



APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY
OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

CLING *To the Lord*



52 LESSONS
FOR FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

CLING TO THE LORD

52 lessons for Friendship Groups

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LESSON I

Why do we trust in certain people or things?
Why do we trust in God?

Jude 3b: *“...exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

INTRODUCTION

What a great blessing Faith is! Now, with so many “teachers” trying to explain to us what faith is, and with so many people drowning in empty philosophies on the subject, it behooves us to go to the Word of God to discover what Faith really is and how it can grow in us.

BE VERY CAREFUL!

First we need to know what Faith is not. Someone read Colossians 2:8.

- Faith is not jumping into the void, as is commonly thought. It is rather having a solid confidence based on substance and evidence that is real.
- Faith is not religion either. Many say, “I am of this faith” or “I belong to that faith”. But the biblical concept of faith is different.
- Faith is not a state of mind. Being optimistic or positive does not mean that we have genuine biblical faith.
- Faith is not manipulation. Many try to manipulate God or other people for their own benefit. That is far from what God wants.
- And Faith is not fixing or adapting the Bible to our convictions. We need to understand Faith well in order to grow in it.

FAITH DOES US MUCH GOOD

Trusting in God produces many benefits in us.

1. **Certainty.** Hebrews 11:1a: **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...”** Faith is the raw material God uses to build what we long for. Through

Faith, He grants us our innermost desires. Faith makes the power of God work in our lives.

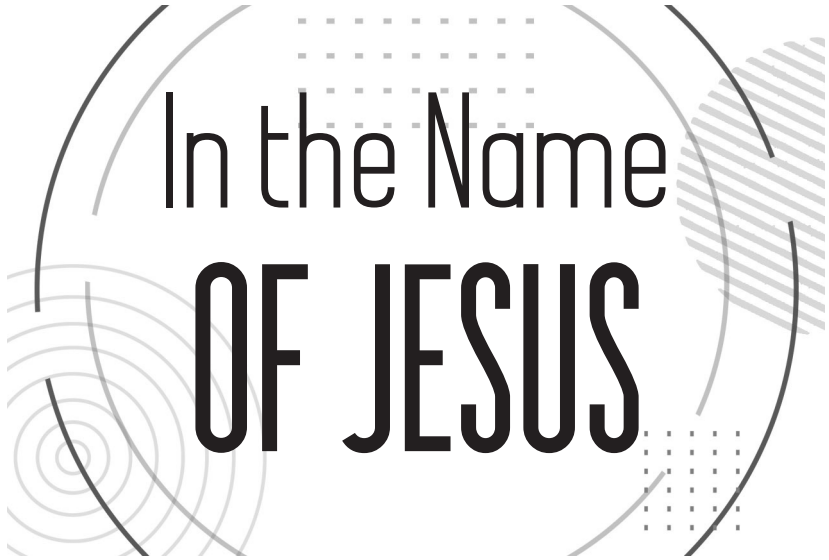
2. **Conviction.** Hebrews 11:1b: “[Faith is] **the evidence of things not seen.**” Decisions in most judicial courts are made based on the evidence presented. So too is Faith. It is proof, evidence or conviction of things we do not see—including God—but which we know we will receive as a reward from Him.
3. **Pleasing God.** Hebrews 11:6a: “**...without faith it is impossible to please Him...»** Our faith is very pleasing to God. Therefore “**for he who comes to God must believe that He is...**” God delights when you trust Him and prove with your life that He is real.
4. **Reward.** Through Faith we not only please God, but we are also rewarded by Him, who “**...and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**”. God supplies all our needs, and He rejoices and blesses us when we take refuge in His love, trusting in Him without reserve.
5. **Opportunities.** In situations of difficulty, God exhibits His power. If many times He does not work miracles, it is because of our lack of faith, because of unbelief (Matthew 13:58). But when there is faith in us, God can even defy the laws of nature. Our faith in God determines the magnitude of His influence in our lives. Our faith can unleash His power or limit it. You and I choose what we want.

6. **Action.** Faith moves us. In our helplessness we often expect God to act for us. Not that this is wrong when we trust in Him. But there will be times when Faith will move our heart to act, as it did for many who came to Jesus seeking His help: the woman with a flow of blood, the centurion whose servant was very sick, blind Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, etc. When our faith is alive, it brings us closer to the Master.

7. **Eternal life.** The greatest reward we have when we trust in God is Salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

CONCLUSION

To grow your faith, simply open your Bible every day and read it. Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. He has all the power to help you, bringing priceless rewards to your life and filling your path with peace, joy and well-being; and all through Faith.

LESSON 2

Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

INTRODUCTION

Doing things in the name of the Lord Jesus involves four important things. Let us see what they are.

1. DO EVERYTHING AS IF IT WERE FOR GOD

Whatever we do, wherever and for whomever, we must do it as if it were for God. We cannot separate God from what we do at home, school or work. We

serve God not only in the Church. We are the Church. So our things must always be done as unto Him, in every place.

Ephesians 6:6 tells us to serve, **“not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,”** In this way we honor the Lord in what we do.

Although now we are not slaves as were many brethren of the apostle Paul’s time, the principle remains the same: serve as if it were the Lord Jesus himself.

If you are at home, serve the Lord; if at school, serve the Lord; if at work, serve the Lord. What does this mean, to be excellent! And why should we be excellent? Because we represent Jesus.

The Word calls us to be excellent in everything we do no matter who we do it for, no matter if that person is humanly undeserving, or if he or she is someone hateful. We are to do good to them anyway, because it is the Lord we are really serving.

And also because it is from Him that we will receive the reward for our effort: **“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”** Colossians 3.23,24.

