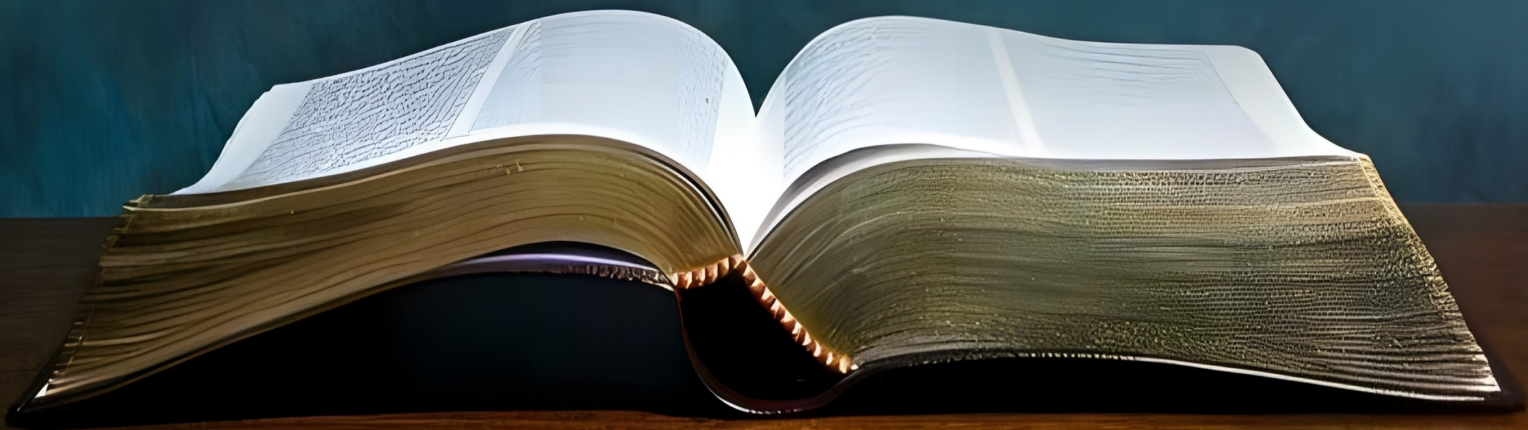


Jehovah Missionary Baptist Church
Third Quarter 2025

Bible Study

Every
Wednesday

7:00pm



2025 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNITY (Psalm 103:17-18 NKJV)

JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PROTECTING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

THOUGHT: Unity strikes at the heart of God. In His last prayer on earth, Jesus prayed that the Church would be united. He interceded for His disciples and for us, those who would believe because of their words. It was never His intent that we be divided by the circumstances of life. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Attitude, Emotion, Forgiveness, Behavior

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: ACTING IN LOVE TOWARD OTHER BELIEVERS (Ephesians 4:3-4)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. In what ways is the Body of Christ one?
2. How can you help the Body of Christ be more unified?
3. What is your testimony of being called to the Body of Christ?

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:3-4

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH PEACE

INTRODUCTION: This month's lesson is directly and intentionally taken from the Jehovah Missionary Baptist Covenant. The first statement under the Church Believer's Covenant is: "I will protect the unity of my church." This statement is powerful and important for every Kingdom Citizen to place as a priority and make a conscience effort to keep. The scripture used for this statement is taken from the book of Ephesians. This awesome letter to the church of Ephesus is written by the Apostle Paul. The purpose Paul wrote this letter is to strengthen the believers in Ephesus and us today in our Christian faith and responsibility as Kingdom Citizens. Paul does this by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, the Body of Christ. The church is made up of different styles, doctrines, denominations, ethnic groups, etc., but they are all made up of people. The church is the people more so than a building! The most important fact and commonality of the church or Body of Christ is that the people love Christ and are committed to serving Him. When we consider this focus chapter for our lesson this week, it's significant to note that the heading for this chapter is: "Unity in the Body of Christ." God has chosen Kingdom Citizens to be His representatives in the earth. Therefore, as Kingdom Citizens, we must place priority on God's choice to call us into His ministry. We must make it our goal and effort to keep unity in the Body of Christ. Paul even challenges Kingdom Citizens to live lives worthy of the calling we have received because it's an awesome privilege to be called Christ's very own. Kingdom Citizens must always keep in mind that there is one Body in Christ. Unity does not just happen; we have to work at it.

Often the differences among Kingdom Citizens can lead to division, but when Kingdom Citizens consider the oneness they have in Christ, this will not happen. Instead of concentrating on what divides people, we must remember what and who unites the Body of Christ.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS BEING UNITED BY GOD’S SPIRIT (V 3)

Kingdom Citizens should realize that building unity in the Body of Christ is one of the attributes of the Holy Spirit. He leads, but each person has to be willing to be led by the Spirit, and to do his or her part to allow the Holy Spirit to keep the peace. When we focus on God more than we focus on ourselves, the Holy Spirit has control and can better keep the peace. In Ephesians 1:13-14, it says: ***“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” (Eph 1:13-14 NIV)*** When we consider the above scripture, it reminds us as Kingdom Citizens of the seal and promise we have been given through the Holy Spirit. This is why Kingdom Citizens can yield to the will of God through the Holy Spirit. Then it says: ***“who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession- to the praise of His glory.” (V 14)*** Kingdom Citizens must understand that the deposited guarantee of our inheritance of the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to keep the peace through the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul says in our text: ***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Eph 4:3 NIV)***

How much effort does it take you to yield to the Holy Spirit in order to keep peace?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS RELY ON THE HOPE OF THE SPIRIT. (V 4)

The text says: ***“There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.” (Ephesians 4:4 NIV)*** This concept of “one hope” has different aspects but they are all tied together as one. They are connected through the glorious future in Christ in which all believers share. Just as God demonstrated through the Trinity, Kingdom Citizens must realize and rely on this same unity of hope. The song writer says: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’s blood and righteousness...” This fourth verse confirms that Kingdom Citizens’ hope is in the oneness of the Body and the Spirit. More importantly, Kingdom Citizens have been called into this Hope! Therefore, since Kingdom Citizens have been called into this hope, we have been sealed by the blood and sacrifice of Christ into this hope of our calling.

3. THE ONENESS OF KINGDOM CITIZENS (V 5)

The text says: ***“One Lord, one faith, one baptism;” (Ephesians 4:5 NIV)*** This verse implies that all believers in Christ Jesus belong to one body, and all are united under one head, Christ Himself. Each believer has been given by God abilities to strengthen the Body of Christ! No matter how great or small your gift and ability may seem, it is useful and necessary for the growth and edification of **the Body of Christ! Oneness is the Goal!**

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Attitude, Emotion, Forgiveness, Behavior

LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT: REFUSING TO GOSSIP AND EXCESSIVE ANGER

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How do lies disrupt unity in the Body of Christ and cause conflict?
2. What happens when anger or sin overtakes you?
3. Why is it vital to confess and repent of sin?

