

KINGDOM. LESSON 7

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God’s kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> JOSHUA 1, 6 and JUDGES 2, 7
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet time with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Joshua 1, 6, Judges 2 and 7). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN ROMANS]</i> (1) ROMANS 1:16
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Review two by two.

(1) Romans 1:16. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[THE PARABLES OF JESUS]</i> THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT
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“The parable of the weeds among the wheat” in Matthew 13:24-30,36-43 is a parable about TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN GOD’S KINGDOM.

“A parable” is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is a true-to-life story or illustration designed to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used the commonplace and the events of everyday to illumine the mysteries of the kingdom of God and to confront people with the reality of their situation and their need for renewal.

We will study this parable by using the six guidelines for studying parables (See manual 9, supplement 1).

Read Matthew 13:24-30,36-43.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Introduce. The parable is told in figurative language and the spiritual meaning of the parable is based on that. Therefore we will first study the words and the cultural and historical facts of the background of the story.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

The sower sowing seed on a field. Everywhere in the world, people understand how seed is sown on a field with a view to a harvest later. What nobody really expects is that an enemy would be so mean as to sow the seeds of weeds among the wheat! That is why the servants are so surprised to discover that there were very many weeds springing up among the wheat!

The weeds. Botanists tell us that this kind of weed is called by the technical term of “*lolium temulentum*”. It is an obnoxious weed, which in its earlier stage of growth closely resembles wheat. During the early stages of growth, both the weeds and the wheat are still in the blade and *they resemble one another so closely that it is hard to distinguish between them*. Because the workers cannot differentiate between what is the wheat and what are the weeds, the owner commands them *not to go and pull up the weeds*, lest they pull up the wheat together with the weeds. The weeds moreover host a fungus that is poisonous both to man and beast. Therefore, the work of the enemy is a contemptible crime.

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Introduce. The context of “the story” of the parable may consist of “the setting” and “the explanation or application” of the parable. The setting of the parable may state the *occasion* for telling the parable, or describe *the circumstances* at the time of telling the parable. The setting is usually found *before* the story of the parable and the explanation or application is usually found *after* the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of this parable?

Notes.

(1) The setting of this parable is contained in Matthew chapter 13.

Jesus teaches eight parables in Matthew chapter 13: the parables of the sower, the weeds among the wheat, the mustard seed, the yeast, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great value, the dragnet and the householder. All eight parables deal with God's kingdom and each parable emphasises another aspect of God's kingdom.

Moreover, there is a close connection between the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds among the wheat. They were probably told to the crowd in close connection with each other and afterwards explained by Jesus to his disciples only.

(2) The story of the parable is contained in Matthew 13:24-30.

(3) The explanation or application of the parable is contained in Matthew 13:36-43.

See point 3: the relevant details of the parable. See point 6: a summary of the main teachings of the parable.

Explanation of the term "the Son of Man". During the time of Jesus on earth, the term "the Son of Man" was not the current designation for the Messiah among the Jews. The term originated in Daniel 7:13-14, which says, "There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven." He received from God the Father the authority, glory and sovereign power to establish God's kingdom on earth. In that prophetic vision, all peoples, nations and people of every language had to worship him. His kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom that would not pass away and that would never be destroyed, like happens to other kingdoms on earth. Jesus adopted this Old Testament term for the Messiah to designate himself. The term "Son of Man" is always used in the New Testament of Jesus Christ only and indicates both his state of humiliation and his state of exaltation.

The humiliation of Jesus. The New Testament teaches that "the Son of Man" had no permanent abode on earth (Matthew 8:20). He was going to be subjected to bitter suffering (Matthew 17:12). He would be betrayed, put to death and buried (Matthew 26:24; 12:40). But even during his humiliation, the Son of Man was definitely not just an ordinary man. He was *the Lord* of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). He had the *authority* to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). He came into this world with *a definite purpose*, namely to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many people (Matthew 20:28) and he came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

The exaltation of Jesus. The New Testament teaches that "the Son of Man" will rise again from the dead (Matthew 17:9). In his human nature, he would leave the earth and return to his Father in heaven, accompanied by glory and many angels (Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 16:27). He will sit on the throne of his glory as the Judge of all people (Matthew 25:31).

