



The Way of Life

Part 2

Study Class Leader's Notes

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Brethren and sisters from several ecclesias have contributed to these notes, and our thanks are due to them all, but especially to the members of Knowle and Dorridge who planned, prepared, and first taught these lessons.

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Introduction

Dear Study Group Leader,

This is Part 2 of a 3-part series intended to help young people aged 15-17 to decide the path they wish to follow in their lives. The notes in the Introduction to Part 1 summarised the purpose and content of the lessons, and discussed some of the practical issues involved in preparing and teaching them. We have not reproduced those notes here, so if you haven't read them already this may be a good time to find Part 1 and look through them.

Planning a syllabus

The CSSU does not produce a lesson timetable for the Study Class, because no two classes are the same. You may have a large group of young people who are committed to their faith, perhaps some of whom are already baptised; or you may have only one or two, for whom the distractions of the world are proving very strong. The important thing is to try to provide them with the teaching that they need.

We have tried to present the notes in a structured form, in which the topics build on what has been covered before, and to provide the young people with subjects appropriate to their age. We have also tried to strike a balance between topics which are based on scriptural subjects and those which are directly relevant to daily life (though of course every scriptural consideration should have its practical lessons, and no moral issue can be dealt with apart from the Word of God). It is therefore a perfectly acceptable approach to start at the beginning of Part 1 and work through to the end of Part 3. All we would suggest is that you consider the needs of the members of the group and provide them with what they need.

Seeking the views of the young people

It may be helpful to ask your group to comment on the topics that they would like to discuss. If you do so, their response will typically highlight two things which are uppermost in their minds:

- practical issues that they face at home, school or college.
- a desire to understand the differences between the beliefs of Christadelphians and those of other denominations and religions.

It is important to listen to their wishes and to respond to them, especially if you feel that they are genuinely seeking for help and guidance, and we hope that these notes will help you to do so: certainly those needs were in our minds.

At the same time, remember that it is often difficult, especially for young people, to stand back from their immediate situation and recognise which activities may in the long run prove most helpful. The time in a Study Class may be their best opportunity systematically to think in detail about the first principles of the gospel, and to get them straight in their minds. To do so may not only help with their immediate situation - though they may not have expected it to be so - but prepare them for the rest of their lives. Many problems which could destroy personal, family or ecclesial life, yield to a clear understanding of the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus.

The young people can tell you what they think they need, but in the end you should feel it to be your responsibility to provide for their needs in the best way you can. If they ask for bread you should give it to them; if they want stones you should listen compassionately and then help them to understand why bread is better.

Talking with young people

We considered in the introduction to Part 1 the importance of listening to young people, gaining their trust, and of respecting the confidentiality of things they say to you. We hope that in addition you will find these thoughts helpful.

Their Questions - the best teaching aid

Imagine: you are teaching your Study Class. You prepared the lesson in great detail, considered every aspect of the subject, arranged the key points in a logical sequence, and now, with ten minutes to go before you finish, you are only half way through what you had planned to say. You pause for breath - and a small voice across the table asks a question which seems at best tangential to what you want to say: at worst, irrelevant. Brushing it aside, you plunge on, determined that the young should absorb the enormous wealth of wisdom you have stored away over the years.

You may have missed the best teaching opportunity you had that day.

The one who asked the question probably stopped listening. After all, if you didn't listen to him, why should he listen to you. The question may have been irrelevant to the lesson, certainly to your perception of it, but it was not meaningless. It may have meant something like

- 'I do not understand what you are saying'
- 'I am not interested in this'
- 'I want to join in this discussion but I don't know how'

Next week he may have a relevant question. What will he do then, and what will he think when you complain that he will not join in the discussion?

Young people's questions are so important. They tell you of their needs, of what they do not understand, of their desire to contribute, of their need to be heard. It is true that they can be distracting, and that occasionally a question is asked deliberately in order to distract! But even then it needs to be listened to carefully, and dealt with in an appropriate way.

So listen to the questions your young people ask, and take them seriously. They are gold-dust. Be prepared to

- Stop what you are saying. You may have many opportunities to finish what you want to say (perhaps they have heard it before anyway); but you have only one to respond to this question.
- Take time to think about the question, and ask yourself what is really being said. Make sure that you have understood what they are asking, perhaps by repeating the question in your own words. It may indeed turn out to be irrelevant, and you may feel it best to talk to the one who asked it at the end of the lesson, or to deal with it another time.
- Do not criticise an honest question, even if you think that the young person should know the answer (perhaps she does, but she wants to hear you give it). There may be wrong answers, but there are no wrong questions (not real questions, anyway).
- Ask the other members of the group if they have the same question, and listen to what they say.
- Give the best answer that you can, but don't be afraid to say that you do not know, or that you find the answer hard to live up to, or that you would like to think about it for a week.

Above all, show the young people that you respect their contributions to the lesson, and that you value what they have to say. By this you show that you respect and value them.

Talk about yourself, in moderation

Young people commonly regard the very old (like you) as being different from them. What would you understand of their problems and difficulties?

Who can blame them? You have probably spent many years polishing your presentation of yourself as someone who has mastered the problems of life and has everything under control. So when it comes to a discussion of something that happened on the way home from school last Thursday, which they felt unable to cope with; or a temptation that they find hard to resist; or a doubt that they have about whether there really is a God, why should they tell you? You will not understand.

You probably will, only too well. You may not, even when you were their age, have encountered precisely the same pitfalls as they; life has got harder for young people. But it would be surprising if you had no experience that was similar.

Should you tell them about it? Only you can decide, and there may be good reasons not to. But if you can, do. They may be worried about exams; tell them that you know what it's like because you worry about your job, or your cooking. They may feel guilty about something they have, or have not, done; tell them that also you often feel ashamed. They may have doubts about their faith; tell them of yours. They may not know what they want to do with their lives; tell them of a time when you did not know either. They may feel inadequate: tell them that, despite the polished presentation, you often feel a failure.

In moderation, of course. You are not trying to outdo them, so that it seems that their problem is trivial; or to change the subject, so that you are talking about yourself rather than about them. You are simply joining them in their trouble, so that you can help them out of it.

It is good for young people to understand that they are not alone in their problems; the very reason Christ shared our humanity was so that 'Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted'. Our aim has to be the same.

Young people need clear principles

If it is good to sympathise; it is even better to help. It is not enough simply to wallow in someone else's problem. Job's friends sat with him on the ground, but they were no help.

One of the hardest things in life is to keep our ideals clear, and our goals simple, while dealing compassionately with our own, and others', failures. It is easy to blur every edge, to colour every picture grey, to think that because we are all mediocre God is satisfied with mediocrity.

Paul wrote 'this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. For ourselves we need constantly to refresh our ideals, to fix once more our eyes upon Jesus, who 'for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame'.

If this is true of us, it is even truer of young people. The young are great idealists, and we should be glad that they are. At the same time as life smoothes off our rough corners it can wear us down, and the young can often surprise us with their clarity, and the freshness of their values.

So listen to their difficulties; understand their failures; but do not leave them there. Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry not just so that they would be better, but so that they would have strength to serve him. That has to be our aim too. To give them the vision that will lift them above their fellows, out of their weaknesses, to walk a journey that leads to Jesus Christ, their saviour. In short, to choose, and to walk, the Way of Life.

And finally ...

Please, please, let us know how you got on with these lessons. Our work is not finished when we print these books and put them in the post. What matters is that they should assist you in the real task of helping the young people in your ecclesia, and the only way we will know how well they achieve that aim is if you tell us. We have provided a comment form in the notes, but a letter or phone call would be equally welcome. If you don't know how to contact us, ask the person who ordered these notes, or look in the ALS diary - the CSSU is org.101, under 'Sunday Schools and Services to Teachers'.

May God bless you, and the young in your care.

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.

Name	Date of Birth	Notes

Teaching Record

This table is 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	Initials	Comments?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Initials</i>	<i>Comments?</i>
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			

Topic	Date	Initials	Comments?
22			
23			
24			
25			
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28			
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31			
32			

For your comments - The Way of Life, Part 2

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.....

Address.....

.....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 would 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

That the young people might consider the development of the Bible, understand the dedication of people in the past to preserve it and so to learn to value what we have.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Peter 1:21 - the general principle.

Exodus 24:4-8; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25 - identifiable writers.

Compare the end of 2 Chronicles with the beginning of Ezra - probable writers.

Review 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15 - possible writers

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the students' notes so that you are really familiar with the historical events. A lesson which is basically imparting information can be difficult to make interesting so you need to be able to assess how much extra information to give to keep their enthusiasm and prevent the basic story becoming lost in a fog of facts.

If you do not have a book such as 'God's Living Word', by Derek Banyard, try to borrow a copy. Apart from an excellent source of information it contains many colour illustrations which you can use to help in the lesson.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Read through the page in the students' notes with the young people asking them to fill in what they know or what they can find out from encyclopedias, and supplementing their knowledge with your own. They can fill in as much or as little as they wish. They may wish to add things that particularly interest them or they may prefer to keep the story simple.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The last two questions for this lesson in the students' notes are very important. Help the young people to appreciate that these men had a great desire for all men and women to be able to know about God's salvation. The lesson for us is to respect God's word and read it

We should thank God for them and for his care for us in that he ensured his word is available to us.

PRAYER

Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy word. I

have not departed from thy judgments; for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. (Psalm 119: 97-104)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Finding out about the Dead Sea Scrolls may be an interesting investigation if the young people are not familiar with the story.

THE BIBLE - OTHER PEOPLE'S VIEWS

2

AIM OF LESSON

To prepare the young people for some of the arguments used against the authority and inspiration of Scripture. To provide some initial responses to these criticisms.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Exodus 17: 14, Joshua 24:26, 1 Samuel 10:25, Isaiah 30:8, Jeremiah 30:2, Habakkuk 2:2, Luke 1:3, Revelation 1:11.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the arguments listed and consider which of these might be of particular concern to your students, both now and in the future.

If you do not have a white board, try to find some other means of writing a list of points which everyone can see.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The students may have already heard of some criticisms of Scripture, and may have concerns about them. Naturally these should be addressed first. Perhaps you could ask for examples of other people's views first of all. Try writing them on a white board - dividing them into the two groups shown below as they think of particular criticisms.

Outright Opposition: - the views of the atheist, the critic.

- "It is a collection of verbal traditions."
- "It is myth, portraying unhistorical characters."
- "It was written after 'prophecies' had happened."
- "We cannot accept the miracles."
- "It is full of contradictions."

- “It was written by many now-forgotten authors.”

Faint Praise - supportive, yet not accepting full inspiration by God.

- “It is a valuable history book - no more.”
- “It is the world’s greatest work of literature.”
- “It is one of several ‘holy books’.
- “It is the Word of God in the words of men.” or “It contains the words of God.”
- The Bible is true but God has since revealed further truths to men.

Such ideas are perhaps more likely to arise in school Religious Education and assemblies. In some ways they are more insidious, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

It is clearly impossible to answer these kind of points comprehensively in one lesson, but you need to be prepared for them, and to have thought through how you will respond. Try to encourage the young people to answer the questions themselves, but be prepared to help them out if they get into difficulties.

Here are some relevant points:

Outright Opposition

“It is a collection of verbal traditions.”

First of all, the Bible’s own claims should be noted. It does NOT claim to be a collection of oral stories handed down over time:

- Exodus 17:14, “And the LORD said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book ...” (The 1st occurrence of ‘write’.)
- Joshua 24:26, “And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God,” (Shows the ‘law’ extends beyond Moses.)
- 1 Samuel 10:25, “Then Samuel ... wrote in a book and laid it up before the LORD.”
- Also Isaiah. 30:8, Jeremiah 30:2, Habakkuk 2:2, Luke 1:3, Revelation 1:11.

The critic should at least take as much notice of the Bible as he does any of other historical documents. Not everyone is aware of these categorical statements that Scripture was very often written down ‘on the spot’.

“It is myth, portraying unhistorical characters.”

Commonly thought. However, throughout the twentieth century as unbelief has generally increased there has been a steady stream of discoveries confirming different parts of the record. It used to be thought for instance that Moses would “be unable to write, as writing had not been invented then.” It is now known that many different scripts were already in use. An amazing recent set of discoveries has been made by Dr. Rohl (found in his book ‘A Test of Time’). Re-dating much of Egyptian history by 250 years or so, he then found:

- widespread evidence of ‘Asiatic’ slaves who lived in the Nile delta
- monuments built by and to Joseph, even possibly his tomb and his statue!
- the tumbled walls of Jericho
- a clay letter written by King Saul!
- another mentioning David
- Solomon’s wife’s house and tomb.(Pharaoh’s daughter.)

Being very recent, his findings are still disputed but they demonstrate the ever increasing support for Biblical history.

“It was written after the prophecies had taken place.”

John Urquhart's book "The Wonders of Prophecy" lists about seventy specific prophecies fulfilled at and since the time of Jesus. Now it is beyond serious dispute that the Old Testament was written before the time of Jesus - scholars accept that it was all translated into Greek (the Septuagint) about two hundred years before Christ. So at least these particular prophecies were provably written BEFORE the events they depict.

“We cannot accept the miracles.”

“These are myths and legends - not serious records.” Perhaps this is the most common view among atheists, i.e. straightforward unbelief. And we for our part cannot force the atheist to believe. There is no quick, slick formula to make him change his mind. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. We can only continue to encourage him/her to read the Bible personally and seriously. It has the “ring of truth” about it. The power is in God's message itself, not in our persuasive arguments about it. We can point out however:

- the reasonableness of it. (A religion that makes sense.)
- that it is what the scientists call ‘falsifiable’, that it lays itself open to disproof if prophecies fail, or history is inaccurate.

“It is full of contradictions.”

Compared with the number of times the Bible supports itself - what we tend to call undesigned coincidences - there are very few examples of apparent contradictions and these are all of an insignificant nature. Lesson 4 discusses these.

“It was written by many lost authors.”

Over the last 150 years critics have claimed that books of Scripture were not written by the human authors it names. For instance they have said that there were two ‘Isaiahs’, and that they can trace different oral traditions in various sections of the book of Genesis. Another example was the Apostle Paul's letters. It was claimed that the varying styles of language between epistles revealed that they were not written by the same man. However such ‘linguistic analysis’ is poor evidence. The methods are unreliable often proving that certain passages or letters were written by different authors when they were known to have been written by the same person. Critics are also far from unanimous in their opinions and they differ greatly in their reasons and in the dates they assign to passages.

Faint Praise

“It is a valuable history book - no more.”

If the history is accurate, then we should take notice of the lessons of that history. Were there ten plagues in Egypt? Then what did the death of the firstborn teach? It taught Pharaoh to fear God! If the Red Sea was parted, then who parted it? The history is valuable as it is the record of God's dealings with His people. “These things are written that ye might believe ... and have life.” John 20:31.

At what point does one stop accepting the history as accurate: Jesus lived, Jesus teaching, Jesus' miracles, Jesus' death, His resurrection and ascension? It is all of a piece.

“It is the world's greatest work of literature.”

Such a point sounds initially supportive of Scripture - but it ignores the vital question - is the Bible the wholly inspired Word of God? Human works of literature are judged by human standards, and the Bible is not to be. If it is not “Thus saith the Lord” then the “world's greatest work of literature” is a fraud!

“It is one of several ‘holy books’”.

Again, this sounds reverential. But, of course, if this statement is true, then the Bible is not! There is “no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved” than Jesus Christ our Lord. Scripture forces us to make a choice: either it is God’s Word, or it is a great lie. The Bible tells the believer to remove all idols from his heart and worship God alone. He cannot therefore consider idolatrous literature to be ‘holy’.

Unbelievers often view Scripture as ‘superstitious’ like the other ‘holy books’. They see Hindus worshipping at statues that ‘drink milk’, and then ‘Christians’ worshipping images of Mary that ‘shed tears’. (Both statues and images being made out of porous stone, it is suspected.) In ignorance of the reasonableness of God’s Word they then assume it is on the same level as other books.

“It is the Word of God in the words of men.” or “It contains the words of God.”

Typical of the kind of clever phraseology which is employed when people start picking holes in Scripture, or accepting more palatable parts and rejecting other sections. Ambiguous statements like these allow wide variation in how much of the Bible different people accept.

The introductions to some translations (like the RSV, although it is still a useful translation) show other examples of complicated wording which hide an incomplete acceptance of inspiration by the translating committees. Such convoluted arguments subtly deny Scriptures like “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Psalm 19:8. If God’s law is pure, why should some parts of it be considered uninspired? It stands, or falls, together.

One can’t fully believe in the Jesus of the New Testament without accepting His view of the Old: “the Scripture cannot be broken.”(John 10:35) “If you do not believe (Moses’) writings, how will you believe my words?” (John 5:47). The Bible is simply God speaking to us.

“The Bible is true but God has since revealed further truths to men”

Often beliefs which are considered to be God’s further revelations are directly opposed to what the Bible says, i.e. what happens when a person dies. Verses like Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19, suggest that God has told us what we are to believe and we are not expected to alter it.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Facing these criticisms of the Bible together and discussing how valid they are will give the young people confidence in their own beliefs and preparation for how to deal with antagonistic comments.

PRAYER

“Lord, increase our faith. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Word.”

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

For those who might think the Bible is dated, some of the arguments put forward in ‘Some of these Diseases’ by Dr. S. I. McMillen (if you can borrow a copy - it is out of print) could be

discussed to show how the laws given through Moses one and a half centuries before Christ show an appreciation of health and cleanliness only recently discovered by men.

ABOUT NEXT WEEK

The next topic is about Bible versions. If you intend to deal with that next week, you may like to suggest to the young people that they bring along different translations to compare.

THE BIBLE - VERSIONS

3

AIM OF LESSON

To let the students know something about the variety of English versions of the Bible available, and to furnish them with objective criteria with which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, so that they may be equipped to make their own personal choice.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

John 20:31.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

It will be useful to assemble as many different versions as possible for the students to examine and refer to.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Talk through with the class the problems facing Bible translators as set out under the headings in the students' notes, and seek their opinions as to the most appropriate solutions in each case.

Help the students to see that if a translator sticks rigidly to translating accurately, word for word, the result may be difficult to understand.(sometimes found in the Authorised Version) whereas attempting to provide meaning in a translation could sacrifice accuracy (as in the Good News Bible). We have to have a good balance and to achieve this there is value in using different versions.

The most serious aspect of interpretation is when the translator has his own doctrinal views and perhaps without realising it mistranslates.

Conclusions

It is important that the young people should arrive at sound conclusions as a result of these considerations. Try to guide them towards the following:

- There is no one ideal translation, and so whichever version we may find most helpful, we should have ready access to others. This is especially true if we are reading a version which provides an interpretation rather than a translation.
- We should recognise that our aim has to be to understand what God originally caused to be written, so that it can change our lives. Our aims, therefore, have to be firstly accuracy; secondly ease of understanding.

Using Bible versions in the Study Class

You may like to take the opportunity to have a discussion of the versions you should normally use in the group. This may of course be constrained by the wishes of the parents of the young people, and you will need to be sensitive to this.

There is much to be said, however, for the young people (and you) using the same version for normal purposes. Even very intelligent young people do not find it easy to sum up a paragraph of text at a glance, and the difficulty of following the text of one version while someone else is reading aloud from another can be considerable.

If you can decide on one version which you will all use, while having others available for comparison, you may find that the benefit of Bible reading in the class is improved considerably.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Many will have and even know of only the version chosen for them by their parents. Choosing the right Bible is an important matter as it may be a companion for many years. In making an informed choice, it will be helpful for them to have an understanding of how and why the versions differ.

PRAYER

Lord, we thank you that we have your word preserved in so many different translations. Help us to use them in the best way to find out what you truly want for us. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people might like to find out about the British and Foreign Bible Society and other Bible Societies - the Gideons - who are dedicated to making the Bible available to all.