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:25-32

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS PRACTICING GODLY BEHAVIOR

INTRODUCTION: In this second week of lessons in July, we continue to study from the book of Ephesians. We also continue to focus on the Jehovah Missionary Baptist Church Covenant. Of course, the heading of this section of the covenant is “I will protect the unity of my church.” It is vital that the Kingdom Citizens strive to live and serve in ministry to protect this unity. The book of Ephesians is unlike several of the other letters Paul wrote in that Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. However, it’s a great letter and lesson on unity in the Body of Christ. Paul wrote this letter among other things to expand the horizon of the readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of the high goals God has for His church. In the section of scripture we study this week, Paul encourages Kingdom Citizens to live as Children of Light. Paul places emphasis on unity and maturity as goals for the Church. Believers must realize the importance of practicing good behavior and principles to live out their Christian duties. One of the duties and responsibilities is to display love towards other believers. Acting in love towards other believers is a very important part of Christian living. Kingdom Citizens must realize and place emphasize on practical application of Christian Living, focusing on replacing harmful and hurtful behaviors with love. This calls for honesty, gentleness, forgiveness, and kindness, while also discouraging falsehoods, anger, and unkindness.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS HONORING UNITY THROUGH TRUTH

Truth is a major quality in keeping unity in the Body of Christ. The Bible tells for us to know the truth and to live by the truth. Not only that but Jesus said in John 14:6: ***“Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (NLT)*** Therefore, it’s imperative that Kingdom Citizens know who truth really is and follow the example of truth in love and unity. We must also realize that truth is a natural human aspect that is to be honored in every aspect of life. When people don’t tell the truth and live by the truth, it’s hard to trust those people. The text says: ***“So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.” (Eph 4:25 NLT)*** Lying to others disrupts unity by creating conflicts and destroying trust. It tears down relationships and leads to open warfare in the Body of Christ. It is never a good thing when division is created in the Body of Christ, and deception and lying will always open the door for satanic attacks of division. The term used in the NIV version of the Bible is “falsehood” which is the same thing as lying! Kingdom Citizens must know that whether called lying or falsehood, it’s not a healthy or spiritual supportive posture for the Body of Christ.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH SATANIC ATTACKS.

It may not seem possible or fair that Satan will attack a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, Satan often launches His attacks on Kingdom Citizens possibly because He sees them as threats to his kingdom. Satan doesn’t need to attack those he already controls or has already deceived. Some of the tools, Satan uses in his attacks on Kingdom Citizens are anger, division, bitterness, hostility, selfishness, disobedience, temptations, and many others. Therefore, believers and everyone shouldn’t let any of those things fester in their hearts. Paul is sharing and encouraging us to let go of those vices, so that the devil does not get a foothold. The text says: ***“Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” (Eph 4: 26-27 NLT)*** The Bible doesn’t tell us that we shouldn’t feel angry, but it points out that it is important to handle our anger properly. Kingdom Citizens must know that we must handle all of Satan’s attacks with the Word of God! Believers must also know that these satanic attacks will destroy relationships. **How quickly do you work to mend relationships?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE.

The text says: ***“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” (Eph 4:31 NIV)*** Kingdom Citizens know that in order to get rid of these things, it requires repentance. It is vital that the believer trusts God and lean on the Holy Spirit to teach and lead him or her in this process. Then the text says: ***“Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Eph 4:32 NIV)***

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Attitude, Emotion, Forgiveness, Behavior

LESSON TWENTY-NINE: BEING SLOW TO TAKE OFFENSE (Hebrews 13:17)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How obedient are you to everyone in leadership?
2. Is it difficult for you to accept trusting leadership? Explain.
3. What advantages do you experience obeying leadership?

TEXT: HEBREWS 13:17

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: ENCOURAGING UNITY THROUGH GROWTH AND RESPECT FOR LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION: In this week's lesson, we continue to study the church covenant heading, **"I will protect the unity of my church."** Under this heading, the bullet points are **"By being slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation"** and **"By following the leaders."** Encouraging unity through growth and respect for authority and leadership requires cooperation of leaders and followers. The task of church leaders is to help people mature in Christ. It also requires followers to respect and honor those who God has chosen as leaders in the Body of Christ. This week's lesson is taken from the book of Hebrews. The writer of this book is not identified but is obviously well known to the original recipients. The overall purpose of this letter is to present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ. Even though many authors have been suggested to have written this letter or book, it's more important to receive the message shared. When we consider the focus chapter in the lesson, we should notice that these are concluding exhortations by the writer. The writer is intentional about addressing leaders and followers as he concludes this powerful book. It's important to note that the writer opens this chapter in the first five verses with five exhortations about real love and what it produces **"(1) Hospitality to strangers (2) Empathy for those who are in prison and those who have been mistreated (3) Respect for your marriage vows (4) Contentment with what you have. Then these verses end with verse five saying: Make sure that love runs deep enough to affect your hospitality, empathy, fidelity, and contentment. (Life Application Study Bible NLT)**

Moving closer to the focus verse in the lesson this week, the writer centers in on the church.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS OPERATING IN OBEDIENCE.

Obedience is an important factor of life especially in the Body of Christ. When followers in the church and even in the secular world learn how to be obedient to leaders, it helps ease the burden of leadership. It is vital for believers in the faith to understand the authority God has given leaders in the Body of Christ. Authority is a word that many people don't like to adhere to or obey because of various reasons. However, it's necessary for someone to be given authority in the Body of Christ. Much of the challenge is for people to accept who God chooses over who they want. It is also vital that the leader understands and is obedient to what God says and desires for the Body of Christ. Kingdom Citizens know that they must submit and obey the leader as they submit and obey God. The text says: ***"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority."*** (Hebrews 13:17a NIV) The text even goes on to say: ***"They keep watch over you as men who must give an account."*** (Hebrews 13:17b NIV) This implies that there is responsibility to God for the leader as it relates to the soul of the follower.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT TRUST IS VITAL AS WELL.

Kingdom Citizens must realize that just as obedience and submission are vital, trust is as well. It is important that believers know that they are not just trusting the leader, but they are trusting God. The Bible says, ***"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 KJV) One of the powerful lessons of these verses is that when we trust in God's leadership, He directs our paths. Trusting can be difficult at times, even when it's trusting God. This is because trust takes waiting for the unknown! Trusting also takes faith, and that's believing what is not tangible! However, Kingdom Citizens must realize that without faith, it's impossible to please God. Therefore, Kingdom Citizens must submit, obey, and trust God as they assist God's chosen leader. The text says: ***"Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden."*** (Hebrews 13:17c NIV)

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THE BENEFITS OF GODLY LEADERS.

Knowing the benefits of having godly leaders is to the advantage of the Kingdom Citizen. It is a great privilege to have anointed, spirit filled leaders in the Body of Christ and to serve beside them. Kingdom Citizens realize that as the leader is blessed, the followers are blessed, and the entire Body is blessed. When the leader experiences the joy of serving as the leader and God's servant, it's done with pleasure. However, when it's a burden to serve as a leader, it's not a benefit to either the follower or the leader. This is why the text says: ***"That would certainly not be for your benefit."*** (Hebrews 13:17d NLT) How effective are you in assisting your leader to serve with joy?

