

## **Leader's Notes: Bible Study**

### **Good to Go as we Engage our World**

This section is to give those of you who are leading study groups a little more insight into the purpose of each study. These studies were made to stand alone so that if a person in your group misses a study, they will not be discouraged from returning to your group. You can divide the study into two sessions of six lessons each if you wish. Those attending will get more out of the lesson if they do them ahead of time. Everything for the Bible Study that was printed in the *Leadership Link* is reproducible, so feel free to copy the lessons and distribute them as needed. If you have any questions, feel free to email me through our website and I will be happy to correspond with you.

#### **Suggestions for leading your small group:**

1. Keep your group to no more than 10-12 individuals so there will be time for individual discussion.
2. Make sure that you, as leader, do not turn this into a lecture time. Rather, after asking a question, allow ample time for people to think and respond.
3. Try to keep things positive even if a person gives a wrong answer. Help to guide them with another question perhaps or ask for other opinions.
4. Read the Bible portions during the group study before you discuss the questions.
5. Stick to the topic and do not allow the group to get side-tracked into other areas.
6. Be sensitive as others discuss issues and listen carefully. Affirm whenever possible. This will encourage others to participate.
7. Don't allow one person in the group to monopolize the whole discussion, but ask for opinions from other members present.
8. Do not allow the study to go beyond your set time because those coming have other obligations to attend to.
9. Summarize at the end and close in prayer
10. Each lesson will have a Starter Question. This question is designed to be an ice-breaker to make people feel comfortable. You may or may not wish to use it each time. Do not spend a lot of time on this part of the class to the detriment of the time spent on the Bible Study portion.

## **Lesson I: Overwhelmed by God's Grace: I Corinthians 15:1-11**

**Purpose:** *To show a person how we can be motivated to engage our world to influence individuals for Christ by extending grace to people when we sense the greatness of the gift of grace bestowed to us by God.*

**Starter Question:** Describe a time in your life when someone overlooked your faults and treated you better than you deserved.

### **I. A Divine Attitude**

When God looked at the human race he created, he knew that each of us had fallen—we are sinners. God's attitude towards us was one of great love because He gave His only Son to be a ransom for us all (John 3:16; I Corinthians 15:1-4). If Jesus had not died in our place, God could not have extended grace to us.

- a. Paul said he did not deserve God's grace, but it was given to him.
- b. Paul persecuted the church by approving of Stephen's stoning, by destroying the church, going from house to house, dragging off men and women and putting them into prison. (See Acts 7:57-8:3)
- c. He wanted to work hard to bring others to Christ because of the grace that had been extended to him.

### **II. A Divine Stimulus**

When we look back at our own lives, our sins, and our failures and think about the forgiveness that has been extended to us by God, we realize how much God loves us! Each day as we think about God's love, it will help us stay motivated to reach out to others with the same love that has been extended to us.

- a. Paul worked extremely hard to preach the love of Christ to others.
- b. He carried out the ministry in a diligent manner.

### **III. A Daily Enabling**

Because we are human and live with our human frailties, we need to realize that we need more than just our own motivation to keep us extending grace to others. We will need the divine power of the Holy Spirit to fill us in such a way that we can reach out with love to those around us.

When Paul did his ministry, who did he acknowledge was really doing the work of the ministry? (I Cor. 15:10) Paul acknowledged that it was not anything of his own doing, rather it was Christ working within him that enabled him to show forth the love of Christ to others.

**Author's note:** The grace of God demands a sacrifice of death. God sent His own son Jesus to be the sacrifice of death for our sins. Many times in our lives we will need to have certain attitudes and desires die before we can minister to others. There may be expectations, hopes, desires, and dreams that we have for others that are smashed and broken before us. We will have to die to all those before we can reach out to them in love. This can be a painful process of loss and grieving. But we must allow this grieving to take place so that we can minister to others. Scriptures tell us to do good to those who spitefully use us. In order to overcome our anger and hurt when people do us wrong, we will need to allow God's grace to cleanse our hearts and give us an attitude of compassion and love so that we can do good to those who have wronged or hurt us. Only then, can we be spiritually good to go each day as we enter our fallen world to engage it with the love of Christ.

## **Lesson II: Developing a Servant Lifestyle: Acts 13:36-37**

**Purpose:** *To encourage a person to be motivated to glorify God daily by developing a Servant Spirit when they understand that the Son of God Himself did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.*

**Starter Question:** Describe a time in your life when someone else demonstrated a servant heart towards you with the love of Christ.

