

## LESSON 10

February 5, 2023

# Unit III. God's Call and Its Responsibilities

## Wisdom and Foolishness

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 25:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

### KEY VERSE

Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1:28-29, KJV)

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God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:28-29, NIV)

### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Contrast God's wisdom with the foolishness of people.
- Affirm the wisdom in following Jesus Christ.
- Perform actions accordingly as you are strengthened by Jesus.

### \*KEY TERMS

**Foolishness** (verse 18)—Greek: *mória* (mo-ree'-ah): folly; absurdity.

**Weak** (verse 27)—Greek: *asthenés* (as-then-ace'): without strength; feeble; sick; helpless.

**Wise** (verse 19)—Greek: *sophos* (sof-os'): learned; skilled; clever; cultivated.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### INTRODUCTION

Many people can recall childhood playground competitions that involved team captains selecting members for their respective teams. To increase the odds of winning, each team leader would try to select the very best players available. In a similar way, God chooses people all the time, but with one huge exception: God doesn't require the best,



## The Biblical Context

Paul writes that the cause for the division within the church is a general misunderstanding of the heart of the Gospel, the message of the Cross (see 1 Corinthians 1:18–3:4). What does it take to deliver the Gospel effectively? Impressive titles and degrees? A great voice? A winning personality? Superior intelligence? No. The message of the Gospel does not require any of these. God’s approach is not like the world’s way of thinking. Unlike the world, God never seeks to impress. Souls are not won to the kingdom because of the impressive qualities of the messenger or the hearer. The Gospel message is not reserved for intellectuals. Many Jews and Greeks rejected the idea of a crucified Savior. They preferred one who appeared powerful, influential, and wealthy—a messiah who would be a conqueror of enemy forces and nations rather than a commoner to be humiliated and crucified. Setting aside such human expectations, Jesus came for the purpose of giving His life to pay the penalty for human sin. It is the wisdom of God to use that sacrifice to justify sinners. Without faith in Jesus, the human mind can neither fathom God, nor approach Him, nor receive eternal salvation.

the brightest, or the most highly skilled. Because of His own self-sufficiency, God often chooses the least likely candidates to accomplish His purposes. Why? Because, by the enablement of His Spirit, God can qualify the unqualified. That is why He said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in [human] weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV). God does not rely on human eloquence, intelligence, or giftedness—only on His own wisdom and power. His chief work is the saving of souls, which He accomplishes by the simple preaching of the Gospel by His own chosen vessels.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### By Foolishness

*(1 Corinthians 1:18-21)*

#### KJV

**18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**

**19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.**

**20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?**

**21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**

#### NIV

**18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being**

**saved it is the power of God.**

**19 For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”**

**20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**

**21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.**

Paul explains that the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—specifically the Cross and the Crucifixion—is the power of God. Paul confessed that God did not send him to baptize people for the sake of making converts, but to preach the Gospel with simplicity, without diminishing the power of the Cross of Christ that leads to eternal salvation (see verse 17). Aware of Jewish expectations about the Messiah, Paul wrote that the preaching of the Gospel is the powerful revelation of God’s power to save, despite appearing as foolishness to those who choose to perish in their sin (**verse 18**). Supporting his claim, Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14, in which God vows to astound those who have no true love or devotion for Him and seek to know Him based on empty religion, wisdom, and intelligence (**verse 19**). The greatest minds on Earth cannot comprehend or explain what God has done (**verses 20-21**). Paul explains the different effects of the preaching of the Gospel. Some anticipated a highly intellectual rendering of God’s plan. Others expected a royal messiah or military conqueror. Yet, God sent a Messiah who gave His life and rose from the dead—foolishness to those who miss the spiritual meaning of the sacrifice. The impact or effect for those who believe is salvation through Christ to God; and for those who count it as foolishness, it is sin leading to a final condemnation from God.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Think about your own conversion story. What moved you to finally accept the Gospel? What did it take to win you to the kingdom?**

### **By Faith** (*1 Corinthians 1:22-25*)

#### **KJV**

**22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:**

**23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;**

**24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.**

**25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

#### **NIV**

**22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,**

**23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

**25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.**

Many Greeks and Jews who had their own ideas and notions about the Christ and how He would come were inclined to reject Him (see **verse 22**). Some looked for specific signs and wonders. Others looked for a military conqueror who would bring about the restoration

of David's throne. Still, others preferred convincing intellectual arguments. Most rejected the idea of an executed "criminal" and the claim of a bodily resurrection. For them, it was a leap of faith they were unwilling to take. In their zeal to know God on their own terms, they completely failed to grasp Him at all. Knowing God begins with accepting that no one can comprehend the mind and processes of God (see Isaiah 55:8-9). Paul preached the message of a crucified Christ—a message that found its mark only in the hearts of those who were ready to receive the fullness of God's grace by faith (verse 23). For the caller of God, believing Jews and Gentiles alike (verse 1), that which is a stumbling block for some becomes a stepping-stone to God (verse 24a). In Christ, everyone who believes receives access to the power and wisdom of God (verse 24b). Paul plainly stated that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisest of men, and God's weakness is stronger than the mightiest of men (verse 25). Those who believe to the point of confession and repentance are led by the Spirit from sin into a life of salvation. By His wisdom and might, God guides and empowers them to overcome future obstacles and challenges.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Share a faithful experience that God empowered you to overcome. What earthly wisdoms had failed?

### **By Frailty (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)**

#### **KJV**

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

#### **NIV**

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,

29 so that no one may boast before him.