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Attitude, Emotion, Forgiveness, Behavior

LESSON THIRTY: FOLLOWING THE LEADERS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How will you describe your sincere love for Kingdom Citizens?
2. How much of a sacrifice do you make to show love?
3. Is your heart always deeply sincere in love with Kingdom Citizens?

TEXT: 1 PETER 1:22

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: LEARNING TO LIVE UP TO THE CALLING

INTRODUCTION: This fourth week of lessons continues to deal with the covenant and heading “**I will protect the unity of my church.**” This week’s lesson comes from 1 Peter. It was written by Apostle Peter. The purpose of this letter is to offer encouragement to suffering Christians of the past and of today. Although 1 Peter is a short letter, it touches on various doctrines and has much to say about Christian life and duties. It starts with Peter identifying himself as the writer. The next content of scripture in chapter one is titled “Praise to God for a Living Hope” which really deals with eternal life. Then the content of scripture that we find our focus verse in is titled “Be Holy.”

This powerful content of scripture focuses on the imminent Return of Christ, which should motivate believers to live lives to spend eternity with Christ. The promise of this section is to encourage the believers to live lives that are pleasing to God. When believers are pleasing to God, they are aligned with holiness. That is what Peter is also teaching in this content of the scripture. The scripture says: “*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*” (1 Peter 1: 14-16 NIV) To be holy is to be set apart for the work of Christ. **It is certainly not to be perfect but to live for the cause of Him who paid the price for us!**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS BEING CLEANSED THROUGH LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

Love is a very important attribute the believer must have in order to be effective in the Body of Christ. In fact, the Bible clearly says: ***“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16 KJV)*** This verse plainly reminds the Kingdom Citizen of the love relationship and importance of dwelling in God. The believer not only knows the importance of loving God but knows the importance of obeying God. This kind of love and obedience requires selfless giving. The self-centered person can't truly love! One of the most sincere and devoted attributes of God is His love. Of course, there are many vital attributes of God that Christians must possess and grow into, such as forgiveness and sacrifice. When believers commit themselves to this quality, they take their eyes off themselves and focus on God and others first! By sacrificing His life, Christ showed His sincere love for the believer and because of that the believer in Christ should sacrificially follow and obey God's example. The text says: ***“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brother” (1 Peter 1:22a NIV)***. One question that we should ask ourselves is: **How sincere am I in my commitment to the cause of Christ?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THE LEVEL OF SACRIFICE IT TAKES TO REPRESENT CHRIST.

Kingdom Citizens realize that as servants of Christ it takes a level of sacrifice that requires more than some people are willing to give. The major quality that one must have in order to give this kind of sacrifice is love. This kind of love must be sincere; it must be true love not pretense. Paul mentions this kind of love in his letter to the Romans in chapter twelve that talks about “Living Sacrifices.” Paul opens this chapter saying: ***“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1 NIV)*** Kingdom Citizens must understand that to live out a sacrificial life, it takes true love and worship. Paul also says in this twelfth chapter: ***“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9 NIV)*** Believers should understand the measure of love God has for His children, and Kingdom Citizens know that same love should be reciprocated to God from the heart.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT TRUE LOVE COMES FROM THE HEART.

The text says: ***“Love each other deeply with all your heart.” (1 Peter 1: 22c NIV)*** The text points out that this kind of love from the heart is deep! The Bible says: ***“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.” (John 13:34 NLT)*** Kingdom Citizens know and experience God's love every day! Therefore, we should show His love towards others as often as given opportunity! **How have you expressed God's love to others today?**

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THOUGHT: As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome the opportunity to serve with others in the local church and in the community. Our commitment to the local church doesn't end with the local church but begins with it.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Growth, One another, Unchurched, Concern

LESSON THIRTY-ONE: PRAYING FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What are some signs that a young Christian is growing?
2. What are some signs that a more mature Christian might not be growing?
3. If a friend asked you, "How do you, as a Christian, bring glory to God?" How would you answer?

TEXT: 2 PETER 3:17-18

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS THE NEXT STEP FOR EACH CHRISTIAN.

INTRODUCTION: Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. When we place our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins the process of making us more like Him, conforming us to His image. Spiritual growth is perhaps best described in **2 Peter 1:3-8**, which tells us that by God's power we have "everything we need" to live lives of godliness, which is the goal of spiritual growth. Notice that what we need comes "through our knowledge of Him," which is the key to obtaining everything we need. Our knowledge of Him comes from the Word, given to us for our edification and growth.

There are two lists in **Galatians 5:19-23**. Verses 19-21 list the "acts of the flesh." These are the things that identified our lives before we came to Christ for salvation. The acts of the flesh are the activities we are to confess, repent of, and, with God's help, overcome. As we experience spiritual growth, fewer and fewer of the "acts of the flesh" will be evident in our lives. The second list is the "fruit of the Spirit" (verses 22-23). These are what should characterize our lives now that we have experienced salvation in Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth is identified by the fruit of the Spirit becoming increasingly evident in a believer's life. **In what ways have you grown spiritually?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS GAIN STABILITY BY FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM SCRIPTURE.

"Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position." (**V 17**) Peter often encourages his readers to take a holy walk in the here and now by reminding them of what God has done for them in the past and what He will do in the future. As Peter concludes his second and final letter, he focuses his readers on the future

new heavens and new earth, which will be filled with righteousness (2 Peter 3:11–13). In looking forward to those new places, Peter challenges readers to live in holy conduct and godliness. In that context Peter warns them and seems to imply that you can “fall from your secure position.” Peter makes a personal and affectionate appeal, referring to his readers as “beloved,” and exhorts them on the importance of being in peace, spotless, and blameless (2 Peter 3:14). Rather than being discouraged that the Lord delays the new heavens and new earth, Peter encourages his readers that God is just being patient so more can be saved (2 Peter 3:15). Peter reminds believers that the apostle Paul also wrote about what God has done and what God will do in the future (2 Peter 3:15). Even though what Paul wrote was important and true, some of it was hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16). Some people who are untaught and unstable distort what Paul said and spread false teaching (2 Peter 3:16). Peter does not want believers to fall into that trap or to fall from their secure position. He warns that, because we know what is coming beforehand, we should be on guard against those false teachings. We should not be carried away by error and so fall from our secure position (2 Peter 3:17). **DO NOT FOOL YOURSELF, YOU CAN FALL.** Gotquestions.com

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS IMPORTANT. (V 18a)

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (V 18a) Spiritual growth includes warnings against evil and admonitions to righteousness. ***To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)*** One of the easiest ways to be drawn away by error is to not know the truth. We have heard this mantra for many years, “You can’t grow if you don’t know.” For some, it may sound like a cliché, but it is loaded with truth. For the followers of Christ, learning and applying scripture is paramount if we are going to live out the truths we say we believe. There is NO spiritual growth apart from the word of God. Charles Spurgeon said, “In order that they might know how to stand, and to be preserved from falling, he gave them this direction: ‘grow in grace;’ for the way to stand is to grow; the way to be steadfast is to go forward. There is no standing except by progression.” Grace is not merely the way God draws us to Him in the beginning. It is also the way we grow and stay in our steadfastness. We can never grow apart from the grace and knowledge of our Lord, and we never grow out of God’s grace. **What are some things you do personally to grow spiritually?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS DESIRE TO LIVE A LIFE THAT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD. (V 18b)

“To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (V 18b). What a wonderful benediction! All of the Christian’s life should be a to the glory of God. Jesus said, ***“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*** Another great benediction, ***“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Eph 3:20-21)*** WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE BRING GLORY TO GOD EACH DAY? ***“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:7-8)*** What are some other verses in the Bible that speak of God’s glory?