### **I. David Served His Own Generation**

- a. He was a shepherd; an errand boy; used his musical skills; served his country by facing the giant; shared from his plenty with Jonathan's son.
- b. David began serving others at an early age. He served his father, Jesse, by taking care of the sheep. He served his brothers by taking them food during war time. He served King Saul in the courts even though the king was trying to kill him. David served the 600 men who followed him during the time he was fleeing from Saul. Later David served his friend Jonathan by taking care of his son Mephibosheth after Jonathan was killed (II Sam. 9).

### **II. David Served God's Purpose**

- a. David was to be King of Israel.
- b. Name general ones such as the Great Commission verse from Matt. 28:18-20; the Beatitudes from Matt. 5; the love chapter (I Cor. 13); Love for God (John 10:27) etc.
- c. In addition to Prov. 3:5-6, explain how the Bible is our guide and map for our life. Psalm 1 tells us to meditate on the word and we will prosper spiritually. Psalm 119:9 & 11 shows us how to keep from sin.

### **III. The Results of Developing a Servant Spirit**

- a. If we walk humbly and faithfully before the Lord our God and obey His Word, the Lord will bless us spiritually and enable us to live a life of fulfillment in Him. Even after we die, our influence can live on in the lives of others we have touched.
- b. David's body decayed, but his influence lives on.

- c. Jesus died, but did not see decay because He was raised again.  
We also will not see eternal decay because we will be raised again at the coming of Christ with a new body.

**Author's Note:** My life should characterize the lifestyle that Jesus led in showing us how to be a servant to others. Whether I am relating to others in my own home, at my work place, or to other believers in church, my actions towards them should always be to think of them as better than myself and to find ways to bless them with kind acts and gracious words. (See Philippians 2:1-5). Side note: Another lesson I learned about servant hood during my time spent in Indonesia with the Alliance was to learn how to be the recipient of servant care by other believers. Since I served in Papua (formerly called Irian Jaya) the people who lived in the stone-age had very little worldly possessions. Many times they would lovingly serve me by bringing me vegetables or fruit. At first it was extremely difficult receiving anything from them when I knew their families needed it more than I did. However, one day God spoke to me about receiving their love in a gracious way because they needed to learn to serve. Perhaps some of us are like that today. We enjoy taking meals to homes where people are under stress, yet when we are under stress, it is hard to allow others to serve us. We need to learn to graciously receive as well to allow others the privilege of serving God!

### **Lesson III: Being a Team Player: Heb. 10:23-25 and I Cor.12:4-11**

**Purpose:** *To enable a person to be motivated to keep engaging our world as we interact with other strong believers through Bible Study, prayer and fellowship because other believers will be an encouragement to our faith and will help keep us accountable to live a godly lifestyle.*

**Starter Question:** Describe a time in your life when you were discouraged and another believer helped you stay spiritually strong and helped you make a godly decision.

#### **I. Being a Team Player strengthens our faith**

- a. We must hold steadfast to our hope in Christ.
- b. We are told to love others and to do good deeds.

#### **II. Being a Team Player helps us to keep the truth**

- a. As the second coming of Christ approaches, living the Christian life will become more difficult. We need to gather together for encouragement to remain faithful.
- b. The word 'encourage' carries with it the connotation that we will teach and exhort each other from the Word of God. See also Hebrews 3:12-13; Colossians 3:15-16; and II Timothy 4:1-3a.
- c. According to scripture, more evil will be evident as the second coming of Christ draws near. We need to be aware of what is happening so that we will remain faithful to Jesus. Read II Timothy 3:1-17 for a good description of what the last days will be like and why we need to exhort and teach one another. Also see the following passages that encourage us to be watchful: I Corinthians 1:4-8; I Thessalonians 5:4-11; I Peter 5:8-9; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 16:15

#### **III. Being a Team Player allows for spiritual gifts to be in operation**

- a. They are given for the common good of each other which means that the various gifts distributed to believers will help strengthen and encourage others.
- b. The Holy Spirit of God through Jesus Christ distributes these gifts. They are not of our own doing. We must be yielded to the Holy Spirit so these gifts will be given and used correctly.

**Author's note:** Sometimes there is tension and a critical spirit when we gather with other believers. These people hurt other Christians by their unkind words and actions. If this happens, people may want to back off and not fellowship with other believers. We should not let Satan use this tool to discourage us. First, we must guard against those who would be hurtful and insensitive to others and try to bring reconciliation. Second, if we ourselves get hurt by someone, we should not allow that to discourage us from fellowshiping with other strong believers.

