

Unit Ten

*The Propagation
of the
Resurrected
and Ascended
Christ*

*Annotated Lesson
Outlines*

Journey through the Bible
Annotated Lesson Outlines

Unit Ten: The Propagation of the Resurrected and Ascended Christ

© 2011 Southern California Young People's Work. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or information storage and retrieval systems-without written permission from the publisher – Southern California Young People's Work.

All New Testament quotations are taken from The New Testament Recovery Version, Revised Edition, © 1991 Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to express their indebtedness to the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee in their preparation of this material. They have opened up the Word and we have entered in.

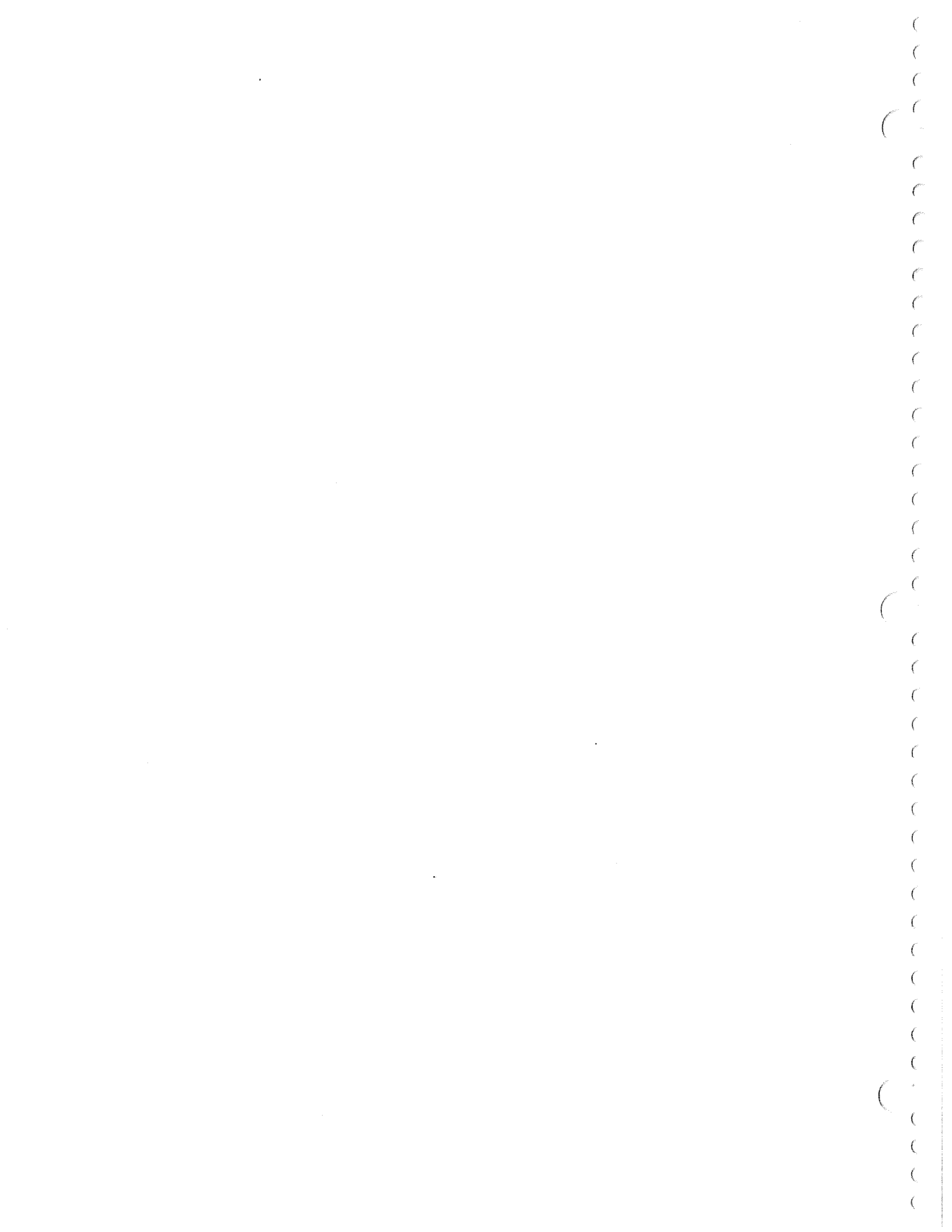
The authors also wish to express their appreciation to the Living Stream Ministry, which has graciously granted us permission to make use of various quotations in preparation of the lesson book of this unit for the young people.

Southern California Young People
Curriculum Project
2411 W. La Palma Ave, Suite 107
Anaheim, CA 92801

Tel.: (714) 252-9310
Fax: (714) 252-9312
Email: journey@scyp.com
Website: www.scyp.com

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW OF LESSONS.....	51
UNIT 10—THE PROPAGATION OF THE RESURRECTED AND ASCENDED CHRIST ...	56
LESSON 1—THE PROPAGATION OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST	56
LESSON 2—THE PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES	60
LESSON 3—THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT.....	64
LESSON 4—THE TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN.....	69
LESSON 5—THE PROPAGATION OUTWARD FROM JERUSALEM	73
LESSON 6—THE CONVERSION OF SAUL.....	78
LESSON 7—LED BY THE SPIRIT FOR THE PROPAGATION INTO EUROPE.....	83
LESSON 8—THE CONTENTS OF PAUL’S COMMISSION.....	89
LESSON 9—ROMANS—THE GOSPEL OF GOD	93
LESSON 10—CREATION DECLARES GOD	97
LESSON 11—ACCOUNTED RIGHTEOUS BY GOD	102
LESSON 12—REIGNING IN LIFE.....	105
LESSON 13—FREED TO MARRY CHRIST.....	109
LESSON 14—THREE LIVES AND FOUR LAWS	113
LESSON 15—THE SPIRIT WITH OUR SPIRIT.....	117
LESSON 16—A LIVING SACRIFICE	120
LESSON 17—A NORMAL LIVING FOR THE BODY LIFE	125
LESSON 18—RECEIVING THE BELIEVERS FOR BUILDING UP	130



Overview of Lessons

Unit 10. The Propagation of the Resurrected and Ascended Christ (Acts—Romans)

This unit discusses the propagation of the resurrected and ascended Christ as revealed in the books of Acts and Romans.

Lesson 1: The Propagation of the Resurrected Christ—The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospels and is the book that links the Gospels with the Epistles. The Gospels reveal Christ's earthly ministry in His incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. The book of Acts reveals that the purpose for which Christ came and passed through all these processes was to propagate Himself as the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through His disciples, for the producing of the churches, the kingdom of God. Today we are still in the book of Acts; Christ is still carrying out His heavenly ministry in ascension for His move to be propagated upon the earth. **Objective:** To see that after His resurrection, Christ wants to propagate Himself in ascension, by the Spirit, through His disciples for the producing of the churches, the kingdom of God. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing that the goal of God's economy is to mingle God with man and man with God (II.A.4.); Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 1–28.

Lesson 2: The Preparation of the Disciples—After His resurrection, the Lord trained His disciples for a period of forty days to know His invisible presence. He had been with them in His physical presence for over three years, but after this period the disciples remained natural until He passed through crucifixion and entered into them as the Spirit on the day of His resurrection. After that time the disciples needed to be trained to know the Lord in a different way. They walked with Him in His earthly ministry; now they were learning to move with Him as the Spirit for the spread of His kingdom. Today, we also need to be trained to know the Lord in an inner way so that we might carry out His move on the earth for the spread of His kingdom within us and within others. **Objective:** To see that before sending His disciples out to preach the gospel, the Lord trained them to know Him as the invisible, indwelling Spirit so that they could continue to work with Him for His move on the earth. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing the anointing and the sense of life (II.G.2.). **Chapter(s):** Luke 24; Acts 1–2.

Lesson 3: The Outpouring of the Spirit—When the Lord resurrected, He imparted Himself as the Spirit into His believers essentially by breathing Himself into them. On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem and at another time in the house of Cornelius, however, the church was baptized in the Spirit economically when the Spirit was poured out upon the believers. In Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, all the believers had been gathered together and were praying for ten days after the Lord had ascended. On the tenth day, the Spirit came upon them and they began to speak the gospel boldly and to do works of power. This resulted in the establishing of the church in Jerusalem in a strong way. Later, the outpouring of the Spirit occurred in the Gentile household of Cornelius when Peter was sent there by the Lord. Thus, the Jewish and the Gentile believers were baptized into one Body. Today, the Spirit is still economically upon the church, therefore we do not need to wait for another outpouring of the Spirit; we can apply the economical Spirit to

boldly speak and work for the Lord. **Objective:** To see that the economical Spirit has been poured out on all believers for their move. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing the essential and economical aspects of the spirit (II.G.1.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 1–2, 10.

Lesson 4: The Testimony of Stephen—Stephen was a brother attested by the Word as being full of the Holy Spirit, grace, faith, wisdom, and power. Such a one was chosen to serve the tables of widows! For this he was appointed as a deacon. Although he was gifted and able in many things, he willingly accepted what was arranged for him. (If he had not, he could not have become so useful to the Lord.) During the time he served, the church greatly grew. Because of his strong testimony, false accusers were used to bring him before the Jewish court (“Sanhedrin”) to accuse him of blasphemy. As one who was constituted with God’s word, Stephen was able to stand before the court and convict the Jewish leaders concerning Christ by a long and detailed message from the Scriptures. In response, they stoned him. As he was about to be stoned, Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing, ready to receive him. He died forgiving his persecutors and calling on the Lord’s name. Stephen’s testimony and martyrdom surely had a deep effect on Paul, who was present. Following his martyrdom, there was a persecution of the church, which led to the spread of the gospel to many other cities. Thus, Stephen’s life and death brought forth much fruit (John 12:24). **Objective:** To inspire the young people through Stephen’s pattern to serve the Lord and be constituted with the Word. **Crucial Matters:** Serving the Lord practically by serving the saints (III.F.5.); Reading the Bible (III.E.3.); Reading the ministry (III.E.8.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 6–7.

Lesson 5: The Propagation Outward from Jerusalem—The apostles began their propagation of the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem. From there, the resurrected Christ was propagated to Judea and Samaria through the scattered saints and through the ministry of the apostles. This propagation then spread to the Gentiles through Paul’s ministry, and eventually it reached the uttermost part of the earth. Hallelujah, the propagation of the resurrected Christ is still going on today, and we can be a part of it! **Objective:** To see how the propagation of the resurrected Christ through the preaching of the gospel spread outward from Jerusalem to reach the entire earth. **Crucial Matters:** Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 7.

Lesson 6: The Conversion of Saul—Saul was a chosen vessel prepared by God for His purpose. He was sovereignly brought up under Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman politics; he was highly educated and well trained in his character; and he was zealous in his religion and in serving God. However, without a heavenly vision, Saul misaimed, persecuting the church. Yet the Lord appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and called him. In the Lord’s calling, Saul received a revelation of Jesus Christ and of the church, His Body. After being called by the Lord, Saul forsook his religion and immediately began to preach Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Saul was converted from everything else to Christ and was used to convey this Christ to others. In this way, Saul was a pattern to us of how we are called by God for His purpose (Rom. 8:28). **Objective:** To see Saul as a pattern of how one can be called by God to be useful to Him. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on His personal calling—responding to the Lord individually (III.C.3.); Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on a vision of God’s eternal purpose being the highest thing to which we could give our lives (III.C.5.); Seeking the human and spiritual education and training that will best equip your vessel to fulfill your goals and ultimately the purpose of your life (IV.A.3.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 9.

Lesson 7: Led by the Spirit for the Propagation into Europe—Beginning from Antioch, the Spirit initiated a series of ministry journeys carried out by Paul and his coworkers. During the second journey, after which Paul revisited the churches in Galatia that had been raised up during the first journey, he determined to spread the gospel further. By following the Spirit's leading in a step-by-step way, Paul was eventually led to Macedonia, a part of Europe, where a church was raised up in Philippi. In this way the Lord's move spread to a new continent. It was because of Paul's ability to receive the Spirit's leading that he was able to be used by the Lord for this great event. Often the Lord leads us by His checking, His prohibiting. The Lord desires to be such a living "road map" to us; rather than telling us the destination, He wants us to depend upon Him throughout the journey. If we learn to follow the Lord in this way, He will be able to use us for His purpose, and we will always have the peace and confidence that we are in the Lord's move. **Objective:** To see how Paul was led by the Spirit, even by the Spirit's forbidding, to carry out the Lord's strategic move into Europe. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing the anointing and the sense of life (II.G.2.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 16.

Lesson 8: The Contents of Paul's Commission—At the end of Paul's third journey, he went up to Jerusalem, where he suffered the ultimate persecution of the Jews', eventually ending up in Roman custody. However, his arrest and trial provided an opportunity for him to testify of Christ and of the commission he had received from God. In his defenses to the Roman governors and to the Jews, Paul testified concerning the Lord Jesus and concerning the commission God gave to him. Paul testified that he had been appointed a minister and a witness of Christ, and that he had been commissioned by God with four great things: opening people's eyes, turning people from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and receive the divine inheritance. These four items must be the contents of our commission which we receive through a heavenly vision of Christ. **Objective:** To see the gospel commission Paul received from God. **Crucial Matters:** Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.). **Chapter(s):** Acts 21–26.

Lesson 9: Romans—The Gospel of God—Since the subject of Romans is the gospel of God, Romans gives us a clear picture both of the means and the goal of God's salvation. The means of God's salvation is His judicial redemption and organic salvation, and the goal is to gain sons conformed to Christ and built together as the Body of Christ. All those who have begun in this wonderful salvation will reach its goal. In Romans we see how Christ continues to work after His resurrection as the Spirit within man. Romans unveils to us the Christian life and the church life. Praise the Lord for this "fifth gospel"! **Objective:** To see that the full gospel of God includes Christ's judicial redemption, His organic salvation, the Christian life, and the church life. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding that man needs a full salvation and that the complete salvation God has provided for man requires a long process of man's cooperation (II.B.3.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 1–16.

Lesson 10: Creation Declares God—Men have chosen to deny God because they love their evil works. To admit that God is real is to admit that He is their Creator, and hence, their Owner who has the right to rule in their lives. God has provided man with many undeniable proofs that He exists, and which even reveal what kind of God He is. God is seen in His creation. It is absurd to think that all that exists came into being by accident. Every item of creation bears the mark of God's handiwork. Paul states that creation makes known God's eternal power and His divine characteristics, and in Colossians we are told that all creation bears the intrinsic characteristic of having been carried out

through Christ as the sphere of God's creation. To deny God as the Creator is the greatest foolishness. Those who preach evolution ask people to subvert the reasoning ability God has given to them to recognize Him. Eventually such persons descend to indulge in the grossest forms of sin, having given up the protection we have by taking God's way of restriction **Objective:** To see that the divine characteristics in creation express God's intrinsic nature, and that by our having God and taking His way of restriction we are safeguarded from wickedness. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing that God is the Creator and Source of the universe (II.A.6.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 1–2.

Lesson 11: Accounted Righteous by God—The righteousness of God is absolute; He cannot compromise it nor can we find a way to get around it. To sinners, God's righteousness is a terrible thing, for God must deal with everyone according to the standard of His righteousness. God's righteousness was satisfied, however, when Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Now God is bound by His righteousness to justify everyone who believes into Jesus. Hence, the righteousness which condemned us now justifies us, for God is bound by His righteousness to save us. His righteousness has become the eternal security of our salvation. Furthermore, when we believe into Christ, we are transferred into Him and God sees us in Christ. Therefore, as far as God is concerned, we are as righteous as Christ is! Based upon our redemption in Christ, we can come forward to God with boldness, just as Christ does. Furthermore, it is based upon this righteousness that we become qualified to receive God as life, which is constituting us with God as our righteousness until we ourselves become as He is. **Objective:** To see that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. **Crucial Matters:** Experiencing redemption with its five major aspects of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, reconciliation, and positional sanctification (III.A.2.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 3–5.

Lesson 12: Reigning in Life—God's complete salvation is for us to reign in life by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. To receive the abundance of grace is to receive God Himself as our all-sufficient supply for our organic salvation. To receive the abundance of the gift of righteousness is to receive God's judicial redemption applied to us in a practical way. When we receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we experience God's complete salvation, which equals our reigning in life. To reign in life is a matter of being ruled by the divine life within us. We need to let the divine life reign in our being and in our living, in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. When we continually receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we reign in life and are truly healthy and normal in our experience of God's salvation. **Objective:** To see that reigning in life is a matter of being ruled by the divine life within us. **Crucial Matters:** Living a life under Christ's kingship to reign in life over all things (III.H.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 5–6.

Lesson 13: Freed to Marry Christ—God created man to complement Him as His counterpart, His bride. For this purpose God made man in His image with a spirit so that man might live in oneness with God. Man, however, became separated from God due to the fall. Man was created to be the dependent party, but the fallen person (the independent self, the "old man") sought to fill the role of God as the husband as well. When Christ died on the cross, He crucified the old man, thus freeing whoever believed into Him to marry another, even Christ! Thus, Christ's death on the cross truly recovered man back to God. The law was given by God to expose fallen man's inability to be a proper husband. We suffered under the law as long as we were bound to our old man as our husband. However, when our old man was crucified with Christ, we were freed from

the law! Praise the Lord! We no longer are bound to our old man as our husband and person; instead, we have been recovered to marry Christ as our Husband and Person.

Objective: To see that man, as a wife, should be dependent upon God. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 6–7.

Lesson 14: Three Lives and Four Laws—Man is regulated by the law of good in his mind and the law of sin in his members. Those who have received God's life also possess the law of the Spirit of life in their spirit. The law of good in man's mind agrees that the law of God is worthy for him to keep, but whenever the law of good causes man to attempt to keep the law of God, the law of sin in man's members rises up to defeat the law of good in the mind and to lead man into sin. Since sin is Satan personified, it is much stronger than the law of good, which is only of the created man. After a person is saved, however, he can live by another, higher law—the law of the Spirit of life, which is in his spirit. Therefore there are three laws according to the three kinds of life (satanic, human, and divine) which operate within the three parts of the believer, in addition to the law of God outside of him. We experience the operation of the law of whatever life we are living by. When we are in our good mind trying to satisfy its demand to do what is good and right, we are defeated and come under the power of the law of sin in our members. Therefore we must learn to set our mind upon our spirit and to live, move, and walk in our spirit so that we might express God in our human life. **Objective:** To see that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding the mingled spirit (II.D.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 7–8.

Lesson 15: The Spirit with Our Spirit—The indwelling Spirit witnesses with the spirits of all those who are regenerated that they are children of God. After we are regenerated, God seeks to bring us on to maturity as His sons by His leading as the Spirit of life. Since God's life is the highest life with the highest consciousness, we can sense it within us. The more we follow the inner leading of the Spirit and take care of the sense of life within, the more we are designated as His sons. However, we do not grow in the divine life automatically. Growth requires our cooperation by setting our mind upon the spirit in order to sense the leading of the divine life and then by walking according to this leading. **Objective:** To reveal to the young people how crucial it is to follow the Spirit for their growth unto full sonship. **Crucial Matters:** His inward operation—experiencing the Lord within us and recognizing His speaking in our spirit (III.C.2.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 8.

Lesson 16: A Living Sacrifice—Paul concludes the book of Romans with five chapters on the church life, indicating that the goal of God's full salvation is the church. In order for God's goal to be realized, we must offer our bodies to God and be transformed by the renewing of our mind. When we offer ourselves to Him in this practical way, He will transform us for the building of His Body and we will prove by our experience that His will, the church life, is good, well-pleasing, and perfect. **Objective:** To show the young people the reasonableness of offering ourselves to the Lord to live the church life. **Crucial Matters:** Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on a vision of God's eternal purpose being the highest thing to which we could give our lives (III.C.5.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 12.

Lesson 17: A Normal Living for the Body Life—Paul charged the believers to walk by the spirit (Rom. 8:4) and to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice to be transformed for

the sake of His Body (Rom. 12:1–5). We might think that walking according to the spirit or being transformed has to do with how strongly we exercise our spirit in the meetings. However, Paul describes the normal living in the Body life in terms of proper behavior and proper relationships in our daily living. The real manifestation of our walking according to the spirit is not how we behave in the meetings, but how we conduct ourselves in our daily living. Romans 12–13 describe the normal human living that is the manifestation and expression of walking according to the spirit. **Objective:** To see that we need a proper, normal living for the Body life, and that for this living we must walk according to the spirit. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding that man will fulfill God's ultimate purpose, to be built into God's corporate expression (II.B.4.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 12–15.

Lesson 18: Receiving the Believers for Building Up—Receiving the believers is necessary for the practice of the church life. Although there may be many differences in practice and feeling among believers, we must still receive one another in fellowship for the sake of the oneness of the Body of Christ. Our criteria for receiving others in the church life is whether or not God has received them. If God has received others by saving them, then we must also receive them, regardless of what they practice (as long as it is not sinful or divisive). Such a receiving is not passive but active, for it involves fighting for one another's growth in life (instead of judging one another) and enjoying what Christ is accomplishing in all the members for the building up of His Body. **Objective:** To realize that the oneness of the Body of Christ is strengthened and maintained by our exercising to receive all whom God has received. **Crucial Matters:** Maintaining a proper, healthy fear of God and a godly respect for the things of God (IV.D.2.); Being friendly, compassionate, honest, magnanimous, generous, hospitable, cooperative, pure, and a good listener toward friends, new acquaintances, and others our own age (IV.C.2.); Basic items of the Christian faith as our basis for receiving all the believers (II.E.2.). **Chapter(s):** Romans 14.

Unit 10—The Propagation of the Resurrected and Ascended Christ

Lesson 1—The Propagation of the Resurrected Christ

OBJECTIVE: To see that after His resurrection, Christ wants to propagate Himself in ascension, by the Spirit, through His disciples for the producing of the churches, the kingdom of God.

SYNOPSIS: The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospels and is the book that links the Gospels with the Epistles. The Gospels reveal Christ's earthly ministry in His incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. The book of Acts reveals that the purpose for which Christ came and passed through all these processes was to propagate Himself as the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through His disciples, for the producing of the churches, the kingdom of God. Today we are still in the book of Acts; Christ is still carrying out His heavenly ministry in ascension for His move to be propagated upon the earth.

BACKGROUND: The Journey through the Bible is designed to take the young people on a "journey" through the sixty-six books of the Bible, helping them to know the stories and facts of the Bible and then, using the stories and facts as the base, to make an application to their daily lives. Now in our journey we have arrived at the book of Acts. In order to appreciate the spiritual significance of this book, the young people need to firstly know the stories and facts of the book of Acts. It would be helpful for the serving ones, in preparing for this and the subsequent lessons, to spend some time to be very familiar with the stories of the propagation of the gospel. Find out before giving the lesson how many of the young people have read through the entire book of Acts. Many of them may not be familiar with the exciting stories in this book. Feel free to take some time in this lesson and in the following lessons to tell them the stories of the Lord's commissioning the disciples with the propagation of Christ (Acts 1:3–8), of His public ascension (Acts 1:9–11), of the disciples praying for ten days in one accord (Acts 1:12–14), of the day of Pentecost and Peter's prevailing preaching of the gospel (Acts 2:1–41; 3:11–26), of the early church life in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37), of the disciples' boldness in spite of the persecution from the religious people (4:8–31; 5:17–42; 12:1–24), of the Lord's confirmation of the gospel preaching through miraculous events (3:1–10; 5:1–16, 19; 9:32–43), of the testimony of Stephen (Acts 6–7), of the ministry of Philip and others (8:4–40), of the baptism of the Gentiles in the Spirit (Acts 10), and of the persecution, conversion, and service of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–31; 13:1–28:31).

CHAPTER(S): Acts 1–28.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

The book of Acts is a central book in the New Testament. It can be likened to the backbone of the New Testament, linking together the Gospels, a record of Christ's ministry in the flesh, and the Epistles, a record of Christ as the Spirit building up the churches. We have spent three units to see the Christ revealed in the four Gospels. In the Gospels, Christ was incarnated as a God-man, having both divinity and humanity. As a God-man in the flesh, He carried out His earthly ministry, bringing God into man,

expressing God in humanity, and accomplishing a full judicial redemption for us. However, Christ's ministry did not stop there, and neither is redemption His goal. In the book of Acts Christ's ministry enters into another stage. Furthermore, in Acts we see the goal for which Christ came—He wants to propagate Himself into man! He is no longer just a man in the flesh; He is the resurrected Christ in ascension. In His heavenly ministry in ascension, the resurrected Christ is propagating Himself into us to produce the churches, the kingdom of God.

I. The book of Acts is a central book in the New Testament

The book of Acts can be likened to the backbone of the New Testament. It is a link between Christ in the flesh in the Gospels and Christ as the Spirit in the Epistles. As such, the book of Acts is a very crucial book in the New Testament.

A. Acts is a continuation of the Gospels and a link between the Gospels and the Epistles

The book of Acts was written by Luke (see Luke 1:3, footnote 1) and is a direct continuation of Luke's gospel (Luke 1:1–3; Acts 1:1). The Gospels record the earthly ministry of Christ in the flesh, while the book of Acts describes the heavenly ministry of Christ in ascension. The Gospels end with the ascension of Christ (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51). However, the Lord's activity did not end with His ascension. Rather, in His ascension He is very busy. Just as His incarnation was the inauguration of His earthly ministry, His ascension was the inauguration of His heavenly ministry. In His heavenly ministry Christ is doing many things to propagate Himself for the producing of the churches.

B. Acts shows us the propagation of the resurrected Christ and the producing of the churches—Acts 1:8; 8:4; 14:23; 15:40–41

In the four Gospels we can see an individual Christ in the flesh. However, in the epistles we see Christ as the Spirit dwelling in many believers and building up the churches that have been produced as His propagation. How did He get into the believers? How were the churches produced? The book of Acts is the critical link that tells us how Christ's propagation is carried out. In order to understand the Epistles, we have to know the book of Acts. It is important first to know the stories in this book, to know the facts of the Bible. Then, we can apprehend the spiritual significance behind the acts and deeds of the apostles, that Christ is propagating Himself in resurrection.

C. In Acts, Christ is no longer merely a God-man in incarnation; He has been processed through death and resurrection and is now propagating Himself into man—Acts 7:55; 9:5

The book of Acts reveals to us a wonderful Person. He is Jehovah, the eternal God, who was incarnated to be a complete and perfect man. He lived a life as a God-man, expressing the attributes of the infinite God in the virtuous human living of a finite man. Then, He went to the cross and accomplished an all-inclusive redemption. In His resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit and breathed Himself into His disciples (1 Cor. 15:45b; John 20:22) to be their life essentially. Then economically, He ascended to the heavens (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Christ is now in heaven "as the Lord of all enthroned" (Hymns, #132). From this position on the throne in the heavens He is carrying out His economy to propagate Himself into man.

