



The Way of Life

Part 1

Study Class Leader's Notes

Published by
The Christadelphian Sunday School Union
Birmingham,
UK

First Edition, May 1996

Reprinted with minor changes, November 1996

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Introduction

Dear Study Group Leader,

We are glad that you are using these lesson notes, and hope that you will find them helpful. In order to prepare the lessons you will need your own copy of the Student's notes, of which the young people should each have a copy.

As leader of a Study Group, or Discussion Class, you are in a special position. Young people have to withstand enormous pressures, and for them the challenge of following Christ is no longer in any sense a formality: something they do because everyone else is doing the same. The responsibility for guiding their thoughts in a regular Discussion Group or Study Class is not to be taken lightly; you have the potential to help them take decisions that will guide their feet into a lifelong walk along the Way of Life; the possibility of being a real friend, to whom they can turn in times of trouble.

You are also very privileged. It is not given to many adults to count teenagers among their friends, and the closeness that can develop between you and the members of your class can be something that you will greatly treasure, and you may come to count this work among the most rewarding things you have ever done.

The work will demand a lot of your time: more in preparation than in teaching. The notes have, for each topic, a heading 'Preparation Required', in which we have tried to identify the specific things you will need to do for that lesson. In addition you need to think and pray regularly about the young people, their well-being and their spiritual growth.

About these notes

In preparing the notes we have tried to meet the needs of 15 -17 year-olds who have grown up through a Christadelphian Sunday School, and therefore have a fairly thorough grounding in Bible teaching. If this is not the case you may find that *The Good News of Jesus Christ*, also available from the Sunday School Union, is more suited to your needs.

The dual meaning of the title is intentional. As well as teaching the young people about, and helping them to choose, the path that leads to eternal life, it deals with their everyday way of life, and the decisions and choices that face them at school and in their personal and home lives.

The notes are presented in three parts, each containing 32 topics. You will notice that for the most part we have grouped them into sections, usually consisting of:

1. A statement of what we the Bible teaches.
2. A Bible Study.
3. A look at what others believe on the subject.
4. Practical implications in everyday life.

Although each part covers 32 topics, you will probably find that several of these will require more than one week, and it is expected that each part will take around a year to teach. Alternatively you can reduce the content of the longer lessons so that you can cover them more quickly.

The aims of the Students' Notes are

- to give the young people access to material that otherwise they would not have;

- to help them during the lesson, by enabling them to see where the lesson is going and to provide 'worksheets' where appropriate;
- to provide them with something to which they can refer later.

We have tried to provide notes that will meet the needs of a wide range of young people, and every lesson has been taught by experienced teachers in at least one Sunday School. However, we do not know your young people as you do, and you should use your judgement about what they need. If you find that some of the topics in these notes are unsuitable for your class, then do something else that you believe is more appropriate.

In passing, you may notice that we have not used capital letters where, for example, pronouns refer to God or the Lord Jesus Christ, or for nouns such as 'angel' or 'word'. We felt that the only consistent and satisfactory approach was to follow the practice of scriptural translators.

Parts 2 and 3

Both parts begin with some topics on the Bible, reinforcing its position as the authoritative word of God, and include several specific topics related to morality in everyday life.

The main themes considered in Part 2 are The World of Work, The Kingdom of God, The Sacrifice of Jesus, Marriage and Family Life, The Second Coming and Judgement, The nature of evil, and Baptism.

Part 3 deals with The Holy Spirit, Creation and Evolution, The Father and the Son, Salvation through Jesus Christ, Family Matters, Ecclesial Life, and The Kingdom of God - past, present and future.

The Study Class

The members of your class may, or may not, be baptised. For those who are baptised, many of the lessons may deal with topics with which they are familiar, but you should encourage them to continue to attend. The fact that they are baptised often increases the pressures on them and means that they are even more in need of help and support; and most, perhaps all, of the material in these lessons should be useful to them.

These notes make no assumptions about whether you meet on a Sunday, as part of a formal Sunday School, or on a different day and in a different place. Neither should you. The aim should be to do whatever is best for the young people, and to meet in an environment in which they feel comfortable. You should sit in as small a circle as is comfortable, and you will probably find that a table is not only useful to rest books on, but creates a safer environment for discussion than a more exposed situation in a living room or lounge. It is important that you should pray with the young people, and if the normal environment in which you meet is not conducive to this, that may prove to be one reason to move.

Many ecclesias have some form of rota for leaders of a Study Class or Discussion Group, especially in situations where the group meets during a Breaking of Bread service. If this is the case, you will need to liaise closely with the other leaders, in particular when you have decided to spend more than one week on a particular topic. If you do not have the constraint of a rota, you may well find considerable benefit in teaching for several weeks, so that you can cover the topics in at least one group of lessons.

Planning your syllabus

In arranging the contents of these notes we have tried to present topics in a progressive way so that Part 2 builds on Part 1, and so on. It is not intended, however, that this should represent a fixed syllabus, and it is important that you should select appropriate lessons for the young people in your care. If there is, for example, a need to discuss with them topics that are dealt

with in Part 2, then it is important that you should do so. Similarly you may feel that some topics are not relevant to your group. If this is the case you should omit them; maybe they can be considered later.

Partly for this reason we have provided a 'Leader's Log' so that you can keep track of which topics have been dealt with.

The key consideration is that you should deal with those topics that are appropriate to your group, in a way that is suited to their needs and abilities.

Getting young people to talk

There is no easy answer to the perennial cry of Study Group leaders: how can I get them to talk? The young people in your class are probably still working out what they think on most subjects, and have not decided, at least not for public consumption, what they want from life. There is a sense in which every time they speak they are making a statement of their position on a particular subject, so it's not surprising if they are rather inhibited.

Even answering questions is not easy for them. Just because they know the answer to a question it does not mean that they are willing to give it. To answer a question is to risk getting it 'wrong'; but to get it 'right' can in some way bring greater pressures. Many 'right' answers have implications in everyday life that they may not yet be ready to face. The safest questions are often ones to which only they know the answer - what they have done at school - or matters where their opinion is as valid as everyone else's. And remember the value of open questions: What do you think about ...?; What do people say about ...?, How do you feel about ...?

If you want your class to join in an open discussion two things are essential. Firstly they should trust you. That means that you won't spring surprises on them by asking them 'trick' questions, and that you won't mock them for giving the 'wrong' answer to a question. Especially it means that you will not without their agreement divulge to anyone else, especially their parents, anything they say during the lesson. In order to trust you they need to know you, and that may require a commitment to teach them every week, not just occasionally; and that you should take an interest in them continually and share activities outside Sunday School.

Secondly, you should be prepared to listen. Listening means not just hearing the words but putting yourself in their position, appreciating as well as you can what their situation is like, and being sympathetic to the struggles they face. It also means not being judgmental. There may be a time for giving them specific advice, but it should always be positive and forward-looking, not criticising them for their situation. Perhaps the best advice ever given to Sunday School teachers, whatever the age of their charges, is 'sit where they sit'.

Lessons about other beliefs

You may wonder why these notes contain several lessons about the beliefs of other denominations and faiths. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that the young people will almost certainly not, at school, receive a distinctly Christian education. At best they will be given purely factual information about a variety of faiths, with the implication that they are all the same. Their parents will probably not be aware of what they have learned, and even if they did may not be able to counter the argument, and many young people, when asked what they feel the need to discuss, answer 'what other people believe'. So we have tried to present information about other beliefs in a way that objectively highlights the differences and draws the young people to a recognition of the essential truths of a salvation that is only through Christ Jesus and by faith in him.

Secondly, the majority of the young people in our Study Classes will have been brought up in Christadelphian households, and it is hard for them to realise that our faith is special. By teaching them sensitively, and accurately, about the beliefs of others, we can enable them to appreciate the special value of, and the need to preserve, our distinctive faith.

And finally ...

Please let us know how you got on with these lessons. We have tried to present an unchanging gospel in a way that responds to the particular needs and pressures of our times, and your feedback can help us to make sure that we do so in an appropriate way. We have provided a comment form in the notes, but a letter or phone call would be equally welcome.

May your work bring glory to our Father, and help the young people in your care to walk in The Way of Life.

With love in Christ,

The Christadelphian Sunday School Union Committee

Leader's log

About your young people

It's not easy to remember what everyone is doing - when they take exams, what courses they are studying or where they work. So here, if you find it useful, is an aide memoire.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Notes</i>

Teaching Record

These tables are intended as a simple way for you to keep track of which topics you have covered, and where you have got to. It should be especially relevant if you are teaching in a rota.

Topic	Date	Comments?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comments?</i>
11		
12		
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14		
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17		
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Topic	Date	Comments?
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32		

For your comments - The Way of Life, Part 1

We would find it very helpful if, at the end of this course, you could let us know how you got on. Please return this page, or a photocopy, to the CSSU Secretary (address in ALS diary)

From:

Name.....Ecclesia.....

Date.....

Summary

Overall, how helpful were these notes, to you as leader, and to the young people? How long did it take you to get through them?

Individual Topics

Were there any topics that you had problems with or which went exceptionally well?



Suggestions for improvement, or any other comments?

If these notes come to be reprinted, are there any changes that you like us to make? Do you have any other suggestions, or information to give us? How many young people did you have? Did one person lead the class every week, or did you have a rota? When and where did you meet? Any other points?

AIM OF LESSON

To communicate the basic truths that:

- The Bible records the Word breathed by God
 - Through it the Spirit of God can change us
- and by doing so to encourage the young people to read it.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Romans 7, Psalm 33, Jeremiah 20

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The material in this lesson would take more than one week to discuss properly. You need to decide whether to cover all the material in one week, and if so, how much of it to summarise or omit.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The Word of God

Read Psalm 33:4-9, and ensure that the students have appreciated the following points:

- The connection (v 6 and 9) between the power of God in creation and his word, or breath. God spoke, and it was done. Compare with a human ruler giving orders. You could illustrate the power of the breath of God by talking about the invisible wind that blows the sails of a ship.
- God's word and breath are not just powers; they are morally right (v 4 and 5).

Now look at:

- 2 Timothy 3:16, where the AV phrase 'by inspiration of God' is a translation of a single Greek word meaning 'God-breathed'. (This is how the NIV translates it) and
- 2 Peter 1:20-21. Again, the NIV is helpful here, especially in v 21: 'men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit'. You may like to refer to Acts 27:15; 17. where the same word for 'carried along' applies to the ship in which Paul was travelling.

Link both these passages to the earlier ideas from Psalm 33.

Now think about the word 'inspiration', and the related word 'respiration'. Both have to do with breathing (the Latin work for breathing is *respirare*), and bring out the meaning that when we use the word in the context of scripture it has all these meanings of the power and goodness of God being built into the words he speaks.

You may like to consider the expression 'Spirit Word'. Although it is fairly widely used, it is not a scriptural expression, and if you wish to use it some clear explanation might be appropriate. Make sure that you do not simply equate the 'Word' to the Bible.

God speaks through people

Look at the first command from God for a written account, in Exodus 17:14, and bring out the point that there was a specific purpose in doing so: 'as something to be remembered' (NIV).

Exodus 32:16 describes how the tablets of stone were written by God himself.

See also Numbers 33:2 (Moses was commanded to record the journeys of Israel) and Joshua 24:26;27 (Joshua wrote 'these words' in the book of the law - presumably appending them to what Moses had recorded).

In passing you may like to emphasise the importance of the fact that from very early on there were written records of God's dealings with men; Moses lived something like 1400 years before Christ. So the scripture is not a set of fables put together after the event.

The Spirit of God drove the prophets to speak the words of God

Now look at Jeremiah 20, and read v 1-3 to illustrate the punishments Jeremiah was receiving as a result of his prophecies. Then read v 7-13, and note that:

- Jeremiah could not resist God's power which caused him to speak (note that the word 'deceived' in v 7 can also mean 'persuaded', which seems a more likely meaning).
- These verses illustrate what happened when a prophet was moved by the Spirit. They contain not only the words of Jeremiah the human being (verses 14 onwards illustrate the same point), but the words of God which he was caused to speak - v 11 and 13, for example. The writers of the scriptures combined in a wonderful way their own feelings and the words of God, as many Psalms illustrate.

The prophets witnessed by their actions as well as their words

If you have time you may also like to consider the experiences of Ezekiel in acting out the judgements of God (Ezekiel 4 and 5, for example), and of Hosea in his love for a faithless woman, that God used more than words when the Spirit inspired his prophets.

In turn, the words of the prophets carried the authority and power of God, and they come to pass just as if God had spoken them directly. When the people ignored the prophets it was to ignore God himself (for example, in Jeremiah 35:15-17).

Above all, God spoke through the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus is the fullest expression of the word and power of God, and his words and actions were those of his Father (John 12:48-50). Even more than the prophets, his words were with power (Luke 4:32, AV).

The New Testament writers were inspired in just the same way

The writers of the New Testament regarded it as having the same authority as the Old. Peter wrote of the writings of Paul (2 Peter 3:16) as scripture. Similarly the words of Jesus cited in 1 Timothy 5:18 are a quotation from the gospel of Luke (Luke 10:7). Note the undesigned coincidence; Luke was a constant companion of Paul in his later years.

Through the Bible the Spirit of God can change us

Stress that we are not good people whose goodness is 'topped up' by reading the scriptures, but bad ones whose only hope is to be changed by the influence of the Spirit of God. Consider Romans 7:18-23, together with one or more other passages, such as:

- Galatians 5:17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
- Titus 3:3. For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, [and] hating one another.

The scriptures - written for us

Stress that the prophets did not just write for themselves and their own day. 1 Peter 1:10-12 emphasises that the prophets did not always understand their message, but that it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but us. Similarly in Romans 4:23-24, the key words that promise salvation were written not for Abraham alone, but also for us.

Just as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and the prophets were powerful, so are the scriptures today, as was illustrated at Ephesus, where those who had practised sorcery brought their books and burned them. Luke comments 'in this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power' (Acts 19:20, NIV). They still are 'living and powerful' (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

Look at some of the things that the scriptures promise that they can do in our lives, by using the Students' Notes. It would be useful to spend time discussing in what way the scripture is able to achieve the things that are promised in the passages mentioned. The list of passages is probably best tackled, if the group is sufficiently large, by asking the young people to work in pairs and to share the passages among them.

Psalm 119:11	Protect us from temptation
Psalm 119:98	Give us wisdom
Psalm 119:165	Give us peace
John 12:48	Judge us if we resist it
John 15:3	Make us clean
John 17:17	Sanctify us
Acts 20:32	Build us up
Romans 10:17	Produce faith
1 Thessalonians 2:13	Work in those who believe
2 Timothy 3:15-17	Profitable for doctrine, ...
Hebrews 4:12;13	Reveal our motives and intentions
James 1:21	Save our souls
1 Peter 1:23-25	Cause us to be born again

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The aim of the study is to encourage the young people to want to read the scriptures because of the help they can give.

PRAYER

This is the first study in the series, and it might be a good opportunity to establish a pattern of praying with the young people at the start of each study. At the end it might be beneficial to write a prayer that summarises the points arising in the last section, and to pray it together, not just in the context of every day life but as a prayer for the remainder of the course.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine that you have been asked to write a preface to the scripture, or some “publisher’s notes” for a back cover. What would you say? How would you summarise its benefits, or persuade people to buy it? Discuss with the class what they would write and then get them to write it.
2. Produce a poster or advertisement which summarises the key messages of this study.

THE BIBLE - THE EVIDENCE OF PROPHECY

2

AIM OF LESSON

To demonstrate the inspiration of scripture from an example of the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, and thus to give us confidence in it.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Isaiah 13, 14 and 47; Jeremiah 25:11-14; Jeremiah 50 and 51

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Many examples of prophecy could have been used for this lesson. But the prophecies about Babylon have been chosen because they:

- are specific and unambiguous
- are prophecies which must have been written before the event; generally this means the fulfilments occurred after the completion of the Old Testament.
- have just one straightforward meaning

Other topics in this course consider the prophecies relating to the Jews and to the Lord Jesus.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Get the young people to go through the Bible passages and pick out from each group of references the key points, which are summarised here:

Jeremiah 25:12-14	Many nations
Jeremiah 50:41-42	
Jeremiah 50:9-10, 14-15, 26	The city would be destroyed and plundered
Jeremiah 51:37	The city will become a heap of ruins

Jeremiah 51:26	No stone would be used for building material (the Arabs use the bricks for building, but not the stone)
Isaiah 13:19-20 Jeremiah 50:1-3, 16, 23 Jeremiah 51:29, 43	Babylon will be uninhabited
Isaiah 13:21-22 Jeremiah 51:37	Animals will live there
Isaiah 14:23	The area would become a swampland
Jeremiah 50:12, 38 Jeremiah 51:36	It will become dry and barren

Now get them to look at the documentary evidence, see how each reference has been fulfilled, and add this to the chart.