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from

**God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**

**31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”**

Paul called Corinthian believers to reflect on their own salvation experience. He noted that by most standards, most would not be counted as wise, socially influential, or of privileged upbringing (verse 26). Paul’s primary point here is that the strength of one’s human aptitude and background does not make that person more acceptable to God. No skill or ability can substitute or replace Jesus’ work on Calvary. If that were the case, then common and ordinary people would have no hope of knowing God (verse 27). According to the Scriptures (Old and New Testaments), God has chosen people from every pathway of life—the strong and the weak, the intellectual and the simple, the wealthy and the poor. Because He possesses all things and has all power, God abides with those who are low in status by society’s standards, as well as those who are flattened or at the bottom, despised or hated, and overlooked (verse 28a). Ironically, it is the despised and the rejected whom God often chooses for displaying His power of salvation. Why? Because they reflect His power by amazing and putting to shame conventional thought and wisdom. Although viewed as frail, they are mighty in the Lord. It is a blessing that God offers salvation not based on top achievements, but totally from Himself, through Jesus’ death (verses 28b-29). Therefore, believers glory in God (verse 31) and not of themselves—for God gathered each one to Himself through Christ by His wisdom, making them righteous, holy, and redeemed (verse 30).

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Reflect on the limitations of your own ability and the fact that, regardless of what you have done and what you do not have, God still saved you for His glory. Who are the most likely candidates to relate to your personal testimony of salvation?**

### **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

God’s grace is so amazing that it continues to puzzle those who think they are qualified to analyze and comprehend God. For generations, people have tried in vain to create their own plans and pathways to salvation based on what seems reasonable in their own minds. Salvation begins and ends with God’s love, grace, and wisdom. No living soul, past or present, has ever imagined a better plan of salvation than the one God has already given through Jesus Christ.

### **YOUR LIFE**

God chose to save you. In so doing, He has also chosen to use you and your testimony for His glory. Reflecting on what God did for you through Jesus Christ should impact your daily life—your spiritual devotion, actions, giving, and service in His name. Does it?

### **YOUR WORLD!**

God reaches people through people. The world will not know of God’s grace unless the people of God share it. From today’s discussion, reembrace your personal testimony and share it freely in person or on social media. Someone needs to hear it.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we thank You for Your amazing grace. You consider us despite every weakness and human limitation we may possess. Somehow You find ways to use us that give us dignity and purpose and bring You glory and honor. For this we thank You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: in this world of fake news and false narratives, whom can you trust for encouraging, reliable truth?

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, February 6	"God's Children and Heirs"	(Galatians 4:1-7)
TUESDAY, February 7	"A Holy Nation"	(Exodus 19:1-8)
WEDNESDAY, February 8	"Abide in Christ"	(John 15:1-14)
THURSDAY, February 9	"Chosen by Christ"	(John 15:15-27)
FRIDAY, February 10	"Be Holy"	(Leviticus 19:2-4, 9-18)
SATURDAY, February 11	"Keep God's Statutes in Holiness"	(Leviticus 20:22-26)
SUNDAY, February 12	"Kindle God's Gift within You"	(2 Timothy 1:3-14)

### NOTES

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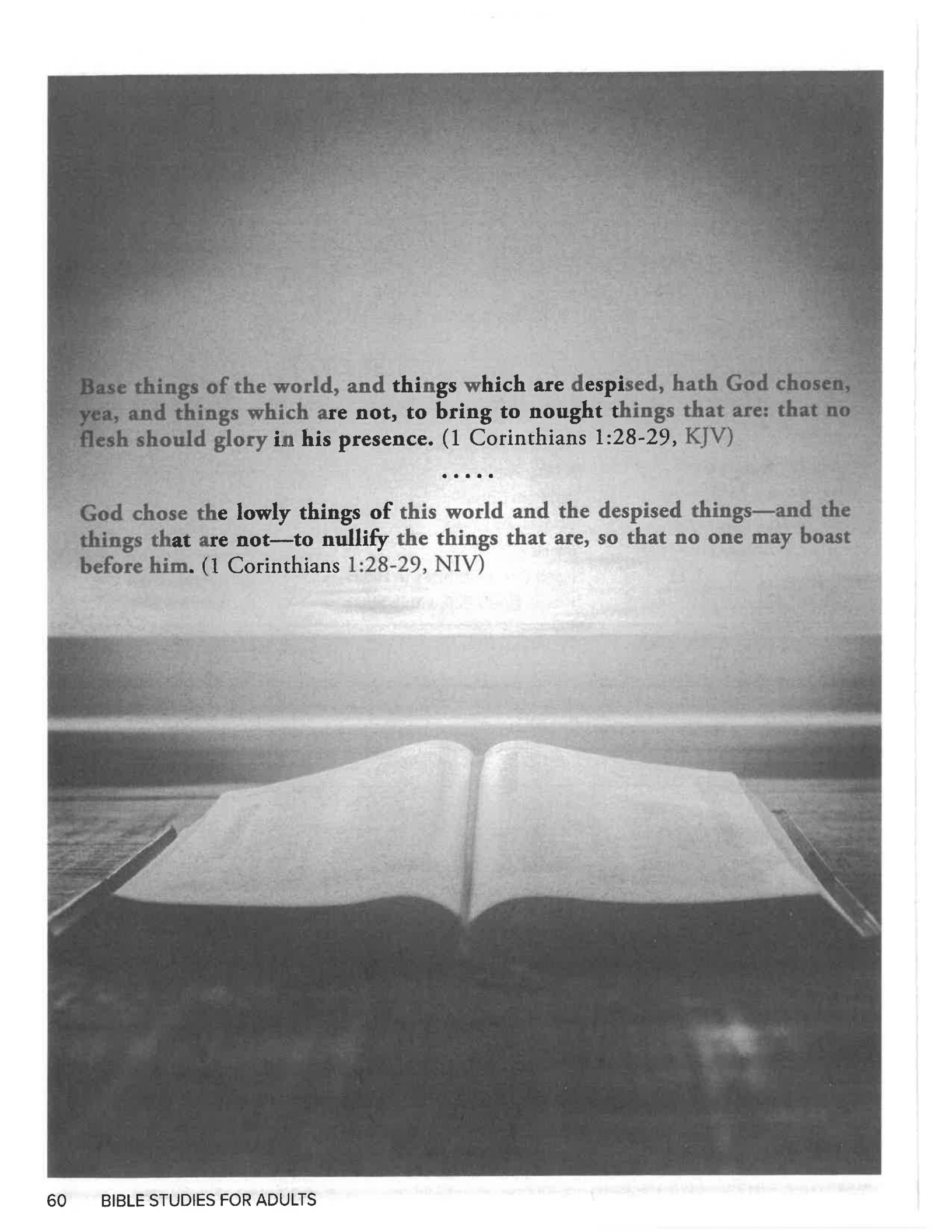
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An open Bible lies on a dark surface, possibly a beach, with the sun setting in the background, creating a soft glow over the water and sky. The Bible is open to two pages, and the text is printed in a serif font.

**Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1:28-29, KJV)**

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**God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:28-29, NIV)**

## LESSON 11

February 12, 2023

# Unit III. God's Call and Its Responsibilities Trust and Encouragement

DEVOTIONAL READING: John 15:1-14

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

PRINT PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

## KEY VERSE

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13, KJV)

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What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13, NIV)

## LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Examine the holy callings of Paul and Timothy.
- Sense the reassurance that is given to those whom God calls.
- Identify and receive the good treasure that God entrusts.

## \*KEY TERMS

**Called (verse 9)**—Greek: *metakaleó* (met-ak-al-eh'-o): called from one place to another; summoned; invited; sent for.

**Faith (verse 5)**—Greek: *pistis* (pis'-tis): belief; trust; confidence; fidelity; faithfulness.

**Power (verse 7)**—Greek: *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is): (miraculous) might, strength; force; ability.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

## INTRODUCTION

The simple saying “Each one, reach one” summarizes the message of discipling others, winning new believers, and leading them on to victory and maturity in Christ. God has created us to touch the lives of others through relationship, friendship, fellowship, and other human connections. Paul was committed to the practice of touching others' lives to influence them for godly purposes. Often it seems that modern believers are content to live for themselves—pursuing their own dreams and satisfying their own needs—with no thought





## The Biblical Context

Contextually, Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy from a Roman prison (see verse 17) as he was anticipating his own execution (see 4:6-8). Paul's statement in verse 9—that God “saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace”—echoes the lesson quarter's theme, “Chosen, Not Choice,” and emphasizes that salvation is rooted in grace, not human merit. Again, as in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Paul draws a contrast between the “shame” associated with “suffering” and “the power of God” (see verses 8, 12). Here, Paul references the shame of imprisonment (although he was no criminal). Elsewhere, Paul boasts in his suffering (see 2 Corinthians 11:16-33). Believers should never be ashamed of suffering for Christ. Like Paul, we should rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for the Lord's sake and find encouragement from the faithful who went before us and were freely willing to sacrifice anything necessary for God's glory.

of improving or assisting the development of others. Timothy's life was shaped by the faith of his mother and grandmother, and by the influence of Paul. Likewise, your development through life has been aided and assisted by someone's example or helping hand. Jesus said, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Stop and consider whose lives you are touching. What meaningful deposit are you making into someone else's life?

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Remember the Call/Work (2 Timothy 1:3-6)

#### KJV

**3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;**

**4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;**

**5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.**

**6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.**

#### NIV

**3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.**

**4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.**

**5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.**

**6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**

Paul expressed gratitude as he prayed frequently for Timothy, his son in the faith, who was a leader in the church (verse 3). Paul and Timothy had labored together in ministry and likely parted in tears at some point prior to Paul's arrest. Paul gives a glimpse into the closeness of their bond as he mentions the joy he would feel at the opportunity to see Timothy once again

(verse 4). The apostle credits the depth of Timothy's faithfulness to the spiritual influence of his mother and grandmother. Genuine faith should not be hidden; it should first touch the lives of one's family and those who know them best. The fruit of Lois's and Eunice's influence was a gifted young church leader who would touch many other souls for the kingdom (verse 5). Paul left Timothy in Ephesus sometime between his first imprisonment in Rome and his later arrest and return to Rome (see Acts 28:16-31). How gratified Paul must have been to note Timothy's development into a fine, godly young man. Rather than rest on past and present virtues, Paul challenged Timothy to seek God with greater passion by stirring up the spiritual gift that was imparted and confirmed in him with the laying on of hands (verse 6b). Because it is not enough to merely rejoice and reflect upon the gift of God, Paul urged Timothy to "fan the flame"—that is, to put the gift to work (see James 2:17; Matthew 25:14-30).

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Name some ways that you can "fan the flame" and stir up the gift that God has given you. Be as specific as possible. Your sharing might help someone else.

### **Work the Call—Do (2 Timothy 1:7-10)**

#### **KJV**

**7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**

**8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;**

**9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,**

**10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:**

#### **NIV**

**7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.**

**8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.**

**9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,**

**10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**

Because of timid fear or embarrassment, many believers are content to simply mark time—in the same place and position—without ever reaching higher to grow stronger and more

effective in whatever God has called them to do. Paul is not speaking to Timothy of prideful or covetous ambition, but about the willingness to suffer and sacrifice to grow in holiness and spiritual impact. While there is no mention of Timothy's being timid in this moment, Paul knew that the road ahead would be filled with trials and triumphs. Paul therefore encouraged Timothy by focusing his attention not on the difficulties of ministry and the Christian life, but on the importance of spiritual power, love, and soundness of mind (**verse 7**). These three traits are necessary tools for doing the work that God has called every Christian to complete for His glory. Regardless of the weight of their respective callings, believers need strength (capacity), love (compassion), and sound minds (competency) to carry out the mission. Spiritual fearlessness is evidenced by a bold, unashamed witness for Christ (**verse 8a**). Timothy's passion for sharing the Gospel would be fueled by and sustained by the power of God (**verse 8b**). Only by grace alone has God granted believers the privilege and responsibility of living a holy life (**verse 9**). No one has ever earned or deserved the right to be saved, but God offers salvation anyway to those who believe in Christ Jesus and the life He brings through the Gospel (**verse 10**).

