

Bible Lessons

Quarterly Lessons for Adults and Young People



Kings and Priests

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. —1 Peter 2:9

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Volume 58

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS
2nd QUARTER, 2026

Kings and Priests

What would it be like to belong to royalty? There is a select group of people who have a firsthand understanding of what it means. Perhaps no one who reads these words will experience it in the flesh, but Revelation 1:6a tells us Jesus “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” Revelation 5:10 uses almost the same words, but adds, “and we shall reign on the earth.” This proclamation is amazing news! God not only wants us to be kings and priests unto Him, but desires that we fully comprehend everything this wonderful appointment includes.

God’s plan is for all of us to be spiritual kings and priests! In most cases involving literal kings and priests, the positions were (and are) held by separate individuals rather than a combined office because the roles are entirely different in scope. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” The word “royal” implies kingship. A royal priesthood can only mean a king who is also a priest.

Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” God desires that every man, woman, boy, and girl from every nation, language, and culture become spiritual kings and priests.

This series of lessons will cover some of the conditions and qualifications of a royal priesthood, the powers and privileges given to us as kings and priests, and the responsibilities involved. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:4 that “he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Could it be that Paul had a revelation of what it truly meant to be both a king and a priest while yet on earth? May God help us discover and gain a greater appreciation for what God has for us!

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

LESSON 1: APRIL 5, 2026

A KING HAS POWER AND AUTHORITY REIGNING OVER SIN AND SELF

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

2 Timothy 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

MEMORY VERSE: Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. —**Colossians 1:12-14**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The sins of Adam and Eve plunged the whole world into spiritual darkness. Jesus Christ came to be the sacrifice for all confessed and forsaken sins. Those who claim His shed blood for the forgiveness of their sins are set free from the power of sin. The redeemed are granted enabling grace to reign as kings over every temptation that formerly held them captive.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 5:19 **Righteous:** equitable in character or action; innocent; holy; just (*Strong's*); Virtuous; keeping the commands of God; faultless; guiltless; approved of and accepted of God (*Thayer*).

Romans 5:20 **Sin:** offense (*Strong's*); to be without a share in; to miss the mark; to err or be mistaken; to wander from the path of uprightness, honor, and law of God (*Thayer*); to know to do good and not do it (*James 4:17*).

Romans 5:20 **Grace:** the divine influence upon the heart; favor; gift (*Strong's*); benefit; bounty (*Thayer*).

1 Corinthians 9:25 **Temperate:** to exercise self-restraint; to contain (*Strong's*); to abstain from that which would hinder, such as an athlete preparing for a race or game (*Thayer*).

1 Corinthians 9:27 **I keep under:** to hit under the eye; disable an antagonist; subdue one's passions (*Strong's*); to beat black and blue; disciplined by hardships (*Thayer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The apostle Paul, formerly known as Saul, served a hard taskmaster while living as a Pharisee. He was driven from city to city in a quest to stamp out what he perceived to be heresy—Christianity. In Acts 8:3 we read, “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”

Saul met Jesus, however, on the road to Damascus. Saul fully intended to continue persecuting the believers, but Jesus had other plans. Jesus assured Ananias in Acts 9:16, “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” From that day forward, Saul was saved from his sins, “translated” into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, and charged with carrying the gospel to the Gentiles.

Saul, later known as Paul, began to prove true in his own life what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:25–27. He was temperate in all things and ran the remainder of his race with certainty, not “as one that beateth the air.” He “kept under his body” by bringing it unto subjection and faithfully preached to others the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the end of his life drew near, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7–8, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. We can by “grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life.” Who gives us this grace?
2. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”
3. Why are we to “walk in newness of life” after being “baptized into Jesus Christ”?
4. What does it mean to be “planted together in the likeness of His death”?

5. If our “old man is crucified with Him,” in whose likeness should our “new man” be?
6. Why is there no longer any “condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”?
7. How important is it to be temperate in all things?
8. Why did Paul say, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection”?
9. If, after being saved, we continue to live after the appetites of our flesh, how would we—or anyone else—know we have been “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son”?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A few dishonest people have devised methods to quiet down a worn-out vehicle engine, or to reduce the belching of a lot of blue smoke—at least for a short period of time. Their goal is to sell the vehicle while it seems to run well. However, these band-aid fixes never last long. Understandably, an unwary car buyer who falls prey to the deception feels cheated.

Imagine rescuing a drowning person—but throwing them back into the ocean a few hours later. What if that time was extended to a few days? To make the point even more realistic, what if the person were thrown back in the ocean a year later after being told, “Eventually, everyone has to drown in the ocean!” We were not created to permanently live unaided and adrift on the open sea. If subjected to the elements too long, we will eventually drown.

Likewise, an experience of salvation that only keeps a person living free from sin for a little while would be devastating! In John 8:1-11, Jesus told the woman taken in adultery, “Go, and sin no more.” He did not intend for her to fall into the same sin again after He had saved her from her sins. If a person sins after being saved, God’s grace has not failed them; rather, they have failed the grace of God.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for saving me from a life of sin! Thank you for the power and grace to live free from sin in this present world. Amen!”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

The following song, written by C. W. Naylor and published in *Melodies of Zion* in 1926, goes very well with our lesson today. I'm submitting it as the "Reflections" and hope our readers will learn it and sing it. —Bro. Harlan Sorrell

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Sin Shall Not Reign

C. W. Naylor Copyright, 1926, by A. L. Byers A. L. Byers

1. Once by sin our souls were bound And no help-ing hand we found, And we
 2. Free from sin we dai-ly live By the strength that he doth give, For we
 3. "Be ye ho-ly," God commands, By our side he ev-er stands To pro-
 4. Oh, ye souls who plead for sin, Look to God, then look with-in, For the

strug-gled for our free-dom but in vain; Till our bless-ed Sav-ior came,
 trust in his al-might-y arm of pow'r: He pro-TECTS us day by day,
 tect us when the temp-er doth al-lure; And we nev-er need to fall
 e-wil in your hearts his soul doth hate: And, lest you be cast a-way,

Washed away our guilt and shame, Gave us grace and help o'er sin-ful-ness to reign.
 Keeps us in the nar-row way, And we find his grace suf-fi-cient ev-ry hour.
 If we trust in him for all: He is a-ble to up-hold and keep us pure.
 Turn from wrong this ver-y day, Come re-pent-ing, seek his mer-cy ere too late.

CHORUS

Sin shall not have do-min-ion o-ver you;..... For the
 have do-min-ion o-ver

Lord hath spoken And its pow'r is broken: Sin shall not have do-min-ion o-ver
 you;..... o-ver you;.....

you;..... For he caus-eth us to tri-umph day by day.
 min-ion o-ver you;

LESSON 2: APRIL 12, 2026

A KING HAS VISION, UNDERSTANDING, AND DISCERNMENT

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

2 Samuel 7:1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2 That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

1 Chronicles 22:11 Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee.

12 Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.

13 Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Psalms 119:98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Proverbs 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

1 Kings 3:9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

16 Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him.

17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house.

18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house.

19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.

20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear.

22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king.

23 Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living.

24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

26 Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.

27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof.

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.

MEMORY VERSE: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. — **Proverbs 3:5-6**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: David was blessed with discernment, understanding, and vision. His son, Solomon, had great wisdom that exceeded the wisdom of all other kings because he desired it above riches, honor, and power. Solomon received great wisdom from God because he asked for it. We have the privilege of asking for wisdom also. God will grant it without upbraiding us for acknowledging our need of it.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 29:18 **Vision:** a dream, revelation, or oracle (*Strong's*); divine inspiration.

Psalms 111:10 **Understanding:** discretion, knowledge, policy, prudence, sense, wisdom (*Strong's*).