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LESSON THIRTY-TWO: PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Where does praying for others fit into your prayer life?
2. Have you been called upon to pray for someone who has hurt you? How did you respond?
3. In what ways have you seen God show up in your life when you were obedient, even when you did not feel like it?

TEXT: JOB 42:7-11

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: JOB REMAINS FAITHFUL IN THE FACE OF GREAT LOSS.

INTRODUCTION: The life of Job demonstrates that humans are often unaware of the many ways God is at work in the life of each believer. Job's life is also one that prompts the common question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" It is the age-old question, and difficult to answer, but believers know that God is always in control, and, no matter what happens, there are no coincidences—nothing happens by chance. Job was a believer; he knew that God was on the throne and in total control, though he had no way of knowing why so many terrible tragedies were occurring in his life.

Job was "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil." (**Job 1:1**) He had ten children and was a man of great wealth. The Bible tells us that one day Satan presented himself before God and God asked Satan what he thought of Job. Satan accused Job of honoring God only because God had blessed him. So, God allowed Satan to take away Job's wealth and his children. Later, God allowed Satan to afflict Job physically. Job grieved deeply but did not charge God with wrongdoing (**Job 1:22; 42:7-8**). **Have you struggled in your prayer life because of something tragic that happened in the past?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT RECONCILIATION IS KEY TO AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE. (VV 7-8a)

"After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves." Prayer is such a vital part to strong Christian fellowship.

Each of us will need to apologize at some point. Just like Job's friends, we are often wrong about one another. When the Holy Spirit convicts us, we need to pause and repent. **Why is it so hard for some to admit when they are/were wrong?** When we have spoken out of turn about another, we must get right with God and then get right with the other person. **What are some of the Keys to Effective Prayer?** Effective prayer hinges on several key elements.

These include approaching God with faith, praying according to His will, **confessing sins, seeking forgiveness**, and persevering in supplication. It's also important to pray specifically, with thanksgiving, and with others. Ultimately, effective prayer requires a sincere heart, a desire to glorify God, and a belief in His ability to answer. *"After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am angry with you and your two friends . . .'"* God required some specific action on their part because of what they had done. When we sin, God expects us to recognize and acknowledge what we have done. One man said, "If I have hurt any of you, please forgive me." That's okay, but if you know the specific sin you have committed against a brother or sister, then you need to address that sin with that individual.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT WE MUST OBEY GOD EVEN IF IT'S NOT EASY. (VV 8b-9)

"My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer." So, God tells Job to pray for the men who dogged him out when he was struggling physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually. **How do you pray for those who hurt you when you were hurting?** For many, we miss the point that our healing and restoration is connected to forgiveness and reconciliation with others. Before we continue, can we as followers of Christ acknowledge that this is not easy? Have you ever wondered how the families at Mother Emanuel in Charleston could forgive Dillon Roof so quickly after the 2015 massacre. Or "In a tragic incident at the West Nickel Mines School in Pennsylvania on October 2, 2006, a gunman shot ten Amish girls, killing six of them. The incident garnered national attention due to the Amish community's focus on forgiveness and reconciliation in the face of such violence." We must pray for one another, not because we have forgotten what has happened, but because we have been granted the power to forgive.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT OBEDIENCE BRINGS MANY, MANY BLESSINGS. (VV 10-11)

"After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted him and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring." The key word in verse 10 is AFTER. There are doors that remain close to us until we begin to operate in obedience. God said, "Pray for them, so Job prayed for them." Then the Lord acted . . . **The Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.** Gotquestions.com says, Obedience to God proves our love for Him (1 John 5:2-3), demonstrates our faithfulness to Him (1 John 2:3-6), glorifies Him in the world (1 Peter 2:12), and opens avenues of blessing for us (John 13:17). When we obey the Lord, we can live a life of joy, without shame, rooted deeply in the Lord and confident in our eternal hope. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17) Our obedience is actually part of our assurance that we truly know God. (1 John 2:3) God will sometimes call us to obedience in the face of great adversity. **Will you obey?**

2025 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNITY (Psalm 103:17-18 NKJV)

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THOUGHT: As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome the opportunity to serve with others in the local church and in the community. Our commitment to the local church doesn't end with the local church but begins with it.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Growth, One another, Unchurched, Concern

LESSON THIRTY-THREE: PRAYING FOR THE UNCHURCHED

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Who are the groups/individuals you pray for on a regular basis?
2. Who are the people you are praying for to be saved?
3. Why is it important for us to pray in concert with the Holy Spirit?

TEXT: 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-6

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: PRAYING DAILY FOR THE UNCHURCHED

INTRODUCTION: Friends were asked to finish the statement, "My day is not complete unless I..." Here are a few of the responses: get a large coffee, floss, eat an apple, check the weather, check social media, get a text or call from (name), workout, eat dessert, make someone smile, and read one Bible verse. Nothing inherently wrong or strange with the actions on the list, except for flossing.

If a person had asked Arthur Flake this question, his response would have been to pray daily for a lost person by name with the hope to share the gospel with them specifically. Flake greatly impacted the growth of ongoing Bible study groups (what he knew as Sunday School) in the first half of the 1900s. He called on Sunday School teachers to pray every day for the lost people their groups were trying to reach. Why Daily? There is a part of me that wonders why we don't pray every day for people who are lost. We may pray every day for a friend going through a valley season until he or she emerges, so why does that garner our attention more often than a person's salvation? The needs of these friends are real and pressing but so too is a person's eternal destiny. Praying daily reminds us of the importance of salvation and of our responsibility to share with others. If sharing Christ is a daily activity, then praying for those with whom we will share should be a daily activity as well. **How often do you pray for the lost? How often do you share the Gospel with lost people?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MAKE PRAYER A PRIORITY. (VV 1-2)

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people." (V 1) The Apostle Paul begins the second chapter with a call to pray, and this call involves many various groups: ***"For kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."*** (V 2) Do you pray for people by name? Dwayne McCrary reminds us that, "Names are important. When we hear a name,

images of people with that name immediately flash in our minds. The simple mention of a name can cause us to smile, grimace, or feel other emotions. That name creates an identity that goes beyond a casual glance. Praying for a person by name also moves us beyond casual prayer. How many times have we prayed for “all the missionaries in the world” without a single face or name flashing through our minds? There is just something about praying for someone by name. We become connected to that person in a different way. Compassion, empathy, and urgency come as a result of praying for a specific person.” In these verses, Paul calls us ‘to pray for all people’; however, he adds emphasis **“For kings and all those in authority.”** We have a responsibility to not only to pray for friends, neighbors, and family, but also for those in leadership in our community, the state, and the nation. **How hard is it for you to pray for a leader who is not your cup of tea?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THE SALVATION OF THE LOST IS THE GOAL OF ALL WE DO. (VV 3-4)

“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” So, when we are obedient and pray for the unchurched and the unconverted, this pleases God. God is always pleased with obedience, and when we pray as He commands, this brings joy to His heart. The Scripture reminds us in Luke 19:10, Jesus said, ***“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*** If Jesus was concerned about lost people, and Paul was concerned about lost people, shouldn’t we be concerned as well. When we believe that people will be separated from God forever if they do not repent and turn to Christ, then we will share the gospel with great urgency.

