



Bible Study: *Recruiting to the Public Ministry*

Part I - *The Importance of the Gospel Ministry*

Setting the Scene:

We live in an age of *universalism*. Many in our society believe that all the various religions in our country are simply different ways to the same god. Popular sentiment declares that a good and loving god could never sentence anyone to eternal punishment.

Our age is also dominated by *relativism*. Many people reject the idea of absolute truth, particularly in spiritual matters. They ridicule those who claim to be certain about what is spiritual truth, or who condemn the spiritual errors of others.

Christianity, however, rejects relativism and universalism. The Bible is God's truth, absolute, unchanging truth. As our Savior prayed, *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth* (John 17:17). He claims, *The Scripture cannot be broken* (John 10:35). There are not many ways to heaven. There is only one way. Jesus declares, *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (John 14:6). Only those who believe in Jesus as their Savior will be saved. Jesus says, *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ...Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son* (John 3:16, 18).

Many who go by the name of Christian today have fallen into *enthusiasm*. Enthusiasts believe that the Holy Spirit works directly in the hearts of people to bring them to faith or strengthen faith apart from God's Word and sacraments. Such a view undermines the importance of the proclamation of the gospel and the importance of the public ministry of the gospel.

In this lesson we will examine the issue of how people come to believe in Jesus. We will also focus on the role played by those who serve in the public ministry.

Understanding the Point:

Read *Romans 10:11-17*

- Vs 11-12 - What is the only way to be saved?
- Vs 13 - What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?
- Vs 13-14 - Why can only believers do this?
- Vs 14-15a - What answer does each of the questions in these verses expect?

Vs 14, 17 - Why is it necessary for someone to preach?

POINT 1 - _____

Vs 15 - Why is it necessary that preachers be sent?

Vs 15 - What responsibility do Christians have?

POINT 2 - _____

Vs 15 - What does it mean that the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful?

POINT 3 - _____

Taking It Home:

Explain: No one will be saved apart from the proclamation of the gospel.

Evaluate: You and I are Christians because others took the implications of Romans 10 seriously.

Explain: God gives a special privilege and special honor to those who serve in the public ministry.





Bible Study: *Recruiting to the Public Ministry*

Part II - *Learning from the Past: What Happened in Israel?*

Setting the Scene:

History records many instances of a dramatic change in attitudes, moods, and actions from one generation to another. Historians often debate the causes of these dramatic changes. Sometimes the causes are rather obvious. Sometimes they are not. The great depression brought about a dramatic change in attitudes, mood, and actions in our country from the carefree spirit of the roaring twenties to the worry, hardship, and forced frugality of the thirties. The causes of the shift in attitudes in America from the 1950s to the 1960s are more complex.

In Israel's history there can also be found some dramatic changes between generations. Under Joshua's leadership Israel experienced a golden era. The people served the Lord wholeheartedly. God gave them success against all of their enemies as they entered and conquered the Promised Land. But something went wrong with the next generation. What happened?

Understanding the Point:

Read *Judges 2:6-15*

Vs 7 - Why were the people of Israel faithful during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders who served with him?

Vs 10 - What happened after the death of Joshua and the elders who had served with him?

Vs 10 - How could this happen?

POINT 1 - _____

Vs 11-15 - What was the result for the people of Israel?

POINT 2 - _____

Read *Psalms 78:1-8*

Vs 1-4 - What was the psalmist determined to do?

Vs 5-8 - Give three reasons why it is so important to do this:

POINT 3 - _____

Taking It Home:

Agree or Disagree: We are always only one generation away from losing the gospel.

Explain: Every believer shared in the responsibility to raise up a new generation of spiritual leaders.

Evaluate: Public ministers of the gospel are key to the preservation of the gospel.

Evaluate: Ministerial education is worth the expense because it pays dividends for years to come.





Bible Study: *Recruiting to the Public Ministry*

Part III - *The Continuing Need for Ministers of the Gospel*

Setting the Scene:

20th century America has seen momentous change from the beginning of the century to the end. Technological advances in transportation, communication, electronics, medicine, and agriculture have been almost overwhelming. List some of these changes.

Yet many things have stayed the same. Basic human needs have not changed. People still need air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, work to do, companionship, etc. Human beings are still born sinful and without the gospel will be lost forever. The devil, the world, and sinful human nature still place temptations in people's way and blind them to God's truth. False teachers still lead people astray.

Our God and his Word do not change. He still *wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:4). Our Savior still looks at every human being as a precious soul for whom he died. His love and concern are evident in his interest in providing faithful shepherds for his people and workers to gather in his harvest.