1 Kings 3:9 **Discern:** to separate, understand, perceive (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

David wished to build the Lord a house, expressing this desire to Nathan the prophet. After God told David he could not build His house, but that Solomon, his son, would, David put all his heart into the planning and preparation stages of the project. According to 1 Chronicles 22, David “set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. He prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; Also cedar trees in abundance.” He also laid in store a “hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; and abundance of timber also and stone.” David hired “workmen in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there [was] no number.”

In 1 Chronicles 29, David encouraged the people to give to the great work of building the temple. “The chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of

hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly." The storehouse swelled with another five thousand talents plus ten thousand drams of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of brass, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. Those with precious stones gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

Solomon willingly took up the vision and finished the project. The result was splendid. When the queen of Sheba saw the temple, along with the attendance of Solomon's servants, "there was no more spirit in her." —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why is spiritual vision necessary to keep God's laws and precepts?
2. In what ways do people perish when there is no vision?
3. David desired to build the LORD a house but was told his son would build it. David then put all his heart into preparing for the building. Why didn't David let his son do all the preparation?
4. How can we be a blessing to future generations by having the same vision and burden David had for the temple, even when we cannot do all we would like to do?
5. How is vision, understanding, and discernment tied to godly wisdom?
6. What is necessary to obtain godly wisdom?
7. Solomon asked for godly wisdom because he felt a lack of it. How could pride, indifference, or unbelief have hindered him from asking God for wisdom?
8. How willing is God to give us His wisdom, especially when dealing with "impossible" situations?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Without understanding, there is no discernment, and without discernment there is no vision for the future. The absence of vision postpones worthwhile accomplishment indefinitely.

Human wisdom has merit, but it can never attain to the level of God's wisdom. Our human wisdom is based upon what we have been taught, what we have personally experienced in life, what we have observed through the lens of our individual prejudices, and what our imagination concludes from these influences. God, however, has wisdom for everyone who asks for it. Godly wisdom is not distorted by our personality, personal bias, pride, or anger.

“Dear Lord, thank you for Your gift of vision, understanding, and discernment, which constitutes godly wisdom. Help me apply myself to this great gift. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

David propelled the Kingdom of God forward through a great vision—one that he allowed God to form in him through faith, obedience, and suffering. By intentionally leading Israel to serve the Lord, David positioned the nation to walk in God's promised blessings of joy, abundance, and dominion over all the land God had sworn to give them. In the same way, through faith-filled obedience and loving devotion to God, each of us can receive—and advance—the great vision of progress God has for His Church today.

Our house cat sits in the window, tail twitching and chattering with excitement as birds flit just beyond the glass. Yet she will never catch one as long as she remains safely inside the comfort of the house. Likewise, we cannot experience the accomplishments God wills for us in His Kingdom if we remain confined within the comforts of our temporal affairs. We must catch His vision and step outside those comforts, intentionally sharing His gospel of love with those around us. As a king over sin and the flesh, I can exercise my will to “say no” to time-wasting pursuits that distract me from the work of His Kingdom.

Paul was an instrument in the growth of God's kingdom because he “was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision” by which Jesus commissioned him to preach the gospel. He said that “through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ...to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.” God help us, whom He has both commissioned to preach the gospel

by word and deed to all and made to be kings, to use the power He has given us over all of satan's forces and to tear down the strongholds of satan in our sphere of influence. I am seeking God to work His great vision into my heart and mind that I would pick up His great cause and sacrificially seek to bring others into his kingdom under the unction of his grace and love.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

LESSON 3: APRIL 19, 2026

A KING HAS COURAGE

2 Chronicles 15:1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about.

16 And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.

17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

18 And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

19 And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

MEMORY VERSE: Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. —**Joshua 1:9**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The prophet Azariah reminded King Asa that the LORD would be with him as long as he was true to the LORD. He rehearsed before Asa the times Israel had wandered away from God and fallen into idolatry. God then vexed them with innumerable troubles. When they repented, He delivered them—until they fell away again. “Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.”

Asa took courage and put away the abominable idols out of all Judah and Benjamin, as well as the cities he had taken from Mount Ephraim. He then called all the people together to Jerusalem for a great sacrifice. All Judah and Benjamin, as well as several from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, gathered in Jerusalem, where they offered seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep and renewed their covenant with the LORD.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Chronicles 15:8 **Courage:** to fasten upon; to seize; to be strong; to bind, restrain, and conquer; to catch, cleave, confirm, constrain, and continue; to be established, fortify, and harden; to maintain, play the man, wax mighty, and prevail; to be recovered, repair, retain, seize, strengthen, and wax strong; to be sure, to be urgent, and to behave valiantly; to withstand (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the preceding chapter, 2 Chronicles 14:8-12, "Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valour. And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled."

The LORD's admonition to Asa was not in reference to conquering the enemy without, but rather the enemy within—idolatry. Only when Asa and the people eradicated their affinity with false gods did the LORD give them rest from their enemies without.—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did God send Azariah the prophet to meet King Asa as he came back from the great victory over the one-million-strong Ethiopian army?
2. How easy would it have been for Asa to feel confident and secure in God's providential care after God had given such a great victory over the Ethiopians, yet still have idolatry present in the land?
3. What does God require of us for Him to "be with us"?
4. How does idolatry on our part make God feel?
5. Name a few idols we can be tempted with today.
6. Which takes more courage for us: to eradicate the enemies within, or to fight the enemies without?
7. Why was God more interested in the "enemies within" than He was in the enemies without?
8. Later, when Judah and Benjamin finally fell into captivity, what was the reason for their fall?
9. Who decides if an idol gains a foothold in our lives?
10. Who decides if that idol is removed?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Several empires and dynasties lasted hundreds, even thousands, of years. However, none of these empires or dynasties exist today in their original form. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay. He could not remember the dream, but knew it was of great importance. God gave Daniel the same dream, along with its interpretation. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar he was the head of gold, but other kingdoms would rise to replace his kingdom. The last kingdom foretold in the dream, the Roman Empire, would also eventually fall. The "stone cut out of the mountain without hands," Daniel 2:34-45, represented the kingdom of heaven, set up by Jesus Christ. We are told in Daniel 2:44 that His Kingdom "shall stand for ever."

Earthly governments rise and fall because they are of this earth and have its inherent weaknesses. The gods of this world are at the heart of every weakness and are therefore directly responsible for

all failure. However, if I accept the courage granted by our Savior to remove the things in my life that hinder His power and grace, I can be part of God's spiritual kingdom that will last forever.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for Your great gift of salvation. Thank you for the godly courage to remove the things in my life that displease you. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

It takes courage to do God's will. He is looking for men and women, boys and girls of courage to live an exemplary life that will represent Him in this world. We must have courage to accomplish this. When we entered into His kingdom, He made us kings and priests. We have a responsibility to fulfill this royal purpose.

We are encouraged over and over in the scriptures to be of good courage. Kingship requires courage if it is to be a successful reign. It is not a place for cowards or the fainthearted. It takes courage to assert the kind of authority against wrong and to do that which is right according to God's commandments. We see examples in the scriptures of people of God who were able to successfully accomplish His will with courage.

Before Joshua was to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land, he was instructed to be of good courage. He was given a promise that he was to hold onto. Therefore, by faith in the promises of God and with courage, he successfully took the children of Israel into the Canaan land.

Joshua, David, Daniel, Joseph, Shadrach, Abednego, and many others set an example of exercising courage in the face of adversities and maintaining lives that pleased God. They faced the Jordan River, the giant, lions, the fire, the pit, prison, and many other conflicts.

Today, we can rejoice in being made “kings” with courage in this wonderful kingdom of God. We accept the challenge to be of good courage in the face of adversities. We must also set an example and lead the way with courage to the “Promised Land.”