AIM OF LESSON

There are many sources of authority, some general and some religious. We claim that the Bible is not only a unique source of authority in matters of belief and practise, but that it is both inclusive and exclusive - that is we believe it tells us all we need to know and that we do not need any other source of religious knowledge. This is a massive claim with far reaching consequences and the aims of this lesson are - to convey the importance of this belief; to justify it and to illustrate the consequences for our faith

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Acts 17:10-11

Here is a difficulty! Those who have accepted the truth of Scripture for some years may not even notice the inconsistency in the argument 'the Bible claims to be the Word of God and to be the final authority on the beliefs and practises of discipleship - and therefore it is'. Such a circular argument will not convince our students! Our Bible references therefore need to be used with care and total honesty. It also means that we will have to resort to deduction and 'logic' rather more than in those lessons which accept Scripture and derive conclusions directly from appropriate verses.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

It is recommended that you carry out the exercises suggested in the students' notes, possibly before reading the rest of these notes. In the section on the claims of the Bible there are too many references to use them all and you should go through them making a selection suitable for the group, and adding others.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

This is a lesson where it is best to involve the students at the earliest possible moment in making suggestions and deductions - after all 'authority' is something about which they often have strong opinions! The students' notes contain a chart along the following lines and the group should be given opportunity either individually or in smaller groups to use the chart to develop an awareness of the sources, the need for, and the limitations of authority. A few entries in the chart are suggested but many more will come to mind. Do not spend too long on this as it is only a prelude to a similar chart on more important matters.

Source of Authority	Why trust them?	Strengths	Weaknesses
Parents	Nature? Power? God's law	They care. They have experience	Human! Out of date?
School Teachers / College Lecturers	Need order to learn	Trained, 'grown up'	Human! Biased? Out of date?
Police	For the common good	Impartial, trained	Human! Biased?

Once the list has been compiled go back and ask the group to describe what would happen if each 'source' had no authority and no control - there is scope here for wild imagination and some humour! Ask if it really would be a good situation.

Now go on to the second chart in the students' notes and ask them to do the same exercise for religious authority.

Source of Authority	Why respect it?	Strengths	Weaknesses
What I learnt from my parents	Respect, tradition, convenience	Avoids upset, continuity	Could be wrong, not own conviction
Personal 'revelation', a 'call'	Inner conviction	Inner conviction	Self delusion? Hard to test
The church	'Obvious', respect, tradition	Security, undemanding	Could be wrong, not own conviction
An individual (e.g. the Pope or an influential person)	Accept (need?) authority figure, majority, tradition	Undemanding, simple	Could be wrong, depends on unprovable assumption
Own choice	Self-satisfying, Self-sufficient	Undemanding, easy, individual freedom	Could be wrong, hard to test
The majority	'Common sense'	Undemanding	Which majority? Could change, poor track record
Books other than the Bible	Conviction, tradition	Definite and examinable, many people accept	Could be wrong, based on non-rational assessment?
The Bible	Conviction, tradition	Definite and examinable	Different interpretations, complex

The conclusion from this exercise will be that either we take a subjective 'stab in the dark' and just accept one of these sources of authority without much reason, or we examine for our selves those sources which are subject to examination recognising that our ability to think is God-given and we are supposed to use our reasoning powers. One other possibility is to reject all and believe that there is nothing beyond a naturalistic point of view of what we see around us; even this last choice requires some view of authority and right/wrong whether it be 'nature' or 'the social good' unless total anarchy is to rule.

Taking a 'stab in the dark' - accepting what we have been told or the conclusion which appeals to us at the time - is not a rational choice for a thinking person.

As the group works through these and possibly other sources of authority it will become clear that to be acceptable on a rational basis an authority will have to be testable in an objective manner. The authority of the church is probably the most widely accepted religious basis but it

will soon become clear that without a more fundamental basis the teaching of the church can easily be the views of a particular set of people, with churches often holding conflicting views. This has been recognised by the churches, some of whom claim to find their authority in the Bible whilst making little use of it in matters of doctrine, and some who claim a continuous line of authority from the days of Jesus and effectively an inspired priesthood appointed by God. In either case there is a more fundamental source of authority behind the claims of the church. We should be careful not to choose ridicule as a means of expressing our distrust of such man-made authority; many such beliefs are sincerely held even when incorrect. It is generally sufficient to point out the shaky foundations.

This should leave those faiths with a basis in written text - the Bible and other religious books. It will not be possible to discuss books such as the Koran in this lesson but they will be considered in other lessons. It will be sufficient to mention that many of these writings are of a 'mystical' nature and do not easily lend themselves to reasoned analysis. Again we should not ridicule such beliefs.

So the principles the young people should identify in their notes will be along these lines:

- . It should be possible to check the veracity of any authority.
- . We should not be dependent on our personal feelings, which may deceive us.
- . We should not be dependent on other people, who may be mistaken or untrustworthy.
- . We should look for something firm and unchanging: that means something written down.

The Claims of the Bible

There are other lessons dealing with proofs of the truth of the Scriptures and in this lesson we should simply point out the claims of the Bible. The purpose of this is to establish that the Scriptures accept and encourage a careful, reasoned assessment of their claims in the light of sense and logic, approached with humility. The Bible does not demand trust without reason, nor belief without the full use of our God-given powers of thought.

The following passages are relevant; there are many others and you will no doubt choose those appropriate for the group:

Acts 3:18, 17:10-11, 18:9; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:4-7; Hebrews 1:1-2;
Galatians 1:1, 1:11-12; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Peter 1:21;
1 Thessalonians 2:13, 4:15; 1 John 2:27

Many Old Testament passages contain the words 'Thus saith the Lord' or 'The Word of the Lord came unto me' (for example Ezekiel 20:2, Jeremiah 32:1, Isaiah 8:1). There are many direct statements about the origins of the commandments under the law of Moses, such as Deuteronomy 6:1. There are many passages in the Gospels where the Lord Jesus assumes or states the truth of the Old Testament as the Word of God, for example Matthew 15:1-6.

It is clear that the Bible makes claims to its origin as the Word of God and therefore for its authority, claims which can be tested and verified in a number of different ways, which are the subjects of other lessons. Any other claims of authority should be testable in a similar way.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

As has been noted young people are very conscious of questions of 'authority'. This lesson is a vital opportunity to propose a clear and often stark contrast between the authority of the Bible and other sources, including the authority of parents and leaders. We are human and fallible and often make mistakes; our exercise of authority, though necessary and commanded by God, is also fallible and subject to error despite our good intentions. The authority of Scripture

has no such limitations. If we can lead the group to accept the authority of Scripture even if some are questioning every other form of authority, including our own, we shall have taught a vital lesson.

PRAYER

Teach us, O Lord, to use the minds you have given us and the powers of reason you have given to us uniquely in this world, to find out truth and to recognise in your Word the path of life and the gift of salvation which can make us pleasing to you and contented in ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Carry out a mock television interview, between someone who accepts the Bible as his, or her, only real authority in life, and a rather cynical interviewer.

THE WORLD OF WORK - PRINCIPLES

5

AIM OF LESSON

This set of lessons is highly relevant to the young people, as they will mostly be thinking about what sort of career they should be following, and perhaps about what further education would be beneficial. They should feel at the end that they have at least sorted out in their minds one or two guidelines that they intend to follow.

The aim of this lesson is to help them to appreciate some basic principles taught in Scripture:

- Work is a blessing from God
- People came to God from a wide variety of backgrounds
- It is important for our happiness, and relevant to our salvation, that we are guided by the right principles in choosing a career.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 2-3

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think about your own career, and the extent to which you have been guided by the principles outlined in this lesson. Be prepared to be open about mistakes you have made, and ways in which you have been blessed.

Make sure that you are familiar with what each of the young people is doing; whether they are working, unemployed, studying for exams, and so on, and try to be aware of any decisions they have recently taken, or may have to take in the next year or two.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

In the beginning

Look at Genesis 2:15, where Adam is told to work (NIV) the garden of Eden. Given that this was before the fall, the basic lesson is that in a world that was 'very good', Adam had a job to do. Ask the young people to think about the positive benefits of work, such as the satisfaction of doing something well, exercise, stretching our mental and physical capabilities.

In this context, of course, it is worth pointing out that God himself had been working during creation, and rested at the end, and that this is often later used as a pattern for our lives.

The curse

Then in Genesis 3:17-19 God curses the ground. Get the young people to think about the differences that the curse would make for Adam. It wasn't just a matter of weeding, and having to work a bit harder, but that the work would be full of frustrations and disappointments, which apply to life in general, not just gardening. Get the young people to think about how the curse would apply if you were, say, a schoolteacher, or a doctor? The point really is that every job is going to have its problems, and we need to be prepared to deal with them.

Lessons from Psalms and Ecclesiastes

Read Psalm 104:16-24 and try to get the young people to appreciate the beautiful picture of the 'works' of God (working still), in which the beasts hunt during the night, and man works during the day. So whatever the effects of the curse, our working lives are still part of God's creation, and in our jobs we can give glory to him.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 and get the young people to think about the messages of the passage. There are many relevant points that emerge:

- v8 The pressure of having a 'boss' looking over one's shoulder. What about being self-employed?
- v10-11 The insidious nature of greed, which imperceptibly consumes whatever is earned.
- v12 The benefits of being physically tired at the end of the day rather than just mentally frazzled.
- v13-17 The waste of hoarded wealth. How to balance responsible saving with greed?
- v18-20 The benefits of satisfaction from work.

Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Thief

The point of the chart is to recognise that God calls people from many different walks of life: think of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, The Lord Jesus Christ, Peter, Matthew, Paul, Lydia, Bartimæus, the man who was crucified beside Jesus. In God's eyes there is no benefit in becoming 'important' or 'successful'

It's not what you know, but who you know

This last section should lead into a general discussion regarding what should be the desirable characteristics of the sort of job we should be looking for. It's important to keep a balance and

to recognise that just as there is no lasting benefit in wealth and 'success', so there is no necessary virtue in poverty.

Paul wrote 'What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things'.

RELEVANCE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLES' LIVES

Ideally the young people should be able to look back on this discussion as something that had a real influence on their thinking about their further education and work intentions.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we have to take many decisions about our education and career. Please help us always to remember that these are ways in which we can serve you, not ourselves. When we choose, help us to choose those things that will lead us to your kingdom, and to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ was content to be a carpenter, and then to give up even that for you. Amen'

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Get the young people to write down the meaning of the following statements:
 - 'She did really well at school'
 - 'He's got a very good job'
 - 'They've got a lovely home'then to think about what they would have meant if Jesus had said them.
2. If you have time you may like to think about Lot and his decisions:
 - to go and live in Sodom
 - to leave it, but dwell in Zoar
 - to live in a cavewhich reflect a growing recognition of the dangers of belonging to a corrupt world
3. Get the young people to write a job advert for the 'perfect' job that they would like to do.

THE WORLD OF WORK - PRESSURES AT WORK

6

AIM OF LESSON

To get the young people to think through, in the light of Scripture, some of the issues that may affect them at work, and to help them to be prepared for them.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Ephesians 6, Colossians 3

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think through your own experience of work, and be prepared to give the young people examples in your own experience that they can discuss. Don't be afraid to tell them of mistakes you may have made - you want them to learn, don't you? - and they will respect you for being open with them.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Begin with a general discussion about work. Ask the young people about their own experience of work. What are the problems, or potential problems, that face anyone at work? Are these pressures new, or has it always been like that? Have a discussion about their ambitions so far as work is concerned.

Discuss with the young people the passages from Ephesians 6 (v5-8) and Colossians 3 (v22-24), and get them to make some notes. The main points should include:

- Obey earthly masters, and sincerely try to please them
- Serving a boss out of reverence for Christ is serving God, and the real aim should be to please God, not your employer
- Work hard at everything

Have a discussion about how someone who works like that is likely to be perceived at work.

Get the young people to 'mark' the chart on their own, then to discuss what they thought, and any differences. It is important to recognise that our faith may lead us to be criticised at work, and to welcome, rather than be ashamed of, this.

Now talk about how anyone who works so conscientiously is likely to be treated. The important points are that:

- One is likely to be given more and more responsibility. This can bring apparent benefits - promotion and more money. Talk about the pressures that could cause one to accept promotion.
- Talk about the impact of that. More responsibility brings more stress. The important thing is that we have to learn when, and how, to say no.
- Saying no will bring its own difficulties. We are likely to 'miss out' on promotion, and are likely to be regarded as lacking commitment. How would one feel in that situation, and what would be the right frame of mind?
- Someone who has principles that are 'not of this world' is likely to come under pressure at work. Discuss these and how one might deal with them.

Discuss the teaching of Jesus that 'no man can serve two masters' (Matthew 6.24), and the potential conflicts that may arise in work. Obvious examples are:

- working on a Sunday or Bible Class night;
- neglecting your family;
- travelling too much (which brings its own temptations);
- being expected to behave in a dishonest way (the pressures that face salesmen are obvious but arise in many jobs)

- working in the evenings, which may affect Bible reading and prayer
- being expected to entertain clients in places where it would be better not to go

The important thing about all of these is to be 'up-front' about one's faith, and to be prepared to make a stand, whatever the consequences.

This applies especially at a job interview. Everyone wants to get a job, but we have to be prepared to be honest so that we don't get jobs that will harm us in the end.

There may be members of the class whose ambitions are not related to employment but to bringing up a family. Discuss how a wife should seek to influence her husband for the good of their mutual faith and their family.

Use the last activity to encourage the young people to think through their own ideas of what they want to do at work and what situations they might face.

RELEVANCE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLES' LIVES

This goes without saying. You may like to end by asking the young people to summarise something they have learned that is going to affect their actions relating to work.

PRAYER

Pray that we may all be guided in our work to obey the lessons that we have learned.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

If the subject of military service is relevant to the young people, you could, as a separate activity, consider the following points:

1. A Question of Authority. Read John 18:28 - 19:16 Who gave Pilate his authority? Read Romans 13:1-7. So are all authorities good? What do we learn about what should be our attitude to human authorities?
2. My kingdom is not of this world. Use the example of Philippi (Philippians 3:20, where 'conversation' (AV) means 'citizenship'. Philippi was a Roman colony, where the inhabitants counted as citizens of Rome, and the language, laws and benefits of Roman citizenship applied. Compare this with the way God wants us to behave. So what do we learn from this about the careers that we should avoid?
3. ... and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21). Consider some examples of men of God who refused to obey Authority? What does God expect of us that we cannot 'render to Caesar'?
4. Suffering and retaliation. Read 1 Peter 2:13-14,18-23; Matthew 5:38,43; 26:52; Romans 12:19. How would we apply that in a time of war? Or if there were an oppressive Government?
5. You may like to photocopy the following page and get the young people to have a tribunal at which the disciple is appealing against being called into the army. Although superficially about a topic which in most countries is no longer an problem, many of the issues raised in this lesson will crop up.

MILITARY SERVICE TRIBUNAL

THE PANEL

Lady I C Fairplay, Chairman of the panel

The job of the chairman is to ask the defendant to explain his position, and then to control the interrogation, in which members of the panel will ask questions in order to establish whether the defendant should be allowed exemption from military service. She is also aware of a range of alternatives, such as working in a munitions factory, joining the police, or becoming a non-combatant member of the forces (for instance, driving an ambulance), which she will be keen to offer to the defendant.

Field Marshall Sir I L Killum VC OBE

A retired soldier who fought in two world wars and was many times commended for his bravery. He received his VC for defending a church hall in which a group of women and children had taken refuge; despite being badly injured he managed to hold the enemy at bay for two days until help arrived. He is convinced that military service is not only a service to one's neighbour but is also a great benefit in teaching young men discipline and a sense of personal achievement.

Sir James L Beagle QC

Sir James is an experienced judge who believes that the law of the land must be obeyed. It will not do for people to pick and choose which laws they obey - that is a sure route to anarchy. In particular he doesn't see why these conchies should have all the benefits and protection of the state but not be willing to play their part in maintaining them.

The Very Rev D Collar, Bishop of Aldershot

Aldershot being a military town, the Bishop comes across a lot of troops and was during the second world war the chaplain to an army brigade. He knows of the time in Old Testament times when God commanded whole nations to be wiped out, and can't see the difference now. He is also familiar with the passages where centurions and soldiers are referred to in a favourable light in the New Testament.

A disciple

At a time of national crisis you have been called upon to join the army to serve your country. You believe what the Lord Jesus said about loving one's enemies and loyalty to God, and therefore have a conscientious objection to this. However, you have to convince the panel of your sincerity. You would be willing to do a wide range of work, including manual work on a farm or in a hospital.

AIM OF LESSON

To get the young people to think through this subject in the light of Scripture, and to consider some of the practical issues.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 2-3, Proverbs 31.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think through what has happened in your experience, and in families you have known. What were the impacts of the decisions that were made? Be prepared to give the young people examples that they can discuss - you may need to be careful not to gossip. As in the previous lesson, don't be afraid to tell them of mistakes you may have made, or to describe to them difficult situations you have been in and ask them to discuss them.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON***Introduction***

Begin by asking the class what they think about this subject. If there are girls in the class you could ask them what career aspirations they may have, what is the attitude of their friends, and what they have been taught at school.

Scriptural Principles

This lesson is not really about marriage, and it is important to keep this early part in perspective. But it is worth beginning by reminding the class that God in the beginning had in mind different roles for men and women.

Look at Genesis 2.18-21; Genesis 3.16; 1 Timothy 2.9-14

The main points of these passages are that

- God intended that a wife should have a supporting role to her husband: Eve was made as a help meet for Adam. If you are using the AV, note that 'help' and 'meet' are separate words, and that 'meet' is an old word meaning suitable. There is no such thing as a helpmeet!
- This is reinforced after Eve was the first to eat the fruit.
- Paul confirms, in writing to Timothy, that these principles still apply, and 1 Peter 3.1-7 is in the same vein (so the common view that Paul was a woman-hater does not apply)

Women in Authority

Get the class to think of any women in Scripture who were queens, judges or business women.

The Queen of Sheba and Esther are obvious examples, though it is worth, in passing, making the point that there are no examples where a queen ruled over her husband.

Deborah was a judge, in considerable authority. It is worth looking at Judges 4:4-9 and noting that Barak should have taken responsibility for the situation and because he would not the glory was given to Jael the wife of Heber.

So far as business women are concerned, look at Proverbs 31, and read verses 10 - 31.

- Her position at home: she is responsible for the home (v22); It is 'her household' (v 21, 27), and 'her servant girls (v15)'.
- Her occupation and status: she buys a field, plants a vineyard (v16), and trades (v18); she makes clothes and sells them. She is respected and praised by her husband (v28) and in public (v31), and acknowledged as a person in her own right, not just her husband's wife.
- Her relationship with her husband: she seeks his good (v11,12), and because of her, her husband is respected (v23).

Lydia (Acts 16.14) was a dealer in purple cloth. Priscilla (Acts 18.3) and Aquila were both tentmakers.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Scripture is full of maids and maidservants, from Hagar to the maid of the high priest who questioned Peter.

Sum up this part of the lesson by making clear that:

- there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that a woman should not work, and several examples of women who did
- the New Testament confirms that God's intention regarding the relationship between a husband and wife still applies.

What risks are associated with a woman working?

If a woman is single

Choice of career is a difficult judgment for a young woman to make. If her aspirations are to marry and raise a family she may feel that she will want to develop the skills necessary for that difficult and most important role. On the other hand she may not marry and may then regret that she did not become a brain surgeon.

What about both husband and wife going out to work?

If they have no children:

- because they are both working hard, other things may well suffer
- their marriage may suffer because they are both under stress, and both return home not to a warm welcome and a meal but to more work
- their work in the ecclesia, their responsibilities to their parents, and their care for others, may suffer because they have no time to attend to anything outside their own home. This in turn may damage their marriage because they have no common interests outside their home; awareness of others' problems always puts one's own difficulties into perspective.
- because they both mix a lot with people outside their common circle of friends, the temptation to be unfaithful is increased.

