

Baptist Training Course

# Sponsor's Guide

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## *Church Members Challenged To Exalt Christ*

**Quarterly Aim: By the conclusion of this quarter  
the students will discuss ways that church  
members can exalt Christ.**

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## Challenge To Evangelize

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

**Background Scripture:** Psalms 51:10-13; 126:5, 6; Isaiah 6:9-12; Luke 14:23; Acts 1:8.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will emphasize the importance of reaching the lost for Christ.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**Come Unto Me**, Matthew 11:18-30.

Some church members view the work of evangelism as a daunting task. The fear of rejection, the fear of mockery and the fear of meeting new people cause many not to serve the Lord in the work of evangelism. Evangelism may be defined as sharing the good news of the gospel. The Roman Road to salvation remains one common method of evangelism. (See Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9, 10, 13.) Every church member should be a soul-winner. It has been estimated that four out of five church members have never led an unbeliever to Christ.

Jesus makes the work of evangelism an easier task. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The church member who feels his responsibility to win souls to Christ has a great burden for the lost. Jesus promised to help bear that burden. He offers His peace and sweet rest for those who labor in the difficult challenge to lead others to Christ.

Jesus has all the answers for those who work in evangelism. He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt.

11:29). The yoke for those who serve the Lord is a double yoke. The servant of the Lord is yoked together with Christ. The soul-winner never works alone. God always works with him. The soul-winner who is prepared by prayer and by study has the power of God and conviction of the Holy Spirit working with him. Church members should not be "ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

Evangelism is no longer a daunting task when one realizes he labors with God. Jesus said, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). The difficulties of evangelism vanish when the soul-winner prayerfully relies on the wisdom and power of God.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 9:19-27.** Paul challenged the church members at Corinth to work diligently in evangelism. The prominence of the word *all* reminds us of the universal need for the gospel of Jesus Christ. *All* is used seven times in the Lesson Text. (See 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22, 24, 25.) Paul taught the church members the proper concern of the soul-winner (verses 19-23), the career of the soul-

winner (verse 24), the crown the soul-winner will receive (verse 25), the course the soul-winner should follow (verse 26) and the danger a soul-winner has of becoming a castaway (verse 27).

Paul viewed the work of evangelism as an unpayable debt that obligated him to be a servant to every unbeliever in bringing him the good news of the gospel. Paul was a Roman citizen. He was a freeman in a world where many were slaves. *Servant* means "bondman or indentured servant." When Paul accepted the work of evangelism, he recognized that he owed the gospel to every person. Romans 1:14, 15 states, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." *Gain* means "to win." Paul wanted to win the victory of bringing unbelievers to Christ in salvation. He witnessed to the Jews, to the Gentiles, to the freemen, to the servants, to the strong and to the weak. His concern for the lost was so great that his only victory was to see someone saved.

Paul understood the task of evangelism must be the career of every church member. He called the work of soul-winning a "race" which lasted for a prescribed distance. The task of evangelism is not a short race such as a one hundred yard dash. It should be the lifelong career of every church member. It could be compared to a marathon. *They which run* refers to those who run on a race course. Paul said, "So run." He challenged every church member to do the work of evangelism every day. The "prize" was an award. In the Isthmian games at Corinth, an award was given to the winner. No one has run the race properly who stands before God with no precious souls won to Christ. No church member should be satisfied to be empty-handed in the work of evangelism.

Paul taught church members to value the soul-winner's crown highly. The

winner's "crown" at the public games was a wreath of flowers worn on the head. It was a "corruptible crown" because it would wither away and lose its beauty. The soul-winner's crown is an "incorruptible" crown that will endure throughout eternity. Soul-winners will gladly throw their crowns at Jesus' feet. (See Revelation 4:10.)

Paul challenged the church members at Corinth to stay on course in the work of evangelism. Satan has many temptations to lead church members away from the work of winning souls for Christ. God's soul-winners must stay on track. Church members who run the race remain on the course God has marked.

Paul also used a boxing illustration. Those who serve the Lord in evangelism must make every word and every witness count. No one should be content to allow his words to drop aimlessly in the hearing of an unbeliever. Soul-winning is a fight against the devil for the unbeliever's soul. (See 2 Corinthians 4:4, 5.) It is not shadow boxing. Every blow must count if the adversary is to be defeated. Church members must give their best efforts in the work of evangelism.

Paul urged church members to beware of becoming a castaway in the work of evangelism. A "castaway" is one who is unapproved, worthless or rejected. Unbelievers will consider the witness of a church member worthless and reject the gospel message if he has not kept the sin nature under control. *Subjection* means "to enslave or to subdue." Those who would become effective soul-winners must subdue the fleshly nature. Those who preach or share the gospel with others must live a holy life that is above reproach.

### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Psalm 51:10-13.** A church member who is right with God will be successful in evangelism. David knew the necessity

of a clean heart and a right spirit. A “clean heart” is one that is pure, holy or cleansed. Children of God have clean hearts only after confession of sins, forsaking sins and receiving God’s forgiveness. A “right spirit” is a faithful, firm and prepared attitude of a rational being. David knew he needed to rely on the Lord’s presence with him and to be led by the Holy Spirit if he were to be an effective soul-winner. Church members who do faithful work in evangelism must be renewed, refreshed or revived. Those who witness to others from a joyful heart that is thrilled with their personal salvation will be a great influence to the unbeliever.

**Psalm 126:5, 6.** Sharing the gospel may be compared to sowing or planting seed. Those who sow little will reap little. Those who sow a lot have the potential to reap a lot. Second Corinthians 9:6 states, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” Church members who labor faithfully in the work of evangelism will share the gospel frequently. One reason why so few are saved in some places is that so few gospel seeds are sown. God guarantees the harvest for the faithful soul-winner. Those who work diligently in evangelism begin with a burdened heart, tearfully praying for lost people to be saved. God promises to hear and answer that prayer. Unbelievers who recognize the soul-winner’s deep burden for lost people will more seriously consider the gospel message.

**Isaiah 6:9-12.** God’s plan for personal evangelism is still “go, and tell.” Some will hear the gospel and will refuse to be saved. The faithful soul-winner will not be deterred in the work of evangelism by rejection. Rejection was discouraging to the prophet Isaiah. Rejection is discouraging to pastors and church members who share the gospel of

Christ. Isaiah asked, “How long?” God’s answer was plain. God expected Isaiah to witness to unbelievers “until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man” (Isa. 6:11). As long as God leaves one person in the land to listen or one person who needs to hear the message of the gospel, God’s people need to be busy sharing the gospel.

**Luke 14:23.** Church members who would do the work Jesus has commanded must go. Unbelievers will rarely be found in the places where New Testament churches meet. God’s command is for church members to go forth into the world for the express purpose of sharing the gospel. Church members may be sure that as they go with the gospel, God has promised “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:20). *Highways* refers to roads used by those who are on a journey. “Hedges” are blocked up, enclosed or fenced areas. Some unbelievers are as difficult to win as if they were closed to the gospel. *Compel* means “to bring to a decision.” The soul-winner has not completed his work with an unbeliever if he has not asked him to accept Christ. Unbelievers may come into or be welcomed into God’s house by being saved. John 14:2 states, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” God does not want any empty places in Heaven. (See 2 Peter 3:9.)

**Acts 1:8.** God promised the power of the Holy Spirit for the work of evangelism. His power is abundant, mighty, strong and wonderful. Empowered church members shared the gospel with people from the whole world on the day of Pentecost. A “witness” is one who bears record or gives testimony. The soul-winner shares the message of the saving power of Jesus Christ. The work of evangelism must be considered a worldwide endeavor. The scope of the work begins at home (Jerusalem),

extends to the state (Judea), includes interstate areas (Samaria) and reaches to the rest of the world (uttermost). *Uttermost* means "the farthest place and the final time."

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Paul's key verse in this challenge to evangelism is "to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Paul was determined to use every scriptural means. *By all means* does not mean Paul would use unorthodox methods or engage in unscriptural practices. He simply stated his intent to do all within his power to bring the unbeliever to Christ. Paul realized he could not save anyone. The salvation of the lost is by God's power and for His glory. His personal priority in evangelism continued to be used of God to win unbelievers to salvation. Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:2-4). Paul's key priority of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ will be successful for church members who follow his example.

Paul had a great burden for unbelievers. Romans 10:1 states, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Every church member needs that kind of burden for the lost. He said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:11). *Terror* means "fear." The fear of the Lord should be one's greatest phobia. *Persuade* means "to convince by reason, to

give evidence or to rely on inward certainty." The unbeliever should reason that he is accountable to God the Creator. (See Romans 1:20, 21.) Unbelievers have the opportunity to receive the evidence of the Bible that they are sinners. (See Romans 3:10, 11, 23.) Holy Spirit conviction gives each unbeliever the inward certainty that he needs to be saved. God will give church members who are right with the Lord and have no ulterior motives for sharing the gospel the opportunity to win souls.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

There are many questionable approaches to evangelism. The common practice called "easy believism" streamlines evangelism to the point something is often left out. Those who use the "repeat after me" method claim professions of faith by those who show no evidence that they were convicted of God of a need to be saved. Those who claim being saved is as easy as raising your hand if you want to be saved omit repentance. God's plan for evangelism has not changed. Questionable methods in evangelism give false security to those who still need Christ as personal Savior.

The only sound approach for evangelism demands church members to emphasize that all are sinners. (See Romans 10:9-13.) God's plan is still confess, believe and ask. The soul-winner reminds the unbeliever of the necessity of repenting of his sinful condition. Repentance is a part of one's confession to God that he is a sinner. The unbeliever becomes aware of a desire to be saved due to the drawing of God by Holy Spirit conviction. The soul-winner urges the unbeliever to place his trust in God, believing He can and will save. The soul-winner asks the unbeliever if he is ready to ask the Lord to save him right now. (See Romans 10:9-13.)

## Challenge To Set an Example

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-22.

**Background Scripture:** John 13:12-17; Hebrews 4:9-13; 8:1-5; 1 Peter 2:21-25.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will determine to set an example that pleases Christ.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

#### **Be an Example,** 1 Timothy 4:12.

Paul commanded the young preacher Timothy to be a good example. This good advice is appropriate for every church member. Paul knew the value of being the right kind of example. After his salvation, Paul determined to live a life above reproach. He may have had a similar goal to Daniel's resolution. Daniel 1:8 states, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." A good example is a model for imitation or a pattern to follow. Paul believed adults and young people have the responsibility to be good examples before the world and before other church members.

Paul encouraged Timothy to be a good example in word and conversation. *Word* means "speech, talk, doctrine, questions or every utterance." *Conversation* means "behavior, manner of life or life-style." A church member who is a good example carefully chooses even his idle words. A church member who follows Christ in a holy life-style will not habitually incorporate sin in daily life.

Paul reminded Timothy to be a good example in love and in spirit. "Charity"

is an unselfish, sacrificial, godly love. The "spirit" is the part in man where he feels, thinks, understands, reasons and desires. It is in the spirit of a man that his attitude is formed. A church member's loving attitude will give others a good example to follow.

Paul challenged Timothy to be a good example in faith and in purity. "Faith" is trusting in Jesus for salvation, relying on God in difficult situations and convictions about sound doctrine. Timothy needed to point the way to Jesus as the only Savior, to show others how to rely on God when things were not going well and to be loyal to sound doctrine. Paul lived as a good example so faithfully that just before his death he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 10:1-22.** Paul challenged the church members at Corinth to be good examples by giving them instructions in several areas. Paul wanted them to be good examples in obedience (verses 1-4), in avoiding disobedience (verses 5-10), in overcoming temptation (verses 11-15) and in separation (verses

16-22). Church members become good examples by excelling in these four areas. Paul's challenge for church members to be good examples is still the best advice.

Paul reminded the church members at Corinth how obedience manifests a good example. The Israelites followed God into the dry land where the Red Sea had been divided. They had faith to obey God in a life-threatening situation. Baptism is an immersion, a covering and a burial. Israel pictured baptism when covered by the cloud of God above and the walls of water on each side. It was a nation as good as dead until God intervened. The people of Israel's appearance on the other side of the Red Sea was like a resurrection. Scriptural baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Baptism sets a good example as the first act of obedience after salvation. Obedience pleases God. The people of Israel received nourishment by the same spiritual food and drink. Jesus Christ the Rock of Ages cared for them. Jesus Christ enables church members to set the right example in obedience to God's commands.

Paul urged the church members at Corinth to avoid the bad example of disobedience. Disobedience displeases God. *Overthrown* means "to be slain." Disobedient Israelites died in the wilderness. Their evil example teaches it is wrong to entertain evil desires. Those who crave wickedness are yielding to the depraved human nature. "Idolaters" are those who participate in false worship or image worship. False worship is heathen religion or paganism. False worship led to gluttonness, drunkenness, lustful entertainment and immorality. "Fornication" is illicit sex. God's judgment fell on the disobedient when twenty-three thousand died in one day. Some disobedient Israelites tested God by seeing how far into wickedness they could go before

experiencing God's judgment by poisonous snakebites. Murmuring is disobedience. The murmurers were destroyed by death. Church members may avoid the bad example of disobedience by accepting and honoring God's standards.

Paul invited the church members at Corinth to be good examples by overcoming temptation. Church members need to consider Old Testament examples since human nature and weakness in temptation is still the same. An "admonition" is a warning. The *ends of the world* refers to the end of an age. The end of an age is marked by greater wickedness. At the end of the church age, it remains vital that church members realize they are susceptible to temptation. Temptation may overcome the preacher, the deacon, the Sunday School teacher or any church member. The "fall" is the plunge into temptation, not a fall from grace! Paul reminded the church members at Corinth that God always provides an escape route in times of temptation. Paul considered idolatry or false worship to be one of the greatest temptations that the Corinthians faced. He encouraged them to use wisdom and good judgment in recognizing temptation and refusing it.

