

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH
Lesson One: The Bible is God's Message of Salvation for Mankind

1. A Christian leader is a shepherd-leader. Our Chief Shepherd is Jesus Christ. In order to be sure we are following the example and teachings of our Chief Shepherd, we must have a good knowledge of the things he taught and how he lived. We also need a good understanding of the things that please our Heavenly Father and the purpose he has for mankind. The only dependable source for all this information is the Bible.

The Apostle Paul warned Timothy, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15).

If we are going to be a good shepherd-leader, we must _____ handle the Bible.

2. We do not want to be ashamed of our shepherd-leadership because we taught people the wrong thing. We must correctly handle the truth that is in the Bible. Satan knows the truth, but he also knows how to twist its meaning so he can deceive people. Sometimes he deceives church leaders. Most church leaders do not want to deceive people, however they often misunderstand and misuse the Bible because they do not know how to correctly use it. Some leaders miss the important and valuable truths of God in the Bible because they mishandle it. This week we want to give you some guidance on how to correctly handle (study and teach) the Bible. Our first lesson will explain the purpose of the Bible.

A good book has one main purpose. This is true of the Bible. The Bible has 66 separate books that were written by 40 different men over a time span of about 1,500 years. The Bible contain moral laws, civil laws, history, poetry and private letters. Although the Bible is written by many different men and contains several different types of information, it teaches us one important truth. The Bible teaches us God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

What is the main purpose of the Bible? _____

3. The Bible teaches us God's plan of salvation through Jesus the Christ. It is God's message for every human being. Every human being needs to understand this message because it explains God's love for mankind. It tells us how to solve the problem that separates us from our Heavenly Father.

The Apostle Paul said, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Apostle Peter wrote, *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). The Bible is God's message to us.

I want to show you how the Bible gives us one very important message from God. I want to summarize it for you in this lesson by using mostly quotations from the Bible. It is a long message because it began about 8,000 years ago. We will begin with some background information.

To properly understand this message, you must understand that God chose to have three special kinds of relationship with human beings. He is our Heavenly Father - God who cares for us like a father. He is the Holy Spirit - God who dwells within us. And, He is Jesus the Christ - God who became a man and walked among us.

Name the three types of relationships that God chose to have with us.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. God has shown his love to us as a caring Heavenly Father, as a Holy Spirit dwelling within us and as Jesus the Christ who walked among us like a friend (John 15:12-15). God involved all three of these relationships when he created mankind.

The Bible begins with the creation of mankind because the message is about God's love for mankind through Jesus the Christ.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:1-2).

God, our _____, planned the creation of mankind. Out of nothing he created a formless mass of material and God, the _____, was hovering over the water.

5. Our Heavenly Father had a special plan for mankind before he created them. He created the materials needed for mankind while the Holy Spirit hovered over the water.

Jesus the Christ was also there helping with the creation. The Apostle John explains it this way:

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

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

The Word was with God in the _____ and helped God with the _____. The Word also became _____ and dwelt among _____. The Word is _____ the Christ.

6. The Apostle John calls Jesus *the Word* because *the Word* was used by both Jewish and Greek philosophers to refer to the force that controls the universe. The Apostle John explained that Jesus is God who became a man by calling Jesus *the Word*. Jesus the Christ was a part of God in the beginning and helped with the creation of everything. Although Jesus the Christ came to the earth in human form about 6,000 years after creation, he always existed as a part of God.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

Mankind was created in the image and likeness of _____.

7. Human beings are the most important part of God's creation. They are the only living things that are created in God's image. He created us to be holy and righteous like him. He created us to have an eternal spirit like his. Adam, a man, and Eve, his wife, were the first human beings that God created. They were to bring forth children to populate the earth. Every child conceived became an eternal spirit.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array (Genesis 1:31-2:1).

All that God created was very _____.

8. Everything that God made was complete and it was very good. God was happy with everything he had created.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8-9).

There were two very important fruit trees in the middle of the garden. The fruit from the tree of life enabled human beings to live forever. However, the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would enable mankind to know good and evil. God created human beings innocent. They did not know good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

In the middle of the garden were two fruit trees. One tree gave them eternal _____. The other tree would give them the knowledge of _____. What bad thing would happen to the human body if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? _____

9. God put two important fruit trees in the garden. The fruit from the tree of life would enable them to live forever. The fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would enable them to know good and evil. There was only one thing they knew would displease God. If they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die.

God also created angels to assist in his work. Angels are spiritual beings that do not have a physical body like ours. However, they can appear to human beings in a physical form. One of these angels was given a high position of leadership. Unfortunately, he became prideful. His pride led him to become jealous of God's authority. This prideful angel led a rebellion against God. Many of the other angels followed him and became part of the rebellion. You learned about this rebellion in lesson 5 of week 9.

This rebellious angel is called Satan which means *the enemy*. He was also called the devil because he likes to slander and destroy others. The rebellious angels who followed Satan are called demons because they like to do evil things. God became unhappy with Satan and the demons. God threw them out of his presence because they were no longer holy and righteous.

God allows Satan and his demons to have a limited power on this earth. God allows them to test human beings to see which ones will respect and love him. Perhaps this is the reason God allowed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be placed in the garden. It was there to test the love and respect of Adam and Eve for God.

Satan loves to slander and to destroy things. He was determined to destroy the joy and the happiness of God's creation. He was sure human beings would rebel against God just like he did. Jesus the Christ said, *"He [Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies"* (John 8:44).

God allowed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be in the garden as a _____ of mankind's _____ and _____ for him.

10. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test of mankind's love and respect for God. He told them that they must not eat of it or they would die. Without the knowledge of good and evil they would be innocent. With the knowledge, they would be tempted to do all kinds of evil and they would most likely do evil like Satan. Evil would bring death to their physical bodies.

As I said, Satan loves to slander and destroy. Satan is very clever. He took on the form of a beautiful serpent so that Eve would not know who he was. He lied to Eve and he slandered God.

He said to the woman, Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Genesis 3:1-7).

In your own words, explain some of the ways Satan deceived Eve. _____

11. Satan deceived Eve by pretending to be a beautiful serpent. He encourage her to doubt that God was telling the truth and to doubt that she would die. He told a lie when he said the knowledge would make her to be like God.

God liked to visit Adam and Eve in the garden.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

So the Lord God said to the serpent [Satan], "Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity [strong hatred] between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he [a descendant of Adam and Eve] will crush your head, and you [Satan] will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:8-15).

The statement, "*he [a descendant of Adam and Eve] will crush your head,*" referred to the solution that Jesus the Christ would bring for the problem of sin and death brought on mankind by Satan, Eve and Adam. That solution involved God paying the penalty for man's sins.

From the very beginning, God planned to solve the problem of sin and death on mankind by _____.

12. God had a plan from the very beginning to save mankind from the destruction of sin and death by paying the penalty for their sins through Jesus the Christ. However, God has no plan to save Satan and the demonic angels from the punishment that they deserve for their evil activities.

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return' " (Genesis 3:17-19).

God put a _____ on the ground so that it would be difficult for mankind to have food to eat. Mankind would die and their bodies would return to _____.

13. God's creation was no longer complete. It was no longer very good. The life of human beings was no longer easy or peaceful. The knowledge of good and evil became a curse on them. It also became a curse for the earth that God had created. Mankind's physical body would die and return to dust out of which God had created it. However his eternal spirit would remain to be punished by God. The eternal spirits of dead human beings are being held by God in a special place waiting for God's judgment (2 Peter 2:9).

"And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken" (Genesis 3:22-23).

Mankind was no longer allowed to eat from the _____.

14. God took away the privilege to eat from the tree of life which enabled mankind to live forever. Without the tree of life, human beings would die. Human beings began to sin because they could not resist the temptations brought to them by the knowledge of good and evil. Human beings became more and more corrupt with each new generation (age group).

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5-8).

Noah and his family still lived a righteous life. God told Noah to build a large boat (Ark) to save his family and some animals from a world-wide flood. Noah trusted God and built the boat. The flood killed all the rest of the animals and all the other human beings on the earth.

"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth' " (Genesis 9:1).

"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. . . Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth" (Genesis 9:11-14, 16).

a. When human beings became very wicked and full of evil thoughts, God started over with _____ and his _____.

b. God left a sign of his promise to never destroy mankind again with a flood. That sign is _____.

15. God gave mankind a second chance through Noah and his family. God promised never to destroy mankind with a flood. He still gives us the sign of that promise when we see a rainbow.

The descendants of Noah's three sons populated the earth. This time, mankind did not become so wicked. However, some were very sinful and others were mostly righteous. It is interesting that many cultures around the world have a story about a world wide flood that killed mankind except for a few of their ancestors who were saved in a boat.

God chose a certain righteous man to become the father of a special nation.

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-5)

Later, God changed Abram's name to Abraham which means *father of a multitude*.

God promised to make Abraham into a great _____ and to make his name _____ . God also promised that all peoples on earth would be _____ through Abraham.

16. The descendants of Abraham became the nation of Israel. Sometimes we call them Jews. Abraham's name is great until this day. He is known as the father of the Jews and the father of the Arabs. He became the father of the Arabs through Ishmael. Ishmael was a child wrongly conceived through his wife's maid. The great nation that God promised was the nation of Israel. Through the nation of Israel, God would bless all nations. This promised blessing was another reference to Jesus the Christ, the descendant of Adam and Eve who would solve the problem of sin and death in mankind.

The descendants of Abraham grew until they numbered over two million people. God was preparing them to become a great nation although they had become slaves to the nation of Egypt. He called Moses to lead them out of slavery. Through Moses, God gave them civil and moral laws to follow and guidelines for honoring God through sacrifices and offerings. These laws and guidelines became known as the Law of Moses. Moses taught the Israelites how to follow the laws so they would become a great nation.

What did God give to the Israelites that would enable them to become a great nation? _____

17. God gave the Israelites the Law of Moses. If they followed it they would become a great nation.

God enabled the Israelites to drive out the evil people who lived in the land promised to their father Abraham. But, they struggled to follow the Law of Moses. They often neglected it and became weak before their enemies. Volunteer leaders rose up to help them follow the Law of Moses. These leaders would throw off the suppression of their enemies and then serve as judges using the Law of Moses to judge cases. After about 300 years, God allowed them to have a king like other nations.

God allowed the Israelites to have a king because they had difficulty following _____

18. The Israelites had difficulty remaining faithful to the Law of Moses. They asked God to give them a king like other nations. God chose the first two kings.

The first King was Saul. Self-pride caused Saul to disobey God and fail as a king. David was the next king. Although he made mistakes and sinned, he always repented and remained humble. He was very close to God. The people of Israel became a strong military nation under his leadership. His son Solomon was the third king.

Solomon made the nation strong both politically and financially. However, his success led to self-pride. He neglected the teachings and warnings of the Law of Moses. He married women who worshiped demons. He tolerated their worship and eventually participated in it. This greatly weakened the spiritual strength of the nation. His son Rehoboam became the fourth king.

Because of self-pride Rehoboam refused to listen to the wisdom of his elder advisors. He followed the advice of his young friends and his actions split the kingdom into two nations. One nation was called Judah where he and his descendants continued to be king and the other nation was called Israel. A few of the kings were faithful to God, but most were not.

The kings provided military strength and political stability under which they could follow the Law of Moses. However, Israel did not remain a strong nation very long because most of their kings were _____ to God.

19. David was the greatest king the Israelites ever had. He was a good military leader and he remained faithful to God. He was a shepherd-leader. Although Solomon brought great wealth to the nation, he also brought unfaithfulness to God. The nation was soon split into two and each nation slowly became weaker and weaker because most of their kings were unfaithful to God. God allowed enemy nations to harass them and to carry some of them off as slaves.

God sent messages to the Israelites through prophets. He pleaded with the Israelites to repent of their sins. He promised to send a Messiah (a leader chosen by God) who would be a powerful, righteous leader and a peace maker. The Messiah would be a descendant of their greatest king, King David.

What did God promise to send to the Israelites if they would repent? _____

20. God promised to send the Messiah, a powerful leader who would bring peace. The Greek word for the Messiah is the Christ. He is called the Christ in the New Testament because the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. Many Israelites prayed that the Messiah or the Christ would come soon because their suffering was great.

Only a few kings listened to the prophets. Although God had warned them that his blessing were based on their faithfulness, they felt God owed them blessings because they were descendants of Abraham. That is when God sent the Israelites this message: *"It is too small a thing for you [the Messiah] to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob [the Israelites] and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth"* (Isaiah 49:6). Gentiles are all people who are not descendants of Abraham.

God informed the Israelites that the Messiah would also be a light (a blessing) to the _____

21. God had always planned to provide salvation to all peoples of the earth, the Gentiles. He told Abraham that all peoples would be blessed through him. God called the Israelites to be his ambassadors on the earth. God wanted them to be a blessing to other nations of the earth by living a righteous life and showing other nations how to follow God. Instead they dishonored God by their unfaithfulness. After 400 years under the leadership of kings, God allowed their enemies to scatter them around the world as refugees and slaves. However, God enabled a small, weak nation of Israelites to continue so that he could bring forth the promised Messiah from the descendants of Abraham and King David.

God gave detailed information through the prophets about where the Messiah would be born, how he would be born, how he would live and how he would die. Here are two of those prophecies.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The Messiah would:

- a. be born of a _____.
- b. would be called Mighty _____, Everlasting _____, Prince of _____.
- c. He will reign as king F_____.

22. The Messiah or the Christ was born of a virgin. He is Almighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. He reigns forever.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:18-23).

- a. Who is the promised Messiah? _____
- b. What is the meaning of his name Immanuel? _____

23. Jesus the Christ is the Messiah that God promised to the nation of Israel. He is a descendant of King David and Abraham. He is the blessing for all people that was promised to Abraham through his descendants. He is the descendant of Adam and Eve who crushed Satan's head. He is God with us.

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the Israelites for Jesus. John challenged the Israelites to repent of their sins and to be baptized as a sign of their repentance. He told them that someone was coming who was greater than him.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph (Luke 3:21-23).

They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority (Luke 4:32).

One time, Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice" (Luke 8:20-21).

The Messiah came to establish a spiritual kingdom made up of those who would _____ the Word of God.

24. The Israelites had failed to put into practice the teaching God had given them. Jesus the Christ called men and women to join him in a new kingdom, the spiritual kingdom of God, the Church. The Church is made up of all who respect and obey God's Word.

Jesus warned the people. *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).*

"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell [God's eternal punishment]. Yes, I tell you, fear him" (Luke 12:4-5).

The way to enter God's kingdom is N _____. We should not fear men, demons or even Satan who can _____ this body. Instead we should fear God who can throw us into _____.

25. The warnings of Jesus are very harsh, but true. We cannot live our life "anyhow" and be a member of God's eternal kingdom. God expects us to be holy just as he is holy. Being holy narrows down or reduces the things that we can do. Men, demons and Satan himself will go so far as to kill us in order to try to force us to dishonor God and be unfaithful to his teachings. In our modern world, Christians are still being killed every day simply because they are faithful to God. But, even if Satan and his evil workers kill us, they cannot cause us to go to hell - the punishment God has prepared for evil spirits and those who disobey him. God has the final judgment and he will save those who have been faithful to him through Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave encouraging words for those who will be faithful to God's teachings.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14:1-3).