Thus, "the Son of Man" is at the same time "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3) and "the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). By using this title in speaking to the Jews, Jesus was able to reveal himself gradually, not all at once. If he had called himself "the Messiah", his ministry might have come to an abrupt halt. That is why people gradually began to ask, "Who is this Son of Man?" (John 12:34). By using this *term as his self-designation*, Jesus emphasised that he was not the nationalistic Messiah, whom the Jews expected, but the Saviour of the whole world (John 4:42; 1 Timothy 4:10).

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Introduce. Jesus did not intend every detail in the story of the parable to have some spiritual significance. The relevant details are those details in the story of the parable that reinforce the central point or main theme or lesson of the parable. Therefore, we should not ascribe independent spiritual significance to every detail of the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. Which of the details in the story of this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes.

The owner. He is apparently a wealthy farmer, who employs several servants to work his farm, that is, to sow the seed and care for the plants until they are ready for the harvest. Apparently the owner employed other expert reapers during the time of the harvest. The explanation does not tell us directly whom the owner represents. Therefore this is not a relevant detail in this parable. In the story, however, the owner sows good seed in his field and sends his reapers out to reap the harvest. And in the explanation, Jesus Christ is the Sower and the One, who sends his angels to reap. Thus, the Owner is at the same time the Sower. The field is *his* kingdom and *he* directs the sowing at the present time as well as the harvest at his second coming (cf. Matthew 16:18, "I build my Church!").

The sower. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:37). In his explanation, Jesus says that he himself is the Sower.

The enemy. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:39). In his explanation, Jesus says that the enemy is *the devil*. Without any regard to the work already done, this enemy sows weeds among the wheat. It is a deliberate act of destruction right amidst the people who are the work of Jesus Christ.

The parable describes the devil as operating at night when "everybody else is sleeping". Because Jesus does not explain this detail, it is only a part of the story, but not a relevant detail with any specific significance for the main message.

However, John 3:19-21 describes how all people, who love the darkness instead of Christ (the Light of the world), hate the light and will not come to the light for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed.

The good seed or wheat. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:38). In the explanation, the good seed represents “the sons of the kingdom”, that is, the sum total of all genuine Christians. They are those people in whom the seed of the gospel bears good fruit (Matthew 13:19,23) and who profess Jesus Christ as the Saviour and King of their lives. They are “the righteous”, who have been justified by faith (Matthew 13:43). After the second coming of Christ, they will shine like the sun in God’s kingdom.

The weeds. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:38). In the explanation, the obnoxious weeds represent “the sons of the evil one”. They are “all who do evil and everything that causes sin” (Matthew 13:41). The weeds include not only evil people, but also evil spirits, evil plans, activities, programmes and evil projects, which are sown among the genuine Christians. Just like the real weeds carry a fungus which is poisonous to man and beast, so these people, spirits, programmes and activities cause much harm and destruction to the genuine Christians. They and their stumbling blocks will be thrown into hell (Matthew 13:42; cf. Matthew 25:41).

The servants of the owner. Jesus does not explain who the servants are. Nevertheless, in the story of the parable they are important, because the owner forbids them to pull up the weeds from among the wheat before the time of the harvest. Instead, they are commanded to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the time of the harvest (Matthew 13:28-30). They clearly include God’s workers on earth. It is not the task of God’s workers (such as: disciples, evangelists, pastors, preachers, teachers and other Christians) to separate the weeds from among the wheat. They are not allowed to separate the weeds from the wheat, because that is clearly the task of the harvesters at the time of the harvest!

The field. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:38). In the explanation, the field represents “the world”. The following three facts must be kept in mind:

- **First. The weeds are sown amidst the wheat.**

Jesus does not say that the weeds were sown *alongside* the wheat or *in another field*, but that the weeds were sown among the wheat in the same field! Therefore, Jesus is not thinking of the mingling of Christians with non-Christians in the world. It is more natural to think of the mingling together of true and false Christians within the Kingdom of God, that is, within the visible Christian Church or Christian organisations and institutions, wherever they are found in the world. This includes the mingling together of the lies of Satan with the truth of Christ in Christian plans, activities and programmes, in Christians church councils, congregations, organisations and institutions.

