PRACTICE MINISTRIES BIBLE STUDY CURRICULUM

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER
&
EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Table of Contents

Section 1 Bible Lesson Summaries
Practice Makes Perfect: How To Run a Smooth Bible Study
Section 2 Bible Lessons
Section 3 Exploring the Bible Answers

Practice Ministries Bible Study Curriculum and Exploring The Bible
©1997, 2002 by Practice Ministries

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.
permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

PRACTICE MINISTRIES
8117 PRESTON ROAD SUITE 300 WEST DALLAS, TEXAS  75225
(214) 691-4290

e-mail address: practiceministries@integrity.com
web-site address: www.practiceministries.org

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
BIBLE LESSON SUMMARIES
Christian Character

Lesson # 1: “A” Is For Attitude

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about having the attitude of being a servant.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids practice looking to the interests of others.

Lesson # 2: “B” Is For Benevolence

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him” (Luke 10:33). In today’s lesson, we’ll visit the story of the Good Samaritan and talk about being kind.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to practice being kind.

Lesson # 3: “C” Is For Christ-Like (Part 1)

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him” (Luke 10:33). In today’s lesson, we’ll visit the story of the Good Samaritan and talk about being kind.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids practice looking to the interests of others.

Lesson # 3: “C” Is For Christ-Like (Part 1)

“If he is calling you to be his servant, you will be of service to all men” (Philippians 3:9). In today’s lesson, we’ll talk about the importance of having the attitude of being a servant.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids practice looking to the interests of others.

Lesson # 4: “C” Is For Christ-Like (Part 2)

“...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31). In today’s lesson, we’ll talk about what does and does not make someone a Christian. The Bible lesson is the account of Paul & Silas in jail, and the Roman guard who upon hearing the message of the gospel accepts Jesus Christ as his savior.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to learn reverence of the Lord.

Lesson # 5: “D” Is For Discernment

“...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31). In today’s lesson, we’ll talk about what does and does not make someone a Christian. The Bible lesson is the account of Paul & Silas in jail, and the Roman guard who upon hearing the message of the gospel accepts Jesus Christ as his savior.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids find ways to practice encouraging those around them.

Lesson # 6: “E” Is For Encouragement

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10). Today we’ll talk about different ways to encourage one another, and living a life that is encouraging to others.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids find ways to practice encouraging those around them.

Lesson # 7: “F” Is For Fear of the Lord

“And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you for your own good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). Today we’ll talk about the “Fear of the Lord,” - the awe & reverence of a holy God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to learn reverence of the Lord.

Lesson # 8: “G” Is For Giving Generously

“...if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously” (Romans 12:8). Today we’ll talk about the what, why, when & how of giving and how God is our model for giving.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies

3
Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to give generously of their time, talents & tithe.

**Lesson # 9: "H" Is For Holiness**

“You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own” (Leviticus 20:26). All through history, a Holy God has called His people to be holy. Today we’ll talk about holiness & what being holy means.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to practice living Godly, holy lives.

**Lesson # 10: "I" Is For Integrity (Part 1)**

“All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal” (Psalm 119:160). Integrity is commitment to what is moral & ethical. Today we’ll talk about how we can rely on what the Bible says to be right and true.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to explore the truth of Scripture.

**Lesson # 11: "I" Is For Integrity (Part 2)**

“In everything set them an example by doing what is good...” (Titus 2:7). Integrity is commitment to what is right. Today we’ll talk about how to build integrity into our lives through the Ten Commandments.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to build integrity into their lives.

**Lesson # 12: "I" Is For Integrity (Part 3)**

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27). In today’s lesson we’ll continue to talk about how to build integrity into our lives, and how to maintain our integrity when it is challenged.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to make some promises of integrity.

**Lesson # 13: “J” Is For Joy**

“I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Today’s lesson is about joy and how we can have an attitude of joy even during difficult times.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to practice & develop joy in their lives.

**Lesson # 14: “L” Is For Love (Part 1)**

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not selfish, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Today we’ll talk about how love is an action, as we focus on the Parable of the Lost or Son.

Exploring the Bible challenges the kids to put love into action.

**Lesson # 15: “L” Is For Love (Part 2)**

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about the love Jesus showed for us during the night of his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, and his crucifixion as prophesied by the Old Testament prophet and hero Isaiah.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to continue to put love into action.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Lesson # 16: “L” Is For Love (Part 3)  
“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37-39). Today we’ll talk about loving God and loving others.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to demonstrate love by their actions.

Lesson # 17: “M” Is For Musical  
“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” (Psalm 95:1-2). Today we’ll talk about two of the great hymns of the Christian faith and what they teach us.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to explore music as a way to praise God, learn Scripture & remember Biblical truths.

Lesson # 18: “M” Is For Messenger (Part 1)  
“...The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied...” (Matthew 26:63-64). Jesus claimed to be God, and Christians are called to be messengers of this truth. How can you & I know that the message is true? Today we’ll talk about the person of Jesus Christ and His claims that He is God.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to explore the claims of Christ and to be assured that Jesus is who He claims to be.

Lesson # 19: “M” Is For Messenger (Part 2)  
“From that time on Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples, “I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life” (Matthew 16:21). Today we’ll talk about the events surrounding the resurrection, as background for evidence of the truth of the resurrection.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to look at the events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection.

Lesson # 20: “M” Is For Messenger (Part 3)  
“I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, according to the Scriptures; that he appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles. Then he appeared to more than five hundred of his followers at once, most of whom are still alive, although some have died. Then he appeared to James, and afterward to all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:3-7). Today we’ll talk about evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to examine the evidence for the undeniable truth of the resurrection.

Lesson # 21: “N” Is For New (Part 1)  
“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is: his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). The Scriptures command Christians to live a distinctly different life from much of what the world says is popular. Today we’ll talk about why our thoughts and attitudes should be different from those of the world’s view.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to work toward becoming who God wants them to be.
Lesson # 22: “N” Is For New (Part 2)

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery [moral corruptness]. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:17-20). The Scriptures command Christians to live a distinctly different life from much of what the world says is popular. Today we’ll talk about how we can do this.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to invite God’s Holy Spirit to change them and make them new.

Lesson # 23: “P” Is For Power

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about how the power of God’s Spirit works in the lives of ordinary people.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to draw on the power of God that is available to them.

Lesson # 24: “P” Is For Prayer

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14). Today, we’ll talk about the Lord’s Prayer, and how it can help teach us how to pray.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to pray using the A-C-T-S recipe.

Lesson # 25: “R” Is For Respect (Part 1)

“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about respect for God, our parents and our teachers.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to learn the importance of respect.

Lesson # 26: “R” Is For Respect (Part 2)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about how to have respect for others.

Exploring the Bible continues to encourage the kids to learn the importance of respect.

Lesson # 27: “R” Is For Respect (Part 3)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). In today’s lesson we’ll talk about how to have respect for ourselves and how to earn the respect of others.

Exploring the Bible continues to encourage the kids to learn the importance of respect.

Lesson # 28: “S” Is For Servant

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14-15). In our first lesson of the year, we talked about having the attitude of a servant.
Today, we’re going to draw upon examples taken from previous lessons and talk about how to serve others.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to serve others.

Lesson # 29: “T” Is For Trustworthy

“They could find no corruption [dishonesty] in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt or negligent [careless]” (Daniel 6:4). In today’s lesson, we’ll use the Old Testament hero Daniel as an example of trustworthiness and talk about the importance of being reliable and dependable.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to be trustworthy.

Special Thanksgiving Lesson: Stories of Thanksgiving

“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts” (Psalm 105:1-2). Three Thanksgiving stories help us learn how to give thanks in new ways.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids think of ways to give in a new way!

Special Christmas Lesson: Cosmic Christmas

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus” (Luke 1:31). Max Lucado’s story, Cosmic Christmas, tells us the Christmas story from a different angle than we’re used to hearing.

Exploring the Bible encourages the kids to remember the reason why Jesus was sent as our gift.

Special Easter Lesson

“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5). A fictional story helps teach is the truth of Easter.

Exploring the Bible helps the kids understand the spiritual battle around us and why God had to send Jesus.

National Day of Prayer Lesson

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Instead of studying today, we’re going to be doing. We’re going to spend our lesson time praying to the God who created us and sustains us for the people of our country.

Exploring the Bible invites the kids to write a prayer for the people of our country.

Story Time

One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25). The thought of “telling your story” – how Jesus Christ came into your life, can be a little uncomfortable. Perhaps you’re afraid of failing or that you won’t know what to say. But if Jesus Christ is in your life, you do have a story to tell, and learning how to tell your story may be just what it takes to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into someone’s life.

A special Exploring the Bible gives you ideas, suggestions and an outline to help you put your story together.
Christian Character

Practice Makes Perfect!

Over the past 9 years we’ve helped organize hundreds of bible studies. And we’ve come up with a pretty good recipe that will help your families get the most out of your bible study.

Here’s a suggested outline for how to make your first bible study go smoothly:

• Invite Jesus to attend your bible study. Ask for His power and presence to work in and through each person gathered.
• If it’s a morning study, have some donuts (donuts are key) and juice on hand. If it’s an evening study, have some light snacks for the boys and dads before study begins.
• Start fairly promptly as some may have time constraints.
• We find that your study works best when the kids sit with their dads.
• Introduce yourself and then have the kids introduce themselves especially if there are some who do not know each other.
• Begin the bible study with an opening prayer. Ask if one of the kids or dads will pray - but don’t push too hard, since it may be uncomfortable or intimidating at first - even among the dads. One idea is to assign the opening and closing prayer to one of the dads and their child, so that they have time to get ready.
• As the group gets more comfortable with each other, we find that rotating the prayer around from week to week is a good way to get the kids and dads involved.
• Give a short description about the day’s lesson
• Lead-off with the discussion question & discuss it for a bit. Encourage your dads to participate in the discussion. We find that often dads will not say anything because it’s “a study for the kids.” But their participation is important.
• Go through the lesson at a comfortable pace for the group. If you don’t finish - it’s ok.
• End the study lesson promptly at the time mentioned. Twenty minutes of study is plenty. You may find that at times, less is better.
• Encourage the dads and kids to do the corresponding Exploring the Bible Worksheet each week, and leave time in your study for each child to give their answers.
• Encourage the kids to practice the quality or character trait emphasized in the day’s lesson during the week. Challenge them to share with the group at the next study about any situations where they had an opportunity to put into practice what they learned.
• Here’s a wonderful way to end each lesson: have each dad get with his child (or boy or girl he brings with him whose father is not there) and ask them to pray with each other. We have found that this is a wonderful way for a dad and child to learn to pray for each other. You may suggest that they ask each other what they would like prayer for that day.

Try the above recipe the first few times, and then if you need to, adjust it to meet your group’s needs.

Sample Bible Study Agenda

7:10 - 7:20 a.m.    Fellowship over donuts and juice
7:20 - 7:40 a.m.    Bible study lesson
7:40 - 7:50 a.m.    Exploring the Bible review
7:50 - 7:55 a.m.    Prayer between each dad and his child
7:55 - 7:57 a.m.    Practice what you’ve learned!
BIBLE LESSONS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Lesson Verse</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) &quot;A&quot; Is For Attitude</td>
<td>Philippians 2:3-11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) &quot;B&quot; Is For Kindness (Benevolence)</td>
<td>Luke 10:25-37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) &quot;C&quot; Is For Christ-Like (Part 1)</td>
<td>Acts 16:22-34</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) &quot;C&quot; Is For Christ-Like (Part 2)</td>
<td>1 John 1:9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) &quot;D&quot; Is For Discernment</td>
<td>Proverbs 2:1-15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) &quot;E&quot; Is For Encouragement</td>
<td>Romans 12:9-21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) &quot;F&quot; Is For Fear Of The Lord</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) &quot;G&quot; Is For Giving</td>
<td>2 Corinthians 9:6-7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) &quot;H&quot; Is For Holiness</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) &quot;I&quot; Is For Integrity (Part 1)</td>
<td>Proverbs 30:5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) &quot;I&quot; Is For Integrity (Part 2)</td>
<td>Titus 2:7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) &quot;I&quot; Is For Integrity (Part 3)</td>
<td>Philippians 1:27</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) &quot;J&quot; Is For Joy</td>
<td>John 10:10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) &quot;L&quot; Is For Love (Part 1)</td>
<td>1 John 4:10</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) &quot;L&quot; Is For Love (Part 2)</td>
<td>1 John 3:18</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) &quot;L&quot; Is For Love (Part 3)</td>
<td>Matthew 22:36-39</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) &quot;M&quot; Is For Musical</td>
<td>Psalm 95:1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) &quot;M&quot; Is For Message (Part 1)</td>
<td>John 14:6</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) &quot;M&quot; Is For Message (Part 2)</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 15:20</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) &quot;M&quot; Is For Message (Part 3)</td>
<td>Matthew 28:19-20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) &quot;N&quot; Is For New (Part 1)</td>
<td>Romans 12:2</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) &quot;N&quot; Is For New (Part 2)</td>
<td>Ephesians 5:18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) &quot;P&quot; Is For Power</td>
<td>2 Timothy 1:7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) &quot;P&quot; Is For Prayer</td>
<td>1 John 5:14</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) &quot;R&quot; Is For Respect (Part 1)</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:17</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) &quot;R&quot; Is For Respect (Part 1)</td>
<td>Philippians 2:4</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) &quot;R&quot; Is For Respect (Part 1)</td>
<td>Philippians 1:27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28) &quot;S&quot; Is For Servant</td>
<td>Ephesians 6:7</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) &quot;T&quot; Is For Trustworthy</td>
<td>Daniel 6:4(b)</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Lessons</th>
<th>Lesson Verse</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Psalm 105:1-2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>Luke 1:31</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>John 3:16</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 7:14</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Time</td>
<td>John 9:25</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exploring the Bible

Exploring the Bible Answers 121
LESSON # 1: ATTITUDE

Today's Lesson verse
“Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).

Character Quality
Attitude

Discussion Question
What chores or responsibilities do you have at home? How do you feel about doing them?

Introduction
The following is an excerpt from President George W. Bush’s speech a couple of months following the September 11, 2001 attack on the Pentagon & World Trade Center:

“Americans have responded magnificently with courage and caring. We’ve seen it in our children who have sent in more than $1 million for the children of Afghanistan. We have seen it in the compassion of Jewish and Christian Americans who have reached out to their Muslim neighbors. We’ve seen it as Americans have reassessed priorities: parents spending more time with their children and many people spending more time in prayer and in houses of worship.

We have gained new heroes, those who ran into burning buildings to save others: our police and our firefighters.

Those who battle their own fears to keep children calm and safe: America's teachers.

Those who voluntarily place themselves in harm's way to defend our freedom: the men and women of the armed forces.

And tonight we join in thanking a whole new group of public servants who never enlisted to fight a war, but find themselves on the front lines of a battle nonetheless: those who deliver the mail, America’s postal workers.

We also thank those whose quick response provided preventative treatment that has no doubt saved thousands of lives: our health care workers.

Countless Americans gave blood in the aftermath of the attacks. New Yorkers opened their homes to evacuated neighbors. We are waiting patiently in long security lines. Children across America have organized lemonade and cookie sales for children in Afghanistan. And we can do more.

Courage and optimism led the passengers on Flight 93 to rush their murderers to save lives on the ground - led by a young man whose last known words were the Lord's Prayer and, "Let's roll."

What do all these men and women have in common? They're all servants. That's what we'll be talking about today: Having the attitude of a servant.

Attitude
(Text: Philippians 2:3-11)

3 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who,
being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Question: How would you define attitude? [A way of thinking or feeling or emotion toward something or someone].

Question: What is a servant? [Someone who serves or helps others].

Question According to the Scripture passage we just read, what should our attitude toward ourselves be? [Humble, a servant].

Question: How should our attitude toward other people be? [Consider others interests, consider others before yourself].

Question: What should our attitude toward God be? [Obedience].

Question: What does obedience mean? [The dictionary says it means to do what someone in charge says]. But I’d like for you to hear another definition of obedience.

When the Bible talks about being obedient, it means, “getting to know and be like Jesus.” Isn’t that a much cooler meaning? It’s more than following a bunch of rules - do this or do that. Think about it for a moment. When you learned to ride a bike, you had training wheels, then when it was time to take those off, you probably wobbled a bit, but you were good enough to do it on your own. Then, the more you rode, the better you became. In fact, they say once you learn how, you never forget.

It’s the same thing with practicing obedience. As you practice God’s instructions, you get good at them; in fact, you get so good at them, you don’t even think about them. It’s kind of like learning how to ride that bike well. Obeying God changes you into being more like His Son Jesus.

Listen to these next two stories and try to identify the peoples’ attitudes toward themselves and others.

In the Olympic Games held in Atlanta, GA, in 1996 there was an incident involving a runner in the finals of the men’s 100 meter dash competition. Linford Christie of Great Britain was the defending champion in this event from the Olympics held in Barcelona, Spain in 1992 and was expected to challenge for the gold medal in Atlanta.

In Olympic competition, if a runner starts before the starting gun fires, it’s called a false start and all the runners have to start over. If a runner false starts twice, he or she is disqualified and cannot continue to compete in that race. Mr. Christie false started twice and was disqualified from the gold medal race. He became very angry and refused to leave the track for several minutes, insisting that he should be allowed to run. He delayed the start of the race and upset the other runners by his display of poor sportsmanship.

Question: What was Mr. Christie's attitude toward himself? [He was very important].

Question: What was his attitude toward the other competitors? [They were less important than he was].

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
In the Gospel of Mark, Mark tells us a story about Jesus and two of his disciples:

35 “Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked”... 41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant [angry] with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:35-45).

Question: What were the two disciples' attitudes toward themselves? [Their needs and wants came first].

Question: What was their attitude toward the other disciples? [Their needs and wants were less important than theirs].

Question: What does Jesus say that the correct attitude toward others is? [To be a servant first].

Question: Imagine going up to your parents, your teacher, your coach, or all of your friends and saying to them, “I want you to do for me whatever I ask?” What would their reaction be?

Jesus wants you to know that the most important attitude is the one of being a servant, to help others first, and to look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Question: How can you practice being a servant today?
LESSON # 2: BENEVOLENCE (KINDNESS)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“But a Samaritan, as he traveled came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him” (Luke 10:33).

Character Quality
Benevolence

Discussion
Tell us about a “good deed” that you did for someone. How did you feel?
Tell us about a “good deed” that someone did for you. How did you feel?

Warm-Up
The dictionary defines the word benevolence as an act of kindness. Being kind is putting love into action.

Introduction
Florence Nightingale was born in England in 1820. She had every privilege available but was bored with her life and wanted to do something useful. As she became a young woman she felt most content when she was caring for the poor and sick near her home. At age 33 she became a nurse in a nearby hospital.

When England and France entered into war against Russia, the British government asked Florence to lead a team of nurses to Crimea (now Turkey). There she spent the days and nights trying to improve the way sick and wounded soldiers were care for. Florence used her own money to buy clean clothes, food and medical supplies for the soldiers. All of her time was spent helping others.

A friend summed up her life: “To give less than every ounce of strength would not have been enough for Florence – would not be what god expected of her. For God was the only master she would acknowledge…the work she did was His work. In that thought was all the reward, all the pleasure she desired. Her only thought was, ‘Thy will be done.’ ” (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 117-126).

Question: What's so important about being kind? [It's important to God, to cheer someone up, it honors God, because God has been kind to you].

The first reason is because it's important to God. Kindness ranks right up there with the biggies on God's All-Star Attitude List: “Love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Jesus said, 37 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37-39).

Loving someone is about as important a thing to God as anything we can do. The apostle Paul puts it this way: “Love is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4). So being kind to someone is loving them.

Let's visit a familiar story from the Bible that's all about kindness.
**Benevolence: The Good Samaritan**  
*(Text: Luke 10:30-35)*

LK 10:30 “In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Jewish people despised Samaritans. Samaritans had different beliefs than Jewish people and the Jews did not want to associate with them. But it was more important for this Samaritan to ignore those differences and be kind to the Jewish man that was hurt.

**Question:** Are there people you know of who may be hurt because they get passed by on the other side of the hall at school? Perhaps:
- Someone who is of a different color or a different race.
- Someone who is not very attractive.
- Someone who doesn't seem as smart as others.
- Someone who doesn't wear the "right kind" of clothes.
- Someone who is new in town.
- Someone who has a physical defect.

**Question:** How can you practice kindness to someone at school today?

So the first reason to be kind is because it's important to God.

A second reason to be kind is found in the Book of Proverbs. "**An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers a man up**" *(Proverbs 12:25).* Sometimes, people just need to be cheered up. Rather than ignoring someone who seems to be down, say a kind word to cheer that person up.

A third reason is also found in Proverbs. "**Whoever is kind to the needy honors God**" *(Proverbs 14:31).* Do you know any people with needs? Perhaps:
- Someone who is new in school without any friends.
- Someone whose family is poor.
- Someone not included in the "in group."
- Someone who is always picked last when making up the teams.
- Someone with a learning disability.

It honors God when you are kind and help people with needs. Think about needs that you have that you would like someone to be kind to you about.

**Question:** What about when someone does something wrong to you? Should you be kind then?

The Bible says, "**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you**" *(Ephesians 4:32).*
The fourth reason is because God has been kind to you. The Psalms say: “He [God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities [wickedness]. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear [respect] him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us” (Psalm 103:10-12). If God treated us as we deserve, none of us would have hope of an abundant and eternal life because He wouldn’t have sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die so that our sins may be forgiven.

Showing kindness:
1. Is important to God.
2. Can cheer a person up.
3. Honors God.
4. Reflects the kindness God shows toward us.

Question: How can you practice kindness to someone today?
LESSON # 3: CHRIST-LIKE (Part 1)

Homework Review

Today's Lesson verse
“he predestined us to be adopted as his [children] through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).

Character Quality
Christ-Like

Discussion Question
What things identify you as belonging to your family? [The main thing that identifies you as a member of your family is your name].