II. The book of Acts is concerning the propagation of the resurrected Christ—Acts 1:8;

2:24, 31–32, 36–38; 3:15; 5:30–32; 9:15; 13:33

“The subject of Acts is the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God. Acts is concerned with the propagation of the resurrected Christ. Christ is carrying out this propagation in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples. The purpose of Christ’s propagation is the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God” (Life-study of Acts, Message 2, p. 9).

A. The propagation of the resurrected Christ is in His ascension—Acts 1:9; 7:55–56

“The propagation of the resurrected Christ is carried out by Christ in His ascension. The Lord Jesus lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, but now He is in ascension. In His ascension the Lord is very active....The fact that Christ is now in ascension means not only that He is in the heavens; it also means that He has power and authority. In His ascension Christ has all the power and all the authority in the universe [Matt. 28:18]....Therefore, with such authority and power in His ascension the Lord is very active. What is He doing? The Lord, as the ascended One, is carrying out His universal and eternal propagation. Who can explain why the earth today is filled with Christians? Why are there so many believers in the world? Great men have tried to gain control of the earth, but they have failed....The point here is that the whole earth is in the hands of the undefeatable One, and this One is carrying out His propagation....We all are part of Christ’s propagation. We have been produced by the resurrected Christ in His ascension” (Life-study of Acts, Message 2, pp. 10–11).

B. The propagation of the resurrected Christ is by the Spirit—Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 8:29; 11:12; 13:2, 4

In the book of Acts, the propagation of the resurrected Christ is by the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 8:29; 11:12; 13:2, 4). In Acts, we do not see the disciples using any gimmicks or natural techniques to preach the gospel. Rather, they were “filled with the Spirit” (Acts 4:8; 13:9).

C. The propagation of the resurrected Christ is through the disciples—Acts 1:8; 4:20

“Christ’s propagation is through the disciples. Who are the disciples? As we shall see, the disciples are not merely preachers, and in Acts they are not called preachers. Rather, the disciples are witnesses. The Lord’s disciples in Acts are witnesses of a wonderful Person...” (Life-study of Acts, Message 2, p. 13).

D. The propagation of the resurrected Christ is for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God—Acts 1:3; 8:12; 9:31; 13:1; 14:22–23; 15:41; 16:5; 19:8; 20:25, 28; 28:23, 31

The propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension is for producing the churches. The churches are the produce of Christ’s propagation. Furthermore, the churches produced by the resurrected Christ in His ascension are the kingdom of God (cf. Rom. 14:17 and footnote 1). “The kingdom of God is a sphere of life produced by the propagation of Christ. Actually the kingdom is the expansion of this resurrected, propagating One....The kingdom of God is His expansion” (Life-study of Acts, Message 2, p. 14).

III. The book of Acts is still continuing today

Acts is a book without a conclusion. This is because in a good sense, the book of Acts is not concluded yet. The book of Acts talks about the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the

kingdom of God. This propagation did not end with Paul proclaiming Christ as the kingdom in Rome (Acts 28:29–31). Rather, it has continued through the disciples of Christ unto this day. Hallelujah! We are Christ's propagation! Hallelujah! Christ wants to use us, His disciples, to propagate Himself into our friends, relatives, neighbors, and even strangers, to produce more churches as the kingdom of God on the earth today. "Can you say how many chapters are in the book of Acts? Perhaps you would say that Acts has twenty-eight chapters. This, of course, is correct. However, it is also true to say that the book of Acts is still being written because the propagation of the resurrected Christ is still taking place....We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God" (Life-study of Acts, Message 2, pp. 14–15).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Did you know that you can be part of the book of Acts? The subject of the book of Acts is the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches, the kingdom of God. It begins with Christ being lifted up on a cloud in ascension (Acts 1:9); but if Christ was taken up from the earth, how could He be propagated on the earth for the producing of the churches? The key is realizing that after the four Gospels, the Lord in resurrection became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17a). It is as the Spirit that He returned to the earth, moved through the disciples to preach the gospel, raised up the believers, and established the churches as the kingdom of God. The rest of the New Testament, beginning with the Epistles, reveals how this resurrected Christ, who is the Spirit, became everything to those whom He gained and gathered together into the churches. Therefore, the book of Acts can be considered a continuation of the four Gospels, linking them to the Epistles. Eventually, in the book of Revelation we can see that all those gained by the Lord to constitute the churches are transformed to become the New Jerusalem. So how can we be part of the book of Acts? The answer is that the resurrected Christ is still being propagated by the Spirit through His disciples today! Therefore, Luke did not finish the book of Acts—it is still being written with all of us as the Lord's disciples! To be a disciple is to daily follow the Lord and learn from Him. Even in junior high, you can be a disciple of the Lord by following Him, learning from Him, and enjoying Him every day in your spirit. You can share Him with your friends at school and with the brothers and sisters in the meetings. Eventually, when we are all transformed and built up together, the book of Acts will be completed. It will be filled with all the stories of how Christ gained us and brought us into the church life. Here, we (His disciples) are learning from Him as the resurrected and ascended One in our spirit to participate in this marvelous propagation. All those who love the Lord and follow Him as His disciples have a place in the book of Acts.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: According to the Bible, there are two kinds of people—those who are in God's economy, and those who are not. Those who are a part of God's move on the earth today will forever have a place in the book of Acts, and every believer has a place in the Lamb's book of life. All those who do not believe will not be remembered; their lives will not be recorded, for their lives will be meaningless and vain as far as eternity is concerned. Every *Who's Who*, every history book, every credit that is recorded today will be burned and forgotten. No matter how great your accomplishment may seem, unless it is an accomplishment in God's economy, it will be lost together with you. Rather than wasting your life on empty pursuits, allow the Lord who is the Spirit right now to regenerate you and bring you into His economy, so that today your life might also count for something eternal and from now on be recorded in the book of Acts!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing that the goal of God's economy is to mingle God with man and man with God (II.A.4.); Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 1–2.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 1–2.

Lesson 2—The Preparation of the Disciples

OBJECTIVE: To see that before sending His disciples out to preach the gospel, the Lord trained them to know Him as the invisible, indwelling Spirit so that they could continue to work with Him for His move on the earth.

SYNOPSIS: After His resurrection, the Lord trained His disciples for a period of forty days to know His invisible presence. He had been with them in His physical presence for over three years, but after this period the disciples remained natural until He passed through crucifixion and entered into them as the Spirit on the day of His resurrection. After that time the disciples needed to be trained to know the Lord in a different way. They walked with Him in His earthly ministry; now they were learning to move with Him as the Spirit for the spread of His kingdom. Today, we also need to be trained to know the Lord in an inner way so that we might carry out His move on the earth for the spread of His kingdom within us and within others.

BACKGROUND: As believers who are just beginning their Christian life, the young people need illustrations and examples to clarify what it means to live and work with and in the Lord. The book of Acts is full of stories about how the believers in Christ cooperated with Him for His propagation on the earth. By knowing these stories, we can understand how to live our own Christian life. The disciples were able to work with the Lord for His move on the earth because they had been prepared by knowing Him as the life-giving Spirit. If the young people are not very familiar with the stories in Acts, take the time to share some stories of how the disciples worked together with the Lord through His invisible leading as the Spirit.

CHAPTER(S): Luke 24; Acts 1-2.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. After His resurrection, the Lord repeatedly appeared to His disciples for a period of forty days—Acts 1:1-3

A. The disciples had been trained by the Lord during His earthly ministry for three and a half years

Out of all those who followed Him, the Lord chose twelve to be His particular companions and witnesses. These twelve disciples represent all of us. Therefore, whatever is written concerning them in the Gospels and Acts also applies to us. In their natural constitution, the disciples were zealous for the Lord, yet they were natural, which meant they were unable to apprehend many of the things the Lord taught them, for the Lord spoke of spiritual realities that were to take place after His death and resurrection. (The natural man cannot apprehend the things of the Spirit—1 Cor. 2:14.) The Lord was taking His disciples along with Him as He passed through His process. The three and a half years of His ministry formed the foundation for their further usefulness, but in itself it was not sufficient to make them the Lord's true witnesses. Although they tried their best, they could only express themselves, and often they were fully exposed in their jealousy and ambition. Because of the veil of their old concepts, they were not even able to comprehend the Lord's plain and repeated word about His death and resurrection! Even though they had seen so much, they were still in darkness concerning the divine things.

B. After He resurrected, Jesus breathed Himself as the Spirit into His disciples and continued to appear to them for a period of forty days before openly ascending to the heavens—John 20:22

1. In resurrection, Jesus became the life-giving Spirit to dwell within His believers to be their life and to lead them into all the divine realities—1 Cor. 15:45; John 14:17; 16:13

Before receiving the Spirit, the disciples possessed the natural life. After receiving the Spirit, they became different persons. By receiving the Lord as the Holy Spirit, they possessed the divine life. By this new life, their eyes were opened to see the divine things, and, because the Lord was now in them as the Spirit of reality, they began to experience the spiritual realities that the Lord had accomplished and acquired for them.

2. Before His ascension, the Lord commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Spirit, after which they would become His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth—Acts 1:8

By means of their new life, the one hundred and twenty disciples were able to pray together in one accord in the midst of the threatening situation in Jerusalem. How very different this was from when they ate their last meal with the Lord before He died! At that time they were arguing about who would be greatest and proclaiming their willingness to die for the Lord. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter had cut off someone's ear and then he and the other disciples had all fled. Now they were absolutely a different group of people. They were praying in oneness and harmony, and they boldly stayed in Jerusalem, where Jesus had just been crucified. (They probably prayed for the fulfillment of the Lord's promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that they might be empowered to move for Him on the earth.)

II. By repeatedly appearing to His disciples, the Lord trained them to know His invisible presence so that they could work together with Him for His propagation—Acts 1:3

The Lord originally chose the twelve to help Him spread the gospel of the kingdom, and then proceeded to train them during His earthly ministry. The completion of their training came during the fifty days following the Lord's resurrection. On the day of resurrection, the disciples received the Lord as the Spirit within them; on the day of Pentecost, they received the baptism of the Spirit upon them. In between these two events, however, the disciples had to learn to know the Lord as the Spirit, and be trained to live and move with the Lord as the Spirit. As the Spirit, the Lord was no longer limited by a physical body. The disciples were accustomed to knowing the Lord in the flesh. They needed to be trained to realize the Lord's invisible presence. The Lord was now the pneumatic Christ. ("Pneumatic" is an anglicized word taken from the Greek word for spirit, "pneuma.") He was with them, but the disciples did not realize it at first. Thus, the Lord repeatedly appeared and disappeared so that the disciples would begin to understand that as the Spirit He was with them all the time (Matt. 28:20b). Although the disciples could not see the Lord, He was with them in a more real way than he had been during His earthly ministry, for He was actually inside of them!

- A. Before they received the Lord as the Spirit, the disciples were unable to understand the many things the Lord taught them during His earthly ministry—John 16:12
- B. After they received the Lord as the Spirit, the disciples were trained further by the Lord to understand the matters of the kingdom—Acts 1:3

Acts 1:3 states that when the Lord was with His disciples during this forty day period, He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God. Now that the disciples had received God's divine life, they could spread this life to others for the increase of the kingdom. The propagation of Christ to others meant the spread of His kingdom on the earth. Therefore the disciples needed to learn how to live by the Lord as life and act by the Lord as life as they moved for the spread of the Lord's kingdom.

III. We must know the Lord today as the ever-present Spirit who is always with us for the working out of His economy

- A. The Lord today is always with us as the invisible Spirit—Rom. 8:9–10; Matt. 28:20

The Lord is with us as the Spirit continually. We need to realize that as the Spirit, He is always with us and will never leave us. As the Spirit, He is always struggling within us for the working out of His economy (Col. 1:28–29).

- B. As the Lord's disciples today we are being trained to abide in Him and to labor in His physical absence and spiritual presence—John 14:12; 15:4; 16:7–8; 1 Pet. 1:7–9

As the Spirit today, the Lord is training us to work together with Him. We must therefore learn to follow the sense of life in our spirit that the Spirit gives us (Rom. 8:6, 14, 16). We must know Him as the invisible One, as the Spirit that is within us so that He may move through us on the earth for His propagation, the spread of His kingdom.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: When the Lord was with His disciples in the flesh, they could only know Him according to the flesh, not as the Spirit. When the Lord was in the flesh on the earth, He was limited to a particular space and could only be in one place at one time. Therefore, if we wanted to find the Lord when He was walking on the earth, we would have had to travel to where He was. Today, however, the Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17a). He is no longer limited by space; He can come to us wherever we are. Furthermore, as the Spirit He can live right within us, not merely among us or beside us. When we know the Lord as the Spirit, we know the Lord much more intimately and experience Him much more closely than His disciples did before His resurrection. Hence, it is more blessed to be alive today during this stage of the Lord's ministry! Not only do we have the Lord within us, but He as the Spirit of reality is leading us into all the reality by His inward working (1 Cor. 3:16; John 16:13). Praise the Lord that we have the Lord within us! (See *Hymns*, #491.)

GOSPEL APPLICATION: The living Lord Jesus is not a philosophy or a mere historical figure. Nor is He a cold, religious, distant God somewhere far away from us. Today, Jesus is with us here as the "right now Christ!" Through death and resurrection, the man Jesus, the living Word of God, is right now "the Spirit" (John 1:1, 14; 2 Cor. 3:17). Two thousand years ago, He lived on the earth in a physical way. He came in such a way to be the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Then, this very Jesus passed through death and entered into resurrection where He became the invisible, but very real, life-giving Spirit so that He can be received by us as our life (1 Cor 15:45b; John 20:22; Col. 3:4a). This is much more precious and intimate than

His merely being among men. Now as the Spirit, He can enter into man. Although He is invisible, right now He is near you. "...He has become the living Word, the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), to be in our mouth and in our heart, just like the air, the breath, that can be taken into our being. He is near and He is available" (Romans 10:8, footnote 1). All He needs is an opening. Open to Him right now to receive Him.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing the anointing and the sense of life (II.G.2.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 3–5.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 3–5; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 55; *Life-study of John*, Messages 46–49; *The Ministry of the New Testament (Elders' Training—Book 1)*, Chapter 5, pp. 59–62.

Lesson 3—The Outpouring of the Spirit

OBJECTIVE: To see that the economical Spirit has been poured out on all believers for their move.

SYNOPSIS: When the Lord resurrected, He imparted Himself as the Spirit into His believers essentially by breathing Himself into them. On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem and at another time in the house of Cornelius, however, the church was baptized in the Spirit economically when the Spirit was poured out upon the believers. In Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, all the believers had been gathered together and were praying for ten days after the Lord had ascended. On the tenth day, the Spirit came upon them and they began to speak the gospel boldly and to do works of power. This resulted in the establishing of the church in Jerusalem in a strong way. Later, the outpouring of the Spirit occurred in the Gentile household of Cornelius when Peter was sent there by the Lord. Thus, the Jewish and the Gentile believers were baptized into one Body. Today, the Spirit is still economically upon the church, therefore we do not need to wait for another outpouring of the Spirit; we can apply the economical Spirit to boldly speak and work for the Lord.

BACKGROUND: In this lesson, the young people need to see the two aspects of the Spirit, the essential aspect and the economical aspect, and how these two aspects relate to our living and work. This can be a difficult concept even for the older saints. Yet, true life stories can be invaluable to illustrate what we mean. At our regeneration we received both the essential and economical aspects of the Spirit. Now we can apply this Spirit by drinking the Spirit and speaking to others for propagation.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 1–2, 10.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Before addressing the events covered in this lesson, it may be helpful to talk about and contrast the essential and economical aspects of the Spirit by listing them in two columns. The "Essential" column could include: Spirit of life, breath, water, essence, living, etc. The "Economical" column could include: Spirit of power, wind, work, economy, authority, uniform, etc. (see Luke 24:49, footnote 3). It may be helpful for the young people to realize that there are two kinds of filling by the Spirit. This could be noted in the columns by the two different Greek words (see Acts 2:4, footnote 2). It should also be noted that, although the terms "essential Spirit" and "economical Spirit" may be used, the same one Spirit is being referred to. We are not talking about two Spirits, but two aspects of the one Spirit.

I. On the day of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus breathed the Spirit into His believers for their life essentially—John 20:22

In resurrection, the Lord Jesus became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). When He met His disciples on the day of His resurrection, this pneumatic Christ breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Thus, He imparted Himself into them as their life, causing them to become His living members. Although they were members, they still needed to be formed into one Body for His economical move on the earth. The disciples had received the divine life, and it was because of this new life that they were able to pray together in one accord instead of arguing with each other as they used to. They still, however, needed to await another application of the Spirit before they could move and work for the fulfillment of the Lord's economy on earth.

II. After His ascension, the Lord poured out the Spirit upon His believers for their work and ministry economically—Acts 2:17–18

"[The baptism in the Holy Spirit] was accomplished in two sections: (1) all the Jewish believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:4); and (2) all the Gentile believers were baptized in the house of Cornelius (10:44–47; 11:15–17). In these two sections all genuine believers in Christ were baptized in the Holy Spirit into the one Body of Christ once for all universally" (Acts 1:5, footnote 2).

A. The outpouring of the Spirit first took place upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost—Acts 2:1–21

1. After His resurrection, the Lord charged His believers to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of His Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, to come upon them—Luke 24:49

The Lord Jesus remained with His disciples after His resurrection for forty days. After this period of further training was completed, He charged them to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. He then ascended out of their midst while they were at the Mount of Olives.

2. After the disciples had been praying together for ten days, the Spirit came upon them as a mighty rushing wind during the feast of Pentecost—Acts 2:2

The disciples returned to Jerusalem and began to pray together. They continued to pray together in one accord for ten days, awaiting the fulfillment of the Lord's promise. Meanwhile, Jews were coming from all over the world to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, which took place fifty days after Passover. Suddenly, a mighty rushing wind filled the house where they were praying. Tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3) appeared over everyone's head, and they began to speak in languages they had never learned (in Acts 2:4 the word "tongues" means "dialects"—see Acts 2:4, footnote 3).

3. Immediately the believers were empowered to announce the resurrected and ascended Christ for His increase—Acts 2:4–11

The believers then went forth and preached the gospel. Because of the works of power being performed by the Spirit (such as speaking in the "mother tongues" of so many visitors, languages that the disciples obviously could not have learned), and because of the authority by which they spoke, many were convicted and believed the gospel. Thus, the church was established in Jerusalem.

B. The outpouring of the Spirit was completed upon the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius—Acts 10:22, 44–45; 11:15–18

The Lord's intention was to have one new man on the earth, formed of both Jews and Gentiles. On the cross, the Lord had broken down the middle wall of partition which separated the two (Eph. 2:14–16). The Lord had committed the keys of the kingdom to Peter (Matt. 16:19). Peter used the first key at Pentecost to open the door to the Jews, and here in Acts 10, he used the second key to open the door to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. Praise the Lord! The separation that had taken place among the people of the earth was nullified, for the Jews and the Gentiles were all baptized in one Spirit into the same Body, and were all given to drink the same one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12–13).

1. Peter was sent by the Lord to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile—Acts 10:9–27

Cornelius was a centurion (an officer in the Roman army) who believed in God. Peter, however, did not believe that Jews should mix with Gentiles, for he was still under his old concepts. So, while Peter was praying, he received a crucial vision from the Lord. Take the time here to explain Peter's vision in detail. During his noontime prayer on the housetop, he became hungry, and while the food was being prepared, Peter had a vision in a trance. In his vision he saw a vision of a vessel like a great sheet descending from heaven, full of every kind of animal and bird, and he heard the Lord commanding him to rise up and slay and eat. However, in his vision, Peter would not obey the Lord, considering that the animals were unclean. The Lord's response to him was this, "The things God has cleansed, do not make uncommon" (Acts 10:15). This happened three times in Peter's trance. The vessel Peter saw signifies the gospel, and the animals represent all kinds of men saved through the gospel, and made clean in the Lord's blood. At first Peter did not understand his vision (Acts 10:17), but eventually he realized that this vision was given to show him that the Lord had made the Gentiles clean (Acts 10:28). Before Peter had his vision, the Lord had given Cornelius a dream and told him to send for Peter and invite Peter to his house. The messengers from Cornelius arrived just as Peter came out of his trance, and the Lord as the Spirit spoke to Peter and told him to go with the messengers (Acts 10:17–20). Thus, the Lord coordinated the dream of Cornelius and the vision of Peter so that everything would be ready to bring the Gentiles into the Body!

2. The Spirit was outpoured upon the household of Cornelius just as it had been on the day of Pentecost—Acts 10:28–44

While Peter was speaking in the house of Cornelius, the Lord poured out the Spirit in the same manner as He had on the day of Pentecost. Cornelius and those of his household all began to speak in other languages just as the Jewish believers had in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

3. The outpouring of the Spirit at the house of Cornelius completed the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is once for all—Acts 2:17, 33

Although people may experience being filled with the Holy Spirit economically at various times, this does not mean that the Spirit is repeatedly being poured out. The Spirit has been poured out upon all flesh once for all. "Eventually, Christ poured Himself out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–18, 33), and that pouring out formed the church. From that time, He has been both within the church and upon the church" (The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today, Chapter 6, p. 102). The Lord has never taken back the Spirit. It is still upon the Body, and always will be. We only need to learn how to apply it.

III. The outpoured Spirit is upon the Body today for its move and work

A. Because we have all been baptized into this Spirit, we can all drink the Spirit—1 Cor. 12:13

B. Because this Spirit is upon the Body, when we move for the Body, we can be confident that we have the economical Spirit—Acts 1:8

Because the Spirit of power is upon the Body for its move, we can be bold in whatever we do for the Lord. In Acts, the believers performed many works of power by the Spirit for the sake of the gospel. As we go to people in the Lord's name, we should exercise the authority of the economical Spirit upon the Body to bind the works of the enemy and to loose people out of the enemy's kingdom.

C. Because this Spirit is upon the Body, we should be bold to speak for others' salvation and for the building up of the Body of Christ—Acts 2:18

When we stand up to prophesy for the Lord, we should realize that the Spirit is upon us economically for our speaking. It helps us to release our spirit and to speak with authority in the Lord's name. Therefore, we should be encouraged that when we speak for the Lord, the Lord as the Spirit is with us! If we want to know the Lord as the economical Spirit that is poured out upon the Body, we need to speak!

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Through the two events of the outpouring of the Spirit—on the day of Pentecost for the Jewish believers and at the house of Cornelius for the Gentile believers—the entire Body has received the outpouring (baptism) of the Spirit once for all (Acts. 2:1–4, 17, 10:44–45). However, for the sake of time and simplicity, the details of these two events need not be brought out in full. Rather, time should be spent on helping the young people see the difference between the outward, economical aspect of the Spirit poured out on the Lord's Body for its work and move on the earth, and the inward, essential aspect of the Spirit breathed as life into the disciples for their life. To clarify these two aspects of the Spirit it may be helpful to use the illustration of a policeman needing to have his uniform on for work outwardly and his thirst quenched for life inwardly. "A policeman does not put on his uniform in order to quench his thirst. Thirst cannot be quenched by putting on a uniform. A policeman clothes himself with a uniform when he is about to go on duty, that is, when he is ready to work as a policeman. Suppose a policeman drank something to quench his thirst and then went to work without his uniform. If he did this, no one would pay attention to him as he tried to give orders on the street. No matter how much he may drink to quench his thirst, a policeman still must put on his uniform when he is about to work as policeman. If he is clothed in his uniform, others will respect him. Through this illustration we can see the difference between drinking and being clothed. Drinking is inward, but being clothed is an outward matter" (Life-study of Acts, Message 7, p. 53). A policeman needs both to eat and to wear his uniform to carry out his mission. Likewise, today we need to experience both aspects of the Spirit if we are to carry out God's economy.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: In his preaching of the gospel in Acts chapter two, Peter began by quoting the prophet Joel regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, and he concluded by proclaiming that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (vv. 17, 21). "[This] indicates that the issue of God's pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh is their salvation through calling on the name of the Lord. God's outpouring of His Spirit is the application of the Lord's salvation unto His chosen people. To be saved is to receive this Spirit, which is the blessing of the gospel in God's New Testament economy (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14). This Spirit is the Lord Himself as the breath (John 20:22) and the living water (John 4:10, 14) to us. To breathe Him in as our breath and drink Him as our living water, we need to call upon Him....As we consider verse 21 in its context, we see that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, that is, upon all human beings, is for the purpose that people will call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. This is the reason Paul says that if one is to be saved, he needs to call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:12–13). ...When we preach the gospel and help others to be saved, we need to encourage them to call on the name of the Lord and say, 'O Lord Jesus!'

From experience we know that the stronger a person calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, the stronger will be his experience of salvation" (*Life-study of Acts*, Message 9, pp. 71–72).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing the essential and economical aspects of the spirit (II.G.1.).

BACKGROUND READING: *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit; God's New Testament Economy*, Chapter 10.

REFERENCES: *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit; God's New Testament Economy*, Chapters 7–8, 10; *Life-study of Acts*, Message 4, pp. 29–31; Message 5, pp. 37–39; Message 6, pp. 43–45; Message 7; Message 9; Message 30, pp. 247–250, 251–252; Message 31, pp. 262–265; ; Acts 2:4, footnotes 2–3; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 55, pp. 478–480; *Life-study of Mark*, Message 67; *Life-study of John*, Message 46, pp. 558–560; *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 52, pp. 460–461; *Two Spirits: A Lesson Book—Level 3*, Lesson 6, pp. 47–54; *The Spirit and the Body*, Chapter 4, pp. 41–44, *The Ministry of the New Testament (Elders' Training—Book 1)*, Chapter 5, pp. 59–62; *The Scriptural Way to Meet and to Serve for the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, Chapter 14; *Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life*, Chapter 3, pp. 35–39.

Lesson 4—The Testimony of Stephen

OBJECTIVE: To inspire the young people through Stephen's pattern to serve the Lord and be constituted with the Word.

SYNOPSIS: Stephen was a brother attested by the Word as being full of the Holy Spirit, grace, faith, wisdom, and power. Such a one was chosen to serve the tables of widows! For this he was appointed as a deacon. Although he was gifted and able in many things, he willingly accepted what was arranged for him. (If he had not, he could not have become so useful to the Lord.) During the time he served, the church greatly grew. Because of his strong testimony, false accusers were used to bring him before the Jewish court ("Sanhedrin") to accuse him of blasphemy. As one who was constituted with God's word, Stephen was able to stand before the court and convict the Jewish leaders concerning Christ by a long and detailed message from the Scriptures. In response, they stoned him. As he was about to be stoned, Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing, ready to receive him. He died forgiving his persecutors and calling on the Lord's name. Stephen's testimony and martyrdom surely had a deep effect on Paul, who was present. Following his martyrdom, there was a persecution of the church, which led to the spread of the gospel to many other cities. Thus, Stephen's life and death brought forth much fruit (John 12:24).

