



Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries
(SDMI)



Adult Ministries

LESSONS FOR MEN - 2020

By **Ángel Rodríguez Gómez**
Mesoamerica Region



Lessons for Men

Ángel Rodríguez

Church of the Nazarene
Mesoamerica Region



Adult Ministries



Title: *Lessons for Men 2020*
Study Guide for Men

Author: *Ángel Rodríguez*

Design: B. Patricia R. de Rodríguez

Translated from Spanish to English: Monte Cyr

Material produced by: Discipleship Ministries, Church of the Nazarene,
Mesoamerica Region.

Publicized and distributed by: SDMI, Mesoamerica Region

Copyright © 2020 All Rights Reserved

Reproduction of this material is allowed for non-commercial purposes, only to be used for discipleship in churches.

All quotes are taken from the New International Version Bible unless otherwise indicated.



Table of Contents

Presentation	5
Lesson 1. Honoring God with my first fruits	6
Lesson 2. Get up and fight for your family. Part 1.	11
Lesson 3. Get up and fight for your family. Part 2.	15
Lesson 4. A Man after God’s Own Heart.	22
Lesson 5. The law of sowing and reaping	26
Lesson 6. Principles to fulfill God's purposes. Part 1.....	31
Lesson 7. Principles to fulfill God's purposes. Part 2.....	36
Lesson 8. Prayer, fasting and worship: a perfect formula to see the wonders of God in our lives	44
Lesson 9. Jesus is looking for new wineskins.	48
Lesson 10. Qualities of a conqueror. Part 1.	50
Lesson 11. Qualities of a conqueror. Part 2.	55
Lesson 12. Urgent! We need times of intimacy with God	59

Presentation

Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries (SDMI) of the Church of the Nazarene is organized by developing Ministries among Adults, Youth and Children.

This material is a guide for the ministry of Men in the Image of God (MIG), of SDMI and aims to convey to each Christian and non-Christian man, God's message about his relationship with his creator and his leading role in society. This ministry wishes to create awareness in each man's mind about the image and likeness of God in his life ... holiness.

The areas of this ministry for men and their objectives are the following:

Spiritual Area:

- Motivate men to be consecrated under the direction of the Holy Spirit.
- Engage in personal evangelism with and to other men.
- Strengthen their worship of God and devotional life.

Ministry Area:

- Recognize that men have a responsibility for the preservation and growth of the work of God.
- Work on personal and church building.
- Facilitate the service of men in the church.

Family area:

- Build their home on the principles and values of the Kingdom of God as shown in the Bible.
- Apply biblical principles and values for a good marriage relationship.
- Apply biblical principles and values for parenting.

The book contains 12 lessons that can be shared one per month at men's meetings. Each lesson contains:

Learning objectives.

They refer to the achievements expected of the student by the end of the lesson study.

Introduction

It is an initial presentation that contextualizes the topic to be addressed.

Theme development.

These lessons have been written in simple, dynamic language and connected with the ideas of the contemporary world, in order to facilitate their use for teaching.

Conclusion of the main teaching.

At the end of each lesson, a brief conclusion of what has been learned is provided, which can be used at the end of the class as a closing session, and in the next session to remember the topics discussed.

Dynamics or activities:

Individual or group learning activities or dynamics related to the subject studied are suggested. These can be reproduced for the participants, although it is recommended that each participant has their own book.

Lesson 1. Honoring God with my first fruits

Biblical Text:
Exodus 26:1-11

Objectives:

- Recognize everything that God has done for us.
- Understand that He is worthy of everything.
- Understand that we are to worship Him even with our possessions.
- Understand that God blesses us when we honor him.

1.1 Introduction

The beginning of a new year is always a good time to look back and reflect on what we did in the last 365 days that God granted us. How did it go with your plans and goals? How many of them did you meet? In what areas of your life do you set goals? In Finances? Family? Education, work, travel, etc.? How did you do with spiritual goals? Please don't tell me you have no purpose in this regard.

Remember what the great commandment is? In Matt. 22:37, Jesus said: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

So I ask you, has God been the center of your life? Has he had priority in everything you did? From 0 to 100, how much was God first in your life?

How would God respond to you if He were to act in proportion to how much you put Him at the center of your life?

1.2 Development

1.2.1 Principles that stand out from the first fruits

A. Giving the first fruits is giving the first, the best, the chosen

In the Old Testament Hebrew::

1. *Bikkurim* is translated as: first, first fruits of the harvest (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19).
2. *Reshít* is translated as: first, main part, the best (Num. 18:12)

The Hebrew person went out to his field of work, and when he saw the first fruits or the first offspring, he pointed them out and took care of them, and then presented them to the Lord in the days of Jehovah's feasts.

In the Greek of the New Testament: *aparque* is translated as the first part, offering of the first fruits, first of a series (1 Cor. 15:23).

Cain brought an offering to Jehovah from the fruit of the earth. Abel brought from the firstborn of his sheep, from the best. And Jehovah looked with pleasure upon Abel and his offering. (Gen 4:3-4)

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering. (Gen. 4:3-4)

B. Give the first fruit of all fruit

We must give of everything that produces good for us. For example, if I have a job, I give to God the first income of the year from that job. But if I make additional sales of any product, I must also consider that when giving my first fruits. The same if I get money through some other source, etc.

C. It implies an act of faith.

It shows that we have learned to depend on God, that we don't believe that what we have is because of our abilities, knowledge, etc. It all depends on Him. Should you bring your firsts, even if you are in a very limited economic situation?

Remember that he is the perfect Father. Do you think he would ask for what you have in order to leave you helpless?

Is that the concept of God we have? Does it sound illogical to think that what he did to send Christ Jesus to die to rescue us from sin and then think that he'll not help us?

Remember that God wants to be the first thing in our life. God is testing our faith, as he did with Abraham when he asked for his firstborn of the promise.

What will be more difficult, giving our stuff or giving up the only child we have?

Do you still doubt if you should give your firstfruits? How about I tell you that in the heart of God, the most perfect plan of salvation was designed, one which his enemy could not stop. He thought that you and I, for the forgiveness of our sins, deserved the best of God. And what happened? He gave us his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, remember he died because of our sins. Jesus spared nothing to pay for your ransom and for my ransom. Is this enough to recognize his Lordship in our life?

D. Bring them before God and present them to the priest

That is, you must bring them to the temple and hand them over to the pastor or to the one who is presiding. This implies that you don't have the freedom to assign them in another way. For example, the first fruits cannot be given to a person in need. You can support that person with an offering or otherwise.

E. Bringing the firstfruits is an act of worship to God

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops. (Prov. 3:9)

God is good. He gives us life and the ability to work. What is honoring God with our possessions? The word "honor" from the Hebrew "kabad", means dignity, distinction of honor, recognition of importance and greatness, give glory. It implies admiring and respecting.

In the Bible we find that God wants to be the first in our life; He is not satisfied with being second. He wants to be above our interests. In fact, the "first commandment" is to love him in the "first place."

There are many ways to worship God, to honor him. Without a doubt, our obedience is our best worship, to obey him in everything, to honor him in everything, even in our finances. God takes care of us, how can we not thank him?

F. Giving the first fruits means being happy

My beloved brother, remember that the delivery of the Firstfruits was done at one of the sacred feasts of the Jewish people. Who can be sad at a party? "Party" is synonymous with joy and celebration. This is the Hebrew meaning of the term: feast. The term "party" from the Hebrew translates: march in sacred procession, celebration, appointed time. It has a cultural sense. They went up to the city of Jerusalem in the midst of praises, and with joy, they entered the courts of the temple of God.

Additionally, remember what God says:

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor 9:7)

Warning:

Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. (Ex 22:29)

1.2.2 Honoring God through the firstfruits brings blessing to our lives

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; (Prov. 3:9)

God points out the law of sowing and reaping. He challenges us to trust Him, but he also promises to take care of us. Your barns will be full, your wineries will be full, says the Lord.

"Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, "Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over." (2 Chron. 31:10)

"This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God." (2 Chron. 31:20)

See what Ezekiel says:

“The best of all the firstfruits and of all your special gifts will belong to the priests. You are to give them the first portion of your ground meal so that a blessing may rest on your household.” (Ezekiel 44:30)

He is worthy of all honor:

who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. (Psalm 103:3-6)

1.2.3 Jesus is the Firstfruit that God had prepared for us

Perhaps you remember that Jesus died on the cross on the day of the Passover holiday. Do you remember what was celebrated during that party? Now I ask you, do you know what Jewish holiday was celebrated when Jesus rose on the third day? The party of the Firstfruits.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor. 15:20)

The Lord Jesus rose as firstfruit of the children of God. Christ became the firstfruits of the resurrection. Remember that firstfruits also means "the first of a series", so Christ is the first of a great harvest. Christ was crucified on Passover Day and rose three days later on the day of the feast of the firstfruits.

When he went to the Father, Jesus didn’t leave us alone. The Holy Spirit was sent as a sign of the coming Kingdom:

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom. 8:23)

That is, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in and with us is only a sign of the coming glory. The anointing, the fruit, the gifts and the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst today, is a first evidence of the life in heaven that awaits us.

In God's model, anything that is first sets the tone for the rest. The first is the root, from which the rest is determined.

And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. (Rom. 11:6)

13 Conclusion

Many may say that God is the most important thing in their lives, but how do they prove it? Do you want to start the year putting God first? Will you accept this faith challenge? Do you believe in the promises of God? Do you want to show your worship in this way by bringing your firstfruits?

I tell you that some have told me: "Brother, that was something that was requested in the Old Testament, but nowadays it is no longer required." I have answered that the essence of this is to put Christ as the first priority of our life. In our church, we have done this for several years. That fund has been destined to send the promise of faith we make. Then, seeing how God has used that resource to reach people that I could not reach, we enjoy it. I have also heard testimonies of the brothers who have given their firstfruits, that God has been faithful to them and they have not lacked what they need. Additionally we have experienced it in our family and God sustains us with his great love and mercy.

If you wish to do this, do it with joy, with faith, with genuine worship. Do it waiting for your tribute to be accepted before God. don't do it as a magical way of saying that then God has to multiply your possessions. don't see it as a form of blackmail. Trust Him, believe Him, recognize him as your Lord.

Prepare with joy to present before Him your firstfruits, as a way of honoring Him. Do it first thinking about what Jesus already has done for you on the cross.

By offering to God the firstfruits and the best of the fruits, you are recognizing that the Lord is the owner and giver of the fruits of the field; Everything is due to his blessing.

Proposed activities:

1. Would you like to renew your commitment today? Do you dare to put Christ in the center again? If you have never done that, today can be your great opportunity.

2. As part of giving your best to Christ, you can commit in your spiritual area to spend a special time with Him every day?

3. In the area of finance, would you dare to present before Christ your firstfruits of income from the work He has granted you?

Lesson 2. **Get up and fight for your family.** Part 1.