If they have children:

- the children may be neglected because they have to come home to an empty house.
- the children may feel uncared for

- they may misuse the time until a parent comes home: there may be no control of what they are watching on television (or video), where they are or what they are doing.
- when their parents do get home from work, they may be too tired to attend to the needs of the children.

What about a wife working instead of her husband?

If a wife can earn more than her husband, what issues are associated with her going out to work and her husband staying at home? Or what if her husband cannot find work?

This situation can bring problems. For example, both husband and wife may feel guilty that they are not following the pattern for marriage that God has prescribed. It can be lonely for the husband, who will not be able to meet sociably during the day with other men, as his wife could have with other women. The man may feel inadequate, and the wife's position as the breadwinner may tend to encourage her to 'take over' at home.

Having said all that, there are situations where there is little alternative. In that case it is important that friends, and members of the ecclesia, are supportive rather than critical. And try to help practically with the difficulties.

Try to ensure that all these points are raised, and make it clear that there is nothing wrong with a wife taking the lead when there is a good reason.

You could consider the example of Abigail in 1 Sam 25.14-19

Working relationships

Finally, you could discuss the topic of working relationships between men and women. It is important for men always to treat women with respect, even if some women regard such courtesy as 'sexist'.

But the relationship must be at arm's length. Most infidelity to a husband or wife arises from a working relationship, and a friendly association may quickly become too intimate.

RELEVANCE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLES' LIVES

It is very important that girls and boys have a balanced view of the role of women in the workplace, know what the Bible says and know how to cope with pressure from the world when it conflicts with what they believe to be right.

PRAYER

Get the young people to write their own prayer asking for guidance regarding their future (or present) work situation.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Role-play an interview for a job where the young people ask each other what their priorities would be in certain situations.

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to be prepared for some of the situations that will rise in more or less any job, and to have at their disposal a methodical approach to dealing with them.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Ephesians 6:5-8, Colossians 3:22-24.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think through the issues and decide on your own position on each. However, be prepared to listen to the young people and guide them without being condemnatory.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Begin by looking at Romans 14:21-22, and the context of meat being offered to idols. Explain that in many cases the important thing is not the decision we take, because there is no absolute right and wrong. What is important is that we consider the subject scripturally and prayerfully.

As to the topics for consideration, it is good to give the young people time to think about each situation for themselves before involving yourself in the discussion. If the class is large enough you could split them into two or more groups and let them work on their own.

To think about all five topics properly will almost certainly take at least two weeks, but it is worth spending the time to think about them fully.

When people depend on you

Scriptural Principles include:

- Working conscientiously, 'as unto the Lord' (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24)
- The Bible teaching on the Sabbath. However, note that Matthew 12:10-12 concludes 'therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath'.
- Haggai 1:5-9, many passages of Ecclesiastes, and John 21:1-8, emphasise that a little work guided by God is better than a great deal without, and this can be extended into a purely human argument, that there comes a point at which working harder and harder becomes simply counterproductive, both for oneself and for the job.

The office party

Scriptural Principles:

- Jesus did not exclude himself from those who were regarded as bad company; indeed, he was described as a 'glutton and a winebibber'. At the same time we are called upon to be different, and to be seen as such.
- There are some thoughts in 1 Peter 3:15-17 that you may find to be helpful.

- The discussion should include the point that by attending, and showing that it is possible to be pleasant and amiable without excess. can be a very positive influence on others; it is probable that not everyone enjoys the indulgence, and you may give others the courage to resist the pressure to join in.
- Having said all that, we need to be realistic about our own ability to resist temptation. Unless we are confident that we will be able to behave in a godly way we should stay away. 'He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm' (Proverbs 13:20).

The Sweepstake

The discussion will no doubt conclude that this is a matter of conscience. However, it should also include the need to be clear about one's motives to others as well as to God.

Scripture Union

There are several scriptural principles involved in this lesson, and the decision will be a matter of balance. The decision is not just whether to go or not but, if one is to go, how to behave when there.

It should be borne in mind that Paul was always willing to speak in the Jewish synagogue (even though their beliefs were 'not a gospel' (Galatians 1), and in the Greek meeting places.

2 Timothy 2:23-26 is relevant to the attitude of mind that one should have.

The Share Option Scheme

This is not easy. Some of the points about gambling apply, but this is not quite the same. Many people are self-employed, and in that sense own 100% of the 'stock' of their company. One significant factor about share-ownership in general is that it requires a considerable understanding of the workings of the stock market. The effort involved in obtaining this, and the time subsequently spent studying the market, can hardly be conducive to a life in Christ.

RELEVANCE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLES' LIVES

The most important lesson to learn is that God will be there in our work place and the young people should be aware of this when faced with these and perhaps other issues.

PRAYER

Encourage the young people to set a good pattern in their lives of praying about dilemmas like these both before they arise and when confronted with them.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people might like to ask members of their families or the ecclesia how they have coped with some or all of these issues and report back next week.

AIM OF LESSON

To contrast the kingdom of David and Solomon with God's intentions for the future, noting the similarities and differences.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and familiarise yourself with the passages.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The young people will know of Saul, David and Solomon as kings of Israel. Go over the story with them by asking questions and bring out the points mentioned here. Use the references to help the students to understand what you want to bring out.

God was Israel's king, and they were therefore his kingdom. However, they disliked being different and demanded a king they could see. God taught Israel a lesson by giving them what they wanted - a tall and handsome king. Saul may have looked good, but as a king he was a disaster. Next, God himself chose someone with the more important qualities of leadership (1 Samuel 16:7). David was not chosen because of how he looked, and neither was Jesus (Isaiah 53:2). David's leadership was based upon caring, learnt as a hill shepherd in Judaea; it was the same with Jesus (John 10:11).

God rewarded David with military success so that under his stewardship Israel achieved secure and extensive borders. He transferred the capital from Gibeah to Jerusalem which was more acceptable to Israel and Judah. Jerusalem is to be the capital from which king Jesus also will reign. The greater reward for David was God's promise about the future. When David had built himself a sumptuous palace, he felt guilty that God's service was carried out in a tent. He decided to build for God a proper temple which would reflect God's dignity and majesty. David sent for Nathan the prophet and told him about the plan. God's answer was unexpected 2 Samuel 7:5,11. In Hebrew idiom, to 'build a house' can refer either to building a literal house, or to starting a family (the house of David means the family of David) and it is used here in both its senses. The promise referred both to David's family and his kingdom, and connected the two. The kingdom would last for ever, ruled by David's son. David's son and immediate successor was Solomon whose name means 'peace'. His greater Son is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Early in his reign, Solomon built the temple his father had longed to build. Indeed, David provided many of the materials.

Jesus built a different sort of temple, using living stones provided by his Father (John 17:6). In this case, the living stones were (and are) the people who comprise the church and kingdom (1 Peter 2:5). The same passage tells that Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Paul makes the point that we are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16). The angel who told Mary

that she would have a baby indicated that he was to be the special and long awaited son of David (Luke 1:32-33).

Either get the students to complete the grid in the students' notes as you talk or get them to look up the references and assemble a list of differences and a list of similarities between the kingdom of God under David and Solomon and under Jesus in the future.. They may pick out points as follows:

Similarities

The following points apply to both past and future kingdoms:

- Jerusalem as capital city.
- A shepherd (c.f. David) rules as king.
- The king builds a house for God.
- God's word is law.
- David's son (c.f. Solomon) is king.
- Kings come from near and far to pay homage.

Differences

Under David and Solomon

It was maintained by military power and was subject to insurrection from within and without. David's exploits as a soldier are well known; Solomon's army included 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses (1 Kings 10:26) and was not idle. Jesus will bring real, lasting, peace.

It used slave labour (1 Kings 9:21).

It was exclusive to Israel.

It relied upon political alliances with pagan powers (1 Kings 3:1).

It lasted only a few generations.

David was not alive to see it after his son succeeded to the throne.

Its rulers and people were subject to sin.

Under Christ

It will be maintained solely by God's power.

Its people will be willing members.

It includes Abraham's spiritual successors as well as his biological descendants. Gentiles as well as Jews.

It will encompass the whole world and have no need of allies.

It will last forever.

David will be raised to be part of the kingdom. In NIV and RSV of translations of 2 Samuel 7:16, "before me" is incorrectly substituted for "before you". A footnote acknowledges that the Hebrew texts use the latter.

The King and his people will be immortal.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Is the kingdom of God really the first priority in our lives?

PRAYER

We pray for the kingdom to come, not only solely as a selfish desire for personal comfort, but as the only way to end war, famine, disease, violence, death and unrighteousness, the only way for God's will to be done in earth as in heaven.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Can the students sort out how much of God's promises to David (2 Samuel 7) apply to both Solomon and Jesus, and what parts (if any) apply only to Solomon or to Jesus?
2. A study of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and his discussion with Pilate (John 18:33-38; 19:19-22) show how Jesus knew he was to be King, but then was not the time.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD - OTHER VIEWS

10

AIM OF LESSON

To foster awareness of the sincerely held views of other groups, while encouraging the class to explore the weakness of their scriptural base at the same time supporting the solidity of the Bible foundation upon which the Christadelphian understanding is built.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Psalm 146:3-4, Ecclesiastes 9:5, Daniel 12:2, Micah 4:7-8, Zechariah 14:9, Acts 1:11, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

If you have a copy of 'Wrested Scriptures' by brother Ron Abel, the section on Luke 17:20-21, beginning on page 91, is helpful.

Read through the students' notes and work out how you want to use them. There is probably more material than you can use in one lesson, so you need to decide whether to spend more than one week on the topic or whether to be selective. A recommended approach would be to deal with the first part of the lesson in some detail, then to talk about the table which follows as something which the young people can use as reference.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Introduction

Ask the young people what they think other people believe about the kingdom of God. They will probably not have come across any particularly clearly expressed view. Some important lessons, however, emerge from a careful consideration of the Bible teaching that establishment of the kingdom is a future event whose citizens are being prepared now. There are present aspects to the Bible teaching, as well as future.

Two examples

Look at Matthew 13:31-32 and Luke 17:20-21 with the young people. These scriptures are frequently misunderstood. Although the view of the kingdom of God as something which progressively fills the earth has lost most of its credibility, it is still found (for example, in the NIV Study Bible comment on Luke 17:21).

At the same time we need to remember that these are the words of Christ recorded in Scripture. They are not passages that we can ignore because some misunderstand them; they are not without meaning.

God's kingdom established in the future to save a doomed world

Matthew 24:21-31 and Daniel 2:44 illustrate the points that:

- The coming of the kingdom of God will save a world that would otherwise destroy itself
- It will come suddenly, not gradually
- It will be imposed on kingdoms which will resist it.

It is worth noting in passing that the phrase 'set up', used of God's kingdom, is exactly the same as is used, also in Daniel, of the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up (Daniel 3). It means 'caused to stand'. God's kingdom is being prepared now; in the future he will cause it to stand.

The kingdom of God - being prepared now

The aim of this section is not to spiritualise the kingdom of God or to diminish in any way its future applicability. But we have to take seriously the many passages, in addition to those referred to in the students' notes, that speak of the kingdom as having a present relevance, such as the parables of Matthew 13; Matthew 23:13; 26:45-46; Mark 12:34; Luke 17:21; Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 1:27.

As brother Abel writes: 'Those who cite these verses usually attempt to squeeze the Christadelphian into an "either - or" situation. Either the kingdom of God is spiritual or it is political. This dichotomy is unscriptural.'

The table of other denominations' beliefs

Explore with the class what they already know about the faith of other denominations regarding the situation when we die, and then fill in any gaps by looking at the table with them. It is most important to note that this lesson is about beliefs and not about salvation; we should note where we think other believers have an imperfect understanding, but we should neither mock their beliefs nor deny them any hope of salvation. It is within our Father's remit to grant life to whom he will - that we can see no other way to understand his word or to obey his commands does not give us the prerogative to limit his mercy.

Having looked at some of the things people believe, look at some of the scriptures they quote in support. Get the young people to complete the Christadelphian line and references to support our beliefs. Some suggested references are:

Acts 1:11; Zechariah 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:20,23; Ecclesiastes 9:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Micah 4:7,8; Daniel 12:2; Psalms 146:3-4.

Ask the class if they are aware of any Bible passages used by 'orthodox' Christendom on this point, and whether they have any problems about their interpretation? Invite the class, perhaps working in pairs to look at some of the passages listed and any others they have named and ask them to formulate answers to anyone who places an 'orthodox' interpretation upon the words. Then review their answers, filling in any gaps and reassuring any who are concerned about apparent contradictions. There is not a lot of point in suggesting problems to the young people just so that you can solve them so you will have to decide how much of this part of the lesson you wish to cover. The students will have the notes for future reference if they encounter the problems in the future.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Christadelphians are sometimes accused of believing what we are told to, so it is important that we understand why other people believe as they do and can support our beliefs from the Bible.

PRAYER

We may wish to pray for the integrity to accept whatever the Bible clearly teaches, however uncomfortable. And we can pray for those who have yet to learn the truth of Bible teaching, and who are presently taking comfort in a misunderstanding.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Some classes may prefer a more active approach in which a member argues the case for the orthodox understanding while the others present the Christadelphian case. This needs to be carefully monitored because people can become committed to a particular view by the mere act of arguing for it, and the class must be helped to understand that Bible truth is not dependent upon the cleverness of the person presenting the argument, but emerges with wide, careful and prayerful reading of Scripture.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD - THE OLIVET PROPHECY

11

AIM OF LESSON

To study what Jesus said about the future in order to build up a picture of what life is likely to be like when he returns.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 24; Luke 21

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes so that you are familiar with the history around AD 70 and which parts of the prophecy has happened in part and which parts we ought to watch out for. You may like to bring some highlighting pens for the young people to use.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Although Jesus talked often about the kingdom and sometimes about his second coming, he seldom gave any detail about timing. His disciples were naturally curious. At the time, they did not appreciate that there would be a long absence, and they were keen to know when Jesus would be taking over, partly because they themselves had a vested interest. They asked Jesus, and by way of answer he gave the Olivet Prophecy, sometimes called the Little Apocalypse.

The main reports of the prophecy appear in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. It will be useful to have some of the class turn up one passage and some the other, so that each can follow in their own text and contribute detail, helping build up a more complete picture.

The Circumstances

A visit to the Temple prompted the question. Jesus and the 12 were on a pilgrimage to the holy city, and they were marvelling at the magnificence of the Temple buildings, at that time in their 46th year of construction and nearing completion. (Matthew 24:1, Luke 21:5) Jesus' comment was that, glorious though it might be, the Temple would be totally destroyed.

Naturally, the disciples were stunned. This did not fit in with Jesus as conquering liberator. Later, on the Mount of Olives (hence the name given to the prophecy) the disciples asked two questions, though they may not have realised how separate they were. This fact that there were two should be emphasised.

1. When will the Temple be destroyed?
2. What signs will there be of Christ's coming and of the end of the world?

Jesus answers both questions, but it is by no means straightforward to sort out the two. There is no point at which we can say that he has finished the first and will now be dealing with the second. The class can be asked to try to find such a point, and their suggestions can be explored to see how they fit. This exercise may take up most of the lesson and will help the class become familiar with the shape of the prophecy.

The answer given to the first question was not specific, but there were sufficient hints to enable listeners and readers to escape the horrors of the cruel siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in 70 AD. One account has it that Christians heeded these words of their Lord and fled Jerusalem to Pella when they saw the signs coming to pass in 68 AD, thereby escaping the worst atrocities of that dreadful time.

One of the Old Testament tests for a prophet was whether his prophecy came true. This was not much help to the prophet's contemporaries if the prophecy took 1000 years to be fulfilled. Perhaps for this reason, many OT prophecies had an initial, early (and probably partial) fulfilment as well as a long term application. The class may be able to think of some examples

(David's house-building son, Isaiah's child, Jeremiah's return of the Jews etc.) The Olivet prophecy may well include some such "dual fulfilment" elements.

Matt 24:	Mark 13:	Luke 21:	Q1 ?	Q2 ?	Notes
4-5	5-6	8	✓	✓	False Christs - this could apply to both events, and has in a small way been experienced in the 20 th century. Simon (Acts 8:9) may have been a first century example. Have the class come across any examples?
6-8	7-8	9-11	✓	✓	Rumours of wars, the end - again, possible dual application, but certainly with latter day implications.
9-12	9	12-13	✓	✓	Persecution - This certainly came true in 70 AD, and seems likely to apply also to the last days - Revelation 13:7-8, for example.
13	10-13	14-19	✓	✓	Encouragement in tribulation.
14	(10)		✓	✓	World-wide preaching - if "in all the world" is to be understood in a literal and global sense, this can apply only to the last days. However, in the more limited parochial sense sometimes used in prophecy (e.g. Daniel 2) it was true also in 70 AD.
15	14	20	✓	✓	Abomination of desolation - this probably relates to the erection of an image of Jupiter in the Temple. Some think it now refers to the Al Aqba Mosque.
16-20	14-18	21-24	✓	?	Flee to the mountains - as mentioned above, many Christians took this warning.

From this point, what follows increasingly applies only at the time of the return of Christ.

21-22	19-20		?	✓	Great tribulation - The scale of devastation described may transcend 70 A.D. which, though dreadful for those involved in the mass crucifixions and other atrocities, was nevertheless limited to the numbers then inhabiting the region, and has almost certainly been exceeded in our own century with the development of the dreadful machines of mass destruction and mechanised warfare deployed against civilians in recent times. What is described exceeds the horrors of anything experienced in our time. In its fullest application, this can only refer to the last days, and tells of the most awful time, yet to come.
23-28	21-23		✓	✓	False Christs again - signs and wonders are not of themselves indicators of veracity. The Lord is probably saying that the signs will be a visible warning of the dying of the age, like vultures hovering over a dying animal.

Matt 24:	Mark 13:	Luke 21:	Q1 ?	Q2 ?	Notes
29	24-25	25-26	?	✓	Signs in the sun, moon and stars. This is often interpreted as relating to political powers rather than to literal heavens, but whether we take it literally or not, these verses no doubt had a local application in AD 70 and will apply again at the return of Christ. (Halley's Comet appeared around 65 AD).
30	26	27-28	✗	✓	The coming of the Son of Man - there is no mistaking that this applies solely to the last days
31	27		✗	✓	Gather together his elect - This certainly describes the coming of the Lord. The gathering may be linked with a number of other passages (I Thessalonians 4 "to meet him in the air"; Isaiah 49:18 etc.) Some brethren anticipate a second exodus, with a gathering to Sinai and a second entry to the promised land.
32-33	28-29	29-31	✗	✓	The parable of the fig tree - at its simplest level, this tells that natural signs portend natural events and Jesus' signs will portend events of the kingdom of God. However, the reference to the flourishing of the fig tree (and all the trees - Luke 21:29) is an unmistakable reference to the profusion of nations coming to independent statehood. The fig tree itself is probably Israel, but do not make this assumption too easily as the OT more often presents Israel as a vine
34-35	30-31	32-33	✗	✓	This generation shall not pass. If Jesus was talking at this stage about the time of the end, he cannot be referring to the generation of his first hearers. One suggestion is that he is talking of the generation which sees the fig tree (Israel) restored to nationhood; that is, our own generation. Another relies on the translation of the Greek word rendered "generation" and points out that it may alternatively be "nation", again Israel (compare Mark 8:12; 15:30; Luke 11:29)
36-41	32-34	34-35	✗	✓	That day and hour. Jesus plainly teaches that the signs are to enable his people to keep themselves prepared, not to work out precise dates. Ask the class whether they would think it a good thing to know in advance the precise timing of the Lord's coming. The days of Noah - Ask the class to identify similarities between Noah's time when people ignored the signs and carried on with everyday activities, and our own time. Can this apply also to the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem?
42-44	35-37	36	✗	✓	Watch. Because we do not know when Christ will come, and the one certain thing is that he will appear when most are not expecting him, the only way is to be perpetually ready.