Consider what the scripture says, Luke 16:19-23, ***“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.” What are some creative ways you have discovered to share the gospel with family and friends?***

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT SALVATION COMES THROUGH JESUS ALONE. (VV 5-6)

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.” The message of the gospel is simple and straight forward: ***Solus Christus*** (“Christ alone”): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The early apostles referenced Jesus when they said in Acts 4:12, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Paul declared to the Corinthians, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor. 5:17). So, as we pray for the unchurched, we must be faithful to pray that they come to faith in Jesus Christ. It’s not enough for them to join a church; it’s not enough for them to stop some bad habit; there must be a decision for Christ. **How do we help people understand the difference between being religious and being saved, or turning over a new leaf and being saved, or being a “good person” and being saved?** Consider John 3, Acts 1:8, Eph:2:8-9.

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LESSON THIRTY-FOUR: INVITING THE UNCHURCHED TO ATTEND

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How would you explain "The Kingdom of God" to a non-Christian?
2. According to Barna Group's research, 52% of practicing Christians feel comfortable inviting friends or family to church. However, only 27% of weekly churchgoers have invited three or more people. Why do you think so few Christians invite others to church?
3. What are some of the excuses friends and family have given you for not attending church?

TEXT: LUKE 14:15-24

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: CHURCH ATTENDANCE HAS DECLINED AMONG MOST RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN THE U.S.

INTRODUCTION: In A Gallup Poll article from March 2024, Jeffery M. Jones shares the following: As Americans observe Ramadan and prepare to celebrate Easter and Passover, the percentage of adults who report regularly attending religious services remains low. Three in 10 Americans say they attend religious services every week (21%) or almost every week (9%), while 11% report attending about once a month and 56% seldom (25%) or never (31%) attend. Among major U.S. religious groups, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also widely known as the Mormon Church, are the most observant, with two-thirds attending church weekly or nearly weekly. Protestants (including nondenominational Christians) rank second, with 44% attending services regularly, followed by Muslims (38%) and Catholics (33%). **From the data above, what are some conclusions we can draw?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST WORK HARD TO HELP OTHERS BECOME KINGDOM CITIZENS. (VV 13-15)

"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, **"Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."** The work of reaching the unchurched and the unconverted is no small task. In the modern era, with so many unchurched individuals, the Church must approach the world from a very simplistic point of view, we cannot begin with Christian jargon.

We must search diligently to learn where the person is and then work from there. Not only are many unchurched today, but many have not been introduced to the Bible; therefore, we must start from scratch. **So, if you are asked, “What is the Kingdom of God?” How would you respond?** Matt Strelecki says, “To effectively reach unchurched individuals, focus on building relationships, demonstrating care, and engaging in authentic conversations about faith. This involves understanding their perspectives, sharing personal stories, and creating a welcoming environment.” In the above scripture, Jesus challenges us to invite those who cannot invite us back. Looking at the strategies Mr. Strelecki suggested, **what additional ones would you add? How have you intentionally reached out to the unchurched who have nothing to offer you in return?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT EVERYONE WILL NOT ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO SALVATION. (VV 16-19)

“Jesus replied: ‘A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses . . . The sad truth from this teaching is that everyone will not be saved. Christ has already paid the penalty for our sins, He has risen from the dead and ascended to His father, and one day He will return in glory, yet some still will not believe. We don’t know who those people are; therefore, we have to reach out as if everyone is going to heaven. One of the saddest truths from the Bible is that God has prepared a great feast for mankind, The Wedding Supper of the Lamb. He says to the world, **‘Come, for everything is now ready.’** “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. ‘Please excuse me.’ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.” **What are some of the reasons your friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors refuse to come to church and refuse to come to Christ.**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST UNDERSTAND THE URGENCY AND THE SERIOUSNESS OF REACHING PEOPLE. (vv. 22-24)

Pastor Alistair Begg said, “We need to share the gospel boldly and with urgency.” **Do you see boldness in the church today or a spirit of urgency to get the gospel out in the modern church?** Acts 4:29 says, **“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”** This is a prayer that we as Kingdom Citizens should be praying. Luke 14:22 continues, “Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ In 2025, there is still room. The commission is ‘go and make disciples.’ The complaint is, but they won’t come.’ The word comes again, **“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.** The goal is to fill the house; the responsibility is given to us His servants? Will you accept the call to GO? Bible.org says, “While many Christians believe it's important to share their faith, a significant portion don't actively do so. Studies suggest that while a small percentage are actively involved in evangelism, the majority have not directly shared their faith with others. Statistics show that a large number of Christians have never led anyone to Christ.” Let here the conclusion: The master said, **“I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”**

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LESSON THIRTY-FIVE: BEING HOSPITABLE TO GUESTS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Share about a time someone demonstrated unusual hospitality to you.
2. In what ways do you extend hospitality to visitors, church members, neighbors, and extended family?
3. What are some reasons why Christians refuse to extend hospitality?

TEXT: ROMANS 15:5-7

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: HOSPITALITY IS A PART OF THE CHRISTIAN'S DNA.

INTRODUCTION: Hospitality can be defined as “the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.” In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.” Hospitality is a virtue that is both commanded and commended throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, it was specifically commanded by God: “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34). During His public ministry, Jesus and His disciples depended entirely on the hospitality of others as they ministered from town to town (Matthew 10:9-10). Likewise, the early Christians also depended on and received hospitality from others (Acts 2:44-45; 28:7). In fact, travelers in ancient times depended heavily on the hospitality of strangers as traveling could be dangerous and there were very few inns, and poor Christians could not afford to stay at them, anyway. This generous provision to strangers also included opening one's home for church services. Hospitality was indeed a highly regarded virtue in ancient times, especially for Christian leaders (Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2).