—Sis. Doris Clay

LESSON 4: APRIL 26, 2026

A KING IS DECISIVE AND SINGLE-MINDED

Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

17 For the LORD our God, he *it is* that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the LORD; for he *is* our God.

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.

23 Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

Judges 2:7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

MEMORY VERSE: A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

—James 1:8

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Joshua was firm and unapologetic in his determination to follow the Lord wholly. Most likely, he had a positive influence on his household to follow the Lord. He exhorted all Israel to determine once and for all to serve the Lord with their whole heart. He knew if they did not make that commitment and stick to it, their steps would soon lead them far away from God—and He would turn them over to their reprobate minds. Their destruction would be as sure as His blessings would have been if they had chosen the right path.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Joshua 24:15 **As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD:** Joshua made a personal decision to serve the Lord. His determination directly affected every member of his household by providing the strongest possible influence for his wife and children to serve the Lord.

Judges 2:10 **There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD:** All who witnessed God's power working through Joshua eventually died. During Joshua's lifetime, the younger generation did not develop a personal relationship with God that would have sustained their faith after his death. The resulting lack of personal convictions soon led them to fall into idolatry.

LESSON BACKGROUND

All of Joshua's generation, except Joshua and Caleb, perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief and disobedience. The younger generation, who witnessed their parents' unbelief and punishment, was aware that this unbelief was the reason they had to wander around in the wilderness for forty years instead of entering the land of Canaan.

When the younger generation finally entered Canaan, they were warned they must utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land lest they forget the LORD and fall into idolatry. Sadly, Judges 1:27-36 lists the cities Israel failed to conquer.

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and

shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass, *that* I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them” (Numbers 33:55-56). —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How necessary is a daily decision to serve the Lord?
2. What will happen if I follow God only when it is convenient or only when I feel like it?
3. What influences are there today that attempt to pull my attention and affection away from God?
4. Why did the people follow God when Joshua was alive, but drift away when he and his generation died?
5. How important is it to establish true and firm convictions regarding spiritual idolatry?
6. What role does a deep and personal relationship with God have in establishing convictions?
7. Who decides if I have a personal and enjoyable relationship with God that distances me from spiritual idolatry?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

“A winner never quits, and a quitter never wins!” This saying is especially true regarding our spiritual walk with God. The devil is determined to sidetrack our spiritual progress with anything we allow to distract us. The variety of distractions is limitless, but we can still make it if we “set our faces like a flint” and ask for God’s help!

We read about three of David’s “mighty men” in 2 Samuel 23:8-17. Adino lifted “up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.” Eleazar “smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword.” Shammah “stood in the midst of the ground [full of lintiles], and defended it, and slew the Philistines.”

These three men heard David express a longing for a drink of water from the well at Bethlehem. Out of their love and respect for David, they broke through the host of the Philistines garrisoned there and brought back water from the well for him. David, overcome with the thought of their sacrifice, poured the water on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

The exploits of these three “mighty men” are admirable. They shared with David the quality of character of being decisive and single-minded. Once their minds were made up about a necessary task, they followed through to its completion, even at the peril of their lives.

“Dear Lord, help me to be just as decisive and single-minded to serve you as David and his band of mighty men were in their time! Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. —John 6:35–38

We have a clear record of how completely the King of our glory was focused on doing the will of His Father. From the age of twelve, we see Him in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking and answering questions in a way that astonished them. When Joseph and Mary questioned Him for remaining behind, He asked why they did not understand that He must be about His Father’s business.

The Gospels show that Jesus then submitted Himself to Mary and Joseph, according to the law, and we have no record of public action beyond obedience and learning until He entered His ministry at about thirty years of age.

Even after beginning His public ministry, Jesus remained faithful to His Father’s will. We see this in His obedience at the wedding in Cana, where He honored His mother’s request to turn water into wine. Throughout His ministry, He was constantly in prayer, repeatedly reminding His disciples that He had come only to do the will of His Father. In the prayers He prayed for us, recorded in Scripture, we see this same emphasis—calling all believers to live obediently and in alignment with the Father’s will.

Near the end of His earthly walk, as He prayed in the garden, Jesus acknowledged that all things were possible with God, yet He fully submitted Himself to His Father’s will. Later, during His arrest,

after the servant's ear had been cut off, He spoke of the relief that was available to Him:

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? —Matthew 26:52–54

Jesus was fully aware that He could have chosen a different path. Yet, even while facing death, He remained faithful, never departing from the will of His Father.

Oh, may we be as dedicated as Jesus to remain faithful and obedient to God's commandments. This unwavering commitment is foundational to His ministry. Just as with His Father, there was no shadow of turning in Him. He never wavered in purpose or action. There was no ambiguity in where He stood or how He would respond.

Even the Pharisees trusted the consistency of His actions enough to attempt to trap Him by it, as seen when they brought before Him the woman caught in adultery. Yet, through the wisdom given Him by the Father, He handled the situation decisively—without compromise and without diluting the message He brought to humanity.

May we follow our King, and may we be the priests and kings in our own lives that He desires us to be.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

LESSON 5: MAY 3, 2026

A KING IS NOT EASILY ANGERED

1 Samuel 25:9 And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

15 But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.

19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

20 And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.

21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any [male].

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.

30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

MEMORY VERSE: He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

—Proverbs 16:32

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Nabal's treatment of David and his men was utterly shameful and dangerous. From a human standpoint, David had every reason to seek revenge. Fortunately, Nabal's wife, Abigail, had the wisdom to recognize that God's providence overrules even in the worst circumstances, and she had the courage to remind David of this great truth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Samuel 25:17 **Son of Belial:** without profit, worthless, destructive, wicked, naughty, and ungodly (*Strong's*).

1 Samuel 25:25 **Nabal:** literally meaning dolt, stupid, wicked, especially impious, fool (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

David and his six hundred men camped near Nabal during the time of sheep shearing. Their presence proved to be a “wall” of defense against predators and poachers. Nabal’s men recognized the benefit of having them nearby and appreciated it. Nabal unwisely chose to ignore the obvious.

Nabal had a reputation that rivaled the meaning of his name. Furthermore, he proved how true the following two proverbs were:

Proverbs 26:12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 29:20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Nabal not only acted foolishly, but he also exhibited that he was wise in his own conceit, thinking himself much better than the man who had recently spared the life of King Saul in the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 24:3-10). In his conceit, he hastily proved it with the first sharp words that came to his mind. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did David expect assistance from Nabal?
2. If Nabal thought so little of David, why didn’t he ask David to leave when he first came to his area instead of enjoying the benefit of his protection during the time of sheep shearing?
3. How does it make a person feel when they are taken advantage of?
4. What is it like to not only have one’s reputation slandered but also to be taken advantage of?
5. David wisely chose to allow God to take his part when King Saul made multiple attempts on his life. Why was Nabal’s treatment of him harder to bear?

6. How important is it to allow God to use us to mollify another person's anger rather than "let it play out"?
7. If David had carried out his threats against Nabal, describe the harm not only to himself, but also to others and to God's cause.
8. Compare our methods of handling difficulties with God's methods.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"One morning, the Mongol warrior, Genghis Khan, and his court went out hunting. His companions carried bows and arrows, but Genghis Khan carried on his arm his favorite falcon, which was better and surer than any arrow, because it could fly into the skies and see everything that a human being could not.

"However, despite the group's enthusiastic efforts, they found nothing. Disappointed, Genghis Khan returned to the encampment, and in order not to take out his frustration on his companions, he left the rest of the party and rode alone. They had stayed in the forest for longer than expected and Khan was desperately tired and thirsty. In the summer heat, all the streams had dried up, and he could find nothing to drink. Then, to his amazement, he saw a thread of water flowing from a rock just in front of him.

