**Gleaner’s Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church for May 16, 2021**

**Good Morning Gleaners!**

**Unit: How to Share Christ:** We often find it challenging, awkward, or intimidating to share our faith with others.  In this 6-week study, we will discover how to share the priceless gift of salvation that we have received in practical and engaging ways.  We will see both the importance and responsibility of sharing Christ.

**Topic of Session #4: Live the Message**

**Scripture:** Primary source of the lesson is *Bible Studies for Life, Senior Adult Personal Study Guide Spring Edition* **p. 128,** or open your Bible to **Colossians 3:1-3, 12-17**

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I praise your name and thank you for another week of your love and blessings.  Thank you for the gift of Your grace and holy Word where we find renewed strength and instruction on how to display our faith.  We know that how we live reflects on the message we share. May our lives be characterized by obedience, and may we  live the message of faith in Christ. Guide our leaders with Your wisdom; bring peace to those burdened, and comfort grieving hearts.  Bless the caretakers in our world, our classmates, families, friends, and especially our pastors as they faithfully  serve.  We pray especially for John’s healing and recovery from this recent illness. Forgive us when we fail You.  These things I ask in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

**Question #1:  (p. 128)  What’s a positive example of actions speaking louder than words?** Our author uses the CEO of Hobby Lobby, David Green, as a positive example of a person unashamed of his faith who uses the Bible to guide business decisions. His employees are paid above the minimum wage.  Stores close early enough to allow parents to tuck their kids into bed, and employees are off on Sundays. He has built a “Christian culture” in which he leads others to lean on God in prayer.  His actions speak louder than words.  Our lives must also match what we do and say.  As we share our faith, it is equally important others see Jesus in us.

**Point: How we live reflects on the message we share.**

**Setting:** Colossae (Ka-loss-ee) was a prosperous city located on a major trade route in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey).  While Paul did not found the Colossian church, his teachings did influence those believers, and he felt a personal responsibility to the congregation.  Epaphras(Ep-a-fris), or Epaphroditus(A-pa-phro-di-tus) brought the message there and God established the church (v. 7). Epaphras told Paul there were false teachers in Colossae who were telling the people that the Christian faith was incomplete.  They were teaching the people to worship angels, and to follow special rules and ceremonies.

**Author:** Colossians (Ka-la-shins) is the third letter written by Paul from  prison in Rome about A.D. 60.  Paul focuses on the deity of Christ.  Paul helped this young church understand who Jesus was and what He had done, probably to counter the false teachers trying to infiltrate the church.   He reminded them that Jesus is supreme over everything, and that his death is all we need to save us from our sins. It is through Him we are free from man-made rules. Paul challenged the Colossians to demonstrate the gospel through both their theology and their behavior.

**Read Colossians 3: 1-3 (p, 130)  Seek the things of Christ, not the things of the world.**

**Verse 1:** Paul said **“So”** or “on the basis of what I wrote in Colossians 1-2, this is what you should do:” **If you have been raised with Christ,** you die to your former, sinful lifestyle through Christ, and He raises you to a new way of living (Rom. 6:1-14). **Seek the things above** **where Christ is..**.instead of being wrapped up in worldly trends and ways of doing things.  Christians are called to seek or value the spiritual and eternal things of God, instead of worldly things that pass away and do not last. In heaven, Jesus is **seated at the right hand of God.** Here Paul  describes the power, authority, and rule of Christ over all things.  Jesus is not just our Savior, but also our Lord and Master who expects us to forsake sinful ways of living to live in the newness of life He died to bring to us..

**Verse 2 reinforces Verse 1** to stress the importance of things in heaven.  If we as Christians fail to seek and set our minds on heavenly things, how will we share the gospel effectively?  What do we need to change? ..**.Set your mind on things above** relates to our intellect and ties into the desires that affect our hearts.  It implies an intense focus that keeps our spiritual gaze straight ahead, instead of being led astray by sinful thoughts and desires.

**Verse 3:** Here Paul explained the reason for his earlier commands: **For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**  This death is the death of “our earthly nature.”  We die to the old, and our resurrected life in Christ is revealed.  It is a way of walking and talking that glorifies Him, instead of allowing our worldly, sinful nature to run things. We can live humble, Christ-like lives in submission to God the Father.   Having a Christ-like character requires dying to self and submitting to the authority and lordship of Jesus. Paul wrote, **your life is hidden with Christ in God.** Our identity with Christ means that when people look at us, they should see Jesus.