Jesus the Christ is preparing a _____ where his faithful followers will be with _____.

26. This is the area that Satan and his demons cannot touch. This is something that they cannot take away from us. Jesus is preparing a place for faithful Christians where they will live with him forever. We will learn more about that later. But first, let us find out how Jesus is able to save us from the punishment of our sins and from death.

The Israelite authorities, who had the responsibility to teach and enforce the Law of Moses, refused to accept that Jesus was the Messiah or the Christ. They arrested Jesus.

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You are right in saying I am" (Luke 22:66-70).

They accused Jesus of blasphemy because he said he was the Son of God. Blasphemy means to say things that insult God. They forced the Roman authorities to kill Jesus by crucifixion. They nailed him onto two pieces of wood put together in the form of a cross with his hands nailed on the cross piece and his feet nailed to the other piece. Then the cross was put into the ground so that his body hung by the nails.

Jesus was killed on the cross because he said he is _____.

27. Jesus the Christ was killed on a cross because he said he is the Son of God. Jesus was buried in a tomb cut out of rock. The tomb was sealed with a large stone cut in the form of a wheel that was rolled across the entrance. Satan, the demons and the evil men who brought about the death of Jesus thought they had succeeded in stopping Jesus. However, they did not know the plan of God. After three days, God revealed his plan.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"

Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "
Then they remembered his words (Luke 24:1-8).

Jesus told his followers that he would be _____ and that after three days he would _____

28. Jesus told his followers that he would be crucified and then he would be raised from the dead after three days. His followers did not try to understand the things he said about his death because they thought he was going to be a political king like King David. They did not expect him to die. When he was crucified, they thought all was lost. That quickly changed when they realized he had come back to life again. God's plan for mankind was revealed. The Apostle Paul explains it this way:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, . . . Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also (1 Corinthians 15:3-7).

This was God's plan: Jesus Christ died for our _____.
Then he was _____ from the dead.

29. The prophets had foretold all of this, but the Israelites did not understand the prophecies because they expected the Messiah to be an earthly king like David who would restore them to a strong nation. Jesus the Christ (Messiah) came to establish an eternal spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom on this earth. Jesus called it the kingdom of God.

This is the most important part of the message about Jesus the Christ. The Bible calls it the *Gospel* or the *Good News*. He died for our sins. This means that he paid the penalty for our sins. This is how he overcame the curse of the knowledge of good and evil in the life of human beings. Then, after three days, he was raised from the dead. His body came back to life again. This is how he overcame the curse of death on mankind. All who believe and follow Jesus Christ will escape the penalty of sin and the curse of death. Praise the Lord!

The writer of Hebrews explains Jesus the Christ in this way:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Jesus the Christ is the _____ of God and the exact _____
of his being in human form. He provided _____ for our
sins and now he is at the _____ of God.

30. Jesus the Christ is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary. He is the exact representation of God in human form. He was both fully God and fully man. He always existed, but he was in human form for about 33 years. His sacrifice on the cross

paid the penalty for our sins and provided purification for mankind. He arose from the dead and appeared to certain people for 40 days before he left the earth. Now he is at the right hand of our Heavenly Father.

The writer of Hebrews explains how Jesus' death took away the curse of sin. Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites sacrificed the blood of animals for their sins.

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

But . . . it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:3-4).

He [Jesus the Christ] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12).

But now he [Jesus the Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26).

Jesus provided purification for mankind by using his own _____ as a sacrifice for our sins.

31. The reason Jesus was able to overcome the problem of sin in the life of mankind is because he made the sacrifice with his own blood that paid the penalty for our sins and provided purification for us. The reason his blood was able to pay the penalty is because he was perfect in every way and did not sin even though he was a man. He is the only human being who did not sin. The perfect died for the imperfect.

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth"(1 Peter 2:22).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Why was the blood of Jesus the only blood that could pay the penalty for our sins? _____

32. Jesus is the only human being who lived a perfect, sinless life. His human life was totally holy. His life was an example of the holy life God had planned for mankind.

Now let us think about how his resurrection overcomes the problem of death. That will happen when Jesus comes to the earth a second time.

Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him (Hebrews 9:28).

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Jesus will come to the earth a second time for the purpose of bringing _____ to those who are waiting for him to return. When Jesus comes the second time, Christians who have died will _____.

33. Jesus is coming to the earth a second time to complete God's plan by bringing salvation to human beings who are waiting for him. When Jesus comes again, those who have already died will rise from the dead. We call it the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown [buried] is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown [buried] in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown [buried] in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown [buried] a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam [Jesus the Christ], a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:45-47).

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:49).

The sin of Adam brought the knowledge of good and evil and caused all of us to _____. Jesus Christ came from _____ and paid the penalty for our sins. When he comes the second time, those who are waiting for him will be given a _____ body.

34. Through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, mankind obtained the knowledge of good and evil which caused them to sin and displease God. God forbid them to eat from the tree of life and live forever because they were corrupted by sin. Jesus Christ, God in human form, came from heaven to show mankind how to live a holy life and to pay the penalty for our sins. When Jesus comes again, he will give a spiritual body to all who are waiting for him.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. . . . then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-57).

When will the problem of death in mankind be overcome? _____

35. When Jesus comes the second time, those who are dead will be raised with a spiritual body that is imperishable. That means it will not die and rot. The bodies of those who are still alive will be changed into spiritual bodies that are imperishable. Everyone who ever lived on this earth will be resurrected or changed when Jesus comes the second time.

The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10).

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

When Jesus comes the second time, the earth will be laid _____. Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel will be _____. They will be shut out from the _____ of the Lord.

36. When Jesus comes the second time, He will lay the earth bare. Everything will be destroyed with fire. People who have not known God or refused to obey the gospel will be punished. Their greatest punishment is that they will not be allowed into the presence of God.

. . . man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, (Hebrews 9:27).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:1-15).

- a. Who will be judged? (choose one: the lost, the saved, or everyone) _____
- b. Who will be our judge? _____
- c. What will happen to those whose names are not written in the book of life? _____

37. After the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, Jesus will judge all of mankind. Records have been made of every person's life. God has a special book called the *book of life*. This book contains the names of those who have salvation through Jesus Christ because they believed in him and followed his teachings. Those who have been saved through Jesus Christ will be rewarded according to the good works they did while on the earth. Those who are punished will be thrown into the lake of fire. Satan and his demons will also be thrown into the lake of fire.

Jesus Christ allowed the Apostle John to see the reward that God has for those who are saved through Jesus Christ. Read about the things John saw:

Then I saw a new heaven [sky] and a new earth, for the first heaven [sky] and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:1-4).

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb [Jesus the Christ] are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb [Jesus the Christ] is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life [the same tree that was in the garden of Eden], bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse (Revelation 21:22-27 and 22:1-3).

Read all the scriptures again and complete these statements about the future home of those who are saved through Jesus the Christ.

- a. Those who are saved will live on a _____ earth.
 - b. There will be a H_____ city on the new earth called the new J_____.
 - c. _____ and _____ will dwell with mankind.
 - d. Death, and mourning and crying and pain will be _____.
 - e. Nothing _____ will enter into the city.
 - f. On each side of the river will be the _____.
 - g. There will no longer be any _____ on mankind nor on the earth.
- *****

38. At a later time, you can read all of chapters 21 and 22 in the book of Revelation for a better description of the new earth and the new holy city called Jerusalem. God and Jesus Christ will again dwell with mankind. All the bad thing brought on mankind by sin will be no more. Nothing impure will be there. The tree of life that was in the Garden for Adam and Eve will be there to heal mankind and enable them to live forever. The curse that was on mankind and on the earth will be gone.

The new earth and the new Jerusalem are all part of God's plan to save mankind through Jesus the Christ. The Apostle Paul explained why he understood God's special plan for mankind.

We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit (1 Cor. 2:7-10).

The Apostle Paul was given a special understanding of God's plan through the _____.

39. The Apostle Paul was among those who studied the Law of Moses and the history recorded in the books of the Old Testament. At first, he refused to accept that Jesus is the Messiah. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Paul came to understand how the Old Testament writings revealed that Jesus is the promised Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled God's plan for mankind.

The Apostle Paul gave this warning:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. He [Jesus the Christ] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 6:23) (Romans 3:23) (Romans 4:25) (Romans 5:8).

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:15-17).

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).

Now that we understand God's plan for mankind, how should we live our life as a leader in his kingdom? _____

40. Being a leader in God's kingdom is the most important work we can do. God has special rewards for those who work on earth to build his kingdom. Our work is so important that we must be careful to live our life in a way that will make the most of every opportunity to do good works for His glory.

Those who follow Jesus have been given an important work to do. This is what Jesus said to his follower after his resurrection.

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples [followers of Jesus] of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus wants us to make _____ of all _____. He also wants us to teach them _____.

41. We have an important work to do. Jesus the Christ asks us to make disciples in all nations of the earth. He asks us to teach these new disciples how to obey his teachings. God has given each of us gifts and talents that he wants us to use somewhere in this work. Maybe he has called us to make disciples or maybe he has called us to help the disciples know how to follow him and his teachings.

Now that you understand the one important message that is told in the Bible, how should this affect your attitude toward the work that God has called you to do?

Summarize in your own words the one important message that is told in the Bible.

ARE YOU FREE FROM THE CURSE OF SIN?

Do you want to be set free from the curse? Do you want to be one of God's children? Your sins can be forgiven through Jesus the Christ because he paid the penalty for your sins. The curse can be lifted from your life through Jesus the Christ.

Someday, the earth will be restored to the way it was before the curse. Mankind will again walk in God's presence and eat fruit from the tree of life. Mankind will again enjoy the perfect life on the perfect earth with the perfect God.

Only those who believe that Jesus is the son of God, repent of their sins and turn to Jesus the Christ for salvation from the penalty of sins will enjoy the new earth. In order to begin this new life, you must repent of your sins and be baptized. To secure that new life, you must learn to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit and you must remain faithful until death.

PERSONAL NOTES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

Do you fully understand how God's wonderful plan of salvation for mankind is being carried out in history from creation to the time of Christ's second coming and the judgment? Make a plan to understand it better so that you can convince others how much God loves them.

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Two: God's Message For Mankind - Part One

1. Many Christian leaders and many followers of Christ do not fully understand the simple but amazing story of God's love for them. They know Bible stories. They know about heaven and creation. But, they do not fully understand the amazing way that God has been preparing for their eternal salvation down through the ages from creation until the second coming of Christ. If they could fully understand it as it is explained in the previous lesson, their world view would be changed. Their priorities would be changed. Their life would be more committed to bringing honor and glory to God. Many are missing the full impact of God's love, because they have not fully understood the important message told in the Bible.

What is the amazing, important message that is told in the Bible? _____

2. The Bible tells us about salvation through Jesus the Christ. It is the most important message because believing and properly responding to it will determine each human being's eternal future. It is a message that every human being must hear, understand and take action on.

Jesus and the Apostles warned us that it is necessary to understand how salvation comes through Jesus Christ.

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

The Apostle Peter said, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 3:11).

Why is it so important that every human being understand how salvation comes through Jesus the Christ? _____

What is the most important thing for us to teach to people about Jesus Christ? _____

3. It is necessary for every human being to understand how eternal salvation comes through Jesus Christ because there is no other way for mankind to escape the punishment of sin and the curse of death. The most important thing for us to be teaching from the Bible is how salvation comes only through faith and obedience to Jesus' teachings. Satan tries to deceive mankind like he did Eve. He deceives leaders to believe that other things are more important. He wants mankind to think that there are other ways to be right with God. This is why it is very important that we correctly handle the Bible.

There are pastors, evangelists, prophets, apostles and other Christian leaders today who misunderstand, misuse and even abuse the important truth found in the Bible. Some want to focus their work on healing and miracles. Others want to focus their work on wealth and health for Christians. Some want to focus on keys to success in this world and on things that might bring comfort and prosperity in this world. Some go so far as to teach you how to use your faith in Jesus to get the things you want in this world.

The things we desire in this world are not important. The most important thing is God's purpose for our life. Instead of asking God to fulfill our desires, we must ask God to show us his will for our life. God is not here to serve us, we are here to serve God. When we serve God, he will bless us and we will find happiness in this world doing the things he

created us to do.

Jesus told us that which is most important in our life. Jesus said, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:31-33).

What are the two most important things that we must seek in our life?

1. _____
2. _____

4. We live in a physical body that has physical needs. But, the most important things are not our physical needs, but our relationship with God.

First, we must seek to be a member of his spiritual kingdom, the Church. We become a citizen in his kingdom by accepting the forgiveness of sins that come through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In order to do that we must repent of our sins, be baptized and follow the teachings of Jesus.

Second, we must focus on becoming a righteous person. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome our sinful nature brought on by the knowledge of good and evil. The Holy Spirit helps us to develop the fruit of righteousness - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

What do you think about a Christian leader who focuses his work on miracles, healing, health, success and prosperity in this world? _____

5. A Christian leader who focuses his work on miracles, healing, health, success and prosperity in this world is either misunderstanding the Bible, misusing the Bible or abusing the Bible. A Christian leader may use healing or other things to reach out to people, but the main purpose of his work must be to help people find salvation through Jesus Christ and live the righteous life. We may get the attention of people through these other things, but if we do not carry through with the most important and necessary matters of salvation through Jesus Christ and living the righteous life, we have failed as Christian leaders. It is deceptive and perhaps evil to focus people's attention on miracles and worldly prosperity without teaching them the most important and necessary things about their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave this warning to such leaders. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

What is the danger for Christian leaders who focus their work on things other than salvation through Jesus Christ and righteousness? _____

6. Christian leaders who focus on something besides salvation through Jesus Christ and living a righteous life may lose their salvation. They may think they know the Bible. They may claim they have a special understanding of it to share with you. However, if they do not focus their work on how to have salvation from the penalties of sin through Jesus Christ and how to live a righteous life, they may be self-deceived, deceived by Satan or a worker using the powers of Satan to deceive people.

Listen to the warning that the Apostle Paul gave against the "super apostles" who deceived the Christians at Corinth:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

We must be careful, because there are _____ apostles and _____ workmen who _____ to be servants of righteousness by using the power of _____.

7. There will always be false apostles and deceitful workers who pretend to be servants of God. Many of them get their power from Satan and his demons. Many people will follow them.

Paul gave this warning to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-5:

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

Some people will refuse to listen to the truth. Instead they will go to leaders who tell them things that suit their own _____. When this happens, Christian leaders must keep their _____, endure _____ and do the real work of an _____.

8. Many people will follow the leader who claims to be a Christian but tells them how to have the things their sinful nature desires. Weak Christian leaders will adjust their teaching and their preaching to say some of the same things hoping they can also attract more followers. The faithful Christian leader will control the attitudes and the desires of his heart to be sure they agree with God's will. He will endure hardship if necessary in order to focus on the two most important things God has called him to teach and preach. He will do the real work of a Christian evangelist. These false leaders may gain many followers. They may gain personal wealth and popularity, but their rewards in heaven will be few or none (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Some may even lose their salvation (Matthew 7:21-23).

When Jesus came to this earth, the teachers of the Law of Moses were deceived about the most important things in life. They were rich and had political power. They twisted the meanings of the Law of Moses to protect their wealth and their political power. They missed the important truths of God that are revealed in the Law of Moses.

Jesus warned the people, *“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20).

