

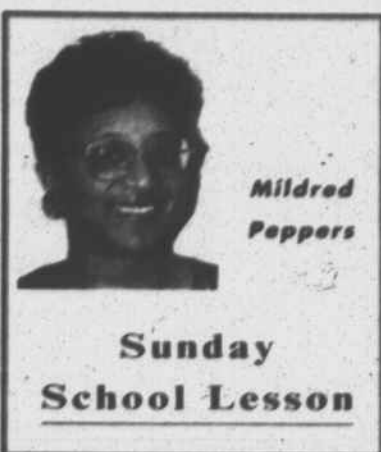
RELIGION

Understanding the importance of love in our daily lives

Lesson Scripture: Mark 12:28-34, Luke 6:27-31; John 13:34-35

Lesson Aims: To understand the importance of love, incorporate love in our daily lives and become authentic disciples.

Background: Upon the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.), his empire was divided. Palestine was caught between two of these empires and was ripe fruit for them as well. For 122 years, Palestine was dominated by the Ptolemies of Egypt ("Richard's Complete Bible Handbook"). The Jews were respected and permitted to worship as they saw fit. Eventually, the kingdom Syria, which was north of Palestine, defeated the Egyptian Ptolemies and gained control of the Jews. Things changed for them. The Jews were now forced to embrace the Greek world. This meant that they must dress, speak and wor-



Mildred Peppers

Sunday School Lesson

ship as the Greeks. The Jews resisted this change and began to revolt (Maccabees) against the Syrians and developed ways to keep Judaism pure. Thus the group of men known as Pharisees was organized. Their rationale or purpose was to hold up the Mosaic Law and the oral traditions as a means of identifying God's people. They, there-

fore, concentrated on keeping every detail of the law. The Pharisees were so committed to obedience that they were blinded to God's grace and mercy in the Scriptures of the Law, the Psalms and the prophets. These are the people to whom Jesus often referred as hypocrites. They constantly challenged Him on obeying the letter of the Law and saw no need to be loving and forgiving. Not all of them were bad people. Remember Nicodemus (John 3). The Maccabees gained some independence for about 120 years and then came the Romans.

Lesson: The lesson opens after Jesus has answered the Pharisees concerning taxation to the Romans and resurrection. They continue to try and trick Jesus. Their next questions is "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus went to familiar passages (Deuterono-

my 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18) and began his discourse. It appears that this scribe (a lawyer) is sincere — notice his response in 12:32 and also pay attention to Jesus in 12:34. Luke goes on to record Jesus' further explanation of this love. At the center of this teaching is "love your enemy." This is beyond the Law and the Pharisees don't understand it. This love is unconditional. Once again, the Pharisaic interpretation comes up lacking. John 13:34-35 calls the followers to an authentic discipleship. This passage comes after the Passover meal and just before His prediction of Peter's denial. This new way of identifying with God commands you treat people the way God has treated you. That way all people will know whose you are.

Application: The essence of God is love. This love is ever-

present, always open to reconciliation and is the basic element for building community. This love is in direct opposition to the Law if the "spirit of the law" is ignored I am not saying to disobey laws. However, if we lose the spirit of the law (living in community), then the law is ineffective. God loves us. Hasn't He proved it already? Then how can we ignore the poor, the sick and the disinherited based on a law? They, too, are part of community! According to Scripture, some may be lazy and trifling but we are not to write them off. Think for a moment how easily we love those in our inner circle. That same love is to be extended to our enemies. Do we deserve God's love? Don't be like the Pharisees and start to number all of the laws you've obeyed and your good deeds. Romans 3:23 states that we all have sinned, therefore, by the

world's standards, we don't deserve God's Love! Thanks be to God Almighty. His love goes beyond the Law. Obedience to God is a must but His grace and mercy stands in the gap for us. His grace and mercy is agape love. Whatever we do in our lives as believers, we must have unconditional love. That means we must do right by our loved ones as well as our enemies. This season's gift is Jesus, the epitome of God's Love for humanity. If we are Christlike, can we be any other way? Faith, hope and love but the greatest of these is love. This love comes from the heart and is genuine. It defies the standards set by the world. Our friends and family may say "stop making a fool of yourself." Love anyway. This love that has to come from the Holy Spirit will give you a discerning spirit to lead and guide you.

New Hope AME Zion Church Member Gives Initial Sermon

Special to THE CHRONICLE

Sister Constance B. Hawkins, a member of New Hope AME Zion Church of Lewisville, will give her initial sermon on Dec. 31 at 9 p.m., followed by Watch Night Service. She is one of Zion's young women who is excited and looking forward to minister and witness of God's goodness. God has blessed Hawkins with talents of writing

poetry and creating artwork. She willingly shares these gifts with the church family and the students with whom she works with at Southwest Elementary School. Being a member of New Hope, Hawkins gives her service as a member of the young adult missionary society, Voices of Praise Choir and as assistant children's director for Christian education. What a wonderful way for a young woman to start the year.



Hawkins

Howard and Thomasina Hawkins are the proud parents of Hawkins, and Alandous Hawkins is her son.

