

The Gospel Message

Lindale

Church of Christ

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If you are looking for a church...

- Where your kids can learn the bible.
- That teaches the truth of God's word with love.
- Where joy and forgiveness are real.
- With solid bible answers for difficult questions.
- That is a true family of caring Christians.

I recommend the Lindale church of Christ!

Sunday 9:00 am, 10:00 am, 10:50 am - Wednesday 7pm

Revised and Edited by Kris Emerson (Feb 2022)

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Work through the booklet, one lesson at a time. Fill in the blanks with the corresponding bible verses and answer the accompanying questions. (Note: all verse references are in the New American Standard Bible translation.)

Suggestion: Whether you are the student or the teacher, please be sure to fill in all the blanks for the lesson before the class begins. This increases the value of the study. If you have any questions or thoughts along the way, write them out on the blank page opposite the lesson sheet, and they can be discussed in the study session.

Old Testament Books:

Genesis	Song of Solomon
Exodus	Isaiah
Leviticus	Jeremiah
Numbers	Lamentations
Deuteronomy	Ezekiel
Joshua	Daniel
Judges	Hosea
Ruth	Joel
I & II Samuel	Amos
I & II Kings	Obadiah
I & II Chronicles	Jonah
Ezra	Micah
Nehemiah	Nahum
Esther	Habakkuk
Job	Zephaniah
Psalms	Haggai
Proverbs	Zechariah
Ecclesiastes	Malachi

New Testament Books:

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
I & II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
I & II Thessalonians
I & II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
I & II Peter
I, II, III John
Jude
Revelation

Lesson 1: Honoring Jesus and His Word

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” Matthew 28:18-20.

Jesus Christ is to be the Lord of our lives. He established His right to rule when He died for us and was raised from the grave. Just before He ascended into heaven, He claimed that right to lead us. If you and I understand this, there are four things we must be willing to boldly proclaim:

1. “Jesus is my Lord and Savior, and I will trust and obey Him.”

- A. “This is My beloved _____, with whom I am well-pleased; _____ to Him!” **Matthew 17:5.** The Father from heaven has told us Jesus is God and that we must follow His instruction for our lives.
- B. The New Testament, from beginning to end, is the teaching of Jesus. To listen to Christ is to read the Word He delivered, and believe it, and obey it:
 1. “He who _____ in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not _____ the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him” **John 3:36.** Jesus also plainly said, “If you love me, you will keep my _____” **John 14:15.**
 2. The books of the Bible that follow the Gospels are also the Word of Jesus Christ and must be honored: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I _____ to you are the Lord’s _____” **I Corinthians 14:37.**
- C. Read **II Timothy 3:16-17** – The Word will guide us all to Christ and to a life of salvation in God.
- D. *Do you believe that Jesus is your Lord and that the Bible is His will for your life?* _____

2. “I must respect the Word of God and live by it.”

- A. God expects us to respect what He says. “You shall _____ to the word which I am commanding you, nor _____ from it, that you make keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” **Deuteronomy 4:1-2.**
- B. John rightly said, “Anyone who goes too far and _____ in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in His teaching, he has both the Father and the Son” **II John 9.** This includes believing Jesus is God and believing the things He has taught us.
- C. Read **Revelation 22:18-20** – This message about Revelation is true of all of God’s word: read and obey.
- D. Examples of God’s demand for His will to be respected:
 1. Adam and Eve and the fruit in the garden – **Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-24**
 2. Nadab and Abihu offering “strange fire” to the Lord – **Leviticus 10:1-2**

- Are you willing to obey what the Bible says concerning your life and salvation? _____

3. “If I will read with an honest heart, I can understand God’s Word.”

- A. Many people have been told the Bible cannot be understood. However, we are expected to understand. “By referring to this, when you read you can _____ my insight into the mystery of Christ” **Ephesians 3:4.** “So then do not be foolish, but _____ what the will of the Lord is” **5:17.**
- B. Example – Read **Acts 2:36-41** – If you knew nothing else about the Word, and you read these verses, and believed in Jesus, what would you do and why? _____
- C. There are certainly challenging topics and sections in the Bible. But the basics of who Jesus is, how to become a Christian, and what it means to live a faithful life can be understood clearly when we read.

- Are you willing to humbly read the Word of God and seek to understand it and follow it? _____

Lesson 1: Honoring Jesus and His Word (continued)

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” Psalm 119:105

We must beware of false standards of authority. Each of the categories listed below can be helpful at times. But following any of these above the clear teaching of Scripture will prevent us from eternal life with Jesus our Lord.