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**What are the trials and sufferings faced by modern-day believers? What are some of the specific fears that discourage people from living for God?**

## **Embrace the Call (2 Timothy 1:11-14)**

### **KJV**

**11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.**

**12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**

**13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**

**14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.**

### **NIV**

**11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.**

**12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.**

**13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.**

**14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.**

Given all that Paul suffered over the course of his ministry, he could have taken a tone of despair and defeat in his letter to Timothy. Paul, however, was fully confident in the Lord. He gives no hint of regret or despair. Therefore, he encourages Timothy with his own testimony and example of faith and steadfast perseverance despite the difficulties. Paul explains that his ministry as preacher, apostle, and teacher to the Gentiles is a divine appointment and God-given mission (**verse 11**). Paul shared that he was willing to embrace his calling even unto suffering and death (**verse 12a**), and encouraged Timothy to hold firmly to his own calling in the same way. Paul was unashamed of his sufferings because of his unwavering faith in God that was able to keep him until the day of the final judgment (**verse 12b**). Paul was confident that all his labors and sufferings for God's sake would be kept in account for the final audit on that great day when all must stand before God. Therefore, the apostle offered to Timothy the pattern of his own life as a godly example to follow (**verse 13**). Timothy had received a rich deposit from the witness of his family and from the mentorship of Paul himself; his task was to guard the gift with the help of God's Spirit dwelling within him, guiding and preserving him as he embraced the call of God upon his life (**verse 14**). With the aid of the Holy Spirit, one must simply keep on pursuing God, while allowing God to make and mold us into what He would have us to be.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Which person in your life has had the greatest impact in motivating you to follow God?**

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

We all have a holy calling directly from God for His glory. He has a plan and purpose for each of our lives. We must submit to it. Embracing the beauty of God's plan in your life doesn't require you to create a plan, only to submit to the one that God already designed for you. Place your trust in God and let Him guide you to it.

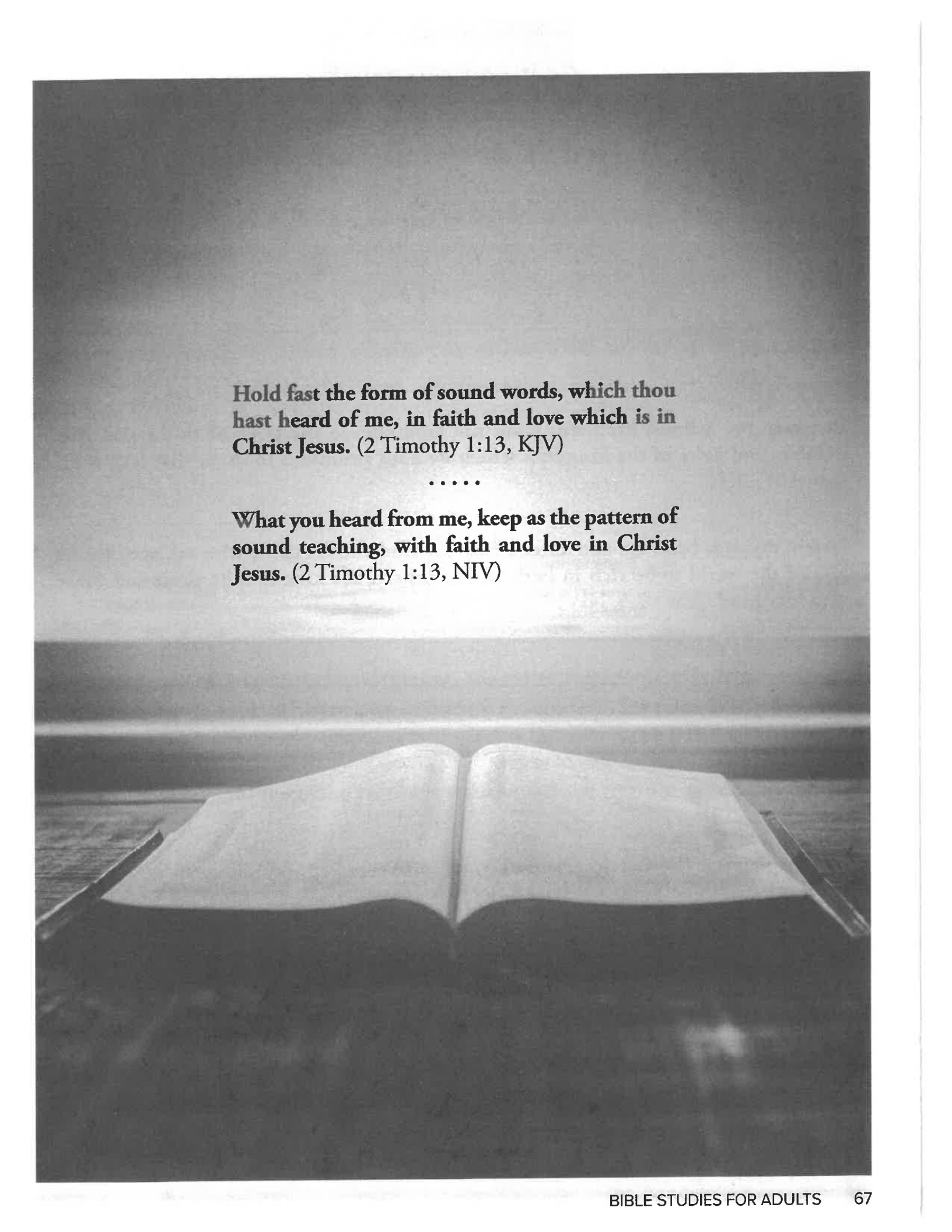
## **YOUR LIFE**

Have you fully embraced God's calling on your life? Doing so requires a clear understanding of what God has called you to do. Understand that God has called and gifted believers to do more than preach the Gospel. Some teach, some organize, some help, some evangelize, some sing—but all serve. Most callings are supportive in nature; none are any less holy and needed than another.

## **YOUR WORLD!**

One of the greatest problems in the world is the failure of those whom God has called to rise and complete the task to which God has called them. Some are unwilling because of their anger toward God or someone else. Others are too lazy or timid. And many are still debating whether to make a total commitment to God. Alone, you cannot change the whole world, but you can make a difference in the lives of many by stirring up your gifts and touching lives, one person at a time.