2. DOING WHAT PLEASES GOD

Ephesians 6.6b: “...**doing the will of God from the heart,**” In addition to doing everything as unto God, what we do must please God. The Bible says that we have a free will to do whatever we want, but not everything we want is pleasing to God. Everything is lawful for us, but not everything is good for us. Even certain good things we do, do not glorify God when they are not of His perfect will.

3. OUR WORKS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

We can wear ourselves out trying to show people that Christ is real, but we will waste our time if we do not show it by what we do. People will not believe by our words but by our deeds.

That is why in the Bible there is not a book called “Words”, but one called “Acts”. We can shout with a megaphone in the street telling people “Christ loves you” but if our deeds are not good, they will speak louder than our words and drown out the Message.

When people realize that we are believers, they begin to watch us more carefully and, according to what they see in us, they speak well or badly of the Gospel. What do people see in us? The good or bad reputation of the Gospel depends on us.

May it not happen to us as it did to the brethren in Rome: **“For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.”** Romans 2:24. Why does this happen?

Because the testimony that convinces people is not the one that tells them what to do, but the one that shows them what to do. There is no greater testimony of faith than a person living what he speaks.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 ESV: **“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, [...] not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”** Probably the only Bible your neighbor is going to read is your life, brother/sister.

4. OUR WORKS, A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

This generation walks in darkness but we, the Church, were called to show the light of the Lord through what we do. Matthew 5:16 ESV: **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”**

What we do will testify that God is in us, or that He is not. Let us do things right. Let us shine. The purpose of doing things well is to give all honor and praise to

the Lord Jesus because if we do something good it is because He has given us the ability or talent to do it. And so that when others look at us, they will praise God for our good deeds.

CONCLUSION

In short, our good deeds are very important, not to save us, for only faith in Christ saves us; but to help others to be saved. Someone read 1 Corinthians 7:14,16. A believing woman married to an unbelieving man can win him to the Lord through her good works or good testimony; and vice versa a believing man to his unbelieving wife. It is true that our good works cannot save us, but it is also true that we are saved unto good works, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

LESSON 3**INTRODUCTION**

The saying is well known: prevention is better than cure. Let us read chapter 13 of 2nd Samuel. The mistakes that David made with his children are useful for us to avoid making the same mistakes.

1. EGOISM V. 1

Amnon fell in love with his half-sister and possessed her without thinking of the consequences. Problems arise in the home when one covets that which is another's and even sins to acquire it. It is true

that not all cases are as drastic as that of Amnon and Tamar, but if children are not taught that they cannot have everything they want, selfishness will destroy their lives; and it will destroy the family. What things or people do our children fall in love with? Where are their eyes fixed? Where is their heart set? David did not know why his son Amnon was troubled. Do you know why your son is troubled, sad, rebellious or changed?

2. BAD FRIENDS Vv. 3-5

Jonadab was a very shrewd man. A bad friend can harm a son in a very short time. Do you know who your children's friends are? Apparently David didn't know; and if he did, he didn't stop Amnon. It was Jonadab who perversely advised Amnon on how to go about raping his sister Tamar. When a father does not watch who his children's friends are, misfortunes can happen. Someone offers them the first cigarette, the first drink or drug. Sometimes Christian parents even let their children sleep in other houses without really knowing who lives there, or what the atmosphere is like there.

3. LACK OF DISCERNMENT V. 6

It is interesting to note that it was Jonadab and not David who observed that Amnon's face grew weaker from day to day. When a father lacks discernment, his son may gradually turn to evil, and his father does not realize it. The pressures of work and chores or indif-

ference do not let us see things until it is too late. How many times must David have entered Amnon's bedroom without noticing that his eyes had darkened. The eyes are the window of the soul, and a wise father will know how to see the eyes of his children, and with God's help, discern what is in the heart. What his father did not see, his friend saw. Unfortunately he was a cunning and perverse friend.

4. IMMORALITY V. 11

Amnon asked Tamar to violate God's law in a perverse way. There was immorality in the king's house. David's sins were passed from one generation to the next. David sinned in chapter 12; his son sinned in chapter 13. Parents must be vigilant, watching what books are read at home, what movies are watched, and what tendencies the children have. Now more than ever we are seeing, even within the church, pregnant girls and thirteen and fourteen year olds fathering children. If you allow your children to maintain a steady diet of immorality and perversity through television or social media, you should not be surprised when they fall into immorality.

5. IDOLATROUS HEART Vv. 15-18

After raping his sister, Amnon hated her. That is, he was not satisfied with getting what he wanted. This is a characteristic of an idolatrous heart. He loves something and then hates it because it does not fulfill

his idolatrous desires. The hatred with which Amnon hated Tamar was greater than “the love” with which he had loved her. When the heart of a son becomes idolatrous, only the power and grace of God can rescue him. There are children who are not content with anything, and the more their parents give them, the more they demand and the worse they behave.

6. LACK OF CORRECTION V. 21

However, no attempt to correct his son is recorded. When there is a lack of discipline on the part of the parent, the children somehow “always get their own way”. How is it that a poorly taught, wayward child can control a large man? How is it that a creature weighing 100 pounds can out maneuver a 200-pound man? The lack of biblical corporal discipline always brings anguish to the heart of the parents, for it is written that a foolish child is sorrow and shame to his parents. If the father only gets angry but does not correct, or gets angry and expects the wife to take care of the discipline, he is failing in his biblical responsibilities and will give an account to God.