- **Second. This mingling within the Kingdom of God is a mystery.**

According to Matthew 13:11, the parable of the weeds among the wheat is also “a secret or of the Kingdom of God”, a mystery (a reality that has not been explained before) that Jesus is revealing to his disciples. The mingling together of clearly different groups of people as godless and unrighteous non-Christians people amidst Godly and righteous Christians within the world can hardly be called “a mystery of the kingdom of God” (cf. 1 John 3:4-15). But “a mystery or secret of the kingdom of God” is the fact that God allows people who are only nominal Christians (traditional Christians or cultural Christians) to be present and work within the same Christians congregations, organisations and institutions as sincere Christians, without enabling us Christians to always make a clear distinction! True Christians must respect this arrangement of God, of course by taking account of the proper boundaries of divinely instituted discipline. This arrangement of God gives unbelievers (nominal Christians and non-Christians) within the Kingdom of God the best chance to hear the Christian message and to observe Christian lives.

- **Thirdly. The weeds are only separated from the wheat at the last judgement.**

Only at the second coming of Jesus Christ the nominal Christians (the weeds) are separated from the true Christians (the wheat). Only then will Jesus Christ send out his angels (the harvesters) to separate the unbelievers from the believers without making any mistake (cf. Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-33). At the second coming, Jesus Christ will gather (weed) out of his kingdom everything that seduces people to sin (the stumbling blocks) and all people who do lawlessness. They cannot be gathered “out of his kingdom”, if they had previously not been “inside his kingdom” in a particular sense! Although the whole world with everyone and everything on it is a part of the kingdom of Christ over which he rules in an absolute sovereign way (cf. Matthew 28:18), the hearts and lives of the unbelievers (whether nominal Christians or non-Christians) and of all wicked people outside the Church are visibly not submitted under the lordship of Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the gospel and their faith in Jesus Christ they are brought over into the kingdom of Christ (cf. Colossians 1:13).

Although it might seem that nominal Christians within Christian churches and organisations are part of the Kingdom of Christ, only Jesus Christ can see whether their hearts and lives are under his sovereign rule or not (cf. Matthew 22:10-11,14; John 2:24-25). Thus, the mingling of “the weeds among the wheat” represents the mingling of unbelievers or believers in appearance only among genuine believers within the Christian Church (and not just within the world). The present form of the Kingdom of God is the mingling of nominal Christians with true Christians.

The harvest and the harvesters. Both “the harvest” and “the harvesters” are relevant details (Matthew 13:39). In the explanation, the harvest represents the final judgement at the end time and the harvesters represent the angels. The task

of harvesting belongs to Jesus Christ only (Matthew 3:12; Revelation 14:14-16). He himself will direct the final judgement. But he will delegate this responsibility to his angels (Matthew 13:41; 24:30-31; 25:31-32).

It is very important to notice that while “the servants” (the workers in God’s kingdom) *cannot distinguish* between “the weeds” and “the wheat” *before* the time of the harvest, “the harvesters” (the angels) can! It is also important to notice that this distinction between the weeds and the wheat will only become apparent at the time of the harvest, when the weeds will be separated from the wheat! Only at the time of the harvest will Christ separate “the goats” from “the sheep”. Only at the final judgement at the second coming of Christ will everybody be able to know who genuine Christians are and who are not (Matthew 25:32)! Before the second coming, Christians can already know who genuine Christians are and who are not within the world outside the congregations (1 John 3:4-15), because only born-again Christians confess with their mouth (Romans 10:9-10) and bear fruit with their lives (Matthew 7:16-20). But within the kingdom, that is, within the visible Christian congregations, organisations and institutions, this distinction is certainly not apparent (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; Romans 9:6)!

The weeds are tied in bundles to be burned. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:42). In his explanation, Jesus says that they will be thrown into the fiery furnace (hell, cf. Revelation 21:8), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. “The weeping” in hell is different to all other weeping in the Bible. It is not the weeping of Esau, when he lost his inheritance (Genesis 27:38). It is not the weeping of bereavement, when Moses died (Deuteronomy 34:8). It is not the weeping of Ahab when he did not get his way (1 Kings 21:1-6). This weeping will be inconsolable; a never-ending wretchedness and everlasting hopelessness. “The gnashing of teeth” denotes excruciating pain and frenzied anger.