Introduction
"...the seeds of my decision had been planted the year before, by the Reverend Billy Graham. He visited my family for a summer weekend in Maine. I saw him preach at the small summer church, St. Ann's by the Sea. We all had lunch on the patio overlooking the ocean. One evening my dad asked Billy to answer questions from a big group of family gathered for the weekend. He sat by the fire and talked. And what he said sparked a change in my heart. I don't remember the exact words. It was more the power of his example. The Lord was so clearly reflected in his gentle and loving demeanor.

The next day we walked and talked at Walker's Point, and I knew I was in the presence of a great man. He was like a magnet; I felt drawn to seek something different. He didn't lecture admonish; he shared warmth and concern. Billy Graham didn't make you feel guilty; he made you feel loved.

Over the course of that weekend, Reverend Graham planted a mustard seed in my soul, a seed that grew over the next year. He led me to the path, and I began walking. It was the beginning of a change in my life. I had always been a "religious" person, had regularly attended church, even taught Sunday School and served as an altar boy. But that weekend my faith took on a new meaning. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would commit my heart to Jesus Christ (excerpt from George W. Bush's book, "A CHARGE TO KEEP" (Morrow), Chapter 10, p. 136).

Somewhere along the way, George W. Bush decided to accept Jesus Christ into his life. That decision began a journey in his life and begins a journey in every person's life who makes that decision. That journey is becoming "Christ-Like."

Background
Paul & Silas were missionaries traveling around the country of Asia and going to many cities, preaching the Word of God. One day, Paul & Silas were preaching in a crowded downtown section of a city & were arrested because some people did not like what they said.

Be Like Christ
(Text: Acts 16:22-34)

22 “The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the
foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family."

Question: What did the man and his family do to become Christians? [They put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ]. The Bible says, “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Question: What does it mean to be Christ-Like? [It means to “Be Like Christ”]. We can try to model His qualities and life, but it isn’t enough to just imitate Him. We won’t get very far on our own. To truly become Christ-Like, one needs to become a Christian.

Question: What is the definition of a Christian? [The definition of a Christian is to be one with Christ]. If that sounds sort of weird – hold on. It’s the most wonderful relationship you’ll ever have.

The Bible says that if you are a Christian, you bear (carry) Christ’s name (1 Peter 4:16). Just as your name identifies you as belonging to your family, being a Christian identifies you as belonging to God’s family. In fact, when you become a Christian, God adopts you into His family and you have the privilege of carrying His name. The Bible says, “he predestined us to be adopted as his [children] through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).

On the other hand, anyone who is not a Christian is not adopted by God into His family and does not carry His name.

Question: What makes someone a Christian? [Lots of people think they are Christian and they all have different reasons]. Let’s talk about what does & what does not make someone a Christian:

Yes No  Question: What if someone says, “I’m a good person. I don’t steal or hurt people or cheat or lie...” Does this make someone a Christian?

The Bible says: “there is no one who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:3). The Bible also says, “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). The person who thinks he or she is good enough on his or her own to be adopted by God is foolish.

Yes No  Question: What if someone says, “I do lots of good things. I help my friends with homework, I don’t break any of the rules at school...” Does this make someone a Christian?
The Scriptures say: “For it is by God’s grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not of yourself, it is a gift of God - not by works [good deeds] so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Being a Christian is not something you can earn by doing enough good things.

Yes No  Question: What if someone says, “I go to church & Sunday school Every week & give 10% of my allowance to the church?” Does this make someone a Christian?

The Bible says, “...Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (Ephesians 5:23). The church is made up of people who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their only Savior. Going to & sitting in church or Sunday school does not make you or anyone a Christian.

Yes No  Question: What if someone says, “I grew up in a Christian family.”
Does this make someone a Christian?

Hear what the Bible has to say about this: “Salvation is found in no one but Jesus Christ, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus.

Christians do & should do many good things, but being a good person, doing good things, going to church, or reading the Bible does not make you a Christian any more than walking into a garage makes you a car, or walking into a McDonald’s makes you a hamburger.

Question: Have you asked Jesus Christ to come into your life as Savior and Lord? If you have, thank God for His gift of eternal life to you. If you have never invited Jesus into your life, Jesus says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in…” (Revelation 3:20).

If you have never opened the door to Jesus, He is standing at your door knocking right now. If you hear His voice, open the door today and invite Him in. If you’re not sure how to do that, why not talk to one or both of your parents today?

Why is it important to be a Christian? How does believing in Jesus Christ save you? That’s what we’ll talk about in Part 2 of Be Christ-Like.
Christian Character

LESSON # 4: CHRIST-LIKE (Part 2)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Character Quality
Christ-Like

Review of Part 1
- To be Christ-like is to be like Jesus Christ.
- To truly become like Jesus Christ, one needs to be a Christian.
- The definition of a Christian is to be one with Christ.
- Being good, doing good things, going to church or Sunday school, or reading the Bible doesn’t make you or anyone a Christian. Only through faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone, the Son of God, as your Lord and Savior, makes you a Christian.

Introduction
After the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States, Pat Tillman joined the Armed Forces. Tillman felt he needed to “pay something back” for the comfortable life he had. That's not unusual. Lots of men and women join the Armed Forces to serve their country. But the list of names grows a little shorter when it comes to NFL players walking away from $3.6 million dollar contracts in the prime of their careers.

The Bible says that, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Pat Tillman laid down his life. Serving with the 75th Ranger Regiment, Tillman was shot and killed during a special operations mission in Afghanistan leading the charge against Al Qaeda fighters.

Senator John McCain of Arizona said, “There is in Pat Tillman’s example, in his unexpected choice of duty to his country over the riches and other comforts of celebrity, and in humility, such an inspiration to all…”

There is another man, who laid down his life for his friends. Humbly, He left the comforts of His home to do something for others that they could not do for themselves. His name is Jesus.

Christ-Like (Part 2)
(Text: Selected verses)

The Bible says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Saved from what? Why do people say it’s so important to be a Christian? That’s what we'll talk about today.

The Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) and that “God saw all that He had made and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

But the crown of God’s creation, Adam & Eve, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. And because Adam & Eve disobeyed God, sin entered into the world. The Bible says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], because of this, death through sin came to all men because all men sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Our God is a holy God. His Word says: “You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy” (Leviticus 20:26).

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
**Question:** What does it mean to be “holy”? [To be holy means “to be set apart”].

**Question:** What is it that God is set apart from? [Sin – which came into the world when Adam & Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden]. Sin makes us un-holy. Sin makes us un-fit to be with God.

**Question:** What is sin? [Disobedience to God]. The word “sin” comes from an archery term that literally means “To miss the mark of perfection” or “To miss the bulls-eye.” Sin is disobedience to God, which can be any wrong attitude, thought or action that causes us to miss the mark – the standard of perfection that God has set for our lives. The Bible says, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This verse does not mean that God expects us to be perfect. He knows that we cannot be perfect by ourselves. But He expects us to be perfect in continually striving to “Be Like Christ.”

**Question:** But what’s so bad about sin? [Sin results in our death physically, and in relational death with God]. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

**Question:** What is a wage? [A wage is what you have earned]. The Bible says that death is spiritual separation from God. So, what your sin has earned for you is spiritual separation from God.

**Question:** “Well what about me? I’m not so bad, at least not compared to him!” [God doesn’t grade on the curve – He’s set one fair standard for all]. The Bible says: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Each of us has fallen short of God’s standard for our lives. The Bible also says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Don’t kid yourself into believing that you’re ok just the way you are.

As a person, you have a body, a spirit and a soul. The Bible says, “…If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). At death, your natural body stops working, but your soul will go on to live forever. There are two places your soul can go:
- A “spirit-fed” soul will live eternally with God in heaven: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- A “spirit-dead” soul will eternally be separated from God: “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out of the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Those are the rules. They’re the same for everybody. And they don’t change.

**Question:** What does Jesus have to do with this? [With mercy toward His creation, God provided a way for you to have your sins forgiven. That’s what happened when Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross. He paid the penalty for your sins and mine]. Jesus’ gift of His death and resurrection holds for you and me today. The Bible says that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just [will do what he says] and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness [impurity]” (1 John 1:9).

**Question:** What is a sacrifice? [In the Bible, a sacrifice means to make something holy - fit to be with God].

In the Old Testament, sacrifice was a condition for forgiveness. A person who needed to have a sin forgiven would bring an animal to the Temple to sacrifice. Most Israelites were farmers. They raised and sold crops and animals to earn their living. Bringing an animal to sacrifice cost them something. That cost paid the penalty for their sin. The animal was usually a lamb, or a goat or a bull (for really big sins), and it had to be without defect. The priest at the Temple would take the
animal, kill it, and sprinkle its blood upon the altar at the Temple, because God required the animal’s blood to be shed in order for the forgiveness of sins. The Bible says that, "...without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

**Question:** How did Jesus’ death pay the penalty for our sins? [Jesus Christ is our sacrifice].

The Bible says “...But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself...Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people..." (Hebrews 9:26-28).

The Bible says that Jesus is “…the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus is “…a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19). Only through putting our faith in Jesus Christ, and by His death & resurrection do you and I have forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life.

**Question:** If you died & appeared before God at the gates of heaven and He asks, "Why should I let you into my heaven," what would your answer be?

The Bible says, “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9).
LESSON # 5: “D” IS FOR DISCERNMENT

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).

Character Quality
Discernment (insight / understanding)

Discussion Question
What is the most valuable or the most important possession you have?

Introduction
Ever heard of S. Truett Cathy? How about the cows and the “eat mor chickin” billboards? Chick-fil-A is one of the most successful restaurant chains in the country. Want to know the reason for their success?

Mr. Truett opened his first store in shopping mall store in 1967. He wanted to honor God by resting on Sunday, so he made the decision to close on the first day of every week. At first it was easy to remain closed on Sunday because the malls were closed. But when malls began to remain open on Sundays, that decision to close on Sunday was put to the test. Statistically speaking, Sunday is the third-busiest day for restaurants, but Chick-fil-A remains closed. Despite this policy (or because of it?), in most malls they generally make in six days what the other restaurants make in seven.

Periodically, the Chick-fil-A board re-evaluates their closed-Sunday policy and each time they come to the conclusion that it remains honoring to God. All the store operators agree to abide by the corporate purpose: “To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us and to have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A.”

Mr. Truett understands the true nature of success in business or in life: Honoring God in all you do. The dictionary defines discernment as insight or understanding. So if you can discern or understand something, you can know all about its character or nature.

We can find out a lot about discernment in a book in the Bible called Proverbs. The proverbs are short statements that can be used as a compass to help guide you through every-day life.

Question: Why do you think it’s important to have discernment? [Discernment is important because it helps you to have knowledge of what is right and true and fair].

Let’s hear what the Word of the Lord says about wisdom and knowledge:

Discernment

2:1 “My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

Question: How can wisdom help you? Here are a few ideas:

1. “You will understand the fear of the Lord [respect for God] and find knowledge in the scriptures.” If you respect God, you listen to what He says. And what God says is always right and always true.

Question: What are some different ways that you can listen to God? [Through His words in the Bible, your conscience, prayers, advice of parents and others who listen to what God says...].

2. “The respect of God is the beginning of knowledge - what is right [truth] and what is wrong [false]."

Question: How does knowing right from wrong help you at school? [You will know what is appropriate behavior and what is inappropriate behavior, you will know why it’s important to tell the truth, why you should respect your teacher & classmates].

3. “You will understand what is right - every good path.” When you make a decision, it determines what path you travel on.

Question: Let’s say that you’re on a hike and come up to a fork in the path? How did you decide which path to take? [If you have a map or a compass, it can show you which path to take because you will have knowledge of the area you’re in. God’s words are like a map & a compass - they will show you the right path to take when you have decisions to make in the areas of right and wrong]. And think about this for a moment: if God didn’t care about us, He wouldn’t have gone to the trouble to have people write down what He wanted us to know. The fact that we have the Bible shows that He loves and cares for us.

Question: How can knowing what is right and fair help you when you participate in activities? [It can help you know what activities to be involved in, how to conduct yourself in those activities, how to get along with teammates or your coach].

4. “Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you.” You will clearly understand what is right.

Question: Why is it important to understand what is right when you make decisions? [You will have the knowledge to guard against making poor decisions]. You see, when you are faced...
with a choice, you are free to make any decision, good or bad. However, you are not free to choose the consequences of those decisions.

For example: If you listen to Christian music, Christian values go into your mind, they are stored in there, and your mind remembers them.

**Question:** If you listen to music that has bad language in it, what will your mind do with them? [It will store them away for you to remember]. You are free to choose the music you listen to, but you are not free to choose the effect it has on your mind. Discernment helps you know what is right, so you can choose to make the right decision.

“Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men.” You will know who to be associated with and what to be involved in. The Bible says, “The heart of wicked men is of little value” (Proverbs 10:20).

**Question:** Why is it important for you to choose good friends? [It’s important to have friends that share your Christian values so that you can encourage each other to make good choices].

**Question:** The Bible says there are 3 ways to get wisdom. Do you know what they are?

- Accept God’s words. Believe and know that what the Bible says is right (2 Timothy 3:16).
- Store up his commands. Memorize Scripture verses. That way your mind can remember them and they will help you when you need them (Psalm 119:9-11).
- Call out for understanding. Ask God for the wisdom you need to make good decisions (Proverbs 3:5-6).
LESSON # 6: “E” IS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10).

Character Quality
Encouragement

Discussion Question
When was a time that you got an award? How did it make you feel?
Have you ever been teased? How did it make you feel?

Introduction
(The following is a popular e-mail that has been circulating for some time. The web-site TruthorFiction.com verified its source and accuracy):

One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball.

Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?"

Shaya's father knew that his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya's father understood that if his son was chosen to play it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging.

Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning."

Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again and now with two outs and the bases loaded with the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat.

Everyone knew that it was all but impossible because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came in and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates came up to Shaya and together the held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya. As the pitch came in, Shaya and his teammate swung at the bat and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher.

The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shaya would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far beyond reach of the first baseman.
Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first. Run to first." Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman who would tag out Shaya, who was still running. But the right fielder understood what the pitcher’s intentions were, so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman’s head. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second." Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third." As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home."

Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

Question: What does the word encouragement mean? [Encouragement means to inspire with hope, courage or confidence].

Question: What are some ways that you can encourage other people? [Let’s look at 3 different ways that we can encourage or be encouraged].

1. Words can encourage: “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up” (Proverbs 12:25). Sometimes all a person needs is a kind word to cheer him or her up.

Question: Who is someone that you know who could use a kind word today? [Someone who is lonely, sick at home, someone who is moving].

2. Prayers can encourage: “About midnight Paul & Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25). Paul & Silas’ were missionaries who were put in jail for telling people about Jesus. Yet at midnight, at a time when they could have been sleeping, instead they were singing and praying to God. Their prayers encouraged the other prisoners who were listening to them.

Question: Who is someone that you can pray for today? [Your family, missionaries (like Paul & Silas), your pastor, teacher, the President].

3. Actions encourage: “For the word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).

Question: What can you do for someone today to encourage them? [Say a kind word, pray, call them on the phone, send a card].

Let’s see how the word of God can be living and active through your life to encourage others:

**Encouragement**
(Text: Romans 12:9-21)

**RO 12:9** “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19
Christian Character

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Discussion
Pick a couple or a few of these lines of the following Scripture from Romans 12:9-21 and discuss how by following them, you can be encouraged or be an encouragement to others:

Hate what is evil

**Question: How is hating evil encouraging?** [The Scriptures say to flee from evil: “Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). If you flee from what’s bad, you can only head toward what is right. And that’s good for everybody!]

Cling to what is good

**Question: How is clinging to what is good encouraging?** [The Bible says to think about “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable” (Philippians 4:8). If you think of these qualities, there’s no room for wrong or impurities. That’s encouraging!]

Be devoted to one another

**Question: How is being devoted to one another encouraging?** [The Bible says to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). If you seek to do what is best for each other, you’ll be a better friend. That’s encouraging!]

Honor one another above yourself

**Question: How is honoring others above yourself encouraging?** [The Bible says, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interest of others” (Philippians 2:4). If we don’t boast about ourselves, we’ll be much quicker to bring attention to others and by doing this encourage them].

Be faithful in prayer

**Question: How is praying for others encouraging?** The Bible says, “...pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer helps God do His work among people. We’re not exactly sure how this works, but God says that we should do it. If it helps God, me & other people - I’m all over this one!]

Share with God’s people who are in need

**Question: How is sharing what you have with others encouraging?** Discuss some of these examples:
- Someone who is new in school without any friends [Share your friendship].
- Someone whose family is poor [Share your abundance].
- Someone not included in the “in group” [Share your group].
- Someone who is always picked last when making up teams [Share your support].
- Someone with a learning disability [Share your time].

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody

**Question: How can you be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody?** [The Bible says, “Never tire of doing what is right” (2 Thessalonians 3:12)].

**Question: How can you encourage someone today in your prayers, through your words or by your actions?**
LESSON # 7: “F” IS FOR FEAR OF THE LORD

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you for your own good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

Character Quality
Fear of the Lord (awe or reverence)

Discussion Question
Kids: If you were a parent, what truths or lessons would you try to teach your children?
Dads: What truths or lessons do you try to teach your children?

Introduction
On October 31, 1571, Martin Luther nailed a note to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany. The note, posted for all to read, explained how certain practices of the Catholic Church (the only official church in his day) did not adhere to the Word of God. He addressed corruption and distortions that kept common people from understanding salvation by faith in Christ alone.

Martin Luther was truly fearful of God. In 1505, he joined a monastery and even within the monastery, to him, God remained unapproachably holy, and he could never attain God’s demands of perfection. One day, while studying the Bible, Luther read, 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Luther accepted Christ’s work on the cross as payment for his sin.

He began preaching and teaching at the University of Wittenburg, and people came to hear his message. Drawing power and money away from the established church, Luther was ordered to appear before the Assembly of church officials and recant (take back) his words. He would not and Luther was declared an outlaw. Hidden by friends, Luther made his greatest contribution to the world: he completed his translation of the Bible into German.

The Fear of the Lord
(Text: Deuteronomy 10:12-13)
“And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees that I am giving you for your own good?”

First of all, let’s try to paint a picture to describe this sense of awe or fear of the Lord. Imagine the following: In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt - on the very day - they came to the Desert of Sinai and Israel camped in front of a mountain called Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1-2). Then Moses went up to meet God, and the God called to him from the mountain and said... ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you’ ” (Exodus 19:9).
Question: If you were in school, and a voice on the intercom called you into a meeting with the principal, what kind of attitude would you have going into that meeting? [Hopefully one of respect].

Let’s continue. On the third day after camping at Mount Sinai, Moses prepared to meet with the Lord on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

EX 19:16 “On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. 17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, 19 and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.”

Thunder, lightning, thick clouds and smoke, violent trembling and loud trumpet blasts! The Israelites who witnessed the presence and power of God in their midst had a reason to fear God.

Question: Does the fear of the Lord have any meaning for you and me today? [Let’s talk a little bit more about what the fear of the Lord is and then we’ll talk about how we can have it today].

The Fear Of The Lord
Listen to what a man named Charles Colson says: “We need to know the fear of the Lord - the overwhelming, compelling awe and reverence of a holy God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: It provides the right perspective on God’s sovereign rule over all creation; the sense of God’s power and perfection...” (Colson, The Body, pg. 376).

Martin Luther knew the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord means that we hold God in such awe & majesty that we are compelled (driven) to acknowledge His rule over all creation - including our own life!

Question: How do you get this sense of God’s power & perfection? [God says you can learn or develop it]. The Scripture says, “Assemble the people - men, women and children...so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God...” (Deuteronomy 31:12). You can learn to reverence or respect God.

Question: What is one good way in particular that you can respect someone? [Listen to him or her].

Question: What are ways that you can listen to God? [Prayer, Family Bible readings Sunday School lessons, Scripture reading in church, Bible study, Reading Christian books or magazines, Listening to Christian music, Listening to parents & teachers].

Question: Why should you want to reverence or respect God? [Here are 3 good reasons to respect God]:

1) A Better Life
“And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). Often times a product comes with instructions, such as, “use only as directed.” God designed us to work best when we live “only as directed.”
2) You’ll Make Good Decisions
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10). You will understand what is right and what is wrong. You will have knowledge to make good decisions and guard against making poor decisions.

Question: In what areas of your life can wisdom help you make good decisions? [Choosing friends, what activities to participate in, keeping your health good].

3) Things Will Just Go Better All Around
“These people honor me [God] with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isaiah 29:13). God wants you to honor Him not with just what you say, but more importantly by how you act.

Question: How would our country benefit today if everyone had a fear or awe of God? [Respect for each other, society would live by God’s rules].

Question: What can you do today to honor God?
LESSON # 8: “G” IS FOR GIVING GENEROUSLY

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“...if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously” (Romans 12:8).

Character Quality
Giving

Discussion Question
What types of things are you good at doing? How can you use what you are good at to help others?

Introduction
Andrew Carnegie was born in Scotland in 1835. His family’s poverty taught Carnegie a lesson. When the Carnegies came to America in 1848, Andrew determined to bring prosperity to his family.

Carnegie climbed from the slums of Pittsburgh to the mansions of New York. By 1868 Carnegie, was worth $400,000 (nearly $5 million today). For three decades, he dominated the steel industry. By 1900, Carnegie Steel produced more steel than the entire British steel industry. When he sold the company to J.P. Morgan in 1901, Carnegie personally earned $250 million (approximately $4.5 billion today).

Today he is most remembered for his generous gifts of music halls, educational grants, and nearly 3000 public libraries. By the time of his death in 1919, he had given away over $350 million (more than $3 billion in today’s dollars).

Question: There are 3 good ways that you can give. What do you think they are?
1. We can give with our time
2. We can give through our abilities
3. We can give of our money.

Today, we’re going to talk about why we should give, what we should give, how we should give, & when we should give. First though, let’s look at a story out of the Scriptures about giving.

The Parable of The Widow’s Offering
(Text: Mark 12:41-44)

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.
43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”

Very quietly with no fanfare, this poor widow put in everything she had to live on. By contrast, the teachers of the law (known as Pharisees or Saducees), the religious leaders of Israel, liked to call attention to themselves: walking around in flowing robes to be seen by everybody, or having the most important seats in their church and places of honor at big banquets.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Question: What did Jesus say that made this widow’s small gift the biggest one given? [What made her gift the largest was her attitude toward giving].