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE THAT CHRIST HAD. (V 5)

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had . . .” Everything we are called to do as followers of Christ has already been modeled for us by Him. **God gives endurance and encouragement.**

Now He calls us to give the same gifts to others. In the Body of Christ, we sometimes want to be recipients of God's blessings, but we do not want to be conduits of the same blessings. In our Church Covenant, we say every first Sunday, "We will be hospitable to guests." **What does this look like in the sanctuary and beyond?** Then we are charged to **"have the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had . . ."** What are some things Jesus did to help individuals feel comfortable, accepted and welcomed? Philippians 2: 5, 8 says, ***"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus . . . And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*** Hospitality has a lot to do with our concern for others and forces us to think about others first. The writer of Hebrews reminds us not to forget to "entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2) Indeed, in the book of Genesis we read about Abraham's humble and generous display of hospitality to three strangers. **How do you treat strangers?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT OUR GOOD WORKS GLORIFY GOD. (V 6)

'. . . so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Kingdom Citizens, God's glory should be paramount in our thinking and our actions. Jesus said, ***"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*** (Matthew 5:16) Many churches have a 'Hospitality Ministry.' In reality, brothers and sisters, the WHOLE church is a member of the hospitality ministry. The Lord wants the entire body to be concerned with caring well for others. And when we do this, God is glorified. **What works are you doing as an individual, a family or a small group, that is done for the glory of God? What are we doing as a church to bring glory to God?** The text says, ***"so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ***"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you . . . I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."*** (John 17:1, 4-5) Jesus' whole life was committed to the glory of God.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD ACCEPT EACH OTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. (V 7)

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." According to this passage, one of the ways we bring glory to God is 'accepting others.' **How challenging is it for you to accept people who are different from you?** Gotquestions.com tells us that, "There are multiple words in Hebrew and Greek translated as "praise" in our English Bibles. In essence, praise is to express adoration or approval. We praise the Lord for His traits, His works, and His character. Praise includes the acts of blessing, commending, honoring, thanking, celebrating, and rejoicing. We praise the Lord because He is worthy of all our praise. He is worthy of all adoration and approval." When we think about God receiving praise by us accepting others, it shouldn't surprise us. God made everyone, special design and special purpose. We tend to welcome people, whether in our churches or in our homes, who are like us. Look at some of 'one another' verses in Scripture: ***"A new commandment I give you: that you love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*** (John 13:34) This verse highlights the core commandment of loving one another, mirroring Christ's love for his followers. ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*** (Eph 4:2) What are some other 'one another' verses?

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SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS SERVING THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

THOUGHT: To be a Christian is to be a servant. Each member in the body of Christ has been endowed with a spiritual gift (s). Therefore, each member should be serving in one capacity or another. Being a pew member is not a biblical practice.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Discover, Equip, Develop, Represent

LESSON THIRTY-SIX: DISCOVERING AND USING OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Do you think Christians are generally too caught up in Jesus's coming or not enough? Explain.
2. How can we properly and adequately "cover" sin without condoning it?
3. What are some indicators that one is operating in or outside of his or her area of "Giftedness"?

TEXT: 1 PETER 4:7-11

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: THE RETURN OF JESUS IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING AND MAY OCCUR ANY MOMENT. DON'T LET HIS COMING CATCH YOU UNPREPARED.

INTRODUCTION: 1 Peter 4:7-11 informs us that we are now living in "the last days" before the end of time and the return of Jesus. **(1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 2:18)** Soon, all things will end, and Jesus will return. That time is even nearer now than it was yesterday and may happen at any time; therefore, we are to live and prepare to meet God. Jesus is going to return in all His glory and will judge the living and the dead. **(4:5, 7)** Apostle Peter gives readers instructions on how to behave until that time comes.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE CONFIDENT THAT TIME AND ALL THINGS OF THIS WORLD WILL COME TO AN END. OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS, WILL RETURN, AND WE WILL ENTER INTO ETERNITY WITH HIM. (V 7)

We have entered the last chapter of world history, and yet we do not know when the last page will be turned; time will end, Jesus will return, and eternity will begin. (Luke 24:34) Jesus' return will take the world by surprise and will be monumental, with eternal consequences. (Matt. 24:37-39) Some people have devoted considerable time and effort in trying to calculate and determine exactly when that time will occur, which is impossible to do. Scripture tells us in Matt. 24:44, "Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

God doesn't want us to be worried or overly anxious about His return, but to be at peace and ready, knowing that He will return. Some people argue that it is foolish to believe that time will come to an end and Jesus will return, especially since He has been gone for almost 2,000 years and hasn't returned yet. In 2 Peter 3:3-10, the Apostle Peter provides an answer to this type of irrational thinking. God's view of time and ours differ significantly. "A thousand years with the Lord is as one day". Any extension of time that God gives before the coming judgment is due to His patience and mercy because He does not wish for anyone to perish. A delayed judgment does not mean that judgment is not forthcoming. The end of time and the return of Jesus may not occur during our lifetime, but He will return because He said He would. ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled.... I will come again."*** (Matt. 24:44, John 14:1-3)

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS NEED TO KNOW HOW TO BEHAVE AS WE AWAIT THE RETURN OF JESUS AND THE END OF TIME.

It is not enough for us to know that the end of time is fast approaching; we should also know how to behave and what we should do as we await that time and the return of Jesus. In 1 Peter 4:7-11, the apostle Peter has instructed us on five specific things that we should be doing as the end and the return of Jesus' approach, which are: (1) "Be alert and of sober mind so that we may pray"; (2) "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins"; (3) "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling"; (4) "Use whatever gift you have received to serve others..." and (5) "Praise and glorify God". **"Being alert and of sober mind"** means that we are not to be indifferent to the fact that Jesus will return (Acts 1:10-11), nor should we become paranoid; rather, we should be spiritually aware and watchful in prayer and service. (2 Peter 1:13; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 Peter 4:7) **"Above all, love each other deeply...."** Loving our neighbor is second only to loving God (Matt. 22:37-39), and is evidence that we love God and belong to Him (1 John 4:20, 13:34-35) **"... Love covers over a multitude of sins."** There are times when sin should be confronted and times when it should be covered, but never should sin be condoned. (1 Thess. 5:14). For those who are discouraged, weak, or just need to be held on to so they don't fall apart, cover their sin. When someone is unruly or defiant and their behavior affects others, that sin needs to be confronted, not ignored or covered up. If a person has a blind spot or a sin that is hindering God's glory in their life or that may lead them into worse sin, it needs to be confronted, not covered.

"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." **"Without grumbling"** is a frank indication that the practice of hospitality could become costly, burdensome, and irritating. (1 Peter 4:9) Finally, we are to **"praise and glorify God."**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD ENSURE THAT GOD IS GLORIFIED IN EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES.

To ensure that God is glorified in every aspect of our lives, we must first seek to better understand and know Him, as well as what He has said about His glory. God is the creator and sustainer of time and everything that was created. He is the only true and living God. (Gen. 1:1-31, Colossians 1:16) God said, ***"I am the LORD; that is my name. I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols"***. (Isaiah 42:8) To glorify God means to show forth His majesty and to make known His presence. (Matt. 6:13) As we serve one another, we do it with the strength and ability which God provides; therefore, to Him belongs praise and glory. **What evidence do you have to show that God is being glorified through you?**

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Discover, Equip, Develop, Represent

LESSON THIRTY-SEVEN: BEING EQUIPPED TO ASSIST PASTORS/LEADERS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Why is the distinction between so-called “clergy” and “laity” harmful? Is there any way in which it is helpful?
2. How would churches be different if every member viewed himself/herself as a minister?
3. What implications from Deut. 32:30 and Ecclesiastes 4:12 are there for the work of ministry among pastors, church leaders, and church members?