It may be helpful, as they go through the prophecy, for the young people to highlight key phrases in one or more of the gospel records so that they are picking out the main points of each element.

Encourage them to think about the extent to which the words have already been fulfilled.

You may need to remind them that although there seem to be passages that have not happened yet, and may suggest that the coming of Christ is some way away (as it may be), these things could happen extraordinarily quickly.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

We are clearly told by Jesus to watch. This does not mean work out when Jesus is going to return but keep our eyes open so that we are prepared at all times.

PRAYER

Dear Lord. Help us to understand what it means to watch and try to do it. Help us not to be scared of the future but know that if we put our trust in you, you will keep us close to you. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Ask the young people to look for something in the newspapers during the coming week that might be indications of the imminence of Jesus' return. It might be events in the Middle East, decline in moral standards, disregard of God's word, etc.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD - CITIZENSHIP

12

AIM OF LESSON

To give the scriptural basis for the Christian's responsibilities to both the commandments of Jesus and to the demands of the civil authorities in this country, and to suggest the principles by which conflicts between the two can be resolved.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Peter 2:9-17; Colossians 1:12-14 - explaining the concept of citizenship of God's kingdom;
1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7 - explaining God's wishes concerning our civil obedience;
Colossians 4:2-6 - summarising the standard of behaviour expected of us in everyday life.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

There is little apparent difficulty for most of us in serving God and Jesus Christ in this country at the present time. All our governments are 'good', there is religious tolerance, freedom of thought and speech protected by law, and general indifference to our activities.

However, imagine that you were leading this discussion at a time when this country was on a war footing, when the patriotism and loyalty of Christadelphians and their families would be called into question, or you were in a country where the Government:

- was bad, unjust, and made arbitrary rules about people it didn't like
- did not allow freedom of worship
- where true believers were considered to be spies, and are the subject of malicious gossip
- where open worship would be illegal, and true Christians would lose their friends, their jobs, and would be shunned at school.

This is the situation now for Christadelphians in some other countries, and to them the matter of 'citizenship' is not academic, but real.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

This lesson has four parts to it:

- What 'citizenship' means for a true follower of Jesus.
- What God's requirements of us are with respect to the civil authorities.
- What our general standards of behaviour should be in everyday life.
- What we should do when there is a conflict between the demands of the state and the commandments of Jesus.

After you have discussed each aspect get the students to write a brief summary in their books.

What does citizenship mean for the follower of Jesus?

The meaning of citizenship is at the heart of the Christian's relationship to the country in which he lives. Start the group discussion by asking what they think the duties and responsibilities of a good citizen are. The things they might come up with are:

- loyalty to its leader or king
- obedience to its laws
- payment of taxes
- support for other citizens
- participation in its defence/fighting
- participation in its government/voting
- a role in educating or teaching its citizens' children and young people

The Bible makes clear that all the followers of Jesus are citizens of a special nation belonging to God. 1 Peter 2:9-10.(holy = separate), Colossians 1:13-14. Thus the community of true believers makes up God's nation, or God's citizens, belonging to, and responsible to, him. The king, or leader of this community is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he calls it the 'kingdom of light'. In Philippians 3:20 we are told that "our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ ..." The Christian's king is, for the moment, in heaven, and that is where the record of their citizenship is held. The duties of the good citizen, which the class identified earlier, are owed to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his or her fellow citizens.

In Lesson 9 The kingdom of God and The Old Testament was discussed. Remind the class how things changed with the coming of Jesus. Previously the kingdom of God was contained geographically within the borders of the nation of Israel, but with the coming of Jesus it developed. Now there are people of many races living in many countries who together form a separate nation, which belongs to God, who should be living their lives according to his principles and laws.

When Jesus told Pontius Pilate that his (Jesus') kingdom was "not of this world", he touched on a special problem his followers were then to have. Basically, it was this: how could the civil authorities get along peacefully with these separate people who owed their allegiance elsewhere, and could be regarded as a series of 'states within other states'? It was the same problem that the Jews faced in their Diaspora. The next section considers this problem, and looks at the inspired advice of the Apostles.

What does God expect of his citizens in relation to their secular leaders ?

If followers of Jesus come under a jurisdiction other than that of the country in which they live, does it mean that they can behave as revolutionaries, as fifth columnists, and place themselves above the law? The group may realise that this is what some cults do, such as the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, or maybe a more recent example that the young people will be familiar with. It is also a charge levelled at Christadelphians in authoritarian states. In fact, Jesus and the apostles lived in such a state, and their instructions to the first century believers are very interesting. 1 Peter 2:13-17:

It is therefore God's will that we respect authorities and obey their regulations - we must not take advantage of our freedom in Christ to act above the law. We should be model citizens, and by example persuade others of our convictions. So, our heavenly king's commandment is that we obey our earthly rulers. This is logical if we bear in mind that our earthly rulers only do so with God's permission - see Jeremiah 27:4-7 for example. We are told not only to obey the laws of our country, but to pray for our rulers and governments. Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Such prayers are rarely heard in our community. Ask the group what they think of this suggestion, and what the content of these prayers should be. They might also imagine the situation if we lived in a dictatorship, or under an oppressive government.

What should be our overall standards of behaviour?

The Bible suggests that potential conflicts between believers and non-believers will be reduced if we behave considerately towards our fellow citizens. Take a look at these references:

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 3:17, 23; Colossians 4:2-6

Ask the group to look at these references and summarise their message. They may come up with the following points:

- we should live and work unobtrusively without stirring things up or drawing attention to ourselves
- we should live in such a way that people respect us
- our acts of goodness should not be restricted to those who share our beliefs
- we should do everything as if we were doing it for Jesus himself - this can be turned round so that we can test our actions to see if we could do them in Jesus' name
- we should act wisely in the presence of non-believers - be particularly careful about how you speak

Use these replies when the group decides which actions are acceptable and which are not.

What should we do if conflict arises between the State's requirements and God's?

Inevitably, circumstances arise when we have to make a choice between what God wants us to do and what the state asks. In principle, our response should be clear. Take a look at these passages: Acts 4:18-20 and 5:28-29 Daniel 3:16-18

In both cases the people involved had a lot to lose by obeying God rather than the authorities and not a great deal to gain, at least in the short term. Peter and John risked being ostracised by their friends and losing any position they had in their home town, as well as being gaoled - they might have rationalised silence by arguing they could do their religion no good from a prison cell. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were definitely risking their lives; in fact, death was certain if they disobeyed the king. Their reply is interesting: first, they had complete faith that their God was well able to save them if he chose to do so, and secondly, that even if he gave them some indication that he would not, they would still not obey the king and worship him as if he were a god.

In the students' notes there are some situations which may present a conflict between God's requirements and those of the state. Discuss these and ask the young people to fill in the grid where they can. Young people can be very black and white in their opinions or they may also be very unsure. Don't be too dogmatic or upset about what they think at the moment because issues like these are often ones that get firmed up in young peoples' minds as they mature. Just be prepared to tell them what you think, what other people think and any relevant facts, points of law or problems which they might not have considered.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The young people should be made aware of how the lives we lead in the community are governed by God's laws and how our behaviour shows our beliefs.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God. We thank you that we live in a country where we can believe in you freely. We pray that we may not forget how blessed we are and so fail to worship you. We ask that you bless believers in countries where governments make life difficult and confirm us in our beliefs so that if times get hard for us we too may be strong.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine that you have to write a brochure to invite people to become citizens of the kingdom of God. You have to cover all sides of the argument. Prepare a rough outline of what it would look like.
2. If you have not used the mock tribunal at the end of lesson 6, you may like to do so here.

AIM OF LESSON

To learn that God is consistent in his dealings with mankind and that 'the spirit of Christ' was at work in Old Testament times.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:15

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and decide how you are going to get the young people to discover the patterns in question. Depending on the size and ability of the class they could take one Old Testament character each or work in pairs. Decide how many characters you are going to study. Young people sometimes find this sort of exercise unrewarding so you may decide to take one in detail and quickly go over some others from the students' memory so that they get the gist of the lesson and could follow it up at a later date.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Introduction

Discuss with the class the idea of a 'type of Christ'. This expression may have become a bit of a Christadelphian cliché so you may prefer to use the word 'shadow' or 'echo' or 'pattern' but explain the principle that the lives of many of the Old Testament characters follow a similar pattern to that of Jesus. Share out the characters in the students' notes. The references will help them to work out the parallels between this character and that of Jesus but you may prefer them to do what they can from memory first or illicit the information by asking questions.

Here are some thoughts that you might bring out:

Isaac - Genesis 17:19-22

- A promised son
- Sacrificed by his father
- On Mount Moriah (Jerusalem)
- 3 day's journey
- As good as dead to Abraham
- Carried the wood (cross)
- Was willing
- Saved by an angel

Joseph - Genesis 37; 41:41-57; 41:46; 42-46

- Favourite son
- Shepherd

- Had a special coat (seamless robe)
- Put in a pit by his brothers (the Jews killed Jesus)
- Sold for silver
- Saved the Gentiles
- Saved the Israelites (Jews)
- Fed Israelites and Gentiles
- His brothers ate and drank at his table
- He knew what they were thinking
- They bowed down to him (future still for Jesus?)
- He was 30 years old

Joshua - Joshua 3 and 6

- Name means 'Saviour'
- Led the people into the promised land through water (baptism)
- The people had to trust him
- Gentiles were spared

David - 1 Samuel 16:11; 17:28; 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 28

- He was a shepherd
- Despised by his brothers
- King over Israel
- Prepared a house for God

Elisha - 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:23-25; 4:8-36, 42-44; 6:1-6; 13:20-21

- Was preceded by Elijah (John the Baptist)
- He was mocked
- Restored life
- Power over nature
- Saved even after his death

Job - Job 1:1, 4-5; 2; 38; 42:10 and 12

- Blameless
- Prayed for his family
- Afflicted by God
- God who made the world knows what he is doing
- He prayed for his friends
- God blessed his latter end more than his beginning

Jonah - Jonah 1:15-16; 1:17; 2:10; 3:1-3

- Saved others by his death (or apparent death)
- 3 days and 3 nights
- God saved him
- Preached to the Gentiles and saved them

You may wish to bring out parallels of your own or discuss other characters but it is important not to get bogged down in the types and not talk about what we can learn. We should understand that God is consistent in his dealing with his people. How can this help us? We can realise that he will always provide a way out, show mercy and kindness. Beware of the dangers - all the characters are human and therefore did wrong which Jesus did not do. Look up Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15 and discuss the implications of Jesus being like his brothers and understanding them.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It should encourage us that God can always be trusted to be consistent and that Jesus understands us perfectly having gone through what is common to man.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we thank you that we can see so many examples of people who were like your Son, and who went through experiences that were like his. Help us to follow in his footsteps, so that we may become more like him. Amen

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

The young people may like to consider the parallels between the journey of the Israelites through the desert and our own lives as shown in 1 Corinthians 10:1-6.

JESUS THE SAVIOUR - PATTERNS OF SACRIFICE **14**

AIM OF LESSON

To increase our understanding of Jesus' sacrifice by contrast with those required by the law given through Moses, to show that sacrifices are still required today and to understand how close to God the new covenant has brought us.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Leviticus 4; Hebrews 10

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The concepts in this lesson are hard to grasp, even for adults. It is important, however, to help the young people to come to understand the relevance to them of the sacrifice of Christ. As Galatians 3:24-25 points out, the law of Moses is a 'schoolmaster' or 'was put in charge' to bring us to Christ. One virtue in a study of the law is to bring us closer to Christ, to help us to understand what he has done for us and to emphasise where we stand now in relation to God.

You should look carefully through the students', and these, notes, and think how much of it your group will be able to understand, and how best to communicate with them.

Since there is a lot of material, you will also need to decide whether to spend one week or two thinking about it. Whatever you do, you must explain how relevant, and important, this is to us.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Introduction

Since this is a rather abstract subject it may be difficult to get the young people 'into' it, and the introduction is important. Explain what the lesson is about, and how you intend to approach the subject.

Start by asking the class if they can think of things in the Old Testament that looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ. They should be able to think of

- The animal skin provided in the garden of Eden
- The passover lamb
- The other sacrifices

Don't be surprised, or express disappointment, if they stare at you blankly. How would you have responded when you were their age? Gently tell them about these things.

Ask them if they can think of any references in the New Testament linking Jesus and the law of Moses, listing them in the students' notes. They may think of these (though they probably won't know where they come from, and you may be advised to take a concordance to help them to look up passages they have thought of):

- John 1:29
- 1 Corinthians 5:7
- 1 Peter 1:18-19

The Passover

These references demonstrate that Jesus was akin to the Passover lamb whose blood, daubed around the door-frame of the Israelites' houses, spared their lives. The Passover protected the partakers from death and signalled their release from the bondage of Egypt and was the first event in their new life together as God's people. It preceded the giving and learning of God's law. In fact the passover lamb was not a sin offering - it was a statement of obedience and of trust in God's salvation.

Sacrifices under the law

The offerings for unintentional sin were as follows:

- for the priest: a young bull - Leviticus 4:1-12
- for the whole Israelite community: a young bull - Leviticus 4:13-21
- for a leader or prince: a male goat - Leviticus 4:22-26
- for an ordinary member of the community: a female goat or lamb - Leviticus 4:27-31

It may help to imagine the feelings of an ordinary, devout Israelite bringing the best of his flock, perhaps many times a year, to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, then raising his hand to slay it, without seeing any apparent benefit from these sacrifices made continually, and without the honour of a close relationship with God. (The ark and the covering glory of God would have been invisible under its coverings in the Most Holy Place).

These were sacrifices made for unintentional sin. Note that there were no sacrifices for murder, adultery, premeditated theft, in fact for any sin that was a conscious rebellion against God. For these things, even when they involved only something as apparently trivial as picking up sticks on the Sabbath day, there was only the death penalty - being excluded from the nation was effectively the same thing. Look at Numbers 15:27-36.

It is also true that although the law provided a way of forgiveness for sins, it did nothing about our human nature. 'The law made nothing perfect' (Hebrews 7:19).

The Day of Atonement

The closest that the people came to being completely reconciled to God was on the Day of Atonement, when all the sins of all the people were removed (Leviticus 16:30, 34). On this occasion the sacrifices offered were a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, then one of two goats as a further sin offering (Leviticus 16:3, 9). The other goat was the 'scapegoat' who carried, symbolically, the sins of the people into the wilderness and might therefore have been identified with Christ. Here again there is a difference. The goat did not die, and just as it lived on in the wilderness, so did their sins. There they waited until one would come who would suffer 'outside the camp', to forgive not only the sins of those who would come after him, but finally to take away the guilt of those who had gone before. (Hebrews 9:15)

If the young people are able to absorb this level of detail, talk through what the High Priest had to do on the Day of Atonement.

In the letter to the Hebrews the writer states clearly that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (see Hebrews 9:12-13; 10:3-4, 11).

A Perfect Sacrifice

What was required was a different sort of sacrifice, one that had the following features:

- it was a personal self-sacrifice, in the form of a sinless, perfect man
- it was a death, or a spilling of blood
- these things were done by a 'High Priest' - someone who was able to help all those whom he represented

Because of these things the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient to deal with sin once and for all, to remove the curse of death from over us.

What then can we learn from the law of Moses?

In the first place the ordinary Israelites' offerings represented a real sacrifice - the animals offered were young and in perfect condition, therefore, valuable. The prophet Malachi later rebuked the people for offering to God animals that were old or sick, therefore, worthless (Malachi 1:7-8).

Secondly, the person offering the sacrifice had to identify himself with the animal offered by first laying his hands upon it and then killing it with his own hand (Leviticus 1:4-6).

Since Christ himself was a sacrifice the other aspect of our sacrifice is identification with him. Ask the class for their ideas on this subject. The first area of identification is a general one and involves sharing in Christ's sufferings (see Philippians 3:10) through, eventually, Christ living in us. The other specific action of identification is through baptism where we identify particularly with his death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-10).

Christ - representative not substitute

It is worth making this point clear, without labouring it. Jesus did not die instead of us, so that the price of our sins is paid in advance. What happened in his death is that he made it possible for us, by identifying ourselves with him, to be saved.

Our relationship with God

The arrangements under the old covenant can help us to understand better what Jesus accomplished for us under the new. For the most part the ordinary Israelite's relationship with God under the first covenant was remote. Although as we have seen, he killed his own sacrifice and laid his hands on it, he then handed it over to the priests at the entrance to the tent of meeting. The priests then offered it to God on his behalf inside the courtyard where the ordinary Israelite was not permitted to go.

By contrast, the emphasis under the new covenant is the believer's closeness to God. Read Hebrews 10:19-22 with the class and then look at the diagram of the tent of meeting in the students' notes.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that we have come into the very presence of God in the most Holy Place, something only the High Priest was permitted to do once a year under the first covenant. The gateway in the Outer Court was furthest from God's presence over the ark.

Ask the class for their thoughts on how someone might move from the entrance to the Most Holy Place. These are the things that needed to be done:

- a sacrifice had to be offered on the altar for the believer's sins - this Jesus has made for us, a perfect sacrifice that does not have to be continually offered
- being washed with water in the laver, which corresponds to baptism of the believer in Jesus and the effectiveness of his sacrifice
- the Holy Place was entered, with the altar of incense, representing a close relationship with God through prayer
- entry into God's presence itself because Jesus' sacrifice has destroyed once and for all the barrier between God and his people.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The requirements under the law of Moses sometimes seem remote and irrelevant these days and the Old Testament is often criticised by non-Christians. It is good to understand how it teaches us how good God is in providing his Son for us.

PRAYER

Ask the young people to write their own prayer thanking God for allowing Jesus to die for us.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Christ's followers are still asked to make sacrifices of various kinds - 'living sacrifices' as they are termed in Romans 12. Lesson 22 in Part 1 of The Way of Life deals specifically with the practical aspect of self-sacrifice. If the young people have not done this exercise they could read Romans 12:1-20 and list the aspects of self-sacrifice mentioned.
2. Other passages, like Hebrews 13:15-16 and Psalm 50:14-15,23 refer to
 - a sacrifice of praise
 - a sacrifice of sharing with others
 - a sacrifice of giving thanks, praise and obedience

The Psalmist (Psalm 50:7-13) makes the important point that the only thing which is truly ours to give to God is our sincerely expressed thanks - in other cases we are only giving back to God the things he has given to us.

JESUS THE SAVIOUR - THE TRIAL

15

AIM OF LESSON

For the young people to understand how unlawful was Jesus' trial, and so to appreciate the wickedness of human beings and the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus in giving himself.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the students' notes and relevant scripture passages so that you can understand what went on at Jesus' trial.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Jesus underwent a double trial. Two independent systems of criminal justice were called upon.

The Jewish Trial

Jewish law had many strict safeguards against miscarriages of justice, both in God's law and in the traditions which had overlaid it. Make sure the students understand that it was the Jews who wanted Jesus killed and could try him under their own laws - the Old Testament laws of God and the rules laid down in the Mishna. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish governing body and it consisted of about 70 priests and scribes. However, because Israel was an occupied country they had no power to sentence a man to death.

The Roman Trial

Thus Jesus had to appear before Pilate who was the Roman Governor. Ask the students to read the students' notes and answer the questions on the first part of the lesson.

Roman law was based upon principles of justice which were designed to bring peace and stability to its empire. As well as reviewing the case, Pilate had the power to legally interrogate the accused in order to get to the bottom of the dispute. He asked Jesus' accusers, "What evil hath he done?" The reply was,

"We found this man,

- perverting our nation;

- forbidding to give tribute to Caesar;
- saying that he himself is Christ, a King.”