Biblical Text:

Nehemiah 4:1-14

Objectives :

- Learn that God desires the best for our life
- Recognize the importance of praying to God, acknowledge our faults before Him, and clear our account with him.
- Learn to be in continuous prayer and vigil for our family.
- Take my place as a man of the house and defend my family from all enemy attacks

2.1 Introduction

After being in captivity for 70 years, God's people are liberated, but they were surrounded by great evil. The people had begun to return to Jerusalem. They did it in three movements:

- First with Zerubbabel, when King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to build the temple. Cyrus returned the utensils of the house of Jehovah that Nebuchadnezzar had taken away. (Ezra 2: 2) They were about forty-two thousand and had two hundred singers. God allowed them to rebuild the altar. Regular sacrifices are re-instituted. They also laid the foundations of the temple.
- The return of the second group is narrated in Ezra 8. There it is mentioned that Ezra went up to Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes provided him with the necessary things to beautify the temple and supported the Jews in their worship.
- The third return occurred with Nehemiah. The king granted, with God's help, for them to return to Jerusalem.

2.2 Development

2.2.1 Mocking of enemies 4:1-2. 4:3

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. (Nehemiah 2:10).

They had used derision and intimidation to prevent the work from starting (Nehemiah 2:19). Now that the work had begun, they were angry and greatly enraged (Guzik, 2016).

And they mocked the Jews; the nature of this discouraging attack is evident. They used a mocking and sarcastic tone and made a mockery of the Jews ... these weak Jews will they finish in a day ... will they resurrect the stones from the rubble ... a fox climbing it will break it down."

1. They would be allowed to once again offer sacrifices. They were asked if they were seeking God through sacrifices, hoping that He would miraculously build the walls? Would they lift the walls with prayer? Did they have any idea of what they are facing? This wasn't an easy project.
2. In many attacks, the enemy mixes some truth and then adds the lie. Do you remember that Jesus points to Satan as the father of lies? Certainly the Jews were not the best builders, so they were quickly discouraged by criticism when they saw the goal of finishing still far away. That can happen to any of us because sometimes our own family and friends can come to say words of discouragement about something we want to undertake for God. More rightly, those who directly oppose the work of God will do so. But HE is faithful and we must rest in God, know that success is not based on our own strength.
3. Sanballat and Tobiah used criticism to get the people to give up. Charles Swindoll points out that there were several enemies together mocking them with sarcastic criticisms and mentions: "Critics join critics." Have you ever experienced that? A leader must be able to resist criticism; Don't let your team get discouraged.
4. Discouragement is an instrument that the enemy will use frequently. However, we must be alert and remember that our faith is tested in those moments. Remember that God is seeing us. He has asked us to strive and be brave. If we do this, we don't doubt for a moment that God will do his part, for that is his promise.

It will break it down: Tobiah made a big mistake. He called the wall something that they had built. But Tobiah overlooked that it was God who had ordered the wall to be lifted, so He would be responsible for supporting his people.

Many people may miss God's blessings by criticizing what others do, because they ignore that they do it in the name of God. We must be careful that we don't allow the enemy to use us to criticize the church. Remember that it is described as the bride of Jesus, and He loves her to such a degree that he gave his life for her. Let us ask God for forgiveness if we have done so, and ask the Holy Spirit to help us be discerning when it comes to the work of God. If we do so, I assure you that we'll avoid many problems.

He became very angry and enraged, and made a mockery of the Jews: seeing that Nehemiah and the people did indeed have authorization from the King (proved by the letters mentioned in Neh. 2: 7) to build, Sanballat and Tobiah had no authority to stop the work. That's why they tried the only option they had left: to try to discourage the Jews from continuing.

1. In the same way, the enemy will seek to discourage us, for he knows perfectly well that we have been freed by our King Jesus when He put his life on the cross. So, take care not to be discouraged in what Jesus has asked us to do. In time, we'll see the reward of God.

2. Have you noticed that we tend to work very differently if we find ourselves with great faith knowing we'll achieve the goal, than when we are all discouraged? That, beloved brothers and friends, happens in everything we do. Pray with faith, read with faith, fast with faith, work with faith. If discouragement doesn't win over you, you will see the powerful hand of God working in your favor.

2.2.2 Prayer of Nehemiah 4:4-5

Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. (4:4)

Nehemiah's response was a great example. He didn't contend with the enemies directly. Instead, he presented it to God in prayer. How would we have responded?

For Nehemiah, prayer was always the first resource, not the last option. When difficult times come, God wants us to trust Him. So we must raise our need or problem before Him in prayer, and then act.

In his prayer, Nehemiah first asked God for his attention and mercy. Nehemiah was convinced that it was God who sent him to lead the reconstruction work. Nehemiah wanted God to show the people that He was really the one in charge of the work.

What Nehemiah was asking God for in his prayer was that He would be the one who would fight their enemies for them. When we act according to God's plans, we must have the conviction, like Nehemiah, that God will fight our battles for us. (2 Chron. 20:20). God's promise is that if we repent of our sins and turn to Him, we can expect his blessing, which includes the protection from enemies, even though the battle may be the most unequal we can imagine. Perhaps you have already experienced this; If not, this is a challenge for your life.

Finally, Nehemiah in prayer reminds God of the cause of the enemy's anger: they were doing what He had asked them to do.

2.2.3 Threats from Enemies

So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. (Neh. 4:6)

So we rebuilt the wall: God answered their prayer by giving everyone encouragement to work. Remember in Phil. 2:12, the Word tells us that it is God who puts in us the will to do it. Nehemiah as leader was to motivate the people, but he knew that it was God who would work in the hearts of his leaders.

When you find yourself in a similar situation, don't have the slightest hesitation in praying and asking God to help you encourage the people with whom you are working. Remember that it is He who touches their hearts so that they wish to move ahead to accomplish His plans.

For the people worked with all their heart: So here we see the fulfillment of what was said in the previous point. God touched the hearts of the people and they had the courage to carry on with the work, no matter how difficult it was for them. God didn't even have to defeat the enemy in a military battle; it was enough just to touch the hearts of the people, and with that, they won the spiritual battle. Many times, God has given us the spiritual victory over the enemy. So always remember this, even if the conditions seem to be the most adverse you can imagine.

2.3 Conclusion

When we hear the voice of God and resist the enemy's attacks, we can achieve the victory. This story is not yet over; we'll return to it in the next lesson. But it can be emphasized that there was already a very significant advance. The work was finished halfway.

It was an exciting but dangerous time; much had been done, but much more remained to be done. Fatigue and discouragement were ready to enter, if given the opportunity.

For now we have learned that:

- The enemy will always want to take away our blessings.
- He will do all he can to defeat us, including mocking, discouragement, criticism, etc.
- Jesus has promised that he'll be with us every day.
- Before turning to anyone or anything else, we must go to Him and ask for His direction.

Bibliography

Guzik, David (2016). Los enemigos intentan detener la obra (The enemies intend to stop the work). Neh. 4 Consultado en https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/spanish/StudyGuide_Neh/Neh_04.cfm

Proposed Activities:

1. Is there any area of your life where you want to ask for God's help? _____

Lesson 3. **Get up and fight for your family.** Part 2.

Biblical Text:
Nehemiah 4:7-14

Objectives:

- Know and value that God yearns for us to look to him and be accountable to Him.
- Learn to be in continuous prayer and on guard for your family.
- Take your place as a man of the house and defend your family from any enemy attack.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous lesson, we saw a leader named Nehemiah who left his comfort zone and went to lead the resurgence of God's people, who were in confronted by great evil. We studied that the enemy, when he sees us determined to act, will begin to oppose every work of God. That should not surprise us, for the Word says that he comes to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10).

So we move forward in the study. Is the enemy's opposition over? What new tests will come? Can Nehemiah keep God's people from giving up? What strategies would you use?

3.2 Development

3.2.1 **The conspiracy to attack the work. Neh. 4:7-8**

But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. (Neh. 4:7-8)

a. ***The gaps were being closed.***

There was already a good advance of fifty percent. The town had regained their courage. That was bad news for the enemy, so he had to try new ways to stop the rebuilding. Dear friends and brothers, the enemy knew perfectly well that it wasn't just a simple wall. God had a wonderful plan for his people (Jer. 29:11). If they managed to rebuild the wall, the people would look to God again. This they will do later when Nehemiah leaves and Ezra the priest presents the Word of God to them. Sometimes, God will ask us to do things with plans of a greater scope than what we can see at first sight.

b. ***They all plotted together to come and fight.***

Since God's people had already resisted their mocking and criticism, this time the enemy would seek to go further. They planned to attack the town, seeking to fall on them in surprise. Here it is important to remember that there were three groups that had allied to prevent the wall from being rebuilt: the Arabs, the Ammonites and those of Ashdod. This involved being attacked on three different fronts.

This seems a bit paradoxical. They raised a wall to avoid being prey to the enemy, but now the enemy was plotting to attack on different flanks. That sounded complicated. The enemy is quite astute in trying to redouble his attack when we find ourselves doing the right thing before God.

Sometimes this can happen in our lives too. Several problems can come into our life simultaneously. Let's see what God's people did to get ahead.

As they progressed in their work, the enemies plotted something more serious. Now, in addition to complaining or mocking, they also threatened and planned violence.

c. ***They intended to harm them.***

One strategy of the enemy is to create confusion so that we lose focus of the purpose of God. Today he does it in various ways: he tempts us to buy things that are out of our budget and then we live so worried about finding ways to get out of the problem that we lose focus on what God asks of us. The same happens when the enemy creates division in our family, when we become obsessed with getting something, etc.

3.2.2 The attack is defended against with prayer and vigilance. Neh. 4.9

But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. (Neh. 4:9)

a. ***But we prayed to our God.***

One thing that characterized Nehemiah was his life of prayer. He could pray when serving the king, when alone, when building, such was his relationship with God. So he knew the way perfectly. Now that the town was beginning to be frightened, he had to go again in prayer. But this time it involved all the people. He knew that when they saw God's answer, their faith would increase.

We must also learn to do the same. We must not only pray when we are alone, but also we must invite those who are facing a need or problem. Soon they also will learn to trust God.

So they took the necessary measures for the problem. Let's move on to the next section and continue learning from this great leader, Nehemiah.

b. *We posted a guard.*

Nehemiah ordered guards to be on duty in case the enemy dared to launch his plan of attack. That is exactly what we should do too. Once we have prayed, we must be on guard to repel any attack that the enemy dares to make against us, our family, our church and those for whom we are interceding.

Unfortunately there are people who mistakenly think that because they have already entrusted things to God, they don't have to take their precautions anymore. This poor thinking may be used by the enemy.

God wants us to rest in Him, but at the same time, we do the part that we have to do. We must be aware that since we came to the feet of Christ, we are in a fight against the enemy. He'll continue trying to get us to give up.

In our daily life, the enemy knows what our weak areas are and will try to attack us there. That is why Paul warns us to put on the spiritual armor that will allow us to resist the enemy's attacks (Eph. 6: 10-18).

c. *Day and night.*

We must pay attention to this. Nehemiah knew that the enemy might delay so that the people would get complacent, and then try to attack them, maybe when it was late at night or very early in the morning.

The apostle Peter warns us that the enemy is like a roaring lion, so we must remain alert (1 Peter 5: 8).

Even if the enemy found them working, they would be ready to repel any attack.

Let's be ready at all times, because the enemy will want to attack us with surprise. But if we do our part, the Lord will take care of us, giving us the victory when the time comes.