4. “I will honor Christ and His word above any other influence in my life.”

A. My Conscience

1. In religious matters, many people just let their conscience be their guide. They listen to that little voice inside of them that helps them decide what is right and wrong. The problem, however, is that every person’s conscience is formed by their personal knowledge, history, and environment. So if those things aren’t founded in the Word, the conscience isn’t helpful.
2. Our own personal experiences and feelings can lead us astray: “There is a _____ which seems _____ to a man, but the end is the way of death” **Proverbs 14:12.**
3. The Apostle Paul was guided by his conscience (**Acts 23:1**), but it led him to do things that were totally wrong in God’s sight! “So then, I _____ to myself that I had to do many things _____ to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” **Acts 26:9.**
 - Was Paul wrong when he persecuted Christians? _____
 - Can one be taught wrongly and yet their conscience feel right? _____

B. The Wisdom of Men

1. Men can be wrong. Our faith must not rest in what people tell us: “...so that your faith would not rest on the _____ of _____, but on the power of God” **I Corinthians 2:5.**
2. God’s ways are higher than man’s ways. “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its _____ did _____ come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” **I Corinthians 1:21.**
3. God expects us to check everything we hear against the perfect Word of God. The Bereans were complimented in **Acts 17:11**, because even though the Apostle Paul was preaching, they were “examining the _____ to see whether these things were so.”

C. The Majority

1. Just because a whole bunch of people do something, doesn’t mean that thing is right. In history many people have gone into religious, political, and moral error in masses. See **I Peter 3:20.**
2. In the days of Noah, there were millions of people on the earth. They all went the way of sin. But Genesis tells us that only _____ people were saved in the ark. See **Genesis 7:13-14, 23.**
3. Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are _____ who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are _____ who find it” **Matthew 7:13-14.**
4. Throughout history, those standing for what is right have often been the “few.” Like Noah and his family in **Genesis 6 and 7**, or Elijah against 850 prophets in **I Kings 18:17-19.**
 - Are you willing to do what the Bible says, even if the whole world is against you? _____

D. My Parents

1. Many people have a faith that is based on the traditions of their parents. It is important that we value Jesus Christ and the Truth even above the beliefs in our own home or family.
2. The Apostle Paul was involved in religious error because he followed traditions from his childhood: “... and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral _____” **Galatians 1:14.**
3. Some are inclined to defend the morals of their raising. But we must all first honor God’s Word.

Lesson 1: Honoring Jesus and His Word

(continued)

D. My Parents (continued)

4. Listen to these powerful words of Jesus: "He who loves _____ or _____ more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves _____ or _____ more than Me is not worthy of Me" **Matthew 10:37**.

- Are you willing to choose Jesus' will, even if your family is not supportive? _____

E. The Law of Moses

1. The Law of Moses is the word God gave to govern His nation of Israel. It begins with the 10 commandments in Exodus 20 and is laid out in over 600 specific laws throughout the Old Testament. It included rules for their society, their morality and their worship.
2. While the Old Testament does teach us many things about God, it is important to understand that it is not the Law of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Old Law has passed away. It was God's plan all along that the Old Law end when Jesus and the New Testament law took effect to save mankind.
3. Jesus said of the Law and Prophets: "I did not come to _____ but to _____" **Matthew 5:17**. This means He did not come to destroy its purpose, but fulfill its purpose, which is to give way to a New Law of salvation in Jesus Christ.
4. We are told that the Law of Moses would last until Jesus came. In talking about the Old Law, Paul wrote: "It was added because of transgressions... until the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made" **Galatians 3:19**. That seed is _____. **Galatians 3:16**
5. Read **Hebrews 8:6-13** – Notice that Christ has brought a "better covenant" (v.6). The first law was written on stone, but the second law will be written on hearts (v.10). "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first _____" **Hebrews 8:13**.
6. The Old Testament still benefits us today as a record of God's history with mankind. "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our _____, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the _____ we might have hope" **Romans 15:4**.
7. However, it was a covenant with Israel, not with us. Our relationship with God is found through obedience to our Savior Jesus Christ, no matter our heritage. "For you are all sons of God through _____ in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were _____ into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" **Galatians 3:26-28**.