It is this attitude of giving generously that we’re going to explore today.

Question: Has anyone given more generously that God?

- “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it...” (Psalm 24:1). Everything that we have comes from what God has given us.
- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God gives us eternal life as a gift.
- “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). God will give us more than we could ever imagine.

Question: What is it that makes people give? [People give because God put in us a desire to give. It makes God happy when you give, because it helps other people].

Let’s talk a little bit now of why we should give, what we should give, how we should give, & when we should give:

**Question: Why Should You Give?**

The Bible says, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Give because you have received much from others.

The Bible says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:25). It’s always nice to get things or have things done for you, but God says it helps you and it helps others when you give.

**Question: What Should We Give?**

The Bible says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion [because you have to], for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Give what you have because you want to.

The Bible says, “My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways” (Proverbs 23:26). Give your attention to God so that you can learn to live a life that is full and meaningful.

**Question: How Should We Give?**

The Bible says, “...the righteous give without sparing” (Proverbs 21:26). Give as you are able. Remember, the widow did not have much to give, but gave as she was able.

**Question: When Should We Give?**

The Bible says, “Share with God’s people who are in need” (Romans 12:13). Share when the opportunity arises.
The Bible says, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Pray when you are aware of a need.

The Bible says, “Never tire of doing what is right” (2 Thessalonians 3:12). Ask God for strength to continue to give.

**Question: Who are people that have given to you?** [Parents who show you God’s love; teachers who help you learn in school; coaches who help you learn to play sports, people who serve in the armed forces to keep our country safe]. Think about how good it feels when someone takes time to help you.

Andrew Carnegie gave away huge sums of money and helped many people. Jesus says that it isn’t the amount given, but the intent with which it is given. When you realize that what you have is on loan to you from God, ask Him how you should handle His property in a way that will help the most.

**Question: How can you help others today by giving with your time or your abilities or your money?**
Christian Character

LESSON # 9: “H” IS FOR HOLINESS

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse

"You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Leviticus 20:26).

Character Quality

Holiness

Discussion Question

In what ways are you different from other members of your family?

Introduction

Growing up, Jim Elliot was a hard worker, good student, and a star athlete. But Elliot also had a burning desire to serve God, and that desire led him to the foreign mission field, specifically, South America. Elliot said, "Why should some hear twice, when others have not heard the gospel once."

Elliot then heard of a tribe of South American Indians called the Aucas. In January of 1956, Elliot and four companions landed on a beach in Ecuador. Within days of the first personal contact with the Aucas, Elliot and his four companions were killed by warriors from the Auca tribe. *

To be holy means to be set apart and made ready. More specifically for a Christian, it means to be set apart for God’s purpose. So to be holy is to be set apart for the purpose God has for your life. Jim Elliot was a man committed to God’s purpose for him. He looked for God’s purpose for him, asked for it, waited for it and most importantly – obeyed it. Jim Elliot made himself available to God.

Holiness

(Text: Selected Verses)

1 “Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 “Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:1-5).

Question: Why did God tell Moses to take off his sandals? [God said to Moses, “Remove anything that stands between you and me - for I have work for you to do for Me.”]. God set Moses apart for His purposes.

Since that day, the Holy God of Israel has called his people to be holy. The Apostle Peter writes, “But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Question: What does it mean to be holy? [Holy means to be set apart and made ready]. More specifically for a Christian, it means to be set apart for God’s purpose. So to be holy is to be set apart for the purpose God has for your life.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Question: How can you live a life that is holy to God? The Bible says, “Your ways, O God, are holy” (Psalm 77:13).

Question: How can we find out what God’s ways are? [By reading and learning the Bible]. Let’s look at a few Bible verses that tell can help us understand how to live holy lives:

- “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1). The first step to becoming holy is to put the Words of God into your mind.
- “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). If your mind is full of these things, it leaves less room for other thoughts that are wrong or impure.
- “Be imitators of God” (Ephesians 5:1). Let the Holy Spirit produce in you the qualities He desires for you to have.

Question: What qualities does God want you to have? The qualities that God wants us to have are: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22). The good news is that as a Christian, those qualities are available to you, through God’s power in your life. All you have to do is pick a piece of fruit and eat it.

Question: Why should you want to live a life that is holy? [Because of what God has done for you through Jesus Christ].

The Bible says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The day that Jesus was crucified; his body broken and his blood shed on the cross, He purchased you by paying an enormous price for your sins: with His life. The day that you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit came and made His dwelling in you, His temple. Therefore, you should honor God with your body and with your thoughts and attitudes.

The Bible also says that, “You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own” (Leviticus 20:26). God has a purpose for your life.

The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself [made us fit to be with Him] through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors...” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). God has given to you the responsibility and privilege of telling people about the good news - the Gospel - of Jesus Christ.

* And now… the rest of the story. Elliot’s death was called a” waste of lives” by some. But hundreds of young people around the world, inspired by the dedication of Jim Elliot and the others, volunteered to become missionaries in their place. Eventually, among others, Elliot’s wife – Elisabeth Elliot – lived among the Aucas who killed her husband. These women learned the Auca language and translated the Bible for them. Many Auca eventually came to accept Christ as Savior.

Question: How can you be an ambassador for Jesus today?
LESSON # 10: "I" IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 1)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Colossians 3:16).

Character Quality
Integrity

Discussion
1. You are at the 7-11 after school. There are only two of you in the store and the other person, unaware, drops a $20 bill on the way out the door. What do you do?

2. Let's change the situation: There's a movie out that you really want to see, but your parents have clearly told you that you cannot watch that movie. On Friday night you go over to a friend's house to spend the night and your friend brings out the very movie that you are not allowed to watch and says, "This is an awesome movie. My parents said I could rent it for tonight. Let's watch it!" What do you do?

Introduction
In 1924, England's best hope ever to win a gold medal in the 100-meter race at the Olympic Games in Paris, France refused to run. The first heats of the 100-meter were scheduled on Sunday, and Eric said, "I don't run on Sundays. Sunday is for worshiping God, not sports. At least for me."

The British officials tried to get the schedule changed, but without success. Some called him stupid. Some called him a traitor. But Eric stuck to a promise he made to honor Sunday as the Lord's Day, to rest from work and sports. As the first heats of the 100-meter were being run, Eric was speaking at a Scottish church about his commitment to Jesus Christ.

Though not his best event, Eric did qualify for the 400-meter race and made it to the semi-finals. Just before the final race, a trainer handed him a note that said, "He that honors me I will honor" (1 Samuel 2:30). Eric won the 400-meter race – not his best event – in world record time! Criticism turned into admiration and respect for the man who lived by what he believed (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 81-88).

In 1981, Eric Liddell's story was told in the Academy Award winning movie Chariots of Fire. Integrity says to make the right decision and follow through with that decision. Eric Liddell was a man of integrity.

Question: What is integrity? [A simple definition of integrity is a commitment to doing what is right].

Question: What does integrity tell you to do? [Integrity says that you choose to make the right decision, and then follow through with making the right decision].

Let's talk about a hero of the Bible named Job who was a man of integrity.
JOB 1:1 "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"
Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."
Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"
20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

JOB 2:1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

Question: How does the Bible describe Job? [Job was a man who did all that was right and was also very rich]. But even after he lost everything he owned, including all his children, and endured a terrible sickness (chapter two), Job still maintained his integrity.

Question: How did Job maintain his integrity? [Job did what was right and without fault, because he respected the authority of God and avoided evil]. Job knew what God required of him, which is to trust Him and do all that is right.

God requires from His people a standard of integrity.

Question: Who is our standard of integrity? [Jesus Christ is our standard of integrity].

Question: How has God told us about Jesus? [God has told us about Jesus through His Word, the Bible].

Question: How do we know that the Bible is true? [There are three Bible verses that can help us understand this].

1. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Bible says that Jesus is full of the truth.

2. "This is the message that we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). When the Bible refers to light, it is referring to the truth.

Question: If there is only light or truth in Jesus, is there room for anything dark or false? No. Every thought, attitude, word or action that Jesus has or does is true or points to the truth. If this were not so, then Jesus could not be God.
3. “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” (John 14:6). Jesus Christ Himself said that He is the Truth. Since Jesus is God, and the Bible is God’s Word, then you can trust that what the Bible tells you is true.

Question: Is there other evidence that the Bible is true? [There are four verses of Scripture that can help us answer this question].

“All Scripture is God-breathed [inspired] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

1) The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years. Yet the Bible has one central message: God’s desire and plan to save men from their sins. What the Bible says fits together perfectly - incapable of explanation by chance. Few if any of these men even lived at the same time as each other. In fact, at the time these men were writing they could not have had any idea that their work would be gathered into what today is the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible is there evidence that its writers were lying or making up information to correlate with current events. That means that the entire Bible is true, not just parts of it.

2) The Bible also says that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Remember that light means truth. Since God is light it would be impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18).

3) “Every word of God is flawless...” (Proverbs 30:5). God’s word will never lead you toward anything not true.

4) “All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal” (Psalm 119:160). God’s word was true when it was written, it is true today, and it will be true tomorrow.

Another way we can have confidence that the Bible is true is through fulfilled prophecy, which we’ll talk about in our lesson on Isaiah.

The Scriptures say that throughout all of his troubles, Job maintained his integrity (Job 2:3). Job could have chosen not to worship and honor God and blame God in his time of trouble. He could have lost his integrity.

Question: How can we know what is right and what the right thing to do is? [You can know what is right because God has revealed truth in the person of Jesus Christ, and through His Word, the Bible].

Question: How can you practice integrity today? [When you are challenged with a difficult decision to make, ask God to help you make the right decision].

Question: Dads - What can you do today to help teach your children integrity?
LESSON # 11: “I” IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 2)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“In everything set them an example by doing what is good” (Titus 2:7).

Character Quality
Integrity

Discussion Question
If you were God, what is one guideline that you would you want people to live by?

Review
Question: Do you remember what integrity is? [A commitment to doing what is right]. We also talked about that we could know what is right or true by knowing Jesus Christ and by knowing God’s words contained in The Bible.

Introduction
He was born in Germany in 1906. At 14, he said that he wanted to be a minister and later studied theology in Berlin and went to Union Seminary in New York.

During this time, Hitler was rising to power in Germany. Many Germans – even Christians – accepted Nazism without question. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw the danger and helped form the “Confessing Church.” It proclaimed that Jesus alone is Lord and that loyalty to Hitler was idolatry. Along with 6,000 other pastors, he refused to discriminate against anyone of Jewish descent.

On April 9, 1945, he was killed along with several others only weeks before Germany surrendered to end World War II. His writings are still read widely today (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 21-24).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood up for God even though it cost him his life. Integrity says that you choose to make the right decision, and then follow through with making the right decision. But first, integrity must be learned and established, and then practiced and maintained.

************************************************

Integrity: The Ten Commandments
(Text: Exodus 20:3-17)

Question: How can you build integrity into your life? The Ten Commandments are a good place to start. Let's review the Ten Commandments and what they mean:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
   God wants to be #1 in your life.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.
   Worship God only in the ways He has instructed us.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
   Honor God’s name by the way you act or talk.

4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day.
   Take a day of rest as a gift from God and use it responsibly.

5. Honor your father and your mother.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Honor and respect our parents.

6. You shall not murder.
Respect the lives of others

7. You shall not commit adultery.
Honor God with our bodies; keep our thoughts, words and actions pure.

8. You shall not steal.
Respect the property of others.

9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (Do not lie).
God wants you to love truth and live truthfully.

10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.
Be content with what you have.

Question: How would you summarize the Ten Commandments? [Love God and love others].
The gospel of Mark gives us a good summary:

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31).

Question: How can practicing the Ten Commandments help you today at home? [Get along and respect family members, telling the truth, being content with what you have, rest].

Question: How can practicing the Ten Commandments help you today at school? [Honoring God by how you represent Him among classmates and friends, respecting teachers and coaches].

Question: How can practicing the Ten Commandments help you in your activities? [How you conduct yourself at practice or at a game, remembering God is more important than the activity, keeping your thoughts pure].

The same Ten Commandments that were given to Israel to teach them how to love God and each other, will still guard and guide you today if you will learn them and learn to live by them. They will help you to build integrity into your life.
LESSON # 12: “I” IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 3)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27).

Character Quality
Integrity

Discussion Question
Who is one of your heroes?
Why is this person a hero to you?

Introduction
Jessica Lynch, a 19-year-old Army supply clerk, was captured in an ambush when she and other members of the 507th Maintenance Company made a wrong turn in Nasiriyah, Iraq. Her rescue by U.S. commandos in a nighttime raid remains one of the enduring moments of the War in Iraq.

But her rescue may not have happened had it not been for an Iraqi lawyer, identified only as Mohammed. Mohammed said that he peered through a window at the hospital where his wife worked as a nurse and saw a sight that “cut” his heart: Lynch being slapped in the face by the black-clad Iraqi security agent. He said he decided on the spot he had to tell U.S. forces where to find the captured American private.

"Don't worry, don't worry," he recalled telling Lynch after later sneaking into her hospital room and promising to help. Mohammed walked out of Nasiriyah along a treacherous road known as "ambush alley" and, hands raised, approached a U.S. Marine. The Marine asked curtly: "What do you want?" Mohammed offered "important information about woman soldier in hospital."

In the days that followed, Mohammed made several more risky trips to the hospital, which was full of Iraqi security guards, at the request of U.S. officers. He gathered information on the number of troops and made hand-drawn maps of the building's layout and location. His wife, Iman, filled in other crucial details, including the fact a helicopter could land on the roof.

Asked why he decided to help, Mohammed said he simply couldn't watch the mistreatment of a fellow human being without taking action. Mohammed told the newspapers he acted with full knowledge of the risks. "I am afraid not for me," he said. "I am afraid about my daughter and my wife. Because I love much."

Integrity is a commitment to doing what is right. Mohammed did what was right, at the risk of losing his home, his job, his family; his life. Today we’ll talk about how we can learn integrity.

Building Integrity Through Promises
Integrity must not only be learned and practiced, but it must also be maintained daily.

An organization called Promise Keepers, calls for their members to live by integrity. Members of Promise Keepers make a commitment to keep seven promises to help them practice and maintain their integrity [Note: The actual Promise Keeper commitments are given in bold, a version for the kids follows each promise]. Here they are:

1. Honor Jesus Christ through prayer, worship, and obedience to His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Honor Jesus in your prayers, worship and be obedient to His Word.
2. Pursue vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that I need brothers to help me keep my promises. Develop good friends who have the same values and who will encourage and help you to make good choices.

3. Practice spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity. Practice living a life pleasing to God.

4. Build strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values. Help strengthen your family by living according to values that God teaches you through the Bible.

5. Support the mission of my church, by honoring and praying for my pastor and by actively giving my time and resources. Honor and pray for your church’s pastor. Be active in your church and use the abilities God has given you to help strengthen your church.

6. Reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity. Love people regardless of who they are or where they worship.

7. Influence my world, being obedient to the Great Commandment [Love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30-31)] and the Great Commission [Go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19-20)]. Show love for God and show love for your neighbor; live your life in a way that would make others want to follow Jesus Christ.

Discussion
Take a couple of the above promises and discuss how the kids and the dads can practice those promises today.

Maintaining Your Integrity

Question: What is a situation where your integrity could be challenged? [An opportunity to watch a movie that you’re not allowed to see, an opportunity to cheat on a test, take some change out of your parent’s change jar].

Question: What should you do when your integrity is challenged? [Protect yourself and ask God to help you].

The Bible says that we are in a battle. Your integrity will be challenged. The devil will tempt you in all sorts of ways. And his temptations are very attractive to us or else he wouldn’t use them. He’ll do anything to try and get us to turn away from living the way God wants us to. But listen to what Paul writes in his letter to the people in the church in the city of Corinth: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Here are some ways to stand up to temptation:
- Ask God to shield you with the truth, knowing what is right and pure and holy.
- Pray with all kinds of prayers and requests.
- Be alert. The Bible says to stay on the path that is right and avoid what is evil.

When your integrity is challenged by a situation, or circumstance, remember these words: “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27).
LESSON # 13: “J” IS FOR JOY

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Character Quality
Joy

Discussion Question
Can you think of a time when you really wanted something but didn’t get it or it didn’t happen?

Introduction
John Bunyan was born in 1628. The official church in England controlled most of the churches. In fact, the British government passed a law saying that only official church ministers could preach. But John preached in small independent churches - he was not part of the official church. He knew that if he continued to preach, he could be arrested. But he also knew that if he gave up preaching out of fear, new Christians in these small churches would give up their faith too, since they were not part of the official church. So, when the day came that John was told to stop, he refused the order. He said he had to obey God. So he was put in prison.

John’s own words sum up his attitude: “Good people, cheer up. We have no reason to be ashamed of gathering here to worship the Lord. And as for me, preaching God’s word is a good work. One day, I will be rewarded for it, so why should I care if I must suffer a little now?”

John spent 12 years in prison, but it was there that he wrote his most well known book, Pilgrim’s Progress (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 21-24).

Even though John Bunyan spent time in prison, he was joyful. How? The dictionary defines joy as happiness, elation or rejoicing. But joy goes beyond a feeling - it's also an attitude. Real joy knows and rests in the fact that God is in control. God has your best interests in mind in all circumstances. You can choose to be joyful in any circumstance – it just takes a little practice!

Joy
(Text: John 10:1-10)

1 “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
There is great joy in living a life obedient to God. By the way, obedience is more than just following rules. It’s getting to know God. So let’s talk about a few ways to develop joy in your life.

You can choose to have joy even on those not so good, very bad days. For openers, Jesus plainly says that there will be some not so good very bad days for you. “In this world you will have trouble...” (John 16:33). So don’t be completely surprised when they show up.

The Bible says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Being made more like Jesus is a process. God allows you to endure some difficult times because you will not develop into the person that He wants you to become unless your faith is challenged and tested.

Question: What happens when you exercise your body? [When you exercise your body, your strength increases and your endurance increases]. You can also exercise your faith. For example, if someone makes fun of you, and you do what’s right by keeping from taking revenge, you increase the strength of your faith. The Bible says that we can then rejoice and be glad.

Question: What about when you don’t make the team or get a part in the school play? How can you be joyful? [Remember, God always has your best interests in mind. He isn’t so concerned with whether you make the school soccer team or get the lead in the school play, as He is with the effort you make and your attitude toward how you try out].

The Bible says “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...” (Colossians 3:23). Did you do it with all your heart? If you work at it with all your heart, you are successful in God’s eyes. If you work to please God, you will find that joy will well up within you and begin to overflow.

Question: How can you be joyful all of the time? [It will take some practice, but you can train yourself to be joyful by praying continually and being thankful in every situation]. The Bible says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Even if it is a small thing, look for what you can thank God for in each situation.

Here are some ideas:

- “Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs” (Psalm 100:2). Go to worship services at your church and worship God gladly; sing songs of joy. Sing praise songs you learn in Sunday school - Sing Christmas carols in the summer!
- “Praise the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2). Go ahead and count your blessings - and remember to thank God for each one!
- “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21). Begin to realize that as a Christian, you are only temporarily here on this earth to serve God. Your permanent residence is in Heaven in the presence of God the Father Almighty and in the presence of the living resurrected Lord Jesus. Praise God! You have in store for you something so wonderful that “No eye has seen no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Question: What are good ways to maintain a joyful attitude in your life? [Stick to your Christian commitment, pray, read the Bible, get good advice from friends, parents, grandparents, pastors, coaches].

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Christian Character

LESSON # 14: “L” IS FOR LOVE (Part 1)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

Character Quality
Love

Discussion Question
How can you show people that you love them?

Introduction
On December 28, 1944, after ten months of being in a Nazi Germany concentration camp, Corrie Ten Boom was released.

The Ten Boom family, all Christians, had provided a hiding place in their home for Jews who were being persecuted (badly treated) during World War II. Her family was eventually betrayed, and in return for their kindness, at age 59 along with her family, Corrie was put into a concentration camp. Her father and sister had died in those camps.

Corrie made a promise to God that if she were allowed to live, she would tell as many people about the love and forgiveness of Jesus as she could. Then God made her a promise: that she would reach far more people than she could imagine with the gospel message. For the next 30 years following her release she traveled to more than 60 countries, telling people about God’s love and faithfulness through her experiences while in prison. Among the 9 books she wrote, the most well known is The Hiding Place, an account of her arrest and time spent in prison.

Corrie Ten Boom put love into action and that’s what we’re going to talk about today. First, we’re going to read a passage from the Bible that defines love as action, and then we’ll look at a Bible story called The Lost Son that shows us love in action.

*****************************************************

Love (Part 1)
(Text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

In those 3 verses, there are 15 different actions that Paul describes as love. As we read our Bible story about the Lost (or Prodigal) Son, see how many of these actions you can find being played out in the story:

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he
went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

31 “ `My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found’ ” (Luke15:11-31).

In the Parable of The Lost Son:

**Question: What's an example of love being patient?** [The Scripture says that the father saw him while he was still a long way off, (verse 20) as if he stayed by the window looking toward the day that his son would return].

**Question: What's an example of love being kind?** [The father was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (verse 20)].

**Question: What's an example of love not being proud?** [The father was not so proud in that he would never forgive his son for the wrong things his son did, in fact, he was overjoyed when his son admitted his mistake and he welcomed his son back with a great celebration (verse 22-24)].

**Question: What's an example of rudeness?** [The older brother was rude, in fact he was very angry and refused to attend the celebration (verse 28)].

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
**Question:** What's an example of selfishness? [The older brother wanted to be recognized for his faithfulness and obedience to his father (verse 29)].

**Question:** What is an example of love not being easily angered? [The father was not angry with his younger son, rather overjoyed that he had returned (verses 20-22)].

**Question:** What is an example of love not keeping a record of wrongs? [The Father did not count his younger sons’ wrongs against him (verse 24)].

**Question:** What's an example of love not delighting in evil? [The father did not take delight in the mistakes of his son (verses 24 & 32)].