Understanding the Point:

Read *Matthew 9:35-10:1*

Vs 35 - What was the purpose of Jesus' public ministry?

Vs 36 - What was Jesus' attitude toward the crowds?

Vs 36 - What does it mean that the crowds were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd?

POINT 1 - _____

Vs 37 - Explain Jesus' statement that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

POINT 2 - _____

Vs 37 - What solution did Jesus offer for the problem he identified?

Ch 10:1 - How did the disciples become part of the answer to their own prayers?

POINT 3 - _____

Taking It Home:

Evaluate: Jesus' observation that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few is even more applicable today than when he first spoke these words.

Explain: God's people will always want to pray for pastors and teachers.

Agree or Disagree: We have it in our power to provide part of the answer to our prayers for pastors and teachers.





Bible Study: *Recruiting to the Public Ministry*

Part IV - A Model Believer's Response of Faith

Setting the Scene:

Christian parents recognize that their children are a wonderful blessing of God. Our children are precious to us. We work hard to provide for their physical needs and we are careful to give them the encouragement and emotional support they need. Because we are also concerned about their spiritual welfare, we discipline them and instruct them in God's Word. We pray for them and do our best to *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4).

We also thank God for giving them to us. In this lesson we want to consider how one model believer demonstrated her thankfulness.

Understanding the Point:

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-18

- Vs 3 - What did the family of Elkanah do every year?
- What did this show about the family?
- Vs 1-8 - Why was Hannah miserable?
- Vs 9-11 - What was the meaning of Hannah's vow?
- Vs 19-20 - How did Hannah show that she recognized that her son was a gift of God?

POINT 1 - _____

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28

- Vs 24-28 - List two ways that Hannah showed her faith and thankfulness.
- Give two reasons why bringing Samuel to Eli was a remarkable act of faith.

POINT 2 - _____

- Vs 18-19 - How did Hannah continue to show her love for Samuel?
- Vs 20-21 - How did God bless Hannah?
- Vs 26 - How did God bless Samuel?
- How did God bless Israel through Hannah's gift of her son?

POINT 3 - _____

Taking It Home:

Agree or Disagree: Hannah's faith in the Lord and her love for Samuel moved her to dedicate him to the Lord's service.

Agree or Disagree: We never lose when we encourage our children to train for the public ministry.

Evaluate: A parent once said, "My child has so many gifts he should do something else than serve in the public ministry."

Evaluate: A parent once said, "I won't encourage my child to train for the public ministry. He should decide for himself."





Bible Study Leader's Guide: *Recruiting to the Public Ministry*

Part I - *The Importance of the Gospel Ministry* (Leader's Guide)

Suggestions for Use:

These four Bible studies can be used in four successive classes or may be combined depending on the time available and how deeply you intend to go into each study. The questions, answers, and the wording of major points are suggestions or guidelines for your presentation. Use them as you see fit.

Purpose of *Part I*:

The purpose of this Bible study is (1) to show the necessity of the administration of the gospel, and (2) to demonstrate the importance of the public ministry in that administration.

Setting the Scene:

Draw a contrast between the prevailing sentiment of our modern society and the exclusive claims of Christianity. There is only one way of salvation -- faith in Jesus. There is only one way for anyone to come to faith -- through the proclamation of the gospel.

Understanding the Point - *Romans 10:11-17*:

- Vs 11-12 - *What is the only way to be saved?* The only way to be saved is through faith, trusting God's promises of salvation accomplished by Jesus.
- Vs 13 - *What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?* It means to worship him as God.
- Vs 13-14 - *Why can only believers do this?* True worship flows from faith; without faith it is impossible to approach God. Cf. Ephesians 2:18-22, Romans 14:22b, Hebrews 11:6.
- Vs 14-15a - *What answer does each of the questions expect?* Each question expects a negative answer. The answer to each question is "They can't."
- Vs 14, 17 - *Why is it necessary for someone to preach?* Apart from the proclamation of the gospel no one can come to faith. Cf. Romans 1:16, 2 Timothy 3:15, Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:18-20. The Holy Spirit bestows faith through baptism because of the word and promise of God connected to the water.

POINT 1 - No one can come to faith apart from the proclamation of the gospel.

- Vs 15 - *Why is it necessary that preachers be sent?* - God makes men willing to train for the public ministry of the gospel and calls them into that ministry through his church. If God does not send them to carry out his work, they have no right to preach.
- Vs 15 - *What responsibility do Christians have?* - Christians have the responsibility to train and send people to proclaim the gospel.

POINT 2 - Christians have the responsibility to train and send out ministers of the gospel.