7. FAILURE TO HAVE DINNER TOGETHER Vv. 24-27

Absalom, Tamar’s brother was also very angry with Amnon. After these things, he makes an invitation to his father David to dine with him and his brothers; and, although Absalom begged him, David would not go and only blessed him. In these days fathers spend

very little time with their children. Dinner time when the father leads in prayer, as well as conversation and family direction, are being lost. Because of jobs and schedules, because of the pressures of everyday life, everyone comes and goes, eats and goes to bed without the family having time to spend together, much less pray together. Then come the consequences. In David's absence, Absalom took the opportunity to kill Amnon for what he had done to his sister Tamar. If David had accepted Absalom's invitation, perhaps Amnon would not have died this way.

8. NOT CUTTING OFF BAD FRIENDS Vv. 32-39

It was Jonadab, Amnon's crafty friend who was at the dinner. David still did not cut off that wicked family member! And Jonadab was more aware of what was in Absalom's heart than David himself (V. 32). When bad friends aren't cut off, they will be the ones to bring the news that the boy is in police custody, in jail, or even dead. It seems that the friends of the children know more about them than the parents, and they keep secret the perversities that are in the heart of the children. Then comes the weeping and the great lamentation.

9. SEPARATION V. 38

Problems in the home that are not attended to will cause family separation. First Absalom fled for three years. David longed to see him, but did not see him for five years. It was sad that Absalom was hidden for

three years in the house of Talmai, king of Geshur (V. 37). But sadder still was that, after Absalom returned to Jerusalem, his father David did not see him for another two years (2 Samuel 14:28).

CONCLUSION

If you have problems at home, obviously, you must face them now, before they escalate and can no longer be remedied. Never hide from problems, for then everything gets worse. And if you have no problems at home, glory to God; but do not “rest on your laurels”. Don’t make David’s mistakes. Work hard to prevent problems from forming. ***The best problem solved is the one that never starts.*** The intelligent learn to make amends for their mistakes, but the wise avoid making them. Pray now for wisdom, discernment, purity, steadfastness and love.

LESSON 4

**Song of Solomon 2:15:**

*“Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil the vines,
For our vines have tender grapes.”*

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do we disregard many small things in life? Because they are less visible to us. But little things like a few microscopic-sized germs can send us to bed with fever and infection. And they can even kill us...

2. A BIG DECEPTION

In the spiritual world it is the same. Many times it is the small things that destroy our life, our marriage, our family. And we are quiet, going to church every Sunday. We feel we are good people because we don't practice sexual contact outside of marriage, or consume drugs or alcohol, or pornography. We think we are good because we don't listen to worldly music, or engage in unhealthy entertainment, or say bad words.

However, we often have bad attitudes, or stay angry with someone at home, or tell lies. These things, though they may seem small, can do great harm. What is the devil's greatest deception? To make us believe that certain small sins are acceptable, because everyone practices them, because "God will not condemn me for that", etc. Are you sure?

The fox is a small animal and a rather agile hunter, of nocturnal life, which apart from meat also eats various fruits. It is a cunning, agile animal with a big appetite. Its greatest ally is its smallness, as it easily enters the vineyards without being discovered; there it eats the sweetest grapes and leaves leaving a great havoc. Efforts to ensure that a vineyard grows healthy and strong can be quickly ruined if the stealthy attack of this animal is not prevented.

Now, the havoc the fox wreaks is not so much by what he eats, but by what he leaves behind, that is, what he “drops” as he eats. As the fox’s intestine is designed more for meat, he does not digest the fruits at all, and the seeds pass through his digestive tract unharmed, falling to the ground when he defecates, and then germinating and growing into plants, often far from the tree from which they came.

That is to say that, while this animal is a very good ally of certain trees in their propagation, it is an enemy of the vinedressers who continually have to be cleaning the land of foreign plants that the fox planted - so to speak. And what would happen if the vinedresser allowed these plants to grow? They would wipe out the delicate vineyards. This natural phenomenon reminds us of the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 13:24-28. Let us read it.

3. THE “LITTLE FOX EFFECT”

In Song of Solomon 2:15 the implicit message is that the little fox is dangerous because it contaminates the vines, and can even make them disappear. Those lovers —Solomon and the Shulamite— had acquired a “vineyard in the making”, that is, they were beginning a relationship, consolidating what would become a marriage. And they wanted to “hunt” for anything that could cause problems between them, that could harm their beautiful romance.

That's when they discovered what we call the "little fox effect". This is a slow wearing-out process, which goes unnoticed most of the time. We can apply this principle to courtship, marriage, parent-child relationships, relationships between blood brothers and sisters or between church members, and above all to our relationship with God.

How are we handling the relationships in our lives? How are we relating to others? Are we taking care of our family relationships? Do we give importance to them? The men in the parable were sleeping. They stopped watching and an enemy entered their master's field and sowed bad seeds in it.

This is a very bad, dangerous time, in which more than ever we have to watch over the state of our budding vines, our interpersonal relationships, so that they grow healthy.

It is said that our Lord Jesus Christ came two thousand years ago to plant his Church in the world, but now the devil is planting the world in the Church. And this is true. That is precisely the "little fox effect": the spirit of the world growing in our lives, in our home and, by transitive property, in the church.

The spirit of the little fox does much harm to our lives, even if we do not realize it, for it always comes with things from outside, which are not of God, and makes them grow among us. He sows thoughts and

attitudes that attempt to war against the presence of God and produce harmful elements that can choke our relationships.

If we are sleeping very peacefully, thinking that this or that fox is small and does no harm, we will surely see our relationship with God and our loved ones deteriorate. Brethren, we cannot allow this spirit to enter and sow harmful seeds such as:

- Hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1)
- Pride (Galatians 6:1-4)
- Envy and strife (Philippians 1:15)
- Vainglory (Philippians 2:3)
- Jealousy (1 Corinthians 3:3)
- Insincerity, lies (Ephesians 4:25)
- Greed (Luke 12:15)
- Selfishness (Philippians 2:21)

These seeds will grow weeds:

1. Unfruitful prayers; little or no communication with God.

2. Unproductive work; many efforts, few results.
3. Household divisions and strained relationships.
4. Superficial, distant or indifferent relationships.
5. Lack of mutual understanding and judgmental environment.
6. Isolation, absenteeism and separation.