Jesus said to the teachers of the Law, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Jesus condemned the teachers of the Law, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (Matthew 23:13,15).

Were the teachers of the Law focusing their work on encouraging righteousness? _____

Whose work were they doing? _____

What was happening to their followers? _____

9. The teachers of the Law were doing the work of the devil. Their life style was far from righteous. They did not focus on teaching righteousness. They twisted the meaning of the Law of Moses so that it would enable them to gain political and financial power. Those who followed their teaching became worse followers of the devil.

The teaching of Jesus was much different. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law (Matthew 7:28-29).

Did Jesus base his teaching on something new? _____

How was his teaching different from that of the teachers of the Law? _____

10. Jesus came to fulfill the law, not to bring a new teaching. Jesus' teachings were shocking to the people because they were different from the scholars who claimed to be the authority on the Law of Moses. Jesus went into details to explain the things that are most important to God. Jesus showed them the basic truths of God that were revealed in the Law of Moses. He taught with authority because he was not teaching the ideas of men, but the truth of God.

The teachers of the Law tried to weaken the teachings on righteousness. They taught that holiness was a physical thing that came through religious rituals, the things you ate, and how you kept your body. Jesus taught holiness this way, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). Again he said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Which is more important, a healthy body or that which we think in our heart? _____

11. The way we think in our heart is who we really are. Keeping our body clean and healthy and performing religious rituals does not make us righteous.

Jesus explained it this way, "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"(Matthew 15:17-20).

What makes a person to be unholy? _____

12. The things that make a person unholy and unacceptable to God are the evil attitudes that come out of his heart. We cannot overcome that with a clean healthy body and religious rituals. We may deceive men into thinking we are holy with these things, but God knows the attitude in our heart. The condition of our body is not so important to God, but the attitude in our heart is most important to God.

This is how Jesus asked us to treat our body. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25). "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).

What thing in our life is most important to God? _____

13. Jesus told us that the most important thing to God is the attitude in our heart. We need a righteous heart. If our body causes us not to have a righteous heart then we need to take action to force our body to stop sinning. It is more important to have our heart right than to protect and glorify our body or to perform religious rituals.

King David knew this important truth when he sinned with Bathsheba. He wrote this in Psalm 51:16-17, *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite [showing deep sorrow for sin] heart, O God, you will not despise.* (Also read Isaiah 1:11-20.)

What is the most important truth that God would want us to know about our relationship with him? _____

14. The most important and basic truth about our relationship with God is that he wants us to be righteous in our heart. The reason God became discouraged with mankind in the beginning was because of the sinful attitudes in men's hearts. The attitudes in our heart must be holy. Without that we cannot please God. Nothing that we do or say can cover up or make up for evil attitudes in our heart.

As a leader in God's kingdom, a righteous heart must be the first thing that we focus on as we do the work God has called us to do. The way we do our work must show that we have a righteous heart. The things we encourage people to do must show that we have a righteous heart. The things that we teach must encourage others to have a righteous heart. No matter which subject we may teach or what action we may take to get people's attention we must show them how righteousness is involved and necessary.

In addition to teaching how salvation from the penalty of sin and death comes through Jesus Christ, the second most important thing that we must teach people is that they must have a _____.

15. There are two basic things that God has called us to teach. First, that salvation from the penalty of sin and death comes only through Jesus Christ. Second, that salvation also depends on having a righteous heart. God has called us to be holy. Six times in the Old Testament and five time in the New Testament we are commanded to be holy.

King David wrote this song about the future of righteous people. He asked a question and then he gave the answer.

[the question] *Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary [the new Jerusalem]? Who may live on your holy hill?* **[the answer]** *He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur [slander] on his fellowman, who despises a vile [sinfully corrupt] man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury [interest] and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken (Psalm 15).*

Who will live with God in the new Jerusalem on the new earth? _____

16. Because of our sinful nature we may never be perfectly holy until the curse is taken away and our body is changed into the spiritual resurrected body. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit we can live a righteous life. This is the most important thing that God wants us to do when we become a member of his kingdom through Jesus Christ.

God is preparing a place for those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus to pay the penalty for their sins and who live a righteous life. Refusing to repent and refusing to live a righteous life will cause us to lose our salvation. This is the second most important thing that God wants leaders to teach their followers.

Here are some scriptures you can read that will help you understand how important it is for a leader to develop righteousness in his followers: 1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chronicles 9:8; Psalm 7:8, 40:9; Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; Isaiah 26:10-11; Daniel 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Timothy 6:11.

Do not let your followers be deceived by the prosperity of the wicked. Satan is using them to deceive us into thinking that righteousness does not matter. In the end, they will be punished in hell for all eternity. Success in worldly things does not mean success with God. Success in this world is very temporary. Success with God is eternal. Here are some scriptures you can read in your free time to help you understand how important righteousness is to God and how God only blesses the righteous. Job 36:7; Psalm 5:12, 11:5, 34:15, 34:17, 34:21, 37:25, 37:29, 37:39, 55:22, 75:10, 148:8; Proverbs 3:33, 10:3, 10:6, 10:24, 10:28, 11:4, 11:8, 11:28, 12:7, 13:5, 14:32, 20:7, 21:21; Isaiah 3:10, 32:17, 57:1; Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 13:41-49; Luke 14:12-14; Romans 6:3 & 16; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Peter 4:18.

Based on the things you have learned in this lesson, what are the two most important truths we must help people understand as we do God's work?

1. _____

2. _____

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Three: God's Message For Mankind - Part two

1. Jesus did most of his teaching and preaching in small villages and deserted areas. *Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him (Matthew 4:25). Some of them walked over 100 miles just to hear the things Jesus taught. When he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them (Matthew 5:1-2). The teaching that Jesus gave on this mountain is often called *The Sermon on the Mount*. It is recorded in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law (Matthew 7:28-29).*

The people were _____ because Jesus taught as one who had _____.

2. Jesus, God in human form, had authority to teach us the things that are most important in our relationship with God. The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law made their teachings complicated by twisting the meanings of words and claiming the words did not really mean what they said. They taught that there are exceptions to the Law if you did this thing or that thing. When they finished teaching, the people were confused. The truth was not clear to them. They wondered if the teachers really knew the truth.

Jesus did not twist or change the meaning of the words in the Law of Moses. Jesus did just the opposite. He explained the moral truth (principles of righteousness) behind the words in the Law. He took the Law of Moses to the heart level of understanding. He explained the simple way to apply it to our life. He amazed the people because his teachings were easy to understand and they made sense. It was clear that he truly understood the Law of Moses.

In your own words, explain how the teaching of Jesus was different from the teachers of the Law? _____

3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus helps us to apply the Law of Moses to our life in a way that is easy to understand. He helps us understand that it is the attitude in our heart that is most important to God.

The teachings in these three chapters contain some of the most important basic truths about how to live a righteous life and how to please God. If we are going to correctly handle the word of truth, we must understand these basic truths and we must make them the foundation of our leadership in his kingdom. We must also teach others to follow these teachings.

Matthew 5:3-10 could be called an introduction to this teaching. It deals with the basic attitudes in our heart. Sometimes this section is called the beatitudes which means statements beginning with the words **Blessed are**. The original Greek means *be happy* or *find happiness*. If we want to find true happiness, we must have these attitudes in our heart. In this lesson we will study the beatitudes and in the next lesson, part three, we will study some basic truths about righteousness and the will of God given in the teachings of Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount contains basic truth about how to live a _____ life. The introduction is sometimes called the _____ and deals directly with the attitudes of the _____.

4. The attitudes of our heart are most important to God. They will determine if we are willing to live a righteous life. Jesus discusses the attitudes of our heart in the introduction of his sermon. They are called the beatitudes. There are eight beatitudes. Here is the first one.

Matthew 5:3

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

How can we be poor in spirit? We are poor in spirit when we realize that our spiritual life is very poor. We realize we have fallen short of God's expectations. We realize the seriousness of our sins. We must realize that when it comes to holiness and righteousness, we are in poverty.

- a. The poor in spirit realize that they are very poor in the areas of _____ and _____ in their life.
- b. What is the promise made to those who know they are poor in spirit? _____

5. Those who know that they are poor in holiness and righteousness will most likely end up in the kingdom of heaven, God's reward for those who accept forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees did not realize they were poor in spirit. They considered themselves to be examples of righteousness for others to follow. They were proud of their righteousness. They wanted others to be aware of their righteousness. Jesus warned the Pharisees, *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven (Matthew 6:1). "When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites. They blow trumpets in the synagogues and on the streets so that people will see them and honor them. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give to the poor, don't let anyone know what you are doing. Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you" (Matthew 6:2-4).*

What do the hypocrites do that proves they are not poor in spirit? _____

6. Hypocrites feel they are righteous. They do their acts of benevolence in public so that others will be convinced that they are righteous. They do not give out of a heart-felt concern for the person. They give to bring attention to themselves. They may feel that their act of benevolence proves they are better than the people they helped. However, in their heart, they may be less righteous than the people they helped. An act of righteousness, such as helping someone else, stops being an act of righteousness when it is done for self-glory. Jesus said that the only reward they will receive is the praise of men.

The next attitude helps to understand the first one.

Matthew 5:4

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

To mourn means to show sorrow. To mourn is to express emotions of sorrow. *The poor in spirit* are aware of their poverty in holiness and righteousness. They know they have offended and disappointed God. *Those who mourn* feel deep sorrow for the fact that they have offended God and disappointed Him. James wrote, *Come near to God and he will*

come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up (James 4:8-10).

The poor in spirit will mourn the fact that they have _____ God. God will bring C _____ to those who mourn for this reason.

7. Those who mourn their sins feel deep sorrow over the ways they have offended God. However, God will bring them comfort by assuring them that he has forgiven their sins through Jesus Christ.

Jesus told this story, *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

Which man was not justified before God? _____

The Pharisee was not H _____ enough to admit to his _____.

8. To be justified means to be made right in your relationship. The Pharisee was not right in his relationship with God. His sins still separated him from God. Remember we said that self-pride is also self-deceiving. A righteous person must have a humble heart that admits he has sinned and mourns those sins before God. The moment we feel we have not been sinning against God is the moment we need to search our heart for the truth.

Pharisees were known for corrupt business practices which they justified by twisting the meanings of the Law of Moses (Mark 12:38-40). This Pharisee probably prayed three times a day, but his prayers were of no value because of the attitude in his heart. He stood in the open area where all could see him. He spoke out loud so all could hear him. He bragged about his fasting and his tithing so others who heard would think he was a righteous man. He was not aware of his own sins against God because he had no humility. Pride kept him from mourning his sins before God. Pride kept him from asking for forgiveness. His prideful heart would not allow him to admit he had sinned. God forgave the tax collector, but he could not forgive the Pharisee.

Why could God not forgive the Pharisee? _____

9. God could not forgive the Pharisee because the Pharisee did not admit to his sins nor did he seek forgiveness. The Tax collector was ashamed of his life. He beat his chest as he mourned his sin before God. He admitted to his sins and he asked for forgiveness. Before a person can truly repent, he must be aware of the seriousness of his sins and he must mourn the fact that he has offended God. Repentance is not a formality, it is a reality that takes place in the heart. Only the humble will be blessed by God.

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

We may be highly educated, hold a high position of leadership or have special valuable skills. But if we are meek, we do not boast or brag about who we are. We do not consider ourselves better than others. We do not conduct ourselves as if we are more important than others. We do not use our strengths to take advantage of others.

In your own words, explain what *meek* means. _____

What is the reward waiting for the meek person? _____

10. Meekness means to be humble and gentle even though we may have great power, special abilities, great wealth or any other valuable thing that others do not have.

Psalm 37:11 gives the same promise as Matthew 5:5. In Psalm 37:11 *the earth* seems to refer to the land of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. For Christians, the promised land is the new earth where the new Jerusalem will be located. The meek person will inherit the new earth that God is preparing for those who are faithful to him through Jesus Christ.

Here are some scriptures that explain the things that a meek person will do.

A. 1 Corinthians 6:7-8

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

A meek person will prefer to be _____ or _____ by another Christian rather than cause division in the church.

B. Romans 12:18-19

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

A meek person will not take revenge on those who do evil to him but will leave the matter to _____.

C. 1 Peter 2:19-21

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

A meek person will endure unjust suffering even though he did a _____ thing.

11. A meek Christian will allow himself to be wronged or cheated rather than cause division in the church. He will not take revenge on those who do evil to him. He will endure unjust suffering even though he has done a good thing. He may have the power and the right to seek justice, but for the sake of peace, he will take no action.

Jesus is our example of this. He was innocent of any sin. He could have called thousands of angels to rescue him from those who wanted to crucify him (Matthew 26:52-53). He allowed himself to be killed so that we might be blessed. That is meekness. We might say that meekness is a willingness to suffer so that others will be blessed.

The first three beatitudes name attitudes of the heart that allow a person to begin the journey toward righteousness. The next beatitude enables a person to take action that will bring maturity in righteousness.

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

When a person is hungry, his body is telling him he needs to eat food. When a person is thirsty, his body is telling him he needs to drink water. It is the body's way of making sure it receives the necessary materials to keep strong and healthy. The person whose heart tells him he needs to become more righteous will be blessed if he responds to that desires in his heart. His heart is telling him that spiritual health depends on living a holy life.

- a. The person who hungers for righteousness wants to live a more _____ life.
- b. What does God promise to those who hunger for righteousness? _____

12. A heart that desires to live a more holy life will find blessings in life. God will enable him to be filled with righteous thoughts and holy ways. God will satisfy his desires for righteousness.

We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized (Acts 2:38). The main purpose of that gift is to help us overcome the sinful nature within us. The holy life starts by confessing our sins and asking forgiveness. The holy life develops when we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into the ways of righteousness.

A. 1 John 1:8-9

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

There can be no progress in righteousness until we confess our _____ and ask God for _____.

B. Romans 8:13-15

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we can put _____ the sinful nature within us.

C. 2 Peter 1:5-9

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

With the strength of our faith and the help of the Holy Spirit we can add the following attitudes to our heart: _____

13. God cannot cleanse us from all unrighteousness until we confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness. Only then can the Holy Spirit enable us put to death our sinful nature and add goodness, spiritual knowledge (which is an understanding of spiritual truths, 1 Corinthians 2:12-14), self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love to the attitudes in our heart. Only the person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be filled with these attitudes and be blessed by them.

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Mercy means undeserved kindness. It means helping those who, because of their bad attitudes and foolish ways, do not deserve help. They have offended us or they have gotten themselves into problems that they cannot solve because of their own bad attitudes, bad decisions and foolish actions. They can only blame themselves for the problems they have. They have no right to ask for help. If they have offended us, their offense may be so great that they have no right to ask for our forgiveness. A righteous person will show kindness to such people when he finds them in need.

Mercy is showing kindness to people who _____.
What is the reward of those who show mercy? _____

14. Mercy is kindness shown to people who do not deserve it. We must remember that we also make mistakes and do foolish things. We also need mercy. Those who show mercy will receive mercy.

A. Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus Christ died for us while we were still unrepentant _____.

B. Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

We need to forgive others because God has _____ us.

C. Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

What will happen if we refuse to forgive others? _____

15. God through Jesus Christ is our example of mercy. Jesus died for us before we ever knew about him. He paid for our sins before we ever thought about repenting and asking for forgiveness. Now that he has forgiven our sins, we should forgive the wrong doings of others. If we refuse to forgive others, God will stop forgiving our sins.

