

Green County Church of Christ

Vacation Bible School - 2016

Diving into the Word of God



Lesson One: The Sea of Confusion

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of
peace...”

1 Corinthians 14:33a

Primary Series Aim:

Students will gain insight, understanding and reinforcement in the knowledge of Jehovah God that will lead them to fulfill an obedience of faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ and remain faithful to Him throughout their lives.

Secondary Series Aim:

Students will have greater knowledge of Jehovah God's laws, teachings and commands so that they may have a full, clear and correct understanding of His workings, plans, and purposes in the world and in their lives.

Lesson One Aim:

Students will have a Bible-based knowledge regarding topics current to the human experience on which God has given specific direction: marriage, drug abuse and communication.

Suggested Lesson Format:

First Session (30 minutes)

Reading

Discussion

Questions

Second Session (30 minutes)

Review

Testing

Crafts

The Sargasso Sea: a Sea of Change and Confusion

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Sargasso Sea is a “vast patch of ocean named for a genus of free-floating seaweed called Sargassum. (Both *Sargassum* and *Sargasso* are derived from a Portuguese word for a variety of grape. The men traveling with Columbus thought the air bladders of the Sargassum weed looked like small grapes” [1].

While the Sargasso Sea is large, it is the only sea which does not have land borders. The only borders it has are the water currents which flow on all sides of it. That means it is constantly in a state of change as the currents, depending on their strength, move the waters within it in various directions.

If we dived into the Sargasso Sea, we would be surrounded by seaweed and would disturb hundreds of sea-creatures which make it their home: crabs, shrimp, fish, birds, sharks, and dolphins. The seaweed would make it hard to swim or move about. Since this mass of seaweed dims or blocks sunlight, the waters of the Sea would likely be murky, dark, and a bit frightening. It would not be a place inexperienced divers would want to begin their first diving lessons.

Human Opinion: The Real Sea of Confusion

Diving into the Word of God, so to speak, would not be like diving into the Sargasso Sea. There is nothing that will confuse us if we study it carefully and with purpose. God has given us clear information, facts, that when examined and applied give us enough understanding on how things work and what He expects of us. However, millions of people do not try to discover the information within the Scriptures or else they learn only what they can to attempt to discredit it. They refuse to open their minds and hearts to its truths. That is sad because Jehovah God truly does want us to know, understand, and believe Him and His Word contained in the Bible.

In this lesson we will examine several topics that people are talking about today. They make headlines. The question is: are they right or wrong? We cannot depend on public opinion for it sways back and forth like the seaweed in the Sargasso Sea. What is unpopular or right one day or decade is often popular and wrong another. The Word of God is the single stable and reliable manual for us to follow. Won't you consider learning what it has to tell us, then trust and follow it?

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17, NKJV).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16).

“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12, 13).

Memory Verse for Today

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace...” (1 Corinthians 14:33a).

Lesson Introduction

The prophet Jeremiah lived during what may be called the “Mosaical Age” specifically the reign of several kings of Judah. The kings of his time were disobedient to Jehovah God, leading the people away from the Law of Moses into idol worship. This had gone on for a long, long, time. God had sent many prophets to counsel and warn them to return to Him, but they refused. All the good kings were gone and the heart of the people was bent on rebellion. God sent Jeremiah to tell the people of Jerusalem and Judah their fate and doom. It was a most difficult task. One of the kings finally had Jeremiah thrown in a pit to die, but he was rescued later. Finally, the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem for the last time and completely destroyed the city. Many people perished and many others were taken to captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah was allowed to remain. He wrote two books, the one bearing his name, and *Lamentations* which was written in sorrow over the devastated city both God and he loved so much.

The Israelites (God’s people) had listened to the wrong people for too long. They let their emotions and desires confuse them as to what was right and wrong. They wanted to do what they thought was pleasurable, not conforming to the will of God for their Age. They allowed their own hearts to tell them what to do and their hearts led them away from God. God, through Jeremiah, said this:

*“But this people has a **defiant and a rebellious heart**; They have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, “Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest” (Jeremiah 7:24).*

*“Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone **followed the dictates of his evil heart**; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done” (Jeremiah 11:8).*

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose **heart departs from the LORD**’” (Jeremiah 17:5).*

*“The **heart is deceitful** above all things, and **desperately wicked**: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).*

Clearly then, what we feel in our hearts is not a trustworthy way to base anything on. Feelings alone should never serve as foundation for belief. Facts should produce all feelings.

Confusion occurs when people fail, for whatever reason, to listen to and obey God. God has told us what is right and wrong. All we must do is to listen, learn, and obey.

