

Session 1 – “Kids these days!”

(Student Workbook)

❖ Lesson Objectives

At the end of the session, the student will be able to:

1. *Describe and interpret a common exclamation about rights, sharing their own assumptions;*
2. *Demonstrate an understanding of the First Commandment as it relates to the main text of Joshua 24:14-24;*
3. *Interpret a significant word in the main text and summarize its use;*
4. *Describe the attitude of Joshua and the people by inferring possible responses;*
5. *Analyze a key phrase in the main text that will distinguish rights from obligations or duties;*
6. *Evaluate the peoples’ final response in light of the catechism and other passages;*
7. *Synthesize and draw conclusions about ways the life of Christ is both example and empowerment for a Christian in our society; and,*
8. *Recognize the two sections of Philippians 2:1-11, which relate firstly to our attitude and secondly to Christ’s attitude.*

❖ Setting Our Sights

In this session will take a look at the mindset that leads us to exclaim “Kids these days!” We will think about society around us and draw some conclusions about the effect our culture is having. We will explore examples from Scripture where obligations and duties are discussed. We will also look at the final words of Joshua to the Children of Israel before his death. Finally we will look at effect generations can have upon each other in light of faith being passed down from generation to generation.

❖ Getting Started

- *“Boy, when I was a kid, we had to work for what we wanted; now everything is just handed to kids!”*
 - *“Kids these days don’t understand the value of a hard day’s work!”*
 - *“Kids these days don’t understand what it means to have a work ethic!”*
1. Share a time when you, or someone you know, said something like this. Why did they say that? What was the situation? What were they thinking?
 2. What are we trying to accomplish when we say: “Kids these days!”?

❖ Digging In

By the end of the book of Joshua, the people of Israel have been set free from 400 years of slavery under God’s appointed leader Moses (Exodus 1-19), had been given the holy Law of God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20), had wandered in the desert for 40 years because of faithlessness (Numbers 13-14), had entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 1-6), and had seen victory after victory as God led His people (Joshua 6-12).

In this reading, Joshua is coming to the end of his earthly life and leadership. He has final words for the people – both old and young. He wants them to think clearly about their relationship with God,

especially as they are establishing themselves in this new land. Even as God has provided for them for close to 150 years, Joshua does not want them to become entitled, thinking that they somehow deserved all the blessings that God had given them.

1. Read Joshua 24:14-24.
 - a. Verse 14 takes us straight to the First Commandment. Write out the First Commandment here. What does it mean? (Try to remember from memory, or use the Small Catechism for help.)
 - b. In verses 14-15, mark the times when Joshua uses the word “serve” (or “served”).
 - c. Look at verse 14, how were the people to serve the Lord?
 - d. How would Joshua’s people follow the command to “throw away” (NIV) or “put away” (ESV) the other gods?
2. Look at verse 15. In light of the First Commandment, generate a list of reasons why serving the Lord might be undesirable to the people.
3. Read again verse 19 and note how strongly Joshua responds to the people. “You are not able to serve the Lord.”
 - a. Why would Joshua say this to the people? Are his words an indictment, a warning, or something else? Describe why you think so.
 - b. What are some reasons why someone would be unable to serve the Lord?
4. In verse 23, Joshua tells the people to “yield your hearts to the Lord” (NIV) or “incline your heart to the Lord” (ESV).
 - a. Read Jeremiah 31:33. What has God done to our hearts to make us aware of our sinful, self-centered inclinations?
 - b. Read Psalm 119:36 and 141:4. What are some things the people turning away from?
 - c. Why does Joshua urge the people to “yield” their hearts to God?
 - d. Give examples of how the people would “incline” their hearts to God.
5. The people respond favorably and willingly. The people respond in verse 24 saying, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” Analyze how is this promise a recommitment to the Law of God – and specifically the First Commandment.
 - a. What are the people promising here?
 - b. To what extent are the people letting go of their “rights”?
 - c. Does their promise mean that the people are letting go of their hopes and plans? Why or why not? (For help, take a look at a promise of God in Jeremiah 29:11.)

❖ Hitting Home

There is a natural, sinful tendency for each generation to accuse another of sinfulness and blame the other for problems in the world. The younger generation might take for granted the good life that they have been given. They might live thanklessly – unthankful toward God and to the previous generations. We will talk about this more in the final session.

1. How does our society contribute to, and perpetuate, this sense of thanklessness?
2. How are thanklessness and entitlement similar? How are they different?
3. Describe how thanklessness might lead to entitlement.

The confession of faith that God's people spoke every day for generations talks about the way an older generation can impact a younger generation for better or worse. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

4. Using this text, what are some specific ways that mature Christians can positively impact future generations by passing along the love of God from generation to generation? How might that look today in the Church and in our individual lives?

Even when we neglect our duty to pass along a vibrant faith for God and a fervent love for others, there is forgiveness. Even when we fall into sinfulness selfishness and entitlement, there is grace and forgiveness. Forgiveness comes through Jesus Christ, the one who laid down His life "for us and for our salvation," as we say in the Nicene Creed.

5. Read Philippians 2:1-11. The first four verses urge the people toward activity. The last seven verses identify the perfect life of Christ. Pick a verse (or a few) from this passage and share how it connects with the thoughts we have discussed today.

❖ Wrapping Up

Even though it is easy to become frustrated with the world around us, we are called to love as Jesus loved. We are called to live thankful lives to God and one another. We are called to live our lives in a God-pleasing way. We are called to holiness.

