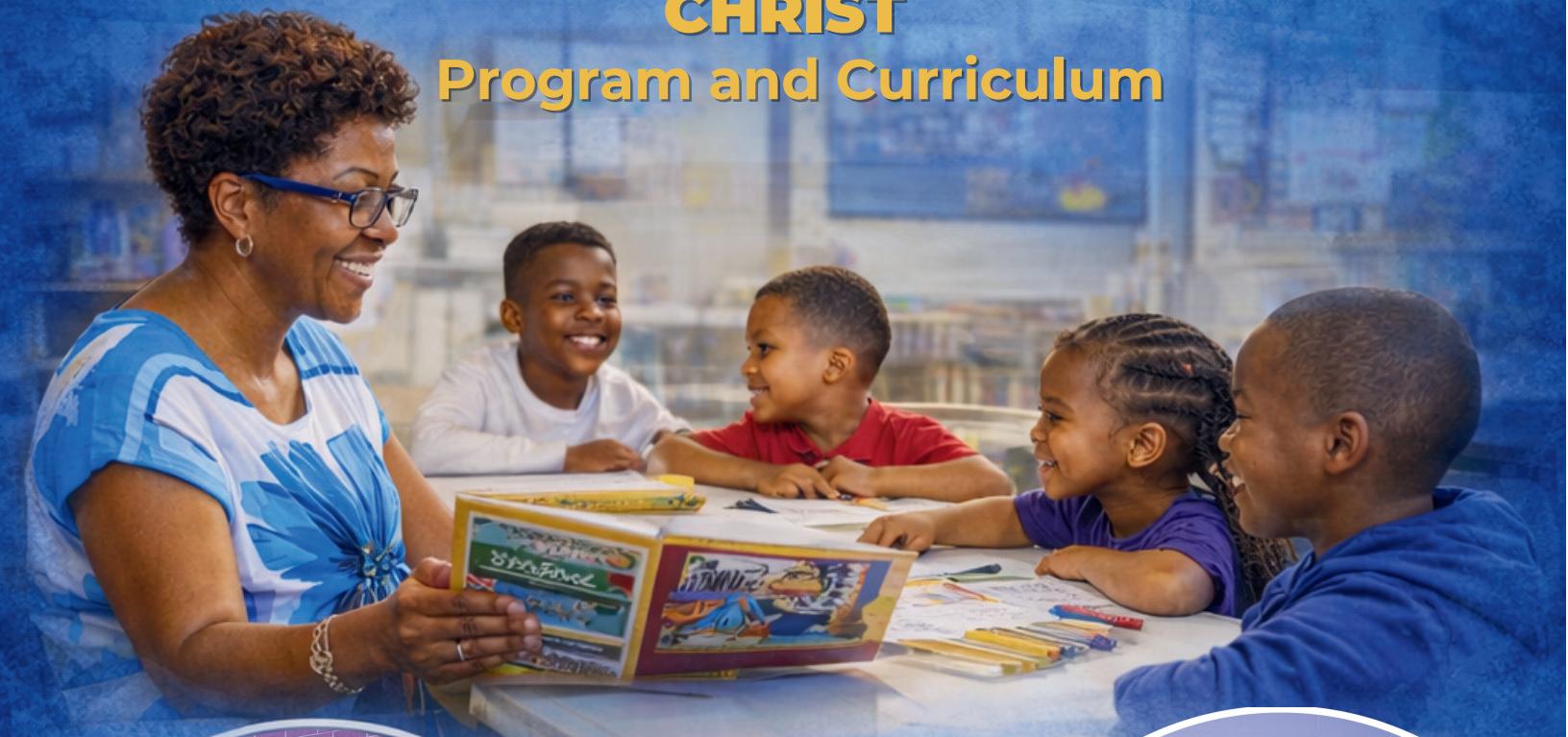


The National Black Church Initiative

NBCI MOVES TO REBUILD, REVITALIZE, AND REIMAGINE SUNDAY SCHOOL TRADITIONS BY BRINGING 6 MILLION CHILDREN BACK TO CHRIST

Program and Curriculum



General Editors
Rev. Anthony Evans
President
and Rev. Dr. Sheldon E. Williams
 www.standingupforchrist.com

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	vi
Preface.....	vii
Introduction	viii
Objectives	x
Chapter one	1
Sunday School Theology.....	1
Chapter 2	8
Christian Denominations and Sunday School	8
Chapter 3	14
Sunday School in North America	14
Chapter Four	19
Sunday School: Functionary of Christian Education Ministry	19
Conclusions	26
Recommendations	28
Addendum	29
Sunday School Lessons – Curriculum.....	29
Bible Study Lessons-MODULE Index.....	31
Addendum II	101
EXTRA LESSONS	101
Bible study lessons—Sunday School curricula MODULES	101
Closing Remarks.....	115
References	116
The Development of the Sunday School, 1780-1905. The official report of the eleventh	118
International Sunday-school Convention, Toronto, Canada, June 23-27, 1905.....	118

Introduction

The critical issue for attempting to fulfill Reverend Evans' appeal was how to approach this subject. This assumes there is a problem with chronic dynamics. It also suggests a solution that involves something relevant, meaningful, and significant in the context of Sunday School Ministry.

Metaphors of “fire” and “heat” help to understand the problem and find a practical solution, as inferred in the term “reigniting.” This term suggests that there were once fire and heat, but over time, these elements extinguished. During my teens, my mother instructed me to tend to our coal stove. She taught me about the importance of the stove for heating our home and keeping us comfortable. She educated me on how to start and maintain the fire. In other words, I was trained to be the minister of a coal stove. This is a way to view the reigniting of Sunday School ministry in many of our Christian church settings.

Theory, by definition, is an explanation of reality. Practice refers to the repeated actions taken to improve one's skill. The praxis, or integration of theory and practice, for this book concerns Christian Church Education in general and Sunday School Ministry in particular. Its objective is to present the historical development and impact of Sunday School, its attrition and widespread dormancy in most Christian churches over the last 40 years, and how it can be reignited or revived so that churches can thrive at the grassroots level.

Format

I have organized this book by beginning with a historical review of who, why, and how Sunday School Ministry started. This review includes the theological ground for Sunday School and the social conditions that influenced its development.

The review is rooted in a positionality perspective, which concerns the mindset of those who pioneered Sunday School ministry from its earliest establishment in England to the present day, including in the United States of America. Such positionality involves reporting on what gave birth to Sunday School within the matrix of its Christian Church parent and social setting.

An organizational component of this book is its educational or curricular content. The content in the last section of this book includes modules that Sunday School planners can use as is or adapt to their local settings. These modules reflect a design that is similar in presentation and utilizes various learning styles—auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile.

This module method highlights the facilitation and benefits of the Church Father Augustine, who asserted that “Repetition is the key to knowledge.” Before discovering Augustine’s quote, I was familiar with the adage, “Repetition deepens the impression.” Thus, the

module design for this book demonstrates standardization and a structured approach to dealing with topics for Sunday School teachers and students.

The basic curriculum comprises twenty-five modules. The first five modules include:

- The Bible
- The doctrine of God
- The doctrine of Christ
- The doctrine of Faith
- Discipleship/stewardship

All twenty-five modules are formatted similarly, listing a specific topic for study. Each module begins with an introductory commentary on the topic, followed by factual/false statements, multiple-choice questions, and, finally, open-ended questions that prompt the student to express their thoughts or feelings about the topic.

Learning experts assert that humankind learns in diverse ways, through visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic styles. In practice, one of these styles might dominate, but we all possess a small amount of each, depending on which one the student was nurtured in and feels most comfortable with. This helps explain why I decided to include these learning styles in each module. The final module section (Extra Lessons) climaxes with five additional topics for inclusion in a Sunday school curriculum.

This book is the culmination of a response to an appeal, presenting my conclusions about Sunday School ministry based on my research findings. I also share a few recommendations for making Sunday School great again. I intend for this book to motivate its readers to reflect on Sunday School as a historical phenomenon in the history of the Christian Church, and as a meaningful way to reignite the vision, mission, and objectives of the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Objectives

This tome has several learning objectives for its reader/ student. Information is beneficial when it is useful; otherwise, it is simply speculative reasoning that does not help the speculator accomplish what he or she is thinking of.

The purpose or objective of this book is to help Christian church gatekeepers acknowledge a ministry condition that, historically speaking, has been impactful but has lost its meaning due to neglect and lethargy. The author has drafted his research and included conclusions and recommendations that can reignite this Christian Education ministry gem as significant and beneficial to contemporary Christian congregational ministry, educating and empowering believers to know and fulfill the Great Commission for Kingdom building.

The following objectives will be attained if the book is systematically embraced and completed:

1. You will learn the historical roots of Sunday School ministry, from its birthplace in England to its application the early days of Colonial America and into the nation's westward expansion.
2. You will sample the widespread practice of various Christian denominations that gives credibility and a diverse flavor to this essential ministry
3. You will read about the basic factors for making Sunday School ministry a reality today (i.e., the pastoral, educationally gifted, and administrative stakeholders).
4. You will learn of the importance of respecting student learning styles.
5. You will acquire an archive of lessons for application or a template for developing additional topics (i.e., The Gospel basics, #1-7; General topics concerning congregational life and interest).
6. You will have a reference source for gleaning foundational, operational, and functional factors for reigniting a relevant Sunday School ministry.

This book serves as a guide to the information and implementation of its insights for anyone who studies to show himself or herself the how-tos for reigniting Sunday School ministry here and now, wherever you do ministry to God's glory, to hear Him say, "Well done!"

Chapter one

Sunday School Theology

Sunday School theology should be rooted in the principle of *sola scriptura*, which means reading the scriptures [Bible] as the basis for formulating church rules and practice. This section aims to provide a theological foundation for church ministry, in general, and Sunday School ministry, in particular.

Theology is the science or knowledge of God as found within the biblical canon. Practitioners and pundits of theology produce their discourse based on their study of the word of God. The early church is described by Luke's sequel, Acts, which mentions several instances of the apostles and believers developing what might be labeled a template for church ministry and its eventual auxiliary, Sunday School ministry.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42).

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).

The ethic of *sola scriptura* has been the foundation for the vision of emulating the early church adherents who sought to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission. It has also weathered debates concerning Bible translations and versions, while establishing a baseline for credible scriptural interpretation.

Philip Carey asserts that the essential question driving the observations in Acts concerning the development of church ministry is the query, "What shall be taught?" I agree with Carey's analysis and conclusion because his query reflects the pursuit of the academy and its participating or contributing pundits, who describe, debate, and disseminate theological discussions. Such discussion is a matter of exploration, discovery, and tentative certainty. Sound academic discovery is the best practice and product of hermeneutics, or proper methods and principles for interpreting scripture. It also encompasses homiletics, the art and craftsmanship of organizing and presenting scriptural findings, and apologetics, the rational determination of theological truth or what should be agreed upon as truth.

Since ancient times, knowledge has been the object of interest for both teachers and students. Regardless of how one believes humankind originated, its existential ontology has consistently exhibited a quest for knowledge. This can be observed in the histories and writings of sages, rabbis, masters, and teachers, such as Origen, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. Much of their insight has been transmitted orally, later archived in books. The reader should notice that the scriptures have followed a similar path.

Egypt was the first civilization for which there are oral traditions and written records on medicine, agricultural measurements, mathematical and construction phenomena, and education. It was not until Gutenberg that the advent of writing and reading accelerated, globalizing communication and making ministry renewal a reality. James W. Alexander, Sunday School theorist, asserts, “Lips of the wise disperse knowledge” (1856). Congruent with this reasoning is the biblical passage found in James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraided not; and it shall be given him.” These research observations offer insight into the provision of knowledge and wisdom for reigniting Sunday School ministry.

The Christian faith is a structured and organized system of religious beliefs. The following are the essential disciplines for establishing a sound theology for the Christian church's education activities, especially its Sunday School ministry.

- Theology--the study or science of God.
- Christology--the study or science of the Messiah.
- Soteriology--the study or science of salvation.
- Ecclesiology--the study or science of the church.
- Missiology--the study or science of missions.
- Praxis--the integration of theological theory and its practice or application.

Theology can yield wisdom that has contributed to the Christian church's development and evolution. Such a study can be described as a heterogeneous praxis of diverse actors and pundits seeking to understand the meaning and mission embedded in the Bible's canon. It was out of such understanding that biblical and theological students sought to establish meaningful and significant Christian church ministries. Historical records indicate that they established liturgies grounded in theological discourse. Those who have researched these areas of interest might conclude that their journey began in chaos, which evolved into an organized call and dedication of laypersons, who produced Christian Education and eventually Sunday School ministries.

Examples of tension and struggle in this field of study include the controversies that the church councils, attended by priests, prelates, bishops, and popes, sought to address regarding people's beliefs and their subsequent behavior. A few of the issues they debated included Jesus' identity, the doctrine of the Trinity, Mariology, the nature of church sacraments, church polity, and many other creedal or doctrinal statements. Christian church historians describe an aspect of these church controversies that yielded the Scholastic era, when the clerical leadership assumed the role of guardians of wisdom. “This era is credited with producing Oxford University (1096 C.E.), as well as the “Father of modern theology,” Peter Abelard (1017 – 1142 CE), and many years later (1225–1274 CE), Thomas Aquinas, called by many, the “Father of contemporary

theology.” Abelard and Aquinas, as well as other entities, spoke to the vision of guarding wisdom and guiding the church in its application of theology.

This section provides a brief overview of the salient theological foundations that underpin the Christian church’s development, offering a glimpse into its past. This highlights and underscores the assertion that “Religious education is a function of the church” (Alexander, 1856) and therefore receives its endorsement from practitioners of theology seeking to discover, design, and deploy biblical data to help the church fulfill its vision, mission, and objectives.

Social conditions

Social conditions are ever-present wherever human beings exist. The concept of social refers to the presence of multiple individuals interacting within or amid family, tribe, clan, or local group dynamics. This means that the interactions of independent, yet interdependent individuals yield organic social conditions. Over time, these actors come together in collective projects and processes. The Bible offers an example that supports this reasoning by describing a moral saturation point that led God to judge a wicked generation with a flood (Genesis 6). This phenomenon was repeated when the Tower of Babel generation and the leaders of humankind failed to learn from the flood’s experience (Genesis 11). Both case studies highlight a problem in which humankind has become disconnected from its Creator and has adopted a lifestyle devoid of the Creator’s values and principles. This reasoning addresses the same issue that has plagued the church throughout its development and has been a significant factor in the societal and church-community conditions this book seeks to address.

Problem-solving is a rational process for improving an unpleasant situation. The issue of decreased impact in Sunday School ministry is a significant concern that this book addresses. Its approach involves analyzing the aggregate history of the Christian church’s educational ministry and its subsequent decline. The lack of Sunday Schools operating effectively in congregational settings today has been a negative factor in the overall quality of Christian church educational ministry. Thus, the goal of problem-solving in this vein is to reveal the breadth and depth of the problem, provide education for resolving the problem, and thereby highlight the benefits of Sunday School ministry by offering suggestions for renewing and reigniting it.

The analysis of the current Sunday School ministry problem stems from dissatisfaction among church leaders and stakeholders who have observed the chronic and persistent nature of current ministry conditions. According to Guy Kendall, *Robert Raikes: A Critical Study*, awareness of the social situation motivated Raikes to pioneer Sunday School ministry – “misuse of Sunday was the impetus in his reasoning” (Swanson, 2013)- that led him to launch his innovative Christian Education ministry.

The Industrial Revolution of the latter 18th century England, that spread throughout Europe and to America, created social, economic, and moral conditions that Christian-minded persons like Raikes and many others drew from, and divine providence inspired ideations in designing a solution to the collateral damage from poor social and religious conditions– the

Sunday School ministry. Their responses and passion can be interpreted as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy – “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and from, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4). Raikes and several others were pioneering voices and pundits that produced Bible-based solutions to social conditions for uplifting their audience. This is the essence and spirit of education that sponsored Sunday School ministry, which endeavored to deliver church-sponsored education to the social context of a local congregation, alerting them to the idea that “Schools and books go together” (Alexander, 1856).

Raikes and his Sunday School pioneering peers understood that schools and books comprise topics and subjects produced by diverse authors for a multiplicity of readers. They recognized that the Bible was no different, serving as a source for rules and behavior. Schools and books have been the vision and objective of those who write and print, especially since Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press (1440 CE), Mainz, Germany. Gutenberg’s technological invention helped books become magic carpets that compiled words, phrases, and linguistic narratives, sharing pictures of life, past and present, and the future.

For those in the educational field and affiliated with Christian church ministries, books and schools encourage educational gatekeepers to address social conditions through Sunday School, with the church becoming a schoolhouse and the Bible as its primary reference. This reasoning is consistent with the testimony of the biblical scholar and poet C. John Collins, who stated, “Book, but that is the best, the bible” (Alexander, 1856).

The history of Sunday School in the USA concerns its indebtedness to the actors and voices of the 19th-century reformers, especially those of the 1840s, who experienced the Second Great Awakening. Many of these actors had a Puritan background (Gershon, 2018). Having immigrated from England’s social, economic, religious, and political conditions, these actors responded to the new world conditions of children living amid increasing immorality. They attempted to improve these conditions through church and community involvement, as well as by augmenting family stewardship. Their pioneering efforts evolved into Sunday School, which focused on solving many of these conditions by assisting students with reading and learning Christian doctrine.

Robert Raikes

The Sunday School phenomenon’s beginning is attributed to the efforts of Robert Raikes (1790), an Anglican layperson. With a sense of philanthropy and evangelism, Raikes began his Sunday School venture by teaching children. The adage “Necessity is the mother of invention” speaks to the social conditions Raikes and others faced. One of the others was Reverend Thomas Stack (Towns, 2013), who joined the Sunday School movement and is credited with helping to launch this 18th-century phenomenon..

Raikes is affectionately labelled the “Father of Sunday School.” This printer and editor of the Gloucester Journal, West England, was a visionary and his efforts were his response to the moral conditions of the poor and working class. His practical understanding led him to fulfill his vision by starting with children (Sunday School Report, 1905). Biographer Thomas B. Water suggests that Raikes is rightfully the starting point for what was eventually “raised to a universal system” (Walters, 1930) within the Christian church community. Like Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote his poignant and epic letter from the Birmingham, Alabama jail, as an apologetic response to pastors who opposed his civil rights methods, Robert Raikes experienced some resistance. The remainder of this book is a testament to how Raikes and other pioneering stakeholders did not allow opposition to hinder their efforts to help and improve the social and moral conditions of their day.

Raikes used his journalistic and printing skills to publish a newspaper (1783), promoting his Sunday School idea. In doing so, he discovered that it was an idea whose time had come, grounded in the spirit of advocacy and philanthropy. This early Sunday School pioneer prioritized being his brother’s keeper rather than his brother’s killer. Thus, the spirit of the Apostolic Church’s founders inspired Raikes to launch the Sunday School movement almost seventeen hundred years after the first disciples of “The Way.”

Church Sunday School Development

As the early church pioneers began to embrace the interim period of occupying until Jesus returned, the church organization evolved as leaders and local church members sought ways to fulfill the Lord’s commission.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The phenomenon of Sunday School has roots in the progressive efforts of organic church development. As the church attempted to serve its constituents and attract its surrounding society, its catholicity was demonstrated beyond its Middle Eastern trappings. Its early concern for conformity to its Jewish roots generated what church historians call the era of “educationalism,” and the manifestation of seminaries for coordinated training. The post-apostolic and episcopal era (third to the fifth century CE) saw the church seeking to make its theology and liturgies systematic, consistent, and meaningful.

