



Sunday School **LESSONS**

FOR YOUTH

VOLUME 24
NUMBER 23



Sunday School **LESSONS**

FOR YOUTH

VOLUME 24
NUMBER 23

Copyright © 2022 Africa Nazarene Publications All Rights Reserved.

ISBN 978-0-7977-1475-5

First Printing 2022

2

This book was originally published in English with the title:

New Believers Bible Studies

By JESUS Film Harvest Partners

Copyright © 2022

All rights reserved.

This edition was adapted by the Africa NDI Team

Copyright © 2022

All rights reserved.

Printed by

Africa Nazarene Publications

AFRICA REGION YEAR PLAN
BIBLE LESSONS FOR YOUTH
Volume 24 Number 23

Contents

PREPARING THE LESSON	5
PRESENTING THE LESSON	6
OTHER SUGGESTIONS.....	7
HOW TO PRAY WITH THE ONE SEEKING GOD'S FACE.....	8
TERM 1 - GOD'S FAITHFULNESS	9
GOD IS FAITHFUL IN ALL OUR SEASONS OF LIFE	10
GOD ENABLES US TO OVERCOME OUR SINS	12
THE DANGER OF ENVY.....	14
GOD PROVIDES A WAY TO PROTECT A RIGHTEOUS MAN.....	16
PRIDE IS SINFUL AND THEREFORE DESTRUCTIVE	18
RESPONDING IN FAITH TO GOD'S CALL	20
GOD PROVIDES A SACRIFICE	22
GOD CAN USE THE HARDSHIPS WE ENDURE TO BLESS OTHERS	24
GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER MAKE US COURAGEOUS	26
THE FIRST PASSOVER.....	28
MEASURING ROD FOR HUMANKIND	30
JESUS' SUFFERING AND DEATH WERE NOT A SURPRISE TO HIM.....	32
JESUS CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH	34
TERM 2 - SALVATION IS THROUGH CHRIST: FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST	36
THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.....	37
JESUS CLEANS THE TEMPLE	39
GREAT LESSON FROM JESUS' ARREST	41
IT IS HARD TO KEEP BOLD CLAIMS	43
JESUS CONQUERS DEATH	45
JESUS REMOVES OUR DOUBTS AND FEARS.....	47
THE RESURRECTED MESSIAH OPERATES MIRACLE IN BELIEVERS' LIFE	49
THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	51
THE COMMUNITY OF JESUS CHRIST	53
THE PROBLEM OF LIE	55

FROM ZEAL AGAINST CHRIST TO ZEAL FOR CHRIST	59
TERM 3 - ARTICLES OF FAITH	61
THE TRIUNE GOD	62
JESUS CHRIST	64
THE HOLY SPIRIT	66
THE HOLY SCRIPTURE	68
SIN, ORIGINAL AND PERSONAL	70
ATONEMENT	72
PREVENIENT GRACE	74
REPENTANCE	76
JUSTIFICATION, REGENERATION, ADOPTION	78
CHRISTIAN HOLINESS AND ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION	80
THE CHURCH	82
BAPTISM	84
THE LORD'S SUPPER	86
DIVINE HEALING	88
THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST	90
RESURRECTION, JUDGEMENT, AND DESTINY	92
TERM 4 - PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH	94
ORDINARY	95
MEANS FOR EXTRAORDINARY END	95
IN GOD THERE ARE NO STRANGERS	97
GOD CALLS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES INTO HIS MISSION	99
AVOIDING SELFISH PRAYERS	101
CHOSEN FOR A GREAT PURPOSE	103
GOD'S HOLINESS IS SO MAJESTIC	105
GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT THREATEN HIS PEOPLE	107
RENEWING OUR HOPE	109
THE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE COMING MESSIAH	111
THE MESSIAH IS BORN	113
JESUS CAME FOR ALL PEOPLE, JEWS AND GENTILES	115

Teaching the Bible is a privilege that God has given us, but it entails a great responsibility, since the teaching must be based on the Word of God. Therefore, we should be very careful to search the Scripture. We must seek the purpose that God wishes to communicate through the biblical writers.

Intelligently reaching out to youth is vital to the growth and development of the church. Most of the evangelical leadership will agree with this statement. On the other hand, being a Sunday School teacher is a privilege that God gives us, and at the same time, constitutes a great responsibility. The privilege of teaching comes from having been taught first and from the mandate that we have received from Jesus to teach others (Matthew 28:20). If we understand the dynamics of teaching well, we will not be frightened by the responsibility, but will enjoy the privilege, and constantly train ourselves to form Christ in others. We encourage you to study each lesson carefully in advance. That way you will have a better mastery of each subject, and without a doubt, it will be a time of spiritual growth.

Following, we have included for you various suggestions that we hope will help you to prepare and better present each lesson.

PREPARING THE LESSON

1. Before preparing each lesson, pray, asking God for wisdom and discernment to understand the biblical study passages and to apply it to your life. Additionally, pray for your students so that they may be receptive to the teaching of the Word of God, so that in the midst of the particular situations in which they are living, the Word of God would be of help, strength, and guidance.
2. Prepare a place free from distractions to study the lesson, where there is a table or desk. It's important to have some materials available such as paper, pens, pencils, and erasers, among others.
3. In addition to the book, you will need a Bible, and it would be of much help if you have on hand different versions. Also, try to have a language dictionary, a biblical dictionary and a good biblical commentary related to the lesson on hand.

4. Read the objective for the lesson multiple times. Knowing where you want to take the lesson will make the path much easier.
5. Memorize the Bible verse. You should be an example of what you are going to teach.
6. Read the lesson thoroughly as many times as necessary. Knowing the topic deeply will help you to develop the class time.
7. The book is designed for youth. Therefore, read the introductory activity. Practice it to be sure that it's feasible. Check to see if it will be necessary to take any additional material to the class.
8. Look in the Bible and read each biblical reference as indicated. Practice the reading, especially of those passages that have difficult words to pronounce.
9. Make your own summary of the lesson to guide yourself in the class. Write on a sheet of paper, or electronically on a tablet or phone, the name of the lesson, the principal points and develop a summary as you study the lesson, point by point. Write out and highlight the biblical references that will be read during the class.
10. Look for the meaning of unknown words so that you may better understand the lesson.

PRESENTING THE LESSON

1. Be the first one to arrive at the classroom and arrange the area in the best way possible. For each new unit, you can change the arrangement of the chairs, the board, etc. Look for ways to create a comfortable environment for the development of the class. Remember that a good environment will help create good attitudes from people.
2. Always begin at the scheduled time.
3. Start by welcoming your students. This allows you to create a comfortable study environment. Know the name of each student, looking for ways to remember the names of new students.
4. Begin class with prayer, asking the Lord to help all to understand His Word and to give everyone the desire to obey it.
5. Begin with the introductory activity; this will help to enter into the topic.
6. Write the title of point 1 and begin to explain it. Use the board and the flip chart as a teaching resource to note explanations. When you finish point 1, write the title of point 2 and continue in this way. Highlight important aspects of the topic.
7. Encourage the participation of each person in the class. Form work groups to develop each point. Ask your students to look up the biblical references, read them, and comment on them. Allow them to give their points of view. Ask for the participation of those who for any reason don't participate. Don't criticize any suggestion, be polite and don't avoid difficult discussions. Rather, guide them with the council of the Word of God.

8. Dedicate a few minutes to comment on how to apply the biblical truths learned in class to our daily lives.
9. Motivate the students to invite other youth to the next class. In a creative way, give them an idea of what the next lesson will deal with. Create anticipation in the youth.
10. Finish the class with prayer. Do it in different ways each day.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Goals and prizes: You can offer a simple prize for the students that, during each class:
 - Memorize all the biblical texts.
 - Punctually attend all the classes of the unit.
2. Memorization. An important aspect of learning the Bible is memorization. You should keep in mind that when something is memorized, it's typically understood better and for a longer time. Therefore, help your students understand each biblical text that they are going to memorize. In order to do so, you can help by reading or writing it from different versions of the Bible, explaining to the students the meaning of difficult words, and helping them apply the text to a real situation in their lives. The following are some activities that we hope will help in the task of memorizing and helping others memorize the Word of God. Of course, you should choose the activity that works best in your situation. Keep in mind the number of people in each class, the characteristics of the class, and the class area and resources available.
 - Write the text on the board, and as you develop the lesson, begin to erase words as the students memorize them. Give some sort of prize to the first person that says the verse correctly.
 - Form teams of no more than four people. Give each team cards with words from the memory verse (one word per card). Allow one or two minutes so that, without looking at the Bible, the students put the verse together correctly and all the members of the team memorize it. Give a prize to the winning team.
 - Hide the text somewhere inside the classroom. Allow some time for students to look for it and memorize it. The one who achieves this first will be the winner. Don't forget a prize!
- Make stations in different places in the classroom. At each one, present part of the lesson. Before beginning each point, they must memorize part of the verse. The hope is that by the end of the lesson, all will have the verse memorized.
- Make two groups and ask each one to memorize the verse by creating hand motions. After a few minutes, when all members of the teams have the verse and the respective hand motions memorized, they will present it to the other group.

- Divide the class into multiple groups to memorize the text. The group that memorizes it first and can say it without any mistakes will be the winner. Give some sort of recognition to the winning group.

HOW TO PRAY WITH THE ONE SEEKING GOD'S FACE

Be prepared to pray with those who want to pray as the class respond to the lesson in faith. Make arrangements for the pastor and/or other mature believers to help you particularly when many responses are expected.

1. Realize the importance of the moment and give it full attention
2. Kneel, sit or stand next to the person you intend to help.
3. Silently pray for God's guidance and, without interrupting his/her prayer, pray for them too.
He or she is the one who must pray and you are only there to assist as the Holy Spirit leads.
4. Listen to the seeker's prayer to determine if they need help.
5. When the seeker has finished praying, find out if he has the assurance that his prayer was answered. You do not have to know what the prayer was about.
6. If the seeker continues to pray without coming to an end, or without being specific:
 - i. Carefully ask if you can help. Once permission has been granted,
 - ii. Find out why he/she came to pray.
 - iii. Briefly guide them with the relevant Scriptures.
 - iv. Together pray for the specific need and trust God with the request.
 - v. When you have finished praying, find out if he has the assurance that his prayer was answered. If not, briefly encourage them to continue trusting God and walking in the light as God leads them. Remind them that it is only by faith in God that they can have victory and, once the work is done in them, the Holy Spirit will testify with their spirit. There may be no physical manifestations but the assurance of the Holy Spirit will always be there.
7. Remember to give the pastor the names of all the seekers and the outcomes of their prayers.

Term 1:

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Objective of this Term:

This term seeks to help the students understand the faithfulness of God to His promises. The students will understand that what makes them succeed in their life it is not their own power or strength; it is all about God's grace. This grace helps them proceed in submission to God's will even when many people of their age opt in disobedience. The students will understand that true joy in their life comes from God and He is always faithful.

- Lesson 1: **God is Faithful in All Our Seasons of Life**
- Lesson 2: **God Enables Us to Overcome Our Sins**
- Lesson 3: **The Danger of Envy**
- Lesson 4: **God provides a Way to protect a righteous man**
- Lesson 5: **Pride is Sinful and Therefore Destructive**
- Lesson 6: **Responding in faith to God's Call**
- Lesson 7: **God Provides a Sacrifice**
- Lesson 8: **God can use the Hardships we endure to bless others**
- Lesson 9: **God's Presence and Power make us courageous**
- Lesson 10: **The First Passover**
- Lesson 11: **Measuring rod for humankind**
- Lesson 12: **Jesus' suffering and death were not a surprise to Him**
- Lesson 13: **Jesus conquered sin and death**

GOD IS FAITHFUL IN ALL OUR SEASONS OF LIFE

Lesson

01

Objectives: a. To help the students to believe that God's promises are true.
b. To inspire them to celebrate that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
c. Christians can trust God because history shows that God keeps his promises.

Memory Verse: *Joshua told the people "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."* (Joshua 3:5)

10

Scripture: **Joshua 3-4**

Introductory Activity:

Give time to your students to share their testimonies of God's faithfulness with others. Tell them that by so doing, they are bearing witness to the world that God is still at work in this world, bringing joy and salvation. Read the Bible Lesson text.

After Moses died, God made Joshua the new leader of the Israelites. The Israelites were glad that God had chosen Joshua to lead them. After wandering in the desert for many years, it was finally time for the Israelites to get another chance to enter the Promised Land. There was one problem: the Israelites had to cross the Jordan River. The river had flooded, so they could not cross it easily. God told Joshua to have the priests carry the Ark of the Covenant and walk in front of the Israelites. When the priests reached the river, they were to step into it. When their feet touched the water, the water stopped flowing and started piling up on both sides. The Israelites were able to cross the Jordan River on dry ground. After everyone had crossed, the water started flowing back again. The Israelites had finally entered the Promised Land.

1. One Thing Standing between the Israelites and the Promised Land

Nearly forty years have passed since the 12 Spies explored the Promised Land. The Israelites did not trust God to fight for them at the time. A new generation has risen within Israel, and they were ready to trust God and follow their new leader, Joshua, into the Promised Land. God's presence, which used to be seen by the fire at night and the cloud in the day, now goes before Israel with the Ark of the Covenant. Just as God directed Moses to part the Red Sea, God also directed Joshua to part the Jordan River. Joshua sent the Priests into the river with the Ark, and the river parted. God instructed the Israelites to gather 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan, and to construct a Memorial to this event on the Promised Land side of the river.

2. Walking into the Future with God

Because the Israelites did not have faith in God's power then, they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. So also, when we refuse to trust God, when we live in rebellion, we receive setbacks and consequences. Walking into the future with God takes faith and courage. However, Christians

do not walk into the future alone, but with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in and around them. The stories of the Bible and the testimonies of others aid Christians as “memorials,” to give them courage that the God who calls them to walk into the future in faith is the same God who walked with the Israelites through the Jordan River.

3. The Meaning of trusting God

Trusting God is at the heart of having a growing faith in God. Because we are not the first to trust God, we can study the Bible and see how others failed and succeeded at trusting God. Ultimately, we can trust God because God never changes. God is always holy, good, and loving. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two sacraments, two outward signs of the inward work of God's grace in a Christian's life. Christians are to have a very practical faith, a faith that lives out in practical ways every day by modeling the life of Jesus. When we share God's love through our actions and words, the Kingdom of God grows.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why is there always a temptation for people to fall away from God, just as the Israelites continually did, even in the days of Jesus?
2. Besides the two sacraments, what are some other ways Christians can bear witness to the work of God in their lives?
3. Who in your life needs to hear your Christian testimony this week?

Review/Application:

Ask your students to summarize what they learned about God's faithfulness and trusting in Him. Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Remind them that their life is like a journey and God is always faithful in all the circumstances of their life. As He accompanied the Israelites He accompanies them and guides them from one stage to the other.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together the Lord's Prayer.

GOD ENABLES US TO OVERCOME OUR SINS

Lesson

02

Objective: To help the students to rejoice knowing it is by God's power and grace that Christians find salvation and victory over sin. To help them understand that worshiping and praising God must be regular habits for Christians. Without regular worship, Christians will experience significant spiritual setbacks.

Memory Verse: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

12

Scripture: **Joshua 6; Ephesians 2:1-10**

Introductory Activity:

Ask one student to pray thanking and asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask some of class members to summarize the content of the previous lesson. Read both Bible Lesson texts.

God promised the Israelites that the land of Canaan was theirs. But the Canaanite people were already living there. That meant the Israelites had to fight for their land. God was on the Israelites' side, so they knew they would win. The first city the Israelites had to conquer was Jericho. This city had very large walls surrounding it. God told Joshua to have all of the Israelites march around the city. Every day, for six days, the Israelites marched around the city one time. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. Then, the priests blew their trumpets, and the Israelites shouted a loud war cry. As they shouted, God made the walls of the city start to shake and crack. All at once, the walls came crashing to the ground.

1. It is God and not believers who has the power to win battles

Soon after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River and entered into the Promised Land, they came to Jericho, the first city God would help them conquer. As Joshua approached the city, a messenger sent from God told him he was standing on holy ground. Because God wanted to make sure the Israelites knew it was God and not them who had the power to win battles, God gave the Israelites very strange instructions for this first battle. Instead of attacking the city with their weapons, they were to march around the city with the Ark of the Covenant, the representation of God's presence with them. Jericho was located in a strategic location. It was an important first step for the Israelites as they began the process of conquering the Promised Land God had called them to possess. The New Testament teaches that it is important for Christians to remember, that it is the grace and power of God at work in them, and not their own piety that brings glory to God. It is important for Christians to not become proud, but remain humble when God works through them in powerful ways.

2. Obedience to God is an essential quality for Christians.

It is essential for Christians to trust God's words. God gives Christians directions through many ways, including the Bible, prayer, and other Christians. At times Christians may not understand why God is calling them to certain actions, but Christians need to trust God has the wisdom and power to accomplish great things through them if they will be obedient. There are many times in which God will call Christians out of what is comfortable, and ask them to take risk in order to demonstrate God's love or compassion. This is why Christians need to have love and trust of God in their hearts, and not just their minds. For it is out of the heart that Christians act. Following God is not just a spiritual decision we make, but also has physical implications. As part of the People of God, God calls Christians to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Sometimes that means saying a quiet prayer, other times it means taking a public stand on behalf of God. Worshiping God with other Christians is one of the most important physical actions Christians can take.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some of the reasons why Joshua believed and obeyed God's commands, even though they did not seem to make a lot of sense?
2. What are some of the small steps of faith Christians can take as they grow in their faith and learn the trust and obedience which will allow them to take large steps of faith?
3. How can mature Christians help younger Christians understand or discern the work of God in this world?
4. How can Christians discern God's call in their lives, how can they know when it is God's voice calling them to a certain action?

Review/Application:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Remind the students that it is the grace and power of God at work in them, and not their own piety that brings glory to God. Worshiping God with other Christians is one of the most important physical actions Christians can take.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Thank God for the praises shared. Pray to close the lesson and surrender to God the prayer requests.

Objective: To help the students understand that outward sins are manifestations of inward sins. To encourage the students to pursue reconciliation with anyone with whom they may be in conflict. To inspire the students to look at the situation from their perspective and from God's perspective, and to seek to understand how reconciliation can occur.

Memory Verse: *If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.*" (Genesis 4:7)

Scripture: **Genesis 4:1-16; Matthew 5:21-26**

Introductory Activity:

Open your class with prayer. Then, ask your students to briefly summarize the previous lesson. Then ask them to mention some ways in which people cause harm to others, even if they do not physically harm them. Furthermore, ask them to indicate the possible steps a Christian can take to be freed from hateful and bitter feelings towards others. Read both Bible Lesson texts.

Adam and Eve's first two sons were named Cain and Abel. Like many brothers, they were very different. Cain was the oldest and farmed the land. Abel was a shepherd who took care of sheep. Cain and Abel had been working in their fields for a long time, and they decided that they would give an offering to God. They wanted to thank God for His blessings. Cain offered a few of the things he had grown in his field. Abel, on the other hand, offered one of the best sheep from his flock. God was pleased with Abel's offering, but He did not accept Cain's offering. Cain was so jealous of his brother that he took Abel out into a field and killed him. God punished Cain for killing his brother. Cain could no longer live in his home and he would no longer be able to grow good crops.

1. Envy can cause murder

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. They ate, and sin entered into their lives. Now sin manifested itself as not just eating a piece of fruit, but in the ultimate crime, murder. Adam and Eve had two sons. Cain, the first-born, brought God a bad offering. Abel, the second-born, brought God a good offering. The text does not give an explanation why one offering was good and the other offering was bad. However, God did warn Cain not to allow sin to control him (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain does not take God's instructions to heart, and allowed the jealousy and anger within him to manifest in violence toward Abel. The effects of sin have tragically increased to murder.

2. How to overcome envy

Jesus makes clear that sin is not just a manifest in outward actions, but can also consume the heart. If Christians want to live a God-honoring holy life, they must go beyond simply living by Christian rules, and instead surrender their whole heart to God. In surrendering their heart to God, God can bring purity and joy into their life that will result in the healing of fractured relationships, both human and divine. God is sovereign, even over suffering and injustice. God's purposes in allowing suffering

may not be immediately understood, but in the end, it will all be worth it. Sometimes people mistakenly believe Christianity is simply about living by a set of rules, like the 10 Commandments. However, Christianity is about the Christian giving their heart, soul, and mind to God, allowing Him to bring healing and salvation to all parts of their life resulting in a life of joy and peace for the Christian. Rather than leaving behind a path of hurt and destruction, the Christian can leave behind a legacy of love and compassion.

3. Understanding the consequences of murder

Murder is the ultimate sin, for it destroys another person who has been made in the image of God. Unlike other sins, there is no way for a person to make full restitution for murder. The sixth commandment applies to premeditated murder. Although the Hebrew term used here can also refer to accidental killing, the commandment here refers to premeditated murder. Deuteronomy 19, where Moses makes a clear distinction between accidental death and premeditated murder, verifies that this is the correct translation of this Hebrew term. In this Deuteronomy passage, Moses makes provision for the safety of those who have accidentally killed someone, while affirming the death penalty for anyone who commits premeditated murder (Deuteronomy 19:1-13). This command does not apply to killing in war, judicial execution, or killing in defense of life.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What do you think God means when he tells Cain he must “rule over” sin?
2. Why does Jesus teach that hating another person is just as sinful as actually killing them?
3. What is required for a youth believer to do in order to refuse to allow bitterness and anger to fester in their hearts?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson for the class; remind them that jealousy and hatred find their ultimate expression in murder. Surrendering their whole heart to God is the best way to avoid envy that may culminate in murder. This surrender is possible when one receives Christ as their Savior.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today’s lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today’s lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord’s Prayer.

GOD PROVIDES A WAY TO PROTECT A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Lesson

04

Objective: To help students understand that sin spreads quickly, causing great pain and destruction. To encourage the students to live lives of righteousness, even among those who wish them harm.

Memory Verse: *The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5)*

16

Scripture: **Genesis 6; 1 Peter 3:8-22**

Introductory Activity:

After the opening prayer, ask your students to briefly summarize the previous lesson. Ask them to explain in which ways God used Noah's family to create a people who will reject sin and serve God? Tell them that God wants to use them to bless many people.

Noah was a good man. He had a wife and three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God was very pleased with Noah, but He was angry with the other people on earth because they were very evil. God told Noah that He was going to destroy all of the human beings and animals that He had made. God then told Noah to build a gigantic boat called an **ark**. The people just laughed at Noah as they watched him build the ark. Soon, they would stop laughing. When Noah finished, God told him to take his family and two of every living creature with him into the ark. It rained very hard for forty long days and nights. The entire earth was flooded, but Noah and his family were safe in the ark. After the rain, God put a beautiful rainbow in the sky. This was to remind us that He will never flood the earth again.

1. God Reveals His Grace by making a Covenant with Noah

The Bible began with two chapters filled with the blessings of God through creation. Beginning with the third chapter though, the focus turned from God's blessings to the destruction sin wrecks on God's creation. By chapter 6 of Genesis, sin had become so prevalent that "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." God decided to begin human beings over again. This time though, instead of simply telling them not to sin, God entered into a new kind of relationship with them – a covenant relationship. While normally a covenant is a formal relationship between two humans, or groups of human beings, God choose to establish a covenant with those God created. In this divine/human covenant, God made promises to people, and called on those people to be faithful to the covenant. While God is beginning humanity over again after the Flood, he established a new covenant with Noah and all creation promising never to destroy human beings like this again. While God promised Noah and his offspring God will never destroy them again, that does not mean there are no longer consequences for sin. The People of God must still flee from sin, and live lives of righteousness. This kind of righteous life is only possible because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who broke the power of sin.

2. **God's Ultimate Covenant with Humanity is through Christ.**

In order to free human beings from the punishment of sin, God enters into covenant relationship in which God pledges to bless and protect those who are faithful to Him. He warned the people of the coming disaster through the Prophet Noah for 120 years. He showed them the way of salvation. If they would just believe His word and repent they would enter the ark and be saved. But they would not believe. In their pride they rejected their only hope of salvation. Only those who believed God's Word and entered the ark were saved. Every other human being died in the devastation. God enters into covenant relationship in which God pledges to bless and protect those who are faithful to Him. The first of these covenants God makes is to Noah and his offspring. The ultimate covenant God will make is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God created this covenant in order to make a way for humans to find salvation from their sins.

3. **All of us are born with the stain of sin in our lives.**

None of us can rid that stain with our good works or attempts at holiness. Our only hope for a life of peace with God and with others is to allow God's forgiveness through Christ to wash us clean and bring us new life. Once saved, we can live lives of joy and peace in the power of the Holy Spirit, even in the midst of a sinful world, because we know our hearts are safe and secure with God. The Apostle Peter calls on us to *"always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks to give the reason for the hope that you have."* One of the reasons Christians have for hope is we know in Christ God saves us from the punishment for our sins.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why did God choose to save Noah's family, and not just completely start over with an all-new humanity?
2. Why is sin so destructive, why can it not be controlled by human strength and good intentions?
3. How to explain others that God's Ultimate Covenant with mankind is made through Christ?

Revision/Application:

Give time to the students to summarize what they learned in this lesson. In the same manner that sin can spread from one person to the entire world, God's blessings can spread from one person. God wants us to live a righteous life even if the majority may prefer to disobey Him. A righteous life is possible only through Christ. In Him we are called to witness God's ultimate covenant with humanity through Christ.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together, praising God for His ultimate covenant He established with all people through Jesus Christ.

PRIDE IS SINFUL AND THEREFORE DESTRUCTIVE

Lesson

05

Objective: To help the students to recognize that at Babel, man was trying to create a society in which they thought they could be their own gods. Students will be helped to understand that human beings can work together to do great things such as develop vaccines, or they can work together to do terrible things like wars. The lesson will encourage the students to find ways they use their gifts and talents to make this world a better place.

Memory Verse: *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2)*

18

Scripture: **Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-21**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the students to indicate how good methods can be used reach bad intentions. Tell them that in this lesson they will learn that God does not like egocentrism.