1. Instead of saying with exasperation "Kids these days!" what can we do to help guide future generations to faithfulness to God?
2. Take a few moments in quiet prayer.
 - Confess ways that you have contributed to our society's sense of entitlement;
 - thank God for His gracious forgiveness in Christ;
 - ask that God would give you the attitude of Christ; and,
 - using your list from above, pray for wisdom as you reach out to others to positively impact future generations with God's love.

❖ The Extra Mile

During the week ahead, accomplish two tasks:

1. Be aware of your own frustrations with others. Note how you interact with them, what your thoughts are about them, and how you feel about them. Jot down one particular instance where you felt frustrated, angry, or irritated, and be prepared to share it with others at the beginning of next session.
2. Be aware of when you discovered that God gave you a situation and enabled you to respond well. What happened? Who was involved? What do you hope will come from that interaction? Be prepared to share it with others next session.

Session 2 – “Wait, Am I Entitled?”

(Student Workbook)

❖ Lesson Objectives

At the end of the session, the student will be able to:

1. *Recall and make use of the parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18 to illustrate the cultural idol;*
2. *Contrast the debts owed to the Master-King and the servant in Matthew 18;*
3. *Assess the unmerciful servant in terms of rights and entitlement in Matthew 18;*
4. *Explain and distinguish between the Master-King’s mercy and his condemnation in Matthew 18;*
5. *Comprehend the terms “selfish ambition,” “conceit,” and “humility” used in Philippians 2:1-11;*
6. *Identify the cultural idol of entitlement as sin in their own lives;*
7. *Apply that identification (Objective 6) to the need of a merciful Savior; and,*
8. *Admit their own sins of the cultural idol of entitlement.*

❖ Setting Our Sights

In this session we will look at one of Jesus’ parables from the Gospel of Matthew, and consider the application in our lives. We will think about entitlement in our own lives, and ask ourselves whether we act in an entitled manner. We will identify how entitlement grows from selfish sin that lies deep in our hearts. And we will see how the forgiveness that Jesus Christ offers targets that specific sin and replaces it with His humility.

❖ Getting Started

The first lesson ended with two activities. The first activity was this: you were asked to be aware of your own frustrations with others. You were to jot down a note about a specific interaction with someone when you felt upset, frustrated, angry or irritated. Now is the time to share with the others. What happened? What were your thoughts? How did the interaction make you feel?

The second activity was similar, in that you were again asked to write down a note about an interaction with someone. But in this interaction, you were to focus on something positive. You were asked to be aware of when God gave you a situation and enabled you to respond well to someone. What happened? Who was involved? What do you hope will come from that interaction?

❖ Digging In

Often when we interact with others, it is easy to be aware of the other person’s shortcomings. Problems arise, though, when we fail to see our own shortcomings. Even worse, there are situations and times when those others have been given an advantage that we feel they did not deserve. It is easy to feel shortchanged. It is tempting to feel selfishly angry.

“I worked hard,” we might think. “And now this guy gets rewarded without putting in the effort I did?” Times like that make us feel like our hard work has been overlooked. We feel that we have been taken advantage of, and that our rights are trampled.

Let's read Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35, and then answer the questions.

3. The man in this story owed the Master-King ten thousand talents. A talent is worth about twenty years' wages.
 - a. So, in total, the man owed the Master-King about _____ years of wages!
 - b. Describe how you would have felt toward a man who owed you this much, if you were the Master-King.
 - c. Name the people who were going to be sold in payment for this man's debt.
 - d. Would the man ever have been able to pay off the debt? _____ What motivated the Master-King to make that decision?
4. The situation changes quickly, beginning in verse 26.
 - a. What three things did the man do?
 - i. He _____ on his knees.
 - ii. He _____ the Master-King to be patient.
 - iii. He _____ to pay back the debt.
 - b. Put yourself in that man's place. Share what you may have felt at that moment.
 - c. Define the word 'pity.'
 - d. Why did the Master-King have pity on the man?
5. The mood of the story changes again, beginning in verses 28.
 - a. What did the servant say when he found a fellow servant who owed him a debt? " _____ !" Even more, he begins to choke the fellow servant!
 - b. Typically, a denarius was one day's wage. So the fellow servant owed about _____ days' wages.
 - c. In verse 29, notice that this second servant does and says everything that the first servant said to the Master-King. Even though he had a right to demand payment, what response would we expect the forgiven servant to have for his fellow servant?
 - d. Why didn't the servant have pity on the fellow servant?
 - e. In your own words, contrast the forgiven debt owed to the Master-King and the debt owed to the fellow servant.
6. In verses 31-34, the Master-King finds out about the exchange.
 - a. What emotion does the Master-King have when he hears what has happened? Why do you think he had that reaction?
 - b. The Master-King identifies the servant as a wicked man. What sin was committed?
 - c. Why is the Master-King merciful in the first part of the story but condemns the man in the second part of the story? Has the Master-King changed? What has changed?

❖ Hitting Home

Last session, we defined the word 'entitled' as "thinking that we somehow deserve all the blessings that God has given." That's a fine start, but there is more. We want to expand our understanding of this sin and the effect it has upon us.

Let's read Philippians 2:1-11.

7. Look carefully at verse 3. What two sins did Paul warn the people to avoid?

8. When does ambition become selfish ambition?
9. Name a way that you might suffer from vain conceit.

Using Paul's warnings, our definition of the word "entitled" might expand to this: "Thinking that we deserve all the blessings that God has given *because we believe we are better or more worthy than others.*"

10. Assess your life. What are ways that entitlement creeps into your attitude and behavior?
11. In verse 5, Paul says that our attitude should be Christ-like. Apply verses 6-7 and identify the way Christ *could have* felt entitled but did not, and what He did instead.

