

# Single Bible Study Lessons Sampler 2019

This collection contains twelve Bible study lessons that are offered as pick-and-choose possibilities for Bible study lessons. The objective is to offer a variety of topics in a format that offers maximum flexibility.

Six lessons are from the *Doctrine Class Studies* lessons, a series of lessons from a doctrinal class book that is being readied for publication. Four lessons are based on topics from *Conference Reports*, and two lessons are based on the Epistles of Peter.

To purchase a PDF suitable for copying for the congregation, go to our website or call or email and request the lesson desired. (The product code for website reference is provided below.) The cost is \$4.00 each lesson, and you may make as many copies as desired for your congregation.

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## **Doctrine Class Studies Lessons**

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### A Christian's Service to His Country

**Key Scriptures:** Ecclesiastes 11:1; Luke 16:9; Romans 13:5–7; 2 Timothy 2:21; 1 Peter 3:15–16; 1 Peter 2:13–15; Titus 3:1–2

#### Introduction

It is important for a Christian to be a law-abiding citizen, pay his taxes, and be thankful for his government. The mission of Christian Public Service is to leave a peace witness and to be of service to the country. It was originally planned for use as alternative service for conscientious objectors who were drafted into the military. From that time, it has grown to include volunteer service in peacetime. Our volunteer units at child-care homes, hospitals, soup kitchens, and rebuilding units are appropriate ways to serve our country.

Service is not only for youth, but Christians of all ages should be actively serving mankind. As we give of our time and talents to our communities, we are doing this for Christ. One program that is a tremendous witness to those around us is our disaster relief projects. Through these work projects, we can show love and concern for people whom we otherwise may never have been able to reach. However, outreach should not be limited to just church-sponsored events. It should be a part of our everyday interaction with the community. Being a good citizen who is service-minded means doing many small things such as projecting a thankful attitude, opening the door for others, being respectful and law-abiding with our driving, and looking to reach out in a practical way to those who do not have the same advantages in life as we have.

When war is imminent, it is hoped that our neighbors will remember our community service and other service we provide to the public. These things should help them to realize that though we do not join in military service, we still appreciate our country and wish to be of service. May we be inspired in the outreach of Christian Public Service and other avenues of service to the nation.

#### Conference decisions

**1942 Conference, Appreciation of CPS Program:** This Conference gratefully acknowledges the CPS [Civilian Public Service] program as a blessing of Divine Providence and sincerely appreciates the consideration and respectful attitude of our government toward its nonresistant citizens. We trust, however, that as we continue through the experimental stage, different improvements shall be effected to make it of more mutual satisfaction.

**1956 Conference, Preparation for Christian Service:** *Resolved*, We accept Art. 20 of the 1947 Western District Conference, relative preparing for Christian service, which reads as follows: "We recommend that members who are sincere and burdened for the cause of Christ make the proper preparation for various lines of work they are called to do. We

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further recommend or advise that brothers or sisters desiring such preparations seek the advice of their home ministers to approve or disapprove their undertaking. In cases where such members do not have a pastor, they should seek the approval of the church Problems Committee.”

**1959 Conference**, Christian Public Service: A. *Resolved*, For the twofold purpose of channeling the energies and interests of our youth into constructive activity and to give greater impact to our peace witness, we encourage local congregations to organize studies and activities.

Further, that the CPS committee be authorized to set up the needed organization to coordinate and implement these activities.

B. *Resolved*, We encourage that all 1-O men seek to be spiritually prepared, as well as show maturity (especially so when they enter service—suggested age, 20 to 22).

## Questions and thoughts for discussion

1. Discuss Christian Public Service as a service A) to our fellow man, B) to our country, and C) in lieu of military service.

2. Discuss the importance of a consistent Christian witness by our youth in CPS units. What is the correct balance between enjoying our time of service and being a representative of the church to the world?

3. How can our homes prepare our youth for Christian service?

4. Discuss: Service requires submitting to God’s timing, which may not always seem convenient to us. It is human nature to make excuses when we hear the call to service. Is it appropriate for us set aside the call and decide when we will serve after we have first considered all financial or familial commitments?

5. Some may find the thought of service exciting, adventurous, or simply a rite of passage before marriage. Does all service provide the same blessing regardless of what motivated us to serve?

6. It is easy to think of service in terms of missions in other countries or service units. How can this cloud our vision toward the vast mission field in our home communities?

7. Discuss: How can service to our country be as simple as making a conscious effort to smile and be friendly to those we meet in everyday life?