In very early Bible times, all of the people spoke the same language. The people could talk to anyone in the world and they could understand each other. One day, a group of men got together. They decided that they would build a city with a tower that would reach to the sky. If the men did this, people would notice and tell them how great they were. God watched the men as they built the city and the tower. They worked very hard. Everything was going so well that the men thought they didn't need God anymore. They were very proud, and ignored God. God decided to mix up their language. This made it impossible for the men to continue building. God made all the men speak different languages so they couldn't understand each other. This is why the city was called Babel.

1. Good methods do not justify bad intentions

Human beings decided they did not need God's protection, but thought if they built a huge Tower, then they would be a great people. It is often good for men and women to work together. However, it is not good when they work together, not to glorify God, but are prideful, trying to make a name for themselves. Rather than scattering across the world though, as God had told them to do in the covenant He made with Noah and Noah's sons, they decided to stay in one area and create a city where they could create a great name for themselves. The great symbol of their pride was the Tower of Babel. God frustrated the plans of human beings by making them speak in different languages. Now that they could not all come together to build this tower of pride, they did what God had originally ordered Noah and his sons to do, they scattered across the world. Corruption has developed wherever authorities have not been held accountable. When religion controls people's understanding through a language that is not their own, people have been used for political interests of the religious leaders. Examples: The Spanish Inquisition, the Papacy prior to the Reformation, the crusades from the leadership on both sides, etc. The account of Babel and the origin of languages give logical support for the idea that God wants to communicate His truth to all people in their heart language. God the Creator, who loves His creatures, gave revelation so we might know Him. He did this to reveal, not to obscure. Revelation was given through language.

2. God wants to communicate His truth to all people in their heart language

There is a difference between people coming together to do something to bring glory to God, and people coming together to do something to bring glory to themselves. Human beings are supposed to be living in a relationship with God where God blesses them and they honor God. God's desire for human is not for us to be confused and alienated from God or others. Instead, God wants all people to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In the second chapter of Acts, we hear of a reversal of the confusion God brought at the Tower of Babel. On the day of Pentecost people from many different lands heard Jesus' disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own language through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, rather than having to travel to Jerusalem to hear about the wonders of God in one language, through the People of God, disciples of Jesus are going throughout the world to tell others the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their own languages. There are many things that divide people: languages, cultures, politics, finances (the list could go on and on). However, in Christ we can all be one. No matter what our differences are on a human level, we can all be part of the People of God. However, this takes a deep level of human, and a conscious decision to live our life glorifying God, not ourselves.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. According to Genesis 10:8-12 and 11:1-4, how would you describe the intent of the leaders of this civilization?
2. What are the dangers of bringing glory to ourselves by showing others what we can do under our own power?
3. What are some modern ways people seek to bring glory to themselves instead of to God?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class and allow the students to comment. Remind them that God is the Creator and Savior, we are not gods ourselves. While we can take great joy in the abilities and talents God gives to us, we must never forget that God is the giver of the gifts.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for providing His blessings and care to the entire world rather than one place. The class will also pray for humble life recognizing God as the Creator and Savior.

RESPONDING IN FAITH TO GOD'S CALL

Lesson

06

Objective: To help the students to recognize that at Babel, man was trying to create a society in which they thought they could be their own gods. Students will be helped to understand the Objective: To help the students to celebrate Abraham's great faith and trust in God, that enabled him to step out in faith to follow God's call upon his life. To help them understand that the God who was faithful to Abraham will be faithful to them as well.

Memory Verse: By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8) at human beings can work together to do great things such as develop vaccines, or

20

Scripture: **Genesis 12:1-9; Hebrews 11:8-16**

Introductory Activity:

After the opening prayer, ask some students to share their experiences about trusting God.

One day God spoke to Abraham and called on him to step out in faith and travel to a new land that God would reveal to him. God's call to Abraham was not just to step out in faith, but also included promises God would fulfill if Abraham was obedient.

God promised Abraham would be the father of a great nation, that Abraham would be a great blessing to others, and that all people on earth would be blessed through Abraham. So, at age 75, even though he had no children, and he and his wife were passed the age of producing children, Abraham believed God could give him a son to begin this new family.

1. God who calls us is powerful to do the impossible

God, the Creator of heaven and earth chooses to make another covenant with a human, as he did with Noah. This time though, the covenant is more than just a promise to never wipe out human beings again. This time, the covenant to one man will result in the creation of a special nation that will bless the entire world. God here is continuing His redemptive work to reconcile a sinful human to a holy God. And once again, it is God who takes the first steps. Abraham is not called to just receive the promises, but is called to step out in faith and live his life believing the promises are sure. God's promise to make Abraham into a great nation is impossible in human terms, for Abraham's wife Sarai is too old to bear children. However, Abraham believes God is powerful enough to do the impossible. Thus, as Abraham steps out in faith, he begins cooperating with God to bring about a people who will bless the whole world. Abraham will not prove himself to be perfect in this journey, but God does not call us to perfection, he calls us to faithfulness and obedience. And for all the mistakes Abraham will make, he never loses faith in God nor turns his back on God's call upon his life. Abraham was not just a great man of faith for the Jews to respect, he was also a great man of faith for Christians to respect. Just as Abraham believed in God's promises, so all people are called to believe in God's promises

fulfilled in Jesus and believe in God for salvation. And just as God was faithful to Abraham, we can be confident God will be faithful to us as well.

2. The most important step on a new journey is the first step.

You may have already taken that first step – great! Now what is the next step God is calling you to take? You may have not taken that first step, what is holding you back? The only path to having true joy and peace in this world is to surrender our lives fully to God and accept the salvation Jesus won for us on the cross. The Creator of Heaven and Earth has not created all that is, and then retreated away from this creation. Neither, when sin entered the world did God retreat away from sinful man. Instead, God proves God's great love, compassion, and desire to be reconciled to man by creating relationships with sinful human being. We should celebrate that the heart of our Creator is to love, forgive, and show compassion to us. Following God calls us to not only believe God will fulfill the promises made, but to step out in faith and live our lives as if those promises have already been fulfilled. Thankfully God understands our fears and doubts, and will not turn away from us because of those. Instead, God is full of patience and compassion, and will take those fears and doubts and, if we are willing, replace them with trust and confidence.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. In which way are Christians the beneficiary of Abraham's faithful response to God's promises to him?
2. What are some of the reasons people give for not wanting to live out God's call upon their lives?
3. Who are those around you who are struggling to take the next step toward God, and how can you minister to them and encourage them to take that next step?
4. What is the next step God wants you to take in your spiritual journey?

Review/Application:

Ask your students to apply what they learned from Abraham's faith into their life. Remind them that God does not call anyone without providing them with grace. God calls, sends, and accompanies His called at the same moment. So there is no need of being afraid of following Him. As it happened with Abraham, God is powerful enough to do impossible.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for His grace and faithfulness that endures forever. The class will also take this time to ask God to enable them to have faith similar to Abraham in order to be a blessing to their family, church, and community.

GOD PROVIDES A SACRIFICE

Lesson

07

Objective: To help the students to understand that faith in God is not just an intellectual decision, but is to affect their heart and actions as well.

Memory Verse: *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. (Hebrews 11:17)*

22

Scripture: **Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19**

Introductory Activity:

Lead your students in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Then, ask them to share what they know about sacrifice.

In the Old Testament sacrifices were part of their religious activities; however, in our churches we are not taught to kill animals for sacrifice. Help the students to share their responses.

One day, God spoke to Abraham and told him to do a very difficult thing. God told Abraham to take his son, Isaac, and sacrifice him on an altar. He was testing Abraham. God wanted to see if Abraham would do anything He asked. Abraham told Isaac that they needed to travel to Mount Moriah and offer a sacrifice to God. As they traveled, Isaac asked his father where the lamb was that they would burn as a sacrifice. Abraham told him that God would provide the lamb. When they reached the mountain, Abraham tied up his son and placed him on the altar he had built. Abraham pulled out his knife. And just as he was about to kill Isaac, an angel stopped Abraham and said, *"Don't kill your son."* Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in a bush. God had sent the ram for Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son.

1. True faith is revealed in our obedience to God

God wanted to test Abraham's faith, and see if Abraham loved God's blessings more than he loved God himself. God called on Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. Though God had never called for a child sacrifice before, child sacrifices were not uncommon in Abraham's day among the other religions. Abraham must decide if he will obey God with such a costly sacrifice. Abraham decided to obey God and began the process for making the sacrifice. Isaac was Abraham's only son by his wife, Sarah. Isaac was the only one through whom God could continue fulfilling his covenant promises to Abraham. Abraham was too old to have any more children. Abraham knew that God called him into a covenant relationship (Genesis 12:1-3), and then expanded or reaffirmed that covenant several times (see Genesis 15, 17). Central to the covenant is God's promise to make Abraham a father of a great nation. With the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21), God begins to fulfill this foundational promise. Just before Abraham sacrificed Isaac, God told him to stop, and provided a ram instead for the sacrifice. God then praised Abraham for his great faith and reaffirmed the covenant He had made with Abraham.

2. Abraham had faith in the goodness of God

What made Abraham to obey God was his faith that God could not do harm to Isaac. Abraham knew that God loves both him and his son. In other words, Abraham is a great man of faith because he had faith in the goodness of God. In this passage the writer of Hebrews states that Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac because Abraham had so much faith in God's goodness, he knew God would raise Isaac from the dead if he went through with the burnt offering. Trusting in God may mean a difficult and costly sacrifice for us today. God rewarded Abraham's willingness to sacrifice, and God will reward our sacrifices as well.

3. Our heart must be directed God as the Giver of all blessings

We often do not realize how much we love or desire something until we are faced with the prospect of that person, dream, or possession being taken away from us. As much as Abraham loved the blessing God gave to him, and was thankful for God's miraculous gift, God wanted to make sure Abraham's heart was not directed more toward the blessing than the One who had given the blessing. As human beings, God created us to love. The stain of sin causes us to love what is not worthy of our love, it causes us to desire what is not worthy of our desires. To have faith in God is more than simply believing God exists or that God loves you. Having faith in God means being willing to obey God, no matter what God asks. Because Christians believe God is perfectly good, they know God will never ask them to do something that will ultimately do harm to others.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why are people sometimes tempted to love God's blessings more than they love God?
2. According to the Book of Hebrews, Abraham believed even if he sacrificed Isaac, God would raise Isaac from the dead. At what point during the journey to the mountain do you think Abraham came to this conclusion: early on the journey or late on the journey?
3. What are the types of things people today are investing their love into, that are not worthy of their love?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class and allow them to apply it to their life. Remind them to direct their hearts toward God is perfectly good, so He will never ask them to do something that will ultimately do harm to others.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for providing Christ as our ultimate sacrifice for our salvation.

GOD CAN USE THE HARDSHIPS WE ENDURE TO BLESS OTHERS

Lesson

08

Objective: To help the students understand that although it is not God's will that other people mistreat us, God is able to work through these mistreatments to place us in a situation in which we become a great blessing to others.

Memory Verse: - *God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (Genesis 45:7)*

24

Scripture: Genesis 41; Romans 8:26-39

Introductory Activity:

Open your class by allowing your students to share the experience they have of being mistreated and if they still carry that burden, encourage them to ask the Holy Spirit in prayer to enable them to forgive those who mistreated or mistreat them. In your prayer ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson.

One night, the Pharaoh of Egypt had a strange dream. It was about seven thin cows eating seven fat cows. Pharaoh wanted to know what his dream meant. Then his cup bearer remembered a man in prison who could interpret dreams. His name was Joseph. Pharaoh sent for Joseph and told him about the dream. Joseph said that for seven years Egypt would grow wonderful crops. For the next seven years, there would be a terrible famine. Pharaoh believed Joseph and made him a ruler in Egypt. Joseph's job was to make sure the Egyptians stored a lot of food during the seven good years. They needed to have enough food to eat during the seven year famine. During the famine, Joseph's family went to Egypt to buy some food. Joseph was glad to see his family because he had not seen them for many years. God was faithful to Joseph.

1. God uses the suffering of his servants to bring about good results

God is sovereign over the affairs of men. The wickedness of evil men cannot stop God's purposes from being fulfilled. God worked through the blessings he gave Joseph, and he worked through the sinful choices of others, to bring protection to Abraham's offspring and to the Egyptians. It took over ten years for Joseph to be released from slavery and jail and recognize the way in which God was able to take bad things and turn them into good.

Joseph said in Genesis 50:20 "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.*" This is not a prophetic statement from Joseph, but a theological parallel. This teaching is necessary preparation for people to understand how God could allow Jesus to suffer and die on the cross and it not be some kind of defeat. The crowds intended to harm Christ, but God intended it for the salvation of many: This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (Acts 2:23).

2. Nothing can separate Christians from God's love

Amazingly, through the wicked behavior of Joseph's brothers, Potiphar's wife, and the forgetfulness of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, Joseph still ended up at the exact right place at the exact right time to save Egypt and his father's family from a coming famine. It was not God's will that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, nor that Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. However, God was able to work through those sinful behaviors and used the gift of interpreting dreams to place Joseph in a situation in which he could be a great blessing to others. No one imagined what a great salvation could come through the death of the Messiah. However, God worked through the sinful choices of others to bring about this great salvation.

3. Christians must live out their faith God in their daily lives

A life of significance is usually never an easy life. Instead, through the crucible of suffering, a strong character is formed in a person. Joseph shows through his life a devotion to God, even when he could not see or understand how God was going to rescue him from so many of his troubles. While Joseph waited for God to bring good from his hardships, he still lived a life that blessed others. The term "goodness" means having a high moral character, of being of high quality. Christians are tempted to live down to the moral standards of the community in which they live, but the scriptures call Christians to live up to the high moral standards God has revealed in the scriptures. Sometimes, as in the case of Joseph, to live with high moral standards results in persecution, not praise. However, the Christian living to honor God, even though they may suffer temporary trials, will earn a great reward from God. For Joseph, the reward came both in this life and in the life to come. For others, the reward will only come on the other side of death, when we see Christ face to face.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some of the parallels between Joseph's life and the life of Jesus, as God worked through them to save others?
2. Why do you think Joseph kept living a life of integrity, even when others kept betraying him?
3. What are some resources God has given Christians to help protect our hearts from becoming hardened when we face sufferings?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God is not the source of their suffering because suffering came to the world because of sin. However, God is able to use their suffering to bless them and other people. Thus they need to avoid the temptation of revenge.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God knowing that in all things He works for the good of those who love Him.

GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER MAKE US COURAGEOUS

Lesson

09

Objective: To help the students understand that courage is required for Christians to carry out God's will. To help them to believe that God will never leave them or forsake them, so that when fear grips their heart, they do not lose hope.

Memory Verse: *I tell you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God. (Luke 12:8)*

26

Scripture: **Exodus 7:1-13; Luke 12:4-12**

Introductory Activity:

Lead your students in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them to discuss what causes fear in their life, and how do they recover courage.

The Egyptians forced the Israelites to work for them as slaves. The Israelites cried out to God and asked Him to free them from slavery. God heard their cry and sent Moses and Aaron to Egypt. They were to tell Pharaoh to free the Israelites. If he refused, God would send a plague to Egypt. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh many times and told him to free the Israelites. Each time they went, Pharaoh would refuse and say, "No!" God was true to His word. Pharaoh refused to free the Israelites nine different times, so God sent these nine plagues to Egypt: the waters turned to blood; frogs; gnats; flies; the death of livestock; boils; deadly hail; locusts; and complete darkness in Egypt, all day and night. After all this, Pharaoh still would not let the Israelites go free.

1. God is the only true God who has power over all creation.

Moses returned to Egypt at God's command, in order to rescue the Israelites from slavery and to take them to the Promised Land. God overcame Moses' fears by doing miracles for Moses. Now Moses performs miracles on God's behalf to show Pharaoh God's great power. Pharaoh believed in many gods, he even believed he had divinity. Therefore, he did not believe he needed to submit to Moses' "god." However, as Moses demonstrated in all the plagues of God upon Egypt, Moses' God is the only true God who has power over all creation. In general, the reports of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart come during the last four plagues, after references to Pharaoh hardening his own heart during the earlier plagues. One interpretation of this is, after Pharaoh continually acted sinfully, God gave Pharaoh over to his sinfulness. (see Romans 1:18-32). At first, Pharaoh refused to submit to God's command through Moses. Therefore, over the course of time God sent a series of ten plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh finally relented after the 10th plague. God powerfully delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt through his servant Moses. God saved his people from death when, in trust and obedience to this Word, they shed the blood of an innocent victim in the Death of the Firstborn plague.

Jesus warned his followers they must be willing to speak for God in front of others. Being a follower of Jesus may result in persecution and sufferings, but it is better to suffer for Jesus' sake than to reject Jesus' commands, and thus be rejected by Jesus.

2. God sends Christians share the message of salvation

In the same manner that God hears the cries of the enslaved Israelites and sends Moses to rescue them from Egypt with great signs and wonders, there are times in which Jesus call us to be courageous and speak up for God's concerns or to provide for those who are in need. Like the Israelites in Egypt, God still hears the cries of those who are suffering, and still sends Christians to set them free from their oppression. Pharaoh would not honor God's word spoken through Moses, and the Egyptians suffered because of that disobedience. They suffered through the 10 plagues God sent on Egypt. God's answer to the Israelite's cries though did not come without a cost to Moses. Moses must have the courage that God will protect him and deliver on the promises made to Moses. We must guard our hearts. Falling away from God is rarely ever a simple one-time decision. Instead, people often make many small disobedient decisions over time that result in an eventual inability to hear God's voice at all. These disobedient decisions are when we rely on our own wisdom and strength more than on God's wisdom and strength for direction. The key to guarding our hearts is believing God will never leave us or forsake us.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some consequences of sin that affect more than just the individual who sinned?
2. How does pride cause a person to either doubt God's word to them, or doubt that God's will is better than their own will?
3. How does a Christian gain the courage to speak up for God's concerns when the result might be persecution?
4. What gifts, talents, and/or abilities has God given you that you can use to help others who are in need?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Encourage the students to trust God as the source of true courage. Inspire them to be God's vessels in bringing freedom to those who are still under bondage of sin and devil. As God used Moses to accomplish His saving plan, He calls each of us to go and make Christ like disciples. In the same manner that God never adandoned Moses, Christ promises to be with us always to the very end of the age.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God who hears the cry of those in bondage and rescue them.

Objective: To help the students to celebrate God's provision of salvation to all those who faithfully follow God's instructions. To help them understand that the Lord's Supper with honor and joy, for it is the Christian's Passover meal to celebrate our salvation through Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse: *This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover. (Exodus 12:11)*

Scripture: **Exodus 11:1-12:13; Luke 22:1-23**

Introductory Activity:

Lead your students in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Let the students share what they know about Passover.

God had sent nine plagues upon Egypt because Pharaoh had refused to free the Israelites from slavery. God decided to send one more plague upon Egypt. God had Moses tell Pharaoh and the Israelites that around midnight He would go through the country. The firstborn son of every family living in Egypt would die. God gave instructions to the Israelites living in Egypt. Each Israelite family was to sacrifice a lamb or a goat. They were to take the blood and put it on the top and sides of their doorframe. When God passed by each house, He would look for the blood. If He saw the blood, He would pass over the house and the firstborn son would be saved. If He didn't see the blood, the firstborn son would die. When Pharaoh realizes that his son had been killed, he was finally willing to free the Israelites.

1. In the Passover God reveals His faithfulness to the oppressed people

For nine plagues, Pharaoh refused God's command through Moses to let the Israelites leave Egypt. God gave Moses instructions on what would be the final plague, the Plague of the Firstborn. In this plague every firstborn son in Egypt would die, of both animals and humans. After this plague, Pharaoh finally relented and let the Israelites leave Egypt. God also gave Moses instructions to pass on to the Israelites to protect them from the Plague of the Firstborn and be ready to leave Egypt. For protection from the final plague, the Israelites must sacrifice a sheep or goat, prepare it for a meal, and put marks of its blood on the doorframes of their homes. This Passover has to be a recurring festival the Israelites will celebrate annually. In the Passover God continued to be faithful to the covenants made to the Patriarchs of Israel. God provided salvation to the Israelites from Egypt so they could journey to the Promised Land, build a Temple, and worship God freely.

2. God's provision of salvation to all

The Last Supper instituted by Christ in the New Testament brings the fulfillment of what took place in Egypt in the Old Testament. The Book of Exodus reveals that all Egypt suffered the consequences of Pharaoh's pride that caused Pharaoh's heart to harden and refuse to do what was best for the Egyptians. Students might argue that the last plague should only affect Pharaoh rather than all the Egyptians. However, Pharaoh was not the only proud person. Both Pharaoh and the Egyptians were mistreating Israel. The Egyptian oppression showed that a cruel oppressor cannot make the oppressed people to be free without being defeated. On the other hand, even the Egyptians who obeyed God's orientations regarding Passover were also rescued because God's salvation is available to everyone. This was true for Israel under Pharaoh, and it is true today for those who are under Satan's power. In this way, people today have hearts that have been hardened by sin and the consequences of sin. Even Christians, if they are not careful to keep their hearts open to God, can fall into temptations that will result in hardened hearts.

3. Jesus instituted a new Passover meal for his disciples

On the night of his betrayal Jesus instituted a new Passover meal. In the first Passover God provided freedom from slavery to Egypt, in the second Passover God provided freedom from slavery to sin. The Lord's Supper, The Eucharist, and Communion are some of the names used to refer to this new Passover meal. God provides instructions for life, for salvation from slavery. Today people that follow God's instructions for life find freedom from sin. The Christian faith is not only about beliefs; it is a faith made alive in the actions of Christians. Celebrating the Lord's Supper is one of the actions God calls Christians to practice. In the Last Supper, Christians celebrate the freedom God has brought to them through the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is a time for honest reflection on the quality of our Christian faith, and a time of joyful celebration for the salvation Jesus has provided for Christians.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What is the connection between the First Passover in Egypt and the Last Supper instituted by Christ in the New Testament?
2. What causes people to rebel against God's commands?
3. What can you do to prepare your heart for taking The Lord's Supper?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God is faithful in rescuing the oppressed. The blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross has power to rescue any person who believes in Him. The Lord's Supper is the fulfillment of the first Passover.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Objective: To help the students to recognize that our responsibility as Christians is to honor our Creator and Savior with how we live our daily lives.

Memory Verse: *He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*
(Luke 10:27)

Scripture: **Exodus 20:1-20; Luke 10:25-28**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Let the students share what they know about the 10 Commandments.

The Israelites had been traveling in the desert for three long months. They finally came to a place called Sinai. The Israelites were very tired and set up their camp at the edge of a mountain called Mount Sinai. This mountain is also known as God's holy mountain. God told Moses to climb to the very top of Mount Sinai. He had some rules for the Israelites that would help them to know what was right and wrong. They are called the Ten Commandments. God wrote these rules on two tablets that were made of stone. Moses took the tablets with him back down the mountain so he could show them to the Israelites. These were some of the rules: Have no other gods before me; Do not take God's name in vain; Honor your father and mother; Do not murder; Do not steal; Do not lie.

1. Rescued people receive the 10 Commandments

After their deliverance from Egypt and crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites have camped at the base of Mount Sinai. Along the way, God provided food for them, water for them, and victory in battle over the Amalekites. Now God provided the foundational 10 Commandments upon which the People of God were to live their lives before God and with each other. The basis for why the Israelites should be obedient to these 10 Commandments is God's gracious deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites were not to follow the 10 Commandments in order to be loved and accepted by God, they already were loved and accepted. God proved this love by rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites were to be obedient to these commandments as a response to God's love and care that had already been expressed to them. Moses went down the mountain and taught the commandments to Israel. The 10 Commandments are: *"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet."* The Israelites were afraid when they saw Mt. Sinai consumed with smoke, thunder, and lightening. Moses told them not to be afraid, that God wants to use God's power to protect them.

2. The 10 Commandments are summarized in loving God and one's neighbor

When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus said that loving God with your whole life and your neighbor as yourself. The 10 Commandments are the foundation of these two greatest commandments. It is significant that God frames this commandment in terms of love. Again, the commandments God gives Israel are not miscellaneous burdens to be followed just to be followed. Instead, they are the means through which Israel could respond in love to God in the way they live before God and with one another. Learning from Jesus, scholars often divide the 10 Commandments into two groups, those commands concerned with our relationship with God (the first four), and those concerned with our relationship with one another (the last six). Because all humans are created in the image of God, it is not enough just to worship God; we are to live out our faith in tangible and practical ways with others.

These foundational commands were not miscellaneous rules that must be followed simply because God commanded them to be followed. Instead, they were an expression of God's love for Israel in that, if they were followed, would result in great blessings for the Israelites in their relationship with God and with one another. God made a covenant with Israel and would be faithful to the covenant. God gave the 10 Commandments after rescuing Israel from bondage. Israel can trust God and the commands because of the love God has shown in the Exodus. Additionally, we can trust God and God's commands, not just because of the Exodus, but because Jesus' life, death, and resurrection demonstrate God's love to us.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What do the 10 Commandments reveal about God?
2. What do the 10 Commandments reveal about people?
3. Why do people often react negatively when someone tries to make them live by certain rules?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God rescued His people before He gave them the 10 Commandments. These 10 Commandments are an expression of God's love to His people. As Christians, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to love God and our neighbors because without Him we cannot please God.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for saving us, and for providing His Commandments for our benefit.

JESUS' SUFFERING AND DEATH WERE NOT A SURPRISE TO HIM

Lesson

12

Objective: To help the students to know that Jesus knew that His suffering and death were part of God's plan to bring salvation to the world.

Memory Verse: *Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. Luke 18:31*

32

Scripture: **Luke 18:31-34; Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Have time to thank God for salvation in Christ.

Luke records three instances in his gospel of Jesus predicting his impending death (see also Luke 9:21-27 and 9:43-45). The common belief in Jesus' day was that God's Messiah would be a military leader like King David who would free Israel from her bondage to the Roman Empire. However, Jesus continually taught that God's Messiah would not be like King David, but would be like the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah prophesied. It was hard for Jesus' disciples to accept these predictions, and in fact, it was only after Jesus' resurrection that they began to believe this part of Jesus' teachings. However, it is important to understand that their lack of belief did not hinder Jesus' ministry, that Jesus fully lived out God's call upon his life, even when Jesus knew it meant he would experience suffering and pain.