Make the significance of the predictions clear. Imagine someone saying similar things today: e.g. that America would always be a second rate nation, and that London would never be inhabited again!

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

This lesson has two key messages. Firstly it confirms the inspiration of the Bible, as the Word of God; secondly it gives us confidence that the other prophecies of the book will be fulfilled.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we are sorry that we sometimes have doubts about your word and about your hand in the world; and thank you that you have provided us with such proof that it is true, and that you do indeed rule the world. Give us faith to trust in you and in your promises. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. The young people could write a 'newspaper article', imagining that they had just excavated the site of Babylon and were bringing to the world the first exciting news of what was there.
2. If you are able, a video could be produced, in which the various people mentioned in the Students' notes were 'interviewed'.

POSTSCRIPT

The next lesson is about the Koran. If you intend to consider that subject it might be beneficial, at the end of this lesson, to discover something of what the young people already know, so that you can tailor next week's lesson accordingly.

AIM OF LESSON

In schools in Britain religious education covers all the major world religions, and any young person who follows the Lord Jesus Christ is likely to be expected to justify their beliefs in this context. Islam (the faith of Moslems) has been chosen because of the large, and increasing, numbers of Moslems in the western world, and because of the direct relationship between their faith and Bible teaching.

The aim of the lesson is that the young people should

- understand something of the faith of Moslems
- be able to explain the difference between the Koran and the Bible
- learn to appreciate and value God's message in the Bible

Many young people with Christadelphian parents are troubled by the thought that 'they are only Christadelphians because their parents are'. As a teacher you may be concerned about the prospect of introducing the beliefs of others into a Christadelphian Sunday School, but lessons like this should be seen in that context, both as a direct way of helping the young people and, by way of example, to show them that we are not afraid to think about other faiths.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Timothy 3:15-17

2 Peter 1:20-21

PREPARATION REQUIRED

There is too much material in the students' notes for them to assimilate in one week, so you will need to decide how much time to spend. Depending on their interest, or local conditions, you may devote two or more weeks to this topic, or select parts to be considered. Any material not used should be useful to the young people for later reference.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Spend a few minutes on a general introduction, asking the young people what they know of other faiths. They will probably, in the UK at least, have been taught something of the beliefs of Buddhists, Hindus and Moslems, though the lessons will probably have concentrated on their practices rather than the underlying beliefs.

Turn to the Islamic faith and bring out some key points about the life of Muhammad (or Mohammed). Make sure the young people realise that he lived some time after the Bible had been completed. It is worth bringing out the reverence with which Moslems treat the Koran (Jews and Hindus treat their writings with the same care). This is a positive lesson for us.

If you do not want to deal in any detail with the extracts from the Koran, a simpler approach to the lesson is simply to consider the questions at the end of the Students' Notes, and to pick one or two extracts that illustrate the answers.

There are some important lessons that emerge from the extracts from the Koran:

Concerning Abraham and Ishmael

It is worth noting that there is much in common between the Koran and the earlier books of the Old Testament. The Arabs claim to be descended from Abraham through Ishmael, and that it is through Ishmael that God's promises come. It is easy to see in this faith the root of the modern conflict in the Middle East. Note how in this passage it is Ishmael who is prepared to be sacrificed, (though he is not mentioned by name) and Isaac who is subsequently promised.

It was because of the factual differences between his teaching and the Old Testament that Mohammed became estranged from the Jews, and the later chapters of the Koran teach that the Jews have perverted the Old Testament teaching.

The angel appears to Zechariah and Mary

Note that Moslems believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, but you should bring out the factual differences between this extract and the account in the gospel of Luke.

Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ

Bring out the Moslem belief that Christ was an apostle and prophet, but no more.

The Crucifixion and the Old Testament

Moslems largely accept the account of the Exodus but believe that the Jews did not keep the covenant and have been rejected as God's people.

Note that Moslems do not believe that Jesus was crucified. They can therefore dismiss his role as a saviour.

In this way Islam is fundamentally opposed to Christianity. Only one can be right. In fact, while rejecting the scriptural teaching about salvation from sin, Islam puts nothing in its place except paradise as a reward for Moslems on the basis of their works.

Concerning Mohammed

Moslems believe that when Jesus promised 'the comforter' in John 14 he was referring to Mohammed.

Concerning Infidels

Moslems are (elsewhere in the Koran) commanded not to start a war, but once attacked can wreak vengeance on their enemies. These days they clearly take a liberal interpretation of this.

Eternal Life

The Koran says little about eternal life and punishment. This is perhaps the clearest statement.

What Moslems believe about the last days

This section is not based on the text of the Koran, but it is interesting and informative. Highlight the following points:

- Like us, they believe (or at least, they did once), that the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 and in the book of Revelation are relevant to the last days. A key common belief is that there will be a war with Israel.

- They believe that the return of Christ will be preceded by the coming of Antichrist. How does the class think they will react when Christ does return?

The Student's Notes go on to ask some questions:

What do the Bible and the Koran have in common?

They are both based on the same historical events. It also seems certain that the name 'Allah' used by Moslems has its origin in the Aramaic name 'Elahh' used in those parts of the Old Testament that are in Aramaic (Ezra 4:8 - 6:18 and Daniel 2:4 - 7:28). For example, this name for God is used in Ezra 4:24, and Daniel 2:18-20)

What are the differences between them?

These are evident in the examples that have been quoted.

Some people think that all religions serve the same God, so there is no difference. What would you say to someone who thought that?

Although it is true that Islam has its roots in the teaching of the Old Testament, the Moslem faith differs from Christianity in every important respect. It cannot be true that salvation is through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and, at the same time, that the New Testament account of his death is wrong.

How would you justify believing the Bible rather than the Koran?

The Koran does not contain prophecies such as those about Babylon which we considered in lesson 2. It is also evident from modern history that the Jews are still God's witnesses in the earth.

What can we learn from the way Moslems regard the Koran?

We can learn from their respect for it, and their dedication to reading it. In addition, their commitment to teaching from the Koran and to regular prayer often put us to shame.

Think of what the Bible tells us about what will happen when Christ returns to the earth. Given what Moslems believe about the last days, how might they interpret these events.

If they believe that Antichrist will appear, and will be slain, they may well rise against the Lord Jesus when he comes.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The aim is to help young people develop a reverence for the Bible as the word of God that will let its message influence their lives. They should also understand and respect the right of others to view their own scriptures as sacred, and that in our relations with them we should always be prepared patiently to explain our faith without mocking or deriding theirs.

PRAYER

Consider what our attitude should be to Moslems - on the one hand Islam is the faith most directly and totally opposed to the truth of the gospel; on the other, Moslems are lost people in need of salvation. Compose and offer a prayer.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Get the young people to write a set of notes about the Bible, and how they regard it, that they could give to a Moslem, or to compose a letter to a Moslem that they know.
2. The final discussion should focus on the respect and reverence shown by others towards their sacred texts. By reference to the previous two lessons clarify the way in which we view the Bible. How can we show our respect and reverence in our a) daily life b) worship?

THE BIBLE - READING AND STUDY

4

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people develop a good habit of Bible reading and to help them do it with a purpose.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:11

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Familiarise yourself with the passages above and in the Students' Notes so that you can be ready to prompt the discussion. This lesson contains many points and questions to be discussed so you will need to decide which are the most relevant for your group and perhaps deal with these first. There are also many exercises in the Students' Notes so be prepared to select and/or share them amongst the young people.

If the class is not used to discussion they may prefer to write some of their opinions down to start with. Most young people who do not wish to voice their opinions are afraid of looking stupid or 'goody-goody' so you can help by showing you value their opinions and are prepared to admit that you don't always find things easy.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

What is the point of Bible Reading?

Get each of the young people to look up some of the passages given here. In a group you can share the verses between them.

Ask them what they think and get them to put the answers on the Students' Notes. The passages in this section will remind them what the word of God can do (some they may have come across in Lesson 1). It is a useful exercise to draw lines from the passages to the reasons suggested by the young people.

They should conclude that the main reasons are for us to learn of salvation and for the Word of God to change us.

The accumulation of knowledge for its own sake will not bring us salvation so we should always try to see some lesson in what we read. Factual knowledge is useful to increase our interest or to build on in future but it shouldn't be used to 'show off'.

How did the scriptures help Jesus and others?

This section has passages showing how the scriptures helped Jesus, Peter, Stephen and Paul. There are of course many others.

How should we go about Bible reading then?

What about these suggestions?

- Pray before you read, for guidance, understanding and humility. Pray afterwards for help to put the lessons into practice and to thank God.
- Think of the lesson or lessons taught by a chapter or passage, and choose one as a 'motto' for the day

Some passages to read

The Students' Notes have some passages to try this out with. The passages could have the following answers:

- a) We should recognise, as Eve did, that everything comes from God.
We should try to do things God's way, not our own.
God sees all that is going on and wants to help us do right.
- b) We should recognise God's greatness in his miracles (nature, science, etc.).
We should recognise his holiness.
We should recognise his concern for his people.
- c) Jesus prayed constantly therefore so should we.
Jesus can comfort us when we're frightened.
He has power over the elements therefore our lives.
He has endless patience.
- d) We should try to be well spoken of.
We should be ready to tell people when we appreciate them.
We should show hospitality.
We should not gossip maliciously or put ourselves first.

Write a sentence summary

This is especially useful for harder chapters. Using a modern version helps to pick out the passages but the NIV sometimes does the job for you in its headings. The passages may be summarised as follows:

- John the Baptist comes as the Old Testament says he would. Jesus is baptised by him. Jesus starts to preach and chooses his disciples, and heals a man with a mental illness.
- Greetings from Paul to the people in Corinth. Paul says he always thanks God for them. He has heard that there are cliques in the church and this should not be so because Christ is One. The simple message of the cross may seem silly to clever men.
- Paul writes to Philemon asking him to receive back the runaway slave Onesimus.
- God is like a shepherd taking care of me in every situation and I know he always will.

Research

Discuss these ideas:

- Keep a 'log-book' and each day jot down things you have discovered or things you don't understand and share these thoughts with each other each week.
- Mark your Bible. Use a colour system to help you find passages you need when talking to friends. Mark in the margin things that interest you. Is it better to use pencil or pen? Is it useful to record who said things? Is it better to write facts or opinions?
- Ask yourself questions. The last section in the Students' Notes might suggest the following:
 - a) What else do I know about John the Baptist?
 - b) If I read a parallel account will I learn anything else about this story?
 - c) What do I know about the kings that were reigning when Amos prophesied?
 - d) What happened in Thessalonica?
 - e) Do I know where these quotations come from?

Discuss whether the whole group read the same plan: the daily readings, one portion of them, the Bible reading planner or read through one book of the Bible. Set a time aside to ask each other questions. How can the group balance the time for reading and praying with the demands of homework.

Discuss what are the best places and times to read. Morning or afternoon? At a table, in an armchair or in bed? Alone or with others? In families?

Discuss the advantages of learning verses by heart. To be able to call them to mind in times of stress? When talking to a friend?

There are lessons on the use of concordances, and other study aids and the advantages of different Bible versions later in the series.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

We always say that we base our lives on the Bible so from the earliest age we should be in the habit of not neglecting it.

We should get used to getting the help we need from God's word.

The young people should be aware of the dangers of reading and not taking anything in.

PRAYER

There is plenty of opportunity for prayer in this lesson. The group could pray together about their aims and thank God for his word.

AIM OF LESSON

To enable the young people to identify the substance, scope and purpose of the gospel, and to prepare the ground for the next topic, which demonstrates that the gospel is consistently taught throughout the Bible.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Mark 1:1; 14-15; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 1:6-12; 3:8, and the passages referenced in the Students' notes.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and make sure that you understand the material, then think through how you intend to approach the lesson: this could vary considerably depending on how willing the young people are to participate and how much they know.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON***Introduction***

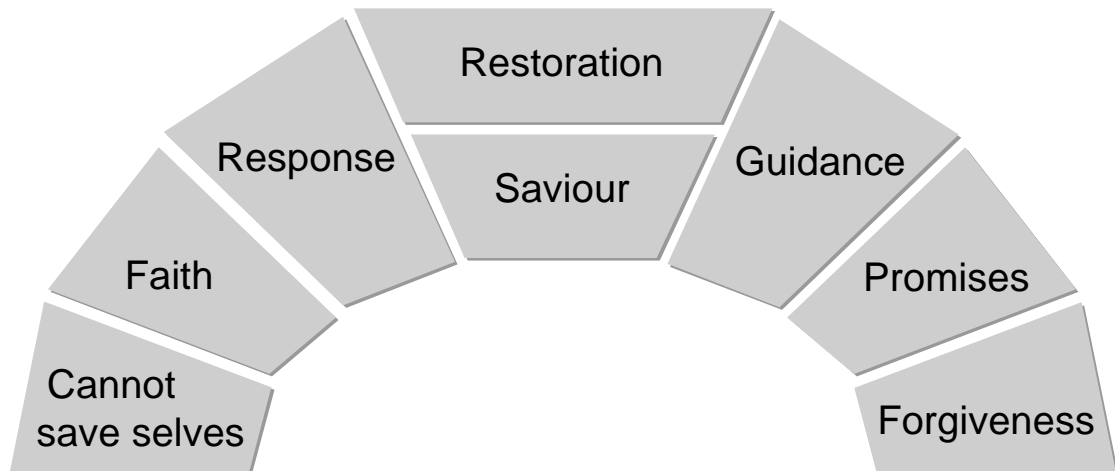
A popular view of the gospel is that it is 'about Jesus'. This, of course, is true; the gospel is essentially centred on the Lord Jesus and in seeking to widen its scope the emphasis on Jesus should not be lost. Nevertheless, an objective should be to clearly define the gospel as the plan for man's salvation in all ages, including both the Old Testament era and our own.

Building Blocks

Get the young people to think about the questions on the first page of their notes, then to look at

Mark 1:1, 14-15	The gospel is about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.
Romans 1:16-17	The power of God is at work to save believers by faith.
1 Corinthians 15:1-4	The gospel centres on the resurrection.
Galatians 1:6-12, 3:8	There is no other gospel, and it was preached to Abraham.

Then get them to read the passages that surround the 'Bridge of Salvation' and summarise their meaning, which in brief will be something like this:



Cannot save selves	We die because we are sinners, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves.
Forgiveness	God does not ignore sin but provides a way in which our guilt is covered.
Promises	From the beginning God has promised to provide a way of salvation through the sacrifice of a saviour
Faith	God requires each person to accept and believe in his plan of salvation and the saviour he would send.
Response	That faith has to be shown to be genuine by our obedience and manner of life.
Guidance	God will walk with his people to bring them to his kingdom.
Saviour	Since we cannot save ourselves, God provides a saviour, who is the means of our salvation.
Restoration	Faithful people will be raised from the dead to live in God's kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ is, of course, the saviour and the whole of the gospel centres around him. The next topic points out however that this is not a New Testament subject: the elements of the gospel were understood by believers before Christ came; they could all, if they so chose, accept the gospel and enter salvation (hence John 8:56).

Only one Testament

Now make the point that since the gospel of salvation was preached to Abraham, there is no difference between the messages of the 'Old' and 'New' Testaments. If you have time you may be able to think then about the purpose of the law of Moses by looking at:

Romans 5:20	The law came to make sin measurable, and thus apparently worse, so that nobody could claim to be righteous in their own right.
Galatians 3:19-25	The law came to convince everyone that they needed a saviour.
Hebrews 10:1-4	The law was a shadow of the way of salvation which God had prepared.
Matthew 5:17-18	Jesus came to fulfil it, not to take it away.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

“it (the gospel) is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” Romans 1:16

This verse defines the essential message of the gospel; it is by the will and power of God; it is the way he has decreed for man to receive salvation; man’s part is to believe.

PRAYER

‘Teach us the gospel, O Lord, and help us to believe it, so that we may join all the faithful disciples of all ages to praise you in the kingdom when the Lord Jesus returns. Amen’

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

If there is a suitable event in the foreseeable future the young people may like to consider whether they might want to make a presentation using real building blocks.

THE GOSPEL - THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

6

AIM OF LESSON

To show that the elements of the gospel as identified in the previous topic have always been taught by God and believed by faithful men and women.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Hebrews 11, and many other passages.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think through the points you want the young people to grasp, especially as shown in the lives of the faithful in Hebrews 11, some of whose ‘works’ were not exemplary.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Remind the young people of the elements of the gospel that were identified last week.