BACKGROUND: There have been many "Stephens" in church history, and perhaps there are some in your locality. Young people can be inspired by the stories of men and women who served the Lord absolutely. These stories will remain in their hearts long after the lesson.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 6–7.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit, grace, faith, wisdom, and power, was selected to serve tables in the church in Jerusalem—Acts 6:1–6

Stephen, a brother in the church in Jerusalem, is attested in the Bible as being full [Gk. pleres, see Acts 6:3, footnote 1 and Acts 2:4, footnote 2] of the Holy Spirit, grace, faith, wisdom, and power (Acts 6:3, 5, 8). Such a one was chosen along with six others to serve food to widows in the church in Jerusalem! (Read Acts 6:1–4 for the background to this appointment. The Hellenistic widows originally came from Jewish settlements in the Greek-speaking world. They arrived in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, got saved, and remained in the newly formed church. The Hebrew widows were those from Jerusalem or close-by. The practical care to the needy ones in the church was apparently not being properly distributed, and the Hellenistic [Greek-speaking] widows were being overlooked. This threatened the peaceful situation in the church in Jerusalem.)

A. Stephen was selected and appointed to be a deacon—Acts 6:5

The apostles, who also functioned as elders in the church in Jerusalem, directed that seven well-attested men, full of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit, be selected to meet the need. These seven were the first to be chosen and appointed as deacons in the churches. Deacons are those who take care of the practical matters in the church under the oversight of the elders.

B. Stephen's service involved serving in a lowly way—Acts 6:2–3

Serving food to a group of widows seems far from glamorous. Yet Stephen readily accepted this responsibility. He was no doubt a gifted person, as is shown in his performing works of power and in his speaking ability. Philip, another one of the seven chosen men, was also a gifted person, especially in preaching the gospel. "According to the pattern in Acts 6, Stephen and Philip did not murmur when they were asked to serve tables. Stephen did not say, 'I am a great teacher. How can you ask me to be a deacon?' Likewise, Philip did not say, 'I am an outstanding evangelist. Why do you ask me to serve tables?' Instead of murmuring, Stephen and Philip did a good job in serving tables. In the church life we are under the Lord's grace and also under His sovereignty. Therefore, without murmuring we should accept the Lord's sovereignty and the environment arranged by Him. If we do this and follow the pattern in Acts 6, we shall have a happy and pleasant church life" (Life-study of Acts, Message 19, p. 158). Furthermore, if Stephen or Philip had not been willing to receive God's arrangement for them, they would have never become as useful to the Lord as they eventually became.

C. Stephen's service helped the church in Jerusalem to increase and multiply—Acts 6:7

Immediately after the deacons were appointed, the Bible records that the word of God grew, and the number of believers in Jerusalem multiplied greatly. Because the apostles were not frustrated from their prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:2–4), and because some willing and capable ones had risen up to take care of the practical situation, the way was paved for the Lord to add to the church. When we give ourselves to serve in such a manner, the church where we are will have an increased capacity to receive and care for new ones.

II. Stephen's faithful testimony attracted Satan's attack by the Jewish religionists—Acts 6:8–12

Since the opposers could not refute the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen preached the gospel, they brought in false accusers who claimed that he blasphemed God, attacked Moses and the law, and spoke against the temple. These were serious charges, and because of them Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish law court.

III. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin and martyred for his testimony—Acts 6:12–7:60

A. Stephen was brought before the same Sanhedrin that had Jesus crucified—Acts 6:12

The Sanhedrin was a kind of Jewish court which could pass judgment on religious issues, including determining punishment on those who broke their law. They did not, however, have the authority to put a person to death. Only the Roman rulers could do that. (This group was the same one that had condemned Jesus to death, and that was currently persecuting the church in Jerusalem!) As they looked upon Stephen, his face had the appearance of an angel's (Acts 6:15), indicating that he was not suffering; he was enjoying the Lord!

B. Stephen answered his accusers with a long message on God's economy—Acts 7:2–53

Stephen was surely a person constituted with the Word of God! His speaking here is the longest in the New Testament, and covers the history of Israel, beginning from the time

God called Abraham. He began by sharing how the God of glory appeared to Abraham. (In the whole Bible, only Stephen used the phrase "God of glory" in reference to Abraham's calling.) He continued on, stage by stage, until he reached the building of the temple. He was vindicating himself to those who claimed that he blasphemed God, Moses, and the temple. He called God "the God of glory," and "the Most High." He spent a long time in a most positive way on the life of Moses, and finally shared how the very God who appeared to Abraham and to Moses would not dwell in a house made with human hands. When he shared this, he implied "that God would abandon the material temple of the Old Testament and initiate a new dispensation for His people to worship Him in the spirit (John 4:24), in which is God's spiritual habitation, the church (Eph. 2:22)" (Life-study of Acts, Message 21, p. 173). Stephen's word exposed the religious ones. They boasted in their temple to God, but rejected God in His desire to live within them.

C. Stephen's speaking exasperated his hearers, and they covered their ears and rushed upon him to drag him out of the city and stone him—Acts 7:54–59

In his speaking in Acts 7:51–53, Stephen greatly offended his listeners. By this word we can see that Stephen cared for God and His economy more than he cared for his own life. He exposed his opposers to the uttermost. They thought they were putting Stephen on trial, but Stephen "turned the tables" and accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit, persecuting and killing the prophets, and of betraying and murdering the Righteous One, who was God Himself coming to them. He also accused them of not keeping the law they had hypocritically accused him of breaking. Actually, as one who had received Jesus, the law had been fulfilled in Stephen through his obedience of faith! Stephen's accusers were exasperated or "cut" (The Greek word literally means, "sawn through.") by Stephen's exposing words and did their best to block out what he was saying by covering their ears and rushing upon him, gnashing their teeth at him like wild beasts. They immediately dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, even though they had no right to do so.

D. As they were about to stone him, Stephen saw the very glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand—Acts 7:56

Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand. All the people on earth were rejecting him, but the Lord in the heavens was standing to encourage and strengthen him. This is the only time the Bible says Jesus stood in the heavens. In other places it says that Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Here, Jesus stood up, showing His concern for His persecuted one. In his speaking, Stephen began by sharing about how the God of glory appeared to Abraham. God's appearing strengthened Abraham to depart from one realm to another. Here also the God of glory appeared to Stephen, strengthening him for his martyrdom.

E. Stephen died calling on the Lord and praying for his accusers—Acts 7:59–60

As he was dying, Stephen called upon the Lord strongly and forgave his persecutors, exhibiting the same divine attributes in his human virtues that Jesus manifested as He was dying on the cross. In his final breath, Stephen expressed God just as Jesus had done.

IV. Stephen's martyrdom prompted a city-wide persecution of the church, which caused the further spread of the gospel—Acts 8:1–5

The martyrdom of Stephen triggered a city-wide persecution of the Christians, and all were driven out except the apostles. The believers who were scattered carried the gospel to other cities. Stephen's death became a seed that brought forth much fruit for the Lord's move on the earth. It surely made a deep impression on one who stood by and held the clothes for those who stoned Stephen. This young man was Saul of Tarsus, and what he saw and heard in Stephen surely operated in him until the day the Lord captured this persecutor, causing him to give himself absolutely to the Lord as Stephen had done.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Impress the younger saints with Stephen's ability to share such a panoramic view of the Bible (Acts 7:2–50). He saw the view of the Bible from beginning to end, so when the time came, he was able to speak this vision to others in a way that had impact. If Stephen had not known the Bible very well, he might still have been martyred, but his martyrdom would not have caused much notice, nor would it have had such an impact. We may not appreciate how the children's meeting serving saints through the years have encouraged us to memorize verse after verse week after week. However, if we do not practice reading and memorizing the Word, the divine revelation will never become a vision to us. Each verse we memorize is like a piece of a puzzle that gets into us and blends with all the other pieces within us. Eventually, if we keep memorizing and reading the Bible, a full picture of the truth in God's word will begin to form in our being. The more we see such a marvelous picture, the more it will control us and become what we speak. Those who watch an exciting play or game enjoy talking about what they have seen to others. It should be the same with us and the Bible. Therefore let us continue to read and memorize the Word until all the pieces begin to come together, and we are able to see the entire panorama of the Bible. Then we will become just like Stephen, filled with the Spirit, speaking to those around us what we have seen and believed.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: When we die, will our face be shining like Stephen's? Will we be seeing Jesus in glory, speaking the divine truth to others? Or will we die a fearful, empty death, with sorrow and regret on our lips? The reason Stephen could die a death in contact with God was because he lived a life that was in contact with God. Stephen was just a normal Christian—not a superhuman being—who came to know Jesus as his life-giving Savior who died for him, and therefore he was not afraid of death. (Heb. 2:14–15; 1 Cor. 15:54–57). The Bible is very clear, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16). If you believe in the Lord today, you will be His forever. Whether you live or whether you die, you will be the Lord's (Rom. 14:8). This was Stephen's testimony and this has been the testimony of Christians throughout the centuries. Today you can have the assurance that God has saved you unto eternal life. By receiving the Lord Jesus as the One who has passed through death into resurrection, you will possess Him as the divine, indestructible, resurrection life that conquered death and released you from the slavery of the fear of death (Heb. 2:15).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Serving the Lord practically by serving the saints (III.F.5.); Reading the Bible (III.E.3.); Reading the ministry (III.E.8.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 19, pp. 154–159; Message 20, pp. 161–162; Message 21.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Genesis*, Message 39, p. 528; *Life-study of Acts*, Message 2, p. 10; Message 19, pp. 154–159; Message 20, pp. 161–162; Message 21; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 69, p. 591; *Life-study of Mark*, Message 67, p. 571.

Lesson 5—The Propagation Outward from Jerusalem

OBJECTIVE: To see how the propagation of the resurrected Christ through the preaching of the gospel spread outward from Jerusalem to reach the entire earth.

SYNOPSIS: The apostles began their propagation of the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem. From there, the resurrected Christ was propagated to Judea and Samaria through the scattered saints and through the ministry of the apostles. This propagation then spread to the Gentiles through Paul's ministry, and eventually it reached the uttermost part of the earth. Hallelujah, the propagation of the resurrected Christ is still going on today, and we can be a part of it!

BACKGROUND: As in previous lessons, pictures can be invaluable. Even today there are many stories of the Lord's move throughout the world. In the recovery we have publications that give reports on the spread of the gospel. Related to the spread of the basic gospel, Christianity also has many classic books which recount the power and move of the gospel. The resurrected and ascended Christ propagated Himself during the time of the apostles, and by our joining ourselves to Him, He is still propagating today. We, like the early apostles, can still participate in the propagation of Christ.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 7.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Acts is a book on the propagation of the resurrected Christ. Before His ascension, the Lord charged the apostles to carry out this propagation beginning from Jerusalem, and to spread from there to Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). This is exactly how the apostles carried out the propagation. They began the propagation in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and spread out from there to eventually reach the uttermost part of the earth. The book of Acts is the story of how this propagation spread. It does not tell us doctrinally how to preach the gospel; rather, it shows us by the apostles' example how the propagation of Christ was carried out. Feel free to tell some of these stories in an interesting manner to present a picture of how the propagation of the resurrected Christ was spread from Jerusalem to the entire earth.

I. The apostles began their propagation of the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem—Acts 1:2, 8

The Lord had charged the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,8). However, the disciples did not wait passively. They spent ten full days together, praying in one accord (Acts 1:14). Surely they were praying for the promised outpouring of the Spirit and for the propagation of Christ. At the end of ten days, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out on the church and the propagation began (Acts 2:1–4, 14).

A. Peter, standing with the eleven, preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, and about three thousand were saved—Acts 2:14, 40–41

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit and standing together with the other eleven apostles, preached the gospel to a crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and about three thousand people were saved and baptized.

B. Peter preached the gospel after healing a lame man by the temple, and about five thousand were saved—Acts 3:1–8, 12; 4:4

The preaching of the gospel was accompanied by signs and wonders (Acts 2:43). On one occasion Peter healed a man by the temple gate who had been lame from birth, and who was over forty years old (Acts 3:1–8, 12). This brought together a large crowd of amazed Jews; and Peter took the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. On that day, about five thousand men were saved and baptized.

- C. The new believers continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, and day by day new ones were saved and added to the church through their testimony—Acts 2:42–47; 5:14**

The propagation of Christ was carried out not only by the apostles, but also by all the saints in Jerusalem. It was spread not only by great gospel messages to large crowds, but also by the testimony of the saints to their friends, relatives, and neighbors in the context of their daily life. The Word tells us that new ones were saved and added to the church “day by day” (Acts 2:47). Even though we are not apostles, we can participate in this kind of propagation by simply presenting Christ to others in our daily life.

- D. The apostles preached the gospel daily and unceasingly, and the number of disciples multiplied—Acts 5:42—6:1a, 7**

If we are faithful to pray in one accord, to continue in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, and to preach the gospel, the Lord will surely add people to the church.

- II. From Jerusalem, the propagation spread to Judea, Galilee, and Samaria through the saints who were scattered from Jerusalem and through the ministry of the apostles**

As the church in Jerusalem grew and the number of saints multiplied into the ten thousands, the situation seemed quite flourishing. However, the Lord was not satisfied to stay in Jerusalem. He wanted to propagate Himself out into the surrounding provinces and to the rest of the earth, as He had charged His disciples before His ascension. Through His sovereignty, a situation occurred which scattered the saints throughout the land to preach the gospel.

- A. Because of the persecution against the church in Jerusalem, the saints were scattered throughout the surrounding areas, and wherever they went, they preached the gospel—Acts 8:1, 4**

Right when the situation in Jerusalem seemed so bright, Stephen was martyred, and a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem occurred. This persecution was so intense that Acts tells us that all of the saints were scattered from Jerusalem throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles (Acts 8:1). This seemed like a great blow to the church; actually, it was of the Lord’s sovereignty to propagate Himself even further, because “those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel” (Acts 8:4). Furthermore, in spite of this scattering, we find out later in Acts that the church in Jerusalem continued to grow and thrive even though all the saints were driven out through the persecution (Acts 21:20). All of the situations that the Lord puts us in are sovereignly arranged by Him to give us the opportunity to preach the gospel.

- B. Philip, a former deacon in the church in Jerusalem, preached the gospel in Samaria and up the coast from Azotus to Caesarea—Acts 8:5, 40**

Philip was one of the seven brothers in Jerusalem chosen as a deacon to serve the saints food. After being compelled to leave Jerusalem, he brought the gospel to the Samaritans, to

an Ethiopian eunuch, and to all the coastal cities in Israel from Azotus up to Caesarea, the capital of Judea.

C. The gospel preaching throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was strengthened by the ministry of the apostles—Acts 8:14–15; 9:31–32a

The resurrected Christ was propagated in Samaria, just as the Lord had promised (Acts 1:8). However, the Jews traditionally had despised the Samaritans and never had any relationships with them (John 4:9). What would happen with these new Samaritan believers? Would they be accepted by the Jewish believers as part of the church? Because this was such a historic move for the gospel to spread to the Samaritans, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to pray for the Samaritans and confirm their salvation. This strengthened the church in Samaria and confirmed their being added to the church. The apostles also ministered to all the new believers throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, who had been saved through the preaching of the scattered saints. In this way, the churches were strengthened and built up (cf. Acts 9:31–32a).

III. The propagation also reached the Gentiles—Acts 1:8; 10:1, 24, 45; 11:19–23

There were many prophecies in the Word of God that the gospel would reach the Gentiles (Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Isa. 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6; Jer. 4:2; Micah 4:2), and the Lord had specifically charged the apostles to carry His propagation to “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). However, because of the Jews’ cultural and religious background, they were extremely reluctant to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence, the Lord had to send a vision to Peter three times to make him willing to go to Cornelius’ house with the gospel (see Lesson 3).

A. The propagation first reached the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius—Acts 10:1, 24, 42–48; 11:1

In the house of Cornelius, the Lord confirmed His acceptance of the Gentile believers directly by pouring out the Holy Spirit on them. The Lord used Peter to bring the news of the spread to the Gentiles to the other brothers.

B. Some of the scattered saints also preached the gospel to the Gentiles—Acts 11:19–23

Some of the scattered saints were bold to preach the gospel to the Gentiles that they met outside of Jerusalem. In this way, a number of Gentile believers were added into the churches.

C. Eventually, the churches included many Gentile believers among the disciples—Acts 13:1 and footnotes 5, 7, and 9

The names mentioned of the brothers in Antioch are a mixture of Gentile and Jewish names, indicating that the propagation of Christ eventually included many Gentile believers among the disciples.

IV. The propagation spread out further through the ministry of Paul’s company and eventually reached to the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 13:1–4, 46–49; 14:1, 27; 15:40–41; 16:1, 9–12; 17:1, 4, 10, 15; 18:1, 19, 23; 19:10; 20:1–2, 6, 13–15

The Lord used Peter to confirm the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. However, none of the apostles in Jerusalem had the burden to propagate Christ in the Gentile world, and the propagation of Christ was still confined to the small land of Israel. Thus, the Lord raised up and

called a special vessel named Saul (later Paul) to be His apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; 26:17). The propagation of the resurrected Christ was carried far and wide to the Gentile world through the ministry of Paul and his company of co-workers. The propagation through the ministry of Paul's company was not an incidental preaching of the gospel as was carried out in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. This was a deliberate spread of the gospel through a group of full-time co-workers. Paul's company was a group of full-timers who gave themselves to go out to regions where the gospel had never been preached, to preach the gospel and establish churches there. The Lord still needs some full-timers to give themselves to serve Him in this way today.

V. This propagation is still continuing today, and we can be a part of it—Acts 1:8

In a good sense, the book of Acts has never ended because the propagation of Christ is still continuing today. The propagation of Christ has reached us, most of whom are Gentiles far away from Jerusalem. We have now been made the disciples to propagate Christ to others. We can learn to witness Christ in our daily life to our friends, relatives, classmates, and neighbors. We can learn to take advantage of the situations in which the Lord sovereignly places us to share the gospel with others. Furthermore, some of us need to be burdened by the Lord to serve Him full-time in the gospel propagation. We can prepare ourselves for this by learning foreign languages, reading the Word and the ministry books, preaching the gospel to our friends, and planning to go to the full-time training to get ourselves equipped to serve the Lord.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: We are in the final stages of the Lord's propagating Himself on the earth. The final chapters in the book of Acts are being written by those who carry out His propagation (spreading) in these days. Perhaps the first acts of propagation were carried out by the great apostles such as Peter and Paul, but the final chapters must be completed by all of us "small potatoes." We should not think that we cannot do the work of the apostles. The word apostle means "sent one." As we pray for someone, we may have the sense that we are being sent to that person that he might receive the Lord. Every time we go to someone with the message of the gospel, we are carrying out Christ's propagation. This propagation is carried out when Christ is spread from one person to another. In this way, the gospel spreads from one place to another place. If one person gets saved through us, he might eventually cause others to be saved, and they in turn may cause others to be saved, and so on. Eventually, through Christ's spreading into one person at a time the Lord can gain many. In preaching the gospel, never feel that you have to care for that many. Simply care for the salvation of one or two and spend time with your companions to pray for these ones. A mother bears only one child in nine months. This is the principle of life. We should take advantage of these final days in the book of Acts to be a part of the Lord's propagating work, for soon the door of opportunity will close and the book of Acts will be finished.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: The spreading of God's kingdom on the earth today is invisible and inward, and is carried out by the Lord who today is the Spirit. The kingdom of the world will soon become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). This action is taking place today, but only a small number are aware of it. When it becomes manifested, and the earth becomes the Lord's, it will take many by surprise. Satan will be cast out, and all the world will be judged and possessed by God. Today, Christ is spreading over the earth like a flowing divine stream of life, gaining more and more ground every day. This flow began from Jerusalem two thousand years ago with only a handful of believers, spread into Judea and Samaria, and will reach the uttermost part of the earth. Today, by the Lord's mercy, this life-giving flow is reaching you. Yet, as it does, Satan is trying to sweep you along with himself into the lake of fire. Allow yourself to be rescued from that fiery stream and brought into the flow of the gospel of life. This is what God is doing on the earth today. If we miss this and are carried

along by the tide of this age, we will miss and lose everything. Jump into the divine stream! Once you do, it will carry you your entire life, until it carries you into God's eternal goal, the New Jerusalem.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 2; Message 6, p. 43; Messages 22, 33, 35.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 2; Message 6, p. 43; Messages 9–13, 22, 33, 35–37; Acts 13:1 and footnotes 5, 7, and 9.

Lesson 6—The Conversion of Saul

OBJECTIVE: To see Saul as a pattern of how one can be called by God to be useful to Him.

SYNOPSIS: Saul was a chosen vessel prepared by God for His purpose. He was sovereignly brought up under Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman politics; he was highly educated and well trained in his character; and he was zealous in his religion and in serving God. However, without a heavenly vision, Saul misaimed, persecuting the church. Yet the Lord appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and called him. In the Lord's calling, Saul received a revelation of Jesus Christ and of the church, His Body. After being called by the Lord, Saul forsook his religion and immediately began to preach Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Saul was converted from everything else to Christ and was used to convey this Christ to others. In this way, Saul was a pattern to us of how we are called by God for His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

BACKGROUND: Paul was a chosen vessel of God, receiving a heavenly vision of God's plan, and was used to convert many to Christ. However, in this lesson, you must remember that *every* genuine, born-again believer has been called by God to be a priest and a king. Thus, when we speak to the young people concerning their own eventual usefulness to the Lord, there is a witness in their spirit. Remind the young people that God has called each one (regardless of how they may appear today). We know this as a fact in our spirit. We need God's continual calling and reappearing to strengthen and intensify this call.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 9.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Saul of Tarsus was a chosen vessel prepared by God and called by God for His purpose. After he began serving the Lord, his name became Paul (Acts 13:9). Eventually, the apostle Paul was used by God to write over half of the New Testament books. Yet Paul was not only an outstanding servant of the Lord; he was also a typical believer who received a typical calling by God. In order to appreciate our own calling, we need to see how and for what purpose God called Saul.

I. Saul was a chosen vessel prepared for God's purpose—Acts 9:15; 26:16; 2 Tim. 2:20–21

In Acts 9:12 the Lord told Ananias that Saul had "seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he may receive his sight." Ananias was somewhat afraid to go, "but the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer on behalf of My name" (Acts 9:15–16). "Because Saul was a chosen vessel to the Lord, he was set apart from his mother's womb and called by the Lord (Gal. 1:15). The Lord is sovereign and able, according to His choosing in eternity, to make the most fierce among His persecutors a vessel, a leading apostle, to carry out His commission in preaching the gospel and taking the way he had opposed and persecuted" (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, p. 208). "In 9:15 we see that Saul of Tarsus was a chosen vessel. In reading the Scriptures we may not pay adequate attention to the word 'vessel,' an important spiritual term. A vessel is a container and therefore is different from a tool or a weapon. In the Epistles of Paul there is a strong emphasis on the importance of vessels [Rom. 9:23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20]...It may have been from Ananias that Saul learned that he was a chosen vessel. Saul of Tarsus was chosen by the Lord not only to be His apostle, His servant, and His minister; he was also chosen to be His vessel. In Acts 9:15 the Lord Jesus seemed to be saying to Ananias, 'Saul is a chosen vessel. He

will contain Me, and his ministry will be to convey Me to the Gentile world.' We all need to see the importance of Saul being a chosen vessel" (Life-study of Acts, Message 26, pp. 216–217).

A. Saul was sovereignly brought up under Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman politics—Acts 22:3; 26:4–5; 21:39; 22:25–28

"Saul was born in Tarsus, a highly cultured city, and received his Greek education at the university there. In 22:3 he says that he studied 'at the feet of Gamaliel, having been trained according to the strictness of the law.' This indicates that he received his religious education from Gamaliel, a great rabbi. No doubt, Saul was a scholar in both the Greek and Hebrew languages, and he was trained in both Greek culture and in Hebrew religion. Furthermore, he was a Roman citizen. With him we see the three main elements of Western culture: Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman politics. He was taught according to the Hebrew religion, he was trained in Greek culture, and he was a citizen of the Roman Empire. His parents or grandparents may have become Roman citizens, and Saul himself was born a Roman (22:25–28). Therefore, Saul had a threefold qualification—in Greek culture, Hebrew religion, and Roman politics. The Lord is sovereign and all-knowing. Stephen seemed to be better educated than Peter and John, who were unlearned Galilean fishermen. But Stephen was not as qualified in the three elements of Western culture as Saul was. In Philippians 3:5 he describes himself as 'a Hebrew of Hebrews,' for he was born a Hebrew and was well educated in the Hebrew religion. No one else was as qualified as he to bear the commission to bring God's New Testament economy to the Gentile world." (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, pp. 203–204).

B. Saul was highly educated and well-trained in his character—Acts 22:3–4

From point A. above, we can see that Saul was highly educated. From his zealousness we can see that he had a strong, disciplined character. "Before Saul was met by Christ on the way to Damascus, he was, no doubt, a brilliant, religious, zealous, and strong young man" (A Young Man in God's Plan, Chapter 2, p. 21).

C. Saul was zealous for his religion and zealous in serving God—Phil. 3:6; Gal. 1:13–14

"Acts 9:1 says, 'But Saul, still breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest.' Saul approved of Stephen's killing (8:1), and those who stoned Stephen laid down their garments at the feet of Saul (7:58). Saul, a persecutor, was a young man with a very strong sense of purpose" (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, p. 203). However, before he was gained by the Lord, Saul was gained by Satan. Saul was zealous, but his zealousness was a frustration to God's economy. Acts tells us that Saul was not only persecuting, but even devastating the church (Acts 8:3).

II. Saul received a heavenly vision of God's plan—Acts 26:19

"Saul was probably very happy as he was on his way to Damascus. He may have been excited and perhaps even was in an ecstasy. Saul may have said to himself, 'I have obtained authority from the high priests to bind all those who call on the name of Jesus. I am going to Damascus to arrest all those who call on this name, bring them to Jerusalem, and put them in jail.' The Lord Jesus was watching over Saul as he was journeying toward Damascus. Instead of appearing to Saul immediately, the Lord waited until 'he drew near to Damascus' (9:3). Then 'suddenly a light from heaven shone around him; and he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' (9:3b-4). Saul must have been shocked by the light

from heaven and by the voice that called him by name. Saul thought that he was persecuting merely the followers of Jesus. Now a voice came from the heavens and told him that he was persecuting this One who is in the heavens" (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, p. 205).

A. Saul received a revelation of Jesus as the Savior—Acts 9:3–5

"To Saul's great surprise, he experienced a heavenly light, a heavenly voice, and a heavenly One. Spontaneously Saul said, 'Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting' (v. 5). Saul called Him Lord, even without knowing Him. Saul may have said to himself, 'I have never persecuted Jesus. Rather, I persecuted Stephen and other followers of Jesus. I thought that Jesus was in the tomb, but now He comes to me from the heavens'" (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, pp. 205–206). Since Saul knew the Hebrew language, surely he understood the significance of the name "Jesus"—Jehovah our Savior. Furthermore, since Jesus spoke to Saul from the heavens and Saul called Him "Lord," Saul came to know that this Jesus had really resurrected. Surely Saul was familiar with the human living and crucifixion of Christ; these things were public knowledge (Acts 26:26). Thus, by Jesus' appearing to him from the heavens, Saul received a revelation of the ascended Christ who had passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. "Luke does not give us the details related to Saul's conversion. Nevertheless, we can see that the Lord Jesus preached an adequate gospel to Saul. Saul indeed heard the gospel. Some may wonder how we can say this. They may point out that the voice from heaven did not say anything about the crucifixion, the redeeming blood, or the resurrection. However, we need to realize that the name Jesus is an adequate gospel. Saul was a sinner, an opponent, but he must have known the significance of this name, since he knew both Hebrew and Greek. He must have realized that Jesus means Jehovah, the Savior. Is this not the gospel? Do we not hear the gospel when we hear of Jesus? Who is Jehovah, the Savior? Paul surely knew the meaning of the name of Jesus" (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, pp. 206–207).