3.2.3 Challenges from inside and outside.

A. *The challenge from within: the work seemed too big. (Neh. 4:10)*

Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." (Neh. 4:10)

Nehemiah and the Jews had remained strong in the face of the possible attack; but now in the middle of the work, new obstacles arose.

a. *"The strength of the laborers is giving out."*

Although they had managed in less than a month to do what they had not done in decades, about half of the wall was still missing. People began to get tired. This should give us a great lesson. There are many illustrations, most of them based on known facts, in which people who were very close to achieving what they had fought for, decided to surrender.

They didn't realize it, but they were so close to getting the wall up. And as we said before, with it, great things would come because they would have confirmed that God had not forgotten them, as many had proclaimed for so long.

Another aspect that we should not forget is that they were like that because of their sin. That was why God had allowed them to be taken into captivity after being defeated. I mention this because sometimes we can mistakenly think that if God has forgiven us, there are no consequences. But God allows us to pay the consequences, even if he has already forgiven us

b. *There is so much rubble.*

Remember that the town had been in captivity for 70 years, and several decades earlier the people had begun to return. By then the rubble had already solidified and it was a huge task to be able to remove it.

The same thing happens in our life. There is much we have accumulated during the times that we have turned away from God. On other occasions, that "rubble" has been in our hearts for years even after coming to know Christ since we have not asked God for help to remove it. Sadly, we often get used to living with the "rubble" in our lives. But God can remove it if you are determined and ask for his help.

So get ready, because if you want to see great things in your life, you should ask God right now for help from his Holy Spirit to remove all that rubble. The Bible says that we have "divine power" to demolish everything that the enemy puts in front of us to divert us from God's purpose (2 Cor. 10: 3-5).

c. *We cannot rebuild the wall.*

The work was twofold: to demolish the old structure that was in ruins and then remove the rubble. But the rubble was added to that which had already been there for long decades.

Now, in order to build where there was construction before, it was essential to first demolish everything and remove the rubble. Otherwise you could only build something that would not last long, because it would not be built on the foundations that were necessary.

The matter was more complex because there was old debris too. We must not allow old debris to remain in our life, for this will hinder our communion with God.

Sometimes we hold a grudge against someone. At first, it was perhaps a small root of bitterness, but over time it damages our hearts so much. That happens little by little, until our spiritual life goes out. This is also often the case with other things that we have left unattended at the time.

But as in building, we cannot expect God to do new things if we don't ask him to remove all debris that may be generated in our lives.

- B. The challenge from the outside: the enemy planned a surprise attack. (Neh. 4:11)**
Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we'll be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." (Neh. 4:11)

The enemy had no compassion in his attack. He was planning how to end that intention of building the wall. If it was at the cost of undertaking a military attack, he would.

Our enemy is also looking for ways to get us to stop doing God's will in our lives. Certainly, sometimes that attack will be the most ruthless we can imagine.

We have experienced it and we have seen friends being victims of various enemy attacks. It seems that there will be no truce from the enemy. Some people unfortunately decide to leave the path that God has given us for salvation.

But I can assure you that those of us who have resisted have afterwards seen God doing wonderful things in our lives. In a similar way, he'll work among others if they will resist the evil one.

Therefore, we cannot give the smallest amount of space to discouragement. We have heard of cases that began with a little discouragement, until it reached the point of depression. There the matter gets more serious because there are people, even within the Christian community, who have opted for suicide.

- C. God allowed the Jews to be warned of the attack. (Neh 4:12)**
Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us." (Neh. 4:12)

God, in his great love for his people who had resisted so far, allowed them to become aware every time the enemy tried to attack those who were building the wall. In those villages, there were also Jews who, upon learning of the evil plans, sent the message to their brothers who lived within the walled area.

- D. Nehemiah organized the defense. (Neh. 4:13-14)**
Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." (Neh. 4:13-14)

Nehemiah could have done something different:

2. He could have refused to do anything about the problem.
3. He could have panicked too.

However, what Nehemiah did was to trust in God and do the concrete things that God told him to do to obtain the victory.

Do you realize that life is continuous decision-making? That's why Nehemiah maintained a close relationship with God. He knew that under God's guidance, he would always make the best decisions.

Nehemiah ordered them to bring their armor. This scene is inspiring ... tired, carrying work utensils in one hand and their spears and bows in the other. I can't stop imagining the scene in my mind. To ensure that this was done, Nehemiah threw two great challenges to the people. If this didn't work out, it could be the end of all the progress they had already made.

a. *Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.*

Nehemiah made them see the whole picture. The challenge was great, but our God is bigger than any problem. In light of this, we cannot stop thinking about that old teaching: "Do not tell God how big your problem is. Rather, tell your problem how big our Almighty God is." Nehemiah was challenging the faith of God's people.

b. *fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.*

Now Nehemiah throws another great challenge: it is not a minor thing for which we fight. It's about our family.

My beloved friend, sometimes we may be exhausted from fighting, but we must remember that it is about the spiritual life of your wife, your daughters, your own. This is reason enough to go out and fight the next round, knowing that God is with us.

3.3 Conclusions

How many problems are you going through? Is there a lot of rubble accumulated? Does the enemy's attacks seem to be getting worse?

In order for God to build something new, everything that hinders our hearts needs to be removed. Is there anything you want God to clean from your heart today?

Like Nehemiah, I exhort you: remember the Almighty God that we have and get up and fight, no matter even if the enemy seems to have already defeated us.

If any of your children seem to have fallen into the hands of the enemy and don't want to know about Christ, get up and fight for your family. Remember that Christ is with you!

If the enemy has put your marriage in danger and it seems that you are already at the point of divorce: Get up and fight for your family, remember that Christ is with you!

Whatever the situation, I tell you now: Get up and fight for your family, remember that Christ is with you!

Bibliography

Guzik, David (2016). The enemies try to stop the work. Neh 4 Consulted in https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/spanish/StudyGuide_Neh/Neh_04.cfm

Proposed Activities:

1. Are you ready to clean the rubble out of your life? How are your defenses? It must all begin with true repentance and God's forgiveness, no matter how long it has been since you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

2. Is there a fight you want to share with the Lord Jesus? Would you like to tell him today: Lord Jesus, I cannot do more. My strength and my spirit are very depleted. Jesus, will you fight this battle with me?

Lesson 4. **A Man After God's Own Heart.**

Biblical Text:

Jeremiah 17:9

Proverbs 4:23

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
(Jeremiah 17:9)*

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23)

Objectives:

- Explain the characteristics of a man after God's own heart.
- Value the importance of seeking to be more like Jesus every day.
- Understand that all our actions have their reward in time.

4.1 Introduction

The Bible assigns great value to the heart. We refer in this case to the internal attitude that reflects who we are from our deepest part. Heart, in this sense, is our central being.

Many people have only a mental or emotional relationship with God. They know the Scriptures, the doctrine, and they are even arduous defenders of the gospel, but they are only convinced.

Sometimes, because of disappointments in faith, people lose their heart for God, and He looks at hearts. Before God, we must be whole, with pure motivations, because He blesses the correct motivations of the heart. For example, David was chosen by God because of his heart. His heart is said to be "after God's own heart" ... his desire was to follow God and be loyal to him alone.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

In biblical history, Samuel had to choose a new king because Saul had lost his integrity.

But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command. (1 Samuel 13:14)

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart wasn't fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. (1 Kings 11:4)

After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he'll do everything I want him to do.' (Acts 13:22)

4.2 Development

In the Bible, the example of a perfect heart is that of David. What did God see in David for such praise? we'll study the characteristics of David, to establish what a person is like who has a heart "after God's own heart."

4.2.1 Characteristics of people after God's own heart

1. Humility.

When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." (1 Samuel 17:28)

Although David had already been anointed as king, he continued with the same task he had before ... shepherd. He maintained his humble attitude.

They repeated these words to David. But David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known." (1 Samuel 18:23)

In an exemplary way, David continued in humility. He waited until the day when God determined that he would definitely be king, because there is a process between being anointed king and actually being the king.

That brings us to a reflection: God has his own time schedule. We must allow God to mark the times in our lives. Let's wait for His timing and don't miss opportunities because of pride, which is the opposite of humility.

2. Subject to authority.

Even beyond justices or injustices, David submitted to Saul, for God allowed him to continue being king. Not infrequently, David was attacked by Saul with the intent to kill him.

And he (Saul) hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice. (1 Samuel 18:11)

Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." (1 Samuel 19:11)

On the extreme side, Saul became envious of David and went crazy. Envy is so harmful.

But David was loyal despite everything, and although he had the opportunity to lead a revolution or kill Saul on more than one occasion, he didn't.

He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." With these words David sharply rebuked his men and didn't allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'?" (1 Samuel 24:6-9)

David's attitude to not rebel against Saul transformed him into a highly credible man. God had already set his sights on David, and David understood that all that happened was to forge his character to shine when he reigned.

God is dealing with your life, forming your character. What will we do with our faith when a leader fails us and the people he leads?

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Rom. 13:1)

3. Free from resentment and envy.

David didn't take revenge against his brothers or the king. He didn't allow a bitter root to grow in him, or anger or resentment. This was something that allowed him to be at peace with himself and with God.

4. Hate towards sin.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. don't cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalm 51:1-12)

David, like every person, wasn't exempt from failure. But when that happened, David didn't become comfortable with sin, but his heart ached when he sinned.

This gives us a great lesson. We must hate sin and fight against it. If we have no genuine repentance, we'll never be restored before God. There will never be complete forgiveness if there is hidden unconfessed sin.

So, even if it's not easy, don't give up, fight to live in integrity.

5. David took advantage of the opportunities:

Saul replied, "You aren't able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. (1 Samuel 17:33-36)

David didn't become a leader overnight with no preparation, but his work with the sheep trained and prepared him.

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. (1 Samuel 17:48)

4.3 Conclusions

Each person creates his destiny with his attitudes. You can be an overcomer regardless of the circumstances. It's not luck or chance ... God has a plan for your life. But you must pursue that plan.

Proposed Activities:

1. On a scale of 0 to 100, how do you think you are in:
 - a) Humility:
 - b) Being subject to authority:
 - c) Being free from resentment and envy
 - d) Confession of all your sin
 - e) Taking advantage of opportunities to be trained for greater things

2. What would you be willing to do to improve your performance in those areas?

Lesson 5. **The law of sowing and reaping.**

Biblical Text:

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Gal. 6:7-8)

Objectives:

- **Understand** and apply the principles of sowing and reaping in the spiritual life.
- **Make** the determination to sow more in the Kingdom of God and in our own family.
- **Learn** to believe that God multiplies what we have.

5.1 Introduction

The Bible uses different figures to describe the church and its development, comparing it:

- to a living stone building
- with a human body where we are each part of that body
- with a bride for whom Christ will come
- with a plant, seeing how it should be sown, cared for and harvested

In this lesson, we'll study some principles that the Bible teaches us about sowing and reaping in the Kingdom of God. These are very basic principles that we can learn and apply to our lives without being great experts in agricultural aspects.

5.2 Development

5.2.1 That which is sown is harvested. (Gal 6:7)

It's a great truth that's expressed when it's said that we are what we sow in our lives. But it's also true that I can become what I decide to sow today.

It translates into something as simple as: "If you want beans, plant beans. If you want oranges, plant oranges."