Jesus told a story to explain how this works (Matthew 18:23-35). A king wanted to settle accounts with his servants who were neglecting to pay back the money they owed him. One servant owed him a very large amount of money. The servant could not pay it back. The king decided to sell the servant, his wife and his children into slavery so he could get his money back. The servant begged for forgiveness and promised to pay back all that he owed. The king had mercy on the servant and canceled the debt because he knew the servant could never pay it back.

As the servant was going home, he found a fellow-servant who owed him a small amount of money. He became violent with the man and grabbed him by the neck. He demanded that the man pay him immediately. The man begged for more time and promised to pay him back. The servant refused to have mercy and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. The king heard about the bad thing the servant had done. *"Then the master [the king] called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed (Matthew 18:32-34).*

What was the king's attitude when he learned that his servant refused to have mercy on the man who owed him a small amount of money? _____

16. The king was very angry when he learned that his servant refused to show mercy on someone. The king withdrew his forgiveness and sent the man to be severely punished for his debt. God has shown great mercy on us by sending his son to die for us and then forgiving us of the sins that made Jesus' sacrifice on the cross necessary. God must feel very angry when we refuse to forgive others. It is easy to understand why God would stop forgiving us if we refuse to forgive others.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The pure in heart have righteous thoughts, righteous plans and righteous goals because they have put to death the sinful nature within them. With the help of the Holy Spirit they have added righteous attitudes to their heart. Out of their heart come good things. They continue to be humble before God and man. They continue to seek righteousness on a daily basis.

- a. To be pure in heart means that our heart is no longer controlled by the _____ within us.
- b. What blessing will come to those who are pure in heart? _____

17. The pure in heart will see God because they have put to death the sinful nature that corrupts the heart.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law emphasized physical purity through rituals such as washing of hands, refusing to touch dead bodies and refusing to eat certain foods. However, Jesus said their hearts were not pure.

Matthew 23:27-28

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

1 John 1:6-7

If we claim to have fellowship with him [God] yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 3:6

No one who lives in him [Jesus Christ] keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Hebrews 12:14

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

What thing is necessary in our heart before we can see God? _____

18. Moral purity or holiness is necessary in our heart before we will see God. When we become a Christian, we repent of our sins and we begin the struggle against our sinful nature. It is only through the help of the Holy Spirit that we can overcome our sinful nature.

If we fail to overcome our sinful nature, it is because we refused to accept the help of the Holy Spirit or we refused to repent of a sin. Someone has said, "If a sinful habit comes back into our life, it is because we refused to lock the door that allowed it in." When we repent of a sinful habit, we must take all necessary action to lock out future temptations and future opportunities to become involved in that sin. Keeping our heart pure is a daily task. Remember Jesus said we must take out our eye or cut off our hand if necessary so that we might have salvation. Refusing to purify our heart is a dangerous thing.

Hebrews 6:4-6

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Hebrews 10:26-27

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Ephesians 4:29-32

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

What is the danger of refusing to purify our heart with the help of the Holy Spirit? _____

19. Those who refuse to purify their heart will lose their salvation. They will grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in partnership with us to purify our heart. If we are not willing to purify our heart, the Holy Spirit will not force us to do it. Those who are not pure in heart can only blame themselves.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Peacemakers are people who have the ability to bring peace between those who have been separated by disagreements or offenses. However, before we can be a peacemaker, we must have experienced peace in our heart with both God and our neighbor. If we are not pure in heart and at peace with others, there is no way we can help others to find peace.

- a. Before we can be a peacemaker, we must find peace with both _____
and our _____.
- b. What is the blessing for a peacemaker? _____

20. A peacemaker has first of all found peace in his own heart with both God and his neighbor. A peacemaker is like God who sent his son to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sins. A peacemaker deserves to be called a son of God because he is doing the work for God.

A peacemaker brings reconciliation between God and man through Jesus Christ. He teaches mankind how to find peace through spiritual maturity. True and lasting peace comes only through spiritual maturity.

2 Cor. 5:17-20

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Philip. 2:1-4

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

A peacemaker helps others to find peace through REC _____ with God and through spiritual M _____.

21. Real peace comes only through reconciliation with God and spiritual maturity. Blessed are those who have found peace and are helping others to find peace. They are like the sons of God doing the work of their Heavenly Father. Now let us look at the last beatitude.

Matthew 5:10

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Spiritually mature people become an emotional threat to those who have no peace. Spiritually mature people have found peace in their heart, they are emotionally secure and they are satisfied with life. The peace, purity and feeling of fulfillment in their life (satisfied with themselves) can make others feel unsuccessful.

Although people can have great success in the world and have great wealth, deep in their heart they know they are not satisfied. Their heart is troubled and their conscience is bothering them because they know they are not right with their fellow human beings. They may have based their success and happiness on things that are evil toward others and things that are temporary. They live in fear of a future where their evil ways may not continue to bring them success and worldly pleasures may no longer be available to them. They realize that everything they have gained is temporary.

The righteousness and purity of a spiritually mature person exposes the personal failures in other people. They see their own selfishness and their own corruption. Some will see the value of spiritual maturity and try to seek after it. However, others will hate those who are spiritually mature because it condemns them. They will try to convince others that spiritually mature people are no different than them. They will make life difficult for the spiritually mature trying to prove that spiritually mature people will sin if they are put under difficult circumstances. If that does not work, they will spread lies to try to convince others that the spiritually mature are no different than people who follow their sinful nature.

Jesus said this to his mature followers. *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven"* (Matthew 5:11-12).

- a. Spiritually mature followers of Jesus will be persecuted because their spiritual maturity causes others to feel _____.
- b. What is the reward of those who are persecuted because of their righteousness? _____

22. Those who are persecuted because they are righteous will receive a great reward in heaven. Spiritually mature Christians are persecuted because their peace, purity and satisfaction in life expose the spiritual failures in others who refuse to repent. Persecutors want to prove that there is no value in being righteous; or they want to prove that spiritually mature people are only pretending to be righteous.

Remember when Satan went before God and said that Job loved God only because of the worldly blessings God had given to Job (Job 1:9-11). Some evangelists are saying that God wants every Christian to be wealthy and healthy. Are those same evangelists preparing their followers for the challenge of Satan? What will happen when God allows Satan to do the same thing to those people that he did to Job? God allowed Satan to persecute Job so that Job could prove to Satan and to the world that his love for God was

real and his relationship with God was more important than worldly success and personal health. After Job had lost all of his children, all of his possessions and was suffering terrible pain from boils, his wife told him, *"Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"* He replied, *"You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"* In all this, Job did not sin in what he said (Job 2:9-10).

Jesus said this to his followers: *"Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also"* (John 15:20).

The Apostle Paul wrote this to the evangelist Timothy: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12).

Jesus gave this warning to the church at Smyrna: *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life* (Revelation 2:10).

God allows the spiritually mature to be persecuted as a _____ of their faithfulness to God.

23. Persecution for righteousness is a test of our faithfulness to God. It is also an opportunity to show the world and Satan that our relationship with God is most important in our life. If we are persecuted because of our righteousness or because we stand firm on our faithfulness to God and his teachings, it is a sign that we have reached spiritual maturity.

The Pharisee and the teachers of the Law demanded that the Apostles stop preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they kept on preaching, they were called to appear before the Sanhedrin, the official governing board of the Jews. *Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name [Jesus the Christ]," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men"*(Acts 5:27-29)! Then they sent the Apostles out of the room while they discussed what to do. After a long discussion, *They called the apostles in and had them flogged [whipped with leather straps]. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name* (Acts 5:40-41).

How should we feel when we are persecuted because we are righteous followers of Jesus Christ? _____

24. It is an honor in the kingdom of God to be persecuted because we have stood up for truth and righteousness. The persecution may bring disgrace on us in the eyes of worldly people, but in the eyes of God we are his faithful children whom he will greatly reward in heaven.

How the world thinks about our suffering for righteousness is not important. Those who compromise their faith, their integrity or their righteousness in order to avoid persecution bring disgrace on God. Jesus said, *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28).

Jesus listed these eight beatitudes in the order in which they must be pursued. A person will not mourn his sins until he first realizes the spiritual poverty of his heart. He will not have a meek (humble and gentle) spirit before God and man until he realizes how far he has fallen away from God's holiness. He will not seek righteousness until he can humble himself before God and man and ask for help to gain righteousness. He will not be able to show true mercy until he has struggled for righteousness and experienced the generous mercy of God. He will not be pure in heart until he has developed righteous attitudes in his heart and learned to show mercy to others. He cannot be a peacemaker until, through a pure heart, he has found peace with both God and his neighbor. He will not have the spiritual strength to endure persecution until he has found peace with both God and man in his own heart and is able to help others find it.

Each step on the ladder of the beatitudes takes us to a higher level of spiritual maturity. However, before we can take the next higher step, we must be able to stand firmly on the one below it. The beatitudes are the basic steps to spiritual maturity.

Jesus has asked us to make disciples of those we baptize. The beatitudes must be our guideline in bringing people to spiritual maturity. We must mentor them through each step until they are able to successfully endure persecution because of their righteousness. Our work as a shepherd is not complete until we have brought them to the highest level of spiritual maturity, the persecution level.

REVIEW THIS LESSON THEN COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW ABOUT HOW TO TAKE THE EIGHT STEPS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY:

1. Step one is to be _____ which means _____. The blessing from this step is that the person will _____.

2. Step two is to _____, which means to _____. The blessing from this step is that _____.

Explain why step one must be taken before a person will be able to take step two.

3. Step three is to be _____, which means to be _____. The blessing of this step is that _____.

Explain why step two must be taken before a person will be able to take step three.

4. Step four is to _____, which means to _____. The blessing of this step is that the person _____.

Explain why step three must be taken before a person will be able to take step four.

5. Step five is to be _____, which means to _____.
_____. The blessing of this step is that the person _____.

Explain why step four must be taken before a person will be able to take step five.

6. Step six is to be _____, which means to _____.
_____. The blessing of this step is that the person will _____.

Explain why step five must be taken before a person will be able to take step six.

7. Step seven is to become a _____, which means to _____.
_____.
The blessing of this step is that the person will be _____.

Explain why step six must be taken before a person will be able to take step seven.

8. The last step is to be _____, which means to _____.
_____.
The blessing of this step is that the person will _____.

Explain why step seven must be taken before a person will be able to take step eight.

PERSONAL NOTES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

What level have you achieved in these seven steps to maturity? _____

How will you move up to the next level? Make a plan. _____

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Four: God's Message For Mankind - Part Three

1. A Christian Leader must correctly understand and correctly use the Bible and its teachings. The Bible tells one message, salvation from the punishment for our sin through Jesus the Christ. The work of a leader must be involved in two important tasks: (1) Bring people to reconciliation with God through Jesus the Christ, (2) Teach them to live the holy, righteous life that pleases God. Sometimes we call this second task discipleship training. We train people how to be disciples or followers of Christ. We train people to become followers of Christ by taking them through the eight levels of spiritual maturity outlined in the beatitudes. The kingdom of God (the Church) cannot be strong until its members are spiritually mature.

In the next lesson, we will look at the teachings of Jesus that give us basic truths about God's will for mankind. These are teachings that we find in the Sermon on the Mount and in other teachings that Jesus gave while he was on this earth.

However, before we look at Jesus' teachings, I want us to understand the **supremacy** of Jesus' teachings over all other teachings in the Bible. The word supreme means to have the highest authority, to be the highest in quality and to be the purest and most complete of its kind. Here are some important truths about Jesus and his teachings that we must never forget.

A. Colossians 1:18

And he [Jesus the Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Who has the highest authority in the church? _____

B. Matthew 17:5

While he [Jesus] was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them [Jesus and the apostles], and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

What did God tell the Apostles concerning Jesus' teachings? _____

C. John 7:16

Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me."

Jesus' teachings come from _____.

D. John 12:49

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it."

Who told Jesus what to say? _____ the Father

E. Hebrews 1:2

In these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

God has spoken directly to us through _____.

F. John 14:10

Jesus said, "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

The teachings of Jesus are really the direct teachings of _____.

2. Jesus has the highest authority in the church. His teachings are the purest and the most complete teachings of God's will for mankind. God commanded the Apostles to listen to Jesus. The teachings of Jesus came from God. God told Jesus what to teach. God spoke directly to us through Jesus. Jesus is God who came to the earth to teach us. Jesus is God who directly taught us his will.

Sometimes we focus on the teachings in the Old Testament or the teachings of the Apostles. However, everything that we teach must be based, first of all, on the teachings of Jesus who was God-with-us.

God gave Moses the laws that he wanted the Israelites to follow. However, we must keep in mind that the Law of Moses was not perfect. Notice what Jesus said about the teaching on divorce in the Law of Moses.

Mark 10:2-12

Some Pharisees came and tested him [Jesus] by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

"What did Moses command you?" he replied.

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife by giving her a certificate of divorce (Deuteronomy 23:1-4). Jesus taught that a man commits the sin of adultery if he divorces his wife and marries another woman. Which teaching should we follow about divorce, the Law of Moses or what Jesus taught? _____

3. The teaching of Jesus about divorce is the true will of God about divorce. It is based on God's will for marriage when God created man and woman. God's will has not changed. Jesus allowed only one reason for divorce (Matthew 5:31-32). Divorce under any other circumstance is a sin before God. There is no way we can follow both the Law of Moses and the teachings of Jesus on divorce. If we ignore the things Jesus said about divorce and follow the Law of Moses on divorce, we are making a serious mistake.

The Law of Moses was not perfect. The people of Israel had been under the influence of the pagan Egyptian culture for 400 years before Moses led them out of slavery. The Law of Moses was a temporary guideline to help the Israelites quickly learn God's ways. It was given to the Israelites to prepare them for the teachings of Jesus. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote about the Law of Moses.

Galatians 3:24-25 (NCV)

The law was our guardian leading us to Christ so that we could be made right with God through faith. Now the way of faith has come, and we no longer live under a guardian.

- a. The Apostle Paul tells us that the Law of Moses was like a _____ over the Israelites to give them guidance until Christ came.
- b. Now that Christ has come, what are we to do with the Law of Moses? _____

4. A guardian is someone who has legal authority over another person until that person becomes mature enough to make his own decisions. The Law of Moses was a legal guide for the Israelites until Christ brought his superior teachings that fully explain the will of God. We are no longer under the authority of the Law of Moses. We are free from its authority (Colossians 2:13-17). However, we are not free from the superior teachings of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus are supreme over the Law of Moses.

Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites had detailed guidelines about the things that were right and the things that were wrong. However, those laws could not cover every circumstance in life. Also, the laws could be twisted and misused by clever people who do not want to follow them. The Pharisees were good at doing that.

The teachings of Jesus give us moral guidelines that we must apply to our life. These moral guidelines can lead to the right decision in every circumstance if we take time to apply them correctly. We must follow the mature attitudes taught by Jesus and not the temporary Law of Moses which was for immature Israelites who did not know how to develop and use heart-felt righteous attitudes.

God told the Israelites, through the prophet Jeremiah, that He would teach us how to follow him from our heart rather than follow a book of rules.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

The new covenant (agreement) that God brought to mankind through Jesus Christ is not a list of rules written in a book. It is God's will put in our _____ and written on our _____.