5. Summary of the Lesson and a Question

- A. "Jesus is my Lord and Savior, and I will trust and obey Him."
- B. "I must respect the Word of God and live by it."
- C. "If I will read with an honest heart, I can understand God's Word."
- D. "I will honor Christ and His Word above any other influence in my life."
 1. Above my conscience
 2. Above man's wisdom
 3. Above the majority
 4. Above my parents
 5. Above the Old Testament

Question: Are you ready and willing to obey the teaching of Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul? _____

Lesson 2: Embracing God's Plan to Save You

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household” Acts 16:30-34.

The story above documents the conversion of the Philippian jailor. He was convinced Jesus was God, and from that point he learned the truth about salvation in Jesus. What started as a frightening event in a prison, ended with a whole family being baptized in water, and a celebration of salvation. This is God's plan for us all.

Before we look to God's plan for your life, fill in the blanks provided here. This is your chance to tell your own story about your relationship with Jesus. Afterward, we will study the Truth of the Scripture. If your story follows what God teaches, you are saved. If not, you can choose to obey the Gospel and be saved today.

- Have you been saved? _____ If not, do you want to be saved today? _____
- If saved, how were you saved? _____
- How old were you when you were saved? _____ Have you been baptized? _____
- If so, were you immersed in water? _____ If not, do you need to be baptized? _____
- Is baptism something to be done after you are saved, or as necessary for salvation? _____

Let's take a look at what the New Testament teaches about how to become a Christian and have your sins forgiven:

1. "I need God's plan to save me. I am not able to save myself."

- A. Everyone sins. No one is good enough on their own. "For _____ have _____ and fall short of the glory of God" **Romans 3:23**. Sins are committed when we disobey God's law.
- B. The problem with sin is that it leads to spiritual death. "For the wages of sin is _____" **Romans 6:23**. This "death" is a separation from God. As long as we have sin connected to us, we are dead.
- C. Being a good person is not enough to justify salvation. Cornelius was a great man. Read **Acts 10:1-2** – list at least 4 great things about him. _____
Yet, he needed to hear "words to you by which _____, you and your household" **Acts 11:14**. Being a good man was not good enough.
- D. But God's plan offers hope, and many other blessings found only in Jesus Christ! Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will _____ in _____" **John 8:24**. He also said He was "the way, the truth, and the life and that no one _____ to the Father but _____ Me" **John 14:6**. Jesus promised a living water and that "whoever drinks of the water I will give him shall _____ thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to _____" **John 4:13-14**. Praise be to our Lord for offering us such an amazing gift!

2. "My great God has done so much to make salvation available to me."

- A. The Father sent His only son to die on a cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever _____ in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" **John 3:16**.
- B. This sacrifice paid the price for God's grace. "In Him we have redemption through His _____, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His _____" **Ephesians 1:7**. This blood has the power to do for us what we could never do for ourselves: "For by _____ you have been saved through faith; and that not of _____, it is the gift of God" **Ephesians 2:8**.

Lesson 2: Embracing God's Plan to Save You (continued)

- C. God raised Jesus from the dead so that we might know that eternal victory over death is coming! "For I delivered to you as of first _____ what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was _____ on the third day, according to the Scriptures" **I Corinthians 15:3-4**. "For as in Adam all die, in Christ all will be _____" **15:22**. We know there is eternal life after death because of Jesus's resurrection!
- D. God has promised that Jesus is coming back one day to destroy the world and take His people home.
1. Jesus is coming again. "For the Lord Himself will _____ from _____ with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" **I Thessalonians 4:16**.
 2. When He does, He will judge the entire world. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one must be recompensed for his _____ in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" **II Corinthians 5:10**.
- E. God loved us enough to share all of this information with us in the Word. Where would we be without the Bible? Yet, by the Holy Spirit's work, God has made salvation possible by obedience to His word.
1. Jesus told the Apostles they would be given Truth by the Holy Spirit. "But when He, the Spirit of _____ comes, He will guide you into all the truth..." **John 16:13**.
 2. They proved that truth by working miracles. "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and _____ the _____ by the signs that followed" **Mark 16:20**. The Holy Spirit gave them this power to prove the message.
 3. These same apostles and prophets taught the word to the people on the day of Pentecost (see **Acts 2:14,22,37-43**). These first century prophets wrote down the word of God in letters. These are the 27 New Testament letters we have today! Even now, 2,000 years later, we still have their writings, the living word of God, so that we too can be saved by obeying God!

3. "I must honor the Word of God by reading God's plan to save me and obeying it."