Hebrews 11 is a catalogue of those who believed the gospel and responded. Select two or three to show that they understood the elements of the gospel and responded to that message e.g. Abraham, Moses and Abel. These will form the basis of the rest of the study, and the young people should find conclusions like these:

The Garden of Eden: Genesis 3: 7-10, 15, 21, 24; 4:3-7, 16; Hebrews 11:4

Can't save selves	Their fig leaves were not enough.
Forgiveness	God covered their nakedness.
Promises	Eve was promised that her descendant would destroy the seed of the serpent.
Faith	It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain - perhaps he knew that Cain would kill him.
Response	Abel was obedient.
Guidance	Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, still lived in God's presence (Genesis 4:16)
Saviour	God provided a lamb which had to die so that their nakedness could be covered.
Restoration	The way to the tree of life was kept (the word 'guard' in Genesis 3:24 is the same as in 2:15, where the man is put into the garden of Eden to 'keep' (NIV 'take care') of it.

Abraham: Genesis 12:1-4; 15:4-7; 22:7-14; John 8:56; Romans 4:16-22; Hebrews 11:8-19.

Can't save selves	In Ur he would have died without hope, and he did not know the way to the promised land.
Forgiveness	His faith was counted as righteousness.
Promises	God promised to bring him into a better land.
Faith	Abraham believed, ...
Response	... and left Ur
Guidance	God showed him the way
Saviour	'God will provide a lamb' ... 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day'.
Restoration	Abraham believed in resurrection and looked to 'a heavenly country'.

Exodus: Exodus 3:7-10; 12:21-23; 14:13-16; Isaiah 63:12-14; Joshua 21:43-45

Can't save selves	Israel were slaves in Egypt and had no way of escape.
Forgiveness	God provided a lamb, by whose sacrifice they could escape death.
Promises	God promised to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey.
Faith	They had to believe his promise.
Response	They had to enter the house with the blood of the lamb on its door, and then walk out of Egypt, and through the waters of the Dead Sea.
Guidance	God guided them through the wilderness.
Saviour	God provided Moses to lead them.
Restoration	They were brought to the promised land.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is easy for our young people to get the impression that you have to be 'good' to follow Jesus or know a lot about the Bible and it is very important that these things are a response to a belief not a barrier that they can't cross.

PRAYER

Lord God of Abraham, the God of all those who were faithful, help us to hear your word and place our trust in you. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people might like to consider the faith and trust that a young child has in its parent and show what our faith in God should be like.

This analogy can be extended to show how wanting to please our father is a natural follow on.

THE GOSPEL - WHAT ROMAN CATHOLICS BELIEVE **7**

AIM OF LESSON

The purpose of this lesson is to consider the beliefs of another group of people so that we may be able to discuss both our beliefs and theirs from a position of some understanding. Inevitably it will become apparent that we believe that they are mistaken in their understanding of scripture and God's plan of salvation, but we must recognise that their views are held sincerely and that many try to live according to their principles. We should not ridicule the beliefs of others but rather assert the doctrines of scripture firmly, with gentleness and consideration.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Peter 1:19-21

PREPARATION REQUIRED

It goes without saying that there is far too much material in the students' notes for you to cover in one week; it has been included because of its potential for future reference. You will need to decide on some parts to deal with: one suggestion would be do cover the sections on 'Popes and Councils', 'Papal Succession - passed on from Peter?', and 'Confession', since these all deal with the authority and role of the Roman Catholic clergy.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Key Difference

We believe that the Bible is the sole source of authority with regard to religious beliefs and that the Bible speaks for itself to each individual who will read it with a receptive mind. The Roman Catholic church teaches that the Bible is the Word of God but that the Roman Catholic church is equally authoritative. Furthermore, it is asserted that a correct interpretation of the scriptures can only be made by the church and not by individuals. Hence the authority and doctrinal interpretation of the church supersedes all else.

The Pope, as head of the Roman Catholic church, also claims a unique and all-powerful authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. He claims to be 'Christ's representative on earth', the direct successor of the Apostle Peter and, under certain conditions, to speak and decree with divine authority (called ex-cathedra). This results in a belief in a progressive revelation of the will of God which allows the Roman Catholic church to believe and teach doctrines which are not found in scripture at all. The list in the Students' notes illustrates the way in which doctrines have been added over the centuries since the Bible was completed.

Beliefs Shared with Others

Roman Catholics believe many of the unscriptural beliefs of Christendom. These include beliefs in the immortality of the human soul, hell as a place of torment, the existence of a being called 'the devil' and many others.

Positive Aspects

It must also be recognised that Roman Catholics hold many scriptural doctrines, often more firmly than many other churches, and are less dismissive of doctrines such as the Virgin Birth and the literality of the resurrection of Jesus. They also uphold many of the scriptural teachings of morality and behaviour so often ignored or rejected by other churches.

Distinctive Differences

As well as their particular approach to the Bible and the authority of the Pope, Roman Catholics hold several doctrines shared only and in part with the Eastern Orthodox church. They are not taught in scripture and in many cases are directly opposed to Bible teaching; this is particularly so with regard to the doctrines of salvation. Such teachings include the following and further details may be found in the Mutual Class Essay written by Brother Dennis Gillett and included with these notes. Leaders may wish to discuss each or selected topics from this list and ask the class to compare with the teachings of scripture and our doctrines. In each case it should be emphasised that such Roman Catholic teachings are additions without scriptural justification (as opposed to misunderstandings of scripture teaching).

- Purgatory and atoning for sins
- Limbo
- Sacraments
- The Virgin Mary
- Prayers to Mary and saints
- Images and relics
- The Eucharist

Another source of information

An Appeal to Roman Catholics, A D Norris (Christadelphian Office)

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is important that our young people know why we believe what we believe and can defend their beliefs if necessary.

PRAYER

'Teach us, O Lord, to deal gently with others whilst holding fast to the doctrines revealed in your Word. Help us to value the clear teaching of scripture and accept it as the only authority in the things we believe and the way we try to live'. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

You might like to discuss:

1. The Roman Catholic Church in Prophecy. Many Bible students, including many non-Christadelphians, believe they have identified the Roman Catholic church in Bible prophecy, particularly in the book of Revelation. It is suggested that the Roman Catholic church and the Pope in particular will be a focus of opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns to the earth. The apparent strengthening of the Roman Catholic church in 'Protestant' countries and its dominance and influence in 'Catholic' countries could also be discussed.
2. Christian Behaviour. The Roman Catholic church also has particular beliefs about discipleship, some of which often make the headlines: in particular their teaching against abortion and artificial means of birth control. These could be mentioned though detailed discussion will depend on the particular group doing the lesson. There are also later lessons which will deal with these topics.

THE GOSPEL - TELLING OTHER PEOPLE

8

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to stand up at school for the things they believe, and to deal with the difficulties that may arise.

To discuss the teaching and preaching of the gospel. To review the methods we use and assess their effectiveness, and to consider alternative methods.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The gospels and the Acts form the obvious background for this lesson. The following passages will provide source material; there are many other passages to choose.

Matthew 4:17; 9:35; 24:14; Acts 4:2; 5:42; 8:4; 10:42; 15:35; 17:3 on; Romans 1:15; 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; Galatians 1:8-11; 3:8; Philippians 1:18; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think through the discussions that could arise and be prepared to be encouraging, understanding, honest, not shocked but also positive with suggestions.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

It is intended that this lesson should be an opportunity for discussion. How you balance the discussion between personal witness and more formal methods will depend to a large extent on the background and needs of the young people.

Everybody will have experienced the conflict of knowing how and when to talk about their beliefs, both in the classroom and outside. The aim should be to let them talk about their experiences in a sympathetic atmosphere and to help them to talk about their faith in a confident way.

The opportunity can also be taken to discuss ecclesial teaching methods and to gain feedback about what the young people find most helpful. Many students will have both experience of and opinions about preaching methods and their effectiveness. There may be criticism of current practices and it can be useful to follow this with the question 'What do you propose?' The following questions may help to stimulate discussion.

Personal Preaching

1 Corinthians 9:16-18

Do you have a specific experience of talking to someone about your beliefs or how you spend your time? How did it start? What was the response?

What stops us speaking to our friends about our faith? Romans 1:16

It is often tempting to keep quiet about our faith. What are the advantages? (less ridicule and difficult questions). And disadvantages? (it is harder when people eventually find out, and we might be tempted to lie about what we do at weekends and in the evenings).

What about telling others confidently what we believe? What are the advantages? (opportunities to invite them to Youth Group or meetings; everyone knows where we stand; others are more likely to respect us; we are less likely to be invited to inappropriate parties or offered drugs etc.) And disadvantages? (it's not always easy!).

It may be helpful to the young people if they can identify some (not necessarily three) specific things they plan to do, or to do differently.

Which of these approaches is best?

Is personal preaching more effective than community preaching? (Perhaps you need somewhere to take a personal contact!) Philipians 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:12; Titus 2:7

How 'pushy' should we be in our personal witness?

Should people who are not yet baptised preach? What are the differences between what you can say to your friends before and after your own baptism?

How can we open conversations or respond to opportunities to speak of our faith? (much will depend on the particular group doing this lesson - the aim should be to give them specific and appropriate words they can choose to use; for example in a discussion about the existence of God or the origin of the universe a simple statement such as 'Well, I believe in God' may be an appropriate witness, rather than a long speech)

Community Preaching

Can we derive methods for today from the ways Jesus and the apostles preached? (You could ask for ideas and make a list)

Is it right to use 'new' methods not available in Jesus' time? (e.g. radio, printed material etc.)

Is there a difference between teaching and preaching? (imparting knowledge, imparting conviction?) Matthew 11:1; Acts 5:42

Should we ask people to come to us or should we go to them? (New Testament practice may give an indication) Luke 13:22

How can we make our ('lectures', Sunday School/Bible School, billing, canvassing, advertising, etc.) more effective?

Coming to a Conclusion

Discussions can sometimes be very interesting but leave an 'unfinished' feeling at the end. This can be avoided by drawing up a summary of Bible principles about preaching with supporting passages. The following is a suggested outline to which you may care to add.

Why do we preach? (Commanded - Matthew 28:19-20, to share our joy, out of concern for others)

When should we preach? (whenever there is opportunity, when someone asks a question, Mark 6:1-2)

Where should we preach? (we should take the message to the people in any way we can, we need a regular pattern of preaching to give continuity and stability for those learning - e.g. our 'lectures', Mark 4:1)

How should we preach? (from the scriptures, centred on Jesus, with simplicity - 2 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, humbly - 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 2:3-5, with appropriate language - Jesus used parables and many everyday examples - Luke 8:5-8).

Follow-up

During the course of this discussion the young people may make comments on Ecclesial preaching activities which it would be appropriate for you to discuss with the Arranging Brethren. This may be an opportunity to help the young people, and to improve the witnessing of the ecclesia.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is important that the young people realise that we all have difficulties preaching and can join in discussing ways to help each other.

PRAYER

Teach us, Lord to share our faith and the good news of the gospel with those around us. Give us courage so that we may be confident in our professions of faith. Help us not to be upset by rejection or ridicule but remember the rejection of the Lord Jesus and the promise of eternal life in his kingdom. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Design a pamphlet, poster or invitation to a meeting, Sunday School, or Bible Reading Group.

THE NATURE OF MAN - GOOD OR BAD

9

AIM OF LESSON

That the young people should understand the origin and nature of sin and how this affects their lives

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 1, 2, 3; Romans 5, 6

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read the relevant Bible passages. Chapter 2 of *'The Christadelphians - What they Believe and Preach'* (Harry Tennant) is also useful. Familiarise yourself with the Students' Notes.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The young people should fill in their notes one section at a time, either in order to lead in to a discussion of that section or to follow it up.

Creation of Man

Genesis 1:25, 31. God created a beautiful world. It was all good.

Genesis 2:7. He then created man. Formula: dust + breath of life = man, living soul or body + spirit = living soul.

Genesis 2:19, 7:21-22. In physical substance animals were identical to man BUT there was an important difference. Man was created in God's image and given dominance over the animal creation. He was given the powers of speech and reasoning and the ability to worship and communicate with God. (Genesis 1:27,28)

The Origin of Sin

Adam and Eve had to prove whether they would obey God or not. They were given a simple test. If they disobeyed they would die - Genesis 2:16,17. God gave them freedom to obey or disobey. He had not made them like puppets; he wanted them to choose his way because they loved and respected him. They chose to eat the fruit.

The Nature of Sin

1 John 3:4 - Sin is the breaking of God's law.

Genesis 3:6 - Eve thought the fruit looked good, would taste good and would give her wisdom. This is picked up in 1 John 2:16 (NIV) "For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world". Mark 7:20-23; James 1:13-15 tell us that sin comes from within not from outside. The internal temptation may be stimulated by an external source as with the serpent in Eve's case. Adam and Eve were proud. They thought they knew better than God and they sinned.

Ask the students if they think some sins are worse than others? e.g. murder, as opposed to stealing a sweet from a shop. Try to draw out that all sins separate us from God and are therefore disastrous for us. However, the immediate effects on people of some sins are worse than others; compare the effects of the murder as opposed to the effects of stealing the sweet. Some sins also separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2) to a greater extent than others; look at Psalm 32:3-5 and think about the effect David's adultery had on his relationship with God. Some sins, like a marriage to someone who has no faith in God, will have a lasting effect.

Ask the students if they think any sins cannot be forgiven? Matthew 12:31 - speaking against the Holy Spirit. Why? - because the sinner does not acknowledge his sin, he lacks repentance and does not acknowledge God's power to forgive but God will forgive our sins if we acknowledge and confess them, 1 John 1:9.

The Consequences

The immediate consequences were that they knew they were naked, they had lost their innocence. They avoided meeting God, fellowship was broken and they felt fear and shame for the first time. The ultimate consequences were that they became dying creatures who would become sick, grow old and die.

Romans 6:23 - the wages of sin is death

God had to carry out his promise of death as the punishment for disobedience. It would be unthinkable to have immortal sinners. God did not leave them without the hope of a saviour, however (Genesis 3:15).

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Romans 5:12. We have inherited Adam's nature and the punishment of death. What is death? The formula for life in reverse. The living soul without the breath of life becomes dust. When Adam died, part of him did not go on living in heaven. His death was God's punishment for sin and so is ours. There is no such thing as an 'immortal soul' There is nothing that carries on living after a person dies. Soul in the Bible means life, person, creature or being. Ezekiel 18:4,20 - souls die!

Look at Ephesians 3:1-3, and note that there are two reasons for our condemnation. As well as being dead in trespasses and sins (plural) we are 'by nature' children of wrath. It is our basic nature, as well as our actions, which separates us from God. It is worth considering that the Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin (singular) of the world.

The main impact on us is the recognition that we start our relationship with God from a long way off, as the prodigal son literally did. We should come to him in humility; but that's another lesson.

PRAYER

No sin is unforgivable as long as we acknowledge, confess and repent, 1 John 1:9. Encourage students - either in a few moments silent meditation or at home during the week - to unburden themselves of the sins they thought could not be forgiven or that keep recurring. The "calm of sin forgiven" brings a peace unique to true believers.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Look at Matthew 5 - the Sermon on the Mount, and consider the practical advice on how to curb sins at the thinking stage before they get to the planning and acting stages
2. Look at the life of David as an example to us. In his early life he asked God before taking action. In the incident of Bathsheba he did not and brought many difficulties on himself as a result.
3. Discuss further the point raised in Section 3 about different sorts of sin, disobedience, sins of omission or weakness and whether they feel some sins are unforgivable.

POSTSCRIPT

Next week's topic is about Hinduism. It may be worthwhile at the end of this lesson to ask the young people what they know about the subject, and what they have been taught at school. This will help you prepare for next week; you may also be able to ask one or two of the young people to introduce next week's topic by bringing in material they have been given at school.

AIM OF LESSON

To enable the young people to understand a little of others beliefs about immortality and human nature, so that they can appreciate the importance, and distinctiveness, of our faith and be better able to explain it to others.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Galatians 5:5-6, Hebrews 9:26-27

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the text in the students' notes and be able to explain or summarise for them.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Read through the information about Hinduism a section at a time with the young people, bearing in mind the questions in their notes. Help them to work out their answers at each stage and fill in a brief summary.