8. The willingness to leave our job for a time and volunteer for CDR projects is a beautiful testimony to those affected by disasters. Is generating more enthusiasm for volunteering the responsibility of the CDR committees, or church leadership, or is it something that each one needs to find on his own?

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## Permissiveness and Worldliness

**Key Scriptures:** Luke 16:15; John 17:15–17; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:17; Colossians 3:2; Titus 2:12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15, 17

### Introduction

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). To *conform* to is to blend in. It is a challenge for the Christian to keep himself unspotted by the world. Satan uses all the deceptive spirits in his power to induce us to blend with our surroundings. Jesus, in His intercessory prayer, prayed that even though we were in the world, we should be kept from evil (John 17:15). Surely as we carefully follow His teachings and are keen to His Holy Spirit, He will bless us with overcoming power. As we are renewed in our minds, we can live happy, fulfilled spiritual lives.

### Conference decisions

**1950 Conference, Automobiles:** It is inconsistent for a Christian to own high priced and flashy cars.

**1950 Conference, Drift toward Worldliness:** *Resolved,* We consider the drift, and the cause of the drift, of the Church toward worldliness; also the lack of spiritual life among both younger and older members. Quite a number of ministers, ministers’ wives, and lay members expressed their convictions as to the reason for the drift. Beginning with the ministers, a number of confessions were brought. The ministers and parents, as well as all members, in the face of a decided drift toward worldliness, should make it their concern to prayerfully study the cause and remedy it by acknowledging their mistakes wherever most beneficial, whether to individuals or in congregations.

**1959 Conference, Modesty in Material Possessions:** *Resolved,* That we teach and practice modesty, simplicity, and economy in everything—in clothes, in homes, in farms, in machinery, in automobiles, and in all we possess or handle.

**1974 Conference, Literature:** *Resolved:* A. We be more careful what type of material we read and have in our homes and church libraries, encouraging more reading in the Bible and church literature, such as the *Mirror of Truth*, Menno Simons’ writings, etc.

B. We assist Gospel Publishers in obtaining and proofreading good books that are acceptable.

**1983 Conference, Drifting Back into Permissiveness:** We appreciate before God the restoration that has been effected throughout the Church in recent years.

*Resolved,* Due to the more recent drift among us, we recommit ourselves to resist

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permissiveness in our personal lives and to exercise spiritual care for one another as we have formerly promised, practicing careful and firm discipline in our homes, our congregations, and throughout the Church, being careful to involve sufficient counsel.

### **1993 Conference, Nonconformity to the World:**

*Resolved,* Due to the ever-present and increasing pressure of the world upon the Church, we believe it is essential to be filled with the Holy Spirit, having a transformed mind in order to have proper discernment and a deep conviction of the words of Jesus that we are not of the world, but are separated unto God. Rom. 12:1–2; Rom. 1:1; John 17:16. We commit ourselves to teach and maintain faithfully the doctrine of nonconformity, exercising discipline where necessary to maintain the standards of the New Testament, and to uphold former Conference decisions relating to this doctrine.

### **1993 Conference, No. 14, Nonconformity to the World:**

*Resolved,* that we adopt the following statement:

Upon reviewing the various concerns about worldliness and a general drift away from Spirit-led living within the Church and the lack of power to deal with these matters in the local congregations, we as ministers and deacons accept the greater part of the responsibility. We confess to having been intimidated by fear of man, often lacking in the true Spirit-filled love of God. We therefore resolve to find the necessary renewal of first love, bringing our lives, homes, and operations into a true moderation, and disciplining our lives to have time for the Lord's work in the Church. Also, that we will fearlessly speak the truth in love, teaching the whole counsel of God, not going to the right or to the left. We commit ourselves to diligently exercise scriptural care and discipline in the Church of God according to the Scriptures and the Conference and councils of the Church, lest the torch be taken from us.

We must open ourselves to the proving of our fellow staff members in our own congregations and those of our sister congregations, and to our brethren in our everyday life. As ministers and deacons we pledge ourselves in our revival meetings to look more carefully at the permissiveness and worldliness among us, beginning with the ministry. Further, we resolve to reprove and correct as necessary. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

### **2015 Conference, Nonconformity to the World:**

*Resolved,* That we acknowledge that we have not sufficiently addressed the concerns of Articles 5 and 14, 1993 General Conference, as well as Article 5, 2003 General Conference. We also accept that we are not clearly identifying and dealing with the spirit of pride and its fruits of worldliness in our personal lives, our homes, and congregations. These are evidenced in our attire, home designs and decor, possessions, and occupations. Through faithful teaching, nurture, and discipline by parents and Church leaders, we will, by humility and obedience, bear the image of Christ rather than the image of the

world. (See also Article 17, 1896 Conference.) It is our conviction that our sisters conscientiously adhere to the teaching of Deuteronomy 22:5, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man.” See also 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:1-6.