❖ Wrapping Up

Our Savior Jesus Christ was humble to the point of death. And God the Father mercifully gives good gifts to all believers. This is good news for each one of us! Next session, we will explore the gifts that God gives to us, "purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy!"

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my sense, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.
(Small Catechism, Explanation of the First Article of the Creed)

Take a few moments with a partner and, using the quote from the Small Catechism above, identify at least five different gifts that God gives us, "without any merit or worthiness" in us.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

❖ The Extra Mile

During the week ahead:

- a. Ask the Lord to keep the parable of the Unmerciful Servant in your mind and heart. Be aware of when you feel your rights being trampled and find an opportunity to humbly show mercy and forgiveness.
- b. Consider and identify some rights that you have as a citizen. Can those be taken away from you? When and why might we choose to lay down our rights from time to time? Be prepared to share your thoughts next session.

Session 3 – “But I Have Rights!

(Student Workbook)

❖ Lesson Objectives

At the end of the session, the student will be able to:

1. *Generate a list of 2-3 rights that have been granted to citizens of the United States;*
2. *Recall Paul’s citizenship right that was transgressed in Acts 16:25-40;*
3. *Discuss the appropriate use of our civil rights that is not sinful, but proper;*
4. *Identify the believer’s rights that are stated in Revelation 2:7 and 3:21;*
5. *Name two of the rights and honor that God the Father gave the Son described in Philippians 2:1-11; and,*
6. *Summarize the use of rights and honor that God gives to Christians through His Son.*

❖ Setting Our Sights

In the second session we discussed the sinful way we sometimes use rights to demand that we get our own way. Although there are times that we misuse those God-given rights, rights are (and have always been) meant to be used to God’s glory. In this session we will talk about rights we have been given in our country and rights we have been given in God’s heavenly kingdom. We will be discussing appropriate uses of our rights. And we will also look for some examples of the rights that God has given, first to Jesus and, now to us as Christians.

❖ Getting Started

Each Fourth of July we thank God for the freedoms and rights which are afforded us as citizens of the United States by God’s gracious Hand. These rights – and others like them – are liberties and freedoms granted to us by the Constitution. They are sometimes called “inalienable rights,” which means they cannot be nullified or taken away from us. Citizenship gives us those rights.

The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution are known as “The Bill of Rights.” Together with the other students in the class, try to name 2-3 (or as many as you can) of the rights that you can remember from the Bill of Rights.

We are also citizens of God’s Kingdom. In our lives as Christians we are given inalienable rights by God Himself. They are different than the ones in the American Constitution, but they are still ours as citizens of God’s Kingdom. No one can take them away and they come to us through faith in Jesus Christ. And those rights are to be used to glorify God and the expansion of His kingdom.

❖ Digging In

St. Paul lived in a similar way to us. Paul was a forgiven child of God who had received great rights as an Apostle. Paul was also a citizen of the Roman empire, which gave him certain rights afforded to Roman citizens. But his rights were sometimes jeopardized, and Paul was forced to respond in defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

12. Let's read Acts 16:16-24.

Paul and Silas had been thrown into prison because they had exorcised a demon from a young slave girl. Normally this would not have been a problem, except that the slave girl was making a lot of money for her owner by predicting the future!

- a. Look again closely at verses 20-21. Did the mob know that Paul was a Roman citizen? In fact, what was the only citizenship they recognized in Paul?
- b. Describe what the mob did to Paul and Silas out of anger toward them.

13. But God did not leave them abandoned. He performed a great miracle! Read Acts 16:25-34.

- a. Describe the miracle that God performed for Paul, Silas, and all the prisoners.
- b. Infer why the jailer was about to kill himself when he saw the prison doors open.
- c. Paul and Silas quickly turned this imprisonment as an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a desperate man – and not just the man himself. Who, in verses 33-34, does Scripture say was saved that night?

14. The sun rose and with morning came a declaration of freedom. Read Acts 16:35-40.

- a. Look at verse 37. In what way and why did the magistrates want Paul and Silas to leave?
- b. But Paul revealed and pressed his Roman citizenship. Why do you think the magistrates were alarmed when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens? What had they done to Paul and Silas that shouldn't have happened?
- c. Was it sinful for Paul to press his rights as a Roman citizen? _____ So, what did pressing his rights accomplish for Paul and the ministry of the Gospel?

As you have discussed, citizenship in the United States comes with certain rights that, when expressed properly, are not sinful but appropriate.

In addition to these earthly rights, God grants each Christian with spiritual rights. Let's look at two examples. Read each of these Bible passages and underline the spiritual right that God grants.

Revelation 2:7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Revelation 3:21: The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

15. Take a minute and explain how these spiritual rights might be encouraging to you in your daily life.

❖ Hitting Home

Last session, we expanded our definition of the word 'entitled' to this: "thinking that we somehow deserve all the blessings that God has given because we believe that we are better or more worthy than others." When our motivation is based in a mistaken belief that we are somehow better than others, we are acting out of selfishness, not selflessness, and is ungodly.

Let's read Philippians 2:1-11 once again.

16. Look carefully at verses 7-8. Summarize the rights that Jesus Christ laid down when he became man.

17. Examine also verse 9. Name two of the rights that the Father gave back to Christ after his death and resurrection.
18. Look at verses 10-11. Explain the results that will happen one day when Christ comes again in rightful glory.
19. Now go back and read Paul's word to the Philippians in verses 1-4. God has given us earthly and spiritual rights. But they are not to be used solely for ourselves. Write a one- or two-sentence summary of what Paul is encouraging the people to do with their God-given rights.