The wheat is gathered into the owner’s barn. This is a relevant detail (Matthew 13:43). Since the first coming of Christ, born-again believers are gathered into the kingdom in its present form (Matthew 3:11-12). At the second coming of Christ they will be gathered into the kingdom in its final and perfect form (Matthew 25:34). There they will “shine like the sun” (Daniel 12:3), that is, God’s glory will be reflected in them (1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18)!

The kingdom of God. This is the most relevant detail in this parable (Matthew 13:43). All the other details in this parable describe the kingdom of God in its present form in the world before the second coming of Christ.

In this parable, Jesus reveals that the kingdom of God in its present form on earth contains two kinds of people: wicked people (unbelievers, nominal Christians, traditional Christians, culture Christians) and righteous people (born-again Christians) without anybody possessing the ability to distinguish clearly between them. In this parable, “the good seed” does not represent the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14) and “the weeds” do not represent the false gospel that is spread by the devil and his servants (2 Corinthians 11:1-4). “The good seed” and “the weeds” do not represent messages, but people! “The field” does not represent the world in general, where both these messages are proclaimed, but the specific sphere in the world where both these groups of people are mixed together without anybody being able to distinguish clearly between them! “The weeds” represent a group of people who are sown among born-again Christians in such a way that the born-again Christians are unable to make a clear distinction between themselves and the other nominal Christians!

That is why “the field” does not simply represent “the world” in the sense of “the earth”, the place where non-Christians and Christians live mixed together and they clearly know whether they are non-Christian or Christian. “The field” represents the Kingdom of God in its present phase in which nominal Christians (traditional Christians, culture Christians) and genuine (born-again) Christians mingle together in a way in which it is difficult to distinguish between them. The parable of the weeds among the wheat is a symbol of the kingdom of God in its present phase before the second coming of Christ and not a symbol of the kingdom of God in its final and perfect phase after the last judgement at the second coming of Christ (the harvest).

The terms “Church” (Greek: ekklésia) and “kingdom of God” (Greek: basileia tou theou) are probably never exact equivalents. “The Church” consists of people who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, regardless whether their confession is genuine or not (people cannot look into one another’s hearts to see whether they are born-again). But “the kingdom of God” in its present phase consists of both people *and* spheres, like organisations, institutions, culture, etc., in which Christ’s rule is openly recognised and also not openly acknowledged. Only in the parable of “the weeds among the wheat” and the parable of “the dragnet” the meaning of the words “the Church” and “the kingdom of God” are very close. In both parables the distinction between true (born-again) Christians and nominal Christians (traditional Christians, culture Christians) becomes clear only at the last judgement at the second coming of Christ (the harvest).

A parable or an allegory? Because so many details in this parable represent something essential or relevant, this parable also approaches an allegory. Nevertheless, Matthew 13:24,36 calls it “a parable”. Also this parable has only one main message or one central point, namely, the command of Jesus Christ to his servants before the harvest to exercise patience with regard to the intermixture of nominal Christians (weeds, goats) with genuine Christians (wheat, sheep) until Christ and his angels will separate them in the last judgement.

An important rule for interpreting parables. Parables are not allegories and parables may not be allegorised! Some Christians in the past have allegorised parables. For example:

The church father Augustine (A.D. 354-430) allegorised the parable of the Good Samaritan as follows. “The man, who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho”, represented Adam. “The robbers” represented the devil and his angels. “The

priest and the Levite” represented the Law and the Prophets. “The good Samaritan” represented Christ. “The inn” represented the Church. And “the two silver coins” represented the promise of life in the present and in the future! Augustine interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan, not as a parable, but as an allegory! His interpretation is wrong!

The church father Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) allegorised the parable of the weeds among the wheat as follows. “The weeds” represent the societies of heretics. The devil’s craft is characterised by trying to mix truth and error so that he may cheat and deceive. Chrysostom applied this parable correctly by saying, “Christians are forbidden to kill heretics”. Heretics (divisive people) must be warned twice (Titus 3:9-10), then expelled from the church (1 Corinthians 5:12-13) and never received or welcomed in Christian homes (2 John 10).