Paul advised church members to set the example of separation from evil. Church members should be separated from the sacrifice of devils or false worship. The Lord's Supper cannot remain pure if church members participate in false worship and then come to the Lord's Table. Paul taught the church at Corinth that it was one bread or one body in Christ. Paul forbade church members to have fellowship with false worship. (See 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.) Church members that participate in the "cup of devils" in false worship and then come to the Lord's Table provoke God to jealous anger. God is greater and stronger than any church member. Church members who fellowship evil should expect God's chastisement.

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE**

**John 13:12-17.** Jesus gave His church an example of humility. Jesus Christ the Lord was humble enough to wash His disciples' feet. He encouraged His church members to follow His example. *Example* means "pattern for imitation." The head of the church honored His servants, the church members. Every church member should consider himself a servant of the Lord. "Servant" is one in subjection. A servant must not consider himself greater than his lord. Jesus sent His church by His authority. (See Matthew 28:18-20.) Since church members are sent on a mission, they cannot be greater than the One who authorized the mission. *Happy* means "supremely blessed or well-off." The happy church member is the servant who understands he must maintain an humble attitude.

**Hebrews 4:9-13.** Church members should labor for the Lord until the time of their eternal rest. Revelation 14:13 states, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." The word *rest* in the original is similar to the word *sabbatical*. It refers to the type of rest the Jews in the Old Testament observed on the Sabbath. God grants no sabbaticals to His servants in this life. John 9:4 states, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." The example of faith results in laboring for God. The example of unbelief ceases any works for God. God's Word cuts to the innermost part of man's being. God knows man's thoughts, plans and purposes. God knows whether His servants have a heart to work for Him or not.

**Hebrews 8:1-5.** Presently Jesus Christ serves as the High Priest in the sanctuary in Heaven. He is an example of serving in the truth. (See Matthew 22:16.) He is an example of sacrificial service. (See Philippians 2:6-8.) He set the example by giving everything in His labor for the heavenly Father. The earthly levitical priesthood served according to the Law God gave Israel. *Serve* means "to minister to God, to do service or to worship." The earthly priests and Levites prepared the sacrifice, offered the sacrifice, collected the blood, cleaned up after the sacrifice and the high priest made atonement in the Holy of Holies once a year. Their service gave a pictorial example in type and shadow of the priestly work of Jesus Christ. The word *example* means "an exhibition for imitation or warning." The *shadow* refers to the silhouette of Jesus Christ that only hinted at His substance. Jesus served perfectly as the blood-flowing likeness of God.

**1 Peter 2:21-25.** Christ gave us an example. He is the pattern every servant of the Lord should imitate. Peter said, "Ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). *Called* means "ordered, commanded or called forth." Christ set the standard for faithful service while enduring suffering. *Follow* means "to accompany." Servants of the Lord walk with Jesus when continuing to labor for God in times of suffering. Jesus gave the example of being above reproach. He was sinless. Servants of the Lord cannot be sinless, but should strive to be above reproach. Jesus gave the example of sacrificing Himself for others. He was the opposite of selfishness. He was not self-centered or self-serving. Peter identified Jesus Christ as the suffering One who Isaiah prophesied would make an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the world. Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6) and "With his stripes we are healed" (verse 5). Servants of the

Lord must keep Christ in view as the example to follow.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Church members should be good examples in several areas. God's servants should be concerned about obeying God, overcoming temptation and being separated from moral and doctrinal error. Church members become good examples by being above reproach by those within their church and those outside the church. God's servants in New Testament churches should be good examples of godliness in suffering, in humility, in self-sacrifice, in loyalty to the truth and in faithfulness. Every church member continues to be a good example only as long as he is alert for signs of being self-centered, self-seeking or self-serving.

Church members are responsible to "keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2). The Lesson Text refers both to baptism and to the Lord's Supper. These are the only two church ordinances. The world seeks religion on its own terms. Church members need to keep God's pattern for the ordinances ever before them. Scriptural baptism is the immersion of a believer in water by church authority for the purpose of obedience to and identification with Christ. Sprinkling, pouring, infant baptism or alien immersion must be rejected by church members. The Lord's Supper must be a memorial and symbolic partaking of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine in a local church as one body in Christ by church members of that local church who are in good standing. Church members who set the right example reject open communion and demand closed communion. Church members set the right example by following the biblical pattern for observing the ordinances.

Church members who have been good examples in the past need to con-

tinually guard against becoming a bad example. No one is above moral or doctrinal error. Satan sends the temptation that he knows presents the greatest difficulty to refuse. Solomon had great wisdom but was overcome with both moral and doctrinal error. Church members who continue to be good examples prayerfully rely on God to grant wisdom, perception and the grace needed to withstand every temptation.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Church members who give routine service and ritual worship do not set the proper example. Spiritual indifference, neglect and dutiful attendance can only be termed nominal religion. The church at Ephesus and the church at Laodicea became bad examples by degenerating into nominal religion. Jesus gave a stern rebuke to the church at Ephesus. Revelation 2:4 states, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Jesus spoke of the sickening condition of the church at Laodicea. Revelation 3:16 states, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Nominal religion will never set the right example.

Every church member who seeks to be an example of revival will cherish the opportunity to do each act of service as unto the Lord. Every church member has the opportunity to set a good example by approaching worship with the overwhelming desire to come before God's presence. Each song should be praise to the Lord. Each prayer should be talking to God. Giving is a joy. Greeting fellow church members and visitors becomes a time to express godly love for one another. The preaching of the Word of God becomes a living conviction that grows in the heart of the revived church member. Revived church members set the right examples.

## Challenge To Glorify God

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1.

**Background Scripture:** Psalm 86:9-12; Matthew 5:13-16; John 12:23-33; Revelation 15:1-8.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain why it is necessary to give God glory daily.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**No Glory, Save in the Cross,** Galatians 6:11-15.

The desire for personal glory motivates many people in religion. *To make a fair shew* means “to display for the purpose of being told ‘Well done.’” Some went through the religious ritual of circumcision for the approval of men. *In the flesh* means “to be stripped of the hide, to be skinned as an animal for food and to be carnally minded.” Some approach religion in terms of men making laws for other men to observe. This may properly be called legalism. *Constrain* means “to compel.” The carnal mind seeks to receive glory by displaying good works to others as if to say, see what I have done.

Some desire to receive glory from others in order to boast. *They may glory* means “to boast.” Some view religious rituals as a means of purging or cleansing the flesh. Romans 3:20 states, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” God makes it clear that no person is forgiven of his sins by religious rituals.

God should receive all glory through the cross of Jesus Christ. The *cross of Christ* refers to the atonement of sins made for mankind when Jesus was crucified. God did what no man could do in providing a way of salvation for sinful mankind. Christ sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God, the sinner’s substitute and the God who provided Himself a sacrifice. Salvation by grace through faith gives glory to God by honoring the only plan God approves for salvation. God receives glory in the cross after salvation since the victory of the cross includes the power to overcome every sin. Colossians 1:20 states, “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” The cross of Christ gives all the glory to God and none to men.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1.** Paul taught the church members at Corinth that following Christ is the only way to give glory to God. He explained the necessity of giving glory to God by not edifying self (verse 23), by edifying oth-

ers (verse 24), by preserving a blameless reputation (verses 25-30) and by right motives and right actions in being a good example that follows Christ (verse 31—11:1). Church members who would give glory to God must prayerfully consider their lives in each of these categories.

Edification is the process of building up, whether a church or the godly life of the church member. *Edification* implies spiritual growth and progress in maturity. Church members develop into more mature servants of the Lord by Bible study, prayer, worship, witnessing and by making right choices in daily living. All things legal are not good or acceptable for the church member who desires to reflect Christ. Anything in the church member's life that hinders a closer walk with the Lord does not give glory to God.

God gets glory from church members who edify others. Each church member should consider his life-style in terms of how it affects others. *Another's wealth* refers to a fellowman's well-being or prosperity. Church members should seek the spiritual well-being of others by striving to lead them to Christ or to a closer walk with the Lord. Church members who glorify God consider how their personal choices affect others.

God gets glory from church members who preserve a blameless reputation. The word *shambles* means "marketplace." Some meat sold in the marketplace came from animals that had been sacrificed to idols. Any church member may go to the marketplace, purchase meat and eat it without questioning its origin. The church member's conscience remains clear by giving thanks to God. A church member may go to another church member's house and eat meat without dishonoring God. He may give thanks for the food without questioning his host concerning its origin. A stronger brother should honor a weaker brother's

convictions. If anyone thought the practice of eating meat from an animal that had been offered as a sacrifice to idols was wrong, the stronger brother should preserve his reputation in the eyes of the weaker brother by refusing to eat. Christian liberty gives glory to God only when exercised in ways that the church member's reputation does not suffer.

Church members who give glory to God use right motives and right actions in displaying good examples of following Christ. Any motive or action is acceptable when it honors God's will and God's way. Good intentions are not enough to give God glory. (See John 4:24.) A church member's good example is a blessing to those inside his church and to those outside his church. A church member's good example leads people to Christ in salvation. Paul encouraged the church members at Corinth to give glory to God by following Christ.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Psalm 86:9-12.** God demands all nations to give Him glory. Worship that honors God glorifies His name, praises His mighty works, recognizes His supremacy and seeks His ways according to biblical truth. *Worship* means "to bow or to prostrate self in homage or reverence for God." *Glorify* means "to give numerous or abounding reasons to give honor." "Thy name" includes God's authority, individuality, character, reputation and rank. God should be praised for His marvelous works. Nothing is too difficult for God.

**Matthew 5:13-16.** Jesus referred to His church as "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world" and "a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid." A church with a godly reputation has a purifying and preserving influence on the world. A church that spreads the message of the gospel shines forth the light of Jesus

Christ. A church that gives glory to God must be as visible as a city on a high hill. The light of God's presence in individual believers should be attached to a New Testament church for the purpose of giving glory to God by their obedience and good works. (See Revelation 1:20; Ephesians 3:21.)

**John 12:23-33.** God glorified Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus gave the example of change of seasons, planting a crop and reaping a harvest. Winter most pictures the season of Jesus' death. Spring symbolizes the resurrection of Christ. The fall or harvest season illustrates Jesus died to make possible a great harvest of many souls. Church members who truly desire to give glory to God will be willing to follow Christ, serve and suffer for His name's sake. God's voice from Heaven glorified Jesus. Jesus foretold His death on the cross and the opportunity of salvation for whosoever will by His words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

**Revelation 15:1-8.** Heaven is arranged to give glory to God. The angels, the beasts or living creatures around God's throne, the redeemed, the instruments and the songs of praise honored and magnified the holy and righteous God. The testimony in Heaven agrees in perfect unity concerning the glory of God. The glory cloud of God filled the Temple in Heaven with the smoky evidence of His majesty.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Paul's challenge to church members to give glory to God may be met in people coming to know Christ in salvation. Church members stand with Christ pleading in prayer for the souls of unbelievers. Paul's prayer and every church member's prayer should be "my heart's

desire and prayer to God . . . is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Church members seek God's approval by refusing to make personal choices that would hinder anyone from coming to Christ.

Church members who give glory to God live a consistent life. They express an overwhelming love for God and for their fellowman. Matthew 22:37-40 states, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Only those who take up their cross and follow Christ on a daily basis may be considered to live a consistent, God-honoring life. Inconsistent church members who are on and off or hot and cold in faithfulness do not give glory to God.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

A consistent life that gives glory to God grows in joy. Philippians 2:15, 16 states, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Abounding joy cannot be found in the legalist. The church member who proceeds from day to day following Christ builds a joyful consistency that proves the reality of his faith and gives credibility to his testimony.

Church members who give glory to God need to do more commending what is right and less condemning what is wrong. Romans 8:33, 34 states, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,

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yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Church members should not sit in judgment over one another as if they were God. Romans 14:22 states, "Hast thou faith? have it to

thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Church members may give God glory by making daily choices in faith that will not offend God or man.

## Challenge To Behave Properly in Worship

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

**Background Scripture:** 1 Chronicles 16:27-29; John 4:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will compare suitable behavior in the early churches with proper conduct in churches today.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**Orderly Behavior,** 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7.

Paul taught the church members at Thessalonica to conduct themselves in an orderly manner. An orderly walk is one befitting those who honor the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Name* means "character or authority." One who walks with Jesus understands the things that give Him pleasure and behaves himself accordingly. One who walks with Jesus also observes the commands Jesus gave. The word *tradition* means "a precept or ordinance transmitted, delivered, entrusted or committed to others." Paul urged church members to adopt the life-style that would please the Lord.

A commitment to orderly behavior requires one to abandon improper behavior. A *walk* is a life-style or deportment. *Disorderly* means "irregular, immoral, rebellious or unruly." Ephesians 2:10 states, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God has a life-style or path marked out for those who

would please Him. After salvation, this path includes scriptural baptism, church membership and faithful service in a life of good works. Some children of God prefer improper behavior to the life-style God requires and the faithful service through the New Testament church of their membership.

Those who walk with Christ must choose their friends carefully. The context is the Christian walk, not church discipline. *Withdraw yourselves* means "to avoid or to choose not to associate with." Church members should choose friends, companions or trusted associates who will encourage them in their walk with Christ. Paul encouraged the church members to follow him as he followed Christ. Every church member should choose orderly behavior that pleases the Lord.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 11:2-16.** Paul taught the church at Corinth concerning how to behave properly in worship. Right behavior in worship includes a proper observance of the ordinances (verse 2), a

proper order of authority (verse 3), a proper reverence (verses 4-12) and a proper practice (verses 13-16). God demands appropriate behavior in worship.