**Question:** What's an example of love rejoicing with the truth? [His father rejoiced that his younger son recognized his wrongs and that he wanted to turn away from them (verse 21-24)].

**Question:** What's an example of love always protecting? [The Father pleaded with his older son to recognize what had happened and to also rejoice and join the celebration (verses 28-32)].

**Question:** What's an example that love always hopes, always perseveres? [The father never gave up hope for his son’s return home (verses 20-22)].

The Parable of the Lost Son is a love story. It’s a story of the love that God has for you. Like the lost son, the Scriptures say that, “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). All of us have sinned.

**Question:** Do you remember what's so bad about sin? [It separates us from God].

Like the father who waited patiently for his son to return, the Scriptures also say that, “God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

For the Bible says, “...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

**Question:** Do you know what repentance is? [Turning away from sinful or wrong thoughts or attitudes and turning back toward God]. Picture yourself (one day) driving down the street in your car, when you realize you’ve been traveling the wrong way. So you turn your car around and head off down the right road. That’s what repentance is – turning from wrong and heading down the right road.

Like the father, when his son repents and comes home, God says, “Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:23-24). This is what God wants for each and every person.

**Question:** How does God show His love for us? The Bible says, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear brothers [sisters], since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:9-11).

In Part 2 of “Love” we’ll look at another act of love: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
LESSON # 15: “L” IS FOR LOVE (Part 2)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Character Quality
Love

Introduction
He was born on a small farm outside London, England in 1821. When he was twenty, he came to London as a sales assistant in a forerunner of today’s department stores. He described himself as a “careless, thoughtless, godless, swearing young fellow.” With businesses and factories springing up in London, men came looking for work, and finding plenty of it – up to 15 hours a day and 6 days a week. Away from their families and home, many men lived slept in crowded rooms above the company’s shop. They were faced with few recreational opportunities other than bars and houses of ill repute.

But while staying in the town of Bridgewater, he became a Christian. Aware of these conditions for young men like himself, on June 6, 1844, George Williams gathered a group of young men together for prayer and Bible study to replace life on the streets. By the next year, the YMCA had chapters in Switzerland, USA, France, Canada, Germany, and Netherlands. Nine years later, from its humble beginnings as a Bible study, the YMCA had 397 chapters in 7 nations with 30,000+ members. Sir George Williams has been commemorated by a stained glass window in Westminster Abbey and is buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral, both among the highest honors given to English national heroes.

George Williams loved his fellowman enough to do something for them that they could not do for themselves. While the extent of George William's love for others was great, today we'll look at how great the extent of God’s love for us is.

Lesson Background
During the last week of Jesus' life on earth, all the people in Jerusalem, and many Jewish people from countries surrounding Israel were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Passover Feast, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Have you ever seen Times Square in New York on New Year's Eve? That’s probably what Jerusalem was like during Passover. Wall to wall people.

Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter & John to prepare the Passover meal. This was the night of the Last Supper - the night that Jesus was arrested and crucified the next day. After Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples; and took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, they went out to a place called Gethsemane, on what is called the Mount of Olives.

Love: Gethsemane

MT 26:36 “Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee [James and John] along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
LK 22:42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

Jesus knew that he was about to be arrested, beaten, and killed on the cross. But something much larger was taking place.

**Question:** When Jesus was crucified, do you remember why He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” [Before this world existed, a perfect relationship between God the Father and God the Son always existed. Jesus had never been separated from God - until now]. The Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

And now Jesus was about to take the sins of all men upon himself thereby being separated from the Holy God, in whose presence sin can not stand. The Bible says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**Question:** How much does Jesus love you? The Bible says, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). Jesus was about to endure the most horrible experience anyone would ever endure. Yet Jesus loves us enough that he willingly endured the crucifixion; the “cup” that he asked his Father to take away from him. Jesus did not want to go through with it.

In fact, he could have chosen not to. As Jesus stood there in Gethsemane, facing a hostile crowd armed with clubs and swords to arrest him, Jesus said, “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). A legion of Roman soldiers stood between 3000 to 6000 men. Jesus could have called upon thousands and thousands of angels to do as he commanded (remember, it only took one angel to roll a two ton stone away from the tomb – think what a few thousand could do!).

But Jesus told us the reason he didn’t back out. “But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?” (Matthew 26:54). Here is where we find the extent of Jesus’ love, in that he willingly obeyed his Father at a time when he knew what he was facing was horrible.

**Question:** How horrible was the crucifixion that Jesus endured? We can get a picture from Isaiah the Old Testament prophet. Isaiah wrote about Jesus’ crucifixion more than 700 years before it happened - before crucifixion was even invented as a punishment!

The Bible says, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:5-7).

The Bible says, “And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us” (1 John 3:23). Jesus loved not with just words, but with actions.

George Williams loved others enough to
LESSON # 16: “L” IS FOR LOVE (Part 3)

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37-39).

Character Quality
Love for God and for others

Discussion Question
When you hear the word ‘love,’ what comes to your mind?

Introduction
Agnes Bojaxhiu was born in 1910 in Yugoslavia and in 1928 decided to become a nun. After spending a short time in Ireland she was sent to join a convent in the city of Darjeeling in Northeast India. When she was twenty-one she took the name Teresa.

At first she taught geography at a girls school in Calcutta. But there were other needs in the city. There were many homeless people and beggars. Lepers lived on the streets as did orphans. In 1946 Teresa gave up the job as a teacher to care for the needy in the slums of Calcutta. In 1948 she became an Indian citizen. In 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity order of nuns.

Her initial work was amongst children teaching them to care for themselves and to learn basic reading and writing skills. She had her first recruit in 1949 and many others joined her over the next few years. In 1952 she founded the Kalighat Home for the Dying. She established a leper colony to help leprosy sufferers. By the year 2000 over 3,000 nuns belonged to the Missionaries of Charity, running centers in over one hundred countries.

Mother Teresa died in 1997. She lived among the people she helped. She cared for people because they needed it and expected nothing from them in return. She literally laid down her life to love and show compassion for all.

*******************************************************************************

Background
The Pharisees were men who were experts in the religious law, both written and oral, that had been passed down for centuries in the nation of Israel. One of the Pharisees asked Jesus a question to test him.

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 22:36-39).

Question: What is the most important thing that Jesus says you can do? [Jesus said that the most important thing a person can do is to love God and to love others].

Question: What does it mean to love God? The Bible says, “This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).
Question: What are ways to love your neighbor? [Take his homework assignment to him if he’s sick, water her plants if she’s out of town]. Jesus gives us His answer in a parable called The Sheep And The Goats

**The Sheep And The Goats**  
(Text: Matthew 25:31-45)

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, `Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, `Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 “The King will reply, `I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, `Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 “They also will answer, `Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 “He will reply, `I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Question: In this story, how did Jesus say that people showed Him love? [Feeding, giving drink, sheltering, clothing, caring for, and visiting those in need].

Question: Why did Jesus punish those who did not show love? [Because they ignored those with needs].

Question: How does God say we should love Him? [By obeying his command].

Question: What is that command? [To love others by caring for their needs]. God demands our action. The Bible says, 14 “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (James 2:12-16).
God says to love others through our actions: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:9-11).

Question: Who are you aware of that has a need right now? How can you love him or her by helping to meet that need today?
LESSON # 17: “M” IS FOR MUSIC

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” (Psalm 95:1-2).

Character Quality
Praise

Discussion Question
What is your favorite type of music? What are some of your favorite songs?

Introduction
In 1871 tragedy struck Chicago as fire ravaged the city. When it was all over, 300 people were dead and 100,000 were homeless. Horatio Gates Spafford was one of those who tried to help the people of the city get back on their feet. A lawyer who had invested much of his money into the downtown Chicago real estate, he'd lost a great deal to the fire. And his one son (he had four daughters) had died about the same time. Still, for two years Spafford - a friend of Dwight Moody (an evangelist who spoke to more than 100,000,000 people and led millions to a relationship with Jesus Christ) assisted the homeless, impoverished, and grief-stricken ruined by the fire.

After two years of such work, he decided his family needed a vacation. They were going to England to join Moody on one of his evangelistic crusades then travel in Europe. Horatio was delayed by some business, but sent his family on ahead, planning to catch up to them on the other side of the Atlantic.

Their ship, the S.S. Ville du Havre, never made it. Off Newfoundland, it collided with an English sailing ship, the Loch Earn, and sank within 20 minutes. Though Horatio's wife, Anna, was able to cling to a piece of floating wreckage (one of only 47 survivors among hundreds), their four daughters, Maggie, Tanetta, Annie, and Bessie died. Horatio received the horrible telegram from his wife, only two words long: "saved alone." He boarded the next available ship to be with his grieving wife, and the two finally met up with Dwight Moody. "It is well," he told him quietly. "The will of God be done." Though reports vary as to when he did so, that belief led him to pen the words to one of the world's best-known hymns, It Is Well With My Soul. Some say he wrote it on the ship on the way to meet his wife, near the place the captain pointed out where his daughters died.

It Is Well With My Soul
When peace, like a river, attendeth my way;
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Today we’ll talk about these 3 reasons why the Bible encourages us to come before God with music & in song.
Music
(Text: Psalm 95:1-2)

“Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol [give highest praise] him with music and song.”

Every Sunday we sing hymns in church & songs in Sunday school. Many of the Psalms in the Bible are written as songs. Every year at Christmas families & choirs go caroling, proclaiming the birth of Christ the Lord; & Christmas music fills the air in stores and in shops and on the radio stations.

Question: Why does the Bible say to come before God with music and with song? [Music helps us praise God, it is right, songs helps us learn Scripture].

Music Helps Us Praise God
Perhaps the most familiar song of praise to God is also the most simple:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

You know the words and you know the melody by heart, but have you ever stopped to think of the Scripture & the Biblical truths that are behind even this simple song?

The Scriptures says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it...” (Psalm 24:1). The Scriptures also says, “Every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father...” (James 1:17).

It Is Right To Praise God With Music
The Scriptures tell us that it is right for God’s people and the angels in heaven to praise Him. The Scriptures say to, “Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him” (Psalm 33:1).

Music Helps Us Learn & Remember Scripture & Biblical Truths
Question: When you were first taught your ABC’s, how did you learn them? [The alphabet song]! And every one of you still knows it. In the same way, songs have always been used as ways to help people learn & remember Scripture.

Question: What is one of your favorite Christmas Carols? Perhaps there is no song that better distills the Biblical truth of the birth of Jesus and who Jesus is than O Come All Ye Faithful.

Let’s go back to the night of Jesus’ birth. The Bible says, “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”
15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about" (Luke 2:8-15).

"Adeste fideles" was written around 1742 by an Englishman named John Francis Wade who was employed at the Roman Catholic Center at Douay, France. In 1841 Frederick Oakeley translated it into English and then in 1852 again translated the hymn into the English words known today - "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

The first verse of O Come All Ye Faithful captures the words of the angels and the excitement of the shepherds on that holy night:

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!  
Come and behold him, Born the King of Angels!

Question: On the night that Jesus was born, why do you think that the angels appeared to shepherds instead of kings or the religious leaders? [Because of their dirty, nasty, stinky job, shepherds were outcasts from society. No person is too lowly for Jesus to come to].

On the glorious night that Jesus was born, the angel didn’t appear first to a king, or high government officials or to religious leaders, but to faithful poor shepherds. Can you imagine how joyful they were when the host of heaven first appeared to them on that night when Christ was born?

The second verse of O Come All Ye Faithful tells us who Jesus is & why he came to us:

The Brightness of glory, Light of light eternal,  
Our lowly nature he hath not abhorred:  
Son of the Father, Word of God incarnate!

The Scriptures say that, “God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5); and that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Bible also says that, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Question: Who is the Word? [Jesus].

Question: What does Word of God incarnate mean? [Jesus became human with a body of flesh and blood]. Jesus put aside His Godly form and became human so He could save man from his sins.

Because God is holy, and separated from all that is sinful, God could have chosen to leave us in our darkened, sinful state - to be separated from Him forever - with no hope of salvation. Yet He did not abhor (hate) us and leave us that way. For God loved you and I enough that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

When we sing even the simplest of songs in praise to God, or sing the great Christian hymns, we proclaim the truth of God’s Word!
LESSON # 18: “M” IS FOR MESSENGER (Part 1)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

Character Quality
Faith in the truth

Introduction
Hudson Taylor was discouraged. He had been preaching in the city of Ningpo, China for a year. The Chinese people were polite and enjoyed gathering to hear him speak. But no one seemed to take the Gospel seriously. No one believed it. He almost gave up.

One day after he preached, a well respected man who was a leading office among the Ningpo Buddhists stood up and turned to his neighbors and said, “I have been searching for the truth for a long time…My father and my grandfathers before me searched for the truth but they never found it. I have traveled far and wide looking for it. I have tried Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, but I have found no rest…But tonight I have found rest. I have heard the truth, and from now on I am a believer in Jesus.”

Buddhism teaches the eight-fold path, Taoism teaches a quiet simple life, Confucianism teaches morals and high virtue. Islam teaches the 5 pillars, Judaism teaches repentance when failing to live according to the Law given to Moses. Hinduism teaches that there are many lives in order to achieve salvation. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science and Mormonism along with every major religion teach that salvation in determined by works – doing enough to “earn” salvation.

Background
Question: Are all religions the same? [No].

Question: What makes Christianity different from all other religions? [Christianity is not a religion]. Religions are an attempt to please God and earn salvation. Christianity is a personal one on one relationship with Jesus Christ. As Christians, you & I are called to follow the teachings of Jesus.

Question: What makes Jesus different from all other religious leaders? [Jesus claimed to be God]. Of all the major religions in the world, every founder claimed to follow the teachings of God. Only Jesus claimed to be God.

Jesus presented himself as the only avenue to a relationship with God, the only source of forgiveness for sins, the only way to salvation. This is why the Jewish leaders feared and hated him. This is why they put him to death. The crime for which Jesus was tried and convicted was blasphemy - claiming to be God. Jesus was tried and executed not for what he did but for who he was.
Jesus Claimed To Be The Son of God
Jesus had been arrested and taken to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. The Bible says, “The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 “Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied" (Matthew 26:63-64).

Jesus Claimed To Be Equal With God
30 “I and the Father are one." 31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:30-33).

Jesus Claimed To Be God
Remember the conversation Moses had with God when God appeared to him as a burning bush in the wilderness? Moses said to God,
13 “Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, `The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, `What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: `I AM has sent me to you' " *Exodus 3:13-14).

Jesus now tells the Jewish religious leaders that he is God with this statement: “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58).

Question: What is the one thing that Jesus wants you to be very clear about him? [He is God].

Question: How can we know that Jesus’ claims that He is God are true? Jesus leaves us with 2 alternatives, either:
1) His claims are false
2) His claims are true.

Let’s look at the two alternatives:

If Jesus’ Claims Are False
If Jesus’ claims are false, and he is not God, then we have two alternatives:
1. Jesus knew his claims were false.
2. Jesus didn’t know his claims were false.

1) Jesus knew his claims that he was God were false. If this is the case, then:
Question: How would this make Jesus a liar? [Jesus knew that he was not God].
Question: How would this make Jesus a hypocrite? [He told others to be honest while he lied].
Question: How would this make Jesus evil? [He told others to trust in him for their eternal destiny. If he could not back up his claim to be God and he knew it, he was incredibly evil].
Question: How would this make Jesus a fool? [It was his claims to being God that led to his crucifixion].

2) Jesus didn’t know his claims were false. If this is the case, then:
Question: How would this make Jesus crazy? [To really believe that you are God is one thing. But to have those qualities that would seem to fit God and display them as consistently as Jesus did, is another story. There is nothing about his behavior that points to Jesus being crazy].

If Jesus’ Claims Are True
If Jesus’ claim that he is God is true, then he is who he said he is. He is God. If this is the case, then you have two alternatives:
1. Accept Him as Lord and Savior
2. Reject Him & willing accept the consequences

Question: Who do you say that Jesus Christ is?  Do you believe that Jesus was a liar? Do you believe that he was crazy?

I believe the evidence so far backs up that Jesus is who He says He is: That Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is equal with God, Jesus Is God! But is there any other evidence?

Yes: The Resurrection!

We’ll talk about the evidence for the resurrection in next our next lesson!
LESSON # 19: “M” IS FOR MESSENGER (Part 2)

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“The time is coming, and it is coming soon, when you will no longer be my disciples but followers of another king. I will be a shepherd for my sheep, and my sheep will listen to my voice. They will follow me, and there will be one shepherd for them. For I tell you, when I send my disciples ahead of you, they will not eat or drink or be welcomed in anyone’s home unless I tell them to. I will send you ahead of me as sheep among wolves. Be on guard how you hear. The one who has heard and understood will have understanding.” (Matthew 10:6-16).

Character Quality

Faith in the truth

Review
When you look at the claims that Jesus made about himself, he wants you to be very clear about who He said He is. Jesus claimed to be God.

This leave us with two choices of what to believe:
1) His claims are false
2) His claims are true.

If Jesus’ Claims Are False
1) Jesus knew his claims were false and he was lying.
2) Jesus was deluded (crazy) in thinking that he was God.

If Jesus’ Claims Are True
If Jesus’ claim that he is God is true, then he is who he said he is. He is God.

Question: If this is the case, then what two choices do you have?
1) Accept Him as Lord and Savior
2) Reject Him as Lord and Savior & be willing to accept the consequences.

Question: Why is the resurrection so important?[Because Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus Christ!]

Jesus made many claims about himself - many times he predicted his own death and that three days later he would be raised to life. If Jesus said that he would be raised again from the dead and in fact he wasn't, then all of his other teachings and who he claimed to be would be in question. His resurrection from the dead is the seal of God to the truth that Jesus is who he said he was: The Son of God!

Question: So how do we know that Jesus Christ was resurrected? Let’s begin to take a look at the evidence.

The Resurrection
(Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20)

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.
20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...”

What we’re going to do next is set the background for the resurrection, so that we can give reasonable evidence that resurrection happened just the way that the Bible says it did. In our next lesson we’ll use this evidence to answer doubts that the resurrection actually happened.

The Tomb
(Text: John 19:38-42)
“Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

As was the Jewish custom, wrapping long linen strips around his body and sprinkling about seventy-five to a hundred pounds of powdered spices into its folds helped prepare Jesus’ body for burial. A separate cloth was used for the head. After Joseph and Nicodemus had prepared Jesus’ body and laid him in the tomb, a stone was placed against the opening of the tomb. The stone used probably weighed about two tons and was set into a channel in front of the entrance of the tomb which was probably only four or five feet high. Then the stone was sealed, probably by a cord that was stretched across it, with clay at each end of the cord.

The Guards At The Tomb
(Text: Matthew 27:62-66)
“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning,
and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

1 “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

JN 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.”

Question: What would you have seen if you had looked into the tomb on that first Easter morning? [Nothing! Except some linen cloths lying just where they had been; maybe even an angel or two!]

Question: What is one thing that you wouldn’t have seen? [One thing that you wouldn’t see was Jesus’ body!]

Question: Why? [Because He is risen - just as He said!]

The Power of the Resurrection
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes…” (Romans 1:16).

Our team of 16 ministered tirelessly and passionately for 5 days near Cienfuegos, Cuba, and brought forth an incredible response of 684 individual professions of faith. The first home we approached found only 15 year old Eduardo at home, alone, peering through the open slats of a wooden louvered window.

After debating whether to knock on his door, we felt the “pressure” of God’s spirit to “go ahead” and so we did. Once inside, we quickly understood why God had led us to this “open door.” Eduardo was shy but engaging, and was quite curious as to what brought us to his door in a remote rural village.

Once the conversation turned to God, he told us that he had seen the “Jesus” film and was curious to know more. After Maria shared the gospel message, Eduardo immediately replied, “Are you telling me that I am a sinner and that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins so that I can be forgiven if I will receive Him as my Savior? YES! I WANT THAT!” And he eagerly prayed and received the “free gift” of salvation and eternal life. We gave him a New Testament and enjoyed a precious time of fellowship as we shared how he could grow in his new life in Christ.

(Kurt Nelson, with East-West Ministries, April of 2004)
For Eduardo, the Bible’s account of Jesus’ resurrection is proof enough that he really was raised, and Jesus is who he says he is! But many people either do not believe what the Bible says, or don’t want to believe what the Bible says. In fact, some people have come up with other explanations as to why the tomb was empty. Based on what we’ve discussed this morning, we’ll give an answer for these explanations...in our next lesson!
LESSON # 20: “M” IS FOR MESSENGER (Part 3)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:16-20).

Character Quality
Faith in the truth

Review
For many the Bible’s account of Jesus’ resurrection is proof enough that He really was raised, and Jesus is who He says He is! But many people either do not believe what the Bible says, or don’t want to believe what the Bible says. In fact, some people have come up with other explanations or theories as to why the tomb was empty.

The Resurrection
(Text: 1 Corinthians 15:3-7)
15:3 “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”

Question: Why do you think it is hard for some people to accept the fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected?

[Some people cannot or will not accept the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead]. They say, “How can this be? There must be some other explanation other than what the Bible says. I won’t believe it until I have proof!”

There have been, in fact several theories introduced by individuals to try to give an explanation as to why the tomb was empty on that first Easter morning.

Let’s hear what these people have to say and then let’s give them an answer!

The Wrong Tomb Theory
This theory assumes that Mary went to the wrong tomb.

Let’s review the Biblical account of that first Easter morning:
20:1 “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" (John 20:1-3).

Question: What’s wrong with the theory that Mary went to the wrong tomb?

1) If this is so, then John and Peter, who ran to the exact same tomb, must also have gone to the wrong tomb.
2) Also, the Roman guards must have been at the wrong tomb, because they were there also.
3) And if the wrong tomb were involved, the Jewish religious leaders would have wasted no time in producing the right tomb.

The Swoon Theory
Jesus didn’t really die, but only fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood. He later revived and left the tomb.

Let’s review the scene at the crucifixion:

33 “But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe” (John 19:33-35).

Question: What’s wrong with the theory that Jesus did not really die on the cross?
1) Everyone at the crucifixion site was sure that Jesus was dead. One of the soldiers even went over and pierced him to see if he really was dead.
2) After being beaten, crucified, and wrapped in a hundred pounds of cloths and spices, would Jesus have had the strength to move a two ton boulder set into a channel, while having to stoop under a 4’ - 5’ doorway to get to the stone?