4. HOW TO HUNT SMALL FOXES

If any of these plants are already growing at home, they need to be pulled up now. That would be the corrective action. But even more important is to hunt the little fox that brings the bad seeds, to prevent these plants from continuing to appear where they should not.

Hunting requires patience and skill, an investment of time, but it is the only way to keep our vines clean. To hunt the little foxes, you should invest time...

1. To be with God (Psalms 51:3; 19:12)
2. To be with yourself (2 Corinthians 13:5)
3. To be with your loved ones (Acts 2:42).

If we do this, our budding vines will grow healthy; and our relationships will be restored, by faith in Christ Jesus.

5. CONCLUSION

Retain this phrase: *“At the end of it all, you will see that the most important thing and the only thing you will be able to take away from this life are the relationships you have cultivated with other people.”* And this applies most of all to the relationships we have with those who are closest to us; our family and brothers and sisters in the faith. Make up your mind today to heal and cultivate those relationships. Spend more time with yourself, with others and most of all with God.

Let's go. You can overcome all those difficulties you have been having. You can cultivate healthy and fruitful relationships. You can achieve emotional and spiritual maturity in your marriage, in your home; and have a full life, full of good fruits, living for the glory of God. Amen.

LESSON 5**1. INTRODUCTION**

Let us read Genesis 32:22-32. Jacob's struggle with the angel is one of the most mysterious stories in the Bible, which highlights the spiritual strength of Jacob, a man with his weaknesses but also endowed with the ability to fight against men and even against God, and to overcome them (v.28). This account reveals to us Jacob's willingness to confront God in a moment of supreme need.

After wrestling with the angel of Jehovah during the night, Jacob obtains his blessing, and receives a new name: the name Israel, which means "he who wrestles

with God.” This name was perpetuated in “the children of Israel” and came to encompass all of God’s chosen people. Later Jacob called the place where he wrestled with God “Peniel”, which means, “the face of God”.

2. JACOB’S PAST

According to Genesis 27, in his youth Jacob usurped the blessing of his brother Esau; then he had his first encounter with God at Bethel (Gen. 28) where he made a covenant with God; he served Laban his uncle in northern Syria for fourteen years and married Laban’s two daughters, Rachel and Leah (Gen. 29), with whom he fathered several children. After proving that he could outwit his father-in-law Laban in cunning (Gen. 30), he set out to return home to Canaan and thus got rid of the trouble makers called Laban and his family (Gen. 31).

Everything seems to be going well, but the trials have weakened Jacob; he has become old, he has dependents, his gait is already slower, his enemies (like Esau) are powerful, and Jacob fears them because he does not know their intentions. What can he do? Now he marches to a meeting with his brother, and although the experiences with God of the previous days encourage him, the meeting with Esau seems too dangerous.

Had Esau forgiven Jacob? Could twenty years undo old grudges? Would Esau seize the opportunity to kill his brother Jacob? These were anxieties very much on Jacob’s mind as he walked toward the land of Canaan.

3. JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

Vv. 22 and 23: Jacob gets up and, probably out of fear, decides to mobilize the camp, taking cover in the darkness of the night. He crosses a ford of the brook Jabbok, a tributary of the Jordan River, but commands his wives, handmaids and children to march ahead and he is left alone. Suddenly, unexpectedly, Jacob finds himself wrestling with a man (v.24). Jacob and this man wrestle until the break of dawn.

Jacob is still unaware of the man's true identity, but in v.28 the man himself tells Jacob that he is God ("**you have wrestled with God**"), and in v. 30 Jacob recognizes him as such, exclaiming, "**I saw God face to face.**" This adds mystery to the incident: why was God attacking Jacob and yet unable or unwilling to defeat him?

V. 26: The struggle lasts for hours, until dawn breaks; Jacob resists and continues to fight to receive a blessing he evidently feels he needs. Here Jacob evidences an outstanding trait of his character: *perseverance*. When God finally realizes that Jacob will not give up, he dislocates his thigh. Even at this disadvantage Jacob clings to the angel of Jehovah, who tells him "let me go." And to keep his identity secret, the angel asks Jacob to let him go before dawn.

Jacob was a thief of blessing in the past, usurping Esau's position by trickery. Now he had to fight for the

blessing. After reconciliation with his brother he would be blessed as he had never been blessed before, but first he had to ask for the blessing from the angel of Jehovah, who was only willing to give it to him after seeing Jacob fight for it.

Thanks to this encounter with God, Jacob will embark on a new path, which will take him from being an usurper and robber of blessings, to being a truly blessed man; a man willing to abandon the shortcuts of fraud, and walk from now on in the path of righteousness.

This is the work of the merciful and gracious God of whom David speaks, the God who does not contend with his creatures forever, one who does not deal with man according to his iniquities, nor repay him according to his sins (Psalms 103:9-10); one who gives second chances, but who also demands from man a clean heart without which man cannot see God (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14).

4. GOD CHANGES JACOB'S NAME

Now God asks, **“What is your name?”**. Undoubtedly, this is the most relevant question in the text. It is one of those questions that challenge a person to dig deep inside himself and to answer honestly.

Of course God knew Jacob's name, but he had to pronounce it because of its meaning: “supplanter”

or “deceiver” (Gen. 27:36). Jacob had to acknowledge his weakness before he could be transformed. By pronouncing his own name, Jacob is actually confessing: “I am a deceiver”. In responding to God in this way, Jacob discovers his own self, he has a confrontation with himself and his sin. Only now can Jacob be changed by God.