Paul challenged the church members at Corinth to keep a proper observance of the ordinances. Christ gave the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to His church. (See Matthew 26:26-30; 28:19, 20.) Christ also taught the proper observance of the ordinances to Paul. Concerning the Lord's Supper, Paul said he taught them what he "received of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:23). A proper observance of the ordinances demands no deviation, no substitution and no corruption of the truth. The divine pattern remains the only proper observance.

Paul urged the church members to observe a proper order of authority. Christ is the head of the human race by right of creation and redemption. His name is the name above every name. (See Philippians 2:9.) He is the head over all things to each church. (See Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18.) Man is head over the woman. (See Genesis 3:16.) The husband is to be the head of the household. Ephesians 5:23, 24 states, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." The woman is not to take the place of authority over the man in worship. (See 1 Timothy 2:12.) Nothing the woman does should elevate her to a place of superiority over the man in worship. God set the proper order of authority in worship.

Paul challenged the church members to use proper reverence in worship. Psalm 89:7 states, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are

about him." The manner of personal attire reveals an attitude of submission or rebellion. Proper reverence demands every church member dress in a manner that reflects a reverential attitude of submission to God. A man prayed with his head uncovered because his only superior authority in worship is Christ and the church. The woman prayed with her head covered in order to reflect an attitude of submission. Any form of attire that blurs the line of distinction or authority between the man and the woman is inappropriate for worship. The man as head of the household has the responsibility to oversee the manner of dress for his household. When Jacob prepared to bring his family to worship at the altar at Beth-el, he said, "Be clean, and change your garments" (Gen. 35:2). Cleanliness in attire expresses proper reverence for worship.

Paul reminded church members to observe the common practice of the church. The word *custom* means "usage or common practice." Church members should not be so contentious as to try to mount a revolt against the common practices of a church. The man is made for the glory of God, made in the image of God and made different from a woman. The woman is made for the glory of the man, made of the man and made different from a man. Only those church members with a rebellious attitude would mount a personal campaign against the common practices of their churches. If church members continue to submit to the common practices of their churches, the church will continue to honor God with reverence in proper behavior. The only reason to change common practice in a church is when that practice conflicts with the clear teaching of the Bible. When all members observe the common practices of a church, there is no quarrel, strife or dispute in that church.

### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**1 Chronicles 16:27-29.** True worship gives God the glory that is due His name. True worship is beautiful in holiness, in offering, in His presence, in gladness and in power. True worship gives God the glory by recognizing the sacrificial offering by which Jesus gave Himself on the cross. True worship gives God the glory from a redeemed people made holy by Jesus Christ. True worship gives God the glory by coming before His presence with rejoicing. True worship gives God the glory by prayerfully relying on His almighty power. Those who truly worship carry with them an overflowing gladness springing up from within. True worship helps God's people shine brightly in witness and in influence before the world. True worship gives all the glory to God. God gets glory only from true worship.

**John 4:20-24.** Jesus explained true worship in terms of giving glory to the Father. Heathen or pagan worship is ignorant worship. Jesus said, "Ye worship ye know not what." True worship is according to the doctrines of truth by those who have investigated, examined and discovered what God has commanded. Jesus said, "We know what we worship." God gets glory from and seeks people who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. The word *spirit* refers to an attitude of reverence and submission. The word *truth* means "manifest, real, fact, ideal or genuine." God has manifested His doctrines of truth in the Bible. Sound doctrine is the only ideal and genuine message in worship. *True* also means "lawful." *Must* means "necessary or binding." Worship according to sound doctrine is the only type God approves. God demands separation from false worship. (See 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.)

**1 Thessalonians 2:9-12.** True worship requires the preaching of the gospel. True worship demands church members and preachers who are holy, just and above reproach. The biblical qualifications of preachers demand that they "be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour" (1 Tim. 3:2.) A pastor must also "have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (verse 7). Deacons should follow the same high standard. First Timothy 3:10 states, "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless." If male church members are to qualify as candidates for the ministry or for deacons, they must live by the same standard. *Holily* refers to purity from defilement. *Justly* means "righteous in character or in action." *Unblameably* means "faultlessly." Those who participate in true worship should live by a proper behavior before the world and in the sanctuary.

**1 Timothy 3:14-16.** Paul taught Timothy the importance of proper behavior in the house of God. *Know* means "to be aware, to consider, to understand or to be sure." Timothy needed to be sure what constituted proper behavior in worship. *Oughtest* means "necessary." *Behave thyself* refers to turning about in a place or to conduct oneself. Paul's instructions concerning how to behave properly in worship was not just for Timothy but for all the members of a New Testament church. Proper behavior in worship forbids disorder, unruliness, anything inappropriate or anything disgraceful. It also includes the demeanor. The demeanor would include body language such as facial expressions and other expressions of disgust or disapproval. Paul defined acceptable worship as the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Proper behavior in true worship demands men to be distinctively men and women to be distinctively women. Paul addressed hairstyle and attire. Both men and women have the responsibility to honor God by doing what is right in these areas. In worship, the standard is still "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Giving God the glory in such matters settles every question of proper behavior in worship. Each gender should honor God above all others.

Giving God the glory by appropriate behavior in worship raises the question of culture. Glory to God is a higher standard than any culture. *Culture* has become the fashionable word to excuse improper behavior in worship. Those who blindly devote themselves to culture will lose the concept of true worship. Some may love the worship style so much that they lose the concept of God. Culture is the way the world thinks. First John 2:15-17 states, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Culture is often godless or decadent. Culture approves things the world loves in religion. Romans 12:2 states, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." God's standard is different from worldly culture. Isaiah 55:8, 9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Some perceive culture as being more valuable than God's commands. In every culture, proper behavior in worship is that which gives God the glory.

### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

When God's people fail to behave properly in worship, the line between the sacred and the secular is erased. Culture becomes old or outmoded. The concept of giving glory to God by proper behavior in worship will always be God's standard. Modern society forms cultural standards and practices by worldly-minded people who continue to make choices of selfishness, self-seeking and self-fulfillment. When society reaches the point that culture demands what pleases an individual and no one else matters, then that society has made culture its god. People seek to worship on their own terms, a worship that makes no demands on their behavior. Proper behavior in true worship demands church members, pastors and missionaries give God the glory in proper behavior.

Proper behavior in worship rests on the foundation of the absolute values found in the Bible. Worship deteriorates into pagan practices when godly values are discarded for relativism. The term *relativism* is the idea that what is true for one may not be true for another and what is right at one place or time may not be right in another. The Bible must be the guiding principle that converts cultural practices into acceptable behavior for worship that gives glory to God. Ungodly attire and hairstyles may be considered an attitude of rebellion to God. Rebellion is never proper behavior for worship.

## Challenge To Observe the Lord's Supper Worthily

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

**Background Scripture:** Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:7-11.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain different attitudes toward the Lord's Supper.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**Jesus Took Bread,** Matthew 26:26-30.

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus met privately with the charter members of His church. Judas left before Jesus met with Jesus for the Passover meal. The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine were available at the time. Jesus gave the ordinance called the Lord's Supper to His church.

"As they were eating" the Passover meal, Jesus took unleavened bread. He prayed and gave thanks. He said, "This is my body." The unleavened bread is a symbol or a picture designed as a memorial to the body of Jesus. Jesus suffered many wounds, bruises and cuts. He felt the sharp pricks of the thorny crown. He felt every lash as the cruel scourging sliced the flesh to the bone. He endured every blow as they mockingly dared Him to prophesy who struck Him. He accepted the piercing pain of the nails through His hands and feet. He bore up under the humiliation when they spit on Him. He dismissed His spirit before the

sword entered His side. Although the flesh was perforated in many places, no bones were broken. Jesus took the unleavened bread to give His churches a memorial of His body that was given to the death of the cross.

Jesus also took the cup, the fruit of the vine. His blood must have been visible on His brow where the crown of thorns had been crushed down on His head. His back must have seeped blood in many places. His hands and His feet were bloody. He bled from the wound in His side after having sacrificed His blood to do the will of the Father to pay the sin debt of mankind. The fruit of the vine symbolizes the precious blood that Jesus shed purposefully. None of His blood was spilled accidentally. The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine illustrate Jesus' death as a memorial for His churches.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 11:17-34.** The church at Corinth needed some correction and some instruction concerning the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a church

ordinance given by Christ to His church on the last night of His earthly ministry. In spite of its abuses and errors in its Lord's Supper observances, the church at Corinth was still a church. Paul gave it instructions for the Lord's Supper concerning problems to avoid (verses 17-22), practices to follow (verses 23-26) and the proper manner (verses 27-33). The Lord's Supper must be restricted to church members. (See 1 Corinthians 5:11-13.)

Paul mentioned several problems the church members at Corinth should avoid when preparing to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul taught the Lord's Supper was to be observed when a church gathered together as one body in Christ. The Lord's Supper could not be done scripturally if there were divisions in the membership. It was not proper to observe the Lord's Supper if some members approved heresy. Heresy is false doctrine. The Lord's Supper could not be done properly if some church members were drunk. It could not be done properly if some church members approached the memorial church ordinance as a feast or fellowship meal. The Lord's Supper could not be done properly if some members used it as an occasion to boast of things that others did not have. The Lord's house and the Lord's Supper must be treated as different from a church member's house or a feast at a church member's house.

Paul challenged church members to follow scriptural practices when observing the Lord's Supper. Having already stated the Lord's Supper was observed only when a church came together as one body in Christ, Paul went on to declare the essential parts of a scriptural Lord's Supper. Unleavened bread represents the sinless body of Christ. The fruit of the vine or the cup represents the sinless blood of Christ. There is no magical or

mysterious power in the two elements used in the Lord's Supper. They do not literally become the body and blood of Jesus. They have no saving power. They are used only as a symbol and a memorial. The purpose in observing the Lord's Supper is twofold. They are to remember the Lord's death and to remember His promise to come again. When church members keep the death and the promise of the Lord's coming again in view, the Lord's Supper has the elements right according to God's divine pattern.

Church members should approach the Lord's Supper in the proper manner. Each church member should examine himself, starting with his experience of salvation. If genuine, he should consider his baptism. If scriptural, he should consider if he is in good standing with the church. If in good standing, he should consider his motive for observing the Lord's Supper. Church members should observe the Lord's Supper as an act of obedience. *Unworthily* means "to treat the Lord's Supper as a feast or fellowship meal, a common meal rather than a sacred and symbolic memorial." *Damnation* means "condemnation." God will surely judge those who approach the Lord's Supper with the wrong motive or in the wrong manner. *Discerning* means "to make a difference." Since the Lord's Supper deals with the Lord's death, it should be approached with reverence and sincerity according to the biblical pattern. Some church members had been judged by God with sickness or death for taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Church members who examine themselves need not worry about God's judgment.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Mark 14:22-25.** Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in the presence of the eleven apostles, charter members of His

church. Judas had just left. (See John 13:26-30.) Although they had gathered to eat the Passover meal together, Jesus gave His church a new ordinance. The church ordinance called the Lord's Supper was restricted. All church members and all believers were not present. (See Acts 1:15.) Jesus gave the Lord's Supper as a memorial of His death.

**Luke 22:19, 20.** Jesus used the occasion of the Passover meal to prepare His church for His coming death. He had predicted His death on numerous occasions. His apostles did not understand the teaching of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection until after He was risen. He gave the purpose of the Lord's Supper in His words, "This do in remembrance of me." He shed His blood for "you," His church. Acts 20:28 states, "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

**John 15:1-5.** The church member should view the Lord's Supper as a reviving experience, a time of spiritual nourishment. Jesus spoke to His church members by referring to them as branches. These verses contradict the church-branch theory of the Protestants who believe each branch is a different denomination. Each church member is a branch. The Lord's Supper is a memorial that reminds church members of the necessity of abiding in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 5:7-11.** The Lord's Supper is for church members in good standing. Leaven represents sin. If there is sin in a church member's life that requires church discipline, a church needs to take care of the matter before observing the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Table should not be a table of wickedness. A church should not participate in the Lord's Supper with church members guilty of immorality, covetousness,

extortion or false worship if the ordinance is done in purity.

### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

The New Testament teaching concerning the Lord's Supper mandates some necessities. These include participation by members in good standing only in the local church of their membership, unleavened bread and fruit of the vine; it is a memorial when a church is gathered together at the appointed time it has determined. First Corinthians 11:25 states, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it." Like the church at Corinth, every New Testament church has the right to decide when and how often it will observe the Lord's Supper.

There are some obvious misunderstandings about the Lord's Supper. It is not designed for unity among believers. It is not given for Christian unity. It is not a Christian ordinance. It is not a sacrament, that is, it is not for salvation. The blood of Jesus one has received for salvation is not enough to make one worthy to participate in any Lord's Supper. It is not a love feast. It is not a fellowship meal. These misunderstandings about the Lord's Supper lead many to approve the unscriptural practice called open communion.

### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Any alteration from the divine pattern destroys the picture of the Lord's death. The unleavened bread is one loaf that represents Christ's body to the church body. First Corinthians 10:17 states, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." This "we" refers to the local church. It has a number of members who may receive the Lord's Supper at the same time. These act as one body in Christ when participating in the Lord's

Supper together. Church members who participate must discern the Lord's body offered as a sacrifice on Calvary.