## **Lesson IV: Realizing our Sense of Privilege: I Peter 2:9-10**

**Purpose:** *To help a person understand how special their relationship is in the family of God so that they will accept their place within the family and be spiritually fit for action.*

**Starter Question:** If there are some in the group who can relate a childhood experience about how they were made to feel special in their family, give opportunity for them to do so.

### **I. We are a chosen generation (people)**

- a. Let people discuss this issue.
- b. Perhaps he was referring to the comparison of the nation of Israel that was chosen by God to be His special people, but all who are believers are included as being a special people to God. Read I Peter 2:4-8.
- c. God sent His only Son as the Incarnate Living Word in the flesh to redeem all mankind and adopt those who believe into His family.

### **II. We are a royal priesthood**

- a. We are now able to approach His throne through Jesus Christ without having to go through an earthly priest. We can offer praises directly to God in prayer ourselves. We have great confidence when we come to God in prayer because of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus understands all our infirmities and is able to extend grace and mercy to us.
- b. We should be able to see a great change in our lives as is indicated further on in this passage in verses I Peter 2:11-12 and following. Sinful desires should no longer take hold of us and our lives should be pure.

### **III. We are a holy nation**

- a. He calls it a people belonging to God i.e. the church
- b. He gave up His life in death to forgive our sins and make us holy and pure before God. He paid the price for our sins, washing them away and imparting His righteousness to us.
- c. The people who have come to Christ in repentance asking for cleansing and forgiveness. Romans 10:9,10; I John 1:9

- d. This holy nation (church) belongs to God. We should be declaring His praises since we have been called out of darkness into light. We are His people and we have received His mercy. It helps us see how special we are to God. We have been chosen and loved. Christ gave His life for us. His Word cleanses us so that we are now holy and blameless before God. We have been given the rights of priesthood. What wonderful blessings are these that have been given to us!

**IV. We are a people belonging to God, that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

- a. We are supposed to be declaring God's glory to everyone.
- b. Previously we were not a people, previously we had not experienced mercy, previously we walked in darkness. Now we are the people of God, now we have obtained mercy, now we walk in His wonderful light.

**Author's Note:** People who are born into aristocracy have many rights and privileges that ordinary citizens do not have. In the same sense, once we have become a child of God, we obtain a new birth, an adoption into His family. Because of this we gain all the rights and privileges of a son of God. Read Ephesians 1:3-14 to learn of some of our rights and privileges. Perhaps these can be shared with the group if you wish. Knowing all this should make a believer want to live a life consistent with our Father who has redeemed us.

## **Lesson V: Persevering in Difficulties: Portions of II Corinthians**

**Purpose:** *To show a person that everyone will experience hardships and difficulties in life, but that as a believer these hardships do not have to make us bitter and unable to function in a godly way. We can, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, remain joyful and useful even on the darkest day of our life.*

**Starter Question:** Tell an instance where you witnessed another believer shine forth the joy of the Lord in spite of the great difficulties they were experiencing in their personal life.

### **I. The Reality of a Life of Hardships**

- a. He was troubled on every side, but not crushed. He was perplexed, but not in despair. He was persecuted, but not abandoned. He was struck down but not destroyed.
- b. He was persecuted so greatly that he nearly despaired of life.
- c. He experienced troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger.
- d. Let the group respond to this.

### **II. Our Godly Reaction to a Life of Hardships**

- a. We should not lose heart and daily be renewed inwardly.
- b. Paul showed great endurance, lived a pure life, was understanding, patient and kind, showing love. His speech was truthful and he lived by the power of God.
- c. We should rejoice.
- d. Allow the group to discuss this.

### **III. Why (how) Paul was able to persevere even though he faced hardships.**

- a. Mercy
- b. Sake
- c. Eternal glory
- d. Power

**Author's Note:** Perhaps one of the strongest witnesses we can have to others is how we approach difficulties when they come to our life. The attitude we display will say a lot about what God has done for us inwardly. It will be a way to show the world that knowing God personally does make a difference. The peace and joy we have despite suffering will speak volumes to those who do not know the Lord.

## **Lesson VI: Fearing the Lord: Various Scriptures**

**Purpose:** *To help a person understand what "the fear of the Lord" really means in their life. Fearing the Lord means to have a holy reverence for the Lord of the universe to the point we will want to obey the Word of God. There are severe consequences for those who do not fear God.*

**Starter Question:** Describe your relationship with your parents as a child by telling of an instance where you were careful to obey them either out of love, of fear of punishment, or just plain respect for them.