- Vs 15 - *What does it mean that the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful?* - The feet of the messenger are beautiful because they transport him with the message of salvation. The messenger is beautiful in the eyes of God and the eyes of those to whom the messenger comes because of the message of salvation he brings. Public ministers of the gospel have a special honor and privilege. They are God's representatives. They are his ambassadors. They are his agents to proclaim his message of reconciliation to those who would otherwise be lost forever. What greater honor and privilege can there be? Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21.

POINT 3 - Public ministers of the gospel receive special honor from the Lord of the church and the people of God.

Taking It Home:

Explain: No one will be saved apart from the proclamation of the gospel. Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit works that faith only through the means of grace, the gospel in God's Word and the sacraments. Therefore, no one will be saved apart from the means of grace. Cf. Luther's explanation to the Third Article.

Explain: You and I are Christians because others took the implications of Romans 10 seriously. Romans 10 reveals the necessity of the proclamation of the gospel. Since God uses human beings as messengers of the gospel none of us would be Christians if other Christians had not taken the time to tell us about Jesus. Thank God for Christian parents, friends, pastors, and teachers who took that responsibility seriously. Cf. Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20.

Explain: God gives a special privilege and special honor to those who serve in the public ministry. A public Gospel minister is one who proclaims and teaches God's truth in the name of other Christians. Through a divine call, God places such public ministers into office and allows them to be his spokesmen to lead fellow sinners to eternal salvation. There is no greater privilege on earth than to be God's messengers to prepare people to live in God's kingdom in time and in eternity. God gives these called workers special honor -- he calls them beautiful. Cf. Daniel 12:3.



Part II - Learning from the Past: What Happened in Israel

(Leader's Guide)

Purpose of Part II:

The purpose of this Bible study is to show the importance of (1) training the younger generation, and (2) raising up a new generation of religious leaders.

Setting the Scene:

You may want to ask the members of the class to compare what it was like when they were children to the childhood experiences of today. What has changed? What accounts for this change?

This lesson will examine a dramatic change for the worse which took place in just one generation in Israel's history.

Understanding the Point - Judges 2:6-15:

- Vs 7 - *Why were the people of Israel faithful during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders who served with him?* They had strong leadership, men who had seen all the great things God had done for Israel in miraculously providing for them in the wilderness and fighting for them as they conquered the Promised Land.

- Vs 10 - *What happened after the death of Joshua and the elders who had served with him?* A generation of Israelites arose who no longer believed in the Lord and had no knowledge or understanding of what he had done for their nation. They served the false god Baal instead of trusting in the Lord and worshiping him as the God of their salvation.

- Vs 10 - *How could this happen?* The people of Israel had not driven all of the Canaanite tribes out of the land as God had commanded (Judges 1:21-2:3). The Canaanite religions were a great temptation for the people of Israel. The people became complacent and did not train their children in the truth or provide the spiritual leadership that the nation so desperately needed.

POINT 1 - The people of Israel failed to train the younger generation and failed to raise up new spiritual leaders.

- Vs 11-15 - *What was the result for the people of Israel?* They fell away from the Lord and served false gods.

POINT 2 - The people of Israel fell away from the Lord because they lacked spiritual training and spiritual leadership.

Psalm 78:1-8 - Psalm 78 is an historic review of the rebellion of the people of Israel against the Lord. Israel often forgot God's past blessings and promises. The psalmist Asaph understood the key to preventing these problems in the future.

- Vs 1-4 - *What was the psalmist determined to do?* He was determined to train the next generation in the truths of God's Word and thereby to raise up qualified leaders for God's people.
- Vs 5-8 - *Give three reasons why it is so important to do this:*
- (1) Training the next generation is important because we want our children to put their trust in the Lord (vs 7),
 - (2) Training the next generation is important because we want our children to keep God's commands (vs 7).
 - (3) Training the next generation is important because it has results for future generations (vs 6). Christian education does not stagnate. It goes out into ever widening circles as each generation passes the truth of the gospel on to the next.

POINT 3 - Christian education and the training of spiritual leaders result in spiritual blessings for God's people for generations to come.

Taking It Home:

Agree or Disagree: We are always only one generation away from losing the gospel. The statement is not true if it is understood to say that one generation cannot pass the gospel on to the next or that the loss of the gospel is inevitable. The statement is true if understood to mean that the gospel *can* be lost from one generation to the next. Church history in general and the history of Israel in particular demonstrate the truth of this statement. Note the repeated pattern during the period of the Judges (Judges 2:10-19). If one generation does not pass the gospel on to the next, it will be lost. If we do not train the younger generation and raise up another generation of spiritual leaders our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences.