We know many people whose life has been dedicated to sowing. They sowed in their children, in their marriage, in their ministry, in their friends, in themselves, etc. And now they enjoy what they have reaped over time.

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12)

But the Bible also warns us of what happens when we sow bad seeds:

Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.
(Prov. 22:8)

Let's analyze what we are, and think about what we have sown:

- If I have dedicated myself to sowing envy, jealousy, gossip, criticism, that is what I am going to get.
- Churches like the one in Macedonia:

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. (2 Cor. 8:1-4)

5.2.2 That which is harvested is in proportion to that which is sown

But this I say:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (2 Cor. 9:6)

The amount of fruit we get depends on the amount of the seed we have sown. I once reflected on the following: "Is the reason I don't give because I don't have, or do I not have because I don't give." If you don't plant anything, expect to reap nothing.

Malachi teaches us that God desires the best of each one of us: our time, our talents, our possessions, etc. We are to honor him with everything we have and are.

If I only plant two or three seeds, I will get only two or three plants possibly.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38)

But God wants to bless us so that we can bless others.

5.2.3 The field must be taken care of while the harvest arrives. (Song of Songs 2:15)

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom. (Song of Songs 2:15)

When you have a crop, it must be irrigated, fertilized, have the weeds removed, protected against pests, etc. It is the same way in our lives.

We must take care that the enemy of our souls doesn't come to sow bad seeds. We have to protect our people, our families, the church, etc.

How are we taking care of our families? How are we taking care of our church?

The passage of Song of Songs 2:15 warns us to take care of the little foxes that can destroy our vines. This applies in all areas: personal, family, church, work, etc. It warns us against neglecting the small details. For example in the family, that means spending time with the children, paying attention to my wife's emotional needs, etc. Failure to do so, the Word warns us, can eventually lead to great problems, possibly sometimes causing great losses.

5.2.4 Planting and harvesting time must be respected

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, (Eccles. 3:1-2)

Things aren't sown and harvested on the same day. Sounds very simple, right? But stop for a moment and think about the times when people want things immediately. A couple gets married and in less than a year they already want their own house and car. That puts them into big debt that ends up moving their focusing from the true purpose we are to have in life, which is to build the Kingdom of God and not their own.

Some plants, such as avocado and bamboo, take several years to bear their first fruit, but others do it faster, like the apple that takes 4 or 5 years.

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." (Acts 10:4)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Gal 6:9-10)

The harvest comes in God's timing, don't forget it. Let's learn to be patient and trust more in God. Sometime we'll be in some ministry, maybe in front of a small group. As the weeks go by and we don't see spectacular growth results, we usually abandon the work. Be careful, we would be making a serious mistake to proceed like this.

5.2.5 God provides for sowing

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. (2 Cor. 9:10-11)

The enemy doesn't like us to sow. You know it. He'll do all he can to prevent us from doing so.

- He'll sow doubt if it is worth doing.
- He'll try to keep us so busy and tired in such a way that we won't want to serve others.
- He'll try to damage our finances to give us pretexts for not contributing to the work.
- He'll tell you that you aren't qualified to be a blessing to others.

But God will give you new strength, He can heal your finances, and He can use you if you prepare yourself in some area of service.

5.2.6 More than what is harvested is received.

Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. (Gen. 26:12)

We know many testimonies in which the will of one person was decisive in transforming many other people

- Hudson Taylor in China
- David Livingstone in Africa
- Jorge Muller and his orphanages in England

Someone sowed in their lives and then they brought forth much fruit. We have many examples of this in our church.

5.2.7 It costs to sow.

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. (Psalm 126:5-6)

When you are willing to sow so that the Kingdom of God grows, the associated cost will be assumed.

- Our pastors have refused to simply focus on their various abilities to generate their own wealth, being willing to leave that all behind to sow into others' lives. And they sowed in our lives, restoring families, contributing to Christ transforming the lives of many of us.
- Because they are willing to pay the price, many families have opened their homes to have our small group meetings.
- Others have taken time away from their work to learn about programs such as Family Ministries and School of Leadership Training classes. Others prepare to be better at the Ministry among children, helping to shape the hearts of children.
- Others help us by contributing to the building of marriages.

- Wives have been willing to rescue their marriages and have forgiven their husbands, believing that God could transform them
- Others invest their time and resources to take their friends to their small group meeting every week. In addition, they are aware of their needs during the week.
- Others set aside time to go with church elders to pray with those in the hospital or other ministries.
- Many set aside time to be better worshipers and lead praise better.
- Others go to the Seminary with great effort to prepare themselves to be servants of God.
- There are mothers who pray every night for God to take care of their children.
- Young people who leave everything, even having a bright future to start a family and be an outstanding professional, to follow Christ.

5.3 Conclusions

Tell me what you want, liar devil, but I won't stop sowing. I know that God will bring growth. I am grateful for what He has done for me:

- Because he rescued my marriage.
- For the wife he gave me
- For the wonderful daughters he gave me
- For my extended family
- For the church in which he allows me to serve

No, I will not stop sowing. What do you say? Do we follow him?

Proposed Activities:

1. Check again the principles we studied. Think about which of them you are failing. For example, are you sowing sparingly or generously in your family, in your church? Have you been careful with the "field" that God gave you: your family, your ministry, your work ...? Now determine that you will commit to God to do so.

Lesson 6. Principles to fulfill God's purposes. (Part 1)

Biblical Text:

1 Cor. 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I don't run like someone running aimlessly; I don't fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Objectives:

- Learn that God desires the best for our life
- Recognize the importance of praying to God, acknowledge our faults before Him and keep ourselves accountable.
- Learn to be in continuous prayer and vigil for our family.
- Take my place as a man of the house and defend my family from all enemy attacks

6.1 Introduction

We're at the end of 1 Corinthians 9 where the apostle Paul illustrates through a metaphor the reason why he had renounced his rights. So far, it has been very clear that the reason he had renounced his rights was to be more effective in reaching his supreme goal: to reach many for Christ.

Now he further strengthens this point by using an example from sports where athletes give up many things and submit to a life of discipline in order to reach a perishable crown. The illustration is taken directly from sports, something that for the inhabitants of Corinth was well known since it was there where every two years they performed the Isthmian Games in honor of the god Poseidon. The Isthmian Games were the second most famous athletic games after the Olympics among the Greeks.

In this lesson, we'll meditate on the answer to the questions:

- How can we achieve success in our spiritual race?
- At this stage of the race, have I advanced as much as I should have?
- What can hinder me in this race to reach the goal?

Perhaps for others the questions differ and could be:

- Am I in a race? Was there a goal? Let me know!

6.2 Development

God wants his purpose to be fulfilled. For this he'll use his church.

1) It all starts with prayer and confessing sins

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. (2 Chron. 20:3,4)

I (Nehemiah) confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. (Neh. 1:4-10)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb. 12:1)

God tells us his purpose in Christ Jesus in Ephesians 1: 9,10

2) Plan: make a diagnosis and set goals

Some of us are given to set goals in various fields:

- The career I will study
- Where I would like to spend a vacation
- The kind of house that I would like to have
- What I'll do when retirement age touches me

But what about spiritual goals?

If you are a SDMI leader, what are your goals? How are you preparing for the ministry if you're a minister of praise and worship, if you're in compassionate ministries, if you're being called by God for some ministry ...

Jesus himself came with a purpose:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

By the way, have you observed that even our enemy has his own objectives?

All Christians should have clear Christian goals, and these goals should be the most important in our lives! This is a component of a healthy spiritual life that isn't an option.

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28)

William Carey said: "Try great things for God; expect great things from God."

3) Act, being aware of what you are going to face

It is one thing to talk about commitment, and quite another thing to do something about it. The only real measure of commitment is action. Arthur Gordon said it like this: “Nothing is easier than speaking words. Nothing is more difficult than living them day after day.”

When trying to run this race, we must remind ourselves that we are going to face obstacles and things that will try to stop us or make us run slowly. Sometimes, they’ll stop our spiritual advancement and momentum.

What kind of person are you? Have you been reaching your goals? Are you achieving everything you think you can? Do people believe in you and follow you easily? If your answer to any of these questions is no, the problem may be your level of commitment.

See how much time you invest in work, in service to others, with your family, in your health and recreational activities, and so on. Calculate how much money you spend on living, on hobbies, on personal development, and on giving. All these are a real measure of your commitment. You may be surprised at what you discover.

Assume your responsibilities - Zero excuses. Gideon was afraid. Samson was lacking firm morals. Jephthah was impetuous. This doesn’t stop people if they have passion.

Ten of the twelve spies who inspected the promised land by divine order gave negative, pessimistic reports to Moses and the people:

“We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ... “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” (Numbers 13: 1-33).

- The people who live there are powerful
- The cities are walled, large and fortified
- Giants live there.
- They are stronger than us
- The earth will swallow us.
- All the people are huge.
- We are like grasshoppers in front of them.

Do not listen to people who try to discourage you. Follow your path, trust in God and believe in the abilities he has put in you, renew your strength in the Lord, because by persevering, we’ll fulfill God’s divine plan for our life. Success is to achieve on earth what was designed in heaven.

Use the Edison method. Thomas A. Edison, when he had a new idea for an invention, called a press conference and announced the invention. He immediately had to go to his laboratory to invent it. Make your plans public, and you'll be more committed to carrying them out.

People tend to continue doing what they are used to, so they lose sight of their reason for doing so. Leaders cannot announce a list of goals and then forget about them. They have to constantly remember and encourage people who work to meet the objectives. They should be consistently offered inspiration and encouragement.

4) **Bring as many with you as you can.** In this race, there is no prize for a single winner. It's about getting there all together.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Heb. 10:24)

It's also not about competing against others ... especially unfairly. It's not about inflating statistics so it doesn't seem like my job was in vain. Let's not look for deception.

Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete doesn't receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. (2 Tim. 2:5)

The attainment of spiritual goals should involve cooperation with other Christians:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. (1 Cor. 3:4-9)

Paul tells us about the church and says that we're like a body. Sometimes we drown alone. Some people want to project a vision and then do it all themselves, and the same people often complain that nobody is helping them, and it's because they aren't letting anyone help them. That happens because we believe that no one else can do it as well as we can.

5) **Be an example, follow strict discipline**

Someone has said that the only thing that is achieved effortlessly is old age. Here in Corinthians the apostle Paul draws a picture of an athletic competition to communicate the absolute need for discipline in the Christian life.

In order to be in a good physical condition, the athlete has to abstain from many things, undergo special diets, schedules for sleeping and exercising, and for this, discipline is needed.

Good athletes know well that without pain, he'll not have the prize. "No pain, no gain." In Christianity there isn't always immediate gratification.

- Discipline is doing things we aren't used to doing.
- Discipline also involves stopping doing something that you are used to doing in order to achieve something desired.

How are your spiritual disciplines going?

Enthusiasm starts things, but discipline finishes them.

6.3 Conclusions

If we want to reach the goal and get the great award of the crown of life that Christ has for us, we must have the determination to run that race. This involves running that spiritual race, always keeping in mind where we're going.

I recommend that together with your family or friends, always try to help each other stay focused on the goal. Thus, if you begin to deviate from the course, the others will have all the confidence to tell you that you should check if you are going in the right direction.

