

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Are You Ready
Matthew 25: 31-46

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Prepare materials for the gathering time. These may include large pieces of paper, crayons or markers and/or pictures which may represent concepts about heaven.

Bible Study Leader:

If the youth are to meet for an application time, art materials will need to be supplied so they can make cards of encouragement. You may choose to let them work on this project while listening to the Bible Study.

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Are You Ready? – 06-19-11-en

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Worship Time Leader:

Decide how and when you will use the paraphrase of Psalm 23 by Issac Watts. Will you both open and close with the reading? Enlist someone ahead of time to do the reading. Since the language is Old English, an older youth or adult may read the words more fluently.

Music Sources:

Bow the Knee, *The Worship Hymnal* # 505; CCLI Not available

My Life Is in You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #518; CCLI # 17315

In His Time, *The Worship Hymnal* #522; CCLI # 25981

Seek Ye First, *The Worship Hymnal* #524; CCLI # 1352

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Are You Ready

Focal Text

Matthew 25:31-46

Background Text

Matthew 23-25

Main Idea

Christians must be ready for God to judge the genuineness of their faith by their deeds of mercy and kindness to people in need.

Question to Explore

What place do actions of mercy and kindness toward people in need have in your life?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to decide what actions they should take to demonstrate the genuineness of their faith.

Gathering together:

On a large piece of paper placed in the center of the room ask participants to write words or draw pictures of some concept they have about heaven. They may choose pictures that you provide and paste those on the sheet. (These pictures may include beautiful nature scenes, family scenes of fellowship, friends together, people worshipping together, abstract scenes which inspire devotion or other scenes which speak to you of heaven.) This is an excellent opportunity for all age groups to participate.

First thoughts:

Share together images of heaven which the group has included on the page. Where do we develop our images of heaven?

Closing the Gathering Time:

Watch your time and close by saying that today we will examine the importance of actions of mercy and kindness and their relationship to our understanding of eternal life.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Are You Ready

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Matthew 25:31-46

Background Text

Matthew 23-25

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Question to Explore

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Teaching Aim

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Introduction to your personal study:

Do your actions really show your heart? You may have seen mirrors at the fair that twist and distort your image. Some of the mirrors make you look fat and short while others make you look tall and skinny. The distorted image in these mirrors is not at all like the real image of the person standing in front of the mirror. On the other hand we have seen mirrors that are clouded and again the true image is distorted. Finally we find a mirror that reflects the true image of the person or thing that is placed in front of it. This is not unlike our walk with Jesus. Our true image may be distorted by the things we do, the clothes we wear or what we think. Therefore, we must be alert at all times. Those around us will evaluate our genuineness. Those we want to share the love of Christ with will notice how we treat the people that we will never see again. We must remember whose image we are to reflect.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

This passage is often confused with the judgement described in Revelations 20.

Some will say that the judgement described here is for nations, and there is another judgement for individuals. That does not seem consistent with Jesus teachings. We are saved by grace! What we do with that salvation is very important. This passage speaks of Christians living their salvation in the course of their regular activities, not as additional behaviour that people do to gain a reward.

I am reminded of a story of a godly man who died and when he was admitted to heaven he discovered that it was very quiet; there was no one else there, just he and God. So he asked God, “Where is everyone else?” God replied, “There aren’t any others. There was only you and me.” The moral of the story is that as Christians we must always treat people like they are God’s most precious possession, because in fact according to Matthew 25:40 “....***whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.***”

Focusing on the Meaning:

Matthew 25: 31-33

This passage draws a clear picture that there will be a judgement and that individuals will be judged. Jesus’ illustration uses sheep and goats probably because the sheep were white and goats were black. The illustration is clear that there will be no question which animal will go to which side.

Verse 32 refers to a shepherd. The shepherd knows his animals. Jesus knows us. Jesus will know our profession of Him as Saviour. He will know our thoughts when we are called to serve another. He will know whom we put first in our lives.