5. Jesus' basic teachings are the guidelines that must be put into our minds and written on our hearts. The truth is that we can never write enough laws to cover every possible circumstance in life. Instead, we must understand God's way of righteousness and then learn to apply it to every circumstance in our life. The Law of Moses is immature and incomplete. The teachings of Jesus are pure and complete.

We must also be careful with how we view the teachings of the Apostles. The teachings of the Apostles are based on the teachings of Jesus and they are sometimes adapted to the culture and the circumstances where they were taught. An application of Jesus' teachings to one culture may not be the best application of Jesus' teachings to another culture. We must always start with Jesus' teachings and see how they apply to our culture or to the culture where we are leading.

Some teachings in the Bible are _____ of God's will to a specific culture.

6. God's will may have different applications in different cultures. We must always go back to God's will and then see how it best applies to our culture. We must keep in mind that both Jesus and the Apostle Paul sometimes went back to the time of creation to point out God's will for mankind before making their application.

We must never compromise Jesus' teachings in order to accommodate the culture. We must never compromise the will of God in order to avoid offending someone no matter how important they may be in the culture. If a teaching of Jesus or the will of God conflicts with the culture or with someone important, then we must take a firm stand for the truth given to us in the Bible.

The Apostle Paul had to deal with this kind of problem when women wanted to take equal leadership authority with men in the church. The Apostle Paul based his response to this problem by going back to the time of creation. Remember that Jesus also went back to the time of creation to explain and justify his teaching on divorce. God's will for men and women was established at the time of creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, God gave more details about his will for men and women. Nothing since that time, including the teachings of Christ, has changed God's will for men and women. Let us review God's basic will for men and women and then see how the Apostle Paul applied God's will to the culture of his day.

Read the following passages of scripture and then complete the statements that follow:

A. Genesis 2:18: God made the woman for the purpose of being a suitable _____ for man.

B. Genesis 3:16: When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, God said that the husband would _____ the wife.

C. Genesis 3:20: Who gave the first woman her name? _____

7. God created the woman to be a helper for man. When they sinned God made it clear that the husband would rule over his wife. Adam even gave his wife her name.

Now let us look at some statements that the apostles Paul and Peter made about the relationship between a man and his wife. These statements are based on God's will for marriage. Read the following passages of scripture and complete the statements that follow:

A. Ephesians 5:22-24: The Apostle Paul taught that the husband is the _____ of the wife and the wife should submit to her husband in _____.

B. 1 Peter 3:1-6: The Apostle Peter said that the true beauty of a woman in God's sight is her _____ and _____ spirit. He also said that holy women are _____ to their own husbands.

8. God's will for marriage is that the man be the head of their relationship. The woman is to submit to her husband in everything. Her true beauty as a woman is her gentle and quiet spirit, not the way she decorates her body. Holy women are women who submit to their husbands.

Now, let us see how the Apostle Paul applied this basic will of God to leadership in the church.

1 Timothy 2:9-14

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For [because] Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

Paul wanted women to dress _____ and with good _____ appropriate for women who worship God.

For what reason did Paul forbid a woman to have authority over a man? _____

9. One reason Paul did not want women to dress with expensive clothes and expensive jewelry is because this was a common practice for some prostitutes in the culture. Paul also taught that it is the will of God for man be the head of the woman even in the church. Paul based this teaching on the will of God at the time of creation and on God's will because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Adam was formed first. Also Eve was deceived by Satan, but Adam was not. Under no circumstances was a woman to have authority over a man or to teach a man. Women were to show submission to men by having a gentle and quiet spirit, by the way they dressed, and by the way they conducted themselves in the church.

Some churches today have women elders who have equal authority with men elders. Do you think this agrees with God's will according to Paul's teachings? Do you agree with Paul's application of God's will to leadership in the church and do you think it still applies to leadership in the church today? Write your answer and your explanation below. Is your explanation based on God's will or human reasoning? See the appendix on page 294 for more information. We will discuss your answer at the next group meeting.

10. Another teaching of Paul was an application of the same will of God to the culture. It is common in most cultures for a woman to show that she is under the authority of her husband by something that she wears. When a woman in the Middle East gets married she covers her body and some of her face to show that she is under the authority of her husband. When a woman in Europe or America gets married, she wears a wedding ring to show that she is under the authority of her husband. Other cultures have other ways for a women to show that she is under the authority of her husband.

In the culture at Corinth, a woman showed submission to her husband by covering her head. This became a problem in the church at Corinth because some women were removing this local cultural sign of submission to their husbands.

Paul began this teaching by reminding them of the same basic facts concerning the will of God.

1 Corinthians 11:3-9

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head [Christ who has authority over him]. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head [her husband who has authority over her]--it is just as though her head were shaved [the practice of prostitutes in that culture]. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

- a. What was the sign in the culture of Corinth that a woman was under the authority of her husband? _____
- b. When Paul said that a married woman at Corinth should cover her head, was it a universal command for all Christian women all over the world to cover their head or was it an application of God's will for that culture only? _____

11. In this teaching, Paul takes the basic will of God and applies it to the culture in Corinth. The sign for a woman in submission to her husband in the culture of Corinth was to cover her head. She wore the head covering every time she appeared in public. If she removed the sign it meant that she had rejected her husband's authority and that she was available for another man to pursue her. It insulted and dishonored her husband. That is the reason Paul was very strong on this teaching in the church at Corinth.

Being a Christian did not exempt a woman from being under the authority of her husband. Also it did not exempt her from wearing the sign of her culture which showed that she was under the authority of her husband. In fact, she was required to wear the sign of her culture as part of her fulfillment of God's will. By wearing the sign, she let the world know that she was submitting to husband according to God's will. Refusing to wear the sign would be an insult to her husband and it would also send a wrong message about the will of God.

Do you think that all married Christian women all over the world should cover their heads because of this teaching of the Apostle Paul or do you believe that all Christian women all over the world should wear the sign of their own local culture which shows they are in submission to their husband? Write your answer and your explanation below. We will discuss your answer at the next group meeting.

12. The Apostle Paul applied the same basic will of God in two different teachings. In one teaching he forbid a woman to have a position of authority over men in the church. In another teaching he insisted that a married woman wear the sign of her culture which indicates that she is under the authority of her husband.

This teaching of the Apostle Paul does not mean that women have nothing to do in the Lord's Kingdom. Women have much work to do in the church. They have many talents and skills that are needed to build God's Kingdom. They have special work to do that only women can do. Read the things the Apostle Paul said about the work of women in the church.

- A. Romans 16:12: The Apostle Paul praised women who _____
_____ in the Lord.
- B. Titus 2:3-5: The Apostle Paul taught that older women should train the _____
_____ to _____ their husbands and _____, and
to be _____.

13. Some women worked hard in the Lord's Kingdom during Paul's time. Some of them assisted Paul in his work. Read Philippians 4:3. The older women need to teach the younger women how to be good wives and good mothers. The younger women can teach their children. The most important work that a young married woman has is to train her children to love and follow God. She normally spends more time with the children than her husband. She has a great opportunity to train and influence her children to respect and follow God.

Modern women want to be equal with men in all ways including leadership in the church. However, this can do damage to the marriage and it may result in damage to the children. The first obligation of a married couple is to train their children to follow God. God's curse on Adam was that it would be difficult for him to provide food for his family (Genesis 3:17-19). God's basic plan for man in marriage is for the man to be the head and to provide for his wife and their children. God's curse on Eve was that she would have pain in child birth (Genesis 3:16). God's basic plan for the woman in marriage is for the woman to give birth and to take care of their children. After the children are raised, she can then train the younger women how to be good wives and she can help them with their work of training the children.

Do you think that the modern trend for women to work and to hold equal authority with men is making marriage stronger? Do you think that this modern trend is helping our children to be better Christians? Write your answer and your explanation below. We will discuss your answer at the next group meeting.

14. We must always go back to the basics. Many times we have to go all the way back to the time God created the earth in order to know the way God really wants us to live. However, for most issues we simply need to discover the things Jesus said that may apply to the circumstances we need to deal with. The teachings of Jesus take priority over any teachings found in the writings of the Apostles. We must always try to see how the Apostles are applying the teachings of Jesus to the culture in which they were leading. We must always ask ourselves, how do we apply the teachings of Jesus to our culture. We must also ask ourselves, am I doing something in my culture that is against the teachings of Jesus.

Here is another example. Jesus said that the meek would inherit the earth. A meek person is gentle and humble. Jesus criticized the Pharisees because they were prideful rather than meek. One of his criticisms was about the way they gave gifts to help others. Jesus gave us this application of meekness as it applies to our giving.

Matthew 6:1-4

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Jesus' application of meekness to the topic of giving was for us to keep the amount of our giving and even the act of our giving _____.

15. The best way to show meekness is to keep our giving secret. Only God needs to know that we are giving money to help build his church and that we are giving gifts to help others. When giving becomes a public activity, it can lead to pridefulness and other problems. Jesus said, *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them"* (Mark 6:1). Read about the attitude of the first Christians in Jerusalem.

Acts 4:32, 34-35

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. . . . There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Acts 5:1-10

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira were not required to give all of their money to the church. It was a voluntary act of benevolence. They could have given part of the price of their land to the church and not offended God or man. Why do you think they lied about the amount they received for selling the land and then claimed that they were giving all they had received for the land to the church? _____

16. It is possible that pride caused Ananias and his wife Sapphira to want everyone to think they gave all they received from the land to the church. Peter said that Satan had entered his heart. His attitudes were not righteous. Since their act of giving was done in a public way, pride became a temptation for them. Pride led them to a second sin of lying about the amount received for the land. Ananias and Sapphira died because of their pride and their lies which came from their hearts. It would have been less of a temptation to be prideful and to lie if all gifts to the church had been given in secret, especially the large ones. Jesus said, "*Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them*" (Matthew 6:1).

Perhaps the Apostles forgot about this teaching of Jesus when they allowed the first Christians to give large gifts in a public way. Jesus said that we should not even let our left hand know what our right hand gave (Matthew 6:3). By this he meant that we should give secretly and then forget about the money we have given. If we continue to think about our generous gifts it may lead us to become prideful.

The basic teaching of Jesus is to be humble. We must avoid circumstances that will tempt us to be prideful. As a leader we must avoid circumstances that may tempt our followers to become prideful. Pridefulness and lying are serious sins in the eyes of God, otherwise, God would not have taken the life of Ananias and Sapphira. Remember, pridefulness was the first sin of Satan and lying is his mother tongue.

We must be careful that we do not forget the _____ teachings of Jesus.

17. The basic teachings of Jesus must never be ignored. They take supreme authority over any other example or teaching in the Bible. We must first focus on the basic teachings of Jesus as we decide the best thing to do in any and every circumstance.

Every time we make a leadership decision, prepare a Bible study or prepare a sermon, we must consider how the basic supreme teachings of Jesus apply to it. We must always bring everything back to Jesus. We must always give him and his teachings the highest authority in the matter we are considering.

Colossians 1:15-18

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Jesus is _____ who came to teach us his ways.
 Jesus is the firstborn _____ all creation.
 Jesus _____ everything in heaven and on earth.
 Everything was created by him and _____ him.
 Jesus existed _____ anything was created.
 Jesus is the power that holds all things _____.
 Jesus is the _____ of the Church.
 Jesus is the _____ among the dead.
 In everything, Jesus has the _____.

18. We must never forget that Jesus is God who came to teach us his ways. The term *firstborn* in this passage of scripture refers to the Jewish custom of the firstborn son having the highest authority over the family after the authority of the father. Jesus has the highest

authority over creation. Jesus is the purpose for creation. Everything was created for him. Everything began with him and everything will end with him. Since he is God, he existed before anything was created. Jesus is not a created angel nor a created *god* who was given a special position of leadership by the eternal God. He is God. His power is the force that created this world and the force that holds this world together. Jesus is the head of the church. It is his church. Jesus was the first one to rise from the dead who never died again - the first born among the dead. In everything, Jesus has supremacy.

The most important thing we can do as a Christian leader is to help people understand that Jesus and his teachings are _____ in this world.

19. Our leadership must focus on helping people to understand that Jesus Christ and his teachings are supreme over everything else in this world. We must focus on bringing people to Jesus and training them to make Jesus supreme in their life.

Jesus and his teachings must have first place in everything:

- First in our families.
- First in our marriages.
- First in our professions.
- First in our mission and ministries.
- First in matters of intellect.
- First in time.
- First in love.
- First in conversation.
- First in pleasures.
- First in eating.
- First in play.
- First in athletics.
- First in what we read and see.
- First in art.
- First in music.
- First in worship.

(by Wayne Meece)

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

How do we bring glory to God? _____

20. We bring glory to God by making Jesus the supreme Lord and master over every part of our life. As leaders, we must enable others to do the same thing.

We must be careful not to get caught up in the teachings of men that are based on half-truths or twisted truths from the Bible. We should not accept the teachings of a man just because he is highly educated, highly experienced, successful in this world and claims to be an authority on the Bible. The Apostle Paul was a highly educated authority on the Law of Moses. However, when he preached the gospel at Berea, the people did not easily accept the things he had to teach them. The writer of Acts says they did a noble thing.

Acts 17:11

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

What is the noble thing that the people at Berea did when they heard Paul's teachings?

21. Every day, the Bereans examined the things Paul said in order to see if it agreed with the Scriptures. They did not do it just one day or one time or a few times, they did it every day. Someone may begin by teaching you the truth, but as time goes on, after he has gained your confidence, he may begin to teach something that is a half-truth or a twisted truth. He might deceive you into believing a wrong thing because you trust him and you do not want to go to the trouble of discovering the things Jesus said on the topic. If anyone teaches you something that you feel disagrees with the teachings of Jesus, you must challenge the person to prove that it agrees with Jesus' teachings or challenge him to stop teaching it.

The Apostle John gave us this warning:

1 John 4:1

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

How do we test the spirits to know if a person is a false prophet? _____

22. We test the spirit of a teacher by comparing the things he teaches to the teachings of Jesus Christ. If anything he says disagrees with the teachings of Jesus, or requires something beyond what Jesus taught or only teaches part, but not all of the things Jesus taught, then reject that person and his teachings. Both Jesus and the Apostles warned us about false teachers coming into the church (Matthew 7:15, 15:19, 24:11; Mark 13:22-23; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 4:1-5, 6:3-11; 2 Timothy 4:2-5; Titus 1:10-11; Hebrews 13:9; 2 Peter 2:1-3). We must constantly be on guard against false teachings.

There are two basic mistakes made in examining the scriptures to determine the will of God. The first mistake is to decide what you believe the will of God is and then search the Bible for scriptures that support the things you believe. If you search the Bible with this attitude, you will be tempted to ignore scripture passages that disagree with the things you want to believe or you will twist the meanings of passages of scripture to make them agree with the things you want to believe. Many false teachings come about because of this wrong approach to Bible study.

The second mistake is to take one passage of scripture on a topic and make it the foundation of a doctrine or teaching without considering the things other scriptures teach on the same topic. One passage of scripture may not contain all the truth of God on a topic. One passage of scripture may be dealing with specific circumstances that require only part of the God's will to be stated.

The two most common mistakes in discovering God's will from the Bible are:

- (1) Deciding the things you _____ before searching the Bible for the information.
- (2) Basing your teaching on only _____ passage of scripture.