### **I. What does it mean to fear the Lord?**

- a. When we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, we will need to give account of our lives.
- b. Christ has reconciled us to God by dying on the cross and becoming sin for us.
- c. God is loving towards all He has made.
- d. We are to have abounding love, be knowledgeable and discern what is best. We are to live a pure and blameless life, being filled with the fruits of righteousness.

### **II. What hinders our ability to fear the Lord?**

- a. Flattery and lack of wisdom will keep a person from detecting sin in his life.
- b. Evil doers do not cry out for mercy because they are proud.
- c. A person who will not listen to advice and chooses to do his own thing, rejecting knowledge, will not fear the Lord.
- d. Overcome these hindrances: listen and obey God's Word; put away our pride; humble ourselves; exhibit a contrite heart; call out to God.

### **III. How does the fear of the Lord motivate us so that we are Good to Go as we Engage our World?**

- a. Discuss the importance of meditating and obeying God's Word and how that will change a person and keep him/her spiritually fit for action.
- b. God has promised to purify and cleanse those who come to Him. I John 1:9. Each day we need to come to Jesus and ask for the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin. We are purified when we then

acknowledge our sin, confess it to God, and begin to obey the truths of the scripture.

- c. We will try to persuade and influence others to fear the Lord. We will have a sense of urgency about this task because we know that disaster is coming to people who do not fear the Lord. We will implore people to change their ways.
- d. We will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This means we will not always have to do things our own way. We will make allowances for other opinions and ways of doing things. Perhaps we will need to step back and let someone else do something that we want to do. It may mean keeping quiet rather than getting into an argument with another person. It means to do good to others even if they are hurtful to us, etc.

**Author's Note:** In our society today, really 'fearing the Lord' is often overlooked because we emphasize so greatly the Love of God. While the concept of the love of God is extremely important, we also need to be knowledgeable about the wrath of God and about His hatred of sin. There is a fine balance here. We cannot just talk about the love of God exclusively without knowing the tremendous consequences of sinful living. God will not be mocked. He requires holiness. Just because grace abounds from God the Father, it does not mean that He will not hold me accountable for disobeying the commands of scripture and living a life that is not disciplined and holy. I will not be good to go if I conform to the world around me and do not live a life pleasing to God. See Romans 12:1,2.

## **Lesson VII: Recognizing the Power of Prayer: Acts 12:1-19**

**Purpose:** *To help a person realize the necessity of establishing a powerful prayer life so that he/she will be equipped to stay spiritually fit for action.*

**Starter Question:** Have any of you experienced a powerful answer to specific prayer? If so, please share it with the group.

1. King Herod was arresting some who belonged to the church in order to persecute them. James, the brother of John, had been put to death with the sword. Because the Jews were happy about this, Herod seized Peter as well. He put four squads of four soldiers each to guard Peter.
2. The church gathered to earnestly pray for Peter.
3. James, the brother of John, had been put to death.
4. Peter's friends had gathered at the house of Mary the mother of John Mark. They were praying.
5. An angel came into the prison and woke Peter up, telling Peter to follow him. So Peter did what the angel commanded. The doors automatically opened and Peter found himself alone about a block down the street from the prison.
6. Peter realized that he wasn't merely dreaming, but that God indeed had sent an angel to deliver him!
7. Peter immediately went to Mary's house where his friends were gathered.
8. A servant girl named Rhoda answered the door. She was so thrilled to see Peter that she did not open the door for him, but she ran back to tell the friends that he was outside!
9. The friends did not believe her. They thought it might be an angel.
10. They were very astonished. Peter told them the story of his release. Peter did not stay there but went on to another place.

11. A large commotion took place at the prison. They did not know what had happened to Peter. When Herod searched for him and did not find Peter, he had the soldiers executed.

**Application:**

1. There will be times of stress and hardships that come to my life. There may be such a difficult hardship that comes to me, that I feel like there could be no answer to the problem. Obviously, the situation does not always turn out to be what we want. James was killed. Peter was released. However, either way we need to earnestly beseech God for His power to be made manifest. We can trust God to hear our prayers and answer them according to His will.

Another lesson that we can learn is that we need to persevere in prayer. We do not know how long the friends were gathered at Mary's house, but we know they stayed there until Peter showed up! When the answer is obviously given, I should believe that God has answered and not be like the friends who did not believe the words of Rhoda.