### **Questions and thoughts for discussion**

1. Why is the world so attractive to us in spite of knowing the dangers it holds?
2. How is the spirit of permissiveness affecting our homes, our schools, and the church?
3. Discuss: It seems that permissiveness is not something that only affects the weak. Do we all have areas in which we are more permissive than we should be? How can I identify the permissiveness in my life and deal with it?
4. Discuss: We sometimes mistake *tolerance* for *permissiveness*. Tolerance is a Christian virtue and permissiveness is sin; what is the difference between the two?
5. How can we be tolerant without being permissive?
6. How can we teach our children that worldliness is not necessarily in reference to people who look different from us but rather a spirit that we all must battle?
7. Will isolation from the world keep us from being worldly?
8. Discuss being permissive or being too rigid with our children or teenagers. Is one less damaging than the other?
9. If we are permissive, does it always mean we have a liberal spirit?

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## Relating to Other Races, Cultures, and Customs

**Key Scriptures:** Genesis 11:1–9; Numbers 12:1–13; Ruth 1:16–17; Jeremiah 38:7–13; Acts 8:26–39; Acts 10:1–48; Acts 15:5–9; 28–29

### Introduction

We live in an ever-changing world. Many of us find ourselves living among people of other races or cultures. It is important for a Christian to be free of racial and societal prejudices. The Scriptures give several examples that the plan of salvation was for those of any nation or background. If we truly believe that all men have a never-dying soul, we will realize the importance of showing Christian love to all people regardless of race, culture, or lifestyle. We feel that God has asked of us to fulfill the Great Commission, and we also know that every person has a soul which God dearly loves.

The church has grown to include members of varied backgrounds and cultures. Questions come to the mission boards from other countries about how to distinguish between customs that are simply a part of their culture and customs that may have root in sin. While this may not affect us directly at home, how open are we to sharing the gospel with people of other races or lifestyles here in our homeland?

The gospel teachings encourage us to love our neighbors no matter who they are. Do we actually have an open mind and a heart full of love for all mankind? We believe that the apostles' writings instruct us to treat all men equally when it comes to their salvation and souls' needs. Does the pride of our heart cause us to look down on those who are different from us? Loving our neighbor as a Christian does not mean we will approve of everything they do, but it does mean we will show them genuine respect as an equal no matter what their background is, what religion they embrace, or what lifestyle or segment of society they are a part of.

May God search our hearts, and may this lesson inspire us to less prejudice and more Christlike tolerance of our fellow men.

### Conference decisions

**1962 Conference**, Article 13, Race Relations: This General Conference issued the following statement of our position on race relations:

#### **Statement on Race Relations, Church of God in Christ, Mennonite**

In view of the worldwide commission given to the church by Jesus Christ, that the gospel be preached to all nations, peoples, races, and tongues, and being faced with increasing opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges, we believe it necessary to declare our position on race relations by the following:

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We adhere to the New Testament teaching on this important issue. “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34–35). “And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom. 10:12). “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors” (James 2:9). The call of God and the church is to all men: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19). “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

The above–stated commission and teaching persuades us to continue faithfully in this faith and doctrine, as taught and practiced by the church since the time of Christ.

**1993 Conference**, Article 16, Culture and Customs: *Resolved*, That we adopt the following statement:

We recognize that every nation has its own customs. We do not believe the gospel requires conformity to any particular culture, but that the customs should conform to the gospel.

Decisions relating to modes of application of any particular doctrine should be done in fellowship and unity with the church in each country, endeavoring to maintain unity in practice as much as possible with the general Church. Eph. 4:1–6; Acts 15:28.

**Additional references:** *Selected Editorials*, “Race Equality,” pages 218–220

## Questions and thoughts for discussion

1. All people have some prejudices. How can a Christian deal with these prejudices in order to show the love of God to all men?
2. Is it pride or merely a lack of understanding that causes us to look down on the cultures of other people?
3. Do we recognize the seriousness of racial prejudice in our children? Are children naturally prejudiced or do they just reflect the attitude of their parents?
4. Discuss tolerance versus permissiveness in dealing with other cultures and customs.
5. How can we help those of other backgrounds deal with the challenges in becoming a part of our culture? Is it necessary that they adopt our culture completely in order to be a part of us?