The Disciples Stole The Body Theory
This theory says that somehow the disciples went to the tomb and stole the body.

Let’s visit a passage of Scripture that directly follows the crucifixion:

“On the evening of that first day of the week, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19).

Question: What’s wrong the theory that says the disciples stole Jesus' body?
1) The disciples were locked in a room, huddled together and cowering with fear because of what might happen to them (since everyone knew who and knew they were followers of Jesus – who had just been crucified).
2) The Roman guards were there. Could these fearful disciples take on a group of trained fighting soldiers and steal the body?
3) The grave clothes were still there.

The Theory That The Roman or Jewish Authorities Removed The Body
Question: What’s wrong with this theory?
If this is so, then why didn’t the authorities just produce Jesus’ dead body? This would have squashed Christianity in the cradle before it had a chance to begin.

Consider this passage from the Bible:

MT 28:11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, “You are to say, ’His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day” (Matthew 28:11-15). They didn’t have the body!
Further Evidence For The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Question: What about the grave cloths? They were left undisturbed inside the tomb.

Question: What is the most reliable source of evidence in a court of law? [An eyewitness].

1) There were 10 separate appearances to many different witnesses.
2) Paul writes that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time and that most of those people were still alive at the time of his writing.

Question: What about the disciples?

1) Before the resurrection, all of Jesus’ disciples fled when he was arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane.
2) Peter denied knowing Christ three times.
3) After the crucifixion, the disciples went into hiding and then dejectedly went home to try and resume their shattered lives.
4) If it was not the resurrection, then what transformed Jesus’ disciples from men who cowered in fear behind locked doors, into men who boldly proclaimed the message that Jesus is the risen Christ?

Question: If you knew that something was not true, would you be willing to die saying that it was true? [Neither would Jesus’ disciples, yet eleven of the twelve were put to death for their belief that Jesus was God. Would they have died for something that they believed to be not true]?

The grave cloths were there, Jesus was seen, and the disciples were transformed.

Question: What about you? Do you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead? Or are you like Thomas to whom Jesus said: 27“...Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-28).

Do You Believe?

At first, only Mercedes and her 13 year old daughter Yanisleidis were home in their small, thatched roof and whitewashed wood-sided home. They were both quite attentive as I shared my testimony and the gospel message. Both indicated a sincere desire to receive Christ. Mercedes explained that she had recently prayed to God to ask Him to reveal Himself to her, if He existed. In fact, she described how she had awakened early that morning with a deep sense that “someone special was coming to visit her home today,” so she cleaned house early that morning.

Suddenly, she realized that we were those visitors, and stated that she was ready to pray to receive Christ. At that moment, her husband Eriberto arrived home unexpectedly in the middle of the day. Concerned that he might not be receptive to our visit, we graciously explained the subject of our conversation. Surprisingly Eriberto began to beam and exclaimed that he never came home at midday, but for some unknown reason, he came home today. I asked him if he was a Christian, and he answered, “I am a half-Christian.” I replied, “I believe that God brought us together today so that you could become a whole Christian!” He grinned and nodded affirmatively and emphatically. Then, Eriberto explained that he, too, had been praying for God to show Himself, if He existed.

After sharing the gospel message again with Eriberto, the entire family prayed to receive Christ with much excitement! We knew that we were on holy ground, as we fellowshipped together and marveled at how God had answered both Mercedes’ and Eriberto’s prayers to make Himself known to them. That night, they came to church for the first time in their life and worshipped with great joy.

(Kurt Nelson, with East-West Ministries, April of 2004)
Mercedes & Eriberto believe. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, this is the message then that the risen Jesus tells you to take into the world:

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).
LESSON # 21: “N” IS FOR NEW (Part 1)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the
renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is: his
good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

Character Quality
Submitting to God’s will

Discussion Question
Take a magazine and look through the advertisements. What do these ads tell you are
important today?

Introduction
The Greyhound had been in a north Atlantic storm for over a week. On the eleventh day of the
storm, sailor John Newton was too exhausted to pump, so he was tied to the helm and tried to
hold the ship to its course. From one o’clock until midnight he was at the helm.

With the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked
as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. Since the age of eleven he had
lived a life at sea. Sailors were not noted for the refinement of their manners, but Newton had a
reputation for profanity, coarseness, and wild living that even shocked many sailors.

Newton had rejected his mother’s teachings of the Bible and had led other sailors into unbelief.
Certainly he was beyond hope and beyond saving, even if the Scriptures were true. Yet,
Newton’s thoughts began to turn to Christ.

That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered from that moment on, for
“On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.” Only God’s
amazing grace could and would take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into
a child of God.

Though Newton continued in his profession of sailing and slave-trading for a time, his life was
transformed. At the age of thirty-nine, John Newton began forty-three years of preaching the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.

For his Sunday evening services, Newton often composed a hymn that led into the lessons and
Scripture for the evening. The most famous hymn of all, we know today as “Amazing Grace.”
(Christian History Institute, Glimpses Article #28, www.gospelcom.net).

************************************************************************

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Once John Newton was lost, but now is found. He knew how bad he had become, and how God
rescued him from evil. John Newton had become “new.”

Question: What does it mean to become new? [Different (and generally improved) from the
way it was before]. Today we’re going to talk about someone in the Bible who became new.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Being Made New
(Text: Luke 19:1-10)

19:1 “Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a `sinner.' "

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Zacchaeus was a tax collector and tax collectors were notorious for collecting more than what was due, and keeping over and above what was expected by the Roman government. The Jewish people hated them, because they worked for the hated Romans.

Question: Why was Zacchaeus the kind of man that Jesus was looking for? The Bible says, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: `I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-13).

On the day that Jesus came to his home, Zacchaeus became a new man. He publicly declared his commitment to living differently than he had before.

Question: What changed about Zacchaeus? [He was made new on the inside].

Scripture commands Christians to become new. It’s a process that happens on the inside of you that results in your spiritual and moral growth. And it’s something that God wants from you each day.

Question: “Was there anything wrong with you about the way you were before you became a Christian?” Let’s go back to the beginning, to the story of Adam & Eve.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 “He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them “man. ”

3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth” (Genesis 5:2-3).

Adam was created in the image of God. He was created perfect.

Question: What was God’s original intent for you and me? [To be in a perfect relationship with Him and enjoy being in Him forever].
Question: What happened when Adam & Eve disobeyed God? [Their perfect relationship with God and perfect nature was damaged].

Question: What continues to be the result? [Instead of being made in the likeness of God, you and I are made in the likeness of Adam - disobedient to God; our relationship with God imperfect because of our wrong thoughts and attitudes].

Question: Has God done anything to help us? [God had to come up with a way where his original intent for all of us could be accomplished. That way, is Jesus Christ]. The Bible says, “For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

Righteous: The “R” Word
Question: Oh, man, the “r” word. What do you think being righteous means? [A lot of people think being righteous means, “I’m better than you” - but that’s not what it means]. No person is “better” than another. The Bible says that we’ve all turned away from God. A guy named Noah understood this. He knew he wasn’t perfect, but he made a choice to follow God’s way. Christians understand that we can live a godly life only because Jesus Christ gives us the power to do so.

When you become a Christian, you’re changed. The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (1 Corinthians 5:17). You are no longer the same person that you were.

Question: In what way are you being made new? [You are becoming more like who God originally intended for you to be, a person who lives a holy and obedient life, pleasing to God]. If you remember, obedience means practicing living God’s ways, in order to become more like Jesus. And God’s ways are always what’s best for you, because He made you to work best when you follow the directions (see lesson #7 for a review).

Question: How can God make you new? [Through the power of Jesus Christ that changes you from the inside out].

While becoming a new person is a process, there is a part that you have in the process. We’ll talk about what God’s part is, and what your part is in our next lesson.
LESSON # 22: “N” IS FOR NEW (Part 2)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 
18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 
19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 
20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:17-20).

Character Quality
Submitting to God’s will

Review
“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Question: Do you remember something wonderful that God does for you when you become a Christian? [When you become a Christian, you are changed. You are no longer the same person that you were].

Question: How is God changing you? [You are becoming more like who God originally intended for you to be - a person who lives a holy and obedient life, pleasing to God].

Introduction
He came from 8 generations of preachers and his career in evangelism spanned over 50 years. At the age of 23 he gave his partner his entire share of their business and borrowed money to prepare to be a preacher. A year later he spoke at the church his grandfather was pastor for over 40 years. When finished, he was invited to speak again that night. He was then asked to lead a revival in another church in Kentucky.

An observer wrote that "[he] exalts Christ and fights sin with all his might…Under his preaching I have seen murderers saved, drunkards converted, homes reunited, and men and women dedicate their lives for special service."

He believed that personal evangelism would produce multiple results. A typical story is that of the day he went looking for the most notorious sinner in a Southern town. He was directed to a certain cornfield. The man saw him approaching and went into hiding. The evangelist, hearing suspicious sounds under a stack of corn, hauled him out. "What are you going to do with me?" the atheist quavered. He told him, "I'm going to ask God to kill you! You don't believe God exists. If there is no God, then my prayers can't hurt you. But if there is a God, you deserve to die because you are making atheists out of your children and grandchildren.” As the man begged him not to pray that way, the preacher said, "Very well then, I shall ask God to save you." He was saved, and before the meeting was over, all of that man's family was baptized--forty of them!

Over 300,000 people invited Jesus Christ into their lives during his years as a preacher. If you’ve never heard of Mordecai Ham; just ask the man who as young boy of 16 in November of 1934 went forward at one of Ham’s revivals in Charlotte, North Carolina: Billy Graham.

God used Mordecai Ham to bring hundreds of thousands to faith in Jesus Christ and started them on their journey to becoming more like Jesus. Today we’re going to talk about how you can become more like the person that God wants you to be. There's a part that you have, and there's
a part that God has. First, let’s look at a story in the Bible that shows both parts working together. Then, we’ll get to what you can do to become who God wants you to be.

Stephen was a Jewish man living in Greece and he was elected by the twelve disciples to assist them in the care of the needy. Stephen was full of God’s power, and did wonders and miraculous signs among the people and told many about Jesus. However, Stephen was opposed by a group of Jewish men, who didn’t agree with his belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. These men made up lies and false charges against Stephen. Upon hearing these lies, the Jewish authorities arrested Stephen and had him brought before the Jewish Supreme Court, called the Sanhedrin. The Court sentenced him to death by stoning, and a man named Saul was there and gave approval to his death.

**Saul’s Conversion**  
(Text: Acts 9:1-22)

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"  
"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ."

Question: How was Saul changed? [He met Jesus face to face].

Question: What was Jesus' purpose for Paul? [Paul became Jesus' ambassador – his chosen representative].

Question: Why do you think that Jesus chose Saul? [Saul, better known as the Apostle Paul, was a Pharisee, an expert in the Jewish religious law. He was taught by the best teachers around, and followed the Jewish religious laws very carefully]. Paul had all the qualities and tools Jesus needed in a man to carry out his work. He just needed a bit of an attitude adjustment.

Question: What was the problem with Paul? [Paul spent much of his time causing trouble for Christians]. Listen to what Paul said about himself:

"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them" (Acts 26:9-11).

Paul, once the greatest persecutor of the Christian church, became the man most responsible for the spread of Christianity around the world, and wrote many of the books in the New Testament of the Bible. God took Paul as he was, and changed him into the new person that He wanted him to be, to accomplish the purpose He wanted him to achieve. If God can take a man like Paul, can He take you and use you for His purpose too.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells you & I how to become a new person: “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:17-20).

Question: How do you and I achieve God’s purpose for us? [Be filled with God’s Spirit].

Being Filled with God’s Spirit
God’s command to you is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But the filling is not automatic. There’s two parts in the equation:

Question: What do you have to do to be filled with the Holy Spirit? [God’s Spirit will not fill you unless you allow Him to. You must ask and allow God to fill you with His Spirit]. That’s your part of the equation.
Question: What’s God’s part in filling you with the Holy Spirit? [He’s the one who does the filling]. It’s kind of like eating. Your stomach isn’t self-serve. It doesn’t fill up on its own. You’re the one who has to put the food into it. Likewise, God’s Holy Spirit is the One who does the filling. That’s God’s part of the equation.

Question: Will God’s Spirit always fill you? [Once you accept Jesus Christ into your life, God’s Holy Spirit comes in and will never leave you. But you must continue to allow God’s Spirit to keep on filling you].

God’s command is to be continually filled. When you eat breakfast, you get filled up, but then at lunch you’re hungry so you eat again! Likewise, you must continually be filled with God’s Spirit to stay filled. It’s a day-by-day, minute-by minute-filling.

When you are filled with God’s Spirit, He is in control. You are no longer in control. Paul gives an example of being filled with alcohol. When alcohol is put into your body, it begins to control you. It affects your reflexes, your body’s control system, and your mind. Soon, you are no longer in control, the alcohol is. When you allow yourself to be filled by God’s Spirit, you allow God to be in control.

Question: What are some ways that you can allow God’s Spirit to fill you? [Let’s talk about 3 ways]:

- “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2). When you fill your mind up with un-godly thoughts and images, there is less room for godly thoughts and images. Fill your mind with Scripture, prayer, and Christian music. These are things that strengthen and encourage you to allow God’s Spirit to work in your life.
- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). The world’s thoughts tear you down spiritually, but these kinds of thoughts build you up spiritually.
- “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Give God permission to make you a new person!

In our next lesson, we’ll talk about an example of being filled with God’s Spirit in action!
Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Character Quality
Boldness in God’s Power

Introduction
Dwight Moody was one of history’s most influential servants for God. He traveled over 1,000,000 miles, spoke to more than 100,000,000 people, and led millions of people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. On one day in Chicago, more than 130,000 people attended one of his services. Perhaps he is best known today for establishing the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

At age 23, Moody was led to minister to poor immigrants in the inner city of Chicago. He spoke to people in lecture halls and theaters. He was able to reach people who otherwise would not visit a church. He was popular and successful. But there’s another reason why he was so successful. He continually asked God to fill him with His Spirit. One day God revealed Himself to Moody in such a way that Moody had to ask God to “stay His hand.”

After that experience Moody said, “I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world.”

What had changed about Dwight Moody? Moody experienced being filled with God’s power. We’ll talk about God’s power in your life today.

********************************************************

Power
(Text: Acts 3:1-12)

AC 3:1 “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

AC 3:6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

AC 3:11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this,
he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

Question: Why do you think that God allowed this man to be crippled from birth? [So that the power of Jesus Christ in that man's life could be shown].

Let's continue the story.

**Peter and John Before The Sanhedrin**

(Text: Acts 4:1-22)

1 “The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is " `the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. '"

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. 20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."
After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

The Power Of God

Question: Can you see electricity? How do you know it is there? [Electricity is a resource that is invisible, but it’s so powerful that it can light up an entire city].

Question: Can you see wind? How do you know it is there? [You can’t see the wind, but you can feel a cool breeze or witness the devastation of a hurricane or tornado].

The power of electricity or wind is available to us if we choose to use it. But the available power of electricity or wind is nothing compared to the power that you as a Christian have available to you in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Bible gives us a glimpse of His power: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Colossians 1:16). The Bible says that God created all things.

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3). The Bible says that Jesus’ power holds together everything that was created - the stars, the planets, you & me.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells within you with all of His mighty power. And that power is available to you. The Bible says, “...his incomparably great power [is available] for us who believe....” (Ephesians 1:19).

Question: Why does God make this incredible power available to us? [The power that God makes available to us through the Holy Spirit empowers us for a very specific purpose: to build the Kingdom of God].

Building The Kingdom Of God

Question: What does the Bible mean when it talks about the kingdom of God? [The kingdom of God is wherever Christians are living obedient lives to God]. The kingdom of God is built through the power of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of Christians.

The Bible says, “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). God’s power is more than enough to help you build His Kingdom.

Let’s talk about 3 ways that God’s power can work in your life today.

1) God Gives The Power To Heal

“Men of Israel, why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (Acts 3:12). God gave Peter and John the power to physically heal a man who had been crippled from birth for 40 years.

Question: What did Peter and John want the crowd of people that had gathered around them to know? [Peter and John knew where the power came from. They wanted to leave no doubt in people’s minds that it was the power of Jesus Christ that healed the crippled man].

Question: What was the result? [The whole city was praising God].

Question: How can God’s power heal today? [Healing doesn’t always take place in physical sickness - although God can and certainly does heal some sickness. God’s power can heal...]

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
loneliness, disappointment, or fear. Even hearing or reading His words can bring comfort and peace.

2) God Gives The Power Of Courage

4:18 “Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. 20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18-20). The apostles, once a weak group of men who denied and left Jesus because of their fear of the Jewish authorities, were suddenly transformed into men who boldly proclaimed Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Question: How can the power of God help you to have courage? [God’s power can help you to do what is right in any situation - even if it means taking a stand for God when it’s not the popular thing to do]. God’s Spirit can also give you courage for whatever He wants you to do.

3) God Gives The Power Of Authority

“But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men [who believed] grew to about five thousand” (Acts 4:4). The authorities tried to keep Peter and John from speaking to the crowd that had gathered by putting them in jail. But even the few words that they spoke were enough to convince many people in the crowd that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Remember, it wasn’t Peter & John that the people believed, it was Jesus working through Peter and John that the people believed.

Question: How can God’s power give you authority as a young person? [When you speak with God’s power, you have a voice of authority. God can use you as well as an adult to accomplish what He wants done].

God’s power gives you the courage and the authority to do His work, through the Holy Spirit. His power is available to you right now, but you have to draw upon it.

Question: How do you draw upon God’s power? [You have to tap into it. Just like you have to plug the cord into an outlet to get electricity to turn on a light, you have to plug into God’s power source. It starts with prayer].

It can be as simple as sincerely saying: “Father, I want to be obedient to You. Please use me today however You want to, to help build Your Kingdom. Amen!”
LESSON # 24: “P” IS FOR PRAYER

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

Character Quality

Prayerful

Discussion Question

Dads: What kinds of things would you like for your son or daughter to talk to you about?
Kids: What kinds of things do you like to talk to your dad about?

Introduction

He established the first orphanage in England. He lived a life of such faith in God that he would sit down for the next meal when there was no food in the house because he knew that God would provide. And God did. Always. The children never went hungry; they always had what was necessary. There were always the right people to look after the orphans. They always had the money to buy the necessary land. There was always enough money to complete the buildings. Muller had faith in God and God honored that faith.

In 63 years spent in a faith ministry, the results are staggering. The 72 schools he started collectively had 121,683 students. The orphanage accommodated 10,000 orphans. It is believed that 2,813 orphans left the institution as believers, and they in turn led thousands more to Christ.

The institution also distributed over 281,000 Bibles, nearly 1.5 million New Testaments, and over 111 million tracts. Several hundred missionaries received financial assistance...Sixty-three foreign missionaries were sent out from his church alone. He built 10 other churches.

He wasn't wealthy, and he didn't run his ministry according to the standards of the business world. What was unusual was the fact that he didn't just say that God provided for him after the fact. He said ahead of time that God would provide.

He commented in the early years of his ministry, when he was unpopular and his ministry was small, that he would depend upon God's supernatural intervention for the sustaining and enlargement of the ministry. He said that it would be evidence to convince skeptics and to encourage Christians. He said these things early on, not after the ministry became so large later in his life.

George Muller was a man of prayer. He talked with God often. Just like a dad wants his children to sit down and talk with him about anything he wants to, God wants us to sit down and talk with Him. Jesus talked with his Dad constantly and prayed often.

Question: What is prayer? [Prayer is simply talking to and with God].

Today, we're going to talk about prayer. Many people use the letters A-C-T-S to help them cook up a recipe for prayer. Each letter stands for an ingredient in the recipe:

- A stands for Adoration
- C stands for Confession
- T stands for Thanksgiving
- S stands for Supplication
When you follow the ACTS recipe, you come up with a prayer that has similar ingredients to a prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples. Today we call it the Lord’s Prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer
(Text: Matthew 6:9-13)

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Let’s look at the ingredients A-C-T-S using the Lord’s Prayer as an example.

Adoration
“hallowed [honored] be your name.”

Question: What does adoration mean? [If I say, “I adore you,” it means I like you very much. When we talk about adoring God, it means to praise the name of God]. It’s the first ingredient of prayer. Let’s look at a good example of adoration in one of the Psalms that king David of Israel wrote:

1 “I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.
2 Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.
3 Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.
4 One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.
5 They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds” (Psalm 145:1-6).

Question: Kids, if you were called in to have a meeting with your principal at school, what attitude would you have going into that meeting? [You would probably (hopefully) go into that meeting with an attitude of respect and the proper perspective that your principal is in a position of authority over you].

Prayer is a meeting between two people, you and God. When you praise God, you stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about whom God is. Praising God allows you to come humbly before Him and acknowledge who He is: the Sovereign Ruler over all creation.

Confession
“your kingdom come, your will be done.”

Question: What does confession mean? [Confession means to admit]. It also means to accept being obedient to God. Confession is the second ingredient of prayer. Let’s look at a prayer of confession that the Old Testament hero Nehemiah made before God:

“I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses”

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Question: What did Nehemiah admit in his prayer? [Nehemiah admitted that he and all the people of his country Israel had sinned against God, and had not lived the way God wanted them to]. Throughout the Bible, God's messengers tell people to repent of their sins.

Question: Do you remember what “repent” means? [Imagine that you’re in your car, driving down the road toward your destination. After driving for a while, you get confused about which way to go, and make a wrong turn and start driving down the wrong road. When you realize your mistake, you turn your car around and start going the right way again. That’s what repentance is, it’s turning away from going the wrong way and coming back toward God and the way God wants you to live].

Question: What is one important reason then, to read and know the Bible? [So you can recognize what the right way to go is. It’s like a map that you can use to help you keep going in the right direction].

Sometimes it’s very hard to admit our faults and ask for forgiveness, but when we do, God does a very wonderful thing. He says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Thanksgiving
“Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Thankfulness is the third ingredient in prayer. King David wrote this Psalm of thanks to God:

1 “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever. 2 Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. 4 to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. 5 who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever. 6 who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever.” (Psalm 136:1-6).

