



**GOD'S LAW
IS LOVE**

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----- **Ages 12-14 (Middle School)** -----

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THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell—5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell—silence

THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

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THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

JESUS EATS WITH A PHARISEE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 11:37-44

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 11:37-44

Key Verse: *"You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?" Luke 11:40*

Luke 11:37-44 (NRSV)

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table.

38 The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner.

39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

40 You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?

41 So give for alms those

things that are within; and see everything will be clean for you.

42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.

43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.

44 Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it."

VOCABULARY

- **Pharisee** – A member of a Jewish sect, distinguished by strict observance of the traditional and written law.
- **Wash** – Dip, immerse, submerge for a religious purpose, baptize.
- **Foolish** – Without understanding, unwise, imprudent.

INTRODUCTION

The Pharisees were individuals who were concerned about the maintaining of Moses' laws by the people. They struggled to seek a sense of justice and were insensitive to the spiritual significance of the law as it related to the ancestors who came out of Egypt into Canaan. The Pharisees were focused on the law presented to the people over 1000 years before. Many did not know the law, and few were told the law. The Pharisees were often in opposition with Jesus and his teaching. They were also a small movement and were not representative of all Judaism.

The Pharisees wanted Israel's descendants to follow the laws created 1000 years ago. Literally, it's similar to asking individuals in 2023 to follow laws created for people living in the stone age. These laws were not applicable to the current livelihood of those living in Jesus' time.

BIBLE STORY

In our lesson today, we find Jesus had been teaching the disciples. He had also been accused of casting out a demon and had taught two parables when he was invited into the Pharisees' home. It was customary to wash both hands and feet when entering a person's home.

Jesus explained that the cleanliness they were seeking was not external, but it was internal. Jesus called them foolish, reminding them that the same God who made the outside also created the inside. He instructed the Pharisees to be generous to the poor and then everything would be clean for them.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus knew the ways of the Pharisees and their deep concern about following the traditions and the law. We all have people who we subscribe to, follow, or like. What causes you to connect with these people? Is it the external qualities you notice or are you taking a deeper dive to learn more of their internal morals? Jesus is reminding the Pharisees of the obsession with the outside and missing the importance of what is on the inside. Think about your friendships; are they based on external qualities or are you investing the time to know those people you call friends or associates? The Pharisees were instructed to change their focus from washing before a meal, to giving generously to the poor. Where is your focus? Does it need to be redirected?

SUMMARY

Jesus sat with the Pharisees knowing they were looking for things that he would do wrong. The Pharisee invited Jesus into his home to eat and questioned Jesus' etiquette as a guest. Jesus demonstrated that what's on the inside is more important than a person's outside actions.

Questions

1. Imagine if you put water in the gas tank of a car or purchased a mobile phone and never installed any apps; how would

those things work? What do you feel is needed for things to work properly? Can you agree with the following statement?
Things cannot operate properly if they are not given the right ingredients to function properly.

2. What are ways we can self-examine to determine if we are viewing others through a biased lens? (Bias, judging people by a standard you've created based on your personal experience, beliefs, or cultural norms.)
3. Based on the scripture, what did Jesus identify as important if cleanliness was the desired outcome?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Fred Hammond wrote a song, "Give Me a Clean Heart." We will use part of it as our closing prayer.

*Give me a clean heart,
to lose the double mind,
to believe You when You tell me
everything will be just fine.
Just lay Your hands on me, Lord,
and I will be brand new.
Give me a clean heart,
a better one I pray
to stay on the path You've chosen
and stick with it all the way.
Give me a clean heart*

and I will serve nobody but You.

Amen.

APPENDIX 1

I Call Them Friend

Create a list of your friends and place their names in the first column; in the second column, share why you decided to be a friend to this person; in the third column, identify if your decision was based on biblical principles **(BP)** or social norms **(SN)**.

Name	Decision based on...	BP / SN
<i>Whitney</i>	<i>the classes we shared in school and the conversation during lunch</i>	<i>SN</i>

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Review your list. Were most of your friends chosen by **BP** or **SN**?

Reflection:

What does the above table tell you about how you select friends?

How can Jesus' teaching to the Pharisees assist you in how you see others?

What is one takeaway you have from today's lesson?

IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH?

LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 14:1-6

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 14:1-6

Key Verses: Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?" But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. Luke 14:3-4

Luke 14:1-6 (NRSV)

1 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

2 Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy.

3 And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?"

4 But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away.

5 Then he said to them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?"

6 And they could not reply to this.

VOCABULARY

- **Sabbath** – The seventh day of the Jewish week, a ceremonial day of rest.
- **Lawyer** – Interpreter of the Jewish law.
- **Lawful** – Permitted; it can occur; permissible.

INTRODUCTION

Let's consider the Sabbath; what is it and why is it HOLY? The word *Sabbath* is derived from the Hebrew word which means to STOP, desist, or cease. The Sabbath was a day (from Friday evening until Saturday evening in Jesus' time) when all ordinary work stopped.