The transition from the Greek Empire to the Roman Empire did not eliminate Hellenistic thinking. The Egyptian city of Alexandria, conquered by Alexander the Great and put under the dynastic rule of his General, Ptolemy, was the intellectual capital of the Roman world (185-254

CE). Its influence is evident in the numerous bishops and prominent voices present at the seven church councils mentioned above.

The intelligentsia and Roman politicians contributed to the church's development, especially during the monastic era (3rd century CE), when monasteries trained priests by assigning them a division of labor and a specific job description, which eventually gave rise to cathedral schools (10th century CE). By the 13th century, the era of scholasticism had emerged as the church sought to promote itself as the "guardians of wisdom." Although separated by time and space, many church historians asserted that an aggregate analysis might see the "Father of modern theology," Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142 CE), and later, the "Father of contemporary theology," Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 CE) as generative pundits of these eras and who helped set the stage for Sunday School ministry.

The pursuit of conformity and societal conversions became the missiological objective of local, regional, and church interests. By the 16th century, the spirit of what would give rise to the manifestation of Sunday School can be noticed in the comment of Archbishop Charles Borromeo, who focused on his Italian parish, while providing a platform for Raikes and others, who came after him when he stated the purpose of ministry is "to teach Italian children the faith" (Orchard & Briggs, 2007).

These years of church development had a residual impact. The church gatekeepers and stakeholders felt that it was essential to develop and implement plans to have a well-trained clergy. The irony is that this effort laid the groundwork for what would become Protestantism. Its impact is observed in the establishment of Harvard (1636) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and later in Bible colleges that focused on leadership training. Examples of the latter are H. G. Guinness (1835 – 1910), Charles Spurgeon (1834- 1892), both of England, and the Moody Bible Institute (1896) in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

The Bible College generation focused on intra-church education by offering Bible-based instruction for laypersons. This ecclesiological phenomenon originated in England but was established in the United States by the descendants of Sunday School teachers, primarily those of 19th-century evangelical background. Prior to the Moody Institute, the Missionary Institute of Nyack, New York (1822), the efforts of Raikes and many others provided significant impetus to church ministry through its Sunday School auxiliary.

An unabridged history of Sunday School includes mentions of others around the same time as Robert Raikes, who contributed to the establishment, development, and impact of the Sunday School ministry. Historical records show that Raikes did not initiate this movement alone. Several women in the Gloucester, England, area (Cliff, 1986) were tasked with making Raikes' efforts feasible and sustainable. The word is that he remunerated them with a nominal amount. One of these women was Hannah Ball, of High Wycombe, and another Raikes supporter was Reverend J. M. Mumford, of Nalsworth (Richardson, 2023). Together, they launched activities to bring Bible-based education to poor and needy children, which would later evolve into Sunday School.

During my research, I learned that as early as 1701, the foundation for Sunday School ministry was laid by individuals such as William Fox, a Baptist Deacon and merchant from London, England (Keller, 1987). Like many others driven by a religious and moral focus on themselves and their fellow humans, Fox and others formed societies to propagate the gospel, with its practical applications in religious education (Birchette, 1989). Such documented history provides a broad basis for understanding the multidimensional actors that gave birth to and helped initiate Sunday School as a meaningful and significant Christian church ministry. My

research also discovered the example of St. Mary's parish church in Nottingham, England, which pioneered in Sunday School educational ministry (Spencer, 2021). All the above helped motivate others to accept the call to servant leadership as Christian church educators of biblical values and principles. Thus, Sunday School ministry was their means of serving humankind in England and the New World, including Black people and Indigenous peoples.

Chapter 2

Christian Denominations and Sunday School

This chapter focuses on the respective denominations that played a role in establishing Sunday School ministry. I suggest you read it as a heterogeneous chronicle of how and why the major USA Christian denominations became involved in the Sunday School movement, as well as their roles in the continuum of this ministry within the operations and ministerial life of their denominations and the broader Christian church community.

Methodist

The spirit of religious education was integral to Methodism from its inception. As the “offspring” of the Wesleyan Church of England, Bible study and prayer were primary practices of its leadership and constituents. Its founders, John and Charles Wesley, made religious instruction a primary pastoral duty (Wardle, 2010). This approach produced the talking points and policy that helped Methodist pundits in the pioneering era of Sunday School ministry—“Let Sunday School be established as far as possible in all times” (Minutes, 2017), was the Methodist mantra.

This mindset spread to Wales, Scotland, and eventually America (Swanson, 2013). Methodists were serious in their formation of Sunday School societies, organizationally speaking (Wardle, 2010), since both oral and recorded history reveal that Methodist pundits, such as Sophia Cook, wife of Reverend Samuel, suggested the Sunday School idea to Robert Raikes (Methodist Magazine, 1835). The importance and seriousness of Sunday School to Methodism is evident in their official actions, which were grounded in legislative (1805) and ethical (1823) practices that made Sunday School valuable and recognized its connections within the larger church operations. As an introductory church movement, committees were established to focus on religious education, developing Sunday School outlines, defining ministry roles, and offering recommendations for best practices (Wardle, 2010).

Testimonies from Methodist actors helped to spur the church administrators to recognize and reward the impact of Sunday School ministry. Some of the testimonies comprised the following:

- “The children come on Sunday with great regularity” (Jones, 2013)
- “The children were glad to escape [social conditions], for a school of order and education” (Kendall, 1939)

With these reports in mind and many other similar testimonies, Methodism, through its General Conference (1844–1868), officially endorsed Sunday School ministry. Such legislative valorization moved Sunday School from the church's outskirts and brought it “more closely in alignment with the church’s regular ministry operations” (Sixth Annual Report, 1864). Thus, Methodism, before other denominations, developed Sunday School as a standardized system. Its “Berean Series” is an excellent example of this. Another example is Reverend Daniel Parrish, D.D., who used his editorial skills to produce books and publications that fostered the success of Sunday School within the Methodist denomination and in the interest of its surrounding communities.

AME, AMEZ, and CME

These three Christian denominations are derived from the Methodist Church in the United States of America. Because of racism, they developed as reactions to their “Mother Church’s” de facto and tacit support of Jim Crowism. Each maintains Methodist theology and liturgy while expressing a distinctly Black version thereof.

Richard Allen is credited with founding the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church after he and his followers were barred from participating in public worship at the St. George’s Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Allen’s “Mother Bethel” was formed (1794) from this split because of racially motivated exclusion. This social dysfunction did not prevent Allen and his followers from maintaining Methodism’s commitment to the learning experience, which AMEs thought was crucial.

After its founding, Charles Smith played a key role in establishing the Sunday School Union in 1882. However, its church historians report that the work of William Elliott (1785), over one hundred years earlier, should be considered the “First Sunday School in America” (Payne, 1891). Elliott’s efforts focused on his children and neighboring others, all of whom were slaves. According to these historical reports, this foundation was laid by Charles Smith, who wisely developed a curriculum that utilized materials published by the Methodist Sunday School Union, which operated between 1827 and 1840.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) denomination was founded after the AME church in New York. Its accredited founder was James Varick (1796), along with key figures such as Abraham Thompson and William Miller (Shockley, 1985). Its early leaders were driven by the same Methodist commitment to education, while sharing Allen’s and his AME followers’ burden for Black constituents facing racial disparities.

As early as 1821, pro-Sunday School lectures were reported to be frequent within this new denomination. These lectures formed a continuum of discussions that led to the establishment of its Christian Education Department the same year. Its vision focused on educating Black people and helping them attain freedom in a land where they could pursue life, liberty, and happiness.

The Christian “Colored” Methodist Episcopal (CME) denomination was founded in 1870 by former enslaved African Americans who were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, due to racial discrimination within the parent church (Swanson, 2006). It has remained active since its beginning (White, 1948). Like its AME and AMEZ forerunners, CME leadership adopted United Methodist materials. Its Sunday School activities had a pre-organizational phase, until they formalized it and established a best practice approach they felt was utilitarian.

The CME’s first official department for Religious Education was established in 1918, followed by the General Board of Religious Education (1934), and then the General Board of

Christian Education, which replaced its predecessor (1950). The Methodist vision for Bible-based education has driven this organizational evolution, while maintaining its focus on providing a steppingstone for its Black constituents in a world (the USA) that needed reform, offering social and economic empowerment. CMEs sought to fulfill these essentials through education grounded in a Christian worldview for Black people.

Anglican / Episcopal

The Anglican Church was established by Henry VIII (1534 CE). England had been Catholic, but Henry wanted a male heir. His efforts to have his marriage annulled with the church's endorsement failed. After a long and tedious struggle, the Church of England [Anglican], with Henry as its head, was founded. Despite his subsequent marriages, he never produced a male heir to succeed him. From the time his daughter, Mary, became queen and attempted to return England to Catholicism, England never regained its prior status. Instead, it embraced Protestantism through the Anglican Church. Ironically, it was his daughter, Elizabeth I, who gave the Church of England its formal foundation when Parliament sanctioned the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1571).

A brief, salient summary of Anglican Church history and its Episcopalian derivative in the USA provides a broader perspective and a comprehensive listing within the category of Christian denominations in the USA. It was from its Anglican church parent that Wesleyan Methodism evolved, with each manifestation emphasizing the importance of education for meaningful Christian ministry.

Some of the significant waymarks that reinforce the Anglican / Episcopal role in Sunday School ministry development are as follows:

- 1790, James Milner and Jackson Kemper, United Parish of Christ Church, and St Peter's, respectfully, are Philadelphia examples of pro Sunday School Pundits.
- 1826, establishment of its General Protestant Sunday School Union.
- In 1946, the General Convention Department of Christian Education, whose purpose was to produce a curriculum for faith development of Episcopalian constituents (Sunday School—The Episcopal Church website)

Presbyterian

This section offers insight into how the Presbyterian denomination has fostered Christian Church Education in general and Sunday School ministry in particular. The Presbyterian Church has its roots in Scotland, which played a significant role in the development of the British Empire, and later became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, comprising England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Philosopher H. H. Titus asserts, "Knowledge of the past is crucial since he who neglects the past is likely to repeat the mistakes of the past and forget that the present grew out of the past."

The earliest record of Presbyterians and Sunday School in the USA dates to 1747, in Virginia, when John Todd and Samuel Davis worked in the interest of religious education (Birchette, 1989). Another early pioneer was Katie [Kathy] Ferguson (1793), who worked

similarly to Todd and Davies. She was the daughter of a slave, who demonstrated her sympathy for desolate children by developing a welfare ministry for them along with an adult education ministry (Oneal, 2022). Meanwhile, in New York, as a member of the Second Presbyterian Church, guided by the spirit of Jesus Christ, who loved children (Walz, 1947) and almost a hundred years after “Kathy,” Major Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, a teacher and member of the Lexington, Kentucky Presbyterian Church, gave additional impetus to Christian church education with his unique Sunday School ministry approach.

The dates listed do not contradict the recorded history of Raikes and the denominations already mentioned, but rather highlight the diverse ways this movement was chronicled, which was more serendipitous than an organized, rational system of Christian ministry. Considering these observations, I am confident that many others contributed to the Sunday School Ministry’s success during its developmental years in various locations. I reference Jackson because of his Civil War context and the ever-present problem in America of the “Color line.” Jackson shared the same vision of promoting the gospel through a coordinated educational ministry as the sundry pioneers mentioned previously. On Sunday afternoons, for slaves and freed men, his approach to Christian education included Bible readings, singing, prayer seasons, and catechism instruction (Robertson, 2019). His example concludes this section’s reporting of the salient activities and actors of the Presbyterian input to the efforts of those who established Sunday School as a significant Christian Church ministry in England and eventually in the emerging USA.

Lutheran

I included the Lutheran denomination’s input because its founder, Martin Luther, is considered the initiator of the Protestant Reformation. It was the efforts of Protestant Christians that led to the establishment and development of this impactful ministry, which educated the lay members of their respective constituencies to instill basic Bible knowledge in the minds of their former Catholic priests, who had neglected or refused to do so.

Lutherans exhibited the same spirit of learning as Luther, a professor in Wittenberg (1512-1521). This central Reformation figure demonstrated a keen aptitude for learning Bible truth. This attitude motivated him to post his famous “95 Theses” in response to what he had discovered and felt the Catholic church did not teach, promote, or practice. For him and the Lutheran leadership, study and learning were crucial. Its American version invested in a Sunday School ministry structure by developing age-appropriate materials. By 1899, Lutherans had established a major Christian education publishing house, Concordia, in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1869 (Sunday School: Making Disciples).

Baptist

This branch of the Christian church originated in England after Henry VIII’s civic and religious controversy, which led to the founding of the Anglican Church, also known as the Church of England. Baptists consider themselves part of several reform efforts within the Anglican tradition, focusing on the theology, liturgy, and political and bureaucratic underpinnings they believed needed to be in harmony with the New Testament model of

ecclesiology. Unlike the Methodist or Episcopalian reformers, whose polity emulated Catholic episcopacy or Presbyterian governance, Baptists promoted a congregational polity. Each congregation was tasked with determining its vision, mission, and ministry or operational objectives.

During the colonial era of the United States, Baptists gained prominence with the arrival of the Puritans in New England. They experienced internal struggles during the early years before the English colonies revolted against English monarchial abuse by helping establish a nation independent of British taxation without representation or religious intolerance. They endured struggles concerning church attendance, the notion of church and state, and the participation of indigenous people as full citizens of their religious communities. Roger Williams is an example of the conflicts that developed among them and a solution to their dogmatism, as characterized by Williams' separation and the creation of a geographical space dedicated to religious liberty.

Less than 90 years after the end of the war with England, the Civil War was fought over freedom for White men and women, as well as how Black people and indigenous people fit into the day-to-day journey for survival within the borders of the USA. The Civil War had a profound moral and spiritual impact. The same tone and impact prompted Reverend Anthony Evans and the National Black Church Initiative to contract me to author this book. This has been the heartbeat that has driven the social, economic, and political experiment known as the USA. The French sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville described America as a religious people during his research (May 1831-February 1832). This religious spirit can be observed in several Baptist denominations that took sides in the Civil War and contributed to the development of Christian Education and Sunday School ministry.

Southern Baptists are the primary version of the Baptist denomination that, despite its congregational independence, supported the South and was pro-slavery. Southern Baptists, like many of their Southern peers, promoted Christian education ministry as vital for teaching God's word and encouraging spiritual growth.

Black people reacted to southern Jim Crow by forming their own religious fellowships. Like Roger Williams and others who pursued an independent path of inclusivity, Black Baptists sought freedom of expression without the unnatural restrictions of racism. Newton, Rhode Island, 1797, Pawtucket (Tyms, 1979) is an example of Black people in the throes of southern religious and social bigotry, embracing Baptist theology, and deciding to separate from their White religious ancestors. Silver Bluff, Beach Island, South Carolina, is "The first noted" (Swanson, 2013) Baptist congregation (1773-78) in the USA. First African is recognized by many as the "First Colored church," Savannah, Georgia (1788). Both gave rise to the first Negro Sunday School in 1826. Thus, from England to the Colonial days of the USA, through social conflict and beyond, Baptist churches established and adapted a form of Sunday School ministry rooted in a vision of Christian education meaningful to them in their time.

As the USA's social life developed, its religious spirit also expressed ideas and practices for the progress and improvement of its citizens. Baptists, particularly Black post-Civil War adherents, formed institutions while adhering to the ethic of "If it is not broke, do not fix it." This was the case for the National Baptist Convention (1880), which established its Sunday School Publishing Board in September 1915. While the nation was considering "Exceptionalism" and whether to enter World War I, Black Baptists applied their understanding of the Great Commission to interpret educational and church-related ministry materials (Tyms).

Wherever people reside and interact, conflict eventually arises. This was true among Black Baptists. After forming their own Baptist churches independent of the Southern Baptist Convention, African Americans established the National Baptist Convention (NBC) in 1895. However, a rift over a mission issue led to the formation of the National Baptist Convention, USA (NBC, USA) in 1897. A second split, concerning publishing operations in 1915, occurred while the Sunday School ministry continued to have a significant impact.

The history of the Black Baptist response to social and religious issues is observed in the formation of the last major denomination, the Progressive Baptist Convention (1961, Cincinnati, Ohio). Many of its organizers had been in affiliation with either NBC or NBC USA. My understanding is that they felt compelled to form a new convention focused on the burden of addressing the ongoing oppression of social and religious practices in America, such as Brown versus Board of Education (Topeka, KS, 1954); Civil and Voting Rights Acts (1964 and 1965, respectively); economic and job discrimination; and other matters. They recognized that society needed a reemphasis on biblical justice grounded in New Testament Christology. The Progressive Convention has never professed perfection in ministry but unequivocally confessed and attempted to demonstrate itself as a work in progress, including its Sunday school and Christian Education ministries.

Chapter 3

Sunday School in North America

According to the first two chapters of this book, Sunday School has its roots in England, with Robert Raikes and many others. These findings are based on oral reports and recorded history. This section addresses the reality of Sunday School development and the need for re-igniting Sunday School ministry within the American Christian church context. Dr Clay Trimble, Philadelphia, Minnesota, stated in 1848, “America has been saved for Christianity and the religion of the Bible by its Sunday School ministry” (Kendall, 1939). I agree with Trimble’s conclusion, but not its initial premise, due to America’s (USA) malpractice of slavery, Jim Crow, and other social, economic, and political factors that influenced structural *de jure* and *de facto* hindrances toward indigenous and Black peoples.

Despite the serious social and religious flaws of America’s social experiment, Sunday School has had a meaningful impact on the lives of many since America’s early days, through the tragedy of the Civil War era, the partiality and disparity of America’s Reconstruction period, amid two world wars, and their collateral and residual damage to the social, economic, political, religious, and moral fabric of society and noticeably in its collateral and residual effects into the 1980s.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, “Sunday School and Denominations,” Methodism played a leading role in establishing and developing Sunday School ministry. Its missionary-mindedness can be observed as American expansion confronted ambitious parishioners, as well as indigenous peoples and other people of color. Sunday School became a movement that grew in its organizational development and was given impetus by its officialization through the Methodist Sunday School Union (1827). Its initial action provided a template for future Sunday School activities that was grounded in centralization, endorsement, and logistical documentation (Christian Advocate).

Methodism’s approach was spurred on by its circuit riders and participation in the westward push of Americans seeking land and opportunity to survive. Much is owed to Methodism for its missionary spirit, which produced training and a praxis focused on Christian education. The testimonies of the significance and impact of these efforts are memorialized by the Methodist Biblical Museum, Climbs, Ohio (1869), which also housed a library cataloging pictures, representations (Sunday School: Making Disciples), and other publications that report the historical development and legacy of Sunday School ministry among Methodists and society.

The work of John Wesley as a missionary to indigenous people in Georgia (1736) provided a substantive resource to the Methodist approach. A few years earlier, William Elliott, a Methodist convert (1724) and English immigrant, used a similar approach by starting a Sunday School in his home, at first for White boys and girls, neighbors, and later (1785) Negroes and

servants (Wardle, 2010). The evidence that this was a Methodist “way of doing things” is observed in Elliot’s efforts in Oak Grove, Virginia (Towns, 2013). Regardless of denomination, Sunday Schools spread from Virginia to South Carolina, Maryland, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, the Mississippi Valley, and the Midwest.