This passage paints a clear picture that there will be a judgement. To understand the picture we must know four things:

- 1) Who the shepherd is.
- 2) There will be a judgement.
- 3) The results of the judgement.
- 4) The basis for the judgement.

Matthew 25: 34-40

Here Jesus is the ruler/shepherd. Jesus is dividing the flock and is rewarding those who have truly demonstrated their love for Him. This passage outlines the Christian ethic of helping those who have no other advocate—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the person needing clothes, the sick, and the imprisoned. Jesus is teaching here that we need to incorporate into our life style the habit of helping those in distress. We help all those in need of our help, regardless of who it is.

The righteous will be surprised that they even helped Jesus because they were just helping those in need. Christ will answer, “As you have done it to the least of these you have done it to me.”

These verses came home to a friend a few months ago. As Susan and Tom were leaving the hospital they met an older man who was really down on his luck (dirty, smelly, bloody, and slightly inebriated). This man asked if they could give him a ride home. Tom said, “Yes”, but first he would check with the ER nurses. One of the nurses Tom spoke to said, “Yes, he can go, and the sooner the better!” When the nurse realised that Tom was going to give the elderly man a ride home, she asked, “Do you really want to get involved?” Tom said “No problem,” and they got into the car. They took the man home to the apartment building that was nicknamed “The Snake Pit” (very run down, a dirty place with a bad reputation). The man was very polite and thanked Susan and Tom several times as he got out of the car. Susan remembers the man saying, “God bless you.” About a week later Susan saw the old man’s name in the paper, as having passed away a few days after their car ride. This man unfortunately never heard about Jesus from Tom, but he allowed Tom and Susan to put these verses into reality. Maybe their small kindness was the only kindness he had known recently.

Matthew 25: 40-46

The group on the left is doomed to eternal separation from God, to a place of eternal fire. When Christ said this, he may have been looking at Gehenna, the garbage dump of Jerusalem, where it was reported to have a fire that burned or smouldered constantly.

Here Jesus seems to run counter to his teaching—that belief in Jesus is all that is needed to receive eternal life. A profession of faith that does not lead to an active concern and love for less fortunate is useless. Do we truly believe what Christ taught, when we appear to love ourselves more than we love others, especially the less fortunate?

To make this clearer we must look at our character. We will receive a new nature or new character when we have conviction and repentance of our sin and faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. This new character will be made visible by our absolute commitment and loyalty to Christ.

The judgement that takes place in this passage stands on two words. In verse 34 it is the word ‘blessed’ and in verse 41 it is ‘cursed’. The verb tense of these words express

an action that took place in the past and is continuing into the future. Therefore the blessing or cursing does not take place at the judgement, it began and will continue from the time you accept or reject Jesus.

Jesus has also outlined in the past the condition for the hope of salvation. We can be redeemed from our sinful nature by becoming convicted of our sin, repenting of our sin, and having faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Out of this faith will come the desire and or ability to do good works.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Many Christians believe or at least they act like they believe that coming to church on Sunday is all that it takes to be a follower of Christ. Jesus is not looking for those who only want the easy way. He is looking for followers who will live a life that matches His own life. We are not saved because we do good works. Our new nature in Christ will lead us to do good works. The final judgement will be based on whether we have truly accepted Christ. Have we the heart of Christ, or have we been playing a game all this time. Therefore we are called to have an absolute commitment to Christ along with complete loyalty to Him.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Are You Ready

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Matthew 25:31-46

Background Text

Matthew 23-25

Main Idea

Christians must be ready for God to judge the genuineness of their faith by their deeds of mercy and kindness to people in need.

Question to Explore

What place do actions of mercy and kindness toward people in need have in your life?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to decide what actions they should take to demonstrate the genuineness of their faith.