"He removed the falcon from his arm and took out the silver cup, which he always carried with him. It was very slow to fill, and, just as he was about to raise it to his lips, the falcon flew up, plucked the cup from his hands, and dashed it to the ground.

"Genghis Khan was furious, but the falcon was his favorite, and perhaps it, too, was thirsty. He picked up the cup, cleaned off the dirt, and filled it again. When the cup was only half-full, the falcon again attacked it, spilling the water.

"Genghis Khan adored his bird, but he knew that he could not, under any circumstances, allow such disrespect; someone might be watching this scene from afar and, later, would tell his warriors that the great conqueror was incapable of taming a mere bird.

"This time, he drew his sword, picked up the cup, and refilled it, keeping one eye on the stream and the other on the falcon. As soon as he had enough water in the cup and was ready to drink, the falcon again took flight and flew towards him. Khan, with one thrust, pierced the bird's breast.

“The thread of water, however, had dried up; but Khan, determined to find something to drink, climbed the rock in search of the spring. To his surprise, there really was a pool of water and, in the middle of it, dead, lay one of the most poisonous snakes in the region. If he had drunk the water, he, too, would have died.

“Khan returned to camp with the dead falcon in his arms. He ordered a gold figurine of the bird to be made, and on one of the wings, he had engraved: ‘Even when a friend does something you do not like, he continues to be your friend.’ And on the other wing, he had these words engraved: ‘Any action committed in anger is an action doomed to failure.’”

Author: Paulo Coelho, Genghis Khan and His Falcon.

<https://paulocoelhoblog.com/2021/06/17/genghis-khan-and-his-falcon/>

“Dear Heavenly Father, help me put away anger. When I feel frustrated, help me turn those feelings over to you rather than let them simmer and then eventually explode. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Anger is something I struggle with. Like a hot flood it washes over me, resulting in relationship disasters. Trying to overcome it, I've gathered the following knowledge. Knowledge is a springboard to overcoming anger, but in my experience, it isn't enough. Victory requires prayer, soul-searching, fasting, vigilance, humility, and the power of the Holy Spirit. I'm a work in progress. I have quoted people who I thought had good insight on dealing with anger, but it's not intended to be a blanket endorsement.

“Wisdom teaches how to conduct ourselves to offenses. It teaches not to expect those we deal with to be faultless; we ourselves are not. It strengthens the wise, arming them against the dangers of provocation. Use soft words and hard arguments. If others are peevish and provoking, we should not be put into a passion but speak calmly” (MHCC).

“You always have a choice how you respond. It takes practice and awareness to dominate your reactions. Anger and frustration are extremely expensive emotions. When you feel irritation ask yourself, ‘Is this worth what it's about to cost?’ When you're reactive, you're

much more likely to make bad decisions. Pay attention to what triggers you. Once you identify your triggers, cultivate a mental space between the stimulus and the response. In that space lies your power to choose your response rather than reaction. Don't take things personally. Develop the ability to withstand the slights, criticism, and frustrations that life throws at you. Realize that your feelings and reactions are your responsibility. No one has the power to make you angry unless you let them. Their words don't define your worth or value. Recognize their response is a reflection of their inner struggles. Be intentional in your response instead of lashing out or getting defensive. Is the feedback you're getting designed to help you grow? If the answer is yes, take it and use it to get better" (Jordan Peterson).

"Are you letting your feelings and emotions drive your car instead of your thoughts and actions? The front two tires of the car are thoughts and actions. The back two tires are feelings and emotions. Practice letting the front tires work. Instead of saying, 'I'm so angry!' (secondary emotion) say, 'I'm scared, I'm sad...' List the real issue under the anger. Working through anger is hard, working through fear or disappointment is easier. Feelings are like an elephant, the rider is logic. If the elephant takes over, the rider is along for the ride. Avoidance in dealing with issues almost never helps. Conflict deferred conflict amplified" (John Delony).

"Anger is information. It tells you something important to you is being threatened or ignored. Like fire, it's a useful servant and a dangerous master. Listen to what the anger is trying to tell you without letting it make your decisions. Early intervention in conflicts, before they escalate, is more likely to be successful. Take breaks when the conversation becomes too heated. Return to difficult topics when both are calm enough to listen as well as speak. Winning an argument is less valuable than solving the underlying problem" (Kayla Hayes).

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 6: MAY 10, 2026

A KING HAS GREAT INFLUENCE

1 Samuel 18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of

David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

2 Samuel 3:31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, *so* fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

36 And all the people took notice *of it*, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

MEMORY VERSE: When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

—**Proverbs 29:2**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: All Israel held David in high regard because the Spirit of the LORD was upon him. His influence brought with it a great responsibility to lead where others could safely follow.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Samuel 18:6 **Slaughter of the Philistine:** referring to one of the most recent exploits of David and his men rather than the slaying of Goliath (*Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

After slaying Goliath, “Jonathan’s heart was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18:1). King Saul then sent David out with the men of war. Having the Spirit of God resting upon him, David seemed incapable of doing any wrong in the sight of the soldiers, Jonathan, and all the people.

Years later, after the death of King Saul, King David’s general, Joab, tricked Abner, King Saul’s general, into a private conversation. During the brief one-on-one conversation, Joab killed Abner in cold-blooded, simmering rage in revenge for the death of his younger brother, Asahel. (Read the account in 2 Samuel, 2:12-32 and 3:22-32.) David demoted Joab because he was so aghast at Joab’s actions. David attended Abner’s funeral and lamented his former enemy as a friend. All Israel took notice and participated in mourning for Abner.

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. David “behaved himself wisely” when sent out with King Saul’s army. Name some attributes with which the Spirit of God blessed David that caused such loyalty from Jonathan and the other soldiers.
2. When the women started singing and dancing at the return of David from one of the military campaigns, it infuriated King Saul. What does this reveal about King Saul’s character?
3. As King Saul increasingly hated David, it also seemed the people admired David more. Why?
4. How does following David in battle contrast to following King Saul? Which would one be easier and why?
5. What did David’s reaction to Joab’s assassination of Abner show about David’s character?
6. Reflecting on the memory verse, what effect do leaders have on those who are under their authority and care?
7. Why do some people in authority abuse their positions?
8. What does God think of those who abuse their authority?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

People have a natural tendency to imitate the behavior of those they admire. We see evidence of this all around us. Fashion trends follow what famous people wear. Children pick up the words and actions of their parents and older siblings.

One story illustrates this point very well. Years ago, a certain lame man had a son. The father and son had a close relationship. As the little boy began to walk, it became obvious he had a limp. He limped on the same leg his father favored! Physically, there was nothing wrong with the boy, but he learned how to walk by watching his father, and he wanted to be like his Daddy!

“Dear God, please help me be the example I should be! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

The central thought echoes a well-known quote often attributed to Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Great power involves great responsibility.” Yet this principle reaches much farther back—to the very beginning of creation. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were given dominion, or supreme authority, over every living thing (Genesis 1:28). Their choices not only affected themselves but all of mankind, illustrating how those with authority carry significant responsibility.

Throughout human history, influential people have guided others toward both positive and negative paths. Numerous examples from the Bible and global history demonstrate these effects. The power of influence is vast; regardless of our circumstances or beliefs, each of us impacts those around us. It is crucial to handle this responsibility with care. There are present and future consequences for leading individuals down the wrong path or in the wrong direction. Most importantly, God will hold us accountable (Isaiah 59).