1. Jesus fully knew his mission was to die and rise again in Jerusalem

Jesus taught his disciples on several occasions that he would die in Jerusalem at the hands of the authorities. Jesus' death was not a surprise to him, he resolutely set out for Jerusalem so he would arrive there at the Passover, and be God's perfect lamb who would take on himself the sins of the world. Jesus' disciples did not understand his teaching on this point. Although Jesus taught them repeatedly that God's Messiah had to die and be resurrected, they thought God's Messiah instead would overthrow the Roman authorities and free Israel from bondage to Rome.

Rather than avoid this painful mission and avoid Jerusalem, Jesus purposefully made his way to Jerusalem in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation for the world. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish life, housing the Temple, and being where the most important religious and political leaders of Israel lived. Crucifixion was one of the most painful means by which the Roman Empire killed people. Crucifixions occurred just outside the city walls, where travelers in and out of the city would be confronted with the power and ruthlessness of the Roman authorities.

2. God's plan of salvation to sinful humanity required sacrifice

God's plan to provide a means of salvation to sinful humanity required sacrifice. And, in Jesus' mind, this sacrifice was not too high a price to pay. While Jesus knew of his impending death, his disciples did not understand his multiple teachings on this fact. Yet, Jesus continued to teach them knowing that after his resurrection they would begin to understand not just that Jesus had to die for them, but that long before his death, Jesus knew and chose this path. One of the reasons why the disciples struggled so much to understand Jesus teaching about the necessity of his death is that their image of God's Messiah was centered around King David instead of Isaiah's teachings about the Suffering Servant. From their youngest years Jesus' disciples would have been taught that, while Israel is now under bondage to Rome, God would send a Savior, a Messiah in the line of King David who will fight and free Israel from her bondage.

3. The Suffering Messiah

It was only on the other side of the resurrection that the disciples began to understand the teachings of Isaiah about the Suffering Servant were in fact teachings about the coming Messiah. It would not be enough for the Messiah to simply break the power of Rome and free Israel from her political bondage to Rome. No, God's Messiah would break the power of sin, and offer a salvation that would free all peoples from their bondage to sin. The entire efficacy of God's plan for Jesus as a Savior for sin is removed from Christianity with the removal of Jesus' substitutionary death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Christians are not called to seek out sufferings and troubles. Enough sufferings and troubles will naturally come their way because they live in a sinful world. However, Christians are called to seek out those who are suffering and in trouble and be Jesus' hands and feet to them.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some other instances in the Gospels in which Jesus demonstrated his knowledge of the future? (Peter's denial, Judas' betrayal)
2. Why do some people assume that when they become Christians, God will take away all their problems and struggles?
3. How does experiencing suffering for Jesus help a Christian better minister to others who need Jesus?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God's Messiah would break the power of sin, and offer a salvation that would free all peoples from their bondage to sin. As Christians we should not seek suffering but we are called to seek out those who are suffering and in trouble and be Jesus' hands and feet to them.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for providing salvation to human beings through the suffering and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

JESUS CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH

Lesson

13

Objective: To help the students to rejoice, knowing that Jesus is Lord over both sin and death; and to inspire the students to take comfort because Jesus knows their pain and grief.

Memory Verse: *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;" (John 11:25).*

34

Scripture: **John 11:1-44; Isaiah 53:1-6**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask the students to share their experience of praying to the sick.

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in Bethany. Jesus loved this family and stayed at their home many times. One day, Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus telling Him that Lazarus was very sick. They knew that Jesus had healed other people, and they wanted Him to come right away. Jesus left for Bethany two days after He received the message from Mary and Martha. When Jesus got to Bethany, Lazarus was already dead and had been buried for four days! When Mary and Martha saw Jesus, they ran to Him and fell at His feet. They cried and said, "Jesus if you had been here sooner, you could have healed our brother." Jesus cried when He heard the news about Lazarus. He knew how much Mary and Martha loved their brother. Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus was buried and said, "Lazarus, come out!" After Jesus said this, Lazarus walked out of the tomb! He was alive!

1. It is never too late for Jesus to solve our problems

Mary and Martha were sisters, whose brother Lazarus was very sick. They were good friends with Jesus, and sent word to him of Lazarus' illness, hoping Jesus would come and heal their brother. Jesus did not immediately go to see Lazarus when he received word from the sisters. Instead, he wanted to show everyone his power over death. Therefore, Jesus waited a few days before going to Bethany, where Lazarus and his sisters lived. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already died. Both sisters lamented Jesus took so long, otherwise their brother would not have died. Jesus, however, encourages them to believe Lazarus could rise from the dead. When they arrived at Lazarus' tomb, Jesus ordered the stone rolled away. He then commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus rose from the dead when Jesus spoke these words! He walked out of the tomb with the burial cloths still wrapped around him. Everyone rejoiced Jesus' disciples kept following him, even when they did not understand why he was going back to Judah.

2. Jesus accepts our lack of faith and our doubts

Lazarus' sisters kept faith in Jesus, even when he initially did not answer their prayers, as they wanted them answered. Christians can take comfort in knowing, we do not need to know all the answers or have the right amount of faith in order to follow Jesus. Jesus accepts our lack of faith and our doubts,

and invites us to grow and mature as he proves himself loving and faithful. Along the way, Jesus calls Christians to take whatever faith and comfort they have, and use them to express Jesus' love for others who are also lacking in faith and comfort. By becoming ambassadors of Jesus' love and comfort, Christians show forth the glory of God.

3. Jesus does not despise our sorrows

Jesus did not just walk on earth as a great teacher and miracle worker; he also suffered as the lamb for our sacrifice. Jesus knew pain, knew sorrow, and knew rejection. Jesus is our great High Priest, who can join us in our pain and sorrow, because he knows the pain we feel. Jesus weeps because, in his humanity, He identifies Himself with the grief of his close friends. In this lesson, we will continue to point out Jesus' deity by looking at the power of an amazing miracle. Jesus, as the image of the invisible God, demonstrated God's power in miracles and in raising a person from the dead. Jesus, as Messiah, entered fully into our humanity. Jesus knew pain, rejection, opposition, and hunger. Because Jesus entered fully into our humanity, no sorrow or grief, pain or doubt, is too tough for Jesus to handle. We can lay on Jesus all our doubts and pain, knowing Jesus will comfort and heal us.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. It is hard to understand why God answers some prayers for healing with "yes," but other prayers for healing with "no." What hope do all Christians have, regardless of how God answers our prayers?
2. What practical ways can you minister God's grace to those who are sick or homebound this week?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that they can lay on Jesus their doubts and pain, knowing that Jesus will comfort and heal them. The students need to know that Jesus does not despise their sorrow and grief. When Jesus performed his greatest miracle, raising a four-day old dead body from the dead, is an assurance that in Christ there is resurrection and life.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for Christ being our hope of resurrection and life.

SALVATION IS THROUGH CHRIST: FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST

Objective of this term:

This term brings the lessons which are related to the death and resurrection of Christ. The students will be helped to understand that our Christian life is completely dependent on Christ. They will also understand that Pentecost took place because Jesus had fulfilled the plan of salvation through His death and resurrection.

- Lesson 14: **The Triumphal Entry**
- Lesson 15: **Jesus Cleans the Temple**
- Lesson 16: **Great Lesson from Jesus' Arrest**
- Lesson 17: **It is hard to keep bold claims**
- Lesson 18: **Jesus Conquers death**
- Lesson 19: **Jesus Removes our Doubts and Fears**
- Lesson 20: **The Resurrected Messiah operates Miracle in Believers' Life**
- Lesson 21: **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**
- Lesson 22: **The Community of Jesus Christ**
- Lesson 23: **The problem of Lie**
- Lesson 24: **Forgiving our persecutors**
- Lesson 25: **From zeal against Christ to Zeal for Christ**

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Lesson

14

Objective: To help the student to recognize that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfills the prophecies of the victorious Messiah as told in the Old Testament.

Memory Verse: *When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen. (Luke 19:37)*

37

Scripture: **Luke 19:28-44; Zechariah 9:9-13**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them to share what they know about the Palm Sunday.

One day, Jesus and His disciples were traveling to Jerusalem. Before they reached the city, they stopped at the Mount of Olives. Jesus told two of his disciples to go into the village there. They would find a donkey and a colt tied to a post. They were to tell the owner that Jesus needed the animals and that He would bring them back when He was finished with them. The disciples went into town and found the donkey and the colt just as Jesus had said. They took the animals back to Jesus and put their robes on the animals' backs. Jesus sat on them and rode into town. The crowd followed Jesus into Jerusalem. They were waving palm branches in the air and shouting, "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (NIV). The people were treating Jesus like a king. But Jesus knew that these people would become angry and turn away from Him.

1. Jesus was the Messiah about whom Zechariah prophesied

Jesus entered Jerusalem at the Passover feast as a king. His entry is marked with many Old Testament allusions to a victorious king entering into the city. However, while some in the crowds celebrated Jesus as king, the religious authorities did not. They were scandalized at the worship the crowds gave to Jesus, and ordered him to stop them. Jesus knows these crowds celebrating his entrance expect him to be a political and military Messiah who will free them from Rome's control. Even Jesus' disciples will abandon him when the guards come to arrest him. Therefore, everyone misunderstood Jesus. Jesus knows this is His Father's path for Him, and while there will be great pain and suffering over the next few days, Jesus' obedience to His Father's plan will lead to salvation for all who embrace Jesus as the real Messiah. The disciples will look back on these events after the resurrection and recognize, while they and so many others misunderstood Jesus' ministry, this did not stop Jesus from being the kind of Messiah God promised.

2. Jesus is the Messiah to conquer not Rome but sin and death

Everyone misunderstood the nature of Jesus' ministry: the crowds, the religious authorities, even his disciples. They all viewed Jesus in terms of human power and authority, but Jesus came to bring

spiritual power and authority. Christians need to be careful they keep their hearts and minds open to Jesus' teachings so they do not fall into the trap of misunderstanding the ministry of Jesus in their lives and this world. Jesus shied away from allowing people to recognize his identity as Messiah. His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, however, changed this. Now, in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, Jesus allows the crowds to sing his praises as Messiah. The crowds still do not understand the kind of Messiah Jesus was, however, after his resurrection, they will.

Those hoping for a military Messiah read Zechariah 9:9-11 as promising exactly what they wanted. However, after Jesus' resurrection, those who experienced Jesus' salvation and freedom from sin recognized this passage meant the Messiah would conquer, not Rome, but sin and death. Even today, many people do not understand the difference between the cause and the consequence of their problems. They go to Christ as a way of solving the consequences of their problem, but they fail to accept Jesus to solve the cause. The cause of all problems in this world is not political or economical. It is the problem of sin and Christ came to solve that. Are you forgiven, or you are still under oppression of it? If sin is Satan is still your oppressor, you cannot claim to be ruled by the Messiah.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some ways people today misunderstand the kind of king Jesus is and why?
2. Why did the religious authorities become so upset with the crowd's praises of Jesus?
3. All of us had some wrong ideas about God. What are some of the wrong ideas you had about God that Jesus has corrected?
4. Jesus as the promised Messiah deserves our worship. What are some ways you can worship Jesus every day of the week?

Review/ Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that Jesus is the promised Messiah but not as a political leader but the One who came to conquer sin and death. This is to say that the political challenges were just the consequences of the real problem which was sin. In the same manner, Christians today are to avoid the tendency of seeking Jesus just to get what they want in this world; Jesus has to be the King of our life and obedience to His Words must be our lifestyle.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God knowing that Jesus Christ reigns in their hearts.

JESUS CLEANS THE TEMPLE

Lesson

15

Objective: To help the students to Recognize that Jesus came not just to bring salvation to sinners, but also to correct abuses some had brought into the worship of God.

Memory Verse: *"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be a house of prayer"; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"* (Luke 19:46)

39

Scripture: **Luke 19:45-48; Jeremiah 7:1-11**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that believers are the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the Temple must maintain clean.

After Jesus rode the donkey and colt into Jerusalem, He stopped at the Temple to worship. When He went into the courtyard of the Temple, He saw some men selling animals to people for their sacrifices. He also saw them exchanging money. As Jesus watched the men, He noticed that they were cheating the people and making a lot of money. Jesus was very angry with these men because they were lying and cheating the people while they were in the Temple, God's house. Jesus ran to the tables and turned them upside down. Birds went flying into the air, and boxes of money went crashing to the floor. Jesus was so angry that He started yelling at the men. He said, *"My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a 'den of robbers'"* (NIV). After Jesus had said this, the men who were cheating the people were so afraid that they ran out of the Temple.

1. The Temple is a place for worship, not for personal gain

Soon after the crowds praised Jesus at the Triumphal Entry, Jesus entered the Temple Courts. Angry that people were conducting business where they were supposed to be praying, Jesus turned over the sellers' tables. Jesus' actions here are not the result of out of control rage. Instead, Jesus demonstrated the Word of God in this particular situation. When the Israelites came to the Temple to make sacrifices or give offerings, there were specific rules about what kind of animals and money they could use. In order to make sure worshipers had the correct kinds of animals and money, some people set up stalls in the Temple Courts to sell these items. The sellers often charged very high prices for these items. These sellers were conducting business in an area where Gentiles were supposed to come and worship God.

Jesus was also upset that the sellers' prices were so high that it hurt the religious pilgrims who came to Jerusalem to worship God. Taking advantage of religious pilgrims was not new for Jesus' day. His actions here are fulfilling prophecies from Isaiah and Jeremiah who both warned the Israelites about not taking advantage of one another. God sent Jeremiah to preach against the abuses in Israel. God called the Israelites to care for one another as an expression of their love for God. However, instead of lovingly caring for one another, many Israelites were instead taking advantage of one another.

2. Christians are to protect themselves from greed

While it often takes money to operate churches and pay for pastors, money can sometimes become a hindrance to the mission of God in the world. It is wrong for people take advantage of others financially. Jesus was very upset that people claiming to be following God were taking advantage of religious pilgrims. He was also upset that it was in the Temple Courts that they carried out this abuse. In order to protect themselves from greed, Christians should regularly practice generosity. When Christians are generous with others, they not only remind themselves of the generosity of God, but also put the love of God in action. Jesus wants Christians to make sure money does not control our actions and values. Christians should always keep money in its place, as a resource Christians use to help our families, churches, and others. Money is not to become an idol for Christians.

When greed attacks us we stop obeying God because our decisions are influenced by the love of money. Paul underlines that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:10). In our days, many youths drop school because they are impregnated just because some people promised them money. Whenever we are tempted by greed, we need to keep our lives free from love of money and be content with what we have knowing that God promised to be with us always as our helper (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why is greed such a powerful temptation for so many people?
2. Why do some Christian leaders give into the sin of taking advantage of others?
3. The greed of the sellers made Jesus angry. Is there anything about money that makes you angry?
4. How can you be generous with others this week, either by sharing your time, treasure, or talents?

Review/ Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Instead of being taken by greed, Christians should regularly practice generosity. By so doing, they not only remind themselves of the generosity of God, but also put the love of God in action. Jesus wants Christians to make sure money does not control our actions and values.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for His loving care for us. Ask God in prayer that the students will be protected from greed.

GREAT LESSON FROM JESUS' ARREST

Lesson

16

Objective: Help the students understand the power of sin can so infect a person's heart that what they consider to be good actions are actually a betrayal of God.

Memory Verse: *In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. (Matthew 26:55)*

41

Scripture: **Matthew 26:47-56; Genesis 37**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask the students why Jesus did not use His power to defeat those who arrested Him.

Judas knew that the priests hated Jesus, so he went to talk to them. Judas asked them what they would give to him if he would tell them where they could find Jesus. The priests offered Judas 30 silver coins, so he agreed to betray Jesus. When the disciples had finished eating the Last Supper with Jesus, Judas left the room to find the priests. A crowd of people carrying swords followed Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas knew that Jesus would be there. Judas told the men that the man he kissed would be Jesus. When Judas kissed Jesus, the men grabbed Jesus and arrested Him. Peter was so angry that he took his sword and cut off the ear of one of the men. Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him. Jesus knew that this was all part of God's plan, so He didn't fight against the men.

1. We are not better than Judas

Last lesson was about the danger of greed. This lesson helps us understand more about this issue. Judas, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, arranged to betray Jesus to the Chief Priests. The Chief Priests did not like Jesus' teachings or the large crowds who listened to him. Therefore, they were happy when Judas agreed to turn Jesus over to them at night when the crowds were not around. They paid Judas 30 pieces of silver in exchange for his betrayal. This did not surprise Jesus, he knew Judas would betray him, and that all this was part of God's plan of salvation. The Chief Priests did not have the authority to kill Jesus, and so they conspired with the Roman authorities to arrest Jesus and eventually have him crucified. Everything is happening as Jesus told the disciples it would happen. At the Last Supper, he told them one of the disciples would betray him. Judas had already agreed to betray Jesus for the price of 30 pieces of silver. We do not know why, but Judas agreed to betray the Messiah.

2. All humanity was represented in Jesus' arrest

Satan deceives people. He deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to believe eating the forbidden fruit would make them more like God. He deceived the religious authorities and Judas to believe betraying Jesus would benefit their lives. Still today, Satan deceives people to believe committing sins will actually make them feel better and not hurt others. However, as all Christians know, sins do not benefit people, but harm them, and others. While the religious leaders hated the

Romans for occupying their land, the Romans also scared them. The religious leaders believed Jesus would lead a rebellion against the Romans and lose. The Romans would then punish the Israelites by taking away even more rights from them, maybe even the right to worship at the Temple. Thus the religious leaders conspired to have Jesus killed. John's Gospel reveals Peter was the disciple who used the sword to try to stop the arrest of Jesus. Jesus, however, never used violence to accomplish his mission. Judas committed a terrible sin by betraying Jesus, however, Peter's striking out in violence was also wrong. Instead of using violence to protect Himself, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. While nothing compares to Judas' betrayal of Jesus, Joseph also suffered at the hands of his brothers who should have protected him instead of selling him. The brothers, consumed with jealousy and anger toward Joseph conspired to get rid of him.

3. Learning from Jesus' gentleness

Gentleness is the gift of having an appropriate temper. It does not mean you never get upset, and it does not mean you allow others to take advantage of you. Instead, it means having the appropriate response for the occasion. In this lesson, Jesus demonstrated a very gentle spirit when confronted by Judas, his betrayer, and the soldiers. However, just the day before Jesus cleared the Temple courts of the sellers and moneychangers. In both cases, though very different, Jesus demonstrated the same power and strength of being in control of his emotions and actions. A gentle Christians knows when to confront someone and when to keep quiet, and in both cases acts out of a God-given wisdom of the situation.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What sins do people commit today they do not think will harm them or others?
2. What are some situations in which a gentle person will act in bold ways, and what are some situations in which a gentle person will act in quiet ways?

Review/ Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that Jesus had power to avoid His arrest but He knew that He came to die to save the world. Jesus' arrest is a great lesson for us about gentleness. He did not use His power to fight against His enemies. He used his power to save them.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for what Christ did for our salvation. He used His power not to destroy his enemies but to save them.

IT IS HARD TO KEEP BOLD CLAIMS

Lesson

17

Objective: To help the students to recognize that despite all Peter's claims he would never abandon Jesus, when the crisis arose, Peter did abandon Jesus.

Memory Verse: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

43

Scripture: **Luke 22:54-62; Hebrews 4:14-16**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them to share their experiences on making bold promises and failing to fulfill. Explain to them that Christ knows our hearts and He always wants to heal us from our sorrows.

During the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples that they all would deny Him. To deny someone means to say that you don't know that person, when you really do. The disciples couldn't believe that any of them would deny Jesus. Peter stood up and said that he would die before denying Jesus. Jesus turned to Peter and said that before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny Him three times. That night, when the men took Jesus away, Peter sat in the courtyard and waited to hear about Jesus. A young girl asked Peter if he had been with Jesus. Peter told her that he didn't know what she was talking about. Then another girl told Peter that she had seen him with Jesus. Peter said that he didn't know the man. A little later, a group of people said that Peter had to be a disciple because he talked like them. Peter denied Jesus by saying, *"I don't know the man!"* Just then, a rooster crowed.

1. Fear made Peter to deny Jesus

After Jesus' arrest, all his disciples fled. Peter, however, secretly followed Jesus and the guards. When they arrived at the high priest's home, Peter entered the home's courtyard where he could watch the proceedings. However, three people recognize Peter as being a disciple of Jesus and want him to identify himself as such. Rather than admitting this, Peter did as Jesus predicted he would, he denied Jesus three times. Being in the high priest's courtyard was very dangerous for Peter. Peter had just cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants, and deserved prosecution. Upon the third denial, Jesus looked at Peter, and Peter, seeing the Lord look at him and hearing the rooster crow, realized he had just fulfilled the prediction Jesus made just a little while ago. (Luke 22:34) Peter, filled with shame, ran away to weep bitterly. While there is much to learn from this account, it we must remember this is not the end of Peter's story. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus reinstated Peter as a disciple. (John 21:15-19) Far from being only a failing for Peter, this event served to reveal to Peter his true cowardice so that Peter would always remember any good in him is from Jesus and not from himself. When Christians endure sufferings and persecutions for Jesus, they reflect the character

of Jesus in their lives. Additionally, when Christians endure sufferings for Jesus, they are witnesses to others of the love of Jesus.

2. Jesus is our High Priest

No one wants to fail someone he or she loves. Additionally, no one wants that failure revealed publicly. This very painful episode in Peter's life serves as one of the most important episodes in Peter's life. Peter, who always believed himself to be the most devoted, most loving disciple of Jesus, is not yet the devoted disciple he thinks he is. The good news is, now that this crisis reveals Peter's weakness, Jesus can build up Peter to be the actual devoted disciple he wanted to be in the first place. Often times Jesus as our High Priest will use situations in the lives of Christians to do the same thing: reveal our weaknesses so Jesus can fill us with his strength. Contrary to the corrupt high priest in Jerusalem who arrested Jesus and turned Him over to the Roman authorities, Jesus is our true high priest. He is a high priest able to sympathize with our weaknesses because he faced temptations just as we do. Because of this, we can trust Jesus and know when we call out to him, he will answer us with mercy and grace.

3. In our weaknesses Jesus can fill us with His strength

Hardships reveal character. However, hardships can also form our character. Just because Peter failed Jesus in his time of trial does not mean Jesus abandoned Peter. Instead, Peter's denials became a vital turning point in his life as he painfully realized how weak he was. After the resurrection, and Jesus' forgiveness, Peter will be able to live in the power of Jesus instead of trying to live out of his own power. While many Christians, like Peter, want to make bold declarations of their devotion to God, it is wiser to remain humble and allow the power of Jesus to work through them knowing that we cannot succeed without His power.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do you think Peter's actual character was so much weaker than he claimed it would be?
2. Why do you think it was important for Jesus to predict Peter would deny him three times by the end of the night?
3. Why would Satan want Christians to believe their failures are so big Jesus will never forgive them? How can Christians fight against this lie with the truth?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that their strength comes from Christ, so instead of making bold declarations of their devotion to God, they have to remain humble and allow the power of Jesus to work through them.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together the Lord's Prayer.

JESUS CONQUERS DEATH

Lesson

18

Objective: To help the students understand that Christ's resurrection breaks the power of sin! Jesus fulfilled all the promises he made to the disciples.

Memory Verse: *In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5)*

45

Scripture: **Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in Christ death is conquered.

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph buried Him in a tomb. Three days later, Mary Magdalene and some other women went to Jesus' tomb. When they got there, they noticed that the stone that was supposed to cover the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. The women went inside and saw that Jesus' body was gone! When they turned around, two angels were standing beside them. One angel spoke and told the women that Jesus wasn't there. He was alive! Mary ran to Jesus' disciples and told them what the angel had said. Peter and John ran to the tomb as fast as they could. They wanted to see the tomb for themselves. When they got there, Peter ran inside. He looked down and saw the strips of linen and burial cloth that Jesus had been wrapped in. Before Jesus died, He told the disciples that He would rise from the dead. It was true. He was alive!

1. Jesus' Resurrection brings hope

Jesus told his disciples several times of his coming betrayal, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem. However, the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant. Therefore, when Jesus died, they believed Jesus was gone for good. The disciples hid together out of fear that the authorities might have them killed as well. Some of Jesus' female disciples journeyed to the tomb to pay their respects. They took spices with which to anoint Jesus' body. However, how could they anoint the body when the stone was in front of the door? When they arrived, they found the door open and Jesus' body gone. Even at this point, they did not consider Jesus' earlier teaching about his resurrection. Suddenly, two angels appeared to them to remind them of Jesus' teaching. The women went back to the eleven hiding disciples and told them the shocking news.

The world radically changed with Jesus' resurrection. Before Jesus' resurrection, the power of sin reigned in the world. After Jesus' resurrection, the power of sin is broken, and the blood of Jesus creates a path of salvation. Sin no longer has dominion; instead, Christians can live a life of love, grace, and mercy under the power of God. The disciples, though Jesus revealed all this to them before his death, were still caught by surprise. To believe a person they watched die on a cross could live once again is to believe in something incredible. However, Jesus' appearance to them after his resurrection proved to the disciples God's incredible power at work in Jesus.

2. Jesus' Resurrection is the Pillar of Christian Faith

Jesus' eleven disciples struggled to believe in his resurrection before he showed Himself to them. Rather than condemning his disciples for failing to believe in the resurrection, even after seeing the empty tomb, in grace Jesus appeared to the disciples. Jesus also did not condemn Peter for his denials or the other disciples for abandoning him. Part of the Good News of the Gospel is the fact that Jesus understands our doubts and questions. Christians can believe in Jesus' resurrection because of the ministry Jesus continues in their lives. While Christians may not physically see the resurrected Jesus, they can experience him in their hearts.

