

LIVING
THE WORD

CARIBBEAN BIBLE LESSONS



Leaders

Adults • Ages 19 and Up • Learner Guide

January • February • March • April • 2021



Adult • Age 19 and Up • Learner Guide

The learning activities suggested in this book are used as a part of the teaching plan provided in the *Adult Teacher Guide*. It is strongly recommended that each church provide a copy of the *Adult Learner Guide* for each adult learner and adult teacher.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Dear brothers and sisters,



Best wishes for a New Year of awesome blessings, life changing adventures and prosperity! It is my pleasure to partner with you on this the first inspirational journey for 2021 through the pages of the adult Sunday School literature, the **Caribbean Bible Lessons Bible Leaders Learner Guide**.

Outside of the New Year; what else is new in your life? The year 2020 may have made you pandemic-weary and disillusioned about facing 2021. Have you felt frazzled or burnt out with the weight of practising endless health protocols and physical distancing routines, worshipping via virtual church and Sunday School, and working remotely (virtually) to keep COVID-19 at bay? Are you grieving over the loss of loved ones due to the virus while having to balance the demands of daily family life? It may help to talk through your concerns with a trusted relative, church sister or brother. God specializes in problems; so, **seek His ears** and heart on the direction you want your life to take.

Before God moves you to new horizons this New Year, do some personal evaluation. **Write down the things or goals** you are committed to becoming, doing and experiencing during 2021. Set timelines at specific intervals during the year to assess how you have been progressing in achieving those goals. Be mindful that wavering faith, lack of vision, procrastination and complacency can stymie your efforts to live abundantly this year and beyond.

During this calendar year, let us **be intentional and proactive** about nurturing, achieving and maintaining spiritual growth in our lives. Develop a daily regimen of personal Bible study and prayer. Additionally, **create a daily gratitude list**. To compile this list, at the close of each day write down at least 10 things for which you are grateful and spend time thanking God for these things. You can also have a gratitude list for the people who have entered your life each day. Thank God for them. Be of service to others. **Bring comfort** to someone who is fearful, hurting or lonely. Make it a point of duty to **encourage someone** who is feeling dejected.

In this edition of the **CBL Bible Leaders Learner Guide**, we respond in earnest to God's call to **Make a Godly Impact**. **Unit 1** also ensures that we start 2021 armed with best practices to guide us in making a bold impact for God in the lives of others. **Unit 2** gives us a tutorial on how to **Know the Enemy** and resist his attacks.

During the month of March, when the international community observes *World Water Day*, **Unit 3** invites us to recognise God's gift of **The Sea—Superb Blessings**. **Unit 4, Reign of Righteousness** is our compass for the Easter season. May God's peace and righteousness guard your mind, heart and life and cover you for 2021 and beyond.

Yours in the Lord's service,
Erica James-King

MEET OUR WRITERS

UNIT ONE: Erica James-King, Jamaica

Ms. James-King is a Christian career journalist and communication practitioner. While working as a communication manager in corporate Jamaica she responded to God's call on her life to engage in full-time ministry through Christian literature. She is the Assistant Director/Editor of Adult Publications at Caribbean Christian Publications. Sister James-King is enthusiastic about evangelism, Christian education, and mission to vulnerable persons. She is a lay preacher and also serves on the Jamaica Baptist Union Print Media Committee and Social Issues Study Commission.



UNIT TWO: Marvia Lawes, Jamaica

The Reverend Lawes is pastor of the Sligoville Circuit of Baptist Churches in Jamaica. She has also led the First Isthmian Baptist Church in Colon, Panama, as a missionary-pastor. This cleric is of the conviction that her early nurture in the Word through Sunday School was essential to her early Christian formation. She believes that Christians need to be open to hearing and responding to the Word of God. The Reverend Lawes has also served as a radio talk show host.



UNIT THREE: Arcelio Hartley, Panama

Mr Hartley is vice president of the Panama Baptist Convention and retired Chairman of the Board of Inspectors of the Panama Canal Authority. He serves as a church planter, lay preacher, deacon and Sunday School teacher. He is passionate about leading people to commit to serving God.





Ms. Roper, who is an environmental specialist in the public sector, is of the conviction that environmental stewardship is the duty of everyone, especially Christians. As a member of the Church of God in Jamaica, she is committed to Christian education and building awareness of environmental issues.

UNIT THREE: Le-Anne Roper, Jamaica

UNIT FOUR: Olson Abrams, Guyana

Mr Abrams is a senior energy engineer in the fuel industry in Guyana. Residing along the East Coast of Demerara, he has been very involved with the ministries and mission of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church.



Mrs Forde is a retired teacher who served at the secondary and primary levels in the Turks and Caicos Islands, Guyana, St. Vincent and Bequia in the Grenadine Islands. She is a Sunday School Director and local missionary to single mothers.