- A. "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". **John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever _____ in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book, but these have been written that you might _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that _____ you may have life in His name" **John 20:30-31**.
- Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? _____
- B. "I must repent of the sins in my life". Being a Christian doesn't mean living a sinless life, but it does mean admitting sin and turning away from it. After believing, Peter told the Jews to "_____ and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins..." **Acts 2:38**. In the next chapter Peter adds: "Therefore repent and _____, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come" **Acts 3:19**. Paul later wrote: "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring...that they should repent and _____ to God, performing _____ appropriate to repentance" **Acts 26:19-20**.
- Are you willing to turn away from the sin in your life, now and forever? _____
- C. "I will openly and verbally confess Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." The believing Eunuch asked Philip what prevented him from being baptized. "And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the _____ of _____'" **Acts 8:37**. Later, Paul also taught: "that if you _____ with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the _____ he confesses, resulting in salvation" **Rom. 10:9-10**.
- Are you willing to openly proclaim the Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? _____

Lesson 2: Embracing God's Plan to Save You (continued)

D. "I need to be baptized in water to have my sins washed away". The "one baptism" of **Ephesians 4:5** is immersion in water, at the moment sins are forgiven, and you are added to the one church.

1. When John the Baptist started his ministry, to prepare people for Jesus, he was "preaching a baptism of repentance for the _____ of _____" **Luke 3:3**. This was actual immersion in water, as we can see in **John 3:22-23**: "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much _____ there."
2. Jesus openly taught that baptism was necessary, along with belief, in order to be saved: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has _____ shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" **Mark 16:15-16**.
3. On the day His church was established, the people were being baptized, not after salvation, but in order to be saved: "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ _____ the _____ of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" **Acts 2:38**. This baptism for salvation continued throughout the book of Acts: "Now why do you delay? Get up and be _____, and _____ away your sins, calling on His name" **Acts 22:16**.
4. Baptism is not man's plan. And it is not about earning heaven. It is about obeying the Gospel message to be saved and added to the church. In fact, it is the very moment when we unite with the power of the death of Jesus! "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been _____ with Him through _____ into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" **Romans 6:3-4**.
5. Everyone in the body of Christ is saved by Christ. How does one get into that body? Certainly we must believe. But the bible also says: "For by one Spirit we were all _____ into one _____" **I Corinthians 12:13**. This is not some emotional or spiritual baptism. This is actual immersion in water, just like the Eunuch did in **Acts 8:36**: "Look! _____. What prevents me from being baptized?"

- Do you need to be baptized in water for the remission of your sins? _____

E. "I am committed to a life of faithful service to Jesus Christ the King!" It won't help us to obey the Gospel and be saved, if we are unwilling to commit our lives to Jesus. This is a life-long commitment.

1. After 3,000 were baptized on the day of Pentecost, "they were _____devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" **Acts 2:42**. Becoming a Christian was just the beginning of their walk in God.
2. Christians were exhorted to "be _____, immovable, always abounding in the _____ of the Lord, knowing your toil is not in vain in the Lord" **I Corinthians 15:58**.
3. A huge part of that was finding a local church and joining with God's people in worship and growth and togetherness as we are "standing firm in one _____, with one _____ striving together for the faith of the gospel" **Philippians 1:27**.
4. "Be _____ unto death, and I will give you the crown of _____" **Revelation 2:10**.

- Are you committed to a life of worship and service in the name of Jesus? _____

4. Summary of the Lesson and a Question

- A. "I need God's plan to save me. I am not able to save myself."
- B. "My great God has done so much to make salvation available to me."
- C. "I must honor the Word of God by reading God's plan to save me and by obeying it."

Question: What part of the Gospel do you need to obey today? _____

Lesson 3: Worshipping and Working Together

“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” Acts 2:41-42.

Once someone becomes a Christian, they begin a new life. This new life leads us to four important things, as seen in the verses above: *the teaching of God’s Word, fellowship with God’s people, the partaking of the Lord’s Supper with the saints, and a prayerful life.* God has a beautiful plan to make this a steady part of the new life. When people join a local church of believers, all four of these things happened together, with God’s people, every single week!

This lesson will discuss God’s plan for the local church: the worship and the work of His people working together. ***“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” John 4:24.*** When choosing a local church to work with, it is important that they honor God in what they do in His name.

1. “I want to worship God in a manner that is pleasing to Him.”