Decades later, false teachers in Roman city of Corinth are tempting the Christians to deny Jesus' resurrection. The false teachers tell the Christians Jesus was just a good teacher, but never rose from the dead. The Apostle Paul recognizes the dangers of this teaching. In this passage, Paul makes clear Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the Christians are fools to follow him. God's plan, and Jesus' obedience to that plan, was to have Jesus die as a perfect sacrifice, fully fulfilling God's demands of perfection and righteousness, and apply that atonement to His creatures who will believe His way of providing righteousness. The Scriptures are emphasized in this event as being authoritative and useful to see God's plan and to recognize the fulfillment of that plan. In Jesus, God took the initiative in providing a path to salvation. Before Christians loved God, God loved them. Therefore, before others can understand the love of God, often times they will have to first see it lived out in the lives of Christians. His resurrection helps us believe that Jesus the Messiah was who He claimed to be—the **true Messiah**, who has the power to forgive us of our sins and give us everlasting life.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What did Jesus the Messiah do to prove that He was not just a spirit?
2. How does faith in Jesus' resurrection bring hope into the lives of his followers?
3. How has Jesus brought new life into your life when you became a Christian?
4. How can you show gratitude to God for the great salvation you enjoy?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that our faith is based on the truth of the Resurrected Messiah. His resurrection proves our hope as Christians to know that through Christ sin and death were destroyed and in Him we can live a victorious life.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text again. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising the Lord for His Resurrection.

JESUS REMOVES OUR DOUBTS AND FEARS

Lesson

19

Objective: To help the students to proceed in celebrating the resurrected Jesus! Jesus commissioned the Church to carry out his ministry to the entire world throughout all the ages.

Memory Verse: *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." (John 20:27)*

47

Scripture: **John 20:19-29; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that Jesus knows our doubts and helps us to overcome them.

When Peter and John discovered that Jesus had risen from the dead, they went back to tell the other disciples. That night, all of the disciples, except Thomas, were at the same house. The disciples locked the door because they were afraid the Jews may try to capture them. While the disciples were there, Jesus went to the house. He showed them the nail marks in His hands and feet. He even ate a piece of boiled fish to prove that He really was alive! When Thomas went back to the house, Jesus had already gone away. The others couldn't wait to tell Thomas what they had seen. When they did, Thomas didn't believe them. He said, "*When I see for myself the nail marks in Jesus' hands, then I will believe that He is alive.*" The next week, Jesus went back. He walked up to Thomas and showed him His hands and His side. When Thomas saw the nail marks in Jesus hands, He believed!

1. Jesus knows our doubts and He helps us to overcome them

Jesus did not simply return to heaven after his resurrection. Instead, Jesus stayed on earth for a time, appearing to and teaching his disciples. However, before he could teach his disciples, Jesus first had to remove their doubts and fears. On the two Sundays after Jesus' crucifixion, he appeared to his disciples to strengthen their faith and resolve. Believing now in Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus commissions the disciples to share the Good News with the world. The disciples did not believe the incredible story the women told them of an empty tomb, angels, and a resurrected Jesus. It would certainly be hard to believe such a story, especially after the disciples have been grieving since Jesus' death. Afraid the authorities might try to arrest and kill them because they were Jesus' disciples, the disciples met in fear and behind a locked door. Suddenly, Jesus stood among them. Jesus' resurrected body appeared like his regular body, but it had the wounds and allowed him to pass through the locked door. Suddenly upon seeing Jesus, the disciples' doubts and fears disappeared! Jesus breathed on them, and the Holy Spirit filled them.

For whatever reason, Thomas, one of the 11 remaining disciples, was absent at Jesus' appearing. Thomas' doubts are certainly understandable. Thomas' declaration is quite bold! One week later, on the second Sunday after the crucifixion, the disciples again gathered in a locked room. Once again,

Jesus appeared. This time Jesus sought out Thomas and invited him to put his doubts to rest. Thomas declared, "My Lord and my God." Thomas is the first person in the New Testament to declare the divinity of Jesus. Therefore, while he is famous for being the "Doubter," Thomas was the first to confess Jesus as God.

2. Christ's resurrection makes us new creations to spread the gospel

Being a Christian is not simply a decision we make in our head, but a decision we make in our hearts. Jesus was not just an historical figure; he was not just a great teacher. Jesus is the Son of God. When we believe in Jesus, we believe in God's great power and love, and we become new creations. Like the disciples, we may still have many doubts, but God will minister to us and bring peace to our doubts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians are then to use that power of the Holy Spirit to minister to others. Believing in Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead does not make Christians better people. It makes Christians new creations. In Christ's salvation, a new creation begins. Christians are the new Adams, who are reconciled to God. As these new creations, Christians are to share the Good News of Jesus' salvation with others. Many today doubt God's existence and love for them. God calls Christians to minister to all these doubters in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christians are able to do greater acts of love and compassion through the grace of Jesus, than if they only lived out of their own power.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. You have never seen Jesus' resurrected body, so how do you know Jesus is risen from the dead?
2. How has the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life enabled you to minister to others?
3. What are some reasons why people today doubt God's existence or love?
4. How can you show the grace of Jesus to people this week?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that Jesus knows our doubts and fears and He is happy to help us to overcome them. Only after overcoming our doubts and fears is when we are able to share the gospel with others.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising the Lord for removing our doubts and fears to make us the vessels of His message to others.

THE RESURRECTED MESSIAH OPERATES MIRACLE IN BELIEVERS' LIFE

Lesson

20

Objective: Help the students to reflect on the great love Peter had for Jesus. Jesus restored Peter as an authentic disciple.

Memory Verse: *Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. (John 21:7).*

49

Scripture: **John 21; 1 John 3:19-24**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that Jesus knows our needs and fulfills them through His power and grace.

One night, Peter, John, and five other disciples went fishing in the Sea of Tiberias. They fished all night and didn't catch anything. The next morning, they were still in the boat hoping to catch some fish. A man standing on the shore asked the men if they had caught any fish. The disciples said no. Then the man told them to put their net on the other side of the boat. When they did, they caught over 150 fish! The net was so heavy, the disciples couldn't pull it into the boat. John looked closer at the man who was standing on the shore. Then he said, *"Look! That man is Jesus!"* When Peter heard John say this, he jumped into the water and started swimming toward the shore. The other disciples rowed the boat to shore. They had to drag the fish net behind them. Jesus told the men to bring over some of the fish that they had caught and they would eat breakfast together.

1. There are benefits when we recognize the Lord

After Jesus' resurrection, some of the disciples went back to their home territory. Not yet completely clear on how Jesus wanted them to minister, they went back to their old jobs as they waited for more direction from Jesus. Though they fished all night, they did not catch any fish. An unrecognized figure at the water's edge called out to them. He told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat and they obeyed. When they did, they not only caught fish, they caught a huge number of fish. One of the disciples recognized this figure at the water's edge as Jesus, and told Peter. When Peter heard it was Jesus at the water's edge he immediately wanted to see Jesus. He was so excited he did not want to wait for the boat to get to shore, so he jumped out of the boat and swam to shore. When the other disciples arrived at the shore, they all shared a breakfast meal with Jesus. Like the Lord's Supper, Jesus passed out the food to the disciples who were there. Jesus then takes Peter through a process whereby Jesus restores Peter as a disciple of Jesus. He also warned Peter of the cost of being a disciple. No matter how great the sins of Christians, Jesus is ready to forgive and restore them. Christians can experience this complete forgiveness and restoration in their lives through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus' forgiveness removes fear and shame

Jesus' forgiveness changes a person's life. Sometimes that change looks like moving to another town and becoming a teacher or preacher of the Gospel. Other times it looks like staying in your town and with your job, and ministering to people in your community. It is important for Christians to seek out God's will for their lives.

Sometimes it can be hard to believe God forgives all your sins. Hearing the Bible teaches God forgives all who honestly seek forgiveness is great. However, sometimes a deeper work needs to happen, when God takes that knowledge in your head and applies it to your heart. Surely, Peter, who denied Jesus three times in Jesus' time of greatest need, carried with him deep shame for his actions. Jesus makes clear in this passage though, that forgiveness should heal shame, and that the Children of God are not to live in shame. Jesus fully restores Peter, because it is God's power at work in forgiveness, not Peter's work. Jesus wants to fill his disciples with joy, power, and love. When Christians carry shame with them though, they cannot accept all of Jesus' joy, power, and love. It is essential for Christians to surrender their hearts fully to God, so God can bring full healing and peace into their lives. If Jesus does not condemn his children, his children should not condemn themselves. This is very encouraging.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do some Christians still feel shame, even after Jesus forgives them?
2. Why does it need to be God's power, not our willpower that makes forgiveness and healing complete?
3. What should a person do if they believe their sins are too great for God to forgive?
4. What happens if someone does not feel guilty about their sins, but just keeps on sinning and asking God to forgive them?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Encourage them to understand that it is essential for Christians to surrender their hearts fully to God, so God can bring full healing and peace into their lives. If Jesus does not condemn his children, his children should not condemn themselves. Remind them that Christians can experience this complete forgiveness and restoration in their lives through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising the Lord for removing our shame and fear through His forgiveness based on His work on the cross.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson

21

Objective: To help the students to understand that just before returning to Heaven, Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, who would empower the disciples to be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Memory Verse: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
(Acts 1:8)

51

Scripture: **Acts 1:1-14; Jonah 3**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them to share what they know about Ascension of Christ.

Jesus had spent many days with the disciples after He had risen from the dead. But the time came when He had to leave the earth. He needed to be with His Heavenly Father. Jesus and the disciples traveled to a place called Bethany. Jesus blessed the disciples and told them that they needed to go out and tell others about Him. Many people still didn't know that He had died for them and could forgive them of their sins. Since Jesus was going to heaven, He told the disciples that He would send them a helper. That helper was the Holy Spirit. After Jesus told them this, He lifted up His hands toward heaven. As He did, His feet left the ground and He started to ascend, or rise into the sky. As Jesus was taken up, He was hidden behind a cloud. Then two angels appeared and told the disciples that one day Jesus would come back to earth just as He had gone into heaven.

1. How to wait for the Promise of the Holy Spirit

One of the most powerful actions Christians can take is gathering with other Christians in prayer. While there are great benefits in private prayer, there is great encouragement and power when Christians gather in prayer. It is also important for Christians to learn patience with God's will and messages to them. Because God's plans are always bigger than Christians can understand, oftentimes God's timing will be very different from human times and plans. Learning to wait obediently in prayer is essential for Christians.

Jesus visited his disciples several times after his resurrection. During these times, Jesus taught the disciples many things about the coming Holy Spirit and the scriptural basis of his death and resurrection. The Disciples still did not fully understand Jesus' mission, for they still wanted to know if Jesus would restore Israel as an independent nation. The disciples would not start to understand fully Jesus' ministry and their mission to the world until the Holy Spirit entered their hearts. Therefore, Jesus commanded them to return to Jerusalem after his ascension and wait for this infilling. The disciples were not unique in assuming God's blessings and salvation were primarily for Israel. God called Jonah to leave Israel and preach to the inhabitants of Nineveh. The Ninevites were historical

enemies of Israel. Therefore, Jonah did not want to obey God, for he wanted God's blessings only for Israel, and God's punishment to consume Nineveh. However, with both Jonah and the disciples, God makes clear to them the message of God's love and salvation are for all people.

2. The Message of Salvation is to be preached to all nations

Even after Jesus' resurrection and ministry to the disciples after his resurrection, the disciples still struggle to understand the breadth of Jesus' ministry. There was still more about God's kingdom the disciples needed to understand. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would empower them to carry out Jesus' ministry. As the disciples continued to obediently carry out God's will on their lives, they would come to understand God's heart and mission in deeper ways. Jesus is alive and cares for us in ways beyond our understanding. Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection were necessary (had to happen) for Him to fulfill all that was written of the Chosen One, the Messiah (Christ): These were a fulfillment of Scripture prophecies concerning the Messiah (Christ). Because God created all people and loves all people, God wants all people to experience salvation. While Jesus' earthly ministry focused primarily on the land of Israel, the power of his resurrection and the Good News of salvation are for all peoples. Therefore, Jesus' ministry did not end with his resurrection. Instead, when the Holy Spirit comes upon the Christians Jesus' ministry continued. Moreover, because of Gospel is for the whole world, Jesus taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit would send them to the ends of the world, preaching Jesus' love and salvation.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What promise did the two men in white apparel (angels) give to the followers of Jesus the Messiah?
2. What are you looking forward to experiencing when you see Jesus face to face?
3. How does the promise of Jesus' return give you strength to live in this fallen and broken world?

Review/ Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that the Promise of the Holy Spirit was crucial for the Disciples to fulfill the Great Commission of going and making Christ like Disciples in all nations. In the same manner, we cannot do God's work without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The fulfillment of this Promise helps us to be confident as we wait for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students understand that the universal Church is Jesus Christ's representative on earth.

Memory Verse: *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:41).*

Scripture: **Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 1:15-23**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Allow the students to share what their ideas about the concept of the church.

On the day of Pentecost, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preached the Gospel to thousands of Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from all over the world for the Jewish festival. The Holy Spirit, who worked powerfully in the disciples who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, so also works in the crowd who heard Peter's preaching. Thousands were saved. These newly saved followers of Jesus began gathering together for worship, encouragement, teaching, and fellowship. The joy of Jesus' salvation so filled the new believers that they shared in common all their possessions, and gave to anyone who had need.

1. The Church is not the building but the people

The church is not a newcomer to the scene of world civilization or world history. Founded just 10 days after Jesus' ascension, for nearly 2000 years the church has given God great delight as it worships and serves Him. The church is the worldwide community of believers in Jesus the Messiah, and has received instruction and blessing from God as His instrument of blessing on the earth since Jesus' return to heaven. The English word "church" is a loaded word, which even among believers we continually have to define as **the people**, and not the building. As well, there is the distinction to be made between the universal church and the local church. Community fits the former, whereas congregation fits the latter.

With the infilling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus finally began to fully understand his life, mission, and teachings. They began to understand how Jesus was a Suffering Servant Messiah, rather than a military rule type of Messiah. In order to learn more about Jesus and to share the joy these first Christians had, they would meet together on a regular basis. These first Christians were primarily Jews, and so they would still go to the Temple on the Sabbath (Saturday), but then meet together for fellowship, teaching, and encouragement on Sundays, known as the Lord's Day (the day on which Jesus rose from the dead). In the Ephesians text, the Apostle Paul is writing about the power and authority of Jesus Christ. This power and authority extends to the church, the gathered people of God who recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

2. The Church represents the love of Jesus Christ to one another and to outsiders

The earthly manifestation of the grace, power, and mercy of Jesus Christ is the universal Church. When it is at its best, the joy and concern they have for each other is testimony to the change Jesus

Christ has brought into their lives. One of the strongest witnesses to the power of Jesus Christ to transform lives in the early church was the love, fellowship, and generosity these first Christians demonstrated. While many people may have struggled to understand Jesus was the Messiah, they could not ignore the great love and joy that had transformed these followers of Jesus. Sometimes the greatest testimony Christians have is not in the testimony they speak in words, but in the testimony they demonstrate by their acts of love and joy.

Fifteen people groups or nations are represented in Acts 2:9-11. These people represented the known **world** of that day. These peoples included the Persians (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians), Egyptians, North Africans (Libya, Cyrene), and Arabians. In this way, the church can solidify the **new identity of a believer** in reminding him/her of who they are in Christ and modeling that transformation in church life: son, heir, a member of a new family and member of a new kingdom. Approximately 3000 were baptized that day, and added to the community of believers. They were most likely from all areas of the world and walks of life. The first Christians gathered together on a regular basis to share in the teaching about Jesus, in fellowship, in miracles, and in generosity. These first Christians experienced the joy of their sins forgiven and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and it transformed not just their individual lives, but their lives together. So also, our lives should show signs of transformation as we seek to live out the love and joy Jesus has shown to us in our relationships with others.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some specific ways in which you have seen the Church show the love and grace of Jesus to others?
2. What have been some of the most meaningful acts of love and joy other Christians have demonstrated to you?
3. What gifts and graces has Jesus given to you that you can share with others this week?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that the church is not the building but people. The true owner of the church is Christ. Youths are sometimes tempted to get angry with the congregation and some think that the solution is to abandon the church. The lesson of today helped us understand that love to God and to one another is the key characteristic of the Church.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray and thank God for the opportunity and privilege God gives us to be part of His church in Jesus Christ.

Objective: To help the students to understand that sin is not content with being limited to their heart, it wants to control their actions as well. To encourage the students to live a life of integrity so that their thoughts, feelings, and actions may flow out of a love for God and for others.

Memory Verse: *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24)*

Scripture: **Acts 5:1-11; Joshua 7**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them why do people opt to lie.

There were many poor people who lived in the city of Jerusalem. Because of this, Christians would sell pieces of land or even homes so they could give money to the apostles. The apostles would then take the money and give it to the poor people. One day a man, named Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira, sold a piece of their property for a lot of money. They must have become very selfish when they saw all of the money. Instead of giving all of it to the apostles, they decided to keep some of the money for themselves. They took the rest of the money and gave it to the apostles. Ananias and Sapphira wanted the apostles to believe that they were giving all of the money they had received for their property. The apostles could tell that they were lying. Because they had lied to God, Ananias and Sapphira died instantly. The other people learned that they should never lie to God.

1. Christian should avoid deceiving others

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the first Christians enjoyed great fellowship with God and with one another. So filled with joy and love, they donated their possessions to the church in order for caring for the poor. Some even sold homes and land, and donated the proceeds. God did not command any of this. The Christians simply gave freely, responding to the great love of God. Ananias and Sapphira decided to sell some of their land and donate a portion of the proceeds. However, instead of simply telling others their offering was only a part of the proceeds, they lied, and told others they donated the whole amount. Though they were being generous, because Satan still had control of their hearts, they allowed their greed to cause them to deceive others. A little bit of sin can cause great problems. Because of this, God decided to punish them immediately, so their greed and deception would not spread throughout the entire church. This event caused great fear to seize the church, as the early Christians realized the great power of the resurrection could bring, not only salvation from sin, but also judgement on sin. A similar episode to Ananias and Sapphiras' greed occurred shortly after the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Achan, rather than obey God's commands for the Israelites to bring all their plunder for God's use, stole some valuables. Like Ananias and Sapphira, Achan and his family paid the ultimate price for Achan's sin and deception.

2. A Christian cannot manage sin in their life

Though the resurrection of Jesus breaks the power of sin, Christians can still choose to allow sin to reign in their lives. In particular, Ananias and Sapphria believed they could serve both God and remain greedy and deceptive. God demonstrated for the first Christians, the incredible danger of believing they could manage sin. While God does not expect Christians to live perfectly, there is a great danger when Christians choose to claim to be following God while also choosing to let sin dominate their lives. Christians need to remember, sin is not content with only having part of a person's heart. A Christian cannot manage sin in their life. If the Christian allows sin to remain in their heart, that sin will infect other parts of the Christian's life as well. Inward sins like greed also do not remain inward, but become manifest in the Christian's actions as well. A life of integrity is when a Christian's beliefs and actions are aligned. It is very important for Christians to not simply accept Jesus as their Savior, but also strive to allow Christ to reign in their hearts and actions as well.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What is it about the nature of sin that caused this couple to lie about their donation, when God never commanded them to give all the proceeds of the sale in the first place?
2. Why can greed be such a destructive vice for Christians and those around them?
3. Why does Satan want Christians to believe inward sins are harmless?
4. What are some ways inwards sins become manifest in a Christian's actions and attitudes?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that God wants them to live a life of integrity. Alone they are not able but through the power of the Holy Spirit, they can afford. Help them understand that as human beings, their sins can bring problem to those who live near them. As youths, they need to know that in some cases their attitude and behavior can make their parents to get sick. You might give them some minutes to discuss the kind of disease they might bring to their parents if they remain in sin.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray to God for a life of integrity wick glorify Him. In this prayer, thank God for the Holy Spirit who enables us to overcome greed and deception.

Objective: To help the students to understand that being a witness for Jesus Christ can lead to persecution and suffering. If so, though, it just gives the Christian an opportunity to be more like Jesus. Forgiveness is a very hard Christian virtue to put into practice, but it frees the Christian from allowing bitterness and hatred to fester in their hearts.

Memory Verse: *Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. (Acts 6:8).*

Scripture: **Acts 6:8-7:50; Jeremiah 38:1-14**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask the students to share their experience when they suffered persecution because of their faith. How did they overcome it?

Stephen was a very wise man and wasn't afraid to tell people about Jesus. Like Peter and John, God graciously decided to do miracles through Stephen. Stephen knew that the reason he could do these miracles was because the Holy Spirit was helping him. Some Jewish men didn't like what Stephen was doing. They accused Stephen of saying terrible things about Moses and God, and they took Stephen to court. While they were in court, Stephen looked up toward heaven. He told the Jewish men that he could see Jesus standing beside God. The men were furious and dragged Stephen out of the city. They picked up stones from the ground and started throwing them at Stephen. Stephen looked up into heaven and asked Jesus to forgive the men for doing this. Then Stephen died. Stephen was the first man to be killed just because he told people about Jesus.

1. Without God's grace we cannot forgive our persecutors

The religious opposition to Jesus assumed that once they crucified Jesus, his followers would stop preaching about Jesus. However, filled with the Holy Spirit, many Christians not only preached about Jesus, but performed mighty signs and wonders in Jesus' name. Therefore, some religious leaders believed they now had to start killing Jesus' followers. Like Jesus, though, the religious leaders had no authority to kill Stephen. Nor did they have evidence Stephen committed any crimes worthy of death. Sometimes people believe it is right to break their own laws. They believe it is okay to commit one crime in order to get their way. However, Jesus taught it is never okay to commit one crime in order to get your way. Jesus taught it was more important to love than to act violently out of anger. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, which means he was the first Christian killed because of his faith in Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, Stephen loved God and others so much he forgave those who were killing him.

Like Stephen, the authorities persecuted Jeremiah for speaking the truth about God. While the authorities should have listened to Jeremiah's message from God and repented of their sins, they instead chose to silence Jeremiah. Jeremiah knew the authorities would persecute him for telling the

truth about God, but Jeremiah also knew it was more important to be faithful to God than to be afraid of people who are teaching the wrong things about God.

2. In time of persecution, it is important to listen to Jesus and be obedient to Him

It is sad that ministering for Jesus, who taught so much about love and forgiveness, can lead to such terrible persecution. The early Christians helped the poor, performed miracles, and taught the truth about God. However, this not only did not protect them from harm, it caused the religious authorities to punish them. No one likes to suffer, however, it is more important to be faithful to Jesus than to try to avoid suffering. In addition, while Jesus does not call Christians to seek out persecution, it is important to listen faithfully to Jesus and be obedient whenever Jesus calls you to act or speak on his behalf. It is hard to love people who persecute you. It is also hard to forgive people who harm you. However, Jesus and Stephen model for Christians lives in which hatred and bitterness do not have a place on a person's heart. If the Christian facing persecution allows bitterness and hatred to build in their lives, then Satan wins, because God is not the full Lord of their hearts. Forgiveness, which is vitally important for Christians to practice, can take a long time to grow. God does not want Christians to make other people angry, just to make them angry. God does recognize, however, that some people will become very angry when they see us loving others or hear us talking about Jesus. While others may become angry, Christians are to serve God first, and act and speak when God leads them to act and speak.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do some people get very upset when other people act in very loving and generous ways?
2. What can a Christian do to make forgiving others easier?
3. What would you say to a Christian who is struggling because of the persecution they are facing?

Review/ Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that Christian life does not mean stop suffering. God is faithful to protect us in our Christian journey. There are times when persecution comes. We need to trust God in those difficult moments and be ready to follow what the Holy Spirit will guide us to do or speak. Forgiving the persecutors helps Christians to share the unconditional love of Christ.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

FROM ZEAL AGAINST CHRIST TO ZEAL FOR CHRIST

Lesson

25

Objective: To help the students to recognize that God called Saul to change his life, from being the persecutor of Jesus' followers, to being one of the greatest preachers about Jesus the world has ever known.

Memory Verse: *But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. (Acts 9:15)*

59

Scripture: **Acts 9:1-19; Numbers 22:21-41**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Ask them if they know anyone whose change of life inspires them.

Saul was a Jew who didn't like hearing Christians tell others about Jesus. Saul asked the high priest for permission to gather up all of the Christians in Damascus. He wanted to take them back to Jerusalem and have them thrown into jail. Saul and some other men started traveling to the city of Damascus. Suddenly, a bright light from heaven came down, and Saul fell to the ground. Then Saul heard the voice of Jesus ask him why he wanted to hurt the Christians. By hurting the Christians, he was hurting Jesus. When Saul got up off the ground, he couldn't see. The light had blinded him. The other men had to lead Saul into town. God told a man named Ananias to go to Saul and pray with him. After Ananias prayed, Jesus healed Saul so that he could see again. The Holy Spirit was with Saul and he wanted to be baptized. Saul had become a Christian. People also called Saul by another name—Paul.

1. God can change anyone's heart

This is one of the most important conversion stories in the Bible. So far, Jesus' followers have taken the message of Jesus to many of the towns in Israel. However, with the conversion of Saul, later known as Paul, Jesus' message will go all over the Roman Empire. Saul's conversion is especially significant because his life demonstrated the radical change God can make in a person's life. Saul was not just a sinner in need of salvation; Saul was actively persecuting the followers of Jesus. Saul did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, and wanted to imprison anyone who taught that he was. However, when Jesus confronted him on the Damascus Road, Saul realized how wrong he had been. God called one of Jesus' followers, Ananias, to begin telling Saul about Jesus. Fear filled Ananias, because word had spread about all the harm Saul was doing to Jesus' followers. However, God reassured Ananias that everything would be okay, that God was in charge, not Saul. Ananias obeyed God, and caused Saul to regain his sight. Saul believed in Jesus and was baptized.

God confronted Balaam in a very strange way, by making his donkey talk to him! God had a very important message for Balaam, and chose to confront Balaam in a very shocking way in order to

make sure Balaam listened and obeyed God's message. Much like God's confrontation of Saul on the Damascus Road, Balaam could not doubt God's message to him, and did exactly what God told him to do.