In creation, God created everything, and on the Sabbath, God rested. In Exodus, God reminded Moses that he, God, rested on the seventh day (Exodus 31:17); and God also produced Exodus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15 to remind us of the redemptive power of the Sabbath. The difference between these two accounts is that the first recorded (in Exodus 20) addresses, through Israel, all creation. The second (Deuteronomy 5) tells of the law after bondage. The Deuteronomy text is directed to Israel as God's redeemed people. We can connect the Sabbath as one of God's signposts which points not only to God's goodness toward us as our creator but also God's mercy toward a chosen people, Israel, as the redeemer.

Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees on how he observed the Sabbath. Some religious leaders considered Jesus a "Sabbath breaker"; however, Jesus did not see it the same way. The

disconnect between Jesus and other leaders is that Jesus saw some of their observance of the Sabbath as a rejection of biblical teaching. Jesus referenced Mark 2:27, that the Sabbath was made to benefit humankind and not the other way.

BIBLE STORY

It's the Sabbath and Jesus is invited to the home of a Pharisee of high status. The scripture reference to "prominent" indicates the potential of the individual being a leading member of the Pharisee party and potentially an influential rabbi, or a person of great wealth. All the while, the Pharisees watched Jesus. In the meantime, right before Jesus sat an afflicted man. He asked the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" No one responded, so Jesus healed him. He asked a second question, and the Pharisees still did not reply.

LIFE APPLICATION

We have established the Sabbath is the Lord's day; what does that mean to you and your family? The Lord created the Sabbath as a day of rest. Early Christians believed it was a day to honor God in worship and devotion. In those times, no one worked; there were certain foods they did not eat, and there were certain household chores which were prohibited. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that those in need should be served on the Sabbath. Therefore, the Sabbath is holy and loving our neighbors is also a law to maintain. It is lawful to care for others even on the Sabbath.

SUMMARY

Jesus taught the Pharisees the importance of the Sabbath by healing an afflicted man. He asked them about healing on the Sabbath as well as taking care of other things on the Sabbath. It was unlawful to lift a beast on the Sabbath; however, Jesus understood it was necessary to ensure a family maintained their well-being by ensuring the animal was resened, even on the Sabbath.

Questions

1. If we recognize the Sabbath as the “Lord’s Day,” what are some things we could do that would bring glory to God on our Sabbath? What is preventing you from doing those things?
2. Identify things you can “stop” doing in recognition of the Sabbath. Identify some things you can START doing.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Draw the word *Sabbath* on a sheet of paper – be creative in the writing of the word. Around the word *Sabbath*, draw or write some of the things you will do to practice the Sabbath, including helping and serving others.

APPENDIX 2

Renew the Practice of the Sabbath

Here is a list of things which we can consider as practice of the Sabbath. Look at the list and underline things you may consider implementing into your practice of the Sabbath.

Worship with family.
Read the scriptures.
Create a devotion.
Write a letter to a friend and mail it.
No social media.
No TV screens or computers.
No shopping/spending money (includes restaurants and coffee shops!).
No chores or housework.
Make a homemade meal together on Saturday night, play music, share what we're thankful for.
Take the dog for a walk.
Read the newspaper and clip coupons.
Make your favorite breakfast.
Watch multiple church services on livestream.
Call and check on a family member.
Reflect on the week
Take a nap.
Go on a run or a hike at a park.
Do a puzzle or read.
Eat lots of snacks.
Have a friend over for games.
Take a bath.
Pray and read the Bible together as a family.
Make a big lunch or dinner.
Blast music.
Drink tea and read in bed.

Look at some of the things you identified. Remember these three things to assist you with practicing the Sabbath.

1. **Prepare** – On the day before the Sabbath, make sure you finish everything that is due the day after the Sabbath. It could be studying for a quiz or cleaning your room or doing necessary chores before the start of the Sabbath.
2. **Pray** – Use the Sabbath to actively seek the Lord through prayers, reading the scriptures, and thanking God for all that you've received and were able to bless others with.
3. **Practice** – It may not be easy to start, but if you do it repeatedly, slowly you'll begin to create the habit of being still – ceasing – stopping.

“God’s creation is a life-giving inhale for all of us, and Sabbath is the exhale.” – **Shelly Miller**

JESUS GIVES GOD GLORY

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JOHN 7:14-24

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JOHN 7:14-24

Key Verse: *“Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.” John 7:18*

John 7:14-24 (NRSV)

14 About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach.

15 The Jews were astonished at it, saying, “How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?”

16 Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me.

17 Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.

18 Those who speak on their own seek their own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an

opportunity to kill me?”

20 The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?”

21 Jesus answered them, “I performed one work, and all of you are astonished.

22 Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath.

23 If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man’s whole body on the sabbath?

24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

VOCABULARY

- **Festival** – A feast of celebration of the holy city; major Jewish cultural and religious event.
- **Teaching** – Provide instruction; content which is taught.
- **Demon** – Evil spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible constantly makes references to the festivals and the many celebrations of the time. The festivals marked time and for the Israelites it provided a sense of national unity. There were frequent public festivals, including the weekly Sabbath, the monthly New Moon Festival, and three main annual festivals – Passover and Unleavened Bread (celebrating the exit from Egypt), Pentecost or Weeks (celebrating the end of the harvest), and Tabernacles or Booths (celebrating the final harvest ingathering).