A. Prayer

1. Christians pray. We pray when we are thankful. “Pray without _____; in everything give _____; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” **I Thessalonians 5:17-18.**
2. Christians pray when they are anxious. “Be _____ for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” **Philippians 4:6.** You can do this on your own. But also, God’s people do this when assembled together.
3. Christians pray when we are assembled in worship. We need one another. And praying together for each other is God’s beautiful plan for His people. “Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must _____. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. For the effective _____ of a righteous man can accomplish much” **James 5:13-16.**

B. Singing

1. In the New Testament, Christians sang. No matter the situation, they encouraged and educated one another through the singing of praises to God.
2. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom _____ and admonishing one another with _____ and _____ and _____, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” **Colossians 3:16.**
3. “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, _____ and making melody with your _____ to the Lord...” **Ephesians 5:19.**
4. “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a _____ of praise to God, that is, the fruit of _____ that give thanks to His name” **Hebrews 13:15.**
5. There is no record of New Testament Christians adding mechanical instruments to their worship. Every example wherein Christians encouraged one another in song was specific to singing, speaking, and teaching. The introduction of instruments to Christian worship came centuries later and is not found in Christ’s design for His church.

C. The Lord’s Supper

1. Christians assemble together on the first day of the week to remember Jesus’ death.
2. On the night before Jesus died, He instituted a memorial to His sacrificed body and shed blood. “While they were eating, Jesus took some _____, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My _____’” **Matthew 26:26.**

C. The Lord's Supper (continued)

3. "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, '_____ from it all of you; for this is My _____ of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins'" **Matthew 26:27-28.**
4. Paul's letter to the church in Corinth shows us that local churches assembled to partake of this memorial together. "For I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took _____; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in _____ of Me.' In the same way He took the _____ also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new _____ in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you _____ the Lord's death until He comes" **I Corinthians 11:23-26.**
5. The Scripture indicates that Christians met to do this on Sunday. "On the _____ day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them" **Acts 20:7.** To honor this pattern, we partake of this memorial of Jesus Christ on Sunday, every week.

D. Giving

1. God has very important work for the church to accomplish. We are to support needy saints, spread the gospel into the world, and provide for a place to worship. In order to do this, God established weekly contributions by saints to meet these needs.
2. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the _____ day of every _____ each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" **I Corinthians 16:1-2.**
3. Please note that tithing (mandatory 10%) is not a part of the New Testament pattern; but giving "as he may prosper." More importantly, we must give from the heart! "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his _____, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful _____" **II Corinthians 9:7.**
4. There is no record in the New Testament of churches raising funds by soliciting from the world, business ventures, or in any other way. Just amazing Christian givers in Jesus' name!

E. Teaching

1. God's people love to learn more about the Word. We take to heart the words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who _____ and _____ for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" **Matthew 5:6.** In fact, we understand that on the judgment day, it is the Word of God that will be our judge! "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the _____ I spoke is what will judge him at the last day" **John 12:48.**
2. So we put great emphasis on studying the Bible in worship. "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the _____, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" **I Peter 2:2.**
3. Our Bible classes and sermons will be centered on the Scripture. We will read it, consider it, and seek to learn it and live it.– "All _____ is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every _____" **II Timothy 3:16-17.**

2. "The local church must do the work God has designed for it to do."

A. Local Churches

1. Christians join together in a location as a team. We seek to "strive together for the _____ of the _____" **Philippians 1:27.** These groups are called churches. Since they exist to honor the name of Jesus they were sometimes called "churches of _____" **Romans 16:16.**

B. Local Autonomy

1. Each local church is autonomous. That is, each is self governed under the headship of Jesus. The New Testament teaches the setting up of elderships in every church. Qualified men are placed in roles of leadership. That leadership is to “_____ the flock of God among you” **I Peter 5:2**. Local churches are led by these men and governed by Jesus. There are no councils, denominational headquarters, or rules decided by men in other places.
2. “An _____, then, must be above reproach...” **I Timothy 3:2**. This text and others go on to lay out qualifications for elders. Only men who meet these qualifications can serve.
3. “When they had appointed _____ in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” **Acts 14:23**. In every example, there was a plurality of elders in each church. So there is no pattern for a single pastor leader in the New Testament. A local preacher is not an elder, but a member of the local church who teaches under their leadership.