2. God prepares us to His ministry even before we know

God had a very specific job in mind for Saul. Because the Gospel of Jesus Christ was for all peoples, not just the Jews, God needed someone who could champion the message of Jesus to both Jews and non-Jews. Because of Saul's upbringing in a Gentile city, his both Roman and Jewish education and citizenship, and his ability to be very persuasive, God identified Saul as an excellent person to share God's message to non-Jewish people. One big problem though, Saul not only did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, Saul was persecuting the followers of Jesus. Therefore, God confronted Saul in a radical way that would change his life forever. After this encounter, Saul spent several years learning about Jesus and the Christian life before he began his missionary work for Jesus. Saul thought he was living a good life. God made him realize though, his life needed a radical change. The change did not come all at ones, it took years before Saul was ready to start his missionary ministry. That time of preparing for ministry was very important. Saul had been acting out of anger and passion when persecuting the followers of Jesus, God needed to redirect that anger and passion toward something good, the Gospel. So also, God does not change Christians all at once. Though Christians make a significant change in conversion, God continues to change them, to make them more like Jesus, the rest of their lives. After Jesus confronted Saul, Saul spent three days in prayer and fasting waiting for God to reveal to him the next steps he should take. It is very important for Christians to have regular times of prayer and fasting so they can better hear and understand God's message to them.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How did God confront you with your need to become a Christian?
2. What kinds of changes has God made to your life?
3. What has been your experience in spending times in prayer and fasting?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind them that the transformation of their hearts is done by the Holy Spirit. Although they experienced the radical change when they received Christ of the first time, God continues to change them to make them more like Christ, the rest of their life.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together thanking God for the radical transformation they experienced when they received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Objective of the Term:

The lessons of term are to help the students to understand the articles of our faith. Articles of Faith are statements that make the core sense of our denomination and they provide the essential connection that binds the Church into a unified and cohesive whole. These articles are not the mere ideas of men and women who gather periodically to craft a consensus. Instead, they are the description of the teachings of the Word of God, The Holy Bible.¹

- Lesson 26: **The Triune God**
- Lesson 27: **Jesus Christ**
- Lesson 28: **The Holy Spirit**
- Lesson 29: **The Holy Scripture**
- Lesson 30: **Sin, Original and Personal**
- Lesson 31: **Atonement**
- Lesson 32: **Prevenient Grace**
- Lesson 33: **Repentance**
- Lesson 34: **Justification, Regeneration, Adoption**
- Lesson 35: **Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification**
- Lesson 36: **The Church**
- Lesson 37: **Baptism**
- Lesson 38: **The Lord's Supper**
- Lesson 39: **Divine Healing**
- Lesson 40: **The Second Coming of Christ**
- Lesson 41: **Resurrection, Judgement, and Destin**

¹ Gay Leonard, Artcles of Faith: What Nazarenes Believe and Why (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill of Kansas City, 2005), 7.

Objective: To help the students to believe that God is One and He manifests in Three Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God created the heavens and the earth, and that God created them "good." Also, believe God created marriage as a special relationship between a man and a woman.

Memory Verse: *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:14)*

Scripture: **Genesis 1-2; John 1:1-14**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit, they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Trinity of God. Ask them to share what they know about this doctrine. Remind them that the term "Trinity" is theological and they cannot find it directly in the Bible.

Long, long ago, God created everything. In just six days He created the sky, the water, and the land. He also made all of the trees, plants, animals and flowers. Then, God took the dust from the ground and created man. He called this man Adam. God put Adam in a beautiful garden that He had made, the Garden of Eden. Adam was to take care of everything that God had created. God noticed that Adam was lonely. He decided to create someone who could help Adam and keep him company. God made Adam fall into a very deep sleep. While Adam slept, God took one of his ribs and made a woman. God gave the woman to Adam, and Adam named her Eve. God was very pleased with everything He had made. And on the seventh day, He rested.

1. The Triune God is the Only God to be Worshipped

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, meaning it believes in one God. This one God created this world as outlined in Genesis 1 and 2. The ultimate expression of God's creation is humanity, which was created in God's image. However, God is more than Creator, God is also Redeemer (in Jesus Christ) and Sustainer (in the Holy Spirit). Because of God's love, when man fell into sin, God reached out to offer a path to forgiveness, salvation, and fellowship. The perfect and ultimate expression of God's offer of salvation is through Jesus Christ, when God became flesh. Jesus ministered, died, and rose from the dead. After Jesus' return to Heaven, God came to earth as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's very presence in the lives of Christians, making the life of Jesus Christ real and alive in Christians. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to live in the power, love, and holiness of God. Thus, God is one, but expressed in three ways, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All these expressions are evidences of God's loving desire to be in relationship with humanity.

2. The Triune God created everything

Beginnings are very important because if you do not begin well, you may never reach the right destination. Genesis 1 and 2 give us some essential facts about God, this world and ourselves. If we are going to live blessed, joyful lives, we need to make sure we base our faith on the true and essential facts the first two chapters of Genesis reveals. First, God took what is chaotic (formless and void), and brought to it order. Each of the seven days of creation reveals the intention and joy God took in creating this world and all that is in it. God created everything “good.” Second, each day God looked at what God made and declared it was “good.” The world in which we live, though it now often bears scars from sin, was originally created “good.” Third, God created humanity differently than everything else. Human beings are not just another animal, not just one more living thing. Instead, humanity has the special blessing of being created in the “image of God.” We also see in the creation of the first man and woman that humanity is created to be in relationship with one another. Marriage is the special relationship God created for a man and a woman to enter into so they can enjoy marital relationship and continue the human race. As the Biblical story progresses we will see the special responsibilities and privileges that come with this image of God being placed on our lives. A second creation begins with the birth of Jesus Christ. Not a physical creation of the earth and heavens, but the spiritual creation of a new People of God. Through Jesus Christ, God will offer salvation, healing, and future blessing to all peoples. God created all things “good,” but sin brought pain and brokenness into the world. In Jesus Christ, God offers to bring healing to this fallen Creation.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What would we know about the infinite God and His will if He did not disclose it to us in human language?
2. What would life be like if God was only the Creator of the world, and not Redeemer and Sustainer as well?
3. What attributes of God do those around you most need to see in your life?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Explain to the students that when we speak of the Triune God, we are not referring to three Gods. We are not referring to three pieces of one God. We refer to the One God who manifests in Three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This means that worshipping the Father is not idolatry; worshipping Jesus Christ is not idolatry; worshipping the Holy Spirit is not idolatry. There is no other God who deserves our worship and adoration except this One Triune God.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today’s lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today’s lesson. Close by having the group pray together thanking God as our Creator. After prayer, bless your class by reading 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Objective: To help the Students believe that Jesus is the Son of God who has the power to both forgive sins and perform miracles.

Memory Verse: *Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:6)*

Scripture: **Mark 2:1-12; Isaiah 35**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Jesus went to the town of Capernaum. This was the place He called home. So many people wanted to see Jesus that some had to stand outside the house where He was preaching. There were four men who heard that Jesus was in Capernaum. These men had a friend who could not walk because he was paralyzed. So, they picked up the paralyzed man and took him to Jesus. They knew that Jesus was the only One who could heal their friend. When they got there, they couldn't get inside to see Jesus, so they carried the paralyzed man up to the roof. They dug a hole in the roof and lowered the man into the room until he was beside Jesus. Jesus knew that this man's friends had faith that He could heal their friend. Jesus told the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven. Then Jesus told him to get up and pick up the mat he was lying on. And he did! He could walk again! Jesus had healed the paralyzed man.

1. Jesus Christ deserves our devotion and worship

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. While Christians commonly speak of God, the first person of the Trinity, as the Creator, Christians commonly speak of Jesus as Redeemer. When man not only fell into sin, but proved unable to serve God with a true heart through the Law given in the Old Testament, God came to earth as Jesus Christ to provide a path of true salvation. The two natures of divinity and humanity dwelled within Jesus Christ. Through Jesus' obedience to God's will, his death and resurrection, God placed the punishment of sin upon Jesus at his crucifixion. Through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, human beings receive forgiveness for their sins. Jesus' deity is shown by His authority over sin. By pronouncing a man's sins forgiven, and then showing His ability to heal, He showed that He has the authority to forgive sins, something only God can do. Anyone can claim to be the Messiah. How can someone discern whether the person really is the Messiah? God filled the Old Testament with prophecies about the Messiah. Therefore, we can ask, "Does this person claiming to be the Messiah fulfill those prophecies?" Jesus does. Secondly, we can ask, "is this person performing miracles only God can work?" Again, Jesus performed miracles like no one had before him. Jesus knew it would be hard for people to believe someone from Nazareth was the Messiah. Therefore, he did not only teach about God, he performed miracles to back up his teaching. In this

passage, we have two miracles, one much harder than the other one. The people are amazed at the healing of the paralytic man. However, it is Jesus' forgiving his sins that is the greater miracle.

2. Jesus Has the Power to forgive sin

After His baptism, His temptations, calling His disciples, Jesus now fully engaged in his ministry. His ministry focused on teaching and healing. Jesus' fame had spread, and some friends of a paralytic believed that if they could just get their friend to Jesus, Jesus would heal their friend. The friends showed both their faith in Jesus and their deep love for their friend by going to such dramatic lengths to get their friend to Jesus. Surprisingly, Jesus decided, instead of healing the man right away, He had to forgive his sins first. After declaring this man's sins forgiven, some in the crowd began complaining. Jesus claimed to be more than a teacher or miracle worker. Only God can forgive sins, and so some of the teachers of the law in the crowd complained to each other that Jesus was blaspheming. Blasphemy is claiming to be God or claiming things about God that are not true. Jesus knew they were complaining about him and Jesus confronted them. They came to see a miracle worker, but Jesus claimed to be much more than a miracle worker. Forgiving sins is something only God can do.

Isaiah prophesied about the ministry of the coming Messiah. Part of the way people would be able to recognize the Messiah is that he would perform miracles. Specifically in verse 6, we hear that the lame would leap like a deer, a prophecy fulfilled in the healing of this paralytic man. Forgiving sins is a mark of Jesus' deity; Jesus' real nature is confirmed early in His ministry. Because Jesus has the same characteristics of deity as God, He is God. Christians understand Jesus to be 'God the Son', not conceived by God physically, but God's exact image for men to see, know, and follow (Hebrews 1:1-4).

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What proof does Jesus the Messiah offer that He has the authority to forgive sins? What does Jesus the Messiah actually claim in showing His authority to forgive sins?
2. In what ways is our body a miracle from God in the first place?
3. What does it tell you about the nature of God that Jesus came willingly to earth to die for a sinful humanity?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Explain to the students that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of Trinity. By so claiming we believe that Jesus Christ is not a creature. Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is the Creator God.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students to understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His work in the world and in the Church. To help them understand the the Holy Spirit is not to be used. He is the One to use us.

Memory Verse: *When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. (Acts 19:17)*

Scripture: **Acts 19:1-20; John 11:1-54**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Paul travelled to Ephesus and preached about Jesus. God was using Paul to heal people and drive out demons that were in people. Some men who weren't Christians tried to drive a demon out of a man. When it didn't work, the demon-possessed man attacked the men. Many people who practiced evil sorcery and magic heard about the demon-possessed man. These people had special spells that they would say. These spells were written down on scrolls. A scroll is a long piece of paper that you have to unroll in order to read what is written on it. When the people heard what had happened, they were terrified. Many people now believed that Jesus was the only One who had the power to drive out demons. Those who did believe asked Jesus to forgive them of their sins. Then they took their scrolls with the evil spells, put them in a pile, and burned them.

1. The Holy Spirit convinces people of their sins

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. While Christians commonly speak of God, the first person of the Trinity, as the Creator, of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, as Redeemer, Christians commonly speak of the Holy Spirit as Sustainer. Because in Jesus' resurrection God broke the power of sin, when a Christian invites God into their hearts, God as the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian's heart. With the Holy Spirit's indwelling, God's power is at work in the Christian's life. This power of God at work in the Christian empowers the Christian to live out the life of Jesus, a life of purity, love, and joy. Paul preached about Jesus in the city of Ephesus for three years. During that time, Paul performed many miracles, and many people became believers. There were many people in Ephesus who practices magical arts. One day, some people who were not Christians tried to practice magic by casting out a demon, invoking the name of Jesus and Paul. The demon answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man with the demon attacked the people using Jesus and Paul's name, and gave them a very bad beating. When people in Ephesus heard about this, they respected Jesus deeply. They recognized it was dangerous to try and practice magic, for the God Paul preached about was the only true God. Therefore, they brought together all the scrolls that contained information about the magical arts and burned them all. There were so

many scrolls burned, it would take hundreds of years of working to earn enough money to replace them all.

2. The Holy Spirit enables believers to witness the Power of God

Paul spent about three years ministering in Ephesus. As usual, he began his ministry in the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews Jesus was the Messiah. However, Paul faced much opposition in the synagogue, and ended up setting up his own weekly ministry time in a lecture hall. Paul's ministry demonstrated God's mighty power through miraculous works as well as his teaching and preaching. Many others wanted to use this power of God working through Paul, but as the text demonstrates with the sons of Sceva, God's power is not like magic, like a possession one can use as long as they have the special names to invoke. The sons of Sceva, a high priest, tried to use the name of Jesus and the name of Paul to cast out a demon, but ended up being beaten badly by the demon-possessed man instead. The people of Ephesus, when they heard about this attack, began to take the name of Jesus much more seriously. They recognized Jesus was different from all the false gods they worshiped, and Jesus' power was greater than all the magical spells they could cast. There was a great revival in Ephesus, at least temporarily, and people burned their very valuable scrolls that contained the fake magical spells they realized were worthless. God demonstrates love through Jesus Christ. Jesus did not just teach and work miracles, Jesus loved. In the tears he shed for Lazarus and for those mourning Lazarus, Jesus demonstrates the fact that God's love for us is real.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What should we expect to see in the life of a Christian who claims to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
2. How can the power of God be at work within a Christian's life?
3. Why is it so dangerous to engage in spiritual warfare if you are not possessed with the true power of God?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Explain to the students that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal being to be used, manipulated, or coerced. Instead, the one true God is personal, loving, and wants to be in relationship with humanity. Ask the students to share their experience on how some people emphasize the miracles while their life does not show the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Objective: Help the students understand that the Bible is a guide to the path of salvation and to living a holy life

Memory Verse: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

Scripture: **Matthew 5:1-20; Romans 8:18-30**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

Jesus became very popular with many of the people around Him. People wanted to listen to Jesus because He cared for them and wanted to help them. Jesus wasn't like the Pharisees, who just taught about the rules people were supposed to follow. One day Jesus was going to speak to a group of people. Many people went to listen to Him. When Jesus saw the crowd coming toward Him, He walked to a mountain near Capernaum and sat down. The crowd of people followed Jesus to the mountain and sat down, too. Jesus spoke to the people for a very long time. He talked to them about many different topics: how they should treat each other; how they could tell others about God's love and forgiveness; how they should give to the poor; about heaven; and even how they should pray.

1. The Bible is the Word of God that teaches us the Truth

God gives the Bible to Christians as a guide to the path of salvation and to living a holy life. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments reveal the heart and will of God for human beings. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Christians receive wisdom and instruction from God through the study of the Bible. Jesus demonstrates in the Sermon on the Mount the importance of knowing more than facts about the Bible, but about correctly interpreting the Bible. In the specific passage for this study, the Beatitudes, Jesus declares the type of person who results from following God's scriptures. God blesses this person as they live out the teachings of scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:10-17, the Apostle Paul teaches Timothy the importance of the Bible in becoming wise and becoming equipped for God's mighty work.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' longest teaching in the Bible. It spans three chapters (Matthew 5-7), and covers many different topics relating to the Christian's life. Many Jews in Jesus' day thought the most important part of being a follower of God was living by all the rules and rituals found in the Old Testament. Jesus, however, taught the most important part of being a follower of God was living out God's love. Jesus' disciples were not to focus on following rules, but on loving God and loving others. If they loved God and loved others, then they would naturally follow all the rules of God. The first part of the Sermon on the Mount is a list of beatitudes. Beatitudes are promises made to people

who are going through tough times. They promise future comfort and rewards. However, Jesus' beatitudes are a little different. For the blessings Jesus promises are not just for the future, but come into the present as well. While Jesus' disciples will suffer in this life if they follow all his commands, they will also experience the close presence of God. The Christian experiences the presence of God in many ways, including experiencing peace, joy, comfort, and hope. Therefore, when Jesus says these followers are "blessed," he means that in the midst of suffering for living as Jesus called them to live, God's presence will comfort them.

2. The Bible teaches how to trust and obey God

Many of the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount teach Christians how to live out God's love in very practical ways. It is not enough to just believe in our head what Jesus said is true, we must put those teachings into action. While this will not be easy, it will result in great blessings both for us and for those blessed through our Christlike actions. Jesus calls his disciples to a very different kind of life than others around them are living. Jesus' disciples are to put God's values and God's desires first in their lives. This means they could experience sufferings now, but it also means God's love and blessings will flow through their lives. When Christians are able to understand that denying their selfish desires and accepting God's loving desires are the best way to live, they will have a deep peace and joy no matter what happens in their life. When our heart is fully given to God, we love what God loves and live as God wants us to live. This means we will feel compassion and mercy for those suffering, and it means we will seek to comfort those who need comforting. We will do this not just because we know we will have a reward in heaven, but because we know God will strengthen us and bless us on this side of heaven as well.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why does simply reading the Bible not necessarily result in a person becoming wise?
2. Jesus' teachings are not easy to live out. Therefore, why should Christians want to live out Jesus' teachings?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Explain to the students the importance of paying close attention to what God actually said in the Bible. If we rely on what others say about God, rather than what He has recorded in Scripture, we run the risk of being deceived or led away from God's truth.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for giving us the Bible as our guide for salvation and Christian living.

Objective: To help the students understand that Satan uses deception to cause us to doubt God's love and goodness. To encourage them to live under the power of the Gospel and not under the power of sin.

Memory Verse: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16)*

Scripture: **Genesis 3; Romans 1:16-32**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of sin.

Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve that everything in the garden was theirs. They could eat the fruit from any tree, except for the tree in the middle. It was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now, Satan had disguised himself as an evil snake. He told Eve that she could eat the fruit from the tree. He said that if she ate the fruit, she would be like God and would know what was good and evil. Eve was being tricked by the snake. She saw the fruit on the tree, and it looked delicious. Eve wanted to be wise like God, so she took a bite. Then, she gave some to Adam. Right away Adam and Eve knew that they had disobeyed God, and they were very afraid. God made them leave the Garden of Eden because they had disobeyed Him. Disobeying God's commands is sin.

1. Adam and Eve sinned because they doubt God's goodness

The first two chapters of the Bible are full of blessings from God. As the third chapter opens though, so enters a threat, the serpent. Among all the blessings God gave, he also gave one restriction to Adam, he must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent tempted Adam and Eve to believe God's blessings were too good to be true. Or, more accurately, God's blessings were too little to accept. The serpent tempted Adam and Eve to believe God was holding back from them, and that if they really wanted to experience all that life had to offer, then they needed to stop trusting God so much, and put more trust in themselves. Adam and Eve fell for this lie, and willfully broke a known law of God. This is what sin is, breaking a known law of God. And so on that day sin entered the world, and it has wreaked havoc and brought tremendous pain and suffering every day since. As a consequence of their rebellion, God ordered Adam and Eve to leave the Garden of Eden. While God's blessings and protection do not leave Adam and Eve, their lives are never the same again. Pain and toil become the immediate consequences of sin, but the effects of sin will dramatically grow. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans he lists many ways in which sin grew over the history of the world. In the first chapter of Romans Paul makes clear God gave humanity the opportunity to know the Creator of heaven and earth. However, humanity chose instead to continue the sin of Adam and Eve, following their own desires instead of following God's commands.

2. Original sin an inherited propensity to personal sin

While God created this world and humanity as an expression of God's love, God did not force humanity to love in return. Instead, God created humanity with the ability to live either serving God or serving themselves. Adam and Eve chose to live for themselves when they fell for the lies of the Serpent who promised them they could be like God if they only disobeyed God. Because of this sin of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world and infects the life of every person born. Each person born is born with this Original Sin, this desire to live selfishly. When a person acts on this desire to live selfishly, they commit Personal Sin. This Personal Sin causes all manner of evil and harm to the person and to others as they live contrary to the laws and will of the Creator God. Christians believe that sin is disobedience/missing the mark or target that God has set for us. We are not just mistaken, but disobedient and wrong. This is an offense to God. Our sin offense separates us from Him. The power of sin has touched the life of every man and woman. While, as creatures, we should focus our lives on living for our Creator and loving others, instead sin leads people to focus on themselves. Living without sin is not possible under our own power or with our own good intentions. Only Christ can conquer sin in this world and in our lives. Therefore, Jesus calls us to live our lives by the power of the Gospel, under his Lordship and direction. This is not just for the sake of our hearts, but also for the sake of those around us whom we will harm if we allow sin to reign in our lives.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do you think God allowed the Serpent to enter the Garden, and did not simply make sure Adam and Eve never faced temptation?
2. How does sin in hearts corrupt the ways in which people view this world, themselves, and God?
3. Why is Sin never content with only infecting a person's heart, but will always find expression in a person's actions?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Explain to the students that just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden, so Satan continues to tempt Christians. Therefore, Christians need to commit each day to the Lord, seeking to live a life of devotion to God.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Object: To help the students reflect on the painful death Jesus suffered at the hands of sinful people in order to become the perfect Passover Lamb who can take away our sins.

Memory Verse: *When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54)*

Scripture: **Matthew 27; Isaiah 53:7-12**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning about Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of Atonement

The priests took Jesus to Pilate, the governor of Judea. They lied to Pilate and told him that Jesus had committed terrible crimes. The Jews told Pilate that Jesus wasn't their king and they wanted Him crucified. Being crucified was the worst death anyone could suffer. Some soldiers took off Jesus' clothes and wrapped a purple robe around Him. Then they hit Jesus many times with a whip, pushed a crown of thorns onto His head, and spat on Him. Simon, a man from Cyrene, had to carry the cross up the hill called Golgotha, because Jesus was too weak to carry it by Himself. The soldiers laid Jesus down on the cross, stretched out His arms, and pounded nails into His hands. Before they lifted up the cross, they took another nail and pounded it into Jesus' feet. The moment Jesus died, there was a terrible earthquake. After seeing all of this, one of the soldiers realized that Jesus really was the Son of God.

1. Jesus died in our place as a Substitute Sacrifice in our behalf

The crucifixion proved the incredible love God in Jesus has for us. With the death of the Passover Lamb, God rescued the Israelites from their slavery to Egypt. Now with Jesus' death, God rescued the whole world from their slavery to sin. While the political and religious leaders conspired to kill Jesus, Jesus willingly submitted to their wicked plans. Jesus knew, while the authorities acted out of sin, God would use their wicked plans to release the greatest salvation the world has ever seen. Christians should demonstrate the love and compassion Jesus demonstrated on the cross. Christians can live confidently because they have freedom from the power of sin. While Satan will always tempt Christians, Christians can live confidently in the power of Jesus Christ to give them strength to say "no" to temptation. Christians can also live confidently in showing the love of Christ to others. While those who mocked Jesus viewed his death as proof he was not the Messiah, in fact, his death fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. This passage from Isaiah foretells many details about Jesus' ministry and death, centuries before it happened. The power of sin runs deeply in people's lives. However, the love of Jesus breaks the power of sin in Christians' lives. In response to Jesus' great sacrifice, Christians should accept this great power and allow Jesus to purify their heart and mind.

2. Jesus' Death Provides a Path for Salvation for Every Person

Sin breaks relationship between a Holy God and a sinful man. In order to provide a path to reconcile a Holy God and sinful man, Jesus Christ came to earth to live a perfect life without sin and take upon himself the guilt of all man's sins. Because Jesus died the death each person deserves because of their sins, Jesus' death provides freedom for a sinful person to accept God's love and forgiveness. Jesus' death provides a path of salvation for every person who hears the Good News of the Gospel and in faith accepts Jesus' offer of salvation.

After Jesus' arrest and trial by the high priest, the religious authorities sent Jesus to the Roman authorities. Though the religious authorities wanted Jesus dead, only the governing Roman authorities could carry out death sentences. Therefore, the religious authorities conspired to manipulate Pilate, the Roman ruler, to kill Jesus. When Pilate condemned Jesus to death, he ordered the beating of Jesus with whips. The Roman soldiers then forced Jesus to carry his own cross through the streets of Jerusalem to the place of crucifixion. When they arrived, the Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of his clothes and nailed him to the cross. While some of his followers stood by quietly watching Jesus die, some of the religious authorities mocked Jesus. It usually took a long time for people to die on the cross, but because the soldiers' savage beating of him earlier, Jesus died in a matter of hours. Jesus cried out many things as he was dying, including "It is finished!"

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What does Jesus' willingness to die such a painful death tell you about the depths of Jesus' love?
2. What happened in your heart when you heard Jesus died for your sins and took upon himself the punishment you deserved?
3. What is the proper response a person should have to someone who has made a great sacrifice for him or her?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that Christ died for us for our salvation. In response to Jesus' great sacrifice, Christians should accept this great power and allow Jesus to purify their heart and mind. As Christians we need to show the love of Jesus through our life of sacrifice to others.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising the Lord for His sacrifice for our salvation.

Objective: To help the students to understand that God's salvation in Jesus Christ is for all peoples, no matter their nation, race, gender, or background.

Memory Verse: *Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:35)*

Scripture: **Acts 8:26-40; Isaiah 53:7-12**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning about Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the doctrine of Prevenient Grace.

Philip (not the apostle) was a missionary who preached to people about God. One day God sent an angel to tell Philip to walk down a desert road that would lead out of Jerusalem. Philip obeyed the angel. As Philip was walking, he saw a man from Ethiopia sitting in a chariot. The man was reading the book of Isaiah from the Old Testament Scriptures. As the man was reading, Philip walked up and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian man told Philip that he didn't understand, but would like someone to explain it to him. Philip explained to the man that he was reading the good news about Jesus. Then Philip told the man how Jesus had died to forgive him of his sins. The Ethiopian man asked Jesus to forgive him of his sins, and then asked Philip to baptize him. The Holy Spirit then took Philip away to another town where he preached about Jesus.