As Sunday School spread, it evolved into a movement as times changed, and people responded to social conditions by creating and addressing social tensions and issues as best as they knew how at the time. There is evidence that some were productive in their dealings. Catherine Ferguson is a prime example of these changing times, as she is the first African American to be admitted to her White congregation (Scotch Presbyterian, 1814). Historical records state that she was born into slavery and, around the age of fourteen, became the church’s first congregant of color. Researchers report that she gathered children at her home and taught a form of Christian education that used the catechism and memorization to instruct her students. The same research reports that she was self-supported, confirming that many Sunday School pioneers had a can-do rather than a can-not-do mindset as church leaders and laypersons attempted to address changing times. This can-do attitude, for many Sunday School ministers, is further observed and confirmed by Baptist input that emphasizes a practical approach to lay initiative, necessitating schools to fulfill their practical and evangelistic responsibilities.

The vision of Social Gospel pundits must be included before this section closes. The influence of this era and its promoters should not be overlooked. An analysis of the salient aspects of this movement, spanning the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, from the 1870s to the 1920s, reveals that this progressive era in American Christian Church history was a religious social reform movement—primarily Protestant actors seeking to apply Christian ethics to social problems. Like Raikes and others already mentioned, a part of their solution was the establishment of religious education sites. These pundits did not let their denominational affiliations hinder them; for practical purposes, these Christian church members attempted to address the issues negatively affecting the community at large. The mindset of these practitioners of the Social Gospel discourse was a sense of responsibility or obligation to minister in helpful and relevant ways. Thus, Christian Education and Sunday School ministry were a part of their response to the needs of people pursuing life, liberty, and happiness in their current circumstances.

The Black Perspectives

This section is essential because it recognizes the social reality of the Black experience within the matrix of American religious life. It also sets the stage for addressing the sponsor’s interest and vision for this writing, the National Black Church Initiative. The words of the late poet laureate, Maya Angelou, “You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lies, you may tread me in the very dirt, but still, like dust, I will rise.” The essence of this first verse of Angelou’s poem is attached to the resilience of Black and non-white others in an America that espoused, “In God we trust,” while practicing inhumanity, from the White House to the lowest domiciles of the Deep South and Jim Crow Midwest.

Black history is an evolving field of study that centers on the trials and triumphs of people who embraced the Christian church message and developed corresponding religious institutions. An attempt to discover this history should begin with the African roots of the Black religious experience. Such an attempt will yield awareness of Black religious pursuits, or

spiritual quests, which have their origin in the Nile River Valley, or Nubian Corridor, with an ancient chronology dating back to approximately 180,000 BCE (Sandidge, 2022).

It is more than a misnomer, and in the realm of disinformation, to refer to Africa as the “Land of heathen idolatry” (Clark, 2012). Academic research has taught the unbiased and unprejudiced student that African history is grounded in focusing on Egypt and Ethiopia, or the history of the two lands, upper and lower “Kemet.” Such research uncovers the secret writings of that ancient era, known as “Maat,” an appellation for moral and spiritual instruction (Clark). These writings highlight the importance of education to this ancient generation of people, long before the era of colonization. According to Hilliard (1995), “Africans developed the most sophisticated system of education.” The Greeks and Romans traveled to Africa to learn and share with family and compatriots back in their homelands. This insight validates the subsequent adoption of Christianity and the development of religious rituals that express their fundamental interest in spirituality, as well as utilitarian ministries, such as Christian education and Sunday School, which the Christian descendants of ancient Africans developed.

Despite the deplorable experience of chattel slavery in the Caribbean and particularly in “Christian America,” Black people have exhibited their African heritage by establishing their own churches (See the Denomination section above). They emulated their White counterparts in worship and polity until they had to separate and focus on themselves. They were socially isolated and often distracted by slave owners, yet they established churches and schools that reflected planning and implementation skills.

Whites at various times helped shape the evolution of the Black church and Sunday Schools. One of the earliest helpers was George Fox (1679), a pre-colonial era example and facilitator who asserted, “You must teach and instruct Blacks and Indians” (Shockley, 1985). Fox's example represents the heterogeneous input of people who worked almost unnoticed yet provided foundational impetus for the later initiatives in the field of Christian Education and Sunday School development. Another facilitator was the Moravian Church (1738), a group of White Christians who assisted in Black missions and eventually organized religious education and Sunday schools. Such research found that Black church history in America confirms that Black people were taught and learned to excel in church ministry because of the importance of altruistic others and their inherent African heritage.

The Civil War exposed the fissures in American society, politics, and religion. However, despite being a violent obstacle, the Freedmen’s Bureau Act (1865) still elicited a positive response. The War Department generated this act and gave legal protection to Black people during the de facto and de jure discrimination of Antebellum Jim Crow in the Southern areas of the then recovering USA. It did not guarantee freedom everywhere, all the time, for every Black person, but it did provide legal support for Black people fighting for the same rights and privileges as their White counterparts. It is from these efforts and more that Black people rose to establish fledgling religious institutions that facilitated education, starting in their homes and extending to their church Sunday School sites. These entities were held day or night, and some developed into colleges (Wesley & Romero, 1968). Descendants of Africa have expressed their ancient wisdom through teachings for children and adults, reflected in the ministries they have implemented and the church schools they have planned and established as tools for disseminating their ancestors' wisdom.

What is it today?

After all that I have written, and now I ask, “What is it today?” My response is rooted in what I discovered about Sunday School from my research. Much of the information I shared above includes the key factors that led to the origin of Sunday School. This effort also provided an outline of the dynamic features of Christian Education and Sunday School ministry. My exploration of this phenomenon can be aptly described as the Christian church fulfilling its mission and calling. The Hebrew prophet Hosea described his backsliding generation, saying, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). This assertion highlights the educational role of church mission. It is another way of affirming the church's commitment to the New Testament Great Commission by “educating its members” (General Conference, 1912) and potential proselytes.

My discovery regarding Sunday School helps inform my readers and me about what Sunday School has been and what it can be like if these insights are applied to reignite a ministry that has gone missing in action. Religious education is still “demanded by the conditions of society” (Alexander, 1856). This is not a sectarian pitch for recruiting individuals to a particular denomination. The history of Sunday School has a universal scope and serves as a medium for ministry success. The Bible admonishes, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Sunday School has been an excellent medium for using books and a designated location to improve the social, moral, and spiritual intelligence of children and adults since its inception.

Robert Raikes, the “Father of Sunday School,” and his pioneering cohorts addressed their social context as if it needed reform from perdition and lawlessness, framing Sunday School as a meaningful effort to address ignorance, irreligion, and immorality. The practicality of their efforts lies in starting with children as the gateway to their parents. For these pioneers and subsequent developers, Sunday School was a practical means for reaching teens, youth, and adults. This was evangelism and true discipleship ministry. As the church continued to “occupy until Jesus returned,” researchers reported that from the 1700s until its heyday, Sunday School was an essential part of Christian church ministry.

My research revealed the challenges they faced regarding the larger church's interest and support, as well as the proper administration of the new Sunday School initiative. My discoveries led me to conclude that its historical analysis suggested that Sunday School was a misunderstood entity that had been allowed by its gatekeepers and stakeholders to flounder amid the miasma of misfocused priorities, including music, entertainment, and quick-fix sensationalism.

Sunday School today is not what it once was, nor what it could be at its best. In summary, churches should be what they were meant to be: ministering to society by helping to educate both church members and the community people who surround them. The church-state debate may have distracted ecclesiological pundits from understanding their identity by leaving education to be a governance matter, when Bible-based schooling and ministry have always been an education issue at the center of the church's vision, mission, and objectives since its post-ascension Apostolic era.

Babies are born without knowing everything necessary for productivity or survival. This fact affirms that humankind is designed to be lifelong learners. Addie Grace Wardle, in *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, writes that the driving force behind Sunday School pioneers within the Methodist denomination is the belief that “there must

be a real educational work" (Wardle, 1918) if Christian ministry is to be impactful. This suggests that Sunday School developers strive to emulate society's teaching and educational standards as a prerequisite for the Christian church's educational efforts through its Sunday School activities. This mindset made Sunday School what it became and what it can be again. It is the arm of Christian ministry that reaches the entire congregational demographic, aiming to provide opportunities for grassroots people to apply best practices.

Saying, did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Moreover, daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:28, 42).

Sunday School today, in far too many Christian church settings, regardless of denominational affiliation, is not what it was in its heyday. For over 40 years, Sunday School has been in decline and disappearing. It is on life support in most churches; however, what Sunday School is in too many situations today should "not allow it to be viewed as an appendage" (Towns, 2013). Instead, the vision and objective of this book are to reignite Sunday School, enabling the church's educational ministry to reestablish its significance in rebuilding Sunday School's ministry to greatness again.

What Sunday School is is what it can become again. At its height and best, Sunday School was a licensed activity led by church leaders who had a heart for using their intellect to shepherd their fellow believers and others in society. This activity embodies Sunday School's design and deployment by those who sought to reach their family and friends, as well as those they had yet to meet, but who would make all the difference in their lives. Thus, Sunday School was an organic exhibition asserting a protection element (Acts 20:29), wherein people attempted to serve and reach their family, friends, and whoever might benefit from what Sunday School was and became, and can be again if current church leaders learn from the past and reapply the best of what Sunday School had been in its halcyon days.

Chapter Four

Sunday School: Functionary of Christian Education Ministry

The effectiveness of Sunday School ministry is closely tied to how it is operated. Sunday School Ministry was an approach to systematic and consistent Bible study. Its pioneers recognized that basic religious education involved reading and writing. Thus, Sunday School became a boost to the secular sponsorship of classwork during the week and a springboard for self-education within the Christian church community. This approach enabled Sunday School to be rooted in the church's Christian Education focus, which helped to emphasize Bible-based learning as a priority. The utility of transparency and practical relevance made Sunday School meaningful and helped to augment the family model (Cliff, 1986) for social formation and nurturing. In this manner, Sunday School was an approach that was of "great value to home life" (Alexander, 1856), supplementing, complementing, and augmenting basic home life practices through Sunday School activities, thereby enhancing the human population and preparing individuals for personal and societal interaction.

The substrata for Sunday School success were evident in its academic promotion and its influence on personal and group spirituality, as well as social capital. As an extension of a church's Christian Education ministry, congregants professed that they no longer devalued Christian education, nor did they view mediocre intellectual activities as sufficient. Thus, Sunday School became their vehicle for addressing these essential educational training matters (Sandidge, 2022). By producing publications and literature, church gatekeepers and Sunday School developers exhibited *sola scriptura* in their development of Bible-based materials. In other words, they enhanced their ministry efforts with the Bible as the primary source for faith and practice. In effect, they were responding to intra-church and societal needs by developing resources that contained biblical knowledge, were age-appropriate, and administratively appropriate.

Sunday School followed the weekly model for church gathering. It was systematized and provided a consistent approach for study (2 Timothy 2:15) and for stimulating the spiritual growth (2 Timothy 3:14-17) of its applicants and adhering students. On Sunday, the Protestant Christian "Sabbath day," "Lord's Day," or day of communal gathering for instruction, worship, and fellowship, Sunday School pundits and pioneers attempted to fulfill the Lord's assertion that it was "Lawful to do good on the Lord's Day" (Matthew 12:12).

"Sabbath school" on Saturday, the seventh day, is central to Jewish worship expression. Hellenistic and pagan influences surrounded the Hebrew Christians (Brimsmead, 1981), but they clung to their spiritual roots. Education was an essential part of the post-Babylonian exile institution known as the synagogue, where spiritual, social, and educational ministry was provided. The early pioneers of Sunday School may have focused on another day, but they

sought to emulate the essence of their Hebraic religious ancestors in its meaning and educational operations.

As a significant factor, time management was an ongoing challenge since the inception of Sunday School. Its journey expressed a continuum of caretaking, which included determining when to start the larger church program schedule and where Sunday School fit into the church's schedule for space utilization. This involved considering Sunday School as an extension of the Christian Education ministry, whose content comprised age-appropriate materials and adapting to spatial exegeses.

By comparing Sunday School development to the early Apostolic churches' evolution, I concluded that they share three perspectives for ministry: evangelistic, educational, and lay-driven. Robert Raikes, the "Father of Sunday School," was a layperson who attempted to conduct Christian ministry that was evangelistic and educationally focused. His Sunday School initiative used catechism as its initial curriculum. His students learned to read, and some became church members (Ashcraft, 2021). Additionally, Raikes and other lay pioneers, along with supporting individuals who contributed to the functional praxis of Sunday School, served as unwitting developmental role models. For example, I learned that John Wesley embraced Raikes's concept, when he and his brother Charles came to the USA, and brought "Methodism" with them in their efforts to grow his ministry by instilling the Sunday School movement with an organization that included statistical analysis, equipment acquisition, curriculum development, visionary teachers, and a goal of doing Sunday School in a meaningful, significant, and impactful way.

The Bible employs several metaphors to instruct its readers on the importance of religious education ministry. There is the building metaphor (Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15) that Sunday School practitioners and adherents applied as they expressed their trust in the building's [Sunday School] architectural, engineering, and construction methodology. The building metaphor is complemented by the agricultural metaphor, which speaks to the age factor in Christian Education and Sunday School ministry. This metaphor helps readers understand the role of leadership in Sunday School ministry. No building or agricultural product is constructed or harvested without the assistance of an expert contractor or farmer. As Sunday School grew in significance, clerical and fiscal record-keeping became paramount (Okenwa, 2020), as these two metaphors imply. In addition, administrative guidance and planning became apparent to ensure that the Sunday School ministry was not overlooked but instead received its portion of the overall church ministry budget and in-kind resources.

Sunday School leadership was a practical response of Raikes and the other Lay contributors. They had to do everything that would make Sunday School meaningful. The need to delegate became challenging, and the pastor's role became apparent, necessitating promotion and careful planning. From these stages of development, the Sunday School ministry was established as a vital auxiliary of the church's Christian Education program. A superintendent for the Sunday School was developed and assigned to maintain its quality of activities and vision. It was the superintendent's task to fine-tune and focus on organizational, administrative, promotional, and curricular matters. As need became apparent, staffing issues were addressed. Such ideas and implementations were driven by questions, such as 'were they gifted for this ministry? Did they have a pro-Sunday School attitude and aptitude? Moreover, would they take appropriate action to make Sunday School relevant and meaningful?

The need for a superintendent for Sunday School signaled organizational development that minimized the risk of pastoral or ministry peers being burned out from operational overload.

The fundamental job description for a superintendent encouraged Sunday School personnel to develop materials and promote teacher empowerment, as teachers were the frontline and grassroots actors in making the Sunday School ministry impactful.

The wisdom in finding and assigning Sunday School teachers centered on their spiritual gift, as well as the church's organizational opportunity and responsibility (Towns, 2013). Within the local church, the leadership sought individuals from among the church's constituency who were gifted and equipped (Romans 12:9; Ephesians 4:11-13) to share Bible-based knowledge through interaction with students and were expected and trained to utilize professional educational skills.

When Sunday School leadership followed the tried-and-true methods, "good" teachers were identified and anointed to interact with their students like shepherds. Some of these "good" teachers not only highlighted and developed their experience but also took the initiative to enhance their impact by continuing to educate themselves on utilizing resources that helped make Sunday School an effective, meaningful, and significant medium for Christian Education ministry.

My research on Sunday School ministry yielded a summative description of Sunday School as a grassroots effort. Its history is marked by the efforts of individuals who laid its foundation and subsequently fine-tuned its application to meet every situation, as necessary. This description validates the benefit of collective input, as superintendents and teachers were "selected by a coordinator, a Christian Education Board, or an auxiliary committee (Sunday School-Wikipedia). An adage supports my analysis— "There is benefit in a multitude of heads."

This has been the method of operation for Sunday School actors since its beginning. "Every person, upon every Sunday, is to examine, interact, and inform" (Constitutions, 1604) fellow members and those who attend from the church's community with Bible-based information that would help them live productively and prepare for Jesus' promised paradise (John 14:1-3). To make Christian education and Sunday School ministry a best practice activity, churches reported on how and where they operated these church-sponsored activities. Thus, Sunday School development employed methods to explain what was done, which provided meaning and significance to the lives of its students and caretakers. They established measurable standards to be emulated. When churches produce vision, mission, and objective statements, Christian Education and Sunday School ministry are central to the overall church ministry focus. In so doing, Sunday School was made a priority and a functional aspect of the overall church's ministry operations.

Purpose and Objective

Sunday School ministry is a derivative of Christian Education ministry. It serves as an augmentation to family stewardship, training a child in the way they should go. Society recognizes the need to prepare its citizens to do their best for themselves and for social order. Sunday School is the church doing its part, considering Jesus's Great Commission, which is rooted in the ethic of being one's brother's or sister's keeper. For practical purposes, this is achieved by grounding Sunday School students in Bible-based academics that provide spiritual guidance and foster social interaction, aligning with the approval of both God and humankind.

The social development of Sunday School exhibits organizers and participants who embraced the evangelistic objective of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). They established intra-church

programs for various age levels, as well as providing community services (Matthew 5:13) through their Sunday School and education activities.

From its inception, Sunday School evolved as a Christian Education ministry that sought to organize and encourage its founders to engage in ministry that was both relevant and significant. Long before Robert Raikes and his other pioneering peers, the Sunday School ministry grew as descendants of the Apostolic era sought to fulfill the Great Commission (Ashcraft, 2021). The purpose of Jesus and Sunday School proponents, over time, has been to implement His objective of strengthening and encouraging church members and proselytes (Ashcraft), demonstrating that life is still meaningful and worth pursuing.

Sunday School has grown because anything alive must produce, or else it must be dead or dying and need to be buried (Towns, 2013). The early church began as a response to the good news of God. It grew both numerically (Acts 6:7) and qualitatively (Acts 11:21) as the skills and commitment of its adherents had a profound impact throughout the Roman Empire. It was said, “These are they who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

This spirit compelled the Apostolic era and later historical actors to establish Sunday Schools to fulfil their evangelistic objectives. With the expansion of ministry ideas and skill application, leaders became practitioners, fellowship was generated, and people were motivated by a ministry that was altruistic and a means for building personal and social skills.

Robert Raikes and his many peers initially focused on educating the poor. This is in keeping with Jesus’ parable about talents and service—“Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). This highlights the purpose and objective of Christian Education ministry in general and Sunday School ministry specifically. Raikes and the other pioneers established Sunday School to teach poor children to read and write, thereby keeping them off the streets and away from trouble. According to R. W. Lynn and E. Wright, *The Big Little School: Two-hundred Years of the Sunday School*, “Sunday School was designed to be a means for charity” (Lynn, 1971). This reemphasizes the original purpose of Sunday School and why it benefited so many over the years. It also provides a platform for reinvigorating Sunday School ministry today within the contemporary church’s programming.

Pioneers and later developers of Sunday School began to train and guide fellow believers in biblical instruction because they believed it was the most effective method for helping them attain insights for living productively. At Sunday School, administration and coordination served to make its purpose systematic and consistent, enabling its intent and content to be applied effectively.

