

The Christian Life Lesson 12 2Q 2009

Community

SABBATH

Read first paragraph “Humans are social beings...” Thoughts?

How many humans did God directly create and how many were created by other humans? If God had made hundreds of millions of humans individually, as “stand alones” would the way we relate be different? Would our “connection” to one another be different than it currently is? How does God’s design for humanity link us all together? Does this linkage, unity of design, tell us something about God and His relationship to all His creatures?

Why do we not experience unity with other humans now? Why is there so much division? What does Satan want to do to God’s universe? Divide it, sever it, fracture it. How has Satan achieved fracture and division on earth?

Believing lies about God resulted in love and trust being replaced with fear and selfishness in the heart – what does fear, insecurity, anxiety, worry, dread, distrust do to relationships? How is this manifested in humanity today?

- Racism, Sexism, Elitism, Phariseeism
- Terrorism
- War
- Spousal abuse
- Child abuse
- Political attacks
- Gossip
- Extortion
- Coercion
- Jealousy
- Bullying
- Cheating

Do any of these problems occur in the church? Is the church part of God's plan to reverse what Satan has done? How so?

- Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. {Ed 154.3}

What did the Apostolic church look like? Was there selfishness or real love for others? What happened? How did the church go from real selflessness to becoming intolerant and warmongering?

Can the church be a conduit for God's healing methods if we continue spread lies about God? Or put another way can the fullness of God's healing power be experienced in the church if we don't know the truth about God? Are their God concepts currently promulgated in Christianity that obstruct the flow of God's healing love? What?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to contrast the difference between the community being built at Babel after the flood and the community God directed Abraham to start. What is the difference?

What were the motives for establishing Babel? What were they trying to do? Make a name for themselves, what does this mean? Establish their own identity, universe, reality separate and distinct from God. They were trying to sever their connection from God – which would be death, suicide, so God intervened to save them.

Abraham, however, wanted unity with God, not separateness from Him. But what happened to the community started by Abraham?

- Division – Abraham’s grandchildren Jacob and Esau
- War – Jews and Arabs
- What caused/causes these divisions?
- What is the only healing solution? Why?

Read second paragraph “From the story...” then read bottom pink questions, thoughts?

- An elite priesthood
- Leadership devaluing the thinking ability of members
- Only those taught in their schools can know truth and be in church leadership
- Believing that membership in the organization conferred special benefit with God
- Believed that their rituals conferred special blessing and right with God
- Believing behavioral conformity to the law merited favor with God
- Believing God favored one people more than another
- Saw God as primarily powerful rather than as love

Do we struggle with any of these?

What kind of people do we become when we believe such things? – The kind that can crucify Jesus and think we are doing God service!

MONDAY

Read last paragraph “A church member...” thoughts?

Do you experience that you are a valued member of the body of believers?

How can we increase the unity, harmony and cooperation in the church so that every member experiences they are valued?

How do we value those who see God differently than us?

Why are some members unable to be valued and useful in the church?

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ " 'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' " Matthew 13:24-30

Who are the wheat and who are the weeds? Are both in the church? Why are there weeds in the church? Do weeds ever get into church leadership?

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." {COL 70.1}

"The field," Christ said, "is the world." But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world. The parable is a description of

that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God. {COL 70.2}

"He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man. . . . The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." The good seed represents those who are born of the word of God, the truth. The tares represent a class who are the fruit or embodiment of error, of false principles. "The enemy that sowed them is the devil." Neither God nor His angels ever sowed a seed that would produce a tare. The tares are always sown by Satan, the enemy of God and man...**By bringing into the church those who bear Christ's name while they deny His character, the wicked one causes that God shall be dishonored, the work of salvation misrepresented, and souls imperiled.** {COL 71.1}

Christ's servants are grieved as they see true and false believers mingled in the church. They long to do something to cleanse the church. Like the servants of the householder, they are ready to uproot the tares. But Christ says to them, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." {COL 71.2}

What is the key to distinguish those who are tares in the church? They call themselves Christian but deny God's character, thus they misrepresent God! Thoughts? What do we do when we see weeds in the church?

There is in the Saviour's words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples.

The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast. {COL 72.1}

We cannot read the secrets of the heart therefore we are not to be in the business of trying to separate the weeds from the wheat. But because the wheat and tares grow together unity in the church is impaired. Some tares will not fit in and find their place because their hearts are not unified with God. Additionally, the tares may discourage, interfere or otherwise obstruct the wheat from realizing its full potential.

How can we improve this situation? By ever more consistently representing the truth about God as revealed by Jesus!

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, “All must move...” thoughts? Who assigns us our role?

Does Satan want to obstruct us from fulfilling our role? What strategies might he employ? What about getting us into roles or assignments that we are not called by God to fulfill?

Read last paragraph – thoughts?

We need people who believe God has called them to help this class.

- We need people who can help organize get together, potlucks and socials.
- We need people who would seek to spread the good news to people not attending this class.
- We need greeters to welcome visitors.
- We need donors to support our weekly radio program.
- We need people to initiate community Bible studies to share this message locally.

- We need members to invite their friends to attend or listen on the web.
- We need ideas to better minister God's love to the world!

WENDESDAY

Read second paragraph – what is required for unity amongst believers?

Is there one central element that supersedes all others that when experienced results in unity?

- Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1Peter 4:8
- You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:13,14

If every person had hearts where God's law of love was perfectly written in would there be unity? Where does such love originate?

- We love because he first loved us. 1John 4:19

Love originates with God – what then is the central truth we must come to in order to have unity? The truth about God Himself!

Last paragraph "The peoples..." then read bottom pink section – thoughts?

Why is there so much conflict today? Because we have two different views of God warring for supremacy in our minds. It is a law that by beholding we become changed, we become like the God we worship and admire. When we worship a God who is power, a God who is punitive, authoritarian we become like

that God and will use power over methods to enforce what we believe is right.

THURSDAY

What is the church built upon? Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church – the chief corner stone.

What is the church? What constitutes the church?

Where do denominations fit in? How did we get so many denominations?

Where does the SDA church fit in?

Are we saved by affiliation in a denomination?

Are we saved by being a Christian?

What is the purpose of the SDA church? Are we fulfilling that purpose?

What was the purpose of the Jewish nation? Did they fulfill their purpose? Why not? What stopped them? Are we in danger of the same obstructions?

If a particular church organization is built on Jesus Christ what would it look like?

The Jews in Christ's day claimed to have Abraham as their father, but Jesus said their father was Satan – what does this mean?

Does it have to do with the methods practiced in one's life?

FRIDAY

Read question 1 and discuss-

Read question 2 and discuss – what do you do when the sermon presents lies about God? Not just a point of disagreement but the sermon actually present lies?

- What would we say if a church was teaching that the human leader was God in human form, like some cults have done?
- Or that God wanted the little girls to sleep with the leader as some cults have done?
- What if a church taught God will burn people forever in an eternally burning hell if they don't love Him?
- What if a church taught God is required to kill all those who don't agree with Him?

What did Martin Luther do when he discovered distortions in his church? What did his church do to him?

Read question 3 and discuss