The first of these was of no concern to Pilate, concerning as it did the Jews and their religion. The second was the opposite of Jesus’ teaching and was, like the first, untrue. But the third accusation required Pilate to interrogate further. In the privacy of the Palace, where the Jews could not enter, a genuine conversation was entered into, recorded in John 18:33 - 38. Jesus was a King, he said, but not of this world! Therefore His claim posed no threat to Rome and its emperor, and contravened no Roman law. Thus Pilate “went out again unto the Jews and said unto them, ‘I find no crime in him.’”

The trial was ended. The verdict was pronounced - a verdict of not guilty. Roman justice had done its task, and had acquitted Jesus Christ. By rights Jesus should now have been set free, but the chief priests and the crowd’s anger began to frighten Pilate - they were set on defying the law, ignoring Pilate’s acquittal of Jesus, and cried out for his blood. Gradually Pilate capitulated, yet still he repeated his declaration of Jesus’ innocence.

He tried to shirk his responsibility by sending the prisoner to Herod who only returned him. He tried to appease the mob’s animosity by having Jesus robed in purple, with a crown of thorns. But they would not be satisfied with scorn alone - they clamoured for crucifixion. That was lynching! He tried to dodge his responsibility by passing it on to the crowd, washing his hands in public. But he could not abdicate his responsibility. He was not brave enough to oppose them. “Law failed, administrative order failed; the mob was in command.”

He hit upon the idea of releasing a prisoner - this way his conscience would not be outraged; order would be preserved; law would be satisfied, and Jewish customs respected. That too failed. But he finally caved in when they threatened him with accusations before the emperor, “If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.” It was no longer just a religious issue now, but political, threatening his career and even worse (he could die if the emperor turned against him). Pilate had tried to resist the inflamed Jews by correct application of Roman law, but the threat of personal impeachment wilted his courage. At the Jewish court the charge had been blasphemy, but in the political Roman sphere it became treason. A clever twist by Caiaphas to achieve their deadly aim.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is moving to consider Jesus’ calm courage, even in the face of such a terrible miscarriage of justice. Idealistic young people will feel this sense of injustice (human injustice, that is. It is another lesson to show that God was just through all this - see Romans 3:26).

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:”

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we have thought of the Lord Jesus Christ, of his bravery, of the way both Jews and Romans conspired together to have him killed, and we have reflected on his quiet gentleness throughout all these things. We thank you Father, for his grace, and that all this was for us. We are ashamed that we so often make a fuss when we think we have been wrongly treated, and we pray that we may keep his example before us and learn to be like him. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Write a newspaper report of the trial, as though you were an impartial eyewitness to these events.

FAMILY LIFE - PRINCIPLES

16

AIM OF LESSON

To provide an understanding of divine principles in marriage and family life, in particular the relationship between Christ and his family (the ecclesia), as a guide to personal relationships and behaviour of family members to each other.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Ephesians 5:22-6:4; (and 4:1-3); Colossians 3:18-25; (and 3:10-14); 1 Peter 3:1-7

It is essential that family relationships are seen as part of the overall behaviour of those in Christ, and the passages in brackets are general examples of how we should treat one another. God invests marriage and family with special importance and significance as we shall see; it was not his intention that there should be less love between husband and wife and children than between that which exists between them and others.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think about the divine family of God, his Son, and the children of God, and their duties, attitudes and responsibilities to each other. You should be convinced of two things: first, that men and women are joint heirs of salvation, and are equal before God, and secondly, that, according to Scripture, men and women are made differently, and are not the same or interchangeable. Both have strengths and weaknesses. How these principles are worked out in practice is a matter for individuals - not all households will follow the same pattern.

This can be a subject that generates more heat than light. Avoid attitudes such as "we would never have been allowed to do (or watch, or attend) such and such when I was your age", or that lax morals are the preserve of the younger generation - they aren't. We are inevitably the product of our age in terms of our material possessions, jobs, clothes, leisure activities and so on, but inside, the hearts and minds of men and women and children have always been the same.

This lesson deals with the basic principles of family life. You should be aware of the following three lessons so that you do not duplicate too much.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

What is marriage?

Begin by thinking about the absolute fundamentals of what marriage is about. These days it is a battered institution, struggling to survive the harm done to it by those whose marriages have failed and by those who chose not to marry but to live together.

Ask the young people what marriage is, and try to bring out two themes, with a few points under each:

It is a statement of commitment made firstly to each other, secondly to the rest of the world. By making this public statement the couple are:

- Informing other potential partners that they are 'taken' - like a 'reserved' notice on a restaurant table or a 'sold' sign on something in a sale. This is basically what a ring is, and there are obvious benefits in both husband and wife wearing one (you may like to discuss this at some point).
- Making a legal commitment to provide for each other, depending on the laws of the land in which they live.
- Potentially creating an environment in which children can be brought up.

For believers it is also a commitment before God to follow the pattern of marriage that he has laid down. It is this divine element in marriage that makes it different from ordinary human arrangements:

- God created the institution of marriage in Genesis 2.
- God intends marriage to be for life.
- He uses marriage often in the Bible as an analogy of his dealings with his people, right up to the end of Revelation, where the new Jerusalem is 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'.

It is however possible to make marriage sound far more complicated than it is. At its heart it is simply a label given to a relationship between a man and woman who are completely committed to each other.

Whether to marry or not?

Ask the young people why so many do not marry, but live together instead. The reasons will probably boil down to one or more of:

- The man and woman are not really committed to each other.
- They do not expect the relationship to last, even though they would like it to, and they would rather end it without the hassle and legal costs of a divorce.
- They don't know whether the relationship will last, but want to see what happens - maybe if it's a success they will get married.
- They are influenced by their friends to think that marriage is not 'cool'.
- They are put off by all the trimmings, and expense, of a traditional wedding.

Discuss the merits of attitudes like these by getting the young people to think about the nature of commitment, and perhaps to see for themselves that the first four points really do not hold water.

An uncommitted relationship stands little chance of surviving, since even 'the course of true love never runs smooth'.

Commitment is a decision, not a condition. It's not like good health, which can come and go; and it can't be half-hearted - that's not commitment. It is an absolute determination to look

after the well-being of one's husband or wife, and given that sort of commitment between two people who love each other, the marriage will work.

The last of the five points is one that needs to be taken seriously, since Christadelphian weddings can be as over-indulgent as any other, and it is important to stress that the wedding itself can be divided into two parts:

The vows before God, which are the essential element of beginning the marriage.

All the other things that go to make up a traditional wedding. These add up, broadly speaking, to an excuse for dressing up and having a party. Nothing wrong in that, of course, and a valuable opportunity for members of different families to meet and mix. The only problem is that these can detract from the important elements, and it is possible for a bride and groom to emerge from their wedding having been almost totally focused on the trimmings and without having given due thought to their subsequent life together.

Building a house

The rest of the lesson likens the building up of a family in Christ to that of the construction of a real building. First of all, before any structure becomes visible, strong foundations are required. Then, the builders provide a framework of walls and a roof, and furnish it to provide comfort and security for the inhabitants. People live in it, and give it life, and warmth, and as time goes on, some of those people move out, to become home-builders themselves, leaving the original builders alone again. The analogy is not perfect, but it gives a progression to the family rather than starting off wherever we happen to be!

The Foundations

Before a marriage starts and a family begins, there must be firm foundations laid. There will be difficult times ahead, which can shake a marriage in the same way that an earthquake can shake a building. The stronger the foundations, the less likely the structure is to topple. These foundations should be put in place before a marriage takes place.

Ask the class to look at the following passages, and ask them to note down in their own words these principles which reach down to the bedrock of God's word, that is connect into some thing that is solid and immovable.

The principles which these passages illustrate are:

- Ephesians 3:14-15; Matthew 23:9; Hosea 11:1-4: It is God who is the real father. All human families exist as reflections of that between God and his people. This is not just an important piece of theory, but a practical principle which should guide everything else in family life. You may need to explain that Matthew 23:9 is not saying that we should deny our human fathers: simply that we have an even greater father in heaven.
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6: sharing the same beliefs, and being prepared to be "one flesh", that is together in all things;
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 4:1-2, 15-16: having true love for each other, not selfish love, but love that is "patient, kind, not rude or self-seeking, that keeps no record of wrongs, but protects, trusts and perseveres";
- Galatians 6:2-5; 1 Peter 3:8-11; Ephesians 5:29-32: a spirit of consideration for each other, for building each other up, so that the two together are more than the sum of the parts.

These form the foundation of a marriage which cannot be shaken. If one is missing, then the marriage will tend to be unstable.

The Framework of the Family - Husband and Wife

This is provided by the husband and wife together. The key passage here is Ephesians 5:21-33, supported by 1 Peter 3:1-7. Ask the class to look at these passages and draw their own conclusions, specifying the responsibilities of both partners. To whom, or what, does Paul liken husbands and wives in Ephesians 5?

The point Paul makes is that, within a marriage, there are responsibilities and duties both ways - it isn't a one-way traffic. Wives are asked to submit to their husbands, but husbands are to behave like Christ towards their wives, with the same love and care that Christ has shown for his people, to the extent of giving everything so that we might be saved. Consider this passage in Ephesians very carefully, for it has tremendous implications for marriage. Marriage "in Christ" is much more than living together. It brings a relationship between two people onto a much higher plane, because of this linkage with the attitude of Christ, his self-sacrifice, and the love between Christ and his family.

It is not fashionable to teach that the husband should be head of the family, and that his wife and children should be obedient to him, but it is the way God ordained that the family should work, and we should not avoid teaching it simply because it is not 'politically correct'. The rôle of the husband is modelled on that of God, the Father, and on Christ, the head of the church, and young men should be growing up to bear this authority, but doing so with the same gentleness, kindness and unselfishness that their Lord and Master showed.

Similarly, young women should be learning to anticipate a rôle as wife and mother, not as a chattel of her husband but as one who has freely chosen to give her love to him.

Note that just as the wife has a responsibility to provide food for the family, so (Ephesians 5:28-29) the husband has to provide spiritual nourishment. This brings a responsibility to young men before they are married, to care for the spiritual well-being of their girl-friends.

Children

Children bring a house to life. They teach parents unselfishness, and should bring out all the best qualities in adults. Children need, and deserve, the love of their parents, and it is a sad indictment of our society today that so often the trust that children have in their parents is abused, and the love they yearn for is not given.

Here are some passages for the class to look up and summarise:

- 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy. 3:4; 1 Samuel 3:13;
- Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 19:18;
- Ephesians 6:1-4

The first of the above deal with the responsibility of parents to provide for their families and "manage" them properly. The second block explains that parents have a duty to teach their children God's ways, not as an imposition but for the children's good: this includes discipline. With respect to the latter, the methods of discipline may have changed, but the need has not. Lastly, we come onto what children owe their parents. The previous pattern of mutual responsibilities is as evident in parent/children relationships as it was in husband/wife relationships. Incidentally, the word translated "exasperate" in the NIV in Ephesians 6:4 is a very strong word: it means "to irritate beyond measure" and it is used on only one other occasion in the New Testament (to make angry, Romans 10:19).

Older People

Older people are still members of families. One of the great losses among us is the loss of the accumulated knowledge of older people, and the continual pain and waste of younger people

re-learning those same lessons. As anyone who has worked in a nursing home will testify, there are some unattractive aspects of old age, but on the other hand there is a wealth of experience and wisdom to draw from older people before minds and bodies fail. Lesson 15 in Part 1 of The Way of Life deals more fully with this subject.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

This lesson has demonstrated what the principles of marriage and family life “in Christ” should be. Things go wrong when one or more of the parties involved don’t keep their side of the bargain. These issues will be discussed in a later class.

PRAYER

In most cases the young people you are teaching will not be married. They will have thought about the possibility and therefore should be encouraged to realise that it is never too early to pray for guidance in choosing a partner and planning a marriage. Get them to write a short prayer of their own.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

This might be an appropriate time to discuss homosexuality with the young people. Whilst we should always have sympathy with those with real problems in this respect, the students should have no doubts about God’s attitude to it. (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

FAMILY LIFE - PRESSURES

17

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to understand what pressures can impinge on family life and help them get into the habit of applying Biblical guidelines.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Corinthians 7; Hebrews 13:4; Ezra 9:14; Matthew 5:32

PREPARATION REQUIRED

You will need to be sensitive to the personal circumstances of the class. There are few families today not affected one way or another by marital separation, divorce or other trauma in their

wider family or amongst close friends. You will have to be careful not to cause embarrassment or hurt, particularly in front of other members of the class.

The way this lesson will be presented will depend on the age and maturity of the class and you will need to adapt the lesson accordingly, omitting some topics and expanding others. It is worth remembering that young people today are exposed to subjects and information from a younger age than previous generations. Needless to say you must be honest and open, and will recognise and admit the difficulties and compromises forced upon us by human nature. The lesson will be another opportunity to reinforce the Christian principles of love, care and forgiveness discussed in the last lesson, whilst upholding the distinction between right and wrong and the high standard of behaviour which is the goal of all disciples.

Most of the members of the class will have first hand experience of the pressures that can occur in marriage; there can be few so fortunate that their Mum and Dad have never revealed their disagreements! This lesson is therefore best conducted as a discussion with as much participation as possible so that real concerns can be tackled.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Ask the class to list specific pressures on a marriage and to indicate the effects in their books. They will probably identify the following and maybe others:

- time
- money
- conflict over children
- not being able to have children
- absorbing hobbies
- work for the meetings and other Christadelphian activities
- (un)employment
- sexual incompatibility
- unfaithfulness
- tiredness
- differing habits (tidiness for example)
- ambition/promotion
- relationships with wider family members
- poor health

Note that when discussing these with the class the positive and helpful aspects of some of these subjects should also be mentioned - not everything is a problem! It should also be stressed that facing and overcoming pressures can strengthen and develop a marriage relationship - indeed that is one reason why there are problems.

Next ask the class to complete the third column on the worksheet indicating what they think we can do about the pressures. Single words such as 'balance', 'tolerance', 'priorities' will be enough on which to base discussion. There will be chance in the next lesson to go into greater detail about actually solving problems in a marriage.

It is interesting to note how few of the pressures listed above are mentioned in Scripture in the context of marriage, and never as a reason for its break-up. You may like to ask the young people to try to think of examples, and then to have a discussion about why there are so few.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

As with all the lessons in this group, marriage and family life will be still in the future for most of these young people. However it is good for them to begin to think about the situation with regard to themselves rather than just noticing the imperfections of their parents' marriage. We can help them to realise that marriage is not a fairy tale but can be a real blessing with God's help.

PRAYER

Loving father. Thank you for my family. Help me to play my part in it, to be understanding and Christ-like in my dealings with all members of it. Please forgive me where I have caused problems. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

This would be a good opportunity to discuss staying single. What are the benefits? How could we cope if we are left single against our wishes? How can we make our ecclesia a family for those who are single now? Philippians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 7-11.

FAMILY LIFE - MAKING MARRIAGE WORK

18

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students understand how God's principles apply in practice to building a godly and happy marriage.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 24:5; Psalm 128; Proverbs 31:10-31; Mark 10:2-12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Obviously to a certain extent how you approach this subject will be determined by your own marital status and experiences. You may not feel comfortable making the discussion really personal, but bear in mind that this might be the most helpful to the students.

Decide the most tactful way to lead the discussion if any of your students have parents who are split up, remarried, or who are not Christadelphians. Also take into consideration any people in the meeting with marriage problems. However if it can be done sensitively the immediacy of these situations may help the students in any decisions that they come to. Have answers ready

on your own views about marrying out of our community and about divorce and remarriage but be prepared to explain that there are other points of view. (There are lessons in Part 3 of 'The way of Life' which deal with these specific problems.)

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Examples

Ask the students to think of some people they know who have a successful marriage (they need not name them). 'Successful' is not a very good word to use because it implies a) there is one right and wrong way to do things b) once achieved you can sit back and do nothing and c) it seems to leave God out of the equation. Perhaps you could discuss this with the students.

What do you mean by a 'successful' marriage?

It's important to get the young people thinking along the right lines, and to understand what God wants of our marriages rather than the images portrayed in glossy magazines. A successful marriage is not necessarily one where there is plenty of money and 'the sex is great'.

What things will help to make a marriage successful? Why?

See if you can come up with a list of criteria for a 'good' marriage. Here are just a few suggestions, not in any order of priority: children, clear roles, faith, forgiveness, friendship, God, listening to each other, love, making a home (how important are material things?), passion, physical affection, prayer, reliability, respect, selflessness, sex, shared activities, shared faith, striving for the same goals, support, thoughtfulness, time. As you discuss each aspect, get the young people to make a list in their books with a brief note as to why it is important. Some reasons may be obvious but it is still a good idea to write something to help clarify thoughts and distinguish between some apparently similar qualities. Other aspects may need more explanation if for instance there was disagreement in the group, or if it is a subject that had not occurred to the young people before.

All these things are connected

	T i m e	T h o u g h t f u l n e s s	S u p p o r t	S a m e g o a l s	...
Children		✓	✓	✓	
Clear roles	✓		✓		

Finally, get the young people to think about whether these things are disconnected or not. One way would be to draw a chart with the things you have identified across top, and repeated down the left hand side. Remember that if the entries on the left hand side start at the top and work down, then they should be repeated at the top starting at the right hand end and working right to left.

Faith	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forgiveness		✓	✓	
...				

These references may help with some of the topics.

Shared faith; 1 Kings 11:1-5, Exodus 34:15-16, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.

Care for each other; Ephesians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, 13:4-6, Colossians 3:19, Proverbs 31:12, 1 Peter 3:1-9

Loyalty: Genesis 2:23-24.

Physical affection: 1 Corinthians 7:5.

End the lesson on a positive note.

It is very important to stress in the discussion that marriage is a good thing ordained by God and that it can and does work if you follow Godly principles. Although we are not given many direct instructions about marriage we are given lots of examples and instructions about relationships, which if we follow will help us to make marriage work.

During the discussion don't forget that marriage, as a relationship between two imperfect human beings, is bound to have its good and bad points. However if the basic components are right then you should be able to look at the sum of it and see that marriage is a good thing. Marriage gets a very bad press these days, and although Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:1 that it is better not to be married, he means to be celibate in mind and body, whereas today's worldly view is often that it is better not to marry because it is going to fail anyway.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

As the young people go looking for a partner (and at this stage it is unlikely to be a permanent one) they should remember God's principles about marriage, and use those to help them make wise decisions.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, Help us to follow the good examples that we have thought about today. Give us the courage to make sensible decisions about relationships that are in accordance with your principles. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Planning. You might like to ask the young people how much of this they ought to discuss with a partner whom they plan to marry. We hope they will decide that so far as possible all aspects should be discussed and put into practice before marriage starts e.g. reading the Bible, praying together.

2. Changing roles. You might also like to discuss role-reversal - if a husband was out of work, for example, or incapacitated in some way. Is it a good idea? Is it wrong? Would it work? For you? For others? If it was necessary?

FAMILY LIFE - MAKING THE FAMILY WORK

19

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to extend the guidance learnt in lesson 18 to family life with children and to appreciate their present family responsibilities.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Titus 1:6; 2:3-5; 1Timothy 3:4; 5:4; Colossians 3:20-21; Luke 9:47-48

PREPARATION REQUIRED

As with the previous three lessons you will need to be sensitive to the personal circumstances of the class. Think through their individual circumstances so that you are prepared not to embarrass or appear to condemn.

We have already discussed pressures on a family and ways of building a marriage so be careful not to go over unnecessary ground again.