B. Saul had Christ revealed in Him—Gal. 1:15–16

Later, in the book of Galatians, Paul described his experience of conversion in this way: "It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15–16). Saul had Christ revealed in Him so that He would know Christ (Phil. 3:10), receive Christ as life (Col. 3:4; John 20:31; Rom. 6:23), and become a child of God (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16). This is what it means to have Christ revealed in us. God's goal in saving us is that Christ would be everything to us, that we would be filled with Christ to live Him for His expression (Phil. 1:21).

C. Saul received a revelation of the corporate Christ comprised of Christ the Head and the many members of Christ as His Body—Acts 9:5–6, 10–12

"According to 9:4, the Lord Jesus asked Saul, 'Why are you persecuting Me?' This is a corporate Me comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers. Saul did not have this revelation, thinking that he was persecuting Stephen and other Jesus-followers in the way he considered heresy (24:14). He did not know that when he persecuted these he persecuted Jesus, for they were one with Him by being united to Him through their faith in Him. He considered that he was persecuting people on earth, never thinking that he touched anyone in heaven. To his great surprise, a voice from heaven told him that He was the One whom he was persecuting, and His name was Jesus. To him this was a unique revelation in the entire universe! By this he began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great

person—the wonderful ‘Me.’ This must have impressed him and affected him for his future ministry concerning Christ and the church as the great mystery of God (Eph. 5:32), and laid a solid foundation for his unique ministry” (Life-study of Acts, Message 25, p. 206). “Saul not only saw that Jesus is Jehovah, the Savior, who died and was resurrected; he also saw that the Lord Jesus is one with His followers. Perhaps Saul said to himself, ‘I did not persecute Jesus—I persecuted His followers. But He told me that I persecuted Him. This must mean that He is one with His followers.’ In this way Saul came to see the Body. He heard a message not only concerning Christ’s salvation, but also concerning the Body of Christ. When the Lord appeared to Saul, He asked him, ‘Why are you persecuting Me?’ The Lord seemed to be saying, ‘Saul, this ‘Me’ includes Me personally and My Body corporately. Personally I am in the heavens, but corporately the Body is on earth. When you persecuted My followers, you persecuted My Body. To persecute My Body is to persecute Me’” (Life-study of Acts, Message 26, pp. 212–213).

III. Saul was converted from everything else to Christ, and was used by God to convey this Christ to others—Phil. 3:7–9

Saul was a capable young man who was zealous for and fully occupied by the Jewish religion. His life was the Jewish religion. However, God’s eternal plan and God’s economy were not related to the Jewish religion, but related to Christ Himself. In order for Saul to participate in God’s economy and be useful in God’s plan, he needed to be converted from that religion to Christ. To be converted is to have a change in our direction and goal. Paul was converted from zealously pursuing the things of the Jewish religion to pursue Christ Himself (Phil. 3:5–7). Furthermore, Paul made it his new goal to be occupied with Christ (Phil. 1:21; 3:8–10). Thus, God could use Paul as His chosen vessel to convey Christ to others (Acts 9:15; Rom. 15:16).

A. Saul forsook his religion and immediately began to preach Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God—Acts 9:20–22; Phil. 3:7; Matt. 16:16; John 20:31

Acts 9:19–20 and 22 say, “...And [Saul] was with the disciples in Damascus for some days. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God....But Saul was all the more empowered, and he confounded the Jews dwelling in Damascus by proving that this One is the Christ.” “Probably no one has ever turned to the Lord Jesus more quickly than Saul of Tarsus did....Here the word ‘immediately’ is significant. It indicates that in a very short period of time his turn to the Lord was absolutely completed. Saul was a persecutor, but he turned to the Lord and became a vessel to contain Christ and minister Him to others” (Life-study of Acts, Message 27, p. 219).

B. Saul was used by God as a vessel to convey Christ to others—Acts 9:15

C. God’s plan is for us to be one with Christ, filled with Christ, and occupied with Christ Himself in order to live Christ—1 Cor. 6:17; Phil. 1:21; 3:7–8; Gal. 2:20

God’s plan is for us to be one with Christ, filled with Christ, and occupied with Christ Himself in order to live Christ (See A Young Man in God’s Plan, Chapter 3, pp. 29–32). After seeing a heavenly vision of Christ, Saul joined Himself to Christ for God’s plan. Saul counted all things that were gains to him as loss, even as refuse, that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:7–8). He dropped everything to pursue Christ as his goal (Phil. 3:12–14). After his conversion, Paul gave himself simply to be one who lived Christ (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20).

IV. We need a heavenly vision of God’s plan, and we need to be converted from many

things to Christ Himself—Acts 26:19

In his conversion from everything to Christ, Saul is a pattern to all of us. We are all vessels chosen by God and called by Him. Whether or not we are useful to God depends on how willing we are to go along with God for His plan. First, we need a heavenly vision of God's plan. Second, we need to be converted from many things to Christ Himself. Then we can be useful to God in His economy (See A Young Man in God's Plan, Chapters 2–3).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: "You may have been regenerated, but maybe even today you need a real, practical conversion from traditional things, from the religious things, unto the living Christ. A person can only be regenerated once. But in my experience I can testify that I have had a number of conversions. Regeneration is once for all, but conversion, to have some change in your life, is not just once for all....You have to consider whether or not something in your life is taking the place of Christ. Is something in your life more important than Christ Himself? If so, you have to be converted from this very thing to Christ. Regeneration is a conversion, but a conversion to us Christians is not just once for all. We need many conversions. Anything, no matter how good it might be, can become a hindrance, a barrier between you and Christ, taking the place of Christ in your life and substituting Christ in your life. May we all be converted from everything other than Christ to the living Person of Christ Himself" (*A Young Man in God's Plan*, Chapter 3, pp. 26, 29).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Have you met Jesus? If you are confident in yourself, considering your own view to be keen and clear on every matter, you need to be introduced to Christ today. The Bible describes a young man named Saul who considered himself educated, capable, even absolute in his religious beliefs concerning God. Yet despite all his ability and strength, he not only did not know the Lord, but also persecuted Him (Acts 9:4–5). As Saul was doing his religious best to bind all those who called on the name of the Lord, the living Lord Jesus revealed Himself to Saul. Saul, who thought he was so clear concerning God, was actually living a life in darkness, until Christ in His mercy shined on him and spoke to him. This caused the young, strong, educated, cultured, and religious Saul to fall to the ground. Saul realized that the One who spoke to him was God, yet it was not God as Saul knew Him to be. Therefore, Saul asked, "Who are You Lord?" The Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute" (Acts 9:5). The light was so bright it blinded him. Before, he had a way to handle everything; he thought his sight was so clear. Now Saul realized he had been spiritually blind. The Lord then told Saul to go into the city to be taught by a simple disciple named Ananias. When Ananias came, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. He received his sight and was baptized, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:18; 22:16). Have you met Jesus? Has He shined on you? Has He caused you to realize that your "sight" without Christ is blindness? Although your condition today is that you are fallen and in darkness, God is not angry with you. He is calling to you right now. Confess your condition to the Lord, call on His name to be saved (Rom. 10:13), and meet the sweet and living Lord Jesus.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on His personal calling—responding to the Lord individually (III.C.3.); Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on a vision of God's eternal purpose being the highest thing to which we could give our lives (III.C.5.); Seeking the human and spiritual education and training that will best equip your vessel to fulfill your goals and ultimately the purpose of your life (IV.A.3.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 25–26; *A Young Man in God's Plan*, Chapters 2–3.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Messages 25–27; *A Young Man in God's Plan*, Chapters 2–3.

Lesson 7—Led by the Spirit for the Propagation into Europe

OBJECTIVE: To see how Paul was led by the Spirit, even by the Spirit's forbidding, to carry out the Lord's strategic move into Europe.

SYNOPSIS: Beginning from Antioch, the Spirit initiated a series of ministry journeys carried out by Paul and his coworkers. During the second journey, after which Paul revisited the churches in Galatia that had been raised up during the first journey, he determined to spread the gospel further. By following the Spirit's leading in a step-by-step way, Paul was eventually led to Macedonia, a part of Europe, where a church was raised up in Philippi. In this way the Lord's move spread to a new continent. It was because of Paul's ability to receive the Spirit's leading that he was able to be used by the Lord for this great event. Often the Lord leads us by His checking, His prohibiting. The Lord desires to be such a living "road map" to us; rather than telling us the destination, He wants us to depend upon Him throughout the journey. If we learn to follow the Lord in this way, He will be able to use us for His purpose, and we will always have the peace and confidence that we are in the Lord's move.

BACKGROUND: Like the pictures of the Lord's move upon the earth, stories of the Lord's calling to full-timers speak louder than our admonitions. Some real-life stories of the Spirit's leading today will be very inspiring to the young people, and the examples of others can encourage them to aspire to the full-time service.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 16.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

For this lesson the serving ones should study a map of Asia Minor in New Testament times. It is also recommended that a large map be prepared to illustrate Paul's route in Acts 16:1–12 during the lesson.

I. Paul's first ministry journey took him from Antioch to Asia Minor—Acts 13:2–14:27

In a brief and general way, trace Paul and Barnabas' journey to Asia Minor. Mention how most of their time was spent in Galatia, a region (not a city) to which Paul later wrote the book of Galatians. After this first journey they joyfully returned to Antioch, their "home church."

II. On his second ministry journey, Paul revisited the churches that had been established during his first journey—Acts 15:36–16:5

Eventually Paul and Barnabas felt it was time for them to revisit the churches that had been raised up during their first journey. Barnabas and Paul, however, had a sharp disagreement and Barnabas left Paul. Paul chose Silas to go with him on this second journey. They then proceeded to revisit the churches that had been raised up during the first journey.

III. After revisiting the churches, Paul was led by the Spirit for his move in the gospel

The rest of this lesson focuses on Acts 16:6–10. (You may want to note that Paul had been introduced to Timothy in Derbe while revisiting the church there, and had brought him along, together with Silas.)

A. The Holy Spirit had forbidden Paul to speak the word in Asia—Acts 16:6

The Spirit had forbidden Paul from advancing into Asia, so Paul had to go north if he was to go forward with the gospel after he finished visiting the churches. ("Asia" here does not denote the entire continent, but only a small Roman province in western Asia Minor. Up to this point Paul had been laboring in Galatia, a province in central Asia Minor.)

B. The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to enter into Bithynia either—Acts 16:7

Paul approached Bithynia, which bordered Galatia and Asia on the north. The Spirit, however, told him he could not go there either. Paul, therefore, had to turn west and travel between the two provinces he was forbidden to preach in! It seemed as if Paul was walking on top of a fence between the two areas, for he could turn neither to the north nor to the south. "The Holy Spirit's forbidding them to go to the left, to Asia (v. 6), and the Spirit of Jesus' not allowing them to go to the right, to Bithynia, indicated a straightforward direction for the apostle and his co-workers" (Acts 16:7, footnote 2).

C. Bypassing Mysia, they came to Troas—Acts 16:8

Continuing west, Paul passed by Mysia (the northern part of the province of Asia) until he arrived at Troas, a city of Asia on the western coast. Their journey seemed to have hit a wall. Paul and his companions, however, did not complain or try to second-guess God. They just obediently followed the Spirit and were at peace, even though the Lord had not yet allowed them to preach the gospel anywhere new on this journey, nor revealed to them why He had taken them on such a long and seemingly fruitless trek. (It was in Troas that Luke, the writer of Acts, seems to have met and joined Paul, for the pronouns in Acts 16:9–10 change to "us" and "we".)

D. In Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for his help, and he and his companions immediately left to announce the gospel there—Acts 16:9–10

While they were at Troas, Paul had a vision in the night of a Macedonian man asking him to come over into Macedonia to help them. Paul and his companions realized that this meant they were to cross the sea into Macedonia to announce the gospel there. Their arriving in Macedonia was a major move of the Lord, for it brought them to a new continent (Macedonia was in Europe, while Asia Minor was a part of the continent of Asia). Because Paul followed the Spirit, the Lord was able to do what He desired, even though Paul did not initially have such a work in view. Paul's party eventually arrived in Philippi, the major city in Macedonia, where the first church in Europe was raised up!

IV. Only if we know the Spirit's leading can the Lord have a way to move through us**A. We should be sensitive to the Lord within us so that we might know His leading, and especially be obedient to His restricting—Acts 16:6–7; Rom. 8:14**

*Although Paul did not have the Lord's direct speaking to go to Macedonia from the very beginning, he did have the Spirit's clear direction through restriction. He was not told where to go, but he was told where he could **not** go. This meant that he had to be sensitive to the Lord, step-by-step, the entire way in order to reach the goal God was after. (We wish that the Lord would always make things plain right away, but then we might not be dependent on the Lord to lead us in a moment-by-moment way.) The Spirit's work in leading us is often by telling us "no." The Lord might give us a direct leading to do something, but He also leads by telling us what not to do, thus restricting us to a certain way and keeping us for His use when the right time or situation has come.*

B. We should follow the Lord's leading even though it may go against our concept

There are many cases in the Bible where the Lord tests His chosen ones in such a way. Noah was asked to spend a lifetime building an ark when no one even knew what a flood was. Abraham was asked to offer up Isaac even though the request humanly made no sense,

for God had promised that Abraham's seed would be continued through Isaac. Here, in Paul's case, the Lord was not asking him to do something, but instead was forbidding him from doing what seemed reasonable without telling him exactly what it was He wanted him to do. This forced Paul to travel in a way that was so sensitive to the Lord. (We often wish the Lord would make certain things known to us, but the Lord knows that the best way to get the most out of the situation in which He has placed us is to make us wait. This causes us to really be exercised before Him.)

C. We should follow the Lord's leading in coordination and fellowship with others

As we are journeying in our lives through school, college, career, marriage, etc., we usually take the course which seems most reasonable to us. If we care for the Lord's leading, however, we will be open to the Lord's restricting and seek His leading at every juncture. Sometimes we are led in a direct way by the Lord, but many times we are led by the way of the Lord's denying us permission to do something we are thinking of doing. In this matter we should also be sensitive to the Lord's speaking through those who are over us, such as our parents, serving ones, and elders. In God's eyes, they are His representatives, and we should honor their feeling as if it were the Lord's. If we feel we should go to a certain college, even thinking that it is something that would be good for the Lord's work, yet an older brother in the Lord feels definitely that it is not the way to go, we should take that as a "no" from the Lord. If we receive the Lord's restriction in this way, our life will be turned to another direction that will lead us into what the Lord truly wants for us. (This is an important principle for us to learn. While we can always continue to pray and fellowship if we feel the leading we have does not match the feeling the other person might have, the Lord has to honor our stand when we follow the fellowship of those He has placed over us, for we are honoring their direction as the Lord's direction.)

D. Those who experience the Lord's moment-by-moment leading have peace and boldness before God and man—2 Cor. 2:14

We should always have the assurance that wherever we are and whatever we are doing is a result of the Lord's arrangement and leading. (It is true that the Lord is sovereign over the events in our lives, even as to where we live and what things happen to us. The Lord, however, desires that we would begin to live our lives as those who willingly choose His will. If, for instance, we choose a college based upon something other than the Lord's arrangement and leading, the Lord cannot use those years to move on that campus through us as He would have if we had stood with Him.) It is a wonderful thing to have the assurance that we are where we are and that we are doing what we are doing because the Lord has led us so. Then we know that the Lord is with us, and that He must bear the responsibility for us when we take Him in such a way. It is then that we also know that we have the Lord's best for us.

Here are some quotations from the Life-studies that may help in your sharing. There are many terms to describe the Spirit's leading: the anointing, the sense of life, the Lord's speaking, the restriction of the divine nature, etc.

"If you intend to go shopping, ask the Lord if He is pleased to go with you. As you are about to purchase a certain item, ask the Lord if He is happy about buying that item. Even in the smallest

details we need to inquire of the Lord....The way to live Christ is by praying to Him all day long" (Life-study of Colossians, Message 36, p. 312).

"When I was a young person, I loved to play soccer. One day, after I was saved, I was playing soccer. At a certain time, when the ball came to me, something within said, 'Stop! Don't play any longer. Leave the soccer field.' All the players were shocked; they did not know what had happened to me. Then I walked off the field and told them that I would not play soccer any longer. That was an experience of the sanctification of the Spirit" (Life-study of 2 Thessalonians, Message 6, p. 50).

"The Spirit may say no much more than He says yes" (Life-study of 2 Thessalonians, Message 6, p. 51).

"If when you think about a certain matter you have no rest in your spirit, stop your thinking. Call back your mind from the thing which gives your spirit unrest. Whenever you try to reason and you feel empty in your spirit, stop and turn your mind back to the spirit....As long as you have rest, comfort, and satisfaction within, it is an indication that your mind is set in the right direction. If you have no rest, comfort, or satisfaction, but rather feel dark, empty, and restless, it is an indication that your direction is toward death. In such a case you need to turn your mind back to the spirit" (Life-study of Romans, Message 16, p. 201).

"The leading of the Spirit does not derive from nor depend upon outward things. The leading of the Spirit is an issue of the inner life. I would say that it comes from the sense of life, from the consciousness of the divine life within us....There is an inward sense which comes from setting the mind upon the spirit. If our mind is set upon our spirit, we are immediately strengthened and satisfied inwardly. We also are watered and refreshed. By that sense and consciousness we can know the life within us, and by this sense of life we can know that we are walking rightly. In other words, we know that we are under the leading of the Spirit" (Life-study of Romans, Message 18, p. 220).

"Sisters, when you are about to go shopping you need not pray,...'O Lord, if You do not want me to go to the department store, prevent me.'...Everything might be smooth outwardly, but how about inwardly? Perhaps after you have parked your automobile and while you are walking toward the door of the department store you have no peace within. Instead of being inwardly strengthened you feel frustrated. However, since everything is smooth outwardly you proceed. Inwardly, however, the closer you get to the store, the emptier you feel....Although everything is positive outwardly, inwardly you are empty and weak. You do not have the anointing, the watering, or the inward peace" (Life-study of Romans, Message 18, pp. 220–221).

"When you sisters are about to go to the department store, although everything may be clear outwardly, you need to obey the inner sense of life. As you approach the entrance of the store, something within may tell you, 'Go back.' You do not hear an audible word, but you have the sense of darkness, weakness, and dryness as you are about to enter the store. Since you are a son of God, you have such an indicator from the inward life. You have something that people in the world do not have. Because you have the life of God, you have the leading which issues from that life" (Life-study of Romans, Message 18, p. 221–222).

"Someone who follows the Old Testament way might say, 'If the Lord wills, I will go shopping tomorrow. But if the Lord does not so will, what can I do except stay home?' Instead of this, we all must learn in our living to be led by the Spirit. Day by day and even moment by moment, we should be led by the indwelling Spirit" (Life-study of James, Message 14, p. 124).

"The Son lives and speaks in the believer. This is a crucial point. The living Christ within us speaks constantly. He will never stop speaking. Due to the fact that we are still in a situation with so many negative things, most of the time this living Christ speaks just one word—no. From morning until evening and from evening until morning, nearly the only thing that He says to us is no. A sister may say, 'I'm going to the department store to buy a pair of shoes,' and the Lord says, 'No.' A brother may desire to talk to a certain person, and the indwelling Christ says, 'No.' Is this not your experience?" (Life-study of John, Message 32, p. 381).

"A living Person is constantly living and moving within us. This living and moving is His teaching....Whenever we are under His anointing, we know what to do. If we take a step which He does not want to take, the anointing will stop, and the soothing, comforting sense will diminish. By this we know that we should not do that particular thing. At such a time we should say, 'Lord, I'm one with You. If You don't want to go, I won't go either.' If we do this, the anointing and its comforting sense will return. The living and moving of the anointing is Christ's inward teaching. We have a living Person in us teaching us all the time. Sometimes in our fellowship with the saints we may sense that the inner anointing has stopped. When we have this sense, we should stop talking. You might have spoken half a sentence, but, sensing that the anointing has ceased, you should not speak the remainder of that sentence. Simply be one with the inner anointing" (Life-study of Hebrews, Message 66, p. 738–739).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: By following the Spirit, Paul certainly moved in a way that was different than anyone else traveling around him at that time. (List a number of reasons why people might travel from one place to another, or why they might avoid a certain place on their travels.) If we could get a kind of bird's eye view of the world at that time, we might notice that there was one man who moved differently from all the other people moving about. That was Paul, moving on the earth by the Lord's leading rather than being carried about like a piece of driftwood by the tides of the age or by human reasoning. How about us? Have we ever experienced the leading and restricting of the Spirit as we were going somewhere? Surely many of the young people should have had the experience of the Lord directing them a certain way, or saying "no" within them. The serving ones also should have a number of personal experiences which they could share which would support this important lesson. There may be no reason as to why there is a "no," but we have to believe that if we follow the Lord in this way, we will one day find out that the Lord had something particular into which He was leading us. If we ignore His speaking to us in this way, we will certainly miss whatever the Lord was leading us into, and end up somewhere far off from His goal. If we wish to reach the Lord's goal, we certainly must know His leading.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Those who receive the Lord have an inward Guide who is always leading them in the right way. Consider how many decisions we must make concerning our lives, and what great consequences will result for us. Do you know what your choices will ultimately produce? Are you able to judge the merits of each alternative? Can you see what lies at the end of each possible road? How can the choices you make result in a life lived according to the highest purpose in the universe, not wasted on vain-glory, or temporary pleasure, seeking our own insignificant goals? Only God has such wisdom and foresight, and only God knows us; we do not even know ourselves. We need such an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving God to lead us day by day. He created us for a purpose, and He knows how we can best achieve His marvelous goal set before us in His Word. Without Him, we are like ships without a map, compass, or stars overhead by which to steer, wasting our time drifting aimlessly, not knowing where we are going or what lies ahead. However, God knows! He sees everything. Receive Him and let Him be your Navigator to lead you into realms "which eye has not seen

and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Receive Him as your living "road map" to a meaningful life according to the highest purpose in the universe.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing the anointing and the sense of life (II.G.2.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 44, pp. 377–378, 378–381; Message 45, pp. 385–386; *Experience of Life*, Chapter 7, pp. 141–142; Chapter 14, pp. 310–312; *The Spirit*, Chapter 7, pp. 77–78;

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 44, pp. 377–378, 378–381; Message 45, pp. 385–386; *Experience of Life*, Chapter 7, pp. 141–142; Chapter 14, pp. 310–312; *The Spirit*, Chapter 7, pp. 77–78; *Life-study of Colossians*, Message 36, p. 312; *Life-study of 2 Thessalonians*, Message 6, pp. 50–51; *Life-study of Romans*, Message 16, p. 201; Message 18, p. 220–222; *Life-study of James*, Message 14, p. 124; *Life-study of John*, Message 32, p. 381; *Life-study of Hebrews*, Message 66, p. 738–739.

Lesson 8—The Contents of Paul's Commission

OBJECTIVE: To see the gospel commission Paul received from God.

SYNOPSIS: At the end of Paul's third journey, he went up to Jerusalem, where he suffered the ultimate persecution of the Jews', eventually ending up in Roman custody. However, his arrest and trial provided an opportunity for him to testify of Christ and of the commission he had received from God. In his defenses to the Roman governors and to the Jews, Paul testified concerning the Lord Jesus and concerning the commission God gave to him. Paul testified that he had been appointed a minister and a witness of Christ, and that he had been commissioned by God with four great things: opening people's eyes, turning people from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and receive the divine inheritance. These four items must be the contents of our commission which we receive through a heavenly vision of Christ.

BACKGROUND: Again in this lesson, stories of the Lord's calling and commission to full-timers today speak louder than our admonition. The examples of others can encourage them to aspire to serve the Lord. We all can become ministers and witnesses of Christ through seeing a heavenly vision, which becomes a commission to us.

CHAPTER(S): Acts 21–26.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. Paul's arrest and trial provided an opportunity for him to testify of Christ and of the commission he had received from God

A. At the end of Paul's third journey, he went up to Jerusalem, where he suffered the ultimate persecution of the Jews, eventually ending up in Roman custody—Acts 21:15–17, 27–33

Due to the negative influence of Judaism in the church in Jerusalem, James persuaded Paul to participate in an Old Testament Nazarite vow with four other men (Acts 21:18–26). However, before his vow was concluded, Paul was seized in the temple by the Jews, who tried to kill him (Acts 21:27–30). Paul was rescued from the Jews by being arrested by a Roman centurion (Acts 21:31–35). Even though Paul had done nothing wrong, the corrupt Roman governors kept him in custody in order to gain favor with the Jews and also in the hope of obtaining bribes (Acts 24:26–27). Eventually, to save his life, Paul was forced to appeal his case to Caesar (Acts 25:6–12; 25:11, footnote 1; 26:32, footnote 2).

B. In his defenses to the Roman governors and to the Jews, Paul testified concerning the Lord Jesus and concerning the commission God had given to him—Acts 21:39–22:21; 22:30–23:10; 26:1–29

Paul defended himself before the people of Jerusalem by testifying how the Lord Jesus had saved him (Acts 21:39–22:21). He defended himself before the Jewish Sanhedrin by testifying concerning the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Acts 22:30–23:10). Finally, Paul defended himself before the Roman governors by testifying concerning his heavenly vision, his conversion, and his commission from God (Acts 26:1–29).

II. Paul testified that he had been appointed a minister and a witness of Christ—Acts 26:16

A. As a minister, Paul worked for God to minister Christ to others—Acts 26:16

Paul was appointed "not only a minister but also a witness. A minister is for the ministry; a witness, for the testimony. The ministry is related mainly to the work, to what a minister does; a testimony is related to the person, to what a witness is" (Acts 26:16, footnote 1).

B. As a witness, Paul was a testimony of Christ and of all that Christ had done—Acts 26:16; 1:8 and footnote 3

Witnesses are "those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life, differing from preachers who merely preach doctrines in letters" (Acts 1:8, footnote 3). "To carry out His heavenly ministry for the propagating of Himself that the kingdom of God might be established for the building up of the churches as His fullness, the ascended Christ wanted to use not a group of preachers trained by man's teaching to do a preaching work, but a body of His witnesses, martyrs, who bore a living testimony of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ" (Acts 23:11, footnote 4).