The Sunday School movement was an idea whose time had arrived, with those who had both heart and head for fulfilling the Great Commission as their social context demanded. Reading habits were improved, interest in the ministry became apparent, and the discipline for planning and implementation was effectively completed. Behind all of this, was the sovereign choreography of divine providence or as the prophet Isaiah declared, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the lord” (Isaiah 40:3). Long before the idea of Sunday School became an empirical reality, Isaiah’s prediction laid the groundwork for what Sunday School was to become and a response to. Thus, Sunday School is a production of divine-human interaction. This is true, as Isaiah described the process of inspiration, calling, and assignment, “Who will I send and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me.” (Isaiah 6:8).

The function of Sunday School is described by its purpose and objective, which in turn reflects its historical impact. Such an impact has been recorded by Sunday School analysts, such as Catherine Beecher (1846), who, in *The Evils Suffered by American Women and American*

Children, describes the factors and challenges in Sunday School development. M. G. Jones (1938) is another Sunday School analyst who, in *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action*, mentioned the impact of Sunday School on gentry, farmers, craftsmen, and others who supported the movement to become what it became at its best, and the benefits that it provided.

In the early 20th century, the Sunday School movement gained momentum from those motivated by the vision of Social Gospel proponents, who surveyed their settings and committed themselves and resources to doing ministry within the church, yet emphasizing the human service components of Christian ministry.

The term “aim” reflects purpose and objective. It is a way of describing Sunday School ministry, which expressed a basic aim of gospel ministry that sought to “convert pupils” (Colby, 1867) or the attendees from poverty to an abundant lifestyle, from ignorance to information that inspired him or her to embrace Kingdom values and principles for living a better life in real time.

In the 1700s, Sunday School pundits helped develop a ministry that was meaningful and significant to church members and potential members from the church's surrounding community. A question that arises from this observation is, “If Sunday School was so meaningful, why didn't everyone attend?” This question is not just about Sunday School attendance but also concerns the many factors that influence Sunday School attendance and participation, as well as those that influence the larger Christian church program.

The questions and give-and-take that followed their responses formed the basics of educational instruction. The pioneers of Sunday School were curious and free, planned, and purposeful in answering such questions (24th Annual Report, 1848). They responded to the needs of church members and society. My research revealed that these pioneers found answers to these questions, which led to meaningful change, creativity, and demonstrated how churches ministered God's word. Thus, Sunday School reflected the church's objective, which was to transform students into disciples and citizens of society through God's word (Towns, 2001), and who were “free” to be all that God intended them to be as independent and interdependent individuals. This, I believe, was their method that prompted the involvement of lay persons and clerics, interacting with social peers, and the manifestation of those gifted for this providential ministry.

This discussion of purpose and objective highlights the effectiveness of Sunday School ministry over the years in its diverse and sundry settings. I understand this to refer to Sunday School as a Christian ministry role model for sharing and using mentorship, sound Bible instruction (Towns, 2001), and a grassroots approach for producing born-again disciples who desire to be faithful, available, teachable, and productive in Jesus' commission to go, teach, and make disciples (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Structure

Structure is related to form and use. As discussed above, Sunday School developed as a complement to parental instruction and guidance. Its structuration does not “release parents from their obligation to train their offspring in the scriptures” (Alexander, 1856). To operate in this vein would be deleterious to the natural order of life, especially when Sunday School was scheduled to meet once in a week and parents had their children the remaining time. Thus, the structure of Sunday School reflected the formation of activities designed to share Bible truth with those whose social, economic, and moral conditions necessitated it.

The church father, Augustine, aptly asserted that “Repetition is the key to knowledge.” Therefore, Sunday School was never intended to replace home, school, or parental stewardship, but rather to serve as a Christian church-sponsored system that strives to enhance the mentorship of parents consistently and Sunday School students through best practices.

My research on Sunday School phenomena explored and discovered the evolution of order, the development of its departmental structure, and the need for recruiting personnel to administer Sunday School activities, which included implementing a coherent curriculum. The Sunday School structure involves consideration of its location within or near the larger church building and its scheduled programming. In addition, the structure involved logistics, such as the Sunday School schedule, materials, clerical affairs, and evaluation to make Sunday School more meaningful for those it was established to serve. This was the use factor that expressed Sunday School as a ministry for sharing the gospel with church members and potential Sunday School students.

During my pastoral career, I learned the KISS principle—Keep It Simple, Stupid. You might view the term “stupid” as crude or tactless, so I substitute “Saint” to avoid such an offense. Anyhow, this acronym means stay out of “left field,” “outer space,” or away from chimerical or fanciful ideation. Instead, develop a ministry that is practical and utilitarian. I understand this counsel to mean structure the organization [Sunday School] with logic, coherence, and cogency. This approach suggests implementing a Sunday School ministry with respect for its personnel, students, and teachers, as well as learning styles and lesson plans that are designed to be relevant, beneficial, and impactful.

Sunday School structuration has been “a journey of a thousand miles” that began with its historical journey of taking one step at a time. This journey, as described in this book, was observed through conversations and communications that helped this ministry transition from a problem to a solution. Such solutions yielded small classes that were age-appropriate and lessons that were significant to the student (Sandidge, 2022), and that resonated and were rooted in the biblical narratives of the good news of salvation.

The vision of Sunday School centered on volunteerism, yet it always pursued what was meaningful, significant, and relevant. The early pioneers developed structures for Sunday School activities that appealed to both individuals and groups. Sunday School created organizational structures to respond to the interests of different age groups within the church and its surrounding community. Purposeful and professional Christian Education/Sunday school ministry is most effective when it is structured to address the needs of primary, youth, and adult church members, as well as non-church counterparts.

Teachers were and remain crucial to the purpose, objective, and structure of Sunday School ministry. Along with the pastor, they are the primary role models for encouraging commitment to Sunday School. They serve as frontline mentors and caretakers. Without a qualified teacher, Sunday School ministry fails to be significant or impactful.

The lesson book for Sunday School is the Bible, comprising the Old Testament and New Testament (2 Timothy 3:14-17). As the primary textbook for potential Sunday School students, Sunday School, from its inception, was designed and deployed as a ministry for Bible-based learning and evangelism.

A system that employs methods tailored to different learning styles, such as true/false, multiple-choice, open-ended questions, and visual aids, makes the content of a Bible-based curriculum more comprehensible and engaging for students. Learning theorists posit that people exhibit a dominant or some of one of four learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic.

The curriculum listed in the Addendum section of this book was designed to include modules that catered to each of these learning styles.

Lastly, the structure of presence highlights the innate ability God has given to humankind. It is observed that the history of Sunday School development was organized in a way that expressed logic and coherent activities in the context of group fellowship. This practice involves punctuality and the application of sound educational practices to fulfill the Bible-based purpose of teaching students about Jesus. It is often overlooked or taken for granted that presence is a significant factor for Sunday School's impact. The presence of administrators, Sunday School teachers, and attendees made the operation and the administration of Sunday School effective. Without presence, Sunday School would have been an activity of "tinkling symbols and sounding brass," or a rain cloud, without it ever raining.

I am convinced and confident that the reorganization and reigniting of Sunday School is rooted in the presence of Sunday School pundits, practitioners, and promoters such as the pastor, the Christian Education leader, the Sunday School Superintendent, teachers, and other intra-church gatekeepers, and stakeholders who want to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission in grassroots settings.

Conclusions

My research yielded the following conclusions regarding the current state of Sunday School and its future. These conclusions set the stage for also sharing recommendations that might help reignite Sunday School as a renewed means of fulfilling the Great Commission in these post-COVID-19 circumstances.

Conclusion number one: Sunday School is a phenomenon of Christian practice that incorporates the diverse perspectives of Sunday School organizers and attendees. Robert Raikes is widely regarded as the “Father of Sunday School,” yet others, such as Henryetta Mears, director of Christian Education at Hollywood Presbyterian, California (Towns, 2001), are among the many contributors to the Sunday School movement since the 1700s.

Number two: The history of Sunday School and its potential reignition has a chronological correlation. Since its inception in the 1700s, Sunday School has evolved into a significant church educational activity; however, since the 1970s, it has experienced a noticeable decline in attendance, promotion, and participation (Towns, 2013). Most Christian churches in the USA no longer have a plenary or Sunday School class system in their weekly programming. Clive Field (2021) declares, “Sunday School has collapsed” in terms of its scheduling and attendance. This conclusion is rooted in observations that reflect a lack of Sunday School administration and a shortage of qualified teachers (Sandidge, 2022), as well as a significant paradigm shift from focusing on Sunday School curriculum to emphasizing a lively and entertaining worship service by most pastors, who often continue as the chief worship leader or coordinator.

Since the late 1970s, this condition has become widespread, and its prevalence was further influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). COVID’s impact should not be minimized but understood as exacerbating a situation that was chronic long before 2020. The ingenuity that led to the invention of Sunday School was evident when COVID-19 interrupted normal church operations. The therapy for ministry continues, as evidenced by COVID-19 church respondents who were spurred to create practical innovations in areas such as spacing, sanitation, and digital technology. These innovations reflect the same intellectual and emotional capital that the Sunday School pioneers used to establish, develop, and sustain Sunday School ministry during the challenging times they faced, dating back to the 1700s.

Number three: Innovation is the “Kinsman redeemer” for Sunday School renewal or reignition. In 1866, Methodist Minister John H. Vincent of Chicago, Illinois, developed a new Sunday School system (Vincent, 1900), described in *The Sunday School Teacher*, that helped instill order and uniformity, much needed at the time. Vincent is an example of human imagination that supports the adage, “if it is not broke, do not fix it,” and which suggests that if it is broke, someone will attempt to fix it. This is the essence of the vision that drove these Sunday School developers and the reason for this book—the present state of Sunday School ministry needs imagination, innovation, and reignition to reestablish and regrow Sunday School to its former prominence.

Conclusion four: Sunday School remains viable when Christian church leaders prioritize it, rather than ignoring its practical purpose and objectives. Master Sunday School teacher and promoter, Elmer Towns (2001), is a modern example of a Christian gifted and committed to promoting the vitality of Sunday School. The Fresh Expression Movement of the 1990s is another example of taking what remains and adapting it in new ways. The vision of this book is

that, in any creative way (Smale, 2023), church pastors, leaders, gatekeepers, and stakeholders can use their minds to regenerate a systematic and consistent Christian Education or regular Sunday School program schedule. They can renew their Christian church ministry from 'cannot' to 'can do', from failing to faithfulness, and from lethargy to prioritizing the substantive and meaningful, highlighting the caretaking aspect of Sunday School without restricting the knowledge aspect of this church-sponsored educational activity.

Recommendations

The content of this book led me to draw some pertinent conclusions (above) concerning what I discovered in my research, as well as what I have observed and experienced regarding Sunday School ministry during my 46 years of pastoral ministry, culminating in my retirement (1974-2022). This journey now climaxes in the following recommendations for anyone seeking to reestablish a viable Christian Education and Sunday School ministry.

Recommendation number one: Launch an ideation [brainstorming] and prayer campaign for gatekeepers, pastors, local church Christian Education stakeholders, and other interested people for reigniting Sunday School ministry that is meaningful to its members and the church's surrounding community, for people of all ages.

Recommendation two: Develop a Sunday School training course that includes a quality evaluation component to yield significant principles and practical skills for implementing a Christian Education ministry with Sunday School as its systematic and consistently scheduled centerpiece.

Recommendation three: Develop a ministry plan that fosters a Sunday School curriculum that is age-appropriate, fosters holistic sociality, uses current technology, and prioritizes a rational budget for operational and material acquisition.

Recommendation number four: Do not make mountains out of molehills or attempt to waste energy on minor issues or trivial preferences. Instead, use sound educational methods that would make Sunday School effective. This involves considering real-life illustrations and lessons. Such lessons promote divine values and principles as the best way to overcome obstacles, such as ignorance or lethargy. Making Sunday School great again in this manner is a "by any means necessary" approach that acknowledges different learning styles and the commitment levels of the Sunday School leadership, as well as their out-of-the-box thinking, without compromising the essence of a Bible-based, church-sponsored educational ministry.

Recommendation number five: Promote, advertise, and cycle the telling of a church's intention to put the doable things to do yielded by recommendations 1-4 within the matrix of the church's vision, mission, and objectives for fulfilling the Great Commission via the reestablishment of a meaningful, relevant, and impactful Christian education/ Sunday School ministry

These recommendations are my attempt to motivate the Christian community with some ideas and mechanics for reigniting Sunday School ministry. As standalone or aggregate advice, these recommendations assert the necessity of preparation. Furthermore, they state some of the prerequisites for talking and writing about a segment of Christian church life that need not flatline but reignite for its potential to transform dry bones into an active army and reanimate modern disciples with the fire of God so they can turn their social, economic, and political worlds upside down with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Addendum

Sunday School Lessons – Curriculum

A Sunday School curriculum typically consists of a manual listing Bible lessons for students to study. Such lessons should provide a basic guide for Bible study, equipping students with the information needed to live productively in the present world (Okenwa, 2020). The primary objective of this curriculum is to inform and increase faith (Romans 10:17). The fulfillment of this objective is manifested in transformed students, from misinformed individuals into disciples prepared for spiritual warfare and for making a reservation for the earth made new.

The focus of the Christian Education ministry can be highlighted in the Sunday School curriculum, which, as we have learned from this book's discourse, was established to enhance Christian living through its age-tailored approach to understanding and applying Bible-based values and principles.

My analysis of Sunday School development revealed its central focus on instruction. Some of its pioneers began by using their church catechisms (e.g., Wesleyan and Anglican), which served as a course of study or plan to facilitate teachers' and students' understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Methodism played a significant role in promoting uniformity in Bible study, with the establishment of its International Lesson Committee (Wardle, 1918). Such initiatives served as a springboard for later Sunday School development, leading to standardized lessons or curricula.

As a result of these efforts, textbooks were published for the Sunday School ministry. Over time, these books began to catalog biblical topics scheduled for cyclical presentation. *Sola scriptura* served as the basis for developing these topics, while Christian educators and Sunday School leaders incorporated secular educational modalities to create lessons and a curriculum schedule. The Bible's case studies, docudramas, and human-interest accounts remained central and foremost (Romans 15:4).

The following list has been finalized by this author's hermeneutical, homiletical, and apologetic expertise, as well as the endorsement of its sponsor, the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI). Neither agent claims that this curriculum is exclusive or without human limitations. However, both agents offer, with confidence, that this list of study lessons is presented in a module format that incorporates learning styles – visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile—that are expressed in each module by a brief commentary, supporting scriptures, a multiple-choice approach of fill-in-the-blank, true, or false, or multiple-choice response options.

These lessons can be used as arranged or rearranged according to the user's preference. They can also serve as templates for presenting other Bible topics. Whatever the users' determination, the author and sponsor of these modules intend that they fulfill the mandate of scripture—“Study to show oneself approved unto God and thoroughly informed” (2 Timothy 2:15)—so that they can live better than before they encountered these Sunday School Bible lessons.

Pastors are KEY for reigniting Sunday school at the congregational level of ministry as administrative, operational, and organizational leadership gatekeepers and stakeholders. Church people tend to follow their pastor's vision, mission, and objectives. Therefore, ask for wisdom (James 1:5), pinpoint those who share this approach, be patient and purposeful, and communicate clearly by focusing on the meaningful and relevant things to make Sunday School impactful and significant again.

Bible Study Lessons-MODULE Index

- 1. The Holy Bible**
- 2. The Doctrine of God**
- 3. The Doctrine of Jesus Christ**
- 4. The Holy Spirit**
- 5. The Doctrine of Faith**
- 6. The Gospel**
- 7. The Ministry of Discipleship**
- 8. The Doctrine of Grace**
- 9. The Scriptures as a Guide**
- 10. The DOCTRINE OF Salvation**
- 11. Spiritual Renewal**
- 12. Forgiveness and Reconciliation**
- 13. Victory Over Sin**
- 14. The Fruit of the Spirit**
- 15. A Life of Prayer and Power**
- 16. Trials and Triumphs**
- 17. Evangelism**
- 18. Church and Community Outreach**
- 19. Gifts and Talents**
- 20. Financial Stewardship**
- 21. Marriage and Parenting**
- 22. Baptism**
- 23. Sabbath Rest**
- 24. The Second Coming of Christ**
- 25. Resisting Temptation**
- 26. The Armor of God**
- 27. Dealing with Fear and Doubt**
- 28. Social Justice Ministry**
- 29. Stewards of Good Health**
- 30. Conflict Resolution**

Bible Study Lessons—Sunday School Curricula MODULES

1. The Holy Bible

The Bible is more than just a book. It is the living, breathing word of God, divinely inspired and powerfully transformative. Every word, from Genesis to Revelation, is God's message to humanity—a message of love, instruction, hope, and salvation.

This lesson is rooted in the assumption that when we open the Bible, we are reading the very words of the creator of the universe. These words carry the power to change our hearts and guide our lives. The Bible reveals God's character, including His Holiness, love, justice, and mercy. Through the scriptures, we learn about God's promises and his plans for us. They provide us with wisdom for living, comfort in times of trouble, and correction when we stray.

What the Bible says about itself is the focus of this Lesson, which will reflect on the Bible's words, phrases, and contextual setting. This lesson has been developed to introduce you to a wide range of biblical topics in a straightforward format, as presented by the author. A serious attempt has been made to order each lesson in a connected series. Each lesson will include a thematic title, commentary, related scriptures, and an option for students to respond with fill-in-the-blank, true/false, multiple-choice, or open-ended questions.

I encourage you to pray before, during, and after each lesson or study Session. Expect the Holy Spirit to lead you in your search for answers (John 16:13). By studying and rightly dividing the word, you will be approved by God, gain knowledge and inspiration, and accomplish your goal with intention. Description

Scriptures:

2 Timothy 3:16

Psalms 119:105

Hebrews 4:12

Psalms 19:7-11

Isaiah 55:10, 11

Romans 15:4

James 1:22-25

True or False:

1. The Bible is as dependable as heaven and earth (Matthew 24:35). T F
2. The Bible says humankind was created by God (Genesis 1:1, 26, 27). T F

3. The Bible warns against anyone tampering with its content (Revelation 22:18-19). T F
4. The Bible was written and preserved by human Ingenuity alone (1 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). T F
5. The Bible comprises sacred scripture for developing good thoughts and good behavior (2 Timothy 3:14 through 17). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The first book printed using the invention of movable metal type in Europe was:
 - a. Jet magazine
 - b. German gazette
 - c. The London journal
 - d. The Gutenberg Bible
2. The bible contains Content called “books.”
 - a. Thirty-nine books in the Old Testament
 - b. Several Barnes & Noble books
 - c. Apocryphal books (i.e., Catholic, or Douay-Reims Bible)
 - d. Twenty-seven books in the New Testament
3. The Bible has been written and preserved over a long. Of time
 - a. By forty authors
 - b. Over 1600 years (i.e., 1500 BCE- 100 CE)
 - c. By King James, the First
 - d. By private interpreters (1 Peter 1:1921)

Open-ended questions:

1. Why do you believe that the Bible comprises or contains the word of God?

2. How do you value the Bible as God’s word?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

2. The Doctrine of God

Who is God? This question is among the most profound we can ask, and the Bible provides rich insight into the nature of God. To many people, God is a mystery. They do not know who he is or what he is like. Many believe that the God of the Old Testament was a fierce and vindictive being. Others think the God of the New Testament is gentler and Kinder. This lesson is designed to confront antithetical ideas about God.