Jacob’s conversion is confirmed by the change of his name: **“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.”** V. 28. Israel means “He who wrestles with God.” Why does God change his name? Because God has decided to set aside Jacob’s character weaknesses and celebrate his tenacity and persistence.

Let us read Hosea 12:2-6. The prophet Hosea sees Jacob as a model to imitate when facing difficulties or when there is a need for a complete transformation. God gave new names to many Bible characters: Abraham, Sarah, Peter, Paul, and others. Their new names expressed how God had filled and transformed their lives. The ambitious deceiver named Jacob had now become Israel, the one who wrestled with God and conquered (v. 28).

5. CONCLUSION

Jacob’s old name brought back memories of his sad past but his new name, Israel, is the promise of a better future for him and his family. In the next lesson we will see how that promise is fulfilled.

LESSON 6



Let us read again Genesis 32:22-32.

1. JACOB ASKS FOR GOD'S NAME

In V. 29 Jacob asks God to declare His name to him and God replies, **“Why is it that you ask about My name?”**

In other words, God is saying to him:

“Do you not know who I am?”, for Jacob knew very well that God’s name was Jehovah. What he really wanted to know was the meaning of that name. But God was not willing to teach it to him. That is ex-

actly what happened when Moses asked God what his name was and received the enigmatic answer: «**I AM WHO I AM**» (Ex. 3:14). God’s identity would still be a secret to many; it would only be revealed and shared with those who believed in Him in centuries to come.

In biblical language, the name is much more than the word used to call or designate a person; it is, rather, the person himself, who makes himself present and reveals himself by making his name known. Therefore, to ask a person to say his name is really to ask him to make his nature and identity known. To bless, invoke or know the name of God is to bless him, invoke him and know him himself, and not only the word with which he is named. No wonder centuries later David would exclaim, “**O Lord, our Lord,**

How excellent is Your name in all the earth!”

(Psalms 8:1).

2. GOD BLESSES JACOB

V. 29 ends by saying: “**And he blessed him there**”, a statement that constitutes the highest point of the story. After wrestling all night with Jacob, God blesses him in the same way he had blessed his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac (Gen. 25:11). It is a new beginning for Jacob; “**the sun rose on him**” (v. 31) indicates in a way the dawn of a new day for his life, a new hope for him and his descendants.

V. 30: The finale of this story begins after the angel's departure, when Jacob calls **“the name of the place Peniel”**, which in Hebrew means the face of God. To what is this due to? Jacob himself teaches us the reason for the name Peniel: **“For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”** Jacob's amazement at this exceptional experience is due to the fact that no one can see God and still be alive (Ex. 33:20; Judges 13:22). The apostle John affirms in his Gospel that no one has ever seen God (1:18). All this allows us to suppose that Jacob only saw a theophany, that is, a manifestation of God's divinity.

V. 31: **“And he limped on his hip”** (Gen. 32:31) symbolizes what the transformation suffered by Jacob cost in terms of loss of pride. This limping is a symbol of divine power, which leaves its mark on the “natural” or religious man. God is telling Jacob that the divine sphere that from now on opens up to him can only be traversed by him with difficulty, under a total dependence on divine grace.

Thus it was that long afterwards God would show the apostle Paul that his power **“is made perfect in weakness”** (2 Cor 12:9). **“My grace is sufficient for you”** God tells Paul, and this is also the message for Jacob in the face of his new physical handicap.

3. FACING OUR PROBLEMS

Jacob's encounter with God passes through a reconciliation with his brother. Today we are living in

times of fragmentation, intolerance, violence, betrayal, etc. (Mt. 24:10): **“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”**

Today’s Christian generations can barely escape the sensual current of the world. Now the only things of value seem to be the Internet social networks, the newly released video game console, the latest model of a smart cell phone, the trending series on Netflix, the pandemic newscasts, and anything else that allows us to evade the reality of our own spiritual life. Jacob’s wrestling with God teaches us that God is very interested in helping us resolve our internal, interpersonal and family conflicts. But our conflict is resolved by facing it, not by running away from it.

Jacob’s struggle also teaches us that in our life there must be trials and stumbling blocks. What is the purpose of trials? Sometimes we ask the Lord to take us out of them, but the purpose of trials is spiritual transformation. Jacob is maturing, his way of facing problems is changing. He was always a shrewd man, but now God is making him a spiritual man. Strong character develops as one struggles in the midst of difficult conditions.

Sometimes the anguish we come to feel seems as if it will crush us. We lose sleep and the desire to eat. We feel that all misfortunes are coming upon us, and it seems that the Lord will remain mute. *But behind every great trial there is a great opportunity; behind every struggle lie spiritual blessings and treasures we do not know about.*

How can we attain God's blessing? We need a transforming encounter with him. **“I will not let You go unless You bless me”**, was what Jacob said to God. Let us do the same! Let us cling to the Lord and say the same to him.

V. 24: Jacob was alone when God appeared to him. Finding ourselves alone with God is when good things begin to happen. He rewards in public what we do in secret (Mt. 6:4). God is a rewarder of those who seek him (Heb. 11:6).

The angel of Jehovah came to wrestle with Jacob and the wrestling lasted all night. Earlier we asked why God seemed to want to defeat Jacob; God could have touched his thigh at the beginning of the wrestling. But the Lord wanted to break him and bring him to the place where he could sincerely say, **«It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”** (Gal. 2:20).

All night Jacob fought back, refused to give up and admit that he had sinned. Then God weakened Jacob and the wrestler could only hang on! Finally, instead of plotting a new trap to get the blessing, Jacob humbled himself and asked God for his blessing...and received it!