C. Paul was sent to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles—Acts 26:17

III. Paul testified that he had been commissioned by God with four great things—Acts 26:18

A. To open people's eyes—Acts 26:18; Luke 4:18

"The first item of the spiritual and divine blessings of the New Testament jubilee, which are the blessings of the gospel of God, is to open the eyes of those who are fallen and turn them from darkness to light so that they may see the divine things in the spiritual realm. To see these things requires spiritual sight and divine light. Many of us have had the experience of listening to certain messages that brought us into darkness and of listening to other messages that brought us into light. Suppose you are listening to a sermon given by a particular minister, pastor, or preacher. The more you listen to that sermon, the more you are brought into darkness, and everything becomes opaque. However, you may listen to another message, and the more you listen, the more the divine light shines in you. Day dawns, your eyes are opened, and you begin to see spiritual things. This is the kind of message that opens people's eyes" (Life-study of Acts, Message 69, p. 600).

B. To turn people from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God—Col. 1:13

"Acts 26:18 speaks not only of the opening of the eyes but also of the turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God. This turn is what we mean by a transfer. To turn from darkness to light is to have a transfer from darkness into light, and to turn from the authority of Satan to God is to be transferred out of the authority of Satan into God. What a great transfer this is! Darkness is a sign of sin and death; light is a sign of righteousness and life (John 1:4; 8:12)...[T]o be transferred to God is to be transferred to the authority of God, which is God's kingdom belonging to light. Formerly we were in darkness and under the authority of Satan. But we have been transferred out of darkness and the authority of Satan into light and God. Darkness is actually the authority of Satan. Whenever we are in darkness, we are under the satanic authority. Light is God Himself (1 John 1:5). Therefore, when we are in the light, we are in God. Just as Satan and darkness are one, so God and light are one. The greatest transfer we can have is the transfer from darkness to light" (Life-study of Acts, Message 69, pp. 600–601).

C. The forgiveness of sins—Acts 10:43; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14

"In 26:18 we see that when our eyes are opened and we have a turn, a transfer, from darkness and satanic authority to light and God, we may receive forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is the base of all the blessings of the New Testament jubilee. The genuine forgiveness of sins comes through the opening of the eyes and the transfer from Satan to God. Therefore, we need to have our eyes opened and to have a transfer from the authority of Satan to God in order to receive the complete and perfect forgiveness of sins" (Life-study of Acts, Message 69, pp. 601–602).

D. The divine inheritance—Col. 1:12

"As the result of having our eyes opened and of being transferred from the authority of Satan to God, we not only have the forgiveness of sins on the negative side, but also we receive an inheritance on the positive side. This divine inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all that He has, all He has done, and all He will do for His redeemed people. This Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ (Col. 2:9), who is the portion allotted to the saints as their inheritance (Col. 1:12). The Holy Spirit, who has been given to the saints, is the foretaste, the seal, the pledge, and the guarantee of this divine inheritance (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13–14), which we are sharing and enjoying today in God's New Testament jubilee as a foretaste, and will share and enjoy in full in the coming age and for eternity (1 Pet. 1:4)...Believers are generally taught that the inheritance in Acts 26:18 is a heavenly mansion. This is what I was told as a young Christian. But after more than fifty years of studying the Bible, I have learned that this inheritance is Christ as the embodiment of the processed Triune God. This Christ is the portion of the saints" (Life-study of Acts, Message 69, p. 602).

IV. These four items must be the contents of our commission which we receive through a heavenly vision of Christ—Acts 26:18–19

"If we have really seen God's plan and have been really converted from the things other than Christ to Christ Himself, what we have seen and experienced will produce or create a commission for us. This vision will cause us to act, to work for Christ, to serve Christ, according to what we have seen of Him....There will be something within you energizing you to contact people. When we contact other believers, we will fellowship with them about the Christ whom we know. Our commission and ministry come out of the heavenly vision. The more that you contact the Lord in prayer, the more you will be burdened for so many unbelievers. As a result of your inward burden...it will be easy for you to preach the gospel" (A Young Man in God's Plan, Chapter 4, p. 34). These items of our commission are all-inclusive. "First, we need to open others' eyes....When you have the heavenly vision, you will open others' eyes even if you speak without eloquence....What you speak should also turn people....You need to turn people from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God....On the positive side, people have to be helped to realize the real forgiveness of sins from God, and also they need to receive Christ, the Son of God, as their portion" (A Young Man in God's Plan, Chapter 4, pp. 35–36).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Young people need to be impressed with how great a spiritual darkness covers this earth (Matt. 6:23; Luke 1:79; John 3:19; 12:46). Whichever way we turn, we can see people living their lives in darkness, without any idea of how wonderful God can be to them. The more we see this, the more we will be burdened to turn others from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). For this to happen, however, we ourselves must be in the light (1 John 1:7; Matt. 5:14–16)! Only those in the light can testify of the light to those in darkness. If we are in darkness ourselves, far away from the Lord, how can we be of any help to others? Paul was

burdened for others because he had fully received the light of Christ, and this light became his gospel (2 Tim. 1:8–11). He did not just speak teachings to people; he brought Christ as light into their dark situation. When light is brought to people who are in darkness, they immediately sense it, and they begin to turn towards the light. This marks the greatest moment in a person's life (just as the greatest moment in a blind person's life might be the moment he receives his sight). We ourselves receive Christ as light as we contact Him in the word and in our spirit (Psa. 119:130). The more we practice to receive the Lord as light, the more we will desire to help those who are in darkness to receive Christ. May we all become light-bearers to this dark generation!

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Spiritually speaking, all men are born blind (knowing neither God nor themselves), in darkness (unable to see God or understand the things of God, but kept in miserable darkness where there is no joy), and under the power and control of Satan (unable to cease from committing sins and powerless to resist death), while doomed to inherit the destination prepared for the devil and his angels—the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). Therefore, men have a great need to hear the blessings of the gospel. “When man hears the gospel and believes in Jesus, his eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. He then is able to know God, life, himself, and the Savior....Though we are born in darkness, when we believe the gospel and receive the life of Christ, we are turned to light. The gospel of God is light, because God is light and the life of Christ is also light. When we have the light within, we are able to see clearly and we have joy....[We are also] freed from the power of Satan. Through His death on the cross Christ destroyed the one who had the power of death, the Devil. When one turns to Christ, he is delivered from the power of Satan unto God and is freed from sin and death” (Gospel Outlines, subject one hundred thirty-six, The Blessings of the Gospel, pp. 264–265). Today, allow the Lord to open your eyes, to turn you from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, and to free you from sin and death.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 69; *A Young Man in God's Plan*, Chapter 4.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Acts*, Message 51; Message 52, pp. 455–457; Message 53, pp. 460–463; Messages 56–60; 62–69; *A Young Man in God's Plan*, Chapter 4; Acts 23:11, footnote 4; Acts 26:16, footnote 1; Acts 1:8, footnote 3.

Lesson 9—Romans—The Gospel of God

OBJECTIVE: To see that the full gospel of God includes Christ's judicial redemption, His organic salvation, the Christian life, and the church life.

SYNOPSIS: Since the subject of Romans is the gospel of God, Romans gives us a clear picture both of the means and the goal of God's salvation. The means of God's salvation is His judicial redemption and organic salvation, and the goal is to gain sons conformed to Christ and built together as the Body of Christ. All those who have begun in this wonderful salvation will reach its goal. In Romans we see how Christ continues to work after His resurrection as the Spirit within man. Romans unveils to us the Christian life and the church life. Praise the Lord for this "fifth gospel"!

BACKGROUND: Though the young people have been around the church life all their lives, the basic vision of what we are doing and how we are different from traditional Christianity is unclear to them. This lesson is necessary both to speak the truth concerning the gospel of God (making application to them) and also to contrast this gospel with that of mere judicial redemption.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 1–16.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In the book of Romans, Paul gives us a clear picture of the goal of God's salvation and the way God has for us to reach His goal. Therefore, Romans might be called "the fifth gospel," for it portrays how Christ continues to work after His resurrection for man's salvation. "We need the fifth gospel, the book of Romans, to reveal the subjective gospel of Christ. Our Christ is not merely the Christ in the flesh after incarnation and before resurrection, the Christ who was among His disciples....The book of Romans is the gospel of Christ after His resurrection, showing also that He is now the subjective Savior in His believers. So, this gospel is deeper and more subjective" (Life-study of Romans, Message 2, pp. 17–18). In Romans, Paul presents the gospel of God in a step-by-step, thorough, and complete manner.

I. As the gospel of God, Romans reveals God's full salvation in Christ, including judicial redemption and organic salvation, which makes us God's full-grown sons

A. Romans reveals the foundation of God's salvation—Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–26; 5:8–9

The foundation of God's salvation is Christ's redemptive death on the cross, which judicially satisfied all of the demands of God's righteousness. Because of this, we can also say that the foundation of our salvation is God's righteousness. The very righteousness by which God had to condemn us, now requires and demands that God justify and save us. Righteousness is the surest and strongest foundation possible for our salvation, for God can never be unrighteous. (For more detail on this point, read Life-study of Romans, Message 57). All that God accomplishes for us in His salvation is based upon the foundation of righteousness which has been established through Christ's redemption.

B. Romans reveals the process of God's salvation—Rom. 5:10, 17

Many Christians consider that salvation involves only the justification and eternal security mentioned above. It is a wonderful thing to be freed from eternal punishment, but God's salvation includes much, much more than that. As mentioned, God's justifying work through Christ's redemptive death is but the foundation for God's salvation; it is

only the preliminary work necessary for us to experience God's full salvation, which involves being saved in His life (Rom. 5:10). The process of God's salvation is clearly presented in Romans as something inward and organic. It even works to save us metabolically! Romans reveals that the process of God's salvation is by the growth and spreading of the divine life within our being—from our spirit to our soul, and even to our body. Use the diagram of the three circles to illustrate this. Many terms are used to depict the different stages of God's organic salvation as portrayed in Romans, such as sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. All these terms, however, refer to the same process of God's organic salvation by life.

C. Romans reveals the goal of God's salvation—Rom. 8:19, 29–30; 12:1–5

Romans reveals that the goal of God's salvation is that we become full-grown sons of God built up together as the Body of Christ. "The basic thought of this book is that God is making sons out of sinners to form a body for Christ that He may be expressed....God's eternal plan is to produce many sons for Himself by means of Himself as their life....This, however, is still not the ultimate goal of God's purpose. The ultimate goal of His purpose is to build all these sons together into one Body to express Christ. God is making sons out of sinners to form the Body to express Christ. This is a full statement of the underlying concept of the book of Romans" (Life-study of Romans, Message 32, pp. 377–378). The book of Romans ends with the sons of God living the Body life practically within the local churches.

II. God's full salvation is carried out in us by Christ as the Spirit based upon what Christ as a man accomplished on the cross—Rom. 8:1–16

In Romans, Paul shows how Christ works out His salvation in us as the Spirit, based upon what He accomplished as a man on earth in the first stage of His ministry, particularly through His death on the cross.

A. Based upon Christ's fulfillment of God's righteous requirement through His death on the cross, Christ as the Spirit has entered our spirit, making it life—Rom. 8:10b

Christ's redemption cleared away the unrighteous situation we were mired in and cleansed us, clearing the way for God to enter into us as life. When we believe and receive through faith what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross, we spontaneously receive Him as the Spirit into our spirit. Thus, regeneration is based upon justification, and immediately follows justification. Regeneration, which is based upon Christ's judicial redemption, is the beginning of our organic salvation.

B. As sons who possess Christ as life in our spirit, we shall be saved in His life and be conformed to the image of Christ as God's firstborn Son—Rom. 1:3–4; 5:10; 8:29

In Romans, Christ is not only the Spirit; He is also called the firstborn Son. Romans presents Christ's human life, death, and resurrection as a pattern for us all to pass through in order to enter into glory. When Christ finished this process, He was designated the firstborn Son of God in His humanity. As the man who became the firstborn Son of God, He became the prototype for the many sons of God. This is a key thought in the book of Romans. God's goal is to conform each of the many sons to the image of Christ so that they might become the many duplications of Christ. Because we have all entered into the

process of God's salvation, we all are going to reach this wonderful goal. By that time, we will all express Christ in a full way. What a wonderful destiny God has prepared for us in His salvation!

III. God's full salvation enables us to live both a Christian life individually and a church life corporately

A. The book of Romans unveils the Christian life—Rom. 1–11

The book of Romans shows us that the Christian life is a life of being saved organically by Christ as life. We should not try to be a Christian or to obtain salvation by works or self-effort. The Christian life is based upon what Christ has accomplished and is carried out by Christ as life. In the Christian life, Christ is everything. (This is why Paul argues so strongly in Romans against people who say we can earn salvation by keeping the law.)

B. The book of Romans unveils the church life—Rom. 12–16

When people read the book of Acts, they may wonder how it is possible for human beings to live such a corporate life. The church life seems so mysterious. In fact, the church life seems impossible. How could individual human beings give up their individuality and sacrifice everything to practice a corporate life? Romans, as the first book after Acts, explains how the church life is possible. For Christ to gain His corporate Body, the many sons of God must realize that the divine life within them is for the Body. For Christ to have His Body, there must be the church life. Therefore, the book of Romans ends with the practical issue of the divine life, which is the church life. Praise the Lord we are in the church life!

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: The saints in junior high school are not be too young to understand that the full gospel of God continues on to the constitution of the Body of Christ, which is expressed practically in the local churches. However, in order to strengthen their salvation experience (many of the junior highers may have been only recently saved and baptized), it may be helpful to focus primarily on Roman numeral I of this outline. There are two aspects of God's complete salvation as revealed in the book of Romans—God's judicial redemption and His organic salvation. By understanding these, the young people can gain an appreciation of how far God's salvation had to go in order to reach them in their fallen state, and how powerful His salvation is to bring us all on to fulfill God's purpose. Encourage the young people to daily experience God's salvation through confessing their sins and contacting the Lord to allow Him to grow in them (A helpful resource for this lesson is *God's Full Salvation, A Lesson Book*.)

GOSPEL APPLICATION: All human beings have two problems: they are sinful (dirty) and they are dead (empty, void of life) (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1). God created man as a vessel, a container to contain God as his content, but because of sin, man has been separated from God (Rom. 9:20–21; 1 Thes. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:21). Every human being is born this way. God's salvation in Christ takes care of both of these problems. Through His death on the cross, our sin is taken away and we are made clean, as though we had never sinned (1 Pet. 2:24a; John 1:29; Jer. 31:34; Psalms 103:12). All of our sins are washed away by the blood the Lord shed for us (Heb. 9:22). After such a cleansing, God can come into us and fill our spirit with His life (1 Cor. 6:11; John 6:63; Rom. 8:11b; 1 Cor. 6:17). When this happens, we begin to enter into and enjoy the process of God's organic salvation (Rom. 5:10b). This organic salvation will continue until every part of our being—spirit, soul, and eventually even our bodies—are saved in life through the spreading of His divine life within us (1 Thes. 5:23; Rom. 8:11). Do you want to continue your life dirty and empty? Receive the gift of salvation by which you can be fully cleansed and filled with God's life to become a son of God (1 John 3:1)! (The example of a soda bottle filled with

dirt, needing to be cleansed to contain the soda, can be used as an illustration for this lesson. However, it does not portray the ongoing organic process of salvation. For this further aspect of organic salvation, God's life spreading through the three circle diagram of our spirit, soul, and body might be helpful.)

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding that man needs a full salvation and that the complete salvation God has provided for man requires a long process of man's cooperation (II.B.3.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 32.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 1, pp. 10–15; Message 2, pp. 17–18; Message 9; Message 10, pp. 111–113; Message 32; Message 57; *Salvation in Life in the Book of Romans*, Chapters 1, 8; *The Crystallization of the Epistle to the Romans*, Chapter 4; *God's Full Salvation*, A Lesson Book.

Lesson 10—Creation Declares God

OBJECTIVE: To see that the divine characteristics in creation express God's intrinsic nature, and that by our having God and taking His way of restriction we are safeguarded from wickedness.

SYNOPSIS: Men have chosen to deny God because they love their evil works. To admit that God is real is to admit that He is their Creator, and hence, their Owner who has the right to rule in their lives. God has provided man with many undeniable proofs that He exists, and which even reveal what kind of God He is. God is seen in His creation. It is absurd to think that all that exists came into being by accident. Every item of creation bears the mark of God's handiwork. Paul states that creation makes known God's eternal power and His divine characteristics, and in Colossians we are told that all creation bears the intrinsic characteristic of having been carried out through Christ as the sphere of God's creation. To deny God as the Creator is the greatest foolishness. Those who preach evolution ask people to subvert the reasoning ability God has given to them to recognize Him. Eventually such persons descend to indulge in the grossest forms of sin, having given up the protection we have by taking God's way of restriction.

BACKGROUND: Darwin's theory of evolution has become a rival "gospel" that many embrace as a justification for a godless life-style. Because of its influence, many young Christians have even been led to believe that science disproves the Bible! Young people need to be inoculated against the evil influence of this world-view and assured that the gospel of God stands! Furthermore, we must see in this section of Romans that God has given us a way to restrict this wickedness that we may be protected and delivered from God's wrath stored up for those who choose to ignore God as their Creator and Savior.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 1–2.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

For thousands of years, mankind has marveled at the universe and credited its origin to a wise and powerful Creator. Just in the last hundred years or so, however, Satan has worked powerfully to nullify the witness of creation through means of the teachings of evolution and other philosophies. This lesson can help to inoculate against the evolutionary world-view that has provided so many young people of this age with an excuse for exchanging a healthy fear of God for a sin-indulging lifestyle.

I. Man knows God through creation—Rom. 1:19–21a

In the garden, Adam and Eve must have been constantly amazed at the new discoveries that greeted them day after day. The entire universe was above them, filled with shining luminaries "to give light on the earth" (Gen. 1:15), and around them were so many interesting and beautiful creations, including so much that was "pleasant to the sight" (Gen. 2:9). God's creation testified to them of God's greatness, power, wisdom, and loving care. After the fall, God's creation did not cease to exist. It has remained as a witness of who God is even though mankind has become separated from God. In fact, God's creation has been examined and investigated more thoroughly by every successive generation of mankind. Today, there is more to marvel at of God's creation than ever before. The more man investigates in any field (physics, biology, chemistry, medicine, etc.), whether at the level of a super-galaxy or at the level of a cell or an atom, the more man must marvel at the perfection and craftsmanship of every design in God's creation.

A. Both God's power and God's divine characteristics are clearly seen in the things God has made—Rom. 1:19–20

As mentioned above, creation testifies to man about what kind of God God is. He is not a small God or a weak God. He is absolutely competent and full of feeling. He is a God full of wisdom and full of power, a God who fills the universe and beyond, and yet He is a God who cares for us, who are infinitely small compared to Him. He cares for us even in the most minute detail. He is a God who has taken forethought about every detail of everything He has created, whether a fly or a mushroom. Surely in eternity He was planning, working everything out so that it all would work together in His purpose. In everything God created we can see planning and design. Paul says that the divine characteristics of God can be clearly seen in the things made. While many today try their best to dismiss the thought of conscious design in creation, the overwhelming testimony of creation points to a particular Designer. In fact, many scientists today are pointing to all the "coincidences" in nature as a clear "signature of intelligence" (such as the design of the DNA molecule, the laws of physics, or even of the earth as a perfect habitat for life over such a long period of time).

B. The testimony of creation leaves those who refuse to acknowledge God without any excuse—Rom. 1:20

The more anyone studies creation, the more he or she must admit there is a Creator. "Man can perceive the invisible things of God by observing the visible things created by Him. Both the eternal power of God and the divine characteristics that express God's intrinsic nature are manifested in God's creation. For example, the abundance of light in the universe shows that light is a divine characteristic, a divine attribute of the divine nature (James 1:17). The same is true of beauty and life" (Romans 1:20, footnote 2).

II. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness—Rom. 1:18

In Romans 1:18, Paul says that the wrath of God is revealed upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. The mystery of creation is God Himself. To deny this is a terribly unrighteous thing to do. The truth that such men hold down or suppress is the truth of God's existence as the primary reality of the universe. "This reality is the sure fact that God and His existence are proved by the creation, and it is the definite fact that men, being without excuse, can know God by the creation. This great reality, this great truth, should cause men to know God and thereby to glorify Him and thank Him (v. 21). However, instead of dealing properly with this reality, this truth, according to righteousness, in which God delights, men held down the truth in unrighteousness, which God hates, and did not approve of knowing God (v. 28). Therefore, they despised and rejected God, changing the glory of God into idols (vv. 21–23) and casting off self-restraint to fall without limit (vv. 24–32), so that they were given up, abandoned, by God (vv. 24, 26, 28)" (Romans 1:18, footnote 5).

A. The man who chooses to hold down the truth of God ends up being given up by God—Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28

The expression "God gave them up" is used three times in this chapter: in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. "The result of man's giving up God is man's being given up by Him. Those who give up God force God to give them up. According to this chapter God gives people up to three things: uncleanness (v. 24), passions of dishonor (v. 26), and a disapproved mind (v. 28). The consequence of such a giving up is fornication (vv. 24, 26–27), which violates

a governing and controlling principle and brings in confusion. Every kind of evil issues from this fornication (vv. 29–32)” (Romans 1:24, footnote 1).

B. Those who hold down the truth of God think of themselves as wise, but become fools—Rom. 1:22

Men who claim there is no God profess to be learned and wise, yet because they deny the truth of God, they become fools. Instead of glorifying the God who created them, they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles” (Rom. 1:23), i.e., they make idols for themselves. (All men worship something, either God or an idol.) Many today have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worship idols instead of God. How foolish this is!

C. Those who choose to hold down the truth of God descend step by step into an abyss of immorality, confusion, and chaos—Rom. 1:21–32

Romans 1:21–32 records how those who give up the preserving truth of God have opened the door of descent into a cesspool of sin and confusion. They are given up by God to uncleanness (fornication), passions of dishonor (homosexuality), and a disapproved mind which is capable of all kinds of wickedness. This is clearly seen in our society today. The root of all of society’s problems is that God is not honored or given His rightful place in man’s considerations. Instead of glorifying God and thanking Him, which is reasonable and fitting since He is our Creator, many people have given themselves over to vain reasonings. “Vain reasonings are the basic element in the daily life of fallen mankind” (Romans 1:21, footnote 2). Our society is saturated with a wrong attitude towards God, therefore it is rapidly descending into an abyss of sin.

D. The ultimate result of choosing to hold down the truth is being given up by God to a disapproved mind—Rom. 1:28

Man was created with a mind that could reason logically. When man chooses to ignore the truth, however, his mind loses its proper function and can no longer function as God created it. This is why the mind of the person who holds down the truth is called a “disapproved mind” in Romans 1:28. When people lose their ability to appreciate God in creation, they lose the most important function of their mind. A disapproved mind is a mind that is capable of every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, and evil (Rom. 1:28–32). When people hold down the truth of God in unrighteousness, eventually they descend to the lowest level of depravity. There is ample evidence of this happening in our society today. What we see today in our culture is the fruit of a philosophy which denies God.

III. God has provided a way of restriction to preserve us from evil and keep us from falling under God’s wrath—Rom. 1:18–22; Psa. 19:1

Herein lies the practical application of this lesson for the young people. We can be saved from the wrath of God by taking His way of restriction in our daily life as revealed in Romans 1–2. In these chapters, we see that the wrath of God is stored up for the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). It is not righteous to deny the existence of God, to refuse to thank God, to ignore the accusations of or conscience, or to use twisted reasonings to justify our sins. Yet these same verses also show us that there is a way of restriction, a practical way that we may take that will preserve us from wickedness that we may be delivered from the wrath of God. This way of restriction is of five aspects: 1) to know God by His creation

as the source of all things (Rom. 1:19–20; Isa. 44:24; Acts 17:24); 2) to hold the truth in righteousness, approving of keeping God in our full knowledge, which means we must glorify, thank, worship, and serve God (Rom. 1:18, 28); 3) to obey the laws of nature (Rom. 2:14–15); 4) to listen to conscience (Rom. 2:15); and 5) to care for the proper reasonings in our mind (Rom. 2:15).

A. We can appreciate and know God through the testimony of His creation—Rom. 1:19–20; Psalms 19:1

The first aspect of God's way of revelation is to know God by His creation (Rom. 1:19–20). God is the source of all things (Isa. 44:24; Acts 17:24; 1 Cor. 8:6). The first thing we must learn as young people is to have a proper appreciation of the wonders of God's creation (Psalms 19:1–4a), particularly in how He created our physical body (Psalms 139:14). When we appreciate the wonder of God's creation, we will spontaneously recognize, appreciate, worship, and thank God as our Creator (Psalms 100:1–5). Perhaps the young people could be given simple assignments to find out everything they can about a particular function of the body, such as sight, hearing, or the function of a muscle, etc., and then give a brief report. Then there should be some word of appreciation to the Lord! Perhaps some brothers or sisters in your locality are in some field of medicine or science in which they can give examples of the wonders of God's creation. We need to develop the habit of seeing and appreciating God's design in His creation. May the Lord save us from the influence of the age which unconsciously cheats us from knowing God in this way.

B. We must hold the truth in righteousness, approving of keeping God in our full knowledge—Rom. 1:18, 28

The existence of God is proved by His marvelous creation, and "it is the definite fact that men, being without excuse, can know God by the creation. This great reality, this great truth, should cause men to know God and thereby to glorify Him and thank Him [Rom. 8:21]" (Romans 18:5, footnote 5). In a society where atheism is rampant, we must be those who glorify, thank, worship, and serve God.

C. We must obey the laws of nature—Rom. 2:14

God created man with a good nature that corresponds to God and His law. Although man is fallen, his good nature still desires to do good. We must not violate our own good human nature by practicing sin, but rather take heed to and observe our original God-created, good nature that corresponds to the law of God. If anyone lives according to the God-created good nature in him, the evil in him will be restricted.

D. We should listen to our conscience—Rom. 2:15

This is a big point that needs to be emphasized again and again to the young people. We must should listen to our conscience (Rom. 2:15). Man's conscience accuses him when he is wrong and excuses him when he does right. All of us must learn to take care of our conscience properly.

E. We must care for the proper reasonings in our mind—Rom. 2:15

We should not consider that it is spiritual to forsake the reasonings of our mind. The good reasonings in our mind accuse and condemn us when we purpose to commit wickedness and thereby protect us. Many people, when they are about to sin, try to reason with their conscience and try to justify to themselves what they are about to do. However, the only way we can justify a sinful act is to twist and subvert the proper reasonings of our mind. If

we appreciate, acknowledge, and thank God, obey the laws of the God-created nature in our being, listen to our conscience, and care for the proper reasonings of our mind, we will be preserved from a lot of evil. As young believers, we must practice these five aspects of God's way of restriction in our daily lives that we may be saved from every kind of evil.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: The younger brothers and sisters can be helped along the positive lines of appreciating the many marvels of intricate design found in God's creation. Examples can be seen everywhere, whether at the microscopic level of the atom, within the human body, in the world of nature, or in the vast expanses of the universe. Ask the young people if it is *reasonable* to believe that all the complex organisms we see around us could come into being by chance? How about the ability to see or to think, did these come about by accident? To think that everything came about by chance requires much more faith than it does to believe in a Creator. God's creation not only reveals the definite existence of God, but also manifests what kind of God He is: unspeakably wise, powerful, and caring. The intricate order and placement of planets in their orbits in the universe declare His wisdom. The immense power released at the splitting of a tiny atom gives us only a hint as to the awesome power of God. The power that causes the earth to rotate in space, and pulls man down by gravity is also a manifestation of God. His loving heart is expressed in His fine and detailed care for His creation (Matt. 6:28–29; Job. 38:39–41; Psa. 84:3). Even the wonderful way He designed our body and supplies its needs testifies of God's loving concern for us (Psa. 139:14; Matt. 6:30–32; 2 Cor. 9:9–10; 1 Peter 5:7). To give the young people such an appreciation of their wise, powerful, and loving Creator can both infuse them with the truth of God's creation as an antivenin to the evil teaching of evolution and cause both their faith and love in the Lord to increase. Praise our Creator!