6. How can we show the love of Christ to those in society who are living a lifestyle we do not approve of?

7. Discuss: Culture can vary greatly within each race and region. Prejudice of any kind is lessened by openhearted interaction with those toward whom we may have been intolerant. However, prejudice is *strengthened* by lack of exposure to cultures and lifestyles other than our own and gets worse the longer we are isolated. Within our relatively closed society, how can we find the proper exposure to other cultures and races to lessen our destructive prejudices and still maintain a separation from the world?

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### Technology

**Key Scriptures:** Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 6:10–12; Isaiah 55:2; Luke 16:15; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 3:16

#### Introduction

We live in a fast-paced, ever-changing world. Technological advancement increases in momentum each year. The basic Christian principle of modesty, simplicity, and economy is one born of the Spirit of God. This principle should be used to help us make the decisions we face in our everyday life, especially as these decisions relate to technology.

A challenge facing the church today is to objectively identify our technological needs while clearly recognizing the dangers that may lurk in these things. Satan would like to gain an inroad into our lives and cause leanness of soul. As God's people, we need to have a carefulness in proving which of these technological advances is proper for us to use and which ones are too dangerous to touch.

Another purpose for the carefulness with which we approach technology is our human tendency to use it for entertainment. It is easy to acknowledge that we are using technology for entertainment if we are watching movies or listening to music. However, there are more subtle ways to derive entertainment from our devices, and it may not be easily perceived unless we are honest with ourselves. It may be as simple as needing to keep up on the latest news or constant communication with friends and family via instant messaging apps. The misuse of internet technology for entertainment seems to breed an addiction. Time that could be better utilized elsewhere is wasted in the pursuit of satiating our hunger for entertainment. If we are not careful, our relationships suffer because we are spending so much time outside of reality, and real-world interactions and spiritual health begin to take second place.

#### Conference Decisions

**1950 Conference,** Recorder: We consider the use of the recorder inconsistent to Christian welfare.

**1974 Conference,** Radio: *Resolved*, Art. 2, 1939 Conference Council, to read thus: Unanimously agreed that, due to its unrestricted and unchristian programs, we do not see any justifiable reasons for its use in our homes, cars, etc. Consequently we cannot permit their use or possession.

**1993 Conference,** Computers: Use, Misuse, and Dangers: The dangers of radio, television, and the recorder all present themselves to our homes today through the ever-increasing capabilities of the computer. With the advancement of computer technology, we

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find ourselves facing the possibility of misusing computers with game playing, entertainment, and more sophisticated un-Christian activities such as viewing videos and playing music.

*Resolved*, that we adopt the following statement:

We acknowledge the ever-increasing dangers in today's world of computers and electronics technology. Caution must be exercised in the purchase and use of computers to avoid promoting a "computer spirit." We believe computers may be used as a constructive tool, but should not be used for games and worldly entertainment. We support the resolution of the 1986 Ministers' and Deacons' Council which states, "*Resolved*, that computers be used for business purposes and not for pleasure, such as games, etc." Great caution should be exercised in accessing the outside world through networks and software, lest the things of the world enter in that the church has stood against. We cannot allow the computer and other electronic technology to violate our Christian doctrines of simplicity, morality, and separation from the world.

### **2003 Conference, Technology Issues:**

*Resolved*,

A. That we prohibit the open internet. We grant permission to our institutions to conduct necessary business over the internet via an appropriately filtered internet service. Existing Ministers' and Deacons' Council decisions regarding business use of the internet will stand until further light is forthcoming.

B. Cell phone usage which infringes on our basic conviction and Conference decisions against photography, recording, radio, the internet, etc., must be avoided.

### **2015 Conference, Photography**

*Resolved*, Electronic technology and the pride of our day have infringed on our conviction regarding photography. Positive, clear teaching and renewed conviction will bring our practice into compliance with our faith. While we continue to embrace our convictions against photography as expressed in past conference decisions, we recognize that our present business environment often requires photographs for inspection, verification, or illustration. A camera properly used as a tool for these business purposes need not violate our historic conviction against photography.

Photographs taken, sent, or stored, even if business-related, that are used for self-gratification, sentimental, entertainment, or other vain purposes are in violation of our stand on photography. This decision does not make provision for working cameras for non-business use.

### **2015 Conference, Entertainment and Technology**

*Resolved*, The enemy of our soul, through the world of entertainment all around us, is endeavoring to engulf us. This entertainment presents itself via visual, audio, and electronic social connections, such as videos, chats, news, and audio books, etc. It is imperative that parents and pastors establish open, trusting relationships with their children

and their flocks. We must face these challenges with courage, not being fearful, rather being assured that God has a way of clarity and victory in the daunting challenges of our time. “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:6). We must strengthen our labors in the directives of Article 8, 2003 General Conference. Disobedience to these directives and other safeguards the church has established is sin.