Be willing to pray before God, asking Him to show you his plans. Then plan what you are required to do and immediately start doing it. There are many who spend all their time working on elaborate good plans, but never carrying out those plans.

Then, as we have mentioned, add others to your spiritual race. You should be aware that it will cost you to have good discipline. This implies:

- 1) leaving behind things that "add weight" to you (anything that hinders you in your spiritual life) in order to run well.
- 2) Do things that you may not be doing, or don't like to do in order to "win." I refer to your time with God, reading the Word, fasting, serving others, etc.

Proposed Activities:

1. Review each of the principles studied. Meditate how well you are developing them in your life. What do you commit to do before God in order to grow more?

Lesson 7. Principles to fulfill God's purposes. (Part 2)

Biblical Text:

1 Cor. 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I don't run like someone running aimlessly; I don't fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Objectives:

- Long to be like Jesus and fulfill God's purpose in our lives.
- Learn new biblical principles that lead us to have a victorious life in Christ.

7.1 Introduction

In the previous study, we began to see some principles for fulfilling God's purposes. Now we are going to study five new principles that will help us achieve God's purpose in our lives.

Today we live saturated with heroes and antiheroes that the movie industry sells us. That's why it's urgent that we learn and teach about true heroes of the faith that God used throughout the Bible. Without a doubt, the quintessential model is Jesus Christ. However, we dare to also look to characters like Paul, because as he declares it, I want them to be like me, because I'm trying to be like Jesus.

The base passage remains the same: 1 Cor. 9:24-27. Now we're going to continue discovering or reaffirming other principles to achieve God's purpose in our lives. Let's study what God teaches us through Paul.

7.2 Development

7.2.1 Run to win

A well-known saying goes, "The important thing is not only to participate, but to participate and win." The Bible says:

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. (1 Cor. 9: 25)

Paul had a clear and defined objective: "I run, not wildly" "not blindly" or "aimlessly." On another occasion he said: "I struggled in order to preach the gospel where Christ had not already been named." All of his trips had this purpose.

So make the changes you require. Isaú Orellana mentions a report by a group of people who developed a computer program to correct running technique. They applied it to a runner who already had good technique. They recorded his way of running and input it into the computer. The result was that he could reduce his time by just over a second by correcting a small turn of his right foot, which made him lose a few thousandths of a second in each stride. With a little effort, he managed to correct it, and effectively won a second and a half, which helped him break his country's record.

Maybe we are very close to achieving great things for God, but that small difference in habits, techniques, preparation, time with God, etc., can be "the big difference" in results.

7.2.2 Your work will be crowned.

Your work will be crowned. (Luke 19:17-19)

In the Isthmian Games of the apostle Paul's time, the prize was a crown of pine, celery or laurel branches. It represented a great honor, of course, but as Paul says here, it was a prize that was temporary. Like those flowers of the day of love and friendship that dry up, it withered over time.

We might think that modern awards are more durable, but did you know that the Olympic gold prize is not really gold? It is silver plated in gold. The reality is that the awards of this world aren't always what they seem to be. In any case, they cannot have an eternal permanence.

Why sacrifice our life for something that will not last? Why give up our soul for something that isn't eternal? We strive as believers to receive, as Paul says, a prize that lasts forever. What is that prize? When the Bible tells us about the crown we can receive, it does so with two different images. In some passages, he speaks of the **crown of eternal life** that we'll receive for our faithfulness to the Lord.

An example of this:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)

7.2.3 Total dependence on God

Don't rest on your own strength. The work of Christ is not based on our ability to do things.

He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'" (2 Chron. 20:15)

Keep in mind that the one who does the work is God. We who serve the Lord are instruments and vessels in His hands, and without his blessing and support, we cannot do anything effective and transcendent.

7.2.4 We must realize that we'll be held accountable. We'll be evaluated.

When the results are evaluated, the leader has the opportunity to decide if the actions have been appropriate, if the appropriate people have been assigned a task, and if the objective should be changed in some way. Failure to achieve an objective is not necessarily an indication of inadequate dedication or incompetent work. Leaders must risk sincere evaluations. This is your best assurance that work can be improved, and that final goals can be achieved.

7.2.5 Give recognition to those who participated in the work, but above all, give honor and glory to God

Recognition should be given based on the achievement of the objectives. In this way, people are helped to see the importance of the goal and the satisfaction of working to achieve the objectives. But above all, give your praise to God.

They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets. (2 Chron. 20:28)

7.3 Conclusion

In a race there are:

- Participants (v. 23). There are those who run with the motto "the important thing is to compete." They just like being part of "something" and that makes them satisfied. They aren't clear why they do it. But there are also those who are willing to give *everything* in order to win.
- Euphoric spectators (v. 24). They're the ones who sit around without going anywhere or achieving anything. They're the biggest critics. They're the ones who like others to do what they should do.
- A judge who sanctions our actions. Remember that we can deceive many, but not God.

One day we'll appear before Jesus. If we took "shortcuts," everything will come to light on that day of judgment. Let's participate in this race according to what God has already established as "statutes" to participate in it.

In your case, are you running to win? Are you disciplining yourself in order to receive the glorious crown of honor? If you have fallen, get up. If you've been distracted, refocus. If you're tired, seek new strength from the Lord. We run to get the prize, which is the crown of Life that Jesus has prepared for each one. Let's not waste time on what the world offers.

Let's live to win. Are you willing to do it? Make a decision and determine not to allow the hindrances and sins that are common to dominate your life. If we depend on God in everything, he'll be faithful to sustain us.

Any reward in this world will end up being corruptible. Whatever is put in our way that makes our race difficult, no matter how much it attracts us, someday will end. However, we must

focus on the greatness of what awaits us, something incorruptible, something that God himself will give us, and that we should crave. Be faithful to God at all times. We need to start ordering our lives in a more conscious way. We must focus on spiritual goals, and stop living a routine Christian life without clear purposes.

Bibliography

Orellana, Isaú. (s / f). The goals of a Christian athlete. Retrieved from

<http://marketingnegocioshm.blogspot.com/2013/12/las-metas-de-un-atleta-cristiano.html>

Proposed Activities:

1. On a scale of 0 to 100, how do you rate yourself in each biblical principle studied here? What should you do to improve on those in which you have given yourself a poor grade?

2. What is your personal commitment to God? What have we learned from this lesson?

Lesson 8. **Prayer, fasting and worship: a perfect formula to see the wonders of God in our lives**

Biblical Text:

2 Chronicles 20: 1-4

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

Objectives:

- Understand that the tests that God allows in our lives are for us to grow in faith.
- Learn to pray, fast and worship at all times.
- Be willing to carry out the part that touches us in each battle, asking God to be with us.

8.1 Introduction

In this study we'll use something that happened to Jehoshaphat, who was king of Judah. On one occasion, several enemies allied together to attack the people of God.

The first to realize that the enemies were coming ran to warn the king that they were coming after him. This is a big mistake that we often make. Sometimes we think that the enemy will only attack people around us, but nothing will happen to us. Instead of being supportive, sometimes it seems that we just sit down to see what happens.

King Jehoshaphat recognized that the situation was serious. It wasn't just an enemy, but an alliance of several of them. Has it ever happened to you that several problems arose at the same time? Perhaps an illness, and economic problems, which are both aggravated by a misunderstanding in the family. It seems that it is almost impossible to get out of that.

Some will think, "Lord at least you sent them so I don't have to face them all at the same time." That's not good thinking. Let's see which way Jehoshaphat chose, and learn how God wants us to face our problems, no matter how big or how many they may be.

8.2 Development

8.2.1 Jehoshaphat had options before the enemy attacked

If this were happening today, what options would we have?

- a) Seek to ally ourselves with other nations to fight the enemy.
- b) Try to get more weapons to face the enemy. Military logic says that if I have a military problem, I should solve it militarily.
- c) Surrender without fighting a clearly numerically superior enemy.
- d) Go to God to ask what you should do.

8.2.2 Jehoshaphat humbled his face to consult Jehovah. (2 Chron. 20: 3b)

We describe the situation as very difficult, but we see Jehoshaphat made the right decisions even in the midst of such a big problem. The passage tells us that he was afraid, and here the question arises, is it a sin to be afraid? I think that is a human reaction, which doesn't have to be a big. It all depends on us ... will we be paralyzed by fear?

Jehoshaphat wisely began by not being paralyzed by fear. He knew that at all times he had to rest in a King who is almighty, Our God, who would guide him about what he should do.

What is our first reaction to circumstances as difficult as those faced by this king? He went alone before God in prayer. Then, he summoned all the people to join in prayer.

When we feel fear, what do we do? Are we going to knock on doors without first seeking the Lord? That will lead us to make wrong decisions. Don't depend on your strength, your wisdom, or on possible allies who don't know God. Let's go and consult God.

Let's analyze his prayer to continue learning more about the Word:

- a) Recognize the greatness of God (20: 6): *LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.*
- b) Trust that God will come to the aid of his people (20:9-12)

In light of this prayer, God responded wonderfully and immediately (20:14-17). He'll give victory, as only He knows how to do it. God spoke on that occasion through a person who was in that great assembly and said to his people: "I will fight for you."

What a wonderful way for God to respond to a king and a people united in prayer with a sincere heart. No doubt that motivates us to ask for His support of our family every time we go through some difficulty.

8.2.3 Jehoshaphat and the people worshiped God

Before God's response, the reaction of King Jehoshaphat and all the people was only to worship Him. Everyone fell down before God.

However, it's important to emphasize that we must always worship God through our worship of Jesus. There is no better place than to be prostrated at his feet.

This worship is continual, at all times, as a lifestyle. In war and in peace, in need and in abundance, at all times our soul must be grateful to Jesus for what he is, for what he has done for us, and for what he will continue to do.

After having prostrated themselves, the Word says that the Levite descendants from the Kohathites and Korahites began to praise the Lord God of Israel very loudly. But they didn't only worship God there. The next day, the first to go to the front of the troops were singers to praise the Lord with the hymn: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."

It's surprising how God, at the beginning of this song, created confusion in the midst of the enemy and caused them to kill themselves. The people of God didn't even have to fight, for their Almighty God fought the battle for them.

Even after returning to Jerusalem, they went to the temple of the Lord to the sound of psalteries, zither and trumpets. There is no doubt, with God there is always a reason for joy that must be expressed through our worship.

8.2.4 Jehoshaphat proclaimed fasting to all Judah (2 Chron. 20: 3c)

Here we see that prayer can and should be supported by fasting. It's striking that Jehoshaphat summoned everyone to fast. So problems certainly bring many benefits, although at first we don't like to go through the test.

Here we now see a people acting in solidarity with their king. There is mutual support and a better understanding that the problems that would arise from this attack would greatly affect them as well.

8.3 Conclusions

Do we want to receive God's help at all times, even in those that are the most complicated? Then we pray, fast and worship. The first thing we have to do is consult God in prayer about what we should do.

Another important key is that the tests are good to achieve the union of a people, a church or a family. Let's get used to praying together, in addition to personal prayer time.

Prayer accompanied by fasting is a great formula for seeing great things from God. Here we can also invite the church or family.