The Bible reveals God as infinite, choosing to reveal Himself to us in ways we can understand. Moreover, liberate the reader. All of nature proclaims God's handiwork. The countless stars with their precise orbits testified to a master intelligence involved with the design, creation, and control of this complex universe. As you study this topic, you reflect on ontology (being), metaphysics (beyond sensory experience), and hermeneutics (principles and methods of interpretation).

The Bible is proof that God is not dead, but is our eternal, loving, and forgiving Father. I encourage you to write down your impressions and compare them as you discover what God says about Himself in His book, the Bible.

Scriptures:

John 4:24

Psalms 139:1-4

Exodus 34:6-7

Isaiah 40:28-31

Hebrews 13:8

Genesis 1:1

Acts 17:24

True or False:

1. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16) T F
2. Jesus is “God with us” [Emmanuel] (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14) T F
3. God is omnipotent and omniscient (Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26) T F
4. God will not and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17) T F
5. God is believed and trusted by faith (Hebrews 11:6). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The Character qualities of God are:
 - a. Vindictive
 - b. Gracious and compassionate (Psalms 145:8-13)
 - c. Judgmental
 - d. All-knowing (Isaiah 46:9, 10)
2. The basis for worshiping God is:
 - a. His creatorship (Revelation 4:11; Psalms 96:3-5)
 - b. His caretaking (Psalms 23)
 - c. He is domineering.
 - d. He is before all things (Psalms 90:2; 104:24-27)
3. The primary attributes of God are:
 - a. Omniscience (Psalms 139:1-4)
 - b. Omnipotence (Jeremiah 32:17)
 - c. Omnipresence (Psalms 139:7-10)
 - d. Faithful (Lamentation 3:22-23)

Open-ended questions:

1. What do you know about God?

2. What did you learn from this lesson about God?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

3. The Doctrine of Jesus Christ

Early in my formative years, I learned the song that serves as the basis for this lesson. The quotation marks the theme of the Bible as Jesus, and how He died to save humankind. This is the essence of this lesson study and the foundation for the entire biblical story – Jesus as God’s solution to the problem of sin and death.

The life of Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of the Christian faith. This lesson will help you embark on a journey to explore the life, teachings, and significance of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What you believe about Jesus Christ, his origin, his life, his death, and his present mission will make all the difference in the world to your salvation and your relationship with God.

This lesson focuses on who Jesus is and what He has done on behalf of sinners who choose to believe in him. It will reveal that Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God, our example, and our means of empowerment.

Scriptures:

John 1:1-4, 14

Hebrews 1:1-3

Philippians 2:5 - 8

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 2:1-20

1 Peter 2:21.23

John 15: 1 - 5

True or False:

1. Jesus is God’s only son (Matthew 3:17; Mark 9:7). T F
2. Jesus is God’s gift of love and sacrifice for sin (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21). T F
3. Jesus came to save church members (John 10:10) T F
4. Jesus saves believers to manage sin, not to remove it (Matthew 1:21, 23). T F
5. Jesus promised to return after the temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The Bible describes Jesus’ Advent:

- a. First Advent (Luke 1:26-38)
- b. Second Advent (John 14:13)
- c. Secret Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- d. Not at all

4. The Bible describes Jesus with several metaphors:

- a. Dog
- b. Vine (John 15:1-5)
- c. Horse
- d. Shepherd (John 10)

5. Jesus has many roles throughout the Bible:

- a. Creator (John 1:13)
- b. Savior (1 Timothy 3:16)
- c. High Priest (Hebrews 4:12-16)
- d. Judge (John 5:22-29)

Open-ended questions:

1. How does the life of Jesus Christ inspire you in your day-to-day journey?

2. What can you do to deepen your relationship with Jesus?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

4. The Holy Spirit

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit includes some element of mystery, but the Bible describes Him using terms such as wind, fire, oil, and water to reveal His reality. This lesson is intended to help you understand and experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God living within believers, guiding, teaching, and empowering them. The spirit convicts our hearts, helps us grow in faith, and equips us for service in God's kingdom. Through the Holy Spirit, God communicates His will to believers and helps them experience His power, peace, and joy in their daily lives. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a living, active part of the Godhead, who works within us to bring glory to the Father and the Son.

Together, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit work in perfect harmony to accomplish God's will in the world. Understanding their roles and the partnership they share in the plan of salvation deepens our relationship with God and strengthens our mission as Christians. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is part of the larger doctrine of the Trinity, which can be challenging for some to comprehend fully. This lesson invites students to marvel at God's eternal nature and His selfless love in watering us. It encourages students to recognize God's presence throughout their lives, serving a God who is both unified and relational, offering love and holistic redemption.

Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 2:9-14

John 16:7-13

Galatians 5:22-25

Romans 8:13-16

Acts 2:37, 38

Ephesians 4:30

John 14:26

True or False:

1. The Holy Spirit appears in scripture for the first time at Pentecost (Genesis 1:1, 2)

T F

2. The Holy Spirit is essential for the new birth experience (John 3:5-8) T
 F

3. The Holy Spirit is not a member of the Godhead (2 Corinthians 13:14) T
 F

1. The “Comforter” is another name for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17) T
F
2. The Holy Spirit is more “it” than a person (Romans 8:26; John 14:26) T
F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The Holy Spirit helps believers to understand:
 - a. The things of man (1 Corinthians 2:11)
 - b. The things of God (1 Corinthians 2:11)
 - c. The stock market
 - d. Truth (John 16:13)
2. The fruits of the Spirit are (Galatians 5:22-25):
 - a. Joy
 - b. Material profit
 - c. Peace
 - d. Temperance
3. The Holy Spirit helps believers:
 - a. No God’s will (John 7:17)
 - b. Conform to this world (Romans 12:1, 20)
 - c. Witness to others (Acts 1:8; 8:26-29)
 - d. Acknowledge and use their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Open-ended questions:

1. How have you applied Luke 11:9-13 in your life?

2. In what ways does the doctrine of the Holy Spirit shape your worship and prayer life?

3. What steps can you take to cultivate a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

5. The Doctrine of Faith

Faith is the heartbeat of the believer's spiritual journey. Anxiety and fear are emotions that we all experience at some point in our lives. Both emotions appear as we navigate the trials and tribulations of life. As believers, we are not called to live in fear. Instead, we are called to trust God's sovereignty and find peace in his promises.

The Bible is a compilation of case studies, docudramas, and human-interest accounts of those it calls believers who learn to lean into God's grace, showcase their preservation through adversity, and find strength in weakness as they discover a deeper intimacy with God and a greater Reliance on His provision and guidance—the dimensions of the doctrine of faith.

Faith is an antidote to fear. It is not the absence of fear altogether, but the decision to trust God's power and presence amid threats and danger. Faith relies on God's promises as revealed in His Word and expressed in the lives of people in real time and space, dealing with factual issues. Faith demonstrates that God is in control and that peace and strength are available to those who believe in God's word.

Scriptures:

Romans 8:28

James 1:2–4

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Philippians 4:6, 7

Isaiah 26:3

Matthew 6:25-34

Psalms 23:4

True or False:

1. Faith is based on evidence about God (Hebrews 11:1). T F
2. The expression of faith can be very displeasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). T F
3. Faith is a mind over matter process (Romans 10:17). T F
4. Faith is how a believer lives (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). T F
5. Faith means to depend on God (Isaiah 41:13). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Believers acquire and express faith by:

- e. Receiving God's gift (Romans 12:3)
- f. Working your Rosary beads
- g. Taking a religious trip to Mecca
- h. Reading and reflecting on God's word (Romans 10:17)

2. Faith is another word for:
 - a. Fear
 - b. Anxiety
 - c. Belief (John 3:36)
 - d. Hope (Hebrews 11:1)
3. The Bible men and women of faith:
 - a. Sarah (Hebrews 11:11)
 - b. Gideon (Hebrews 11:32, 33)
 - c. Enoch (Hebrews 11:5, 6)
 - d. Balaam (Numbers 21)

Open-ended questions:

1. How has faith [Trusting] in God's promises helped you overcome fear, anxiety, trials, and tribulations?

2. What are some practical steps you took or recommend for building faith?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

6. The Gospel

The Gospel, “The Good News,” Is the breath, heartbeat, and soul of the Christian faith. It is a message of hope, Redemption, and new life offered to all who believe in Jesus Christ. At its core, the gospel is the announcement of God’s rescue plan for humanity. The essence of its content is that through Jesus’ sinless life, death, and Resurrection, sinners can be reconciled to God and receive eternal life.

The Bible asserts that the gospel is the power of God; His authority to save and His ability to speak. Thus, the gospel as described in the Bible is a story to be heard, with a life-changing force for whoever hears it and embraces its transformative power. Its message is for everyone, regardless of past mistakes or present struggles.

The gospel calls believers not only to believe but to become disciples who share its message. Individuals who accept this message may feel a responsibility to share it with family and friends, motivated by their beliefs rather than a sense of obligation.

This lesson will guide you to reflect on the power of the gospel in your life and inspire you to share it with the world around you.

Scriptures:

Romans 1:16

Romans 10:14

Matthew 28:19-20

John 3:16, 17

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Mark 16:15

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Luke 4:18-19

True or False:

1. The Gospel concerns sad news about humanity (Acts 1:8). T F
2. The Gospel is a secret for Christians only (Romans 10:8, 9). T F
3. The Gospel is the good news about God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9) T F
4. Only believers can benefit from the Gospel (Romans 1:16). T F
5. The Gospel is about church membership (John 3:16, 17). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Sharing the Gospel involves:
 - a. Praying for boldness (Ephesians 6:20; Colossians 4:4)
 - b. Sharing your testimony (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - c. Acting out your shyness
 - d. Engaging in conversations (Acts 8:26-40)
2. Sharing the Gospel involves:
 - a. Going to the movies
 - b. Staying alone
 - c. Writing a summary of the gospel message on a card in your own words
 - d. Pray for the opportunity to share the gospel.
6. Preparation for sharing the Gospel involves:
 - a. Private time and space (Luke 5:16)
 - b. Study of God's word (Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:15)
 - c. Developing your skills with sports
 - d. Discipline and prayer (Matthew 6:5-13; James 4:8)

Open-ended questions:

1. What does the Gospel mean to you personally?

2. What challenges have you faced when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others?

3. Who is someone in your life who needs to hear the Gospel, and how can you reach them as soon as possible?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

7. The Ministry of Discipleship

Discipleship has its foundation in Christian church ministry and the Great Commission of Jesus, which instructs followers to go into all the world, teach, and baptize those who will receive the message of salvation. Discipleship is not merely a one-time decision but an ongoing journey of following Jesus and growing in relationship with him.

This lesson will focus on discipleship as a divine call to partner with Jesus in his mission to transform lives and bring hope to a broken world. This lesson will explore what it means to practice discipleship in everyday life and how believers can fulfill the Great Commission as centers of influence within the matrix of family, friends, and people they have yet to meet, with whom they can make all the difference in the world.

Making disciples means helping others follow Jesus, grow in their faith, and live out his teachings. Thus, the discipleship ministry is an urgent call to those who will hear its message and embrace its objective of walking with the Lord and Savior, bringing comfort, counsel, and the present truth to those seeking a better way of life.

Discipleship is a process that involves teaching and eventually baptizing those who accept the gospel of good news. Teaching involves guiding others to understand God's word and apply it in their lives. Baptism signifies a public declaration of faith, a bold step in obedience to God's will.

Finally, discipleship ministry fulfills the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, challenging every believer to reflect on their relationship with God. In this light, discipleship is a journey, not a destination. As one embraces this mission, he or she becomes part of God's eternal story, a demonstration of love, patience, and a commitment that points others to Jesus to fulfill their most profound need.

Scriptures:

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15-16

Acts 1:8

Romans 10:13-15

James 1:22-25

Colossians 3:17

John 15:16

True or False:

1. Jesus has some authority for witnessing (Matthew 28:18-20). T F
2. Church membership determines our discipleship (John 15:16). T F
3. The great commission is only a commandment and not a calling (Mark 16:15-16).
T F
4. Making disciples involved only teaching and not baptizing (Matthew 28:18-28).
T F
5. Discipleship means living out the principles of the kingdom (Colossians 3:17). T F

Multiple choice (Circle all that apply):

1. The basics for a disciple include the following:
 - a. Hearing God's word (James 1:22)
 - b. Speaking in tongues
 - c. Doing God's will (John 7:17)
 - d. Walking and exercising daily.
2. Discipleship is:
 - a. A privilege
 - b. The believer's assignment (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - c. Urgent calling
 - d. Optional
3. The believer's everyday life should involve:
 - a. Practicing Christian discipleship
 - b. Prioritizing the things of this world
 - c. Embracing Mammon over the Kingdom
 - d. Growing in a relationship with Christ

Open-ended questions:

1. In what ways do you currently practice discipleship in your everyday life?

2. What fears or challenges have you faced when trying to share your faith, and how can you overcome them?

3. How can you intentionally invest in the spiritual growth and development of others, both within and outside the church?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

8. The Doctrine of Grace

Grace is the central teaching of the entire Bible. It is the most important, grounding idea of all biblical doctrines. Grace is God offering man what man has not been able to produce by himself or herself. God's promises are rooted in grace. Grace is his love in word and action toward unlovely, insubordinate, and rebellious creatures, men, and women. Grace is described as an unmerited favor.

According to the Old Testament record, the Israelites tried to establish their righteousness through their charitable deeds. This lesson will help you discover or reinforce what you already know about grace. It will highlight that grace is not a license to serve sin or a cloak to hide our sins; rather, God imparts power to stop sinning.

Grace is fundamentally about God: His ultimate best initiative and pervasive, extravagant demonstrations of care and favor. Michael Horne Appley asserts that grace is God giving Himself in the person of Jesus Christ for the redemption of stubborn sinners.

Grasping the concept of grace is crucial for comprehending the profound depth of God's love and mercy toward us. It humbles us, freezes us from striving to earn salvation, and empowers us to live transformed lives in Jesus Christ.

Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:8, 9

Romans 3:20-24

Titus 2:11-14

Genesis 6:8

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Hebrews 4:12-16

John 1:14

True or False:

1. Believers can save themselves (Jeremiah 13:23). T F
2. We receive grace by our good works (John 1:12; Acts 16:30, 31). T F
3. Grace is an expression of God's love and his mercy (Titus 3:5). T F
4. Sanctification is a product of God's grace (Titus 2:11). T F
5. Grace is a gift from God to the proud (James 4:6). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Grace is described by the following:

- a. Gift of God (Romans 6:23)
- b. In good and regular standing
- c. Speaking in tongues
- d. God's love (John 3:16)

2. Grace is God's solution to:

- a. Conflict management
- b. Sin problem (Romans 3:23-24; Matthew 1:21)
- c. Death (2 Peter 3:9; Luke 19:10)
- d. Lawlessness (Romans 6:16)
- e. What is the effect of God's grace?
 - a. Material prosperity (Matthew 6:33, 34)
 - b. Assurance with God (1 John 5:11-13; 3:1-3)
 - c. Self-management
 - d. Eternal life (John 6:37; Romans 6:23)

Open-ended questions:

1. How has the concept of grace impacted your understanding of salvation?

2. In what areas of your life do you struggle to accept God's grace?

3. How can you extend grace to others in your relationships and interactions?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

9. The Scriptures as a Guide

In a world that constantly pulls us in every direction, with opinions, social pressures, and the noise of daily life overwhelming us, one of the greatest gifts God has given us is the ability to renew our minds through the study of His Word.

This lesson will center on God's word. More specifically, it will search the book of books for what it says about itself and how to study it for personal benefit. The Negro College Fund slogan is "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that we should not conform to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The church father, Augustine, asserted that "Repetition is the key to learning." This is a first-hand way of saying "Repetition deepened the impression," Or that "Practice makes perfect."

The underlying meaning is that it takes systematic, consistent study to make the repetition and practice of using the scriptures as a guide to realize personal Improvement. This lesson will focus on the Bible as a reference source for understanding God's purpose and provision, which helps us live better in this life toward eternity.

Scriptures :

Psalms 119 :105

Romans 12 :1-2

Romans 10 :17

2 Peter 1 :20-21

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11

Luke 24:25-27

True or False:

1. The Bible is a book for quick Reading and not deep study (2 Timothy 2:15). T
F
2. The Bible is like a lamp that enlightens understanding (1 Peter 19-21; Psalms 119:105). T
F
3. The Bible is sacred scripture for developing God-like thoughts and behavior (2 Timothy 3:14-17). T
F
4. The Bible contains merely the words of men about social life (John 6:63-69). T
F
5. The Bible is merely a compilation of human-interest stories (Proverbs 6:23). T
F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. A best practice approach to Bible study includes:
 - a. Pray (Matthew 17:14-21)
 - b. Study Mechanics (2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39)
 - c. Help by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13)
 - d. Embracing it as a power source (Hebrews 4:12)

2. Some more ways to benefit from the scriptures as a guide are:

- a. Meditation
 - b. Journaling
 - c. A hit-or-miss approach, or one where you do or do not approach.
 - d. Memorization

3. Some examples of those who benefited from using the scripture as a guide include:

10. The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:5)
11. The Redemptive prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 55:8-9)
12. Joshua (Joshua 1:8)
13. Satan and his angels (Revelation 12:7-9)

Open-ended questions:

3. How has scripture helped you to respond to challenges?

4. What do you do to make the Bible your guide for Faith and practice?

5. What would you tell someone to encourage them to embrace the scriptures as a guide for productive living?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

10. The Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation by grace is the heart of the Christian faith. It is the Bible's Beautiful, life-transforming truth that stands apart from anything the world offers. As described in the biblical narrative, salvation means that despite our mistakes, flaws, and sins, God has chosen to extend His unmerited favor to us. Grace is an essential component of the Salvation Enterprise and means something we do not earn or deserve, but is a gift from God, given because of his willingness and initiative to love us and to give us mercy.

The Bible describes the state of man before his conversion as sinful. It is easier for people to do what is wrong and sinful than to do what is right and good. Education and training may develop some outward traits of good behavior, but the inherited evil nature remains.

The Bible portrays salvation as a mission of rescue from death and eternal separation from God. It marks the beginning of a new life, one filled with freedom, healing, and a sense of purpose. When Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on the cross for our sins, He paid the ultimate price for our sins, and through His sacrifice, we are reconciled to God. This is the foundation of the doctrine of salvation.

Being saved by grace includes forgiveness, being invited into God's family, and being adopted as God's beloved children. It is not something we experience only occasionally, but rather a daily journey of growing deeper in God's love and experiencing His goodness in every moment of our life's journey.

Scriptures:

John 3:37

Ezekiel 36:26

John 1:12, 13

Matthew 18:3

2 Corinthians 5:14 to 21

Titus 3:4-7

1 John 1:7-1 John 2:2

True or False:

1. Salvation is God's love in action (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). T	F
2. Salvation is based on human works (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5) T	F
3. Salvation is God working in US to will and do good (Philippians 2:13). T	

F

- i. Salvation involves your actual crucifixion (Galatians 2:20). T F
- ii. Repentance is not essential to be saved (Ask 3:19). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Salvation is a gift to be--
 - a. Earned (Ephesians 2:8 and 9)
 - b. Acquired by doing proper liturgies (Hebrews 8:9, 10; 10/16)
 - c. Received by faith (John 1:12, 13)
 - d. Confirmed by baptism (Mark 1:9, 10)
2. Salvation is exhibited by:
 - a. Church membership
 - b. Natural talents
 - c. The fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25)
 - d. Seeking and following God (Jeremiah 29:12, 13; Romans 8:14)
3. Salvation is the believer's priority by:
 - a. This one thing I do (Philippians 3:14)
 - b. Seeking it first (Matthew 6:33)
 - c. Putting Family first and last (Matthew 10:37 to 39)
 - d. Speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Acts 4:12)

Open-ended questions:

1. How do you know that you are saved?

2. What are some practical ways you can extend God's grace to others?

3. Why is it important to recognize that salvation is a gift and not something we can earn?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

11. Spiritual Renewal

Amid life's business and challenges, believers need to prioritize spiritual renewal and refreshment. In this lesson, you will explore the importance of nurturing your relationship with God and seeking times of spiritual replenishment.