### **Questions and thoughts for discussion**

1. As the world progresses, how can we uphold the foresight and vision our fathers portrayed in not accepting the television and other worldly technology?
2. What are some of the greatest technological challenges facing the church today?
3. What spirit causes us to desire technology’s most recent advances?
4. Is resistance to advances in technology helpful in fighting the dangers, or is there something to be said for cautiously moving forward with the advances of our time?
5. Discuss: God is not the Author of fear. Our forefathers used caution with emerging technology such as the telephone and automobile, yet they carefully moved forward with the changing times. When we view the times we live in and the endless possibilities presented by smartphones and other devices, it can cause some to be gripped by an overwhelming fear of the future. Is this ever a proper response? Remembering that God is still in control, how can we instill in our children an encouraging attitude toward the future?
6. What is appropriate use of photography and what is misuse?
7. Is there a difference between using message apps to distribute and listen to gospel singing versus listening to recorded music of the world?
8. How can we personally find conviction to regard the line between entertainment and legitimate use of the internet?

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## The Authority of the Church and Church Discipline

“The church is a spiritual organization in the hands of God. As the bride of Christ, she is to be kept pure and spotless. God has made provision for the organization, government, and perpetuation of His visible church. He has given her authority through the Holy Spirit to interpret the Scriptures and discipline unfaithful members.”<sup>1</sup>

### Authority

- Matthew 16:18–19      The church is given the keys of the kingdom
- Matthew 18:18          Authority to bind and to loose
- Acts 15:28–29          Example of using the keys
- Acts 13:1–3              Calling forth leaders and workers

### Discipline

Excommunication is commanded for three reasons (1 Corinthians 5):

- For the purity of the church
- To save the one in error
- To remove the reproach before the world

### Sins unto death

- 1 John 5:16–17          Two types of sin
- Galatians 5:19–21      The works of the flesh
- 1 Corinthians 6:9–10    Will not inherit the kingdom of God

“According to the Holy Scriptures the excommunicated should be avoided in all spiritual fellowship, in the Lord’s Supper, and the greeting of peace or the holy kiss. Besides spiritual course, the avoidance also pertains to temporal matters . . . Any communication with an excommunicated brother should be motivated by a genuine love and interest in our fallen brother and a longing for his return to fellowship.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Faith*, p. 38

<sup>2</sup> *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, p. 190

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### The avoidance

- 1 Corinthians 5:11–13      Not to eat with them
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15      Not to fellowship with them, but admonish them in Christian love
- Romans 16:17      Avoid them

### Additional scriptures

- Ephesians 4:11–16      Members are given various gifts to work together to edify the body of Christ
- Hebrews 13:17      Submit yourselves to those appointed to leadership
- Titus 1:5      To set things in order
- Titus 3:10–11      Heresy must be dealt with to prevent it from harming others
- Galatians 6:1–2      Desiring to restore

**Additional study**      *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 164–194  
                                  *Principles of Faith*, pp. 38–40

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### Questions

1. How can the church be pure and spotless when she is made up of members who are prone to failings?

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2. Discuss the importance of each of the three reasons for excommunication.
  
3. What are ways we can help an offended or disobedient brother or sister? See Matthew 18:15–18.
  
4. Discuss: Excommunication is to be a redemptive work, not a punishment. It is to be done in love with the spiritual welfare of the erring one in mind. When a member has left the grace of God, excommunication places judgment on sin and opens the way to seek repentance. (It is difficult for unconverted observers to view it as redemptive.)
  
5. Discuss keeping the avoidance in love in daily life.

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## **The Christian Home and Christian Nurture of Children**

Home is a haven that God created. Solid Christian homes are very important because they have a deep influence on the family, and, ultimately, the church. Each member of the family has a role to play in maintaining a happy, wholesome environment in the home.