23 to the One who remembered us in our low estate His love endures forever. 24 and freed us from our enemies, His love endures forever. 25 and who gives food to every creature. His love endures forever. 26 Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever” (Psalm 136:23-26).

Question: What are some reasons you have to be thankful to God?

The Bible says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it...” (Psalm 24:1). Even though everything belongs to God, He has given us all that we need to live day by day. He remembers us in our low estate, our separation from Him that is caused by our sins; and through Jesus’ death on the cross, He forgives us of our sins when we confess them and ask for forgiveness. His love endures forever. Give thanks to God for what He has done for you!

Supplication
“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Question: What does supplication mean? [Our last ingredient is supplication - which means an earnest & humble request]. The Bible says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”
(Philippians 4:6). Jesus demonstrated this attitude in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest:

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; Yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

If ever there was a time for an earnest request, this was it. Jesus was about to be arrested, beaten and crucified on the cross. He did not want to go through with this horror if there was any other way that God’s plan could be fulfilled. Yet Jesus was willing to accept what His Father wanted. Without this attitude, Jesus would have been tempted to get out of His predicament in a way that would not have fulfilled God’s plan, which would leave you and I without a Savior. But give thanks to God that Jesus did obey His Father, and that by His obedience we have a Savior who has delivered us from evil.

**Question: What can you talk to God about?** [Anything]. The Scripture says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14). Prayer takes you directly into the presence of God, into His throne room of majesty, where you and God can talk.

**Question: How should we approach God?** [With confidence]. Yet remember to approach Him humbly with praise and adoration; confession, & thanksgiving for who He is and what He has done for you. And make your requests, knowing that if you ask according to His will, He does hear you.]
LESSON # 25: “R” IS FOR RESPECT (Part 1)

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse

“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17).

Character Quality

Respect

Discussion Question

Dads, think of one person who you respect. Why do you respect this person?

Kids, think of one person who you respect. Why do you respect this person?

Introduction

Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703 in East Windsor, Connecticut. He attended Yale University at age 13 and later went on to serve as president of what is now Princeton University.

Edwards and his wife Sarah had eleven children. Despite a rigorous work schedule that included rising as early as 4:30 a.m. to read and write in his library, extensive travels, and endless administrative meetings, he always made time for his children. He committed to spending at least one hour a day with them. And if he missed a day because of travel, he diligently made up the hour he returned.

Numerous books have been written about Edwards’ life, his work, and influence on American history and his powerful professional legacy. But the legacy that Edwards would probably be most proud of is his legacy as a father.

Of the 1,394 known descendents of John Edwards, there were 13 college presidents, 65 college professors, 30 judges, 100 lawyers, 60 physicians, 75 army and navy officers, 100 pastors, 60 authors of prominence, 3 United States senators, 80 public servants in other capacities including governors and ministers to foreign countries, and one vice-president of the United States. The example of Jonathan Edwards shows just how rich that legacy can be. But it works both ways.

Consider the case of Max Jukes, a contemporary of Edwards. As an adult, Jukes had a drinking problem that kept him from holding a steady job. It also kept him from showing much concern for his wife and children. He would disappear sometimes for days and return drunk. He made little time for loving and instructing his children. Of Jukes’ known descendents, 310 died as paupers, at least 150 were criminals (including 7 murderers), more than 100 were drunkards and half of his female descendents ended up as prostitutes.

Jonathan Edwards instilled respect into his children by respecting them. Today we’re going to look at why we should respect God, respect our parents and respect our teachers.

Respect

(Text: Selected verses)

“And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you for your own good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Question: What does respect mean? [To respect someone is to hold him or her in esteem or admiration].

God knows that we need to respect Him and live the way He asks us to for our own good. Often times a product says “use only as directed.” God designed us to work best when we live “only as directed.”

The Bible, God’s “road map” for our lives to make sure we end up in the right place safely says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10). You will understand what is right and what is wrong. You will have knowledge to make good decisions and guard against making poor decisions.

Ways To Respect God
Listen to the words of Isaiah the Old Testament prophet who said about the people of Israel, “These people honor me with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isaiah 29:13). God wants you to honor Him not with just what you say, but more importantly by how you act.

Question: In what ways can you show your respect for God by how you act?

Respect For Parents and Teachers
In this section of today’s lesson, we’re going to focus on respect for your parents and your teachers.

Respect For Parents
The Bible says, “Honor your father and your mother as the Lord your God has commanded, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you...”(Deuteronomy 5:16).

Question: What are two good reasons for you to honor or respect your parents?
1) God says so.
2) Your mom and dad can teach and guide you so you learn what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, to protect you and help you make good decisions.

Question: What are two good reasons to obey your parents?
1) The Bible says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). God says it’s right to obey your parents in the Lord. The Scriptures clearly tells that parents, especially fathers, have a responsibility to teach you God's Word. So when you obey your parents according to God’s Word, you are obeying the Word of God.
2) The Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). It pleases God when you obey your parents.

Ways To Respect Your Parents
Question: In what ways can you show your respect for your parents?

Question: In what ways can your parents earn your respect?

Respect For Teachers
Question: What are two good reasons to respect your teachers?
1) For their work in your life. The Bible says, “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in highest regard in love because of their work...” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
2) Their position of authority. The Bible also says, “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Matthew 10:24).
Ways To Respect Your Teachers

Question: In what ways can you show your respect for your teachers?

Question: In what ways can your teachers earn your respect?

There have been many who descended from men like Max Jukes and overcame great obstacles to succeed. Others have come from loving homes like Edwards’ only to descend into a troubled adulthood. But these are the exceptions, not the rule.

A hundred years from now, it is likely that many of your accomplishments will be forgotten. In fact, your descendents may know little about your life. Learn the lessons told by Jonathan Edwards and Max Jukes. Learn respect and give respect to those in authority. How you put this lesson into practice will affect you, your children, your grandchildren, and the generations that follow.
LESSON # 26: “R” IS FOR RESPECT (Part 2)

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Character Quality
Respect

Introduction
Eric Liddell, of Scotland, won the gold medal in the 400-meter race in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, France (see lesson # 10 for further review). In the 1920s there were no starting blocks for runners in the sprint events. Instead, runners dug a hole in the dirt with their shoes to help them get a good push. But Eric always kept a small trowel handy to dig the holes. Instead of keeping this advantage to himself though, he would pass the trowel down the line to his rivals so they could dig holes as well.

One day, as Eric took his place on the inside lane on the track – the best position for the 400 meters, he noticed the competitor who had drawn the outside lane was not a strong runner. At that time, there was no staggering to make up for the curves, so the runner in the outside lane had to run farther. Eric went over to the runner and asked if he could change places with him.

A few weeks before the Olympics, Eric ran in a competition in Scotland. It was a cool day with a strong wind blowing. Eric noticed one of his competitors sitting beside the track in only a tank top and shorts. Eric took off his warm-up jacket and placed it around the other runner’s shoulders to help keep him warm.

In most athletic events, competitors do what they can do get a physical and psychological edge to increase their chances of winning. The Bible says to look out for others interests as well as your own. But for Olympic champion Eric Liddell, if he had to choose between helping another or win a gold medal, he would choose to help. Remembering his teammates and competitors who did not come in first, he said, “In the dust of defeat as well as in the laurels of victory, there is a glory to be found if one has done his best.” (Adapted from, Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 89-91).

Eric Liddell had respect for others and he showed by how he treated others. In the previous lesson, we talked about having respect God, and for having respect specifically for our parents and our teachers. Today we’re going to talk about having respect for others.

Respect For Others
(Text: Selected verses)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Respecting Other People By Being Considerate:

Question: What are some ways that you can be considerate toward others?
- Practicing good manners by saying please and thank you.
- Listening when someone else is talking or performing.
- Apologizing if you accidentally bump someone or cause some disturbance.
- Respecting the learning environment at school in the hallways or in the classroom.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Respecting Other People’s Property

Question: What are some ways to show respect for others’ property?

- Using things in a way that keeps them in good condition.
- Keeping things where they do not get lost or stolen.
- Returning materials or equipment promptly so that it is available for others.

Respecting Differences Among Individuals

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

From time to time, you may come across someone who is “different” from you. He or she has a different skin color, has a “funny” accent, or wears different clothes than “normal” people like you. Often times, these differences can make you uncomfortable with another person or group of people.

Question: What are ways that you can respect these and other differences among people?

[Here are some suggestions]:

- Remember that God has created each person to be unique and valuable.
- Recognize what it is that makes this person different and look for the positive qualities rather than the negative.
- Look for his or her abilities and strengths rather than weaknesses.
- Work at getting along with everyone and take the lead in setting an example for others.
- Whether or not you like or agree with these differences, you can still treat this person respectfully.

Note: This section on “respecting differences” is not meant to condone individual choice or behavior in direct opposition to God’s Word. In fact, let’s discuss this.

Differences Based On Direct Opposition To God’s Word

If you read the newspaper or watch the news reports, there are certain issues that seem to be accepted by many people, which are morally wrong according to God’s Word and standard for society.

Question: Can you think of some examples? [Some examples are: Racism (hate based on skin color or nationality), same sex dating or marriage relationships, sex outside of marriage, lying if you don’t get caught, worshipping false gods (even today, individuals worship gods of other religions)].

Some people who have adopted these attitudes and lifestyles demand acceptance of their views from people who do not share the same opinion they have. It is here where you must take your stand on the Word of God. The Bible says, “Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God...” (Galatians 1:10). The Bible says that we must first please God rather than other people.

It is important for you to know what God has to say about these issues. It is important to know how God wants you to respond to these individuals. There are three points for you to remember:

1) God does not hate sinners - He hates sin! “...While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). If God hated sinners, He wouldn’t have sent Jesus to save us from our sin.

2) As a Christian, we have no right to assume that we are better people than others; we can only thank God that we are forgiven and have the power to live a life pleasing to God. Our forgiveness and salvation is only because of His gift to us. The Bible says, “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).
3) Be able to tell people what God has to say about these issues, and why you stand on the Word of God, even if it is unpopular with the person you are talking with. The Bible says, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). When you speak the truth, even if it’s unpopular, you obey God and please him.

Whether it is respecting others by being considerate, respecting other people’s property, or respecting the differences between you and another person, remember what the apostle Paul wrote to us:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).
LESSON # 27: “R” IS FOR RESPECT (Part 3)

Homework Review

Questions & Memory Verse

Today's Lesson verse
“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1).

Character Quality
Respect

Review
In the previous lesson, we talked about having respect for others by being considerate. We also talked about respecting differences between people and suggested some ways to do this. Today we’re going to talk about respecting your-self.

Discussion

Question: What are two good ways to respect yourself? [Proper nutrition for your body & proper nutrition for your mind].

Introduction

He was discouraged. He had been an ordained minister at Oxford University and had been out preaching for two years. Why did people seem so bored with religion? When Oxford called him to come back and teach.

Upon his return, His younger brother said, “There's a group of guys I want you to meet. We've been meeting together Sunday evenings to study the Bible and pray.”

He was curious so he attended the meeting with his brother. The small group of students were talking about getting up early for prayer and Bible reading, meeting together for Bible study and serving others. They decided to live on little money and give the rest to provide food and clothing to the needy.

“This is just the kind of group I've been looking for,” he thought! Growing up poor, he wasn’t used to luxuries. In fact, he was sure that a simple diet of bread, water and vegetables was best for a healthy body. He soon became the leader of the group. Some of the other students laughed at them. Another said, “They have a method for study, for eating, for charity…” It became known around campus as “The Holy Club.”

The professors and university officials tried to think of a way to stop it. But John & Charles Wesley and the others would not be stopped. And “The Holy Club” began a movement that would become known as the Methodists! (Adapted from Hero Tales, by Dave & Neta Jackson, Bethany House, 1997, pp. 179-180).

“The Holy Club” members discovered a simple truth: Respect for God will lead toward respect for your-self & others. Today we’ll learn how to respect God and how it leads to respect for your-self, and the bonus that comes with it!

Background

In about 600 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and attacked it. He captured the king of Jerusalem along with some of the articles from the temple of God. King Nebuchadnezzar had these articles carried off and he put them into the temple of his god. Then king Nebuchadnezzar ordered his chief official to take to Babylon some of the Israelite boys from the royal family and other important families. Four of these boys were named, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (You may know them better by Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego). For 3
years they were taught the Babylonian language and everything else they would need to know to serve king Nebuchadnezzar. They were also given a special diet of food from the king's tables.

Respect For Yourself
(Text: Daniel 1:8-16)

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

Question: What does defile mean? [Pollute or make dirty].

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead."

Question: What's the reason that Daniel and his friends wanted only vegetables and water? [They cared about what they put into their bodies - what they ate and drank]. Vegetables help bring to your body what it needs to be healthy and strong. They help maintain good health so that your body works and functions properly.

One way to have respect for yourself is to take good care of the body God has given to you, so that you can accomplish the work God has for you to do.

Question: What are other good ways to take care of your body? [Exercise, rest, thinking before acting].

But your body is more than just a physical body. You have a mind that controls what the body does and says. Just as your body needs proper nutrition and exercise to remain healthy, so does your mind.

The Bible says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

Question: How is your mind like a computer? [A computer can only give back to you the data that has been programmed into it]. Likewise, what you put into your mind, determines what comes out of you - what you do and what you say.

Question: How is your mind like a garden? [Your mind is like extremely fertile soil, capable of producing whatever is planted into it].

Question: What do you get if you plant watermelon seeds in fertile soil? [You get watermelons].

Question: What do you get if you plant truth seeds in your mind? [You get truth]!
Question: What happens if you plant impurities into your mind? [Impurities come out]!

Your mind needs proper nutrition for it to stay healthy. The Scriptures say, “...For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34-b). One way to respect yourself is to put proper material into your mind.

Question: What are some ways to put proper nutrition into your mind? [Scripture, books, music, movies that build positive Biblical values, avoiding material & conversations that tear down your mind].

Respect Yourself By Respecting God
“...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10-b).

Your body is God’s temple! When you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, at the very moment you made that decision, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in His temple, your heart. The Bible says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temples and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Out of respect for God and for yourself,
- Why then, would you put or consider putting anything into your mind, i.e.: words, thoughts, music, language, information, or pictures that do not build up your mind?
- Why then would you put or consider putting anything into your body, i.e.: excessive amounts of alcohol, or drugs that would be harmful?
- Why would you bring anything into your mind or your body, which is God’s temple that He does not approve of?

Instead, listen to what the apostle Paul tells us:
“...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). If you will train yourself to think about these things, you will have more of the life that Jesus tells us you can have.

The Bible says, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27). If you respect God, and yourself, you will earn the respect of others.
LESSON # 28: “S” IS FOR SERVANT

Homework Review
Questions & Memory Verse

Today’s Lesson verse
"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:14-15).

Character Quality
Servant

Introduction
William Booth was a Methodist minister, who took Christ’s command to ‘feed my sheep’ literally. His philosophy was that there is little point in preaching ‘salvation’ to hungry people, so the concept of ‘soup and salvation’ took hold. In July of 1865, Booth began preaching on the streets in the slums of London. Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards became Christians. His aim was to lead them to Christ and link them to a church for continued spiritual guidance.

Even though Booth's followers became Christians, churches did not accept them because of what they had been. However, Booth gave their lives direction in both a spiritual and practical manner and put them to work to save others who were like themselves. They also preached in the streets as a living testimony to the power of God.

In 1867, Booth had only 10 full-time workers serving under the name of “The Christian Mission.” By 1874, the numbers had grown to 1,000 volunteers and 42 preachers, and the Mission had a new name: The Salvation Army. The church spread out of the east end of London into neighboring areas and then to other cities. Booth laid a firm foundation for the organization. Today, The Salvation Army serves people in 103 countries.

Before he retired, Booth addressed the members of the Salvation Army one last time. His address consisted of one word: Others.

In the first lesson of this series, we talked about having the attitude of being a servant.

Question: Do you remember how we defined a servant? [We defined a servant as someone who helps meet the needs of others].

Question: Do you remember what the attitude of a servant should be? [The important attitude of being a servant is to not just be concerned about your own interests but also be concerned about the interests of other people].

In today’s lesson, we’re going to draw upon examples that we have studied in previous lessons and talk about how we may serve others.

Being A Servant
(Text: John 13:1-15)

1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power.
power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

TIME-OUT!

Question: Why do you think Peter's reaction was so strong? [Imagine what traveling was like back in Jesus' day. There were no cars or bicycles - people walked a lot. There were no paved roads - the roads were dirt and scented with "gifts" that animals traveling on the road left behind. It was considered a lowly servant's job to take off a person's sandals and wash their tired, hot, sweaty and really smelly feet. Do you understand a little better why Peter's reaction was so strong?]

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Although there are many lessons that we can learn from this story, let's talk about the last verse in the Scripture that we just read.

Question: Why do you think that Jesus washed his disciples' feet? [Jesus set the example of being a servant]. Jesus, the Son of God, whom God would exalt to the highest place, with a name above every name, washed his disciple's feet - a job reserved traditionally for the lowest slave. Jesus himself set an example for his disciples to follow.

Question: Did Jesus mean that his disciples should run around washing people's feet all day? What do you think he mean by "washing each other's feet"? [Let's see how you can be a servant. We're going to review some ways that have been mentioned in previous lessons that will help guide you in being a servant - to help you "wash other's feet].

Be An Encouragement To Others
The Bible says, “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up” (Proverbs 12:25). Some-times all it takes is a kind word to cheer someone up.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies

94
Question: What are some other ways or things you can do to cheer someone up? [A card, a visit, a phone call, a good deed, an “anonymous” gift].

Question: Do you know of anyone who could use some cheering up today?

Give To Others
The Bible says, “…if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously…” (Romans 12:8).

- Question: Does giving just refer to money? [No].
- Question: What are some other ways that you can give? [Volunteering time, abilities or talents].
- Question: Do you know of anyone that has a need that you can help meet today by giving of your time or your abilities or your money?

Pray For Others
“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities to pray.

Question: Who do you know that needs your prayers today? [Family, friends, yourself, your pastor, local leaders, national leaders, teachers].

Care For Others
Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? 33 “But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him” (Luke 10:33-34).

Question: In the story of the Good Samaritan, who does Jesus say is our neighbor? [Anyone who is in need].

Question: How can you find out about people who are in need? [Newspaper articles, radio stations, church newsletters or bulletins, charities, church outreach programs].

Question: Who needs for you to care for them today? [Family member, friend, neighbor].

Question: What do all of the above examples of meeting needs have in common? [They all require that you take action]. The Bible says, “Suppose a brother is without clothes and daily food? If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (James 2:16).

Question: How will you be a servant and help meet someone’s needs today?
LESSON # 29: “T” IS FOR TRUSTWORTHY

Review
Last week’s homework questions & memory verse

Today’s Lesson verse
“They could find no corruption [dishonesty] in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt or negligent [careless]” (Daniel 6:4).

Character quality
Trustworthy

Discussion question
Who are some people that you count on to be dependable? Why?

Introduction
Question: What does it mean to be “trustworthy”? [Someone who is reliable and dependable].

He has preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history – over 210 million people in more than 185 countries. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, videos and film. In Graham’s 54 years of preaching:

- Every United States President since Eisenhower has sought his counsel.
- There have been no scandals that have corrupted his mission.
- He has received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor Congress can bestow on a private citizen.
- He has received the Big Brother Award for his work on behalf of the welfare of children.
- He has been honored by the George Washington Carver Memorial Institute for his contributions to race relation.
- The National Conference of Christians and Jews has honored him for his efforts to foster a better understanding among all faiths.
- He has been the dominant figure on the Gallup Poll “Ten Most Admired Men in the World” list, over the past 54 years.

The Bible says, “Those who honor me I will honor” (1 Samuel 2:30). Billy Graham said, “My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ,” has been trustworthy in the work God has given him to do. And God has honored him. In today’s lesson, we’re going to talk about the importance of being reliable and dependable.

Background
Daniel was a young man who was captured and taken to Babylon when king Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city of Jerusalem in Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel in about 600 BC

Trustworthy
(Text: Daniel 6:1-23)

1 It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
6 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. 8 Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered-in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?"

The king answered, "The decree stands-in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. 15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." 23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Darius ruled over a huge kingdom in the middle east that stretched for hundreds of miles, with more than 120 provinces or areas of countries that needed governing. Daniel so distinguished himself among the king's other administrators and governors by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to make him the highest administrator in the whole kingdom.

**Question:** What were some of Daniel's qualities that made him an exceptional leader?

[Daniel was honest, reliable, dependable and careful with his work].

Let's talk about Daniel's qualities that can help you become an exceptional leader.

**Trustworthy**

"At this, the other administrators and governors tried to find reasons for charges against Daniel in the way he handled government business, but they were unable to do so. They
could find no corruption [dishonesty] in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt or negligent [careless]” (Daniel 6:4). The Scriptures say that Daniel was completely trustworthy.

**Question:** What are some things that you are depended upon to do? [Chores, be ready on time, be a good example to younger brother or sister].

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church in the 1700s, had risen for sixty years at four o'clock in the morning, and for fifty years had preached every morning at five. He preached twice each day, and often three or four times. During his ministry Wesley rode over 250,000 miles on horseback and preached over 40,000 sermons.

**Question:** How can you be trustworthy with your responsibilities? [Be reliable and dependable with whatever you are given to do].

The Scriptures also say that Daniel was not negligent.

**Question:** What does “negligent” mean? [Careless or sloppy]. Daniel was not careless or sloppy in his work.

**Question:** How can you avoid being careless with your responsibilities? [Count on your work to be neat, on time and done completely].

**Question:** Why is it important for you to be reliable and dependable with what you’re given to do? [So that you’ll be trusted to be given more important responsibilities].

Let’s look at three examples of why being trustworthy is important:

1) Your school is putting on a carnival to raise money to help pay for an operation that a young boy in your community needs. One of your classmates is elected to be in charge of counting the money that was raised from the carnival. **Question:** What quality do you want that person to have? [Honesty].