But in addition to this, at all times we must worship: Before God’s response, during the time of implementing the necessary actions (during the test), and not only when God has already granted us the victory. The blessings didn’t stop there in victory. The Word teaches us that they also obtained the spoils of war: large numbers of cattle, weapons, clothing and valuable items. Doing that took several days. Isn’t the way God responds when we cry out to Him the right way truly wonderful?

Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets. The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. (2 Chronicles 20:27-29)

He who was afraid now had great peace and joy. But, on the contrary, those who instilled fear ended up full of fear, defeated by the Power of God. The man who began with fear in the story ended up full of joy, and those who threatened others ended up defeated.

Proposed Activities:

1. In all sincerity before God, how much are we using this plan of praying, fasting and worshipping continuously?

2. May you commit yourself to God so that this becomes a part of your daily life. If it already is, how could you improve it?

Lesson 9. **Jesus is looking for new wineskins.**

Biblical Text:

Mark 2:18-22 (parallel passages: **Mt. 9.14-17; Luke 5.33-39**)

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

Objectives:

- **Understand that for God to bless us and use us in his Kingdom, we need all old things to be removed from our lives.**
- **Yearn and ask that the Holy Spirit continuously does his work of cleansing in our lives.**
- **Inspire others by being transformed into the likeness of Christ and fulfill his Mission.**

9.1 Introduction

In Mark 1, the beginnings of Jesus' ministry are narrated to us. It's described as he begins to call the first disciples, then Jesus cast out an unclean spirit. After that Mark testifies of how Jesus healed many people. In addition, he focused on preaching the good news of salvation, beginning in Galilee.

However, Mark teaches us that the enemy will try at all costs to stop the work of God that brings salvation to us. So the enemy used the religious leaders of that time to try to confront Jesus and prevent him from continuing with his redemptive plan.

While Jesus was fulfilling the mission entrusted to him by the Father, the scribes became inflamed. On one occasion, after calling Matthew (2: 13-17), he hosted a great meal, inviting other tax collectors and sinners. But there were also scribes and Pharisees there, and they became indignant. They rebuked Jesus, asking him why he didn't require his disciples to fast?

Jesus, far from falling into dispute, responded to them, using two short parables that hold great truths for us today. So be prepared to see how Jesus helped those who opposed his work, as

perhaps today there are still some around us. We'll learn what we should be for Jesus to use us as instruments of blessing.

9.2 Development

9.2.1 The parable of the new patch on old cloth

In high school, we wore a uniform that usually ended all torn on the knees due to the multiple falls we suffered while playing. So, moms used to put patches on our knees. However, putting a new patch on an old uniform could end up tearing the fabric of the pants. Those who lived in the time of Jesus knew that.

The spiritual application is that the new fabric represents the new covenant. With Jesus, the Old Covenant was abolished. Now the grace of Jesus took precedence over the law. But the scribes and Pharisees didn't understand.

Sometimes you and I may be trying to mix the two covenants and that is senseless and impossible.

We sometimes have an old mentality:

- Someone offended me and I don't forget. So whoever does it pays for it.
- Someone sinned, so let's take the stones and stone them.
- We have many problems at home, but at least my spouse doesn't do that anymore.

However, the Bible declares that we are new creatures when we accept Jesus as our Savior. The Word declares that all things are made new. Therefore, we must understand that:

- Jesus wants to give us new clothes, not a patch for the old ones. (Eph. 4:24)
- Jesus has come for us to have life and life in abundance. (John 10:10)

9.2.2 The parable of the new wine in new wineskins (Mark 2:22)

The wineskins were leather bags made to hold liquids. They were especially used in the fermentation of grape juice that resulted in wine. What does Jesus call old wineskins?

- Something that belongs to the past, something not recent, worn, old
- The lifeless religious system taught by religious leaders, distorting the Law of God.

Jesus seeks to teach through this metaphor:

- a) that the Christian needs to be regenerated in order to assimilate the message of salvation by grace.
- b) that a new teaching could not be incorporated into the old legalistic system imposed by the Pharisees.

9.2.3 Characteristics of old wineskins

Now we'll describe some characteristics of old wineskins. It will be very useful, because we can use it as a checklist to see how Jesus sees us.

- They are no longer guaranteed to fulfill their function of preserving what is stored there: the wine fermentation process inflates and stretches the leather and bursts it because it can't resist the pressure.
- They represent the traditional: what is customary and habitual, what doesn't go beyond the limits.
- Refers to religious leaders who imposed their beliefs and heavy burdens, which even they themselves could not successfully carry.
- They symbolize the archaic mind, ways of working in the ministry that no longer work in the current context. (Rivera, C. s / f)

Jesus was telling the religious leaders that they were unable to assimilate the new things that God had prepared for them. The Pharisees tithed, fasted twice a week, and went to the synagogue. But they lost their spirituality, staying in mere religiosity, traditions and legalism.

Something similar could be happening to us. We go to a small group, we attend church, we tithe, we offer our firstfruits, but where is the thirst to bring new people to the feet of Christ? Where is the thirst to practice righteousness, help the poor, give bread to the hungry?

Take care not to become postmodern Pharisees. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to do his complete work in us, regenerating our heart. To explain it better, we could give some examples of old wineskins that Rivera C. identifies:

- The skin of bad attitudes. For example, being late to worship, developing a half-hearted ministry, being a pessimist. Criticizing everything we see.
- The skin of mental schemes: Believing that only our human and ancient methods are effective.
- Those that have worked in the past. "It has always been done that way here." Does that sound familiar?
- The skin of the shortened vision: Believing that we aren't going to reach the goal, that we won't advance, that we aren't chosen for great things. We end up in the well-known comfort zone, doing small things when God has called us to better ones.
- The skin of worldliness: conforming to this world and not acting according to the demands of God, living without holiness that He demands of his people. It seems that often the distinction between a Christian and the one who isn't has become more imperceptible.
- The skin of carnality: wanting to force God to manifest himself in non-biblical ways, in ways that put us at the center.

9.2.4 Characteristics of the new wineskins

Now we're going to give some characteristics of the new wineskins. God allows us to identify with many of them.

- They are new vessels, suitable for receiving new wine and withstanding all the pressures demanded of it.
- They characterize the leader and believer with vision and new goals, with real perspectives. Going forward, risking without fear of losing.
- They symbolize the man who dreams, who has ideals, who looks at the future with possibilities.
- They represent the dynamic leader who seeks solutions, who is able to face different contexts and circumstances to carry out the Mission of God.

9.2.5 New Wine

We have already identified that the wineskins represent us. Now we'll learn what new wine represents. Jesus has come with a message of Salvation by grace, which abolished the previous covenant. This is the wine that Jesus wants to deposit into our lives.

From the theological point of view, wine is a symbol of joy (Psalm 104:15); an ingredient of worship (Joel 1:10); and a complement of bread (Judges 19:19). Thus, to work in the Kingdom requires people full of his holy Spirit, with Jesus as the center of his life to carry out His work. For this we must:

1. Repent of our sins, accept Christ as a personal Savior and turn away from sin so that it won't enslave us again.
2. Ask God, through the Holy Spirit, to clean our hearts from all the impurities that hinder us from being like Jesus. We need Him to regenerate our heart.
3. Not neglect but maintain an intimate relationship with Jesus every day.

9.2.6 How to be a new wineskin.

a. Return to your first love (Rev. 2: 1-7)

In Rev. 2:1-7 in the letter to the church of Ephesus, God recognized the work of the church, but accused them of having left their first love. That is, they no longer loved God the most.

Perhaps some of us have worked hard for the Lord, like the Ephesians. There may also be some who have not accepted an invitation to collaborate in a ministry for some time.

But today, God invites us to regain our first love. Let the new wine help you see new horizons. Are you tired of not seeing results? God says in Isaiah 40:29-31 that He can give us new strength. Let's spend more time with Him, let's spend more time studying the Word more, praying more, fasting whenever possible. Let yourself be filled by the Holy Spirit.

b. Change the way you think. (Rom. 12: 2 and Eph. 4:23)

To be a new wineskin, we need to be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. This implies being emptied of all things that aren't pleasing to God.

A new wineskin is a person with a renewed mentality according to the will of God. Jesus didn't use someone else's wineskins. He formed his own wineskins. Today, He wants to do the same with us. Eliminate negative expressions: "it's impossible", "it doesn't work", "it can't be done."

c. Drop what the old man represents, so you can receive new wine.

- Remove excuses, laziness, mediocrity, religiosity, tired routine, etc. from your life.
- Don't let the narrowness and weariness of your life cause you to pity yourself.
- Everything that smells like old wineskin limits us and steals the blessing of a new future (Hades, 2013).

d. Let's not forget the cross

The purpose for each of us is to share the good news of Salvation in Christ with others and make Christ-like disciples. The Holy Spirit will be in charge of convincing you. This includes all people, even those who have hurt us.

How are we going to reach them? What new ways does God want to use to attract them? Are you open to do what God says? Does my skin have the ability to stretch and fit into the new movement of God?

When was the last time God gave you a new idea to attract others to Christ or to improve your ministry?

Let us also be careful not to depend on ourselves, on our works, on our gifts, on our ideas., etc. It's all about Jesus. He is the Lord, He is the Savior, He is the one who does the work.

9.3 Conclusion

Jesus is represented as the new wine that requires a container (wineskin) in which to be deposited. God was pleased to prepare new wineskins that could contain this wine, and that container can be you and me. But we need to recognize Christ as Savior and then ask for the intervention of the Holy Spirit to help us remove everything that prevents God from using us as instruments of blessing. We cannot please God if we remain with our old way of life, with beliefs that have nothing to do with biblical truths.

I conclude by saying three important things: The first is that the new wine demands new wineskins, the second is that the new wine asks for us to have new lives, and the third is that the new wine demands that we leave our comfort zone.

Bibliography

Hades, Lázaro (2013). ¿Odres viejos, odres nuevos, remiendos...qué quiere decir esto? (Old wineskins, new wineskins, patches ... what does this mean?) Found at: <http://lazarohades.com/2013/09/06/odres-viejos-odres-nuevos-remiendos-que-quiere- decir-esto/>

Rivera, C. (s/f). Odres nuevos y odres viejos (New wineskins and old wineskins). Found at: <https://www.clubensayos.com/Religi%C3%B3n/Odres-nuevos-y-odres-viejos/3652379.html>

Proposed Activities:

1. Did you identify yourself with some of the features of old wineskins? If so, which ones?

2. What can be your plan of action for God to fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit, making you into a new wineskin?

3. Ask God to allow you to be part of the new movement that will bring blessings to many. Ask him to show you new ways to reach the lost and better develop your ministry.

Lesson 10. Qualities of a conqueror Part 1

Biblical Text:

Joshua 10:1-25

Objectives:

- **Understand** what I must do so that God shows himself in my life with great Power at all times.
- **Cultivate** in our lives the characteristics to be a conqueror for God's purpose, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

10.1 Introduction

God made a promise to Abraham, who long ago gave up his lands because of the evil of the inhabitants of those areas (Gen. 15:16). Now, 4 generations have passed in a period of approximately 400 years (Ex. 12:40). When Moses was one hundred and twenty years old, the Lord took him. Surely inside the camp of Israel many questions arose. After 40 years, now who will lead us? What do we do now?

Have you ever faced a situation that was scary, and at the same time, filled with great expectation? Well, the Israelites had reason to feel both sensations.