Connect with Life:

Read the following: Bob and Bertha lived in an isolated village in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. Bertha was a good homemaker and Bob had a job that gave them ample amount of money to purchase groceries when they were visiting relatives in southern Saskatchewan. Bob and Bertha were involved in a small local church in the community. One day Bob was contacted by Johnny, one of the church's members, stating that his family had a need of some groceries. Bob went to his basement room, where extra groceries were kept, and filled several bags with canned goods, potatoes

and assorted other items. The groceries were given to the family in need and nothing was thought about the event again.

Several years later and far from that isolated community, Bob and Bertha once again met Johnny, the father of the family they had helped so many years ago. Bob recalls that when Johnny saw him, he immediately started telling everyone around them about Bob and Bertha's generosity when he was in need.

Guide the Study:

Use the above story about the groceries to generate discussion of giving "without any thought of reward".

Have a member read the complete passage Matthew 25:31-46.

State and list: In the explanation of verses 31-34 it mentions four points we must remember. (As you list these, ask members to locate them in the passage and indicate where.)

- a. Who is the shepherd? (We must clearly understand who the shepherd is. The shepherd is Jesus).
- b. Will there be a judgement? (Yes there will be a judgement, a division of the people.)
- c. What will be the results of the judgement? (See verses 34 and 41. Have a member read those verses. [a teen if you have one in the group])
- d. What is the basis for the judgement? (See **Teaching the Passage** in your Teacher Preparation. Read the paragraph to the group. It refers to this.)

Ask: In this passage was Jesus going against what he taught earlier? Ask: Is our salvation based on works?

Get a response from more than one member: Where do good works come into our Christian walk?

Ask: Are there people who you know that "play" at being Christians?

Ask more specifically: How do they "play" at being Christians?

Ask: From the lesson material what will be the judging criteria at the judgement time?

Provoke a brief discussion within the group by asking: What about people who we feel don't deserve our help? (It's their own fault! or They are not my responsibility!, Etc.)

Ask: What should be our motivation for helping those who have no advocate and cannot help themselves?

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have the group list some things they could do or places they could go that would allow them to get immediately involved in helping people. (Don't forget an elderly neighbour)

Conclude by saying: As you look around your community, you will find the less fortunate. Finding a place where your level of involvement is comfortable may not happen, but be ready to grow because the moment you make yourself available opportunities will come that will stretch your commitment to Christ.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Are You Ready

Matthew 25: 31-46

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Putting Faith to Work

(The person in charge of directing the youth application section needs to gather art supplies and provide envelopes in which to place the completed project)

Use art supplies (construction paper, markers, crayons, pictures) to make a card to encourage an elderly friend, a person who is sick, a classmate or a parent. Don't fail to put the card in an envelope, address and mail it if necessary. Getting something by postal mail doesn't happen often, but can be a real boost to one's emotional well being.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Are You Ready***
Matthew 25 31-46**Beginning the Service:**

Sing **Seek Ye First** and other songs suggested in the Music Sources.

Leader, say:

Issac Watts who lived from 1674-1748 paraphrased Psalm 23 in the following way.

**My Shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is His name;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, Beside the living stream,
He brings my wand'ring spirit back, When I forsake His ways;
And leads me for His mercy's sake, In paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk thro' the shades of death Thy presence is my stay;
One word of Thy supporting breath Drives all my fears away.
Thy hand in sight of all my foes, Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows, Thine oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God Attend me all my days;
O may Thy house be my abode, And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, While others go and come;
No more a stranger, nor a guest, But like a child at home.**

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

The Chuvash people are one of the largest minority groups in Russia. Of the 2 million Chuvash, many have not experienced the Gospel in a personal way. Pray that the home church materials now available on line in Russian may be used to start home churches among this people group.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Preparing for Heaven

For most big events in our life, we spend a great deal of time in preparation. While awaiting the birth of a baby, we purchase what will be needed, decorate a nursery and choose a name. Many cultures have elaborate ceremonies which mark the coming of age of a young person. Families may save for months to be able to prepare for such a celebration.