David took extreme effort, more than his predecessor Saul, to follow God’s guidance and direction in his life and in leading the children of Israel. When he stumbled, he sought to correct it, and God had mercy. Those in positions of authority should remain humble and strive to honor God through their words, deeds, and actions. The Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:1 encouraged—Follow me as I follow Christ (paraphrased). Sadly, many choose to follow after someone/something that is contrary to God’s word. That unwise decision, if not corrected, will lead to separation from God now and throughout eternity.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

LESSON 7: MAY 17, 2026

A KING HAS A TERRITORY OF RESPONSIBILITY

Luke 4:5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Luke 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Romans 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

MEMORY VERSE: And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

—**Daniel 2:44**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The power and glory of this world’s darkness are given to the devil. He uses the allure of the world as bait to entrap all who will fall for his devices. The powers the devil grants to his subjects are designed to help further his kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of heaven is from above. It is full of light, grace, truth, love, and power to live free from the entanglements of sin and fleshly appetites. God also gives His children the authority to minister to others that they might be delivered from the kingdom of darkness. The prayers of the righteous for the lost are effective for their salvation.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 10:18 **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven:** “I saw at your command devils immediately depart, as quick as the flash of lightning. I gave you this power—I saw it put forth—and I also give now, in addition to this, the power to tread on serpents (*Barnes*).”

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for forty days. The devil tried unsuccessfully to trick Jesus into abdicating His power and authority over sin and fleshly appetites by presenting a seemingly innocent “test” of His divinity—tempting Him to satisfy His hunger. He then offered to “give” Jesus the power and glory of all earthly kingdoms. Finally, the devil insinuated that Jesus could prove He was the Son of God by jumping off a pinnacle of the temple. Jesus defeated the devil every time by quoting the Word of God.

The devil knew if Jesus did not exercise His authority over His flesh, He could not have power over anything else—including sin. Jesus triumphed over all, however. Because Jesus had ultimate power

and authority, He also had the right to give power and authority to His disciples. That power and authority did not stop with the disciples who walked physically with Jesus for three and a half years. Jesus' disciples today are entrusted with the same authority, "even unto the end of the world"! —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. The devil offered Jesus the power and glory of all earthly kingdoms if He would worship him. Why did Jesus not accept this seemingly short path to power?
2. If Jesus had accepted the devil's proposal, how would the plan of salvation have been affected?
3. To what did Jesus liken the fall of the devil from the high places in men's hearts?
4. What power and authority did Jesus give His disciples?
5. Describe the power and authority Jesus gives us today through His word and the Holy Spirit.
6. Who or what is the limiting factor of our God-given kingly power and authority today?
7. What did God reveal in Daniel 2:44 as it pertains to power and authority in the kingdom of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A certain young girl helped her mother spread the blanket for the Sunday afternoon picnic the family was about to enjoy. The place the family chose happened to be in the cow pasture near their home. Suddenly, the little girl's grandpa cried out, "Run! Get under the fence! The bull is coming!" The family started for the fence, but it soon became evident there wouldn't be enough time to escape the charging bull. The little girl, frozen in fear, shouted, "Make him stiff-legged! Make him stiff-legged!" The bull suddenly stopped in his tracks, unable to move further. His legs were indeed stiff!

God answered the little girl's prayer, and the family relocated their picnic to a safe spot. The little girl, my mother, never forgot that God hears the prayers of the righteous, even a prayer of a child.

Several years ago, God placed a heavy burden on my heart for a young couple faced with some life-altering decisions. As I mowed our

lawn, I began to pray for God's intervention and blessing on the couple. A few days later, we received news of God working on behalf of the couple in multiple ways. It was evident God was working for their eternal good. By turning the key to prayer, a door of opportunity was opened!

"Dear Heavenly Father, help me understand in greater measure the power and authority you give me as a king and priest. Help me exercise that power and authority for the good of souls. Amen!"

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

As children of God, we are given territory to rule with power: ourselves first and foremost, then, through prayer and fasting, we can also plead for our unsaved loved ones.

We overcome by the power of the blood of the Lamb, the power of our testimony when it is based on who God is and what He has done for us, and the powerful force present when "the devil comes and finds nothing in us," because we love not our lives unto death (Revelation 12:11). That last phrase speaks of being sold out to God and of not letting anything separate us from the love of God in this life or in death.

In Psalm 2:8, the Lord tells us, "Ask of me, and I shall give the heathen [unsaved] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Another verse in Isaiah 45:11 invites us, "...of my hands command ye me." Here are just two instances where God bequeaths to us on earth an open invitation to pray and touch His throne.

May the Lord give us understanding to properly rule the territory He gives us as kings and priests.

—Sis. Vonda Cole

LESSON 8: MAY 24, 2026

A PRIEST IS BLAMELESS AND FAITHFUL

1 Samuel 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

13 And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

14 And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

16 And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.

17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

24 Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress.

25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

27 And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

28 And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:

but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

32 And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

33 And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

34 And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

36 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

MEMORY VERSE: Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? —**Proverbs 20:6**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Eli's two sons defiled the priesthood, despite his protests of their behavior. Their many sins caused the people to abhor the offering of the LORD. God sent a messenger to warn Eli of the consequences of allowing his sons to continue in the priesthood while still pursuing their wicked ways. God held Eli responsible for his sons' sins, even though he had not committed them.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Samuel 2:12 **Belial:** without profit, worthlessness, destruction, naughty, ungodly, wicked (*Strong's*).

1 Samuel 2:22 **Women that assembled:** women employed with the upkeep of the tabernacle (*Clarke*).

1 Samuel 2:35 **“A faithful priest”**: Zadok, who replaced Abiathar, the last descendant of the house of Eli. Abiathar was removed because he sympathized with Adonijah when he attempted to take the throne from David. The direct descendants of Zadok continued in the High Priesthood as long as the monarchy lasted (*Clarke and Barnes*). “A faithful priest” is also a prophecy of Jesus Christ (*F.B. Meyer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Aaron, the first high priest, had two sons who desecrated their priesthood by drunkenness and strange fire in their censers. Fire from the altar consumed them in an instant, punishing them for their lack of fear of God.

Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, would have done well to remember the fate of Aaron’s sons. Instead, they persisted in their errant behavior. God sent warnings to their father, Eli, who made an ineffectual effort to encourage them to reconsider their ways. Hophni and Phinehas, however, “knew not the LORD.” Their lack of personal knowledge and contact with God led them to not fear the LORD. The absence of godly fear in their lives led to their demise and the fall of their posterity. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did their office in the priesthood not automatically cause Eli’s two sons to know and fear the Lord?
2. Why did their lack of knowledge and fear of the Lord lead Hophni and Phinehas to desecrate the priesthood?
3. How did the sins of Hophni and Phinehas affect the congregation?
4. Why were Eli’s efforts ineffective in changing the behavior of his adult sons?
5. Why was Eli also held accountable for the actions of his sons, even though he did not participate in their sins?
6. What did God say would be the personal repercussions for Eli, his two sons, and all their lineage because they profaned the office of the priesthood?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

“What is the speed limit on this road, Papaw?” asked our grandson. After informing him of the posted speed limit, he asked, “How fast are you going, Papaw?” I looked down at the speedometer as the realization flashed through my mind that my grandson had high expectations of me.

Reflecting on it now, I must acknowledge the awesome privilege—and responsibility—that has been entrusted to me to be a positive influence on our grandchildren. If I exhibit proper respect for the laws of the land, my positive influence will help our grandchildren learn a little more in that direction. If I portray a reckless disdain for the law, that same tendency will soon find its way into their behavior.

It is no less true that my spiritual habits and attitudes are noticed by others, especially among those who look up to me as “older and wiser.” Even if I do not regard myself as being exceedingly wise, there is a great likelihood that others feel differently and are counting on me to live up to their expectations.

“Dear God, please help me to be faithful to you, myself, and others! Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

This is a true story that a missionary to Ethiopia, Dick McLellelan, related in his autobiography. One day, on his way to a village, he and his companions came across an old, crippled man sitting by the side of the road. As they approached, he called to them, “Do you have the words of life?” “Yes,” replied the missionary, “we have the words of life.” One of the missionaries remained with the old man, Gwobata, and shared recordings of scripture in different languages. When McClellan and the others returned that evening, many of the villagers had come down the hill to listen to the “words of life.” The old man and other members of his family gave their hearts and lives to the Lord that very evening.