New Hope AME Zion Church is pastored by the Rev. Johnny L. Ruff.

Bailey leaves Lyons' defense team Trial for Baptist leader begins in two weeks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LARGO, Fla. — Criminal defense attorney F. Lee Bailey has left the legal team representing the Rev. Henry J. Lyons, who faces charges of state racketeering and grand theft.

The Baptist leader's defense team announced Monday that the famed West Palm Beach lawyer, noted for his defense of O.J. Simpson and the Boston Strangler, was no longer representing Lyons.

One of Lyons' three remaining lawyers, Denis de Vlaming, said that it has been difficult for Lyons to pay Bailey's legal bills ever since federal prosecutors froze Lyons' assets.

De Vlaming also said Bailey had a conflict with a trial in Texas that will take place about the same time that Lyons' trial on state racketeering charges begins Jan. 11.

"Is this a crippling blow to the defense? No," de Vlaming said. "Will we miss him? Cer-

tainly. Personally, I was looking forward to trying a case with him."

De Vlaming said Bailey parted on good terms and wished Lyons good luck. Lyons, president of the National Baptist Convention USA, and Bernice Edwards, a former convention employee who lives in Milwaukee, are accused of stealing millions of dollars from companies seeking to do business with the convention and laundering funds through secret accounts to finance lavish lifestyles.

The scandal came to light in July of 1997, when Lyons' wife, Deborah Lyons, set several small fires in a \$700,000 home owned by the Baptist leader and Edwards. After crashing her car, a distraught Deborah Lyons told sheriff's deputies she was upset beca. She later recanted her statement and in an emotional press conference, claimed she set the fires as a result of an addiction to alcohol.

Lyons and Edwards also

attempted to purchase a million dollar home in Charlotte.

Since authorities have begun investigating the case, allegations of drug use and other marital fidelities have arisen, though Lyons maintains his innocence.

Lyons has managed to illude at least three attempts to unseat him as leader of NBC, the nation's largest black church organization.

Lyons' legal fate is now in the hands of three lawyers: lead attorney Grady Irvin Jr., Largo criminal defense attorney Jay Hebert and de Vlaming, now the team's senior attorney.

Anthony Battaglia left Lyons' defense team earlier this year.

"I came into this case as the third senior attorney," said de Vlaming.

"Now I'm the most senior lawyer by attrition."

Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Susan Schaeffer must approve Bailey's departure from the case. She was expected to do so by next week.

Watchnight '98 at Goodwill Baptist

Special to THE CHRONICLE

Goodwill Baptist Church invites all to come out to Watchnight '98 service to be held at Goodwill Dec. 31. The service will begin at 10:30 p.m. The Rev. Philemon Samuels, senior pastor, will bring forth the message from the provocative topic "Your History Is No Match for Your Destiny."

Goodwill has a long tradition of having Watchnight services each year on New Year's Eve. With God's grace, the services have grown each year with the blessing of the Lord touching all those who have attended. The van ministry will be available to those who may need transportation to this or any other service at Goodwill. For van pickup call (336) 725-0792 or the church at (336) 764-3930.



Rev. and Mrs. Samuels

God is Making a Survivor Out of You and Me

I have been successful in some things and have even reached some high mountain peaks. But when the storms of life prevailed, I have even failed. Yet, God holds me securely, because He is making a survivor out of me.

I have lost my footing from time to time and fallen into pity and despair, but I have learned to keep on striving and never lose hope. In all these trials I'll never give up, because I know that God is making a survivor out of me.

We are tossed by life's treacherous seas and we cry out to God and say, "Lord help me if you please, I just can't take anymore." But if we would listen we would hear God say, "Hold on my child I am here, I'm making a survivor out of you."

Though the road of life is rugged and we are bowed beneath the load, we must hold fast to Jesus and keep on toiling. Why? Because I see a small patch of blue sky peeking through the clouds and God's love keeps shining through. I heard God say, "Your last days will be your best days, I'm making a survivor out of you."



Rev. Maryalice Scott

January 1-21, 1999
Spiritual Renewal Services
 Theme: Reclaiming Big for the Kingdom

Friday, January 1, 1999
 Rev. Darl L. Scott, Sr.
 History Grove A.M.E. Zion Church, Glendon, NC

Saturday, January 2, 1999
 Rev. Dwight A. Bryant
 Bread of Life Full Gospel Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Sunday, January 3, 1999
 Rev. Dr. Bernard H. Sullivan, Jr.
 St. Stephen A.M.E. Zion Church, Gastonia, NC

Monday, January 4, 1999
 Rev. Dr. Horace C. Walter, Presiding Elder,
 A.M.E. Zion Churches, Winston-Salem District

Tuesday, January 5, 1999
 Rev. Dr. James H. Sloan
 Goler Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Wednesday, January 6, 1999
 Rev. William H. Puryear
 Bethlehem A.M.E. Zion Church, Pfafftown, NC

Thursday, January 7, 1999
 Rev. Rick Owens
 Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church
 630 N. Patterson Avenue
 Winston-Salem, NC 27101
 Rev. Dr. Seth O. Lortoy, Pastor

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