2. Knowing that God loves us, that He is powerful and can answer our prayers is a wonderful comfort as we walk our earthly journey. We have a mighty God who delights to come near his children and pour out blessing upon them. By submitting myself to the will of God in prayer, I can have peace and rest assured that God will cause things to work together for my benefit and good. It takes the anxiety and worry out of life.

**Author's note:** Our faith can be increased by reading autobiographies of great men of God. Some of these men are Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Goforth, George Mueller, William Carey. You may want to suggest some book you have read that has increased your faith to pray and see God answer. God has answered so many of my prayers in mighty ways. As I look back on my life and remember what He has done, it brings me encouragement today to trust Him in the hard places. It keeps me spiritually fit and good to go!

## **Lesson VIII: When Duty Calls: Matthew 25:14-36**

**Purpose:** *To show a person that even though there will be dry times in the life of a Christian, nevertheless, even on those days we can still be good to go by responding to the Word of God in simple obedience.*

**Starter Question:** Describe a time in your life when you felt spiritually dry, but you persevered and did what God asked you to do. How did being obedient to God even when you felt like you had nothing to give others affect your own life?

### **Study: What God Entrusts to Us**

1. The setting was just several days before Christ's death. The disciples had gathered with him on the Mount of Olives to ask him how they would know when the end of the age would happen. Then Jesus told them many things about the second coming of Christ. This story was one of the ones he told. See Matthew 24:1-3.
2. Jesus, who has ascended to heaven, and will return again.
3. It was given to them to invest and receive returns on it.
4. They were given different amounts according to their abilities.
5. The five talent person and the two talent person invested their talents and doubled the amount given to them.
6. The man with one talent buried his talent in the ground to hide it. He did this because he was afraid of the master.
7. He was very pleased with the first two and rewarded them for being faithful.
8. He was angry with the third man. He took his portion away and gave it to the man with ten talents. Then this man was thrown outside and into the darkness.

### **Application: What God Expects of Us**

1. I think Jesus told this story to help the disciples understand that what we do during our earthly lives will determine our place in the afterlife. I think Jesus also wanted to encourage them that in fact, He will return sometime in the future and there will be a place for us with Him then, if we are faithful to what he has given us.

2. I think God expects us to work diligently to use the gifts He has given to us for His glory. He certainly wants us to be spiritually good to go and productive each day of our life.
3. We can learn that different people look at life differently. Those who have a lot of gifts, and those who have only a few gifts, can please God the same. God only expects us to use what He has given to us. However, we can see that the Master expects us to do something with what we are given. If we do nothing and are lazy, then judgment will come.
4. The people did not know when he was returning. We do not know the exact day of Jesus' return, but we can look at signs of the times and realize that the day is soon to be!
5. The Lord wants us to be diligent to grow and learn all we can. He wants us to actively use and expand the gifts that He has given to us.
6. This lesson shows me that life is uncertain. We do not know exactly when Christ will return. We may feel on some days like quitting because the path we are to walk is too difficult. However, this passage shows that God only wants me to be faithful to what He has given me. He does not promise that my life will be full of roses, but He wants me to keep faithfully doing the things He has asked me to do.

**Author's Note:** Throughout scripture there are examples of God's servants who have great days, and then have difficult days. Elijah, on Mt. Carmel, is one of these men. Paul also suffered much persecution. There had to be days in their lives where they felt spiritually dry and depleted emotionally. We know Elijah felt that way (see I Kings 19) after God powerfully showed Himself strong on Mt. Carmel. Elijah fled to Beersheba, exhausted. It was there that God ministered to him and he was then able to continue his ministry.

When we feel exhausted, we need to continue to rely on God's Word to be our guide and do the things He asks of us, even though we may not have emotions that are exuberant. God will honor our obedience.

## **Lesson IX: Practicing Unquestioning Obedience: Acts 9:1-18 and 22:12-16**

**Purpose:** *To help an individual see the importance and blessings of unquestioning obedience to God and His Word.*

**Starter Question:** Can you share a time in your life when you almost missed a great blessing because you did not want to obey what the Lord was telling you to do?

It is extremely important for a believer to learn to obey immediately whenever prompted by the Holy Spirit or when reading scriptural principles. Those who do so will grow quickly in their faith. Those who do not will experience many difficulties as they try to live for Jesus. Let us look at the life of one man in the New Testament that had a great part in helping shape the ministry of the apostle Paul. Help the group think through the ramifications that would have taken place if Ananias had not been obedient to God.