An open Bible lies on a dark beach, its pages glowing from the light of a setting or rising sun on the horizon. The sky is a gradient of dark to light, with the sun's glow creating a bright horizontal band across the middle. The water of the ocean is visible in the background, meeting the horizon line.

**Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13, KJV)**

.....

**What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13, NIV)**

## LESSON 12

February 19, 2023

# Unit III. God's Call and Its Responsibilities

## The Rich and the Poor

DEVOTIONAL READING: Amos 5:7-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: James 2:1-12

PRINT PASSAGE: James 2:1-12

### KEY VERSE

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (James 2:5, KJV)

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Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5, NIV)

### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explore the dangers of showing partiality and favoritism.
- Imagine what it feels like to be poor in the world yet rich in faith—and the benefits and challenges of such.
- Identify and celebrate the God-given value of one another.

### \*KEY TERMS

**Favoritism (verse 1)**—Greek: *prosópolémpsia* (pros-o-pol-ape-see'-ah): partiality; “respect of persons” (KJV).

**Judges (verse 4)**—Greek: *krités* (kree-tace'): magistrates; rulers.

**Poor (verse 2)**—Greek: *ptóchos* (pto-khos'): beggarly; destitute.

**Royal law (verse 8)**—Greek: *basilikos* (bas-il-ee-kos') and *nomos* (nom'-os): compounded, it means “law” in general as connected with a king; kingly law, divine law.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### INTRODUCTION

God has called every believer to the important task of treating others as he or she desires to be treated—with dignity, fairness, and love. Throughout the Old and New



## The Biblical Context

Certain aspects of the book of James appear to indicate a Jewish-Christian audience, the spiritual heirs of Israel. Note the address: "To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1, NRSV), and the use of the Greek word *synagogue* (translated as "assembly" in the KJV and NRSV [2:2]). The writer, the apostle James, was the natural brother of Jesus and a leader in the early church. Surprisingly, James rarely mentions Jesus; only 1:1 and 2:1 refer to Jesus by name. The letter seems more concerned with practical Christian living (e.g., compassion toward others, godly conversation, sharing with others, etc.) than with Christology and the tenets of the faith. For James, the truest expression of Christian faith is evidenced by godly living rather than keeping rules and rituals. God's command is that Christians would love and serve each other—particularly those in need.

Testaments, God commands His people to welcome strangers and serve the poor, orphans, and widows, along with those who may be hungry, sick, or living on the margins of society. Such heartfelt acts of kindness are counted by God as more reliable measures of one's devotion than more obvious or public displays of spirituality such as eloquent prayers and generous offerings. True spiritual devotion is not necessarily measured by hours at church or Scripture memorization skills. Instead, God checks our lives for everyday demonstrations of love toward those who are often unable to repay the kindness. Christians are to extend graciousness toward others as if they are literally engaging angels or even the Lord Himself (see Hebrews 13:12 and Matthew 25:40).

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Be Careful (*James 2:1-4*)

#### KJV

**MY BRETHREN, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.**

**2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;**

**3 And ye have respect to him that wareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:**

**4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?**

#### NIV

**MY BROTHERS and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.**

**2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in.**

**3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"**

**4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?**

James directly challenges the practice of showing favoritism in church, warning the saints not to show extensive respect for one person over another (**verse 1**). James emphasized his point



by using an illustration. The gold ring and fancy clothes are those of a wealthy person contrasted with the dirty clothes of a poor person (**verse 2**). The Christian “assembly” or “meeting” is specifically a reference to any place where saints gather for worship. In James’s illustration, the rich man is offered the best available seat while the poor man is directed to sit on the floor (**verse 3**). **Verse 4** boldly confronts favoritism and discrimination in church, a practice which directly contradicts the Gospel. James says that Christians who differentiate among people based on appearances show themselves to be judges—and not for the sake of righteousness, but for evil (**verse 4**). There is no place for such partiality, especially among those who have come together to worship God. The reader should note that this passage does not discourage showing due honor or assistance to those who deserve it (e.g., elders, clergy, etc.). Rather, James challenges believers not to show special favor to one person over another based on social status, family background, or appearances. There are many unspoken questions the church must ask. Do we overlook or disregard anyone? Who is it that we routinely include or exclude? Are there individuals we help or refuse to help because we have placed ourselves in the judge’s seat, counting them as worthy or unworthy because of looks, speech, or past behaviors?

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What practices in the church encourage division?

## Be Courteous—Hearken (*James 2:5-8*)

### KJV

**5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?**

**6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?**

**7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?**

**8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:**

### NIV

**5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?**

**6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?**

**7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?**

**8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.**

James assures the readers that despite the firmness of his tone, he speaks in love. Continuing with the phrase “Listen, my dear brothers and sisters” (NIV), James emphasizes

his personal, relational connection with his audience (**verse 5a**). His goal is to demonstrate the seriousness of the practice of discriminating against the poor. Throughout the Scriptures, God has so closely identified Himself with the plight of the poor and lowly that, in His eyes, a casual disregard for them (in conversation, seating preference, etc.) is equal to despising or dishonoring not only them but also the Lord Himself (**verse 6a**). James presses the point further by challenging Christians to think more critically about exactly what they are doing. Are the recipients of their favor truly deserving of honor, or are they persons of low or questionable character? Specifically, he asks whether those who receive such favor are the same ones who exploit, mistreat, drag believers into courts (**verse 6b**), and even blaspheme the name of Christ (**verse 7**). James adds these details into the argument to emphasize the shallowness and contradiction of such favoritism, then calls the church to return to Christian love. In **verse 8**, James refers to the “royal law,” also known as the “Golden Rule,” a simple command from God emphasizing one’s loving his or her neighbor as oneself (**verse 8**). If anyone is unclear about how to treat anyone in the congregation, he or she would do well, says James, to refer to this law—treat the person as you wish to be treated. It’s that simple. Believers who live by the rule of kindness, grace, and mercy above religious ritual will do well in avoiding any appearance of favoritism.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Often acts of favoritism are not just one’s personal opinion, issue, or bias. How can we battle favoritism?