4. CONCLUSION

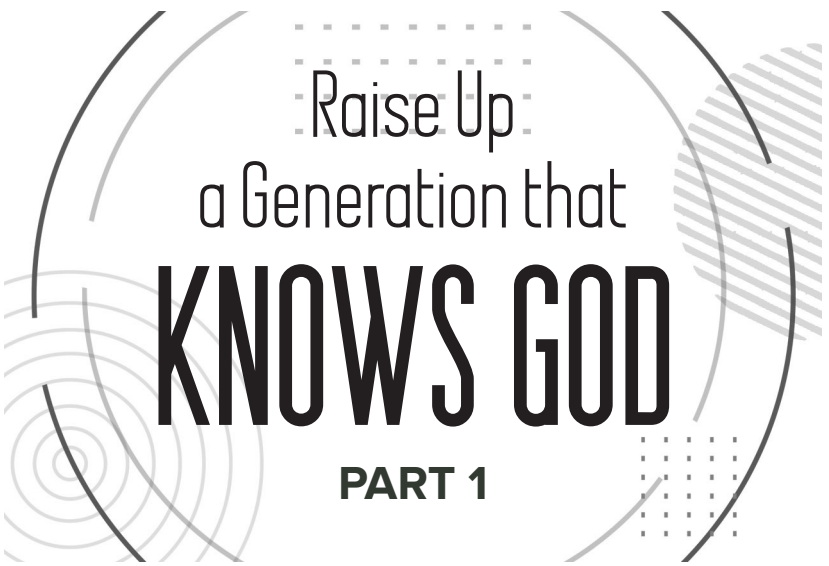
Jacob was persistent, and God encourages us to be persistent in all aspects of our lives, but especially

spiritually. In what aspect of your spiritual life do you need to be most persistent? What is your most urgent need today?

The last comment about the patriarch Jacob's struggle with the angel of Jehovah relates to his change of name to Israel. In this instance Jacob became a type of the victorious Christian who reaches his supreme goal of salvation, and receives his reward in Heaven:

"To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." **Revelation 2:17**

LESSON 7



Raise Up
a Generation that
KNOWS GOD
PART 1

Judges 2:6-10: *“And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.”*

1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in dangerous times, like no other generation has ever lived before. Drug addiction, uncontrolled sex, pornography, alcoholism, crime, a perverted educational system that teaches homosexuality, the third gender, etc.

It is a bombardment on our families, and most of all on our children. Everywhere there are more and more broken marriages and dysfunctional families. It is an epidemic that has broken out in the world.

2. A BAD CENTURY

The reign of the media and especially of social networks is increasing its influence, and our children are overwhelmed by it all.

It is said that what is published today in a copy of the Sunday newspaper or on a single web page is much more than what a person in the 19th century managed to read in a lifetime.

In the church, too, there are many families frustrated because they fail to be a light in their community. Many are losing the battle with their children, with their marriage, and with their salvation. Many Christian parents sadly do not have a good relationship with their children, nor with their spouse. Undoubtedly this is the worst crisis “of this evil century”.

3. A LOST GENERATION

How is it possible that the children of those who were with Joshua, who had seen the glory of God, knew not of God, nor of his power? Their fathers had seen the manna fall from heaven, the sea split in two, the Egyptian army drown in the sea, and the water gush out of the rock.

A generation had arisen that did not know God, nor what God had done for their fathers. The environment enveloped them, the influence of their neighbors, their friends, etc. They became people of weak convictions, or no convictions at all. God had brought Israel out of Egypt, but Egypt continued to live in Israel's heart.

Whose responsibility was it to pass on the love of God to the children? Whose responsibility was it to tell the miracles and tell the story of how God had brought them out of Egypt? The parents! How ungrateful those parents were.... (because not to teach a child to love God, nor to testify to the mighty acts of God is ingratitude to God).

It was those parents who should have spoken to their children; but because they did not, their children came to take for granted that what their parents had they had always had. They ignored that their parents had been slaves there. They were unaware of all the sacrifices their parents had had to make to live like that.

Do your children know about the desert you had to go through to get to where you are now? Do they know about the God of miracles? Do they know that there is a sowing and a reaping? The question about Joshua is how busy was he that he allowed an entire generation to be lost?

4. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The Word says in Deuteronomy 6:4-7: **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”**

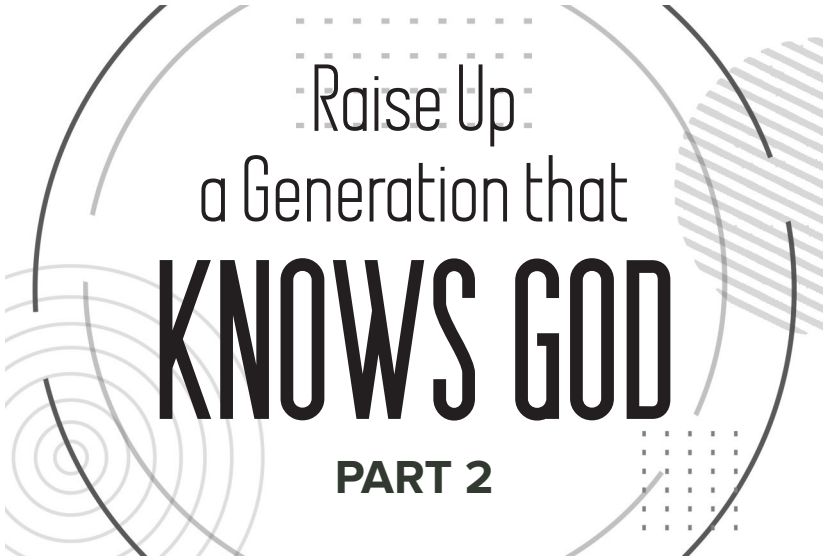
“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.” First, before speaking to your children the word has to be upon your heart. This is the main reason why many parents do not talk to their children: they do not know the Word, or worse: they do know it but they do not have it upon their heart: **“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.»** Matthew 12:34. **“And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons.” (NASB)** To repeat is the way not to forget. We forget easily. That is why David said, **“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:”** Psalms 103:2.