Church members benefit from the Lord's Supper by taking a look back at the cross and a look ahead to the coming of the Lord. A look back at the cross motivates and encourages church members to do the work of the Great Com-

mission. (See Matthew 28:19, 20.) A look ahead to the coming of the Lord reminds church members there is a great urgency to work for the Lord while there is opportunity. (See Romans 13:11-14.) Paul challenged the church at Corinth to unite in the reviving experience of the Lord's Supper observed according to the biblical pattern.

Have you placed  your literature order?

## Challenge To Equip Church Members

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31.

**Background Scripture:** Acts 13:1, 2; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; 5:18, 19.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand that spiritual gifts were given to equip the members of the early churches for service.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts,**  
Ephesians 4:12-15.

Christ gave some gifts designed to equip church members for service. These gifts Christ gave His church for the express purpose of fully outfitting each church member for the work of the Lord, for doing the service God had appointed and for building up the New Testament church. Each church member needed Christ's enabling power to labor effectively in his place of service.

Spiritual gifts were necessary to fully equip church members until the Bible was completed. Second Timothy 3:16, 17 states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Until the Bible was completed, church members needed spiritual gifts for several reasons. They needed help to bring God's people into the unity of the faith. They needed greater knowledge of the Son of God. They needed more spiritual maturity. They needed help to nourish childish

church members. They needed to stabilize those who had been tossed by every wind of doctrine. They needed to speak the truth in love. They needed help to assist a church in growing together as a spiritual building fitly joined together. When the Bible was completed, church members were fully equipped, fully outfitted and thoroughly furnished with all they needed for serving the Lord.

God's Word is completely sufficient to enable church members to do God's work and build up a church. James 1:25 states, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." God's Word empowers church members to continue in truth and to be energized in their labors for the Lord.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 12:1-31.** Paul begins a lengthy discussion of spiritual gifts. (See 1 Corinthians 12—14.) Paul explained the purpose of spiritual gifts given to church members in terms of leading them to honor Christ in true worship

(verses 1-3), supplying them for service (verses 4-11), enabling them to labor more effectively (verses 12-22) and helping them grow together as one body in Christ (verses 23-31.) These temporary spiritual gifts were necessary to equip church members for service before the completed Bible was given.

Spiritual gifts helped lead church members to honor Christ in true worship. Church members were not left without knowledge concerning the way of true worship. The Holy Spirit operated in church members at Corinth to keep them from being led into idol worship or any false worship. Spiritual gifts directed church members to recognize, honor and obey Jesus Christ the Lord in true worship and in faithful service.

Spiritual gifts supplied church members so they were fully equipped for service. As a toolbox may have several different tools, there were several different spiritual gifts that church members needed in the infancy of the church age before the Bible was completed. "Gifts" are divinely granted endowments, some of which were miraculous. A "miracle" is an unusual demonstration of God's mighty power. *Administrations* refers to service categories, such as a teacher, a deacon or other official duties. *Operations* means "effects or mighty works." "Manifestation" is exhibition. *Profit* means "to give an advantage." Several spiritual gifts are listed, including the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. "Tongues" were human languages. The Holy Spirit distributed these to various church members as He saw fit.

Spiritual gifts were given to church members to enable them to labor more effectively. Each of the churches at Corinth, Rome, Ephesus and Colossae was one complete body in Christ. (See 1

Corinthians 10:16, 17; Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18.) Ephesians 4:16 states, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." As one complete or whole body of Christ, the church members at Corinth all had necessary significance and value to the church body in their respective roles of service.

Some misinterpret 1 Corinthians 12:13 to teach the heresy called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The church was immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. It is false to assert that any individual ever received baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to His church, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The church Jesus built was immersed in power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of providing strength necessary to fulfill the Great Commission work in the world. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not identical with salvation. The Holy Spirit does not baptize individuals into a universal, invisible body of Christ composed of all the redeemed. There is no such organization in the Bible. Individuals are born into the family of God, not baptized. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is falsely considered by some to be a second blessing. The Holy Spirit immediately indwells the saved person at the point of salvation. This indwelling is complete and full in the sense that one gets all the Holy Spirit at salvation. First Corinthians 12:13 literally means all church members at Corinth were baptized unto one kind of body. This is the local church body, which is one body in Christ with the authority for scriptural baptism. (See Ephesians 4:5.) All church members of the local church body at Corinth were made to drink of the Holy

Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowered the church members at Corinth with spiritual gifts needed to labor effectively until the Bible was completed.

Spiritual gifts helped the church members at Corinth to grow together as one body in Christ. *Tempered* means "combined, mixed or joined." Church members should rejoice together, suffer together and serve together as one body in Christ.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Acts 13:1, 2.** The Holy Spirit gave the church at Antioch divine leadership. He worked through the church members in prophecy and in teaching. "Prophets" were speakers inspired by the Holy Spirit who told forth the will and the way of God more clearly. The gift of prophecy was usually an extended speech that included explanation or description. "Teachers" were instructors who systematically gave the right information about doctrine. Jesus said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). The Holy Spirit worked mightily through church members who served faithfully. *Ministered* means "performing duties in worship, acts of obedience or deeds of benevolence to relieve those in need." The Holy Spirit made known to Paul, Barnabas and to the church at Antioch that God had called Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries.

**Romans 12:3-8.** The church at Rome was one body in Christ. God the Holy Spirit gave spiritual gifts to church members to equip them for service. *Dealt* means "to apportion, to distribute or to divide." God gave certain gifts to some church members and others to other church members. Throughout the whole church body, there were members gifted with the enabling power to do everything necessary for the church to serve God

effectively. Paul gave another inspired list of miraculous spiritual gifts. It includes prophecy, ministering, exhorting, giving, ruling and mercy with cheerfulness. "Exhortation" was comforting or encouraging by going to the side of and praying with another. *Ruleth* means "to stand before, to preside over or to give leadership." *Sheweth mercy* means "have compassion on by virtue of divine grace." The church members were totally equipped to serve God effectively.

**Ephesians 4:7-12.** Church members at Ephesus received various spiritual gifts. They were entrusted with them to fully equip them for service. The "gift" of Christ refers to an offering or a sacrifice. The finished work of Christ included suffering that sinners would have to suffer if they had died without Christ and were tormented in hell. After descending to "the lower parts of the earth" (verse 9), Christ led forth those waiting for their entrance into Heaven. The dead in Christ were in the place called paradise or Abraham's bosom. (See Luke 16:22-31; 23:43.) Jesus has "the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Christ gave "gifts." *Gifts* means "something bestowed or power received." These temporary spiritual gifts were endowments for church members to build up the church before the Bible was completed.

**Ephesians 5:18, 19.** "Be filled with the Spirit" refers to yielding to the Holy Spirit's leadership. Believers receive all of the Holy Spirit at salvation. There is no second blessing. The filling of the Spirit is the believer yielding to God. The believer does not get more of the Holy Spirit. A child of God needs to be filled with the Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit does not refer to a miraculous spiritual gift. The believer who yields to the Holy Spirit or is filled by the Spirit has a greater joy from within. The Spirit-filled believer has a glad heart

that makes him able to rejoice in any circumstance, however difficult.

### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Church members are equipped for service today by the Bible. True Baptists have always held that the Bible is the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. Rather than receiving miraculous spiritual gifts instantly as church members did in New Testament days, it is God's plan to prepare His servants by the study of the Word of God. Second Timothy 2:15 states, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." A "workman" is a toiler, a laborer or a teacher. A workman who tries to use the wrong tools or does not know how to use the right tools will be disgraced. *Rightly dividing* comes from a word that means "to make a straight cut or to dissect, analyze, expound and understand" the Bible correctly. The tools gained by Bible study coupled with a prayerful submission to the Holy Spirit equip church members with every talent and ability needed for a church to do its work effectively.

Church members who turn to the Bible for growth in personal maturity or for greater understanding will not lack any necessary tool for effective service in and through the church of their membership. The Bible is God's permanent and perfect gift that He gave to replace the temporary miraculous spiritual gifts. (See 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.) Second Timothy 3:16, 17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." *Profitable* means "serviceable or beneficial." *Perfect* means "completed." *Thoroughly furnished* means "to fully equip, as a teacher." Church members lack nothing

needed for service. In the Bible, God provided all necessary tools for doing His work. The need for better-equipped church members reflects an alarming degree of spiritual illiteracy by church members. Church members are not powerless without miraculous spiritual gifts. They are more empowered through the Bible.

### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Various church members have different talents and abilities. Greater talents or abilities in one area does not mean church members with those are more important than those who do not excel in those same things. All the talents and all the abilities of all the church members are necessary for a church to function effectively to accomplish the work God has commanded to be done. Pastors, deacons, teachers, adults and young people should encourage each church member to use his talents and abilities for the glory of God. Too many are sitting back with talents and abilities that are unused because they have not been asked. Church work should never be a one-man operation. Every church member has important talents and abilities that God can use to further the cause of Christ.

Church members who have the proper understanding of the Lesson Text will not fall into the trap of the charismatics. The church member who rightly divides the Scripture understands that the time and place for the use of miraculous spiritual gifts was in the infancy of the church age before the Bible was completed. The fascination for the miraculous spiritual gifts popularizes a quest for gifts God does not give today. However, Satan is in the business of giving people what they want in false religion. Church members who are Bible trained are totally equipped to serve God through a New Testament church.

## Challenge To Accept the Greatest Gift

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

**Background Scripture:** John 3:14-18; 14:21-28; Romans 5:5-8; 8:35-39; Ephesians 2:1-5; Revelation 1:1-5.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will conclude that love is the greatest gift.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**God Is Love,** 1 John 4:8.

God gave the greatest gift for the greatest good of the greatest number of people. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God offers the gift of His love to every person. Salvation is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive. Second Corinthians 9:15 states, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." God's gift of love in Christ Jesus accomplishes the great good of reconciling sinful man with a just, holy and righteous God. Salvation is much more than an escape from hell. Those who are born again have a personal relationship with God based on His great love.

God is love. God's character and attributes set Him apart from all others. God is light and truth. He is the source of real love. *Love* means "to dote on after having made a deliberate choice." Romans 5:8 states, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God loves all unbelievers as a

matter of character, principle, will and duty. God could not be God if He were not love and if He did not love unbelievers. God loves with sensitivity, intelligence and consideration. God loves unbelievers, but He does not love their sins. God's love for unbelievers is so great that He did not spare His only Son. Romans 8:32 states, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" God's love is complete, unconditional and available to every unbeliever for salvation.

God loves His children. Every child of God may rest secure in the fact that God loves him eternally. Romans 8:38, 39 states, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's gift of love enabled Him to give Himself, for He is love.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 13:1-13.** Paul categorized spiritual gifts into groups. He

taught that love is the greatest gift (verses 1-7), some are temporary gifts (verses 8-10) and some are abiding gifts (verses 11-13). This inspired commentary on the subject of spiritual gifts helped the church members at Corinth to view, to understand and to value spiritual gifts the same way God does.

Paul described love as the greatest gift. He compared it to the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, the gift of understanding mysteries, the gift of knowledge and to the gift of faith. The gift of "tongues" means languages. *Though I speak* means "if." If a man could speak like an angel, it would be wasted without the gift of love. It is falsely asserted that there is a devotional language of angels by which some people speak praises to God. See the previous lesson concerning the error of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul concluded love is greater than all other spiritual gifts. Other spiritual gifts without love remain as valueless as an indistinct trumpet blast or a cymbal crash. One's self-sacrifice without love leaves him as worthless as a nobody. Good deeds and selfless compassion for needy humanity without love remains as profitless as a zero. Love is long-suffering, kind, not envious, does not exalt itself and does not have too high an opinion of itself. Love always behaves properly and appropriately, seeks to help others, refuses to be provoked and does not think evil of others. Love does not delight in evil doing. Love rejoices in truth. Love bears up under difficult burdens, continues to believe, rests in hope and cheerfully endures all circumstances. Love is the greatest gift. (See 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13.)

Paul instructed the church members at Corinth concerning the temporary spiritual gifts. Temporary spiritual gifts were given to aid the New Testament churches until the completion of the

Word of God. Paul said, "Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor. 13:8). Paul used three expressions to explain the temporary nature of miraculous spiritual gifts. *Fail* means "to become useless, be abolished, cease or be done away." *Cease* means "to be restrained, to quit or to come to an end." *Vanish away* is the same word as "fail." Temporary spiritual gifts were given as partial messages from God. They were much like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. When God gave the Bible, He gave the whole truth. The Bible completed the puzzle of God's revelation. There is no further need for the temporary gifts. God's Word is "the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). Some incorrectly attempt to identify the perfect thing that was to come as the second coming of Christ. When the Bible was completed about AD 100, God withdrew the temporary miraculous spiritual gifts.

Paul referred to spiritual immaturity and the need to mature in the Lord. Paul matured after three years of personal instruction by the Lord. He urged church members at Corinth to be mature enough to seek the greatest gift. A child of God who looks into the Bible will find his condition as clearly revealed as a face in a mirror. When the Bible was completed, Paul understood he would be able to see himself as God saw him. After the completion of the Bible, only three spiritual gifts abide. Of those three, the greatest spiritual gift is love.

### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**John 3:14-18.** Jesus went to Calvary as the gift of God for salvation. Salvation also will keep men from perishing in

hell. God's plan involved Jesus' being lifted up on the cross. (See Galatians 3:13.) Jesus became the Lamb of God sacrificed to pay the sin debt of humanity in full. God loves sinful men so much that He gives them the opportunity to repent, trust and ask God for salvation. Those who die unsaved will spend eternity in hell forever.