- Malachi 4:5–6            Parents and children turned to each other
- Ephesians 5:21–25        Order of the home based on God’s plan of loving headship
- Ephesians 6:1–3          Children, obey

### **The nurture and admonition of the Lord**

- Ephesians 6:4            Children to be nurtured in a godly way
- Deuteronomy 5:16        Honor father and mother
- Proverbs 13:24          Discipline is an act of love
- Proverbs 22:6, 15        Train up a child; deal with the sin nature

### **Additional scriptures**

- Colossians 3:20–21      Parents not provoking, obedient children
- 2 Timothy 3:1–2        Disobedience a sign of the last days
- Lamentations 3:27      Responsibility in youth
- 1 Samuel 3:13–14        Eli did not restrain his sons

**Additional study**        *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 347–364  
                                  *Principles of Faith*, pp. 75–76

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## Questions

1. Discuss what creates the atmosphere of the home and the part each one contributes:  
Father — unselfish, prudent and loving headship  
Mother — self-sacrificing, nurturing, diligent  
Children — respectful, helpful, obedient
2. How are healthy, trusting relationships built between parents and children? What hinders such relationships?
3. Discuss the importance of regular schedules and structure in the home, and the security and order this structure provides:  
Daily living — mealtimes, bedtime and rest, punctuality for work and church, etc.  
Spiritual — family devotions, church attendance, church activities  
Social — hospitable, outgoing, involved in congregational life
4. How is good character developed in children?

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## Holy Matrimony

“Matrimony was divinely instituted for the propagation, purity, and happiness of the human race. It receives divine sanction between one man and one woman only. There should be no marriage between a believer and an unbeliever . . . The emphasis the Scriptures place upon marriage is contained in two words: purity and sacredness.”<sup>1</sup> “Ultimately, it is for God’s honor and glory.”<sup>2</sup>

- Genesis 2:18, 21–24                      God established the order
- 1 Corinthians 7:39                        Marry only in the Lord
- Mark 10:6–8                                They shall be one flesh
- 2 Corinthians 6:14–15                    Not unequally yoked with unbelievers
- Colossians 3:18–19                        Submit, love, and be not bitter
- 1 Peter 3:1–7                                Subject to the husband, honor the wife

Those contemplating marriage should prayerfully seek for a partner in the fear of God. In marriage, both persons make a sacred and solemn vow to be faithful to each other as long as they both shall live. Infidelity to the marriage vows can break this bond, sometimes irreparably.

- Romans 7:2–3                                It is for life
- Matthew 19:3–9                            God’s plan for husband and wife to be joined together and not break the marriage bond

### Additional scriptures

- Genesis 24                                    Example of Isaac’s marriage
- Ezra 10:10–12                                God does not approve of marriage between believers and unbelievers

**Additional study**                      *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 326–346  
*Principles of Faith*, pp. 72–74

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Faith*, p. 72

<sup>2</sup> *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, p. 327

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## Questions

1. What are the most important points to consider when seeking marriage?
2. An important part of discerning God's will for marriage is knowing the difference between godly love and carnal obsession, infatuation, or selfish love. What are the characteristics of godly love? carnal love or infatuation?
3. Why are we to marry someone of our faith? What are the consequences of marrying outside the faith?
4. What conduct do God and the church bless
  - before marriage
  - during the engagement
  - after marriage
5. Selfishness is the greatest hindrance to a happy marriage. How does selfishness show itself before and after marriage?
6. Marriage is defined as a sacred bond between a man and a woman. In what ways is this definition being threatened today? Discuss the Bible's teachings about
  - couples living together before marriage
  - same-sex relationships

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## Musical Instruments and Appropriate Music

“Historically, the Christian religion has been opposed to musical instruments. This has been largely based on Jesus’ words, ‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him’ (John 4:23).

“The extensive use of instrumental music in the Old Testament is in contrast to the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup> In the time of Jesus, the apostles, and throughout the history of the Anabaptist faith, musical instruments have never been accepted.

### In the New Testament

“In the New Testament no reference is made to instrumental music in the church. However, there are references and exhortations to simple voice singing as a means of worship and edification.”<sup>2</sup>

- John 4:23–24            Worship God in spirit and in truth
- Acts 17:24–25            God is not worshipped by men’s hands
- Hebrews 13:15            God is honored by the fruit of our lips
- Colossians 3:16            Singing with grace in the heart
- Ephesians 5:19–20        Christian worship from the heart

### In the Old Testament

- Amos 6:1, 5                Woe to those that take pleasure in them
- Isaiah 5:11–14            Used in worldly entertainment
- Ecclesiastes 2:8–11        Solomon did not find satisfaction in them

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<sup>1</sup> *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 266–267

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 267

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## Additional scriptures

- Mark 14:26                      The example of Jesus and the disciples
- Acts 16:25                      The example of Paul and Silas
- James 5:13                      Pray and sing

**Additional study**        *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 266–268

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## Questions

1. Does instrumental music take away from the gift of singing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do we worship God in spirit and in truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What is the danger in listening to music of the world? If we listen to music that is not wholesome, how can we be delivered from it? Discuss 2 Corinthians 6:17.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How do we determine what is appropriate music for worship services? for special services or occasions?

