

# Equipping the Saints: Putting God First

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

Ephesians 4:12

## 1 Lesson 1: Equipping the Saints

### BIBLE PASSAGE

"But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." - Luke 9:62

### GOAL

Emphasize being committed to serving God wholly and faithfully and appropriately applying each point.

### WORD STUDY

Redemption (Colossians 1:14)

"in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

- \* Colossians 1:13 - Paul used some keywords "rescued," "domain of darkness," transferred us to the kingdom."
- \* These words would point the Jew's memory back to the times when their forefathers were mistreated slaves in Egypt, and God sent them a deliverer through Moses to "rescue them from the domain of darkness" and transfer them to the promised land."
- \* In Colossians 1:14, Paul used the word "redemption," and it was commonly referred to as the purchase of a slave. God redeemed us (purchased us), that is freed us, by/through His Son.

### COMMITMENT - PUTTING GOD FIRST

- Being committed to God means I put the will of God first in my life, just as Jesus did (John 6:38; Luke 22:42). Serving God is a **choice I make every day** (Psalm 119:30; Joshua 24:15).
  - John 6:38; "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."
  - Luke 22:42; "saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."  
**Serving God is a choice I make every day**
  - Psalm 119:30; "I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances *before me*."
  - Joshua 24:15; "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- When I am committed to God, He expects 100% of my being. (Mark 12:28-31) Loving God with **all of** our heart, soul, mind, and strength requires us to focus our lives on Him entirely.
  - Mark 12:28-31; "One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; <sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
- When I commit to serving God, my relationship with Him comes before all others. (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26) My love and care for God must come first.
  - I should not allow my love for family or friends to interfere with my service to God. (Matthew 10:37; "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.")
  - The word "hate" in Luke 14:26 means having a preference over another, not detest or despise. ("If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.")
- When I commit myself to God, I put spiritual goals before physical goals (Colossians 3:1-3; Matthew 6:19-24).
  - The primary goals in my life become centered around my service to God and preparing for an eternal home, not around trying to gain as much material wealth or pleasure as possible and, in the process, sacrificing my soul. (Colossians 3:1-3; "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.")
  - Matthew 16:24-26; "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal, <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>22</sup> "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! <sup>24</sup> **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. <sup>25</sup> "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"**
- When I am committed to God, my standard of living becomes much higher (Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 3:3, 7)
  - Matthew 5:48; "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"
  - Luke 6:36; "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."
  - Ephesians 4:32; "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
  - 1 Peter 1:15-16; "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
  - 1 John 3:3, 7; "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;"
  - My standard is not that of my own or other people (2 Corinthians 10:12; "For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.")
  - "**Even as**" or "**just as**" is defined as meaning "**equal**" or identical in quantity, quality
  - The standard of conduct for God's people has never been, is not, nor ever will be "**the best I can do!**" It's about committing to "**walk even as He walked.**" (1 John 2:6; "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.")
  - When I fail to make the standard, I "**miss the mark**" and "**transgress**" God's Law (1 John 3:4; "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.")
- There are several things we can do to help strengthen our commitment to God. **I will mention three. See if you can think of some others.**
  - Practice moral uprightness - doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do**
  - Selflessness - is not just about me.**
  - Self-discipline - stay the course.**

### CONCLUSION

#### Conclusion:

- When I became a Christian, I became one of God's children. His expectations for His children in the New Testament age are no different from those in the Old Testament age (Exodus 20:3; "You shall have no other gods before Me.;"
- Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Proverbs 23:26).
- God has always desired that His children devote and commit themselves fully to Him, to serve Him before all others. As one of His spiritual children, He expects the same type of commitment from me.

**Have I committed myself wholly to God?**

## 2 Lesson 2: Authority

### BIBLE PASSAGE

"When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" (Matthew 21:23)

### GOAL

To learn about our need for authority and the sources of authority

### WORD STUDY

Authority (Matthew 21:23)

"When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what **authority** are You doing these things, and who gave You this **authority**?"

### SCRIPTURE/MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way *which seems* right to a person, but its end is the way of death."

### INTRODUCTION:

Does it make a difference in whether or not we have authority for what we do in service to God? Does it make any difference what we use as a source of authority as we try to serve God? Let us examine what the Bible says about authority regarding our work for and worship of the God of heaven.

### OUR NEED FOR AN AUTHORITY

- Recognize the need for authority in the home, school, business, and nation; indeed, religion also needs it.
- Authority, as defined by Merriam-Webster: "power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior."
- Strong's Dictionary of the Greek and Hebrew Bible Words defines authority as: "authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength. (Strong)
- We must recognize the need for authority and respect it once it has been established.

### SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

- Man needs authority in the religious realm:
  - Chief priests and elders recognized this when they asked Jesus, "By what authority are you doing these things?" (Matthew 21:23-27; " **When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup> But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet. <sup>27</sup> And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."**)
  - Jesus' answer reveals the two sources of authority: **divine** and **human**. The same is true today!
- Some deny that **divine (from God) authority is needed** for all we do in religion. (Discussion: False standards of authority - how can we build a house if we use a different standard for measuring? Or, if there is one way to the Father <John 14:6> how can we expect to reach the Father via many ways?)
  - "I'll do what the majority does since the majority must be right."
    - Matthew 7:13-14; "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."**
    - Luke 13:23-24; "And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, <sup>24</sup> "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."**
  - "I like to follow my conscience."
    - 1 Timothy 4:2; "by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron."
    - Acts 23:1; " Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."
  - "I trust what my family pastor preaches, and this is what we have always believed."
    - 1 Corinthians 2:5; "so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
    - Matthew 10:37; "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."
  - "You have your truth, and I have my truth. I just feel I am right."
  - Jeremiah 14:12; "There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death."
  - Jeremiah 10:23; "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps."
  - "I follow the 10 Commandments. How can anyone go wrong following the 10 Commandments?" (Galatians 3:24-25; "
  - Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."
- Old Testament examples teach the need for **Divine Authority**
  - Cain and Abel (Genesis 4; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17)
  - Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 16:12)
  - Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-20; Exodus 30:1-10)

### CONCLUSION

Romans 15:4 - Let us learn from these examples the need for **divine authority** for everything we do in religion.