## **Be Cautious—Hear** (*James 2:9-12*)

### **KJV**

**9** But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

**10** For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

**11** For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

**12** So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

### **NIV**

**9** But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

**10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

**11** For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

**12** Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom.

James offers a final word of caution concerning favoritism—namely, those who engage in it are guilty of sin (**verse 9**). This charge comes after the reminder of the great commitment of

loving our neighbor. As in today's church, many Christians in James's day were very intentional and devout about obeying religious rules and laws to the letter without thinking, sometimes, about their personal responsibility to serve or support those outside their social or ethnic circle. For this reason, James emphasizes that a lawbreaker is a lawbreaker. A sinner is a sinner. One is not free to despise the poor, for example, and still be counted righteous, because failure to keep a single point of the law is like failure in keeping the whole law (**verse 10**). Adultery and murder are both violations of God's law. Whether one commits one sin or another, he or she is still counted as a lawbreaker in God's sight (**verse 11**). Thus, James recommends cautious consideration of the serious implications of sinning against others. Favoritism and discrimination are sins against God—just as serious as the transgressions of adultery and murder. Believers, therefore, must live as if God is taking note (**verse 12**). Those who live under God's law of grace should love under the law of grace. Christian love for God must be on display in the treatment of others. Discrimination (especially in church) violates Christianity's major tenet to regard others without partiality, loving God with the whole heart and loving others as oneself (see Matthew 22:39).

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Who are the people in your congregation who seem to receive preference or dishonor? What can you do to create a more welcoming atmosphere for everyone?**

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

James's warning against favoritism is an expression of God's love for all people and an affirmation of the worth of every living soul. There are no superstars or celebrities in God's house; God is the main attraction. The church should be a warm, welcoming place where believers from every social rank and background may gather to worship God and experience the love of God through others.

## **YOUR LIFE**

Are you aware of your own personal biases or prejudices? Everyone may have them but that doesn't make them okay with God. People tend to show preference to that which is familiar, and show discomfort or dishonor to what is different or unfamiliar to them. Examine your own heart carefully and confess with a prayer partner your tendencies to show favoritism. Pray that God will help you recognize the sin of such attitudes and lay them aside.

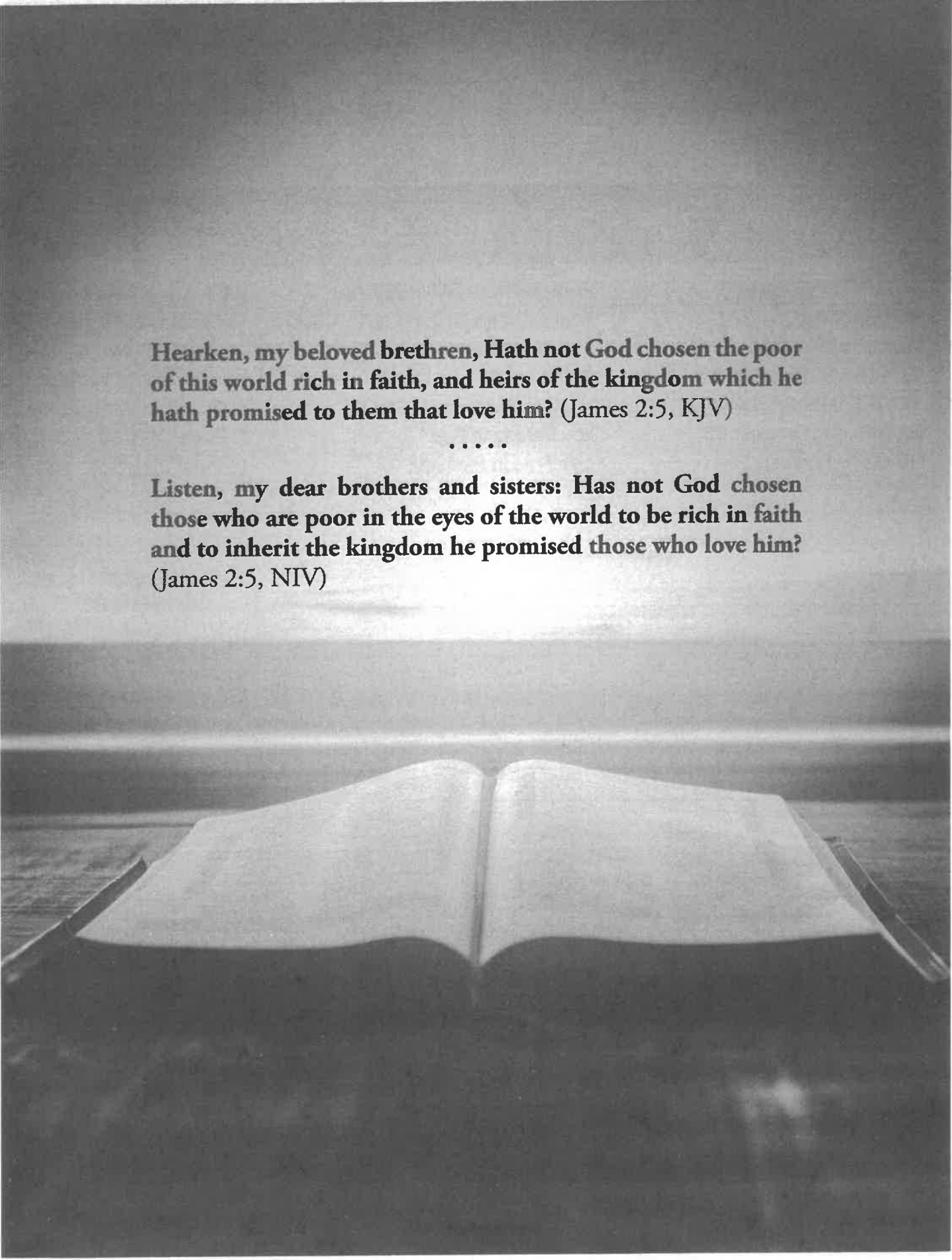
## **YOUR WORLD!**

Connect with others within your church to extend your reach to serving those in need. It is what God requires of every Christian. Remember that there is always more you can do.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Father, show us our sin and the errors in our actions and secret thoughts. Our highest desire is to please You, especially in what we do in Your name. Teach and lead us into more meaningful expressions of love for others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



An open Bible lies flat on a dark, reflective surface, possibly a beach at sunset. The pages are white and appear to have some text on them, though it is not legible. The background is a dark, gradient sky with a bright, glowing horizon line, suggesting a sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

**Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (James 2:5, KJV)**

.....

**Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5, NIV)**

## LESSON 13

February 26, 2023

# Unit III. God's Call and Its Responsibilities

## An Important Role

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 2:1-25

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:1-10

### KEY VERSE

**Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9, KJV)**

.....

**You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9, NIV)**

### LESSON AIMS

**As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:**

- Describe the significance of being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people” (see verse 9).
- Reflect on the responsibilities of being and living as a chosen people.
- Encourage others in building God's kingdom on the cornerstone of Christ.

### \*KEY TERMS

**Chosen (verse 4)—Greek: *eklektos* (ek-lek-tos’):** selected; chosen out; by implication, the favorite; of those chosen out by God for the rendering of a special service to Him.

**Hypocrisy (verse 1)—Greek: *hupokrisis* (hoop-ok’-ree-sis):** playacting; deceit; “hypocrisies” (KJV).

**Malice (verse 1)—Greek: *kakia* (kak-ee’-ah):** wickedness; vicious disposition; spite.

**\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**

### INTRODUCTION

How does one prove loyalty or deep devotion? Talk is cheap, but commitment can



### **The Biblical Context**

The first epistle of Peter addresses the testing of the believer's faith. Peter wrote this first epistle to comfort and encourage first-century Christians who were suffering intense religious persecution. The apostle's message to the church included a call to perseverance and unwavering faith. Peter was well acquainted with the sufferings associated with being a Christian in his day. During his ministry in Jerusalem, Peter had seen other believers being harassed and executed. He himself had been threatened, arrested, and beaten, yet he refused to back down or stop preaching, speaking, or ministering in the name of Jesus. His word to fellow believers was a call to holy living and an ever-increasing hunger and thirst for God demonstrated by a putting away of ungodliness—evil speaking, hatred, hypocritical living, and deception.

be measured in other ways. Most people can weigh or discern a person's interest in them by the time they devote to the relationship, the sacrifices they are willing to make, the joy or enthusiasm with which they pursue the other's presence, or the hardships or inconveniences they are willing to endure for the sake of being together. People are often willing to make costly personal sacrifices for a close family member such as a parent or a child, but many professing Christians are often altogether unwilling to bear any significant inconvenience for Christ's sake. You are God's special possession. He has already proved His commitment to you. The question now is this: how far are you willing to go to express your gratitude and commitment to Him?

### **ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT**

## **Living, Praising Stones** *(1 Peter 2:1-5)*

### **KJV**

**WHEREFORE LAYING** aside all malice, and

**all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,**

**2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:**

**3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.**

**4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,**

**5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.**

### **NIV**

**THEREFORE, RID** yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

**2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,**

**3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

**4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—**

**5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

Somehow millions of professing Christians have accepted the false notion that being a Christian is only about one's being willing to receive the Lord's blessings. They are completely disconnected from any awareness or concern with God's expectations of those who are recipients of His grace. God commands those who call Him their Lord and Savior to do what He desires for them—specifically, to live a godly life that reflects His holy character. Peter described the Christian life as a putting aside of some things to pursue what matters to God. There is no room in the believer's heart for malice (evil actions), guile (dishonesty), hypocrisies (phoniness), envies (covetousness, jealousy), or evil speaking (backbiting, slander, strife) (**verse 1**). Many Christians make long excuses for ungodly conversation and actions. God is not interested in excuses or justifications for sin, but He does note the behavior as an honest reflection of a person's real character. Instead of doing the ungodly things that may come easily, Christians should desire more of God—or, in Peter's words, desire the sincere milk (pure nutrient) of God's Word (**verse 2a**). Studying the Scriptures helps Christians to grow into spiritual maturity (**verse 2b**). Those who have already experienced God's goodness should seek Him more eagerly (**verse 3**). Peter then proceeds to describe God's spiritual house—individuals who come to the rejected "living Stone" (**verse 4**, NIV). The living stones (individual believers) offer acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (**verse 5b**). Whenever God's people gather to offer themselves as a spiritual sacrifice, together they create a spiritual house. God calls His people individually to serve Him in community. As we connect with other believers, each stone becomes that holy priesthood that God calls precious and acceptable to Him.

### **? WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**As living stones, why is it essential for us to connect with other believers?**

### **Light, Precious Stones (1 Peter 2:6-10)**

**KJV**

**6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**

**7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,**

**8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.**

**9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;**

**10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.**



## **NIV**

**6** For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

**7** Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

**8** and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

**9** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

**10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beginning in **verse 6**, Peter quotes two passages from the Old Testament. In quoting Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14, Peter makes an indirect reference to Israel as living stones (**verses 6, 8**). By identifying Jesus as the rejected cornerstone of God’s spiritual house (**verse 7**), Peter links the church to the fulfillment of the Old Testament image of God’s people. Peter cites Isaiah 28:16, noting that believers may place their trust securely in Jesus without risk of shame (**verse 6**). Cornerstones are essential to the building of any structure. For those who believe, the Stone is precious; but the Stone is disallowed or rejected by the disobedient (**verse 7**). Although some may stumble in disbelief or disobedience, Jesus remains the strongest, most prominent stone in the Lord’s house. Neither doubt nor unbelief can ever diminish Him (**verse 8**). Under the old covenant, only the priest could approach God. Now, God calls believers a royal priesthood, meaning that every believer can come before God freely and fearlessly, as members of His own house (**verse 9**). The section ends with a reminder of God’s grace and mercy. He is the precious stone who has called believers to declare His praises throughout the earth (**verse 10a**). Before Christ, mercy seemed so far out of reach; but through Christ, God has redeemed the world back to Himself (**verse 10b**). For this we give Him praise!