C. Authorized Work for the Local Church

1. Local churches belong to God. Therefore, how churches use the Lord’s funds and what work they engage in must be authorized by the Lord. When reading through the New Testament, one can identify three areas of work for the church that church collections may be used for.
2. Helping Saints In Need – “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the _____ in Jerusalem” **Romans 15:26**. “And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the _____ living in Judea” **Acts 11:29**. While many passages like this exist (see also **I Corinthians 16:1-2**), there is no example of collected church funds being used for general benevolence outside of the needs of the saints.
3. Supporting Church Workers – Preachers and teachers were often financially supported by local churches. Paul wrote, “for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my _____” **Philippians 4:16**. The Bible even says that elders, who work hard at preaching and teaching are worthy of their wages (**I Timothy 5:17-18**). Funds go to support workers in the kingdom.
4. Assemble for Worship – The New Testament shows us the pattern of Christians assembling in worship. They assemble to sing and pray and study, partake of the Lord’s Supper and give of their means. To accomplish this, funds are used to construct and maintain a church building. The building is a place of worship, study and growth, not social events and entertainment.
5. We have no Scriptural authority for local churches of Christ to engage in work outside of the objectives defined above. When we stand before the Lord to give an answer for where we worshipped and the church we worked with, our authority must come from the Word of God.

3. Summary of the Lesson and a Question

- A. “I want to worship God in a manner that is pleasing to Him”
 1. This means opening the Scripture to find authority.
 2. 5 elements of worship are found: Sing, Pray, Teach, Give and Partake of the Lord’s Supper.
- B. “The Local church must do the work God has designed for it to do”
 1. Operating autonomously under the leadership of local, qualified elders.
 2. Doing the work of helping saints, spreading the Gospel, and gathering for worship.

Jesus said, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men.” **Matthew 15:9**

Question: Is it important to worship and work only as God has authorized? _____

Lesson 4: Growing in Grace and Knowledge

“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” II Peter 3:17-18

In the verses preceding the ones typed above, Peter reminded Christians that Jesus is coming again. “But the day of the Lord will come like a _____, in which the heavens will _____ with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” **II Peter 3: 10.** Because this day is coming, we must prepare to meet Jesus and remain ready. Jesus is coming at a time that no one knows. We must be sure not to lose our steadfastness. We must not follow false teaching that leads us away from God. Our best protection is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This lesson will discuss how to study the Word of God. Specifically, how does the New Testament lay out and how do we work our way through it in reading and in study to become more like Jesus. Learning and trusting the Word is the best thing anyone can do in their walk with God. “All _____ is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, _____ for every good _____” **II Timothy 3:16-17.**

1. “I believe in the message and power of the New Testament.”

A. The Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

1. “The beginning of the _____ of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” **Mark 1:1.** The four Gospels tell the story of Jesus. They help us understand the prophecies about Jesus. They help us know what a wonderful gift His birth is to the world. They also teach us many amazing things that Jesus said and did. This Gospel, or “good news,” about Jesus is where our faith begins.
2. We even know exactly why these Gospels have been written. “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these have been written so that you may _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have _____ in His name” **John 20:30-31.**
3. The Gospels’ greatest story is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If we knew no other works of Jesus, this would be enough to change lives forever. All four Gospels tell this crucial story. When Mary and the others went to the tomb on Sunday morning, an angel appeared to them and said, “He is not here, for He has _____, just as He said” **Matthew 28:6.**
4. Because Jesus is the good news, and He came with amazing signs and power, and was risen from the dead, we must listen to Him. God appeared on the mountain to Peter, John and James and said of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, _____ to Him” **Mark 9:7.** So we read the Gospels to know about Jesus. But we also read to learn His teachings and obey Him. Jesus spoke of those who would claim His name but still be lost. Those who would be saved are described here as “everyone who _____ these words of Mine and _____ on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock” **Matthew 7:24.**
5. For any who have not been baptized in water to have their sins forgiven, perhaps the best argument that can be made is this: Jesus said to do it. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be _____; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” **Mark 16:16.**
6. May we always give attention to the reading and obeying of the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

B. The Book of Acts

1. Before the resurrected Christ ascended, He told the apostles to “stay in the city until you are clothed with _____ from on high” **Luke 24:49.** This is where the book of Acts begins, revealing to us what happened next.

