# Sunday School Lesson

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we can ourselves. The call of God is a call to battle, not a summons to hide.

For some persons God is coned that God is dead. When we lives. feel we must enter a particular building to be near God, we may be saying that God is dead and the church is his tomb.

This idea is food for thought. Solomon, in his prayer of dedication for the Temple, declared: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this presently involved in his world. house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27)

#### Does Our Idea of God **Really Matter?**

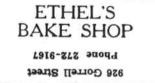
Our idea of God is important because it has a great deal to do with the way we live our lives.

If we see God as little more than conscience, we will be inclined to do that which makes us feel good inside and avoid that which makes us feel bad or uneasy. Of course, we should enjoy serving God and receive and that he is therefore concern- earth. satisfaction from that service; but if we think of God just as conscience, we can often convince ourselves that what we want to do is right. We can maintain that sincerity is enough. But the sincerity with which we may hold a particular belief is no guarantee of its truth.

God as the creator and sustainer of the universe actively ruling much of our devotion amount it need not be so. God will stay the world he has made, we will live very differently. Our lives will become less self-centered, is being said by the church? To God seriously and try to fulfill and we shall see ourselves in a put it bluntly, Do we practice his will and purpose in our lives. relationship with God.

If we put too much emphasis on "otherness," we may think of are not thinking theologically. him as so far removed from us that he takes little notice of our condition and needs. Consequent- logically is, it will amount to not help. ly, we may feel that we must nothing if we do not act theowork out our destiny with little reference to God, assigning to to respond to God either in dis- Bible teaches about God. Move him a very minor role in our lives.

introduced when we lay so much stress on God's immanence or "presentness" that we see him only as an enlarged reflection this is God's world and (2) that tivate an awareness of God in of ourselves. We may come to feel so intimate with God that we think of him as a crony or pleasant companion whom we know thoroughly.



of his majesty. On the other at all. hand, if we forget that he is always near - immanent - we tend to think of him as unrelated to life as we experience it. We must struggle to hold both For example, read verses 9-10. fined to the church. I heard a views together, for one without theologian suggest that many of the other presents a distorted us by our attitude may be agree- picture of God, and this distoring with those who have claim- tion leads to distortions in our

> Only as we have a true understanding of God can we live in a manner he can approve.

## Thinking Theologically

Thinking theologically may seem difficult, but it simply means to take God into account in our lives - to reckon seriously with the fact that God is

Many of us go about our own business, pursuing our selfish concerns (as individuals and as nations), acting as though we were quite alone and free to do as we please. Can it be that our failure to think theologically has brought us to these present difficult days? Can it be that the tured as being sad, and he must only way out of our present be sad when he contemplates dilemma is for us to find our our earth. It shows him as a way back to God and to take little weary of putting up with seriously the fact that all of life us. It shows him prepared also comes from and through him to act in judgment, to smite the ed with everything that happens in this world?

fact that for many of us God God replies: "Dear child, I fearplays little or no part in our ed that you were dead," and so scheme of things. True, we be- he "stayed His hand." lieve in the church and support cepted on Sunday radically af- that prevents our total destrucwhat we preach?

If we cannot give the right God's transcendence or answers to these questions, we

## Acting Theologically

Important as thinking theoobedience or in obedience. We than this, we will be seeking to may choose good or evil. But understand how we may apply the happiness we long for.

If we lose sight of the other-|we must live in it in accordance ness of God, we lose the sense with his will or we will not live

All of life is a dealing with God. He is inescapable. That is what the psalmist who wrote Psalms 139 said so beautifully.

The psalmist knew that God was in his world and was actively engaged in working for his good and the good of all men. Thus the psalmist was thinking and acting theological-

We do not like to talk about the fact of God's judgment, but this refusal does not remove its reality from our lives. God always comes in judgment, whether we like it or not. The world in which we live today manifests this judgment.

Our wars are the judgment of God upon our failure to hear the word of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers." Hunger stalks the earth and children starve because we seek to hoard God's

In the poem used at the beginning of the lesson God is pic-

But then the little man stands up to say: "You must not strike We must honestly face the it, God; I'm in the way." And

Over and over again the Bible it. But have we been willing to and the church tell us that it is let what we have heard and ac- not our merit but God's mercy On the other hand, if we see fect the way we live the other tion. We are, according to some six days of the week? Does not persons, headed for oblivion; but to little more than lip service? his hand if we rise from the Do our actions conform to what deadness of our living and take

#### What Can We Do About It?

We are living in a day that calls for action. But action without careful planning and clear recognition of the problem does

During this quarter's lessons logically. We have the freedom we will be learning what the However, another danger is only if we choose to follow God's these insights to our living. We will for our lives, will we find are confronted today by problems large enough to stagger the We need to recognize (1) that strongest mind. We need to cul-

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strive to become aware of his activity in the world about us.

what that will is, then we must will and purpose. at whatever cost prepare our-

our individual lives and then selves to carry out that will.

We will not always agree completely as to what precisely is In every crisis situation we God's will, and each of us will shall endeavor to discover God's have to walk by the light he has will in that particular situation. and do what he feels is God's This task will not always be will for him. But, above all, we easy, but we must make the ef- must seek to open up our lives fort. Once we have determined that God may reveal to us his

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131 S. Davie St. - Phone 272-2564 - Greensboro

bounty and keep it for ourselves.

We must live theologically.