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**God has called His people to declare His praises. What are some legitimate ways that Christians can praise God both individually and publicly with other believers?**

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

Members of alumni organizations, sororities, fraternities, as well as families and political groups are often much bolder in boasting about or promoting their identity than many Christians. God expects His people to declare His glorious works through their testimonies. This is not the time for the church to be outdone by the world. The Good News of Jesus Christ is something to shout about!

## YOUR LIFE

Consider your salvation testimony. Regardless of your personal background (what you have or haven't done), you were born as a sinner in desperate need of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. You may not have a dramatic story of coming from a life of crime or illicit sin, but if you are truly saved you have a story to tell—a testimony of the eternal hope and security you now have in Christ.

## YOUR WORLD!

Many individuals want to impact the world by becoming a social-media influencer or a famous athlete or celebrity, but in time, fame diminishes, athletes lose their ability, and celebrities lose their star quality. There is a most lasting way to influence the world: by sharing your faith and winning at least one lost soul for the kingdom. You will never know how significant the impact of your witness to just one person can be.

## CLOSING PRAYER

God, Your blessed name is precious on Earth. We are grateful to You for the gift of Your grace and the redemption of our souls. Because of who You are and what You have done for us we glory and rejoice in Your presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

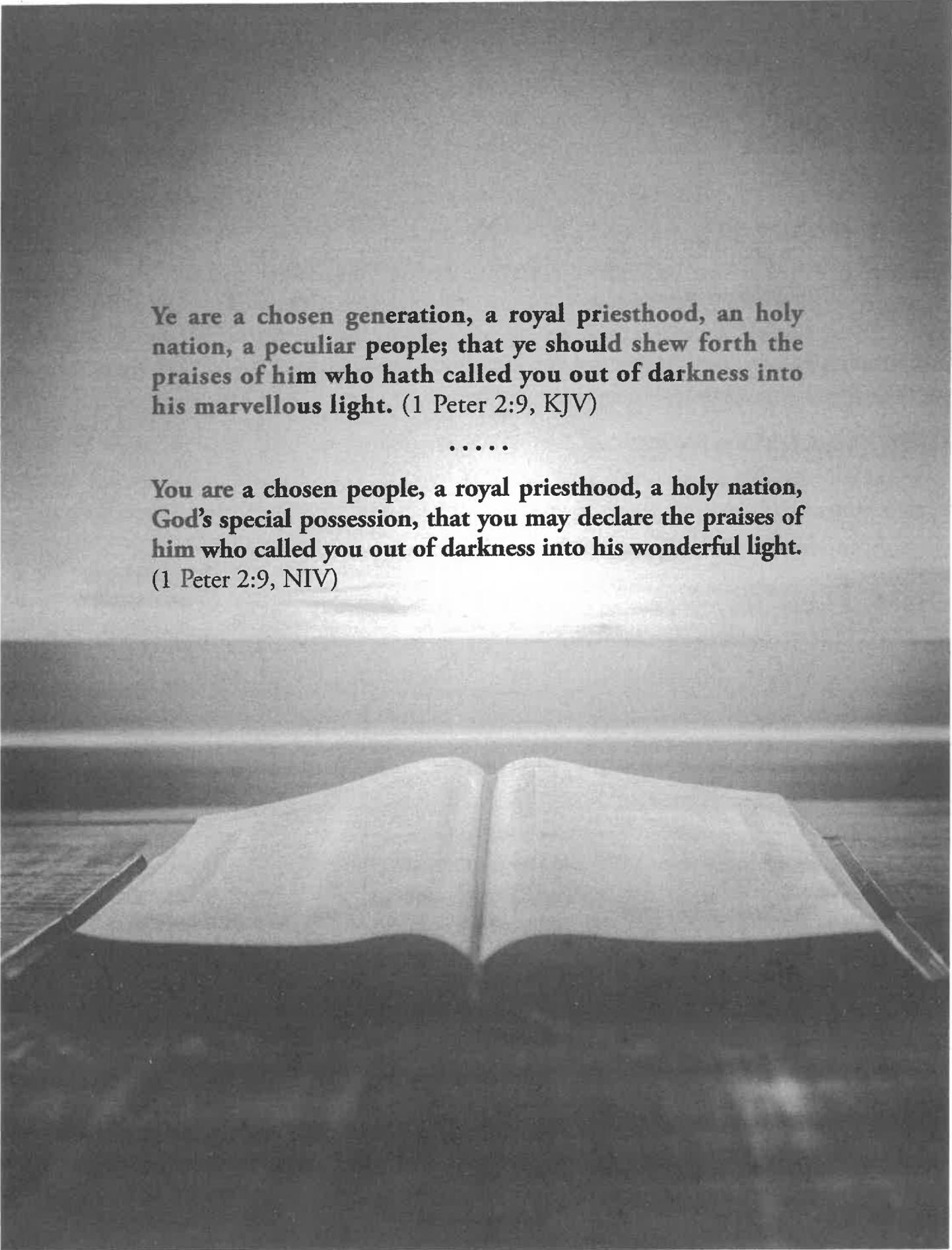
## CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider how you can walk more closely with God.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, February 27	"Lord, Hear My Prayer"	(Psalm 28)
TUESDAY, February 28	"Come to Me, You Who Are Weary"	(Matthew 11:25-30)
WEDNESDAY, March 1	"Jesus Shows Compassion"	(Matthew 14:13-21)
THURSDAY, March 2	"I Take Refuge in the Lord"	(Psalm 71:1-12)
FRIDAY, March 3	"I Will Proclaim God's Wondrous Deeds"	(Psalm 71:13-24)
SATURDAY, March 4	"God Rejoices when Sinners Repent"	(Luke 15:1-10)
SUNDAY, March 5	"A Rebellious Son Is Restored"	(Luke 15:11-24)



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