«And shall talk of them when you sit in your house.» What do you talk about at home with your children? What's more: do they talk? Colossians 3:16 says, **«Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.»**

«When you walk by the way.» When traveling, or visiting, or shopping, don't give your child your cell phone or tablet. Ephesians 5:16 says, **«Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.»** Make the most of every moment with your children!

5. CONCLUSION

«When you lie down, and when you rise up.» Pray together, read the Bible. The time to end the day or start a new one is simply perfect to seek God. What impacts our children's lives is not what we talk about, but what we do. When you take time to talk to them, you are showing them that God is important to you, that He is the center of your life.

LESSON 8

Raise Up
a Generation that
KNOWS GOD
PART 2

***Judges 2:6-10:** “And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.”*

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two types of parents: parents who are repressive, who want to control their children and tell them what to do all the time, to the point of annulling them. This can be helpful when they are small, but when they grow up they reveal themselves. They end up distanced from the Lord. And then there are the permissive parents who, for fear that their children will “suffer”, allow them everything. Then they have children who do what they want and who also end up far from the Lord.

2. TEACHING AT HOME

No one has a guarantee that their children will decide to do the right thing; but we do have the opportunity and the duty to instill in them the right way. God is speaking to us about how we can be good parents. Children don't want things. Children want time; time with you.

As we mentioned at the beginning, we are in the age of communication, and the paradox is that families are now more disconnected than communicated. One statistic shows that in families where both parents are committed to the things of the Lord, 75% of the children are also committed to God. But if in the home only the mother is committed, then only 20% of the children are committed.

Many churches have been filled with old people—saying it with affection—because neither the children

nor the grandchildren are going to church anymore. That is the result of parents who expect the church to teach their children about God, that the church will teach them to love God. But that is not the case. It is our responsibility to teach them, to tell them about the power of God, to pray with them, to counsel them when they are not doing things right, to monitor what they look at on the Internet, who their friends are, etc.

3. UNKNOWN

Recently in the State of Florida, U.S.A., a 16-year-old boy walked into his school, killed 17 people and then took his own life. The parents told the media that he was a good son, but when the FBI entered his room they found guns, posters of unclothed women on the wall. They also discovered that the boy was connected to Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists, had purchased weapons online, consumed pornography and played violent games.

The question is where were his parents while all this was going on in the room? Parents and children live in the same house, carry the same last name, come to the same church, but don't know each other. The disconnect is slow, and many become perfect strangers in their own home. I draw a conclusion here: those children of Israel did not know the God of their fathers because they did not know their fathers. But if my children know me, they will know my God, **«For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.»**

There are things that play against us and we mentioned this in the first part of the lesson; for example, the environment in which we now live. We could say that our environment is the foreign gods of this century. They surround our family. We live in a lost world where Satan rules and has a well laid out plan. But you can make a decision and your family can take God's promise to Abraham that **"in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."** Genesis 12:3, and set out to be a model of blessing to your own and also to those outside.

This is a promise of blessing for our children: *"For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant."* **Job 14:7-9**

4. CONCLUSION

It says in Judges 2:6 that those men went to work **"to his own inheritance to possess the land."** In other words, they forgot their children! Our children are our God-given inheritance, the most important thing we have in our lives. We cannot trade them for a job, a program, friends, or for anything in this life.

The best inheritance we can leave our children is not material things, but eternal life; and the hope of living together for an eternity in the kingdom of heaven. We need to talk to them and tell them who our God is and where He took us from. Amen.

LESSON 9***Ecclesiastes 8:8:***

“No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death.”

1. INTRODUCTION

Atheists like to say that religion is a crutch; that people seek an imaginary God just because they went through a difficult situation and needed something to hold on to. But this is a distorted way of looking at humanity’s situation.

Yes, most of the time it is the setbacks that lead men to approach God; it is the anguish that makes them look for the Savior. However, it is not at this moment that they “invent God”. It is at that moment that they discover God. It is at that moment that they perceive their fragility.

2. A UNIVERSAL LAW

Nowadays, companies are very concerned about the physical safety of their employees. They make them aware of their limitations and of the care they must take, because an accident at work could have lifelong consequences.... for one or the other! And today, because of the pandemic, health care has become even more extreme.

In the same way, we, as the Church of Jesus, have the mission to make all human beings aware of their fragility before the elements of life on Earth, on the one hand, and also — and more than anything else — of their fragility before the condemnation of sin in the life to come. We, as the Church of the Lord, have the solemn mission to warn people that if they do not take care, if they do not do the right thing with their lives, they will suffer the consequences for all eternity.

Let's read what Jesus once said to his disciples, in Luke 12:13-20. As you can see, my friend, death and eternity stalk everyone equally. It is not the sick today who will die tomorrow; not necessarily. Often it is the

healthy ones, the ones who laugh now; the ones who are apparently strong and seem to be standing firm.

In a town in England, there is a house built in 1636 on whose door lintel reads this inscription in Latin: “You would weep if you knew you had but a month to live, but you smile, not knowing that perhaps you have but a day to live.”

Today we are here and tomorrow we are no more! Nor is it the elderly who are about to die, in many cases. Young people are also departing all the time. In other words, no one’s life is guaranteed, not even for being of a young age.