**John 14:21-28.** God loves obedience. Those who love God demonstrate their love by obeying His commands. Judas Iscariot did not understand God's love. God's love abides within His children. God's love brings comfort, peace and rejoicing. God's great love provided the Holy Spirit as another divine guide for His churches.

**Romans 5:5-8.** God showers His love in the hearts of His children. Children of God know the love of God in them by the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Heroic people would choose to die for a good cause or for others deemed worthy. God sent His Son Jesus to die for those who were unworthy, ungodly and unrighteous. God loves sinners.

**Romans 8:35-39.** God's love is a permanent gift to all His children. Who shall "separate us from the love of Christ?" No one can. Who can defeat those who are loved by Christ? No one can. What circumstance has the ability to render God's love unimportant? There is none. God's love is permanently implanted in the hearts of His children.

**Ephesians 2:1-5.** God's love is evident in His great mercy. His love is greater than the sinfulness of all unbelievers. God loves the disobedient, the ones whose lives are controlled by the devil and the ones who are trapped in sexual addiction or other fleshly lusts. God loves every sinner. God has the abil-

ity to save any sinner by grace through faith.

**Revelation 1:1-5.** The testimony of Christ reveals the great love of God. The testimony of Jesus reveals a God who loves mankind so much that He is willing to wash "us from our sins in his own blood" (verse 5). *Washed* means "to destroy, dissolve or melt." "Sins" are offenses toward God or anything that misses the mark of God's holy standard for morality or doctrine. Jesus' blood is the only stain remover for sin.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Love fulfills God's commands. As the greatest virtue, love enables the child of God to reflect Christ more than anything else. Galatians 5:6, 7 states, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Love works for God according to the truth. Ephesians 4:15 states, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Although there is much being touted as godly love by followers of false religion, real love for God must be found in a New Testament church. When people do not love the truth, anything they say is suspect. Church members who love God should have such a great love that it outshines anything that passes for godly love.

Jesus lived the life of love. It bears repeating that Jesus is the perfect example of love. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.) The passage may be read with His name substituted for "charity" in order to get the deepest significance of the text. Jesus' life makes an obvious contrast with anything else that is called love. Church members who want to shine for

Jesus need to let His love work through them.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The many problems of the world reveal a genuine need for God's love to be shed abroad. The problems of a lack of peace, violence, the shedding of innocent blood and the rampant wickedness on display illustrate a culture devoted to ungodliness even while seeking to be loved. Mankind still needs to be pointed to the truth that love must be defined in terms of Jesus Christ.

Love is an action word. Love sent Jesus to the cross. Love held Him there. Love caused Him to sacrifice His blood for the whole world, including those who do not want to hear about Jesus. Jesus

considered love a great enough motive to willingly give His life for others. He did not meet some needs or any needs, Jesus met the world's greatest need of a Savior.

Church members need to use the three abiding spiritual gifts of faith, hope and love in faithful service to God until Jesus comes. Those who truly reflect godly love will live by standards that God has given in the Bible. Church members may move forward in the power of God to witness of the love of Christ to a world hopelessly tangled in sin. Even in failure, persecution or discouragement, church members may find love the only motive to help them continue to serve God in these troubled times. God's greatest gift is still needed today.

**It's later than you think.**



**Order now!**

## Challenge To Understand Spiritual Gifts

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 14:1-22.

**Background Scripture:** Matthew 7:21-23; Acts 8:14-21; James 1:16, 17.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss abuses of spiritual gifts then and now.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**Establishing the Saints,** Romans 1:11-13.

Paul attempted to establish and equip the church at Rome by using his spiritual gifts. Paul did not have the Bible to establish and equip church members. Paul referred to spiritual gifts he could share with them. *Impart* means “to give, to share or to transfer to another.” Paul could not impart the power of the Holy Spirit or miraculous spiritual gifts to others. Paul had a responsibility to use his own talents and abilities to strengthen that church. Paul’s “spiritual gifts” were non-carnal mental attitudes or principles of behavior formed by the leadership of the Holy Spirit. “Gifts” were of divine or human origin. God intends a preacher’s talents and abilities to strengthen the Lord’s churches. (See Ephesians 4:11, 12.) Paul had a great opportunity to share spiritual attitudes and principles of behavior that would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the church at Rome.

Every church needs to be established in purpose and in doctrine. *Established* means “to be steadfast, to strengthen, to confirm, to be solid, to be stable or to turn in a certain direction.” Church members need to take a stand concerning

the purpose of the church. (See Matthew 28:18-20.) Great Commission work is still the only purpose God has given New Testament churches. Church members need to be steadfast in sound doctrine. Ephesians 4:14, 15 states, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Churches that are established in purpose and in doctrine “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Established churches have the ability to make informed decisions in the will of God that bear much fruit.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 14:1-22.** Paul instructed the church at Corinth concerning the proper perspective of spiritual gifts. He explained the value of the gift of prophecy (verses 1-5), the value of understanding (verses 6-11), the value of strengthening that church (verses 12-17) and the value of spiritual maturity (verses 18-22). The immature church members at

Corinth placed the wrong value on spiritual gifts.

The value of the gift of prophecy rests in words that edify, exhort and comfort. *Edification* means “to build up, to dome up as in an architectural structure or a temple.” The doming-up process of teaching God’s truth builds up the Lord’s churches. Any practice designed to exalt individual church members will not build up a church. *Exhortation* means “to invite, to beseech or to challenge.” When God’s truths are taught, church members are challenged to do God’s will. “Comfort” is encouragement. The Word of God gives encouragement to discouraged church members. Spiritual gifts were not given to exalt individual church members. God distributed spiritual gifts for the purpose of better equipping the church to do God’s will. The phrase *unknown tongue* refers to human languages that the hearers could not understand. Paul valued the gift of prophecy because it enabled church members to be built up by instruction and encouragement from God.

Paul emphasized the value of understanding. *Profit* means “usefulness, benefit or advantage.” There is no profit in the gift of revelation, the gift of knowledge, the gift of prophecy or the presentation of sound doctrine if the hearer is unable to understand the message. The word *tongues* refers to human languages. Musical instruments may be skillfully played so that melodies are recognized. The trumpet call may sound out the command to retreat or to charge. Soldiers who understand the trumpet call have the ability to do what is commanded. Church members cannot obey God’s commands unless they are given in an understandable language. “Voices” are tones, noise, sounds or languages. “Signification” is meaning or understanding. A “barbarian” is a foreigner who speaks another

language. Every church member needs to understand God’s message.

Paul reminded the church members at Corinth of the value of strengthening the church. Church members who excel work to strengthen the church. *Excel* means “to abound in quantity or quality.” Church members should pray for and seek those things that enable them to build up a church. A message in a “tongue” or human language must be interpreted in order to be fruitful or useful for the church. “Unfruitful” is barren. Praying, singing, teaching and preaching can be fruitful only when the message is understood. The word *unlearned* comes from a word that looks like the English word *idiot*. It refers to one who does not know much. *Amen* means “truly, surely or so be it.” Amens have great value in affirming or confirming one’s belief in the message preached. Even expressions of thanksgiving will not build up church members if they do not understand what has been said.

Paul valued spiritual maturity. He encouraged church members to use five understandable words rather than ten thousand that could not be understood. *Be not children in understanding* refers to spiritual immaturity. “Malice” is evil or wickedness. Church members should be as innocent as small children concerning the ways of wickedness. Paul challenged church members to be mature in understanding God’s message. Paul quoted an Old Testament passage to prove the value of spiritual maturity. Isaiah 28:11, 12 states, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.” Like Israel, church members are sometimes so immature that they refuse to hear and heed God’s message. Before the Bible was completed, the gift of tongues was

given for the benefit of unbelievers who spoke other languages so that they might hear and believe God's message in their own language. The gift of prophecy was given for church members to understand God's message. Spiritual maturity requires church members to know and do God's will.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 7:21-23.** There is great power and authority in the name of Jesus. Some who use the name *Jesus* do not do so by His power or by His authority. Power to do miraculous things comes from two sources. God enabled church members to use miraculous spiritual gifts before the Bible was completed. Unbelievers may do miraculous works by Satan's power. "Wonderful works" are deeds by miraculous power. The miracle workers Jesus described did not know the Lord as their personal Savior. Their miraculous power must have come from Satan. Satan gave his servants the ability to prophesy, to cast out devils and to do miraculous works. Even though the devil is able to give his servants miraculous power, they are unable to resist the power of God. All unbelievers including those who do miraculous deeds by Satan's power will spend eternity in hell. There are many religious people and some who are called miracle workers who do not have a personal relationship with God. "Iniquity" is wickedness that transgresses the law. It is wicked for people to claim to know Christ, to claim to worship Him and to claim to do miracles by His power when they are unsaved.

**Acts 8:14-21.** Each of these Samaritans were born again and scripturally baptized with the exception of Simon the sorcerer. Simon made a false profession of faith. His false profession rendered his baptism null and void. Simon revealed a greedy, unrepentant heart by disclosing

his desire to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans were indwelt by the Holy Spirit in His totality at the moment of their salvation. *Receive the Holy Ghost* refers to the energizing power the Holy Spirit gave church members for the work God commanded them to do. *Fallen upon* means "to light upon." The Holy Spirit empowering of the whole church on Pentecost was a once-for-all event that was never repeated. This passage of Scripture does not teach a second blessing, the erroneous belief that after salvation one may get more of the Holy Spirit. This passage does not teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These Samaritan church members were energized by the Holy Spirit or filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to do miraculous things to confirm their testimony of Jesus Christ and the message of salvation.

**James 1:16, 17.** James encouraged followers of Jesus not to err. *Err* means "to go astray or to wander out of the way of truth." There are many errors concerning a misunderstanding of the purpose and duration of miraculous spiritual gifts. God gave temporary miraculous spiritual gifts to equip His churches until He gave the completed Bible as a permanent and perfect gift. The permanent gift of the Bible replaced the temporary miraculous spiritual gifts. The Bible is a good and perfect gift that came from Heaven. James used the word *gift* to refer to something given. *Perfect* means "complete, of full age or mature." The temporary miraculous spiritual gifts were given to equip the churches in the infancy of the church age. The Bible was given as a perfect gift to equip the churches throughout the duration of the church age. Every perfect gift is from God. The *Father of lights* refers to the luminous shining forth of God's great glory. While God has "no variableness"

in that He does not change, He does change His methods of operation.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

God ceased using miraculous spiritual gifts with the completion of the Bible about AD 100. (See 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.) The key verse for this lesson reveals God's desire for church members. First Corinthians 14:12 states, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." The fascination with miraculous spiritual gifts revived around the turn of the twentieth century. Since God has ceased working by this method, one may be sure that the fascination with miraculous spiritual gifts is of demonic origin. Miraculous things by demonic power will not build up the Lord's churches.

The relevance of this key verse rests on the need for church members to seek to build up the church of their membership. Few church members excel according to God's viewpoint. Many church members may be considered to excel by human reasoning. Faithfulness to sit on a pew may be considered by some to be excellence. Giving a large offering may be considered by some to be excellence. While faithful attendance and systematic giving are parts of God's plan for church members, God expects more from those who excel. (See Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 16:2.) Every word, every lesson taught, every practice, every sermon should be carefully scrutinized with regard to its effect on a church. Church members who excel must say, "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things" (Prov. 8:6). Each church member should ask himself, am I building up the church? The sound preachers of a previous generation believed and taught the doming-up process of "teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:20). God adds His power and blessings upon churches and church members who build up churches by presenting biblical truths "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:13).

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The charismatic movement may be recognized as people who promote the use of spiritual gifts today. One such gift is miracles. Pastors and members of New Testament churches should avoid terms and expressions charismatics use. One such expression to be avoided is "God told me to do this," implying that God spoke to them audibly. This is extra-biblical revelation. Because the Bible is complete and the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, church members and pastors would be wise to avoid this pitfall of the devil. God's revelation is complete. No extra-biblical revelation is inspired of God, whether it is called tongues, prophecy, knowledge or discernment. Note that those who have embraced and promoted the statement "God told me to do this" have departed from the faith. They have given God credit for things He has not done.

What is lacking in many churches is a sound, solid and thorough biblical instructional program that is conducive to spiritual growth. A biblically knowledgeable church membership is potentially a strong church. Philippians 1:10 states, "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." It is vital that church members approve only those things that God approves.

## Challenge To Emphasize Priorities

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 14:23-40.

**Background Scripture:** Matthew 6:33; Mark 13:10; Romans 1:16; 15:17-20; 2 Corinthians 8:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20; 1 John 4:6; Revelation 1:11, 17.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand the priority of decency and order in the Lord's churches.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**The Preeminent One,** Colossians 1:18.

When priorities are considered, Jesus must be first! He is the head, the One at the head of the line. *Preeminence* means "first in rank, time, place or importance." He is the first to be considered in every decision. Church members should first ask themselves the following questions. What would Jesus do? Would this please God? Does this put God first? Every church member should give Jesus the preeminence in all things.

If Jesus is the preeminent One in all things, He must be honored above all others. Every decision in a church should honor the Lord. Jesus is the head of each New Testament church. In the same way that the head controls the physical body, Jesus Christ commands, controls, directs and empowers each church to accomplish His work. (See Matthew 28:19, 20.) A church is a local, visible body of scripturally baptized believers who have covenanted together for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission by New Testament principles. Jesus is preeminent in the church He built because

He "loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Jesus loved the church so much that He purchased it "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). His will should be a greater priority than any other.