### **I. The Character of Ananias**

- a. He lived in Damascus
- b. He was called a disciple, which meant he was a follower of Christ.
- c. Ananias was a devout observer of the law. He was highly respected by all the Jews living in Damascus. Being an observer means more than just knowing the law, it means he was practicing the law as well. This means that he was intentionally trying to live a life pleasing to God. It helped him to be able to respond to the Lord when asked to do a difficult thing. The fact that he was respected would be a help to people who were leery of Paul and his conversion. Paul was a man to be feared because of his persecution of the church. Having a spokesperson like Ananias would help others accept him into their fellowship.
- d. He was quick to respond in the affirmative the first time the Lord spoke to him. He did not just put off talking to the Lord. The second response stated the fear that Ananias had to do this task because of the bad reputation of Saul (Paul). Perhaps Ananias was fearful that he would be arrested. When the Lord explained that Ananias should

go anyway, Ananias quickly did what God asked him to do with no further questions. God did not promise Ananias that he would not be arrested. He simply asked Ananias to go! Obviously, Ananias was a man who wanted to obey the Lord even though he did not understand completely why he needed to help Saul.

## **II. The Difficult Task Assigned to Ananias**

- a. The Lord asked Ananias to go to the house where Saul was staying and ask to see Saul.
- b. His response was one of questioning because he was fearful Saul would arrest him. He needed some further information from God.
- c. When Ananias was told that the Lord had a special message to give to Saul and that Saul would be used of God to take the good news to the Gentiles, Ananias did not ask for any further instructions. He simply got up and went to find Saul. When he found Saul, Ananias laid hands on Saul so that his eyesight would be restored and that the Holy Spirit would come upon him for ministry.
- d. I think most people today would argue with God about this assignment. It would take a lot to convince someone to do such a dangerous task as this! We are not usually quick to obey such difficult assignments because we are not used to obeying the small things God asks of us. In order for God to use us in such a mighty way, we need to begin to obey God in the small things. Then He can trust us to do more. If we are not willing to live holy lives, then God cannot use us.

## **III. The Blessings that Result from Obedience**

- a. Saul regained his eyesight and was baptized. Paul would become one of the greatest Christians to ever live. He was a witness to bring many to Christ including taking the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- b. Paul wrote at least 13 and possibly 14 N.T. books as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He traveled extensively to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers. He influenced the early church and their activities in a powerful way.
- c. We bless other people's lives. We also please God. Our obedience is like a fragrant offering to God. We encourage others and help them mature in Christ. We ourselves will be blessed of God as we obey Him.

**Author's note:** In my opinion, this lesson is probably the key lesson in learning how to be "good to go" as a believer. If we would practice immediate obedience to the Word of God and obey His inner promptings, our lives would be spared so much discipline and hardships. When we are obedient to the Word, it is a guide and help for our lives. We do not need to suffer the consequences of wrong decisions or sinful lifestyles. Just as we try to teach a small child to obey so that they are protected from harm, Jesus calls us to obedience so that we can live a life that will be glorifying to God and pleasing in His sight. May each of us learn this lesson early. May we not fear the consequences of unquestioning obedience. Ananias did not fear doing God's will even though it could have meant his imprisonment! May we have the courage daily to live this way.

## Lesson X: Reacting Correctly to Adversity or Failure: II Kings 6:1-7

**Purpose:** *To show a person that even though we may fail at a task or fall into sin, we can take steps to begin again and return to a "good to go" position with Christ.*

### Background for this study: The School of the Prophets

(excerpt taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* Volume 2 , page 211, by Merrill C. Tenney, Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House.)

"The text of the OT suggests that the prophets were responsible for the first schools in Israel. The prophets' educational role is quite plain from the beginning. They look back to Moses as their founding figure, as the prophet par excellence. (Deut. 34:10). He embodied the prophetic ideal (Deut. 18:15ff), 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (i.e. Moses) from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed.' The prophets were considered teachers of Israel as a whole. By the time of the beginning of the Israelite kingdom, there was a prophetic profession. Bands or companies of prophets (see I Sam. 10:5; 19 and I Sam. 19:20) is a description of the 'band of prophets.' The 'sons of the prophets' were the disciples who were taught by the prophets. Later on there is clear evidence of the prophets teaching their disciples (see I Kings 19:16; II Kings 2:3ff; II Kings 4:38; Isaiah 8:16). The prophets transmitted knowledge to their disciples (II Kings 4:38-41). An aspect of the knowledge that was transmitted concerned medical science (cf. the practice in Egypt where theology and medicine were combined). As may be expected from a tradition that had its roots in a Mosaic prototype, the teaching of the prophets centered on question of a relevant interpretation for the times in which they lived."

