

Central Study Hour Sabbath School Lesson Notes for *Family Seasons*

Lesson 11: Families of Faith

SABBATH AFTERNOON

The war between good and evil isn't won all in one day. To have a family of faith, everyone has a part to play whether a child, a parent, a grandparent, or an adult relative or family friend. Everyone must be in it for the long haul since it requires endurance for years, for a lifetime.

Read the Memory Text.

Much of this lesson has to do with the influence of culture on families.

Share highlights from the first paragraph.

Read the 2nd paragraph ("Christian families confront....is negative."). The entertainment culture today has a huge influence!

Read the final paragraph.

SUNDAY: HOLD FAST WHAT IS GOOD

Share the main idea of the opening paragraph.

Tell/sum up the story of **Acts 10** (Verses not to overlook: **17, 19-20, 23, 28, 34-35**).

What can we learn here about our need to overcome our own barriers and prejudices when dealing with other cultures? Natural pride and prejudice were removed by the vision. We need to respect everyone and try to win everyone to Jesus.

Share the 2nd paragraph ("Christ's death...them, as well.").

What conclusions did the early Christian missionaries reach regarding sharing the gospel to other cultures?

Acts 15:28-29 – The Jerusalem council decided that Gentiles didn't need to become cultural Jews via circumcision in order to be Christians, but they did expect them to follow biblical moral and health principles. They established some distinction between the moral and the cultural.

1 Cor. 2:2 – They focused on the main thing, Jesus and Him crucified.

1 Thess. 5:22 – Prove what is worthy and good, and hold fast to that.

Read/share the 3rd paragraph ("Though every culture...biblical principles.").

Read the first 2 sentences of the 4th paragraph ("At the same time....as authentic Christianity."). Examples of such cultural compromises: 1.) Baptism by sprinkling, 2.) Belief in disembodied souls, 3.) Sunday sacredness. While Satan constantly spreads confusion, "Jesus has redeemed this world, and His Spirit guides His followers into all truth (John 16:13)." When you see biblical truth, you hold fast!

Share the 1st question from the box at the bottom of the page. *Do we really need to know? Absolutely! What is the likelihood if we are not aware?* We'll end up conforming to our culture in ignorance, just following the music, dating practices, and watching whatever TV and movies fit with the popular customs.

How can you learn to discern between biblical truth and culture? It is interesting that the days of our week and most of the months of the year are named after pagan gods of the ancient Roman empire. Yet, no one views it as a compromise with pagan culture. *Why?* Because it doesn't infringe on any biblical truth or moral principle. Holiday's in the USA are, however, a mixed bag. Some are very useful for biblical Christianity, such as Mother's and Father's days, and Thanksgiving. On the other hand, Halloween is completely built on pagan ideas. Holidays like Easter and Christmas are a mix. It's important to remember the resurrection and birth of Jesus,

but that has no real connection to rabbits, eggs, and jelly beans, or Santa Claus and all the commercialism of Christmas. We are to just hold fast to the good!

MONDAY: THE POWER OF CULTURE ON FAMILY

Share highlights from the opening Scripture and the first paragraph.

In what ways did culture impact family life in the following four examples? What principles can we learn?

A. **Gen. 16:1-3 – The Abram, Sarai, and Hagar story.** Abram and Sarai were desperate for a natural born heir, but with Sarai apparently barren, they chose to follow the accepted cultural practice of using a servant girl to bear the child. This was a cultural shortcut in attempting to bring about God's promise.

Several principles can be noted.

- 1.) This interference with God's plan caused unnecessary suffering and hardship for everyone involved.
- 2.) Utilizing practices just because they are culturally permissible may do more harm than good.
- 3.) Scripture shows that polygamous marriages result in much unhappiness.
- 4.) Trusting in God is always the best choice.

B. **Read Gen. 35:1-4** - *What cultural practices had been followed by members of Jacob's family?*

Having images/idols and wearing earrings are both cultural practices.

What principle is brought out here?

When they really knew that they needed God, they put away and gave up both the images and the earrings. (They needed God's protection from violent retaliation by the surrounding peoples because of Levi and Simeon killing the inhabitants of Shechem – see Gen. 34:25-26, 30.)

C. **Ezra 10** – Several Jews had married pagan wives. The issue here was beliefs. The principle? Unequally yoked marriages are not wise. People should marry those of the same faith.

D. **1 Kings 11:1** – Solomon followed the cultural practices of a king having many wives. The principle? His situation actually ruined his ability to be a good king because of the compromises. He became sexually perverted and miserable. It underscores that having just one wife was God's plan from the beginning!

Read the final paragraph.

**Discuss the questions in the box at the bottom of the page if desired

TUESDAY: SUSTAINING FAMILIES THROUGH SEASONS OF CHANGE

Change is inescapable and unpredictable. Change comes in many ways with a variety of causes.

In the following examples of traumatic changes faced, how did these changes affect family life?

1. Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (Gen. 12:1-5) – Abram moved his family and servants far away from home (Ur) to obey God's call. It was a major change bringing upheaval to their lives.

2. Hadassah (Esther 2:7-9) – Esther was forcibly selected and removed from the only family that she knew to become part of the King's harem, but she won the favor of Hegi. Naturally, the situation would have been terrifying, but got hopeful when Hegi treated her well. God overruled all for good.

3. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 1) – They were forced to leave home as POW's into a land of captivity. After being selected for special training, the test on food would likely have ended in death if they failed to yield. Their trust in God was blessed big time.

If you faced a similar upheaval in your life, what would you do to cope?

Share highlights from the last paragraph.

WEDNESDAY: TOWARD A FIRST-GENERATION FAITH

*What crisis of faith developed in Israel after Joshua and his peers died? To answer tell about **Judges 2:7-13**. Read the 2nd half of the first paragraph ("Within a generation...."). And, sadly, many drop out.*

Read John 1:12-13. *How does one become a true son or daughter of God? One must receive Jesus personally. The new birth doesn't come by flesh and blood but by the Spirit (John 3:5-7). It doesn't automatically happen because the parents are Christian. God has no grandchildren, only children!*

Share highlights from the remainder of the narrative.

**Discuss the box at the bottom of the page.

THURSDAY: TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY RUNNERS

Share highlights from the opening paragraph.

Prepare a short concise summary of each verse given. Expound more on the last one (**2 Cor. 17-21**).

Share highlights from the remainder of the narrative.

CONCLUSION

Ask the question from the box at the bottom of Thursday's page.

Do other activities have a higher priority? Are we too busy to share the message? Do we lack vision for what we can do? Are we modeling fearfulness to our younger church member and to our children?