

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2026

April 5, 2026

Resurrection: The Future Hope
Printed Text: 1 Corinthians 15:13-20, 51-58
Devotional Text: Luke 24:1-12
Background Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-20, 50-58;
Revelation 22:1-5
Key Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20

April 12, 2026

Authority: Belonging to God
Printed Text: Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1, 6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17
Devotional Text: Proverbs 31:4-9
Background Text: Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1, 6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17
Key Text: Mark 12:17

April 19, 2026

Children: Gift and Model
Printed Text: Mark 9:36-37, 42; Mark 10:13-16
Devotional Text: Psalm 8
Background Text: Matthew 18:1—6; Mark 9:36-37, 42; 10:13-16
Luke 2:1-20
Key Text: Matthew 10:15

April 26, 2026

Family: Distinct and Obedient
Printed Text: Deuteronomy 6:3-9; Matthew 19:3-9
Devotional Text: 2 Samuel 7:25-29
Background Text: Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 6:1-4;
2 Timothy 1:3-5
Key Text: Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 5 April 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

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Resurrection: The Future Hope
Printed Text: 1 Corinthians 15:13-20, 51-58
Devotional Text: Luke 24:1-12
Background Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-20, 50-58;

Revelation 22:1-5
Key Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Many Dwellings In the Father's House - John 14:1-4
Tuesday: Encouraging Words of Hope - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Wednesday: I Know That My Redeemer Lives - Job 19:23-27
Thursday: Awake And Sing for Joy - Isaiah 26:12-19
Friday: Give Thanks to the Lord - Psalm 118:15-24
Saturday: Christ Is Risen from the Dead - 1 Corinthians 15:13-20
Sunday: Death Is swallowed up - 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

KEEP IN MIND:

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died." (1 Corinthians 15:20, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

EXPLORE the meaning of Christ's resurrection;

VALUE and appreciate our identity in Jesus Christ; and

WITNESS personally and corporately to the resurrection of Jesus Christ

BACKGROUND:

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul dealt with issue after issue. He addressed the division in the church (1:10-4:21), sexual immorality including incest (5:1-13 and fornication (6:12-20), marriage and divorce (7:1-40). Idolatry (8:1-11:1), and different aspects of public worship (11:2-13:13). In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addressed the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy. The apostle instructed that the Corinthians should pursue love and the gift of prophecy because it builds up the whole church. Tongues only build up the individual. The only way tongues can edify the church is if the one speaking has the gift to interpret. Paul wrote that proper worship will result in even unbelievers admitting, "God is truly here among you" (1 Corinthians 14:25). The chapter ends with Paul describing the proper order of worship. With all of these other issues dealt with, Paul finally launched into explaining the significance of Christ's resurrection.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, two things are immediately clear. First, Paul loves this church. Second, it is apparent that Paul knows the Corinthian church and the issues related to this particular body of believers. In earlier chapters, Paul lovingly yet firmly teaches the Corinthians about the carnal issues that plague this particular church. He emphasizes the importance of keeping the congregation morally clean. Paul was also keenly aware of and addresses the quarrelsome factions that existed in the Corinthian church. In his letter, he directly confronts the contention created by the cliques within the church and warns them of their potential to destroy the entire body.

Similarly, Paul confronts and admonishes the church's erroneous beliefs concerning the spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts, Paul writes, were not to be used to impose hierarchy within the church, but rather to glorify God. Paul then proceeds to teach that while gifts are wonderful, they are to be exercised in love and that love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul now begins a critical area of teaching. It is not enough that the Corinthians believe in the virgin birth, ministry, and sacrificial death of Jesus, the Christ. Paul zeros in on the key element of the Gospel: the resurrection of Jesus. Without this belief, Jesus' birth, ministry, and even His death mean absolutely nothing.

In the ancient Greek and Roman world, there were several prominent philosophies regarding death and the afterlife. In this chapter, Paul clarifies that he is not teaching a spiritual resurrection, like the Stoics who taught that following death, the soul was merged with a deity. Paul makes it clear that Jesus "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25, NIV).

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Resurrection Guaranteed (1 Corinthians 15:13-20, NRSV)

¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised;

¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.

¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.

¹⁷If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

¹⁸Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.

¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

In Verses 12-19, Paul refutes the people's belief that there is no resurrection of the dead, a central issue in the Corinthian church. In the Greco-Roman world, many believed in the immortality of the soul but not in the physical resurrection of the body. Paul counters this by emphasizing the resurrection as a core tenet of Christian faith. The resurrection of the dead is a promise found throughout Scripture, including in the Old Testament (e.g., Daniel 12:2) and affirmed by Jesus (e.g., John 5:28-29). The resurrection is not just a future hope but a present reality that impacts Christian living and belief.

Paul uses a logical argument to show the implications of denying the resurrection. If the dead are not raised, then Christ's resurrection is also impossible, undermining the entire foundation of Christian faith. The resurrection of Christ is a historical event attested by multiple witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) and is central to the gospel message. It fulfills Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Psalm 16:10) and typologies, such as Jonah's three days in the fish (Matthew 12:40). Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20), guaranteeing the future resurrection of believers.