Wedding locations must be reserved months in advance and elaborate preparations are carried out by both bride and groom and their families.

Preparing for retirement begins at a early age as families think about saving for the future. As retirement age approaches, elaborate plans are made for travel, housing, new and interesting activities.

Yet, preparing for heaven is something we leave for the last of life even if we are sincere Christians who have accepted Christ as our personal Saviour. That safety net is securely in place and we go on our way carrying out the responsibilities of daily life.

Today's Bible study about the judgement is not so much a story about how much good we have done in order to earn a place with the sheep rather than the goats. In fact, it is not about that at all for our place in heaven was earned on the day we accepted Christ as Saviour.

What it does seem to address is the question of our preparation for heaven. With whom will we be comfortable spending eternity?

Jesus teaches in Matthew 25: 31-48 that all people will be gathered before him and that they will be divided into two groups. We may simplify the story by saying that Jesus is here referring to those who have accepted him as Saviour – that will be the group that is blessed with the words, ***“Come you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”***

But we must consider here what has been the life attitude of this group of people. And Jesus makes it clear that this group of people has looked at the needy of the world as worthy of their help. They gave food to the hungry; welcome to the stranger, clothing to

the naked, consolation to the imprisoned and drink to the thirsty. Jesus says that in doing these acts, they actually ministered to him.

What is it about the salvation experience that transforms us into this kind of person – one who looks on another as a worthy human being regardless of the life circumstance in which this person is currently found?

The transformed life in Christ equips us with that mind of Christ which views human need as an opportunity to express our Christian faith. James said in his writing in James 2:14-7 ***“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”*** Later in verses 21-22, James asks, ***“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.”***

That perfecting of our faith is our preparation for heaven. What if in the judgement we were to be placed with the sheep only to find ourselves more at home with the goats? What about our daily life of service, our choices of literature, music, and mass media is preparing us to comfortably live in the blessed place that we call heaven?

Will we be at home with the language, the attitudes, the dreams and aspirations of other inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom? Will our conversation with the Lord have been so regular, so complete, so much a part of our daily existence that the transition to His Presence in heaven will not seem a great deal different than our usual communion with him?

There is a fine line in understanding that our works do not bring about our salvation, but are essential to the expression of that salvation experience. The life which has been transformed by Christ will focus on others – not on self. Can you recall those times in your life when you were so concerned about another person that your own needs seemed inconsequential. That must be a glimpse of the heavenly existence – we will be freed of that always present concern with self that so limits us on earth. We will be free to enjoy God’s presence and rejoice with others who belong to Him.

Call to Commitment:

Prayerfully consider how your leisure time contributes or hinders your relationship with Christ. What holy thoughts do you think? What intercessory prayer is lifted up to God? How does your ordinary life prepare you for the heavenly life?

Concluding the Service:

You may chose to conclude the service by rereading the paraphrase of Psalm 23 by Issac Watts with which the Sharing Time was initiated.

**My Shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is His name;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, Beside the living stream,
He brings my wand'ring spirit back, When I forsake His ways;
And leads me for His mercy's sake, In paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk thro' the shades of death Thy presence is my stay;
One word of Thy supporting breath Drives all my fears away.
Thy hand in sight of all my foes, Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows, Thine oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God Attend me all my days;
O may Thy house be my abode, And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, While others go and come;
No more a stranger, nor a guest, But like a child at home.**

(Psalm 23, Paraphrased, Isaac Watts, 1674-1748)

Leader, Say to the congregation:

Please take home a copy of this interpretation of the 23rd Psalm. You may wish to add other interpretations of it from various translations and interpretations of this beautiful Biblical song. They will offer you new insights and inspiration each time you read and study a different one.

Prepare copies for reading at the end of the service and for the congregation to take home – along with the suggestion that they may wish to also make copies of the 23rd Psalm from The Message and other distinctive translations and interpretations of the Bible. These will offer new inspiration for that beautiful psalm each time a different one is read and studied.

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