❖ Wrapping Up

A cinquain is a short poem that does not need to rhyme. In a cinquain there is one word on the first line, two words on the second line, three words on the third line, four words on the fourth line, and then one word to end or summarize the poem.

Take a moment now and read the following two cinquains out loud. Notice in the first that it is centered in our earthly rights, and the second is centered in our spiritual, heavenly rights.

Rights

Freedoms Gifts

Exercised In Love

Harmony Humility Fellowship Peace

Responsibility

Rights

Through Christ

Exercised in eternity

Hopeful Renewing Encouraging Assuring

Salvation

❖ The Extra Mile

During the week ahead: Go back again to the two cinquains and prayerfully read through them, giving thanks to God for the rights He has given you in this life and the life to come.

Session 4 – “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?”

(Student Workbook)

❖ Lesson Objectives

At the end of the session, the student will be able to:

1. *Identify the cultural idol as exemplified in Cain in Genesis 4:1-16 (Knowledge);*
2. *Express a reason why Cain asked that question (Comprehension);*
3. *Defend God’s expectation that we are our “brother’s keeper” (Comprehension);*
4. *Construct a real-life example of our Christian obligation to each other (Synthesis);*
5. *Compose a confession of sins and prayer that addresses Entitlement (Synthesis);*
6. *Summarize the applications of Philippians 2:1-11 as biblical duty and Gospel hope (Evaluation).*

❖ Setting Our Sights

In this last session we will be drawing together many of the ideas that we have explored in the first three sessions. We will consider our attitudes toward God and others. We will think through our God-given duties and how they are shaped by the relationships that we have. We will identify the idol of entitlement in our lives and ask the Lord for forgiveness in Christ. And we will be using Scripture and the Catechism to construct a real-life example of our Christian obligation to others and ask God to help us live toward the goal of imitating Christ.

❖ Getting Started

Parent: “You may play outside, but I want you to watch your little sister.”

Child: “But I want to go across the street to my friend’s house.”

Parent: “No. I want you to follow my rule. Stay in the front yard and watch your sister.”

Child: “But why?”

Parent: “Because I said so. It is for your own safety and for hers.”

Child: “You are always telling me what to do and what not to do!”

Parent: “My rules are for your good and for your sister’s safety. It is because I love you that I give you rules.”

In our sinful nature, no one likes to be told what to do. We didn’t like it as a child and we certainly don’t like it as an adult. Perhaps that is why one of the most difficult words in Scripture is the word “OBEY.” However, often there are good reasons why we should “obey” what someone says, even when we don’t like it or understand. This is especially true of what God says.

1. Give an example from your own life when obedience to a rule was beneficial to you, even though you didn’t understand it at the time.

❖ Digging In

Obedience is a difficult habit to learn. But it is easy to break. In the first family, Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Each son made his own offering to the Lord. Abel’s was accepted; Cain’s was

rejected. This made Cain bitterly angry. He did not protect or love his brother, rather he killed his brother because of his anger. Let's read Genesis 4:8-10.

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."

2. In the first part of verse 9, the Lord asked Cain a question, "Where is your brother Abel?" Did God know where Abel was? _____ Then analyze and answer the question: What was God's purpose in asking?
3. In the second part of verse 9, Cain responded to the Lord with a question of his own, "Am I my brother's keeper?"
 - a. Rephrase Cain's question.
 - b. What was Cain trying to accomplish with this question?
4. In verse 10, The Lord asks Cain, "What have you done?" What was God's purpose in asking this question?
5. Cain was angry and felt justified in his anger. He felt mistreated. He did not want to care for his brother. But God expected Cain to love his brother, not harm him. God expected Cain to "be his brother's keeper." Defend that expectation by answering the following questions:
 - a. What does obedience to God's expectation accomplish?
 - b. What does obedience to God's expectation prevent from happening?

St. Paul talks about the duty and obligation to love one another too. In Colossians 3:18-4:1, he lists out the duties of Christians as they interact with each other. Read the verses and fill in the blanks for the people he is addressing.

In verse 18, he addresses _____;

In verse 19, he addresses _____;

In verse 20, he addresses _____;

In verse 21, he addresses _____; (keep in mind that this word implies BOTH parents)

In verse 22-25, he addresses _____; and,

In verse 4:1, he addresses _____.

6. Choose one of those categories that applies to you; then write out a real-life way, with God's help, you can fulfill this duty in your daily life.

❖ Hitting Home

With God's help, we can identify and define Entitlement as: "Thinking that we deserve all the blessings that God has given because we believe we are better or more worthy than others, and we would rather care for ourselves than for others."

In that case, Entitlement is all around us and in us! Though it is easily seen in others, because of our sinfulness, it is more difficult to identify and accept in our own lives. Once we do, though, we clearly see our need for a Savior, the forgiveness of sins He gives, and the example He sets for our lives.

We wrestle daily with the sinful desire to shirk the responsibility, obligation, and duty to love and care for others. We might even use the freedoms that God has given to us to our own advantage rather than for the good of others. But, the duties and obligations given to us ought to be fulfilled for God's glory and for the benefit of others.

So, let's look one more time at God's Word from Philippians 2:1-11. As we have done in the past sessions, we see not only our duties, but also the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Read those verses and take five minutes to answer the next two questions.