Paul's line of reasoning in essence concludes that if there is no resurrection, Christ did not rise and their faith would be useless. They would all still be in their sin, condemned forever. However, Paul reassures his audience that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. He continues to explain the benefit of this fact. Jesus did not conquer death only for Himself. He is the first of all who have died. His resurrection ensures that all who believe in Him shall have eternal life. To illustrate this truth, Paul compares Jesus to Adam. Just as Adam brought death for all, Jesus has brought eternal life for those who believe in Him. This was Christ's purpose all along; the Father sent Him so "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

1. How does the belief in the resurrection of the dead impact your daily life and decisions?
2. In what ways can cultural beliefs today challenge or undermine the doctrine of resurrection, and how can we respond biblically?
3. How does understanding Christ's resurrection as the "firstfruits" influence your view of life after death?

The Mystery of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-54, NRSV)

⁵¹ Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed,
⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
⁵³ For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.
⁵⁴ When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

Next, Paul launches into the "mystery" of death that he obviously believes plagues these believers. Because of the sin of the first man, Adam, the "natural" bodies of all humankind are subject to death. However, praise be to God, because of the redemptive act of the "last Adam," Jesus Christ, believers now possess "spiritual" bodies. Paul asserts that these bodies are "incorruptible"; they are no longer subject to the laws of nature and the death penalty of sin. If believers were only subject to the inheritance of Adam, it would be fitting that we return to dust since it is through Adam's sin that mankind dies. However, through faith, believers are joined to Jesus Christ. The bodies of the believers, through their faith in Him, now bear "the image of the heavenly." It is these glorified "heavenly bodies" that are to be resurrected. Paul is clear that the nonbelievers are simply "flesh and blood" and as such "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Part of this glorious inheritance is the resurrection!

1. In what ways can the certainty of our future transformation influence our daily decisions and priorities?
2. How can the promise of being changed at Christ's return provide comfort in times of loss or grief?
3. What practical steps can you take to live in expectation of Christ's return and the

transformation that will occur?

Power Over Death (1 Corinthians 15:55-58, NRSV)

⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Paul now addresses the opinion of some Corinthians that the believers who are "asleep," or who have died before Christ's return, have been lost. Paul explains that at the time of Christ's return, believers will be in different states: some dead, some still living. However, the result will be the same for all believers: "we shall all be changed." The change will be signaled by the sound of the "last trump" (trumpet). This signifies the final call of Christ Himself for His beloved to join Him. This image is mirrored by John when he writes, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Revelation 1:10). In that great moment when Jesus calls for the believers, the "living and the dead" will be changed to heed the trumpet call. In an instance, or the "twinkling of an eye," the resurrection will occur.

Paul reiterates that for the believer, death has no final say. Death is, at best, only a temporary state for the believers awaiting the glorious return of Jesus. At Christ's return, the believers will shed the mortal body and "put on immortality." The believer's freedom from sin (through Jesus Christ) also frees him from the penalty of sin, which is death.

Sadly, for the nonbeliever, death indeed claims the final "victory" and has the last word. Not so with the believer! Death has no "sting." It is not the final word. The victory is that the believer will have resurrected life through belief in Jesus, the Christ. Knowing this, we as believers must take more seriously and earnestly our commission to preach and teach Christ to a dying world.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. Many engage in frivolous activities searching for who they are. However as believers, the resurrection has already determined our identity. How has the resurrection of Christ impacted your life? How can you begin to value your identity in Christ?
2. In view of today's lesson, discuss whether or not you believe that mourning at funerals reflects a lack of "hope in the resurrection."
3. Discuss the difference between our "beliefs" and our "convictions."
4. What does it mean to "mourn in the hope of resurrection"?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Certain events define our identities. On the wedding day, we become a spouse. Giving birth to a child, we become a parent. We cherish these life-changing events and commemorate them every year with anniversaries and birthday celebrations. As believers, another event that deserves our devotion is the Resurrection of Christ. The Resurrection is the foundation of our faith. It is the fuel that motivates us to want to live

right and treat others with love and kindness. Without it, we would be eternally lost. Let's remember to celebrate the Resurrection and not just once a year, but every day of our lives.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 12 April 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

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Authority: Belonging to God

Printed Text: Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1, 6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17

Devotional Text: Proverbs 31:4-9

Background Text: Mark 12:17; Romans 13:1, 6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17

Key Text: Mark 12:17

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Wise and Righteous Counsel - Proverbs 11:3-6, 8-11,14

Tuesday: Our Ultimate Allegiance Is to God - Acts 5:26-32

Wednesday: Godly Leaders Will Give an Account - Hebrews 13:16-21

Thursday: Just Rulers Fear God - 2 Samuel 23:1-7

Friday: The Ways of a Godly King - Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Saturday: The Things That Belong to God - Mark 12:13-17

Sunday: Show Honor, Love, and Righteousness - 1 Peter 2:13-17

KEEP IN MIND:

"Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him." (Mark 12:17, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

RECALL Paul's exhortation to be transformed in order to discern the will of God so we can love others effectively;

ACCEPT God's will to love one another unconditionally; and

COMMIT to a new beginning in which they actively carry God's love into the world.