UNIT FOUR: Penny Forde, Turks and Caicos Islands

Happy New Year from the Editorial Team for Adult Publications!



Front (centre): The Reverend Alfred Charles-Julien (Guyana)

Front Row (L-R): Yolanda Brathwaite (Barbados), Shaverme Walker (St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Grace Peart (Jamaica), Lilly Samuels (Jamaica), Dr Cheryl Strachan (The Bahamas), and Genevieve McMaster (British Virgin Islands).

Back Row (L-R): Erica James-King (Jamaica), Olson Abrams (Guyana), Arcelio Hartley (Panama), the Reverend Arthur Edgar (USA), the Reverend Stacey Lalor-Knowles (Jamaica), and Commissioner of Police Atlee Rodney (Antigua and Barbuda).

Missing from the Photo: Dr Cynthia Anderson (Jamaica), Derek Archer (Guyana), Kenneth Dubissette (Grenada), Penny Forde (Turks and Caicos Islands), the Honourable Justice David Fraser (Jamaica), Dahlia Fraser (Jamaica), the Reverend Vonnie James (Grenada), Andre Johnson (Jamaica), the Reverend Marvia Lawes (Jamaica), Joan Purcell (Grenada), Lee-Ann Roper (Jamaica), Dr Zoë Simpson (Jamaica), Angela Webb (Trinidad and Tobago), and Gay Ward Foster (USA).

Special Recognition

Caribbean Christian Publications expresses appreciation to the following persons for their contribution to this issue of the **Caribbean Bible Lessons Bible Leaders Teacher and Learner Guides:**

Curriculum Developers: Gordon Brown, the Reverend Arthur Edgar, Giselle Hall, Richard Hemmings, Rebecca McHenry, the Reverend Dr Burchell Taylor, and Herona Thompson.

Surrender to God



BIBLE FOCUS

Psalm 62:8; Judges 6:11-28, 36-40; Luke 17:3-6;
John 20:24-29

KEY VERSE

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.

– Psalm 62:8 NIV

BIBLE TRUTH

Only when our lives, sin, doubts, desires and fears are surrendered to God by faith, we can truly live abundantly in Christ.

LIFE QUESTION

How have I dealt with my sin, doubts, fears and cares?

THAT'S LIFE

Amy felt like a dwarf in the Christian lifestyle. She had become quite short-tempered in recent times, snapping at her family members regularly. Her family had noticed her change in demeanor this past month.

Amy's brother, Errol, remarked yesterday: "If that is how church change you into a monster, I will stay far from the church door." Amy apologized for her conduct but Errol shrugged off her response. He retorted with two new nicknames for her, "Snobbish Sister" and "Hellish Amy". His response wounded Amy's spirit and pushed her to the point of tears.

Amy reflected that when she became a Christian a year ago, she

felt ecstatic about her new faith and God's forgiveness of her sin. Well, now she was not even sure God had forgiven her. Maybe that is why she was ill-tempered with her family.

Amy felt like she was going to explode with pent-up anger and uncertainty. It all started when her friend, Mandy, told Amy that she (Amy) had joined the wrong church and so God had not forgiven her. Today, Amy did not feel like a Christian. To make matters worse, her Christian aunt, from whom she was planning on seeking advice, died recently.

What advice would you give to Amy and Mandy?

Recount a situation in which you exercised faith in God.

How did your circumstance change?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

The key to a happy and blessed New Year is to start the year by throwing out the baggage of sin, doubt, despair and fear that you may be carrying. Surrender them to Christ. Most importantly, submit your life to Christ. Surrendering to God should not only take place when you accept the gift of salvation from sin; it should also be a daily, conscious act of devotion to God.

Today, we commence a five-part series, "Make a Godly Impact". It is an undeniable, non-negotiable and mandatory fact that if we are living for Christ we will make a godly impact on others and on the society in which we live.

1. Yield to God; Exercise Faith – Judges 6:11-28, 36-40

Faith is complete trust or unflinching confidence in God. It is easy for one's faith to waver in challenging circumstances, with devastating news bombarding one, and in the face of cruel and discriminatory action from others. However, God, and His teachings in the Scriptures, require us to have faith in Him, His instructions, promises, love, power and sovereignty, at all times. Those who have faith in God will reap His blessings and a prosperous future. As Christians, our faith should grow steadily—it should not stay stagnant or at an immature level during our lifetime. What can we learn from Gideon that could help to strengthen our faith?