But the missionary wanted to know how Gwobata knew that the words of life were coming. How was it that he was there when the missionaries passed by? Gwobata told him that he’d seen a vision of

a man running down the trail and calling, “The word of life is coming! Believe the word of life, and you will live forever!” Ever since then, he had slid down the hill every day, asking everyone if they had the words of life.

The missionary had one more question for the old man. “How many days have you been waiting at the bottom of the hill, my father?” Gwobata answered, “Many days. Every day since that vision. Twenty years ago.”

—Sis. Sarah Herron

LESSON 9: MAY 31, 2026

A PRIEST IS INSPIRED WITH GODLY WISDOM

Genesis 41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

MEMORY VERSE: But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. —**Job 32:8**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Joseph never held the office of king or priest, yet because he was determined to live pleasing to God and to be a faithful ambassador for Him, he was inspired with godly wisdom and understanding that far exceeded his years.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 41:39 **Discreet:** to separate mentally, distinguish, understand, consider, discern, perceive, to be prudent (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Genesis 39 gives the account of Joseph entering the service of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. The LORD was with Joseph and blessed everything he did in the household of Potiphar. Despite being a youth of only seventeen years, Joseph rapidly rose through the ranks and was soon placed over Potiphar's entire household. Potiphar trusted the wisdom the LORD gave Joseph so much that "he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. (verse 6)"

Joseph's refusal to succumb to the pressures Potiphar's wife put on him eventually turned her infatuation with him into rage and false accusations. Rather than losing his life, Joseph was confined to the prison where "the king's prisoners were bound" (verse 20). Joseph maintained his trust in God. He "shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (verse 21). The prison keeper recognized the wisdom God gave Joseph and put him in charge of the prison. When the time was right, God caused the butler to remember Joseph. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How valuable is divine inspiration?
2. God often used dreams to inspire His people in the Old Testament. What are some of the ways God uses to inspire His people today?
3. Why did Joseph declare it was not in him to understand dreams?
4. Why was Joseph so confident that the LORD was both able and willing to give Pharaoh “an answer of peace”?
5. How did Joseph have such a wise plan for the next fourteen years?
6. Why was Pharaoh so convinced that Joseph’s advice was the prudent path to take?
7. Describe why divine inspiration is dependent upon faith in God, faithfulness to God, forgiveness, and the proper attitude about the circumstances God allows to come our way.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Inspiration is valuable in everything humans undertake. Without inspiration, nothing of any worth would ever be accomplished. It takes inspiration to understand the desired result before the first step can be taken; otherwise, our efforts are aimless and contradictory.

Noah certainly needed divine inspiration to know how to build the ark; nothing like it had ever been constructed. He had only one chance to get it right, but because God gave him specific instructions, he was able to complete the task successfully.

Abram, later known as Abraham, was instructed by God to leave the land of his birth for a country that was yet to be revealed to him. There were many times after this first inspiration that Abram wondered how God’s promises would be fulfilled, but God always stood true to what He revealed to Abraham.

Moses received the Ten Commandments, along with all the ordinances God instituted for His people, directly from God. None of the commandments or ordinances originated from Moses’ imagination, intelligence, or training he received in the courts of Egypt. Many of the ordinances dealing with hygiene and cleanliness would have spared countless lives in the Middle Ages had they

heeded the advice given through God's divine inspiration to the Israelites on their desert journey.

Daniel was inspired by godly wisdom and understanding many times. The LORD revealed dreams and their interpretation to Daniel on several occasions, including the time the king had a dream he could not remember. God revealed to Daniel what the king had dreamed and gave him an understanding of the dream also.

Music, poetry, writing, scientific experiments, architecture, and countless other endeavors start with inspiration. While these efforts can be noble and exciting, how much more valuable is divine spiritual inspiration? Thankfully, divine inspiration is not relegated only to the past. We can ask God for it today! James 1:5 tells us, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

"Dear LORD, thank you for the wisdom and inspiration you give your children. Help me to always appreciate its true worth. Please give me more of it! Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Godly wisdom comes from contact with God. It is essential to our natural and spiritual well-being. Without it, many have made a shipwreck of their lives.

In the kingdom of God, we are made kings and priests. Each of these positions is a place of leadership and authority. They are positions that represent God's way and will in the earth. To successfully accomplish God's will, we need to have godly wisdom.

It is not God's will for us to aimlessly grope through life, making gross mistakes that affect our lives and the lives of others. Each step we take needs to be purposeful and meaningful. It needs to have God's influence written on it. Godly wisdom will make this happen.

When we read in the scriptures about the wisdom of various people of God, we find that this wisdom came from above; they didn't depend upon human wisdom or their own thoughts, but on God. The scripture says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." It also says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God..."

We see in the Bible examples of people who depended on God's wisdom rather than human wisdom. David was a successful man of

war, but when he returned to his home to find that the city was burned, his wife and children taken away, along with those of his men, he turned to God for wisdom. He obeyed God and recovered everything. In the case of Joseph, when he sought after godly wisdom, not only were his family's lives saved, but also those of a whole nation.

When we seek God for His wisdom and follow it, we will see that the blessings of the Lord will rest upon the outcome, both naturally and spiritually. What a blessing to be inspired by the wisdom of God!

—Sis Doris Clay

LESSON 10: JUNE 7, 2026

A PRIEST SELFLESSLY CONSIDERS THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 14:32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

MEMORY VERSE: For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

—1 Peter 3:17-18

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus calls us to follow Him in sacrificially considering the needs of others. This path involves suffering, but the end of that suffering yields the fruit of priceless souls.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 20:28 **Ransom:** a consideration paid or demanded for the release of someone or something from captivity.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The ninth and tenth chapters of Hebrews tell us of Jesus becoming our high priest, then offering His own blood as the perfect atonement for our sins, redeeming us to God. Jesus taught His disciples that they were to have the same spirit of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others, putting the needs of those they served above their own. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How does the world calculate greatness? How does God?
2. What does the term “servant leader” mean to you?
3. What difficulties do “servant leaders” face?
4. How are those who suffer for the sake of others encouraged and strengthened during their own difficult times?

5. When we follow God as dear children we walk in love. What kind of love is it?
6. Christ suffered for our sins. We also sometimes suffer for the good of others. Why?
7. Describe how someone's suffering or difficulty benefited you or someone you know.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I heard about this account several years ago but do not remember the pilot's name, nor can I find an online reference to verify whether it is fact or fiction.

An airplane carrying several people had to make an emergency landing due to mechanical issues. The aircraft sustained substantial damage, but there were no fatalities. "John," the pilot, feeling responsible for the welfare of his passengers, did everything humanly possible to ensure their well-being. Their forced landing near the Arctic Circle was frigid. Hypothermia, however, was only one of their concerns. Food, water, shelter, protection from wolves, and the need for eventual rescue were also paramount.

One of the rules for survival in intensely cold environments is to avoid sweating. As sweat evaporates, heat is pulled from the body much more rapidly than normal, leading to the onset of hypothermia, frostbite, and cardiovascular stress. Sweating is practically a death sentence unless a person can change into dry clothes and find warmth soon enough.

John knew the important "no sweat" rule, but in his zealous efforts to help his passengers, he forgot about himself. By the time he remembered, it was too late—he was drenched in sweat. Knowing he had only a short time to live, he continued to do all he could for his passengers until he finally succumbed to hypothermia.

John could have taken the selfish path of protecting only his own life, but many of his passengers may have perished. Jesus could have considered His own comfort above our great need of salvation, but the world would have been lost because no one else could do what Jesus did to save us.