BACKGROUND:

The question of political obedience cannot be rightly considered without taking into account the relation of Christianity to political life, neither can this isolated passage in an Epistle of St. Paul's be considered apart from other teaching upon the same subjects in the rest of the New Testament. Very similar language, it will be remembered, is found in 1Peter 2:13-17. When He was arrested by the civil power, and unjustly tried and condemned, our Lord made no resistance. Not only so, but when resistance was made

on His behalf, He rebuked the disciple who had drawn the sword for Him. When the didrachma was demanded of Him, which it was customary for the Jew to pay towards the repair and maintenance of the Temple, He, though as Lord of the Temple He claimed exemption, nevertheless, for fear of putting a stumbling-block in the way of others, supplied the sum required by a miracle (Matthew 17:24-27, NIV). On another occasion, when a question was asked as to the legitimacy of the Roman tribute, He replied in words already quoted, "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." (Mark 12:17, NKJV). And, lastly, when appeal was made to Him to settle a disputed inheritance, He refused, saying to His petitioner, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:14). Here we really have the key to the whole question. So far as His practice was concerned, our Lord pursued a course of simple obedience; into the theory of political or civil obligation He absolutely refused to enter. The answer, "Render to Cæsar," left matters precisely as they stood, for the real question was, "What was Cæsar's, and what was not?" The ambiguity of the reply was intended.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Question About Tribute (Mark 12:17, NRSV)

¹⁷Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

The enemies of Christ often sought to find an occasion to accuse Jesus. Nothing is more likely to ensnare the followers of Christ, than bringing them to meddle with disputes about worldly politics. Even today, if you want to start trouble, talk about politics. Jesus avoided the snare, by referring to the submission they had already made as a nation; and all that heard him, marveled at the great wisdom of his answer.

Jesus acknowledges the legitimacy of secular authority and the obligation to fulfill civic duties. This phrase also reflects the broader biblical principle of respecting governing authorities, as seen in Romans 13:1-7, where Paul instructs believers to submit to governing authorities as they are established by God.

Jesus' statement emphasizes the higher obligation to God, which transcends earthly authorities. It implies that while civic duties are important, spiritual obligations are vital. This dual responsibility highlights the distinction between earthly and divine realms. He calls believers to recognize God's sovereignty over all aspects of life, including those that belong to Him, such as worship, obedience, and moral conduct. This echoes the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which commands love and devotion to God with all one's heart, soul, and strength.

1. How does Jesus' response in Mark 12:17 guide us in balancing our responsibilities to government and to God?

God's Reasons for Our Submitting to Human Authority (Romans 13:1, 6-8, NRSV)

¹Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

⁶For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing.

⁷Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Paul presents seven reasons why Christians are to submit to human government: Government is by divine decree (v. 1*b*); resistance to government is rebellion against an institution of God (v. 2*a*); those who resist will be punished (v. 2*b*); government serves to restrain evil (v. 3*a*); government serves to promote good (vv. 3*b*-4*a*); rulers are empowered by God to inflict punishment for disobedience (v. 4*b*); and government should be obeyed for conscience's sake (v. 5).

Paul says, human government is ordained by God for the benefit of society. In whatever of the many forms it exists, civil authority derives directly from God. Like marriage, it is a universal institution of God, and, like marriage, it is valid regardless of place, circumstance, or any other consideration.

There is no civil authority, Paul says, except from God. No matter what form it takes, no human government at any time in history, at any place on earth, among any people on earth, at any level of society, has ever existed or will ever exist apart from the sovereign authority of God, because all "power belongs to God" (Ps. 62:11). The entire world, everything in heaven and earth, including Satan and his hosts, are subject to their Creator. God sovereignly created and absolutely controls the universe, with no exceptions or limitations. Also, without exception, the power that any person, group, or society may possess is divinely delegated and defined. How well or how poorly that power is used is another matter. Paul's point here is that this power has only *one source*—God.

No one enjoys paying taxes. But taxes are a part of everyday life. While it is appropriate for citizens, including Christians, to take advantage of deductions and other benefits that the law provides, no citizen, especially a Christian, is justified in circumventing payment of taxes by any means that is illegal or unethical.

Yet tax fraud is probably the most widespread crime in the United States. Some years ago, the Internal Revenue Service estimated that the gap between what was paid and what should have been paid in income taxes was \$93 billion for the most recent year.

It goes without saying that all taxes are not just. The only completely just tax system the world has known was in the divinely revealed the Mosaic law of ancient Israel. But although their taxes were absolutely fair, the people soon discovered ways to cheat on them.

Many taxes that *are* justly levied are *not* justly spent by the government body that collects them. Yet, just as with submission to human government in general (Romans 13:1-5), Paul makes no exception in verses 6-7 for a Christian's paying *all* taxes that he is assessed.