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:11-12

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: BUILDING STRENGTH AND UNITY AND FOSTERING MATURITY IN MINISTRY THROUGH COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL SUPPORT- “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

INTRODUCTION: God has given unique governing ministry gifts to specific members of the body of Christ who are called to ministerial leadership. In Ephesians 4:11-12, the focus is on leadership gifts, not all gifts. It should be noted that each of the leadership offices and gifts centers on the Word of God, showing that the Word is foundational to a mature church. When the Word is diminished or compromised, the church will become weak and ineffective. God has given unique leaders to the church for the purpose of equipping the church to be the church.

1. EVERY KINGDOM CITIZEN SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE FIVE LEADERSHIP GIFTS LISTED IN EPHESIANS 4:11-12 AND THEIR PURPOSE.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are five distinct leadership offices and governing ministerial gifts established and given by God to specific members of the Body of Christ, the church. (Eph. 4:11) Although there are differences among the five leadership offices and ministerial gifts, they are all spiritual gifts and share a common goal and purpose. A spiritual gift is a Holy Spirit-empowered ability given to a believer that he or she should use to build up the Body of Christ.

The common goal and purpose of each is “to equip the saints for the work of service, so that the body will grow in unity, maturity, and Christ-likeness” (V 12) Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are to be engaged in the work of the ministry. They are to help the rest of the body become prepared so that they may serve and do the work of the ministry in accordance with their various gifts. Therefore, every Christian is “in the ministry” in the sense that every Christian has a ministry in building the Body of Christ. Sometimes, though distinctively different, leadership gifts are integrated into other duties; for instance, all pastors must be teachers, but not all teachers are pastors. Thus, teachers could function in a seminary or the local church without the duty of shepherding the flock, as pastors do. The word "apostle" means one who is sent. The Lord gave apostles the authority and ability to perform miracles as a proof of their apostleship Both apostles and prophets are those who receive direct revelation from God, which they impart to the church, many times saying, “Thus says the LORD.” Prophets sometimes predicted the future, but at other times they expound on revelation already given. Evangelists preach the Word as it relates to people’s need for salvation. All believers are called to proclaim the gospel; evangelists are those with a special gift to do so. (2 Tim. 4:5). The word “pastor” means “shepherd” and is interchangeable with the words elder and bishop. (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). The job of a pastor is to manage, lead, and oversee the church, while feeding (teaching) the flock with God’s Word and guarding and protecting them from wolves. (Heb. 13:7, 17; Acts 6:2) This means that the pastor's responsibility is to adequately prepare the people so that they may become mature Christians, no longer spiritual milk drinkers, but spiritual meat eaters.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT THE CHURCH IS STRONGER, MORE RESILIENT, AND EFFECTIVE WHEN EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER AS A TEAM.

Ministry is not just for clergy and leaders but for all Christians. (Eph. 4:11-13) Whether by choice or necessity, too often, too many pastors and church leaders do almost everything in the local church, while many members simply attend services and do nothing. This style of church operation resembles a football game where there are 22 men on the field, desperately needing rest, and 22,000 fans and spectators in the stadium, desperately needing exercise. Every church member should be trained and equipped in doing the work of the ministry. We can’t expect the pastor and church leaders to do everything, (Acts 6:2) and then be prepared to deliver a “fiery” sermon every Sunday morning, as well as to take care of himself and his own family so that they all can look, act, and be perceived as the epitome of Christianity and pious living.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD RESPECT THE AUTHORITY AND SUPPORT THE OFFICE AND GIFTS OF THE PASTOR AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS AND WILLINGLY ASSIST THEM.

Effective followership will help ease the workload of pastors and leaders. Therefore, a great way to support the leadership of the church is to align yourself with them and follow their directions. Other ways to support the leadership include praying for them frequently, showing them godly love, and treating them with respect and kindness. Pastors and other church leaders have faults, failures, problems, families, and lives of their own; therefore, they need our understanding and support. Regardless of how much they love you, they will become tired, feel discouraged, and hurt by our attitudes, actions, and words.

According to FutureLearn.com, “To be a good follower, one needs a combination of humility, active listening, respect, and a willingness to learn. Good followers also demonstrate a strong work ethic, courage to speak up when necessary, and the ability to manage their egos.

2025 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNITY (Psalm 103:17-18 NKJV)

SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS SERVING THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

THOUGHT: To be a Christian is to be a servant. Each member in the body of Christ has been endowed with a spiritual gift (s). Therefore, each member should be serving in one capacity or another. Being a pew member is not biblical.

WORDS/PHRASES: Discover, Equip, Develop, Represent

LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT: DEVELOPING A SERVANT’S HEART

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What comes to mind when you think of the word servant?
2. Share an experience when you were a servant to someone and why? When has someone been a servant to you?
3. Why does the word servant have such a negative connotation and the word master such a positive one?

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-8

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: EMBRACING THE MINDSET OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: In Philippians 2:1-8, Paul tells the Philippians how they are to conduct and protect themselves against internal conflicts in the body of Christ. At the time Paul wrote this letter to the Philippian Church, he was in prison. However, because of his deep love and care for the saints at Philippi, he continued to write letters to instruct and encourage them to live in the fellowship of the Spirit, marked by unity, love, and humility as followers and representatives of Jesus. Paul asks four rhetorical questions (“**if there is any...**”) to encourage, establish a foundational premise for his exhortation to them, and to engage the readers.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE ALWAYS READY TO RECEIVE GODLY INSTRUCTION AND ADVICE.

In verses 2-4, Paul instructs the Philippian believers on what they should do and how they should live among each other, as well as what would bring him great joy, even though he is in prison. He wrote to them saying, “**Therefore, if there is any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.**” When we live with the feeling that we are so important, or so able, or so talented, we are out of God’s will and the realm of humility. It is good to acknowledge and commend anyone who works hard and does a good job.

However, if a person is working solely to be recognized, applauded, or to establish a name for themselves, or because of envy, that is conceit. We need to realize that whatever good is done, all the glory belongs to God. **(V 4)** Consideration for others is an ethical principle that fosters a culture of kindness and respect and is extremely important in the Christian faith. The principle of considering others is also emphasized in **Matt. 7:12; Matt. 22:39; Luke 6:31**. We should be able to more clearly understand the benefits and how crucially important it is to be unselfish (sometimes sacrificial) when we think of what Jesus did for us. Why did Jesus come from heaven's glory to this earth? It was for us. Why should we carry the gospel? It is for others. To think of others rather than just ourselves is to have the mind of Christ.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD SEEK TO KNOW THE WILL AND MIND OF CHRIST.