**Starter Question:** Describe a time in your life when you experienced a spiritual power failure and how you were able to recover from it to minister again for Christ.

### I. The Story

- a. A company of prophets and a man of God: Elisha
- b. Build a place for them to live and study (a dormitory and meeting place) because what they were using was too small.
- c. They went to the Jordan River.
- d. While a prophet was cutting down a tree, his axe head fell off and flew into the water.
- e. He was very concerned because he had borrowed the axe from someone else.

- f. Elisha asked the prophet to show him the spot where it fell.  
Then Elisha threw in a stick at the place, and the axe head began to float. They were able to recover it and return to their duties.

## II. The Application to our lives

- a. The school of the prophets was instrumental in training people for ministry. It was an Old Testament story, but it can relate to us today. If we obey the Great Commission verses (Matt. 28:18-20), then we too should be reaching out to others and discipling others. The men in this story were part of a school that was teaching them how to minister. Their example is beneficial to us to show that we, too, should have spiritual outreach ministry in our lives.
- b. The prophets saw a problem so they made a plan to solve the problem. More space was needed for the school of the prophets, so instead of asking others to do it for them, they decided to take on the task themselves. Their attitude was positive. They were willing to invest themselves to see that the building would be built. They seemed enthusiastic about working. This story teaches me that I should be eager to see the Kingdom of God expand, and that I should have a part in the ministry of making that happen.
- c. The significance of inviting Elisha to accompany them shows that they had a good relationship to their teacher. They trusted him. He was called the man of God in this passage, so he stood as an example of a spiritual mentor. This teaches me that it is good to have spiritual confidants around me to encourage me in my faith and build me up.
- d. The axe could represent the Word of God that we hold forth to bring spiritual refreshment to others. The Word of God is the tool we use to accomplish things for the Lord. Or it could mean a spiritual gift that has been given to me (such as hospitality or teaching) that is used as a tool for ministry. I feel the axe can represent any tool that we use to get the job done of expanding the Kingdom of God. The axe head also represents power in our life through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 reminds us that we need the Holy Spirit in our lives to enable us to minister effectively. Acts 1:8 also reminds us that we need to minister not only to those close to us, but that we need to be involved in expanding the Kingdom of God worldwide. Therefore, I need to be diligent to make sure I am using the gifts God has given to me for His glory.

e. Alas, as the men were working diligently for a good purpose, the axe head flew off its handle and sank down into the waters of the Jordan River. It appeared the tool was lost! It is a borrowed tool, so it did not belong to the man who used it. There are many spiritual lessons here for us. The gift/s that we have been given are not our own. They belong to the Lord, and He has entrusted them to us to do a job for Him. Sometimes circumstances cause us to get discouraged and we want to give up. Sometimes while we are working for the Kingdom, we fall into sin. Sometimes we are not diligent about studying God's Word. When that happens, we are like the man in the story who lost his working tool! Look what he did to recover it:

- 1) He identified the problem.
- 2) He had a spiritual mentor close by who saw the problem as well.
- 3) The spiritual mentor was able to help the man out of his dilemma.

I feel that Elisha is representative of Jesus who is there to bring us back to Himself. When we run out of steam spiritually, when we are confused or discouraged, we need to look to Jesus for strength (Phil. 4:13). We need to confess specifically what our need is that has caused us to become spiritually inactive (or not good to go). If we have fallen into sin, we need to confess it and ask for forgiveness and restoration (I John 1:9) We need to make a complete break with that sin, and surrender ourselves anew to Christ. Then the tool, which signifies God's power in our lives, will be useful again.

**Author's Note:** In order for me to stay 'good to go' spiritually, I will need to know how to handle the stresses and disappointments that come into my life. This lesson is extremely important for each of us so that we will not stay in a discouraged state, feel that we are unworthy to minister to others, or allow our sin to keep us from repenting. Satan would like to use these things to make us feel that we can no longer leave our homes and engage the world for Christ. We need this lesson of freedom from obstacles and hindrances to penetrate our souls. We need to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit each day so that we will keep in a position to be 'good to go' for the Lord. Just like a small child learning to walk who falls frequently but gets up and smiles and tries again, we need to know that Jesus will be there for us when we fall or fail. He will help us to minister again if we entrust ourselves to Him.