2) Your coach is asking for volunteers to be in charge of bringing the drinks for your team after the baseball game. **Question:** What quality do you want that person to have? [Dependability].

3) You’re working on a team project in school and your grade depends on everyone else doing their part. **Question:** What quality do you want that person to have? [Reliability].

**Developing The Qualities Of Reliability And Dependability**

**Question:** From our Scripture reading, how can you develop these qualities of reliability and dependability? [Let’s look at three things that Daniel did regularly]:

Daniel was committed to obeying God. The Bible says, “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10).

**Question:** How can you be committed to God? [Remember Daniel’s example and be more concerned about pleasing God rather than other people].

Daniel continually asked God for help. The Bible says, “These men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help” (Daniel 6:11). Daniel knew that in order to do his job well, he needed to ask God for wisdom and understanding.
Question: Why do we need to ask God for help? [Daniel knew that in order to do his job well, he needed to ask God for wisdom and understanding]. We need to do the same.

Question: Where else can you & I go for wisdom and understanding and help? [The Bible, prayer, good advice from parents, teachers, pastors, friends]

Daniel continually served God. The Bible says that, “At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” (Daniel 6:19-20).

Question: How did the king know that Daniel served God continually? [By the way Daniel lived - by his actions and his commitment to God by praying - the king could see it!].

Question: How can people know if you serve God? [By the way you live - what you say and do].

Question: What can you do to serve God today?
STORIES OF THANKSGIVING

“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.” (Psalm 105:1-2).

The Pilgrims landed in Plymouth in December 1620 and faced a bitter winter without adequate shelter or food. Only 55 of the 102 immigrants survived to see the spring. The following autumn, an ample harvest assured the settlers that they would have food for the winter months. This celebration is what many refer to as the first “Thanksgiving.”

However, some point to 1623 as the first Thanksgiving. That year a drought, which began in May and continued into July, was threatening to wipe out all crops. Gov. William Bradford called for an entire day for prayer and fasting. Toward evening, a gentle rain began to fall. Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving (probably July 30, 1623) and grateful prayers were offered.

Since then, Thanksgiving has been celebrated many different ways and for many different reasons. Today, it seems that Thanksgiving is celebrated as a break from school, a time to eat—a lot—and then watch football. Following are three stories that might give you a new outlook on the day we call "Thanksgiving."

Five Loaves and Five Turkeys!
by Virginia Pritchard

Our broken, often discouraged single-parent family lived in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Two of my children were attending college on grants, scholarships and student loans. The two younger children still lived at home.

As usual, bills accumulated and financial pressure intensified. To make things worse, the following week was Thanksgiving. We had little food and no money to buy groceries. One Friday while I was home during a lunch break, I did what came easily: I sat on my bed and cried. During my crying and groaning the phone rang.

I quickly dried my eyes and cleared my throat with a couple of practice hellos. Collecting all the control I could I answered as sweetly as possible. A man’s voice asked, “Is this Virginia?”

"Yes, I am."

"I'm from the Philadelphia Inquirer Action Line, and I understand you could use a Thanksgiving dinner."

I stammered for a moment and said, "Yes, yes; that is true. How did you get my name?"

"That is not important," he replied, "However, we would like to know where you shop, so next Tuesday you can go to the store of your choice and pick up a gift certificate for $50."

"My goodness," I exclaimed. "I shop at Pathmark."

"Great. A certificate will be waiting for you. We hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving."

My reaction was joy, relief, and excitement—plus guilt. I had neglected to trust the Lord, who remains faithful. Glancing at the clock, I rushed back to work and straight to a friend’s office. Barbara had heard me exclaim many times that Jesus loves us. With great enthusiasm I told her what happened. She responded with a glint in her eye. "Ginny, I'll do one better than that. I have a turkey that was given to us in the freezer. Since my husband and I hate turkey, I'll bring it to you on Monday, and you can spend the extra money on something else." I chuckled, thanked her and returned to work.
On Tuesday, I hustled the kids into the car and headed to Pathmark to pick up the gift certificate. We carefully selected our groceries, and as we turned down the meat aisle, I was greeted with "Turkeys – $.39/lb." That was cheaper than hamburger and, after all, I could always use another turkey. I picked out a 12-pound gobbler and plopped it in the cart.

As we put the groceries away at home I was reflecting on how faithful God is even when our trust falters. Then, as I was about to shut the cabinet, the doorbell rang. I listened as the children opened the front door and a friendly voice said, "Is your mother home? We are from the Church of the Open Door." I went into the living room and greeted two gentlemen. "Hello," they said, their arms full of groceries. "We have brought you your Thanksgiving dinner."

Without another word they put the bags carefully on the dining room table. With my mouth still open we watched as they brought in seven bags of groceries—and a 21-pound turkey. "Gentlemen," I exclaimed. "Let me tell you what happened today." After hearing our tale, they just laughed and said, "Well, we collected this food for you and now you will be able to write a book on a hundred ways to fix turkey." With that, they wished us a happy Thanksgiving and bid farewell.

We had to clear space for the groceries in the bathroom linen closet, the laundry room and under one bed. As we were preparing for bed that night, I received another phone call—Carol, a friend from church. "Ginny," she said excitedly. "John and I have just come from the market and we bought food for Thanksgiving. We are going to make a whole bunch of pies, and not only that, we got an extra-big bird. We want you and the kids to come over for Thanksgiving. We won't take no for an answer." I quickly told Carol all that had happened. "Well, you can always use turkey," was her only reply.

I had trouble falling asleep. The Lord had provided us with four turkeys for Thanksgiving! When the children arrived home from college, we rejoiced over His providence, which extended to the annual Christmas party drawing where we received, yes, our fifth turkey. Now for the past 18 years, our family has encouraged each other with: "Remember the turkey story." The turkeys taught us a timeless message about God's faithfulness—and His sense of humor.

A Safe Guardrail

Excerpt from, Certain Peace in Uncertain Times, by Shirley Dobson

One rainy night, I was alone and working in the kitchen. I suddenly had a strong urge to pray for our daughter, Danae, who was out with a friend. At first I ignored the impression, but it was so strong that I put down what I was doing and prayed right then for Danae's safety, calling for a legion of angels to protect her.

Awhile later, a policeman came to our home and told me that Danae and her friend had been in an accident on a mountain road. The car she was driving had hit a slick mixture of oil and gravel and flipped over, sliding on its top within a few feet of a 500-foot precipice — a sheer drop-off with no guardrail. Both Danae and her friend suffered minor injuries, but neither was seriously hurt.

I can only conclude that the prompting I felt to pray was a "call to battle" from the Lord — and that when I yielded to this call with my petition to heaven, He allowed me the victory I sought. I can still picture those angels, standing wingtip to wingtip, providing a safe guardrail.

We are in a continual battle with the spiritual forces of evil — but we will triumph when we yield to God's leading and call on His powerful presence in prayer.

As you gather with loved ones around the Thanksgiving table in a few weeks, I hope you'll take the time to reflect on the many ways God has shown His care and concern for you this year.
Don’t be content to simply thank Him for tangible blessings such as food and shelter (although those are certainly things for which we must be grateful); rather, try to identify specific times in which the Lord has surrounded you with His power and protection — just as He placed His angels between Danae’s car and the edge of the cliff.

As I note in my book, “Our Father encourages us to seek more than the care of our physical needs. He wants to hear and meet our requests for spiritual and emotional fulfillment, too.” Praise Him for His provision in every area of your life this Thanksgiving!

Mike Gentry’s Store
By Leanna Lindsey Hollis

Mike Gentry's store in Blue Springs, Miss., is a family-owned-and-operated store/gas station/restaurant/info center/meeting place. Mike's mom ("Miss Callie Mae") and dad opened the original store in nearby Sherman back in 1962. Not too many years ago, Dad was injured in a robbery attempt and was hospitalized for months. He later required total care at home before finally dying.

The community came to the family's aid in many ways: visits, meals, love, concern, prayers. The family sought a way to say thank you, and a few years ago, just before Thanksgiving, they succeeded. They prepared a large, free meal for everyone in the community.

This month, they'll do it again, just as they've done every year since that first gathering. Over the years, my family has sat at tables with people we've never met; we always leave the meal having made wonderful, new friendships. We make a connection.

I guess heaven will be a bit like that - a huge banquet prepared for us, meeting people we've heard about but haven't yet met. Wouldn't it be nice if the body of Christ here on Earth was a little more like that? No barriers, taking a place at whatever table has an open slot, knowing we're welcome and not minding who sits at "our" table?

As Thanksgiving approaches, why not look at your church and community in a new way? Ask yourself if there is something you can do to build that sense of connectedness, of family. Then do it. Maybe you'll be the one cooking dinner to say thank you.
“Gabriel.”

Just the sound of my King’s voice stirred my heart. I left my post at the entryway and stepped into the throne room. To my left was the desk on which sat the Book of Life. Ahead of me was the throne of Almighty God. I entered the circle of unceasing Light, folded my wings before me to cover my face, and knelt before Him. “Yes, my Lord?”

“You have served the kingdom well. You are a noble messenger. Never have you flinched in duty. Never have you flagged in zeal.”

I bowed my head, basking in the words. “Whatever You ask, I’ll do a thousand times over, my King,” I promised.

“Of that I have no doubt, dear messenger.” His voice assumed a solemnity I’d never heard Him use. “But your greatest work lies ahead of you. Your next assignment is to carry a gift to Earth. Behold.”

I lifted my eyes to see a necklace - a clear vial on a golden chain - dangling from His extended hand.

My Father spoke earnestly, “Though empty, this vial will soon contain My greatest gift. Place it around your neck.”

I was about to take it when a raspy voice interrupted me. “And what treasure will You send to Earth this time?”

My back stiffened at the irreverent tone, and my stomach turned at the sudden stench. Such foul odor could only come from one being. I drew my sword and turned to do battle with Lucifer. The Father’s hand on my shoulder stopped me.

“Worry not, Gabriel. He will do no harm.”

I stepped back and stared at God’s enemy. He was completely covered. A black cassock hung over his skeletal frame, hiding his body and arms and hooding his face. The feet, protruding beneath the robe, were thrice-toed and clawed. The skin on his hands was that of a snake. Talons extended from his fingers. He pulled his cape further over his face as a shield against the Light, but the brightness still pained him. Seeking relief, he turned toward me. I caught a glimpse of a skullish face within the cowl.

“What are you staring at, Gabriel?” he sneered. “Are you that glad to see me?”

I had no words for this fallen angel. Both what I saw and what I remembered left me speechless. I remembered him before the Rebellion: Poised proudly at the vanguard of our force, wings wide, holding forth a radiant sword, he had inspired us to do the same. Who could refuse him? The sight of his velvet hair and coal-black eyes had far outstripped the beauty of any celestial being.

Any being, of course, except our Creator. No one compared Lucifer to God - except Lucifer. How he came to think he was worthy of the same worship as God, only God knows. All I knew was that I had not seen Satan since the Rebellion. And what I now saw repulsed me.

I searched for just a hint of his former splendor but saw none.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
“Your news must be urgent,” spat Satan to God, still unable to bear the Light.
My Father’s response was a pronouncement. “The time has come for the second gift.”

The frame beneath the cape bounced stiffly as Lucifer chuckled. “The second gift, eh? I hope it
works better than the first.”

“You’re disappointed with the first?” asked the Father.

“Oh, quite the contrary; I’ve delighted in it.” Lifting a bony finger, he spelled a word in the air:
C-H-O-I-C-E.

“You gave Adam his choice,” Satan scoffed. “And what a choice he made! He chose me. Ever
since the fruit was plucked from the tree in the Garden, I’ve held Your children captive. They fell.
Fast. Hard. They are mine. You have failed. Heh-heh-heh.”

“You speak so confidently,” replied the Father, astounding me with His patience.
Lucifer stepped forward, his cloak dragging behind him. “Of course! I thwart everything You do!
You soften hearts, I harden them. You teach truth, I shadow it. You offer joy, I steal it.”

He pivoted and paraded around the room, boasting of his deeds. “The betrayal of Joseph by his
brothers - I did that. Moses banished to the desert after killing the Egyptian - I did that. David
watching Bathsheba bathe - that was me. You must admit, my work has been crafty.”

“Crafty? Perhaps. But effective? No. I know what you will do even before you do it. I used the
betrayal of Joseph to deliver My people from famine. Your banishment of Moses became his
wilderness training. And yes, David did commit adultery with Bathsheba - but he repented of his
sin! And thousands have been inspired by his example and found what he found - unending
grace. Your deceptions have only served as platforms for My mercy. You are still My servant,
Satan. When will you learn? Your feeble attempts to disturb My work only enable My work.
Every act you have intended for evil, I have used for good.”

Satan began to growl — a throaty, guttural, angry growl. Softly at first, then louder, until the room
was filled with a roar that must have quaked the foundations of hell.

But the King was not bothered. “Feeling ill?”

Lucifer lurked around the room, breathing loudly, searching for words to say and a shadow from
which to say them. He finally found the words but never the shadow. “Show me, O King of Light,
show me one person on the Earth who always does right and obeys your will.”

“Dare you ask? You know there need be only one perfect one, only one sinless one to die for all
the others.”

“I know Your plans - and You have failed! No Messiah will come from Your people. There is
none who is sinless. Not one.” He turned his back to the desk and began naming the children.

The Father stood up from His throne, releasing a wave of holy Light so intense that Lucifer
think you know much, fallen angel, but you know so little. Your mind dwells in the valley of self.
Your eyes see no farther than your own needs.”

The King walked over and reached for the book. He turned it toward Lucifer and commanded,
“Come, Deceiver, read the name of the One who will call your bluff. Read the name of the One
who will storm your gates.”

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Satan rose slowly off his haunches. Like a wary wolf, he walked a wide circle toward the desk until he stood before the volume and read the word: “Immanuel.”

“Immanuel?” he muttered to himself, then spoke in a tone of disbelief. “God with us?” For the first time the hooded head turned squarely toward the face of the Father. “No. Not even You would do that. Not even You would go so far.”

“You’ve never believed Me, Satan.”

“But Immanuel? The plan is bizarre! You don’t know what it’s like on Earth! You don’t know how dark I’ve made it. It’s putrid. It’s evil. It’s…”

“It is Mine,” proclaimed the King. “And I will reclaim what is Mine. I will become flesh. I will feel what My creatures feel. I will see what they see.”

“But what of their sin?”

“I will bring mercy.”

“What of their death?”

“I will give life.”

Satan stood speechless.

God spoke, “I love My children. Love does not take away the beloved’s freedom. But love takes away fear. And Immanuel will leave behind a tribe of fearless children. They will not fear you or your hell.”

Satan stepped back at the thought. His retort was childish. “Th-th-they will too!”

“I will take away all sin. I will take away death. Without sin and without death, you have no power.”

Around and around in a circle Satan paced, clenching and unclenching his wiry fingers. When he finally stopped, he asked a question that even I was thinking.

“Why? Why would You do this?”

The Father’s voice was deep and soft. “Because I love them.”

The two stood facing each other. Neither spoke. The extremes of the universe were before me. God robed in Light, each thread glowing. Satan canopied in evil, the very fabric of his robe seeming to crawl. Peace contrasting panic. Wisdom confronting foolishness. One able to rescue, the other anxious to condemn.

I have reflected much on what happened next. Though I have relived the moment countless times, I’m as stunned as I was at the first. Never in my wildest thoughts did I think my King would do what He did. Had He demanded Satan’s departure, who would have questioned? Had He taken Satan’s life, who would have grieved? Had He called me to attack, I would have been willing. But God did none of these.

From the circle of Light came His extended hand. From His throne came an honest invitation. “Will you surrender? Will you return to me?”
I do not know the thoughts of Satan. But I believe that for a fleeting second the evil heart softened. The head cocked slightly, as if amazed that such an offer would be made. But then it yanked itself erect.

"Where will we battle?" he challenged.

The Father sighed at the dark angel’s resistance. "On a hill called Calvary."

"If you make it that far." Satan smirked, spinning and marching out the entryway, and he soared into the heavenlies.

The Father stood motionless for a moment, then turned back to the book.

Opening to the final chapter, He slowly read words I had never heard. No sentences. Just words. Saying each, then pausing: JESUS…NAIL…CROSS …BLOOD…TOMB…LIFE.

He motioned toward me, and I responded, kneeling again before Him. Handing me the necklace, he explained, "This vial will contain the essence of Myself; a Seed to be placed in the womb of a young girl. Her name is Mary. She lives among My chosen people. The fruit of the Seed is the Son of God. Take it to her."

"But how will I know her?" I asked.

"Don’t worry. You will."

I could not comprehend God’s plan, but my understanding was not essential. My obedience was. I lowered my head, and He draped the chain around my neck. Amazingly, the vial was no longer empty. It glowed with Light.

"Jesus. Tell her to call My Son, ‘Jesus.’"

The Story Continues

1:26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

Practice Ministries Bible Studies

106
“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord’s hand was with him.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. To show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
and to enable us to serve him without fear 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

* Copyright © 1997 by Max Lucado, and used with permission of Word Publishing. All rights reserved. International copyright secured.
EASTER LESSON:  

THE DRAGON *

There was once a great and noble King whose land was terrorized by a crafty dragon. Like a massive bird of prey the scaly beast delighted in ravaging villages with his fiery breath. Hapless victims ran from their burning homes only to be snatched into the dragon's jaws or talons. Those devoured instantly were deemed more fortunate than those carried back to the creature's lair to be devoured at the dragon's leisure.

The King led his sons and knights in many valiant battles against the serpent. Each time they wounded the dragon and he retreated to his hidden lair deep in the mountains. While he healed, the kingdom would be at peace for a time. "Take courage," the King told his people. "One day the dragon will be slain." Riding alone in the forest during a period of calm, one of the King's sons heard his name purred low and soft. In the shadows of the ferns and trees, curled among the boulders, lay the dragon. The creature's heavy lidded eyes fastened on the prince, and the reptilian mouth stretched into a friendly smile.

"Don't be alarmed," said the dragon as gray wisps of smoke rose lazily from his nostrils. "I am not what your father thinks."

"What are you, then?" asked the prince, warily drawing his sword as he kept his fearful horse from bolting by pulling in the reins.

"I am pleasure," said the dragon. "Ride on my back and you will experience more than you ever imagined. Come now. I have no harmful intentions. I seek a friend, someone to share flights with me. Have you never dreamed of flying? Never longed to soar in the clouds?" The sunlight glistened with an iridescent sheen on the dragon's metallic green scales. "Bring your sword for security if you wish, but I give my word no harm will come to you."

Visions of soaring high above the forested hills drew the prince hesitantly from his horse. The dragon unfurled one great webbed wing to serve as a ramp to his ridged back. Between the spiny projections the prince found a secure seat. Then the creature's powerful wings snapped twice and launched them into the sky. Once aloft the dragon wafted effortlessly on the wind streams. The prince's apprehension melted into awe and exhilaration.

From then on, he met the dragon often, but secretly, for how could he tell his father, brothers, or the knights that he had befriended the enemy? The prince felt separate from them all. Their concerns were no longer his concerns. Even when he wasn't with the dragon he spent less time with those he loved and more time alone.

The skin on the prince's legs became calloused from gripping the ridged back of the dragon, and his hands grew rough and hardened. He began wearing gloves to hide the malady. After many nights of riding, he discovered scales growing on the backs of his hands as well. With dread he realized his fate were he to continue, and so he resolved to return no more to the dragon.

But, after a fortnight, he again sought out the dragon, having been tortured with desire. And so it transpired many times over. No matter what his determination, the prince eventually found himself pulled back, as if by the cords of an invisible web. Silently, patiently, the dragon always waited.

One cold, moonless night their excursion became a foray against a sleeping village. Torching the thatched roofs with fiery blasts from his nostrils, the dragon roared with delight when terrified victims fled from their burning homes. Swooping in, the serpent belched again and flames engulfed a cluster of screaming villagers. The prince closed his eyes tightly in an attempt to shut out the carnage, but the agonized cries and smell of burning flesh assailed him. The dragon's...
long neck snaked and spasmed as he crunched bone and devoured his roasted prey. The prince retched and clung miserably to his spiny perch.

In the predawn hours, when the prince crept back from his dragon trysts, the road outside his father's castle usually remained empty. But, not tonight. Terrified refugees streamed into the protective walls of the castle. The prince walked among bedraggled women carrying wailing children with gashes from the dragon's talons. Some victims, too badly wounded or burned to walk, were brought in carts or dragged on makeshift pallets.

The prince's heart was torn. Their pain brought tears to his eyes and shame to his soul. "What have I become?" he asked himself. At that moment, he wanted even more desperately to be free of the dragon. Perhaps his father, in all his wisdom, could help. But the prince feared that the truth would make him abhorrent in his father's sight. Surely he would be disowned, exiled, or perhaps even condemned to death.

The castle bustled with frantic activity to care for the refugees thronged in the courtyard. The prince attempted to slip through the crowd to close himself in his chambers, but some of the survivors stared and pointed toward him.

"He was there," one woman cried out, "I saw him on the back of the dragon." Others nodded their heads in angry agreement. Horrified, the prince saw that his father, the King, was in the courtyard holding a bleeding child in his arms. The King's face mirrored the agony of his people as his eyes found the prince's. The son fled, hoping to escape into the night, but the guards apprehended him as if he were a common thief. They brought him to the great hall where his father sat solemnly on the throne. The people on every side railed against the prince.

"Banish him!" he heard one of his own brothers angrily cry out.

"Flay him!"

"Burn him alive!" other voices shouted.

As the King rose from his throne, bloodstains from the wounded shone darkly on his royal robes. The crowd fell silent in expectation of his decree. The prince, who could not bear to look into his father's face, stared at the flagstones of the floor.

"Take off your gloves and your tunic," the King commanded. The prince obeyed slowly, dreading to have his metamorphosis uncovered before the kingdom. Was his shame not already great enough? He had hoped for a quick death without further humiliation. Sounds of revulsion rippled through the crowd at the sight of the prince's thick, scaled skin and the ridge growing along his spine.

The King strode toward his son and the prince steeled himself, fully expecting a back-handed blow even though he had never been struck so by his father.