Jesus is the beginning. *Beginning* means "chief cornerstone or head of the corner." Ephesians 2:20 states, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." Every life, every family, every church and every nation built on Christ the foundational Rock and chief cornerstone will endure the test of time. Matthew 7:24, 25 states, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Jesus the first resurrected to remain alive forever must be preeminent in all things.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 14:23-40.** Paul instructed the church members at Corinth concerning right priorities. He explained the priority in purpose (verses 23-25),

the priority in understanding (verses 26-31), the priority in self-control (verses 32, 33), the priority in authority (verses 34, 35) and the priority in orderliness (verses 36-40). *Priority* means "to come first in order of importance." The church at Corinth did not worship decently and in order when it failed to observe these priorities.

The priority in purpose for church worship must be the clearly understandable, correct and convincing praise to God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The babble of confusion achieved by multiple church members speaking at once cannot bring glory to God. "Tongues" then were languages, but heretics now call tongues ecstatic utterances. These are usually gibberish. *Mad* means "to rave as a maniac." When several church members speak at once, visitors look on such confusion as if it is the product of raving maniacs. To "prophecy" is to forthtell the Word of God. When a church member speaks forth the truth, a visitor whether lost or saved may be convicted by the Holy Spirit. The priority in church worship is that people should be saved, the saved will acknowledge the truth, and people will respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Each church should place a priority on understanding in public worship. At Corinth, several members had something different to say at the same time. Some had a favorite song, others a favorite doctrine, some spoke in tongues, some tried to make an explanation and others tried to translate the tongues. Understanding required place and time in priority so that each could be received. Tongues speakers should have spoken one at a time. God's rules limited tongues speaking to no more than three in any one service with the demand that each should be translated so that all could understand what had been said. Those with the gift of prophecy were

also limited to three so that all could intelligently receive the teaching. When any church member is speaking, all others should wait until he has finished before another begins to speak. When there is a priority on understanding, all present can learn.

The priority of self-control gives dignity and meaning to worship. Heretical tongues speakers act as if they are out of control. In the days before the Bible was completed, this was not so. Paul stated each person who spoke in tongues was so well in control that he could wait his turn to speak. There is a great deal of difference between faith and foolishness. *Confusion* means "disorder or tumult." The priority of self-control helps church members worship God without commotion or confusion.

The priority of authority helps retain order in worship. Women were not to speak in tongues in public worship. Many heretical tongues speakers today are women. God's order of authority is clear. (See Ephesians 5:23, 24.) Men church members should answer their wives' questions at home. Women should not usurp the authority of men in true worship. (See 1 Timothy 2:12.) The priority of authority helps maintain dignity and order in worship.

The priority of orderliness demands church members to honor God's rules of order. Each one of several church members in Corinth thought he was the only one with a message from God. Each thought he was the most spiritual member of that church. Paul reminded them that spiritual church members were those who followed God's guidelines as He gave them. When God's guidelines are not followed, all that is left is the confusion of ignorant worship. *Covet* means "earnestly desire." When God's rules were observed, church members were permitted to prophesy or speak in tongues before the Bible was completed.

(See 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.) God's priority of orderliness in true worship should be observed with decency, dignity and devotion to God.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 6:33.** Church members should put God's kingdom work first. God's kingdom work in this age is the work of His churches. (See Matthew 28:19, 20.) Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount to the members of the church He built during His personal ministry. *Seek* means "to pursue or to follow after." The Lord's work must come first.

**Mark 13:10.** The priority of the work of the Lord's churches must be the preaching of the gospel. New Testament churches should make God's mandate for global missions their top priority.

**Romans 1:16.** God's priority in sending forth the gospel was "to the Jew first." The unfolding record of the spread of the gospel through the book of Acts reveals the gospel first to the Jews then to the Gentiles. Although God's priority goes to the Jews first, He sends forth the gospel to every person.

**Romans 15:17-20.** Paul gave glory to God by word and deed through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the gospel remained the first priority in Paul's ministry and mission work. Paul counted the preaching of the gospel more important than miracles or any other thing.

**2 Corinthians 8:5.** The members of the churches of Macedonia had a priority in their belief about sacrificial giving. They gave themselves first. After giving themselves to the Lord and after giving themselves to be fellow laborers with Paul, they rejoiced over their opportunity to give liberally to help the church members at Jerusalem.

**1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20.** Church members should make a priority of following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. *Quench* means "to extinguish." *Despise* means "to make nothing of or to lightly esteem." Yielding to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and heeding the teaching of the Word of God should be of great importance to every church member.

**1 John 4:6.** Church members should make a priority of truth. Those in error have not made a priority of hearing and obeying God's truth. There can be no substitute or no improvement to God's commands or methods.

**Revelation 1:11, 17.** Jesus revealed His preeminence by saying, "I am the first." *Alpha* is the first letter in the Greek alphabet. Jesus reminded the apostle John to keep Jesus as his top priority. Jesus is first in time, place, rank and importance.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Church members should participate in an orderly manner in true worship. Although the Bible has been completed and miraculous spiritual gifts are no longer a part of true worship, church members still must have order in worship. At Corinth, some members were aggressive, intolerant, self-seeking and prideful. These strong-willed church members demanded others listen to them first and honor them. The desire to be more important than others and the selfish goal of being more important than others was not a new problem. The church Jesus built faced the same problem. (See Matthew 20:20-28.) Churches today have instructions to deal with the same problem. (See Philippians 2:1-4.) Church members who have a priority of order in true worship will glorify God by keeping Jesus first.

Paul gave principles of order for public worship that still apply. Worship must have the priority of gospel preaching in truth so that each hearer may be convicted and drawn to respond to God. Everything in worship must be done to build up a church. Everything said in worship must be understood. If it cannot be translated or the meaning understood, then it must not be included in worship. Church members should speak one at a time in worship and even in business meeting. When a previous speaker has finished, another may speak. Every church member should exercise self-control in order to maintain order in worship. Women should not be given authority over men in worship. True worship should have the priority of decency and order.

#### **CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION**

Every church member should seek to actively participate in worship. Worship includes preaching, teaching, giving, praying, singing. Because the Bible is complete, true worship no longer includes the miraculous gift of tongues, prophecy, interpretation or revelation. Participation by every church member

counts in worship. An order of service gives church members a clear idea of what to expect in worship. A disorganized worship will result in some church members participating a lot and some little. Church members may become more like spectators instead of active participants. True worship requires each member participating by his presence, attention, talents and offering.

Orderly worship includes a priority of reverence. Adult and teen behavior during prayer time, congregational singing, the offering, teaching or preaching should reflect reverence for God, God's house and for true worship. God commands, "Reverence my sanctuary" (Lev. 26:2.) Amens are an excellent way to reverently express agreement with truth sung, taught or preached. Psalm 89:7 states, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Reverence in orderly worship includes cheerful giving, heartfelt singing, quiet attentiveness in preaching, serious praying and brokenness in yielding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and responding to the invitation.

## Challenge To Live by Resurrection Power

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-34.

**Background Scripture:** Matthew 28:1-6; John 11:23-28; Acts 1:21-23; 24:14-16.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will evaluate the impact of the resurrection of Christ on their lives.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**The Power of His Resurrection,** Philippians 3:10, 11.

The power of the resurrection transforms the believer's life. However, all children of God and all church members do not live by His resurrection power. Some live discouraged, downcast and disheartened lives defeated by circumstances as if God is too weak to make a real difference in their lives. The power of Jesus' resurrection reveals God's great strength to do mighty works in the lives of His people.

Church members should understand Him better. The power of the resurrection produces a mighty transformation in the lives of those who rely on God. The confidence in God who does all things comes by knowing more about Him. Paul's desire for the church members at Ephesus was that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he

wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:18-20). Those who know Christ rely on Him more.

The resurrection power enables church members to have intimate fellowship with Him. Even in times of suffering, each church member may open his heart to Christ for sweet fellowship. Revelation 3:20 states, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Fellowship with Christ in suffering enables church members to draw on His resurrection power.

Resurrection power enables them to reflect on Him. The resurrection power helps them overcome personality flaws and character defects in order to be more like Christ. Resurrection power meets their needs at any time.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 15:1-34.** Paul challenged the church members at Corinth to live by the resurrection power of Christ. He explained the doctrine of the resur-

rection (verses 1-11), the doubts some had about the resurrection (verses 12-19), the definite order of the resurrection (verses 20-28) and the dead in Christ and the resurrection (verses 29-34). He urged them to consider the impact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on their lives.

Paul taught and preached the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He knew the gospel was to be declared. *Declared* means "to make known, to understand or to certify as genuine." Every person who trusts in Christ for salvation knows the resurrection of Jesus Christ is genuine. Jesus lives within the heart of the believer. The doctrine of the resurrection is a foundation of strength on which God's people may stand secure. The gospel is defined in terms of "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Jesus made several post-resurrection appearances that proved by many witnesses that He had risen from the dead. Paul and the other apostles preached the soul-saving and life-transforming power of the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Every person should believe the gospel which includes the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul understood some had doubts about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Some of the church members at Corinth had doubts about the resurrection of Christ. Paul knew some did not understand how valuable the resurrection of Christ was. He offered logical arguments to show the absurdity of not believing in the doctrine of the resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ identifies the Savior, or there is no Savior. If there is no doctrine of the resurrection, gospel preaching and Bible teaching are a waste of time. If

there is no doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then preachers, teachers and witnesses of Christ are deceivers. If there is no resurrection, no one can be saved. If there is no doctrine of the resurrection, no one has his sins forgiven. If there is no doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, then the dead in Christ died without any real hope. Paul refers to the dead in Christ as those "asleep in Christ." *Perished* means "to be totally destroyed or to lose all." Paul ended his logical arguments in favor of the reality and importance of the resurrection by concluding that the power of the resurrection gives hope in this life and in the life to come.

Paul explained the definite order of the doctrine of the resurrection. The resurrection follows the order of the barley harvest in Israel. There were firstfruits, the main harvest and the gleaning. Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection. The main harvest is the first resurrection. It is also called the resurrection unto life or the rapture. The rapture will be a complete rapture. Paul said, "They that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23). The gleaning includes all the Jews and Gentiles who will be saved after the rapture occurs. The doctrine of the resurrection assures the total defeat of every enemy of God including sin, the flesh, the devil, the anti-Christ, the forces of the nations that fight at the Battle of Armageddon and those who would fight against God at the battle of Gog and Magog. The doctrine of the resurrection assures every person in Christ that every enemy of God will be defeated.

Paul explained the doctrine of the resurrection and its impact on the dead in Christ. Paul did not teach a living person could be baptized on behalf of someone who had already died. Paul continued his what if questions that logically proved the necessity of the doctrine of the resurrection. Why did the dead in Christ fol-

low the Lord in scriptural baptism during their lives on earth to picture the resurrection if there is no resurrection? Why did Paul continue to preach the doctrine of the resurrection which some hated enough to kill him? Why had some died in the arena fighting against wild beasts as sport for unbelievers if the resurrection were not true? If there is no doctrine of the resurrection, Paul suggested the Epicurean doctrine of eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die would be a better way to live. He challenged them not to allow anyone to deceive them about the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection. The church members at Corinth evidently had fellowship with some that did not believe the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Evil communications* refers to wicked companions. *Good manners* means "ethics." Paul urged them to wake up to the truth about the doctrine of the resurrection.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 28:1-6.** After Jesus' body lay three nights and three days in the grave, an angel testified of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. The faithful women who had been last at the cross were the first to arrive at the empty tomb. God certified the truth of the resurrection by an earthquake as a sign from Heaven, by an angel as a messenger from Heaven and a message from Heaven. The message of the resurrection was in simple, clear and understandable terms. The angel said, "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matt 28:5, 6). The angel offered the women the proof of the empty tomb. The faithful women were the first ones whom God permitted to know the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were charged with the responsibility to tell the

good news of the gospel. (See Matthew 28:7.)

**John 11:23-28.** Jesus spoke to Martha concerning His resurrection power. Martha believed in the doctrine of the resurrection. Jesus assured Martha the resurrection was more than a doctrine. He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). The resurrection is a divine expression of who Jesus is. Jesus is the eternal God. *Resurrection* means "the dead stand up." Martha testified of her belief in the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection for every believer. The basis for Martha's belief in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ rested on the basis of her belief that "thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (verse 27). Jesus proved His resurrection power before Martha, Mary and many others by raising Lazarus from the dead. (See verses 29-48.) The resurrection power of Christ and the doctrine of the resurrection give comfort to bereaved family members of the dead in Christ.

**Acts 1:21-23.** Peter listed some qualifications he considered important for a replacement for Judas Iscariot. One qualification was faithfulness. Some had been so faithful to the Lord's church that they had been "with us all the time" (Acts 1:21). Another qualification was firsthand knowledge of Jesus "beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us" (verse 22). The third qualification Peter listed was one who could be a witness of His resurrection. There were two candidates who met Peter's qualifications. Church members who would live by resurrection power today need these same three qualifications. Every church member should be faithful always, have great personal knowledge of Jesus and be a witness for the risen Lord.