**Question #2: (p. 131) How exactly do we set our heart and mind on things above?**

**Read Colossians 3:12-15 (p 132) Put on and wear the character of Christ.**

**Verse 12:** Paul identified godly traits we are to **“put on”** and wear. **Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved,** we are to be set apart for His glory.  We are to display the same traits and behavior as Jesus Himself.  We must be willing to **…” put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

**Verse 13:** Paul provided specific instructions on dealing with conflict through  **bearing with one another** by not being easily offended. This requires  patience and long suffering.  We also need to avoid the dangers of an unforgiving heart by **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another.  Just as the Lord has forgiven** us**, so** we **are also to forgive.** As we acknowledge our own need for forgiveness from Christ, it’s easier to forgive others who have harmed or offended us.

**Verse 14:** Paul’s **“Above all”** introduction lets readers know that **putting on love** is the primary, important action believers are to embrace.  The Greek word *(agape)* for love describes God’s love toward believers in the New Testament.  One who shows genuine (*agape*) love will have little trouble living out the other qualities Paul mentioned. Paul wrote that love leads to true **unity** within the church.  Love is the **perfect bond** that holds Christians together and moves them toward spiritual maturity.  On a foundation of **love** and **unity**, a body of believers can weather most any storm.

**Verse 15:** Paul continued his teaching with an appeal to the **peace of Christ** that should **rule in** the **heart** of each Christian.  Peace leads to gratitude.  When Christ’s peace controls our hearts and minds, we can focus on how much He has done for us. Paul told the Colossians to **be thankful.** Thanksgiving takes our eyes and problems off ourselves.  This allows  us to focus on God and the things of heaven.

**Question #3 (p. 134): What are some practical steps believers can take to put on the character of Christ?**

**Read Colossians 3:16-17 (p.135) We are reminded of our need to be in God’s Word, to worship God, and live all out for Him.**

**Verse 16:** The best way to learn more about God  is through His Word. Paul challenged the Colossians to live like Jesus and demonstrate His character in front of the watching world. Time spent in Scripture was crucial. Paul said **The word of Christ must dwell richly among you,**  More time spent in the Word would transform hearts and lifestyles.  The Colossians had Old Testament texts, oral gospel traditions shared by the apostles, as well as the words of Jesus that were a part of Paul’s teaching.

After the message that Christ must live in the lives of His followers, Paul explained how to do this using **teaching, admonishing, and singing.** ...**in all wisdom** believers should **teach and admonish one another.**...The Word would teach God’s truth, but on the flip side, **admonishing** in all wisdom relates to stern but loving correction and  encouragement to live out what was taught.  Together, **teaching and admonishing one another through** **psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and singing to God with gratitude in hearts** would shape believers spiritually into the image of Christ.

**Verse 17:** Paul’s final instruction about teaching, admonishing, and singing is that we are to do this **with gratitude in** our **hearts.**  When we consider the message of Christ, the blessings  showered on us,  and His rule in our hearts; how else could we respond except with thanks? Paul concluded by commanding that everything we do **in word or in deed** must be done **in the name of the Lord Jesus.** Our **words and deeds** must  be done with conscious recognition of Christ’s lordship, authority, and reputation. We   must also **give thanks to God the Father through him.** To possess a heart of gratitude  is to view life from a perspective of contentment instead of dissatisfaction.

**Question #4 (p136) How has music helped shape your knowledge and understanding of God?**

**Question #5 )p. 136) What opportunities will you have to live out these verses in your normal, everyday routines?**

**Engage: (p. 134)** Grade yourself on the characteristics listed in Colossians 3:12-15: Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, and Thankfulness with a score of #1 meaning you don’t do this well and a score of #10 meaning you display this characteristic very well.

**Live It Out (p. 137)** How will you ensure your actions align with the message you share?  (1) **Confess.**  Are there any areas of your life that don’t align with the message of Christ?  Pray and ask God to reveal any sins or bad habits.  Confess those and repent.  (2) **Accept correction.**  Give a trusted friend permission to point out times when you are thinking more like the world and not like Christ.  (3) **Share**. As God gives you opportunities to share your faith, be willing to admit your own sin and failure.  It’s important to be transparent, but keep the focus on Christ who has forgiven and transformed you.

**Prayer:** Father, help us each day to put on the attributes of Christlikeness.  We are grateful for all You have done for us. Help us set our minds on things pleasing to You.

**Watchword:** May the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another. Stay well and safe. Have a great week!