Rule for interpreting parables. The fact that Jesus Christ gave separate symbolical meaning to several details of his parable of the weeds among the wheat does not give Christians the right to ascribe separate symbolical significance to each detail of the stories of the other parables! Parables indeed convey only one main message.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Introduce. The main message of the parable is found either in the explanation or application or from the story itself. From the way Jesus Christ himself explained or applied the parables, we know how we should interpret parables. A parable normally has only one main lesson, one central point to make. Therefore, we should not try to find a spiritual truth in every detail of the story, but instead look for the one main lesson.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the weeds among the wheat in Matthew 13:14-43 teaches about “two kinds of people in God’s kingdom”.

The main message of the parable is the following. “The servants of God must exercise patience with regard to the intermixture of genuine Christians and nominal Christians in God’s kingdom in its present earthly manifestation.” The parable of the weeds among the wheat emphasises that Christians do not have the task to separate the “good” (sincere, born-again) Christians from the “bad” (hypocritical, not born-again) Christians. Christians and Christian leaders must let them grow, live and function together until the judgement day. Then Jesus Christ with his angels will sort them out from one another.

Patience with respect to the nominal Christians is one of the fundamental characteristics in God’s kingdom. The workers in God’s kingdom should not be too eager to expel the following people from their company or congregation. They should not expel people who do not belong to Christ’s regular followers. They should not expel people who have not yet been converted. And they should not expel people who still have some strange immature convictions and behaviour patterns.

The workers of God’s kingdom must distinguish between the need to exercise church discipline and the need to show love and mercy towards “imperfect” people in their midst. They *should exercise church discipline*, that is, they should follow biblical guidelines to warn, rebuke, correct and if necessary ban members out of the congregation if they do not repent of their known gross sins.

But the workers of God’s kingdom *should exercise patience* with respect to the nominal Christians (traditional Christians, cultural Christians) involved in the church meetings. They should not try to determine who is “good seed” and who is “a weed” within the congregation. Instead, they should try to win people to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Christian workers may act on the basis of *known sin* in other Christians’ lives. But they may not act *as if they are God and know* who is genuinely born again and who is not. That is the prerogative of Jesus Christ only (John 3:3-8; Matthew 25:31-46).

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Introduce. Some parables are similar to one another and can be compared. However, the truth in all the parables has parallel or contrasting truth taught in other passages of the Bible. Try to find the most important cross-references that help us to interpret the parable. Always check the interpretation of a parable with the direct clear teaching of the Bible.

Discover and discuss. How does what the following Bible passages teach compare to what the parable of the weeds among the wheat teaches?

Notes.

(1) The parable compared to the parable of the sower.

Read Matthew 13:36 and Luke 8:9. By comparing these two passages, it is not unlikely that these two parables were told in this chronological sequence and that the parable in Matthew 13:3-9 was immediately followed by the parable in Matthew 13:24-30. After Jesus had spoken these parables to a crowd of people, he went into a house and there his disciples asked him to explain these parables to them.

There are resemblances and certain differences between the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds among the wheat. As to the resemblances, both parables speak of a sower, a field, seed and a harvest. As to the differences, in the first parable, the devil snatches away the good seed and in the second parable, he sows the weeds among the wheat. Satan sometimes openly opposes the Word of God and snatches it away from people. But at other times he infiltrates among the true people of God in order to poison their minds. In the first parable, all the seed is good, but in the second parable, weeds appear among the wheat. In the first parable, the emphasis is on the reception of the Word of God by different conditions and attitudes of the heart. In the second parable, the emphasis is on being patient with respect to distinguish and separate nominal Christians from genuine Christians in the church.

(2) The parable contrasted with 1 John 3:4-15.