The lesson will be another opportunity to reinforce the Christian principles of love, care, forgiveness, and being non-judgmental of the individual, whilst upholding the distinction between right and wrong and the high standard of behaviour which is the goal of all disciples.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Ask the young people to suggest difficulties that might arise between parents and children. Get them to list them in their books leaving room to write solutions to the difficulties later. They will probably identify some of the following and maybe others:

Money	Parent's demands	Differing habits (e.g. tidiness)
(Dis)obedience	'Young people's' activities (discos etc.)	
Helping in the home	Schoolwork	Hobbies
Parental disagreement	Sibling disagreement/rivalry	Step-parents
Illness	Pressure to attend meetings	Language
Part-time jobs	Favouritism	Parent's unemployment

Now ask them to suggest ways to avoid and solve these problems. Most of the remedies will be the same as discussed in the last lesson e.g. respect, listening to each other, doing things together. In fact you could get them to refer to the list you made last week to see what applies. They will, however, notice that differences occur because of the differing responsibilities parents and children have. For instance parents have a duty to teach their children about God and to become responsible citizens whereas children have a duty to obey their parents.

Many of the problems the students will have listed will be because the balance between being treated like a child and being treated like an adult is in question. It might be a good idea to ask the young people how they would cope with these difficulties if they were parents so that they begin to see things from their parents' point of view. Do you ever stop having to obey your parents? How do grandparents fit into family life?

As you discuss the list get them to write notes on how they would cope with the difficulties both as a parent and as a child.

Note that when discussing these with the class the positive and helpful aspects of some of these subjects should also be mentioned - not everything is a problem! It should also be stressed that facing and overcoming pressures can strengthen and develop family relationships.

These references may help.

Parent's demands	Matthew 21:28-32 (parable of the two sons), Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1, Proverbs 22:6, 29:15
Leaving home	Luke 15:11-24 (prodigal son)
Sibling rivalry	Luke 15:25-32 (elder brother)
Being treated as a child	Luke 2:48-52 (Jesus, aged 12)
Parents too overbearing	Ephesians 6:4

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

As we go through life we experience many different roles. It is good for the young people to understand this so that they can begin to understand how others feel as well as being prepared for different responsibilities.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven. You have shown us how the best father cares for his children. Help us to be more like you. Help us to be loving. Help us to be forgiving. Help us to be understanding and help us to be selfless. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Consider the ecclesia as a family. How can we extend our responsibilities to ecclesial fathers, aunts and uncles, other children and brothers and sisters.

AIM OF LESSON

To show the way God has judged in the past to establish principles for his judgments to come.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Genesis 3:16-23; Leviticus 10:1-7; Numbers 15:32-36; 2 Samuel 6:6-9; 2 Samuel 12:1-14; John 8:1-11; Matthew 23:13-15, 28-39

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the passages referred to and build up your own picture of God's attitude to those who have fallen short of his standards.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Ask the young people to read through the situations referred to in the students' notes - or others of your own choosing - with a view to assessing God's judgments and mercy. They could each take a separate example and be prepared to explain to the others:

Together build up your conclusions about the way God deals with us and get the students to write them in their books. They should discover something like:

- God always does what he says.
- God wants us to repent and learn from what we have done.
- God will always forgive us if we are repentant but those who blatantly set themselves against him will not be forgiven.
- God's forgiveness does not depend on whether the sin is 'serious' or not, but on whether the sinner is repentant.
- God may forgive us but that does not mean that he will save us from the consequences of our actions.

Now get the young people to look at the remaining passages, and think about what they might learn from them:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1 Samuel 16:4-12 | We do not know what people are really like inside, so we are not in any position really to judge them. |
| 1 Peter 3:1-5 | God's measure of people's worth is very different from the common human assessment. |
| Psalms 139:1-5 | God understands us completely, even knows our thoughts before we think them. |
| Matthew 7:1-5 | Our judgment is clouded by the fact that we are sinners ourselves. God will judge us as we judge others. |
| Romans 2:1-4 | Because we are sinners we are in no position to condemn other people. |

1 Corinthians 6:1-6 God expects us to take the best decisions we can when we are faced with difficult situations.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

We all need to be aware of how God requires us to worship him by our behaviour but it is also important that we understand his mercy when we inevitably fall.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, having heard of your judgment we pray that you will help us and strengthen us to follow in Christ's footsteps that we may be found worthy of a place in your kingdom through the grace which we have seen displayed in your word. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

- . Suggest that the young people imagine they were a disciple present when Ananias and Sapphira were punished by God. How would they explain what happened?
- . Ask them to privately list things they have done wrong. Then go through the list and decide whether they have suffered as a result. Have they been forgiven? Have they forgiven others for similar offences?
- . Go through Psalm 51 with the young people. Explain the circumstances of the psalm and notice how David felt as his prayer to God progresses and he is assured God will forgive him.

JUDGMENT- THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

21

AIM OF LESSON

To explain the Day of Judgment and to find from Scripture the evidence for all its attributes.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Romans 14:10, 12; Hebrews 9:27-28

PREPARATION REQUIRED

The work sheet lists a series of passages which indicate aspects of the Day of Judgment. Consider each of these and prepare your answers, as to the information they teach about it. It is probably worth bearing in mind that young people especially like to know exactly what's going to happen when, and how will it work and we really can't be too certain of the details from

Scripture. Be prepared to encourage them to find out what 'facts' there are but also accept that God doesn't expect us to work out a timetable and formula for him to stick to. The correct balance needs to be maintained in pointing out the results of the judgment, so that the benefits of the kingdom of God are set against the pleasures of this life and the resulting condemnation. Also the passages about the judgment put a strong emphasis on works so the correct place and balance of faith in the believer's life needs to be clarified.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Initial Discussion

Discuss with the group their initial understanding of the Day of Judgment. "Who, how, what, why, when," questions can be used to structure and encourage this.

Scriptural references

Then get the young people to consider the passages in their notes; you could ask them to start at different points to cover the whole. Give them time to work through the references and then encourage them to report back on their findings. This can either be done passage by passage or against topics, such as who, or what or how.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The parable demonstrates that we can't tell who will be in the kingdom of God and who will not because we all look the same, until the 'harvest'. It also shows that the decisions about people are revealed at the Judgment Seat and not before. A time of joy for some and of sorrow for many (Luke 13:28).

Matthew 25:31-46

The sheep and the goats indicate that faith demonstrated by works is vital and that these should be so automatic to us that we are not aware that we are doing them, but sadly we may not be aware that we are not doing them either. This and all the other passages clearly show that there are only 2 types of person - acceptable and not acceptable so it isn't a matter of totting up 'good works' as this parable might suggest. It is not a parable about 'good' and 'bad' sheep, but about sheep and goats - the difference is a matter of birth (as in baptism). Emphasize that good deeds only show which type you are.

John 5:21-30

Christ Jesus has been appointed as the just judge, who is not doing it for his own ends. The Judgment happens after the resurrection. The result of doing good is life and of doing evil is condemnation. When we believe and are baptised we, in a sense, make the transition from death to life, and in a sense our judgment is determined at that point. This needs to be balanced with the teaching of other passages that we have to live out in our lives the standards to which God has called us.

Luke 21:25-27

We should regard the coming of Christ as good news, not something to be frightened of. But we need to make sure that we are ready for him.

2 Timothy 4:1, 8

Judgment will be 'at his appearing'. If we have lived our lives with him in mind, we can be confident that we will, at the Day of Judgment, be accepted.

Romans 14:10-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10

These passages seem to suggest we will be required to give an account of ourselves, but it is not clear what form that will take.

1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 51-54

There is obviously a difference between the risen body and our bodies as they are now. Verse 52 'For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable ...' can cause difficulties, but you need to bear in mind that Paul is talking about the sort of bodies that immortal people will have, not giving a timetable of events. His point is that (presumably after the judgment) we will be different from how we are now.

Revelation 20:11-15

Here is the final and most complete picture of Jesus opening the books, referred to often in Scripture, the book from which we ask for our sins to be erased. The dead, wherever they were placed, are raised and judged some to eternal life and the rest to die again.

1 John 4:14-18, Luke 12:27-34

God wants us to be in his kingdom, and wants to help us to get there. If we can trust him during our lives, and have his kingdom in the front of our minds, there is absolutely no doubt that we will be in it.

Finally ...

Although we would like the students to be baptised and this lesson should clearly encourage them, there may be those who do not yet feel ready and who may be worried about what will happen if Jesus returns before they are baptised. Alternatively they may be worried about younger unbaptised friends, or members of their family.

This can be a real concern for parents, who worry that when Christ returns they will be taken away from their young children. Explain that Jesus knows our hearts and our futures and whatever he does will be just - Hebrews 9:27-28. His prime purpose in coming back is to save and rescue his people, and the ones who will suffer will be those who have deliberately turned away from God and his word.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The signs of the times tell us that there is not much time left to get our lives right with God and to develop our faith, then to put that faith into action daily. We need to be aware of our sins and to have them forgiven first by Baptism and then through our prayers through the Lord Jesus Christ. So that when Jesus returns to judge the world and us, we pray we will be worthy by God's grace of a place in his kingdom.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, we live in a wicked world which needs to be put right by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know too that however hard we try we ourselves are human, and we keep doing things that we should not. Please forgive us our sins, and help us to commit our lives to your service so that when Jesus comes back we will not fear the day of judgment. Help us to truly long for his return, and to look forward to the time when he will put right everything that is wrong with our world. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss a human court of law and compare it with God's judgment. What are the similarities and differences?

God knows- men can only guess. God has always known so doesn't have to go through a long trial process. In a human court we would have to prove our innocence. In God's we will have Jesus on our side. Romans 8:33-34.

2. Look at other parables on judgment, like the wedding feast, the ten virgins, the workers in the vineyard.

JUDGMENT - JUDGING OTHERS

22

AIM OF LESSON

This is intended to be a practical lesson to determine what Jesus meant about judging others and how it affects us.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 2:1-4; Matthew 6:9-14; Matthew 7:1-5; Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 6:37-42; John 8:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, 11

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read the relevant Bible passages. Think carefully about what your answers would be to the questions on the worksheet. There is not always a right or easy answer when dealing with practical issues so it can be helpful to discuss the topic with others to get a wide range of views.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Use the worksheets as a basis for the lesson. Try to draw out the distinction between judging someone's salvation (which we're not in a position to do) and dealing with the practicalities of fellowship for the present, to lead someone who is astray back to God.

Prejudice

We should not have prejudices but we do and all have room for improvement!

Don't Judge?

It is God who ultimately judges. Help the students to recognise how totally dependant we are on God's mercy and that this should affect our dealings with one another.

Forgiving others

Be ready to assure that God is aware of our weakness. It is the effort we put in, rather than what we do (or don't) achieve that matters.

When someone sins

Emphasize the difference between disfellowshipping as a means of correction and condemning as unworthy of salvation. See 2 Corinthians 2:5-8.

The young people will presumably not have had any real experience of this sort of situation, and most of what they have heard may have been second hand from people who had an axe to grind. So it is best for you to limit the discussion. Talk about the principles, explain that there are times when regrettably we have to take action when someone sins, and ask them if they have any questions. (There is another lesson in Part 3 about this).

Are you as bad?

The point of this exercise is to help the young people to notice when they are guilty of condemning others and begin to think how they could put things right if it does happen.

When someone confesses to doing something wrong ...and when they don't

The point from these two examples is that if we are to behave to others as God does to us then we should place far more importance on whether someone else is repentant than on how 'bad' was the crime. Similarly, we should not necessarily protect others from the results of what they have done. So in the first example we would forgive our son because of his repentance, but expect him to repay his friend for his stolen bike. In the second, our daughter should be punished, more for her obstinacy than for the theft.

Discrimination

It will be obvious to the young people that we should not have prejudices based on appearance but they may not realise how easy it is to do it unintentionally.

Feeling guilty?

There are three people in this example to whom we could confess. We should certainly tell God. Whether or not to tell the teacher or the boy we copied from will be a matter to discuss. Circumstances like whether we have learnt from the experience, how the other people concerned would react and whether any one has been hurt by the situation which in this case they haven't.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

When Jesus returns we hope he will look on our shortcomings with love, compassion and mercy. He died for us to obtain our salvation. If we live our lives with this at the forefront of our minds, our judgment of others will be tempered with similar love, compassion and mercy.

PRAYER

Encourage students to pray that God will help them to be more compassionate and less judgmental in the dealings with others but most of all to pray for his mercy towards themselves.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

- . Discuss whether guilt makes it difficult to forgive yourself and thus difficult to understand that God has forgiven you. How can you rectify this without making yourself blasé about sin.
- . Discuss attitudes in the world today which clearly show lack of forgiveness. There may have been a recent public court case you could discuss where people have shown their desire for revenge, their desire for someone to be punished; where people have let their emotions get in the way or have made uninformed opinions.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN - THE DEVIL AND SATAN

23

AIM OF LESSON

To enable the young people to understand the Bible background of these words.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Many passages listed in the students' notes.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

You may have a copy of 'The Devil - The Great Deceiver' by brother Peter Watkins, or 'Christadelphians - What they Believe and Preach' by brother Harry Tennant, in which chapters 15 and 16 deal with this subject. Some preparatory reading will be helpful, especially if you intend to teach the next four lessons.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The source of sin

Ask the students to look up the passages in their notes and decide what the Bible says about where sin comes from. It is significant that the Bible never encourages us to lay the blame for sin elsewhere.

Mark 7:20-23 'from within, out of the heart ...'

James 1:14 'by his own evil desire'

Romans 7:18-21 'sin living in me'

Jeremiah 17:9 'The heart is deceitful'

The source of evil

The word 'evil' is used to include both sin and its effects; so it includes those things that 'go wrong' in life that are not directly the result of human wrongdoing: earthquakes, calamities, etc.

It also includes occasions, as in the life of Job, where God brings about calamity for the ultimate benefit of the one who is suffering and of those who observe the troubles. Once again get the students to use the references in the students' notes.

- Genesis 6:5 Before the flood, men's hearts were evil
- Genesis 37:20 'a ferocious animal' (AV evil beast), which is of itself neither good nor bad.
- Isaiah 45:5-7 God makes peace, and creates evil (AV): I the LORD do all these
- Job 2:7-10 Job had received both good and evil from God.

A Study of the words "Satan" and "Devil".

Although the Bible seems quite clear that sins originate inside us, we do have to recognise that the words Devil, Satan and Lucifer (AV) do occur in Scripture and therefore we can understand how the belief arose in an evil being going around causing evil and making us sin. To try to understand these problem passages we should know what they mean.

Satan in the Old Testament

"Satan" is an ordinary Hebrew word for an enemy, opponent, adversary. It is not used to mean 'the great enemy of mankind' in the Old Testament, but is used both as a verb and a noun, singular and plural, for all kinds of enemies. The word 'Devil' does not appear in the Old Testament at all, and the Jews have never believed in a supernatural Satan. The passages in the book of Job referring to 'Satan' were similarly understood by them to refer to someone who put forward an opposing view, whether he be human or angelic. The examples of the use of the word given in the students' notes are:

- Numbers 22:22 The angel who opposed Balaam
- 1 Kings 5:4 David had no adversaries
- 1 Kings 11:25 Rezon the son of Eliadah opposed Solomon
- 2 Samuel 24:1 God incites David to number Israel; 1 Chronicles 21:2 says it was Satan.

The Devil in the Old Testament

The word 'devil' does not occur at all in the NIV translation of the Old Testament, and only four times in the AV (Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, 2 Chronicles 11:15, and Psalm 106:37). On each occasion it refers to pagan idols. The Hebrew word is sa'ir, from which our word satyr comes. In fact it is translated satyr in Isaiah 34:14 ('wild goats' in the NIV). In general the word means 'goat' or 'goat-like'. Note the letter in the students' notes for the next lesson.

Satan in the New Testament

So in the Old Testament Satan is just an adversary. In the New, however, it has a more focused meaning, always referring to people or things that are opposed to God. In the following passages the Hebrew word is carried forward into Greek in just the same way as it has been into English.

- Mark 8:33 Simon Peter, by his words, was opposing the will of God
- Luke 13:11-16 A crippled woman, 'whom Satan had bound'
- 1 Thessalonians 2:18 By some means the work of God through Paul was prevented.
- 1 Timothy 5:15 False teachers in the church.

Acts 5:3 Satan tempted Ananias and Sapphira.
 Matthew 4:1-10 Christ refers to the tempter - the devil - as Satan.. From this, and other passages, we learn that the two words in the New Testament are referring to the same thing.

The reference in Luke is informative because it is clear from it that 'Satan' includes the effect of sin as well as the sin itself - not that the woman was especially sinful, but her affliction was part of the curse for sin that falls upon us all. So Satan represents everything in human nature and in its consequences that is opposed to God.

The Devil in the New Testament

John 6:70 Judas Iscariot is described as 'a devil'.
 Ephesians 6:11 Christians need to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 James 4:7 The devil must be resisted.
 1 Peter 5:8 The devil is looking for people to devour.

Compare this passage with Genesis 4:7 'sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it', to make the points that 'sin' is personified in the same way as the 'devil' is, and the same metaphor is used of both - meaning, of course, the same thing.

Why does Scripture speak of our human nature in the way it does?

Our battle with our human nature is sometimes described as a battle between two parts of ourselves to help us understand how we should really fight to become Christ-like. In a way it is a parable to make it easier to understand. When the darker side of our nature is personified it seems as though it is another person who is being spoken of.

Thinking about Hebrews 2:14

In his death, Christ destroyed his own humanity: the devil within, and because of this triumph he also freed himself from death. 'For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him'. (Romans 6:9). There was no sense in which anyone or anything outside himself was destroyed.

In doing so, however, he benefited us because when by faith and baptism we associate ourselves with his death, and so long as we remain firm in our faith and obedience, our sinful human nature, has no power to condemn us to death.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

The consequences of wrong doctrine.

Some people quite seriously believe in a supernatural being who is the source of evil. But some of the consequences are:-

- Responsibility for sin is not always clearly put where it belongs - with ourselves
- The meaning of Christ's sacrifice changes - Hebrews 2:14
- Troubles that come to us may not be seen as the chastening of a loving Father - Hebrews 12:6-11
- Belief in a personal Devil often accompanies belief in a personal 'Holy Spirit', both may be personalised

- A more superstitious view of life, and of the Bible. What is more reasonable than to say that human nature is the source of mankind's problems!

PRAYER

Matthew 6:13: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Think about this analogy:

'I have two dogs fighting inside me: a black dog and a white dog. When the white dog wins I do what is right; when the black dog wins I do what is wrong.'

'Which one usually wins?'

'The one I feed the most'

Get the young people to think what the two dogs eat, and how they can feed the white dog.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN - WHAT OTHERS BELIEVE 24

AIM OF LESSON

For the young people to realise that many other people believe in a literal fallen angel who is the source of the evil in the world, and so to appreciate the teaching of the Bible and to be prepared to respond when they meet those of other persuasions.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

There are many passages listed in these and in the students' notes.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

You need to have looked at all the references referred to and to be clear in your own mind what they mean, so that you can discuss them in an open and relaxed way with the young people.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

'Goats and the devil'

You may like to use this letter as an introduction. You can recap last week's lesson, reminding the young people that the Hebrew Old Testament does not mention the devil, and emphasise

the point that many non-Biblical religions have teachings of evil 'gods' which bring harm and trouble.

A fallen angel?

Get the young people to look at the set of passages as they have been printed in their notes. The obvious conclusion, if they are taken literally, is that

- Satan was cast out from heaven once in the time of Isaiah, and ...
- ... again when the disciples were travelling from town to town.
- When Christ was crucified he was cast out a third time, and killed, ...
- ... only to come to life again, so that Roman believers needed to crush him under their feet.
- Later he reappears in heaven, so that Michael has to do battle with him.

It seems obvious that these passages cannot be taken literally.

A closer look

There may not be time to look in detail at each of these passages, and you run the risk of getting rather bogged down if you try, since they are not easy to understand or explain. However, you may like to make some or all of the following points:

Isaiah 14:12

The chapter demonstrates clearly that this refers to the king of Babylon. The NIV, and most modern translations, do not use the word 'Lucifer'. The Hebrew word means something like 'light-bearer', 'shining one', or 'morning star'.