The following points may help:

Creation and the Caste System

God created men and women equal (Galatians 3:26-28) though different from the animals (Genesis 1:26-27). We are his workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). This affects our treatment of strangers, poor, etc. Because men are made in God's image we have a responsibility for all men (James 3:9,10)

Karma

The teachers of the law believed in justification by works which was impossible to achieve. The Law of Karma does not allow the principle of salvation by God's grace.

Nirvana

Our tendency is to lecture and discuss rather than sit quietly and think, but there are a number of references to meditation in the Psalms e.g. Psalm 1:2; 119:148; 143:5; 46:10. It is instructive to look at Joshua 1:8 and reflect that at the start of a military campaign the one command to Joshua was that he should meditate on the law.

Faith which is not expressed in actions is not faith at all. James 2:26; Galatians 5:6

There are some superficial resemblances to scripture in these Hindu sayings e.g. Isaiah 53:4 and Matthew 11:28, but Jesus taught that devotion to God should be expressed in devotion to others. Matthew 22:37-40; 7:12; 25:31-46

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Our young people will learn of other religions at school and need to be clear about their own views and how to support them.

PRAYER

Thank you, O Lord, for showing us your wonderful purpose with mankind in the Bible. Grant us, conviction in what we believe and understanding towards others. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Write a letter to an imaginary (or real, if they know one) Hindu to explain gently why a faith based on the Bible is the only real hope.
2. Some people think that it is wrong to practice yoga because it allows evil spirits to act on the mind. You could discuss this, and the broader issues associated with yoga and meditation.

THE NATURE OF MAN - HUMILITY

11

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to develop a humble attitude towards God and other people.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Kings 5:1-19, 1 Peter 5:6-7

PREPARATION REQUIRED

You should acquaint yourself with the questions on the students' notes, and you should have read through all the Bible passages referred to.

Think of examples in your own life that illustrate the lessons of humility or pride, and be prepared to share them with the young people.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

What is humility?

Matthew 11:29; John 13:1-5,

Numbers 12:3, Exodus 32:31-32; Numbers 14:11-20,

Matthew 18:2-4

Discuss these verses and get the young people to decide on a definition of humility. You should come up with something like 'regarding others of more worth than yourself'. It is important to see the distinction between 'of more worth' and 'better'. It is not necessarily a good thing to think you are worse than everyone, and therefore not able to do anything.

Notice in Numbers 14 how Moses not only puts the people before himself, but is more concerned about the reputation of God than of himself.

The young people may have heard of Uriah Heap in *David Copperfield*, and might like to distinguish between true and false humility.

Humility before God

Look at 2 Kings 5:1-16 and Luke 17:7-10

Discuss Naaman's problem and how we too can be guilty of wanting to do good things when we are only expected to do something simple for God. Help the young people to see that we can never earn a place in God's kingdom (Naaman couldn't pay for the cure). All we are required to do is accept God's forgiveness and respond to his love for us.

Bring out the distinction between humility and weakness or cowardice. Naaman was 'commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded'. He would have been an extremely tough individual, used to demanding obedience from his men.

When he goes to see the king to tell him what the servant girl had said, this was not only an act of great humility but also of bravery. Israel was the enemy of Syria at the time, so this proposal could have caused Naaman a lot of trouble.

Baptism is in itself a humble act of obedience, which can also require some courage.

Think about James 4:3, 6-10, 1 Peter 5:6-7, and Matthew 5:2-5

These verses may prompt some discussion about how we pray to God. Do we tell him what we would like in order to improve the lot of ourselves and others, or should we simply confess the problem and ask him to help?

The Sermon on the Mount is mainly about humility, and this may be a good time to discover that mourning and weeping really mean being willing to confess to God that we are sinners and gratefully acknowledging what Jesus has done for us.

Humility before men

The questions in the Students' notes do not necessarily need written answers, but it will be useful to discuss which points the young people (and you) find difficult, and how you can encourage each other to 'do better'. You may wish to add questions of your own.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The general idea of this lesson is to get the students to think about themselves, both in relation to God and in terms of how they deal with people on a day-to-day basis. Humility is a hard lesson to learn for even the most experienced Christian, so the more thought provoking the lesson, the better.

PRAYER

O Father in heaven, my greatest delight, I worship thee for thy wondrous might.
Thou high and lofty one, far beyond creation's farthest star,
Inhabiting eternity - the high and holy sovereign of the sky;
Oh! am I not too low for thee to stoop to visit, and to dwell with me?
Thy still, small whisper answereth, No. Thy desired dwelling is below;
At the contrite sinners behest, mid tears and sighs thou lov'st to rest;
And he who tremblest at thy word in praise and supplication, shall be heard.
All glory be to God, I pray in Jesus Name, my living way.
Amen.

(anonymous 18th Century)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Students could write a prayer that the humbled Naaman may have said on his way back to Aram/Syria.
2. Think about Psalm 113; Isaiah 57:14-21; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 11:25-30.

DEATH - HELL AND THE GRAVE

12

AIM OF LESSON

To make sure that the young people have the basics clear in their own minds, and appreciate that not only is the scriptural teaching about death simple and straightforward, but also that it is compassionate.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 3:19; Psalm 88

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes familiarising yourself with the references.

Decide how you will share the references between the young people, and what you would expect them to fill in. (The titles in the lesson outlined below should be sufficient for some of them.)

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Most young people who have been to a Christadelphian Sunday School for some time, especially if they have been attending Sunday evening meetings, will have at least an outline of scriptural teaching on death.

Death is a curse

This fundamental teaching affects everything else that we believe. If death is a blessing, and the dead have gone 'to a better place', it is hard to see what the death of Christ means - why did he come to save us from death if it is a blessing? Make sure that the young people understand the significance of this.

Another point worth making relates to evolution. If the human race evolved from some other form of life, then the first humans would have been, like their ancestors, dying creatures from the first. The teaching of scripture, that death is a punishment for sin, could not be true. This is one of the strongest reasons for insisting that mankind must have been a separate creation, made by God with the capacity of living for ever.

Everyone is unconscious in the grave

The point of these passages is to show that death is an unconscious state. Look at some of them - enough to make the point clear. It is worth looking at Psalm 88, and comparing the different names given to the grave. It is poetic language, describing the grave as though it were one place that everyone went to.

It will be useful to compare the AV and NIV translations of Psalm 146:4. The word 'breath' (AV) or 'spirit' (NIV) is a reminder of the creation of man in Genesis 2:7 (the Hebrew word there is different, but the idea is the same). The same Hebrew word (ruach) does occur in Genesis 7:15, 22 and refers to all the creatures that died in the flood.

Everyone goes to hell

All people - Psalm 89:48

Joseph (according to Jacob) - Genesis 37:35 (sheol)

Hezekiah - Isaiah 38:10 (sheol)

David - Psalm 16:10 (sheol) and the Lord Jesus - Acts 2:27,31 (hades)

Even God's influence reaches there - Psalms 139:8

Finally, to lay to rest any doubts, these passages show that 'hell' is the place that everyone goes to on death - the grave. It is, in a sense, a place of punishment, but only in the sense that death is the punishment for sin. Even Christ was placed in 'hell' at his death.

Since the words 'sheol' and 'hades' (especially the latter) are in normal English usage, it is worth explaining them here, and clarifying that 'sheol' is the normal Hebrew word for the grave in the Old Testament, and 'hades' its New Testament equivalent. The other common word, 'gehenna' is the subject of the next lesson.

It is possible to be raised from hell

These passages make clear not only that we can be saved from 'hell' but that it is in God's power to raise us from the dead - the dead are not under the power of 'the devil' in eternal flames.

Do you think it is comforting to be told that someone has gone to be with Jesus?

It is worth discussing the effect of the teaching that the dead have 'gone to be with Jesus'. Apparently comforting, until one considers some of the implications:

- has the deceased really gone to heaven, or to the other place?
- are they looking down and watching what we do?
- if so, are they trying to communicate with us?

What does this mean about spirits and mediums?

Make clear that since the dead are dead, there is no possibility of communicating with them, and therefore that whatever talents 'mediums' have, they do not include the ability to contact dead relatives.

Note that in the Old Testament, such practices were linked with idolatry, and were condemned by God.

Ask the young people if they have seen 'mediums' on television or elsewhere, and discuss what they actually saw.

It is worth discussing the visit of Saul to the witch at Endor. Explanations vary, but the most satisfactory is that the witch was, like modern mediums, a clever psychologist, used to summing up her clients and interpreting small hints taken from their words and appearance. However, in this case, much to her consternation, God did really bring up Samuel from the grave, and the subsequent conversation was a direct one between Saul and the prophet.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Emphasise the simplicity of scripture teaching, but make clear the fact that death is what it seems to be - a curse from which we need to be saved.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, it is not easy to know what to say to people when they have lost a relative and believe that their soul has gone to heaven. Give us wisdom to know what to say, and to remember the mercy of your judgement on mankind. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Look at Philippians 1:23 and discuss what Paul meant when he said that to die was to be with Christ.

AIM OF LESSON

The previous lesson has contrasted the Bible's teaching about the grave with the erroneous ideas of "hellfire". Now we look at 'Gehenna' and contrast the scriptural background with common misunderstandings about it.

The aim is that the young people will be able to understand and explain the New Testament references to hell fire.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Key references: Joshua 18:16; II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; II Kings 23:10; Mark 9:42-50.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The previous lesson will have shown that the Greek word 'Hades' is the equivalent of the Hebrew 'Sheol' and both refer simply to the grave, i.e. the state of unconscious death.

There is another New Testament word translated hell (gehenna), which does NOT mean the grave, but whose meaning is not understood without examining its Old Testament background. This is the purpose of this lesson.

Look up all the passages where it occurs to see what they teach. Christendom Astray says this: "The word 'Gehenna' ought not to be translated at all. It is a proper name, and like all other proper names, should only have been transliterated. It is a Greek compound signifying the valley of the Son of Hinnom."

In this lesson we need to examine the history of this valley and what Jesus meant in using its name. You might like to ask the young people to read the historical passages before the lesson.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

If the young people have not already read the historical section in the students' book, ask them to do so now and to answer the questions.

Now read together Mark 9:42-50 substituting 'rubbish dump' or similar expression for the word 'hell'.

Ask them if this now makes sense and point out that the whole passage in Mark is full of phrases which we should not take literally:-

v42: "millstone tied round neck"

v43: "if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off!"

v43: "... better to enter life maimed" (No one will)

v45: "cut your foot off..."

v47: "pluck out your eye"

v47: "enter the kingdom with one eye" (we will be healed.)

In just the same way:

v48: "with two eyes be thrown into Gehenna"

v49: "their worm does not die, and fire is not quenched."

are equally figurative. Does anyone really believe in immortal worms?

Thus Jesus uses "gehenna" to mean "the rubbish dump". We must avoid like the plague temptations which will get us thrown out of the city of the Great King, to be left on the scrap heap from which there will be no escape. The time of opportunity is in this life: there will be no second chance to purge our sins in a future "purgatory". This is the meaning of "unquenchable fire" - no second chance after this life.

Ask the students to look up Isaiah 66:24 and explain it then read again the second historical section. The 'unquenchable fire' is not an eternal torment, but a continual reminder to the living. It appears to be this same literal valley that is kept as a memorial outside Jerusalem to show to the visiting worshippers the fate of former rebellious people.

"Unquenchable fire" means that the fire will not go out until the burning object is totally destroyed. Otherwise, why is Jerusalem not still burning? See Jeremiah 17:27.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Whereas it is comforting to know that "hell-fires" do not await us when we die, we are taught throughout scripture that it is in this life that we have our chance to accept or reject God's ways. And while of course there is no literal place of eternal damnation in flames, there is a good reason why the scriptures use the analogy: to realise at the return of Christ that we have thrown away the opportunity of eternal life would cause us dreadful anguish which only death would extinguish.

PRAYER

Most holy Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was separate from sinners, who kept himself pure for your Glory; teach us in your mercy to love righteousness and hate wickedness in our own lives and to wait for you to save us from being thrown away at the last day. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. What does it mean to cut off hands, feet, eyes. Look at Deuteronomy 6:6-8. If not literal, what does it mean? Ask for examples. Give up smoking gradually or "cut it out!" Choice of friends; social activities; television - if your programme causes you to sin, switch it off! "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked." Previous verses teach tolerance of someone else - these verses teach intolerance with one's own sins. We must accept restrictions.
2. Read Jeremiah 19:1-14 and discuss how Jeremiah's actions fit in with what you have learnt.

AIM OF LESSON

To enable the young people to understand, in an objective way, what other denominations believe about Hell and the grave, and to appreciate the importance of the Bible teaching, so that their beliefs are clarified and they are better able to discuss their faith with others. It is also important to understand that not everyone believes the same, and that some believe the same as we do.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

This lesson is intended to reinforce the points made in the two previous lessons.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The students' notes contain the text of an article from the Encyclopaedia Britannica on Hell, an extract from 'An Introduction to the Christian Faith', and the text of an American tract. Also relevant is the section of the text in lesson 7 that relates to what Roman Catholics believe about hell and the grave. It may be appropriate to ask the young people to read part of this text during the lesson, but you will need to decide in advance how much to get them to read. This will depend on how much time you have, and on their inclination and ability to read a long and sometimes difficult text.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Review briefly the subject matter of the previous lessons, then get the young people to read the sections of text that you have decided are appropriate, and to summarise what they have learned. The main points to bring out are:

- All the main religions of the world have some idea of a place of eternal punishment, so it is easy to see how this belief was incorporated into Christianity. There are many common elements - bridges, for example.
- However, they actually believe very different things on questions such as:
 - Once in hell, is it possible to leave?
 - Is hell hot or cold?
 - Is hell a real place or imaginary?
 - Is hell one place or several?
 - How does someone get there?
- The beliefs of Roman Catholics are different from the rest of Christendom, as they believe not only in Hell but also in Purgatory and Limbo. Hindus and Buddhists believe in something similar.
- Judging from the extract from 'An Introduction to the Christian Faith', the modern Anglican church believes something much closer to the teaching of the Bible than in the past, in the sense that they believe hell to be a figurative, not a literal, place. However, since they also

believe in the immortality of the soul, they have to have somewhere for wicked souls to go: hence the two views described in the third paragraph of that extract. It all adds up to a rather confusing picture.

- The tract published by the Fellowship Tract League gives the opposite end of the spectrum. Discuss the difference between a faith based on the fear of eternal flames and one built on God's promise of eternal life.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is important that we all appreciate that the truth about death is very simple. It is the end of life, and it is a punishment for sin. The only hope is resurrection. These truths focus our minds on the lives we are living now, and the need for salvation from sin and death.

PRAYER

There are several things that you could pray about. The need to understand difficult passages of scripture; to help others to appreciate the truth and not be led astray by nice words that amount to a cruel lie; to realise that the Bible teaching about hell is meant to teach us how awful it would be to see Christ return and realise that we had failed to respond to his message.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Write a letter to the author of one of the articles pointing out what the Bible teaches.
2. Write a newspaper article as though you were an investigative reporter who had just unearthed the fact that what many people believe about life after death is wrong.

DEATH AND OLD AGE

15

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people think about old age and the prospect of death; how they can learn from and help old people.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Leviticus 19:32

PREPARATION REQUIRED

1. Think through the questions posed in the Students' Notes so that you can help the discussion along.
2. Decide how you are going to apportion the references. You may not have time in the lesson to look them all up.
3. Be prepared with practical suggestions of whom the young people could visit etc. if they would like to put into practice what they have learned

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The Bible's Attitude to Old Age

The Bible teaches that we should help and respect old people. Help the young people to come to this conclusion by looking up the passages in their notes and discussing them. (Widowed, bald, grey headed and lonely people aren't necessarily old, but may well be).

The young people should be encouraged to think in terms of people they know; in their own family, in the ecclesial family and those who are neighbours.

What can we learn from old people?

Try to get the young people to realise that older people have usually had more experience of life - seen more troubles, conquered more temptations than they will have done, so respect is often deserved, not just a duty.

Problems

Often old people can become cantankerous, forgetful or obstinate and keeping respect for them can be hard. Keeping your patience can also be difficult.

We can be in danger of pushing our own ideas because we think we know best or expecting them to be able to do the things we can do.

Help the young people to find answers to the problems they can see like keeping reminding ourselves how frustrating it must be not to be able to do what you used to be able to do; or thinking how we would like to be treated when we are that age. We should be prepared to listen to what the old person wants rather than doing what we think he or she wants.

Practical help

This bit is often easier. The young people will be able to make a long list of things they could do like shopping, housework, letter writing, entertaining, collecting library books, etc. Advice about things like gadgets and benefits is also important and if the young people feel ill-equipped in this area they should be encouraged to get advice in turn from others who know more about what is available. Little tips like knowing you can buy TV stamps and that hold-up stockings can be easier than tights can be invaluable.