Explain: Every believer shares in the responsibility to raise up a new generation of spiritual leaders. Parents have a responsibility to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Because every Christian is addressed in the words of the great commission, *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you* (Matthew 28:20), every Christian has a responsibility for Christian education. Every Christian has the responsibility to encourage those who have the gifts for the gospel ministry to train for the ministry. Pastors, teachers, and other called workers act in the name of every Christian in the group which has called them. If Christians expect to have qualified people to serve in their name, they also have the responsibility to see to it that a new generation of pastors and teachers is trained.

Evaluate: Public ministers of the gospel are keys to the preservation of the gospel. By virtue of his office as shepherd of God's people and because of his training a pastor has the primary responsibility for doctrine and practice in his congregation. Teachers exercise immense influence over the children entrusted to their care. When pastors and teachers forsake God's truth or fail to carry out the work assigned to them, God's people are in real spiritual danger. That is why God gives pointed instructions to those who serve in the public ministry to teach faithfully and rebuke those who hold to error (2 Timothy 4:2-5). At the same time every Christian has the responsibility to test what he hears and compare it with God's Word (1 John 4:1, 6). Every Christian has the responsibility to preserve the truth that God has given him.

Evaluate: Ministerial education is worth the expense because it pays dividends for years to come. If God's people lack pastors and teachers, God's work is hindered among them. God established the public ministry for the benefit of his people (Ephesians 4:11-13). If those who serve in the public ministry are incompetent or unprepared for the work they are called to do,

God's people will suffer. That is why God has established qualifications for those who serve in the public ministry (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9). Those who are well-prepared and qualified for the ministry are a blessing to God's people. Every pastor and teacher who is trained and called into the ministry influences many other people for years (even generations) to come.



Part III - *The Continuing Need for Ministers of the Gospel* (Leader's Guide)

Purpose of Part III:

The purpose of this Bible study is to demonstrate our Savior's continuing concern (1) that precious souls be gathered into his kingdom, and (2) that his church be served by faithful shepherds.

Setting the Scene:

In a constantly changing world some things remain the same. In your introduction to this lesson draw the contrast between all the changes we see around us (in society, technology, etc.) and the spiritual needs of God's people and the world. These spiritual needs do not change.

Understanding the Point:

- Vs 35 - *What was the purpose of Jesus' public ministry?* The purpose of Jesus' public ministry was to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. He called people to repentance and trust in God for the forgiveness of their sins. Cf. Luke 19:10.
- Vs 36 - *What was Jesus' attitude toward the crowds?* He had compassion on them. He longed for their spiritual needs to be supplied.
- Vs 36 - *What does it mean that the crowds were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd?* It means that they had no faithful and true spiritual leaders to guide and help them in their spiritual needs. Most of Israel's spiritual leaders at this time were theologically and spiritually bankrupt. The Sadducees were rationalists who denied cardinal truths of Scripture. The Pharisees were legalists who were quick to make rules and tell people what they had to do, but failed to tell them what God had promised to do to save them.

POINT 1 - Without properly qualified, trained, and dedicated ministers God's people lack spiritual nourishment and defense.

- Vs 37 - *Explain Jesus' statement that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.* Jesus likens the world to a great harvest field. Every human being in the world is a precious soul for whom Jesus died. Every human being is part of the harvest Jesus wants to be gathered into his kingdom. In Jesus' day there were few workers to gather in that harvest. There were few true teachers of God's truth. There were

only a few who were proclaiming the good news of forgiveness of sins through faith in the Savior.

POINT 2 - There are not enough workers to gather in God's spiritual harvest.

Vs 37 - *What solution did Jesus offer for the problem he identified?* He encouraged the disciples to pray for workers.

Ch 10:1 - *How did the disciples become part of the answer to their own prayers?* Jesus sent them out to proclaim the gospel. They became some of the workers for whom they were to pray.

POINT 3 - God answers our prayers by instilling in us or our children a desire to serve in the public ministry of the gospel.

Taking It Home:

Evaluate: Jesus' observation that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few is even more applicable today than when he first spoke these words. The population of the world today is many times greater than it was when Jesus spoke these words. The number of teachers of the truth is very small by comparison. Many who go by the name *Christian* today have rejected the fundamental truths of Scripture and instead proclaim a counterfeit gospel. False religions (Islam, Buddhism, New Age Movement, etc.) and cults (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and numerous smaller groups) are on the rise. The spirits of rationalism, materialism, and secular humanism dominate our society. The need for faithful pastors, teachers, and missionaries is great.