Everything animated is designed to grow healthfully. Plants and animals require nutritious food and fresh air to grow and thrive. Humans need the same, along with exercises to renew their relationships with God and others.

It is a spiritual law that spiritual growth and development are fostered through systematic Bible study, regular prayer, and sharing Christ with others. If any of these are missing, growth is hampered, and death becomes a more certain reality.

The Apostle Paul exhorts believers not to conform to the patterns and trends of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. This is not a one-time event but a continuous process. The importance of spiritual renewal and refreshment cannot be overstated in the life of a believer. As they prioritize their relationship with God, set times of solitude and reflection, and cultivate a heart of repentance, they will experience God's restorative presence and find strength for the journey ahead.

Scriptures:

Psalms 23:3

Isaiah 40:31

Acts 3:19

Romans 12:1, 2

Joshua 1:8

Philippians 4:8

Isiah 55:8, 9

True or False:

1. God's word is an excellent source for renewal (Deuteronomy 8:3). T F
2. Jesus used other resources to overcome temptation (Matthew 4:4). T F
3. Spiritual renewal is a matter of mind over matter (2 Timothy 2:15). T F
4. Spiritual renewal does not involve fellowship with other believers (Hebrews 10:24, 25). T F
5. Prayer is essential for spiritual renewal (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) . T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Spiritual renewal involves:
 - a. Personal empowerment (Isaiah 40:31)
 - b. Systematic gym exercise
 - c. Retirement from Physical Activities
 - d. Solitude and reflection (Psalms 23:3)
2. Spiritual renewal effects:
 - a. The study of God's word (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12)
 - b. Job Security
 - c. Thinking and behavior (Ephesians 4:23, 24)
 - d. Spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:35)
3. Spiritual renewal includes a process of:
 - a. Living in a monastery and using rosary beads
 - b. Receiving God's word (Colossians 3:16)
 - c. Repentance (Acts 3:19)
 - d. Growing in grace by trusting and obeying God's will (1 Samuel 15:22; Ephesians 4:13; 2 Peter 3:18)

Open-ended questions:

1. In what ways do you prioritize spiritual renewal in your life?

2. What is the one area in your life where you need God's word to renew your mind and bring renewal?

3. How can you create space in your life to allow God to speak and minister to you for your renewal?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

12. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

A movie from the early 1970s, *A Love Story*, suggested that love means never having to say you are sorry. This was Hollywood's way of expressing a romantic and sentimental view that people make mistakes and need to apologize or seek forgiveness.

Forgiveness is one of the most potent and transformative acts we can engage in as followers of Christ. It is the heart of the gospel and the very essence of God's nature toward us. Forgiveness is more than just a nice idea; it is a command, a choice, and a powerful tool for healing, freedom, and restoration.

The plan of salvation includes the essential element of forgiveness for sin. Beyond being an act between two parties, forgiveness is an exchange of power, the authority and ability to be merciful rather than harsh and lenient over litigation. This lesson explores the concept of men who sin, why they do so, and how God forgives them and reconciles them to Himself and to one another.

The Greek family of words that has its roots in a lasso (Aillavssw). The root connotation of this word is "change" or "exchange." Therefore, reconciliation signifies a change in the relationship between God and humanity, as well as between individuals. It is assumed that there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now a change has occurred from a state of enmity and fragmentation to one of harmony and fellowship.

It is the Cross of Christ that reconciles the center to God and others. Such reconciliation grants access to the Father by one Spirit, for the reconciled is no longer a foreigner or alien, but a citizen with God and other members or disciples of the household of faith (Ephesians 2:11 through 22).

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Matthew 18:15-20

Ephesians 1:3-10

Isaiah 53:46

Jeremiah 31:34

Isaiah 59:1, 2

Matthew 6:14

Luke 18:1-8

True or False:

1. Forgiveness involves stockpiling guilt, so sin is repeated (Jeremiah 31:34; 2 Corinthians 5:19). T F
2. Forgiveness is between God and the believer alone (Colossians 3:8, 9, 12-14; Hebrews 12:15). T F
3. Forgiveness of sin has conditions (1 John 1:7-1 John 2:2) T F
4. Forgiveness depends on how much money you have (Isaiah 55:1, 2). T F
5. There is one sin God will not forgive (Mark 3:28; Matthew 12:31, 32) T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. God Reconcile centers by:
 - a. His grace (Ephesians 2:11-16)
 - b. Becoming a member of the “True” Church (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)
 - c. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10)
 - d. A subscription to a religious magazine
2. The doctrine of reconciliation is about:
 - a. Interpersonal relationships (Second Corinthians 5:19-21)
 - b. Behavior modification (Titus 3:5)
 - c. The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:19-22)
 - d. Relationships between God and man, man, and man (Ephesians 2:11-22)
3. Forgiveness and reconciliation go hand in hand. How?
 - a. By being kind and compassionate (Ephesians 4:30 through 32)
 - b. By forgiving family and friends when needed (Matthew 18:21, 22)
 - c. By seeking a sustaining relationship with others (Romans 12:17-21; Hebrews 10:24, 25)
 - d. By being stubborn and violent (Genesis 4:1-11)

Open-ended questions:

1. What has the forgiveness of God done for you?

2. How have you benefited from the doctrine of reconciliation?

3. What are some ways you can share the doctrines of forgiveness and reconciliation with others?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

13. Victory Over Sin

Sin has been humanity's greatest enemy since the fall of Father and Mother Adam in the Garden of Eden. It entered the world, causing a separation between God and humankind, and its consequences are seen everywhere—broken relationships, pain, suffering, and death. However, amid this struggle, there is good news: Victory over sin is possible through Christ.

Jesus's sacrifice not only paid the penalty for our sin but also broke its power over us. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are united with Him in His death and Resurrection. This means that, spiritually, we share in his victory over sin.

Seeing is the record of every wretched life in the cause of every burden of grief. It renders men unholy, unclean, and unfit. The gospel of salvation is God's provision for empowering man to overcome sin and self-destruction. This lesson will teach about the origin, nature, and how it can be overcome, to God's glory and humankind's edification.

We need to understand what sin is so that we will not be deceived by it. However, more than that, we need to recognize that there is a real solution and a way to overcome sin as we receive help from God. Victory comes to those who find strength in weakness through Christ by shifting their perspective from self-deliverance to becoming empowered believers who face adversity with courage and hope, thanks to God's help in Jesus Christ.

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 12:9, 10

Philippians 4:13

Romans 6:14

1 Corinthians 15:57

Romans 6:6, 7

2 Corinthians 5:17

Romans 6:23

James 4:6-11

True or False:

1. The heart of humanity is good despite its fall from holiness (Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9; Romans 8:7). T F
2. Victory over sin involves the transformation of one's mind (Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). T F

3. Sin is an unbeatable force that cannot be controlled (Philippians 4:6, 7, 13). T
F
1. God promises victory over sin to those who join a church (1 John 2:1, 2). T
F
2. Sin can be overcome with God's help (Hebrews 4:12-16; Jude 24, 25) T
F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Sin is a problem because:
 - a. It is the breaking of God's law (1 John 3:4; 5:17)
 - b. It heals death (Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:16, 17)
 - c. It is war against God (Revelation 12:7-9)
 - d. It separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2)
2. Sin is an expression of:
 - a. Weakness 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)
 - b. Self-initiative (Genesis 3:1-6; 1 John 2:15-17)
 - c. In gratitude to God (Romans 1)
 - d. Slavery and bondage (Romans 6:14-16)
3. Victory over sin involves a cost:
 - a. Spending time at church (Hebrews 10:24, 25)
 - b. Putting Christ's solution over self-saving (Romans 5:6-9; 1 John 1:7)
 - c. Covering or excusing your sin (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9)
 - d. Living in faith and not fear (Acts 16:30, 31; Hebrews 11:6)

Open-ended questions:

1. What does it mean that sin no longer has dominion over you?

2. How have you encouraged family and friends to live in the victory that Jesus has provided?

3. In what areas of your life are you sure that you are experiencing God's victory over sin? How can you apply that to the other areas of your life?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

14. The Fruit of the Spirit

What does it mean to be saved or live a Godly life? Spiritual growth and maturity are essential aspects of the Christian life, as believers are called to deepen their relationship with God and grow in Christ continually. In this lesson, we will explore the act and process of salvation as a spiritual reality that unfolds over time and space, involving growth and maturity.

This lesson is rooted in the question, “Are you a spirit-filled Christian?” When Jesus left the earth and ascended into heaven, He promised to send His Holy Spirit to lead and guide believers into all truth, help them understand God’s will, effect the new birth, and then empower them to witness and live a holy life.

The Apostle Paul provides guidance on measuring and observing the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. This is where the fruit of the Spirit comes in. It is not something we can manufacture ourselves. Instead, it is the evidence of God’s work in us by the Holy Spirit, who transforms us from the inside out, producing fruit that reflects God’s nature.

The fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22, 23, is not a list of isolated traits. They work together, forming a beautiful display of the Godly character that is only possible when we allow the Holy Spirit to shape us.

Scriptures:

Galatians 5:22-25

John 15:1-5

Ephesians 5:8-10

Colossians 3:12-14

2 Peter 1:5-8

John 16:7-12

Romans 8:13-16

1 Peter 2:9-12

True or False:

1. The fruit of the Spirit is produced by mind over matter (John 3:5-8). T F
2. The fruit of the Spirit is the same as the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). T F
3. A fruit of the Spirit is joy and happiness (Galatians 3:22 through 25). T F

4. The fruit of the Spirit is exhibited by community services (1 Corinthians 13). T
F
5. The fruit of the Spirit is determined by being a member of the right church (Proverbs 14:12; Matthew 15:9) T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The fruit of the Spirit includes (Galatians 5:22-25):

- a. Goodness
- b. Being Wealthy
- c. Being physically healthy
- d. The gift of healing

2. The Fruit of the Spirit includes:

- a. Gentleness
- b. Temperance
- c. Ability to predict.
- d. Patience

3. The fruit of the Spirit includes:

- a. Kindness
- b. Peace
- c. Academic degrees
- d. Love

Open-ended questions:

1. Which fruit or fruits of the Spirit do you find most challenging to cultivate, and why?

2. How have you seen the fruit of the Spirit manifested in your life?

3. What are some practical ways you can help others learn about and grow in experiencing the fruit of the Spirit?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

15. A Life of Prayer and Power

Prayer is a vital aspect of the Christian life, offering believers a direct line of communication with God. In this lesson, we will explore the power of prayer and its significance in our daily walk with God.

Prayer is a form of religious/spiritual communication that involves talking to and listening to God. It is as valuable for your spiritual role as breathing is for living. Daniel prayed consistently, in good times and in times of Crisis. Your prayer life will determine the course of your spiritual journey.

One writer has said that too many people treat God like a lawyer or physician. They go to him only when they are in trouble or are sick. In the life of prayer and power, the believer communicates with the heavenly Father. Christ spent much time in prayer. Send separated Humankind from God, as far as face-to-face communion was concerned, but God then gave man the privilege of talking with him in prayer. God knows that we need to open our hearts to him and bring our problems to him for help.

“Pray it through until it is through.” That is what my retired pastor and friend, Vern Joyner, asserted. God inspired Israel through her prophets to make prayer an essential part of religion and the spiritual journey— “If my people will... and pray... (2 Chronicles 7:14). Prayer is important and impactful when believers make it a life essential. I subscribe to and promote the notion that much prayer, much power; little prayer, little power; and no prayer, you need to get started ASAP!

Scriptures:

Daniel 6:10

Mark 11:24-26

Philippians 4:6, 7

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

James 5:13-18

Jeremiah 29:12, 13

Psalms 55:17

True or False:

1. Prayer is only for times of urgency and duress (Psalms 55:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). T
F

2. Prayer is talking to God but not expecting him to answer (Jeremiah 33:3; 29:13; Isaiah 65:24). T F
3. Prayer is exclusively self-talking and for the prayer alone (James 5:16). T F
4. Prayer is a believer talking to God for his guidance and grace (Matthew 6:9-13). T F
5. Jesus recommended private over public prayer (Matthew 6:6, 8). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Prayer is mind over matter and not about faith (Mark 11:24-26):
 - a. True
 - b. Maybe
 - c. False
 - d. Sometimes
2. You should only pray in church or in good times (Jonah 2:1, 2, 9):
 - a. False
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Maybe
 - d. True
3. The major condition for answered prayer is giving money (John 15:1-7):
 - a. Sometimes
 - b. True
 - c. False
 - d. Maybe

Open-ended questions:

1. Do you emulate the disciples who asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1, 2)?

2. How can you cultivate a more consistent and meaningful prayer life?

3. How do you have or how do you need to incorporate thanksgiving and praise in your prayer routine?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

16. Trials and Triumphs

Life is full of moments that assess our faith – times when the storm feels unrelenting, when the weight of our burden seems too much to bear. Amid trials, there is a truth that can bring us comfort: God has a purpose in our pain.

Trials and tribulations are an inevitable part of the Christian journey, but they are also opportunities for growth, refinement, and deepening of faith. In this lesson, we will explore how believers can navigate trials and tribulations with faith, trusting in God's sovereignty and faithfulness.

To live productively, men must acknowledge trials and apply solutions that work, facilitating joy over grief, victory over being a victim, and blessings over burdens. Such solutions involve being honest about whether a person has contributed to their troubles and submitting to what will deliver them from tribulations. It is not up to humans to experience trials, but it is unproductive and not to one's benefit if you do not deal with trials by faith in God's purpose.

Scriptures :

James 1 :2-4

Romans 8 :28

2 Corinthians 12 :9, 10

James 1 :24

Romans 5:3, 4

Isaiah 43:2

1 Peter 1:6, 7

2 Timothy 4:7, 8

True or False:

1. Trials are only hurtful and not helpful (James 1:24; 1 Corinthians 10:13). T
F
2. God's word and prayer are the best ways to overcome troubles, suffering, and pain (Luke 18:1; Matthew 26:41; Hebrews 4:12-16). T F
3. Suffering is painful but not productive (Romans 5:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:10) T
F
4. Trials and tribulations are proof that God has abandoned you (Isaiah 43:1, 2). T
F

5. Trouble, trials, and tribulations will eventually be terminated (Nahum 1:9; Revelation 21:1-4). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Trouble can be a ministry for good:

- a. True (Romans 8:28)
- b. Never
- c. Sometimes
- d. False

2. It takes the following to overcome trials:

- a. Getting enough sleep.
- b. Denial
- c. Perseverance (James 1:2-4)
- d. Grace (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)

3. Troubles, trials, and tribulations can have a positive effect:

- a. Building character (Romans 5:3, 4)
- b. Working for us (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18)
- c. Yielding righteousness (Hebrews 12:11)
- d. Rejoicing (1 Peter 1:6, 7)

Open-ended questions:

1. Can you think of a time when you faced a trial that you now see as a turning point in your life? How did God use the situation to strengthen you?

2. What is the difference between enduring hardship and personating through it with faith?

3. How can you support your family and friends and be supported by them during trials and tribulations?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

17. Evangelism

The call to mission and evangelism is at the heart of the Christian faith, as believers are commissioned to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world. In this lesson, you will explore the biblical mandate for mission and evangelism and how everybody is called to participate in this important work.

Evangelism is often thought of as something that happens in a distant mission field, on a stage, or in a structured church setting. However, the most powerful evangelism often takes place in the simple, everyday moments of life. It is not just about preaching a sermon; it is about living out the message of Christ in everything we do. As you live your life fully surrendered to God, your actions and words can become a testimony of his love, mercy, and grace.

One of the most impactful ways to evangelize everything in life is by simply showing kindness. It might be through a smile, a word of encouragement, or lending a helping hand. These small acts of love can open the door to deeper conversations about faith. People are drawn to those who genuinely care about others. The late former President Theodore Roosevelt is credited with stating, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” It is my belief that when you live with the heart of Christ, those around you will notice how much you care, and then they will be inclined to hear why you are the way you are.

Evangelism is not just about speaking; it is about listening and being present. It is about living with purpose in everyday life. It is about understanding that every moment is an opportunity to point others to the hope we have in Christ. When you embrace the reality that evangelism is not an event, but a lifestyle, you will begin to see every encounter as a divine appointment. Your life, filled with the love of Christ, becomes the best testimony of all.

Scriptures:

Matthew 28:19, 20

Acts 1:8

2 Corinthians 5:20

Mark 16:15

1 Peter 3:15

Matthew 5:13-16

Acts 22:1-21

True or False:

1. Evangelism is about being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). T F
2. Evangelism success depends on individual talent (1 Corinthians 13). T F
3. Call to evangelism is rooted in the great commission (Matthew 28:19, 20). T F
4. Believers are powerless to do evangelism productively (Acts 1:8). T F
5. The call to evangelism applies only to a few of the household of faith (2 Corinthians 5:14-20). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. The mechanics of mission and evangelism involve (Romans 10:14, 15):
 - a. Calling
 - b. Material prosperity
 - c. Playing sports well
 - d. Believing
2. Being successful in mission and evangelism involves (Colossians 4:5, 6):
 - a. Matriculating in school
 - b. Walking and wisdom
 - c. Getting a high-paying job
 - d. Speaking in grace
3. The essentials of evangelism include (John 4:28-30):
 - a. Meeting people where they are at
 - b. Focusing on truth
 - c. Inviting people to Jesus for discipleship
 - d. Sharing the hope and help of the gospel.

Open-ended questions:

1. What are some barriers that prevent you from sharing the gospel in your daily interactions, and how can you overcome them?

2. How has the Holy Spirit empowered you to be a witness for Christ in your sphere of influence?

3. In what ways can you cultivate a lifestyle of evangelism and mission, integrating it into your everyday life's interactions and activities?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

18. Church and Community Outreach

God designed us for relationships, not only with Him but also with one another. From the beginning, he declared that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Building Godly friendships and being part of a Christ-centered community is essential for our spiritual growth and encouragement.

The church plays a vital role in community outreach, as believers are called to share the love of Christ and the gospel message with those around them. In this lesson, you will explore the biblical mandate for community outreach and how the church can effectively engage in this mission.

Building Godly friendships and community requires intentionality. It takes time, effort, and vulnerability. We must be willing to invest in others, listen, and share our lives openly. Godly relationships are more than candle acquaintances; they are purposeful, rooted in love, Mutual engagement, and accountability.

A strong community of Godly friendships equips us to serve others. Together, we can extend the love of Christ to those in need, spreading his light to a broken world. Suppose the church and believers are committed to fostering friendships and building relationships with the Gatekeepers and stakeholders of their community. In that case, they will honor God, share collective faith, and reveal God's love to the world.