"Dear Heavenly Father, help me to be more concerned about others' well-being rather than only thinking of myself. Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Be ye therefore followers of God—the Greek word for follower means “to be an imitator.” I recall a time when one of my grandsons was little and was sitting in a chair across the room from where I was sitting. His mother noticed that he was sitting with his legs crossed just as I was; he was imitating me because I was in his presence. If we are going to imitate Christ, we must be in His presence often. The scripture here says to follow or imitate God as dear children in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Our great high priest loved us so much that He gave his life for us so that He could make us kings and priests to reign on earth (Revelation 5:10) that we might manifest the same love to our fellow man. Ephesians 4:1-2 tells us to forbear one another in love. The writer is counseling us—as Christians (imitators of Christ)—to love our brothers in Christ.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:44 that we are duty-bound to love our enemies and those who persecute us. Christ left an example for us when He prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). He had a great love for the souls of those persecuting Him. If we were being persecuted and stoned to death, could we with true, godly love, as Stephen, say, “Lord lay not this sin to their charge”? (Acts 7:60). Nothing but the true love of a God in the heart of a man can enable him to utter such sentiments in his dying moments for the souls of others. May we have such a love for lost souls that we say a prayer for them at all costs.

—Bro. Rick Cox

LESSON 11: JUNE 14, 2026

A PRIEST INTERCEDES FOR OTHERS

Exodus 32:7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Numbers 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.

10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.

11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.

13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

MEMORY VERSE: And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. —**Job 1:5**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: *Refer to the Word Definitions.*

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 32:7 **Thy people:** The LORD reminded Moses by using this term that he had an inherent responsibility to intercede for the people he had agreed to lead out of Egypt into Canaan. The LORD was angry enough with the people to destroy them and start over with Moses' lineage. If Moses had not stood between the LORD's wrath and the people, they would certainly have been destroyed.

Exodus 32:9 **Stiff-necked:** churlish, cruel, hard-hearted, impudent, obstinate, and stubborn (*Strong's*).

Exodus 32:11 **Thy people:** Moses used the same term the LORD had used in his plea for divine mercy. In verse 13, Moses reminded the LORD of His promise to multiply the seed of Israel, His people, in the land of Canaan.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The LORD delivered Israel with a mighty hand out of the land of Egypt. The people, however, were quick to forget the many miracles and signs the LORD performed on their behalf. Three months after crossing the Red Sea, Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the commandments from the LORD. The people assumed he would not be gone long, but after thirty-eight days, they concluded he would never return. Their erroneous assumptions, fueled by their unbelief, led to unreasonable fears and ultimately a mob mentality. Taking matters into their own hands, they demanded that Aaron make them gods that would go before them. Aaron relented and fashioned a golden calf out of their melted-down earrings. Their hard-hearted unbelief and rebellion brought the LORD to contemplate their destruction. If Moses had not interceded on their behalf, the LORD would have destroyed them and started over with Moses' descendants.

About one year and nine months later, Miriam and Aaron allowed their jealousy of Moses to grow to the point of open rebellion. Their complaint against Moses' marriage quickly escalated to claiming they were "just as important as Moses." The LORD withdrew His presence from the camp and struck Miriam with leprosy, showing the consequences of jealousy and rebellion.

Job is noted for his careful and constant intercession for his children. His burnt offerings and prayers on their behalf were not because he was aware of anything they had done wrong, but because he knew there was always the possibility they could sin. His intercessory prayers and sacrifices were proactive, not reactive.

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What justification did the LORD have to destroy the people and start over with Moses' descendants?
2. Why did Moses intercede for the people?
3. How powerful are God's promises, especially when we remind Him of them?
4. What most likely would have happened if Moses had taken a "neutral" stance with the LORD's wrath?
5. How much pride in Moses' heart would it have taken for him to regard Miriam's punishment as a just reward for her jealousy?
6. How much do you think God counted on Moses to intercede on behalf of the people, and on behalf of Miriam and Aaron?
7. How much does God count on us to intercede for others, even those who hurt us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The role of an intercessor is a vital link in the process of God meeting humanity's needs. Jesus prayed for His disciples often. We are included in His intercessory prayers also! Peter could draw comfort from Jesus' words, "I have prayed for you," as he wept bitterly after denying Him three times. Peter's failure was great, but he had the reassurance that Jesus had already interceded on his behalf before His heavenly Father.

When we pray for others, it is an intercessory plea asking God to help someone in ways we are powerless to do so ourselves. If someone is thirsty, we can give them a drink. We do not need to pray about it. But if the need is greater than our capacity to help, we pray. In this way, we turn the case over to the One who has all power in heaven and earth.

We can subconsciously fall into the trap of thinking it is our intercessory prayer that does the work. Thankfully, it is only God's power that will bring the needed change. In Luke 5:19, the friends of the man afflicted with palsy knew they were powerless to heal their friend. They brought him to Jesus, though, knowing He would perform the work. They saw the crowd surrounding Jesus when they arrived but were able to fulfill their part of interceding for their friend when they removed the tiling from the roof and let him down by ropes to Jesus.

"Dear Jesus, thank you for praying for me! Please help me to be faithful to bring the needs of others to you when I am powerless to help them myself. Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

The lesson shows us the great responsibility of being able to intercede for others. God's word states that through Christ we are made kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). As kings we are to govern our spirit, conquer satan, and have power with God in prayer. As priests we are to make intercessions for others, including the church, the lost, our enemies, and rulers of the land. Moses was called upon to pray for Israel and his siblings under some unpleasant circumstances. Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends (Job 42:10). Though miserable comforters to him, Job became their intercessor and a blessing to them.

Many years ago, I was told that an elderly sister and a brother, who were ministers, could hold a full-fledged conversation with you and still would be praying in the spirit for others. Yet it is not just a duty for ministers to intercede for others. We all have a responsibility to pray for those with whom we interact. At one time a co-worker, in the presence of the maintenance crew, asked if I had been praying for them. I told him that I had. His response to me was that I had

better be praying! May God help us all to prove faithful in this aspect of spiritual warfare.

No one can say that they have no purpose or place in the body of Christ. The need for intercessory prayer is always a great need. It is also a way to express a measure of love for those around us.

The priest always had someone in need of intercessory prayer. As we see the hurts, the lost estate of others, and the spiritual need of the world, intercessory prayer should be exercised in a great way by God's priests, His people.

—Bro. Paul Phillips

LESSON 12: JUNE 21, 2026

A PRIEST IS HUMBLE

Numbers 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

24 And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

26 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

Philippians 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth. —**Numbers 12:3**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Moses and the Apostle Paul, men greatly used of God, realized they were nothing without the power and love of God working through them. When it appeared outwardly that the actions of others might threaten their reputation or hinder the work God was working through their lives, they trusted God to take care of the situation.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Numbers 11:27 **Prophecy:** to speak or sing by inspiration in prediction or simple discourse (*Strong's*).

Numbers 12:3 **Meek**: gentle in mind [in all] circumstances; saintly, humble, lowly (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Forty years before God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he had a desire to help his people. Exodus 2:11-15 tells of the time he stepped in to protect one of the Hebrew slaves from the Egyptian taskmaster who was beating him. Moses killed the taskmaster and hid him in the sand, thinking he had righted the wrong.

The next day, Moses revisited the Israelites. Seeing two of the Hebrew slaves fighting, he approached them and tried to mediate the dispute. The instigator of the fight asked Moses, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" (Exodus 11:14). Moses realized that if his deeds of the day before were already known among the Hebrews, Pharaoh surely knew and would kill him.

Moses led the life of a lowly shepherd for the next forty years. He no longer depended on his education, social standing, or military training. By the time God finally called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses was completely convinced he was not worthy or able to do it—even with God's help.