God called Gideon to deliver the Israelites at a time of great trouble (v. 3, 11)—relentless attacks and raids on their harvests from the Midianites. "*Mighty warrior*" (6:12) is a prophetic term describing Gideon's destiny and purpose planned by God. God spoke that destiny and purpose to Gideon while Gideon was threshing (beating) wheat fearfully in a winepress—a hidden location. Gideon considered himself a cowardly underdog. God prophesied through the angel His purpose for Gideon, although Gideon was convinced that he was an insignificant person from a clan that he considered weak. Gideon wrestled with the prophecy, probably wondering if he was having delusions of grandeur or would be volunteering to make himself a murder target.

Gideon sought a miraculous confirmation from God through a simple and effective prayer (v. 17). God gave him the requested confirmation (v. 21-24). This miracle strengthened Gideon's faith and he felt emboldened to help to turn his people back to worshipping God, by destroying the pagan altars and building an altar to God. Then, Gideon's faith wavered again. He requested another sign from God. This time, he asked for it in the form of the wet wool (fleece) and the dry ground. God, once again, answered Gideon's request. Still grappling with fear and not allowing his faith to grow, Gideon asked another time for a sign from God. On this occasion, our patient God granted Gideon the sign of the dry wool and wet ground. Faith puts fear to flight! Gideon overcame fear to be a faith

abiding, courageous, dedicated and mighty warrior who led the Israelite army to battle against the enemies. He commandeered 300 brave men who stormed the strongholds of the enemy and put them to flight and confusion. Gideon and his men experienced God's miracles: The Midianite troops suddenly turned on their own, killing each other (Judges 7:19-22). Gideon and his army also killed some of the Midianites (8:11-23).

Perhaps, you are submerged in a very difficult situation. Maybe, your circumstance is not challenging, but you sense God is speaking to you about something, and you are not certain about aspects of God's directives for you. Whatever the situation: go ahead and pray, asking God for confirmation. God can do it! Sometimes, we need to fast and pray over a prolonged period of time before we receive confirmation. Be receptive to God's leading by living a life devoted to Him. Also, be mindful that God will not give us miraculous signs of confirmation about every area of our lives. God speaks to us through His Word (the Bible), nature, sermons, advice from fellow Christians, prayers, dreams and visions, and by the conviction He places in our spirit and on our heart. Also, we must exercise faith in God at all times if we are to please Him.

2. Anchor and Grow Your Trust in God – Luke 17:3-6

The Scripture passage, Luke 17:3-6, reports a lesson which Jesus taught His disciples about two major essentials of our Christian life—forgiveness and faith. Both characteristics are inter-related: we cannot have forgiveness from God without exercising faith in Him after confession of our sin to Him. Also, our forgiveness from God will be non-existent if we do not forgive those who harm us (Matthew 6:12).

The disciples appealed to Jesus for help to increase their ability to persistently trust in God and in His power (Luke 17:5). In response to their request, Jesus used the imagery of the *fig-mulberry tree*, also known as the *sycamine tree* or the *sycamore fig tree*, which has a very deep root structure. Jesus referred to it as being uprooted and transplanted into the sea (v. 6), to explain the power that can be achieved when the disciples have faith even as small as a mustard seed. Jesus was indicating that God is more than capable of doing that which humans regard as impossible.

3. Abandon Doubts; Touch Jesus – John 20:24-29

One of Jesus' disciple, Thomas, had stated that unless he could put his fingers in Jesus' nail-scarred hands and in His wounded side, he would remain unconvinced that Jesus had come back in body and spirit from the grave (v. 25). Eight days after His resurrection, Jesus presented Thomas with the opportunity of touching His wounds. Jesus then commanded Thomas to stop doubting His resurrection and have faith. Thomas obeyed.

Reality Check

What do you need to surrender to God by faith so that you can have a close relationship with Him during 2021 and beyond? **Make a list**, pray and sincerely surrender yourself and your list to God.

Maximize the Moment



BIBLE FOCUS

Ephesians 5:14-20; Judges 4:1-16; Mark 10:46-52

KEY VERSE

Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

– Ephesians 5:15-16 NIV

BIBLE TRUTH

Adverse circumstances, gender, age, social class, cultural norms or any other limitation should not restrict our worship of and service to God.

LIFE QUESTION

How am I available to God for Him to use my life, opportunities and abilities daily to honour Him?

THAT'S LIFE

Winston was the director of evangelism at his church. He always inspired his church brethren to let God use them as vessels for helping others. One day, on his way to the radio station where he worked, Winston saw an old man lying listlessly on the sidewalk opposite the hospital. He looked frail, seriously ill and malnourished. Winston mumbled to himself that he was "running late" and he could not stop to check on or help the man.

Later, during his radio programme, Winston spoke about the old man. He appealed to the health and social security ministries to assist the golden

ager who seemed to have been abandoned by the roadside.