One essential thing to understand about the mind of Christ is humility. We are instructed by Paul that **"In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself"**, which is hard and is about the least attractive thing for most people to accept and do. It is completely contradictory to the attitude of the world. **Ephesians 4:1-2** gives us a glimpse into what humility requires of us **"...walk worthy of the vocation you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."** **"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."** **(V 5)** Imagine the transformation in our daily lives if we consistently put others before ourselves, just as Christ did. Jesus was the epitome of humility, as demonstrated when He washed the feet of His disciples. Upon examining the humiliation that Jesus endured and His perfect obedience to God, we can discern the mind of Christ. Reviewing God the Father's response to Jesus' obedience to Him and His subsequent earthly humiliation and sacrifice will also help us better understand the mind of God. It was in the mind of God the Father to exalt the Lord Jesus. When we recall the humiliation that Jesus endured, we see that Jesus **"Who, being in the form God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.... made himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** **(VV 6-8)** Jesus came from glory to a place of humiliation. He left all the glory of heaven and came down to this earth, became a man, and suffered the death of a criminal for you and me. Jesus Christ was humble and obedient. God the Father exalted Him. **"Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** **(vv. 10=11)**

3. KINGDOM CITIZEN MUST FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

In 1 Peter 2:16, we are instructed to "live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (ESV). This directive is set within a specific context of submission to authorities and the broader context of Christian living on this side of eternity. Although believers in Jesus are no longer subject to the Old Testament law, the purpose of our freedom is not to indulge in sin but to live as servants of God. The Greek term rendered as "servant" by translations such as the ESV is actually **doulos**, which means "a slave or bondservant." The translation "servant" is appropriate, however, as the **doulos** could voluntarily yield to his master, unlike the slave of history's transatlantic slave trade. In essence, being servants of God entails acknowledging Him as our Master and dedicating ourselves to His service. **Gotquestions.com**

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: Discover, Equip, Develop, Represent

LESSON THIRTY-NINE: LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What inferences can we get from Genesis 1:4 "...He separated the light from the darkness?"
2. In what ways can we be a light to those around us? What are some characteristics of light?
3. What are some things that one can do to move from spiritual darkness to spiritual light?

TEXT: MATTHEW 5: 14-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LIVING AS BEACONS OF LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

INTRODUCTION: Both Matthew 5:14-16 and Philippians 2:14-16 declare that our lives should be lived in such a godly manner, characterized by humility, inner purity, and righteousness that they will shine as a light and transform the lives of others. In Philippians 2:14-16, Paul continues to instruct the Philippian believers that not only are they to strive for moral uprightness and purity, but that they should also live blamelessly and refrain from grumbling and arguing. By writing this letter from prison, Paul encourages the believers to maintain their faith and to praise and honor God even in difficult times and situations, as he is doing. Despite the challenging circumstances of his imprisonment, Paul's faith and joy had remained unshaken. He reminds the Philippians to be like shining stars in the dark world around them. The continuous mention of light in this lesson reminds us that at the beginning, *"God said, Let there be light..." (Gen. 1:3)*

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST KNOW HOW TO LIVE THEIR LIVES WITHOUT GRUMBLING AND ARGUING, AND THEY SHOULD PRACTICE DOING SO.

In Phil. 2:14, we are instructed to "Do everything without grumbling or arguing..." This seems impossible; however, we must do so because it is commanded of us in Matt. 5:14-16 *"Let your light shine...."* The word "grumble" means to murmur under your breath or to express a complaint in a bad-tempered way. The word "argue" refers to disputing in a raised voice, debating, and quarreling out loud.

Grumbling is a serious sin that proved costly for the Israelites. **(1 Corin. 10:5, 10)** Therefore, if someone has a problem with a specific person or situation, don't just grumble about it behind their back; instead, address the person or situation you take issue with in a godly manner. Living in this “...**warped and crooked generation...**,” we are unable to do everything without grumbling or arguing through our own human efforts. Therefore, we must submit ourselves to God and allow Him to work in us, giving us power and will to do what pleases him. Without God's power operating on the inside, we cannot obey Him on the outside. That power comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17, 26; Acts 1:8). This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. **(Eph. 1:19–20)** The same Holy Spirit who empowered our Savior is available to us, works in us, and is released in us through His Word as we listen to, read, study Scripture, and spend time communicating with Him through prayer. **(1 Thess. 2:13; Hebr. 4:12)**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST NOT BE CONTENT WITH JUST THEIR OWN SALVATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, BUT THEY MUST ALSO WANT TO SEE OTHERS WALKING WITH THE LORD.

Believers are not only to honor God but also to become beacons of hope and light, illuminating the path for others to also encounter the transformative power of faith. How can we shine as lights in the world? Scriptures tell us that we can shine as lights in the world by living without grumbling or arguing, and by showing ourselves blameless and pure. Our behavior and attitude can have a significant impact, serving as beacons of hope and positivity to those around us, as well as a powerful testimony to the transformative power of faith in drawing others to Christ. We can let our light shine because Jesus said we can. Letting our light shine means we are in control; it's simply a matter of doing so and determining where and how brightly we want to shine. Matthew 5:14-16 tells us that we are the light of the world, and when we let our light shine, “... *it gives light to everyone in the house.*” Lights are used to make things evident, to guide, to serve as a warning, to bring cheer, and to make things safe. It has been said that lighting another's candle does not take away any of the brightness from yours. It has also been said that some people would rather curse the darkness than light a candle so that they and others might see. They would rather live in darkness. In the darkness, they can grumble and criticize without being recognized. It is not their desire to illuminate, bring joy, or comfort to the lives of others, but as followers of Christ, we must.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE TO ALWAYS STRIVE TO BE PLEASING AND TO LIVE BLAMELESSLY.

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ and that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” **(Phil. 2:15-16)** Paul looked forward to the day of Christ, and on that day, he wanted to see and to know that his work was fruitful. This was something he could only be assured of if the Philippians continued to walk with the Lord. Obviously, Paul was more concerned with glorifying and pleasing God than with pleasing himself or others. Matthew 5:14-16 tells us that when seeking to help others live righteously, we must always be mindful of seeking God's approval so that our work will not be in vain. All our efforts and attainments are only for the glory of God, even though they uplift others. *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

QUARTER 3: JULY - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

KINGDOM CITIZENS PROTECTING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

| | |
|----------------|---|
| JULY 6 | ACTING IN LOVE TOWARD OTHER BELIEVERS |
| JULY 13 | REFUSING TO GOSSIP AND EXCESSIVE ANGER |
| JULY 20 | BEING SLOW TO TAKE OFFENSE |
| JULY 27 | FOLLOWING THE LEADERS |

KINGDOM CITIZENS SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

| | |
|------------------|---|
| AUGUST 3 | PRAYING FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH |
| AUGUST 10 | PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER |
| AUGUST 17 | PRAYING FOR THE UNCHURCHED |
| AUGUST 24 | INVITING THE UNCHURCHED TO ATTEND |
| AUGUST 31 | BEING HOSPITABLE TO GUESTS |

KINGDOM CITIZENS SERVING THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| SEPTEMBER 7 | DISCOVERING AND USING OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS |
| SEPTEMBER 14 | BEING EQUIPPED TO ASSIST PASTORS AND LEADERS |
| SEPTEMBER 21 | DEVELOPING A SERVANT'S HEART |
| SEPTEMBER 28 | LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE |