

BAPTIST BELIEFS



BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

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BAPTIST BELIEFS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

Africa Coordinated Curriculum
for Bible Study

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CHAPTER ONE

WHO ARE THE BAPTISTS?

Aim: I will study about Baptists and their specific beliefs.

Background Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-53;
Romans 6:1-4

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38; Romans 6:4

Memory Verse

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Baptists are not well known in Africa. However there have been Baptists in some African countries for nearly 150 years. In some countries there are no Baptist churches. In others there are many. Compared with other church groups, Baptists in Africa are fairly young and weak with about a half million members.

In other parts of the world Baptists are strong with many churches and members. In all the world there are about 40 million Baptist churches in 130 countries.

But the number of churches and members is not the most important thing. Their beliefs are more important. Baptists need to know who they are and what they believe. They need to know the ways they are different, as well as in what ways they are like other groups.

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Interpretation

Historical Background

Martin Luther led the Protestant Reformation in 1525. The Reformation came about as he reflected on some of the basic teachings of the Catholic church. Mainly, Martin Luther taught that salvation was by grace alone. Finally, he and a large group of followers broke away from the Catholic church. They could not agree on what the Bible taught.

After this some of that group felt that there were still some wrong biblical teachings. The most important disagreement was over baptism. This smaller group insisted that a person should be baptized to show that he had personally accepted Christ as Saviour. They believed that it was not scriptural to baptize little children who could not make a decision about salvation. So they rejected infant baptism and re-baptized adults as believers. So this new group of Christians was called Ana-baptists, or "rebaptizers." The first leader of this group was a converted priest of the Catholic church. He wanted to be baptized as a believer.

This man and many others with him were persecuted for their beliefs because they opposed the Catholic church. They wanted churches formed of truly converted people who became church members voluntarily. They rejected the state-church. From the beginning the Ana-baptists defended religious freedom. Early on some of them even died as martyrs for their faith. So as they were persecuted they were driven into hiding. Finally some fled to Holland. Later some went on to England.

The heritage of Baptists as we know them today is out of England. There were two groups there. The General Baptists were those who had been Ana-baptists (the rebaptizers). The other group were the Separatists. They had withdrawn from

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the church of England (Anglicans), for the same reason as the original Ana-baptists. They saw the state church as corrupt. They held that a pure church must not be under the influence of the state.

John Smythe left the Church of England in 1606 and became the leader of this Separatist group. He too had rejected baptism of infants as unscriptural and worthless. Then in 1609 he and 80 members disbanded their congregation as being "unbaptized." He baptized himself and then 40 others of the group. This was the first English Baptist church.

Thomas Helwys became the leader of another small group known as General Baptists. He died in prison in defence of religious freedom.

By 1630 there were six Baptist congregations around London. By 1644 there were 47 General Baptist churches in England. They insisted on "believers' baptism." They were evangelistic in purpose and dedicated to religious freedom. Baptism by immersion was an important doctrine for these churches. These were years marked by much civil strife in England, but it was a time of unusual growth among Baptists.

Application For My Life

In this series of lessons we want to learn who we Baptists are and what we believe. We will look at some beliefs in detail and only mention others.

Some very important beliefs have distinguished Baptists from the beginning. A few of them are:

1. *Salvation by grace.* Every person must make a decision to accept christ as Saviour. Justification is by faith through God's grace.

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2. *Believers' baptism.* Baptism is an outward sign of what God has done in the heart. It shows that one has personally decided to accept Christ and is a born-again believer.
3. *Scriptural baptism by immersion.* The Scriptures teach that this is the method. A person is put completely in water and becomes a picture of what God has done.
4. *Authority of the Bible.* The Bible is inspired by God. It is our guide and authority.
5. *The individual and God.* Each Christian can know for himself the will and purpose of God.
6. *Church membership.* Only scripturally baptized believers can be church members.
7. *The church.* The church is made up of scripturally baptized believers. The local church is independent.
8. *Church government.* All the members in a local church can share in decisions. No one outside decides for them.
9. *Religious liberty.* We believe in religious freedom. The state must not interfere with churches. We accept to live under a government, but we must be free to worship and minister.
10. *Other beliefs.* Along with others, Baptists share beliefs about God, Jesus his Son, the Holy Spirit, man, sin and missions.

Things To Do

1. Read the Bible verses in today's lesson. Answer the following questions.
 - A. What does the Bible teach about baptism?
 - B. Who was baptized and why?

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- C. Who should be baptized today?
2. Who is the head of the church?
3. Who makes decisions in a Baptist church?

CHAPTER TWO

FAITH BUILT ON THE BIBLE

Aim: I will understand that the Bible is the foundation on which Baptist faith is built.

Background Scripture: Psalms 119; John 7:16-18; Mark 1:9-10; Matthew 14:28-31

Memory Verse

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"
(Psalms 119:105).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Sarah, a non-believer, had a discussion with Elizabeth concerning the truth of the Bible.

"I have read the Bible through and nothing miraculous has taken place. I have memorized a verse from every book in the Bible. There has not been any drastic change since I did that. What is wrong?" Sarah asked.

Elizabeth began to explain to Sarah that she needed a relationship with Jesus Christ to really understand the Bible. "It is not just a good book to read like a novel. You must ask him to help you understand its meaning in your life," she told Elizabeth. "In fact, the Bible is the foundation of my faith."

Interpretation

If there is one tool needed by a traveller, it is a map. The map can be in the form of paper, a signboard or information

FAITH BUILT ON THE BIBLE

provided by a friend. Likewise, in matters of doctrine and teaching, the Bible becomes a map for Baptists.

Baptists have based their decisions on the Bible for many years. It warns, advises, guides, reprimands and instructs. Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God put into writing. This means that God spoke to men who wrote his message to people. The Bible consists of 66 books written by many authors, but they wrote only what God told them to write. The writing took place over many years, and yet there is unity throughout the Bible.

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament has 39 books and gets its name from the agreement between God and Israel. The New Testament, having 27 books, gets its name from the new agreement between God and the new Israel, all Christian people.

The Bible is a guide book from God. He speaks to his people as they read it. He teaches them the way they should live through his Word.

Baptists depend on the Bible to teach them how to know and follow God's will. They attempt to follow its teachings.

An example can be found in the beliefs of Baptists on baptism. Baptists believe that those who confess Jesus as their Saviour should follow him in baptism. Read Matthew 28:19. They also believe that the scriptural form of baptism is immersion, putting the entire body under the water. The Greek word, *baptizo*, gives this meaning to the word. In Mark 1:9-10, we read that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. The Scripture says he came "out of the water" indicating he had been immersed. This is the basis for Baptists' beliefs on baptism.

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Likewise, Baptists get their instructions for observing the Lord's Supper from the Bible. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Application For My Life

What is faith? Read Hebrews 11:1. This teaches us that we do not see the things we have faith to believe. We hope for them, but we do not see them. We learn in 2 Corinthians 5:7 that we should walk by faith, not by sight. We will find many things that we do not understand completely. This does not make them untrue. It just means we must trust the Lord to help us as we try to understand his will.

John 7:16-18 shows us that Jesus got his authority from his Father. He assures us that those who want to do God's will will know whether the teaching is from God.

Where do we get the power to do the things God wants us to do? Jesus got his authority from his Father. We get our power and authority from Jesus.

Read Matthew 14:22-31. Jesus had fed 5000 people and then sent his disciples ahead of him in a boat. He was going to meet them, and Jesus was walking on the water. A wind had beaten against them, and they were working hard to stay afloat. Deep into the night they looked up and saw Jesus walking toward them. Peter said, "Lord, is it you? Let me come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come."

Peter began to walk toward Jesus on the water, then suddenly he became aware of the wind. He was afraid, and he began to sink.

What is the lesson in this story for us today? When Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was able to keep his faith. He knew that Jesus had the power to let Peter walk on water. However when Peter looked away from Jesus and saw the

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situation around him, he failed to keep his faith. He began to sink into the water.

When Christians today keep their eyes on Jesus and the teachings of the Bible, their faith can grow strong. When they begin to look around at other things, they grow weak.

Where will you fix your eyes?

Things To Do

1. Since a Christian's faith grows stronger when he stays close to Jesus, what can you do this week to grow strong?
2. Begin to make notes of what the Bible teaches you as you read it each day. Write down the verse you read and what you feel that God is saying to you in that reading.
3. Look at Psalms 119. Write at least six statements that psalm makes about the Word of God, the Bible.
4. Memorize the memory verse in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

GOD THE FATHER

Aim: I will learn that God is holy and worthy of our worship.

Background Scripture: Psalms 19:1-6; 66:1-9; Revelation 5:12

Verses in Today's Lesson: Psalms 19:1-6

Memory Verse

"I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies" (Psalms 18:3).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A woman who had lost two sons in death wondered about God. "Why should God do this to me?" she asked. "Couldn't he wait until I got over the grief of losing one son before he took the other one? Why should he take both sons at the same time?"

Death, however, is something man does not understand. Only God knows why things happen at a certain time. Only he knows what his perfect plan is.

Man can know, however, that God is in control. Nothing happens without his knowledge. He is all powerful, and he does not make mistakes. There is no end of his love and mercy. He never leaves us or forsakes us.

Interpretation

Read Psalms 19:1-6. The psalmist says the entire creation shows the glory of God. All that he has made shows us more

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about himself. It is God and only God who can create. He is the origin of all.

David, the writer of this psalm, saw a miracle in the way a day is separated from another day. This alone, he felt, is enough to convince a person about the presence of God. No words can describe God as well as his creation does. The sun and the heavens show his greatness. However many people do not see God in these things because their minds are not tuned spiritually.

God is all powerful, and he knows everything. He knows what is in a person's mind. He knows what we are going to do before we do it. Nothing is too big for him. Nothing can be hidden from him.

God is perfect and loves each person equally. He is Father of all. He cares for every person and provides for our needs. He is constantly ready to help any of his children who will call on him.

God is worthy of our worship. Read Revelation 4:11. It is by his power that all was created and now exists. No one else can be compared to him.

God is holy. We should come before him with great respect and in the manner he bids us to come. Yet in all his holiness, God wants man to come to him. He desires our worship and our fellowship in prayer and meditation. He wants to speak to us through his word. He wants us to know him.

God wants his children to be like him. He made man in his own image, and he commanded man to spend time with him and learn from him. He wants to have a relationship with his children that will let them walk closely with him. But God made the choice. Man must decide whether he wants to obey God.

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Man's best knowledge of what God is like is by knowing his Son, Jesus Christ. Read John 14:8-11. Jesus told Philip that if a person had seen him (Jesus), he had seen the Father. Today, as we know Jesus we also know the Father.

Application For My Life

A man was talking to a Baptist pastor and said, "I believe a person can worship in his home, at work, as he walks through the forest or as he reads a book."

The wise pastor agreed, "Yes, a man *can* worship anywhere, but he can worship best in the place God has set aside for worship, the church. If a person really wants to know God and worship him it must be through his Son, Jesus Christ. One who knows Jesus knows God."

There is no doubt that a person can worship in many places, but the person who does not worship in church usually does not worship in other places either.

God deserves our worship, and he desires our worship. Man needs to worship and express praise to God. God has provided a way for man to come to him. It is through Jesus, his Son. He wants man to come to Jesus and receive eternal life. He wants man to have a perfect relationship with himself. But God gave man the choice.

God wants man to avoid sin and live in the plan he has made. Man can know God's plan and his will only when he spends time with God. Man can do this in worship, in Bible reading and in prayer. Man has no power within himself to live the life God has planned for him, a life of holiness and righteousness. But God has promised to be with his children and bless them in their daily walk with him.

Often man will say that he does not know God's will for his life. Through the years man has cried out, "How can a

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man know God?" God has promised that he will not hide himself from the man who truly wants to know him. Read Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Chronicles 15:2 and Jeremiah 29:13. These verses assure us that God will not hide himself from us. He will reveal himself to those who really want to find him.

Things To Do

1. Ask God to give you power to defeat sin and to know that there is no sin so great that he cannot overcome.
2. Claim the verses in Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Chronicles 15:2 and Jeremiah 29:13 and the promise that God will reveal himself to you. Ask him to help you have a greater desire to know him and his will for your life.
3. Ask God to teach you how you can worship him best. Tell him that you love him and offer yourself totally to him.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD THE SON

Aim: I will understand that Jesus, God's Son, was human, but he had no sin. Yet he died on the cross for the sin of man. He must be Lord of my life.

Background Scripture: John 1:1-18; 4:6; 5:24; 11:35; Luke 4:2; Hebrews 4:15

Verses in Today's Lesson: John 1:1-3, 12, 18; 4:6; 5:24; 11:35; Luke 4:2; Hebrews 4:15

Memory Verse

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Mose was chairman of the youth of the church. One day he was discussing a problem with one of the young people.

"What shall we do?" Simeon asked. "The elders blame us because we spoke in tongues, we prayed in a loud voice and some of them saw some guys talking to girls in a dark corner. Shouldn't we just forget about the old people and start a church of our own?"

Moses wisely advised, "No, we must let Jesus be the Lord of our lives. He will help us know what we should do. Leaving the church is not the answer."

"What does it mean to let Jesus be Lord of our lives, Moses?" Simeon asked. "How can we do that?"

Perhaps this chapter would help Simeon know the answer of his question.

Interpretation

When God created Adam, he made a perfect person. He intended for that person to have fellowship with him and live in total happiness. But sin came into the world, and man lost that relationship with God. Man disobeyed God, and the fellowship was broken.

God still wanted the fellowship to be perfect. He planned to send a Saviour into the world. That Saviour would take the sin of man on himself. He would die on the cross to pay the price for the sin of man.

God planned to send his Son to be that Saviour. No one else was worthy to pay the price. Only he was without sin.

When the proper time came, God sent his son, Jesus. He was born as a baby to Mary, a virgin. The child grew and lived as any other child would live. When he became a man he began his work of redeeming man from sin.

Jesus had a human body just as we do. He got tired. Read John 4:6. He felt hunger. Read Luke 4:2. He had emotions (John 11:35). He went through all temptations known to man, yet he did not sin. Read Hebrews 4:15. Jesus became our high priest and our sacrifice for sin. He died on the cross to pay the price of sin for all mankind. All who believe in him and accept him as Saviour have life forever with him.

God gave his Son the work of showing man what he (God) was like. He called his Son his Word (John 1:1), and Jesus was God's message to man. God said that Jesus was with him in the time of creation. Nothing was made without Jesus. (John 1:2-3)

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People who know Jesus know God. (John 14:7) Believing in Jesus gives us the right to become sons of God (John 1:12). Read John 5:24. All who hear God's Word and believe him have eternal life. They will not be judged because they have passed from death into life.

God has completed his plan to have a perfect relationship with man. This relationship is forever.

Application For My Life

What is the relationship between you and God? He wants to be your Saviour and your Lord. He becomes your Saviour when you accept his death on the cross as payment for your sin. What does it mean for Jesus to be the Lord of your life?

Making Jesus the Lord of one's life means that he controls every decision in every day. It does not mean the person makes decisions and then expects God to approve them. Jesus must make the decision about what you do, where you go and when you do it. As he becomes your Lord, he will show you how to follow him.

We must follow Jesus' example and spend much time with the Father. Jesus prayed often and gained strength from the time he spent with God. He prayed before every major decision he had to make. Before he chose his disciples, he spent the entire night in prayer. When he was very tired from much healing and teaching, he went to his Father in prayer. The night before his death on the cross, his enemies found Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on his knees. Since Jesus prayed so often and got his strength through prayer, we too should spend much time in prayer.

God has given us his written Word, the Bible, to help us know his way of life. We should study the Bible daily to learn what he wants to teach us. A regular program of

reading the Bible every day can become the means of God's speaking to us. He will show us his will for us when we wait before him in prayer and Bible study.

God has also given us the church as a place where we can grow in him. We should worship him in the services of the church. We should take part in the activities planned by our church. We should seek our place of service to him in this way.

God has promised that those who want to know him will find him. Read Matthew 7:7-8. He will never turn away from anyone who really seeks him.

Things To Do

1. Spend some time in prayer in a place where you can be alone with God. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Saviour, will you do that now? As he becomes your Saviour ask him to be your Lord also.
2. Seek some time that you will set aside each day for prayer and Bible study. Decide what time that will be and where you will spend it. Decide on how you will read the Bible. Read an entire book before you go to another one.
3. Write down the things you will pray about. Keep the list in your Bible, and write the date when that prayer is answered.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD THE SPIRIT

Aim: I will learn that it is the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin. He is also our Comforter.

Background Scripture: John 14:1-13, 25-26; 16:13

Verses in Today's Lesson: John 14:25-26; 16:13; Matthew 3:16

Memory Verse

"God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Joshua was explaining to an unsaved friend how he could become a Christian. He said that a Christian believes in Jesus and receives him as Saviour by faith. "You cannot touch the new life, and you cannot see it. But you can feel it. You can see the results of it," Joshua explained.

"But how can I live a new life which I cannot see without anyone to help me?" the friend asked.

"Oh, you do have a Helper. He is the Holy Spirit. He will help you every day of your life," Joshua eagerly answered. "Although you cannot see him, he will never leave you."

Who is the Holy Spirit? Just what is his work in this world?

Interpretation

While Jesus was in this world he was limited by his physical body as we are. He lived a human life just as we do, but he was God. Although he lived life as we do, he never sinned. Therefore, he was able to pay the price for the sin of man. This meant that Jesus would die on the cross and rise from the dead.

When the time came for Jesus to leave his disciples, he promised them a Helper. He had lived with these men for three years, and he wanted to provide for their needs. Jesus promised them that his Father would send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. Read John 14:25-26. The Holy Spirit has no limits as a physical body does. He can be with everybody at the same time.

Where else in the Bible can we learn about the Holy Spirit? Read Matthew 3:16. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove. Then God spoke from heaven to say that he was pleased with his Son.

When we sin, the Spirit shows us our evil deeds. He is in the world. He convicts people of sin so they can be saved. Read John 16:13. The Spirit lives in those who believe in God's Word, Jesus Christ. He teaches them the right way to live in a world of sinfulness. The boldness a believer has to speak and live for Christ is a result of the Spirit in his life. He gives individuals power to face danger unafraid.

The Spirit is the third person of the trinity. This means God reveals himself to man in three ways. He shows himself, his son Jesus and his Spirit. We call God the Trinity, the three in one.

The Spirit of God was present in the creation of the world. Read Genesis 1:2. He lived in man and was his helper

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throughout the Old Testament. Some examples are Genesis 41:38; Exodus 31:3 and I Samuel 19:20.

He has continued to be present in the lives of people throughout the New Testament. Read Luke 4:18; Acts 13:9 and Revelation 1:10. He is also with us today.

Application For My Life

Have you been aware of the Holy Spirit in your life? If you are a Christian, it is the Holy Spirit who helped you understand that you are a sinner needing to be saved. He helped you to know to look to Jesus for your salvation.

What are ways a Christian relates to the Holy Spirit? Read the memory verse for today. It says we must worship in spirit and in truth.

What does spiritual worship mean? It is worship characterized by faith. Remember chapter two of this book. We learnt that faith is believing although we cannot see. When we worship in Spirit we seek to bring glory to his name. We praise God for who he is. We thank him for what he has done for us. We can do this through singing, praying, reading his Word, testimonies, sermons, making offerings. Perhaps you can name other ways we can worship. We worship him for his glory. He is worthy of our worship.

The Spirit is also Counselor for the Christian. He teaches and brings to remembrance all that Jesus taught his followers. Read John 14:26. It is the Holy Spirit who will help us know how we should live and what we should do in every situation.

He helps Christians show concern for other people. Jesus set the example as he went about doing for others. The Spirit reminds believers to show love for everyone.

GOD THE SPIRIT

Paul speaks in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 to give advice to Christians. He warned in verse 19, "Do not quench the Spirit." Christians should welcome the counsel of the Spirit and never try to ignore him. We should be glad for the help he will give us.

Things To Do

1. Write some of the times the Holy Spirit has worked in your life. Begin with your salvation when he showed you your sin and helped you turn to Jesus as your Saviour.
2. List some of the ways you can bring glory to God through worship in your church. Are there some things that you should list that do not bring glory to him? Perhaps you should make a list of the things you will not do also.
3. Practise saying the memory verse until you can say it easily without looking at it. Be sure to learn the place where it can be found in the Bible. Then you will be able to show it to other people when you need to do so.
4. Pray that God will help you to obey him when he speaks to you through the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWO BAPTIST ORDINANCES

Aim: I will learn the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper as church ordinances.

Background Scripture: Mark 1:9-10; Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; Ephesians 2:8-9

Verses in Today's Lesson: Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Memory Verse

"But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:8).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Among some church groups there are several religious acts called sacraments. These churches believe that God does something special to the one observing these acts of worship. They believe these are a means of grace. That is, God shows his special favour to them in the sacraments. Baptists do not accept this meaning and do not have sacraments. Rather we observe just two New Testament ordinances. Jesus commanded us to follow his example in baptism. And he told us to remember his death in the Lord's Supper. So these two are symbols, not a means of grace, to the Christian believer.

In our lesson today we want to learn the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let us find out why Christians observe them.

THE TWO BAPTIST ORDINANCES

Interpretation

Baptism: Mark 1:9-11; Romans 6:3-8

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus went to John for baptism. Jesus was without sin. He didn't need to confess sin, nor did he need forgiveness. The Bible tells us: "He committed no sin; no guide was found on his lips" (1 Peter 2:22). So he was not getting some special grace from God. Sin was not his problem.

Jesus was baptized as a sign and symbol of his relationship to the Father. And the Bible commands us to be baptized for the same reason.

There are three things that are seen in the act of baptism. (See Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 6:3-5.)

1. We see that our salvation is in the crucified, buried and risen Christ (v. 4). We cannot earn our salvation. We cannot obtain it by any good thing we do. It is a gift of God, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9. In the Saviour's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave we are saved. Baptism pictures this.

2. Baptism also shows that we have died to the life of sin. Paul speaks of dying to sin and being raised to walk in newness of life. When one dies to the old life of sin, he repents, and God through Christ gives him new life. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul says we are a new creation. That is what he means in Romans 6:4 when he says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death..." In verse 11 he tells us, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Baptism shows our death to sin and new life in Christ.

3. Finally, baptism shows that we believe that as Christ was raised to life we too will have a resurrection. Look at

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verse 8: "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Just as Christ lived again after death, so also will the believer. We show this hope in our resurrection after death when as a believer we are baptized.

Now we must make two important points about baptism as Baptists believe it. Baptism is a picture of the death of Christ and his resurrection, and our death and resurrection. This picture cannot be shown by pouring or sprinkling water on the head. When death occurs one is buried out of sight. Death to sin is shown by putting a person under water. Resurrection is shown by raising him from water again. In fact, the word, baptism, in the New Testament means "to put into water completely."

The other point is that the picture is lost if a person is baptized before he is a believer. This is especially true if a non-believer, or a small child, is sprinkled with water. It is the wrong form for the wrong people. That cannot be scriptural, and it is meaningless. The picture is also lost if a real believer is sprinkled with water and calls it baptism. The Lord's Supper: Luke 22:17-20; Matthew 26:26-28

All four of the Gospels record what is called the Lord's Supper. They all give us the details of Jesus with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. That was the night before he was crucified. The Gospels tell us how Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples. They tell us that he shared the cup with them. He said his blood was "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus was giving the disciples an explanation of his death. His death on the cross and resurrection brought forgiveness of sins. His death is seen in the bread and wine. Paul quotes Jesus saying, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). So this was the Lord's Supper, and they were

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instructed to eat the bread and drink the wine to remember the sacrifice of Jesus.

We see this event explained clearly in 1 Corinthians 11:17-26. It is called the Lord's Supper in verse 20. Paul tells us the reason for it in verse 26. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Paul told the Corinthian church and he told us that we must do it as a remembrance.

Application For My Life

Christians in churches today must observe the Lord's Supper regularly and often. It is a reminder of what God did for us. The bread and drink are symbols of his death. It is a way of remembering and giving thanks for our salvation.

All who claim Jesus Christ as their Saviour should follow him in believer's baptism. This is a testimony to the world that the person is a born-again believer.

Things To Do

1. What are the three things that baptism shows?
2. Who should be baptized?
3. Why is immersion the proper form of baptism?
4. What is the meaning of "do in remembrance"?
5. Why should Christians observe the Lord's Supper?

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CHURCH, A FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Aim: I will understand how the church operates as the body of Christ.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-28; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 2:5, 9

Verses in Today's Lesson. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 27-28; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 2:5, 9

Memory Verse

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Previously in our study we have defined a local Baptist church. We know it as a group of scripturally baptized believers who have joined together in fellowship and ministry. This group of Christians have made a commitment to the Lord, as well as a commitment to each other. Members have experienced believers baptism by immersion as taught in the Bible. As a member of a Baptist church one accepts the responsibility of being a part of its ministry and witness.

Unfortunately, sometimes people become members who have never had a salvation experience. Others are not committed. They stray away. Some are under the power of

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Satan They allow sin to separate them from fellow Christians. For some the living Christ is not real. A group may call themselves a Baptist church but not behave as God's people. Let us see how a local Baptist church should function.

Interpretation

The Body of Christ: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-28

Paul tells us about the church in writing to the Christians at Corinth. He used the human body as an example. In verse 12 he said, "...the body is one and has many members...." Also the church is one with many parts. In verse 27 he said that we "...are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

But if there is no unity in the body it can't function. Nothing can be done. Parts of the human body can not function separately. They must work together. Each part must do as it is intended. In a church the members must do as God intended.

But unity does not mean uniformity. It does not mean to be alike. The parts of the human body must function together, but they don't do the same things. Unity is being different but being united.

This is the picture of many churches working together. Each is a part of the body of Christ. They all work together to accomplish the work God has given to the churches. Baptist churches join together to form associations and conventions to do God's work.

We must remember, however, that conventions do not control associations. Associations do not control member churches. The local church as a part of the body of Christ is

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free and independent. Churches join together in associations and conventions for ministry.

The Local Church in Ministry: Ephesians 4:11-16

There are gifts within the body of Christ. Paul tells us about these both in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and in Ephesians 4. There are "varieties of service, but the same Lord." So within the body of the church there are members who can do many things that need to be done. No one is able to do everything well, but everyone can do something. Some members take great pride in their special gift and forget that God gives the gift. Sometimes they don't use their gift for the right purpose.

Everyone in a church receives his special gift from God for a special purpose. Paul explains this in Ephesians 4:12-13. First he says the gifts are to equip the saints "for the work of ministry." Then he says it is for "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." This is the purpose for God's gifts to members.

Churches should decide what ministries are needed. Then they should decide what gifts God has given to that body. God will not lead a church into a ministry unless there is a member in the body to do it. A church should try to do nothing where the gift or the need is missing. This will bring "unity of the faith." All the gifts of all members should be used.

The Church and Its Needs: Ephesians 4:15-16

A local church must reach out to minister beyond herself. The meaning of evangelism and missions is "a church going." But a church must minister to the needs of her own members.

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The biblical word for this local body of Christians is *koinonia*. This word means a ministering fellowship. They are people who care. Christians in a church experience suffering, hardship and loss. At such times others of the fellowship give support and show love.

Some member of the church may fall into sin. Others may be harsh and want to punish. Discipline may be needed. But Paul guides us by saying, "Speaking the truth in love..." (Ephesians 4:15). He suggests the reason in verse 16: "...when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

The Church Members are Priests: 1 Peter 2:5, 9

The functions of the priests were in three areas; 1) to make God known to the people, 2) to conduct worship and teach the people about God, and 3) to bless and render judgements. All of this was to be a channel between god and man.

First Peter speaks of all Christians as being priests. Sometimes this is understood to mean only that the church has no need of special priests. But it is more than that. It means that each of us are responsible for making God known and being the means of bringing man and God together. We no longer need a priest to make a sacrifice to God. We do not have a priest to speak to God for us. We can pray directly to him. But in the church, we minister to each other as priests.

The writer in Hebrews explains that the Old Testament priesthood has been done away with. In its place Christ became our eternal high priest. He opened the way for us as priests to come directly to God. Read Hebrews 10:11-25. We can minister to each other, and we represent God to the world.

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Things To Do

1. Compare a church to a physical body. Who is the head?
2. What is the ministry or the work of the church?
3. What is the Christian's work as a priest?

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHURCH?

Aim: I will learn how Baptist churches are governed.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Acts 15:22-29; Luke 4:16-22

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Acts 15:22-29; Luke 4:16-22

Memory Verse

"But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

It is not easy to understand how Baptist churches can function. There is no pope. There is no big ruling body that gives orders to a local church. In fact, there is not any one person even in a local Baptist church who can make decisions for all the members. There is not an earthly spiritual head of a local church, and there is not a head of a group of churches.

Yet, a Baptist church can function. A church can get on with its job of preaching, teaching, witnessing, meeting human need and other work. And a group of churches in a certain area can cooperate in these same tasks. Even hundreds of churches in a country, or thousands of churches all over the world can work together in the work of the Lord. Things do get done. New churches are started. Many

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physical needs are met, like feeding the hungry or treating diseases or building schools.

This, and much more, is done by Baptist churches working together or by members of one church cooperating in witness and ministry. But there is no pope or bishop who makes decisions for everyone else.

So, how can a Baptist church function? How are decisions made? Who has the authority? Is there no leader? Does the work get done without a plan? What are the answers to these questions?

Interpretation

Baptist Churches

There is a local church or there are churches in a city or a country or in the world. But there is not "The Baptist Church of Kenya" or "The Baptist Church of Zambia." There can only be a Baptist Church at a certain place, or Baptist churches in an area, or Baptist churches in a country or in the world.

A New Testament church is a local group of baptized believers. They have agreed to unite in Christian ministry and to fellowship in the name and Spirit of Christ. They are committed to his teaching as given in the Bible. The Bible is the final authority of these believers. The church, this local group of baptized believers, shares together in worship and ministry. They are alert to the needs of each other in times of crisis. The main purpose of a church is to extend the gospel everywhere.

A group of Baptist churches in a local area can cooperate in sharing the gospel of salvation. This group is called an association. As they meet together from time to time they

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worship and teach too. They will try to find ways to take the gospel to new places, starting new churches.

Baptist churches in a certain country will join together to form a convention. This is to carry out the same purpose of a single church or an association. Together they preach and teach the good news of salvation.

It must be understood that New Testament churches have only one purpose. They join together in associations to carry out this one purpose. The church is not a building and money. A church is a fellowship of Christian believers committed to one task: to preach the good news. Churches in a convention or association unite to do the same thing.

The secret of Baptist churches is that they voluntarily decide to cooperate in a single purpose. Christ is the leader. The Bible is the authority for all the churches.

The Leaders of a Church

No one outside a local church can direct that group. The association cannot. The convention cannot. No missionary can make the decisions. A local church is free and independent.

But a church has leaders. There are people who lead in making decisions about its life and work. There are several people who serve in leadership positions. But they are servants of the church, not bosses. These leaders can only guide and make suggestions to do the Lord's work.

There are two main groups of leaders in Baptist churches: pastors and deacons. The pastor is chosen by the local church. He leads the church to make decisions about its life and work. He has no power to rule. He leads the church in worship.

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Deacons are also church leaders who teach, witness and serve. They are not bosses. Deacons are elected to serve the church.

The Members of a Church

Deacons are members, and pastors are members. All leaders are members. All members are equal when making decisions. Each can vote as a Baptist church governs itself. This is a democracy at its very best. The authority in a Baptist church is in the members themselves. The authority in an association is not in the leaders. It is in the churches.

However, sometimes the leaders forget that they are only servants. They begin to act like rulers. Sometimes the pastor or the deacons make a decision without the members. Sometimes the chairman of a convention forgets that he should not make a decision alone. These people are all elected by members. They are servants to help churches do Christ's work.

Trouble and conflict in a local church, association or convention come when people forget these things. If members forget the purpose and authority in a church, the gospel will suffer. The work will not be done. The church fails.

Application For My Life

Everyone in a Baptist church must accept responsibility for the ministry of the church. In Luke 4:16-22 Jesus helps us understand this ministry. Here we see his mission and ours. Pastors, deacons and all members must commit themselves to this. All of them together are responsible for the church.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHURCH

Things To Do

1. Who makes the decision in a local church?
2. What is the responsibility of the leaders?
3. What is an association? What is a convention?

CHAPTER NINE

THE PASTOR OF A CHURCH

Aim: I will understand the role of the pastor in a church.

Background Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Memory Verse

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ"
(Ephesians 5:21).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Most people in Baptist churches would be able to explain something about the work of a pastor. They know he preaches on Sunday. They also consider him to witness and visit. They consider him to be the main leader in the church. However there is confusion about the pastor, both as to what he does and how he leads the people. There is not very much written about the pastor in the Bible. Much of what we could say about a pastor is out of tradition and practice in our churches.

Even some pastors do not understand their role. And some have abused the position. Many members have not understood the pastor's position. Because of this the Lord's work has not grown as it should. So it is important that we understand the role of a pastor if we want our churches to grow.

Interpretation

The Pastor: A Man of God

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The best description of the spiritual qualities of a pastor is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Here he is called bishop which means he is the leader of the people of God. This comes from the idea of shepherd. A shepherd in Bible times was one who both fed and protected his flock. So a pastor of God's people is one who is the spiritual leader. He cares for the spiritual needs of people. He feeds them with spiritual food.

The Bible speaks of men and women called by God for special service. There were prophets like Amos, judges like Deborah, leaders like Moses. These were spokesmen of God. Jesus called a select group and sent them out. In Acts 14:23 we are told how Paul and Barnabas set apart leaders for the churches. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul spoke of spiritual gifts for pastors and apostles. Read those verses.

The Pastor and His Work

Since he is a man of God, it is obvious that he does God's work. It is not clear sometimes what that means. The pastor is not special. He is an ordinary man to whom God has given special gifts. That determines what his work is.

The pastor is not just one who preaches and teaches. There are preachers, teachers and evangelists. The pastor may do that work too, but his work is related to a "flock of God's people." A man who preaches on radio is not a pastor because he is not doing the work of feeding and caring for the "flock." The pastor represents God to the group in times of trouble and need. As God's leader he helps them to become what God wants them to be.

The apostle Paul, however, tells us a very important part of a pastor's work. In Ephesians 4:12 he says, "...for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry...." We need to understand three things here. First, to equip means to prepare, to make ready for action. Saints are the people of

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God, those who belong to him by salvation. So that is the church. Work of ministry means to do the work of God. So the pastor helps others to do the work of ministry. He helps his people to minister in times of need, to witness, to share God's love.

The pastor as God's man is not the boss or dictator. He is a servant. He is a chosen leader and servant. Since the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, the people must not consider him just a hired man. His work is not to do all the things that no one else wants to do. Members of a local church must be sure he is not hindered in equipping the saints for the work of ministry.

The Pastor: His Call to a Church

In Baptist churches pastors are not sent by some church council. There is not an outside authority that decides who will be the pastor. In fact, it should be remembered there is no authority over a local Baptist church except Jesus, the head. The local church is the authority.

So a church will decide who will be the pastor. How does a church call a pastor? In a democracy the leader should be the choice of the people. The people decide under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the right person, and the people must decide who that is. There are several important things here:

1. They must pray for guidance and be willing to be led by the Holy Spirit.
2. They should select a committee carefully and prayerfully to consider possibilities and recommend to the church.
3. The church decides. There must be no selfish motives. The people must be allowed to make suggestions. They should pray for God's leading.

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The church must know God's will, not by some miracle, but by prayer and discussion. The church should ask for God's wisdom. The chosen pastor must be called by God and received by the people.

Application For My Life

The Pastor: His Acceptance by the Church

When the church invites him to be their pastor they must support him in two ways. First, they accept him as their spiritual leader. They are committed to follow him and to cooperate with him in the work of ministry. This is commitment in calling him to be pastor.

Secondly, the church must physically support him. They must meet his needs and his family's. They must pay him adequately and house him properly. They must provide for all his physical needs so he can carry on his work. When there is a problem or crisis, the church must help him.

There must be a right relationship between the pastor and his people. Otherwise the work will be retarded, and conflicts will arise. The work of ministry will be hindered. Exciting things happen in the kingdom of God when a pastor and church work in harmony.

Things To Do

1. How can a person be equipped for ministry?
2. What are the church's obligations to the pastor?
3. What are the qualifications of a pastor?
4. Make a list of the ministries of your church. How can you contribute to those ministries?

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEACONS IN A BAPTIST CHURCH

Aim: I will understand the ministry of deacons.

Background Scripture: Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Verses in Today's Lesson: Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Memory Verse

"...whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Many people do not understand who deacons are in a Baptist church and what work they do. Both deacons and other members sometimes consider them as the ones who run the church. The ministry of deacons is important, and so we need to understand this work. When we know it we will know the kind of men who can be deacons. Some see them in the role of "boss," and others say they are servants. The Bible is clear on the ministry of deacons.

Interpretation

Deacons in the New Testament

There were deacons very early in the New Testament church. In Acts 6 we see that they were chosen to meet a very special need. Greed widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. No doubt there were other things to do in ministering to people. The leaders said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve

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tables" (verse 2). Therefore they asked that seven men be chosen for this work, and deacons were appointed. The Greek word for deacon means "servants." So the meaning is to serve, not to rule. It is a position of service, not one of authority. This word for deacon is the same one used by Jesus in Mark 10:43: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant."

The leaders in that first church were clear about the kind of men wanted to be deacons. In Acts 6:3 they said, "Pick out...men of good repute, full of the spirit and wisdom." Stephen was one of those chosen, and verse 8 says he was "full of grace and power." In verse 5 it says he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." So these were men of great spiritual qualities chosen to serve with their hands.

We should also see that there was a special "setting aside" of these men. Notice verse 6, "...and they prayed and laid their hands upon them" Finally, notice that we are then told (verse 7), "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly...." The ministry of these spiritual men was effective. The church grew.

In the book of Acts, deacons came into being to serve God and the church. There is no information about what they did. That is good, for the needs will always be different from church to church. But it was a spiritual ministry and required spirit-filled men.

Deacons: Their Qualifications

We have already seen that the first deacons had specific qualifications. Stephen was a man "...full of grace and power" (Acts 6:8) and "...a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 6:5). In selecting deacons they looked for "...Men of Good repute, full of the spirit and wisdom" (verse

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3). So deacons are not ordinary men, for they were given work that was not ordinary. Paul in writing to Timothy gave details of their qualifications. (Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.) With a clear understanding of the kind of men deacons are, we need to look carefully at their ministry.

Deacons: Their Work Among the People

Deacons are servants of the church. They should not consider themselves to be directors or managers. They should not misuse their authority. Deacons should be spiritual leaders of their congregations. Some of their duties include the following:

1. Calling on the sick
2. Visiting the troubled and distressed
3. Caring for the poor and needy
4. Evangelizing, preaching and teaching
5. Caring for the needs of the pastor
6. Being alert to spiritual problems among the people

This is a ministry of care and concern. It is an important part of the work of deacons. They must help the church fulfil its purpose.

Many times both churches and deacons fail to understand this spiritual role. They think of deacons as officers with authority instead of servants. This is a serious problem. Some deacons seem to want all the power and authority they can get. Sometimes they stay in the position so long they urge their will over the will of the church. Sometimes the deacons exercise absolute and final control. The will of the members is not considered. Deacons should act in an advisory capacity in all business matters. That is, they lead

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the church in making the right decisions in business matters. They don't make the decisions alone.

Churches should be able to look to their deacons for wise counsel and strong leadership. As deacons give this service they must reflect Christ. Therefore, they must set good examples of stewardship, Bible study and prayer. They must be active in worship, witnessing and discipling. They must show evidence that Christ is Lord of their lives. They must cooperate with the pastor in making sure the church is united in its purpose. They will be good examples in their private lives and in their business dealings.

Application For My Life

A deacon is a man of God who is specially qualified. He is called by his church to high and holy spiritual services. He is not just a business officer of the church.

In writing to Timothy about deacons Paul concluded with these words: "...those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:13).

Things To Do

1. Make a list of the qualifications of deacons as you now understand them.
2. Now list the kinds of work a deacon should do in the church.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Aim: I will learn that the church has been authorized by God to act in accordance to his will.

Background Scripture: Matthew 7:29; 9:6; 28:18-20; John 5:27, 30; Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 9:8; Revelation 12:10

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 28:18-20; John 5:27, 30; Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 9:8

Memory Verse

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me' " (Matthew 28:18).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Thomas and Timothy were walking home from a worship service, and they began to discuss the matter of authority. "Why should the pastor tell us what to do? He says we should give a tithe of our money, we should do kind deeds for other people, we should pray, read the Bible. He is just a man. Why should he tell us what to do?" Thomas asked.

Timothy replied, "Do you really believe what you are saying?"

"Yes," Thomas answered. "It is between me and God whether I give my money, pray and read my Bible."

"The pastor is a spokesman for God," Timothy responded. "He speaks for God. His authority is from Jesus. Whatever

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he speaks is God's message to us, his people. The pastor was called of God to be the shepherd of his flock, his people."

Perhaps Thomas would get more help if he studied this lesson.

Interpretation

In the Memory Verse for today Jesus spoke of his authority. He was making his farewell speech to his disciples. He assured them that he had all authority in heaven and on earth. No one but God could make such a claim. Jesus sent his disciples out to carry on his work in the world. He could do this because his Father had given him the authority. They would preach, heal and teach in the power which Jesus gave them. These men were left to carry on the work of the church of Jesus on the earth. They would do everything as if Jesus himself was doing it.

During his life on earth Jesus taught like one with authority. Read Matthew 7:29. It was customary for the Jewish religious teachers, the rabbis, to quote prominent scholars in their teaching. However Jesus did not quote anyone else. He had the authority himself to speak God's message. The rabbis did not understand this. They thought of Jesus as the son of Joseph, the carpenter. How much authority could he claim to have! But Jesus constantly reminded his listeners that he had authority to even forgive sins. The Jews believed sickness was brought on by sin, and Jesus even healed the sick. Read Matthew 9:6.

The apostles were promised the power of the Holy Spirit. They would even be able to do greater things than Jesus did. When persecution came to the Christians, they scattered to many parts of the world. Wherever they went they took the gospel with them and churches were started. And so the

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authority and power was passed on to the church. Jesus will be with the church in whatever it does. The church is a community of believers, and every believer can approach God personally. This was shown clearly at Jesus' death. The curtain of the temple was split into two pieces. This indicated that everyone could approach God without the assistance of priests.

Jesus gave power and authority to every believer to come to God for himself and for others who had needs. It is a privilege and a great responsibility for every Christian.

Application For My Life

Authority and power remind us that we also have an obligation to fill. Along with the gift of God's blessing comes the responsibility to use it wisely. We have authority from God, but we are also expected to submit to authority. God has given authority to the government, to parents, to teachers and to the church. Sometimes people rebel against authority.

Jesus taught that every person should submit to the authority of the government. This involves obeying the laws of the land and paying the taxes assessed by the government. These governments even got their authority from God. Read Romans 13:1

Every person is commanded to obey parents. God planned for parents to care for children. God gave parents authority over their children. Read Exodus 20:12. This commandment of God gives a promise for those who will obey it.

God expects similar obedience to all those in authority. This could be teachers or even employers. It is according to God's plan that his children will respect and honour one another.

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This does not imply that those who have authority have reached perfection. They do have responsibility for specific jobs. Along with the responsibility, God gives the ability to do this work. We should pray for all those in authority over us, that God will enable them to do their jobs well.

Things To Do

1. Pray that God will help you to obey those in authority over you.
2. Pray for those people. Pray for your country, its leaders, your parents, teachers and employer. Pray for those in the church who have leadership responsibilities.
3. Ask God to make you worthy of the authority he has given you as his child.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY CHURCH?

Aim: I will learn that I can take an active part in my church activities.

Background Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Jeremiah 1:5-7; Acts 2:41-42

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Jeremiah 1:5-7

Memory Verse

"Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Samuel: Gideon, I wonder why you do not take an active part in activities of the church. You are a Christian, aren't you?

Gideon: O yes, I accepted Jesus as my Saviour three years ago. But I just can't do anything in church. I'm too young.

Samuel: You are about the same age as I am, and I really enjoy working with the youth. We have good times and serve the Lord in several ways.

Gideon: I believe youth have more temptations than older people. They should wait until they are old to serve God effectively.

Samuel: I believe you have been misinformed sometime. Everyone has temptations, but the Lord will help you resist

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them. Besides, if we wait until we are old - if we ever get there - we won't know how to serve. We need to be learning now.

Perhaps the following lesson would help Gideon learn what he could do in his church.

Interpretation

Read Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus gave his disciples work to do. This was for those who had lived then and those who would live in years that followed. The work was not limited to one age group. It included everyone.

Read Jeremiah 1:5-7. Jeremiah tells about the message which God gave him. Jeremiah was called by God into a job of prophecy. He like Moses, however, hesitated to do what God wanted him to do. Jeremiah used the excuse of being too young. God answered plainly that he was equally interested in young people and older people.

God loves everyone equally, whether old or young. Jesus died for the sins of all, with no limitations.

Young people have more energy than many adults. They can use their energy in the church to be a blessing to many people. If it is not used in a positive way of witness for the Lord, it can lead the young person into bad habits.

Paul might have sensed the danger which was involved in selecting Timothy to lead. Read the Memory Verse for today. Paul knew that criticism might be directed against Timothy because of his age. We are not sure how old Timothy was, but at least he was younger than Paul. What Paul was saying to Timothy was, "Although you are not as old as I, prove to the people that they can respect and trust you."