Three Important Topics

No doubt there are more than three things people are confused about, but since time is limited we can only look at a few: same sex marriage, drug abuse, and evil forms of communication. Let us put aside our own personal opinions, those of people we may admire, those of politicians and educators, and filter them through the Word of God.

Same Sex Marriage

In many if not most States it is legal for people who are of the same gender (male or female) to obtain a marriage license and be considered lawfully married. This change is not only historic, it is unheard-of in time past, not only in America but in all the world.

A lot of things led to this. One of the greatest was the dim view people have had for decades about the sanctity of marriage. Once divorces were granted for almost any cause, it was only a matter of time before marriage became looked upon as a civil union or contract. Once the Lord God was virtually removed from it, except in ceremony, people who wanted lawful civil unions recognized between people of the same sex began demanding their “rights.” The government and many of its leaders are behind this largely because they wanted votes, did not want to be publicly attacked by enemies and wanted to be viewed as in step with the times.

What does the LORD God have to say about marriage? Does He approve of same sex marriage? What did Jesus Christ say about marriage? Let’s take a look at it from the Word of God:

“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 21-24).

There is no confusion here. God made woman to be the mate of a man. That was His divine plan. He had nothing else in mind. As someone has said, “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” That may or may not be humorous but it is true nonetheless.

When the Pharisees (a Jewish religious group) tried to test Jesus, they asked Him if a man could divorce his wife for any reason. Jesus told them:

“...Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and 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’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4, 5).

Jesus Christ echoed the Father’s (God’s) words, putting His seal of approval on it. He went further by telling us that once married, a man and woman become “one flesh.” In saying this, Jesus did not have to forbid same sex marriage or any other perversions of it. He invoked the ‘Law of Exclusion,’ meaning, what He said is what it is. Anything more or anything less will not do.

God is not going to revoke a universal law for the sake of culture or the times. Whether popular to say so or not, same sex marriage is wrong and is therefore a sin, no matter if social laws say otherwise. We must stand up for God’s way *always* if we wish to please Him. PLEASE understand: neither homosexual practices nor any other sin gives us the right to insult, persecute, hurt, harass, or in any way harm another human being! It is Jesus’ place ALONE to condemn or justify the living and the dead (John 12:48; Acts 10:42; Romans 12:17-21).

Drug Abuse

God made everything, including many plants with chemicals and natural substance which, when properly applied, help the mind and body to work correctly or be healed of diseases. For that we should be thankful. Many doctors use these things to help us. However, there are many, many, people who abuse substances: they take too much of something, take what they do not need, or take it just for a pleasurable feeling or mood it gives. This kind of activity ruins and destroys the body and mind over time. Overdoses can and do kill hundreds of people.

Alcohol, Marijuana, pain-killers, amphetamines, narcotics and the like are major things which people abuse as drugs. Science has proved over and over how harmful these are to the human body and mind, but many people will not listen, sometimes because they are addicted to them, sometimes because they just want the thrill of the “high.”

What does God say about drug abuse? Is there anything at all we can learn from His Word about it? Consider these things from the Old testament concerning alcohol:

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is lead astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). *“Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart”* (Hosea 4:11).

And these from the New Testament: *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak”* (Romans 14:21). *“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

Alcohol contained in medicine if properly used can be helpful, but can damage our bodies, minds, and the image we portray to others can be when it is abused. The Apostle Paul had to *tell* Timothy to use a “little wine” for his stomach’s sake (1 Timothy 5:23). That likely means he was not drinking any before that. As for other drugs, they are all associated with witchcraft and sorcery in the Bible. In the original language the word for “witchcraft” is akin to the word ‘pharmacy’ or ‘pharmaceuticals’ (see Galatians 5:20 where the word is translated ‘witchcraft’). Besides that, God commands Christians to keep a clear head and sober mind (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; Titus 2:6; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8). One cannot do this when he or she is abusing alcohol and/or drugs.

Perhaps the greatest argument against “social” (public) drinking is related to love. Our Christian influence and image are important things we must safeguard. People who know us are watching us. This is especially true of children and young people. Our actions could lead them to begin drinking, causing them to violate their conscience and therefore sin. On this point, Paul the Apostle wrote: *“I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,”* (Romans 14:14-17). Paul is saying that nothing is more valuable than a human soul, not even my freedoms as a Christian. Whether or not I have a right to take a drink of alcohol as a Christian is irrelevant—I must be sober-minded at all times and am responsible for the influence and effects of my actions on others. Drinking alcohol impairs both.

Furthermore Paul wrote: *“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak”* (Romans 14:20, 21). Since there are people, especially young people, who might be led into sin, isn't it far better to avoid doing something than to risk their souls by doing it anyway? Our love for them should make us forego any rights we have for their sake and for the sake of love.