GOSPEL APPLICATION: "There must be a God who rules and arranges everything. Otherwise, how can we have the wonderful order that we have today? The order of things can only speak of two possibilities. It can either be by chance, or it must be set into place by someone. It can only come by chance or arrangement. Either someone has arranged these things, or they have come about by accident. One of the two must be right....We cannot go away from this subject in a light way. We have to ask, 'If there is a God, what should we do?' It is not enough to believe that there is a God. Please read Amos 4:12: 'Prepare to meet your God.' Friends, are you prepared to meet your God? If you know that there is a God, you cannot live foolishly or sit idly. First, you must be prepared to meet your God. Friends, are you prepared to meet God? I hope that no one among us will be deceived by the atheists anymore. If there is a God, what must we do before we can meet Him? There is only one thing: believe in the Lord Jesus. This is the only way to meet God because He bestows grace to us through Christ. Apart from Christ, everyone is condemned" (*The Normal Christian Faith*, Collected Works, Volume 27, Appendix 2, pp. 201–202, pp. 210–211; Also see *Gospel Outlines*, Subject one hundred thirty-eight, "God May be Known," p. 268).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing that God is the Creator and Source of the universe (II.A.6.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 3; *The Crucial Points of the Truth in Paul's Epistles* (Elder's Training, Book 6), Chapter 2, pp. 16–18; Romans 1:18, footnote 5; Romans 1:20, footnote 2; Romans 1:21, footnote 2; Romans 1:24, footnote 1.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 3; *Life-study of Colossians*, Message 10; *The Crucial Points of the Truth in Paul's Epistles* (Elder's Training, Book 6), Chapter 2, pp. 16–18; *Experience of Life*, Chapter 8, pp. 166–169; *The Normal Christian Faith* (Collected Works, Volume 27), Chapter 1; Appendix 2, pp. 201–203; *Gospel Outlines*, Subjects 138, 259; Romans 1:18, footnote 5; Romans 1:20, footnote 2; Romans 1:21, footnote 2; Romans 1:24, footnote 1.

Lesson 11—Accounted Righteous by God

OBJECTIVE: To see that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

SYNOPSIS: The righteousness of God is absolute; He cannot compromise it nor can we find a way to get around it. To sinners, God's righteousness is a terrible thing, for God must deal with everyone according to the standard of His righteousness. God's righteousness was satisfied, however, when Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Now God is bound by His righteousness to justify everyone who believes into Jesus. Hence, the righteousness which condemned us now justifies us, for God is bound by His righteousness to save us. His righteousness has become the eternal security of our salvation. Furthermore, when we believe into Christ, we are transferred into Him and God sees us in Christ. Therefore, as far as God is concerned, we are as righteous as Christ is! Based upon our redemption in Christ, we can come forward to God with boldness, just as Christ does. Furthermore, it is based upon this righteousness that we become qualified to receive God as life, which is constituting us with God as our righteousness until we ourselves become as He is.

BACKGROUND: A clear presentation of God's righteousness is necessary both for their foundation of truth and their experience.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 3–5.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Formerly, because of sin, God was bound by His righteousness to condemn man. Now, because of Christ's redemption, God is bound by His righteousness to justify all those of the faith of Jesus Christ.

I. Because man disobeyed God, man comes under God's righteous condemnation—Rom. 1:18; 3:19–20

To mankind, the most terrifying thing in the universe should be the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:32a; 2:5). Because God is righteous, He will not and cannot bend His righteous standard for any person or for any case; all who sin must come under the penalty of His eternal judgment. God is obligated by His righteousness to condemn sin. God will not bargain with anyone regarding this outcome, nor can He be swayed by any emotional appeal; the soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:20a). If God were to compromise on this, His eternal purpose would be compromised and lose its high standard and value. God's administration in His economy is based upon righteousness (cf. Psalms 89:14; Hebrews 1:8).

II. No man can be justified before God by trying to keep the law—Rom. 3:20; Acts 13:39

Man knows that God is righteous, and that God will punish unrighteousness. Therefore, man tries to behave according to God's law, hoping to earn God's salvation (even though he is born a sinner and is prone to sin). Paul says in Romans that if a person could live a perfect life according to God's law, he would earn life eternal (Rom. 2:7). No one, however, can keep the law. Instead, everyone breaks the law continually, therefore falling more deeply under God's condemnation. Trying to keep the good law of God even causes man to sin more (Rom. 7:7–11)! In spite of what religion says, we cannot earn salvation by attempting to behave according to God's standard of righteousness. God gave the law to bring people to the realization that they are in a desperate and hopeless situation (Rom. 3:19–20) and in need of a Savior!

III. God freely accounts a man righteous out of faith in Christ—Rom. 3:21–22

A. Just as Abraham was justified by faith, we also are justified out of faith in Christ—Rom. 4:3, 8–9; 5:1

Abraham, the father of faith, was justified by faith before the law was given (Rom. 4:1–3, 13–16). “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). Many argue that we must do our best to keep the law, for God gave it to us for us to keep. It is true that God gave the law for man to keep, but not that man might be saved through it. God gave the law in order to expose man and shut man up under sin so that man might be ready to receive Christ as the Savior (Gal. 3:22–23). God accounted Abraham’s faith as righteousness long before He gave the law (Rom. 4:10–13). Abraham was not justified by any works according to law. His experience proves that salvation comes through faith and has nothing to do with the law. We also are justified through faith in Jesus Christ and not out of the works of the law (Rom. 4:5; 5:1).

B. God is held by His own righteousness to justify the man who receives Jesus Christ as his Lord—Rom. 3:24–26; 1:17; 4:25

Righteousness is terrifying to fallen mankind because God is bound by His righteousness to carry out His judgment upon every person who sins, regardless of how He feels. Even the Almighty One is bound by righteousness! How strong and absolute it is! Yet because it is so strong, the very righteousness of God becomes the hope and security to all who believe in Christ, for Christ satisfied all the righteous demands of God’s righteousness when He died on the cross for mankind’s sins. God cannot righteously demand payment from us for our sins, for Christ has paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. Now we can boldly declare to God that He must save us, for He is bound by His righteousness to do so! This makes God very happy, because it is His desire to see all men saved in Christ (1 Tim. 2:4). We, who were once terrified of the righteousness of God, now find ourselves assured and comforted by it, for it has become the eternal security, the guarantee, of our salvation!

C. God sees the man who believes as being as righteous as Christ—Rom. 4:3–5; 22–24

When we believe in Jesus as our Savior, our faith joins us to Christ and God sees us in Christ. When we believe into Christ, we put Christ on as a garment. To God, we are just as Christ is. His life is a life that matches God’s standard in every way. (This is why He could die on the cross for us.) God now sees us as righteous as He is! We can boldly come forward to God through Christ at any time, for God receives us in Christ. Christ’s judicial redemption is what gives us the right to have fellowship with God.

IV. Justification is the foundation for our participation in God’s organic salvation—Rom. 5:1–2, 10; 1:17

Because what Christ accomplished on the cross has satisfied the demands of God’s righteousness, the way has been made clear for man to receive God as life. Man lost the right to enjoy God as life because of sin. Our regeneration is possible because of Christ’s redemption. Our spirit is life because of righteousness. Eventually our entire being will become constituted with God as life. Christ’s righteous act is the foundation for every stage of God’s complete salvation. On the one hand, God’s righteousness through Christ’s redemption will remain the sure foundation for us to enjoy God unto eternity; on the other hand, through our enjoyment of God based upon this righteousness, we will become constituted with the righteous God until we are as righteous as He is. In eternity, we will match Him. The foundation for this process is the judicial redemption we

enjoy in Christ which satisfied God's righteousness. God is bound by His righteousness to save us to the uttermost until we are the same as He is!

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: In this lesson we want to focus on the positive aspect of God's righteousness. This can be a great release to those young people who may only know that God's righteousness is something to be feared. However, we need to see that after we believed into Christ, we were made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Impress the young people that just as God could never accept us outside of Christ, now that we are hidden in Christ, God can never turn us away or deny us (Col. 3:3; John 6:37). We are now justified in Christ (Rom. 3:26). Therefore, the very righteousness that kept us away from God now opens the way for us to come to God and enjoy Him (Rev. 22:14; Heb. 10:19)! Before we were saved, God was bound by His righteousness to condemn everyone in sin (Ezek. 18:20; Rom 6:23). Yet now He is bound by that same righteousness to accept and give Himself to all those in Christ. Praise God for His righteousness! For us who are in Christ, to stand so firmly on God's righteousness is to honor and respect the Lord. It is as if we are telling Him, "Lord, I believe in You and Your word more than my feelings. I may feel worthless and unqualified to come to God, but because You died for me I have been made as righteous as You are. Praise You Lord! Therefore, I come forward to the throne of grace right now to receive the supply." Such a stand honors the Lord and shames the enemy. To present the righteousness of God in this way to the young people will both strengthen them and give them a solid foundation to come forward with boldness to the throne of grace regardless of their feelings (Heb. 4:16).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: In this age, Satan has done a subtle, far-reaching work in an attempt to undermine and attack the foundation of God's throne: righteousness (Psa. 97:2). The tide of this age is to forsake righteousness. With regard to doing what is right before God, the thought of this age is that as long as we do good and are good persons everything will be fine. However, this degraded standard of righteousness is according to man's fallen mentality and is far short of the righteousness that God requires of man. Every man must be approved according to God's standard of righteousness, which is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). In God's eyes, the righteousness of man is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Even our goodness is counted as unrighteousness because it is outside of Christ, and it can never qualify us to enter the Lord's presence. The righteousness of Christ (the righteousness that man needs) is typified by the robe that was supplied by the father to cover the prodigal son (Luke 15:22). When we believe into the Lord Jesus, the Father covers us with Christ so we can boldly come into His presence. We need to receive Christ the Son as the God-satisfying righteousness to cover us so that we may be justified according to God's standard of righteousness and enter into the joy of eternal life (Luke 15:22 and footnote 5).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Experiencing redemption with its five major aspects of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, reconciliation, and positional sanctification (III.A.2.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 57.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 6, 57; *Salvation: A Lesson Book*, Lesson 13; *The Gospel of God*, Chapter 5.

Lesson 12—Reigning in Life

OBJECTIVE: To see that reigning in life is a matter of being ruled by the divine life within us.

SYNOPSIS: God's complete salvation is for us to reign in life by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. To receive the abundance of grace is to receive God Himself as our all-sufficient supply for our organic salvation. To receive the abundance of the gift of righteousness is to receive God's judicial redemption applied to us in a practical way. When we receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we experience God's complete salvation, which equals our reigning in life. To reign in life is a matter of being ruled by the divine life within us. We need to let the divine life reign in our being and in our living, in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. When we continually receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we reign in life and are truly healthy and normal in our experience of God's salvation.

BACKGROUND: Many young people may feel that reigning in life is a matter of our endeavoring. What a release for them to see that actually reigning in life is a matter of receiving and a matter of being under the ruling of the divine life! Reigning in life is equal to our experience of God's salvation.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 5–6.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. Outside of the realm of God's salvation, sin and death reign as kings—Rom. 5:14, 17a, 21

Ever since sin entered into the human race, it has reigned as an all-powerful king over mankind. Many people think that they are the master of their own lives, but when they try to do good, they find that sin is the real king within them (Rom. 7:13–16). Through sin a second king, death, was also brought into power. The reign of death does not merely mean that every human being must physically die: "Death in man causes him to be weakened to such an extent that he is dead, without any strength concerning the things of God. In this way, death reigns" (Salvation in Life in the Book of Romans, Chapter 7, p. 43). Every human being is born under the cruel dominion and bondage of sin and death.

II. God's complete salvation is for us to reign in life by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness—Rom. 5:17b

God's intention is to have a group of people who would exercise His dominion on the earth (Gen. 1:26). These people would not reign as kings by means of their own ability or power, but by receiving Christ as grace and by allowing Christ as grace to reign within them. When grace is allowed to reign as king within a believer, the believer reigns as a king over all things, including sin and death. (Sin and death do not make kings of those they rule over! Grace, however, when it becomes king in a person, makes that person to be a king also.) The experience of God's salvation as portrayed in the book of Romans is carried out as we are reigning in life and issues in our reigning in life.

A. To receive the abundance of grace is to receive God Himself as our all-sufficient supply for our organic salvation—Rom. 5:17b; John 1:14, 16; 2 Cor. 12:9

God, the great King who rules the entire universe, has gone through a process to become life and grace to us. As life and grace to us, God is in Christ to be our supply. For what does He supply us? To be kings! "Paul tells us that we were saved with a life which is not only divine but also royal and kingly. It is a life which is able to reign (5:17). We have received a life which not only gives us the ability to be spiritual, heavenly, and divine, but also gives us the ability to reign. In this life we reign over all the negative things" (To Be Saved in the Life of Christ as Revealed in Romans, Chapter 1, p. 10). To reign as kings, we must increase our capacity to receive grace, and even grace upon grace (John 1:16). When this grace reigns within us, and when we are under the ruling of the divine life, we ourselves reign as kings over sin and death, and even over all the circumstances in our lives.

B. To receive the abundance of the gift of righteousness is to receive God's judicial redemption applied to us in a practical way—Rom. 5:17b; Eph. 1:7

We can receive grace and reign in life as kings because we have received the gift of righteousness. The gift of righteousness resulted in our justification and qualifies us to receive the abundance of grace so that we may reign in life unto our complete salvation. "We reign in life in the spiritual, practical, and experiential union by the mingled spirit through the abundance of grace and the abundance of the gift of righteousness, with which God has gifted us (5:17b). Grace is for us to experience God's organic salvation, whereas the gift of righteousness is for God's judicial redemption" (Crystallization—study of the Complete Salvation of God in Romans, Message 4, p. 29). As we appreciate all that Christ has accomplished for us in His judicial redemption, we spontaneously are led to receive and enjoy Christ as grace. All those who have been justified should reign in life, for they all are positioned to receive and enjoy the abundance of grace. We have been redeemed and given grace so that we may be kings reigning in life. What a gift!

C. When we receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we experience God's complete salvation, which equals our reigning in life—Rom. 5:10, 17

Romans chapters 6—16 define what it is to reign in life. As we grow and reign in life through the process of God's organic salvation (our sanctification and transformation), we more than conquer in every environment (Rom. 8:35–37) and overcome every obstacle to practicing the Body life. For instance, as we reign in life, we find that we are able to receive and be built up with any kind of believer, no matter how different they may be from us in their background or practice. Whatever we need for our Christian life and our church life is supplied to us as we enjoy the supply of the abundant grace. (Please read pages 31–32, 36–37, 42–44 of the Crystallization—study of the Complete Salvation of God in Romans.)

III. Those who reign in life are experiencing God's complete salvation

A. To reign in life is a matter of being ruled by the divine life within us—Rom. 5:17; 6:12–14; Matt. 8:9

This is the burden of the lesson. In Roman numeral II.A., we saw that God supplies us with Himself as the abundance of grace. He comes in as the divine life, and this life is able to reign. We need to let the divine life reign in our being and in our living. Just as the centurion in Matthew chapter eight was in a position of authority by being under authority, we reign in life by being ruled by the divine life. When our thoughts, our

conduct, and our living are ruled by the divine life, then we reign over sin and death; sin and death have no hold over us. When our thoughts and emotions are ruled by the divine life, no circumstance can bring us down (Rom. 8:35–39). Therefore, we should check with ourselves; are we under the ruling of the divine life in everyday matters, such as how we dress, what we choose to do with our free time, or how we interact with those around us? If so, we are practically reigning in life. Those who see us will see someone reigning for God on the earth.

B. To progress in God's complete salvation, we must continually receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness—Rom. 5:17; 6:16

"The life we have received does not merely save us from a few things; rather, it enthrones us as kings to reign over all things. This is much higher than being saved in life. We have received righteousness objectively, but we still need to continually receive the abundance of grace so that we can reign in life subjectively. This reigning is defined in chs. 6–16; all the matters expounded there are the issue not of our endeavoring but of our receiving the abundance of grace" (Romans 5:17, footnote 3). Every one of us is a potential king, but will we remain only potential kings, kings in theory? Many of us may only know of God's salvation in a mental way and not be aggressive to lay hold of this gift God has given to us. God created us in His image for His expression (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:29–30), but He further desires and expects that we would exercise His dominion as kings ruling for Him on the earth (Gen. 1:26). Image is for dominion as well as for expression. If we do not grow out of our spiritual infancy through the stages of God's organic salvation portrayed in Romans 6–16, we will not be able to rule with Christ when He returns. If we do not exercise to reign today through the grace and life we have received, we will not be qualified to reign as kings in the coming kingdom.

C. Reigning in life is a test for us to see whether we are healthy and normal in our experience of God's salvation

"To know whether we are truly experiencing God's organic salvation, we must see if we are reigning in Christ's life" (The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life, Message 4, p. 45). If we are not reigning in life, we may know that we are not progressing in God's complete salvation. We may think that we are healthy and normal Christians, but if God were to show us our real condition, we might be shocked. The real test of a believer's condition is the degree to which they are reigning in life. If we are being reigned over by sin and death, we may know that our experience of God's salvation is short. "We have received righteousness objectively, but we still need to receive continually the abundance of grace (the processed Triune God as the consummated Spirit) that we may reign in life subjectively" (The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life, Message 4, p. 46). We are all saved objectively, but now we must go on to allow Christ as life and grace to grow and reign within us subjectively. As we are experiencing God's organic salvation in this way, we will not only be saved from the dominion of sin and death; we will also positively reign over all things. "When we reign in life, we are all-transcending in Christ's victory in all circumstances" (The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life, Message 4, p. 49). May we all seek to be such normal, healthy, reigning believers.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: The young people need to be continuously led to a rich enjoyment of the Lord by the exercise of their spirit in the young people's meeting. To enjoy the Lord in such a way is to receive grace and partake of God's organic salvation. This enjoyment issues in our reigning in life. The scope of this lesson with the young people, however, reaches beyond the occasional young people's meetings into their daily living. Impress them with what it means to reign in life over so many practical things. Use point A under Roman numeral three to lead the young people into the realization that in order to reign in life we firstly need to be ruled over by the divine life. Practically, the divine life "speaks" to us outwardly through our parents, older saints in the church life, and those in authority over us. Inwardly, we always need to pay attention and follow the Lord's speaking in our conscience (Acts 24:16). How can we do this? Surely not by self-resolve. Such efforts always end in failure (though in our experience, these failures are necessary to lead us away from our impotent self and point us to the powerful reigning life within our spirit). Only by being good receivers of God's abundant grace can we be supplied and strengthened to live as kings in this age, reigning in life over so many evil, negative, and distracting things.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: There is one thing all human beings are vulnerable to—death. Sin entered into the world through one man (Adam), "and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Death is not merely the ending of our human existence; it includes the feelings of weakness, emptiness, restlessness, depression, darkness, and pain. Death is terrible! However, there is one Person who has overcome death—the God-man, Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, it was not possible for Him to be held by death because He is the resurrection and the life (Acts 2:24; John 11:25). In fact, He partook of blood and flesh, that through death He might destroy the devil, who has the might of death (Heb. 2:14). This life is the only life capable of overcoming Satan, sin, and death. Whoever possesses this life will overcome too, but whoever does not have this life will suffer death forever (c.f. 1 John 5:12–13)! The good news today is that this life is available to us as a free gift. Romans 5:17b says, "...much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." We can reign in life by receiving Jesus Christ! While we reign in life, we experience all the wonderful by-products of this eternal life: strength, satisfaction, peace, rest, joy, happiness, comfort, etc. In other words, we are set free from the bondage of death and come under the ruling of the King of kings who loves us and gave Himself up for us. Receive Him to reign in life!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Living a life under Christ's kingship to reign in life over all things (III.H.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 46–47; *To Be Saved in the Life of Christ as Revealed in Romans*, Chapter 1.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 46–47; *Crystallization-study of the Complete Salvation of God in Romans*, Messages 4–6; *The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, Messages 4–5; *To Be Saved in the Life of Christ as Revealed in Romans*, Chapter 1; *Salvation in Life in the Book of Romans*, Chapter 7, p. 43.

Lesson 13—Freed to Marry Christ

OBJECTIVE: To see that man, as a wife, should be dependent upon God.

SYNOPSIS: God created man to complement Him as His counterpart, His bride. For this purpose God made man in His image with a spirit so that man might live in oneness with God. Man, however, became separated from God due to the fall. Man was created to be the dependent party, but the fallen person (the independent self, the “old man”) sought to fill the role of God as the husband as well. When Christ died on the cross, He crucified the old man, thus freeing whoever believed into Him to marry another, even Christ! Thus, Christ’s death on the cross truly recovered man back to God. The law was given by God to expose fallen man’s inability to be a proper husband. We suffered under the law as long as we were bound to our old man as our husband. However, when our old man was crucified with Christ, we were freed from the law! Praise the Lord! We no longer are bound to our old man as our husband and person; instead, we have been recovered to marry Christ as our Husband and Person.

BACKGROUND: Although this topic is profound, it is the experience of the young people. Many times in the meetings we hear an exhortation or charge and determine to do something for the Lord. However, as soon as we determine something and begin to try to carry it out in ourselves, we are making ourselves independent of the Lord. We need to learn to tell the Lord, “Lord, I cannot make it. You are my Husband. You have to fulfill this word for me and in me.” Then we are dependent on Him and the Lord can begin to operate.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 6–7.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In order to share this lesson on Romans 7:1–4, two key matters must be understood. The first is the dual status of believers, and the second is the proper understanding of the phrase “the law regarding the husband” (Rom. 7:2). Therefore, before ministering from this portion of the Word, the serving ones need to thoroughly assimilate Message 12 of the Life-study of Romans (especially pp. 141–149). It would be helpful to have the young people read from the footnotes in the Recovery Version during the lesson to further make clear and strengthen the thought and burden of what is being shared.

I. Our old husband (the old man) died, freeing us to marry Christ—Rom. 6:6; 7:1–3

A. God created man to be His wife—Isa. 54:5

The entire Bible is a romance depicting man as the wife and God as the husband. God’s intention in creation was to gain a bride who would be His counterpart.

B. After man fell, he assumed the position of husband for himself

1. Although he was created to be a “female” towards God, man assumed the position of husband after the fall

Rather than return to God after the fall, man chose to remain independent and thus rejected God from being the husband. When a person does this, he automatically assumes the role of husband in his own life.

2. The Bible calls man in his fallen, independent state “the old man”—Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22

In fallen man it is the self which came about in man’s soul through the fall that assumes the role of husband. Man’s independent self is called “the old man” in the

Bible, not because of age, but because by nature the old man is decrepit and decaying. Since the old man is separated from God, who is the source of life and is always new, he can only be old. Our unfortunate spirit, which remained in us as the part which was meant to be joined to God, now lived under the headship of the self, the old man, acting as the husband.

C. When we were crucified with Christ, it was our old man that was crucified—Rom. 6:6, 8

- 1. When Christ died on the cross, our old man (our old husband) was crucified with Him—Rom. 6:6**

According to Galatians 2:20, when we were crucified with Christ, it was the old "I" that was crucified, which is the old man (Rom. 6:6). The self, the old man, and the "I" are all terms that refer to different aspects of man in his fallen and independent state. What then is left of us after we experience Christ's crucifixion? We are! When we are freed from self, the old man, and the old "I," we experience a real liberation to be who we were meant to be. We experience a "new I" (see Galatians 2:20, footnote 2)!

- 2. When Christ died on the cross, the part created to be a wife to God was freed from the part that had usurped God's place as husband—Gal. 2:20**

When we experience Christ's liberating death, our spirit is released from its bondage to the usurping, independent old man. Hallelujah! Our old man was crucified on the cross with Christ! Our spirit is free to be joined to Christ!

D. Because our old husband (our old man) died, we were freed from the law that God had given to fallen man—Rom. 7:1–3

- 1. God gave the law to expose fallen man (the old man as the husband)—Rom. 7:13–15**

Since our old man assumed he was competent to fill in as husband in place of God, God gave man the law to expose his utter inadequacy and inability to be such a husband. Our old man, however, would never give up usurping the position of the husband, and sought to use the law to justify himself, to prove that he could live as God, yet independent of God.

- 2. When our old man was crucified, we were freed from both him and the law given to him—Rom. 7:2, 4**

As those created by God, we possess a spirit, a soul, and a body. When man fell, his soul became the self, which means our personality became fully identified with the self, rather than our spirit. When our old man, our independent self, sought to maintain its existence by using the law, we (the wife part of us) went along with this. However, now that our old man has been crucified, we are no longer bound to "the law of the husband." We are free from the law that our old husband was endeavoring to keep. "Free from the law—oh, happy condition" (Hymns, #1001)!

- E. Because our old husband (our old man) has died, we are free to marry another husband, even the resurrected Christ, who gave Himself up for us—Rom. 6:8; 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–27; Rev. 21:9–10**

This is a real romance. We were meant for Christ, but we were stolen away from Him and were in a hopeless situation, married to the wrong person! Christ, however, rescued us by crucifying our old man on the cross through His own death, so that we might marry Him in resurrection. Hallelujah!

II. As those married to Christ, we can bear fruit to God—Rom. 7:4

- A. Those married to the old man can only produce death—Rom. 7:5**

When our old man was our husband, we had no ability to produce anything that would be pleasing to ourselves or to God. Our life only brought forth death.

- B. Those married to Christ can bring forth God as fruit to God—Rom. 7:4**

As those married to Christ in resurrection, we can bring forth fruit to God. This fruit is just the expression of the divine attributes in our human virtues. "...God is brought forth by us as the fruit, the overflow, of our life" (Romans 7:4, footnote 3). This expression of God brings forth praise to God.

- C. As those married to Christ, we need to be joined to Christ as our Husband—Eph. 5:23–24; Col. 1:18; 2:19**

- 1. We must reject any independence on our part which would restore our old man as the husband**

If we do not allow Christ to be our Husband, if we are not submitting to Him in all things in our life, if we do not allow Him to choose for us and direct us, then we again take our old man as our husband. Human beings must have a husband. If it is not God, it will be ourselves. When we are in ourselves and separated from Christ in experience, Christ is not our Husband in practice.