3. WE ARE FRAGILE CREATURES

This happened in the state of Paraná, Brazil; in a city of 500 thousand inhabitants called Londrina, in the month of September, a few years ago. This event caught the attention of firefighters and public opinion:

A 19 year old girl, away from the church, away from God, started drinking alcohol and using drugs. One day she went out for another of her “late nights” with four other young men, including a minor as young as 13. The boys passed by her house, called the girl and, it seems, were already drunk.

With the sound of the car blaring, they continued drinking. The girl’s mother, in desperation, accompa-

nied her to the car and said the following phrase: “May Jesus be with you! There was laughter inside the car and the girl stuck her head out and said to her mother: “Only if Jesus comes in the trunk, because it’s full here!

They sped off and minutes later the driver lost control of the car on a highway and crashed head-on into a pole. The five young occupants of the car died instantly.

Firefighters and police arrived, and found drugs and drinks inside the car; but here’s the unusual thing and what shocked everyone: even though the car was totally destroyed, the trunk was intact. Even more; when the firemen opened the trunk they were startled by what they saw: inside the trunk there was a basket full of eggs, and none of them were broken....

No one should turn away from God, or forget about him, because human frailty is not fiction, but a reality. It is not that people begin to “realize” that they need God. It is that they actually need Him. A person doesn’t just feel fragile; he is fragile!

Let’s read Isaiah 40:5-8. In affliction, someone who felt self-sufficient, realizes that he is not enough for himself; he needs someone greater, stronger; he needs the Almighty! The problem is not that fear leads man to God. The problem is that pride separates man from Him. To want God is the natural thing to do. To avoid Him is the unnatural (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

4. CONCLUSION

Only in God's hand is there security. Only in Him will today and tomorrow be peaceful. That is why God says to you, friend; He says to all of us in fact: **“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.**

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah 55:6-7.

LESSON 10



What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘war’?

1 Corinthians 2:4-5: *“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, our theme in the Apostolic Assembly has been “United Expanding the Kingdom with

Power”. In ancient times, to expand a kingdom, war was used. In the Bible we find that King David was a warrior who conquered great territories and cities; as well as wealth and prestige. David provoked the fear of many neighboring peoples, who knew that this king brought with him the favor of God.

David also managed to unify the Israelite territory, expanding it to control Jerusalem, Samaria, Petra, Zabab and Damascus. In the spiritual world it is no different. As children of God, we are at war for the conquest of territory, and we have an adversary against whom we fight.

EQUIPPED SOLDIERS

In this war, we cannot stand still: either we retreat or we advance; either we conquer territory, or ours is invaded and conquered. As servants of God’s army, we cannot have a passive attitude; we cannot live indifferent to this reality. As apostolic Christians we have to recognize that we are involved in a war; and that we have been called to fight.

Every soldier who goes into battle prepares himself, equips himself and knows against whom he is going to fight. That is why you must ask yourself who is your enemy, what is the reason for your war, and what are the weapons you have at your disposal to fight. The word of God in Ephesians 6:10-12 tells us:

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual **hosts** of wickedness in the heavenly **places**.”*

The Apostle is teaching us that we are at war and that our enemies are not “flesh and blood”, that is, they are not the people around us; neither are they circumstances or visible factors. No, but our real struggle is against the devil and his angels who rule in the darkness of this age; it is against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly regions.

In this well-known biblical passage, Paul is referring to the demons that move in the air around us. The Apostle tells us that we must strengthen ourselves in the Lord and in the power of His might — because our strength comes from Him — by putting on **“the whole armor of God”**. And it is important that it be with the **whole** armor, because where we leave only one part of our life exposed, the enemy will cause wounds there.

In verses 13 to 19, Paul explains how our spiritual armor is made. It is composed of truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God and prayer at all times. These are our weapons of protection and attack.

In chapter 4 of the book of Matthew, we find a clear example of this, given by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was in the desert fasting for 40 days, and there He was tempted by the devil; but Jesus resisted the temptation, answering the devil always with “It is written!”

WITH POWER

Returning to the text at the beginning, the apostle Paul says that he did not go to the brethren at Corinth **“not with persuasive words of human wisdom.”** Paul was indeed a doctor of the Scriptures, but his faith in Christ was not based on that knowledge or on his long religious experience.

In his travels, Paul simply preached the Gospel of Salvation and powerful miracles occurred. That was demonstration enough that the power of God was with him: **“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”** How tremendous!

Now, we have received that same power. When? When we were baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit: **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”** says the Lord in Acts 1:8. He also promised: **“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means**

hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” Mark 16:17-18.

If it is I who speaks, or you, nothing extraordinary happens; but if it is God who speaks, many things happen in the environment where we live. Please answer honestly: Aren't you tired of marital and family problems? Aren't you tired of talking to your children and they don't listen, or of that persistent illness, or that economic shortage? Aren't you tired of fighting and fighting, and not getting results, because you fight with your own strength? No doubt you are.

But God has given us powerful weapons to fight and overcome. He has left us His effective Word to proclaim; He has endowed us with His power to make the enemy flee, and to manifest in our lives the signs of the Holy Spirit.

What do we need for all this and much more to happen? Only to believe! We must trust in the Lord. And trusting means that, leaving our own weapons, we take His and make them our own. Example: we get up early in the morning to pray and make the enemy flee.

CONCLUSION

All this and much more is possible with the power of God. Think about it. The war we are in is not even yours or mine; it is the Lord's, as it was said to Jehoshaphat and his people in 2nd Chronicles 20:15b:

“Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”

The Lord Jesus is our commander; our mighty Savior who defeated the enemy on the cross of Calvary. And He is calling us to battle for our own. He is calling us to fight, but not in our own strength, but in His power! Brother, sister, let us go forth, with power, to conquer in Jesus’ name!