The next day when Winston was on his way to work, he saw the same man at the same location. Now, flies were buzzing around some of the open wounds on the man's hands. A carton was partially covering him from the searing sun. As he drove past the man, Winston complained bitterly about the negligence of the authorities with regard to the man.

What are your views about Winston's behaviour? Give reasons for your answer.

If you were Winston, how would you have responded to the elderly man by the roadside? Why?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

God is more concerned about our availability than our abilities. To maximize the moment is to make the best use of our time, as well as every opportunity and circumstance to glorify God through our conduct, speech, actions and lifestyle.

Maximizing the moment for God is living with the discernment that God wants to use us in every situation, every day, to exalt Him and advance His cause.

1. Exercise Firm Faith and Godly Leadership – Judges 4:1-16

For 20 years, the Israelites were being ruled and oppressed by Jabin, the Canaanite king and his military commander, Sisera (vv.1-3). God allowed this cruel domination of the Israelites by the Canaanites, because the former had rebelled against God by living in disobedience to Him, including worshipping Canaanite gods. The people of Israel cried out to God for help and He raised up Deborah, a woman who used every moment to honour Him. God used Deborah to relate and offer guidance to His people about His plan for redeeming them from the Canaanite oppression.

She was a wife, prophetess and the only judge of Israel, during the period of internal disunity and oppression of Israel, between the death of Joshua (Joshua 24:29-31), and the appointment of Saul as Israel's first king. Deborah is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. This multi-talented, God-honouring, gifted and influential leader of her nation made herself available to inspire and defend her nation for God.

Deborah sent for Barak, the only leader who commanded respect in Israel at the time, and ordered him in the name of the God to establish an army to fight the Canaanites. She assured him that the LORD would deliver Sisera and his army into his hands. Barak accepted the assignment only on condition that Deborah accompany him into battle (Judges 4:4-10).

Although Sisera had a powerful army with the swift mobility of 900 iron chariots, his entire army was wiped out by the Israelite fighters led by Barak, who had no chariots (v. 16). The Israelite fighters were on foot. God confused, confounded and drove fear into the Canaanite army by using His supernatural powers in causing a sudden, out-of-season thunderstorm. As the Canaanite troops fled out of fear and panic, Barak and his men pursued them and killed them. The leader of the Canaanite army, Sisera, was killed by a woman, Jael (4:18-21; 5:24-27).

What can we learn from this portion of Scripture about faith? Barak's faith which rested on the condition of Deborah's accompanying presence in battle, was fledgling. Deborah exercised

strong, godly faith and influence by allowing Barak to lead while she stayed in the background. This prophetess made the best use of each moment for God by repeatedly giving Barak assurance of God's almighty power and presence. She had faith that God would give the Israelites victory if Barak and his army acted according to God's instructions. How have you made optimal use of your opportunities in influencing your family, community and nation for God? In what ways have you exposed yourself to ridicule or danger in helping others or protecting their rights?

2. Seize Deliverance and Healing! – Mark 10:46-52

In the view of the crowd, Bartimaeus, who had a visual disability was not worthy of attention from Jesus, Messiah and Rabbi. To some, Bartimaeus was perceived as *persona non grata*. Others told the blind man not to bother Jesus. *Many rebuked him, and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (v. 48 NIV, NLT). However, Jesus *flipped the script* on the crowd. He silenced the gathering by doing the opposite of what they expected of Him, with their worldly values and standards. Not only, did Jesus send some members of the crowd to call the blind man to Him; but Jesus stopped moving and focused solely on blind Bartimaeus and Bartimaeus' needs. Jesus went further than paying attention to the blind man: He also healed the man. We can learn from Jesus that each of us is very important to Him. None of us is insignificant to Jesus and neither are our needs and hurts.

Bartimaeus never allowed poverty, sneers, jeers, bullyism, embarrassment, a bothersome cloak, and a visual disability from preventing him from receiving his healing. With immense difficulty, he went through the crowd and found Jesus. Bartimaeus maximized the moment by seeking his deliverance from blindness. What do you need to release, let go of, abandon or overcome right now to experience salvation, deliverance, spiritual growth and/or healing? How do you need to make optimal use of the moment right now for growth in your spiritual, material, emotional and social life?

3. Show Christlike Virtues – Ephesians 5:14-20

Apostle Paul wanted the believers at Ephesus and in other parts of western Asia Minor to take their new identity in Christ seriously. He advised them to seize each opportunity to live with godly wisdom, in keeping with God's Will (vv. 15-17). Paul outlined practical ways of living in close communion with God when we make the most of each opportunity daily for God. Are you displaying the virtues cited by Paul?

Reality Check

God uses the person who is genuinely surrendered and available to Him to fulfil His purpose. In which ways am I available to God when He calls on me to carry out necessary tasks for Him and to His glory?

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