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Throughout those days, youth were regarded with some suspicion by the church. Paul was saying that Timothy should silence criticism by his conduct. Paul explained what desirable conduct must include: love, faith and purity.

Love in a person would serve as a shield to stop all accusations. Paul charged Timothy to love the unloveable, to forgive those who would mistreat him and rid himself of bitterness against his enemies.

Secondly, he was to be a faithful Christian leader at all times, even when the future was dark. He was to show people that he knew God by the change in his life. He should live a pure life. These are not a separate set of qualifications for people in leadership positions. They are for all members of the church of Jesus Christ.

Application For My Life

Young people have much to contribute to churches today, but to be able to contribute, they must have pure conduct. Love, faith and purity must be evident in the life of the useful young person.

What specific jobs in the church can a young person do? Those who have the spiritual maturity to do so can teach Sunday School classes. They can use their time and energy to study God's Word so they can share it with other people. The place of teacher for young children should not, however, be given to one who will not prepare for the lessons. It is not a position of honour. It is an opportunity to serve God by teaching his Word. It will require time and effort for one to earn the privilege of being a teacher.

Young people enjoy singing and can be useful in the music of the church. If the young people are willing to practise and improve their talent, they can be a blessing. Their singing

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY CHURCH?

should be to the glory of God, and not to bring honour to themselves.

Keeping the church clean and tidy is a task that can be done by young people. They can sweep the floor and the grounds, dust benches and tables, clean windows or do other work as needed. Youth can serve as ushers to help people find seats in the services and to help wherever there are needs. And a very important task is visitation. A visit from a Christian friend can do much to help a lost person feel welcome in the church.

Any young person who wants to work in the church should pray and ask God to show him what work to do. There is plenty for everyone.

Things To Do

1. Make a list of jobs that you could qualify to do in your church. This is not restricted to jobs that are vacant.
2. Begin by selecting a person who needs a friend. Visit that person during the coming week. This may be someone who is sick, lonely or in sorrow. Be sensitive to what you could do for that person to make him/her feel better.
3. Pray that God will show you what he would like for you to do in his church. Remember the qualifications listed in this lesson to help you prepare for the job.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

Aim: I will learn the importance of evangelism and missions in Baptist churches.

Background Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8

Verses in Today's Lesson: Acts 15:22-23; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8

Memory Verse

“Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing” (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

There are many churches who call themselves Christians. They have varying interpretations of the Bible, especially the New Testament. Some believe it teaches one thing; others believe something else.

Some groups that claim to be a church do not follow the teachings of the New Testament. They are a church in name only. Some claim to be the true church because they think they can trace their history all the way to New Testament times.

Baptists do not claim to be able to trace their church leadership to Jesus or John the Baptist or Peter. Baptist churches do claim to be New Testament churches. This is because they try to follow New Testament teachings. Baptists try to decide who they are and what they should do by looking at churches in the New Testament.

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

One of the important marks or identifications of a Baptist church is its commitment to evangelism and missions. Today we are going to look at these two things. In doing so we will be able to see if we are part of a new Testament church. We may see some things that need to be changed in the church we are members of.

Interpretation

What are Evangelism and Missions? These two words may not be clearly understood. Some think that churches called evangelistic are not interested in the physical needs of people. They only want people to "get saved." They are only interested in life after death and not in life here now. To them, missions means going far away to another country to "get people saved." So critics think evangelism and missions are bad.

But that is not the meaning of these New Testament concepts. Evangelism comes from the word, "evangel." This word means "good news." So evangelism means telling the good news. The story of Jesus in the New Testament is good news. Telling people this good news is evangelism. There are many examples of this in the book of Acts.

Missions is related to this. The evangelist goes to tell the good news. We must understand that missions is not just someone from America coming to Africa. Instead it is churches (or a church) sending out a messenger with this good news. That is what happened in Acts 15:22-23. Silas was sent by the church to Antioch to help Paul. That was missions.

Evangelism and Missions in the New Testament

BAPTIST BELIEFS

1. The Message

There are several places in the Bible where we can learn what the "good news" is. The message is: Christ died, was buried and rose again. Because of this it is possible to be forgiven of sin. All people have sinned by rebelling against God. Because of that, we are doomed to eternal separation from God. The good news is we can be saved from this by the death of Jesus.

2. The Command (Luke 24:47-48; Matthew 28:19-20)

In the Luke passage Jesus told his followers what the news is. Then he added, "You are witnesses of these things." They had seen his death and burial and could testify to his being raised from the dead. All people must hear this. Matthew ends his Gospel in the same way. Jesus tells his followers to go to "all nations." So we must go. This is a command to every Christian.

3. The Method (Acts 1:8)

The method was simple. They had to start in Jerusalem where they were. Then they would go to near-by areas, Judea and Samaria. Eventually they would get the message out "to the end of the earth." That is the same method God expects his people to follow today. We start where we are, go to areas around us and then to every part of the world. Sometimes a person can't go, but he joins with other Christians to send someone else. The church in Antioch did this.

The Church in Evangelism and Missions

This "going with the message" was so much a part of the church in the New Testament we can conclude one thing. A New Testament church is one that always goes out with

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

the good news. So it makes no difference what a group may call itself. If it does not go, it is not New Testament.

Application For My Life

There are two other things we can say about it. First, evangelism and missions give life to a church or group of churches. If they do not go and tell, they die. They may meet and talk and pray and collect money, but it is dead as a church.

The other thing is that Christians committed to going with the good news are the hope of the world. People without Christ will die in their sins. They will spend eternity without God. If Christ is not Lord, evil and wickedness continue to reign. The gospel is the hope of the world.

Everyone must help send good news everywhere. This may be at work or school or home. That is our Jerusalem. Some may leave their home to go to places near by. That is our Judea and Samaria. Some may go to far away places, "to the end of the earth," as Jesus said. Each church can pray and give so the gospel can be preached everywhere.

Baptists are people of evangelism and missions. This has been true throughout our history. They join together in associations and conventions to send the gospel. They can do more together than a church can do by itself. When a church or churches cease to be involved in going with the good news "to the ends of the earth" they cease to follow the New Testament example. We are Christians today because the gospel was shared by people before us. There will be Christians and churches in the next generation only if we go out with the message.

Things To Do

1. What is the New Testament meaning of evangelism?

BAPTIST BELIEFS

2. What is missions?

3. Jesus told his followers to begin in Jerusalem, the city where they lived, then go to Judea, the area around. Then they should go farther to Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth. Where is your Jerusalem (the city, town or village where you live)? _____ Where is your Judea? _____ Where is your Samaria? _____ Will you be his witness there?