

LESSON 65

The Gift of Men

EPHESIANS 4:1-19



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD GAVE LEADERS AS GIFTS TO HELP THE CHURCH MATURE AND GROW

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ephesians 4:1–19 from the Scriptures or read story 143, “The Gift of Men,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Live a Life Worthy

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ dictionary
- ✓ a bottle of vitamins
- ✓ a small dumbbell
- ✓ a bag of chocolate
- ✓ a roll of dollar bills
- ✓ a Bible

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Losing All Sensitivity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ four blindfolds (for a large class you might want to double the number of blindfolds and gloves)
- ✓ one pair of surgical gloves
- ✓ one pair of latex kitchen gloves
- ✓ one pair of heavy work (or winter) gloves
- ✓ a variety of small objects such as a nickel, flat washer, piece of Velcro hook material, small piece of sponge, etc.
- ✓ an opaque bag

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

7. ACTIVITY TIME **10 MIN**

Shaking Hands

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER **5 MIN**

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON **20 MIN**

Obedience and the Gospel

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ✓ Bibles for the class

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

As Christians we are called to live lives worthy of our calling—After spending the first three chapters of his letter teaching the Ephesians about the magnificence of Christ and the power of his grace, in chapter 4 Paul turns to applying this teaching to their everyday lives. Paul tells them that as followers of Christ, they should make every effort to live in peace and kindness with one another. Sin divides, but Paul appeals for unity on the basis that all Christians share the same hope, the same faith, the same Spirit, the same baptism, and the same Lord (Ephesians 4:4–6).

God gave us leaders to help us grow and mature in Christ—Paul was aware that obeying the command to live in unity was not going to be easy. That is why Paul explains that God has given us leaders to help us grow and equip us for ministry (Ephesians 4:11). Paul goes on to explain that our leaders are gifts given by God to the church to prepare his people for service until we all reach unity and become mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:13). Until this happens, when we are with the Lord in heaven, no one can say they don't need the help of a God-ordained spiritual leader. In Hebrews, God makes our responsibility to our leaders clear when he says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Hebrews 13:17).

As believers we are called to live holy lives—Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live holy lives. When he tells them to no longer live like the Gentiles (Ephesians 4:17), he is referring to the unbelieving Gentiles who hardened their hearts and lost their sensitivity. They had become so familiar with sin that their consciences no longer bothered them; they were completely given over to sin. That can easily happen to us. The more violence or sensuality we expose ourselves to in the media, for instance, the more callous we become. Our hearts and consciences become dull and hard and we lose the ability to discern what is pleasing to God.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Callus

A callus is an area of tough skin that has built up on an area of the body where there is constant friction. Farmers get calluses on their hands from doing a lot of heavy work. Guitar players grow calluses on their fingertips from pressing down on the guitar strings. God gave us calluses on our hands and feet as a gift, to toughen up our bodies so they are not so easily hurt. But, if our consciences become callous, that is something different. If we keep sinning in an area or disregard God, soon we develop a callous on our conscience—a hard heart. Once our conscience is callous, once our heart is hard, we can sin without sorrow or concern about God.

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

In Ephesians 4, Paul turns to the practical issue of obedience, but the cross remains at the center. Although we need to obey and help one another obey, we do it for Christ. Our fellowship is designed to help us grow up into Christ, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13 NIV). We do not obey to become Christians; we obey to become more like Christ!

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ephesians 4:1–19 from the Scriptures or read story 143, "The Gift of Men," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Live a Life Worthy

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ dictionary
- ✓ a bottle of vitamins
- ✓ a small dumbbell
- ✓ a bag of chocolate
- ✓ a roll of dollar bills
- ✓ a Bible

Explain to the class that as Christians we are called to live a life worthy of our calling, but there will be deceivers who try to lure us away with worldly wisdom. Act out what a barker might say, trying to sell you the message listed next to the item below.

■ **Dictionary—Live Smarter**

(Example: “All you need in life, my friends, is knowledge. If you read this book and memorize the thousands of complicated words, you will have a knowledge that will make you the envy of the world.”)

■ **Vitamins—Live Longer**

(Example: “Start this vitamin program and you will have the most important thing in life—your health. Why struggle with sickness and die young when you can take these tiny little pills and live a long life?”)

■ **Dumbbell—Live Stronger**

(Example: “Become the envy of everyone who sees you and gain the kind of strength in your upper body so that no one can push you around ever again. Strength is the secret of life.”)

■ **Chocolate—Live Happier**

(Example: “Everybody knows that you can’t live forever, so why not enjoy the life you have left. Chocolate is the secret to happiness in life.”)

■ **Money—Live Without Worry**

(Example: “Money makes the world go round. If you have money you have everything. If you have money you can buy anything. Money—that’s what life is all about.”)

Act out the role of a pastor by pulling out the Bible and correcting the false promises of each item.

DICTIONARY—“Jesus said to [Thomas], ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

VITAMINS—“Jesus said to [Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:25–26).

DUMBBELL—“But he said to [Paul], ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

CHOCOLATE—“But [Jesus] answered [Satan], ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” ’ ” (Matthew 4:4).

MONEY—[Jesus taught the crowd:] “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money....Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:24, 31–33).

BIBLE—“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Conclusion: Until we get to heaven, we need the gift of teachers and leaders to teach us God’s Word and to help us grow toward God.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Losing All Sensitivity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ four blindfolds (for a large class you might want to double the number of blindfolds and gloves)
- ✓ one pair of surgical gloves
- ✓ one pair of latex kitchen gloves
- ✓ one pair of heavy work (or winter) gloves
- ✓ a variety of small objects such as a nickel, flat washer, piece of Velcro hook material, small piece of sponge, etc.
- ✓ an opaque bag

The object of this lesson is to demonstrate the process of desensitization.

Keep the objects for this lesson hidden in a bag. Blindfold four volunteers. Have three of the volunteers put on the gloves. Then, take one of the objects out of the bag and hand it to the volunteer wearing the work (or winter) gloves. Ask them to describe what it feels like to them. Pass the object on to the student wearing the kitchen gloves, then to the student wearing the surgical gloves, and finally to the volunteer wearing no gloves at all. Each time the child should describe what the object feels like.

You might consider having the object brought back to the children with the gloves and allowing them to take the gloves off and feel the objects with their bare hands to appreciate the difference. Draw them out as to how different the object feels without the gloves. Help the children appreciate the gift of touch as well and talk about how the gloves represent a hardened heart and conscience.

Ask the following questions:

■ **What does it mean to harden your heart?**

(When we repeatedly disobey God's Word we harden our hearts against God. The more often we disobey, the more we get accustomed to disobeying and the less our conscience objects. One day we find ourselves freely disobeying with hardly any guilt at all.)

■ **In what areas do kids struggle with losing their sensitivity to sin?**

(Disrespectful speech and treating brothers and sisters with anger are two ways. Here is a desensitization test: Imagine your life being secretly recorded on video and shown for the church's viewing on Sunday. Would you be more embarrassed and filled with guilt if they saw your sin than you are at home? If so, you might be getting desensitized to sin.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Shaking Hands

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of two people shaking hands. Under the drawing write the words of Ephesians 4: 3: “[Be] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Obedience and the Gospel

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Read through Ephesians 4 together. Write the headings for two columns on the board. Label the first column “Obedience” and list all the things Paul asks Christians to do. Label the second column “Grace” and list the references to Christ or grace. The point is to see how we are not simply to obey in our own strength apart from Christ and the work of his grace. Use these two lists as a way to talk about the life of holiness we are called to without forgetting the gospel and the grace of God that empowers us to obey.