Spiritual help

When someone is living on their own they may miss being able to talk about the Bible and their problems.

Really listening to an old person's fears, reading with them and praying with them can help both them and us.

We should aim to help the old person to trust in God to see them through difficult times and know they have God's kingdom to look forward to after death.

This of course, all has to be done tactfully so that we don't lay ourselves open to the accusation "It's all very well for you ..."

Help them to feel useful. Even the most infirm can dictate letters and pray for others

Preparing for our own old age

This may seem a long way off for the young people but they should be encouraged to realise that our certainty of life after death, our total reliance on God and our acceptance of hard times is built up over a lifetime. It cannot be switched on at the age of 70.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

After considering the questions in the Students' Notes, the young people should be beginning to appreciate the role they can play in the lives of older people and how they can prepare for their own old age.

PRAYER

It may be useful for each young person to 'adopt' an old one and make him or her a subject for regular prayer

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people could take positive action towards helping some old people they know, i.e. arranging a visiting rota, organise a play or some singing for them, take on a job like collecting library books or letter writing for someone who is housebound.

PROMISES - TO ABRAHAM AND DAVID

16

AIM OF LESSON

The aim is that the young people will learn from the example of Abraham and David that we can trust the promises of God, and appreciate the relevance to us of the promises.

Abraham and David received promises which formed the foundations of their faith, and which concern not just themselves, but their descendants and us. This study concentrates on the more immediate fulfilment of the promises as recorded in the Old Testament

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 12-47; Exodus 1,12,14; Deuteronomy 1; Joshua 1; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 2,4,9; 1 Chronicles 29; 2 Chronicles 2; Ezekiel 21; Matthew 1

PREPARATION REQUIRED

There are rather a lot of references to look up in this lesson so you will have to decide how to tackle it with your group. You may decide not to look up all the promises - just some to show that they are there. You might share the fulfilment references out and get the young people to think about how they fulfil the relevant promises, or you might ask them to say from memory when some of the promises were fulfilled. Whichever way you decide it will make a useful record if they do fill in the correct references.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

First, read through the passages identified in the table in the Students' notes, and make sure that the young people understand the points which are summarised there. Now look through the other passages listed at the start of their notes, and see how the promises were fulfilled in Old Testament times.

Some of the words which Abraham and David heard were relevant to their own days and some to their immediate descendants. By looking at the promises concerning Abraham's immediate descendants and seeing how they came to be fulfilled, we can look at the other promises and say with confidence they will come true. Perhaps the clearest way to show the fulfilment of the promises is to set them out in tabular format, and connect the promises with other scriptures which describe the truth of these words.

<i>THE PROMISE</i>	<i>THE FULFILMENT</i>
Genesis 12:1-3	
Blessed	Genesis 24:1
Great Nation	Exodus 1:6,7
Great Name	Genesis 14:17-20
Bless/Curse	Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 20
All peoples	
Genesis 12:7	
Land - Offspring	Joshua 1:1-6; 21:43-45
Genesis 13:14-17	
Land - You	
Land - Offspring	Joshua 1:1-6; 21:43-45
Offspring/dust	1 Kings 4:20
Genesis 15:4-6	
Son - heir	Genesis 21:1-2
Offspring/stars	Deuteronomy 1:8-10
Genesis 15:13-21	
Descendants/strangers	Genesis 46:5-7

Descendants/slaves 400 years	Exodus 1:8-13
Enslaving nation judged	Exodus 14:26-28
Descendants/great possessions	Exodus 12:31-36
Abraham die in peace and old age	Genesis 25:7-8
Land from the river of Egypt to Euphrates	1 Kings 4:21
Genesis 17:4-8	
Abraham/father of many nations	Genesis 25:1-4, 12-16
Abraham/father of Kings	Matthew 1:1-16
Abraham and descendants/everlasting covenant	
Abraham and descendants/land of Canaan everlasting possession	
Genesis 22:16-18	
Descendants/stars and sand	Deuteronomy 1:8-10; 1 Kings 4:20
Descendants/gate of enemies	1 Kings 4:21-25
Descendants/all nations blessed	
2 Samuel 7:8-16	
David/Great name	1 Chronicles 29:26-28
Israel/Peace	1 Kings 4:21-25
David/house	1 Kings 2:12
Offspring/kingdom	1 Kings 9:3-5
Offspring/home for God	2 Chronicles 2:1-5
Offspring/everlasting throne	Ezekiel 21:25-27; Matthew 1:1-16
Father/Son relationship	
Iniquity/stripes	
David's home and kingdom and throne for ever	

Note: The selected scripture can relate to more than one promise. Not all the promises were fulfilled in the Old Testament. This should lead to a discussion of when they were fulfilled or when they will be fulfilled.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The fact that God has fulfilled these promises and others in such detail must surely give us confidence in those yet unfulfilled.

If you have time you may like to spend a few minutes discussing the last questions in the Students' notes.

PRAYER

Lord God of Abraham, the God whose word is to be praised and trusted, guide our minds to understand the depth of your promises made to men like Abraham and David, but which include all your servants. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people may like to read Ezekiel 36:8-15 and discuss this promise which shows how God cares for the land itself.

Other interesting promises in the Old Testament are Deuteronomy 28, Hosea 2:23, Daniel 12:13.

What promises did God make to Abraham's other descendants, Ishmael and Esau?

THE PROMISES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

17

AIM OF LESSON

Last week's lesson studied the promises to Abraham and David - some fulfilled and some as yet unfulfilled. This week we consider how we can be included in these promises, particularly those to Abraham.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 22:31-32; Luke 13:28-29; John 8:56; Acts 7:5; Romans 4:13-24; Hebrews 11:11-16; Hebrews 11:17-19; Hebrews 11:39-40; Galatians 3:8-9; 16-18; Galatians 3:27-29; Acts 3:25

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and decide how the young people will work through their notes. They could share the references between them, discuss them before they write, etc.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Abraham himself is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament - Why is this? What is to be learned from these references?

Using their notes, the young people can read the references given and fill in what they understand by them (encourage them to give their own answers and not to be afraid of making 'mistakes'). Discussion could then take place on their answers.

Matthew 22:31-32	Abraham will be raised from the dead
Luke 13:28-29	Abraham will be in the kingdom
John 8:56	Abraham looked forward to seeing Jesus' day
Acts 7:5	Abraham never inherited the land then, it was to happen in the future
Romans 4:13-24	Inheritance will be through faith not by simply keeping the law. The promise is not restricted to the land of Canaan but to the whole earth.

Hebrews 11:11-16	They looked forward with faith to the promise of a new land
Hebrews 11:17-19	Abraham believed God could raise the dead
Hebrews 11:39-40	The promise is still to be inherited
Galatians 3:8-9, 16-18	The promises to Abraham form 'the gospel', and his seed will inherit the kingdom. These verses show how important the promises are.
Galatians 3:27-29	We can all be part of the kingdom if we belong to Christ
Acts 3:25	Note how in verse 26 Peter interprets the promise that was made to Abraham. The promise is to 'all peoples' - Jews and Gentiles - and the blessing is brought about by the work of the Lord Jesus, who came first to the Jews.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Having learnt that we can trust God to keep his promises, the fact that we can be included in them gives us a wonderful hope for the future.

PRAYER

Almighty God, as we learn more about your plan and purpose for the earth we pray for strength to follow Christ's example as true believers, and for faith that we can all be part of his kingdom as promised to Abraham so long ago. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. The class might consider the parable of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-19) and discuss how it illustrates this lesson.
2. The young people might also like to think how we keep promises.
3. Look at Genesis 15:1-6 and get the young people to put themselves in Abraham's position. God had promised him something that seemed impossible, but he believed it would happen, and for that reason he was saved. Emphasise that this is exactly what God wants of us.

PROMISES - FULFILMENT THROUGH ISRAEL

18

AIM OF LESSON

To follow how the promises given to Abraham and David or 'God's plan' have been fulfilled through Israel up to the current date. By looking at Israel - the land, Israel - the nation and Israel - the people. The aim is to show how God's plan and promises are alive and working in the world today by looking at what prophecy has been fulfilled, and what is still to happen. This will show that in a world which generally ignores God and appears to have much to offer young

people. God is still in control. The promises are available to us all today and compared to these the world has nothing really to offer.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 12:2, 17:7-8; Exodus 19:5; Ezekiel 37:21-22; Leviticus 26:42; Deuteronomy 11:12-15; 28:64-68; Jeremiah 3:17-18; Luke 1:32-33; Galatians 3:26-29

PREPARATION REQUIRED

It may well be worth collecting any relevant newspaper cuttings with regard to any events happening in Israel at the time to use as introductory material which the students can read and discuss prior to looking how this fits in with God's plan for Israel. Another useful source may be 'Signs of the Times' from previous months' *Christadelphians*.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Look at Israel in two parts:

1. The Land
2. The Nation and People

The Land

Start by reminding the students briefly of how the land of Israel figured in the promises to Abraham (Genesis 17:7-8; Leviticus 26:42; Deuteronomy 11:12-15), but remember that this has already been covered.

The students could look at different maps in the backs of their Bibles and compare the Old Testament maps to those depicting New Testament maps and maybe a modern atlas.

Through discussion with the students put together a picture of this land, a land flowing with 'milk and honey'. A useful tool would be a Bible Message Calendar to show the great diversity and beauty of the land and how little in some areas the area and customs have changed.

It is also worth noting during discussion that the physical geography of Israel and of the surrounding area in the Middle East confirms the Bible evidence. The mountains, rivers and seas are there as described in scripture etc.

The following list is to help the discussion about Israel the Land and give a picture of this place where the Bible records took place.

1. Israel is only a small country, but it is of strategic importance. It was conquered by the Romans, and was the centre of the Medieval Crusades against the Arabs.
2. It is where the cultures of the East meet those of the West.
3. It is the centre of the world's land masses.
4. There is enormous diversity of climate: you can freeze on Mount Hermon 9,232 ft above sea level, whereas the Dead Sea is some 1,312 ft below sea level - a 10,544 ft difference! Israel has some of the world's great vineyards and orchards.

5. The phenomenon of salt water existing so far inland, away from the sea, and in such concentration that it is impossible for swimmers to sink.
6. Still 60% or so of Israel's land mass is barren desert wilderness.
7. In some ways little has changed. Life as it was in biblical times coexists with 20th century life.
8. There has been war with the neighbouring Arabs for so long. Sum up the current situation.
9. Jerusalem the capital is thought by historians to be the oldest inhabited city in the world. Also the future capital of the world. Jeremiah 3:17-18

The Nation and People

After the discussion-orientated section about the land, look at the following references with regard to the bringing home to Israel of God's people. Most countries are becoming multiracial and multi-cultural. Israel is gathering Jews as was prophesied.

Genesis 12:2 - A promise from God to make Abraham's family a great nation.

Exodus 19:5 - If Israel obeys God they will be a treasured possession, a holy nation.

Deuteronomy 28:64-68 - Israel did not obey God so were scattered.

Ezekiel 37:21-22 - The promise to gather his people once again.

If we look at them in worldly terms, the Jews should not have survived. They have suffered persecution throughout the world for many centuries, which reached a peak during World War 2. But the holocaust was merely a continuation of what had gone on for centuries.

After the Jews fled Europe and populated all over the world, God has been drawing them back as he promised in Ezekiel. Since 1948 and the setting up of the Independent State of Israel numbers have grown. 1948 population c.1 million; 1993 population c.4 million (of a total population of c.5 million). The gathering together of Jews in their homeland is just part of the preparation for the outworking of the promises to Abraham.

Use the maps in the Students' notes, and any others that you have, to illustrate these points.

You could also think of the many Jews who have had an enormous influence on the human race. Whether for good or ill, it has been out of all proportion to their numbers. Albert Einstein, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were all Jews, who in their own fields have dominated much of twentieth century thinking. Then there is the amazing dominance of Jews in music and entertainment. Many of the twentieth century's greatest composers (Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein), violinists (Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman) and pianists (Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim), have been Jewish; and amongst many other well-known Jews are Jonathan Miller, Stephen Spielberg, Barbara Streisand, and Peter Sellers.

Future Promises

From the previous lesson we know that Abraham did not inherit the land and that since his descendant King Solomon, Jerusalem has not been united under one king. Ezekiel said 'There will be one king over all of them'. As part of the promises was that Abraham's family and their land would be everlasting, (Genesis 17:7-8), the nation of Israel with a king ruling in the capital Jerusalem has still to happen to fulfil the promises.

Matthew 1:1 The genealogy of Jesus shows that he is a direct descendant of Abraham and is, even humanly speaking, the rightful heir to the throne of Jerusalem, (Luke 1:32-33).

Galatians 3:26-29 If we belong to Christ then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. The promises of being part of Abraham's great nation, being blessed by God, living in peace in the promised land forever are still available through Jesus. The future promise of living in the kingdom with Jesus as King ruling from Jerusalem

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Do the students want to be heirs to the promises?

PRAYER

Consider the Lord's prayer with special emphasis on the future fulfilment of the promises in "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven".

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Students may wish to continue the theme of the lesson by taking newspaper clippings on events in Israel and keeping their own record of the outworking of the hand of God upon his people and his land leading to the kingdom.

PROMISES - FAITH

19

AIM OF LESSON

Many of the events and passages relevant to this lesson will have been considered in Lessons 17, 18 and 19. The purpose of this lesson is to draw from these studies an understanding of the meaning of faith in people's lives and to recognise the importance of faith to salvation. Salvation is the gift of God but an individual's access to salvation is by faith - it is the key to the door. It is important to emphasise that although it is essentially to be based upon sound doctrine, faith is an attitude towards God and His plan of salvation rather than a set of beliefs. It is to be understood in terms of trust, obedience, commitment and reliance on God rather than ourselves.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 22; 1 Samuel 17; Judges 6; Hebrews 11; Romans 4

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The structure of this lesson will depend on the way lessons 16-18 have been taught. If much of the narrative detail has been dealt with then it may be appropriate to ask the students to work

alone or in twos to draw up a list of 'features of faith for today' from the lives of Abraham and David - see the Students' Notes. If the narrative details have not been considered then it may be appropriate to go through them verbally asking the students to suggest modern parallels of faith from each event.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Definition

Hebrews 11:1,6 It is recommended that a modern version is used for these verses. The class may like to offer paraphrases which use their own language. 11:3 is a good example - modern science offers no explanation of the ultimate origin of the universe - we believe it came about by God's power.

The Leader may choose from other events in the lives of these men but the following are three examples:

Abraham and Isaac Genesis 22

Verse

- 3 early - no vacillation or hesitation - faith acts; took wood - prepared, no excuses - faith commits
- 5 worship - not seen as a chore - faith is willing; come again - trusts God - faith is trust
- 6 took - he really means it - faith commits; together - fellowship - faith is a relationship
- 8 God will provide - trust even when hard to understand; together - still together - persistence in faith
- 9 told him of - God's way, not ours - faith is obedient
- 10 knife, slay - sacrifice - faith will make sacrifices

See Hebrews 11:17-19 Abraham believed the promises of God and had concluded that God would raise Isaac from the dead - so faith is not blind faith; it rests upon the promises of God and trusts in the righteousness and goodness of God.

David and Goliath 1 Samuel 17

Verse

- 32 heart fail - the opposite of faith. David was in his later teens - faith and courage
- 34-36 fought wild animals - faith increased by experience. The living God - faith in God
- 37 fought wild animals - knows success is from God
- 39 not Saul's armour - does not put faith in man's defence
- 40 sling and stones - but he does make provision - not blind faith but using what God has given him
- 42-44 Goliath curses David - faith is sometimes despised
- 45-47 David trusts in God - his faith is clearly in God

Gideon - Judges 6

If you feel that the young people may find these examples a little distant from their own experience, you may like to think about Gideon. His life was not one of continuous courage: he starts by being afraid, and unwilling to do what God wants him to do, but ends up by leading Israel to victory.

Verse

- 1-6,11 Israel is dominated by the Midianites, and Gideon is afraid to thresh wheat openly. But God understands our human nature, and does not expect everything all at once.
- 12-15 Gideon is called to save Israel but protests that he is unable to do this because he is too weak. God still does not reject him.
- 16-24 Gideon asks for a sign, and the angel causes fire to burn up the offering. God is willing to help his faith to grow.
- 25-28 Gideon destroys the altar of Baal, but secretly by night
- 29-32 Gideon's father supports him against the people
- 33-40 Gideon summons all Israel against the Midianites, and asks for a sign to confirm that God is with him.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It can be difficult to relate the faith shown by men like Abraham and David in their very dramatic times to faith today in very different circumstances. It may be useful to spend a few minutes discussing the comparisons and contrasts emphasising that what God wants from us has not changed - he asks for faith and commitment now as he did then.