1. The grace of God through Jesus Christ is offered to all people

God always makes the first move in love and salvation. God created the heavens and the earth for humanity to enjoy. Yet, humanity chose to sin. However, not content with a broken relationship with humanity, God reached out through the patriarchs and prophets to show humanity how to have a relationship with God. When humanity continued to live in brokenness and sin, God reached out in Jesus Christ to provide an even better path to salvation. When a person becomes convicted of their sins and turns to God, it only results in God first reaching out to them. Praise God, God always makes the first move in love and salvation! The Good News about Jesus is for all people. God wants Christians to share the Good News about Jesus with everyone they can. However, sometimes people allow differences between them and others prevent them from helping others. Sometimes the differences are racial, economic, religious, or many other ways. God does not want anything to stop Christians from sharing the Good News with others. God wants Christians to see beyond race, nationality, wealth, and see others simply as beloved creations of God who need the Good News.

2. God brings people into your life who need to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ

After the stoning of Stephen, a great persecution broke out against the Christians in Jerusalem. Many of the Christians fled Jerusalem. However, this persecution did not stop the teaching and preaching about Jesus, in fact it was just the opposite. As the Christians fled Jerusalem, they began preaching about Jesus and working great miracles wherever they went. One of these Christians was Philip. He fled to a city in Samaria, and there he healed many people and many became Christians because of his ministry. One day God told Philip to leave Samaria and go south to a busy road between Jerusalem and Gaza. When Philip got there, he saw a very important person riding in a chariot. This person was an official from Ethiopia who had traveled to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple. This official was frustrated because, though he was reading the scriptures, he did not understand the scriptures. Philip offered to explain the scriptures to him, and so he got into the chariot and they traveled down the road. The passage the official was reading was about the Suffering Servant, about how Jesus would die for our sins. Hundreds of years before Jesus was crucified, God gave this prophecy to Isaiah to tell of the way in which God would save people from their sins. As Philip explained to this official all about Jesus, the official was overjoyed, and when they came to some water, asked Philip if he would baptize him. So now, even though the enemies of Jesus thought they could stop his followers from preaching about Jesus by persecuting them, instead, the Good News about Jesus was not only being preaching to more people, but now an Ethiopian became a Christian and would take the Good News of Jesus Christ to a new continent: Africa!

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What would your life be like if God had not taken the first step toward you, but waited on you to reach out for salvation and healing?
2. What does it tell you about the nature of God that God did not wait for you to recognize your sin and need of salvation?
3. What should be a person's response to God's prevenient grace?
4. What should you do if God brings someone into your life to share the Gospel with who is very different from you?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that the prevenient grace enable all who will to return from sin to righteousness. This means that without this grace no human could be able to accept Jesus. It also means that there is no race, community or nation that is excluded from hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ. As we have learned today, God prepared the heart of the Ethiopian Official to receive the message brought Philip.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students understand that no sinner is so far from God's grace that God cannot save them.

Memory Verse: *Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." (Luke 19:9)*

Scripture: **Luke 19:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:12-17**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning about Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on repentance. Allow the students to share their experience of repentance.

Jesus was passing through a city called Jericho. A man named Zacchaeus lived in this town. Zacchaeus was a very wealthy man because he was a tax collector. Tax collectors were known for taking money that wasn't theirs. When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was in Jericho, he wanted to see Him. Because Zacchaeus was a short man, he wasn't able to see Jesus through the crowd. Instead, Zacchaeus climbed to the top of a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. When Jesus passed by the tree, He looked up. Then Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down from that tree. I want to go and stay at your house today." Zacchaeus was excited and climbed down from the tree. The people couldn't understand why Jesus would want to go to the house of someone who was a sinner. Because Jesus showed love to Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus made restitution by paying back four times the amount of money that he owed the people.

1. It was only by God's grace that we receive salvation from Jesus

In Jesus' day, the Roman Empire occupied the Promised Land. As occupiers, the Romans extracted taxes from the Israelites. The Romans used these taxes to support the troops in the Promised Land. The Israelites hated the Romans and desperately wanted freedom from Roman occupation. The Romans used some of the Israelites to collect these taxes. The Israelites hated paying taxes to the Romans, but they hated their fellow Jews who collected the taxes for the Romans even more. The Israelites viewed these tax collectors as collaborators with the Romans, and therefore traitors to Israel and to God. The Israelites, then, viewed Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, as the worst of all sinners in Israel. It is not surprising, then, that Zacchaeus, as the chief tax collector, chose not to enter the crowds to see Jesus, but hid in the safety of a tree. Jesus, though, noticed Zacchaeus. In addition, to the crowd's shock, Jesus invited himself over to Zacchaeus' house for dinner. In Jesus' time, to share a meal with someone in their house meant that you accepted them as a friend. Jesus, therefore, is publicly declaring he is going to be a friend of this chief tax collector. At dinner that evening, Zacchaeus was so overwhelmed by Jesus' love and acceptance, he repented of any sins he committed, and promised to make restitution to anyone he had wronged. Jesus declared Zacchaeus' salvation. Not only that, he declared this chief tax collector whom others viewed as a traitor, was actually a true

child of Abraham! If Jesus can save Zacchaeus, then salvation is available to anyone. If the Israelites viewed Zacchaeus as the worst of all sinners before his salvation, then the early Christians viewed the Apostle Paul as the worst of sinners before his salvation. In fact, Paul calls himself the worst of sinners. Before Jesus saved Paul, Paul blasphemed Jesus and persecuted the Christians. It was only by God's grace Paul received salvation from Jesus.

2. Repentance is the proper and joyful response to the grace of God

In repentance, a sinner turns from their sin and selfishness and turns to the grace and mercy of God. This repentance includes a willingness to change thoroughly, not just a change of heart but a change of mind and lifestyle as well. Though it is the work of God in the believer that will make this change, the believer must be open and willing to accept this work of God in their lives. God's grace is not "fair," as we humans view fairness. Instead, God's grace is extravagant, reaching people who do not deserve it. The point is not that people get to escape justice or making restitution, but that Jesus usually grants salvation before a person makes restitution. Jesus boldly declares he will share dinner at Zacchaeus' house. Zacchaeus boldly declared he will make restitution to anyone he has cheated. While God will freely forgive repentant sinners, God will sometimes call those saved Christians to make restitution to those they have wronged. Sometimes restitution can be giving back any money he stole. Other times it is seeking forgiveness from those hurt by our sins.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why is it important for a person to not only believe in their head that Jesus died for them, but to repent of their sins?
2. What are some of the emotions you experienced when you understood that Jesus had died for you and offered to forgive you of all your sins?
3. Since it is God we have wronged the most, how can Christians show gratitude to God for our salvation on a regular basis?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that no one is too far in sin that he cannot be saved. Help the students to understand that God loves even those we think they do not deserve. In fact, no one deserves God salvation. It is for this reason that salvation is through God's grace. As forgiven people, we need to forgive others. As saved people, we need to obey the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we will need to seek forgiveness from those hurt by our sins.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students to believe that Jesus came to earth to provide a way to eternal life. Through faith in Jesus Christ God forgives Christians, and Christians are born again.

Memory Verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

Scripture: **John 3:1-21; Ezekiel 36:22-29**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were a group of men who knew Old Testament Scriptures and taught them to other people. When the Pharisees met Jesus, they believed He was a teacher, not the Son of God. But, Nicodemus became very curious. He wanted to learn more about this man named Jesus. During the night, Nicodemus went to see Jesus. Nicodemus knew that God was with Jesus, but he wasn't sure if he should believe what Jesus was teaching. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to go to heaven, he had to be born again. Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus meant by being born again. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to realize that it takes more than just knowing the Bible to get into heaven. A person needs to ask God for forgiveness of his sins, and accept God into his life. Nicodemus left Jesus and thought about what He had said.

1. Jesus is the Messiah whose battle is against sin and death

Jesus was not the kind of Messiah the Jewish leaders expected. They expected a military leader like King David who would preach against the Roman occupation of the Promised Land and lead a battle to get the Romans out. They thought the Messiah would show God's mighty power through winning military battles. Jesus, however, was a Messiah concerned with saving more than just the Jews from Roman occupation. His battle was against sin and death. In addition, Jesus displayed the mighty power of God in healings, not in battles. The Jewish leaders did not know what to do with this Jesus. How could he be the Messiah and yet not be raising an army? How could he not be the Messiah, and still do all these miracles? Nicodemus came on behalf of the religious leaders to try to find out more from Jesus. Jesus' responses to Nicodemus confused him. Jesus was speaking to him in spiritual terms, but Nicodemus thought Jesus was speaking in physical terms. This is a text prophesying about Jesus. Nicodemus should have thought about this text as Jesus taught him. The Pharisees knew the Old Testament scriptures very well. In this text, God promises a time when the Israelites get new hearts and new spirits. As with Jesus' teaching, this is not literal new hearts, but new spiritual hearts. Nicodemus should have understood Jesus' talk of "being born again" being grounded in this text. God makes many other promises in the text God fulfilled in Jesus' ministry and in the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

2. Justification, regeneration and adoption happen at once

The moment a person repents of their sin and asks God for salvation, God saves the sinner, and the sinner becomes a completely new person. They are no longer separated from God by sin or rebellion. Instead, in salvation God removes all their guilt for all their sins by granting them a full pardon. Secondly, they are “born again,” no longer ruled by the sin they inherited at their birth, but now ruled by God as one saved by grace. Third, the Christian is transformed, going from a child of wrath to a Child of God. All three of these actions happen at once, and represent the complete and total salvation God offers to all people. Our lives are much bigger than what we see here on earth. Within our bodies is our soul that lives forever. If we believe in our hearts Jesus is God’s only Son, then we receive forgiveness of our sins from God and live forever in Heaven. If we refuse to believe in our hearts Jesus is God’s son, then we will be condemned. Condemnation is not God’s desire for anyone, but people must decide for themselves if they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior or not. We should celebrate the great salvation God provides to us. We can celebrate in times of worship with brothers and sisters in Christ. We can celebrate in being compassionate and loving to others. We can celebrate in living a life of love. Jesus give us a new life, we should celebrate!

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do you think Nicodemus, so thoroughly trained as a religious teacher, struggled to understand this teaching from Jesus about needing to be born again?
2. Why do some people believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior right away, and others take time before they will believe?
3. Believing in Jesus does not just bring spiritual salvation. What other benefits come from accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior?
4. How does it make you feel when you hear God has adopted you as a Child of God?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that as Christians, we are to celebrate the new life that Jesus gave us. We can celebrate by living a life of love. The students need to understand that justification, regeneration, and adoption happen at once, and represent the complete and total salvation God offers to all people.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today’s lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today’s lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for the new life we have in Christ.

CHRISTIAN HOLINESS AND ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Lesson

35

Objective: To help the students to understand that the Holy Spirit's infilling of the disciples enables the disciples to take the Good News to the ends of the earth.

Memory Verse: *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

80

Scripture: **Acts 2; Joel 2:28-32**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Christian life and the Entire Sanctification

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem. He was going to send the Holy Spirit to help them. One day the disciples and some other Christians went to a house to pray together. Suddenly, the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. The day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His followers is called the Day of Pentecost.

1. This infilling of the Holy Spirit leads the Christian to a life of communion with God and growth in grace

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make the life of Jesus alive in the Christian's life and empower them to live in the power of God. With the power of Holy Spirit at work within them, Christians can fulfill God's commands to love God and love others. With the infilling of the Holy Spirit, Christians can also live fully devoted to God's Kingdom, and free from bondage to sin. Though the disciples often misunderstood Jesus' mission to the world while Jesus ministered on earth, once filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to understand better the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Jesus' mission to the world. God's plan of salvation is more than to save people from the guilt of their sins, God's plan is to save people from the power of sin in their lives. Therefore, while the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides a path to salvation, the infilling of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent work of God in which God cleanses the heart from sin. Through the Power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is able to reject sin and have the power to love others with the love of God.

2. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification is for all

Entire Sanctification is the result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which is also called the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It includes the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. He empowers the believer to live and to serve like Jesus Christ. God never intended salvation to be limited to Israel. Because God created everyone, God wants everyone saved. Joel 2:28-32 speaks God's promise that one day, not just the Israelites, but everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. God also speaks through Joel of the coming Holy Spirit who will fill the Children

of God. As Jesus commanded, the disciples gathered in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. More than Jesus' 11 disciples, about 120 followers of Jesus gathered to wait. Suddenly, a rushing wind filled the room, and what looked like tongues of fire alit upon their heads. The disciples then declared the praises of God in many different languages. This filling of the Holy Spirit fulfilled Jesus' promises, as well as many Old Testament prophecies. This filling by the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the strength and grace to fulfill God's call upon their lives.

3. The Holy Spirit's filling of the Christian is a daily reality

Although there is a specific day when each of us received Christ as our Lord and Savior, our Christian life should not be limited to the past experience. We need to examine ourselves on daily basis to be sure that we are still under God's guidance. In other words, the Holy Spirit's filling of the Christian is not to be a one-time event, but a daily reality. When the Christian live out of God's power instead of their own power, they bear witness to the work of God in their lives. They are able to accomplish exceedingly more with God's power than under their own power. Christian holiness and entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus Christ and it has various terms such as Christian perfection, perfect love, heart purity, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and the fullness of blessing. Like all stages of salvation, sanctification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It does not occur as a result of one's efforts. However, this experience has to be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christ-likeness of character and personality.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why are the disciples able to live more like Jesus after the infilling of the Holy Spirit than when Jesus walked the earth?
2. Do you feel yourself torn between living for God and living bound to sin? If so, what can you do to allow God to have all of your life?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Underline to the students the difference between Entire Sanctification and spiritual growth. Remind them that Christian life is a journey of grace because Christians are to continue growing in their faith throughout their life in this world.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students to understand that God directs the church as it belongs to Him. The church has a mission which includes committing people to the Lord's work, even if that means God sends them out from their community in order to bless others.

Memory Verse: *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2)*

Scripture: **Acts 13:1-5; 1 Samuel 15 - 16**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Church. Ask the students to comment about the concept of Church and the reason why many people consider the building as the church.

Paul, Barnabas, and three men from other countries were at a church in the city of Antioch. While they were there, they fasted and worshiped God. To fast means to go without food. While the men were praying, the Holy Spirit told them to set apart Paul and Barnabas for a special task. To be set apart means to be chosen to do something special. The Holy Spirit wanted Paul and Barnabas to go out to different parts of the world and tell people about Jesus. When the Holy Spirit was finished speaking, the other men walked up to Paul and Barnabas. They placed their hands on Paul and Barnabas and prayed that the Lord would help and protect them as they went out to preach. After the men had prayed, Paul and Barnabas sailed on a boat to the island of Cyprus. This was the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey.

1. The Church is not a Place but people of God redeemed by Christ

The Church is the community that confesses Jesus as Lord. It is the people of God who are made new in Christ. It is the body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. In Old Testament times, God formed the nation of Israel to receive God's blessings and to share God's blessings with the world. In the New Testament times, God has formed the Church to be gatherings of Christians who share with each other the blessings of God and then share with the world the blessings of God as well. The Church is not a place, but the People of God who practice the gifts of God with one another, worship, fellowship, and then go out into the world to put their God-given gifts and talents into practice. God calls all Christians to be witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God, however, calls some Christians to the more public positions of pastors and missionaries. It is important for the church to discern if a person who feels God's calls upon them to this kind of position is in fact a calling from God.

2. The Church has its Mission and all Members are to Participate

After the persecution of the Jerusalem followers of Jesus broke out, many of the leaders of Jesus' followers moved to Antioch. It was in Antioch that people first started calling the followers of Jesus Christians. During one of their worship services, God told the Christians to set aside Saul and Barnabas for God's special work. The Christians did not realize exactly what that meant at the time, but Saul and Barnabas would become two of the most important missionaries the Christian church has ever known. In particular, God called Saul and Barnabas to be missionaries to the Gentiles. Saul (later called Paul) wrote many of the New Testament books written after the book of Acts, to the many churches he either planted or mentored. God often calls the most unlikely of people to do great things. When God sent the prophet Samuel to Jesse's house in Bethlehem to anoint the new king of Israel, everyone would have assumed Samuel would anoint Jesse's firstborn. However, not only did God not choose the firstborn, God ended up choosing the opposite, Jesse's youngest, David. God looked at the potential in David's heart when looking for someone who would serve God faithfully. So also, when God chose a missionary to the Gentiles, no one thought God would choose Saul. Saul was the opposite of a man pursuing God's kingdom, Saul was persecuting God's new church. However, God identified in Saul a person through whom God could do great things. When God calls people to special positions of ministry, like pastoring or being a missionary, God uses other Christians to confirm that calling. In this way, the whole Church plays a very important role in the more public ministries of the Church, not just in leading those ministries, but also in confirming, supporting, and encouraging those called to lead those ministries.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What were some of the actions believers in Acts 13 did that bore witness to them being The Church?
2. What are some of the benefits Christians receive when they gather together with other Christians to worship together and to practice their spiritual gifts?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that although it is important to have a good building for our worship, church is not that building but those who are saved and together they worship the Lord. We need to be humble to serve the Lord and to one another with love. We need to be ready to be commissioned to share the Good News according to God's indication.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for being the Owner of the Church.

Objective: To help the students to celebrate Jesus' willingness to demonstrate his love for us. To take our sins upon Himself on the cross, Jesus needed to participate in baptism.

Memory Verse: *And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)*

Scripture: **Matthew 3:1-17; Isaiah 42:1-9**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Sacrament of Baptism.

When Jesus was about 30 years old, He left Galilee and traveled south to the Jordan River. While He was there, Jesus went to see His cousin, John the Baptist. John baptized people who wanted to show that they were sorry for their sins. Jesus walked into the river and stood before John. Jesus told John that He would like to be baptized. John couldn't believe what Jesus was saying. Jesus didn't need to be baptized, because He had never sinned. Instead, John wanted Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus said that He needed to be baptized in order to fulfill God's mission. When John heard this, he agreed to baptize Jesus, even though he felt unworthy. When John brought Jesus out of the water, the sky opened up and a beautiful dove came down from heaven and landed on Jesus. Then a voice from heaven said, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased"* (NIV).

1. Baptism symbolizes being dead for sin to being alive in God

Baptism is the first of two sacraments practiced by the Church of the Nazarene. A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace. As such, Baptism signifies a person's acceptance of the gifts and blessings God offers in salvation. In Baptism, the Christian symbolically moves from being dead to sin to alive in God. In this sense, it represents being *"born again."* Baptism also includes many allusions to the Old Testament. Being saved through water recalls the way in which God saved Israel by parting the Red Sea during the Exodus. Baptism also alludes to circumcision, in which God gave the Israelites a practice in which to be marked as set aside for God's use and blessing. We are not sinless or faultless like Jesus. However, we can strive to, like Jesus, *"fulfill all righteousness"* in our lives. This does not mean we work hard under our power to be righteous. It means we surrender all our life to God's will for us, and are willing to do whatever God asks. It is important for the students to understand that Baptism has to go together with faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism alone cannot save us because it is an external act to witness what took place inside us. In the same manner, a person who refuses to be baptized claiming that they are already saved by Christ brings doubts of their salvation because baptism was established by God and true faith is revealed in obedience.

2. Jesus was baptized to display to us both God's mighty love for humanity and His obedience to the Father.

It can be a challenge to explain why the sinless Jesus said he needed baptism. However, what is clear is Jesus, the Son of God, fully obeyed God's call upon his life. Fully God and fully human, Jesus displayed to us both God's mighty love for man and his obedience to God. Because Jesus obeyed God's plan all the way to death and resurrection, salvation is available to us. Jesus demonstrated his love for us in his obedience to God. Celebrate Jesus' willingness to demonstrate his love for us. Jesus began his public ministry with baptism. John the Baptist came as a forerunner for Jesus, preparing the Israelites for Jesus' message and ministry. One of the ways John did this was by calling the Israelites to ask forgiveness of their sins and then receive baptism. John's baptism symbolized the person's death to sin and becoming alive in God. Because of this, John was surprised when Jesus requested baptism. From John's point of view, Jesus does not need baptism. Since Jesus was sinless and was the Messiah, why does Jesus need baptism? If Jesus is going to take on humanity's sins on the cross, he needs to identify with humanity in baptism. John did not baptize Jesus because Jesus needed baptism; he baptized Jesus because we need Jesus to save us. More than identifying with humanity, Jesus' baptism was the opportunity for God to speak from heaven and confirm God's love for Jesus.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What changes has God brought into your life since your baptism?
2. What would you tell others is the benefit to being baptized?
3. What do you think happens in a Christian's life when they begin to practice obedience to God's commands and will for their life?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that baptism is a sacrament because it is an outward sign of an inward grace. When Christians are baptized they make an external testimony of what God did in their heart. In this way, Baptism means obedience. When Christians learn obedience to God's commands and God's ways, God blesses their lives beyond all measure.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for providing the sacrament of baptism through which we symbolically witness our new life in Christ.

Objective: To help the students to understand that Jesus transforms the Passover meal from being a redemptive meal about freedom from slavery in Egypt to being a redemptive meal about freedom from slavery to sin.

Memory Verse: *And he [Jesus] said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (Luke 22:15)*

Scripture: **Luke 22:1-23; Exodus 11:1 – 12:13**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper.

Every year, the Jews would celebrate the Passover holiday. One Passover evening, Jesus and all of the disciples ate the Passover meal together. This would be the last supper that Jesus would have with His disciples. While they were eating, Jesus looked at His friends and said that one of them would betray Him. To betray means to tell on a friend. The disciples were sad and said they would never do such a thing. Jesus said that the man who dipped his bread into the bowl at the same time Jesus did would betray Him. When Jesus looked at Judas, He said, "Yes, it is you" (NIV). Then Jesus took some bread and broke it. He told the disciples that when they ate the bread, they should think of His body that would be broken. Then Jesus picked up a cup filled with red-colored wine. He said that when they drank the wine, they should think of the blood that He would shed for their sins. When we do this in church today, we call it Communion.

1. The Lord's Supper, is Jesus' new Passover Meal

The Lord's Supper is the second of two sacraments practiced by the Church of the Nazarene. A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace. While the first sacrament, Baptism, is normally practiced only once at the beginning of a Christian's spiritual journey, the Lord's Supper is to be practiced on a regular basis until the Christian receives their eternal reward. Jesus established the Lord's Supper on the night of his betrayal, as he gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus redefined the Passover meal and infused it with new meaning in anticipation of his coming death and resurrection. While it was the blood of a lamb that saved the Israelites from the last plague God sent upon Egypt, now it will be through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's perfect Lamb that salvation will come to the world. Jesus calls on his followers to practice this Lord's Supper meal, not once a year as in the Passover meal, but on a regular basis.

2. The Lord's Supper is both a time of reverence for Jesus' great sacrifice, and a time of celebration for Jesus' great love

The practice of the Lord's Supper should be both a reverent time of humility, and a joyful time of celebration. God provided salvation for Israel from their slavery in Egypt. However, the Israelites had to obey God's words about marking their doors with blood. The Jews celebrate the Passover meal each year to remember this foundational event in their history. Now, in Jesus, God provides salvation for the entire world from their slavery to sin. However, people need to obey God's word in order to receive this salvation. The Lord's Supper is a celebration Christians celebrate often to remember this foundational event in their lives.

Jesus is the Son of God, whose death and resurrection will break the power of sin over the lives of Christians. However, Jesus still shares this special transforming meal with them so that, even though they do not understand now, after his resurrection they will remember what happened. Remembrance of this meal will remind them that Jesus knew all along that his life would end on the cross. After refusing to free the Israelites from Egypt, even after many plagues, finally, after the plague of the Firstborn, Pharaoh threw Israel out of Egypt. As a lasting memorial of God's mighty work on behalf of Israel in which God killed the first-born of the Egyptians, but "Passed Over" the homes of the Israelites marked by the blood of the lamb, the Israelites are to celebrate the Passover meal each year. The Lord's Supper, as Jesus' new Passover Meal, is very special for Christians because in it they remember not just a lamb who died for their salvation, but the very Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Christians also believe God's strengthens them and encourages them as they participate in the Lord's Supper. As such, the Lord's Supper is both a time of reverence for Jesus' great sacrifice, and a time of celebration for Jesus' great love.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What emotions and feelings do you experience when you remember the sacrifice Jesus made for you on the cross?
2. What difference does it make in your life that Jesus died on the cross to provide a path of salvation for you?
3. What comes to mind when you reflect on the pain Jesus suffered in order to bring you salvation?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that The Lord's Supper is a sacrament because it is an outward sign of an inward grace. God strengthens the Christians and encourages them as they participate in the Lord's Supper.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who takes away the sins of the world.

Objective: To help the students to be encouraged because Jesus knows their needs, and listens when they call out to Him.

Memory Verse: *When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47)*

Scripture: **Mark 10:46-52; Ruth 1**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit, they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on Divine Healing.

As Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem, He passed through the city of Jericho. A large crowd of people surrounded Jesus as He walked down the street. He heard a man calling out to Him, saying, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" Many of the people who were around Jesus told the man to be quiet and not to bother Jesus. When the man heard the people talking to him, he shouted even louder. He wanted Jesus to hear him calling. Jesus looked through the crowd and saw a blind man, named Bartimaeus, sitting at the side of the road. Jesus told the people to let Bartimaeus know that Jesus heard his cry. Then Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted Him to do. The blind man said, "*Teacher, I want to see.*" Jesus told Bartimaeus that because he had faith, he would be healed. When Bartimaeus raised up his head, he could see!

1. God continues to heal people today

The Jews in Jesus' day generally believed that God sent rewards and punishments in this lifetime on the righteous and the wicked. While the text does not explicitly state this principle, the crowds tell the blind man in great need to be quiet as the miracle worker was passing by. Why would the crowds tell someone in need of Jesus' help to quiet down? Because they did not believe Bartimaeus was worthy of Jesus' attention. Because the disabled could not work, they often relied on begging for their daily needs. Others also looked down on the disabled, assuming their disability was punishment from God. Therefore, Bartimaeus' disability has physical, social, and religious implications. Bartimaeus is desperate. He cries out loudly to get Jesus' attention. Bartimaeus' faith impresses Jesus, so Jesus heals him. Bartimaeus then becomes a follower of Jesus. Many aspects of Jesus' teachings, miracles, and ministry surprised people. In the last two events, Jesus surprises people who assumed the rich were righteous and the disabled were wicked. For, the rich young man goes away from Jesus sad, because he loved his riches more than God, while the disabled Bartimaeus follows Jesus after being healed because of his faith. Physical healings were one of the means through which Jesus manifested his divinity. While Jesus did not heal all the sick or raise all the dead in his time, Jesus did use physical healings to demonstrate the power behind his teachings. The ministry of Jesus' continued through the early church as many of Jesus' followers taught and healed in the power of the Holy Spirit. God continues to heal people today as well. Sometimes those healings are instantaneous miracles through

prayer. Sometimes times God heals through the means of medical science. Sometimes God's answer to prayers of healing is to give patience and endurance in the face of the sickness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Finally, sometimes God offers the ultimate healing to his Children, the reward of seeing him face to face in glory (Philippians 1:20-24).