Luke 10:17-19

This passage could read 'I saw Satan fall, like lightning, from heaven'. Equally well, it could read 'I saw Satan fall - like lightning from heaven'. Given that lightning does actually travel between heaven and earth the latter reading is more likely. In this case the analogy could be between the speed of lightning and of the fall of Satan; not literally from heaven to earth but in the extent to which the disciples had been able to overcome the curse of sin by their healing.

John 12:31

If you already believe in an angel being cast out from heaven you can use this verse to justify it, but actually that is not what it says. Passages like Galatians 3:22 'But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe', use similar language of human nature. It was this that Christ overcame.

Hebrews 2:14

If the devil were a fallen angel then there would be no relevance in Christ sharing our nature. It is because our humanity is the real enemy that he had to share it.

Romans 16:17-20

Sinful men still rule the world, and our sinful nature still, in practice, governs much of what we do. But not for long.

Revelation 12:7-9

How you interpret this passage may depend on your understanding of the book of Revelation as a whole. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Michael is the Lord Jesus Christ, and these verses represent something that happened in 1914. In a sense they are right; the most

satisfactory explanation is that it does indeed speak of Christ, but of the battle fought and won in his life and death.

'Reasoning from the Scriptures'

Deal with the quotations a section at a time, and discuss the questions that follow, together with any other points that the young people may raise.

Satan the Devil - Definition

There is, of course, no disagreement over whether the devil exists: only whether or not there is 'a spirit person'.

Luke 22:31. In the previous lesson you should already have covered the point that the Bible describes sin (the things we do), and sinfulness (our human natures) as an enemy - for good reason, since they are the things that threaten our salvation. This is an example.

Luke 10:18. Jehovah's Witnesses interpret Revelation 12:7 as predicting something that happened in 1914, so it is hard to see how this could be taken literally. It surely refers to the effect of Christ's ministry, 'that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Hebrews 2:14).

Matthew 25:41. The lesson about Gehenna in Part 1 makes clear that this is one of Christ's allusions to the burning of rubbish in the valley of Hinnom.

Is Satan perhaps only the evil within people?

Nobody, of course, would suggest that Satan in Job was God himself. These are difficult passages, and it seems clear that the book refers to a being to whom God was able to give power to hurt Job. But everything in Job is under the control of God, as is clear from the record, and as Job himself indicates (Job 1:21, 2:10).

The reference to the temptation of Christ reveals a complete misunderstanding of the difference between temptation and sin. Look at Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:15

From where did Satan come?

It is, of course, hard for us to understand how evil came into a world that was 'very good', and to appreciate how the creation could contain a creature that would tempt Eve. But it does not get round the problem to push the origin of evil back one step and say that before the fall of man, 'an angel fell first'. We simply have to accept that God wanted a world in which men and women chose to obey him, and therefore allowed the possibility of disobedience.

In John 8:44 the word translated 'abode not' is variously rendered stand (nearly always), set, establish, stand still, and stand by. It does not justify the interpretation put upon it in the New World (the JW's own) translation. The full text reads (in the NIV - the AV says the same): 'You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him'. That does not support the statement that he was 'originally perfect'

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Belief in a supernatural devil is common, and we need to be prepared both to explain our faith patiently and kindly, as well as understanding the fears of those who really believe in a being 'out there' who is trying to lead us to sin.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, who has taught us that temptations come from within us all, give us strength to resist them, and faith to believe that you will deliver us from evil. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Write a letter to some imaginary (or for that matter real) Jehovah's Witness explaining why you think they have misunderstood the Bible teaching about the devil, and trying gently to correct them.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN - THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS 25

AIM OF LESSON

To study what happened when Jesus was tempted and how it prepared him for later temptations.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1-13

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Compare and contrast the different narratives, considering how each temptation prepared Jesus for future conflicts. The use of the students' notes is included in further suggested activities so you should decide whether you are going to use this.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The purpose of the temptations

The temptations follow Jesus' baptism by John. This was God's public introduction of Jesus to the nation as Son of God and their Messiah. By the age of 30 - his baptism - he had learned to control sin. Now he received the Holy Spirit without measure. He had to learn not to use it for his own benefit. Jesus knew all the prophecies he was to fulfil - the honour of being Son of God and King of Israel. He also knew the prophecies about how he was to suffer and die to bring salvation to many. There would be tremendous mental and spiritual conflict during those 40 days as he considered the work he was to carry out.

The temptation to turn stones into bread

There is sometimes debate as to whether the temptations were actual or imagined. In the case of the first temptation, having fasted for 40 days and 40 nights and having endured intense mental concentration and spiritual conflict, the desire to turn stones into bread was immediate and obvious. The wilderness stones even looked like the little loaves he was now longing for. Jesus didn't need an outward supernatural being to tempt him to make the stones into bread for his own self-gratification. His own inward desire to sin would be extremely strong. He was the Son of God wasn't he? God had declared it at his baptism. God had given him unlimited power. He was in urgent physical need - surely his own Father wouldn't mind him satisfying that need? In fact he said so later in Matthew 7:9.

Jesus responded by quoting from Scripture - Deuteronomy 8:3. God had made Israel suffer hunger before he fed them manna in the wilderness so that they might learn the same lesson Jesus himself quoted. God's word is more important than natural food. He refused to satisfy the natural desire of hunger by using God's power. He relied on God's word and overcame temptation.

The temptation to throw himself down from a pinnacle of the Temple

Matthew and Luke give a different order of the 2nd and 3rd temptations. Strict chronological order is not always followed in the Bible records. This should not be seen as a difficulty. It is quite possible that during the 40 days Jesus had faced these temptations over and over again and that the Bible record is a summary of what he had gone through. Traditionally it was thought that Messiah would proclaim himself from the pinnacle of the temple. In his mind's eye Jesus could imagine attracting attention to himself by appearing on this spot and then going through the stunt of throwing himself from this great height without being hurt. Jesus' inner conscience even quoted Scripture to convince himself to sin - Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus' quick reply is again a quotation from Scripture - Deuteronomy 6:16.

This temptation soon became a reality - Luke 4:29-30. This was the occasion when Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth and his hearers were so incensed that they took him to the brow of a hill outside the town in order to push him over the cliff. He was miraculously saved by passing through the midst of them. This was less spectacular than letting them push him over the edge to have a host of angels save him.

The temptation to be king of the world now.

Like the 2nd temptation, this 3rd temptation to have power over the whole world was imagined rather than real. There isn't actually a mountain that is physically that high! Jesus knew that ultimately, as Messiah and Son of God, the kingdoms of the earth would be under his rule. He knew his scriptures: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession", Psalm 2:8 (NIV). The temptation was to be ruler of the world without having to go through the agony and humiliation of the Cross. However, this would be a rejection of God's power and the victory over human nature. Jesus reacted instantly with another quotation from Scripture to 'fear the Lord and serve him only', Deuteronomy 6:13 (NIV). The imagined temptation became a reality after the feeding of the 5,000 when, because of the miracle, they recognised who he was and Jesus quietly went away because they wanted to force him to be King.

Christ victorious

After the temptations we are told "the devil" departed for a season. Although victorious over this set of temptations, Jesus was not free from the temptation to sin for the rest of his life. We are told that we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without

sin, Hebrews 4:15. We can be sure he suffered from constant recurrence of temptation. Unlike us, he had the added temptation to use the power of the Holy Spirit for his own ends. Unlike us, he never gave in to temptation.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Coping with temptation is a subsequent topic so don't go into too much detail on this aspect of the lesson. The main points of relevance are:

- Jesus knows how we feel when we are tempted. He has been there.
- Jesus knew his Scriptures so well that they were a great strength to him in difficult situations.
- It is a good idea to think through areas of temptation and what our reaction should be before they occur.

PRAYER

Assure the students that when we present our prayers to God asking not to be led into temptation, or asking for forgiveness, he hears us. Jesus understands about temptation and so does God when we offer our prayers in Jesus' name.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

You could ask the young people to think about the questions in their book.

Human Lusts

The 3 categories of temptation listed in 1 John 2:16 can be directly linked with the temptations of Jesus:

- Fleshly appetites - the desire to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread
- The desire for what the human eye can see - to become King of the world spread out before his eyes
- Human pride - the temptation to throw himself down from the temple in front of an admiring audience, knowing he wouldn't be hurt.

The Crucifixion of Christ

If you study Matthew 27 carefully you will find the following elements common to both the crucifixion and temptation of Jesus:

- verse 42 - 'he saved others but can't save himself' - there is perhaps a hint here of the 1st temptation. Jesus was able to feed others and save them from starvation by providing bread but could not, if he was going to fulfil his Father's will, save himself.
- verses 40 & 43 - 'Come down from the Cross ... let God rescue you if you are his son' has overtones of throw yourself from the pinnacle of the temple and God will send his angels to take care of you.
- verses 37 & 42 - His Cross proclaimed him as King and he was taunted to come down if he really was. This is connected with the temptation to rule over all the kingdoms he could see without going through the agony of the Cross. Matthew 26: 53 'Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?' must have been a real temptation.

To a greater or lesser degree it appears that Jesus endured the temptations all over again as he hung on the Cross.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN - COPING WITH TEMPTATION 26

AIM OF LESSON

To consider the practical aspects of temptation and help the young people to be prepared to cope with it.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 4:1-11 (Temptation of Jesus); Romans 7:15-24; Matthew 12:43-45

PREPARATION REQUIRED

This is a discussion based session. Read through the notes and decide how you are going to present the material in the lesson outline and how to encourage discussion. It is more important that the young people talk and answer each other if they wish to than that you keep talking. They should also be able to trust that you will not go and tell the ecclesia what they say - without you having to tell them so.

If you do not have this relationship with them, or if the young people will not be willing to discuss these things with each other, it may be best for them to work individually for at least part of the lesson.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

There is a lot of prose in the students' notes, which will fill up the lesson if you ask them to read it all. But it's worth them reading through it at some point, maybe as homework. You may like to simply summarise what it says.

In the sections where they are asked to think of some relevant Bible passages which would be helpful in given situations, the tables are followed by some relevant passages. The young people are left to work out which passage applies in which situation, but here are the 'answers'.

Bible guidance

- What to do when you find money in the street: Exodus 22:7; Proverbs 6:30-31.
- What to do when you have an opportunity to cheat in an exam: Psalm 36:1-4; Ephesians 4:22.
- What to do when the conversation turns smutty: Ephesians 4:29, 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8.
- What to do when offered illegal drugs: Judges 13:4; Proverbs 31:6.
- What to do when Jesus is ridiculed: Luke 22:59-62.

How can you avoid temptation?

- The temptation to get drunk: Isaiah 5:11,22, 56:11-12.
- The temptation to neglect Bible reading: Hosea 4:6; Psalm 19:11; James 1:25.
- The temptation to misbehave sexually: Genesis 39:7-10; Proverbs 5:1-8, 6:23-29; 1 Corinthians 6:15-19.
- The temptation to be unkind to people: Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Proverbs 19:17; Isaiah 58:7:10.
- The temptation to be unhelpful at home: Exodus 20:12; 1 Timothy 4:5,8.

What activities and influences will be helpful?

Some possible answers:

- Read the Bible every day and pray about your problems.
- Make friends who have the same values as you do.
- Mix with lots of people and make your life 'open', without secrets.
- Tell everybody what your values are so that they won't want to involve you in questionable activities.
- Meet people who have needs with which you can help - the elderly, perhaps.
- Keep a good relationship with your parents.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

- Try to anticipate tempting situations and work out a policy in advance.
- Do not place yourself in tempting situations.
- Avoid those 'friends' who bring out the worst in you. Choose friends who will be a good influence.
- Find wholesome activities to utilise leisure time - temptations are less likely to arise there, but don't be complacent.
- Do not despair when you yield to temptation. It happens to everyone. God, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, is always ready to receive us as soon and as often as we sincerely repent.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, we hallow your name. Let your kingdom come, and your will be carried out on earth as it already is in heaven. Give us our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Keep us from temptation, and from evil. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Role playing is a very good way of anticipating situations and trying to find out what we would and should do. Get the young people to set up tempting situations for each other to cope with. For those that feel shy in these situations writing down what you would say is also a good exercise.

AIM OF LESSON

To provide the Biblical background to an important doctrine and describe its first century practice.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 3; Romans 6

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and the questions in the students' notes so that you are sure of the issues, bearing in mind the young people in your group, and what knowledge they already have on this subject. Be aware of the next two lessons. Although you need to answer questions as they arise it is a pity to give muddled answers when a clear explanation is at hand.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON***Background***

Water played a vital part in the salvation of many Old Testament characters e.g. Noah from the Flood, Moses and Israel from Egypt, Naaman. Some of these incidents are used in the New Testament to describe the importance of baptism and to be an example to us. I Corinthians 10:1-6. I Peter 3:18-22.

The Greek word 'baptiso' meaning "dipping" or "washing by immersion" is used in Mark 7:2-4 as the thorough "washing" conducted by the Jews.

Principles. Baptism is ...**A public act of repentance for the remission of sins.**

Luke 3:3. John's baptism was based on this principle, but this did not provide any lasting benefit for the repentant sinner. Baptism into Christ provides an everlasting association with one who will forgive.

A public act of faith in an association with the death and resurrection of Jesus

Romans 6:1-4. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. Believers are "buried with him" and raised with him to a "new life". Baptism demonstrates the disciple's belief in the resurrection as well as associating him with Jesus in a new life.

A rebirth

John 3:1-5. All members of Adam's family have died or are going to die. In Christ's family immortal life is the inheritance. To be reborn into Christ's family is not only a burial in water but also a burial in the Spirit - a renewing of the mind, a change of direction, of motives being

replaced by the fruits of the Spirit. The rebirth is real - a disciple is born into a new family now directly related through Jesus with the Father in heaven.

The answer, or pledge, of a good conscience towards God

1 Peter 3:18-22. Christ died once for all. Our sins are forgiven, blotted out, removed "as far as the east is from the west" and we should believe that through Christ this has been done and will be done.

Practice

The apostles baptised

Acts 2:37-41. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles there are records of people hearing the Gospel message and responding to this message by being baptised. This passage is a good one to think of the principles mentioned above and see how they apply.

Jesus was baptised

Matthew 3:13-17. The one who knew no sin insisted on being baptised "to fulfil all righteousness". Note the heavenly declaration at this time - the first recorded in the New Testament "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased". Is there any further need of examples to show why baptism is so important?

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

We hope that one day these young people will all be baptised so it is important for them to understand the principles behind what may seem a strange way of showing allegiance to Christ. To be really associated with Christ means to follow his example. Baptism is a step but a most important step in following him. It demonstrates a recognition of the need for forgiveness, faith in the Resurrection and a desire to be associated with Christ in a new life.

PRAYER

Lord God in heaven, you were pleased to see your son Jesus being baptised and committing his life to you. Help us to please you in our lives - in our thoughts, our actions and in our service for others. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Think about the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus recorded in John 3.

AIM OF LESSON

That the students will learn that it is important to look at what people believe in comparison to what the Bible teaches.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

It might be helpful to ask some non-Christadelphian friends what their ideas about baptism are as opinions do vary in the established churches. Encouraging the students to do the same will help them to compare this understanding with what God instructed the first century believers to do.

The students will already have looked at what baptism means so you don't need to repeat this unnecessarily.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

If you ask the students whether or not their friends have been baptised, you are sure to get at least three different answers, maybe more. These are likely to be: yes, when I was a baby; no, not at all; or, yes, only a short while ago. These responses are likely to be the basis for the lesson with a few added details here and there. You can take a look at each response as a specific part of the lesson. Get the young people to fill in the page in the students' notes as each point is clear in their minds.

Christening

Infant sprinkling is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. Christening, or infant baptism, was only accepted as a practice of the Roman Catholics in approx. 250 AD. The act of sprinkling instead of immersion had already been accepted in 150 AD. This already proves that it wasn't what Christ or his disciples preached, since they were all either dead or very old by then.

Mark 10:14 and Matthew 18:4. Jesus is clearly showing the child-like qualities adults should have as in 1 Corinthians 14:20 and 1 Peter 2:1-2. Otherwise only baptised infants would be saved Mark 10:15. In verse 24 Jesus refers to his disciples as children.

It may be worth looking at the occasion of the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch and other New Testament baptisms and asking the students how infant sprinkling differs in method from what happened in Acts 8; Mark 1:5, 9-10 and John 3:23.

- It can be seen that baptism requires complete immersion in water. There was always plenty of water about at the location where baptisms took place. The baptiser stood in it and the person to be baptised came down into the water and came up out again.

- Now ask the young people to list the principles of baptism as discussed in the last lesson and compare infant sprinkling to these. It is clear that a baby cannot repent of any sins when it has not yet committed any. It cannot have faith or understand the association with the death and resurrection of their Saviour and it cannot change direction in life and determined to follow Jesus.

Confirmation

Within the Christian church confirmation is the admittance of a baptised person into full membership of that church. In the early church and amongst Christadelphians today, it is administered immediately after baptism - the right hand of fellowship - to signify that the newly baptised brother or sister is welcomed into our fellowship. In the Roman Catholic Church from about 1600 through the 20th century, confirmation was delayed from two to seven years after the infant was christened. Since Vatican Council II it is usually further delayed until early adolescence. The Church of England has no specific age rule, but the rite is usually administered between the ages of 14 and 16; in the Lutheran church the rite is administered at about the same age.

Confirmation goes some way to acknowledging the importance of faith as an understanding adult, but wouldn't it be better to follow the pattern of obedience set down in Scripture?

Baptism for the Dead

The Mormons place great importance on 1 Corinthians 15:29. They spend enormous amounts of time in tracing the genealogies. Some have been baptised by proxy more than fifty times for the benefit of their "Gentile" ancestors.(Mormons baptise by immersion in water. Although infant baptism is rejected, they consider the age of accountability to be eight years old.)

As the act of baptism has to be preceded by a confession by the believer, you cannot be baptised on behalf of someone else. The Mormon doctrine of proxy baptism rests on one passage in the entire Bible. Any doctrine must be suspect which rests on only one verse. Much more so when the interpretation given to the verse violates the teaching of Scripture that after death comes either judgment or annihilation.

Young people often want to know what Paul actually did mean by being baptised for the dead. You may like to discuss this. Perhaps the best explanation is that if there is no resurrection then Christ is still dead, so what is the point in being baptised into his name? So the verse would read: 'What shall they do who are baptised for the dead (meaning Jesus) if the dead rise not at all?' Alternatively it could refer to a current custom with which Paul does not necessarily agree.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Try to draw out through the lesson that it is important to compare everything which people say we should do, to what God says we should. If we put our lives against the Bible we will see where we are going wrong. It is important to encourage the young people to know clearly what the Bible says so that they can simply put this view forward when needing to, rather than be critical of others' beliefs without being positive.

PRAYER

Dear Lord. Thank you for showing us so clearly how you want us to show our allegiance to you. Help us in our decisions in life that we may always want to do things your way. Help us also to

be gentle with our friends when confronted with other beliefs but also be firm in what you have shown us to be true.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

- . If the young people have come across people who quote Romans 10: 9 and say that baptism isn't necessary you may like to discuss this. The apostle Paul's statement in itself is sound enough but a believer must then wish to please God as Paul himself writes so powerfully earlier in Romans (6:3-5).
- . The students may like to make a survey amongst their friends about what different denominations believe about baptism and what they practice.
- . The students' notes contain some general information about the Mormons taken from the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia. You may like to have a general discussion about this.

BAPTISM - AM I READY?

29

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to recognise how they should feel before asking for baptism and understanding the change in their situation when they are.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

1 Peter 3:18-22

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and the worksheet and try to anticipate the answers your class might give to the questions. Think how you would guide the discussion so that you would help them to realise the seriousness of the subject but also the joys of a life in Christ.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

The purpose of this lesson is to help the young people to understand the difference between an academic understanding of what the Bible says and the 'calling' to follow Jesus. Explain to them that knowing what baptism means, which they now do having done lesson 25, is important but they have to feel the need and want it for themselves before they go any further.