In his final comment on the Christian's submission to human government, Paul mentions several particulars about paying taxes. First, we are to render to all what is due to them. To render carries the idea of paying back something that is owed, and that

meaning is reinforced by the phrase what is due them. Taxes are not voluntary or optional offerings given for the support of government and paying them is the unqualified obligation of every citizen. Christians not only have a moral but a spiritual responsibility to pay taxes, because they know, or should know, that God requires it of them. Cheating on taxes is a crime against government and a sin against God. Christians are to pay tax to everyone to whom tax is due.

The custom (*telos*) was a form of toll or goods tax, paid directly to Roman governors or procurators or to their vassals, such as King Herod. Assessments such as those are also to be paid unbegrudgingly to whom they are legally due.

The next two obligations mentioned in this verse do not relate to paying taxes but to a Christian's attitude toward public officials.

First, Paul says, we are to render fear to whom fear is due. *Phobos* (fear) was used to refer to everything from awe, respect, to abject terror. In this context, it probably means having sincere respect for civil authorities who collect taxes.

Second, we are to render honor to whom honor is due. Honor refers to high esteem that is genuine, not feigned or merely pretended. The honor we render to those in authority, including those who collect taxes from us, should be honorable.

Live As Servants of God (1 Peter 2:13-17, NRSV)

¹³For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme,

¹⁴or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.

¹⁵For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish.

¹⁶As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil.

¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

In the context of 1 Peter, the apostle Peter is addressing Christians who are facing persecution and suffering. The concept of God's will is central to the Christian faith, as seen in other scriptures such as Romans 12:2, which speaks of discerning God's will, and Ephesians 5:17, which encourages understanding what the Lord's will is. The idea is that believers are to align their actions with God's desires, reflecting His character and purposes in the world.

The act of submission is not merely a social or civic duty but a spiritual one, reflecting a commitment to God's will. This aligns with the broader biblical teaching that believers are to live in a way that honors God (Colossians 3:17). The concept of submission is rooted in humility and obedience, virtues highly esteemed in Scripture (Philippians 2:3-8).

Believers are called to submit to authorities as a testimony of their faith and trust in God's sovereignty. This submission is not blind obedience but a conscious act for the Lord's sake. We are to recognize that all authority is ultimately under God's control. Submission to human institutions is a reflection of our submission to God. While submission is important, it must be balanced with a conscience that is aligned with

God's Word. When human laws conflict with God's commands, believers must choose to obey God.

Christians are called to be exemplary citizens, showing respect and honor to authorities, which can lead to a peaceful and orderly society. By submitting to authorities, Christians can silence critics and demonstrate the transformative power of the Gospel in their lives.

Christian freedom is not a license to sin but a call to live righteously. True freedom in Christ involves living in a way that honors God and reflects His character. Believers are called to live as servants of God. This means prioritizing God's will over personal desires and serving others as an expression of faith. It's crucial to be vigilant against using freedom as a pretext for evil. This requires self-examination and accountability within the Christian community. Live as witnesses of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are to live in a way that stands out in a secular world, demonstrating integrity and godliness that can lead others to Christ.

Christians are called to treat everyone with high regard, reflecting the love and respect that Christ showed to all individuals. The brotherhood of believers should be marked by love and unity, serving as a testimony to the world of Christ's love. Fearing God involves a deep respect and awe for His holiness and authority, guiding our actions and decisions. Honoring the king or governing authorities is a biblical principle, recognizing their role in maintaining order and justice.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How can we balance our allegiance to God with our responsibilities to earthly authorities, especially when they conflict?
2. How does understanding that we are made in the image of God influence our identity and actions as Christians?
3. What are some practical ways we can demonstrate respect for governmental authorities while maintaining our ultimate allegiance to God?
4. How can we practically show high regard to everyone in our daily interactions, especially those we disagree with?
5. In what ways can we actively demonstrate love within our church community, and how does this reflect our faith to outsiders?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Today many in our communities are loaded down with debt and absent of God's love. From payday loans to student loans, the African American community is saddled with obligations to lenders. This greatly hinders our life and witness. Proverbs 22:7 states that "the rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." While the writer of the time was speaking of actual physical slavery, today we are under financial and psychological slavery as we struggle to make ends meet. Before you take on debt, have a reliable plan for paying it off as soon as you can and read the fine print. You could be taking on more than you bargained for, hindering opportunities to practically love people as Paul exhorted the Romans. Debt hinders our ability to give to kingdom work or obey God in proclaiming the Gospel, due to working long hours or not

having enough money at the end of the month. God wants to free us up to love, and being chained by debt is a sure way to hinder that mandate.