- 2. As a wife, we must exercise dependence upon Christ in all things, and thus bring forth fruit to God—Rom. 7:4**

In light of all this, we should consecrate ourselves again to the Lord and give ourselves again to Him. We must take Him as our Husband. The husband in a couple is the head of the wife. Ephesians tells us we should hold to Christ as the Head in all things (Eph. 4:15). May we all become so sensitive to His feeling and desire within us in all things, and may we learn to come to Him in everything for His supply and leading. As our Husband, He is responsible for all the things concerning us.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Man was created to be dependent upon God. Our relationship to God is as a wife to a husband. In the marriage relationship ordained by God, the husband is the head to be the supply to the wife. The message of the world, however, is to live as independently as possible. Such people claim that they do not need any "crutch" such as to believe in the Lord. Yet every human being needs God! Our declaration to this age should be, "We need God!" If the source of our living is not God, it is our self. This is an insult to God. Imagine if a husband found out that his wife was being supported by another man! How terrible! To trust in ourselves is a form of idolatry, for it puts us in the place of God. Yet that is often how we live: instead of turning to Him, we turn to other sources, including our own mind, ability, etc. We have a wonderful Husband who is fully able to meet our every need. We

are joined to the Lord and are one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Because of this, we can know God as everything to us. He is our "I am." He is like a blank check given to us. We only need to fill in the "amount" of whatever we need, and we can draw from the rich "bank" of supply who is the Triune God. Unlike the people in the world, we are not striving to become independent; rather, we are striving to become utterly dependent upon God, our wonderful Husband and rich supply.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: As our maker, God is the unique Husband in the universe, desiring to supply all our needs (Isa. 54:5). When He put the first man Adam in the garden of Eden, He revealed that His intention was to be his provision, protection, and pleasure. Furthermore, God wanted to be his very life, as shown by God's placement of man in the garden, in front of the tree of life. However, because of man's fall, he was cut off from God as his husband and provider. This is why man now seeks many other things to be his provision, protection, and pleasure (i.e. careers, weapons, movies, etc.). Furthermore, by birth man possesses the life handed down to him from Adam: a life independent of God. As a result, man lives a miserable life today, dependent on himself. But Hallelujah, our compassionate God embodied Himself in the man Christ Jesus to both save us from the fallen life of Adam and present Himself to us as our wonderfully rich Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15) to satisfy all our needs! Repent for living a life independent of God, and open to the lovely Lord Jesus as your Husband and Provider to receive all that He is and has done for you.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 12.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 12; *Life-study of Genesis*, Message 18, pp. 232–236; Message 20, p. 263.

Lesson 14—Three Lives and Four Laws

OBJECTIVE: To see that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

SYNOPSIS: Man is regulated by the law of good in his mind and the law of sin in his members. Those who have received God's life also possess the law of the Spirit of life in their spirit. The law of good in man's mind agrees that the law of God is worthy for him to keep, but whenever the law of good causes man to attempt to keep the law of God, the law of sin in man's members rises up to defeat the law of good in the mind and to lead man into sin. Since sin is Satan personified, it is much stronger than the law of good, which is only of the created man. After a person is saved, however, he can live by another, higher law—the law of the Spirit of life, which is in his spirit. Therefore there are three laws according to the three kinds of life (satanic, human, and divine) which operate within the three parts of the believer, in addition to the law of God outside of him. We experience the operation of the law of whatever life we are living by. When we are in our good mind trying to satisfy its demand to do what is good and right, we are defeated and come under the power of the law of sin in our members. Therefore we must learn to set our mind upon our spirit and to live, move, and walk in our spirit so that we might express God in our human life.

BACKGROUND: Young people need to be delivered from the continuous cycle of bondage and condemnation in trying to do good, yet suffering defeat from the law of sin and of death. "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). We have the strongest life with the strongest law in the universe. Every day we need to be filled with the Spirit and live by the Spirit to overcome the law of sin and of death.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 7–8.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In order to prepare for this lesson, the serving ones should get into The Knowledge of Life, Chapter 9.

I. There are three lives within man and four laws related to man

Three of the laws are laws pertaining to a particular life and nature. They operate spontaneously as a characteristic of each particular life, whether human, satanic, or divine. They are laws in the sense of being scientific laws, like the law of gravity. The law given by God to Moses, however, is simply a set of outward demands given to expose man's true condition.

A. The law of good is located in man's mind and is according to man's God-created nature—Rom. 7:22–23

Man was created by God, and corresponds to God. Therefore, something in man agrees with and seeks after what is right and good according to God and hates what is contrary to God's nature. This law of good in man's mind seeks to do the law of God, because the law of God is according to God, and therefore it is very good. This is why every human being agrees that God's law is good and desires to do what is good in God's eyes.

B. The law of sin is located in man's flesh and is according to the satanic nature—Rom. 7:17–18, 20, 23; 8:2b

When man fell, another life with another nature entered into him. This life and nature is of Satan, God's enemy. Satan's life is characterized by rebellion, and therefore its law is

called the law of sin. Whenever the law of good in our mind tries to do the good it knows it should do, the law of sin in our members does not agree, and rises up to cause us to do just the opposite. In this way it demonstrates its mastery over us. The law of sin is much stronger than the law of good in our mind, for the satanic life is much stronger than the human life. Therefore, every human being (especially the person who tries to do good) discovers that rather than doing the good, he or she is overpowered to do the evil that goes against the law of good within them. When it comes to sin, we are powerful; when it comes to doing that which pleases God, we are impotent. If these two laws were the only laws within us, we would be doomed to a miserable and wretched existence as slaves serving a law that is against our very created constitution.

- C. The law of God outside of man is also according to God's nature, but only makes demands without giving any supply to keep those demands—Rom. 7:12, 14, 16**

In our God-created life, we acknowledge that God's law is good and that we should keep it, but we find that every time we try to keep it, we cannot. In fact, every time we try to keep it, the law of sin demonstrates its control and power over us. Man's effort to keep the law only causes him to become worse! Man, with the law of good in his mind, the law of God outside of him, and the law of sin and of death in his flesh, is in a situation of tremendous conflict. He wants to do good; he tries to do good, but he cannot overcome the law of sin and of death. Surely this is a wretched situation to be in (Rom. 7:24)!

- D. The law of the Spirit of life is located in our spirit and is according to God's nature—Rom. 8:2**

There is another law that is more powerful than the law of sin and of death. After we are regenerated, God's life with God's nature enters into our spirit. The life of God is the highest life, and it possesses the highest law, the law of the divine life. The law of the divine life can overcome the law of sin and of death. The law of the divine life is called "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2), and when we are under its rule we are freed from the law of sin and death. Those who live according to the law of the Spirit of life find that they spontaneously fulfill the demands of the law of God. Therefore the law of God is not something for us to try to keep by our own life; it is something which can show us whether we are living a human life ruled by the law of sin and of death or by the law of the Spirit of life. Praise the Lord for a third life with a third nature and a third law! Whenever we touch the Spirit of life, we are delivered to live a life that is fully according to God by means of God's own life! God is the way He is because of His life. If we possess God's life, we possess the very thing that causes God to be the way He is! We cannot imitate God, but we can be as He is by living according to His divine life which is now within us. For us to imitate God would be like a monkey trying to imitate a man. In order for a monkey to live like a man and not like a monkey, it would have to receive a human life and learn to reject the monkey life. Every life has its law. The apple tree produces fruit according to the law within the life of the apple tree. A dog spontaneously growls or wags its tail because of a law within the dog life. The operation of such a law is spontaneous and automatic; it is something governed from within according to its life. Praise the Lord we now have God's life! The more we allow this life to grow in us, the more we spontaneously live out the law of the divine life.

II. We live according to the spontaneous operation of the law under which we place ourselves

Within us today we have three lives with their three laws. We are faced with a choice as to what life we will live by. If we choose to live according to our good nature, the law of good in our mind, then the law of sin and of death will automatically operate to bring us down. If, however, we choose to turn to our spirit and live by Christ, the law of the spirit of life will operate in our being and we will be freed from the law of sin and of death. Those who possess God's life are again in the situation that Adam and Eve were in when they lived in the garden of Eden with the two trees. Every moment we can choose the tree which brings us under the reign of the law of sin and of death, or the tree which brings us under the reign of the law of the divine life.

A. The secret to living according to God's desire is first to recognize that we have no power in ourselves to do anything for God or according to God—Rom. 7:18–19, 21–24

After seeing such a vision as Paul presents in Romans 7, we should be fearful of trying to do good just as much as we fear doing evil! The problem is not with the good law of God; the problem is with the source from which we try to fulfill its requirements. When we try to do good, it triggers a reaction of the law of sin and death that "the evil is present with me" (Rom. 7:21). Therefore we should forget about trying to be good. To try to do things as a good person without God is a great trap. Once a person falls into this trap, he is distracted from God as life. In ourselves we have no ability to reach the standard God presents in the law. We must fully give up trying to keep the law!

B. After recognizing this fact, we must set our mind on the Spirit in our spirit in order to allow the Spirit to operate His law in us—Rom. 8:4–6

Instead of trying to do things which we think God would want us to do, we should be desperate to live by God Himself as life! In order to do this, we must learn to set our mind upon the spirit. If we are people focused on God as life, we spontaneously will live a life according to the law of the Spirit of life. Such a life will certainly be well-pleasing to God and will not require any self-effort. Paul uses the term "law of" in these verses to highlight the fact that all of this is spontaneous! If we live in the flesh, we will be brought under the power of a law that will spontaneously cause us to sin. If we live in the spirit, we will be brought under the power of a law that will spontaneously cause us to live a life that expresses God and fulfills God's purpose.

C. After we have entered into the realm of life where the law of life operates, we need to abide there by continually following and walking by the Spirit in our spirit—Rom. 8:4, 6, 14

As soon as we rise up in the morning, we need to set our mind upon our spirit so that the law of the Spirit of life might operate in our being. As we are living in such a realm and under such a law, Satan will do his best to distract us back to the vicious cycle of living by our own life, trying to do good things, yet falling into sin. When we find ourselves in this realm, we simply need to come back and again set our mind upon the spirit. As soon as we touch the Spirit of life, the law of the Spirit of life delivers us again and enables us to live a life that expresses God and is fully according to God in every way.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: To present this lesson clearly, it would be helpful to use the three-

circle diagram of the parts of man with the location of the three lives, and their respective laws, clearly labeled (placing the fourth law, the law of God, outside the circles). However, before addressing the spiritual application of the diagram, explain to the young people that in the physical, scientific world, the stronger life and law, when activated, always wins over the weaker one. (The example of an airplane using the law of aerodynamics to overcome the law of gravity is helpful in understanding this principle.) Then, using the diagram, explain how the law of good in man's mind corresponds with the law of God outside of man and desires to fulfill it (Rom. 7:21–22). Yet, as it tries to do the good that it desires, it is overcome by a stronger law, the law of sin and of death in man's flesh (Rom. 7:23; 8:2b). (Although the younger saints still need the operation of the law to keep them until they come more into the realization of how to live and walk by the Spirit, they should be aware of the fact that sin is much more powerful than their resolve to do good.) The only way to overcome the law of sin and of death in their flesh is by the operation of another, stronger law—the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). Point out that the location of the law of the Spirit of life is in their spirit. Therefore, when we wake up in the morning, the first thing we should do is turn our mind to our spirit by calling on the name of the Lord. From morning revival to the end of the day, by setting our mind on our spirit, the law of the Spirit of life will free us in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Every life has its law. Man was created by God according to His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, within man is a law that corresponds with the law of God and desires to do the good contained in it (Rom. 7:16b). However, when man fell, Satan injected his life with its law (the law of sin and of death) into man's body (Rom. 5:19a; 7:17, 23). This law of sin and death in man's flesh is stronger than the law of good in man's mind. Therefore, man does not do the good which he wills, but the evil which he does not will, this he practices (Rom. 7:19). (Some simple examples such as knowing that it's not right to steal, lie, talk back to your parents, cheat on a test, etc., but doing it anyway, may be used at this point to show the operation of the law of sin and of death in our flesh defeating the law of good in our mind.) As a result, our conscience rises up to condemn us for not doing the good we know we should do (Rom. 2:15). Such slavery to sin results in a cycle of sin and condemnation that repeats itself until we realize our hopeless, wretched condition and our need to receive a savior with the highest life and highest law that can overcome the law of sin and of death in our flesh (Rom. 7:24a). Who can deliver us (Rom. 7:24b)? "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) on the cross. After dying on the cross, Christ Jesus rose up in resurrection to become the Life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) that we may receive Him into our spirit as life (John 1:26; 3:6; 11:25). This life is God Himself, possessing the highest law—the law of the Spirit of life—able to overcome the law of sin and of death in our flesh (Rom. 8:2). "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Receive Him, be freed from your wretched condition, and give thanks to God "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding the mingled spirit (II.D.).

BACKGROUND READING: *The Knowledge of Life*, Chapter 9.

REFERENCES: *The Knowledge of Life*, Chapter 4, pp. 30–35; Chapters 9–10; *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 13–15; Message 67; *Life-study of Hebrews*, Message 37, pp. 418–426; Messages 63–64; Message 66, pp. 734–739.

Lesson 15—The Spirit with Our Spirit

OBJECTIVE: To reveal to the young people how crucial it is to follow the Spirit for their growth unto full sonship.

SYNOPSIS: The indwelling Spirit witnesses with the spirits of all those who are regenerated that they are children of God. After we are regenerated, God seeks to bring us on to maturity as His sons by His leading as the Spirit of life. Since God's life is the highest life with the highest consciousness, we can sense it within us. The more we follow the inner leading of the Spirit and take care of the sense of life within, the more we are designated as His sons. However, we do not grow in the divine life automatically. Growth requires our cooperation by setting our mind upon the spirit in order to sense the leading of the divine life and then by walking according to this leading.

BACKGROUND: The young people need many examples to see the difference between living according to the outward pattern of the Christian life and living according to the mingled spirit. This concept is fundamental, and is critical in distinguishing the Lord's recovery from Christianity.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 8.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God—Rom. 8:16

A. God the Spirit entered into our spirit at the time of our regeneration—John 3:6

B. From the day of our regeneration, the Spirit within our spirit witnesses to us that we are the children of God—Rom. 8:15–16

From the time we receive Christ and are born again, the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are God's children. Nobody needs to tell us this, for God Himself is our inner witness to this fact. Every genuine believer has the experience, particularly whenever they cry, "Abba Father." God responds to our calling Him "Father" by responding to us with the witness that we are His children.

II. The sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit—Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:25

A. The Spirit within every believer's spirit is life and seeks to give life—Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:45b; John 6:63a

As God's children, we possess God's life, which is just God Himself as the Spirit. As the Spirit within us, God is continually seeking to spread Himself as life within our hearts. The spreading of God as life within us equals our growth in life. We will always be God's children, regardless how much we grow in life, but those who grow in life mature to become God's grown sons. (Whether we are male or female, we all as children of God are growing to become God's sons to express God and inherit all that He has and is.)

B. Because every believer possesses the divine life, they possess its consciousness and have the sense of this life—Rom. 8:6; 2 Cor. 2:13

Every kind of life has its sense and level of consciousness. Since God's life is the highest life, it possesses the richest sense and highest consciousness. When we touch the Lord's life within us, we sense the Lord's feeling concerning many things. When we touch the divine

life within us and open to its sense, we immediately feel energized, enlivened, enlightened, and encouraged to follow its leading.

C. When we follow the Spirit's leading, we grow in life and are marked out as sons of God—Rom. 8:14

1. To follow the Spirit's leading is primarily to follow the inner sense of life, not outward signs or circumstances

Many Christians think that to follow the Spirit is to be watchful for outward signs or circumstances in their environment that would indicate what the Lord wanted them to do. To follow the leading of the Spirit, however, is primarily to follow the inward sense of life. "The divine life within us leads us constantly, not by signs or indicators, but by giving us an inward sense, feeling, or consciousness. Thus, Paul says, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.' If you are led by outward things, it does not prove that you are a son of God. However, if you are led by the inward sense of the divine life, it indicates that you are a son of God. We are the sons of God because we have the life of God. Why are the worldly people not the sons of God? Because they lack the life of God" (Life-study of Romans, Message 18, p. 221). The more we follow the leading of the Lord within us, the more we enjoy life and the more we grow in life as the sons of God. Serving ones may feel to linger on this point by giving examples of how occurrences (such as dreams, coincidences, or other unusual events) are not the Lord's primary way of leading. If we pay too much attention to these outward things, we may be distracted from the Lord's inward leading and become superstitious. The Lord leads us by His Spirit within for our growth unto sonship.

2. Those who follow the Spirit's inner leading bear the mark of God's sons

"Although the churches in the Lord's recovery do not post a list of outward regulations regarding dress, within you you have the divine life which makes you a son of God. When your friends, relatives, and classmates dress themselves in a devilish way, within you is a sense that does not allow you to dress yourself in that manner. This is the leading of the Spirit, the mark that designates you as a son of God" (Life-study of Romans, Message 18, p. 223). When we follow the Spirit by caring for the inner sense of life, we move and behave differently than those around us who do not have the Spirit, for we are motivated and directed by a hidden and mysterious source within which others do not possess. Such a living marks us as sons of the invisible God who is within us.

III. To be led by the Spirit, we must walk according to the Spirit by setting our mind on the spirit—Rom. 8:4, 6

A. We have the choice of setting our mind on the flesh or of setting our mind on the spirit

The Lord has come into our spirit, giving us a wonderful option. Before we were saved, we could only live in our flesh. Now that the Lord has come into us, we can choose to set our mind upon another source for our existence—our mingled spirit.

B. As we set our mind on our spirit, we become conscious of the sense of God's life within our spirit

When we set our mind upon our spirit, we are able to sense the leading of the Spirit which leads to our growth in life.

C. As we obey the sense of life within our spirit, we grow in life as the sons of God

The goal of God's economy is to produce many sons who are conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29). The goal of the Lord's leading within us is for us to grow in the divine life so that we might become His full-grown sons. Sons are more manifested in life than children are. The more we grow in our human life, the more we develop into the full expression of the human life. With the divine life it is the same. The more we grow in the divine life, the more we grow out of spiritual childhood to express God's life in full.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: If we want to grow in the Christian life, we must learn to follow the sense of the Spirit within. We can remain spiritual infants all our lives, or we can grow to become God's mature sons. We should not be satisfied just to know that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). We must grow to become the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). Before we were regenerated we lived our lives in and according to the human life, following our human thoughts and feelings. Now we must learn to live by another life—the divine life. The Spirit in us is the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). The more we follow the Spirit, the more we will receive its life-dispensing. This is the way to grow in life. As we follow the Spirit in this way, we will grow to maturity.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Whose son are you? Are you a child of God or of the devil? Practicing sin is not a matter of behavior but of whose children we are. Hence, it is a matter of life and nature. If you have never made the definite decision to receive the Lord Jesus as your life and thereby become a child of God, you are, by default, a child of the devil (John 8:44). Though you may possess good morals, good behavior, a high culture with a top education, if you have never received the life of God, you still remain a child of the devil. The truth in the word of God is speaking to you outwardly that you, by your natural birth, are a child of the devil awaiting the judgment of the lake of fire (John 8:44; Matt. 3:7; 23:33). Therefore the word cries out to you, "You must be born anew" (John 3:7). Outwardly, the word is declaring the truth and inwardly, right now, your conscience is witnessing and accusing you of being a sinner, not a child of God. As the question at hand is a matter of life, the only way of salvation is to receive a new birth with another life—God's life. Open to the Lord Jesus, call on His name, confess to Him that you are a sinner, and receive the Lord Jesus as the life-giving Spirit to regenerate you with the very life and nature of God to make you His child. Then instead of your conscience accusing you, your spirit will join with the indwelling Spirit of Christ to testify that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16), allowing you to intimately call God your Father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: His inward operation—experiencing the Lord within us and recognizing His speaking in our spirit (III.C.2.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 18.

REFERENCES: *Life Lessons*, Lessons 32, 34; *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 16, 18.

Lesson 16—A Living Sacrifice

OBJECTIVE: To show the young people the reasonableness of offering ourselves to the Lord to live the church life.

SYNOPSIS: Paul concludes the book of Romans with five chapters on the church life, indicating that the goal of God's full salvation is the church. In order for God's goal to be realized, we must offer our bodies to God and be transformed by the renewing of our mind. When we offer ourselves to Him in this practical way, He will transform us for the building of His Body and we will prove by our experience that His will, the church life, is good, well-pleasing, and perfect.

BACKGROUND: Sadly to say, many young people reach the end of high school and still do not have the view to give their lives for the church life. However, according to these verses, the most reasonable thing for us to do with our lives is to present our bodies to the Lord in consecration to live the church life. At this point, some of the young people may have never consecrated themselves, while others have. Regardless, everyone should see the reasonableness of this offering and recognize that their consecration gives God the ground to practically work in them and fulfill such a consecration. We consecrate, God carries it out.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 12.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. God saves us in His life for the sake of His purpose, which is the church, the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:22–23; 3:10–11; 5:25–27

"...[I]n the book of Romans we have five complete chapters that dwell on the matter of the church. Life is not for life—life is for the Body. Life is for the church. We have to be alert, for we can be veiled even by the best things.... I wish to point out that the church is Paul's final word in the book of Romans. When we listen to someone speak we always wait for his concluding word, and the concluding word in the book of Romans concerns the church. Therefore, if you stop at chapter eight you will miss a great deal, separating yourself from the final word of Paul's discourse. We must proceed all the way to Paul's conclusion. Why did Paul write the book of Romans? He did not write merely for justification, sanctification, or even for glorification. Romans was written ultimately and consummately for the church life. The consummation of the book of Romans is the church" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, p. 290).

A. The consummation of the book of Romans is the church

The church life is the consummate topic in Romans. We are growing in life and experiencing God's complete salvation so that we can live the church life.

B. The Body of Christ is the goal of God's salvation—Rom. 12:4–5

"God's goal is for us to live a Body life, which is a corporate life. His redemption, justification, and sanctification are for this goal. If we do not pay our attention to the Body life, we shall surely miss God's goal. To be redeemed, to be justified, to be sanctified, and to be conformed to Christ—all are for us to have the proper corporate life. We should not stop with the experiences of sanctification and conformation in Romans 8. We need to see that the experiences of sanctification and conformation in the Spirit are meant to bring us forward to Romans 12 that we may practice the corporate life" (Life-study of Romans,

Message 25, pp. 295–296). In this age, the corporate life is the church life; in eternity it will be the New Jerusalem.

II. It is most reasonable to offer ourselves to the Lord for His purpose—Rom. 12:1

“To offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is our most reasonable service....If we have a sober mind and if we intend to be reasonable, fair, and logical, then we certainly must have the church life. People who do not like to have the church life are the most foolish of people. To practice anything other than the church life is foolish, but to give up everything for the church life is logical and reasonable. Nothing is more reasonable than churching. To spend two dollars on a worldly item or amusement is foolish, but to spend two million dollars on the church life is reasonable. If I had a hundred lives, I would give them all for the church life. However, I would not give even the smallest fraction of my life to the worldly things, for to do that would be stupid. What a reasonable service it is to give ourselves to the church life! I can testify that I have been in the Lord’s work for more than forty years and that I do not have the slightest regret about it. Whenever I think about the church I am excited. Every time I think about the church life and about my ministry for the church life I am in the heavens. What a reasonable service it is!” (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, p. 298).

A. The apostle exhorts us through the compassions of God to present our bodies—Rom. 12:1

“Romans 12:1 says, ‘I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your most reasonable service.’ In 12:1 Paul speaks in a begging way, revealing the importance of the matter concerning which he is about to charge us. It unveils God’s desire and purpose. For centuries and ages God has had a particular desire—to have a body for Christ. Hence, the Apostle said, ‘I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God.’ Notice that it is not ‘compassion’ in singular, but ‘compassions’ in plural. In [Romans] 9:15 we have seen that compassion is richer and deeper than mercy. God not only has one kind of compassion, but many kinds of compassion upon us. He has had compassion on us in selecting us. He has had compassion on us in calling us, in saving us, and in bringing us into His life. As the previous chapters show, He has had many compassions on us in the past. It was through these compassions of God that the Apostle Paul begged us to present our bodies to God. If we realize the compassions of God and are moved by them, we shall do what the Apostle begged us to do” (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, pp. 296–297).

B. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice—Rom. 12:1

“In verse 1 Paul also begs us to present our bodies ‘a living sacrifice.’...[I]n the church life it is a question of sacrifice, of offering ourselves to God for His satisfaction. The church life as a whole is an offering for the satisfaction of God. Although many bodies are presented, the sacrifice is one. Why are there many bodies but only one sacrifice? Because the many members are one Body and the many believers are one church. Why does Paul use the word ‘living’? Because he compares this sacrifice with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The sacrifices offered in Old Testament days were all slain, but the church is not a slain offering; it is a living offering full of Christ as life” (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, p. 297).

C. It is most practical to present our bodies—Rom. 12:1

"When Paul began to speak about the church life, he implored the believers to present their bodies because as human beings nothing is more real and practical than our body. If your body is not in the church life, please do not say how much you yourself are for the church life. In the past years many people have said to me, 'Brother, I stand with you. Because the burden of my business is so heavy I cannot be in the church life, but I am one with what you are doing.' Others have said, 'I'm too tired to attend the meeting. You go to the meeting and I'll stay home and pray for you. I can't go to the meeting physically because I'm so tired, but my heart and spirit will be there with you.' These words sound pleasant but they are a deceit. We must realize that we are in our bodies. Where our bodies are, we are. Suppose that all the saints should say that they are too tired to attend the meeting. What would happen to the meeting? Thus, Paul begged the brothers to present their bodies. If you mean business for the Lord's purpose, you need to present your body....It is better to come to a meeting and sleep than not to come at all. You may attend a meeting and sleep through it all except for the last few minutes. Perhaps during the last five minutes you will be inspired and receive a great help. I am familiar with a number of cases in which this has happened" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, pp. 298-299).

III. After we offer ourselves to the Lord for His purpose, He will transform us for the building up of His Body—Rom. 12:2

Our offering ourselves to the Lord is for His purpose. When we offer ourselves to Him, He will transform us for the building up of His Body.

A. We must not be conformed to this age—Rom. 12:2

"Paul tells us not to be 'conformed to this age.' We should not be molded by this age. What is this age? The age is the present, practical world life, which is the opposition to and substitute of the church life. The entire world is a Satanic system, a system constituted by Satan....This world system is composed of many ages...and every age is a part of the world. Each age has its modern fashion....Since an age, being the present, practical world life, is a part of the world system, you cannot be in the world without being in one of the ages....[I]n order to forsake the world you must also forsake the age....Each age has its fashion and style. Sixty years ago the Western ladies fashioned their hair into a high tower. Later short hair became common, and the so-called 'bobbed hair' became popular. In recent years the young people have adopted the so-called 'hippie type' hairdo of this age....The world opposes the church, and the ages oppose the churches. If we mean business to have the church life, we must give up the age. Since the present age opposes the church life, we cannot follow the age and be fashioned according to it and still truly experience the Body life. A person who is possessed by the modern age may attend the Sunday meetings, but he cannot practice the church life. If we want the Body life, the practice of the church life, we must not follow this age nor be conformed to it. This is the reason that Paul told us not to be conformed to this age" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, pp. 300-301).