It is suggested that a list is drawn up of the characteristics of faith based on the examples studied. It may be something like this:

trust	commitment	belief
action	willingness	relationship
persistence	sacrifices	courage
experience	dependence	humility

If time permits it would be valuable at this point to consider the faith of the Lord Jesus, using the above list. It is readily seen that in each of them the Lord Jesus excelled.

With some groups it may be appropriate to discuss the way our faith sometimes fails and the limitations we have because of human weakness. This is important because the students may compare themselves with Abraham (or the Lord Jesus) and decide they could never have such faith and should not try, or they may think commitment has to wait until such faith is achieved.

PRAYER

'We ask Lord that through your Word we may be given the understanding we need as a firm foundation for a strong faith. Please help us to trust in you as our loving Father, and forgive us when our faith is not as strong as we would like it to be. Amen.'

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people may like to suggest some 'tests' that happen to them which require them to show the qualities of faith, like being laughed at for going to church.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS IN GOD'S PURPOSE 20

AIM OF LESSON

The aim of this lesson is that the young people should be able to understand and explain why it was that God sent his son, and why his death was so important. This is a difficult subject for us to understand, and it is important to keep it as straightforward as possible. The lesson should identify two main reasons for the life and death of Christ:

1. To make a way for us to be saved.
2. To show us what God is like and to set us an example for our behaviour

The last lesson in this group concentrates on the second of these. This one centres on the first

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Romans 6

PREPARATION REQUIRED

How you present this lesson will depend very much on the young people you are teaching: how much they know already, and how willing they are to talk. Nevertheless, it should follow the outline suggested below.

If the young people are relatively familiar with this subject, get them to answer the questions in their notes as you go along. Otherwise, go through the lesson and then use it as recapitulation.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Introduction

Ask the young people why they think it was necessary for Christ to live and die: how would our situation have been any different without him? Make a list of the points they make, so that they can see it (a whiteboard may help). It is likely that their answers will, initially at least, be a bit simplistic or vague, and you may have to push them to say what they mean - often they may not know, but don't worry. The points on the list should at least include, in some form, the following

- to show us what God is like

- to die as a sacrifice for our sins
- to set us an example of how we should live
- to overcome sin
- to save people who believe in him

Mention that some of the points they have made relate directly to our lives; these are covered in two weeks' time. Others are to do with the process by which we are saved, and these form the subject of this week's lesson.

The problem, and how Jesus came to solve it

Ask the young people what God wants of the world; what stands in the way of his purpose?

God wants the world to be full of people who serve and worship him and who live for ever in peace and happiness. Now imagine the situation at the end of Genesis 3, when Adam has sinned and they and their descendants are expelled from the garden and condemned to death.

What was God to do to recover the situation?

Get the young people to think of possible alternatives to the sacrifice of Christ.

Pretend that sin does not matter and let everyone live for ever anyway? This would not work because sin make us unhappy and brings evil in the world, so God's purpose would not be achieved.

Wait for people to come who would live perfect lives? In a sense that is what God did with the law of Moses; he gave us a set of commandments to obey, and everyone broke them. So the law demonstrated to us all that this plan would not work (as God knew before)

At some point in the lesson we need to take a step back and consider the following question:

Why do we die?

It should be mentioned at this point that there are two reasons why we deserve to die.

1. Because we sin
2. Because we are sinful. We have human nature, and are always tempted to sin, even when we don't. And even when we are not sinning directly, in breaking a commandment, our lives are so mediocre that we can never do anything that is wholly good. Even Jesus said "Why do you call me good? No-one is good - except God alone" (Mark 10:17-18, NIV). Refer to Romans 5:12-14 and point out that after Adam, everyone died: even those who had not broken a commandment.

We come from the ground; of ourselves we can never rise above it, and so we return to the ground

So God sent his son.

What did Christ achieve in his life and death?

Ask the young people what it was that Jesus achieved for us? The answers should boil down to:

He overcame the things that make us deserve to die.

1. He did not sin

2. He overcame human nature. It was not just that Jesus always resisted the temptation to sin, but that by the end of his life his humanity no longer held any power over him.

This latter point is perhaps a bit hard to understand in the abstract. But we know from experience that when we sin it is easier for us next time to make the same mistake. Similarly, when we resist temptation, it is a little easier for us to resist it again - to the point at which we may no longer be tempted in that way. If we can imagine this latter pattern of life extended to the ultimate it becomes easier to understand what it was that Christ did.

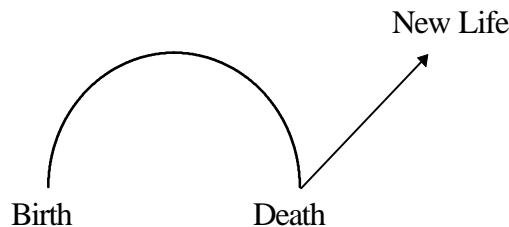
You may find these passages useful:

'For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man' (Romans 8:3, NIV)

'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil' (Hebrews 2:14, NIV).

'I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me' (John 14:30, NIV)

Emphasise the point that for these reasons it was essential that Jesus should be born human, just like us.

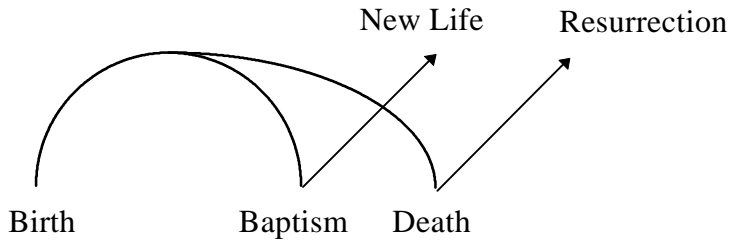


So he had overcome, for himself, the causes of death, and God raised him from the dead. 'But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him'. (Acts 2:24, NIV)

How does this save us?

We are no more able to live perfect lives after the death of Christ than those who were before. But God in his grace has allowed that if we acknowledge our sins, and confess that we deserve to die, we too can be saved from death.

The pattern in our case is exactly the same as for the Lord Jesus Christ. But in our case baptism stands in place of his death on the cross.



Use Romans 6:3-11 to reinforce this message.

- v3 When we are baptised it is like entering Christ's grave (buried with him)
- v4 We emerge to a new life
- v5 If this is the case, then when Christ returns we (if we have died) will be raised from the dead to immortality
- v6-11 Although we are still human, and we still sin, these things no longer condemn us to death. But we should live our lives as men and women who are no longer ruled by sin, but by the Lord Jesus Christ.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is worth thinking through the point that Paul had to answer at the start of Romans 6. We are by the grace of God saved from the effects of our sins, and no longer condemned to death. Does this mean that we can now live our lives exactly as we want and 'continue in sin, that grace may abound'.

A few minutes thought and discussion will lead to the obvious conclusion that if we really want to be saved from our sins we will do everything in our power to avoid disobeying God. But it is important to have the discussion, and to make it clear that the teaching of scripture about salvation by grace does not remove our obligation to resist sin and dedicate our lives to God.

PRAYER

Get the young people to write a prayer thanking God for what Jesus has done for them

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Get the young people to write a short essay about the future of the world, if God were to leave it as it is, and Christ did not return.
2. The young people could choose a hymn, hymns or songs to finish Sunday School which show our gratitude for what Jesus has done. This is a useful exercise as it encourages them to think about the words of our hymns.
3. 1 Peter 1:18-21. Ask the young people to read this several times and then to write in their own words what they think Peter was saying.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS - THE CRUCIFIXION 21

AIM OF LESSON

To show that Jesus was in control of the events and his crucifixion was the culmination of a life of selfless sacrifice of total love to the will of his father and the salvation of us.

To convey the suffering of Jesus long before the cross and the cross itself and the actions and reactions of the characters that surrounded these events.

To show that whether the authorities liked it or not they were fulfilling prophecy in many ways.

To show how the death of Jesus can affect our lives now and in the future.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Look at the Students' Notes and be familiar with the gospel records referred to there. Also a good plan of the City of Jerusalem and surrounding areas would be useful to follow the movements of the final week of Jesus' life around Jerusalem and Bethany.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Consider the role of the religious leaders at the time of Jesus and how they had lost the relevance of their worship and were as "whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones". All the Scribes and Pharisees were concerned with was their external appearance to the people they were supposed to be leading.

It was understandable that the religious authorities were trying to find ways to 'quieten' this young man Jesus, or reduce his popularity.

Read Matthew 23:1-11. Jesus could see beneath the outer appearances and knew the reasons behind the Pharisees actions - Jesus was a threat to their authority and openly attacked them stirring up the people against their authority. This would obviously have been quite hard for them to swallow, a very good reason from their point of view for Jesus to be 'quietened' or got rid of. It is against this background that Jesus enters into Jerusalem for the final time leading up to the crucifixion.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Thinking slowly through the crucifixion narratives helps us to understand a little of what Jesus went through on our behalf and to appreciate that he was totally in control of events.

PRAYER

We pray that the events that took place in Jerusalem all those years ago, a sacrifice for sin, a loving father giving his son and a son in true obedience, will have an impact on all our lives. Through baptism, our figurative death and resurrection we can have the opportunity of forgiveness of our sins and the opportunity to remember this act of the Lord Jesus the giving of his life, in the emblems of bread and wine just as he did with his disciples in the upper room. We pray that he will soon return to call all of his disciples, past and present, to the kingdom that was rightly his all those years ago when they put the sign on the cross "the King of the Jews". We thank you Father that Jesus endured the pain until the end when he could have called legions of angels to his aid. Help us to recognise the price that he paid for us and to respond in obedience. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Look at Luke 2:41-50; Matthew 16:21-23; Matthew 17:1-8, and discuss how Jesus knew from an early age what his life held for him but his disciples could not accept it. However, he continued tirelessly to teach, heal and explain.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS - SELF SACRIFICE 22

AIM OF LESSON

To consider how the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus should affect our attitude and our behaviour towards others.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Philippians 2:1-11 and the Bible references in the students' notes.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read the relevant Bible passages.

Think through each of the situations so that you can guide the discussion towards the 'right' answer - where there is one.

Note down any additional verses which you think may be helpful.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Read Philippians 2:1-11 with the group.

Give the dictionary definition of self sacrifice - 'the negation of one's own interests, wishes etc. in favour of others.' (Concise Oxford Dictionary)

Get the young people to suggest briefly how Jesus' life showed a commitment to a life of self sacrifice as described above:

- He lived a life of total dedication to others.
- He had compassion on others.
- He became a servant to his disciples.
- He felt compassion for others.
- He felt compassion for those who rejected him.
- He laid down his life for us.

Building on Jesus' example discuss the hypothetical situations in the Students' Notes or devise similar situations more relevant to your own particular students.

Try to draw out the magnitude of what Jesus achieved for us in comparison with the meagreness of what we do in return.

Reassure the students that we are all human but that we should be aiming for the high ideal of following Christ's example even though none of us achieve it.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

By reminding ourselves that Jesus was prepared to die for us and every one we know - even those we don't like - we may in some small way feel a little more ready to put others' wishes before our own.

PRAYER

It would be appropriate to read or sing together Praise the Lord No. 16 - 'Brother, sister, let me serve you'.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

It could be profitable to look at some of the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount and discuss how easy it is to do them. Examples are: Matthew 5:21-22, 38-42; 7:1-5.

JESUS' RESURRECTION - A STUDY OF THE EVENTS 23

AIM OF LESSON

This is partly an exercise in piecing together the resurrection narratives and partly an example of Bible Study. The aim is for the young people to appreciate the benefits that can come from

looking in detail at the Bible, and trusting that it is the inspired Word of God: more specifically, to gain confidence in the resurrection narrative.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Piecing together the gospel records is not simple. To read any one account on its own would be to gain an incomplete understanding of what happened, and one needs to look at all four (and 1 Corinthians 15) in some detail to work out a harmony. Even then not every uncertainty is completely resolved, but the overall impression gained is one of real people under pressure, rushing breathlessly around in some bewilderment.

You will need to spend some time yourself looking at the gospel records and comparing them with the chart below. Some questions may remain, and you need to be prepared to deal with them during the lesson as they arise. For example:

1. Why does Matthew's account make it seem that Mary Magdalene and 'the other Mary' met the Lord together on their way to meeting the disciples, when it is clear from Mark and John that Mary met Jesus on her own, and Luke 24:22-23 indicates that they saw the disciples before the other women met him? The answer must be that all the gospels are summaries of the events, and many details had to be left out.
2. Were all the disciples together? In other words, did they all hear the women's account, and only Peter and John act upon it, as Luke 24:11-12 seems to imply; or were Peter and John in a different place, as John 20:2 implies. It is at least possible that Peter and John were in another house, as one might expect since they alone followed Jesus to his trial, but we cannot be sure.

There are some hints in the students' notes, before their blank chart. They are meant to be helpful! Make sure that you have read them and thought about them, even if you do not agree with them all.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Harmony in diversity

Begin by considering examples of how witnesses can easily differ superficially when describing the same event. Test the class on something like:

- What the exterior of the building you are occupying looks like,
- What you said last week!
- Who was at a recent youth weekend.

And get across the point that it is possible for accounts of events to differ while being equally truthful. Indeed, if differing records can be shown to harmonise then their truth is established to a greater extent than if they had all been identical.

A look at the records

Ask each member of the group to look at a single gospel record (you could do the same for 1 Corinthians 15). Give them some small pieces of paper on which to write, for each event recorded,

- What happened?
- When?
- Where?
- References

They will need five or six pieces of paper each.

Then get them to lay all the pieces of paper on the table, collect together the pieces that describe the same event, then put them all in the 'right' order.

A harmonised account

When this is complete the young people will be able to complete the chart in their notes.

There follows a completed chart, which is on a page of its own so that if you want you can photocopy it for the young people.

Other points

These were not isolated incidents, but at times merge into one long appearance of the Master who "for many days", appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses ..." (Acts 13:31). Also Acts 1:3,4: "To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying (AV eating) with them he charged them "...to wait.."(RSV).

The appearances were not made in a hurry. There were "many proofs" which were to extend eventually over nearly six weeks. Some of them ate and talked with Jesus at leisure, and in this way impressions became permanent, and disciples who were strained and bewildered became calm and confident.

In the early appearances of Jesus stress is laid on the importance of their meeting him again in Galilee. It seems very likely that this was the convened, pre-arranged meeting spoken of by the Apostle Paul, "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive." (1 Corinthians 15:6). Also Mark, "he is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him as he told you." (Mark 16:7)

He would not have met five hundred disciples all at once, by chance. It must have been after the lakeside meeting, which was the third group meeting. The meeting in Galilee is stressed as important in Matt 28:16-20. On the mountain to which Jesus had directed them he repeats what he has already told the Eleven and commands them to go unto all nations, baptising and teaching. The apostles were commissioned, along with an army of faithful witnesses, who were to form the nucleus of the new church.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

"If Christ be not raised, then your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins." This foundation doctrine was to be readily accepted, yet was not given without "many infallible proofs". We too must believe that, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age." It will transform us as much as it did those timid disciples.

Events following the resurrection of Christ

<i>What happened?</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Where?</i>	<i>References</i>
The women arrive at the tomb. Mary Magdalene sees the stone removed, and runs to tell Peter and John.	Just after dawn	Outside the tomb	John 20:1-2
The other women see two angels, one of whom tells them that Jesus is risen. The women run to tell the disciples.	Just after dawn	At the tomb	Matthew 28: 1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12
Peter and John run to the tomb; Mary Magdalene follows.	Just after dawn	At the tomb	John 20:3-10
Mary Magdalene sees two angels at the tomb, and Jesus appears to her.	Morning	At the tomb	Mark 16:9-11, John 20.11-18
The other women tell the disciples what they have seen at the tomb, but are not believed.	Morning	?	Luke 24: 9-12, John 20:2-10
Cleopas and his companion leave to go to Emmaus.	Morning	Jerusalem	Luke 24:13-14
Jesus appears to the other women.	Morning	?	Matthew 28:9-11
Jesus appears to Simon Peter	Afternoon	Jerusalem ?	1 Corinthians 15:5, Luke 24.32-35
Jesus appears to Cleopas & his companion, who return to Jerusalem and tell the disciples	Afternoon	Road to Emmaus	Luke 24.15-35, Mark 16.12-13
Jesus appears to "Eleven" disciples and others, Thomas is not there.	Evening	Upper room	Mark 16:14-15; Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25, 1 Corinthians 15:5
"Eleven", including Thomas	Week later	Upper room	John 20:26-29
Jesus appears to Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John and two others	Later	Sea of Galilee	John 21:1-14
All disciples - more than 500	Later	A mount in Galilee	1 Corinthians 15:6, Matthew 28.7, 16-20, Mark 16.7
Jesus appears to James	Later	Galilee?	1 Corinthians 15:7
Jesus ascends to heaven.	Six weeks later	Mt of Olives	Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:44-51, Acts 1, 1 Corinthians 15:7
Apostle Paul	Much later	Damascus	Acts 9, 1 Corinthians 15:8

PRAYER

Ephesians 1:17-20.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Another exercise, or an alternative if for some reason this lesson is unsuitable, is to reconcile the accounts of the women who were at the cross and later at the tomb. There is a table summarising the information, and drawing some conclusions, in the students' notes.