23. Many false teachings have come about because (1) people decide the things they want to believe and then look for scriptures to prove it or (2) they base their teaching on only one passage of scripture.

The best way to know God's will is to search for the basic truth of a topic found within the Bible. Remember that the laws given to Moses seldom contain basic truths about the will of God. Only the ten commandments contain pure basic truths. However, the fifth commandment, which is to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, was changed by the Apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from the Sabbath day which is Saturday to the first day of the week which is Sunday.

The Law of Moses contains laws that applied the basic truths of God's will to the life and the culture of the nation of Israel under specific circumstances at a specific time in their history. It is no longer a valid guide for anybody. Also remember that some of the teachings of the Apostles are cultural applications of the basic truth. Applications of the truth in specific circumstances to specific cultures cannot be taught as the basic truth of God's will.

The following DO NOT qualify as basic truth:

- a. Most of the laws given to Moses which were A_____ of the basic truth to the nation of Israel in a specific time under specific circumstances.
- b. Some teachings of the Apostles which were A_____ of the basic truth to specific cultures and specific circumstances.

24. The laws given to Moses were mostly applications of the basic truth of God to a specific time and specific circumstances of the nation of Israel. Some of the teachings of the Apostles were applications of the basic teachings of Jesus to specific cultural problems and specific circumstances that the Apostles had to deal with as they took the Gospel to different cultures within the Roman Empire.

There is an important difference between the basic truths concerning God's will and the application of those truths to a specific culture or to a specific circumstance. We cannot use the application of a basic truth in one culture or one circumstance as if it is the correct application of the basic truth for every culture and every circumstance. An application of a basic truth is not the basic truth. Applications only give us examples of how the basic truth may be applied to a specific culture or to a specific circumstance.

Will the application of God's will be the same for every circumstance and every culture? ____

25. The application of God's truth will be different for each circumstance and each culture. The basic truth about God's will does not change. However, the application will be different. We make a big mistake when we take an application of God's will to specific circumstances or to a specific culture and teach it as God's will for all circumstances or all cultures.

If we want to know the basic will of God, we must do the following:

- (1) First examine the teachings of Jesus on the topic with the attitude that his teachings are supreme over all other scriptures on the topic.
- (2) Then examine other passages of scripture on the same topic.
- (3) As you examine other scriptures on the same topic, keep in mind that we are no longer under the authority of the Law of Moses. It was incomplete, immature, imperfect and depended on rituals and laws instead of heart felt attitudes.

- (4) Also remember that some of the teachings of the Apostles were applications to culture and circumstances that might be different from your own culture and circumstances.
- (5) If several passages give us different information on the same topic but are not disqualified by being applications to specific cultures and specific circumstances, then we must see how the different pieces of information on the same topic can work together to give us a complete understanding of God's will on that topic.

Review the five guidelines above and then complete the following statements:

- a. The teachings of Jesus have _____ authority over all other teachings on the same subject.
- b. We must examine other passages of scripture on the _____ topic.
- c. We must remember that the Law of Moses has _____ authority over us.
- d. We must remember that some teachings are applications of the basic will of God to _____ and _____ that may be different from our own.
- e. Passages that contain different basic information on the same topic should be combined together to give us a _____ understanding of the topic.

26. Jesus teachings have supreme authority over all other teachings in the Bible. However, we must examine other teachings of the Bible on a topic to be sure we understand it well. We must keep in mind that the Law of Moses contains applications of the basic will of God to the culture of Israel in a special time of its history. We are not under its authority, but we can learn from its examples of how the basics may be applied to a culture. Some teachings in the New Testament will be applications to specific cultures and circumstances that may not fit our culture or our circumstances.

One passage of scripture does not contain the complete truth of God on a topic when there are other passages also containing basic information on the same topic. It is our responsibility to combine all of the basic information into one complete understanding of the topic. The important thing is to discover the basic will of God and then discover the best way to apply it to our culture and our circumstances. The basic will of God must never be changed. However, the applications can be different depending on the culture and the circumstances.

Remember the warning of Apostle Paul to the Evangelist Timothy, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). The Greek word for *correctly handle* means to "cut straight." It was used to warning skilled craftsmen to do their work accurately so as to avoid poor quality results when the project was finished. A Christian leader must accurately understand the will of God so that he can accurately apply it to the culture and the circumstances where he leads. Anything less is shameful leadership. We must be skillful and accurate teachers of God's will.

Review this lesson and then complete the following statements below concerning the correct way to discover God's will from the Bible:

- a. We must always remember that the teachings of Jesus are _____ over any other teaching found in the Bible and are the best source for discovering the basic _____ about God's will for mankind.
- b. Most of the laws given to Moses were an _____ of God's will to the nation of Israel at a specific time under specific circumstances, therefore we are no longer under its _____.

- b. Some of the teachings of the Apostles in the New Testament are _____ of God's will to specific cultures and specific circumstances within the Roman Empire.
- c. We must never take the A_____ of God's will to a specific culture or a specific set of circumstances and teach it as if it is the basic truth of God to be followed in all circumstances and all cultures.
- d. Two mistakes that are often made in discovering God's will are:
 - (1) to decide what you believe and then _____.
 - (2) to base the thing you believe on only _____ passage of Scripture.
- e. When passages of scripture contain different information on the same topic, we must determine how all the information can be combined to give us a _____ understanding of the topic.

PERSONAL NOTES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

What mistakes have you made in seeking God's will for your life? _____

How will you help others to avoid making mistakes in discovering God's will for their life?

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Five: God's Message For Mankind - Part Four

1. We must correctly handle the teachings in the Bible in order to discover the will of God. The teachings of Jesus are supreme because he is God who came to teach. Other teachings in the Bible help us to understand the basic will of God taught by Jesus. Some teachings in the Bible help us to understand how to apply the will of God to our culture and to certain circumstances.

In this lesson, we will look at the basic teachings of Jesus that reveal the will of God. Our space is limited so we will group Jesus' teachings into five basic topics and try to summarize them under these topics. This presentation of Jesus' teachings is not a formal approach, but it is just one way to view the teachings of Jesus. We present his teachings in this way for the purpose of convenience.

The first topic is called ***Be Ambassadors for Christ***. It is our responsibility to bring others into reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. This is the first topic that Jesus dealt with after he presented the beatitudes (the eight steps to spiritual maturity) in his sermon on the mountain.

On this topic Jesus said, *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:13-16).

Be Ambassadors for Christ:

Jesus wants us to be the _____ of the earth and the _____ of the world so that men may see our _____ and give _____ to our Father in heaven.

2. Christians are to have an influence on the society just like salt influences food. Salt preserves food so that it will not rot. Christians are to preserve society from the influence of evil. Salt also helps food to taste good. Christians are to encourage society to be the best that it can be. The nation of Israel was supposed to do this, but it failed. That is the reason God made a new covenant that invited everyone (Israelite and Gentile) to become his children through Jesus Christ.

When salt becomes weak in its ability to preserve and to improve the flavor of food, it has no use and it is thrown away. When Christians do not have a righteous influence on society, they cease to be useful. God cast aside the nation of Israel because it ceased to fulfill this purpose. Its leaders were hypocrites and the nation was not bringing praise to God. God established a new kingdom through Jesus Christ. Its citizens are made up of *whoever* follows Jesus (John 3:16). We call this new kingdom the Church.

Christians are citizens of the new kingdom, the Church. Christians are to be a spiritual light that enables people to see God. A light is wasted if it is put under a cover. The best place for a light is on a lamp stand where it is high above everything else and its light can shine into every corner of a room. Our spiritually mature life must be seen in society by the good deeds we do for others. This will lead society to praise God who enables us to do these good deeds. This will draw the attention of the society toward God so that it will want to follow Jesus and his teachings. When people see the blessings we bring to society because we are following Jesus, they will be influenced to follow Jesus. God wants the world to see him through us.

The thing that will enable us to be a strong salt and a bright light to the world is our _____ maturity seen through our good _____.

3. This is the reason our spiritual maturity and our good deeds of righteousness are so important to God. God wants to use our life to bring all mankind to him. If our way of life is no different than the next person in the world then what are the benefits in following Jesus? Why should anyone follow Jesus when Christians are just as wicked and just as sinful as people who are not Christian? We must be spiritually mature so we can influence the world to turn toward God and praise his name.

Here are some more teachings of Jesus concerning this same topic. Read each passage of scripture and complete the sentence after it.

Be Ambassadors for Christ:

- a. Matthew 9:36-38: Jesus viewed sinners who were separated from God as sheep who had no _____. His solution to the problem was to recruit more _____.
- b. Luke 15:3-7: God is more happy about one _____ who repents than he is about ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to _____.
- c. Matthew 28:18-20: Jesus' last instruction to us was that we should make disciples out of every _____ and then teach them to _____ everything he commanded.
- d. The Apostle Paul explains this very well in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21: We are Christ's _____ because God is making his _____ through us.

4. We can summarize this first topic of Jesus' teachings by calling it **Be Ambassadors for Christ**. God is making his appeal for reconciliation of mankind through us. Lost sinners need a shepherd who will lead them to Jesus. More shepherd workers are needed. God rejoices every time a sinner repents. He wants every nation to repent and obey his commands to live a righteous life.

We must remember that God has called us to be his ambassadors. We must teach other Christians that God has also called them to be his ambassadors. Every Christian needs to be like salt and light to those around them.

Jesus said that the Law of Moses and the teachings of all the prophets that God sent to the nation of Israel could be summed up in two commandments found in the Law of Moses. Read Matthew 22:37-40.

The two basic commandments that Jesus would have us follow are:

- (1) Love God with all of our _____.
- (2) Love our neighbor as we love _____.

5. The teachings of Jesus can also be summed up by these two commandments. The first one is to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind. The second one is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. One way to show our love for God is to be his ambassador. We can be his ambassador by living a righteous life that will be spiritual salt and spiritual light to the culture in which we live.

Our next topic for Jesus' teachings is titled **Give God Priority**. This is another way that we show our love for God. Read the following scriptures and complete the statements.

Give God Priority:

- a. Matthew 10:37-39: God does not forbid us to love our family, but he warns us that we must love him _____ than our family members.
- b. Luke 9:23-26: If we love God, we will _____ our own desires so that we can do his will.
- c. Luke 16:13 and Luke 18:18-27: We cannot give priority to both God and _____.

6. Loving God more than anything else in this world can bring problems in our family. God wants us to love our family, but if our family asks us to do something that is sinful or they insist that we follow our culture instead of obey God, then we must say no to our family and no to our culture. Sometimes our family does not want us to be a leader or a worker in the Church. We must always do the work God calls us to do even when our family does not like it.

Another problem comes when we want to accomplish something in this world that is not in God's plan for our life. If we are going to give God priority in our life, we may have to deny ourselves some of the desires we have in life. We may want wealth or other temporary things that are available to us in this world.

The rich ruler had great wealth (Luke 18:18-27). He also had skills that God wanted to use in building the Kingdom. The man's desire for wealth kept him from doing God's work. He was not a sinful man, but he was not using his life to do God's work. If he used his skills to do the work of God, he might not be able to maintain his wealth. He had to choose between serving God and pursuing wealth. He could not do both. Before he could give God priority in his life, he had to give up his pursuit for wealth. He chose to pursue wealth rather than doing God's work. Pursuit for wealth was his priority in life and he was not willing to change it for God.

If we love God with all of our heart, soul and mind, we will use our life to bring glory to him. This means we will be his ambassadors no matter where we are and we will not allow family nor our desire for things in this world to keep us from doing the work God asks us to do.

The next topic for Jesus' teachings is called **Love Our Neighbor**. The most basic way to be salt and light to the world is through the way we treat our neighbor. This was the second most important command given in the Law of Moses. Here are some of the teachings of Jesus on this topic. Read each passage and complete the sentence after it.

Love Our Neighbor:

- a. Matthew 5:21-22: The sixth commandment given to Moses says it is wrong to murder someone, but Jesus taught that it is also wrong to be _____ with someone.
- b. Matthew 5:23-24: If someone has something against us, we must first go and be _____ to the person before we can properly worship God.
- c. Matthew 5:43-48: The Law of Moses ordered the Israelites to love their neighbors (Leviticus 19:18). The Law also allowed civil punishment for an injury. For example, if one person destroyed the eye of another person in a fight, the matter would be taken to the civil court and the person would be punished by having his eye destroyed. The teachers of the Law taught that this allowed them to hate their

enemies. Jesus taught that we must _____ our enemies. If we love only those who love us we are no different than the _____. If we are going to be perfect like God, we must _____.

- d. Mark 11:25: We cannot properly pray to God until we have _____ those who sin against us. (Also see Matthew 18:23-35.)
- e. Luke 6:36-37: We must be _____ to our neighbor because we have also sinned. (Also see Luke 6:41-42.)
- f. Matthew 25:31-46: God will judge our righteousness not only on moral purity, but also on the _____.

7. The way that we deal with our neighbor is the second most important thing to God. The Law of Moses forbids murder, but Jesus warns us against being angry with our neighbor or offending our neighbor. If we have offended a neighbor, we must reconcile (correct) the problem before we can properly worship God. Our relationship with our neighbor will affect our relationship with God. God is not happy with us when we are not showing love to our neighbor.

The strongest teaching of Jesus on this topic is that we must love our enemies who do bad things to us. The Law of Moses allowed the Israelites to return evil for evil through its civil courts. However, God loves those who hate him. He provides for their needs even though they offend him. Our love must be like God's love or we are no different than the pagans who love those who return their love and hate those who hate them. It is God's will that we must love our enemies and that we forgive those who do wrong things against us.

We must be merciful to our neighbors who do bad and foolish things because we also do bad and foolish things. We need God's forgiveness and we also need our neighbor's forgiveness. We deceive ourselves when we think we are perfectly righteous and have no need for mercy.

Mercy and love for our neighbor must go beyond forgiveness. Mercy includes helping those who have problems they cannot solve. Jesus made it very clear that he will judge our righteousness by how we help others who are in trouble and cannot help themselves. God shows his love and his mercy through us. When we help others who are in need, we are helping God. Showing mercy is a form of godliness.

If we love our neighbor, we will seek his _____ when we offend him. We will _____ him when he offends us. We will show _____ by helping him when he has a problem even if that problem is his own fault. The greatest love will be shown when we love someone who insists on being our E_____.

8. Loving our neighbor goes beyond loving those who love us. We will seek our neighbor's forgiveness. We will forgive our neighbor. We will show mercy by helping our neighbor with his problems. And, we will love those who insist on being our enemies. Loving our neighbor starts with our family, goes to the members of the church and then extends to those who are unbelievers in our community and in the world.

The worst thing we can do is not to love our fellow Christian. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"(John 13:34-35). The Apostle John warned us, *We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command:*

Whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:19-21).

The worst thing we can do as Christ's Ambassador is to hate our _____.

9. The worst thing we can do as an Ambassador for Christ is to hate another Christian. We fail to be salt and light to the world when we hate our brother in Christ. We prove that we love God when we show love and mercy to our neighbor especially when that neighbor is an enemy.

One time a teacher of the Law of Moses tried to justify his twisted teachings by asking Jesus, "Who is our neighbor." The expert taught that some people were not qualified to be our neighbor; therefore, we did not have to love them. The Jews claimed to keep themselves spiritually pure by separating themselves from Gentiles when they ate and in other activities. In addition to this, they hated the Samaritans. Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with the Gentiles and claimed to be equal with the Jews before God. The Jews disliked the Gentiles, but they hated the Samaritans. Read Jesus' answer to this teacher's question in Luke 10:29-37.