Scriptures :

Ecclésiastes 4 :9, 10

Proverbs 27 :17

James 1 :27

Micah 6 :8

Matthew 25:31-46

James 2:14-17

Matthew 28:19, 20

True or False:

1. Community outreach involves personal ministry (James 2:14-17). T F

2. Making church membership a requirement is good community outreach. T F

3. Relationship building is the basis of the church and Community Outreach Ministry (Genesis 2:18; Proverbs 27:17). T F

4. Taking a Lone Ranger approach is a good community outreach strategy (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10). T F
5. A sense of unity and shared purpose is fundamental for the church and Community Outreach ministry (Acts 2:42-47). T F)

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Building healthy relationships involves (Proverbs 13:20):

- a. Emphasizing the pursuit of prosperity (Matthew 6:33)
- b. Walking in wisdom
- c. Being a companion of fools
- d. Building win-win agreements (Amos 3:3)

2. A best practice community outreach Ministry centers on:

- a. What unifies people (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10)
- b. Save and satisfying fellowship opportunities (Hebrews 10:24, 25)
- c. Emulating Christ's method of interaction (Proverbs 18:24; John 15:13)
- d. Recreational activities for personal benefit

3. Intra church and community outreach involves:

- a. Comforting and edifying activities (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- b. Highlighting board game activities
- c. How to make money
- d. Love and hospitality (1 Peter 4:8-10)

Open-ended questions:

1. How can the church balance maintaining friendships with non-believers while staying grounded in Christ?

2. In what ways can you actively engage in community outreach while being a church member in good and regular standing?

3. How can you personally contribute to your Church's Outreach efforts? How does the biblical mandate, the Great Commission, shape your understanding of your church's mission?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

19. Gifts and Talents

To understand spiritual gifts, you must discover or rediscover the truth about your relationship with the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit includes some element of mystery, but the Bible describes Him with terms such as wind, fire, oil, and water to reveal His reality from the realm of the unknown. This lesson will help you understand and experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit and His agency in delegating gifts for ministry to believers.

God has uniquely gifted every believer to build up the body of Christ and advance His kingdom. In this lesson, you will explore the concept of spiritual gifts and talents, understanding how they are discovered, developed, and deployed for God's glory.

Scriptures:

Matthew 25:13-30

Romans 12:3-8

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Ephesians 4:11-13

Galatians 5:22-25

John 16:7-12

True or False:

1. All believers receive the same gift (1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-11). T F
2. Some believers never received a gift (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:7). T F
3. You can find a list of spiritual gifts in Matthew 28:18-20, T F
4. Natural talents are the same as spiritual gifts (Matthew 25:13-30). T F
5. The fruits of the spirit are the same as spiritual gifts (Galatians 5:22, 23). T F)

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Some of the spiritual gifts listed in the Bible are:

- a. Tongues (Acts 2:13; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19)
- b. Wisdom (Acts 6:3, 10; James 1:5, 6)
- c. Making money
- d. Prophecy (Acts 15:32; Acts 21:9-11)

2. Some additional spiritual gifts are:

- a. Being an expert plumber.
- b. Teaching (At 18:24-28; Acts 20:20, 21; Ephesians 4:11 to 14)
- c. Hospitality (Acts 16:14, 15; Romans 12:9-13)
- d. Deacon Ministry

3. Some of the other spiritual gifts listed are:

- a. Missionary (Acts 8:4; Acts 13:2, 3)
- b. Pastor (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
- c. Inventing something
- d. Apostle (Romans 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1)

Open-ended questions:

1. Have you found a resource to help you discover and identify your spiritual gifts and talents? If so, what are they, and how are you using them in ministry?

2. Are there any barriers or obstacles preventing you from utilizing your spiritual gifts? If so, what steps can you take to overcome them?

3. How can you encourage and support others in discovering, developing, and deploying their spiritual gifts and talents?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

20. Financial Stewardship

When Jesus began his ministry in Jerusalem, one of the first things he did was drive the money changers out of the temple. Three and a half years later, as he was near the end of his earthly ministry, the money changers had returned to the temple. Christ responded by overturning their tables and saying, “My house will be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.” (Matthew 21:13).

Managing finances is a topic that touches each of us deeply, regardless of age or circumstance. We all deal with money, whether in abundance or scarcity, and how we manage it speaks volumes about our priorities and our trust in God.

Generosity and stewardship are essential aspects of the Christian life, reflecting God’s character and provision. In this lesson, we will explore biblical principles for living a life of generosity and faithful stewardship of God’s resources.

My mother taught me about the importance of money and the value of giving time and making offerings in church. She gave me a weekly allowance of \$1 and instructed me to put ten cents in an envelope for time (10%) and \$0.05 (5%) for local church expenses. I followed that formula for years until I stopped receiving an allowance, so I reapplied when I got a job at 16. The lesson I learned was how to support the church’s ministry through my financial stewardship systematically.

Money is not innately evil. However, people misusing it for bad purposes is what makes money matters an issue. Money helps us accomplish things within a specific time and space. Church ministries use money to fulfill their vision, mission, and objectives for kingdom building. As stewards of God, we must be good stewards of money. This lesson will teach you some Bible principles for practicing good fiscal stewardship.

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Luke 12:33, 34

Proverbs 11:24, 25

Psalms 24:1

Deuteronomy 8:18

True or False:

1. The world and its resources belong to humankind (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 24:1). T
F

2. Tithing is a biblical way of supporting Christian ministry (Deuteronomy 14:22; Malachi 3:8-10). T F
3. Offerings beyond the time should be given only when one has a lot to give (2 Corinthians 9:1-7). T F
4. Money matters concerned ministry support, people, and materials (1 Corinthians 9:14). T F
5. Time means 10% and is calculated on one's increase (Deuteronomy 14:22). T F)

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Tied and offering practice are based on who owns everything:
 - a. The government
 - b. Your employer
 - c. The creator (Psalms 24:1; Haggai 2:8; Acts 17:28; Exodus 20:11)
 - d. Your parents
2. Financial stewardship involves:
 - a. Faithful returning of time (Proverbs 3:9, 10; Genesis 14:18-20; Leviticus 27:30)
 - b. Robbing God whenever you can get away with it (Malachi 3:10, 11)
 - c. Saving some of it for a rainy day.
 - d. Trusting and giving as the lord has required (Luke 6:38; Luke 12:42)
3. Giving also has biblical criteria:
 - a. Generosity in response to need (1 Corinthians 9:13, 14)
 - b. Only if they explain their life situation.
 - c. Depending on how others respond
 - d. As giving to the lord in worship and ministry to others (Psalms 96:8; Matthew 25:13-30)

Open-ended questions:

1. How does your attitude toward material possessions reflect your relationship with God?

2. What are some obstacles that prevent you from trusting God with your finances, and how can you overcome them?

3. How can you cultivate a spirit of generosity and stewardship in your daily life, both individually and as a community of believers?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

21. Marriage and Parenting

It was the Lord who created marriage and the family unit of people, comprising a husband and a wife. The lord said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). “Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and she will cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and we are not ashamed” (Genesis 2:24, 25).

Marriage is one of the most beautiful and sacred gifts God has given humanity. It is not just a social contract, but a divine covenant —a union created by God for His glory and our good. At its core, marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. It is not just a partnership between two people, but one with God at the center.

Since our first four parents, Father Adam and Mother Eve, every human being has arrived; they are their mother’s birth canal. Childhood begins with babyhood and then sojourns into adulthood. Significantly, God likens the conversion process to being born again— “Unless you become as a little child, you will not enter the kingdom.” Children are important to God, and this lesson emphasizes the primary objective of marriage and the reproduction of another human being as a steward and a child of God.

Parenting can be viewed as one of humankind’s fundamental stewardship responsibilities. Humans have been designed and empowered to reflect God’s love to one another and to the world. Expression of respect, love, and value fosters a Godly home and creates a legacy of faith for future generations. When people enter a covenant relationship and then reproduce, they honor God and give a powerful testimony of His transforming grace.

Scriptures:

Genesis 1:26-28

Mark 10:9

Ephesians 5:22-25

Exodus 20:12

Ephesians 6:12

Proverbs 1:8, 9

Matthew 18:1-10

True or False:

1. Salvation is only for adult believers (Matthew 19:14). T	F
2. Sorrow is a result of honoring one’s parents (Exodus 20:12). T	F

3. Jesus started his incarnation as a grown man (Matthew 3:17; Luke 135, 80; Isaiah 9:6).
T F

4. Happiness is absent once you get married (Proverbs 11:14; Amos 3:3). T
F

5. Divorce is a good option when there is conflict in marriage (Proverbs 16:18; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Timothy 6:10). T F)

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. What image does a healthy marriage reflect?
 - a. God (Genesis 1:27)
 - b. Jet magazine centerfold
 - c. Godly love (1 Corinthians 13)
 - d. Muscle Magazine
2. How can you honor your parents?
 - a. Disobedience (Ephesians 6:1 and 2; Colossians 3:20)
 - b. Respect (Proverbs 1:8-9; Matthew 15:4)
 - c. Neglecting their training (Proverbs 22:6)
 - d. Compromising principles (Matthew 15:1-9)
3. How did God design for marriage and parenting to go together (John 14:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:8; Hebrews 13:4):
 - a. By having children without first getting married
 - b. By marrying without having children,
 - c. By never getting married
 - d. By getting married and then planning to have children together

Open-ended questions:

1. How does understanding God's design for marriage help your approach to building a relationship?

2. What are some ways the church or ministry can support and encourage married couples to build strong families?

3. What does it mean to honor your parents in practical terms?

4. Can the church family or ministries support individuals in building satisfying and strong homes?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

22. Baptism

Baptism is a Christian church ordinance that signifies a conversion relationship with Christ Jesus and symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Baptizo* means to “dip” or “bury” in water and is thus a church sacrament wherein believers in fellowship profess Jesus as Savior and Lord. This lesson focuses on the why and when of baptism for a believer who confesses and professes Jesus as their Savior.

Sin has no cure today except our faith in God. Baptism is how we can proclaim to the entire world that we believe Jesus died for our sins, was buried in the tomb, and rose Victorious over death. By being baptized, we demonstrate our faith in Jesus’s provision of salvation through the events of the Cross, the Burial, and the Resurrection.

Baptism is a significant sacrament in the Christian faith, symbolizing the believer’s identification with Christ’s death, burial, and Resurrection, as well as their commitment to follow Him. In this lesson, we will explore the significance of baptism in Christian faith and its implications for the believer’s life.

Scriptures:

Acts 2:38

Romans 6:3, 4

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

John 3:23

Acts 8:26-39

John 3:5

Matthew 3:13-17

True or False:

1. Baptism indicates a transformed life for and in Christ (Romans 6:1-6). T F
2. Baptism is more about ceremonial cleansing than actual sin removal (Acts 22:16). T F
3. Baptism should take place after a believer has been taught and decided to follow Christ as Savior and Lord (Matthew 28:18-20). T F
4. Baptism and the lord’s supper are the same sacrament (Matthew 26:17-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23, 34). T F
5. Baptism is a conditional ritual and not a requirement to enter the kingdom (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Baptism is the believer's confession of:
 - a. Forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38)
 - b. A new lifestyle (Romans 6:3 and 4)
 - c. Material prosperity (Matthew 6:19 to 34)
 - d. Being a member of the true church (412; Matthew 3:13-17)
2. Ordinances or sacraments that betoken a transformed life are:
 - a. Returning a faithful tithe and offering.
 - b. Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23:34)
 - c. Washing (John 13:1-20)
 - d. Baptism (John 3:5; Acts 8:26 to 39; Galatians 2:20)
3. Bible baptism is practiced by:
 - a. Infusion-pouring (12th century)
 - b. Dipping
 - c. Sprinkling rose petals.
 - d. Immersion (Mark 1:9, 10; John 3:23; Acts 8:26-39)

Open-ended questions:

1. What significance does baptism hold for you?

2. What does baptism impact one's relationship with the Christian community?

3. How does baptism reflect the journey of repentance and spiritual renewal in the life of a believer?

4. Does baptism by immersion reflect a spiritual significance in your faith journey?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

23. Sabbath Rest

In a world driven by busyness and productivity, the concept of rest often feels foreign, even impossible. However, from the very beginning of creation, God established a rhythm of work and rest. I knew that life would become more complex and that man would tend to forget his Creator.

Sabbath rest is a secret practice that God established from the beginning of creation as a time for rest, reflection, and renewal. In this lesson, you will explore the significance of practicing sabbath rest in your life and how it fosters spiritual renewal and connection with God.

Psychiatrists have maintained that if every person put away all perplexities for one day a week and were completely relaxed, there would be little need for mental institutions. God understands the problems that face us today. He has made time for us to study, worship, and commune with him. He sets aside one day each week for us to renew our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual strength.

The Sabbath was given as a gift and a commandment to the Israelites. This was not merely about physical rest but a profound, spiritual renewal. By observing the Sabbath, Israel acknowledged God as their provider, trusting Him to meet their needs even when they were not working. For us today, the principle of the sabbath still holds profound significance. Rest reminds us that our worth is not tied to our productivity. It realigns our hearts with God, shifting our focus from what we can accomplish to who he is. Sabbath is a time to breathe, to step back from the relentless pace of life, and define peace in God's presence.

Scriptures :

Genesis 2 :2, 3

Exodus 20 :8-10

Matthew 11 :28-30

Isaiah 58 :13, 14

Exodus 16 :22-30

Deuteronomy 5 :12-15

Hebrews 4:1-9

True or False:

1. Sabbath day is any day among the 7 days of the week (Exodus 20:10; Genesis 2:13). T
F

2. Sabbath is a sign, initially between God and Israel, but honored by Christian believers (Exodus 31:12-18; Romans 14:1-9). T F
3. The sabbath was designed to foster belief and trust in God (Hebrews 4:1-4; Isaiah 58:13, 14). T F
4. Relationship with Jesus is the ultimate objective of actual sabbath acknowledgment and practice (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:4-9). T F
5. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27) T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. A believer honors the sabbath by:
 - a. Balancing work and rest (Exodus 20:8-10)
 - b. By hoarding material possessions (Luke 12:16-21)
 - c. Prioritizing peace and renewal (Isaiah 40:28-31)
 - d. Unplug and eliminate distractions.
2. Sabbath rest might include:
 - a. Journaling about your reflections on God and well-being
 - b. Intentional walks outdoors to meditate on God's creation.
 - c. A restful activity with your family
 - d. Prioritizing work and sports activities
3. Practicing God's design for rest involves:
 - a. Remembering and planning (Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27, 28)
 - b. In your secular things to do
 - c. Prioritizing our God believer relationship (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)
 - d. Renewal over religious ritual (Matthew 12:1-8; Matthew 15:1-9)

Open-ended questions:

1. Why do you think God plays such a key role in creation and the commandments?

2. What are your biggest obstacles that prevent you from taking time to rest, and how can you overcome them?

3. Practicing sabbath rest impacted your relationship with God and others?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

24. The Second Coming of Christ

The Anticipation of Christ's return is one of the most profound and transformative truths in the Christian faith. We are repeatedly told in Scripture that Jesus will come again, not as a humble servant, but as a conquering king, bringing justice, restoration, and eternal life to His people.

A promise to return signals that the promiser has already been present. Jesus's first Advent climaxes with his promise to return and complete the drama of salvation by judging Satan and sinners, then ushering in the age of Eternity and Paradise. This lesson examines the biblical evidence regarding believers and God's promise of return.

Every day, the media presents a daily list of difficulties that humans are incapable of solving. Moral decay is a parent everywhere. General confusion, perplexity, and grappling with current social problems are very evident and widespread. Frustration surrounds us. Crisis confounds us. Nothing ever really gets solved. There is always a new and larger crisis to sustain the sense of total alarm.

Matthew 24 urged his disciples always to be ready, because his return will come like a thief in the night for those who are unprepared. To prepare for Christ's return means living with an eternal perspective. It means living in a way that aligns our hearts with the hope of his return, allowing that hope to shape the way we live in the present.

Scriptures:

John 14:1-3

Titus 2:12-13

Acts 1:9-11

Revelation 3:20, 21

Matthew 24:30, 31

Luke 21:34-36

2 Peter 3:9-14

Matthew 24:42, 44

True or False:

1. Almanac includes a prediction of Jesus's return date and time (Matthew 24:36). T
F

2. The second coming will be more of a secret than a stupendous event (Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7). T F

3. Believers do not need to be anxious about the second coming of Christ (John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:23, 24). T F

4. The second coming involves judgment and environmental transformation (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:7-12). T F

5. Jesus's promise to return does not affect the believer's mental health (Luke 21:34-36)
T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Apostle Paul calls the second coming:

- a. The Day of the Lord
- b. The Lord's Day
- c. The blessed hope (Titus 2:13)
- d. The last day

2. Environmental signs mark the second coming of Christ:

- a. Regular church attendance
- b. Harsh weather
- c. Old doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21)
- d. People announcing and confessing their waiting for God to come (Isaiah 25:9)

3. Warnings does the Bible give to prepare us for his coming

- a. Widespread fear (Luke 21:34-36)
- b. Decrease in church attendance.
- c. His coming is like a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:9-14)
- d. Wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6, 7; Mark 13:7)

Open-ended questions:

1. What does it mean to you personally to live in anticipation of Christ's return?

2. How does the hope of Christ's return affect the way you deal with trials and challenges?

3. What areas of your life suggest that you are ready for Jesus to come? What areas need adjustment to prepare for his return?

4. Does baptism by immersion reflect a spiritual significance in your faith journey?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

25. Resisting Temptation

Temptation is an unavoidable part of life. We all face moments where our desires, emotions, and circumstances lead us toward choices that can lead us away from God's will. Whether it is the temptation to give in to anger, to chase after fleeting pleasures, or to doubt God's promises, we all have areas where we struggle; however, the good news is that we are not powerless in the face of temptations, trials, and tribulations.

Believers can live productively by acknowledging temptations, trials, and tribulations, applying effective solutions, and finding joy in overcoming grief, moving from a state of victimhood to one of victory, and embracing blessings over burdens. The solutions involve being honest about the weather one has contributed to their troubles and then submitting to what will deliver them from such trials or tribulations. It is not to experience trials, but rather to deal with them productively for one's benefit. New London.

The journey of faith is marked by temptations, trials, tribulations, and triumphs, as believers navigate through various challenges and experiences. In this lesson, you will explore how temptations and trials can strengthen your faith, leading you to resist them and grow spiritually, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Scriptures:

James 1:2-4

Romans 8:28

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Matthew 4:4

1 Corinthians 10:13

Ephesians 6:10-17

True or False:

1. Temptations, trials, and tribulations are only hurtful and not helpful to the believers (James 1:2-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13). T F

2. Hastings and troubles are not insurmountable (Psalms 34:19). T F

3. Suffering is painful but not productive (Romans 5:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:10). T F

4. The best way to overcome temptations and troubles is by God's word and prayer (Luke 18:1; Matthew 26:41; Hebrews 4:12-16). T F

5. Temptations and tribulations are proof that God has abandoned you (Isaiah 43:1, 2; Romans 8:28-39). T F)

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Jesus overcame temptations in the wilderness by (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3):

- a. His divinity
- b. Being a good person.
- c. The Word of God
- d. Being a member of the true church in good and regular standing

2. Resisting temptation involves:

- a. Behavioral modification practices
- b. Submitting to God (James 4:6, 7)
- c. Experiencing God's grace (Titus 2:11, 12)
- d. Residing in a monastery.