Before baptism

Ask for suggestions for answers to the first questions in the students' notes. They may need a suggestion from you to get the idea. Make a list and then discuss whether these are good reasons. There will not be right or wrong answers so they might like to give each reason a

score out of 5. Having to do this will make them really think about it. The sort of suggestions you might have are:

- Because my friends are baptised - good that you want to mix with people who believe the same as you - but it must be a personal decision.
- My parents expect me to - good for families to be united but it must be a personal decision.
- I was nearly killed the other day and it made me worry about the future - good so long as you understand all the implications.
- The Bible tells me to - good so long as you really want to follow Jesus. There are many who understand what the Bible says but have no desire to act on it.
- I feel bad about all the things I do wrong and want to be forgiven - good.

As you discuss their suggestions encourage them to understand that the importance of a real desire to follow Jesus on their part is the most important thing.

If you have not had suggestions like these you might like to add them to the list:

- I know God loves me and I want to do it for him.
- I am really glad Jesus died for me because I know I have no hope otherwise.

Follow a similar pattern with the second question. The sort of problem they might suggest could be:

- Am I old enough?
- Do I know enough?
- Am I good enough?

In discussing these questions help them to realise that a certain amount of knowledge is necessary to fully understand what you are doing; age could be critical if someone was not mature enough to live up to following Jesus as they might be when they are older; no-one is good enough - this is the whole point. Get them to write a brief answer to the questions they pose after discussion.

At baptism

Make sure the group know what happens at a Christadelphian baptism. The time that you spend discussing it will depend on your class. If they have questions about why we do things the way we do, use this time to answer them. You may like to ask them questions like this.

After baptism.

Discuss with the class what they think the result of baptism should be. List them and discuss them. Possible answers might be:

- Their sins are forgiven.
- They have now got to try to be like Jesus.
- There is no difference. It's just like going swimming.

Through discussion help them to see that they still have the same nature and will still go on sinning. The difference now is that they now have a new relationship with God and a righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus, Romans 3:21-24.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It can sometimes be a shock after baptism to discover it is just as difficult to be 'good'. This lesson should put that into perspective. Also knowing what is expected of them should help them to know when they should make this most important step of their lives.

PRAYER

Encourage the young people to pray as did the boy's father in Mark 9:23-24, "I do believe, help me to overcome my unbelief".

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

- . It may be helpful if you could arrange a visit to a baptism, even if the young people have attended one previously.
- . The young people could write a letter to a friend explaining why they might wish to be baptised or write an imaginary dialogue between themselves and someone at work or school who might think it a silly idea.

LIVING THE WAY - STRESS AND ANXIETY

30

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to cope with the stresses they find in life, and to learn the relevance of Bible teaching.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

There are many passages in the students' notes.

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Think about your own life, and work through the students' notes with your own experiences in mind. How relevant are they to you? What things have helped you in the past, or caused you difficulties?

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

This is a discussion lesson. It is more important for the young people to talk than to take notes. Depending on your relationship with them you may find helpful the notes on 'Talking with young people' in the Introduction to this book.

Be content for the discussion to wander a bit. It is better to keep it on track by asking questions and apparently casual remarks than by working formally through the list of topics in the students' notes.

Some things to think about:

What are they? Do you think everyone suffers from them? What are typical causes?

Stress and anxiety are caused by situations we can't cope with. They may have a variety of sources:

	<i>To do with you</i>	<i>To do with the outside world and other people.</i>
Physical	an injury or illness ...	poverty, unemployment ...
Psychological	grief, fear of failure, thinking that you are ugly or 'not good enough' ...	arguments, dealing with people we are afraid of or don't like, difficult relationships with people we care about such as members of the family or boy/girl friends ...

It is important to recognise that situations which some people find stressful are no problem to other people. Some people enjoy an argument or thrive when they're overworked. Some are quite happy to sit around and do nothing all day, or don't worry if they don't know where their next meal is coming from.

This means that it is not the situation itself that is stressful, but the way we cope with it. In a sense everything belongs in the 'To do with you' column. That doesn't mean it's your fault, but it's important to recognise that no situation is entirely out of your control.

It's also important to realise that most people suffer from stress. It may be helpful, if you can do so without gossiping, for the young people to think of people they know and to identify things that they worry about. This is a good time to talk about the things you worry about as well as to ask the young people about the things that cause them problems. If they are honest they will probably talk about their relationships with their parents and friends, and it is essential that you should keep what they say to yourself.

How do they make you feel? How do you recognise them in other people?

It is good for us to learn to recognise the symptoms of stress: things like

- tense muscles
- inability to concentrate
- feelings of panic
- over-reacting - being short tempered or bursting into tears, often over trivial things
- rushing about doing unnecessary things
- doing nothing because we are overwhelmed by the amount we have to do
- behaving in a stupid way that we afterwards regret

so that when we find ourselves behaving like that we can stop and think about why.

Similarly, when we see others behaving in these ways, rather than criticising them or looking down on them, we can try to understand the cause and make allowances - or even help!

Often, of course, problems which are apparently medical can be caused by stress, and it is amazing how our health is affected by our frame of mind.

What can you do about them?

There are some useful steps that we can take, which are common sense:

- Make a list of the things you are worrying about. Often when you do this you realise that they are not as serious, or as numerous, as you thought.

- If the problem is overwork, make a list of what you have to do and prioritise it. If it really is too much, decide on some things you're not going to do. If that affects anyone else, go and explain the situation to them.
- If you are feeling tense, do some relaxation or breathing exercises.
- If the problem is to do with a relationship with someone else, and you could talk to them, go and explain the problem in an unemotional way. Explain how you feel about the situation; ask them how they feel; try to discuss a solution.
- If you have a friend you can trust, go and talk to them.

These steps can be important and very valuable, but in the end the most important thing is for us to talk to God. If we can explain our problems to him and trust him to help us, then a lot of the burden of responsibility or guilt can be lifted.

How can you avoid them?

We often cause stressful situations ourselves by the way we behave.

- If we don't pray about decisions, or about our everyday life, we are taking all the burden of responsibility on our own shoulders. That means that if things seem to be 'going wrong', we have only ourselves to blame.
- If we don't think before we act we can often walk into trouble. Anyone who has watched a TV soap opera will realise that nearly every story is based on someone acting stupidly, failing to listen properly to someone else, or getting their basic values wrong. Life can be much simpler if we live it God's way.

So the keys to avoiding stress are things like:

- Praying to God so that we can trust him to take responsibility for our future, and know that he is controlling the present.
- Trying to do things God's way - that means reading his word so that it can guide us.
- Talking, and listening, to other people, so that there are no misunderstandings.
- Trying to think ahead so that we don't walk into trouble.
- Recognising that we are human and have limitations. We can't do everything or be best at everything. We have the looks, abilities, and background that God has given us, and we should not feel ashamed or embarrassed about them.

If we can realise that stress and anxiety come not from the situation we are in but from the way we handle it, we can learn to deal with them and to avoid them.

Can they be good?

Stress can be good if an otherwise lazy person is spurred into action, or if they cause us to recognise a problem that we have been ignoring.

Most often, however, they are destructive and entirely unhelpful.

What can we do to help other people?

If we have learned something about how to deal with our own stresses and worries, then we may be able to start helping others. In the same way as the solutions to our own anxieties lie within ourselves, so do those of other people. So it is no good simply telling them what to do. To help them we have to show them how to help themselves.

What the Bible says:

Tell God

The fact that Paul had learned for himself 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God' explains how he had 'learned to be content whatever the circumstances'.

Recognise that some things are a result of our faith, and view them positively

'Suffering as a Christian' sounds like something we never have to do, certainly when compared with the persecution of the first Century. But if we decide to go to Youth Weekends or Bible Class instead of working all the time, we may get fewer marks in examinations. If that's the case we should be able to accept that we have made a good choice in our lives which we are perfectly entitled to make, and if that costs us a mark or two, well, so what? We have chosen right and should not feel defensive towards anybody. This principle applies all through our lives. If we take decisions prayerfully and with respect to God's will, we should never look back with regret, even though we may superficially seem to be suffering because of what we decided.

Coping with guilt - ours and other people's

This is really just the principle of prayer carried out at the human level. In practice, talking to people face to face without any aggression or defensiveness, but a willingness to listen to their point of view, is amazingly effective in defusing stressful situations.

Trust God about the future; he does understand

This is really the essence of faith. Abraham trusted that God would take him to a better land, would bring him countless offspring, and would fulfil all the other promises. This is a great example for us, and when we manage to do it all our problems fade away. How to get there? - this is why we read the Bible and why we need regularly to pray to God about our everyday lives.

Recognise that God brings difficult times in order to develop our personalities.

The NIV translation of Hebrews 12:7 seems to be accurate, and is very helpful: 'Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons'. If when difficult times come we can remind ourselves that they have been put there by a loving father for our good, even though perhaps we can't understand why, a lot of the hurt can fade away.

Make time to think and meditate

The lesson of the fishermen in John 21 is a very pointed one. Jesus had come into the world as its light. When his disciples slaved away all night they wasted their time and effort. Five minutes guided by Christ was better than many long hours of hard work without him.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

It is important to recognise that we will always have things to worry about. However much we may imagine that our problems are temporary, they will be replaced by others. But if we can learn how to approach today's difficulties we can also learn how to cope with tomorrow's.

PRAYER

Dear Lord God, help us to obey you so that our lives will not be complicated by sin; help us to pray to you so that we can trust you to guide us; help us to share our problems with you, knowing that you want to help us. Amen.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Get the young people to look through the Psalms for one that shows how the writer learned to cope with a stressful situation. Examples are Psalms 3, 4, 7, 13, 23, 34, 51, 52, 54, ...

LIVING THE WAY - LANGUAGE

31

AIM OF LESSON

To help the young people to realise how their language affects God, other people and themselves.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 12:36-37

PREPARATION REQUIRED

This is largely a discussion lesson so read through the notes and the relevant passages and decide for yourself which points are clear, which debatable and what problems or questions you might get from your particular group.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

For each section, get the young people to discuss the questions on the worksheet using the references to guide them. If you want to share the references out it will probably be better to do it within each section rather than getting one group to talk about gossip, one about lies and one about swearing. This way you will get the best input into each section. Encourage the young people to write their own answers after listening to others' points of view.

The sort of points that should be made are:

Gossip.

Gossip is idle talk and your group should decide whether it is possible to have 'good' gossip and 'bad' gossip or whether to call 'good' gossip conversation. In the end they should realise that it can be uplifting to ask after people who are not there, take an interest in each others' welfare,

tell of your own successes and problems but there is a fine line between this and talking in a damaging way especially about people who are not there to defend themselves. Bring out the fact that James includes 'gossip' amongst 'all kinds of wickedness'. He uses strong language to describe the damage that can be done by a misplaced word.

Help the young people to think about:

- how stories can get exaggerated or embroidered
- how we often find it easier to say something nasty about someone than something good
- how we may have felt crushed in the past when things have been said about us
- how, just because something is 'true' we don't have to say it
- how hearing something about someone affects your opinion of them and you can never really forget it

The rules they devise should include something like:

- Only say things that will do good.
- Always bear in mind that people who hear things may not be as fussy about what they pass on as you are.
- James 3:10 says we can use our tongues to say good things and we should make a point of doing this.

Lies.

The Bible is unequivocal about lying but it is probably the thing we most often justify. It seems to be against the Spirit of Jesus to hurt someone by insisting on telling the truth. Are there ways we can avoid it? Help the young people to see that the reason for the lie is the most important aspect. It must always be wrong to tell a lie to help ourselves, protect ourselves or hurt someone else. Being deceitful without actually telling a lie is just as bad.

Swearing.

There are two distinct meanings of swearing these days although obviously they both had the same origin.

- Legal oaths. The students will have seen court room scenes on television and know about taking an oath. They may not know that by law, people are allowed to 'affirm' that they will tell the truth because of what the Bible says.
- Unwholesome language. Swear words have developed from the sort of oath mentioned above therefore originally used God's name. Others are biological in origin. It is difficult to say why some words are worse than others but deep down we know what gives us and others offence and that should be our guide. Telling dirty jokes also comes in this area of discussion. Context and the way in which words are said also make a difference to whether they are offensive or not. For this section it seems to be clear that the rules are, Don't do it.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

If we are trying to be like Jesus - loving and thoughtful, our conversation should always be influenced by our care for those who hear.

PRAYER

Colossians 4:2-6. The young people could write their own prayer using this passage as a guide for what to ask for.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

- . The young people might make a list of their friends or acquaintances and beside each a good quality or achievement. They could then either tell each other or make up their minds to tell someone else about each during the coming week.
- . Matthew 15:11 tells us how what we say shows what we are like inside. The students could discuss how our language can be a form of preaching - showing others what we are really like - and also show us what sort of people we really are.

LIVING THE WAY - FURTHER EDUCATION

32

AIM OF LESSON

To prepare the young people to cope with a new environment and living away from home and to consider whether some subjects are a better choice than others.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 12:1, 11-14; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14

PREPARATION REQUIRED

Read through the notes and decide how you are going to present the lesson depending on the students in your group. Many of these verses from Proverbs apply to life in general and, although it is appropriate to consider these things when maybe the students will be taking full responsibility for their own actions for the first time, you may wish to select a few to give the gist of what they need to think about.

Choice of subject is of course very important but if the students have done lesson 5 they will probably have covered much of this section.

Some of these issues may seem a little alarming and indeed some students may already be apprehensive about striking out on their own. Others may feel they can't wait to be away from the watchful eye of their parents. Be prepared to discuss the issues that are most appropriate to your group.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF LESSON

Coping with a new environment away from home

The whole of the book of Proverbs contains useful guidance for young people on the point of leaving home and there are some good tips at the end of Ecclesiastes too. Solomon makes the point that wisdom and understanding are greatly to be desired (Proverbs 4:7), but that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 1:7), and that self-discipline is a

necessary adjunct (Proverbs 1:2 NIV). Fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7). We are responsible for our actions even when we are children (Proverbs 20:11) and we should serve God while we are young (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Some Do's

- Be eager to learn - Proverbs 18:15
- Think before you act and speak - Proverbs 13:3, 16, 19:2
- Accept correction - Proverbs 17:10
- Control your temper - Proverbs 16:32
- Be moderate in your appetites - Proverbs 25:16
- Exhibit patience and ignore wrong - Proverbs 19:11
- Follow God now - Ecclesiastes 12:1

Some Don'ts

- Don't lie all day in bed! - Proverbs 6:6-11
- Don't waste your time - Proverbs 6:9
- Don't waste your money on drink - Proverbs 23:29-35
- Don't waste your money on immoral women - Proverbs 7:7, 21
- Don't risk your own position by guaranteeing a stranger's debt - Proverbs 22:26
- Don't consort with fools - Proverbs 13:20
- Don't mix with people with violent tempers - Proverbs 22:24; and evil men - Proverbs 4:14
- Don't make yourself ill with study - Ecclesiastes 12:12

Two examples of sons leaving home:

The prodigal son - Luke 15

He exhibits all the bad qualities:

- Lack of patience (not prepared to work for his inheritance)
- squanders his wealth on wild living
- consorts with worthless people

Jesus at the beginning of his ministry - Luke 4

He exhibits total self-discipline:

- the ability to overcome immediate bodily cravings
- the patience to wait for his reward
- the humility not to flaunt his position

Choice of University or College

The young people in your group will probably not realise how difficult it can be to enjoy further education whilst still trying to follow Christian principles. If they can go to a place where there are friends with the same aspirations and perhaps live in a student house with them, they can be saved many agonising decisions and even drastic mistakes. If you are not in a position yourself to explain this you may be able to get other students in your ecclesia to tell them how glad they were that they went somewhere where there were like-minded friends (or sorry that they didn't). They should also be encouraged to choose a university which is near an ecclesia which has other young people or who are sympathetic to students.

Some subjects are a better choice than others?

If we assume that the course of study chosen leads to a directly related occupation, then there are obviously areas to avoid at all cost, and others which are only marginally less

compromising. Be careful not to repeat what was discussed in lesson 5. It may be suitable just to ask whether anyone's choice of career has changed since your previous discussion or whether any further problems have arisen. You may also choose to talk about individual problems with one of the young people on his or her own afterwards. In all our deliberations we should bear in mind the following:

- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." - Romans 12:2
- "Ye cannot serve both God and Money." - Luke 16:13
- "Let us do good to all people." - Galatians 6:10
- "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." - 2 Corinthians 6:14

Whatever we choose to study, our choice should not involve an impossible compromise of our beliefs, our actions, our time and our money, all of which are the Lord's if we seek a treasure in heaven - Galatians 6:7-8.

Subjects to avoid at all costs

- Military and police academies
- Politics (national and local)
- Law

These are professions which govern the world. The tutor may consider the plight of those already in these professions when they come to a knowledge of the truth. Are there any half-way houses, e.g., company secretary, solicitor restricting himself to wills, conveyancing etc. and avoiding litigation? Why should one not be a barrister? (Answer: client's best interests versus the truth.)

Subjects to avoid if possible

- Dramatic Arts
- Theology and Philosophy
- Media Studies
- Corporate Finance and the Stock Exchange

These are professions which are very much yoked to the world: they reflect the world's behaviour, beliefs and aspirations and pose very real problems for the disciple of Christ, who is told "Come out from among them and be separate." - 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Dramatic arts - consider the general falseness of the world of theatrical entertainment, its degenerate standards and the morally indefensible roles which one might be obliged to portray.

Theology and philosophy - why bother to make the world's vain philosophy the subject of three or four years' study.

Media studies - are there areas of journalism (newspaper, film and television) and advertising which it would be better to avoid, and others which are acceptable? What compromises are involved?

Finance - The high-flier could be faced with some very unsavoury situations: Insider information, "bear raids", doctoring of balance sheets, fixing of markets, lending to immoral individuals, companies and countries for very questionable purposes, living in an unreal world of frenetic mega-money transactions.

Better choices of subject

It is easy to identify those subjects which the disciple of Christ should avoid, but less easy to identify which are good. Compromises and problems occur in all walks of life and it depends very much on the individual as to how he or she copes with them. One could consider the following studies as very positive and worthwhile:

- Medicine
- Teaching
- Social Services
- Environmental Studies
- For the scientifically minded, subjects such as Applied Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics which concentrate on the facts of our world rather than man's interpretation.

However, these studies have their practical problems too, e.g., the doctor has to cope with such dilemmas as abortion, eugenics, allocation of scarce financial resources, constant high-level stress and unsociable hours. The teacher may have to cope with violent school children and an intolerable workload which can undermine his health, to such an extent that he is too tired to give of his best in the service of the truth.

General guidelines for a career

Help the young people to fill in this section in their books in the most appropriate way for your particular group. It will probably depend what they are like or what they have discovered new.

RELEVANCE TO OUR LIVES

Decisions made at this time in our young peoples' lives could affect their whole lives and even their salvation. A lot of discussion will take place at school so it is really important that we help the young people to see the situation from a scriptural point of view.

PRAYER

Discuss with the group how important it is to commit issues like this to God at all stages of the decision making process. Get them to write a prayer of their own to suit their particular circumstances.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

Think about:

- Paul - a well-educated man who gave up his career and counted his education as 'rubbish' in order to win Christ. Philippians 3:5-9.
- David - a simple shepherd boy whom God called from his sheep to become the king of a great empire. Think how his training as a shepherd enabled him to be a good king. Psalm 78-70-72.

Sorry, but you've not quite finished! It would be really helpful if you could fill in the comment form on pages 9-10 and send it to the CSSU secretary. You may need to get together with other teachers to work out what you want to say, but please be assured that your comments will be taken seriously and that we will reply to you. We know that you are busy, but around the world many schools are using these notes, and if your comments enable us to help all of them then your time will have been well spent. Thank you very much.