B. The Book of Acts (continued)

2. These Apostles of Jesus were gathered together in one place in Jerusalem, just as Jesus told them. “And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of _____ distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them” **Acts 2:2-3**. These Apostles began speaking in other languages and working miracles.
3. It was these men, empowered by Jesus and the Spirit, who told the crowd about the Messiah. And when asked about how to be saved said, “Repent, and each one of you be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the _____ of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” **Acts 2:38**.
4. That day, thousands of people were baptized and added to Christ’s body. For the next 12 chapters in Acts, we read about people becoming Christians, growing in Christ, and forming local churches. If we want to excel in our walk with Christ, we will want to read these stories and seek to follow in the footsteps of men and women of faith in Acts.
5. The Lord Jesus also appeared to a man named Saul of Tarsus, who later became known as Paul. This man became an apostle of Jesus as well, but with a special mission. Ananias was sent to find and baptize Saul, because the Lord said, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the _____ and kings and the sons of Israel...” **Acts 9:15**. Paul went out to spread the word to the Gentile nation. Chapters 13-28 of the book of Acts show us Paul’s journeys and teach us much about how the world came to know Jesus and obey Him and grow in Him, in every place and culture.
6. Growing in your faith and being confident in your convictions will demand a steady and loving relationship with the book of Acts. We learn so much about how the church is to be structured and how the church is to worship. Here are some examples:
 - *Appointing elders (plural) in every church* – “When they had appointed _____ in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” **Acts 14:23**.
 - *Partaking of the Lord’s Supper on Sundays* – “On the _____ day of the week, when we were gathered together to break _____, Paul began talking to them...” **Acts 20:7**.
 - *Collecting funds to help Needy Saints* – “And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the _____ living in Judea” **Acts 11:29**.
7. The book of Acts records the beginning of the Lord’s church, as well as the establishment of many local churches. These examples form a pattern for us to follow in His name today.

C. The Letters to Individuals and Churches (Romans through Revelation)

1. The remaining 22 New Testament letters were written by apostles and prophets to encourage Christians. Some were written to individuals, while most were written to local churches. They were intended to help Christians grow. They were written to help Christians fight error, stay ready, and grow stronger.
2. These letters are filled with encouragement in Christ; reminders of how blessed we are to be Christians! “Therefore, having been justified by _____, we have _____ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this _____ in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” **Romans 5:1-2**. Growing in faith includes a constant remembrance and celebration of the power of Jesus in our lives. We live for Him and we live for heaven. “There is no condemnation for those who are in _____” **Romans 8:1**.

C. The Letters to Individuals and Churches (Romans through Revelation) (continued)

3. But these letters also demand Christians keep fighting sin and stay strong. "What shall we say then? Are we to _____ in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still _____ in it?" **Romans 6:1-2.** Becoming a Christian and joining a faithful church is wonderful. But if we stop fighting Satan and stop growing, our souls can be lost! "Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, _____ you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be _____" **Romans 11:22.** So we must keep seeking to do the will of God.
4. These letters continue to remind us that God will always forgive Christians who confess their sins and turn to do what is right. None of us are sinless. No church or Christian in the New Testament was without sin. But that's why we trust in Him! He will forgive us if we are honest about our sins. "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and righteous to _____ us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" **I John 1:8-9.** So, we grow in our faith by reading, learning and obeying; and also, by repenting when we fail and never giving up.
5. In short, the epistles (letters) help us commit our lives more fully to Christ. Our faith is not just a belief or a baptism or a Sunday worship service. Our faith is full immersion into Jesus Christ, wherein we give our lives to His purpose and live daily for His coming. "I have been _____ with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by _____ in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" **Galatians 2:20.**
6. The truth is, we grow when we read the New Testament. It teaches us and encourages us and tells us who we are to be and where we are going. The journey is not easy. But our labor in godly living, church worship and encouragement is worth it. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in _____ in the _____" **I Corinthians 15:58.**

2. "I know that Jesus is coming again."

A. He is Coming in the Clouds

1. Why must we keep studying, learning and worshipping? Because Jesus Christ is coming.
2. "For the Lord Himself will _____ from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of _____, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" **I Thessalonians 4:16.** We need to be looking for and ready for that day.

B. He will Save all of His People

1. Jesus will gather all of the saved together and take them to an eternity in glory.
2. "Then we who are alive and remain will be _____ up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" **I Thessalonians 4:17.**

C. He will Condemn all who Live in Sin

1. But all who choose to live in sin will be sent to an eternity of suffering.
2. "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out _____ to those who do not know God and to those who do not _____ the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His _____" **II Thessalonians 1:7-8.**

Question: Jesus is coming. Are you ready for that day to come? _____