**Acts 24:14-16.** After being arrested and given an opportunity to speak in his own defense, Paul confessed to believing in the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ. He realized some Jews who were Sadducees considered the doctrine of the resurrection to be heresy. *Heresy* means “a doctrine one took for oneself or to be carried away with like a ship under a strong wind and full sail.” They considered Paul a traitor and a teacher of false doctrine. Paul hated false doctrine. Ephesians 4:14 states, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” The Bible doctrine of the resurrection teaches a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto death. Paul revealed the impact of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ on his life. He said, “I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). Paul knew the resurrection meant he would stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Paul's life after salvation, his scriptural baptism and his ministry focused on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He said, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). The power of the gospel reveals Jesus is a living Savior. He arose from the grave by the resurrection power of God. Many did not believe in the resurrection in Paul's day. God's plan for the resurrection is for His children to live forever and be with Him forever in glorified bodies. As Jesus was resurrected once, each person will be resurrected only once. The relevance of the doctrine of the resurrection affects the future of every person. Those who are saved will

have a part in the resurrection of life and the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who die without Jesus as their personal Savior will have a part in the resurrection unto death and the Great White Throne Judgment. The doctrine of the resurrection gives hope and the promise of a better life ahead for those in Christ.

The resurrection disproves many popular doctrinal errors. Some believe in soul sleep even though the Bible reveals believers and unbelievers are awake, alert and aware of their personal condition after death. (See Luke 16:22-25.) Others believe in reincarnation in spite of the fact that in every case people who had died were still known as people. Samuel did not become a rock after he died. Enoch and Elijah did not become dogs after they died. There is no justification in the Bible for a belief in reincarnation. Some believe in being baptized for the dead. There is no example in the Bible and no Scripture that teaches one may be baptized on behalf of a dead relative in order to change their eternal destiny. Once life is ended, one's eternal destiny is sealed. (See Luke 16:26; Revelation 22:11.) The belief in the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an either/or proposition for all. Those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ must reject all other beliefs.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The Bible teaches the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Modern thinking demands toleration for and acceptance of different cultures, ideas and beliefs. Some cultures are ungodly. Some ideas and beliefs are absurd. Those who know Jesus as personal Savior must risk being labeled “intolerant” rather than accept false standards, false moral principles and false doctrine. Second Corinthians 6:16, 17 states, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living

God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The resurrection power enables church members to take a stand for the absolute truths of the Bible in an age when popular thinking denies there are any absolutes.

The doctrine of the resurrection sets New Testament churches apart from all other religious groups. While other religious groups focus on making holy places of their leaders' burial places, New Testament churches focus on the gospel of the risen Lord. While others follow dead leaders, church members follow a living Lord. The doctrine of the resurrection reveals a power that enables followers of Christ to shine as lights in a world darkened by spiritual ignorance.

## Challenge to Victory

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

**Background Scripture:** Job 19:23-27; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand that ultimate victory comes in the resurrected body.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**Mortal Bodies Quickened,** Romans 8:11.

The indwelling Holy Spirit assures the believer there is life with Christ after death. The new life of salvation begins by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no victory if the believer is not sure of his salvation. If a person were shocked by electricity, he would know it. If one received an injection, he would know it. When one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Bible teaches one can know it. Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). When a person is saved, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit promises every believer there will be a resurrection unto life.

The Holy Spirit has the power to resurrect those who have died. *Quicken* means "to make alive or to give life." *Mortal* means "subject to death." *Bodies* means "physical or whole body." Death is not the end. For those in Christ, there remains great comfort and great rejoicing. John 11:25 states, "He that believeth

in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Believers have much more to gain by death than they lose.

John 11:26 states, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." When believers are given their resurrected bodies, they will never die again. Children of God are not subject to the second death, also called the resurrection unto death. God's power resurrects the dead.

God's promise that the Holy Spirit "shall also quicken your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11) gives children of God a guarantee that death is not the end. First John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 15:35-58.** Paul explained the victory that comes with the resurrection for those in Christ. The doctrine of the resurrection teaches victory for the dead in Christ (verses 35-50) and for those alive in Christ at the time of the rapture (verses 51-58.) Paul's inspired explanation concerning the victory of the

resurrection has given comfort throughout succeeding generations.

The doctrine of the resurrection promises victory for the dead in Christ. Paul taught the resurrection in agricultural terms of sowing and harvest. The dead in Christ are planted in a grave in a similar manner to seed planted in a garden. The dead seed brings forth new life by virtue of God's blessings on the seed, soil and necessary water. God's power brings forth the dead in Christ with new life. The new life is far superior to this life. *Corruption* means "decay, perish or ruin." *Incorruption* means "unending existence or immortality." *Dishonor* means "disgrace or shame." *Glory* means "honorable or praiseworthy." "Weakness" is disease or infirmity. *Power* means "abundant might or wonderful strength." A "natural body" is an earthly, human or fleshly body. A "spiritual body" is a nonhuman or supernatural body. In spite of the fact that the first Adam sinned, Jesus the second Adam was resurrected from the dead. There are two kinds of life, the natural and the spiritual. The natural man's nature desires earthly or worldly things. The spiritual man's nature desires spiritual or heavenly things. Death and resurrection are necessary because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

Paul also explained the necessity for those alive in Christ at the time of the rapture to be changed. *Mystery* means "secret." *Changed* means "to be made different." This change occurs at the rapture. It is a sudden change. The suddenness is described as a moment, a twinkling of an eye or a trumpet sound. A "moment" is an atom of time. *Twinkling* means "a jerk of the eye." A blink or a wink is very fast. A trumpet may sound in an instant or at any moment. The rapture is referred to as the "last trump," meaning the last in a series or the last of

an age. The rapture may occur at any moment. Paul believed in the doctrine of the imminent return of the Lord. He said, "The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). This agrees with his statement about the rapture in the letter to the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). When the living in Christ are changed at the time of the rapture, their victory is gained immediately. Raptured believers will have sudden and complete victory over death, the sin nature and the grave. *Victory* means "triumph or conquest." *Sting* means "to prick with a poisonous goad." After a believer is changed at the rapture, he is no longer subject to sin and for the first time is able to keep all of God's laws. The victory comes to the believer through the suffering, shedding of blood, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because those in Christ have a certain victory ahead, Paul urged church members at Corinth to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). *Stedfast* means "settled." *Abounding* means "excelling." Church members may be sure God will bless their labors for the Lord.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Job 19:23-27.** Job had something he was so sure of that he wanted it engraved "with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever" (Job 19:24). He was supremely confident that his Redeemer would stand in the last days on the earth. Job looked by faith past the suffering and death of Jesus as the Lamb of God. His assurance rested in his personal knowledge that his Redeemer lived. The only way Job could know this great truth was by the witness of the indwelling Holy

Spirit. He was inspired to write it down in a book. Job also had confidence that he would be resurrected. His belief in a personal resurrection was so great that he said, "After my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:26, 27).

**Philippians 3:20, 21.** Paul had confidence in the risen Lord. *Conversation* means "citizenship." Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, which was largely made up of people influenced by Roman ideas. Roman citizenship meant much. Paul spoke of a heavenly citizenship that means more than any earthly citizenship. He looked for the risen Lord to return in his lifetime. He said, "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," (Phil. 3:20). Paul anticipated the change from this vile body to a glorious body. *Change* means "to transfigure or to be transformed." *Vile* means "low or of low estate." *Fashioned like* means "conformed to or made similar to." (See 1 John 3:2.) Paul also wrote to the church members at Philippi about the great victory of the resurrection by which Christ will "subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21). *Subdue* means "to bring into obedience."

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.** Paul explained the rapture to the church at Thessalonica. He gave the rapture as a certain hope to be anticipated with great rejoicing. He gave the order of the dead in Christ resurrected first and then the living in Christ will be changed. The rapture is as sure and certain as the fact that Jesus died and rose again. Jesus will bring the dead in Christ with Him and transport the living in Christ to Him. *Caught up* means "to seize, to pluck up or to take away by force." The command will be given to come up to join the Lord

in the air. Revelation 4:1 states, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." The victory of the resurrection should be preached, taught and understood as words of comfort to those in Christ.

### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Victory in Christ in the resurrection will be more glorious than anything children of God have ever experienced or imagined. Since the rapture could occur at any time, victory in Christ is just ahead. The victory of the resurrection is a victory over present struggles, cares and circumstances. Titus 2:12, 13, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The believer's hope should be so great that it changes his life on a daily basis to reflect Christ more. The hope of the resurrection is the only sure hope. The hope of the resurrection is sure because Christ has secured it.

Paul relied on the hope of the resurrection to give him strength and victory over all kinds of circumstances. Paul said, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. 4:8-10). Paul remained confident of final victory in the sure hope of the resurrection in difficult times. (See 2 Corinthians 1:8, 9.) Paul trusted in victory by the power of God who raises the dead.

**CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION**

Church members should be reminded to focus more on the blessings and victories to come than on the present circumstances. Paul always looked ahead. He looked past every life experience that would discourage him or make him feel defeated. Consider what Paul experienced. Second Corinthians 11:23-27 "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the hea-

then, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Like Job, the more Paul suffered the more firmly he held to the hope of the resurrection.

Church members should be as equally concerned with modeling Christ through preaching, teaching and contending for truth. Those who preach, teach and claim to contend for truth without modeling Christ are hypocrites. The doctrines of truth transform the will, thoughts, attitudes, words and lives of those who embrace it. The victory of the resurrection should be represented in lives that reflect Christ.

## Challenge to Biblical Stewardship

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1-12.

**Background Scripture:** Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6, 7; Ephesians 3:20, 21.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain the importance of giving through the church of their membership.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**An Account of Stewardship,** Luke 16:2.

The steward was a trustworthy servant who was given special responsibilities. The word *steward* means "one who manages a house or an estate." Some examples of a steward would be a manager or a treasurer. In serving the Lord, a steward may serve as a preacher, a church member and a child of God. A child of God has talents and abilities God has given. In the Bible, Joseph, Daniel, David and Paul were stewards. A steward has been given a sacred trust.

The stewardship is the capacity in which a servant is given responsibilities. The Ethiopian eunuch was a treasurer. Joseph was an overseer. Nehemiah was a cupbearer. Eliezer was over Abraham's household. A pastor is given responsibility to lead a church. A father has the responsibility to lead his family according to God's will. Each steward has a place of service for which he is personally responsible.

Every steward is accountable to God. The word *account* is an explanation. God's servants will give an account to the Lord. First Corinthians 4:1, 2 states,

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." *Required* means "to seek, to expect or to demand." The account will include thoughts, motives, words, actions, doctrines, morals, preaching, teaching and work done for the Lord. God will question His servants with His demands for the glory that is due Him. He will root out every hidden thing. The Judgment Seat of Christ will be the accounting day for each child of God. Romans 14:10-12 states, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 16:1-12.** Paul taught the church at Corinth concerning the responsibility to be good stewards in the matter of giving. He explained the stewardship of offerings (verses 1, 2), the stewardship of the overseer (verses 3, 4), the stewardship of opportunities (verses

5-9) and the stewardship of hospitality to other preachers (verses 10-12). Paul gave definite instructions to follow in the matter of giving.

Paul taught those church members to be good stewards in the matter of offerings. This offering was the benevolent offering given for the purpose of helping the church members in Jerusalem who were destitute as a result of a famine. (See Acts 11:28, 29.) The church at Antioch planned to participate in this offering. The churches of Galatia participated in this offering. The church at Corinth had planned to take part in this offering but had not yet fulfilled its intentions. It should be noted that the benevolent offering was for a sister church. Benevolent offerings that aid those who are not of like faith and order transgress God's command. (See 2 John 10, 11.) Benevolent offerings as well as any other offerings must be received when a church is gathered together. The only plan the Bible gives for the support of the Lord's work is by tithes and offerings.

The tithes and offerings of God's people should be given on a systematic basis. Paul encouraged them to give on the first day of the week or a weekly offering. Weekly giving by church members brings a regularity by which God's work can be appropriately funded. Offerings should be on a proportionate basis. Paul said they were to give "as God hath prospered" (1 Cor. 16:2). On weeks when a church member made more, he should give more. On weeks he made less, he understandably must give less. Paul did not forbid the church members to have a savings account. He said, "That there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). *Gatherings* means "collections or contributions." The church at Corinth was not to wait until Paul arrived to start gathering the benevolent offering.

Paul taught church members to be good stewards in the matter of choosing an overseer for the benevolent offering. Each offering collected by a church must be dispersed according to its intended purpose. (See 2 Corinthians 8:21.) The principle of honest fiscal responsibility sets apart a church that seeks to give glory to God from a religious organization set up by man. Offerings were given for the church members in Jerusalem. The church at Corinth was responsible to see that its offering reached its intended destination. Paul said, "Whomsoever ye shall approve" (1 Cor. 16:3). The church at Corinth chose an overseer or a treasurer to be responsible for the disbursement of its funds. The member, selected to oversee this responsibility, had to travel to Jerusalem to fulfill his responsibilities.

Paul explained the importance of being good stewards in the matter of God-given opportunities. The church at Corinth would have the opportunity to show hospitality to Paul, the missionary, over the winter and to send him on his way. Paul did not expect to leave Corinth empty-handed. The church members would give an offering to enable him to continue his travels to do mission work. The church at Corinth was expected to give mission offerings as well as regular church offerings and benevolent offerings.

Paul stated his mission work at Ephesus was due to God's opening a great door of opportunity. *Great* means "large, many or mighty." *Effectual* means "the energizing force to be active and powerful in labors." Paul said the opportunity was "unto me" (1 Cor. 16:9). God selects the missionary for the field. When God's missionary gets on God's field of labor, the success depends on God's opening the door of opportunity. As with any great work attempted for the Lord, there were "many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9).

*Adversaries* means “those who are opposite, contrary or in opposition.” Philippians 3:18 states, “(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” Satan is the greatest adversary. (See 1 Peter 5:8.) Every successful work for God requires His people to go through His open door of opportunity.