7. *In two or three sentences, summarize how Philippians 2:1-4 shows us our biblical duty to fight against entitlement.*

8. *In two or three sentences, summarize how Philippians 2:5-11 shows us our Gospel hope in Christ Jesus.*

❖ Wrapping Up

Many times, our sinfulness leads us to be more interested in fighting for our rights than in fulfilling our God-given duties or obligations of love. We desire our own well-being rather than the well-being of others. We identify sinfulness in others but are reluctant or unwilling to see it in ourselves. We look for loopholes in God's commands, rather than willingly fulfilling what He says.

But Jesus gives the perfect summary to our entire Bible study:

Jesus said in Luke 17:10, "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

9. Using those verses, compose a devotional confession of sin that addresses your struggles with entitlement. After confessing the sin and asking for forgiveness, be sure to ask for God's help to live in a way that reflects Jesus' humility. You can use your answers in question 6 above.

❖ The Extra Mile

As we live our lives in such a way to fulfill this goal, we return again and again to our merciful God. During the week ahead: Go back again to the confession of sin that you wrote in this session. Prayerfully read through it. Then, finish with this prayer:

“Most merciful Father, our sins make us unworthy to ask anything of you. For the sake of your dear Son, do not condemn us for our sins, but hear our cries for mercy and forgive us our trespasses. Enlivened by your forgiveness, we, too, pledge to sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.” (Small Catechism, CPH 2017, p268)

Session One: “Kids these days!”

(Teacher Notes)

Setting Our Sights (about 2 minutes)

Welcome everyone warmly. Distribute a pen/pencil and copy of the Student Guide for this session to each person. Let them know that you will have a copy of each session for them each week, rather than giving them everything all at once. Make that everyone has access to a Bible as well, as there are passages to look up during the session.

At this first session, verify that everyone knows each other by name. If there are some who are unknown or unfamiliar, take a few moments and allow everyone to introduce themselves.

Then read the paragraph under “Setting Our Sights.” Then move immediately into the section “Getting Started.”

Getting Started (about 8 minutes)

Choose someone from the group to read the quotations:

- **“Boy, when I was a kid, we had to work for what we wanted; now everything is just handed to kids!”**
- **“Kids these days don’t understand the value of a hard day’s work!”**
- **“Kids these days don’t understand what it means to have a work ethic!”**

Read through the following questions, and give the group an opportunity to respond. This is simply a time of sharing; there are no “right” or “wrong” responses.

1. Share a time when you, or someone you know, said something like this. Why did they say that? What was the situation? What were they thinking?

Summarize the conversation by reading through the next question, and asking for responses.

2. What are we trying to accomplish when we say: “Kids these days!”?

Digging In (about 35 minutes)

Read the following introduction to the group.

By the end of the book of Joshua, the people of Israel have been set free from 400 years of slavery under God’s appointed leader Moses (Exodus 1-19), had been given the holy Law of God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20), had wandered in the desert for 40 years because of faithlessness (Numbers 13-14), had entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 1-6), and had seen victory after victory as God led His people (Joshua 6-12).

In this reading, Joshua is coming to the end of his earthly life and leadership. He has final words for the people – both old and young. He wants them to think clearly about their relationship with God, especially as they are establishing themselves in this new land. Even as God has provided for them for close to 150 years, Joshua does not want them to become entitled, thinking that they somehow deserved all the blessings that God had given them.

1. Read Joshua 24:14-24.
 - a. Verse 14 takes us straight to the First Commandment. Write out the First Commandment here. What does it mean? (Try to remember from memory, or use the Small Catechism for help.)

You shall have no other gods before me.
We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.
 - b. In verses 14-15, mark the times when Joshua uses the word “serve” (or “served”).
The number will vary depending on version of the Bible used.
NIV has seven; ESV has six.
 - c. Look at verse 14, how were the people to serve the Lord?
“In sincerity and truth...put away the idols your fathers served.”
 - d. How would Joshua’s people follow the command to “throw away” (NIV) or “put away” (ESV) the other gods?
They were to literally throw away and discard any physical idols or statues. They would promise to follow God and serve Him only. More importantly, they were to live out the First Commandment in all they did and said.
2. Look at verse 15. In light of the First Commandment, generate a list of reasons why serving the Lord might be undesirable to the people.

Perhaps they felt that the false gods would provide for them better than the true God.
Perhaps they were frightened that God would not follow through on His promise.
Perhaps they felt guilty and did not feel worthy of God’s attention. Perhaps they no longer really saw God as the provider, and looked to their own accomplishments.
Perhaps they were ‘hedging’ their bets and keeping other beliefs, just in case.
3. Read again verse 19 and note how strongly Joshua responds to the people. “You are not able to serve the Lord.”
 - a. Why would Joshua say this to the people? Are his words an indictment, a warning, or something else? Describe why you think so.
His words were both indictment of the past, and warning for the future. Joshua had been with the people long enough to know that they were likely to become fickle and turn away, as they had in the past.
 - b. What are some reasons why someone would be unable to serve the Lord?
There can only be one priority in a person’s life. Clinging to false gods, and prioritizing your life around those false gods, means that a person would not be able to serve the Lord faithfully. Jesus Himself said, “A man cannot have two masters...You cannot serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24).
4. In verse 23, Joshua tells the people to “yield your hearts to the Lord” (NIV) or “incline your heart to the Lord” (ESV).
 - a. Read Jeremiah 31:33. What has God done to our hearts to make us aware of our sinful, self-centered inclinations?
God established the new covenant with His people and has written His law upon humanity’s hearts.
 - b. Read Psalm 119:36 and 141:4. What are some things the people turning away from?
Selfishness, pride, arrogance, evilness, wicked deeds, temptations, and the like.
 - c. Why does Joshua urge the people to “yield” their hearts to God?