As Christians, we must constantly pay back the debt of love that Christ gave to us, but we will always "owe" more love. We should pay every person in our lives love. Paul says this is what is expected of us from God. God has loved us so much that we owe not only Him but everyone around us the debt of love.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 19 April 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

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Children: Gift and Model

Printed Text: Mark 9:36-37, 42; Mark 10:13-16

Devotional Text: Psalm 8

Background Text: Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 9:36-37, 42; 10:13-16

Luke 2:1-20

Key Text: Matthew 10:15

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: A Heritage from the Lord - Psalm 127

Tuesday: My Child, Be Eager to Learn - Proverbs 2:1-6

Wednesday: Do Not Despise the Little Ones - Matthew 18:7-1

Thursday: Obedience That Is Acceptable Before God - Colossians 3 :20-25

Friday: Praise From Infants - Matthew 21:8-9,15-17

Saturday: Good Deeds of Children - Proverbs 20:7-12

Sunday: Let the Little Children Come - Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16

KEEP IN MIND:

"Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town." (Matthew 10:15, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

TRUST in God's ability to provide for our needs and guide us in His ways.

VALUE Jesus' teaching that true greatness is found in humility and service, not in status or power. and

UNDERSTAND the necessity of spiritual rebirth, akin to starting anew with the innocence and openness of a child.

BACKGROUND:

In chapters 9 and 10, we see a series of lessons that the Lord taught His disciples. His public ministry in Galilee has ended and now He has a private ministry a little while longer in Galilee with the disciples, and then He progresses to travel down to Jerusalem.

Through these months, the final months prior to His death, the focus of Mark is on His instruction to the twelve. He repeats to them continually about His death and resurrection. But in addition to telling them that and trying to prepare them for that coming event, there are things they need to know. And so, He is their teacher, and the lessons are private, not public. We have the privilege of joining those lessons. One of them teaches about humility, and that is the one before us in the lesson here.

“They came to Capernaum, and when He was in the house, He began to question them. “What were you discussing on the way?” But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, “Whoever receives one child like this in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me does not receive me but Him who sent me.”

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Who is the Greatest? (Mark 9:36-37, NRSV)

³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them,

³⁷“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

In this lesson, Jesus uses a child to illustrate a profound spiritual truth. In the cultural context of first-century Judea, children were considered of low status and without power or influence. By placing a child among the disciples, Jesus challenges societal norms and emphasizes the value of humility and innocence. This act is a visual representation of the kingdom of God, where the least are often the greatest. The presence of a child also echoes Old Testament themes, such as the prophecy in Isaiah 11:6, where a child leads in a time of peace, symbolizing purity and the coming of God's kingdom.

Jesus' action of taking the child in His arms is significant. It demonstrates His love, care, and acceptance, qualities that are central to His ministry. This gesture is a physical manifestation of the welcoming nature of God's kingdom. It also reflects the nurturing aspect of God, as seen in passages like Isaiah 40:11, where God is depicted as a shepherd who gathers the lambs in His arms. This act of embracing the child underscores the importance of receiving the kingdom of God with childlike faith and trust.

Jesus' words following this action are crucial for understanding His teaching on humility and greatness in the kingdom of God. By addressing His disciples directly, He is instructing them on the values that should define their lives and ministry. This moment is a teaching opportunity, emphasizing that true greatness is found in serving others and adopting a posture of humility, as further elaborated in Mark 10:43-45, where Jesus explains that the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served.

1. How does Jesus' action of taking a child in His arms challenge the disciples' understanding of greatness?
2. In what ways can we cultivate childlike humility and faith in our daily lives?
3. How does the concept of servant leadership, as demonstrated by Jesus, apply to our roles in family, work, and church?
4. What are some practical steps we can take to welcome and value those who are marginalized in our communities?
5. How do the teachings in Mark 9:36 connect with other biblical passages on humility and servanthood, and how can these connections deepen our understanding of Jesus' message?

Christ's Love to Little Children (Mark 10:13-16, NRSV)

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.

¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

In the cultural context of first-century Judea, children were often seen as having little social status. However, the act of bringing children to Jesus indicates the recognition of His authority and compassion. This reflects the Jewish tradition of seeking blessings from a rabbi or holy man. The act of bringing children to Jesus also symbolizes the faith and trust of the parents or guardians in His power and goodness.

The laying on of hands was a common practice in Jewish culture for blessing, healing, and imparting authority. In the Old Testament, this gesture is seen in the blessing of Jacob's sons by Isaac (Genesis 27) and the commissioning of Joshua by Moses (Numbers 27:18-23). Here, it signifies Jesus' willingness to bless and accept those who are often marginalized or overlooked, emphasizing His role as a compassionate and approachable Savior.

The disciples' rebuke reflects a misunderstanding of Jesus' mission and the value He places on all individuals, regardless of age or status. This action may have been influenced by cultural norms that did not prioritize children. However, it contrasts with Jesus' teachings on humility and the kingdom of God, as seen in Matthew 18:3-4, where He emphasizes the importance of becoming like little children to enter the kingdom. This moment serves as a teaching opportunity for Jesus to correct His disciples and highlight the inclusivity of His message.

Jesus emphasizes the importance and truth of His statement. The use of "truly" underscores the certainty and authority of Jesus' words, reflecting His divine insight and the weight of His message. It is a common introductory phrase in the Gospels, often used to highlight a significant teaching or prophecy.