According to this teaching of Jesus, the person who shows _____ to his enemy fulfills the Law of Moses and he is our _____.

10. According to this example given by Jesus, the Samaritan, who showed mercy to his enemy, was the person who obeyed the Law of Moses by loving his neighbor as he loved himself. If the teacher of the Law of Moses was going to fulfill the Law of Moses he would also have to show mercy to a Samaritan whom he hated.

The next topic for Jesus' teachings is called **Moral Purity**. The word moral refers to doing the right thing, doing the correct thing and doing the thing that is good for God and good for others. It involves showing love, respect and concern for the needs of others. It involves not doing things that could harm others. It involves showing respect for God and his purposes for mankind. A morally pure person is a person whose thoughts and actions do not hurt others and do not offend God. The opposite of moral purity is called immorality.

Here are some of Jesus' teachings on moral purity.

Moral Purity:

- a. Matthew 15:17-20 and Luke 6:45: We must first understand that moral purity comes from within our _____.
- b. Matthew 5:27-28: It is morally wrong to look at a woman _____.
- c. Matthew 5:31-32 and Luke 16:18: It is morally wrong to _____ your wife and marry _____ woman. It is also morally wrong to marry a _____ woman.
- d. Matthew 5:37: If our yes is not fully yes and if our no is not fully no, it is morally wrong and our attitude comes from the _____.
- e. Mark 7:21-23: List some of the other immoral attitudes that can come from our heart:

11. Moral purity involves respecting our neighbor and also respecting God's will for mankind. These moral attitudes must come from within our heart. If we do not take control of the immoral thoughts within our heart, they will eventually come out in sinful talk and sinful actions. Jesus said it is just as sinful to think about doing an evil thing as it is to do it. The attitude within our heart is who we really are.

It is a sin to lustfully think about having sex with someone who is not your wife. It is a sin to divorce your wife so that you can marry another woman. The divorced woman is not free to remarry. God does not accept the divorce unless the wife or the husband sinned by willfully having sex with someone else while they were married.

God does not want us to be deceitful by making promises we do not plan to keep. If we say yes, we must mean yes with all of our heart. If we say no, we must mean no with all of our heart. Trying to deceive people is how Satan works.

Other immoral actions include sexual immorality. There are many ways to use the sexual part of our body in ways that offend God and his creation. Among these are having sex outside of marriage. Having sex with children. Men having sex with men and woman having sex with women. And, having sex with animals. All of these are condemned in the Law of Moses and in the writings of the Apostles.

Here are some immoral actions that involve material goods. Stealing things that belongs to others. Greed which can be cheating others so that you can gain wealth and refusing to help others with their needs when you have resources that could help them.

Here are some immoral actions that involve hatred toward others. Malice means looking for opportunities to hurt others. Slander means spreading information knowing that it will destroy someone's reputation (gossip) and telling lies and half-truths for the purpose of destroying someone's reputation. Arrogance is claiming to be better than others. Envy is desiring things that others have and hating them because they have it and we do not.

Here are some immoral actions that encourage others to sin. Lewdness is talking and acting in sinful ways so that others will know, hear and see the evil things we do. Lewd people want others to know that they are sinful. They have no shame. They are proud of their sinful ways and they want others to know about it. Folly is talking and acting without any concern about how our talk or our action may affect others morally or spiritually.

Immorality can be summed up as any T_____ or A_____ that will hurt others or offend God's will for mankind. Moral purity must begins within our _____.

12. Moral purity begins in our heart. Moral purity will keep us from saying or doing anything that might hurt someone or that might offend God's will for mankind.

The last topic for Jesus' teachings is called **The Kingdom**. The focus of Jesus' teachings always involved something that was important for the Kingdom.

The Kingdom:

Read Matthew 4:23, Luke 4:43, 8:1 and 9:1-2: The good news that Jesus brought was focused on the _____.

Read Luke 9:11, 9:60, 10:9: Jesus' primary purpose in preaching was to tell people about the _____.

13. The good news of Jesus' teachings focused on the Kingdom. This was his primary purpose in going from village to village. Sometimes he called it *the kingdom of God*. Sometimes he called it *the kingdom of Heaven*. Sometimes he just called it *the Kingdom*. The term *kingdom of God* is found 51 times in the gospels and 14 times in the other books of the New Testament. The term *kingdom of Heaven* is found 31 times in the gospels but not in any of the other books of the New Testament. The term *Kingdom* is found ten times in the gospels and once in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Once Jesus used the words *kingdom of the Father*. Other references to the Kingdom in the New Testament are *kingdom of Christ and God*, *kingdom of light* and *kingdom of the Son*.

Jesus healed the sick and did other miracles out of kindness and mercy to those who came to hear him, but his first concern was that they become a part of the kingdom of God. One time Jesus left the area where he had been preaching and traveled by boat during the night to Capernaum on the other side of Lake Galilee. Read John 6:24-31 and complete the following statement:

Jesus told the crowd that they were only interested in something to _____. Then they asked Jesus to give them a _____ so that they would believe his teachings.

14. Some were only interested in food and miracles. They asked Jesus for a miraculous sign to prove that they should follow his teachings. Jesus knew that they were not willing to repent. They only wanted to be entertained. Jesus refused to give them a miraculous sign because he was unhappy with their attitude. He refused to put on a performance for them. He was not joking with them in what he said. Instead he tried to explain to them why it was necessary to repent and follow his teachings. Read John 6:66-69 then complete the following statement:

The twelve Apostles did not leave Jesus because they knew he had the words of _____ that would enable them to enter the Kingdom.

15. The most important work of Jesus was his teachings concerning the kingdom of God which gives eternal life. Those who are only interested in miracles and wealth will be disappointed. Christian Leaders who focus their ministry on miracles and wealth may be deceived about the work God is calling them to do. The kingdom of God does not consist of miracles and wealth.

The Kingdom refers to those who become reconciled with God through Jesus the Christ and become his ambassadors to the world. Those who are reconciled become the spiritual children of God. They become citizens of God's eternal spiritual kingdom which is the Church. One does not become a citizen of this kingdom through physical birth but through spiritual rebirth. Citizenship comes through repentance and baptism (spiritual birth: John 3:5-21 and Acts 2:38-41). One remains a citizen of this kingdom through obedience to the teachings of Jesus (Romans 6:1-14).

This kingdom is eternal. Many citizens of this kingdom have died, and they are waiting for their eternal home to be given to them when Jesus comes again. Christ is preparing a special place for every citizen. When Christ comes the second time, he will usher all of its citizens, both dead and alive, to their eternal home where they will enjoy wonderful fellowship with him and the Heavenly Father.

The citizens of the kingdom of God can be found in two places today. Where are they?

(1) _____

(2) _____

16. The citizens of God's kingdom are either dead, waiting for Christ to come again, or they are active members of God's Church. We call this the universal Church or the catholic Church. The word catholic means universal and does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church. This universal Church is made up of those who have their names written in the *book of life*. It is not based on a certain Christian denomination or on a certain race or tribe of people. All who are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ are members of the universal Church which is another name for the kingdom of God.

Now, let us look at some specific teachings of Jesus concerning ***The Kingdom***.

The Kingdom:

a. Matthew 6:24-33: The thing that pleases God most is when we seek His _____ and His _____ first in our life.

b. Matthew 7:21: If we want to enter the Kingdom, we must do the _____ of God.

c. Matthew 18:1-4: The greatest in the Kingdom will be a person who is _____.

d. Mark 9:42-47: If we want to enter the Kingdom, we must remove anything that causes us to _____.

e. Mark 10:23-25: It is difficult for a _____ man to enter the Kingdom.

f. Luke 17:20-21: The kingdom of God is within _____.

17. Those who followed Jesus so they could see miracles and be fed would never become citizens of God's kingdom. We must seek after the Kingdom of God and we must seek to live a righteous life in order to be a citizen of God's kingdom. We must be concerned about following the will of God and not our own desires. We must remove everything in our life that causes us to sin. Seeking to become rich may keep us from entering the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not an organization nor an institution that is established in a certain location. Our citizenship in the Kingdom is established within our heart as we submit to God's will through obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Here are some other important teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom.

The Kingdom:

a. Matthew 6:19-21 and 24: The most important place to gain wealth is in the _____.

b. Matthew 16:24-27: If we want to lay up our treasures in Heaven, we have to _____ ourselves some pleasures in this world, take up Jesus' _____ and _____ him.

c. Mark 9:41-42: Our treasure in Heaven is based on the good deeds we do for _____, but we can lose our reward in heaven when we cause someone to _____.

- d. Luke 18:28-30: Those who have to leave their family in order to be in the Kingdom will receive _____ times as much in this world and _____ life in heaven.

18. The kingdom of God focuses on eternal life with God, not on health and wealth in this world. The teachings of Jesus focus on enabling us to become a citizen of that kingdom now so that we can be a part of it for eternity. If we do not become a part of the Kingdom now, we cannot become a part of it after we die. Our focus must be on the eternal kingdom and not on this world. We lay up treasures in heaven, not on this earth. We have to deny ourselves some of the pleasures of this world, take up the cross (the work) of Jesus and follow him. Our eternal rewards (treasures) are based on all the good things we do to help others. If we cause people to sin or to miss their way into the Kingdom, we have failed very badly and may lose our citizenship. Whatever we give up here on this earth, we will receive back many times in other ways here on this earth and we will also have our eternal life in heaven.

The Apostle Peter compares Jesus to a special stone used in construction called the cornerstone or the capstone. The cornerstone was perfectly square and was correctly placed at one corner of the foundation. All measurements for the rest of the building were taken from the cornerstone. If the cornerstone was not perfectly square and not correctly placed on the foundation, then the rest of the building would be incorrectly built.

Now that you understand the illustration that Peter uses, read Peter's warning and his advice to all who want to be citizens in the kingdom of God.

1 Peter 2:1-12

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him [Jesus Christ], the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him [God]-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

- a. We must _____ ourselves of all immoral activities.
 b. Jesus is a P _____ cornerstone whom _____ has chosen.
 c. For those of us who believe, Jesus is _____, but for those who do not believe his message, he is like a stone over which they _____ and _____.

- d. Those who build their life with Jesus as their cornerstone become a _____ priesthood, a _____ nation and a people belonging to _____.
- e. Those who live the Christian life are like A _____ and S _____ in this world.
- f. Our responsibility as a citizen in the kingdom of God is to live such _____ that unbelievers will _____ God.

19. As a citizen of the kingdom of God, we will rid ourselves of all immorality because the teachings of Jesus are precious to us. But to unbelievers, the teachings of Jesus are like a stone over which they stumble and fall. As citizens of the kingdom of God, we become a royal priesthood and a holy nation that belongs to God. We are like aliens and strangers in this world because our life style is different from those living around us. This world is a temporary place for us as we look forward to our eternal home. Our most important task as we live in this temporary home is to live such good lives that unbelievers will glorify God.

God is the one who designed us. We are born into this world like a building under construction with only the foundation in place. We must make Jesus the cornerstone of our life so that our life will fulfill God's design for us.

Jesus was arrested because some thought he claimed to be the political king of the Jews. Read the response that Jesus gave to Pilate.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"(John 18:36-37).

The kingdom of God is not in this _____. Jesus is the _____ of the kingdom of God. Everyone on the side of _____ follows the teachings of Jesus.

20. The teachings of Jesus are supreme and they are precious. They are supreme because he teaches us of a kingdom that is eternal and not of this world. His teachings are supreme because he is the king of that eternal kingdom. His teachings are precious because they are the complete truth about the will of God. Those who ignore or twist his teachings are stumbling over him and losing their eternal salvation. Those who follow his teachings become citizens in his kingdom with full rights to the benefits of the Kingdom.

Review this lesson. Then, in your own words, explain the basic truths about God's will taught by Jesus for each of these topics:

A. **Be Ambassadors for Christ:** _____

B. **Give God Priority:** _____

C. **Love Our Neighbor:** _____

D. **Moral Purity:** _____

E. ***The Kingdom:*** _____

PERSONAL NOTES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

Do you know all of God's basic truths that were taught by Jesus Christ? Which ones do you need to understand better? _____

What method or process will you use to teach others these important truths?

Unit Ten: CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Six: Keep the Unity of the Spirit

1. The last lesson in this course on Christian Leadership is about Christian unity. There was division in the church during the time of the Apostles and there continues to be division today. Some reasons for division are necessary and useful to protect the unity of the church. However, other reasons for division are not needed because they do damage to our witness for Christ in this world. Let's try to understand when division is needed and when it is not needed. We will start with God's will.

It is not God's will for Christians to be divided. This was a serious concern of Jesus as he prayed in the Garden of Gethemene the night before he was crucified on the cross. He prayed for his Apostles, then he prayed for us.

"My prayer is not for them [the Apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:20-21).

Just before Jesus was crucified, he prayed that we would be _____ so that the world would _____ that God had sent him.

2. Jesus prayed for us. He wants us to stand together as one so that the world will believe that he was sent by God. The Apostle Paul wrote this to the church at Ephesus:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all(Ephesians 4:2-6).

We must make every effort to _____ the _____ of the Spirit because we are _____ body.

3. The universal Church is one body made up of all who are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded us to love our fellow Christians. The Apostle John warned us against hating our fellow Christians. If we are following the teachings of Jesus, we will be humble, gentle and patient with each other. We will tolerate things that we do not like about other Christians because we love them. We will keep the unity of the Holy Spirit that is working among us by maintaining peace among ourselves.

It is common for problems to come up that threaten unity among Christians. It happened in the first church at Jerusalem. Read Acts 6:1 then answer the question below.

What threatened to bring division in the first church at Jerusalem? _____

4. Some Grecian Jewish widows were being neglected in the distribution of food to widows who could not provide for themselves. The problem came about because the membership had greatly increased and the Apostles did not have enough time to do all the work that was needed in the church. They solved the problem by having the church appoint deacons to take care of the benevolent work so that the Apostles could take care of the

spiritual work of the church. The solution was a matter of better organization within the church.

Sometimes division can be avoided by bringing about better _____ within the church.

5. Many problems within the church are caused by a lack of better organization or a lack of good communications between leaders and the members. The worst thing that a leader can do is to deny that the church has a problem. The best thing that a leader can do is to take time to listen to those who have complaints and seek out a solution. Read Acts 6:2-7.

The Apostles solved the problem by making a _____ to the members of the church. This proposal allowed the members to _____ those who would do the work.

6. The Apostles were very wise in the way they handled the problem. They did not give orders to the members. They made a proposal (a suggestion) for how to deal with the problem. Part of the proposal allowed the members to make some choices. It is always good when as many people as possible can be involved in a decision. Ownership of a decision is half the battle in putting a decision into action.

The Apostles took time to prepare a very good proposal. However they gave the members some say in how the proposal would be carried out. The members were allowed to choose those whom they felt could do the work well. Everybody was happy and the church continued to grow.

