

LESSON 7 February 17 IT'S TIME...for Hope

LESSON AIM: To encourage pupils to bring hope through faith in Jesus Christ to people who have no hope for a good life here on earth or eternal salvation.

SCRIPTURE RESOURCE: 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

TEACHING AID: Being Missional Definition Cards, Glass water and pitcher

CREATING LEARNING READINESS:

TEACHING AID: Clear glass half full of water and a pitcher with additional water.

COMMENT: All of us have seen this and been asked the question “Do you see this glass as half full or half empty?” Ask the class to discuss how they see it. Talk about the reasons why some people see it one way and some the other. Bring out points like:

The way we approach life because of personality style

Way we were taught as a child

Disappointments in life which have disillusioned us or good things that have happened to us.

Circumstances in which we live: poor health, good health, poverty, abundance,
Happy marriage/unhappy marriage, betrayals

Support system: family, friends, co-workers

Seeing the glass as half empty implies pessimism which Webster defines as taking the gloomiest possible view of the situation. Seeing the glass as half full implies optimism or as Webster says: to dwell upon the most **hopeful** aspects of the situation.

ASK: 1. How do you think being a Christian effects how you view the glass?

READ 2 Cor 4:7-10. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;

perplexed, but not in despair;

persecuted but not abandoned;

struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

ASK: 2. What hope do you see expressed here?

ASK 3: What's missing in the life of a Christian who looks at life with little hope?

He's focused on here and now rather than on future. (Life is just a "clay jar" easily broken)

He's focused on his own needs rather than those of others. Getting outside of our own needs changes our focus.

He's forgotten that the message of reconciliation for himself and that the message of reconciliation has been placed in his hands to share with others.

(NOTE: Refer back to pp 22-30 of pupil's book for the basis for following discussion.)

COMMENT: Jesus once preached in the Nazareth synagogue and quoted Isaiah as the essence of the Gospel: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19.)

Let's relate this scripture to the Great Commission.

This was Jesus stating his mission. Note that all those listed are people who have little hope:

Poor....prisoners....blind....oppressed.

Jesus is saying he is to bring HOPE to the world. He passed along this mission to us in the Great Commission and in 2 Cor. 5 Paul reiterates by telling us to be Christ Ambassadors and reconcile the world to him.

In an earlier lesson we talked about "Worldview." In the past century the "Worldview" for those of us in the United States has basically been one of HOPE. We looked forward to a better tomorrow. But the present world view seems to focus more on the idea that you best live for today because it's all we have. I need to worry about myself because I'm all I've got to get me through. There is not much hope for tomorrow. Much of the rest of the world has lived in so much war and poverty and with oppressive governments and religions throughout the last century until they've had no hope and their present "worldview" is not much different.

Our charge as Christians is to bring HOPE TO THE WORLD. We are to do that through our own personal actions and the actions of the church. And we are to be both passionate and intentional about it.

We can do this using several methods. (Write HOPE on the board and add each of the four points as you talk about it in this style ---

HOPEthics

Education

Example

Evangelism

ETHICS: We must look at our own character. We cannot incarnate the ministry of Jesus if we do not practice the ethical behavior he exemplified for us. We have to get some moral guts so that we can be distinguished from society in general.

EDUCATION: We must be serious about spiritual, theological and moral formation. We have to have some depth and not be just surface. We have to be intentional and not hap hazard about teaching moral behavior. We have to deal with theological questions with logical, relevant answers that the outside world can accept...not surface, trite, traditional, churchy platitudes. All of this will come about only by a focused determined attitude on the part of the individual and the collective body of the church.

When people feel they know something about their faith, they are more comfortable discussing it. We're not talking being a Biblical scholar here. We're not talking being able to answer the great mysteries of the faith. Christianity is both an emotional and a logical thing. To have only one or the other puts a person at a disadvantage when it comes to sharing the faith. Education helps give us security as we face a world which operates on emotion and logic.

EXAMPLE: We will not tell the Good News if we are not exemplifying the life of Christ. How can you lead an unethical life and tell the Good News of Jesus Christ? No one will believe you if you lead an unethical life. If you know nothing about your faith, who is going to listen to you.

EVANGELISM: **Ethics and Education precede Evangelism.** If we are ethical and if we are educated we will be able to command respect so people will want to know what there is about our lives that makes us who we are.

ASK 4 What comes to your mind when the word "Evangelism" is said?

Hell fire and damnation from the pulpit

Approaching strangers and asking them if they are saved

Sitting with a Bible and flipping from page to page to explain the plan of salvation

Revival meetings

COMMENT: Do you know that the committee in many churches that it is most difficult to enlist people to serve on is the Evangelism Committee. By and large people are quite willing to serve on any committee but they feel uncomfortable or inadequate to serve on that one. Perhaps its that perception we just talked about and a fear that they will be asked to do that kind of evangelism that scares them away.

Evangelism is not a program! We may have evangelistic endeavors such as revivals, visitation programs, tract ministries, Evangelism Explosion, or other concentrated endeavors to win people to Christ but when it comes down to it, **evangelism is a passion.** It's a response ---"I was blind, but now I see." "I cannot but speak the things I have seen and heard." It's a desire to give others the hope we have. Each of us must find how we are to accomplish that goal.

ASK: 5. If we do not have revivals and we do not go door to door approaching strangers with the Gospel, what alternatives and methods does the average Christian "evangelize" or bring hope to people?

By and large on a one to one basis.

COMMENT: Through out this study we have used several terms which are basically interchangeable:

(Write on board)
Great Commission
Ambassadors for Christ
Reconciling the World to Christ
Evangelism
Being "missional."

All of these are ways of saying we each have a personal responsibility to share the Good News of John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son that whosoever believes in him should have everlasting life.

For the last FEW weeks we've been asking that each of us think about how we could be "missional" as an individual. That means that considering what my personality is, what I am good at, my talents, the world in which I operate--- how can I be "missional."

The first lesson we taught in this series we gave out cards with a definition of being missional as individuals and as a church. If you still have that pull it out, and here is another copy. We want you to have two copies. If not here is another copy. (Cards available in church office.)

Now's the time to make a commitment to yourself and to God that you'll begin to carry out your personal mission. Write down on this card in a few words what you are going to do TO BE MISSIONAL. Example:

I'm going to develop a relationship with Joe with whom I work (or play golf or exercise) so that I can begin to talk about faith with him.

I'm going to volunteer time to teach someone to read.

I'm going to teach children and make it my goal to see that each understands what it means to be a Christian

I'm going to volunteer to baby sit for my neighbor so she can go to Bible Study.

I'm going to visit Joyce who is sick and run errands for her.

I'm going to spend one afternoon a week doing carpentry work at OIAM so that building will be ready for use quickly.

If you are willing, write the same thing down on the other card and turn it in after class. Do not sign your name. We'd like to compile a list of the kind of things you have chosen to do. (If you feel comfortable in doing so, you might ask the members to bring their card to the table where the glass is before you do the concluding activity. Teachers please turn these into the office)

CONCLUSION: Lift up the glass and say, "This represents the poor, the oppressed, the needy, the lonely, the sick, the lost who do not know Jesus. Those people who have no hope" Hold up pitcher and say, "This represents us, Ambassadors for Christ, Reconcilers, fulfillers of the Great Commission. If we fulfill our missional purpose we will bring hope to hope to the needy, the lonely, the sick, the lost who do not know Jesus." Pour water from the pitcher to fill the glass. Conclude with a dedication prayer that the class will carry through with their commitment to their missional purpose. a