The "kingdom of God" refers to God's sovereign rule and reign, both in the present spiritual sense and the future eschatological fulfillment. Receiving the kingdom implies

accepting God's authority, grace, and salvation. This concept is central to Jesus' teaching and is echoed throughout the New Testament, emphasizing the necessity of a heart posture that is open and receptive to God's rule.

Children in the cultural context of Jesus' time were seen as dependent, humble, and without status. This phrase highlights the qualities of trust, humility, and openness that are necessary to enter the kingdom of God. It suggests a posture of dependence on God, free from pride and self-sufficiency. This teaching aligns with other biblical passages that emphasize humility and faith, such as Matthew 18:3-4.

The phrase "will never enter it" underscores the exclusivity and necessity of the childlike qualities mentioned. Entrance into the kingdom of God is contingent upon receiving it with the humility and trust of a child. This teaching serves as a warning against self-reliance and pride, which are barriers to experiencing God's kingdom. It reflects the broader biblical theme that salvation and participation in God's kingdom are gifts that require a humble and receptive heart.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. What does Mark 10:15-16 teach us about the nature of the kingdom of God and who is welcome in it?
2. How can we apply the principle of childlike faith in our daily walk with Christ?
3. In what ways might we unintentionally hinder others from coming to Jesus, and how can we change that?
4. How does this passage challenge our understanding of leadership and authority within the church?
5. How does the concept of being "born again" relate to receiving the Kingdom of God like a child, and what steps can we take to experience this rebirth?
6. In what ways can pride and self-sufficiency hinder our relationship with God, and how can we overcome these obstacles to embrace childlike faith?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Jesus in His teaching about the Value of Humility uses a child to demonstrate that true greatness in His kingdom is found in humility and lowliness, not in power or status. Emulating a child's trust and dependence on God is essential for spiritual growth and entering the kingdom of heaven. Jesus models servant leadership by embracing the least in society, teaching that leaders in His kingdom must serve others selflessly. By taking the child in His arms, Jesus shows the importance of welcoming and valuing those who are often overlooked or marginalized. This lesson challenges believers to redefine greatness according to Jesus' standards, focusing on humility and service rather than worldly success.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 26 April 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84894230612?pwd=Zk1ESitzbGZwTIJyV21UZXY5aTVPZz09>

Family: Distinct and Obedient
Printed Text: Deuteronomy 6:3-9; Matthew 19:3-9
Devotional Text: 2 Samuel 7:25-29
Background Text: Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 6:1-4;
2 Timothy 1:3-5
Key Text: Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: By Wisdom a House Is Built - Proverbs 24:1-6
Tuesday: Growing in Divine and Human Favor - Luke 2:40-52
Wed: Submit to One Another - Ephesians 5:21-33
Thu: Choose Whom You Will Serve - Joshua 24: 15-21
Fri: We Will Serve the Lord - Joshua 24:22-28
Sat: An Inseparable Union - Matthew 19:3-9
Sun: Teach Your Children God's Ways - Deuteronomy 6:3-9

KEEP IN MIND:

"Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

AFFIRM that loving God requires obeying God's Word.

EMBRACE the commandment to love God with all of ourselves; and

DISCUSS ways to share God's love with the next generation.

BACKGROUND:

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Law (Pentateuch) written by Moses. The word "Deuteronomy" means "repetition of the law." It was written for the new generation of Israelites who had come out of the wilderness and were looking forward to occupying the Promised Land (Canaan). It was Moses's farewell address before he transferred leadership to Joshua. Moses wanted to partially restate and explain the importance of the laws before he died.

The scribes often argued with Jesus about the correct way to interpret the law. Jesus was questioned on a topic that was debated by many rabbis priest and Israel, which commandment was the greatest. At the time, rabbis, such as Hillel, did not think that all the commandments held equal importance. The idea was to find the "parent" commandment from which all the other commands could be reduced. Jesus responded with two passages familiar to his audience, defining his understanding of the law and what it means to truly follow God's command.

The command to love was prominent in the Jewish Scriptures and in the religious life of Israel. Love was given first to God. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 states the loyalty that the Israelites were to give to God and God alone by loving or desiring him with all their

hearts, minds, and strength. This passage is called the Shema. The words of the Shema were to be worn on the hands and head and placed on the doorpost in order to remind faithful Jews of its obligations. Jesus stated that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord all of our being.

The next passage that Jesus cited has to do with love on a social and relational level. This command first appears in Leviticus 19:18. In this verse, the Israelites were commanded against holding grudges or taking revenge on each other, but instead to love their neighbors as themselves. This command was given in the context of fostering love between fellow Israelites. Later on, it was widened to include others outside of the nation of Israel. Jesus made this command the second greatest command of the whole Bible. Together, both of these commands constitute what it means to express and experience the kingdom of God.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Love God with Total Devotion (Deuteronomy 6 3-5)

³Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

The book of Deuteronomy is generally considered by Christian and Jewish scholars to be the farewell address of Moses to the people of Israel. The setting of the address is in the plains of Moab, which was a high pastureland east of the Jordan River. Moses was speaking to a new generation of Israelites because the previous generation died off in the wilderness. As a result of their rebellion against God, the Israelites were forced to wander through the wilderness for forty years (Deuteronomy 1:26-2:1). Additionally, God barred Moses himself from entering into the Promised Land because of his own rebellion (Numbers 20:12). So, on the plains of Moab, Moses was delivering a restatement of what God expected of this new generation of Israelites as they entered the Promised Land. Canaan was a land "flowing with milk and honey" (v. 3). It was also a land flowing with many different pagan gods. The Israelites were entering a polytheistic (many gods) culture and Moses was calling them to have allegiance to God alone.