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## Photography

The principle of simplicity dictates a life without unnecessary encumbrances. Photography adds nothing to Christian fervency but rather subtracts from it. There are several reasons why nonconformed believers should reject photography.

- 1 John 2:15–17            The lust of the eye and the pride of life are of the world
- Romans 1:25              Admiring the creature more than God
- Luke 16:15                That which men esteem is an abomination to God
- Exodus 20:4              Danger of idolatry
- Isaiah 2:11–18            Pride does not please God

**Additional study**        *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 266  
Art. 15, General Conference 1967, *Conference Reports*  
Art. 6, General Conference 2015, *Conference Reports*

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### Questions

1. How much would accepting photography for any and all purposes take us away from the humble, nonconformed way of life taught by the Scriptures?

2. Discuss the terms used in the conference decisions about photography:
  - self-gratification
  - sentimental purposes
  - entertainment purposes
  - vain purposes
  - a snare and peril
  - idolatry (“making and worshipping of idols may include photographs”)
  
3. What is the difference between photography for pleasure and vanity, and using a camera as a tool? Describe what may constitute necessary uses of photography.
  
4. Discuss why we should refrain from pictures and portraits of friends, family, or others.

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# Sample Lesson for Bible Study

## The Church of God

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“The church is the body of Jesus Christ, who is its foundation and head. It is comprised of those who have been born again and have joined the visible church through water baptism.”<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Corinthians 12:13                      Entrance by the Spirit
- Ephesians 2:19–22                      The household of saints
- Ephesians 4:4–6                        One united, visible body
- 1 Corinthians 12:14–18                Every member contributes

### The church belongs to Christ

“The believer’s appreciation for the church is also based on his understanding of what the church is to Christ. He recognizes that she is the beloved Savior’s bride, and, with this vision, he loves her, too.”<sup>2</sup>

- Acts 20:28                                He purchased her
- Matthew 16:16–18                      Christ is the foundation
- Colossians 1:18                         He is the head, she is the body
- Ephesians 5:25–27                      He sanctifies and cleanses her
- Ephesians 4:11–13                      He provides gifts for her edification

### The church is known by

- John 13:35                                Her love
- Matthew 28:19–20                      Her outreach
- 1 Corinthians 1:10                      Her unity
- 1 John 1:7                                Fellowship among members
- 1 Corinthians 12:25–27                Care for one another
- Acts 2:41–42                            Pure doctrine
- Proverbs 11:14                         Security and safety

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Faith*, p. 35

<sup>2</sup> *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, p. 167

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## The doctrine of a united, visible church does not exclude anyone

- Revelation 22:17      An invitation

The purpose of the church is diverse: to glorify God, shelter the saved, preach the gospel, and be a light to the world.

**Additional study**      *Bible Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 164–184

*Principles of Faith*, pp. 35–37

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### Questions

1. What are the blessings and responsibilities of being a member of the church of God?
2. Discuss: Individual members may have varied views about matters but are able to work together in unity.
3. Discuss the ways in which the church provides safety and security to her members.
4. Discuss the responsibilities of the ministers and deacons and what they provide for the church through their faithful labors.
5. What applications of doctrine need to be strengthened to remain the true, visible church of God?
6. How is the Great Commission accomplished in church of God? (Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:15).

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## Godly Submission

Peter alludes to submission numerous times: submission to the government, wives to husbands, younger to older, servants to masters, and each of us to one another. We cannot escape this principle of our faith. There is a humility that must be alive within us that enables us to graciously submit to one another both because of, and regardless of, the differences in order that God has established.

**1 Peter 2:13-15** Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

**3:1-2** Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

**7** Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers not hindered.

**5:3** Neither as being lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock.

**5** Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

All must submit. Children submit to their parents, wives to their husbands, husbands to the Lord, congregational leaders to the authority of the church, and all of us are to be subject to each other and to God. Godly submission requires us to humble ourselves before our fellowman. Pride can often make us view certain people as inferior to us because of age, social status, or our perception of their Christian life. This often happens subconsciously and can grow into something that inhibits spiritual growth. If we lend equal value to the insight and advice of each of our brethren, regardless of age and nationality, we will have much more success in life.

In many countries, elders receive much respect from the younger. It can look as though the old at times make selfish demands of the young, yet the young still submit. Has the lifestyle in the US and Canada over the past number of generations dimmed our

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vision as to what real submission is? Is it possible to keep the proper submission to God if our submission to those about us is diminished?