Joshua knows that a person must obey God and follow Him only. After years of leading the people, Joshua knows that there cannot be a middle path where the people can follow both their own sinfulness and God. They must choose God, and “yield” their sinful hearts to Him.

- d. Give examples of how the people would “incline” their hearts to God.
Some examples might be: worshiping ONLY God, and not a pantheon of gods; remembering that God is the one who gave them all the blessings; teaching their children about God’s blessings and favor; worshiping God with thankfulness and sincerity; remember to care for others in response to God’s care of them.
5. The people respond favorably and willingly. The people respond in verse 24 saying, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” Analyze how is this promise a recommitment to the Law of God – and specifically the First Commandment.
 - a. What are the people promising here?
They are promising to do EXACTLY what God says, and to do ALL of what God says. They are promising to follow the First Commandment: to fear, love, and trust in God above all things.
 - b. To what extent are the people letting go of their “rights”?
Joshua has laid this out before the people as a choice. The people had the “right” to choose for themselves. They were making the choice to recommit to the leadership of God, and to His ownership of them as His people. They were making the choice to follow the holy law of God in their relationship to Him and in their care and love of each other.
 - c. Does their promise mean that the people are letting go of their hopes and plans? Why or why not? (For help, take a look at a promise of God in Jeremiah 29:11.)
Only insofar as their hopes and plans are in contrast to God’s plans for them. In making that choice, they are recognizing that God has only their good in mind and desires them to be in relationship with Him.

Hitting Home (about 20 minutes)

Have someone read the following paragraph out loud.

There is a natural, sinful tendency for each generation to accuse another of sinfulness and blame the other for problems in the world. The younger generation might take for granted the good life that they have been given. They might live thanklessly – unthankful toward God and to the previous generations. We will talk about this more in the final session.

1. How does our society contribute to, and perpetuate, this sense of thanklessness?
Some responses might include the way entertainment makes casual fun at thanklessness in programs and movies; the growing ‘selfie’ culture that is fixated on me, myself, and I; the enormous effect that social media and its vitriol on people’s lives.
2. How are thanklessness and entitlement similar? How are they different?
They are similar but not the same. (Think in terms of sinning in things we have done, and sinning in things we have failed to do.) They are both centered in the individual and do not care about anyone else. Thanklessness might lead to a sense of entitlement over time. Both refuse to acknowledge indebtedness. Thanklessness might be caused by

forgetfulness, but it might be also be intentional; whereas entitlement is always intentional.

3. Describe how thanklessness might lead to entitlement.

If one does not recognize the value of a gift, it might lead to thanklessness.

Thanklessness does not acknowledge the love of the giver. Not acknowledging the generosity of the giver might lead to a sense of entitlement.

The confession of faith that God's people spoke every day for generations talks about the way an older generations can impact a younger generation for better or worse. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

4. Using this text, what are some specific ways that mature Christians can positively impact future generations by passing along the love of God from generation to generation? How might that look today in the Church and in our individual lives?

Help the participants generate ideas that can be carried out in their individual lives, as well as their corporate life together in the congregation. Write these out on a white board, if one is present.

Even when we neglect our duty to pass along a vibrant faith for God and a fervent love for others, there is forgiveness. Even when we fall into sinfulness selfishness and entitlement, there is grace and forgiveness. Forgiveness comes through Jesus Christ, the one who laid down His life "for us and for our salvation," as we say in the Nicene Creed.

5. Read Philippians 2:1-11. The first four verses urge the people toward activity. The last seven verses identify the perfect life of Christ. Pick a verse (or a few) from this passage and share how it connects with the thoughts we have discussed today.

Help the students connect with the verses that focus on Christ AND on the verses that encourage them to live a Christian life.

Wrapping Up (5 minutes)

Read the following section and then give the participants time to write out their ideas and for private prayer.

Even though it is easy to become frustrated with the world around us, we are called to love as Jesus loved. We are called to live thankful lives to God and one another. We are called to live our lives in a God-pleasing way. We are called to holiness.

1. Instead of saying with exasperation "Kids these days!" what can we do to help guide future generations to faithfulness to God?
2. Take a few moments in quiet prayer.
 - Confess ways that you have contributed to our society's sense of entitlement;
 - thank God for His gracious forgiveness in Christ;
 - ask that God would give you the attitude of Christ; and,

- using your list from above, pray for wisdom as you reach out to others to positively impact future generations with God's love.

The Extra Mile

Before everyone departs thank them for attending and for their participation. Remind them of the time and location of the next class. Suggest that they use the coming week to accomplish the activity in this section, explaining that it will be helpful to them when they meet again for session two.

During the week ahead, accomplish two tasks:

1. Be aware of your own frustrations with others. Note how you interact with them, what your thoughts are about them, and how you feel about them. Jot down one particular instance where you felt frustrated, angry, or irritated, and be prepared to share it with others at the beginning of next session.
2. Be aware of when you discovered that God gave you a situation and enabled you to respond well. What happened? Who was involved? What do you hope will come from that interaction? Be prepared to share it with others next session.

Session Two: “Wait, Am I Entitled?”

(Teacher Notes)

❖ Setting Our Sights (about 1 minute)

Welcome everyone warmly. Distribute a pen/pencil and copy of the Student Guide for this session to each person. Let them know that you will have a copy of each session for them each week, rather than giving them everything all at once. Make that everyone has access to a Bible as well, as there are passages to look up during the session.

Then read the paragraph under “Setting Our Sights.” Then move immediately into the section “Getting Started.”