3. A believer who resists temptation will:

- a. Persevere (Hebrews 12:1, 2)
- b. Trust God (Romans 8:28)
- c. A resilient and steadfast (James 1:2-4)
- d. Trust others for victory (Psalms 146)

Open-ended questions:

1. How have you seen God work all things for good in your life?

2. Reflect on the triumph you have experienced. How have these victories strengthened your faith?

3. Is the Bible a source of strength for you during temptations, trials, and tribulations?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

Addendum II

EXTRA LESSONS

Bible study lessons—Sunday School curricula MODULES

1. The Armor of God

In the battle of life, believers are constantly faced with challenges – spiritual, emotional, and physical. The enemy seeks to weaken our faith, so doubt, and lead us into sin. As Believers in Christ, we are not left defenseless. The Apostle Paul urges us to put on the whole armor of God, a divine provision that equips us to stand firm against the enemy's tactics and to live Victorious lives.

The armor of God is not something we merely put on and then forget about it. It is a daily choice to be clothed in God's strength, relying on his protection, wisdom, and righteousness. Each piece of the armor represents a vital aspect of our relationship with God and our spiritual walk.

The armor of God is for every moment of weakness, so believers will have the opportunity to experience the sufficiency of God's grace and the power of Christ working within them. In this lesson, you will explore how God's armor provides strength in times of weakness, empowering you to persevere through challenges.

Scriptures:

Philippians 4:13

Isaiah 40:28-31

2 Corinthians 12:9, 10

Ephesians 6:10-7

Hebrews 4:12-16

Proverbs 3:5, 6

True or False:

1. God's armor will help the believer follow God's will (John 7:17; Romans 12:1, 2)
T F
2. Church membership is the same as God's armor (Matthew 16:24; Matthew 7:21-23)
T F
3. God's word is a part of the armor (Matthew 4:4; Ephesians 6:17). T F
4. Truth is a part of God's armor (Ephesians 6:14; John 8:31, 32). T F
5. The armor of God is solely for clergy (Ephesians 6:10, 11). T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. God's armor is another way of saying (Philippians 4:13):
 - a. God is working in you to will and to do his good pleasure.
 - b. The believer is perfect (Philippians 3:13, 14)
 - c. God's grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)
 - d. Sin is greater than salvation (Romans 5:20)
2. God's armor helps those who are (Isaiah 40:28-31):
 - a. Self-righteous
 - b. Religious (Matthew 15:1-9; Matthew 7:21-23)
 - c. Wealthy in material goods (Matthew 6:21-34)
 - d. Weary and fainting yet call on God.
3. Putting on the army of God means:
 - a. Receiving his benefits (John 1:12)
 - b. Yielding to God (Romans 6:16)
 - c. Victimizing God over Satan and sin (Matthew 6:33)
 - d. Speaking in tongues

Open-ended questions:

1. What of God's armor do you feel you need most in your life, and why?

2. Can prayer and the sword of the Spirit become more integral parts of your spiritual journey?

3. In what areas of your life do you struggle with weakness? How might the armor of God change your weaknesses into strengths?

Closing Prayer: Be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

2. Dealing with Fear and Doubt

Doubt and uncertainty are everyday struggles that many believers face on their spiritual journey. In this lesson, you will explore how to overcome doubt and uncertainty through faith, trusting in God's promises and character.

Anxiety and fear are emotions that we all experience at some point in our lives. Whether it is the fear of the unknown, anxiety about the future, or worries about health, finances, or all relationships, these feelings can often feel overwhelming. As believers, we are not called to live in fear. Instead, we will trust in God's sovereignty and define peace in His promises.

Fear and doubt arise from a lack of trust in God's control over our circumstances. Fear whispers lies to us, telling us that we are alone, powerless, or that God will not come through for us.

Faith is the antidote to fear and doubt. When we place our trust in God's character and his promises, we begin to see fear dissipate. Faith is not the absence of fear, but it is the decision to trust in God's power and presence, even during challenges that tend to produce fear and doubt.

By relying on God's promises, we can overcome anxiety, doubt, and fear. As we continually bring our worries to God in prayer and trust in His provision, we experience His peace and strength. Through faith, we learned that anxiety, doubt, and fear do not have the final say. God does.

Scriptures:

Matthew 6:25-34

Isaiah 26:3

2 Timothy 1:7

John 20:27-29

James 1:6

Mark 9:24

True or False:

1. Anxiety, doubt, and fear are only human traits (Matthew 6:34; Mark 9:24). T
F
2. Anxiety, doubt, and fear will eventually be terminated (Nahum 1:9; Revelation 21:4)
T F

3. God cannot help one who is anxious and fearful (Psalms 34:18; Psalms 56:8, 9)

T F

4. Anxiety, doubt, and fear are productive attitudes (Romans 5:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:10)

T F

5. Believers should be anxious and doubtful like unbelievers (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14)

T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. What does the Bible say is God's replacement for anxiety, doubt, and fear?

- a. Accumulation of wealth
- b. Wisdom (James 1:6)
- c. Faith and Trust (1 Timothy 1:6-8)
- d. Daily physical exercise

2. Your struggle with doubt, anxiety, and fear is overcome by:

- a. Doing charitable deeds (1 Corinthians 13)
- b. Resignation to troubles (Luke 21:10-19)
- c. Confess your lack of faith and accept help to believe (Mark 9:24)
- d. Becoming a vegetarian.

3. The Bible encourages dealing with anxiety, doubt, and fear by:

- a. Give your fears to God (Philippians 4:6, 7)
- b. Embracing God's assurance (Isaiah 41:13)
- c. Behavior modification
- d. Trusting in God's presence (Hebrews 13:5)

Open-ended questions:

1. In what areas of your life do you wrestle with doubt and anxiety? How can you strengthen your faith in those areas?

2. What are some practical steps you can take to support yourself and others in overcoming fear and anxiety?

3. How can you incorporate practices such as prayer, worship, and studying God's word to bolster your faith and trust in him?

Closing Prayer: May you be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

3. Social Justice Ministry

John Dunn, Scottish poet, stated, "Is an island unto himself; we all are part of the continent of peace of the mien." God created us to be social, as we are called to be fruitful, multiply, replenish, and subdue this planet. Even The Lone Ranger needed Tonto from time to time; otherwise, they would not have had another episode. The ethic of being one's brother's and sister's keeper is becoming a dinosaur in Christian ministry.

Faith and justice are deeply intertwined in the Christian state, reflecting God's heart for righteousness, mercy, and compassion. In this lesson, you will explore social justice, examining its issues of poverty, oppression, and inequality, considering biblical principles.

As believers, we are called to live a life that stands out--not in a way that draws attention to ourselves, but in a way that points others toward God. Jesus calls us the salt and light of the world, too simple yet powerful images that reveal how we should influence those around us.

A Bible-based ministry of social justice encourages believers to walk and shine as light in a shadowy world. It also encourages them to embody kindness, integrity, and love for the marginalized, and to be social, considering God's values and principles.

Scriptures:

Micah 6:6-8

Matthew 25:31-46

James 2:14-17

Matthew 5:13-16

Philippians 2:15, 16

Colossians 4:5, 6

Ephesians 5:8, 9

True or False:

1 The last c

T	F		
2. Rich people are eager to give their wealth away (James 5:1-9)	T		F
3. The concept of social justice is a modern matter (Mica 6:6-8).	T		F
4. Social justice is more about partying and fellowship than being one 's keeper,			
T	F		

5. Beavers should be salty and have dim lights to be productive (Matthew 5:13-16)

T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. This ministry can include (Matthew 25:31-46):
 - a. Nutrition and dietary education classes
 - b. Prison Ministry
 - c. Vacation on a cruise ship
 - d. Community service ministry (i.e., Feeding, clothing, counseling)
2. Social justice ministry exhibits (James 2:14-17):
 - a. Link between faith and work
 - b. Political action
 - c. Passive piety
 - d. Justice and mercy (Micah 6:8)
3. A social justice minister should express:
 - a. Bullying
 - b. Threats and intimidation
 - c. Coercion and manipulation
 - d. Humility and respect (Micah 6:8; Hebrews 13:1, 2)

Open-ended questions:

1. In what ways can you actively engage in promoting social justice in your community or sphere of influence?

2. How can you integrate the principles of Micah 6:8 into your daily life, both individually and collectively?

3. Collect at a time when you witnessed injustice or inequality. How did you respond, and what did you learn from the experience?

Closing Prayer to be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

4. Steward for Good Health

If you purchase a car, you will receive an owner's manual. This manual contains all the information you need to know to operate and care for your car. Medical research indicates that 80% of all diseases, excluding accidents, are attributed to poor health habits. Millions of people are committing suicide on the installment plan. They are digging their graves with their mouth!

"You never miss your water until the well runs dry." This is an old proverb that advises you not to miss opportunities to maintain or recover good health before you become unwell. Do not wait until you are laid up in a hospital before you learn to be a better steward of your physical, mental, and spiritual health. Billie Holiday said, "God helps that child that has his own."

The creator and designer of the human body has written an instruction book — the Bible. God does not lay down arbitrary rules to show his authority. He advises because, having made us, he knows what is best for us.

This lesson is about being good stewards of good health. Does it reflect managing someone else's resources? Since we are created and redeemed by God, our stewardship involves taking care of ourselves by eating, drinking, reading, and engaging in any activities that affect our emotional, mental, and physical well-being. This lesson is designed to educate you on the value and principles of stewardship, enabling you to live better and feel better.

Scriptures:

3 John 2

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

John 10:10

1 Corinthians 10:31

Daniel 1:8, 12, 13, 15

Proverbs 20:1

Proverbs 23:29-35

True or False:

1. Your health condition is not a priority for God (3 John 2). T	F
2. Diet and nutrition are matters of stewardship and glorifying God (1 Corinthians 10:31)	

T

F

3. Fruits and vegetables are the original and best diet for good health (Genesis 1:29 through 31) T F

4. Bodies are the one thing we own (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) T F

5. Alcoholic beverages are suitable for human consumption (Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:29-32) T F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. And spiritual health is affected by (Philippians 4:8):
 - a. What we earned from the job.
 - b. What we see.
 - c. How much sleep do we get?
 - d. What we hear and read.
2. Humankind's original diet consisted of:
 - a. Unclean meats (Leviticus 11:1-10; Deuteronomy 14:3-80)
 - b. Wine and strong drink (20:1; 23:29-35)
 - c. Fruits and Vegetables (Genesis 1:29; 3:18)
 - d. Fasting
3. After the flood, God allowed the following for food (Genesis 7:1-2):
 - a. Watermelon
 - b. Clean meats
 - c. Clean meats without blood
 - d. Clean meats that died from natural causes

Open-ended questions:

1. How do you practice good stewardship concerning diet and nutrition?

2. What is your thinking about taking care of your body as a good steward of God?

3. How do you see the prosperity of 3 John 2 impacting your mental and spiritual health?

Closing Prayer to be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

5. Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. Whether in families, friendships, workplaces, or church communities, disagreements will arise. As followers of Christ, we are called to manage conflicts differently- God's way. The Bible teaches us not only to resolve conflict but also to pursue peace beyond today.

Living in peace does not mean avoiding the issue or suppressing our feelings. Instead, it means addressing conflicts with love, humility, and the desire for restoration. One of the first steps in resolving conflict God's way is self-reflection. Jesus taught His disciples to examine their hearts before pointing out someone else's thoughts: "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your eye?" (Matthew 7:3).

Communication is another essential element in resolving conflict, God's way. Ephesians 4:29 encourages believers to speak words that build up, not tear down. A gentle, honest conversation can often dissolve years of misunderstanding and hurt.

This lesson encourages you to pray for wisdom for yourself, for the other person, and for the courage to reconcile broken relationships. Thus, resolving conflict God's way will help you oversee broken relationships well and lead to deeper personal growth and a powerful testimony of God's grace.

Scriptures:

Proverbs 15:1

Colossians 3:13

Romans 12:18

Matthew 18:21, 22

Ephesians 4:29, 30

2 Corinthians 5:18, 19

True or False:

1. Conflict management and conflict resolution are used interchangeably. T
F
2. Conflict management is about coexistence with conflict. T
F
3. Conflict resolution is about restoring broken relationships. T
F
4. Social conflict is inevitable, T
F
5. Believers should function as if conflict does not exist (2nd Corinthians 5:18 and 19).
T
F

Multiple choices (Circle all that apply):

1. Conflict resolution essentials include:
 - a. Communication (Ephesians 4:29)
 - b. Standing your ground.
 - c. Self-reflection (Matthew 7:3)
 - d. Peacemaking (Matthew 5:9)
2. Handling conflicts God's way involves (Matthew 18:15-17):
 - a. Acting like social conflict does not exist.
 - b. Going to the other party privately.
 - c. Third-party mediator
 - d. Being trusting of the experience and input of the church body.
3. Successful conflict resolution includes:
 - a. Win-Lose settlements.
 - b. Seeking peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14)
 - c. Coercing others to accept your way.
 - d. Listening (James 1:19, 20)

Open-ended questions:

1. Why is it important to resolve conflicts in a God honoring way?

2. Does forgiveness play a role in resolving conflicts?

3. Share a time when God helped you reconcile with someone. What did you learn from that experience?

Closing Prayer to be a doer of what you learned from this lesson.

Closing Remarks

These lessons have been presented in a simple format for adult learners. They can be adapted for a younger age group. Be careful to consider that any substantive changes to their content must be provided in writing for approval by this author and his sponsoring agency, the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI). Their contact information is as follows: Mark McCleary (McCleary dot mccleary@gmail.Com) Or In care of Mark McCleary Ministries, 13842 A Outlet Drive, #144, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; National black church initiative (NBCI), Attention: President Anthony Evans (dcbci2002 @gmail.Com).

References

1845-1846 Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for Years 1845-1846, *Conference Journal 1*, 2017.
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/mechsouthconfjournals/1?utm_source=place.asburyseminary.edu%2Fmechsouthconfjournals%2F1&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

Alexander, James W. (1856). *The American Sunday School and Its Adjuncts*. Philadelphia, PA: American Sunday School Union,

Ashcraft, Jack. (2021). Why is Sunday School Important in the Church? December 3, <https://www.christianity.com/church/why-is-sunday-school-important-in-the-church.html>

Beecher, Caterine E. (1846). *The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children: The Cause and the Remedy*. New York; Harper and Ork-Harper and Row.

Birchette, Colleen (1989). “A History of Religious Education in the Black Church,” in *Urban Church Education* by Donald B. Rogers. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.

Christian Advocate and Journal 1833-1865, no. 33, pp. 130-13, New York, NY.

Clark, Jawanza E. (2012). *Indigenous Black Theology: Toward an African-Centered Theology of the African American Religious Experience*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Cliff, Philip, B. (1986). *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780-1980*, (1st ed). National Christian Education Council, January 1.

Colby, John. P. (1867). “Duties of the Sunday School Teacher Before His Class,” In *Sunday School Teacher*, vol.1, October, No. X, pp. 289-292.

Hilliard, Asa G. (1995). *The maroon within us: selected essays on African American community socialization*. Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press

Field, Clive D. (2021). *Counting Religion in Britain, 1970-2020: Secularization in Statistical Context*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

General Conference Journal, 1912, pp.1233-1234.

Gershon, Livia, (2018). Where Sunday School Comes From, April 22.

<https://daily.jstor.org/daily-author/livia-gershon/>

Jones, M. G. (2013). *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Puritanism in Action*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Keller, M. (1987). *Building a Strong Sunday School*. Nashville, TN: National Baptist Publishing Board.

Kendall, G. (1939). *Robert Raikes: A Critical Study*. United Kingdom: Nicholson and Watson, Limited.

Lynn, R. W. (1971). *The Big Little School: Two Hundred Years of Sunday School*. New York: Harper and Row.

Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review (1935), Vol. 17, p.319. New York: B. Waugh and T. Madson Publishing.

Orchard, Stephen & Briggs, James H. Y. (2007). “The Sunday School Movement: Foundation in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools (Studies in Christian History and Thought). Carlisle, England: Paternoster Publishing.

Okenwa, Francis, (2020). *A Handbook for Effective Sunday School Ministry: A Training Manual for Sunday School Teachers*. Lagos: Peace land Integrated Services.

Sunday School. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_school, “Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical, 1604,” Church of England. Anglican.net <https://www.anglican.net/doctrines/1604-canon->

Payne, D. (1891). *History of the AME Church*. Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the Sunday School Union.

Richardson, Harley (2023). The day passes profitably: Robert Raikes and the Sunday School Movement, May 13.

Robertson, Jr. James (2019). Stonewall’s Sunday School, Radio Transcript, October 23, 2019. <https://www.wvtf.org/civil-war-series/2019-10-23/stonewalls-sunday-school>

Sandidge, Oneal, Ph. D. (2022). *History of the Black Sunday School*. Maitland, FL: Xulon Press.

Shockley, Grant. S. (1985). *Christian Education Journey of Black Americans: Post, Present,*

Future. Nashville, TN : Discipleship Ressources.

Smale, Irene. (2023). The Evolution of the Sunday School 1751 to the Present-Day S A Paradigm for the Church in Supporting Societal Crises. The Church of England.

Spencer, Stephen (2021). SCM Study Guide: Anglicanism (2nd ed.), “Transforming the World, Chapter 9. London: SCM Press.

“Sunday School: Teaching the Faith,” Making Disciples for Life.
<https://makingdisciples-resources.lcms.org/sunday-school/>

Swanson, Gary B. (2006). “Sabbath School, where it came from and where it’s going,” *Elder’s Digest*, January 28, 2025. In the 2006 First Quarter, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministry Department, General Conference.

_____. (2013). The History of Sabbath School, Adventist Digital Library, 2025.

The Development of the Sunday School, 1780-1905. The official report of the eleventh International Sunday-school Convention, Toronto, Canada, June 23-27, 1905.

The Sixth Annual Report of the Incorporated Church Society of the Diocese of Huron, See The Discipline, May 15, 1864, p.16-19. London, Ontario, Canada: Diocese of Huron.

The 24th annual report of the American Sunday-School Union: May 15, 1848., 1848.
Abraham H. Cassel Pamphlet Collection, JCRG 08-P 01. Juniata College Archives and Special Collections, pp.37-39.

Towns, Elmer L. (2001). What Every Sunday School Teacher Should Know. Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House Publishing.

_____. (2013). How to Grow an Effective Sunday School. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publisher, Inc.

Tyms, James D. (1979). The Rise of Religious Education Among Negro Baptists, Washington, DC: University Press of America.

Vincent, J. Heyl. (1900). *The modern Sunday school*. Revised edition. New York: Eaton & Mains.

Walters, Thoms B. (1930). Robert Raikes, Founder of Sunday Schools, London: Epworth Press.

Walz, L. H. (1947). "Escape from sermon, June 8. 1947. Pastor of Second Presbyterian Baptist Church.

Wardle, Addie Grace. (2010). History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Chicago (1918), "A Dissertation submitted to the University of Chicago. New York; The Methodist Book Concern.

Wesley, C. H., and Romero, P. (1968). The Law in Motion—The Freedman's Bureau and the Legal Rights of Blacks 1865-1868. Millwood, NY: KTO press.

White, Ellen G. (1948). Testimonies for the Church, vol 6. In Extension of the Work in Foreign Fields, p. 23, 24. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association.