2. People can misunderstand God's love and plans

Christians need to always be humble in heart and open to God's message for them. Because many in Jesus' day assumed they knew how God always works and did not want to listen to God's message through Jesus, they rebuked Bartimaeus' calls for healing from Jesus. Whenever Christians think they know exactly how and when God will act, they can be hindering God's redemptive work. Instead, Christians need to believe God always hears their prayers. Like Bartimaeus' blindness, people would have looked at Ruth's loss of both her husband and her sons as signs of God's punishment. However, life is much more complicated than just, *"good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people."* Because of sin in this world, sometimes bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people. What is important is to look at a person's heart, not their circumstances. Are they a person of faith? Then no matter what their circumstances, God will work to bring healing and goodness into their lives. In Jesus' day, they thought God punished people for their sins by making them disabled. Jesus, however, demonstrated God's love for disabled people. Sin seeks to disable people while God seeks to heal people. God's healing comes in many forms. In Jesus' ministry, Jesus' healing often physically healed people, spiritually healed people, socially healed people. Today, Jesus' healing also comes in many forms.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do you think people felt they had the right to rebuke Bartimaeus?
2. Why does God not always answer our prayers the way we want?
3. What are some of the physical and spiritual needs in your community?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God's healing comes in many forms. Christians need to understand that people in their community have different kinds of sickness. In this way divine healing can be physical, spiritual, and social. God is able to heal us. We need to avoid the spirit of judgment to those who are sick.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for being our Only True Healer.

Objective: To help the students to encouraged, knowing that at the end of this age, Jesus the Messiah will come back to judge his enemies, reward his people, and reign as King over the whole earth.

Memory Verse: *Be prepared to given and answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this will gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15).*

Scripture: **Revelation 19:11-20:6; Luke 21:5-19**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on the Second Coming of Christ.

In this passage, using vivid imagery and symbols, we hear that one day Jesus Christ will return to earth and the curse of sin will be broken as the unrighteous are defeated and the righteous are rescued.

1. Christ will Return for the Second Time

After Jesus' death and resurrection, he returned to Heaven and the Holy Spirit came to dwell within Christians. One day, at the end of time, Christ will return for a second time. At that time Christians, both living and dead, will meet Jesus and be taken to Heaven. There are many who try to interpret exactly when and how all this will happen. However, the Church of the Nazarene recognizes the Bible does not give clear and exact details on the "when" and "how," and so chooses to focus on the "who." (2 Peter 3:3-15) Christ will return in glory!

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John shares many of the visions God gave him about events that will occur in the future. Using vivid imagery and symbols, John communicated these visions through his writing. John saw these visions as pertaining to the end of the Roman Empire of his day. However, Christians believe these visions also communicate truths about the future reign of Christ on earth. There is much debate about what many of the images and symbols John uses means. It is best to not get tied up into trying to assign modern-day parallels to every image and sign John uses, but to find the main message John was trying to communicate, and apply that message to our current situation. Jesus also uses vivid imagery and symbols to try and communicate heavenly truths to the disciples about the future. The immediate future Jesus was talking about to the disciples is the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70. Christians also understand this passage to be talking about the end of time as well, when Jesus will return with power and glory.

2. One day God will completely destroy the power of Satan, and rescue believers in Jesus.

When times are tough, sometimes we need encouragement. The vision given to John was to give the early Christians encouragement as they were suffering under the persecution of the Roman Empire. So too, the passage has been a source of hope for Christians throughout the centuries who have also suffered for being followers of Jesus Christ. When we are encouraged, and have a clear understanding of both God's love and power, then we can live confidently in this fallen world. Though we may suffer many trials and persecutions, that does not make us unique. Instead, it places us in the long line of faithful Christians throughout the centuries who did not consider suffering for Christ as something to be avoided. Christian hope is deeper than what many people might think. Though sin and evil seem to run rampant in this world, there will come a day in which God completely destroys the power of Satan, and rescues believers in Jesus. John was given this vision, and shares it in the scriptures as a source of hope for Christians throughout the centuries.

91

It is important to note that our present life as believers determines how we will face the Second Coming of Christ. In other words, the Second coming of Christ is not to be considered as a theme of curiosity; instead of wasting our time trying to calculate the possible dates of the Second Coming of Christ, we need to spread the Good News to others knowing that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will bring different consequences to people. This future event has to inspire us to live in Christ. Those who will be still alive at His coming will not precede those who are asleep in Christ Jesus. If we are in Christ we will be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord so that we shall ever be with the Lord. Therefore, we need to be in Christ now as we are still alive, knowing that there is no repentance after death.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Jesus the Messiah will return to the earth. Why do we think this is the Jesus we have studied?
2. Jesus the Messiah will defeat those who oppose Him at that time. Who are these enemies of Jesus? Who are the beast and the false prophet?
3. Where in our study have we seen predictions that Jesus the Messiah would reign as King?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Encourage the students with what you learned today by helping them understand that what seems to be impossible to be removed today in their life will be completely destroyed. Although sin and evil seem to run rampant in this world, there will come a day in which God completely destroys the power of Satan, and rescues believers in Jesus.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for helping them to contemplate the Second coming of Christ not in fear but with hope and joy.

RESURRECTION, JUDGEMENT, AND DESTINY

Lesson

41

Objective: To help the students to recognize that the earthly life we live is only the beginning of our existence. After death, all Christians go to heaven where we will live worshiping God and enjoying God's presence without any pain or suffering ever again.

Memory Verse: *'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'* (Revelation 21:4)

Scripture: **Revelation 21; John 14**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Tell them that in this Unit, they will be learning on the Articles of Faith. Today the lesson will be based on Resurrection, Judgement, and Destiny.

One night, John the apostle had a vision. A vision is like a dream. God wanted to show John what heaven would be like. God called it the New Jerusalem. John saw the most beautiful city he had ever seen. He saw a city with walls made of jasper, and the inside of the city was made out of pure gold. There were four walls around the city, and each wall had three gates. The gates were named after the 12 tribes of Israel. Each gate was made out of a giant pearl. John looked inside the city and saw that there wasn't a temple to worship God in. An angel told John that there wasn't any need for a temple because God and Jesus would be the Temple. Then the angel told John that there would be no sun in heaven because God and Jesus would shine brighter than the sun. The people whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life, since Jesus had forgiven them of their sins, would be able to enter this wonderful city.

1. Every person will stand before the judgment seat of God

In the resurrection of the dead, the bodies both of the just and of the unjust will be raised to life and united with their spirits. Those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. This is the good news because we have this privilege of hearing this while we can make a decision helped by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the message of the Future has impact to our present life in the same manner that our present living can affect our future knowing that God's message ends with wonderful news—everyone who has trusted Jesus the Messiah as his or her Savior will enter a beautiful, sin-free paradise and live there eternally with God. God and the Lamb (Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God) are the center of heaven, not us. When Christ returns, he will raise the saints from the dead to join God in heaven. Every person will also stand before the judgment seat of God. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians will be saved. However, those who reject the forgiveness of Christ will be eternally lost in hell. This earthly life is only a small part of who we really are as the Children of God. When this life is over, all Christians will enjoy an eternity in Heaven with God. There all our questions will be

answered, all our sufferings taken away, and all our tears be dried. It will be a place where we can worship God perfectly, for there will no longer be any pain or sin.

2. Heaven will be a place where Christians will spend all eternity with Jesus

God gave the Apostle John visions of what Heaven will be like. There will be no more pain, sin, or suffering. Instead, Christians will enjoy worshipping Jesus with perfect love and joy. Jesus promised his disciples, before his death, that when he left them, he would prepare a place in Heaven for them. The disciples were to live in the confidence and peace that, even when Jesus' left, Jesus would still be taking care of them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Living the Christian life can be very hard. In the midst of temptations and persecutions, many Christians are tempted to walk away from the faith. In addition, if not explicitly walking away from the faith, at least they are tempted to compromise their faith. One of the reasons why God gives Christians the hope of Heaven is to remind us that we are living for something greater now than these momentary pains and trials. Live confidently, be ready to share your hope of heaven with someone this week. It may mean you risk having them laugh at you; however, everyone needs to know there is hope not only for this life but also for the life to come. They also need to know there are consequences for how they live their life, consequences both for this life as well as for the life to come.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Does the promise of end-times judgement bring you joy or fear? Why?
2. How should the prospect of the end times affect how you look upon your daily life?
3. What are you looking forward to most in Heaven?
4. What makes the message of destiny to be Good News?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help the students understand that Christ came to die for everyone for salvation. Receiving Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior and obeying His commandments in fellowship with other saints is the best way of waiting with joy and hope the last judgement. In Heaven all our questions will be answered, all our sufferings taken away, and all our tears be dried. It will be a place where we can worship God perfectly, for there will no longer be any pain or sin.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for informing us about the future of His creation and for providing Heaven as our last destiny.

Term 4:

PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Objective of the term:

This term will help the students understand that their Christian life is not based on religious obligations made by human beings. Our Christian faith is based on Jesus Christ. In the Second Term we learned about Christ's work of salvation through His death and resurrection. This last term will deal with the messages related to His Birth. The students will understand that the best way of expecting the Second Coming of Christ is to understand His first Coming.

94

- Lesson 42: **Ordinary Means for Extraordinary End**
- Lesson 43: **In God there are no strangers**
- Lesson 44: **God calls people of all ages into His Mission**
- Lesson 45: **Avoiding Selfish Prayers**
- Lesson 46: **Chosen for a great Purpose**
- Lesson 47: **God's holiness is so majestic**
- Lesson 48: **God is sovereign over everything that might threaten His people**
- Lesson 49: **Renewing our hope**
- Lesson 50: **The Announcement about the Coming Messiah**
- Lesson 51: **The Messiah is Born**
- Lesson 52: **Jesus came for All People, Jews and Gentiles**

ORDINARY MEANS FOR EXTRAORDINARY END

Lesson

42

Objective: To help the students to celebrate the fact that God can be trusted, because God continues to be faithful to the covenants by providing a rescuer for the Israelites when they cried out to from their slavery in Egypt.

Memory Verse: *When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water." (Exodus 2:10)*

95

Scripture: **Exodus 2:1-10; Matthew 2:13-23**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Today's lesson helps us understand that God can use simple means to protect us. Instead of trusting the material, we need to know that God is the true Protector.

The new pharaoh of Egypt thought there were too many Hebrew people in his land. The Israelites were also called Hebrews. So, Pharaoh ordered that all of the Hebrew baby boys be killed. When Moses was born, his mother wanted to hide him so that he wouldn't be killed. As Moses grew, his mother found it difficult to hide him. She had to quickly think of another way to save her little boy. She made a small basket to put Moses in and put it into the Nile River. Her daughter, Miriam, watched the basket to make sure that nothing happened to the baby. When Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to take a bath, she found the small basket. In it, she discovered a little Hebrew baby. Pharaoh's daughter decided to keep the baby boy. Moses didn't grow up with his real family, but he was safe.

1. God is always faithful to the covenant He makes with His people

God continued being faithful to the covenant made with Abraham by protecting the Israelites. Many generations of God's people have lived in Egypt after Joseph; however, God's people are no longer living in freedom and blessing, but in slavery. Their cries have risen to heaven, and God begins providing a way of freedom for them through saving the infant Moses from death. Fearful of the growing number of Israelites living in Egypt, the Pharaoh demanded all the newborn male Israelite babies be killed at birth. One mother refused this order and kept her baby safe at home for three months. When she could no longer hide the baby, she placed him in a basket in the Nile hoping he would be saved.

The Hebrew term used here for "basket" is the same used in the Noah account in Genesis 6 for the ark he was building. In both accounts, God provided a means for delivering God's people from destruction. Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby, had compassion on him, and adopted the baby to be her own.

2. God saves us so that we become the vessels of His blessing to others

In the midst of Pharaoh demanding the deaths of Hebrew baby boys, God is able to use Pharaoh's daughter to be part of the salvation history of God's people Israel. We need to remember that sometimes God's blessings and protection will flow into our lives by people who are not following God or seeking to honor God with their lives. In addition, that God will use us to protect and bless those who are in need of protection, whether or not they are Christians. God continues to protect the Israelites, being true to the covenant with Abraham.

While God sent the Israelites to Egypt during Joseph's day to save them from a famine, now, generations later, Pharaoh is oppressing them and using them as slaves in Egypt. God sees their suffering and begins raising up one of Abraham's descendants who will deliver the Israelites from their slavery. We can do great harm to others in trying to protect ourselves when we allow our hearts to be filled with fear. This happens on national levels with one race oppressing another race, but also happens in our own personal relationship level when people allow fear to breed racism in their hearts. Thus, God saved Moses from death so he could grow up and deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How does the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the status of all Christians as the People of God, demonstrate racism is a sin?
2. How can we make sure the differences we have with others do not become hindrances to us loving them in Christ?
3. If God can use people who do not believe to bless and protect others, how then can you as a follower of Jesus Christ bless and protect those who do not say they follow God?
4. How can you stand up for and protect those in your community who are being oppressed, even if they are very different from you?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help the students understand that God can use the means that we may despise to fulfill His will in our life. In the same manner that He saved Moses from death so he could grow up and deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God saved us to be the vessels of His blessings to other people.

Challenge:

Ask the class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the group pray together praising God for His faithfulness to the covenants He makes with His people. As Christians we are witnesses of God's faithfulness and His continuous protection.

Objective: To help the students to remember that God sometimes chooses the most unexpected people to be essential parts of keeping covenant promises.

Memory Verse: *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."* (Micah 5:2, 4 / Matthew 2:6)

Scripture: **Ruth 1; Matthew 2:1-8**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Today's lesson helps us understand that God is the Creator of all people and He can use anyone for His glory.

Naomi and her husband had two sons, Mahlon and Kilion. Naomi's family had to move to the country of Moab, because there was no food left in their town of Bethlehem. When Naomi's sons grew up, they married Ruth and Orpah, who were from Moab. Ruth and Orpah liked Naomi, and they respected her very much. Many years later, Naomi's husband and her two sons died. Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were left all alone. Naomi decided to go back home to Bethlehem. She begged Ruth and Orpah to go back to their own families. But, because they loved Naomi so much, neither one of them wanted to leave her. After much begging, Naomi finally convinced Orpah to go back to her family. But Ruth stayed with Naomi, and they traveled to Bethlehem. Ruth later married a man named Boaz. Do you know who Ruth's grandson was? King David!

1. God is at work in maintaining the covenant promises

The little Book of Ruth is located between the books of Judges and 1 Samuel. Judges ends with this sad news, *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."* In the book of 1 Samuel Israelite kings begin to be anointed. The events of Ruth occur during this period of anarchy, before the monarchy. Amid famine in Israel, a family from Bethlehem fled to Moab in order to survive. While there, though it was against Israel's law, the two sons of this family married two Moabite women. Then, over the course of time, the Israelite father and the two sons died, leaving no males to care for the mother and wives. This put these three women in a very difficult situation where no one was protecting them or providing for them. The mother, Naomi, decided to return to Jerusalem and see if she could find any extended family members who would help care for her. One daughter-in-law, Ruth, went with her. Through a series of events, orchestrated by Naomi outwardly, but by God behind the scenes, Ruth became engaged to one of Naomi's extended family members.

Because of this, Naomi and Ruth were protected and blessed. Ruth bore a son, and Ruth became part of the family tree that would produce both King David and Jesus Christ. The events recorded in the book of Ruth give witness to God's work in maintain the covenant promises. Not only is Ruth, a Moabite, grafted into the history of Israel by being in the family chain of King David, but also in the

family line of Jesus Christ. Although God does not speak in this book of Ruth, nor are there any miracles, God still speaks and works, indirectly, through this beautiful story.

2. Christians are to demonstrate love for God and for other people

Christians and churches will demonstrate love for God and love for others. Christian love, as modeled in Jesus Christ, is a sacrificial love that places the needs of others above our own needs. Devotion, faithfulness, and integrity all mark the kind of Christian love that demonstrates the heart of Jesus for others. This kind of love does not come easily, nor is it developed quickly. Instead, Christian love is the result of a relationship with God in which the Christian receives the love of God, and then turns around and shares that love with others. The longer the Christian walks with God, the deeper their love for God and others should grow. Their lives will bear the fruit that comes from being Holy Spirit filled believers. This fruit results in honoring God, helping others see Christ in them, and building up the Body of Christ. In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul describes nine virtues that will characterize a person or church who are bearing witness to the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As Christians, you are part of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom much bigger and more significant than any earthly nation, state, or peoples. Because of this, Christians are called to love all Christians, both to show God's compassion, and also to show our solidarity with all God's people. We are also called to love non-Christians, because God loves them, works through them, and because they may be the ones through whom God will bless us.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some of the ways in which Ruth demonstrates a sacrificial love for Naomi?
2. What are some of the risks and rewards for loving others sacrificially?
3. What are some practical ways in which you can demonstrate the love of God to others this week?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Encourage your students to love those considered strangers knowing that the time we were sinners, we were also strangers to the community of faith, but God's grace found us in our sin and brought us to His family. He can do the same with any other people.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text again. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together the Lord's Prayer.

GOD CALLS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES INTO HIS MISSION

Lesson

44

Objective: To help the students to be open to God's direction in their life

Memory Verse: *Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:10b)*

Lesson Text: **1 Samuel 3; Acts 9:1-19**

99

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Today's lesson helps the students understand that we need to listen to God Voice in our life.

Hannah prayed to God and asked Him to give her a son. God answered Hannah's prayer, and she named her little boy Samuel. When Samuel was very young, his mother took him to Eli, the priest. Samuel grew up helping Eli in the temple. One night, when Samuel and Eli were asleep in the temple, Samuel heard someone call his name. "*Samuel!*" He ran to Eli and said, "*Here I am.*" Eli said, "*I did not call; go back and lie down.*" Samuel heard someone call his name three times. Eli realized that it was God calling to Samuel. Eli told Samuel that the next time he heard his name, he should say, "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*" (NIV). God called Samuel again, and Samuel talked with Him. When Samuel was older, God made him a prophet, priest, and judge over Israel.

1. Samuel was called by God when he was still very young

Eli and Samuel were the last two judges of Israel. Samuel would follow God's will in anointing the next two kings over Israel, Saul and David. Though Eli was a faithful judge, his two sons were wicked. They took advantage of their positions as priests. Eli confronted them and tried to get them to change their ways, but they refused. God warned Eli that because of the sins of his sons they would both die on the same day. A woman named Hannah was barren and greatly distressed because she had no children. One night, as she was pouring out her heart to God in the temple, she promised God that if she had a son, she would dedicate him to God's service in the temple. Eli found her praying that night. When Eli recognized her great grief and sorrow, he promised her God would answer her prayers. Hannah went home, conceived, and bore a son whom she named Samuel. After Hannah weaned Samuel, she fulfilled her promise and gave him to Eli to be used in God's service.

Unlike Eli's sons, Samuel grew "*in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people.*" (1 Samuel 2:26) In this passage, God spoke directly to Samuel, signaling that Samuel would be the one to inherit Eli's position as High Priest, and not either of Eli's sons. In fact, the revelation Samuel received was a confirmation that the line of judges would no longer run through Eli's family. Samuel's life focused on doing the work of God before he even knew God personally. As Samuel grew, God revealed himself more and more to Samuel. Christians need to create places and times in which they can

receive God's continued revelation to them. Later on, this Samuel was used by God to anoint the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

2. God called Paul while he was trying to destroy the Christian Church

Paul, the greatest missionary in the Bible, received a direct call from God. Unlike Samuel, though, who was serving God, Saul (later called Paul), was actually trying to destroy the early Christian church. He thought he was doing God's will, but on the road to Damascus God confronted and corrected Saul. Jesus revealed to him that he, whom Saul thought was a heretic, in fact really was the Messiah. The key to a life of joy and peace is having a heart open to God, our Creator and Savior. Prevenient grace is God's blessed work in the life of a Christian before they know God as Savior. We see this prevenient grace at work in Samuel's life from a young age, as God spoke to him before he even recognized the voice of God. After becoming a Christian, Christians need to make sure they remain open to hearing God's voice. On the other hand, Paul received the call from the same God who called Samuel but in different contexts. This means that God can call us in various ways. The important thing on our part is to listen to God's call.

100

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Hearing God's audible voice is very rare, even in the Bible. What are the more common ways in which God gives direction to Christians?
2. Eli's sons were rebellious. What causes children to turn away from their parent's teachings?
3. Saul's conversion is very unusual, but an example of God confronting people with their sin problem. What are ways in which God confronted you with your need to repent?
4. What are some steps Christians can take to be open and ready to hear God's voice to them?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help your students understand that God calls His people in various ways. Their age, culture, language, or social status cannot be a challenge for God to call them. What they need to do is to continue listening to God's will and be ready to submit themselves to God's guidance. Our devotional life helps us to be ready for God's calling.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together Praising God for His saving grace and His calling to the ministry.

AVOIDING SELFISH PRAYERS

Lesson

45

Objective: To help the students to strive to have prayer times that are marked not by trying to get from God what they think they need, but asking God to give them what they actually need.

Memory Verse: *And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. (Titus 3:8)*

101

Scripture: **Samuel 10; Titus 3:1-8**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Remind the students that God knows the best for each of them, always.

Samuel had been the judge of Israel for many years. He was getting very old and would not be a judge much longer. Samuel was ready to choose someone to take his place. The Israelites told Samuel that they didn't want another judge. They wanted a king because all of the countries around them had a king. God was disappointed in the Israelites, but He told Samuel to listen to what the people were saying. There was a young man named Saul; he was a head taller than any other man in Israel. God told Samuel that Saul was the man He had chosen to be king over Israel. Samuel went to Saul and poured a special oil over his head. This is called an "*anointing*." Samuel took Saul back to the Israelites and told them that Saul would be their king. The Israelites were very pleased.

1. Israel insisted that they wanted a king

Samuel is the last judge to serve in Israel. Unfortunately, like his predecessor's sons, Samuel's sons did not honor God. They used their position to take advantage of others. Therefore, the Israelites demanded new leadership, they wanted a king like the other nations. This is a theme repeatedly found in Israel's history – Israel wanting to be like all the other nations around them. This is contrary to God's covenants with Israel, God wanted Israel to be different, like a light in the darkness. Sometimes God gives us the answers to our prayers, even though God knows those answers are not the best for us. God does this to teach us the dangers of selfish prayers. God had Samuel warn the people of the consequences of having a king (see 1 Samuel 8:10-21). The Israelites refused to heed God's warning, and kept demanding a king. Therefore, God chose Saul to be their king. While Saul began his reign well, as the months and years progress, he became a very bad king. Through his actions and decisions, he demonstrated he cared more about pleasing people than pleasing God. The Holy Spirit that came upon King Saul early in his reign is also available for Christians. With the Holy Spirit within, Christians can live lives of love and holiness. We must be careful we do not fall away from God as King Saul did, but that we remain obedient to God.

2. Our hearts and minds are to be devoted fully to God

It can be a tough lesson to get what we want, only to realize it does not satisfy. The only way Christians will be full of joy and love is when our hearts and minds are devoted fully to God. One way of doing this is to pray Jesus' words, *"not what I will, but what you will."* (Mark 14:36) When a Christians' heart and mind are devoted to God, they will more easily pray for the right needs, and receive from God only good blessings. Discernment is a very important quality for a Christian to develop. Unlike the Israelites who refused to listen to Samuel's warning, a person who is developing discernment is learning not to rely on their own wisdom or insights. A discerning Christian will seek out God's will, seek out advice from mature Christians, and try to remove selfishness from their life. They will strive for a prayer life focused on receiving from God what they need, not what they want. Deciding to incorporate Jesus' prayer "not what I will, but what you will" is an excellent step in training ourselves to put God's will first in our prayers. It will also help us not mistakenly pray for desires contrary to God's will. In addition, writing down prayers can help Christians see how much of their prayer time is focused on what they want from God verses praising God.

102

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How can a Christian discern whether their prayer requests are selfish and, if answered, will not bring them the joy and peace they assume will come with the answer?
2. Though overall a bad king, Saul began his reign rather well. What causes people to fall away from keeping God first in their lives?
3. Why are people tempted to judge others by their appearance, and not wait to get to know their character?
4. What does it take a Christian to follow God's will, even when that course of action will require them to practice self-denial?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help your students understand that they need to know how to pray. When a Christians' heart and mind are devoted to God, they will more easily pray for the right needs, and receive from God only good blessings. Discernment is a very important quality for a Christian to develop. One way of doing this is to pray Jesus' words, "not what I will, but what you will."

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together Praising God for discernment that the Holy Spirit empowers them to seek first the will of God knowing that God's will is good, pleasing and perfect.

Objective: To help the students to appreciate the unique opportunities and dangers of living as exiles in the midst of people who do not honor God.

Memory Verse: *For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14)*

Scripture: **Esther 4; 1 Peter 2:9-17**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Remind the students that God puts us in certain positions in order for us to be a blessing to others.

Xerxes chose her to be his queen. Haman was the king's highest officer, and he didn't like the Jews who lived in his country. Haman had planned to kill all of the Jews. Esther was worried when she found out about his plan. She was also a Jew. Esther wanted to tell the king about Haman's evil plan, but she couldn't go right in to see him. If she went in without the king calling her, the law said that she would be killed. The only way she would live was if the king would hold out his scepter to her. Esther took that chance. She bravely walked right in to see the king. Everyone was shocked! What would the king do? He lowered his scepter to Esther, and she touched it. When Esther told the king about Haman's evil plan, the king had Haman killed. Esther saved her people.