Before the Apostle Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he persecuted the saints with zeal. Many Bible scholars believe Paul, known as Saul in his youth, was in his early thirties when "he made havock of the church." Since no other "persecutor" was called out by name, Saul/Paul may have been one of the most ardent and renowned persecutors. It would be surprising if Saul were not a very proud young man.

After Paul's "Damascus Road" experience, he realized his nothingness. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 and Ephesians 3:8, he describes himself as "the least of the apostles" and "the least of all saints." So complete was his humility that when false brethren tried to harm him by preaching Christ out of pretence and ill will, "supposing to add affliction to my bonds," Paul refused to accept the personal slights, but said, "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice" (Philippians 1:18). —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. If Moses had even the slightest pride in the “Spirit” and the leadership position God gave him, how easy would it have been to be jealous when the Spirit of God came upon the seventy elders?
2. When two of the seventy elders prophesied in the midst of the camp, Joshua did not think it was proper. What are some of the possible reasons Joshua didn’t think it was proper?
3. What decision did Moses have to make about Joshua’s envy for his sake?
4. How can allowing someone else to be jealous in our stead seem proper, even if we do not show outward manifestations of jealousy ourselves?
5. Moses wished that all God’s people would receive the Spirit of God, which had formerly been put on him alone at the time of Aaron and Miriam’s jealousy. Why did Moses seemingly not fear that the “Spirit” would be diluted in him and possibly make him less important?
6. A few false brethren took advantage of Paul’s imprisonment, hoping to lure followers after themselves. Why did Paul believe this great trial would “turn to his salvation”?
7. How easy would it have been for Paul to discredit the gospel preached by some out of envy and strife?
8. Paul was able to count ministries intended to harm him as a blessing to himself. How would he have been affected if he had chosen another attitude?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A young corporal barked orders at two privates digging a ditch one day during the Revolutionary War. The two ditch diggers were having a difficult time accomplishing their task. The various orders and suggestions of the corporal did not seem to help matters, but only made their job increasingly odious. After the two privates were about exhausted from their toil, a man on a horse approached from a distance. As he drew near, the rider could sense that the two men digging were nearing exhaustion. Dismounting, the rider asked the corporal about the situation. After hearing his explanation, the rider

then asked why he, the corporal, was not helping dig the ditch. “I’m corporal! I don’t dig ditches!” exclaimed the corporal. Without saying a word, the rider reached for the shovel of one of the privates and bade him rest for a few minutes. Letting each private take turns resting, the rider dug alongside the men until the task was completed. After the ditch finally met the satisfaction of the corporal, the rider mounted his horse, saluted the men, and riding off, said, “When you need another ditch dug, just call for General Washington. I’ll be glad to help again!”

There have been many great leaders down through the ages who did not consider themselves “too important” to rub shoulders with the common man. The greatest leaders possess a certain level of humility that draws loyalty from those who follow and elevates those whom they lead to the highest levels of achievement. Chief among these leaders is Jesus Christ, who exemplified humility in leadership to perfection.

“Dear Lord, help me to have true humility that comes from the knowledge that I am nothing without you. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Humility is one of those graces that life gives you a lot of opportunities to exercise, if you've a mind to. When you've failed in any other area, you get a chance to exercise humility, so failure's not a complete loss. Once you've made up your mind to utilize humility and start speaking, it's not so hard. You just have to get past the walk down the hall and opening your mouth for the first word—then give it all your heart.

Early in our marriage, Eric came home one evening, fell to his knees before me, wrapped his arms around me, and said, “Diane, I'm so sorry. I made a mistake and this month is going to be really tight.” I melted. There was no anger, just a willingness to work with him. His humility taught me a valuable lesson. When I make a mistake, the best approach is to get as humble as possible. Often, it will take some of the heat out of what could have been a conflict.

Years later we'd had a 'difference of opinion' and I realized I was wrong. I decided to embrace it. “You were right, I was wrong,” I replied in a pleasant tone. “What did you say?” he asked. I had an

instant choice. I knew he'd heard me the first time. I could be mad because he was trying to "rub it in," or I could embrace it. "You were right, I was wrong" and I decided "in-for-an-inch, in-for-a-mile" and added the rider, "Again." We both burst out laughing, and it's been a catch-phrase in our marriage ever since.

Bro. Ostis Wilson said in one of his messages on humility, "Any time that you run into a situation and you can't handle it just like a Christian should; and you feel disappointed in yourself because you didn't come out with real victory, if you look around in the situation, you'll find a place where you can humble yourself. If you can humble yourself, you'll overcome it."

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 13: JUNE 28, 2026

A PRIEST TELLS THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 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;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 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.

MEMORY VERSE: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. —**I Corinthians 13:1**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We are called by God to treat one another with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance with love, striving for unity in the Spirit. The body of Christ is likened to the human body. Each member cares for the others in the body, especially when one is injured or there is a threat of injury.

Our brains receive and send signals via our central nervous system when any part of our body is hurt. The brain quickly processes the signals sent by the nerves, identifies the location and severity of the injury, and instructs the other members on how best to help the injured member. The brain strives to “tell the truth in love.” It does not scold the finger that got hit with the hammer, but tells the other hand to grab and comfort the injured finger quickly. Then, the other hand wraps the hurt finger to help it heal.

When a member of the body of Christ is in danger or injured, the Holy Spirit identifies the problem, then intercedes with our Heavenly Father “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The Spirit then carries back a warning or comfort to the endangered or injured member and instructions to other members of the body on how to warn or help the one in danger or who is injured.

The Holy Spirit has a special way of “telling the truth in love” when a soul faces any difficulty. His instructions are a perfect blend of truth and comfort, with the end goal of healing and restoration.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ephesians 4:15 **Speaking the truth:** true in doctrine and profession (*Strong’s*); to tell the truth (*Thayer*).

Ephesians 4:15 **In love:** affection or benevolence (*Strong’s*); brotherly love, goodwill (*Thayer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul, known as “Saul, the Persecutor,” zealously sought to eradicate the faith of those who believed in Jesus Christ. His methods were by force, not by “speaking the truth in love.” By comparison, the good message of the gospel spreads hope and change through repentance. Salvation transforms a person from the inside out, renewing the hearts and lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ through the avenues of truth and love, not coercion.

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What danger is there of false doctrine, sleight of men, cunning craftiness, and efforts to deceive when words are spoken without truth in love?
2. How has someone exhibiting lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance benefited you in the past when they spoke the truth in love?
3. What would have happened if they had told you the truth without love?
4. How would you feel if someone told you something less than the truth, but did it kindly, thinking they were showing love by altering the truth?
5. How important is timing when telling the truth in love?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Years ago, my grandpa threw a nice ham bone out to their dog for him to enjoy. The bone accidentally hit the dog on the top of the head. The dog ran off yelping, believing the bone was meant to hurt him rather than to be enjoyed. My Grandpa understood why the dog ran away, and regretted throwing the bone, but it was too late to help the dog. Grandpa considered the situation and felt a renewed challenge to always handle the Word of God in a manner that draws people to Christ, rather than drives them away.

“Dear Heavenly Father, help me not shy away from the truth, but help me tell it when I should, with the love of God. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

As a child, I remember the joy of feeding the hogs, especially when we fed them whole corn on the cob. When Dad was not there, what a joy it was to throw the cob as hard as you could and hit the hogs right on the nose and watch them reel in pain and hear them squeal, then turn away. I have seen ministers who seem to enjoy rocking people with the Word. They appear to feel, “I got them good and mad.” We don’t want to take joy in offending people with the Word.

Uzziah was a good king, but he wanted to burn incense in the temple. In 2 Chronicles 26:17-18, fourscore priests withstood him. I believe they did it in love. Sadly, it was not received, and he was struck with leprosy. Let us speak the truth in love and receive the truth in love.

—E.E. Gracey

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