Read 1 John 3:4-15. 1 John emphasises two groups of people that live in the world in general: “the children born of God who do what is righteous” and “the children of the devil who do not do what is righteous”. But the parable of the weeds among the wheat emphasises two groups of people that live within the kingdom of God in its present form (in the Church). In 1 John the characteristics of the people in the world can be clearly distinguished, but in Matthew 13:24-30 the characteristics of the people in the kingdom of God (in the Church) cannot be distinguished clearly. It is not possible for Christians to make a distinction between true born-again Christians and Christians who behave themselves as Christians in name, in tradition and in culture. That is why it is not the task of the servants to pull up the weeds from among the wheat. These two passages in the Bible emphasise two different aspects of the kingdom of God. 1 John emphasises that non-Christians in the world can be visibly distinguished from born-again Christians in the Church, because non-Christians continue visibly to live in sin. But Matthew 13:24-30 emphasises that nominal Christians cannot be clearly distinguished from genuine Christians within the Church!

(3) The parable contrasted with the parable of the dragnet.

Read Matthew 13:47-50. “The parable of the dragnet” speaks of the kingdom of God in its present form as gathering all kinds of people in the world and that the genuine Christians will only be separated from all other people in the last judgement at the second coming of Christ. It does not contrast the good fishes within the net with the bad fishes still in the sea, but emphasises the fact that the good fish remain mixed with the bad fish within the net until they are sorted out after the catch. The parable of the dragnet has therefore the same central message as the parable of the weeds among the wheat. Both parables teach that Christians and nominal Christians in the kingdom of God on earth in its present form and in the Church and Christian organisations and institutions will remain mixed until the day they are sorted and separated from each other on the last judgement day.

6. Summarise the main teachings of the parable.

Discuss. What are the main teachings or messages of the parable? What did Jesus Christ teach us to *know* or to *believe* and what did he teach us to *be* or to *do*?

Notes.

(1) The main message.

The parable of the weeds among the wheat in Matthew 13:14-43 teaches about “*two kinds of people in God’s kingdom*”.

The main message of the parable is the following. “The servants of God (the offices or leaders of churches) must exercise patience with regard to the intermixture of genuine Christians and nominal Christians in God’s kingdom in its present earthly manifestation (form).” The servants of God must allow all people in God’s kingdom (in the Church) to hear the Word of God and to grow together until the final judgement day, when Jesus Christ together with his angels will separate them from each other and inaugurate God’s kingdom in its final manifestation as the new earth.

(2) The lesson with regard to patience.

The disciples were sometimes too eager to expel from their company some people who did not belong to Christ’s faithful (regular, official) followers (Luke 9:49-50). They were sometimes too ready to flare up in anger against members of their own group of disciples (Luke 22:24).

Jesus Christ teaches that Christians may not drive participants in their Christian meetings, organisations and institutions away when there is no serious doctrinal or behavioural problem involved. Christians should tolerate the great variety of Christians within the Christian Church (the Body of Christ) and “be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

The right to determine who is “good seed” and who is “a weed”, must be left to Jesus Christ, the Judge. By saying this, Christ does not overrule church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18), but instilled a spirit of wise patience in Christians. When Christians exercise loving patience, church discipline will only become stronger, because the chief purpose of discipline is not to destroy the human spirit, but to save it (1 Corinthians 5:5).

(3) The exhortation to hear.

Jesus repeated the exhortation “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:43) at the end of all his seven letters to the congregations in the book of Revelation 2 and 3. It is a very important exhortation. If a person has ears to hear with, but stops his ears in order not to hear the words of God (Christ), he commits the unpardonable sin (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31). When he does not receive the words of God and persists to ignore his words, then he commits *the unpardonable sin* (Hebrews 4:7; 6:4-8; 10:26-31). “All wrongdoing is sin. There is a sin that leads to death” (1 John

5:16-17). The unpardonable sin is when a person is not born of God and deliberately keeps on sinning (1 John 3:6-9) (the verbs are in the *present continuous tense* and therefore do not mean: “he who commits sin” (cf. 1 John 1: 8-10), but: “he who *keeps on* sinning” (1 John 3:6-9). Jesus Christ admonishes his hearers to listen well to his words, to believe in him and to examine himself to see whether he is “the good seed” (a child of the kingdom) or “a weed” (a child of the devil) (Matthew 13:38). “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5).

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group **to pray short** to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** “the parable of weeds among the wheat” together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Judges 13, 14, 15 and 16 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (2) Romans 1:17. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. Romans 2:17-29.
Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God's kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.