❖ Getting Started (about 5 minutes total)

Choose two people from the group to share their experiences. Remind the participants that there is no need to critique or comment on the stories. This activity is simply about listening and sharing.

❖ Digging In (about 25 minutes total)

Read the introduction and the Bible story to the group. Then answer the questions.

6. (About four minutes)
 - a. So, in total, the man owed the Master-King about 200,000 years of wages!
 - b. Answers might include feeling words like flabbergasted, angry, irate.
 - c. The Servant’s wife and children
 - d. Would the man ever have been able to pay off the debt? NO The Master-King had the right to make that decision; he also had a duty to guard against others taking advantage of him.
7. (About six minutes)
 - a.
 - i. He FELL on his knees.
 - ii. He BEGGED the Master-King to be patient.
 - iii. He PROMISED to pay back the debt.
 - b. Answers might include words like worried, scared, at wit’s end, inconsolable, desperate.
 - c. To have mercy on someone out of compassion for that person.
 - d. Emphasize to the class that it was because of the Master-King’s compassion that he had pity.
8. (About seven minutes)
 - a. “PAY WHAT YOU OWE!”
 - b. Typically, a denarius was one day’s wage. So the fellow servant owed about 100 days’ wages.
 - c. We would have expected that, as the Master-King had pity and compassion on the servant, then that servant would have pity and compassion on his fellow servant for a lesser debt.

- d. *Emphasize that the servant, while forgiven, did not yet have an attitude of compassion or pity. He still felt he was owed what was rightfully his.*
 - e. *The Master-King was merciful and gracious; the servant was hard-hearted and self-centered. The Master-King had pity; the servant felt entitled.*
9. *(About eight minutes)*
- a. *He was enraged. His mercy, compassion, and pity should have changed the servant and made him merciful, compassionate, and pitiful. But it did not have an effect on that servant.*
 - b. *The servant was selfish, self-righteous, and covetous.*
 - c. *The Master-King has not changed, but his attitude toward the servant did. The Master-King enjoyed having mercy, but was rightfully displeased when that mercy was not passed along to another servant. We would have expected that the servant had changed, but his hard and sinful heart had not yet been changed by the Master-King's compassion.*

❖ Hitting Home (about 8 minutes total)

Have someone read the paragraph and the Bible reading.

Let's read Philippians 2:1-11.

- 10. *Selfish ambition and vain conceit*
- 11. *Ambition, in and of itself, is not sinful; it becomes sinful when it is without humility and mercy for those around us.*
- 12. *Answers may include in our professional lives, in academics, in sports, in relationships, on social media.*

Have someone read the paragraph.

- 13. *Answers may include when we feel passionately about something, or when we are single-minded; in areas of our lives where we feel defensive; in areas where we feel insecure.*
- 14. *Jesus Christ COULD HAVE considered His divinity His RIGHT, and left us in our sins. BUT He chose to humble Himself and take our sins to the cross and die.*

❖ Wrapping Up (about 5 minutes total)

Split people up into groups of two. Work with someone if there is an odd number of students.

Answers might include:

- 1. *Clothing and shoes*
- 2. *House and home*
- 3. *Family and friends*
- 4. *Voting privileges and freedom*
- 5. *Our jobs or money*

❖ The Extra Mile (about 1 minute)

Before everyone departs thank them for attending and for their participation. Remind them of the time and location of the next class. Suggest that they use the coming week to accomplish the activity in this section, explaining that it will be helpful to them when they meet again for session two.

Session Three: “But I have rights!”

(Teacher Notes)

❖ Setting Our Sights (about 2 minutes)

Welcome everyone warmly. Distribute a pen/pencil and copy of the Student Guide for this session to each person. Remind them that you will have a copy of each session for them each week, rather than giving them everything all at once. Make that everyone has access to a Bible as well, as there are passages to look up during the session.

Then read the paragraph under “Setting Our Sights” and move immediately into the section “Getting Started.”

❖ Getting Started (about 7 minutes total)

Choose a person from the group to read the first two paragraphs. Then take a few minutes to lead the class in generating and recalling as many of the rights as people can remember. If there is white board, you can write them down. For your help, officially the Bill of Rights lists these:

- *Freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and of assembly*
- *Right to petition the government*
- *Right to bear arms*
- *Protection against housing soldiers in civilian homes*
- *Protection against unreasonable search and seizure*
- *Protection against the issuing of warrants without probable cause*
- *Protection against: trial without indictment, double jeopardy, self-incrimination, property seizure*
- *Right to a speedy trial*
- *Right to be informed of charges*
- *Right to be confronted by witnesses*
- *Right to call witnesses*
- *Right to a legal counsel*
- *Right to trial by jury*
- *Protection against: excessive bail, excessive fines, cruel and unusual punishment*
- *Rights granted in the Constitution shall not infringe on other rights.*
- *Powers not granted to the Federal Government in the Constitution belong to the states or the people.*

Read the last paragraph and move immediately into Digging In.

❖ Digging In (about 20 minutes total)

Read the paragraph and then move into the questions.