By the time of the New Testament, the festivals celebrated two types of occasions, the exodus through Passover and the 50 days after as Pentecost representing the end of the harvest. The Feast of Booths combined the two by celebrating both harvest and the memory of Israel's wilderness wanderings.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus arrives halfway through the Feast of Booths and enters the temple courts where he teaches. Malachi 3:1 prophecies of the day when he “suddenly come to his temple...” Many scholars believed John 7:14 is the fulfilment of Jesus' return to the earth.

As far as the Jewish leaders knew, Jesus had no formal train-

ing, yet he was teaching, which brought great amazement to the people. Jesus was not a student at the rabbinical schools where individuals were trained to teach as Jesus taught. Jesus responded to their curiosity proclaiming it was not his teaching, but it was from the one who sent him.

Jesus challenges their question by proposing a conditional statement to If, Then; “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (verse 17). If you choose God’s will, then you’ll know my teaching source. “Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him” (verse 18). If you speak of your own, then it’s for personal glory but if you seek the glory of God then you speak truth.

Jesus questions their logic; if it’s okay to circumcise on the Sabbath to maintain the law of Moses, then is it not lawful to heal a man’s whole body on the Sabbath? Jesus calls them to judge correctly.

LIFE APPLICATION

In any event, be careful how we judge others. Be intentional to widen your circle of connections and to make room for curiosity. You probably meet or see people on a daily basis and how often do you discover more about them before assuming their character or style? Listen carefully to your words; are your words and actions uplifting, encouraging, and kind or are you critical, judgmental, and rude? There are times when your silence equals agreement and consent to others; therefore, be intentional to consider your words and actions daily.

SUMMARY

In sum, we are all created in the image of God. Our abilities are also gifts from God; therefore, we must consider how often we judge others. Jesus entered the temple, the place where people gathered to be in the presence of the Lord. He taught in the temple, and it is there he was judged by the people, specifically the religious leaders.

Jesus accused these leaders of trying to kill him as he knew of his coming death plotted by the same people in the temple. They accused him of being demon-possessed.

Jesus through his teaching reminds them of the ways they have broken the law of the Sabbath by fulfilling the law of circumcision but can't see how his action of healing of the man on the Sabbath also maintains the command of God. God commands us to love our neighbors, unconditionally.

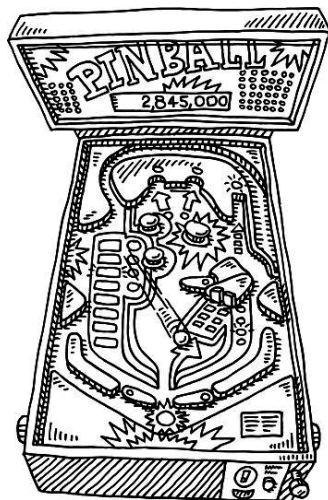
Questions

1. Jesus arrived halfway through the festival. The writer was intentional to include the timing of Jesus' arrival. Why do you think the arrival time was significant to the narrative?
2. Jesus did not take credit for his teaching. Instead he attributed his knowledge to God. As Jesus' followers, we all have special talents which God gave us. How often do we acknowledge God's gift in expressing our abilities to others? Do we take credit for what God has blessed us to acquire and achieve? In what ways can we help others see God's work in our abilities?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Please, Lord, hear our prayer. Each day we think our lives are our own and we are in full control. Give us the courage to let go and give you full control. Help us not to be judgmental, as we are all equal in God's eyes. Help us to see the good in all your creations. Let us release our judgment to you, dear Jesus. Instead of judging others, may the Lord help us to concentrate on living our lives to bring you glory. Help us, dear Jesus, be who and what you want us to be. Give us strength, faith, and hope, and most of all, give us guidance every day. Dear Lord, help us to concentrate on living our lives to bring you glory. Amen.

APPENDIX 3 The Truth Beneath



Have you ever played a pinball machine?

Once the marble starts moving, you must keep hitting it to keep it

going, or the game is over.

The modern-day pinball machine was invented by David Gottlieb in the 1930's.

Before Gottlieb's creation, there were several mechanisms that had to be invented to make the pinball machine possible.

Even after Gottlieb invented the game, soon after, coin-operated games were invented, and games that used electrical outlets became popular.

When you look at a pinball machine it might be easy to just assume that the entire machine was created at once, but it is actually made up of a series of inventions that give us the game we see today.

Often when we look at other people, we see the person they have become. Usually, we don't know their lived story, we only know what we see from the outside. It is impossible to know everything that has created the person before us. Therefore, it would be difficult for us to make any judgment about others.

We sometime believe other people can't judge us, but they do.

What does it mean to be judged?

Have you ever been judged? _____ How does it feel?

Have you ever judged others? _____ How does it feel?

Based on scientific research, we make judgments about a person in .01 seconds, which is unfair.

Instead of judging others, give them the benefit of the doubt by remembering that we aren't perfect either. Choose to show mercy when it comes to how you judge others.