When Peter encourages husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, what is he talking about? Is there a submission of opinion, emotion, and authority that should be exercised by the husbands as they consider that their wives are possessors of the Holy Spirit? They have needs that ought not to be ignored by the husband even if it requires him to unbend from what he sees as the perfect path. There are times when a husband must submit his will to the godly advice of his wife, remembering that the Lord provided a help that was meet for his needs including warning him of dangers that he is blind to.

God blesses the order He has put in place, but it seems that His blessings are withheld somewhat if a father demands submission from his children. Demanding submission is much different from teaching proper respect for authority. Children must be taught at a young age about authority and consequences, but the outcome will be much better if those children learn to obey authority out of respect versus obeying out of fear. Fear works in darkness, and those who submit solely because of fear will often undermine authority when given a chance. Those who submit because of genuine respect and love will find stability and security in authority and will work to support it. Likewise, a husband who demands submission from his wife will not find the same security in his home as a husband whose wife submits to him out of respect for him and God's order.

Submission to the authority of the church does not mean to simply adhere grudgingly to perceived rules. It means believing in the church and trusting her without reserve. When we are truly submitted, we find that we see the church guidelines for what they are—not rules, but guiding principles that have been put in place out of love and concern.

## Questions for thought and discussion

1. Is submission a matter of the will or of the spirit? Or is there no real difference?
2. Can I be insubmissive in something without being insubmissive in everything?
3. Is there ever a time to say; “This is good enough. I have submitted as far as I can. I can't submit further in this matter”?
4. How do you reprove a brother for insubmission?
5. Discuss: A group project works best when everyone is willing to give their ideas and opinions. How do we openly give an opinion and just leave it when it is not accepted? Is it insubmission when we refuse to speak up or offer our input out of fear of what others will think or of being rejected?
6. Is there such a thing as submitting to our brethren against our will?
7. Is there ever a time to push our point, or will it all work out for the best if we speak once and leave the rest to God?

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## Living a Practical Christian Life

True Christianity must be practiced in the real world. Some may have the view that it is only our spirit that matters—what we do is not as important. But the Bible is full of teachings on the importance of proper behavior. The Apostle Peter points out many things that must be brought into submission if our Christian life is to be considered genuine.

**1 Peter 1:13** Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

**22** See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

**2:1-2** Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

**11-13** Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

**17-18** Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

**3:1** Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.

**3-4** Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

**7-9** Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge ... Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

**4:8-9** And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

**2 Peter 1:5-9** And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

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A 102 year-old runner was recently interviewed. He was asked how he was able to do this at an age at which most people are fragile. He answered, “I don’t run because I can, I can because I run.” It took a deliberate effort on his part to be able to run at his age.

Some people are naturally inclined to be hospitable. Others are not. If we are not inclined that way, should we, like the runner, practice hospitality whether we feel like it or not? If we do this, will it eventually become part of my nature? How often do we neglect to cultivate good works because we have no inner inspiration to do so? It seems that the best way to do these things would be to have fervent desire within that leaves us almost without choice. Most of us have not found this to be the case.

The writings of the apostles lead us to believe that their life of sacrifice and suffering was not automatic. They made hard choices. They denied self. They sometimes faced the future with misgivings and fear. Sometimes we will have no inner compulsion to do the right thing, but the need will still be there. Some say, “I don’t have a conviction on that.” Sometimes, we must put our faith in the teachings of the Bible and the convictions of our forefathers despite not having a personal feeling on something. Obedience, if practiced, will bring conviction.

To recognize that Christian living includes practical works is not diminishing the need of the Spirit. It enhances the relationship between the Spirit and us. It proves that the Spirit working in our heart has bent our will to His will, and our life is in harmony with Him. Our devotion to God is proved by what we are doing and how we behave when no one else is watching.

The Bible teaches us to love our brethren, to be courteous, show pity, be hospitable, and have compassion. These, and other virtues, are the lubricant that make life go smoothly among us.

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works ... But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:18–20).

### **Questions for thought and discussion**

1. Does God hold me responsible to identify proper behavior in my daily life and act accordingly, or is it better to go by inspiration?
2. Is ignorance an excuse that justifies me before God?
3. Discuss: Love is an action verb. It is more than just thoughts and prayers. If we love our fellow man, there will be practical works that show we care.
4. What is the value in doing the right thing even if we do not feel like doing it?
5. How important is it to carefully cultivate Christian character? Will others overlook inconsistencies and feel the Spirit within?