That generation had contemplated all the wonders of God: the manna of heaven, the water from the Rock, the clothes that didn't wear out, the cloud that protected them from the sun, the column of fire that gave them heat in the cold night. The problem is that they were now seemingly without a leader. It had to be someone who wasn't chosen by the people, but was chosen by God. Why did Joshua become a conqueror? What lessons can we learn from him?

10.2 Development

We read in the basic text of this lesson that God granted a great victory to his people, which was then led by Joshua. But I invite you to discover what lies behind the great victories that God grants to his servants. You may be surprised to see that it all started many years ago. Prepare to discover the characteristics of men and women that God will use to bless his people.

10.2.1 It all starts with a training process

We must see that Joshua was always willing to serve God and his servants. God already had His plan in which Joshua would be a central character. This means that if we want to be used as instruments of blessing, we must enter into a process of formation of our character.

- In Ex. 17:8-14 when the people ask Moses for water in Rephidim, Moses instructed Joshua to choose a group of men and go out to fight against Amalek. God told Moses to write a book where it would be recorded that Joshua would be his successor, and not

one of his children. When you fight the battles of Jehovah, your name is written and God recognizes your name; God recognized Joshua.

- In Ex. 24:13, Moses went up to the mountain of God. This is another key, Moses went up the mountain and Joshua went with him. Joshua longed to be close to the presence of God, just like Moses.
- In Ex. 33:11, when God spoke with Moses face to face, Joshua, his servant, never departed from the meeting. Stick with people who seek God. Do you want to be wise? Go with wise men, do you want to be a fool? Go with fools. Stick with those who seek, with those who seek to be with God.
- At the beginning of the exodus, after fleeing from Egypt and crossing the desert, the Israelites reached the edge of Canaan. From Cades-Barnea, Moses sent twelve spies to observe the land of Canaan for forty days. For ten of the spies the first thing they did was to proclaim everything bad they had seen in the promised land. The negative words caused discouragement, fear and rebellion among the people (Num. 13:32-33). On the contrary, Joshua and Caleb declared that the land was rich where milk and honey flowed. They didn't declare evil, but all that was good in that land (Numbers 14:6-9). They had the right attitude that God likes. So don't be surprised that God continues his plans through them.

10.2.2 Being obedient, no matter the circumstances. (John 16:33)

The conquest of the Promised Land, first known as Canaan, and then Palestine, began.

Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. (Joshua 1:2)

Almost at the end of his life, Joshua gathered the people to give them a blessing and final warning, just as Moses had done. Joshua reminded Israel of exactly what God had miraculously done for them in the past, and urged them to choose who they would serve.

Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. (Joshua 23:6)

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

10.2.3 Meditate on and fulfill God's commandments. (Josh. 1:8)

Joshua 1:7, 8 emphasizes keeping the whole law. This is what requires effort from yourself. Joshua should be an example for all the people, putting the honor of God first by keeping God's Word.

But Joshua not only had to learn the Word, he also had to teach it. Here we see how important the ministry of teaching in the Church is. God established it from the beginning, as part of the duties of his people. Today many want to replace the teaching of the Word with other more "interesting" activities. In order to keep God's law, and to be able to speak his law, it was necessary to "meditate" on it "day and night."

So that there is no doubt about the importance of preserving sound doctrine, later our Lord Jesus would establish that:

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. (John 14:21)

10.2.4 Search for God's direction and follow it. (Joshua 3:3)

In front of the Jordan River, Joshua gathered and instructed the people (Josh 2:14). By that time, Jericho, which was the first city that God was giving to his people, was terrified and all they would have to do was go in and take it. But God first asked them to circumcise the people and they did. That put them at a disadvantage against the enemy.

After crossing the Jordan, they rested for three days. They had been in the desert for 40 years, what were three days more now? So they celebrated Passover in Gilgal. Gilgal is the place where Jehovah and his people Israel set up their first camp in the promised land. Gilgal symbolizes the beginning for Israel, where Jehovah removed the shame of slavery; it is the place of a new beginning.

Jericho was a walled city, difficult to conquer apparently. When Joshua sought God's direction (Jos. 6: 3), he received a strange order. Think about the order God gave Joshua. Can you imagine blowing the horn, shouting and waiting for the walls to fall down? How would his men of war react? But Joshua was willing to follow the orders of the true Commander in Chief of the army of Israel. Obviously, God gave them victory, just as he had said he would. So the lesson is: seek the direction of God and follow it.

But I take this opportunity to tell you something that I hope you have in mind. After Jericho, they went to a smaller town and apparently easier to conquer named Ai. However, because of the serious consequences for the sin of Achan to take from anathema ("something set aside" as a votive offering to a temple, "something cursed") they were humiliated by this small city-state. Joshua asked the reason why Israel had been defeated (Joshua 7: 10-15), God showed him the sin

of a man who had taken a Babylonian mantle, 200 silver coins , and gold bullion of more than half a kilo. After punishing the guilty, God granted victory to his people.

The third conquered town was Gibeon, who gave itself up without a fight (Josh. 9), and its inhabitants became servants of Israel. They acted with deception, pretending they came from afar. When three days later they learned that they had been deceived, Israel could not kill them, because *“the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel,”* but they announced, *“Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly.”* (Josh. 9:16-21).

The methods are not important. **The important thing is God!** And God can take Jericho in one way, Ai in another, and Gibeon in another way if he wishes. It is not about God's methods, but about God's character.

Thus the people of God were building a bridge between the north and the south, little by little they became owners of the land. This caused the Amorites to try to block their way and take the fight outside their own territory. The Word says that five kings gathered to fight against Gibeon. Then the Gibeonites asked Joshua for support (Jos. 10: 5, 6). But Israel was not obliged to defend the Gibeonites ... or were they?

10.2.5 Honoring the Word ... being reliable people. (Joshua 10:7)

Joshua, the leaders of Israel, and all the people of Israel knew that they made a bad decision concerning the Gibeonites, but they still honored it.

But we see Joshua and the leaders of Israel going one step further. Allowing the Canaanite kings to destroy the Gibeonites would have been a convenient way to break their vow that they should not have made, but they didn't. We should have the same sense of honor. Although Joshua was only obliged not to kill the Gibeonites, Joshua fulfilled the spirit of the vow made.

Also remember that the deal with Rahab de Jerico was honored. (6:24) Only 4 women are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus: Rahab is one of them, the others: Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary.

10.2.6 Trust in the promises of God. (Joshua 10:8)

Sometimes when faced with a problem, the picture seems very bad. But it's terribly bad when we have to deal with five problems at once. What happens when they come against us? That is the time to meditate on the promises of God. He was just reiterating what was already promised.

And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.” (10:8)

10.3 Conclusions

Each of us can be an instrument of blessing in the hands of God. But we must undergo a process in which He helps us grow to take on greater responsibilities.

This was the case with Joshua, who is identified as a type of Jesus:

- a) He obeyed God and his leader Moses when he lived,
- b) He was concerned that the Word of God would be fulfilled in his life, in that of his own family, and in the lives of his people,
- c) He sought God's direction and followed His instructions, although for some they didn't sound "logical,"
- d) He honored God's Word and trusted Him, even in the most adverse circumstances.

Proposed Activities:

1. What do you commit yourself to before God, so that He makes you into a conqueror?

If you fulfill this, get ready for a victorious life in Christ Jesus.

Lesson 11. Qualities of a conqueror Part 2

Biblical Text:
Joshua 10:1-25

Objectives:

- **Understand** what I must do so that God shows himself in my life with great power at all times.
- **Cultivate** in our lives the characteristics to be a conqueror for God's purpose, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

11.1 Introduction

In this study, we'll see what is perhaps the most incredible prayer in the O.T. It was prayed by Joshua when he asked God to stop time by exclaiming "sun stand still." In this way he could catch the five kings who had allied to make a front against the invasion of God's people.

We'll see how God responded by literally making time stop its march. But why was God willing to grant his servants such great wonders? We'll discover what was behind that prayer ... Joshua's entirely consecrated life to love, honor and obey God in all circumstances, knowing that God supports him.

We will also continue exploring other notable features of this great servant of God called Joshua. I must clarify that the list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it certainly provides us with a good basis for God to help us conquer what He already has planned for our lives.

11.2 Development

11.2.1. From the hand of God we should not be afraid. (Joshua 10:8)

Do not be afraid of them ... This is a commandment. Although Joshua had a reason to fear because Israel faced a confederation of five kings, God commanded him to not fear his enemies. We can paralyze our ability to fight God's battles out of fear. Although we face strong enemies, we are commanded not to fear. *"The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you."* The command came, and comes, with a promise of victory.

This call to Joshua to strive and be very brave is the same call that God makes to every Christian. It has always been like this. God does not rescue us to hide in a corner, but to make us children of Almighty God. That's why he calls us to be courageous and brave. That courage arises from being a child of God, from belonging to the covenant established between God and his people. The courage that God asks has to do above all with honoring the will of God written in his Word.

11.2.2 Strong and brave man. (Joshua 1:9; 10:8, 9)

Once God gave him the command, Joshua told the people to get ready, because they would soon take over the land. Joshua believed God and obeyed immediately. Now, with a select troop, and a forced march that took him all night, he arrived at the front of the Amorite armies. Dear friends and brothers, note that being a conqueror requires an extraordinary effort on our part. Are we doing it the right way?

Trusting in the promise of God, Joshua put forth a great effort to participate in the work and will of God. This took hard work and initiative on Joshua's part. The march from Gilgal to Gibeon involves a climb of 1000 meters, and the distance is 32 kilometers, taking about nine hours of rapid marching. Can you imagine the great work that this cost them?

God does His work, but He puts us to work with Him. Often God expects to see our initiative, our willingness to work as a team with Him, before He does what only He can do. Jesus was undoubtedly the quintessential example of a hard-working man. How are you struggling?

11.2.3 God is the commander in chief, He supports you. Joshua 10:10-11

During the battle, God manifested himself powerfully, causing fear in the Amorites by unleashing a hail storm on them that caused more havoc than the swords themselves. That combined army retreated in a disorderly way, being pursued all the way to Bet-horón (6 kms from Gibeon); Azeca and Maceda (both cities about 24 kms from Gibeon).

11.2.4 Seeks to complete the task entrusted to him. Joshua 10:12-14

But there was little time left until dusk and it was likely that the enemy, with numerical superiority, would take advantage of the night to reorganize and attack. Therefore, it was necessary to annihilate the Amorites before the shadows of the night gave them the opportunity to protect themselves. Our Lord Jesus did not stop until he could exclaim to the Father "It is finished."

For his part, Joshua could not finish until he had distributed the Promised Land among the tribes: Joshua 19:49-50. This man did not rest until he had conquered and distributed the promised land. Do not rest until you see your dream come true.

11.2.5 He is aware of the Almighty God that he has. Joshua 10:12

Let's remember several miracles of great importance in Joshua:

- the opening of the Jordan River and the crossing through on dry ground (Josh. 3:13-17)
- the fall of the walls of Jericho (Josh. 6:13-20)
- "artificial artillery"; selective hail over the Amorites (Josh. 10:11)
- the prolongation of the day in the battle of Gibeon

The spectacularity of these miracles shows us the Divine Omnipotence: nothing can oppose what God wants to do. Remember how Jesus calmed the storm, walked on water, multiplied the loaves, turned the water into wine, resurrected, healed, and continues to do so.