JESUS' RESURRECTION - WHO MOVED THE STONE? 24

AIM OF LESSON

To prove that Jesus really did rise from the dead by examining Bible evidence against some of the alternative suggestions to resurrection that have been made.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 27, 28; Mark 15, 16; Luke 23, 24; John 19-21; Acts 2-5

PREPARATION REQUIRED

You might like to read "Who Moved The Stone" by Frank Morrison.

Read the relevant Bible passages and decide how you are going to use the Students' Notes. The whole group could discuss each point and write down conclusions or, if the group is large, they could split up, discuss 2 or 3 points each and then report back to the entire group.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The sub-topics of the lesson are the points in the Students' Notes. It is suggested that each point should be answered a) with Bible evidence, b) with any other relevant or logical evidence.

Jesus did not really die and later recovered?

John 19:33. Soldiers didn't need to break legs. Already dead.

Mark 15:44-45. Pilate confirmed death with centurion.

A Centurion would not be biased - trustworthy evidence.

The disciples had hallucinations?

An interesting consideration is the wide number of different ways and situations in which Jesus appeared:-

- Indoors / outdoors
- Singly / small numbers / large group
- Women / men
- Those with expectant faith / sceptical disciples
- Surprise appearances / planned meeting
- Rushed (don't touch me) / leisurely, talking in depth, sharing meal
- Not touching him / "feel my hands and feet."
- Doing normal things, eating / miraculous appearances.
- In Judaea / in Galilee
- At evening / at breakfast time
- In a crowded city / on a mountain top
- Stationary / when on a journey.

Hallucinations don't come with such variety!

The disciples stole the body?

Matthew 28:11-15 records how this lie started.

The disciples were too unhappy, disbelieving and scared to trick the Jewish leaders at this stage. Later, when convinced Jesus was risen, they risked their lives and some even died for preaching the resurrection. They wouldn't have died for a stolen body that remained dead.

Joseph of Arimathæa moved the body to a more suitable tomb?

Points to ponder

- It was reasonable that he should want to.
- He was perfectly respectable and could have done it openly in daylight.
- Being a Jew, he wouldn't have moved the body until after the close of the Sabbath.
- The early morning party of women did not meet him.
- If he DID remove it, it must have been during the night. It would be difficult moving a body by torchlight.
- Why remove the grave clothes and carry a naked body?
- How did he get past the guard?
- When Jerusalem was in uproar 7 weeks later, he could have produced the body and the tomb he'd moved it to.

The Jews or Romans took the body?

Matthew 27:63-66. The Jews specially asked for a guard so that nobody could move the body and claim resurrection.

Once the disciples declared Jesus alive, they could have produced the body to prove he wasn't. But they never did!

The disciples visited the wrong tomb?

Mark 16:6. The angels confirmed this was the place he HAD lain.

The Jewish leaders would have soon shown them the right grave.

The disciples

Compare the two sets of verses to show the overwhelming change in the disciples from the time after the resurrection and ascension. They changed from dejection to triumph, from sorrow to intense joy. They became a driving force. They preached and brought fantastic results. They turned the world upside down.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

We shall see in next week's lesson that the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the pivot of our faith. It is important that the young people are convinced that it really happened, especially as theologians and sceptics constantly doubt it.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we thank you for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the faith of those who over many years have spread the truth of the gospel. Help us to be changed as they were, so that we may be certain of a resurrection like his. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Produce a play, or a video of an interview, in which the various people involved are interviewed.
2. As the resurrection of Jesus is the most startling miracle in the Bible, the young people may like to discuss the fact that if we are convinced that this took place, we should have no problem believing any of the other miracles.

BIBLE STUDY - 1 CORINTHIANS 15

25

AIM OF LESSON

Part of a series about resurrection, this lesson offers the opportunity to study a passage of scripture which deals at length and almost exclusively with the subject in hand.

At the same time this lesson will provide experience in the methods and objectives of Bible study.

A further objective is to note the carefully reasoned arguments of the Apostle Paul, and to recognise that God expects us to use the minds he has given us to reason and examine doctrine and teaching so that we can have a firm foundation to our faith. This may be contrasted with an approach which is based on emotion alone (without, of course, denying the importance of emotion based on truth).

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Although there are many passages of scripture relevant to this subject, it is recommended that the chapter in 1 Corinthians is used exclusively and in its context. This will provide ample material for the lesson and will emphasise the value of listening to scripture with careful attention to each word.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Work through the chapter as the young people will, thinking about the impact that the subject has on your own life.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Background

The background to 1 Corinthians can be described briefly indicating the difficulties and the questions they were experiencing. It can be emphasised that despite their difficulties Paul still viewed them as beloved brethren and sisters, but that he was very concerned that they be fully informed and convinced about fundamental doctrines such as resurrection.

It should also be noted that Paul chooses to base his whole argument on the resurrection of Jesus, thereby putting the Lord at the centre of his teaching.

Review of the text

The first part of the chapter will have been dealt with in lesson 24, but it is worth pointing out that in verses-2 Paul makes it clear that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is an essential part of the gospel of salvation.

The main section is from v12 to the end of the chapter. Suggestions for what the students might write follow, but encourage them to think not only about what the text says but about the implications on their own lives.

Verses	Summary
12-19	Everything undertaken by the disciple is ineffective, purposeless and futile, if Christ is not raised. (So how does school work fit into this pattern?).
20-28	The whole purpose of God rests on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (What does this say about the importance of this life compared with the next?)
29-34	All the efforts and service of discipleship are to no effect, if Christ did not rise.
35-49	Belief in resurrection raises many detailed questions but the most important thing is to realise that resurrection is far more than just being restored to life - it also involves a change of nature and glorious association with the purpose of God.
50-57	Resurrection means that death has been conquered, and the victory is by the grace of God and through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
58	This is not only a fundamental doctrine; it is also an encouragement to hold on to the Faith and to service, which will not be in vain.

Baptism for the dead

During the verse by verse consideration this particular 'difficult passage' will arise. It is used by the Mormon church as justification for their practice of being baptised for their dead relatives, thereby, they believe, assuring their salvation. This doctrine is incompatible with the teachings of scripture and it may be pointed out that no fundamental and essential doctrine of scripture rests on just one verse. The following is a suggested explanation of this passage.

Paul has been talking, up to verse 19, about the implications if Christ did not rise from the dead. In verses 20-28 he has gone on to emphasise that Christ really is risen. Then in verse 29 he reverts to considering the situation if Christ is not risen, but is dead. What then is the point of baptism - a symbol of death and resurrection? The AV is rather clearer than the NIV here:

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead [that is, if Christ is dead], if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour [i.e. why am I prepared to give my life for the sake of someone who is not risen from the dead]?

Conclusions

Towards the end of the lesson it will be useful to draw together the conclusions and perhaps to enter them in their notes. This is particularly important for this lesson because the work is demanding and involved and must not be allowed to obscure the essential doctrine.

1. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead physically, restored to life.
2. This reality is essential to the claims of Christianity.
3. His resurrection is the guarantee of the disciples' hope.
4. We can expect people to deny, ridicule or try to get round this belief.
5. As Christ's so the disciples resurrection will be glorious.
6. The resurrection will be when Christ returns to the earth.
7. Resurrection is the answer to death.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

1 Corinthians 15:16-17 shows how fundamental the resurrection of Jesus is to our faith and without it we have no hope at all.

PRAYER

'Lord, grant us faith in the resurrection of your Son so that we may have confidence in your promise of resurrection for all disciples. Help our faith to grow so that the hope of Paul may become our hope too. Thank you Lord for giving your Son and for raising him to glorious life. Amen.'

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Write a letter to someone who believes that the resurrection of Christ was not a real event, but simply refers to the sense in which, when someone believes in Jesus, Christ can be said to live on.

2. Young people often want to know what we shall be like when 'raised imperishable'. Although it is not important to know, they may like to discuss what Jesus was like: he appeared normal, but could pass through doors, etc.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS - SO WHAT?

26

AIM OF LESSON

Having considered in the last six lessons the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we should now consider what effect should this have on our lives.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Acts 2:37-38; 2:41-47; 4:32-34; 8:32-38; 16:29-31; Galatians 1:13-18

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes, references and questions in the Students' Notes and decide how you would answer the questions yourself and how you will encourage them to reach these, or their own, conclusions.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

When we truly think about all that Jesus has done for us, as these lessons have been guiding us to over the last few weeks, and realise how miserably we respond to his love we ought to feel that more is somehow required of us.

Some of your students may already be baptised, some may be committed to a life of following Jesus but unsure of their feelings and others may still be some way from acknowledging their need.

This lesson seeks to discover what sort of response is required by looking at some examples taken from the Acts of the apostles.

Make sure that the young people realise that any response has to be their own decision and you are not pressurising them. They may then feel more relaxed about expressing their views.

Go through the questions in their notes with them, read the passages together but let them answer the question for themselves wherever possible.

The sort of answers to expect from the first five questions are:

- Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus.
- Jesus had suffered for him.
- Believe in Jesus.

- He went away for three years to learn more of the work he was going to take on.
- They continued learning from the apostles, broke bread, prayed, had all things in common, met together continually, praised God and helped each other.

Get the young people to try to imagine what it was really like in these exciting times so that they can understand the joy of the new understanding of the new Christians and their feelings of commitment to God and to each other.

When they have done this they should be able to fill in the answer to the last question.

- A commitment to follow Jesus comes when we realise that we continually do wrong things and are sorry about this and that the only way to be saved from this state of affairs is to believe that Jesus has died for these sins.
- We show our desire to follow him by being baptised. This is not the end of our search but a new beginning.
- We keep having to remind ourselves of what Jesus has done by breaking bread in remembrance.
- We want to praise God for our salvation and meet with others who feel the same way.
- We want to help each other and above all we need to pray for help and guidance.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The way of life should not be an academic exercise but, because Christadelphians believe it is important to get the facts right, we can easily give the impression that it is. This lesson is a good opportunity to redress the balance and show that true commitment comes from our hearts and our lives should reflect this.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, please help us to respond as we should to the marvellous truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, by obedience to your will, in the care we show for others, and in our praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Think what the resurrection must have meant to Paul having persecuted the Christians in his early life. Look at 1 Timothy 1:15, 1 Corinthians 15:9.

RELATIONSHIPS - WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

27

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to understand the responsibilities we have to others and whether we should help Christadelphians more than the rest.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Luke 10:29-37; Matthew 25:31-45; Galatians 6:10; James 2:14-17; Ezekiel 33:1-9.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read the relevant Bible passages, and think carefully about what your answers would be to the questions in the Students' Notes. Might the young people answer them differently?

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Use the Students' Notes as a basis for the lesson. The first three sections look at the Bible foundation for our 'neighbourliness'. If you have a large group of students, they could be divided into 3 groups, tackle one section each and then report back.

The Good Samaritan

Jesus helped the lawyer to answer the question for himself.

The priest and Levite may have been worried about being robbed or attacked.

Maybe they didn't want to break the law by touching anything unclean, or maybe they were on the way to the temple to perform priestly duties so didn't want to be 'tainted', or maybe they thought it was too dangerous to stop.

The Samaritan was like Jesus in that he brought help and restored life. The oil and wine represent the gospel message. The two silver coins represent the price of redemption that Jesus paid. Jesus went away for a time, like the Samaritan, but will repay the balance in ultimate salvation when he returns. The Samaritan had a donkey, and could help; the priest and levite, representing the law, could not. In the context in Luke, Jesus was travelling to Jerusalem via Jericho, so in this analogy the Samaritan would have taken the injured man back to the city of God, away from the city of destruction to which he had been travelling.

So whom should we help?

Our service to others is worth far more when we remind ourselves we are really serving Christ. Our service should be particularly to our brethren and sisters - but not exclusively. Although we can't solve the world's problems this side of the kingdom, it doesn't mean we shouldn't have compassion on our fellow human beings.

The Watchman

We have been entrusted with the precious knowledge of the coming kingdom and how to be saved, and we have an obligation to tell others about it. Some will listen and some won't, but what matters is that we've given them a chance to hear. If we do that, we have fulfilled our duty.

In many ways the gospel message is much more important than good works because it is about eternal rather than fleeting things. However, people may not be very receptive to the gospel when starving. (NB James 2:14-17)

Some hypothetical situations

This section poses some practical situations in which the students could find themselves. Encourage them to use the Bible principles from sections 1-3 to help with their answers. There may not be one 'right' answer, and you may like to think for yourself about the following suggestions:

1. Still offer help. At least make sure there is nothing you can do before leaving it to others.
2. Pray about it. Find out her interest. Get her talking about the past, her grandchildren etc. Ask her help with information for a school project or opinion on a Bible passage or something the speaker said.
3. If you are alone it would probably be dangerous, but you might pray for God's guidance and then trust he will take care of you.
4. Slow down with doors locked and see what they want. Drive on, ring the police and explain you were too nervous to stop.
5. Better to buy food, drink, clothing, room for the night than to give money which may be wasted on alcohol.
6. Talk through what the money is needed for, help with the problem, offer friendship and counselling.
7. Go for help. Try to help get her away. Talk to the attacker. Jesus said "Turn the other cheek" and "Do good to those who spitefully use you".

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

If we truly love our neighbours as ourselves we shall not go far wrong. Our service to others is a way of serving Christ. It helps to see that helping our neighbour is not easy so discussing problems can help.

PRAYER

Encourage the young people to pray for God to guide their lives into opportunities to serve others and by their service to preach the gospel.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

As this is a practical topic, ask the young people to suggest one way in which they will try and show 'neighbourliness' during the coming week.

PERSONAL MORALITY - MUSIC

28

AIM OF LESSON

For the young people to appreciate that music represents a challenge to our judgement. It is provided by God as a gift, to be used for our good and in his worship. But there are no

simplistic rules about what is good or bad, and we need to gain an understanding of the scriptural principles involved, and then use our courage in applying them.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Exodus 15:1-2, 20-21, and 32:17-19.

1 Chronicles 15:27-29, and Daniel 3:4-6

PREPARATION REQUIRED

There is a simplistic view of music, that 'classical' music is good, and anything 'modern' is bad; and since judgement of music is essentially a personal thing it is difficult to disprove. It is a fact, however, that the lives of many classical composers were as immoral and dissolute as their modern counterparts, and that a fair amount of classical music, opera in particular, was originally written as a bawdy 'music hall' entertainment. This is not to ignore the distasteful nature of much modern music; but it does not all deserve to be thrown into the same bin.

So an essential preparation for this lesson, apart from familiarising yourself with the notes and planning how you will lead the discussion, is to try to set aside any prejudices you may have that are based purely on preference. There are some biblical lessons to be learnt, and it is important that it is these points that the young people take away with them, rather than a debate on musical taste.

It is doubtful whether you can deal with this subject fully in one week, and since it is an important practical aspect of the lives of most young people you should be prepared to spend time on it. So if you operate a teaching rota it may be worthwhile rearranging teaching duties so that you are able to spend two weeks on this topic.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Introductory discussion

Before you begin the main content of the lesson, have a general, and factual, discussion about music as it impinges on our lives.

Ask the young people about the sources of music that they experience such as radio (which channels?), film scores, CDs, live music at school or home (do they play any instruments?), discos, hymns and spiritual songs, and make a list on a piece of paper or a whiteboard. Include your own.

Then ask them what they like and don't like, and why. Again, include your own views, but try at this stage to avoid a lengthy discussion. This is essentially scene-setting.

Now ask the young people to think of as many examples as they can of music in scripture. It doesn't matter whether it is in any way a complete catalogue, though it is worth jogging their memories to obtain at least some sort of representative list.