Another problem that could have caused division in the church came between the Apostle Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas was a friend of Paul. When the church was started at Antioch in Syria, Barnabas went after Paul and encouraged him to help plant the church (Acts 11:25-26). When the church became strong, the church sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary Journey to evangelize and to plant churches in an area called Asia Minor (Acts 13:1-3). The journey was successful and several churches were started. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, reported to the church about their work and took a rest. Later they decided to do another missionary journey, but a problem developed between Paul and Barnabas. Read about it in Acts 15:36-41.

Both Paul and Barnabas were in agreement to make another missionary journey, but there was a serious _____ about whether to take _____ on the trip. They decided that the best way to deal with their disagreement was to _____

7. John Mark had abandoned them at Pamphylia on the first missionary trip (Acts 13:13). Paul did not want to take him on the second trip, but Barnabas did. Paul was afraid that John Mark would abandon them again. The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas was so serious that they could not agree on a solution. The only way to solve the problem was to do two separate missionary trips so they would not have to work together. Paul took Silas with him as a partner on his trip and Barnabas took John Mark with him on the other trip. Their disagreement did not divide the church at Antioch.

Barnabas and Paul had different personalities. The differences in their personalities was so great that it became difficult for them to agree on how to handle John Mark. Their disagreement was not a matter of doctrine or morality. It was a difference in opinion on how to deal with John Mark. Paul and Barnabas did not have to agree with each other before

they could serve God. There was a solution. They accepted the fact that they could not agree on how to deal with John Mark. They agreed to continue serving God separately in order to avoid division in the church. They agreed to respect each others opinion and then to work separately so that the Lord's work could progress.

Sometimes differences in personality can become a serious problem within a church or an organization. The best solution to this kind of problem is to find a way for the conflicting personalities to do the Lord's work without having to work _____.

8. People with conflicting personalities can cause division in the church if care is not taken. The best solution is to find a way that both can serve God without having to work together. Sometimes this means serving in different areas of the church and sometimes it may mean serving in completely different locations. If they are both spiritually mature, they will respect each other's opinion and also agree that it is best they do not work together. This type of agreement can be the best witness for Christ under the circumstances. Sometimes we call this "*agreeing to disagree*."

The worst thing that can happen is if the two try to get others to take sides with them on the issue to see who can win the disagreement and take control of the situation. This can split the church and it can cause some people to leave the church totally. The best thing is for the two to admit to each other that they cannot agree on the decision that needs to be made and then to find a way to do the Lord's work separately without interfering with each other's work. This shows that they are spiritually mature and that they respect each other.

The Apostle Paul had to deal with a similar problem in the Church at Corinth. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.

a. The Apostle Paul appealed to the church members to _____ with one another so that there would be no _____ among them. The problem was that some of the members claimed to _____ different men.

b. Whom should they have been following? _____

9. When church members do not agree with each other, there will be division. Unity comes when people are united in mind and thought. The members were taking pride in following the leadership of different men. Some claimed to follow Paul. Others claimed to follow an evangelist named Apollos whom Paul had sent to teach them how to follow Christ. Some claimed to follow Cephas, another name for the Apostle Peter. Perhaps they had been converted to Christianity by the Apostle Peter and then had moved to Corinth where they joined the church. Corinth was a large commercial center near Athens, Greece.

Christ is not divided. The followers of Christ must not be divided. The members of the church should follow Christ only. Christ is the one who died for them. They were baptized into the name of Christ. Christ is the one who saved them.

The members of the church at Corinth showed their spiritual immaturity by this division among them. Read Paul's explanation in 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

a. What bad attitudes in their hearts showed that they were spiritually immature? (vs. 3) _____

b. Leaders in the church are only _____ through whom God does his work. It is _____ who blesses the church and causes it to grow.

10. Jealousy among some of the members brought quarreling within the membership. Some members felt they were more important than others because of who baptized them and who taught them. Paul explained that all Christian leaders are servants through whom God does His work. No Christian leader is more important than another. God is the one who blesses the church through his servants. Christian leaders are fellow workers. One is not higher in rank than another. All are doing God's work as God calls them to do it (verse 5). I am sure that neither Apollos, nor Paul nor Peter claimed to be more important than the others. It was the idea of the members that one should be more important than the others.

Paul called this idea worldly (verse 1-3 and 1 Corinthians 1:20-25, 2:6-16). By this he meant that it was an idea that came from the world, but it was not the will of God. Worldly ideas about how to do the Lord's work can cause division in the church. Christian leaders must be quick to recognize when worldly ideas are destroying the will of God within the church. They must also be quick to correct any application of bad worldly ideas to the work of the church. They must be sure that worldly ideas do not cause division within the church.

Every time there is a division within the church, we must look for the _____ ideas that are causing the division. Then we must apply the _____ of _____ to the issue in order to make corrections in the thinking of those who are divided.

11. Division within the church is often caused by worldly ideas that have corrupted the thinking of its leaders or its members. Christian leaders must be quick to see how these worldly ideas go against the will of God. They must then use the Word of God, the Bible, to correct the thinking of those who are causing the division.

One way to keep unity is to always take people back to the basic teachings of Jesus. Can you think of a teaching of Jesus that could have been used to correct the thinking of these Christians at Corinth? _____

12. We will discuss your answers at the next discussion meeting.

Another problem in the church at Corinth that was reported to the Apostle Paul involved immorality. Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-12.

What immoral thing was one member of the church doing? _____

Instead of being filled with grief over the immorality, the members were _____.

What were they required to do according to the teachings of Jesus? Read Matthew 18:15-18. _____

13. The Apostle Paul was applying the teachings of Jesus to a problem of immorality in the life of a member. A member who knows that a Christian is living a sinful life has the right to talk to the person privately in order to encourage the person to repent. If the person refuses, he can then bring others who can help him to convince the person to repent. If the

person still does not repent, then he can bring the problem before the leaders of the church to take action. If the church cannot convince the person to repent, then the person must be treated as if he is not a Christian.

The Apostle Paul said that the man who had his father's wife should be expelled from the fellowship. Evidently the church had already warned the man to repent and the man had refused to repent. The man continued to call himself a Christian and he continued to live in sin. The church leaders had failed to take the next step of discipline which was to treat the man as an unbeliever.

Since the man insisted on calling himself a Christian, there was one more thing they had to do when they put him out of their fellowship. Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-11.

If a person calls himself a Christian but refuses to repent of an immoral life, we must not A _____ with him.

14. We must not associate with a person who calls himself a Christian, but refuses to repent of his sin. Paul is very strong on this teaching. We can associate with a non-believer who lives an immoral life because he does not claim to be a Christian. However, we cannot even eat with a Christian who lives an immoral life. Such a person is a hypocrite. He brings a terrible shame on Jesus Christ and on his Church. When we associate with that person we are saying that a Christian is free to sin just like the unbeliever.

Sometimes when the church disciplines an immoral member, it causes division within the church. Friends and relatives of the disciplined member may leave the church. This kind of division can be good and useful. Read again 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

Just as a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough, unrepentant _____ in the life of one member may work through the _____ membership of the church. We do not want the church members to be full of _____ and _____. We want them to be full of _____ and _____.

15. If people leave the church because a friend or a relative has been disciplined, it can be a good thing. If even one member is allowed to live a sinful life, other members will start living sinful lives. Soon the church will be full of malice and wickedness instead of sincerity and truth. It is good to clean the church of sinful members who refuse to repent.

Those who leave because a friend or relative has been disciplined would probably be the next members to start living a sinful life. This type of division is good because it keeps the members spiritually mature and it keeps the witness of the church strong. Remember the warning of Jesus. *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men"*(Matthew 5:13). Members who refuse to repent are like salt that loses its saltiness. Churches that refuse to discipline sinful members are like salt that loses its saltiness. They are no longer good for anything.

A good reason to make division is when immorality is involved. Jesus said that the church has the right to divide out those who refuse to live a righteous life (Matthew 18:17-18). Paul said that the church has a responsibility to divide out those who refuse to live a righteous life (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). Church members are warned to respect the disciplinary decisions of their leaders because it is to the advantage of their eternal salvation (Hebrews 13:7 & 17).

Any time disciplinary action is taken in the church, the members must be fully informed of the reasons for the discipline, the evidence for the action taken, the efforts made to bring the person to repentance and any other information that might help the members to understand why the action was taken, why it is biblical and why it is necessary. This

should help to reduce the number of members who may divide themselves from the church because of the disciplinary action. Failure to fully inform the members will give Satan an opportunity to do more damage to the church by spreading false rumors and half-truths about the things that happened.

One good reason to make some division in the church is when a member is un_____ because of _____ in his life.

16. Dividing out an unrepentant, immoral member by disciplining him and putting him out of the fellowship can be a good thing. Those who leave the church because the person is their friend or a relative have made their own decision not to follow the will of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. They can only blame themselves for leaving the church. When a person leaves a church because it is following God's will, they are leaving God (Matthew 13:17-18).

Another reason to make division in the church is when someone tries to introduce false doctrine into the church. Some false teachings come because the person does not know how to correctly handle the Bible. This was the case with Apollos. Read Acts 18:24-26.

Although Apollos knew the Scriptures (the Old Testament) well, he only knew about the _____ of John. Priscilla and Aquila privately explained the way of God to him more _____.

17. Apollos was highly educated in the Old Testament Scriptures. However, he only knew the baptism of John the Baptist. He did not know about the events that took place on the Day of Pentecost where the Apostle Peter explained that we must be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and we then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The problem with Apollos was similar to the problem with the followers of John the Baptist whom the Apostle Paul met at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). They needed someone to explain the way of God to them more adequately.

Some people are sincere, but they are sincerely wrong in the things they teach. If they are truly sincere in their desire to teach the will of God, they will listen to someone who can explain the will of God to them more adequately. It should be done in private so as not to embarrass them. If they are sincere, they will change the things they teach to agree with the true will of God. Division will then be avoided.

Sometimes false teachings come into the church because of political pressure. This happened through the Apostle Peter at Antioch. We have looked at this event before, but read about it again in Galatians 2:11-16.

The Apostle Peter was afraid of those who belonged to the _____ group. Because of this fear he stopped eating with the _____. The false teaching behind this said that we are justified by observing the _____ and not through our faith in _____.

18. The circumcision group were Jews who became Christians, but claimed that before a Gentile could become a Christian he had to observe the Law of Moses. These false teachers were faithful Jews who had a lot of political influence among the Jews. They went every where teaching this false doctrine in the church. These men refused to accept that the Law of Moses was no longer a requirement. The good news, the gospel, is that both they and the Gentiles are justified through their faith in Jesus Christ. No one is justified by

keeping the Law of Moses. The Apostle Peter was a hypocrite. He knew the truth, but he did not follow it because of political pressure from fellow Jews. Peter was not acting in line with the truth of the gospel (verse 14). Paul said that Peter was trying to force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs instead of the truth in the gospel (verse 15).

Did Paul confront Peter privately or publicly? _____

19. Paul confronted Peter publicly because Peter knew the truth and he was not following it. Peter did not need someone to explain the way more adequately to him. He needed someone to confront him for his hypocrisy. Peter, a Christian leader who knew better, needed to be challenged for his bad example and his support of a false teaching. As a leader who fully understood the will of God, he needed to be rebuked publicly (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

It makes no difference who is teaching a wrong thing, he must be confronted especially when he knows the truth. Some consider the Apostle Peter to be the head of the universal Church. However, he was clearly teaching a wrong thing by his actions and he needed to be corrected. Both Apollos and Peter corrected themselves when they were confronted with the truth. No division resulted even though there was a confrontation because they truly wanted to serve God.

However, there are others who teach false doctrine for personal reasons. These people are not interested in serving God but have other reasons for being involved in the Lord's work. Here are some examples found in the New Testament. Read each scripture and complete the statement behind each scripture.

- a. 1 Timothy 1:6-7: Some people want to be _____ but they do not know what they are talking about.
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:1: Some false teachers will follow _____ spirits and things taught by _____.
 - c. 1 Timothy 6:3-10: Some false teachers are C_____ and understand N_____. They have an unhealthy interest in controversy over the meaning of _____. These people feel that godliness is a means to _____.
 - d. Titus 1:10-11 and 15-16: Some false teachers are R_____ people who know how to D_____ people. They teach false doctrine for _____ gain. Both their mind and their conscience are _____. They are D_____ and _____ for doing anything good.
 - e. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: Some false teachers are _____ workmen who _____ as servants of righteousness.
- *****

20. Some false teachers want to build a reputation of being a great teacher by introducing new teachings that they claim to have discovered. The truth is that they do not really know the Bible but have managed to twist the meanings of words to create a false teaching. Some false teachers follow deceiving spirits and demons. Sometimes they have special powers from these demons that they use to convince people to follow their false teachings (2 Corinthians 4:4). Some are conceited and understand nothing about the Word of God. They like to argue about the meaning of words. They pretend to be godly so that they can

gain financially. Some are rebellious against God and have no concern about righteousness. They know how to deceive people. They teach false doctrine for dishonest financial gain. Their minds and their consciences are corrupted. They are disobedient and unfit for doing anything righteous. Some are deceitful workmen who masquerade as servants of God.

Here are some of the things they try to teach. Read the scripture and complete the statement.

- a. Colossians 2:8: Deceptive _____ that depends on human _____ which is based on principles of _____.
- b. 1 Timothy 1:3-4: _____ and endless _____ that promote controversy.
- c. 1 Timothy 4:3: Forbid people to _____ and order them to abstain from _____.
- d. Hebrews 13:9: _____ foods.
- e. Colossians 2:18-23: Worship of _____ and following rules based on _____ commands and teachings.

21. Some of the false teachings are deceptive philosophies that come from human traditions which are based on worldly principles. Some false teachings are myths that have been passed down from one generation to the next in the culture. Some look to tribal genealogies for religious value. Some forbid people to marry or to eat certain foods for religious purposes. Others claim that certain foods have powers when used in religious ceremonies. Some teach that we should worship angels and follow rules based on human wisdom.

Read the following scriptures and complete the statements after them:

- a. Titus 2:1: Christian Leaders must teach that which is in accordance with _____.
- b. 1 Timothy 4:7: Christian leaders must have _____ to do with false teachings.

22. Christian leaders must always be concerned about teaching sound doctrine. When we see someone teaching a false doctrine, we must try to correct the person by teaching him the will of God from the Bible. If he refuses to change his teaching then we must have nothing to do with him. We must explain to the members why they must have nothing to do with the person by showing how his teachings go against the will of God.

Those who teach the false doctrine will have to leave the church or stop teaching it. This may cause division. Some members may leave the church and follow those who teach a false doctrine. Those who leave are not interested in the will of God. This kind of division is not bad since it keeps the church from being corrupted by false doctrine that might cause some members to lose their salvation.

One other possibility for division could be a difference of opinion on how to apply certain passages of scripture. This could lead to a difference in opinion on how to live or how to do the Lord's work. When this happens it may be best to *agree to disagree* and to go separate ways so that the Lord's work can progress.

Study this lesson again and then answer the essay questions below:

- A. List the types of division in the church that are bad and explain how each should be handled?

- B. List the types of division in the church that are good and explain how each should be handled?

- C. In your own words, explain how we can keep the church strong and united when something threatens to cause division.

- D. Which is more important, unity or the right doctrine? Explain your answer.

PERSONAL NOTES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

Do you know of something that threatens to cause division in the church or in the Kingdom of God? Will it cause a good division or a bad division? _____

What can you do to help bring about the best results from the problem that is threatening to cause a division? _____