In this second address he offers principles for godly living because we must know and act upon God's Word (4:44-29:1). Moses is concerned that the people will possess "the land that flows with milk and honey" (verse 3) but forget who blessed them with it as well as their promise to devote themselves in obedience to God's Word. It is important to "fear" God and keep His commandments. To fear God means to honor and respect Him. If we love God, we should respect Him enough to obey His commands. If we do so, it will go well with us and future generations. Thus, it is important to teach our children, grandchildren, and younger Christians the Word of God and the importance of showing our love for Him by obeying His commands.

Verses 4 through 9 are known as the Shema, which is Hebrew for “hear,” the first word in the text. Devout Jews recite this prayer twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, in compliance with verse 7.

In verse 4, Moses is like a teacher calling his students to attention. He wants them to listen to his important declaration about God: “The Lord our God is one Lord!” “One” is expressing compound unity, which validates the Trinity. Moreover, this helps us understand the importance of Israel’s complete devotion to God alone. We cannot serve other gods because He is a jealous God (verse 5:9).

Jesus repeats the instructions in verse 5 and says that this is the greatest commandment combined with the command to love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). God loves us, so our love for Him must involve our whole being—not only worshipping and serving God but loving our neighbors. If we love God, we must show it by our actions toward others.

1. How can our love, obedience, and fear of God influence future generations?
2. How do you demonstrate your love of God?

Loving God is the Greatest Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NRSV)

⁶ Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

⁷ Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

⁸ Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead,

⁹ and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The scribe in this passage presented Jesus was a very significant question: “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” (v. 28). This was already on the minds of the religious leaders at the time, and it was expected that Jesus would have an opinion on such a popular question. Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love God and quoted the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4–9. This means that loving God has to do with acknowledging God above all other allegiances. He then fleshed this out, explaining it as a command to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Loving God encompasses the whole of our existence.

The command to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength is the commandment that holds up all others. It is loyalty to God that causes us to follow his other commands. Without this loyalty, we can rationalize and avoid certain commands because our loyalty would then be only to our selfish desires. In contrast, the Shema says that our desire for God must surpass all others. This desire includes our heart, which is the seat of our will and emotions. It also includes our soul, or our entire life. It includes our mind, the center of our intellect and intelligence. Finally, it includes our strength, or all of our physical and material resources and effort.

Some Jews take these verses literally and bind phylacteries, or small leather boxes containing selected texts from the Torah, on their foreheads and arms. In addition, there are some who place mezuzahs, a small box containing this text and parts of the Torah, on the right side of the doorpost. The purpose is to not only keep these commandments but to have physical reminders of the presence of God’s Word in their

lives. Our love for God is not about legalistic obedience but a life devoted to the living God by teaching and living out His Word daily.

God wants us to always study the Word and apply it to our daily lives so it can help and guide us in our decision making. We will not be deceived by the enemy if we know the Word by heart and use it.

God desires for us to talk about His Word wherever we find ourselves, day or night. As we teach His Word, our children and others are listening. The Holy Spirit is able to use us to transform lives. People will see God at work in us and be encouraged to seek Him.

1. Why is it good to remember and reflect on our past?
2. How has seeing other people remain devoted in their faith impacted your faith?
3. What is the most recent opportunity you have had to teach someone younger about the application of God's Word to daily living?
4. In what ways do you need to grow in showing love for God?
5. How does the definition of love for God differ or agree with the way that society portrays love?

Applying the Law (Matthew 19:3-9, NRSV)

³Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?"

⁴He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

⁵and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

⁷They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?"

⁸He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery."

The Pharisees' question was not a genuine inquiry but a test. This reflects a heart that is more concerned with legalism than with understanding God's will. Jesus' response to the Pharisees points back to the creation account, emphasizing that marriage is a divine institution meant to be permanent. Jesus challenges the Pharisees to look beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law, which is rooted in love and faithfulness. Understanding the cultural and historical context of the Pharisees' question helps us see the radical nature of Jesus' teaching on marriage. In a world where divorce is common, Christians are called to uphold the sanctity of marriage and seek reconciliation and healing in relationships.

Jesus affirms the intentional design of God in creating humans as male and female. This design is foundational to understanding human identity and relationships. By

referencing the creation account, Jesus underscores the sanctity and permanence of marriage as instituted by God. Marriage is not merely a social contract but a divine covenant. Jesus' response, "Have you not read," highlights the authority of Scripture. Believers are encouraged to seek answers and guidance from the Bible, recognizing its authority in all matters of faith and practice. Understanding the creation account is crucial for comprehending God's purpose for humanity and the world. It provides a framework for addressing contemporary issues related to gender, marriage, and family.