Music in the Bible

Look at Job 38:4-7, Revelation 14:1-3 and Luke 15:25 and draw out the lessons that music is part of God's work, and will play an important part in his kingdom. It is not just man's invention, like a piece of machinery or a scientific theory, but a God-given gift.

In everyday life

Music also played an important part in the lives of ordinary people. Look at these examples, for instance:

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|-------------------|--|
| Genesis 4:21 | The first reference to musical instruments: so before the flood, people were playing stringed and wind instruments. |
| Genesis 31:27 | People celebrated important events with singing and instrumental music. |
| Job 21:12 | Job describes music and dancing as part of everyday life (of the wicked, in this case, but his point is that the wicked seem to be blessed in this life). |
| 1 Samuel 16:16-23 | The emphasis is on instrumental music rather than singing. The Authorised Version translation that David 'played with his hand' in v23 is correct, and this had a soothing effect on Saul. |

So in summary, the main points so far are that music is an important part of God's creation, and will be so in his kingdom, and that both instrumental music and singing have always been a valuable part of people's lives.

Some Comparisons

Now get the young people to think about the two comparisons in the notes

The song of Moses compared with the worship of the golden calf

Exodus 15:1-2, 20-21. It seemed that first Moses and the men sang this song, and then Miriam and the women sang it. They used (NIV) tambourines and dancing.

Exodus 32:17-19. Moses and Joshua are on their way down the mountain having received the law from God, when they hear singing and dancing.

Similarities: on both occasions the people were singing and dancing

Differences: the first occasion was to God, and was acceptable worship; the second was to idols, and they were condemned for it.

Lessons: Music and dancing are not of themselves either good or bad. What matters is their purpose, and the context. The events of Exodus 15 and 32 may have looked superficially similar, but in fact they were very different. So we should not make any blanket judgements about the rights and wrongs of music and dancing, but we do need to note the dangers that they can be abused.

David's arrangements for music in worship compared with Nebuchadnezzar's image

1 Chronicles 15:27-29 the ark was accompanied by 'shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps' (AV); 'with shouts, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps' (NIV).

In Daniel 3:4-6 the people were commanded to worship at the sound of 'the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer' (AV) or 'horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes' (NIV). This part of Daniel was written in Aramaic, so there is less common language than we might have

otherwise expected, but nonetheless it is clear that largely the same instruments were used as in David's time.

Similarities: the same musical instruments (fundamentally) were used

Differences: the first occasion was to God, and was acceptable worship; the second was to idols, and faithful men refused to have any part in it.

Lessons: there is nothing inherently right or wrong in specific musical instruments. A wide range of instruments can be used either for God's glory, or in the worship of idols. The wisdom lies in knowing the difference, and God's people need to refuse the latter.

What can we learn about music today?

The parallel between the worship of the golden calf and Nebuchadnezzar's image, on the one hand, and some modern pop concerts, is startling. In each case they involve large numbers of people 'worshipping' an idol, whether an inanimate object or a 'pop' idol, and have the same connotations of immorality and obedience of someone other than God.

The key lesson needs reinforcing: the judgement lies not in a superficial assessment of the nature of the music, but is a matter of determining who or what is being worshipped and obeyed.

Music in Worship

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|--------------------|---|
| Matthew 26:30 | Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before they left the upper room. The passover hymns were Psalms 113 - 118 and 136, which the Jews called the "great Hallel". |
| Acts 16:25 | In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God: so hymns were not only used in formal worship. And men sang as well! |
| 1 Corinthians 14:7 | The implication is that pipes (NIV flutes) and harps were used in worship in the first century. |
| Ephesians 5:19 | Singing was an important part of worship. It is interesting to note the two halves of the verse. Other people hear the 'psalms and hymns and spiritual songs'. God hears the 'melody in our heart'. |
| Colossians 3:16 | Singing can and should be a part of teaching and exhortation; it's not just a musical exercise. |

There is a lesson from the first part of this study which needs to be carried over into our thoughts about music in worship today. We cannot make simple judgements about what sort of music is good or bad (Victorian good, modern bad; organs good, guitars bad; rhythm bad, lack of it good; standing still good, dancing bad). Acceptable worship can encompass a wide range of sounds and expressions.

But - there is a but. We live in a corrupt, and corrupting, world which uses rhythm and loud music in a way that can be very enticing. The advantage of simplistic judgements is that they are simple; the trouble is that they are often wrong. The problem with right judgements is that we always have to be on our guard, and questioning our motives.

Finally, the lesson of 1 Corinthians 8 needs to be heeded. We need to think not only about our own actions, but about the effect that they will have on others. That includes thinking about the elderly, and the traditionally minded, as well as those who might be misled into wrong actions.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The young people could think about how the lessons they have learned could be applied in their Sunday School or CYC, or in ecclesial worship.

They should be encouraged to think about whether they should change their listening habits (radio, TV, and recorded music).

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, who has given us the gift of music, help us to use this gift to give pleasure to you and benefit to others. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Read through 1 Corinthians 8:4-13, substituting 'listening to' for 'eating', and 'music' for 'food'.

TALKING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

29

AIM OF LESSON

One of the communities that we are most likely to encounter in everyday life is the Jehovah's Witnesses, because to their credit they make a practice of regularly visiting all the houses in a neighbourhood. The aim of this topic is to prepare the young people for such a meeting by exploring the faith, doctrine, history and practice of an active group of sincere and dedicated but apparently misguided believers, establishing points in common, and facing up to differences. We are often perceived as being like them and it is important for us to know a bit about them.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Revelation 7:1-4

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and the questions in the Students' Notes making sure you know the answers and why we believe what we do. Decide how you are going to organise the lesson.

You will need to provide concordances for the young people to use.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The students could read through the information provided quietly or together and then discuss the questions before filling in an answer.

Or you may prefer to look at the questions and read through the notes asking them to spot the answers as they go.

Jehovah's Witnesses are much more numerous and therefore better known than Christadelphians. Although their faith does have points of contact with ours, there are huge areas of difference stemming largely from their acceptance of the authority of the hierarchy of their organisation. Although our own understanding of prophecy has been modified over the years and still varies from person to person, we have never claimed inspiration or authority, and acknowledging a better interpretation is no great embarrassment to us. For the Jehovah's Witnesses it is a major problem.

Of necessity, this lesson consists largely of conveying to the class information which will mostly be new to them.

Christadelphian Connection

Strangely, the Jehovah's Witnesses understanding of the second coming has a Christadelphian connection. The Emphatic Diaglott, a literal word for word (and generally unintelligible) translation of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson who was once a Christadelphian uses the word presence instead of coming to translate the Greek word parousia when it refers to the second coming of Jesus. Following the disappointing failure of their prediction of the second coming in 1874, Russell and his mentor, N H Barbour, were persuaded that an invisible presence of Jesus had begun in that year, later changed to 1914. Other new Testament uses of parousia and New Testament use of other words for the second coming of Jesus make this a difficult position to sustain.

New Testament use and meaning of parousia

The word occurs in Matthew 24:3,27,37,39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6,7; 10:10; Philippians 1:26; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,8,9; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12; and 1 John 2:28.

There is no justification at all for the Jehovah's Witnesses interpretation of these passages. It is clear that the real return of Christ will be a highly visible event: 'every eye shall see him' (Revelation 1:7). See also Matthew 24:27. 2 Peter 1:16 speaks of being 'eyewitnesses of his majesty'.

Michael the archangel

Michael is referred to in Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1, Jude 1:9, and Revelation 12:7. The link between the passage in 1 Thessalonians and the Lord Jesus Christ is tenuous. The belief that Christ was created by God before any of the rest of the creation is based on Colossians 1:15. However, verse 18 implies that the apostle is describing Jesus as the firstborn from the dead.

They also believe that Jesus then brought about the rest of the creation (Colossians 1:16). This is a difficult passage, but the word 'by' is nearly always translated 'in' in the AV, and the same phrase is translated 'in him' in (for example) Colossians 1:19 and 2:6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 (in the AV; verses 9 and 10 have 'in Christ' in the NIV).

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is very important to understand the sincerely held beliefs of others to strengthen our own beliefs and to be knowledgeable and sympathetic if we are required to defend our views.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we see around us many who seem to have misunderstood the meaning of your word. Teach us the humility to recognise that we may not have perfect understanding either; give us perception to learn more of your truth, and grant us gentleness so that we may help others in their understanding. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The class might like to discuss any of the Jehovah's Witness beliefs in more detail, e.g. their refusal to receive blood transfusions.

PERSONAL MORALITY - DRUGS

30

AIM OF LESSON

To consider the rights and wrongs of smoking, drinking and drugs.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read the relevant passages on the Students' Notes and work out your own position on the relevant drugs. Consider each student in your class and try to imagine what they might say. Be prepared for them having different standards to each other and you. For instance, you will have to be careful not to tell them never to drink if you like a glass of wine yourself or you may have to protect a young person who would be shocked by the behaviour of another. You may also need to be not too condemnatory if you wish someone to be honest with you.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Go through the questions and references in the Students' Notes, discussing each point as fully as the young people wish before proceeding to the next.

Share the references amongst the young people or look some of them up yourself if this will help but let the students themselves decide what the Bible is telling us.

Some points that should come out of the lesson:

How should we regard our bodies?

Our bodies are not our own. They have been given to us by God to use in his service. Therefore we should not abuse them. If our service is like a race, we should treat our bodies like an athlete does; no smoking, etc.

Who is in control in your life?

One of the fruits of the spirit is self-control. Talk about the loss of control when a person is dependant on any sort of drug and contrast it with the benefits of letting God control our lives. Are there any differences between smoking, drinking and different sorts of drug taking?

Are there any good points?

Anything that is addictive is dangerous. Maybe cannabis is therefore not as bad as hard drugs or smoking but then is the company you are keeping or the places you go the right ones? Also don't forget that cannabis is illegal.

It should be borne in mind however that some addictive drugs are used in medicine.

What does God think about drunkenness?

These verses are self-evident but it may also be useful to talk about the difference between drunkenness and social drinking and the dangers of one leading to the other.

What can we do to avoid the dangers?

The Bible is very strict about getting rid of the bad things in our lives. We can keep clear of temptation by avoiding the wrong company and filling our lives with helpful things.

It may also be helpful to talk about how the young people could help a friend who may be more vulnerable or having problems.

Does it matter what other people think?

The young people should be encouraged to understand how their actions may be seen by others. What sort of example do they set for younger people? How do their family or ecclesia suffer when they behave badly?

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is very important that our young people discuss these issues from a Christian point of view because there are so many pressures from peers, magazines, television and even sometimes teachers encouraging them to 'do their own thing', 'discover themselves', etc., that they need to be prepared.

PRAYER

The young people should be encouraged to pray about all their temptations for guidance for themselves and others.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. The young people could position on the charts at the end of their notes all the common drugs they can think of: tea, coffee, aspirins, wine, beer, sleeping tablets, anti-depressants, cigarettes, cannabis, heroin, LSD. What about adrenaline (the excitement of playing computer games)?
2. Some communities, like the Mormons, will not take any drugs, so they do not drink tea or coffee. Are they right?
3. The class could make a list of reasons why people smoke, drink or take drugs and discuss how prevention is better than cure.

GOD'S ANGELS

31

AIM OF LESSON

To enable the young people to take a more literal view of angels than perhaps they have done before, and to understand more of God's glory manifested through angels.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Exodus 3:2, 4, 6, 7; Revelation 19:10; Psalm 34:7; Hebrews 1:14

PREPARATION REQUIRED

To become familiar with the passages used in these notes and to provide Leader's auxiliary list. 3 large (A3) sheets of paper and felt-tip markers will be useful to demonstrate points made during the lesson.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

What or who are angels?

1. How does God communicate with people? On one sheet of paper write 'God' at the top and 'Man and Woman' at the bottom, ask the students to think of as many ways of communication as possible, e.g.: dream, angel, prophet, etc. These words are then written in the gap.
2. God does not NEED the angels, so why does he use them? To show us more of himself; to help us understand him better, etc.
3. Bible stories of angels. Students can list stories, or they might have been asked to think of a list for homework.

4. Attempt a definition of angels. For example: angels are a part of God's energy or Spirit, or power used to
 - honour him in Heaven and
 - bring messages to earth.

Are angels the same person as God?

1. Angels are NOT God, but are a part of his power
2. Think of a King or Queen, the boss of a large factory, a head-teacher, etc. People work for them, by helping, serving, etc. Write 'the boss' in the middle of a sheet and put words suggested by students in a circle around the paper.
3. So angels are separate from God, they are NOT God, but they work for Him:

Look at Exodus 3:2, 4, 6, 7. It was an angel who spoke to Moses, but he was speaking on behalf of God, and is therefore referred to as LORD and God.

Revelation 19:10 shows the distinction well.

Are angels visible or invisible?

Sometimes angels have been seen as men, but sometimes as lights or some other form which have been instantly recognised as 'An angel'. For example in Luke 1:11-13 an angel appeared to Zacharias, and was known to be an angel straight away, much to Zacharias' anxiety. But the angel who came to Samson's mother was not recognised as being an angel until he had finished His second visit. See Judges 13.

Angels they can be either:

Visible:	Luke 1:26-31	Gabriel talks to Mary
	Luke 2:8-16	Angels talk to the shepherds
Invisible	Exodus 23:20-23	Commented on in Isaiah 63:9

What do angels do and how do they do it?

Here the leader's own list of references is needed. Ideas should be sought from the group, supplemented by the leader's list.

- Appear and Disappear
- Come from Heaven
- Sometimes look like men
- Sometimes look different from people
- Can rejoice
- Do not marry
- Can be seen by a donkey but not by a man (Balaam)

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Do angels have anything to do with us?

At least two important quotations can bring this lesson home to us all.

Psalm 34:7 Angels camp around us

Hebrews 1:14 Angels help us towards the kingdom

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, you have shown us that your angels encamp around those who fear you. We confess that too often we are unaware of their presence, and ask for faith to trust in your providence. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Read 2 Kings 6:8-18 to understand more about God and his powerful messengers.

PRAYER

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AIM OF LESSON

To encourage the young people to pray and give help in how to go about it.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Samuel 1:9-20; 2 Kings 19:14-20, 32-37; Nehemiah 2:1-8; Psalm 51:1-2; Psalm 32; Matthew 26:36-47; Luke 22:43; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Matthew 6:5-15

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the references and the Students' Notes and decide on your answers. Be prepared for the students to make their own suggestions. Prayer is between the individual and God and our position should be to listen and help rather than dictate a set of rules.

You may decide to give the examples of prayer for the students to read as homework beforehand.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The first four questions in the Students' Notes will help to get them talking. Using the examples of prayers (and any others you may choose) and the references, get the students to fill in their answers. Suggestions for what they might put are:

Why?

- Because God is our father and we need to talk to him as to an earthly father.

How?

- Humbly
- Honestly
- Recognising 'God's will be done'

- Kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down?

Where and When?

- Regularly
- Constantly
- Whenever we feel like it
- Anywhere

When we are feeling good/bad

In bed, our own room, the garden

What?

- Praise God
- Thank him
- Tell him our sins and ask for forgiveness
- Tell him our problems and ask for help

By the time you get to the last question the young people may already have told you what they find difficult. It does not hurt for them to realise that none of us find it easy but don't give them problems they would not have thought of for themselves. Their problems will probably include:

- I forgot to pray
- I don't know what to say
- I don't feel God will listen to me
- I find it hard to concentrate on a prayer someone else says
- I always seem to say the same things.

What they fill in will depend on your discussion but here are some suggestions:

- Make some times when you always pray and don't be deflected from it.
- Find somewhere quiet - the bathroom may be an ideal place.
- Try praying with someone else.
- Sing a hymn or say the Lord's prayer if you get stuck.
- Make a list of things to pray about or pray about different things at different times.
- Ask God to help you pray.

Think about God first and realise he won't think you're stupid. He doesn't mind what words you use. He wants you to pray. He wants to help you. He loves you. Luke 11:5-13; James 1:5-8; 1 John 5:14-15; Romans 8:26.

Be honest. If you are not sure whether you ought to pray for something, tell God and ask him to do what is best, James 4:3.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Prayer should be a vital part of all our lives. It really does make a difference when we pray regularly and sincerely but as a community we do not talk very much about the practicalities.

PRAYER

This would be an ideal time for the young people to write or say their own prayer to God asking for his help in this matter.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. The young people could list everything they could thank God for including their problems, opportunities, etc.
2. You might like to talk about the background to prayer, how it was associated with sacrifice - on altar - the tabernacle - the temple.

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