Evil Communication

The airwaves and all forms of media today are filled with words and phrases that should not be expressed according to the Word of God. God desires our language to be pure and uplifting, not crude, obscene, or hurtful. Jesus warned: *“...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matthew 12:34b-37).

There are many forms of language that can be labeled “evil” (harmful). Below is a list of the main ones people often do as a matter of habit:

- ◆ **Blasphemy and Slander** (BLASPHEMOS): “vilification (especially against God)” (Strong’s #988). See Mark 7:20-23.
- ◆ **Cursing** (KATARA): “imprecation, execration” (Strong’s #2671). See James 3:10-12.
- ◆ **Gossip** (PHLYROS): “a ‘prater’ or ‘tattler’ (Strong’s #5397). See 1 Timothy 5:13.
- ◆ **Invoking God’s Name carelessly** (SHAV): “falsely... vain” (Hebrew Strong’s #7723). See Exodus 20:7.
- ◆ **Lying** (PSEUDOS): “lie, lying” (Strong’s #5579). See Ephesians 4:25.
- ◆ **Insults** (RHAKA): “*O empty one,*” that is, thou worthless (as a term of utter vilification)” (Strong’s #4469). See Matthew 5:22.
- ◆ **Swearing** (EPIORKEO): “to commit perjury, forswear self” (Strong’s #1964). See Matthew 5:34.
- ◆ **Cussing, foolish talk and crude humor** (AISCHROTES): “shamefulness, obscenity” (Strong’s #151); (MOROLOGIA): “silly talk, buffoonery, foolish talking” (Strong’s #3473); (EUTRAPELIA): “well-turned, witticism in a vulgar sense, ribaldry, jesting” (Strong’s #2160). See Ephesians 5:4.

Paul said: *“Let no corrupt (SAPROS: “rotten, worthless, bad, corrupt” Strong’s #4550) word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”* (Ephesians 4:29), and, *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”* (Colossians 4:6).

It is clear that God expects our communications to be the kind that keeps our dignity and honor intact, His Name holy and only builds up others. We dishonor other human beings who are made in God’s image, ourselves, and God Himself when we say foolish, unkind, immorally suggestive, hurtful, untrue, and evil things. Let us learn to keep a tight rein on our hearts and mouths.

Questions for Review

Instructions: Choose the *best* answer from those provided.

1. Why is there so much confusion in the world today?
 a. People are born sinful; we inherit Adam's sinful nature.
 b. People today are more cruel, self-centered and evil than they used to be.
 c. People often choose to do what is right in their own eyes.

2. Is making decisions based on what we feel in our hearts a good thing or a bad thing?
 a. The heart is deceitfully wicked, cannot be known and therefore cannot be trusted to always make right decisions.
 b. We can trust how we feel because that is what God gave us hearts for.
 c. Allowing our emotions to guide our way is a good thing because everyone does it.

3. Why is basing our decisions on God's Word, specifically the New Testament, a good thing as opposed to something else?
 a. Because there are too many things we cannot be sure about.
 b. Because we are living in the Christian Age which is guided by the Holy Spirit's words found within the Bible's New Testament.
 c. Because religious people like preachers and pastors tell us it is.

4. What is the best way to answer those who believe God accepts same-sex marriage?
 a. Tell them it is all right because beliefs and opinions can change over time.
 b. Tell them it is wrong and God hates those who are homosexual.
 c. Tell them God's Word, given by the Holy Spirit through Jesus and His Apostles, plainly shows He does not accept it, never has, and never will.

5. What is the worst thing about abusing drugs, including alcohol and marijuana?
 a. They can harm the mind and body over time.
 b. They can cause others to be misled into doing something sinful.
 c. They can ruin our lives and those of others by leading us and them down the path of personal ruin into eternal punishment.

6. Why is it so important for us to be very careful about the language we use?
 a. God will hold us accountable for it in the Day of Judgment.
 b. We might hurt someone else's feelings.
 c. Someone might hurt us if we say bad things about them or to them.

Conclusion

We dive into the Sea of Confusion any time we leave the safety of God's Ship (His Word) and enter places where people use their own thoughts, feelings, and ideas as their guide for what is right or wrong. There are millions of people swimming around in it, many believing they are on the right track even though they are drifting farther and farther from solid ground. Let us learn God's Word, keep it ever-present in our minds and hearts so we can be sure where we are going and where we are headed: toward God and not away from Him.

Thank you for your participation!

Exit Question for Discussion

What in this lesson impressed you the most, or may be something you just learned, or something you will share with others who need to know?

[1] - www.oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/sargassosea.html).