Paul reminded the church members at Corinth concerning their responsibilities to be good stewards toward other preachers. Paul expected Timothy and Apollos to come to Corinth. Perhaps Timothy was intimidated by aggressive church members. Paul expected that church to receive him as a faithful servant of the Lord and to respect him as a preacher of the gospel. Paul expected the church to give a love offering to help Timothy in his ministry. At some future time, the church at Corinth would be responsible for caring for Apollos when he arrived in that city. When church members are good stewards in the matter of giving tithes and offerings, the churches will not lack funds, the ministry will be supported, funds for mission work will be more than adequate and there will be plenty of funds to supply benevolent offerings as needed.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**Luke 6:38.** Good stewardship includes the principle of liberality. Giving meagerly will be blessed meagerly. Liberal givers will be blessed liberally. God knows the hearts. Those who give to be seen of men or to receive blessings will be disappointed. Those who give from a heart of love for the Lord will be richly blessed. *Measure* means “portion.” Malachi 3:10 states, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heav-

en, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” God has the ability to fill up faithful givers to overflowing. David said, “My cup runneth over” (Psalm 23:5). He knew God would not permit a faithful giver to go without any necessary thing. David also said, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 37:25).

**2 Corinthians 8:1-5.** Paul commended the giving of the churches of Macedonia. They gave sacrificially even though they experienced great poverty. They rejoiced in giving liberally. Their giving was so remarkable that it was more than Paul expected. The churches of Macedonia participated in the benevolent offering for the church members at Jerusalem who were needy due to the great famine in the land. Their offering was given to those in the truth. They did not send aid or offerings to help the Pharisees or the Sadducees. Paul stated that an offering is a gift. Once an offering is given, a church member should consider it to belong to the Lord. The churches of Macedonia received offerings from their members. The only biblical example of scriptural fund raising is by the tithes and offerings of the members. The best givers first give themselves to God. After that, there is no heart problem with giving.

**2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.** God approves cheerful givers. The Greek word bears a resemblance to the English word *hilarious*. God intended giving to be cause for great rejoicing. Church members can only give from the things that God has given them. Everything one has comes from the Lord. All material things that church members have belong to the Lord. Good stewards in the matter of giving begin at ten percent and then go on to give freewill offerings. There are

two kinds of givers. The grudging, sparing giver gives little. The cheerful and bountiful giver gives much. *As he purposeth in his heart* does not mean God is willing to wait until one makes up his mind that it is his responsibility to give. *Purpose* means "to consider before and to choose the preferred thing." The prayerful giver will be prepared to give abundantly through the church of his membership.

**Ephesians 3:20, 21.** A church is the storehouse for giving unto the Lord. (See Malachi 3:10.) Each person should give through the church of his membership. God works in the child of God to give him a desire to be a part of a New Testament church. Matthew 5:15 states, "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." The book of Revelation reveals the "candlestick" is God's symbol for a true church. (See Revelation 1:20.) God works in His children, leading them to a true church through which they are to serve as good stewards of the Lord. God's work is done through New Testament churches. A New Testament church is a local, visible body of scripturally baptized believers who have been covenanted together by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

Paul taught the church members at Corinth the proper way for a church to receive and to disburse funds. He taught them to give systematically, proportionately, regularly and joyfully through the church. He commended the example of the church members who first gave themselves to the Lord. He taught them to give as a witness or proof of their love for God. Second Corinthians 8:24 states, "Wherefore shew ye to them, and before

the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf." Paul explained giving as a work of God's grace in the heart of God's people. Second Corinthians 8:7, 8 states, "Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." Each church should collect an offering on Sunday and disburse the funds in the proper manner for the intended purpose.

Paul taught church members to give for the support of their churches, for the support of the ministry, for the support of missions and for the purpose of benevolence. Widows, orphans and other needy church members may be helped from church funds. There is no Bible example of giving outside the ranks of the Lord's churches. Churches are not commanded to fund social programs. In order for giving not to be evil spoken of, it must be used for scriptural purposes. Churches have expenses that must be paid. When members do not give as they should, a church will have difficulty meeting its obligations. If a church has difficulty meeting its financial obligations, it is not right to turn a church into a fund raising organization. The only biblical plan for supporting the Lord's work is by the tithes and offerings of the members. Churches send the wrong message to the world by begging for funds through fund raising schemes. When the hearts of God's people are turned to the Lord, there will be no lack of funds for any worthwhile project.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The proportionate method of giving allows the burden of church obligations to rest equally on all members of a church. If each member were to start his

giving at ten percent, each member would bear his fair share of the responsibility for meeting the financial obligations of a church. Second Corinthians 8:13, 14 states, "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." A percentage basis is a proportionate system by which church members are equally responsible to meet a church's financial needs.

God's plan for proper stewardship includes one hundred percent participation of church members in the giving process. After a church member has given his offering through the church of

his membership, God does not excuse wasting the rest of his substance.

A church should wisely use all of its funds. A proportionate basis for church giving to missions could start at ten percent. If each church adopted this minimal amount for the support of scriptural missions, there would be more funds than there would be missionaries to support. Some churches are to be commended for giving forty or fifty percent to missions. Many churches give more than twenty percent to missions. Concerned churches may work together with cooperating churches by giving through the office of the Secretary-Treasurer of Missions in Texarkana. Each church member should count it a privilege to support missions through the church of his membership.

## Challenge To Love God Supremely

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24.

**Background Scripture:** John 13:35; 14:15; 21:15-17; 1 John 4:8, 20, 21.

**Aim:** By the conclusion of this lesson the students will list ways to show their love for God.

### DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

**The First Commandment,** Mark 12:29-31.

Jesus must be our first love. God's people must love Jesus with all their hearts. Church members must put their love for Jesus above all others. Revelation 2:4 states, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Those who disobey the first commandment have fallen into a backslidden condition. Revelation 2:5 states, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly." God commands His people to love Jesus with all their hearts.

Jesus should be our Lord. The first commandment states one must love the Lord "with all thy soul" (Mark 12:30). There should be no other person or thing so enthroned in one's life so that he is unable to serve the Lord first. Matthew 10:37, 38 states, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Jesus should be the Lord enthroned in every heart.

Jesus should be our Teacher. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Philippians 3:10 states, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Those who are saved should continue to seek to know Jesus. Let Him teach every truth until the mind is filled with His wisdom.

Jesus should be our Master. He said to love the Lord with "all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). Servants of the Lord go beyond physical strength by drawing on the Lord's energizing power. Philippians 4:13 states, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Nothing Christ commands is impossible with His strength.

### EXAMINING THE TEXT

**1 Corinthians 16:13-24.** Paul came to the end of this letter to the church at Corinth after correcting many problems. He ended the book with an assortment of thoughts, including commands (verse 13), conduct (verse 14), cooperation (verses 15, 16), the collection (verses 17, 18), churches (verses 19, 20) and closing

remarks (verses 21-24). Paul revealed his love for the church by his faithful words of truth.

Paul gave four necessary commands. Church members must watch for temptation, for Satan's opposition and for Christ's coming. Every church member should be faithful. Paul said, "Stand fast in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13). Jude said, "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "The faith" includes all the doctrines of truth. Church members should also quit acting childish. *Quit you like men* means "be manly or act like a mature man." Paul reminded the church members at Corinth to "be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). *Strong* means "to be empowered, to be increased in vigor or to become more powerful." Church members may grow in influence before the world by becoming more like Christ. Romans 12:2 states, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." These necessary commands will be valuable to every church.

Paul described the proper conduct for a church member. Each church member should do everything from a motive of godly love. *Done* means "finished, fulfilled or performed." Any church member who serves the Lord with a motive of godly love will please God and not hinder others.

Paul reminded church members to have the right cooperation. The household of Stephanas proved themselves by faithful service. *Addicted* means "to determine, to appoint or to arrange in an orderly manner." "Ministry" is attendance as a servant, especially as a teacher. The word *ministry* is similar to the word for *deacon* in the original lan-

guage. Those who serve the Lord faithfully should receive the cooperation of other church members. *Submit* means "to obey or to be subject to." *Helpeth* means "to be a fellow worker, one who cooperates together." When church members work together in loving cooperation, a church has a strong influence for the Lord before the world.

Paul was thankful for the collection he received from the church at Corinth. The word *collection* refers to offerings. (See 1 Corinthians 16:1.) They had ceased supporting Paul the missionary for a while. Their offering reached Paul at a time when he had some needs. When church members love scriptural missions and God-called missionaries, there will be no lack of funds to carry on God's work. The offering from Corinth made Paul rejoice. *Refreshed* means "to give rest." Paul could refrain from tent making for a while. Paul taught that those who participated in giving to missions were a blessing to the missionary and received a blessing from the Lord.

Paul mentioned the churches. He referred to several churches. Some were in the province of Asia Minor. One church met in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. They evidently were faithful to worship and serve the Lord in truth wherever they lived. New Testament churches should have tender affection for each other. Fellow church members should show love for one another. The "holy kiss" was a custom in that time in the sense that a handshake is a custom in this time. Each church had its own location, group of members and individual set of problems.

Paul's closing remarks shared his personal feelings for the church at Corinth. He cared enough to send a letter with a greeting in his own handwriting. (See Galatians 6:11.) Paul encouraged the church at Corinth to love Jesus Christ. *Anathema* means "banned, excommuni-

cated or count accursed." *Maranatha* means "God is approaching for judgment." Church members should love the Lord so supremely that they could not tolerate the life-style of those who do not love the Lord. Paul assured them the grace of God is with them. Paul reminded the church at Corinth of his great love for them.

#### BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

**John 13:35.** Jesus spoke to His church to give them a new command to obey. Church members are commanded to love one another. This command will be obeyed only when church members love Christ and love as Christ loves them. Such great love for Christ and then for fellow church members is a recurring New Testament theme. Ephesians 4:2, 3, "Forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (See also Ephesians 4:15, 16; 5:2; Philippians 1:9; 2:1, 2; Colossians 1:4; 1:8; 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 3:12; 4:9.) *Commandment* means "precept or charge." *As* means "according to, how or when or in the same manner." When church members love Christ first or supremely, they may share that love with others. *One another* means "to duplicate, each other or yourselves together." The love of Christ in a church member should be duplicated or extended to each member in the same church.

**John 14:15.** When Jesus gave His church His last message before the cross, He encouraged it to obey Him because of its great love for Him. A church should express love for Christ first. The church at Ephesus began by showing a supreme love for Christ. That special love for Christ was later relegated to a lower priority. Revelation 2:4, 5 states, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou

art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The doctrine of love is so important that a church may lose its candlestick or authority as a church by a lack of love. *Left* means "to forsake, to lay aside or to put away." *Fallen* means "to fail." Any church that does not love Christ supremely has failed God.

**John 21:15-17.** Jesus challenged Peter to love Him supremely. He asked, "Lovest thou me more than these?" (verse 15). Jesus referred to this supreme love in terms of *agape*, a sacrificial, godly love. Peter's answer used the word *phileo* for love that means "a friend or to have affection for someone." When the question and answer were repeated, both Jesus and Peter used the same terms. The third time, Jesus used the word that Peter had been using. He asked Peter if he had a friendship for the Lord. Peter replied that Jesus was his friend. Peter was "grieved" or made to be sorry or to be in heaviness of heart because Jesus continued to ask Peter the same question. Jesus commanded His disciples to love Him supremely. (See John 15:9-14.) Jesus gave Peter the responsibility as a spiritual leader to "feed my sheep" (John 21:17). *Feed* means "to lead to pasture or cause to graze." Peter was commanded to be an undershepherd to nourish Jesus' followers in God's Word.

**1 John 4:8, 20, 21.** Those who claim to know God must exhibit His great love. God is the source of love. One factor of God's character is love. First John 4:11 states, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." *So* means "in this manner." (See John 3:16.) *Ought* means "to owe, to be obligated or to be bound." Those who know God's love are obligated to demonstrate His

love in their lives. God's love must be exhibited to those around us. One has no testimony for God when his love for God is absent from his life. One has no genuine love for God when it is invisible. The command to love God includes a command to love others. *Brother* means "from the same womb." While unsaved may have an earthly love for their immediate family members, children of God are to love other children of God. There should be a greater love between children of God in the same church family.

#### RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

A supreme love for Christ enables church members to say what needs to be said to one another. Ephesians 4:15, 16 states, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Church members may say almost anything to one another if they say it with love.

Paul could say what needed to be said to Philemon because he loved him. He urged him to forgive Onesimus (Philemon 10-16). Galatians 6:1 states, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The spiritual church member loves Christ supremely. His motives are clear. His love is unquestioned. His message will be heard.

Church members may encourage and challenge one another to greater faithfulness when their love is evident. Hebrews 10:24, 25 states, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assem-

bling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." *Provoke* means "to stir up, to sharpen or to incite." Love keeps encouraging words from being abrasive. *Consider* means "to observe fully." A shepherd who loves his sheep will observe them carefully on a daily basis. This has been called "passing under the rod." In the same manner, a pastor who loves the members of the church he pastors will observe and encourage them to greater faithfulness to the Lord. Hebrews 13:7 states, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." When a pastor and his church members share the love of Christ, they encourage and challenge one another.

#### CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Harsh words do not reflect a supreme love for Christ. A supreme love for Christ is both firm and gentle. A church member's genuine love for Christ demands truth in fellowship. Second John 1 states, "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." Paul taught the church at Corinth to love Christ so much that it would be separated from false religion. Second Corinthians 6:16, 17 states, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." A supreme love for Christ by church members is both practical and profitable.

Love for Christ also demands subjection to God's moral standards. First Corinthians 5:1, 2 states, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not

rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." Tough love in the church demands the right fellowship and the right life-style. A lack of church discipline reveals a lack of love for Christ and for the erring brother.