Explain: God's people will always want to pray for pastors and teachers. Since the need to proclaim the gospel will exist until judgment day, the church will continue to need pastors, teachers, and missionaries. Since the desire to become a public minister of the gospel is a fruit of faith, God's people will want to pray that God will continue to lead people to produce that fruit of faith in their lives. We will also always want to remember to pray that God will bless our pastors, teachers, and other public servants of the Gospel and give them the strength, wisdom, and perseverance necessary to carry out their important work.

Agree or Disagree: We have it in our power to provide part of the answer to our prayers for pastors and teachers. Only God has the power to answer prayers. Nevertheless he often uses people to accomplish his purposes. He uses the encouragement we give to our children, grandchildren, or the other young people we know to lead them to study for the public ministry. As we contemplate the blessings of our God and the privilege and honor he gives to those who serve in the public ministry, he may also lead us to train for the ministry.



Part IV - A Model Believer's Response of Faith

(Leader's Guide)

Purpose of Part IV:

The purpose of this Bible study is (1) to show how God used a model believer's response of faith to bring blessings to his people, and (2) to hold up Hannah's example as one worthy of imitation.

Setting the Stage:

Emphasize that children are a precious gift of God. The gift of children brings the responsibility to raise them in "the training and instruction of the Lord."

Understanding the Point:

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-18

- Vs 3 - *What did the family of Elkanah do every year?* They went to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship the Lord and offer sacrifices to him.
- *What did this show about the family?* They were faithful believers.
- Vs 1-8 - *Why was Hannah miserable?* She had no children.
- Vs 9-11 - *What was the meaning of Hannah's vow?* She promised that if God blessed her with a son, she would dedicate him to the service of the Lord and that he would become a Nazarite (Numbers 6:1-8) to the Lord.
- Vs 19-20 - *How did Hannah show that she recognized that her son was a gift of God?* She named him Samuel which in Hebrew means "God hears". She knew that God had heard her prayer and granted her request.

POINT 1 - Hannah recognized that her child was a gift of God.

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28

- Vs 24-28 - *List two ways Hannah showed faith and thankfulness.* (1) She brought a thank-offering to the Lord. (2) She brought her young son to Eli and gave him to the service of the Lord.
- *Give two reasons why bringing Samuel to Eli was a remarkable act of faith.* (1) Samuel was very young. (2) Hannah was giving up her only child, not knowing whether she would be blessed with any more children.

POINT 2 - Hannah showed her faith and thankfulness to God by dedicating her son to the service of the Lord.

Read 1 Samuel 2:18-26

Vs 18-19 - *How did Hannah continue to show her love for Samuel?* Every year she came to visit Samuel and brought him a new coat.

Vs 20-21 - *How did God bless Hannah?* He blessed her with more children -- three sons and two daughters.

Vs 26 - *How did God bless Samuel?* God caused Samuel to grow in stature and mature as a leader of God's people. The people of Israel came to regard Samuel highly.

- *How did God bless Israel through Hannah's gift of her son?* Samuel became a great leader for Israel (1 Samuel 3:19-4a) replacing Eli who was weak and Eli's sons who were wicked (1 Samuel 2:27-36).

POINT 3 - God blessed both Hannah and Israel when she gave her son into the service of the Lord.

Taking It Home:

Agree or Disagree: Hannah's faith in the Lord and her love for Samuel moved her to dedicate him to the Lord's service. Hannah's actions were a fruit of faith and a demonstration of her thankfulness to God. Her actions also showed her love for Samuel because she knew that Samuel would receive important spiritual training. She also recognized that there was nothing more honorable for a person to do than to serve the Lord full time in the ministry.

Agree or Disagree: We never lose when we encourage our children to train for the ministry. We cannot outgive God. Whatever we do out of love and thankfulness to him, he more than repays in other ways. Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, Malachi 3:10-11, Matthew 19:27-29, Matthew 10:41-42.

Evaluate: A parent once said, "My child has so many gifts he should do something else than serve in the public ministry." This statement shows a misunderstanding of the importance of the public ministry and a misconception of how God can use all of a person's gifts in the ministry. The person who said this also may be judging the ministry on the basis of worldly ideas of fame and wealth.

Evaluate: A parent once said, "I won't encourage my child to train for the public ministry. He should decide for himself." Too often a statement like this one is a cop-out and fails to distinguish between encouraging and forcing. Although the desire to serve in the public ministry is a fruit of faith and an individual matter, God uses parental encouragement to direct young people to do those things which please him. We should never underestimate the God-pleasing influence parents can have in the lives of their children.