**Lesson XI: The Value of Praise and Thanksgiving:  
Psalm 111:1-9; II Chronicles 14:11-15.**

**Purpose:** To encourage a person to keep praise and thanksgiving a priority in their life because by doing so, we will remain spiritually fit to live for Christ.

**Starter Question:** Tell about a time in your life when someone praised you or thanked you for something you did or for a character quality you have. Tell the group how you felt when this happened to you.

**I. What will Praise and Thanksgiving do for a person?**

**A. Praise reminds us who God is**

1. He is righteous. He is gracious and compassionate. He is faithful to His promises. He is just.
2. He performs great works that delight us. His deeds are glorious and majestic. He is gracious and compassionate to us. He provides food for us. He is faithful to His promises to us. He provides redemption for us.

**B. Praise reminds us of who is worthy of our devotion**

1. We should praise Him because He is eternal and he created all things. No other being can claim to have these qualities.
2. We were created by his will for His glory.

**C. Praise reminds us of the benefits of belonging to God**

1. He forgives our sins
2. He heals all our diseases
3. He redeems our life from destruction
4. He crowns us with love and compassion
5. He satisfies our desires with good things
6. He renews our youth like the eagles.

**D. Praise Satisfies our Soul**

1. Praise acts like delicious food, but this is food that feeds the soul and spirit, not physical food that satisfies our appetite.
2. I feel it brings joy and peace to us.

**E. Praising God will change us**

1. God's love is better than life because we know that no person on earth can satisfy our inner longings. Only God can do that.
2. This benefit is that we receive divine strength for our life.
3. He is provided with safety.

**F. Praise defeats our enemy**

1. He praised *God* and lifted up His name.

**G. God manifests His presence in the atmosphere of praise**

1. They were praying and singing hymns to *God*. Others were listening to them. *God* sent an earthquake and delivered them.
2. The Holy One enthroned on high will come to dwell with us.
3. Jesus did not have to beg *God* for a miracle. He simply gave thanks to *God* and began to break the bread and fish and there was more than enough to feed the crowd.

**II. How Can we Praise God?**

1. With our mouths.
2. With our hands and knees.
3. We can praise Him with instruments.
4. With our hands.
5. With our life - all our actions.
6. At all times.

**Author's note:** This lesson is such an important one for us. Praise wipes out doubts, it lifts our spirits, it brings glory to *God*, it invites His presence into our day, and it lifts us from depression. It keeps us joyful and ready to face our world!

## Lesson XII: Maintaining an Eternal Perspective: Colossians 3:1-17

**Purpose:** *To help a person recognize the necessity of living for eternal things rather than temporal things, and the importance of living a godly life with our actions.*

**Starter Question:** Think back to your childhood. If your parents ever took you on a special vacation, describe the anticipation you had and how you prepared to get ready for the vacation.

1. We are to focus on things above where Christ is seated.
2. Our mindset should be on eternal issues and not on earthly things.
3. We need to focus on eternal things because our life here on earth is just temporary. If we have died with Christ, our life should be hidden in Him.
4. We must put to death all things that belong to our earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, idolatry.
5. Other things to put away are: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, lies.
6. We should take off our old self and put on our new self.
7. We can take off the old man and put on the new man by understanding the following:  
**Facts we need to know:** 1. We have died to sin. 2. We were buried with Christ in baptism to His death, and we were raised to a new life when we were raised in baptism. This is a symbol of what happened when we came to Christ and asked Him to be our Savior. 3. Our old self was crucified with Christ on the cross so that our sin would be done away with. 4. We must believe that if we have died with Christ, we will also live with Him and do live with Him in our earthly body.  
**What we must do:** 1. We must consider ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God. 2. We must not let sin reign in our bodies and do not obey its evil desires. 3. Don't offer the parts of our body to sin. 4. Offer our bodies to God for His glory.

8. Qualities to exhibit in a believer's life: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness, wisdom, gratitude, full of praise.
9. Whatever we do in our lives should be done to glorify the name of the Lord as we give thanks to Him. If we read the Word of God we will be aware of how to live, how to act, how to speak. Then we need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be able to live in such a glorifying way before the Lord.

**Author's note:** This lesson includes the section from Romans to teach us about the sanctified life, so it is a very important one for you to stress how we can live with an eternal mindset, how we can put away the old self, and put on the new self. Make sure the women in your group understand the "how to" and not just the theory of living with an eternal mindset.