Marriage is instituted by God as a sacred covenant between a man and a woman. The "one flesh" union signifies a deep, spiritual, and physical bond that reflects God's intention for unity and partnership. The call to "leave" one's parents signifies the establishment of a new, primary family unit. "Cleaving" to one's spouse involves commitment, loyalty, and prioritizing the marital relationship above all others. Jesus' teaching underscores the permanence and durability of marriage, aligning with God's original design. Divorce is not part of God's ideal plan, and the focus should be on reconciliation and faithfulness. Marriage serves as a living illustration of Christ's relationship with the Church, characterized by love, sacrifice, and unity. Couples are called to model this relationship in their daily lives, serving as a testimony to the world.

Marriage is a sacred covenant established by God, not merely a human contract. The "one flesh" union signifies a deep, spiritual, and physical bond that should not be broken by human intervention. Since God is the one who joins a couple in marriage, it is under His authority and not subject to human whims. Couples are called to remain committed and faithful, reflecting God's faithfulness to His people. The marital relationship is a living illustration of Christ's relationship with the Church, characterized by love, sacrifice, and unity.

The Pharisees reference Moses to justify divorce, but Jesus points back to God's original design for marriage, emphasizing permanence and unity. Jesus attributes the allowance of divorce to the hardness of human hearts, indicating that it was a concession, not the ideal. Marriage is intended to be a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting God's faithfulness and love. Jesus uses Scripture to clarify God's intentions, demonstrating the importance of knowing and applying biblical truths in our lives. In a culture where divorce is common, Christians are called to uphold the sanctity and commitment of marriage as a testimony to God's design.

Marriage is intended to be a lifelong covenant, reflecting God's unchanging nature and His commitment to His people. Human sinfulness and hardness of heart can lead to deviations from God's perfect plan, such as the allowance for divorce. In marriage, as in all relationships, forgiveness and reconciliation should be pursued to align with God's original intent. The Mosaic Law provided guidelines to manage human sinfulness, but it was not the ideal. Jesus calls us to strive for the ideal in our relationships. Christian marriages should reflect the love, sacrifice, and commitment of Christ to His Church, serving as a testimony to the world.

Jesus provides an exception for divorce in the case of sexual immorality, highlighting the seriousness of marital fidelity. Remarrying after an unbiblical divorce is considered adultery, underscoring the gravity of breaking the marriage covenant. Believers are called to uphold the sanctity of marriage and strive for reconciliation and forgiveness. Marriages should reflect Christ's love and commitment to the Church, serving as a testimony to the world.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. In what ways can we apply the principle of looking beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law in our daily lives?
2. In what ways can we uphold the sanctity of marriage in a culture that often views it as a temporary arrangement?
3. How does recognizing God as the Creator influence our view of human identity and purpose?
4. How does the concept of "leaving and cleaving" challenge cultural norms regarding family and marriage?
5. Moses told the Israelites that their observance of God's commands affects not only themselves, but their children and grandchildren also (Deuteronomy 6:1-2). Why do you think this is so? Can you think of any examples of disobedience that has affected subsequent generations?
6. Traditionally, Jewish scholars have taken Deuteronomy 6:8-9 literally and called on the faithful to wear phylacteries with portions of Hebrew Scripture tucked inside, and to post words on their doorposts. Do you think Moses intended this verse to be taken literally? If not, what do you think he meant?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

In our society, personal autonomy is a really big deal. The ability to rule oneself and decide what is right and wrong is considered to be an important right. How does this idea match up with God's call to obey His commandments—to allow Him to determine right and wrong?

For those who read the Bible, following all the commandments can be overwhelming. It is good to know that loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves are the greatest commandments. By obeying these commandments, we obey all the others. This is what it means to live in the kingdom of God. It is simple but difficult. Our challenge is to truly love God with all with all our being and everything that we have. This can only be done with a deep understanding of the love that God has for us. When we know that God gave His life for us, then loving Him and others is less of a chore and more a privilege. In our everyday life, we have the opportunity to love God and show that He is the highest priority, as well as love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the test of loyalty to God and displays whether we truly love Him. To love our neighbor as ourselves is a sign that God is truly working in us.

Our love for God must involve our whole heart, soul, and mind. This also includes loving our neighbors. We have to teach and demonstrate for our children and future generations what love encompasses. There is a rise in hate crimes across the United States and the world. If hate is taught to children, they may grow up to hate. But if we teach love of God and others, they more likely will grow up loving all. This love for all humanity was demonstrated during hurricanes Florence and Matthew. Many cities were flooded by heavy rain. People of every race, religion, and culture rescued those stranded in their houses and donated food, clothing, and money. This is the love God personified. We have to love and worship God with our whole beings.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: 3 May 2026

Christian Expectation of Grace

Printed Text: Jonah 3:1-5; Jonah 4:6-11

Devotional Text: Revelation 5:1-5

Background Text: Jonah 1-4; Galatians 3:1-13

Key Text: Jonah 4:10-11a

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