1. *(about 5 minutes)*
 - c. *The mob did not know that Paul was a Roman citizen. They assumed he was simply an Israelite, a citizen of the Jewish people.*
 - d. *They seized Paul and Silas, dragged them to the marketplace, and put them on trial.*
2. *(about 4 minutes)*

- a. *In verses 25-26, we find out that God gave them the gift of joy in their imprisonment, followed by an earthquake, and miraculous releasing of the prison doors and their chains.*
 - b. *If the prisoners had escaped, the guard would have been held accountable and might have lost his life.*
 - c. *According to the verses, the jailer and his whole household were baptized.*
3. (About 6 minutes)
- a. *The magistrates wanted to sweep the imprisonment under the rug, and for Paul and Silas to leave quietly. They wanted it not to be talked about.*
 - b. *They had held Paul and Silas prisoner after false evidence was used. They had also imprisoned Roman citizens without a trial, which – like today – was illegal. They would have been held accountable for the horrible way Paul and Silas were treated.*
 - c. *No. Pressing for his rights allowed Paul to keep moving freely through the country while on his missionary journey. It also brought attention to a broken system where people were falsely and wrongfully imprisoned.*

Read the paragraphs and complete the activities. (About 2 minutes)

Revelation 2:7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Revelation 3:21: The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

4. (About 3 minutes)
- While answers might vary, some answers might include that these promises show us that there are spiritual rights and gifts given, in addition to our earthly rights. These promises lift us out of our personal problems and worries and remind us of our heavenly blessings. These promises show that God will not leave us defeated but give a glimpse of the victory that is waiting for us because of Christ Jesus.*

❖ Hitting Home (about 13 minutes total)

Have a class member read the paragraph and Bible reading.

- 5. *Christ laid down His rights as the Son of God, humbling himself, and became a servant. He laid down His rights as God, and became a human subject to death, a gruesome, humiliating death.*
- 6. *The Father gave back His right of exaltation and His right of rank or office associated with His divinity.*
- 7. *When Christ comes again in glory to judge both the living and the dead, worship and honor and glory will be rightfully given to Him. People will be rightly humbled in His presence. People will rightly confess that He is the Savior.*
- 8. *While answers will vary, be on the lookout for the idea that we are to use our rights for the good of others, in service to one another. We are to use our rights to bring harmony, not*

division. We are to use our rights for the building up of community, rather than our own self gain.

❖ Wrapping Up (about 4 minutes total)

Have a class member read through the paragraphs, and then one or two others read the cinquains. Prepare them for this exercise by telling them it will be a summary of the lesson today, and a closing meditation.

❖ The Extra Mile (about 1 minute)

Before everyone departs, read the paragraph and thank them for attending and for their participation. Remind them of the time and location of the next class.

Session Four: “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?”

(Teacher Notes)

❖ Setting Our Sights (about 1 minute)

Welcome everyone warmly. Distribute a pen/pencil and copy of the Student Guide for this session to each person. Make that everyone has access to a Bible as well, as there are passages to look up during the session.

Then read the paragraph under “Setting Our Sights” and move immediately into the section “Getting Started.”

❖ Getting Started (about 4 minutes total)

Choose two people from the group to read the dialogue. Then read out loud the paragraph that follows. Choose one person to share a story.

❖ Digging In (about 20 minutes total)

Read the paragraph and the Scripture reading, then move into the questions.

2. (About 2 minutes) Did God know where Abel was? YES God was confronting Cain with Cain’s sin.
3. (About 4 minutes)
 - i. *Do I really have to do what you tell me to do, God? I don’t want to care for others, I don’t want to do what God is asking me.*
 - ii. *He was trying to find a way out of his obligation and duty to love his brother.*
4. (About 2 minutes) God was forcing Cain to admit and confess his sin.
5. (About 7 minutes)
 - b. *Obedience accomplishes God’s will for our good and for the good of others. Obedience fulfills the duties of the great commandments to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourself.*
 - c. *Obedience cares for the needs of others and prevents undue harm from happening to others. God uses us to protect our neighbor (as we learn in the 5th-10th commandments).*

Read through the paragraph then help the group fill in the blanks (About 3 minutes).

In verse 18, he addresses WIVES;

In verse 19, he addresses HUSBANDS;

In verse 20, he addresses CHILDREN;

In verse 21, he addresses PARENTS; (keep in mind that this word implies BOTH parents)

In verse 22-25, he addresses BONDSERVANTS (WORKERS); and,

In verse 4:1, he addresses MASTERS (BOSSSES/EMPLOYERS).

6. (About 2 minutes) Answers will vary because of personal applications, but two examples might be: I will love my wife each and every day by giving her compliments rather than instructions; I will be a better employee by working faithfully, not begrudgingly, and not take more breaks than I am given.

❖ Hitting Home (about 15 minutes total)

Have a class member read the paragraph and Bible reading. At the end, have a participant share their thoughts (about 5 minutes).

7. (About 5 minutes) We are to lay down our lives for others in humility and love. We are to put aside our own desires and focus on the needs of others. We should consider others higher than we consider ourselves. We should seek unity and harmony rather than our own self-interests.
8. (About 5 minutes) Christ set aside the glory of heaven to become human so that He could die on the cross for our sins. He won forgiveness and set the perfect example by fulfilling His duties and obligations from the Father. And all He did was to the Father's glory.

❖ Wrapping Up (about 5 minutes total)

Have a class member read through the paragraphs, and the Bible passage. Read through the exercise and give them time to compose. **Important note: if there is not enough time to finish, this can be finished later, on their own too!**

9. Example: Heavenly Father, I confess that I have not been humble or obedient as You desire. I confess that I struggle with You and with others over my duties to love and care for them. Too often, I would rather care for myself and my own good, than for others. Forgive me for when I am acting entitled. Help me, by Your Holy Spirit, to do as Jesus says, and simply complete my duty as you would have me do. Hear me for Jesus' sake. Amen.

❖ The Extra Mile (about 1 minute)

Before everyone departs, remind the participants that they can use the week ahead to finish up any unfinished thoughts from this lesson. Read the paragraph and prayer. Thank them for attending and for their participation.