1. God put Esther in a very important position in Susa to ensure there would be protection for the Israelites

The events of the book of Esther occur after the end of the Babylonian captivity, when most of the Israelites returned to the Promised Land. For whatever reason, many Jews, including Esther and Mordecai, have decided not to return to the Promised Land, but to live in the Persian Empire. The Book of Esther, along with the book of Daniel, record some of the unique challenges Jews faced when living outside the Promised Land. In particular, the racism and jealousy others felt towards Jews. God put Esther in a very important position in Susa to ensure there would be protection for the Israelites, even for Israelites not living in the Promised Land. Interestingly, there is no mention of God, prayer, or miracles in the book of Esther. However, it is clear God is working behind the scenes, remaining faithful to the covenant promises to protect the Israelites. God works through the advice of Mordecai, through the courageous actions of Esther, and in response to the Israelites' fasting. Regardless of the earthly nation in which Christians live, they are "foreigners and exiles" in that nation, for their true citizenship is in the Kingdom of God. In this passage, the Apostle Peter gives some guidelines on how Christians are to conduct themselves while living as exiles in their earthly nation. They are to show honor and respect for the earthly rulers and authorities, and live such good lives that they will be witnesses of God's glory to the pagans.

2. Racism is an expression of Human sinfulness

Human sinfulness expresses itself in many forms. Rage and racism are two of the forms on display in the book of Esther. Haman's rage was so great, he did not just want to punish Mordecai for his disrespect, but his rage fueled his racism to the point of plotting to destroy all Jews living in the Persian Empire. This is an example of sin within a person expressing itself in outward forms. Humans cannot control sin under their own power. However, God is able to frustrate the work of sin, and in Christ, destroy the power of sin. With Jesus' power and presence, Christians can reject sin. Esther and Mordecai's situation displays some of the unique challenges facing exiles. One of the best ways to fight prejudice and hate is to sit down with someone who is different from you and get to know them (and allow them to get to know you, too!) Massive walls fall down when we start by just taking one brick away at a time. Jesus wants us to love others as He loves them. This is not always easy, but fasting is one way a Christian can spend a specific time of prayer and reflection for God's healing work in their life. When people become a Christian, they become members of the greatest kingdom of all, the Kingdom of God.

104

This is a kingdom whose citizens are *"from every nation, tribe, people and language."* (Revelation 7:9) Sometimes, before becoming a Christian, the new Christian hated other nations or groups of people. Part of what it means to grow in your Christian faith is to allow God to heal those prejudices, and see all people as God sees them, as God's beloved creations. It can take great courage to allow God's transforming work in a Christian's life.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some reasons why a person would feel prejudice against others?
2. Besides prejudice, what other inner sins can cause someone to lash out in anger towards others?
3. Why is there such a great temptation for people to hate or be suspicious of others who are different from them?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help your students understand that as Christians they are living as exiles. Thus, they are to conduct themselves while living as exiles in their earthly nation.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together the Lord's Prayer.

GOD'S HOLINESS IS SO MAJESTIC

Lesson

47

Objective: Help the students to reflect on the great divide between God's perfect holiness and our human frailties. To help them to celebrate the wonderful grace of God that bridges this great divide by offering salvation to all people.

Memory Verse: - *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."* (Revelation 4:11)

105

Scripture: **Isaiah 6:1-8; Revelation 4**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Tell the students that God's majestic holiness hates sin and His gracious love loves the sinner.

One day Isaiah, who was a prophet, had a vision. A vision is like a dream. Isaiah saw God in the Temple, and He was sitting on a throne. God's robe was so big that it filled the inside of the Temple. Isaiah also saw angels called "seraphs." When the seraphs talked to each other, the doorways in the Temple shook, and the inside of the Temple filled up with smoke. Isaiah couldn't believe what he was seeing! One of the seraphs picked up a hot coal from the altar and put it on Isaiah's lips. The seraph was showing Isaiah that God wanted to take away his sin. Then, Isaiah would be ready to go out and tell others about God. God asked Isaiah whom He could send to tell others about Him. And Isaiah answered, *"Here am I. Send me!"* (NIV).

1. Christians are to remember to treat God with great honor and respect

Being a prophet of God was not an easy or safe calling, because God called prophets to preach against the sins of the Israelites. Oftentimes the kings would jail or abuse the prophets because of this confrontational preaching. However, the hope that people would repent and turn to God motivated the prophets to be obedient to God's call on their lives. The Israelites had good kings and they had bad kings. The good kings were faithful to God and recognized their position meant they had a responsibility to turn the Israelite's hearts to God. The bad kings were unfaithful to God and led the people into all manner of sins, worst of all, idolatry. God raised up prophets to warn the kings and people to repent and turn back to the only true God. Isaiah was one of those prophets. In this passage, Isaiah describes his experience when God commissioned him to be a prophet. In this vision, God's holiness overwhelms Isaiah. Isaiah fears his and his people's own sinfulness will ruin him.

2. God graciously saves His people before commissioning them

God graciously forgives Isaiah after his confession. God then commissions Isaiah to go and warn the Israelites destruction was coming upon them if they did not repent of their sins. The rest of the book of Isaiah is a record of his ministry carrying God's message to Israel and several of her kings. Like Isaiah, the Apostle John had a vision of God in the temple. Also similar to Isaiah's vision are the flying creatures with six wings and their singing the *"Holy, holy, holy"* praises to God. God is a mighty and

awesome God. God's holiness is so majestic Christians will be overwhelmed when they see God face to face. Isaiah had a unique experience when he had a vision of God in the temple. Like Isaiah, God calls all men and women to be his messengers. Some of those, like Isaiah, God calls into full-time ministry. Others may have secular jobs, but God still calls them to share God's love and the Gospel with others. No matter what kind of ministry God calls us to, we can always give praise and thanksgiving to God for crossing the great divide between heaven and earth in Jesus Christ.

3. Our encounter with God brings humility in our heart

It is appropriate to feel great humility when in God's presence. Whatever holiness a Christian may possess, it is nothing compared to the holiness of God. In addition, while God does call Christians his sons and daughters, it is good for Christians to remember to treat God with great honor and respect. No matter where Christians find themselves, there are people around who need to hear about Jesus Christ. There are also people who need to see the love and compassion of Jesus Christ in action. Christians are to offer their lives to God, so God can show them ways to translate their experiences with God into ministry opportunities in their community.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How can you celebrate the wonderful grace of God that bridges the great divide of heaven and earth by offering salvation to all people?
2. What are some of the qualifications you feel a person needs in order to share the Gospel with others?
3. In what ways was Jesus different from all other people when he came to earth?
4. How should having a wonderful worship service on a Sunday affect the way you live the other six days?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help your students understand that God's glory and holiness helps us to be humble and courageous knowing that our God is Powerful. No matter what kind of ministry God calls us to, we can always give praise and thanksgiving to God for crossing the great divide between heaven and earth in Jesus Christ.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for His majestic holiness, Power, grace, love and splendor.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT THREATEN HIS PEOPLE

Lesson

48

Objective: To help the students to understand that many Christians face persecution because of their faith. They are willing to suffer because they know that while the evil powers of this world may cause persecution now, in the end God's sovereignty will prevail.

Memory Verse: *Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29)*

107

Scripture: **Daniel 3; Acts 5:12-42**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were three Hebrew men who helped King Nebuchadnezzar in his palace. One day, the king decided to have a large statue built that was made of solid gold. The king said that when the horns, flutes, harps and other musical instruments begin to play, everyone must bow down and worship the gold statue. Anyone who doesn't will be thrown into a fiery furnace. When the music sounded, everyone bowed to the idol except for the three Hebrew men. They knew they should only bow to the One true God. The king was so angry that he had his soldiers throw the men into the fiery furnace. Later, when the king looked inside the furnace, he saw four men. God had sent an angel to protect the Hebrew men. When they came out, none of them were burned or even smelled like smoke.

1. God's People are called to live in opposition to what is contrary to God's law.

Being a prophet of God was not an easy or safe calling, because God called prophets to preach against the sins of the Israelites. Oftentimes the kings would jail or abuse the prophets because of this confrontational preaching. However, the hope that people would repent and turn to God motivated the prophets to be obedient to God's call on their lives. The warnings and prophecies of the prophets have come true; Israel did not repent of their sins and turn to God, so God sent Babylon to conquer the Promised Land. The Babylonian army destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, and carried off most of the Israelites into exile. Three of those Israelites were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God was with them and blessed them because they remained faithful to God. In fact, God blessed them so much, they held positions of authority in Babylon. However, some hated the Jews, and looked for opportunities to harm them. The enemies of the Jews found an opportunity to have Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego killed when King Nebuchadnezzar had an idol built and ordered that everyone bow down and worship the idol. While these three men obviously adopted some cultural changes to allow them to fit into Babylonian culture and be Babylonian leaders, there were certain activities and practices in which they refused to participate. Daniel chapter 1 records one example of this, their diet. Daniel chapter 3 records a second example, worshiping idols. Although the Babylonians conquered

Israel, these three men knew it was not Babylon working on its own, but God directing the Babylonians. Therefore, although they were exile in Babylon, these three men knew God was still in control. They also believed God would save them from any punishment Nebuchadnezzar gave them for being true to the one true God.

2. God is our side even in times of hardships

Daniel chapter three records how God was faithful to them. God sent an angel or his very presence to be with them in the furnace. God is sovereign over all – Israel, Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, even a furnace. After Nebuchadnezzar release these three from the furnace, he praises their God, and declares protection for all Jews living in Babylon. Similarly, to the account of Joseph in Egypt, and Esther in Susa, so here in Babylon, what others have meant for evil, God has turned into good. (Genesis 50:20, Esther 4-7). Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, some people were jealous of the success Peter had serving God. They arrested Peter and threw him into jail. Also, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, God protected Peter and provided a path to freedom. When his enemies threaten Peter again, he declares, *"we must obey God rather than human beings!"* Unlike their polytheistic neighbors, Israel is to believe there is only one God who has created everything, and who has entered into covenant with Israel. Because there is only one true God, the Israelites are not to worship any idols to fake gods. They are to make sure the one true God remains the only object of their devotion.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are the false gods many people in your community serve today rather than the one true God?
2. What are some ways in which God proves God's love and for you?
3. Where can a Christian find courage to make a stand in the face of persecution?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Help your students understand that God's glory cannot be changed with idols. Students might suffer persecution because of their faith. Instead of giving up, they need to do like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who believed God will protect them if they are faithful to God. However, even if God does not, they know it is better to die for being faithful to God than to live being unfaithful to God.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Objective: To help the students to recognize rejection never has to be the final word in a Christian's relationship with God. Regardless of the failure, God is always willing to forgive and help restore the humble Child of God.

Memory Verse: *I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success."* (Nehemiah 2:20)

Scripture: **Nehemiah 2:11-20; Luke 19:28-48**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages.

A long time ago, the Jews built a wall around Jerusalem to protect them and the Temple from their enemies. However, because the Jews did not obey God, He let the Babylonian army attack and burn Jerusalem to the ground. Then, the army took the Jews to Babylon as prisoners. Many years later, Nehemiah asked King Artaxerxes if he could go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city's wall. Some rulers told Nehemiah that they would attack him if he tried to rebuild the city. However, that did not scare Nehemiah. He was excited about rebuilding Jerusalem, the "Holy City." Nehemiah took many families with him to Jerusalem. He had each family rebuild one section of the wall. Some men stood guard in case anyone tried to attack. After much hard work, the wall was finally completed!

1. God wants to forgive and restore those who return to Him

Rather than being a light to the nations, a people who loved God and loved one another, the Israelites sinned continually and harmed one another. After decades of refusing to listen to God's words of warning to repent through the prophets, God allowed the Assyrians to conquer the Promised Land. The Israelites lived for 70 years in exile before God allowed the Babylonians to conquer the Assyrians. The Babylonians allowed the Israelites to return to the Promised Land. It is not God's desire to punish people. However, when people, like the Israelites, ignore God's laws and God's commands, they cannot count on God's protection from the consequences of their sins and rebellion. However, consequences never have to be the last word in a person's relationship with God. God always wants to forgive and restore those who turn away from sin and toward God. Jesus gazed upon the city of Jerusalem just days before his crucifixion. He was sad because once again, the Israelites were rejecting God as Nehemiah's ancestors had. In Jesus' day, the Israelites rejected God by rejecting Jesus. Jesus knows that once again God would allow a foreign army to destroy Jerusalem. This prophecy came true in 70 AD. when God allowed the Romans to conquer Jerusalem.

2. God must be the first Priority in our life

There are many responsibilities people have in their lives. God knows that Christians need to care for their homes, families, jobs, and churches. However, God must always be first in their life.

Whenever a Christian's responsibilities to others becomes their life's first priority, they will experience great frustration and trouble. However, when a Christian's first desire is to love and honor God, then God will give them success in their loving and providing for others. Living with this first desire will not make life easy, but lived with courage and tenacity, the Christian's life will be joyful and a great benefit to the Kingdom of God. When the Israelites returned, life was hard. They had to build new homes, replant the fields. The Israelites spent so much time building their homes and planting their fields, they ignored the destroyed city walls and the destroyed Temple. They did not think rebuilding the Temple or city walls was as important as building homes and planting their fields. Nehemiah had stayed behind in the Babylonian Empire after the first exiles returned to the Promised Land. While still living in Babylon he heard reports the Israelites were not doing well in the Promised Land. This greatly upset him. He was a servant of the King. One day, the king noticed how sad Nehemiah was about what was going on in the Promised Land. The king told Nehemiah to return to the Promised Land and encourage the people to rebuild the city walls. God sent Nehemiah, and another man Ezra, to remind the people that God must be their first priority. They did not honor God when they ignored the destroyed city walls and Temple. If they only focused on their needs, then God would not give them success in the Promised Land. The people obeyed God's message through his servants, and got to work rebuilding the city walls.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What are some of the consequences that come into a person's life who refuses to live by God's laws and commands?
2. Why do some people refuse to seek God's forgiveness, even after experiencing the painful consequences of their sins?
3. How can a Christian discern the difference between what they want for themselves and what God wants for them?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that God's commandments are for their benefit and disobeying Him brings bad consequences. However, God is not pleased in punishing His people. Disobedience to God is not limited in doing what is wrong; it includes not doing good. In this way, God calls Christians to live out their faith with God's power, loving others in tangible ways.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for His forgiveness that enables us to be restored with Him in Christ Jesus.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE COMING MESSIAH

Lesson

50

Objective: To help the students understand that Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection were all foretold by numerous Old Testament prophets.

Memory Verse: *They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32*

111

Scripture: **Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Luke 24:13-35**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Tell the students that the Old Testament brings the message of the Coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Throughout the centuries, God inspired various prophets to foretell many details concerning a special Chosen One who would save his people from Satan's power and one day rule as a mighty king.

1. God that prepares a way for a sinful humanity to be reconciled to Him.

God gave the prophet Isaiah in particular several very specific visions of the life, death, and ministry of the coming Messiah. These passages make very clear the type of suffering Jesus would face. As the early Christians read the Old Testament in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they identified these passages as especially relevant to the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah. Interestingly, the religious teachers of Jesus day, in general, did not interpret these passages as being about the coming Messiah.

Instead, they looked back at the passages that spoke about a leader who would conquer Israel's captors, and free Israel politically. This is one of the reasons why so many of the religious leaders and Jews in general in Jesus' day struggled to understand Jesus' ministry as that of being of the Messiah. In fact, even Jesus' disciples did not fully understand Jesus' type of ministry until after his death and resurrection.

However, while humans may misinterpret or misunderstand God's scriptures, that does not change the fact that the ministry of Jesus was clearly laid out in the Old Testament. We see this is Jesus' message as he is walking with these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Graciously, though, Jesus laid out for these two the truth of his ministry, and how his ministry was foretold in the scriptures.

2. The Messiah suffered a terrible death to win our salvation

No one likes to suffer. However, Jesus suffered a terrible death in order to win our salvation. If we embrace Jesus' great salvation, then that means we must be willing to also suffer for Jesus as well. What we find, when we surrender fully to Jesus, is that Jesus brings a joy and peace in our lives that

surpasses all understanding. Most of the religious leaders in Jesus' day were waiting for a military Messiah in the tradition of King David who would come in and overthrow the Roman authorities. However, Jesus did not come to free Israel from her political bondage, but from her spiritual bondage. While most of the religious leaders could not understand how Jesus could be the Messiah, thousands of ordinary men and women flocked to hear Jesus' message, observed his miracles, and believed he was sent by God.

Living a life of self-denial does not come easily or naturally for anyone, whether they are a Christian or not. In fact, living a life of self-denial requires a lot of practice and commitment. It begins with small steps of self-denial as we learn that if Jesus is faithful in the small things, he will be faithful in the large things as well.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. How can men and women today, as in Jesus' day, misunderstand God's scriptures, and miss out on the blessings God wants to give?
2. What steps can you take to make sure you are understanding the Bible correctly?
3. What is there in your life that is holding you back from completely embracing the life and sufferings of Jesus in your life, that you might be more like your Savior?
4. In what ways have you been blessed and strengthened by God when you fully surrendered your life to Christ?
5. What activities or habits can you change this week that will help you more deeply and faithfully hear God's voice spoken to you?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that throughout the centuries, God inspired various prophets to foretell many details concerning a special Chosen One who would save his people from Satan's power and one day rule as a mighty king. This lesson showed that the religious leaders in Jesus' day were waiting for a military Messiah in the tradition of King David who would come in and overthrow the Roman authorities. However, Jesus did not come to free Israel from her political bondage, but from her spiritual bondage. While most of the religious leaders could not understand how Jesus could be the Messiah, thousands of ordinary men and women flocked to hear Jesus' message, observed his miracles, and believed he was sent by God.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for the life, ministry, death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus Christ that brings salvation to us.

THE MESSIAH IS BORN

Lesson

51

Objective: To help the students to rejoice for God comes to earth in Jesus to make a way for salvation, a path for us to experience the depths of God's love.

Memory Verse: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

113

Scripture: **Luke 2:1-38; Isaiah 9:2-7**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Tell the students that Jesus came to this world for our salvation. We should not consider Jesus as a simple baby. He is the Savior.

After Joseph and Mary were married, they had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. While they were there, it was time for Mary to have her baby. Joseph took Mary to an inn. An inn is like a hotel. The innkeeper said he didn't have a room for them to stay in for the night, but they could stay in the stable where he kept his animals. Joseph thanked the innkeeper and took Mary to the stable. Later that night, Mary gave birth to a little baby boy. She wrapped him in pieces of cloth and placed him in a manger to sleep. A manger is where hay is placed for animals to eat. An angel from God spoke to some shepherds who were in a field nearby. The angel told them that a Savior had been born and that they would find Him lying in a manger. When the angel left, the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the baby just as the angel had told them.

1. The Son of God came to earth in the most humble of circumstances

The theme of God coming to earth in surprising ways continues. Not only was Jesus born to a virgin, but God's Messiah was born in a stable, with animals around him instead of in a palace with attendants all around him. Just as an angel announced to Mary she would give birth to the Son of God, so an angel visited Joseph to reveal God's message to him as well (Matthew 1:19-25). A census began in Israel during Mary's pregnancy, requiring Israelites go to their hometowns and register. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, Joseph's hometown. Because of all the people coming to Bethlehem for the census, there were no more rooms available at the inns. Joseph and Mary settled for staying in a stable, where the animals slept. Here, in the most humble of circumstances, to the most humble of people, the Son of God came to earth. Angels came to earth to announce Jesus' birth and sing songs of praise. However, they did not announce Jesus' birth to important or rich people, as many would assume. Instead, the message went out to shepherds, some of the poorest and dirtiest people in Israel. In fact, because of the nature of their job, shepherds could not take part in temple worship without ritual cleansing. This extraordinary event occurs in such an ordinary way.

2. The poor and ordinary people witness Jesus' birth

Humility is one of the most important Christian virtues. Humility is not self-hatred or self-loathing. Instead, it is an honest assessment of your own abilities and limitations, seen through the loving eyes of Jesus. When Christians are humble, they are open to the work of Jesus working through their lives. They are also willing to set aside their pride and put others before them, that others might see the love of God expressed through their lives. Just as it was the poor and ordinary people who witnessed his birth, so it was the poor and ordinary people who became Jesus' first followers. They flocked to hear his sermons, witness his miracles, and accept God's invitation to enter the Kingdom of God. Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah. Isaiah prophesied he would be a mighty warrior and powerful ruler. This is one reason why so many rejected Jesus as the Messiah, they were looking for a military Messiah. However, rather than a military warrior or political ruler, Jesus would be a spiritual warrior and spiritual ruler. Rather than simply do battle against nations, Jesus battled Satan himself! Moreover, as Isaiah prophesies, *"his kingdom will have no end."* In the midst of the less than ideal situations in which to have a child, God brings messengers of joy to the young couple. These shepherds must have glowed with joy, just as Mary must have glowed with a new mother's joy. One of God's joys is bringing people into our lives, especially during difficult times, to encourage us, support us, and model God's love to us. As God's children, God will call us to go to people in their times of need to encourage them, support them, and model God's love to them.

114

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What do the circumstances of Jesus' birth tell you about the nature of God's love?
2. Who are some people who have showed God's love to you during difficult times?
3. What do you have to offer others, through God's love and power, which can bring encouragement, support, and love to a family this week?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Remind the students that the birth of Jesus teaches us great things about humility. Humility is not self-hatred or self-loathing. Instead, it is an honest assessment of your own abilities and limitations, seen through the loving eyes of Jesus. When Christians are humble, they are open to the work of Jesus working through their lives. They are also willing to set aside their pride and put others before them, that others might see the love of God expressed through their lives.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for Jesus' birth.

JESUS CAME FOR ALL PEOPLE, JEWS AND GENTILES

Lesson

52

Objective: To help the students understand that God brought Gentiles (non-Jews) from distant lands to worship Jesus as Israel's king.

Memory Verse: *"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2)*

115

Scripture: **Matthew 2:1-12; Micah 5:1-4**

Introductory Activity:

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to receive with joy what God has to share with you today. Ask your students to do a summary of the previous lesson. Read both Biblical passages. Ask the students to share what they know about the wise men who visited Jesus.

The Magi, who were also called wise men, went to Jerusalem. They asked King Herod where they could find the King of the Jews. They had been following a star that shone in the Eastern sky, and they knew that the star would lead them to the King. The Magi had gifts for the new King, and they wanted to worship Him. Herod was surprised to hear the Magi say this. He thought that he was the only king in Jerusalem. Herod wanted to trick the Magi. He told them that when they found the King, they should come back to Jerusalem and tell him, because he wanted to go and worship the new King. The real reason Herod wanted to find Jesus was so he could have the new King killed. When the Magi found Jesus, they worshiped Him and gave Him their presents of gold, incense, and myrrh. In a dream, God told the Magi that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. So they didn't return to Jerusalem. Instead, they traveled a different way to return to their homes.

1. God brought more than just the shepherds to worship Jesus

God calls all people to worship. Because of the great salvation offered to us, our lives are to be lives of worship: lives lived in response to God's love. We are to worship God every day of the week. We worship God whenever we live our lives in gratitude to God's great power and love. While God established Israel as his "*Chosen People*," this did not mean God's love was limited to Israel. God wanted Israel to demonstrate God's love and mercy to the world. However, Israel often failed to fulfill this purpose, and instead focused only on herself. As Christians, we need to remember God's love extends far beyond us. God's love encompasses all peoples, and therefore, as God's servants, we need to share God's love with all the people we can. God, in a surprising twist, guided three Magi from a distant land to worship Jesus as well. Guided by a star in the sky, the Magi found Jesus and worshiped Him. Magi understood that special stars in the sky signaled the ascension of a new king. Therefore, they traveled to find this new king, and to give gifts to this new king. It is very surprising that God revealed Jesus' birth to foreign Magi, for the Israelites thought God would first reveal the Messiah's birth to the Jewish scholars and leaders. The Magi went to Herod, the current king of Israel. God did not make Herod king, the occupying Roman authorities installed him as king. He was not from King David's lineage, and therefore the Jews did not recognize him as being an authentic king. The Magi appeared at the king's palace, assuming the king's palace is where a new king would be born.

Therefore, Herod consulted the religious scholars, who told him the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The Magi then traveled again to find Jesus, guided by the star once again, this time to the home of Joseph and Mary.

2. God's plans for the Messiah kept surprising everyone

The angel surprised Mary when he told this virgin she would bear the Messiah. A host of angels announcing Messiah's birth surprised the shepherds. In addition, it was not to Israel's wise men to whom God revealed the birth of the Messiah, but to Gentile wise men. With this latest surprise, God showed Jesus' purpose and ministry would not be limited to the Israelites. Jesus offered salvation to all peoples, and is therefore worthy of worship by all peoples. The scripture text the Jewish scholars used to establish where the Messiah would be born was Micah 5:2. While Micah first spoke these words about a Jewish leader in his own time, the scholars understood the text also as a prophecy about the future Messiah as well. Bethlehem also produced Israel's greatest human king, King David. God's love is bigger than we can comprehend. God's plans are more beautiful than we can fathom. Israel's leaders did not have ideas about the Messiah this big or beautiful. Instead, they imagined a future Messiah to be a military leader who would free them from Roman occupation. However, God's plans are bigger and more beautiful than this. God's sending of these Magi to Israel signaled Jesus' ministry would be much bigger than to just rescue Israel from Roman occupation.

Questions:

Ask the students the following questions:

1. Why do you think Israel's leaders focused their hopes on a military Messiah instead of a spiritual Messiah?
2. Like the star the Magi followed, what are some ways in which God uses nature to reveal God's will?
3. What makes worshiping together with your brothers and sisters in Christ different from how you worship alone during the week?
4. Instead of those gifts that the Magi brought to Jesus as sign of their worship, which gift do you offer to Christ?

Review/Application:

Summarize the lesson to the class. Allow the students to share their experiences related to God's plan of salvation. This is the last Sunday of the year. Allow your students to share on how God changed their lives through the classes of this year.

Challenge:

Ask someone to retell the main Bible lesson text. Ask your class to share how they think God wants them to respond to today's lesson. Spend time in prayer for your community, one another, and for wisdom in living out today's lesson. Close by having the class pray together praising God for His grace and faithfulness.



ISBN: 978-0-7977-1475-5
PO Box 1288
Florida 1710
Republic of South Africa