B. We are transformed by the renewing of the mind—Rom. 12:2

"We should not be conformed to the age, but transformed by the renewing of our mind (Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). To be conformed to the age means to adopt the modern fashions outwardly; to be transformed is to have an organic element wrought into our being to produce a metabolic change inwardly. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our

mind....The mind is renewed not only by outward teachings, but by the element of Christ being added to it. When the Lord Jesus spreads Himself from our spirit into our mind, our mind will be renewed. By the renewing of our mind our soul is metabolically changed. In this way we experience transformation in our soul, a necessity for the church life. If we intend to practice the church life, we need to experience such a transformation in our soul by the renewing of our mind" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, pp. 301–302).

C. In this way we will prove by testing what the will of God is—Rom. 12:2

"We need the renewal of our mind and the transformation of our soul that we 'may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.' What is the will of God? The will of God is to have the Body life, the church life. Do not apply the mention of the will of God in 12:2 to your personal human situation, to the matters of marriage, employment, or housing. Some people pray, 'O Lord, I am going to buy a new house. What is your will? How many bedrooms and bathrooms should it have? How much should I pay for it? Lord, I want to know Your will.' Forget about praying in this manner, for the more you pray and seek the Lord's will in this way, the more you will find yourself in darkness and out of His will. The will mentioned in 12:2 is to have the church life. The house that you purchase, the job that you have, and the person that you marry should all depend on the church life. Even the clothes that you wear should depend on the church life. If you are right with the church life, you will know what you must do. Everything must be for the church life, for to have the church life is the unique will of God. This is good, well-pleasing, and perfect. And this is for the Body life. The presenting of our bodies, the transforming of our souls, and the renewing of our minds are all for the Body life" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, p. 302).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Every day we are presenting the members of our bodies as either weapons of unrighteousness to sin, or weapons of righteousness to God (Rom. 6:12–13). The church life is the place where our minds can be transformed by the hearing of the Word, and the testimonies and prophecies of the saints. By presenting our members (our eyes and our mind) to read the Bible, our mind is transformed (Rom. 12:1–2). Whenever we present our bodies to the movie theater, the television set, etc., an element of the world gets into us and shapes our attitudes, thinking, desires, and affects our choices. Thus, by presenting our bodies to the wrong things, our lives become shaped in the wrong way. Instead of becoming more transformed into the Lord's image (2 Cor. 3:18), we become more conformed to this godless, satanic age. Some believers become so conformed to the world that they are exactly the same as unsaved people who are involved in sin. We are always being shaped in one direction or another. As clay vessels, we take on the shape of whatever we present ourselves to. This should be a strong warning to us. If we would be used by the Lord, we must take care of how we are shaped by taking care of what we present (subject) ourselves to.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: We are either being conformed to this age by its influences and attitudes, or we are being conformed to the image of Christ. It is evident that each age has its shaping influence. In one age, the people who are produced all have one way of thinking, dressing, etc. Within your schools there are even different currents or categories that fashion people according to their mold. For instance, those who are into sports dress one way and those who are into a certain kind of music dress another way. The age we live in shapes everyone. It moves like a current, carrying everyone who passively drifts along within it, until they are thoroughly soaked with whatever is in the current around them. Those who believe in the Lord, however, receive His divine life which enables them to swim against the current and to

live outside of the age. They live and move by this more powerful life that shapes them into the image of God. Receive the divine life of God that will supply you to turn from the current of this age and conform you to His glorious image.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on a vision of God's eternal purpose being the highest thing to which we could give our lives (III.C.5.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 25.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 25.

Lesson 17—A Normal Living for the Body Life

OBJECTIVE: To see that we need a proper, normal living for the Body life, and that for this living we must walk according to the spirit.

SYNOPSIS: Paul charged the believers to walk by the spirit (Rom. 8:4) and to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice to be transformed for the sake of His Body (Rom. 12:1–5). We might think that walking according to the spirit or being transformed has to do with how strongly we exercise our spirit in the meetings. However, Paul describes the normal living in the Body life in terms of proper behavior and proper relationships in our daily living. The real manifestation of our walking according to the spirit is not how we behave in the meetings, but how we conduct ourselves in our daily living. Romans 12–13 describe the normal human living that is the manifestation and expression of walking according to the spirit.

BACKGROUND: In an age when the distinction between right and wrong is so blurred, a message like this can serve two purposes. First, it can educate the young people concerning what is human virtue and propriety. Second, it can explain how our enjoyment of the divine life in our spirit supplies us and trains us to live such a life.

CHAPTER(S): Romans 12–15.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. When we give ourselves to God for the sake of His purpose, we will begin to live the Body life—Rom. 12:1–5

Paul exhorted the believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God for the sake of His purpose (Rom. 12:1). Immediately after charging them to present their bodies, he began to talk about the Body life (Rom. 12:3–6). Our presenting our bodies is so that we can live the Body life. Paul does not present the Body life as something abstract; the Body life in Romans 12–13 is very practical and tangible. To live the Body life we must have a normal human living, a proper daily living that expresses Christ.

II. A normal living in the Body life is not primarily a matter of how we exercise in the meetings, but a matter of a proper human living in our daily life—Rom. 12:3—13:14

We might think that walking according to Spirit or being transformed has to do with how strongly we exercise our spirit in the meetings. However, Paul describes the normal living in the Body life in terms of proper behavior and proper relationships in our daily living. The Body life is not only a meeting life, but also a matter of our daily living. The real manifestation of our walking according to spirit is not primarily how we behave in the meeting, but how we conduct ourselves in our daily living. Romans 12–13 describe the normal human living that is the manifestation and expression of walking according to the spirit.

A. We should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but function in the Body according to what God has given us—Rom. 12:3–8

We express Christ, not so much by how we function in the meetings, but by how we live in our daily life. The first item of a normal living in the Body life is to not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We may think very highly of ourselves and despise others, or make excuses for ourselves and put others down. Another possibility is that we

may feel that we have no portion and thus refuse to function in the Body. Both of these attitudes are wrong.

- B. Toward others we should show honor, love them warmly, and take care of their needs—Rom. 12:9–10, 13, 15**
- C. Toward God we should be burning in spirit, serving the Lord diligently as a slave—Rom. 12:11**

Romans 12:11 describes the way we should be toward God. The opposite of slothful is diligent. To be zealous for the Lord we must pursue Him diligently. Furthermore, we must be burning in spirit, serving the Lord as a slave. For the sake of the Body, for the sake of God's purpose, our laziness must be dealt with. Then for the church life we must serve the Lord as a slave. To be burning in spirit in our daily life is another aspect of a normal living in the Body life.

- D. Toward ourselves we must be full of the enjoyment of the Lord, rejoicing in hope, enduring in tribulation, persevering in prayer, abhorring and conquering what is evil, and cleaving to what is good—Rom. 12:9, 12**

"We Christians should be a rejoicing people because we always have the enjoyment of the Lord. If we enjoy the Lord in His riches, we will not only be joyful inwardly, but we will be rejoicing outwardly. Even in times of trouble we should and can rejoice in hope....We Christians must also be able to endure tribulation....By rejoicing in hope we can endure any kind of tribulation. [Romans] 5:3 says that we can exult in tribulation....In order to endure tribulation we need to be persevering in prayer. We need to pray persistently. This will not only enable us to endure tribulation, but also to remain in the enjoyment of the Lord, in His presence and in His will....In addition to all this, as God's holy people, we must abhor and conquer the evil things and cleave to the good things. We Christians, who are separated unto God, must maintain the highest standard of behavior, a standard above that of moral and ethical people" (Life-study of Romans, Message 27, p. 318). This is another aspect of a normal living in the Body life.

- E. We must bless those who persecute us without avenging ourselves, living in peace with all men—Rom. 12:14–21**

A proper, normal human living is also one that is at peace even with our enemies and persecutors. We should bless those who persecute us and not curse them (Rom. 12:14). To bless people is to speak good things about them and to them. "Regardless of how bad people may be toward us, our mouth should only express blessing, not cursing. How the Lord blessed us when we were His enemies! We should bless our enemies and persecutors in the same way. This also is an aspect of the life that follows the Lord's steps....We should repay no one evil for evil (v. 17). Under the law it was eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Today we are not under law but under grace. We must not repay evil for evil, but rather repay good for evil, as the Lord has done to us....Furthermore, we should not avenge ourselves, but give place to the wrath of God, for vengeance belongs to the Lord (v. 19). While we are practicing the church life with a normal human life, we should not avenge ourselves in any way. We should be willing to suffer people's wrongdoing and the loss of everything. We should leave the whole situation in the sovereign hand of the Lord and give Him the place to do whatever He likes according to His sovereignty....In verse 20 Paul says, 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap

coals of fire upon his head.' This is actually loving our enemies. Our love to them will be coals of fire heaped upon their heads to turn them to the Lord. The best way to calm our enemies is to give them something to eat and drink. Thus, Paul commands us, 'Do not be conquered by the evil, but conquer the evil with the good' (v. 21)...Finally, we need to live in peace with all men, as far as it depends upon us to do so (v. 18)" (Life-study of Romans, Message 27, pp. 319–320). Such a life, the expression of a normal, proper human living in the Body life, is impossible to live without the Lord working Himself into us.

F. We must take forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men—Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21

As those who are living the church life, we should also give consideration as to how others perceive our lives and actions, as Paul did in 2 Cor. 8:21 when the collection of money was being taken for the needy saints. Even though we may have no impure motives, we should ensure that we give no ground for others to be stumbled. When we live the Body life, we become conscious of how others view us as believers.

III. In order to have a proper human living, we must be transformed by the renewing of our mind—Rom. 12:2

According to the progression of Paul's thought in Romans 12, transformation is mentioned before his speaking on a proper daily life for the church life, showing that transformation is needed for such a living.

A. Transformation is a metabolic change brought about by the Lord's dispensing of His life into us—2 Cor. 3:18

"Before we consider 12:1–2 I want to give a definition of transformation....Transformation does not merely denote a change; it means that a substance is changed both in nature and in form....This type of change is a metabolic change. It is not just an outward change, but a change in inward constitution as well as in external form. This change occurs by the process of metabolism. In the process of metabolism an organic element filled with vitamins comes into our being and produces a chemical change in our organic life. This chemical reaction changes the constitution of our being from one form into another. This is transformation. Suppose that a person has a very pale complexion and that someone else, wishing to change his colorless complexion, applies some coloring to his skin. This, no doubt, produces an outward change, but it is not an organic change, a change in life. How then can a person truly have a colorful face? By daily absorbing into his body healthy food with the necessary organic elements. Because your body is a living organism, when an organic substance enters into it a chemical compound is formed organically by the process of metabolism. Gradually this inward process will change the coloration of your face. This change is not outward; it is a change from within, a change resulting from the process of metabolism. According to the Bible, this metabolic change is termed transformation" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, p. 293).

B. We cannot improve our living by our own effort, but must receive a constant supply of life from the Lord to be transformed

"In the process of transformation the life of Christ is added to our being. When His life, which is organic and filled with vitamins, permeates our being, a spiritual, chemical compound is formed. This changes our constitution both in nature and in form. This is

transformation. It is not outward correction or external adjustment. It is absolutely an inward metabolic change in our organic element, a change in life and with life by the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). In the process of transformation the divine element is wrought into us. If we keep in mind this proper understanding of transformation as we approach Romans 12—16, we shall realize that this portion of the Word is altogether different from what our natural concept would lead us to believe it is" (Life-study of Romans, Message 25, pp. 293–294).

C. We are transformed as we walk according to the spirit—Rom. 8:4

To be transformed, we need the supply of the Lord's life. Thus, we need to have a morning revival every day, and we need to be in the meetings. Most of our time, however, is spent outside of the meetings. Thus, in our daily living we need to practice walking according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4) and live and walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25). Walking according to the spirit is to do everything in our daily living under the restriction of the Spirit (Rom. 5:21; Acts 16:7). When we live and walk according to the spirit, we give the Lord the way to regulate us and transform us. As we live under the Lord's regulation and restriction, we receive His abundant supply (2 Tim. 4:22) and are transformed to express Him in our daily living. Thus, we are enabled to live the Body life, and to have a proper human living that expresses the Lord.

D. Our transformation and our walk according to the spirit will be manifested in our daily living—Gal. 5:16, 22–25

These matters, such as transformation and walking according to the spirit, are not theoretical; they can be checked practically by our living. The real manifestation of our transformation and our walking according to spirit is how we conduct ourselves in our daily living. The genuine growth in life is exhibited in a change in our daily living and results in a richer church life. All the matters listed in Romans 12–13 are a checklist for us to test ourselves to see where we are in our growth in life. Growth in life, walking according to spirit, and transformation are not theoretical matters; they have a practical expression. If we are short in experiencing the Lord, we shall also fall short in the matters mentioned in these chapters, for we cannot live such a life by our own ability or effort. Therefore, instead of trying to be a better Christian and improving our behavior, we must go to the Lord to receive more life. It is the law of this life that spontaneously lives out the virtues mentioned in Romans 12–13.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: (Because of the fallen and degraded standards of today's society there is the need for young people to be infused with a proper, high, and virtuous standard of human living. Such a speaking corresponds to the God-created humanity within them.) The life of a normal Christian is one lived on the highest, most noble plain. One living a normal Christian life would not hold a grudge against others, but would be willing to forgive others when he is wronged. He would not consider himself better than others, but would have a caring heart, desiring to see others saved. Such a one would also, no doubt, genuinely respect and obey his parents and would be careful to take forethought to live in an honorable way in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor 8:21). These are just a few examples of the uplifted living of a normal Christian. For us to live such a high life is both impossible and altogether spontaneous. It all depends on the source of our living. We must realize that the Christian life can only be lived by Christ in us. If we are not in contact with Christ we will not be able to live the Christian life. For only Christ is the real Christian: the real "Christ-man." Therefore, we

must be those who continually contact and enjoy Christ. The more we do, the more Christ will spontaneously be lived out of us. The result of our contacting and living Christ in such a way will be the expression of Christ—a testimony of the Body of Christ on the earth today.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Something within man strives for improvement to make himself more proper in his humanity. When the new year rolls around, masses of people make resolutions to better themselves; some even turn to religion or philosophy. Their sense of a need for improvement comes from their conscience deep within, condemning them of sin. It is because of the law of good within their mind (Rom. 7:23, footnote 2) that people desire and strive to do good in order to appease the feeling in their conscience. Yet, these feeble efforts of the natural life to improve itself are quickly overcome by the law of sin and of death in man's flesh (Rom. 8:2). These attempts are like putting makeup on a corpse, which only improves its outward appearance. Such changes are temporary at best and do not address man's real need. The truth is that all men, even good men, are serpents with an intrinsic serpentine nature, as the Lord revealed to Nicodemus, a seemingly upright and moral person (John 3:14). Man does not need mere outward change; he needs to receive another life, a life that will transform him metabolically. He needs to receive God Himself, the unique source of a normal, proper human life.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding that man will fulfill God's ultimate purpose, to be built into God's corporate expression (II.B.4.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 27.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 1, p. 14; Messages 25–27; Message 28, pp. 327–330; *The Secret of God's Organic Salvation*, Chapter 3.

Lesson 18—Receiving the Believers for Building Up

OBJECTIVE: To realize that the oneness of the Body of Christ is strengthened and maintained by our exercising to receive all whom God has received.

SYNOPSIS: Receiving the believers is necessary for the practice of the church life. Although there may be many differences in practice and feeling among believers, we must still receive one another in fellowship for the sake of the oneness of the Body of Christ. Our criteria for receiving others in the church life is whether or not God has received them. If God has received others by saving them, then we must also receive them, regardless of what they practice (as long as it is not sinful or divisive). Such a receiving is not passive but active, for it involves fighting for one another's growth in life (instead of judging one another) and enjoying what Christ is accomplishing in all the members for the building up of His Body.

BACKGROUND: Many of the young people have a set of friends at school and receive those within this group and exclude or even criticize those outside their circle. We should help the young people see that as believers in Christ we must receive all those whom Christ has received, regardless of their background, appearance, or associations. What a positive message this is both for themselves and others in their schools who have believed: they are accepted and valued in the church life!

CHAPTER(S): Romans 14.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In every local church there are problems which arise. Some saints may offend others, some may function too little while others may function too much, and there may be differences in how the saints feel things should be done in the church life. The church must move according to the Lord's leading, not according to the soulish opinions of the saints, but we should recognize that it is one thing for a saint to say "I am offended by this" or "I feel this is right," and another thing to say, "my conscience will not allow me" or "the Lord has led me so." We must honor the saints' feeling before the Lord and continue to receive them in fellowship, even if our feeling about something does not agree with theirs. "If we are unclear about receiving the believers, we shall damage the church life and cut it into pieces" (Life-study of Romans, Message 28, pp. 329–330). As those standing as the church on the ground of oneness, we must receive all genuine Christians into our fellowship, regardless of how they differ from us in what they practice as believers.

I. We receive others according to God's receiving—Rom. 14:1–9

Our only criteria for receiving others is whether or not God has received them. If God has received someone, we must receive him. Regardless of whether they are like us or not, or whether or not they see things as we do, if they have believed into the Lord we must receive them as our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. "Whomever God has received, we are compelled to receive. We have no choice. Consider a family with many children....Perhaps in such a large family some of the children may not be happy with all of their brothers and sisters. However, the children must realize that it does not rest with them to determine who their brothers and sisters will be. That depends upon the parents. If one of the children in this family thinks that his brother is ugly and complains against him, his complaint should not be directed against his brother, but against his parents who brought him forth. Our heavenly Father has brought forth many children, many Christians, and He has received them all. Therefore, we also must receive them, not according to

our tastes or preferences, but according to God's receiving" (Life-study of Romans, Message 28, p. 331). If we do not receive all believers, we are sectarian (divisive), and are not a genuine expression of the Body of Christ in our locality.

A. We should receive those who are weak in faith—Rom. 14:1

"Some believers are weak in faith because they have not yet received much of the transfusing and infusing of the element of God into them. Nevertheless, they do have a measure of faith and must be received" (Life-study of Romans, Message 28, p. 334). Those who are stronger in faith must receive those who are weaker than they are and minister life to them. It is easy to judge others, but the real need is to receive them in love. Such a receiving is not passive but active. Receiving is not merely allowing someone to partake of the Lord's table. To receive a believer is to stand with the Lord's operation within that brother or sister and to fight for his or her growth and building up in life. To receive the believers is to join ourselves to them and to dispense life into them.

B. We should respect those who practice differently as doing so to the Lord, and we must give others the freedom to follow their conscience before the Lord—Rom. 14:2–8; cf. 1 Cor. 8:4–13

In Romans 14, Paul wrote concerning some who would not eat meat for conscience' sake (perhaps out of fear that it had been offered to idols before being sold—see 1 Cor. 10:24–33), and concerning some who judged some days as being more holy than others (this was important to the Jews—see Col. 2:16–17 and Gal. 4:9–10), as opposed to those who had no problem eating meat and those who judged every day the same. Paul did not judge the so-called "weaker" ones. Instead, he just said, "Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). It would seem that he should have given a teaching to set everyone straight on these matters. But he recognized that these matters touched the saints' faith and exercise before the Lord. Paul warned the so-called stronger ones about judging the so-called weaker ones. If we think we are stronger, we need to bear with those we view as weaker. We should only care to receive life from and minister life to one another. Thus, the Body of Christ will be built up rather than torn down. We all have different backgrounds, and our experiences of the Lord are also different. How you feel in your conscience about certain matters might be different from how another believer might feel. To you, a certain matter might not be so crucial. To another, that same matter might seem important, something he feels he must do in order to be obedient to the Lord or the Word. For instance, some believers feel they must end their prayers with "in the name of Jesus." Others feel this is not so important. Some may feel that the Lord's Day should be kept holy and hence they may refrain from any form of recreation and may even fast all day. Others may feel that there is no problem in taking their families out for dinner and to the park, and may even feel the Lord is granting them the opportunity to do this. Those who are legalistic may judge others for doing something which they themselves refuse to do, and some who are loose may judge others who are more careful in their walk with the Lord as being "religious"! Apart from obviously sinful matters, we should assume that others do what they do "to the Lord." Paul was dealing with a crucial matter in the church life. We must learn to believe that others may be doing what they do, to the Lord—according to how they sense the Lord leading them, according to their feeling in their conscience, or out of loving honor to Him. For instance, a saint may feel that he should dress and wear his hair as those in the group he is burdened to reach with the gospel (as Hudson Taylor did).

Instead of judging him, we should consider that what he is doing may be of the Lord (or at least in his feeling he is doing it to the Lord). The way to deal with all situations is just to minister life, for life will make all things clear in time.

C. As believers, we should seek to follow the Lord's personal leading toward us, yet with a care and respect for the feeling of the Body

Concerning others, we should be careful not to judge, but concerning ourselves, we should seek to take care of the feeling of the Body. We should not exercise our freedom to practice differently if it offends the members of the Body.

II. We receive each other in light of the judgment seat of Christ—Rom. 14:10–12

Paul reminds us that we all shall have to ultimately answer to the Lord for what we do, therefore our judging of others is foolish. All those who have been received by Him belong to Him. "We have to recognize that we are Christians....It does not only mean that you are a "Christ-man" but it also means that you are a man belonging to Christ" (The Life-Pulse of the Lord's Present Move—Elder's Training, Book 8, Chapter 8, p. 120). Therefore all must live to Him. "As long as a person belongs to the Lord and lives to Him, he is all right. We must not place further demands upon him in accordance with our doctrinal concepts" (Life-study of Romans, Message 28, p. 336). Instead of judging others, we should take care of our own walk with the Lord. If there is a lack with any brother, we should believe that the Lord is able to enlighten and adjust him, and to make him to stand (Rom. 14:4). Furthermore, we should have a healthy fear that we might be judging something that the Lord has initiated! We should keep in mind that we will have to give account before the Lord's judgment seat.

III. We receive all believers in the principle of love—Rom. 14:13–15

We must care for the saints in love instead of putting stumbling blocks in front of them. For instance, if a brother who does not eat meat sees a brother he respects eating meat, he may feel it is all right for him to eat meat even though his conscience does not agree. In such a case, according to the feeling of his conscience, he sins against God when he eats meat. If the brother who eats meat loved the other who does not, he would not put a stumbling block before his brother by eating meat in his presence. This is to care for him in the principle of love. Paul even says here that a brother may be destroyed by our carelessness, meaning in his feeling he cannot follow the Lord due to his sense of sin in his conscience. We need to be careful about the feeling of the saints, particularly those who may seem younger or simpler in their faith.

IV. The church can only be built up if we know how to receive one another—Rom. 14:19

To receive the believers is to receive what the Lord is producing in them for His Body. (We need to practice to actively seek fellowship with other believers. We should realize that what we have in common with other believers at school is infinitely more precious than what we share with our unbelieving friends. Have you ever wondered who else in your school is a believer?) If a church stresses conformity and excludes those who are different, whatever Christ does that is outside their concept will be also excluded. Therefore, we need to appreciate those who have a heart to follow the Lord at any cost, even though what they discover may seem strange or new. We should also have such a determination to follow the Lord, even though it may mean that we are misunderstood and judged by others. As Brother Lee has said, the truly safe way to follow the Lord is simply to love Him (see Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs, p. 24–25). The Lord has needed some like this in every generation. On the one hand, we need to take

care of the feeling of the saints; on the other hand, we need to stand with our feeling before the Lord. If these two do not match, it merely becomes an opportunity for prayer and fellowship. In such an atmosphere, many riches of Christ will come forth for all the saints to enjoy. "So then let us pursue the things of peace and the things for building up one another" (Rom. 14:19).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: We need to receive all the saints as Christ has received them (Rom. 15:7). Our receiving of the saints according to Christ's receiving of them is practically evidenced not only in the way that we speak about others, but also in the way we choose those whom we spend our time with. In the matter of our speaking, we should always take care to speak words to one another that are good for building up (Eph. 4:29 and footnote 3) rather than words that are meant to hurt and make fun of others (Matt. 5:22 and footnotes 3,5,7). To make fun of, condemn, put down, or reject someone based on their appearance is an insult to God their creator (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 43:7). In the matter of who we choose to spend our time with, we need to firstly see that we are all part of God's family (Eph. 2:19), and as such, we should not divide ourselves from other saints for any reason (i.e. forming cliques based on ethnicity, popularity, athletic ability, etc.). Our coming together with one another should not be for the sake of our own private interests (1 John 1:3 and footnote 3). To come together in such a way excludes others and results in divisions in the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10, 12-13). Therefore, we should speak words that build up one another and exercise to include all the saints that they would feel received even as Christ has received them.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Many people who have not received the Lord realize that if they were to die in their present condition, they would be cast into the lake of fire, and they are afraid. Certain fears that men have are unjustified, based on superstition or imagination, but this fear is not. The Bible clearly says that all will stand before the great white throne of judgment, and the names of those who have not believed in the Lord to receive Him will not be found written in the book of life. Therefore, these ones will be cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:11-15). Such a fearful realization should sober us to see the seriousness of the choice being presented today. God does not want for you to perish. The lake of fire was not prepared for men, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:46). God loves man and desires that all men would be saved (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4). Today, the Lord wants you to receive Him and He wants to receive you "just as you are" (*Hymns*, #1048). The Lord's heart of love toward man to receive man is shown in how He warmly touched an unclean, leprous man to heal him (Matt. 8:2-3; Mark 1:40-41), how He detoured to Samaria to reveal Himself as the thirst-quenching, living water to a sinful woman (John 4:5-30), and how He, as the only sinless One, mercifully saved a woman caught in the act of adultery from being stoned (John 8:3-11). These are only a few examples of His loving and receiving heart. As the good Samaritan, He does not pass the weak and wounded one dying on the road, but He is full of compassion, caring for and supplying him (Luke 10:33-34). Today, He wants to do the same for you. Do not let your present condition keep you from coming to Him. He wants to receive the unclean, the sinful, the thirsty, the weak, and the dying ones. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him (John 1:12). Come to Him just as you are. Receive Him and you will not only be saved from the lake of fire, but will also be lovingly received by Him.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Maintaining a proper, healthy fear of God and a godly respect for the things of God (IV.D.2.); Being friendly, compassionate, honest, magnanimous, generous, hospitable, cooperative, pure, and a good listener toward friends, new acquaintances, and others our own age (IV.C.2.); Basic items of the Christian faith as our basis for receiving all the believers (II.E.2.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Romans*, Message 28, pp. 327-336; Message 29, pp. 343, 348-352.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Romans*, Messages 28–30; *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Message 44; *The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life*, Chapters 3–4; *The Experience of Life*, Chapter 6, pp. 105–114; *Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery* (Elder's Training—Book 4), Chapter 6, pp. 70–72; *The Life-Pulse of the Lord's Move* (Elder's Training, Book 8), Chapter 8, p. 120.