Then Joshua did something unheard of. Knowing the Power of God, Joshua dared to ask for even more wonderful miracles: to stop the sun at Gibeon; and the moon in the valley of Ajalón. (10:13) And the sun stopped and the moon stopped, so that Israel had time to complete the victory before darkness fell.

There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! (Joshua 10:14)

It is worth mentioning that the Amorites worshiped the sun and the moon, but now they obeyed and surrendered to the power of Jehovah. God was willing to hand over these five kings to the Israelites because of the sin, evil and demonic religion of these Canaanites.

11.2.6 The Triumph Ceremony. Give glory to God. Joshua 10:24-27

The Amorites panicked. The five kings hid in a cave. Joshua 10:16-27 describes the capture and execution of the five Amorite kings. They abandoned their troops and hid in a cave. Joshua's soldiers rolled large stones over the entrance to that cave and kept them locked up until the end of the entire military operation.

After that, Joshua wounded them and killed them, and made them hang on five wooden poles. The Canaanite kings were executed. Joshua wanted to make it clear that there was no room for those Canaanite kings. According to this pattern, we cannot allow room for our spiritual enemies in our lives. All the land belongs to Jesus, and must be ceded to Him.

Joshua made the defeated kings lie on the ground before him. He called the generals of his army to put their feet on the necks of the kings. The act was symbolic of surrender and complete submission. At the ceremony, Joshua told his generals that God had given them the victory, that God is the Commander of Israel. *"Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight."* Joshua 10:25

In the same way, the Word teaches that Jesus publicly displayed his enemy whom he defeated on the cross. *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.* (Col. 2:15)

11.3 Conclusions

The inhabitants of Canaan were experts in war and fiercely resisted any attempt by other peoples to colonize their land. But the Lord had already delivered Canaan to his people. They just had to take it from the Canaanites and protect it from their enemies.

By the strength of God, Joshua and Israel lost their fear, and the nations, which previously looked unbeatable, trembled at the mention of the Name of God. Joshua and the people of God had the courage, strength, and above all, the faith that God would fulfill his promise.

Yes, God is faithful to his promises and keeps everything he promises.

1. The promise he made to Abraham 650 years earlier has been fulfilled: with his supernatural guidance, God has given Abraham's descendants the land he had promised.
2. God also fulfilled unpleasant promises: He warned that only Joshua and Caleb, from those who had left Egypt, would enter the Promised Land. So it was.

Proposed Activities:

1. Pray that God will make us conquerors, but above all, that we are willing to pay the price, go through the formation process and prepare for great battles. Father, thank you that we can come to your throne and tell you about our fears, problems, and concerns. Your Word says that we are to live the Christian life by the power of your Holy Spirit, not by trying to do it by our own efforts. We have learned that victory is in doing things Your way, not ours. Give us wisdom and discernment to listen to your Word, and apply it to our lives. It is transformation that we want, Lord. In the name of Jesus, amen.
2. We have many "lands" to conquer for the glory of God and for our blessing and personal edification.
 - a. Family is land that God gives you
 - b. Friends is land that God gives you
 - c. Your neighbors is land that God gives you
 - d. Your coworkers is land that God gives you

They are all lands that God gives us to conquer. Determine today what you will do for God to lead you to be a victor.

Lord, since you have made me to be a conqueror, I pledge to:

If you fulfill this, get ready for a victorious life in Christ Jesus.

Lesson 12. **Urgent! We need times of intimacy with God.**

Biblical Text:
Exodus 33:7-18

Objectives:

- Recognize that away from Jesus, we are nothing.
- Develop a plan to have times of intimate communion with Him.

12.1 Introduction

I don't have time ... Have you thought about how a person's time is distributed during an average day?

- Physiological needs: Sleep, wash, eat: 8 hours of sleep, 1 hour of eating, 1 hour of personal grooming and getting dressed. That's 10 hours (42%)
- Working or studying: 8 hours. You've accumulate 18 hours so far. (75% accumulated)
- Transporting myself: 1.2 hours, That's 19.2 hours. (80% accumulated).

So how do we spend the 20% that we have left?

- Family, girlfriend/boyfriend, and friends? 1 hour a day. That's 20.2 hours total.
- What do we do about leisure and recreation time?
 - Watching TV? On average 1.8 hours. By the way, children watch TV 4.5 hours a day. We've used 22 hours (91.7%).
 - Internet use: many people spend three hours surfing the web
 - 72% of internet users have a Netflix account.
 - A person looks at their cell phone more than 150 times a day. That gives an average of every 6 or 7 minutes. In fact, the study notes that 73% of users panic if they don't feel their phone, or lose it. They feel anxious, nervous or depressed if they don't use it, causing addictive problems and dependence 'nomophobia'
 - There are other activities not included. Some 40 min of physical activity.

But wait, this certainly doesn't include Nazarenes because there isn't time to read the Bible, pray, go to worship, attend our small group, and spend in some ministry, etc.

12.2 Development

12.2.1 God's design is to have intimacy with us. Eph. 1:17

In order to know God, we must have an intimate relationship with Him. This implies seeing and knowing him as He is. It is a relationship that makes you more passionate for Him. It is longing to enter his presence, seek his direction, and look for what He wants for your life.

Remember what the prophet Isaiah expressed: Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of armies; All the earth is full of his glory. Who does not want to experience contemplating God day by day? We must seek the face of God, until it is the most important and priority for our lives.

If our love is true, our actions will show that we want Him to be the center of our homes, our plans, our ministry, etc. From the beginning, God has sought to have that communion with us. Do you remember God talking with Adam and Eve? (Gen. 1:28) Do you remember God talking to Abraham (Gen. 12), calling him (Gen. 15), and the promise of a son (Gen. 17:17), and the covenant with him.

The Bible gives us examples of people who sought him wholeheartedly

In the Bible we find men and women who were instruments in the hands of God. To fulfill their purposes, they sought that intimacy with God.

- **Moses.**

He was a man who met God at the burning bush when he was called (Ex. 3). Then on Mount Sinai. Ex. 33:

¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.

¹⁸ Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

You and I must ask for the same thing: Beloved Jesus, I beg your presence on this new day. May everything I do have the purpose of honoring you and giving you glory.

- **David.**

Sometimes our prayer may consist of asking God for things: "God give me," and "God forgive me." But maybe we don't tell him that we love him, that he is special, that we want to know him more, to show us his plans. You and I need to invest time to recognize his holiness, his love.

In 2 Samuel 6:12-23, we see that David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem (after the Philistines had taken it). He sought to worship Him always. For example, in many of the Psalms we can glimpse how God was a literal necessity for his life.

In Psalm 16:11, David declares that in God's presence, there is fullness of joy. May God grant us to experience what David experienced before God.

- **Jesus**

Jesus is always the model in everything he asks of us. He spent time alone with God.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matt. 6:6

His whole life is a model of intimacy with the Father.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35

It was a priority for Jesus to spend time in the Word of God and Prayer. Jesus took time to approach the Father in hearing his Word. He spent time away from everything and everyone, and used that time, set apart for God, to develop intimacy with Him.

12.2.2 Identify what is hindering your relationship with God

A. We may have lost focus

When a person comes to have such intimate communion with our Lord Jesus, his life is totally changed and transformed. He will never be the same again because he has known the glory of our Lord Jesus. But suddenly, we start acting on our own. We rely more on our abilities and gifts, falling into the sin of pride. We no longer consult God, we trust ourselves more ... until the great defeats come to our lives.

B. We may have moved away because of sins we haven't confessed.

David sinned when he took Bathsheba, and did not realize the seriousness of his fault (2. Sam. 12). He had to be strongly admonished by Nathan. Thus David realized his great fault.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Psalm 51:9, 11-12

C. We may have become indifferent to God

Indifference to God is manifested in the lack of commitment and seriousness towards God. Many times we do not give the importance due to our relationship with God. Sometimes the daily cares, the future of the world, etc. absorbs us and we only dedicate a small portion of our time to approach the throne of grace.

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. Matthew 13: 22

I do not know if you have thought like this, but many times it seems that we do not care what God wants for us. We care about what we want for our life.

12.2.3 Correct what you need to correct and prepare for great things

The first step in having a deep relationship with God, an intimate relationship with God, is to recognize where I am at the moment. We must stand before Him and tell him as David:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139: 23-24

The most beautiful thing about this is that God, seeing the intention of our heart, prepares a beautiful response. Let's see what the Word declares in Jeremiah 29:13:

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

He also reiterates it in Isaiah 57:15

I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Why miss those blessings? Sometimes we act in absurd ways when we choose to miss that meeting with Jesus that he has already prepared for us.

1. We must focus on the priority

The world involves us in what could be called the "tyranny of the urgent." It absorbs us so much that it affects us in our being. The enemy is very cunning and has found a way to blur the really transcendent. He tries to keep you and I focused on meeting commitments, whether labor, study, ministerial. That way we don't have time to listen to the voice of God, whom we say we love.

God wants to hear us, that we share our sorrows, projects, needs, etc. God must take first place in our priorities. In order to enter into a more effective relationship with God, it is necessary to practice spiritual disciplines. These will bring us closer to God because we focus on Him, instead of just knowing him superficially.

2. We must come before Him and confess our sins

The Word says in Isaiah 1:18:

"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

David had sinned by taking Bathsheba, a married woman. God had withdrawn his presence from David. That is why we see him pleading in Psalm 51:12:

Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

2.3.3 We must put aside indifference

We commit sin when we think we can be without Him. We like comfort, we don't like to change our attitude, we don't like to renew ourselves. We don't like to get up early to pray. We want everything easy.

But see God's beautiful promise to Moses when we seek him with a sincere heart:

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14

Then we read:

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.. Ex. 34:29

Being in the presence of God had transformed his face, although he had not noticed, since it was common for him to be in the presence of God. But those who saw it knew that it came from being in the presence of their God.

12.3 Conclusions

God is waiting for us to set aside time for him day by day. So I invite you to make a plan with time for God. The goal is not just that you pray or read the Bible every day. What we are looking for is to help you develop a lifestyle of intimacy with God.

Renounce what has separated you from your intimacy with God: friends, courtship, love of money, wanting recognition, etc. Jesus said:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Rev. 3:20

Jesus is talking about looking for a close relationship. He comes to your door and knocks. If you open your life and allow him in, he will enter that intimacy, you with Him and He with you. Invest time in Prayer and in the Meditation of His Word, since through these practices you will grow spiritually and your life will be an effective life, bearing fruit and being exceedingly victorious in Christ Jesus.

Proposed Activities:

1. My commitment to God: To lead a life of communion with our God requires discipline. We must leave our comfort zone. Have you committed yourself today to start to have this full communion with God?

2. We can begin by identifying what has been a hindrance to spending time with God. What are the main obstacles that have prevented you from spending time alone with God? What do you intend to do, with God's help, to remove them from your life?

If you do this, prepare yourself to live an abundant life in Christ Jesus



CHURCH OF
THE NAZARENE



MEN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

**Sunday School and Discipleship
Ministries International**
Adult Ministries