Instead, his father embraced him and wept as he held him tightly. In shocked disbelief, the prince buried his face against his father's shoulder.

"Do you wish to be freed of the dragon, my son?"

The prince answered in despair, "I have wished it many times, but there is no hope for me."

"Not alone," said the King. "You cannot win against the serpent alone."

"Father, I am no longer your son. I am half beast," sobbed the prince.
But his father replied, "My blood runs in your veins. My nobility has always been stamped deep within your soul. Nothing can take that from you."

With his face still hidden tearfully in his father's embrace, the prince heard the King instruct the crowd, "The dragon is crafty. Some fall victim to his wiles and some to his violence. There will be mercy for all who wish to be freed. Who else among you has ridden the dragon?"

The prince lifted his head to see someone emerge from the crowd. To his amazement, he recognized an older brother, one who had been lauded throughout the kingdom for his onslaughts against the dragon in battle and for his many good deeds. Others came, some weeping, others hanging their heads in shame. The sister who was known for her beautiful singing came, tearfully removing her slippers to reveal spiked scales on her feet.

The King embraced them all.

"This is our most powerful weapon against the dragon," he announced. "Truth. No more hidden-ness. Alone you cannot resist him. Together you will prevail, for you draw strength from one another. Those of you who think yourselves immune to the serpent's wiles, beware lest you be the next to fall. Those ensnared, you must desire freedom more than the dragon's flight. The struggle will be long and fierce. Over time, you will choose more often against the dragon than for him until finally you go to him no more."

"Will the scales then be gone as well?" asked the sister, looking at her bared feet.

"No, my child," the King answered gently. "But, in time, they will fade. And one day, when the dragon is finally slain, all traces of the scales will disappear."

"Death to the dragon!" someone yelled from the crowd and a great cheer rose up in chorus, "Death to the dragon! Long live the King!"

God, our Great King, loves you. Even though you and I choose at times to fly with the dragon, He loves us. One day, almost 2,000 years ago, God sent to us the Truth (John 14:6), His Son; the only man who would not ride with the dragon, so that we could be free from the dragon's power. And on the day that Jesus went to the cross, He defeated the dragon.

To all who accept the Truth, and say, "Death to the dragon! Long live the King," God's mercy upon you will begin to fade the scales.

On that day, you become princes and princesses of the King. And when you choose again to fly with the dragon, and confess your secret rides, He forgives you and enables you more and more to choose freedom from the dragon.

One day, on that glorious day, the dragon will be bound and locked up, never to harm anyone again, and you will live with the King forever, and all traces of the scales will disappear!

* By Dr. Melinda Reinicke, From the book Parables for Personal Growth
SPECIAL PRAYER LESSON *
For The National Day Of Prayer

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The United States Congress set aside a day called “The National Day of Prayer” in 1952. It is a day set apart where all Americans are asked to pray for our country: its leaders, and its people.

Today, we’re going to pray for people in 5 groups:
- Government
- Churches & Ministry Organizations
- Businesses & Industries
- Families
- Ourselves

Suggestions or examples of individuals in each group are given to help you think of people to pray for. Also, one or two Scripture verses accompany each group to help you think of what to pray about for them.

As you gather individually with your son or daughter, or as a group of families, let’s humble ourselves, turn away from wrong and toward good, and call upon Him, that He will hear from heaven and will forgive our sins and will heal our land.

“Give ear to my words, O Lord…” (Psalm 5:1).

Our Government

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).

Pray that our leaders will ask God to help them make good decisions, and stand by them, even they are unpopular
- Federal Leaders: President, US senators & representatives, appointed leaders
- Local Leaders: Governor, state senators & representatives, mayors, elected positions
- Judicial System: US supreme court, state supreme court justices,
- Armed Services: Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Reserves

“Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29).

Churches & Ministry Organizations

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap [bring in] a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

Our nation desperately needs to know that there is One God, and that He has set a standard of truth for all. Pray for:
- Your pastor, your church leaders and teachers, your congregation, your denomination; that the Word of God will be spoken boldly and unashamed and that the Church will be a pure and bright light in a dark world.
- Ministry organizations that you support or help your family, i.e.: Salvation Army, Focus on the Family, Christian Camps, Practice Ministries; that lives will be changed, for God’s words to be put into practice everyday.
**Christian Character**

**Those Imprisoned & Persecuted**

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave or forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

- Many times, those people who are in prison because of wrong deeds need to have their hearts (their thoughts and attitudes) made pure so that they do not commit their crimes again. Only Jesus can change a person’s heart. Pray for their hearts to be changed.

- Some people are “made slaves” to illegal drugs, excessive alcohol use, wrong beliefs about God, and are they are “imprisoned or held hostage” to them. Only Jesus has the key to unlock the chains that hold these people to their captors. Pray for their release.

- Sometimes Christians are made fun of or looked down upon. In other parts of the world, Christians are sometimes put in prison, physically harmed, or have jobs, homes or even family members taken away from them. Pray for their safety and that God will be honored by their words and actions.

**Our Society & Cultures**

“Blessed are they who keep his laws and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. You have laid down rules to live by that are to be fully obeyed” (Psalm 119:2-4).

Everyday we are influenced by what we see, hear, read or are told; whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, Godly or ungodly. Pray for the influence of the wrong the bad and the ungodly to be stopped, and that what is right and good and Godly will be seen, heard, read and told.

Perhaps pick one or two groups from the following list and apply your prayers to people in these fields:

- Business & Industry
- Community Services
- Educational System
- Scientific Community
- The Media
- The Entertainment Industry

**The Family**

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts and you shall teach them to your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

- God designed the family to be where His truths and ways are taught. Pray for parents, and especially fathers to lead their family by the example that God and heroes in the Bible set for us.

- Pray for your family members, your friends, your neighbors, your teammates, for broken families, for those who don’t have families.

Practice Ministries Bible Studies

113
Personal Renewal & Moral Awakening

“Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way that is everlasting [true and right]” (Psalm 139:23-24).

- Pray that God will show you parts of you that don’t make Him smile, and allow Him to help fix those areas.

- Pray for all people in our country, that they will look for God, and turn around from thinking & doing wrong, and think & do what is right.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

* This lesson is adapted from the Dallas Leadership Prayer Breakfast Guide, 1997.
STORY TIME

Today’s Lesson verse
“One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25).

Introduction
In 2001, I helped develop a course called “Story Tellers” for a local church in Dallas, TX, to help people develop and learn how to share their story – how they came into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Story Time is an abbreviated form of this course, but the purpose is still the same – to help you testify to the transforming power of Jesus Christ in your life.

One of the most powerful and intimate moments that you and the kids in your Bible study will experience is when a dad or a son or a daughter simply tells their story.

Whenever you decide to do this as a group, it’s time to put aside the Bibles, the workbook, and just listen. It’s an awesome time to spend together. (See note on how to proceed with your group at the end of this lesson).

Story Time
(Text: John 9:1-25)
1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” 3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” 6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. 7 “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” 9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.” But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

10 “How then were your eyes opened?” they demanded. 11 He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.” 12 “Where is this man?” they asked him. “I don’t know,” he said.

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

16 Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided.

17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.” 18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. 19 “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

20 “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for
already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God" they said. "We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

Telling Your Story

The thought of "telling your story" can be a little uncomfortable. Perhaps you're afraid of failing or that you won't know what to say. That's why I've put this section on "Story Time" together. Everyone has a story to tell, and learning how to tell your story may be just what it takes to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into someone's life.

So…What's Your Story?

"So…tell me your story." If you were asked that question, what would be your answer? "Well…I don't think I have much of a story to tell." "I suppose I've got a story, but it's not very interesting." It's natural to feel that way, but it's far from the truth. We all have a special, unique and meaningful story to tell unlike that of anyone else. If you've met Jesus, you have a story to tell.

Perhaps you already know it well. Perhaps you still need to develop it. Either way, writing and sharing your story can be a powerful reminder of how God is at work in your life. It can provide a powerful witness to those who hear it – especially to your son or daughter!

That's the purpose of sharing your story - to tell of the transforming power of Christ in your life. When you share your story, you're telling the Gospel through your story, a Gospel made real and tangible in your life.

So, here we go…

If you've never thought much of how to tell someone your story, or had the wonderful experience of putting your story down on paper, here are some ideas and suggestions for putting your story together.

Conversion

If you remember a specific time, place or event when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life, then perhaps "conversion" fits best. If conversion fits best, try shaping your story around these questions:

- What was your life like before you invited Jesus into your life?
- What led (events, conversation, etc.) you to accept Jesus as your Savior?
- How and when did you receive Christ as Savior? As Lord?
- How has Jesus changed your life?

Journey

If your faith seems more like a journey, then perhaps "Spiritual Journey" fits best. Try these questions:

- What have been some key events in which God has worked in your life?
- What experiences, circumstances or people have helped to develop your faith in Christ?
- How would your life be different without Jesus? (i.e.: lifestyle, attitudes, priorities, relationships, etc.).

Practice Ministries Bible Studies
Sharing The Gospel Through Your Story

“In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).
The Gospel is the story of Jesus. The story of Jesus is part of the larger story of scripture, spanning the Creation, through the Fall, to the Redemption (or rescue) that Jesus brings. That’s a big story, yet there is one theme that runs throughout that story: Reconciliation! One powerful way to share the good news of Jesus Christ is by weaving the Gospel into your own story.

Try fitting these questions in your story:

Creation
How do you understand God’s purpose in creation?
“…to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).

Fall
How have you experiencedsin in your life?
“If you love me you will obey my commandments” (John 14:15).

What are (were) the consequences of that sin?
“But your iniquities have separated you from your God” (Isaiah 59:2).

Rescue
How did you come to put your faith in Jesus Christ (the solution)?
“For it is by grace (undeserved mercy) that you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How have you been reconciled to God (what were the results)?
“…we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:11).

What role has the church or others played for you?
“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Putting Your Story Together

• What elements of your story might be interesting to someone else?
• What Bible verses might you include under each of the previous questions?
• What experiences in your life can form illustrations to help you tell your story?
• Write your story as if you were telling someone else
• Keep it between 3-5 minutes

********************************************************************************

Story Time In Your Bible Study
Some of the dads and kids in your group will be willing to share their testimony. Others may feel that they are not ready. That’s OK.
Before you do this lesson, I suggest that you announce a week ahead of time that this is what the lesson will be. I also suggest telling the group that either you will volunteer to lead off, or have one or two dads who you feel would be willing to lead off agree to do so.

You may spend one session on this or several, as there won’t be enough time to do more than one or two each week. I do encourage you to make enough time to let all who want to give their testimony to be able to do so.

A work sheet for this special lesson is found in the Exploring the Bible section of this Practice Ministries Leader’s Guide.
EXPLORING THE BIBLE ANSWERS
STUDY LEADER’S GUIDE TO EXPLORING THE BIBLE

This study leader’s guide to Exploring the Bible is designed for two reasons:
1. To give the answers to questions asked in the Exploring the Bible sheets with specific
   Scripture references.
2. To give suggested answers to some open ended questions.

The suggested answers given are by no means the answer to many of the questions, but ones
that we hope will help you foster ideas and discussion as you lead your group through the
Exploring the Bible section of the lesson.

Exploring the Bible can be a great way for kids and their dads to learn about the Bible together,
and also bring the whole family to a deeper understanding of God’s Word.
Read  Philippians 2:3-11

Background
In the Book of Philippians the apostle Paul tells us that our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus, who took the nature of a servant.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Find the Book of Galatians in the Bible. There are 9 attitudes listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Copy them in the spaces below:

love  joy  peace
patience  kindness  goodness
faithfulness  gentleness  self-control

2) Choose one attitude and write down in the space below how you can practice that attitude this week:
   - Kindness  Invite a new student to join you for lunch.
   - Self-control  Choose to watch on t.v. only what is pure.

3) “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). How can you practice looking to the interests of others this week?
   - At Home  Help a brother or sister with homework.
   - At School  Help tutor a student.
   - At Activities  Encourage others on your team.

Good Words To Remember
“Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).
LESSON # 2
“B” IS FOR KINDNESS (BENEVOLENCE)

Read  Luke 10: 25-37

Background
The Jewish people despised Samaritans because they were a different people with different beliefs, and did not associate with them. When the Bible was written, towns were often very far apart. The term neighbor was used for someone who lived next door or lived in a “neighboring” town. So a neighbor could be someone who also lived very far away.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) List four reasons to be kind:
   • Jesus does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10).
   • A kind word can cheer someone (Proverbs 12:25).
   • Being kind to the needy honors God (Proverbs 14:31).
   • Because Christ has been kind to us (Ephesians 4:32).

2) The Samaritan stopped to help a man who was different from him. Who do you know that is “different” (different race, not as smart as others, etc.) & may be hurting because people walk past them? How can you be kind to them?
   Stop by and say hello, give to organizations that can help them find medical attention, food, shelter.

3) The man that was hurt also had some “needs.” Who are “needy” people you may know (someone new in school, someone ill, etc.)? How can you be kind to them?
   Invite someone to lunch, invite them go to a ball game with you, introduce them to your friends, visit them if they are ill.

4) Write down how you can practice kindness this week to:
   • A Family Member  Offer to help with their responsibilities.
   • A Classmate  Offer a kind word.
   • A Teammate  Encourage during a game or practice.

5) What is one benefit to you for being kind?
   Gaining respect from others, benefit yourself (Proverbs 11:16 or 17).

Good Words To Remember
“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).
Christian Character

LESSON # 3
"C" IS FOR CHRIST-LIKE (Part 1)

Read  Acts 16:22-34

Background
Paul & Silas were missionaries and were traveling around in the country of Asia preaching the word of God. One day, they were arrested in a crowded part of the city because of their preaching.

To be Christ-like, you have to “Be Like Christ. To be truly like Christ, you need to be a Christian. Lots of people think that they are Christians for many different reasons. But Paul said to the jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
Read the statements below that people say makes them a Christian:
1) I’m a Christian because I’m a good person.
2) I’m a Christian because I do good things (works).
3) I’m a Christian because I go to church.
4) I’m a Christian because I have put my faith & trust in Jesus Christ as my only Savior.

1) What would you say to someone who made one of those statements? Match each statement to the Bible verse below that can help you answer those statements:
   __2__ a) “For it is by grace that 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).
   __3__ b) Christ is the head of the church, his body [people who have made Jesus Christ their Savior & Lord], of which he is the savior” (Ephesians 5:23).
   __1__ c) “There is no one who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:3).
   __4__ d) “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

2) What does the Bible say that you must do to be saved?
Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9).

Good Words To Remember
“he predestined us to be adopted as his [children] through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).
LESSON # 4
“C” IS FOR CHRIST-LIKE (Part2)

Read 1 John 1:9

When we sin, we commit an offense against God. Because it’s people that sin, only a person can pay the penalty. Because the offense is infinite against an infinite God, only God Himself could pay the penalty. That’s why God sent His Son Jesus to us. Jesus, 100% human, lived a sinless - perfect life. Jesus, 100% God, has the capacity to take your sins and remove them from you. The Bible says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God” (1 Corinthians 5:21).

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Look at these words below and match their definitions:
   a) Bible __c__ Set apart from all that is unholy
   b) Jesus Christ __e__ Not fit to be with God
   c) Holy __a__ The Word of God
   d) Sacrifice __i__ Disobedience toward God
   e) Un-Holy __h__ What we have earned
   f) Confess __l__ Separation from God forever
   g) Salvation __g__ Rescue from separation from God
   h) Wages __b__ God’s “Way” of rescue
   i) Sin __k__ Gift of God through Jesus Christ
   j) Gospel __j__ Good news
   k) Eternal Life __d__ Payment for our sins
   l) Death __f__ Admit

Our God is holy – set apart from all that is not fit to be with Him. God’s Word, the Bible, tells us that all people are disobedient to God, and that this disobedience, sin, makes us un-holy – un-fit to be with Him. The Bible also tells us that if we claim to be without sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

As a result of our sin, our wages - what we have earned is death - separation from God forever, with no hope of being able to rescue ourselves. But there’s good news! God has provided our salvation – our rescue – through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Good News – the Gospel – is that Jesus, through the sacrifice of His life on the cross, is God’s way back to Him – our way to have the chasm bridged between God and us. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

How can you be sure? Jesus said, “This is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me” (John 6:39).

Good Words To Remember
“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” (John 1:29).
Read  Proverbs 2:1-15

Background
The dictionary defines discerning as understanding or insight. So if you discern or understand someone, you know all about that person. The scriptures say a discerning person seeks knowledge and wisdom.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) What is the importance of wisdom?
   - You will understand what is right and just (Proverbs 2:9).
   - You will have understanding to protect you from doing wrong (Proverbs 2:11).
   - You can be saved from following the ways of wicked people (Proverbs 2:12).

2) How do you get wisdom?
   - Store up God's commands in your mind and in your heart (Proverbs 2:1).
   - Listen to wisdom and strive to understand it (Proverbs 2:2).
   - Ask God for insight and understanding (Proverbs 2:3).
   - Seek for it like you would for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:4).

3) Read Proverbs 3:13-15. Wisdom is:
   - More valuable than silver (Proverbs 3:14).
   - Better than gold (Proverbs 3:15).

4) What are choices you are faced with that are difficult?

5) How can you practice making good decisions?
   - Ask God for help to make good decisions.
   - Get good advice from wise people: parents, teachers, pastors

Good Words To Remember
“For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).
LESSON # 6
“E” IS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Read Romans 12:9-21

One dictionary definition of the word “encouragement” is to inspire with hope, courage or confidence.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) List two ways that God encourages us:
   - He does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10).
   - He has removed our sins from us (Psalm 103:12).

2) There are 3 main ways that you can encourage others. By your:
   - Kind or encouraging words (Proverbs 12:25).
   - Prayers (Ephesians 6:8).
   - Actions (Hebrews 4:12).

3) Romans 12:9-21 lists at least 15 ways that you can encourage others. List at least 10 of them in the spaces below:
   - Love sincerely
   - Hate what is evil
   - Pray faithfully
   - Bless (contribute to a person’s well being)
   - Do what is right
   - Live peacefully
   - Don’t take revenge
   - Overcome evil with good
   - Be patient
   - Share
   - Cling to what is good
   - Be devoted
   - Honor others above yourself
   - Serve God
   - Be joyful

4) Now pick 3 of these “encouragers” and write down how you can practice them this week (for instance, if you choose “pray faithfully,” think of who you’ll pray for & pray for that person every day this week):
   - Serve God
   - Hate what is evil
   - Honor others
   - Don’t take revenge
   - Honor God with your thoughts and your words and actions.
   - Stay away from things that do not honor God or help you.
   - Be courteous, hold the door open for another.
   - Walk away from an argument, pray for that person.

Good Words To Remember
“The word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).
Lesson # 7
“F” IS FOR FEAR OF THE LORD

Read  Deuteronomy Chapter 5

Background
Moses had the fear of the Lord, the overwhelming awe and reverence of the Holy God. It is this fear of the Lord that allowed Moses to develop the qualities that God needed him to have to lead the nation of Israel.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Match the qualities Moses possessed for leadership with the Bible verse expressing that quality:

3) Obedience ---- 5 ---- Exodus 4:31.
5) Fear of the Lord ---- 1 ---- Hebrews 11:27.

2) What are the benefits of the fear of the Lord?
   • The beginning of wisdom and understanding of what is good (Psalm 111:10).
   • Humbleness (Proverbs 15:33).
   • Avoiding what is evil (Proverbs 16:6).

3) Why should you want to obey God’s commands?
   For our own good (Deuteronomy 10: 12-13).

4) The Scriptures say that the fear (reverence) of God can be learned, through hearing the Word of God. In what ways can you practice hearing God’s Word?
   Bible reading, Sunday school lessons, Christian music, hymns songs, books.

Good Words to Remember
“Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you…” (Deuteronomy 5:33).
LESSON # 8
"G" IS FOR GIVING GENEROUSLY

Read  Mark 12:41-44

1) In the Parable, why was the widow’s offering pleasing to God?
Because she gave more of what she had than the others did.

2) Three ways to give are with our: Time, Abilities, & Money. In the chart below, list any giving that you currently do, & then challenge yourself to use your time, abilities or money to give in a new area.

For example: I can use my ability in math to peer tutor at school, or I can give some of my money to a Sunday school class mission project.

I can use my abilities:
@ home by  Helping plan a family activity.
@ school by  Helping a classmate with a science project.
@ church by  Singing in the choir.
in the community by  Helping an elderly neighbor rake leaves.

I can use my time:
@ home by  Doing chores before t.v.
@ school by  Helping with a fund raising project.
@ church by  Helping in the nursery.
in the community by  Participating in a charity project.

I can use my money:
@ home by  Buying a special gift for the whole family.
@ school by  Buying lunch for a friend.
@ church by  Giving 10% of your allowance to the church.
in the community by  Giving to a family who needs help.

Good Words To Remember
“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
LESSON # 9  
“H” IS FOR HOLINESS

Read  Leviticus 20:26

Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) To be holy means to be set apart for God’s purpose. What is a special purpose that God has given to Christians?
   To be ambassadors for Jesus by telling other people about Him and what He has done for you and for me (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

2) What is that message?
   God is reconciling (forgiving and bringing back to Him) people who have been separated from Him by sin through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19).

3) What are some ways that we can learn to live a life that is holy?
   • Live according to God’s standards (Romans 12:2).
   • Honor God with your thoughts, words and activities (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
   • Keep greed and impurities out of your life (Ephesians 5:3).
   • Think about things that are right and pure (Philippians 4:8).
   • Love what is good and be disciplined (Titus 1:8).

   Living a holy life often times means not embracing values that many people in society says is OK.

   Think about the content of the movies, music, magazines, television programs, video and games, etc. that are available to you at anytime. One of the biggest challenges that you have as a Christian is keeping what goes into your mind pure.

4) What are some ways that you can practice holiness this week:
   • At Home:       Pick a Bible verse, memorize it, and commit to following it.
   • At School:     Go out of your way to encourage a teacher or friend.
   • During Free Time  Do a community or church service project.

Good Words To Remember

“...be holy in all you do, for it is written: Be holy, because I [The Lord] am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).
LESSON #10  
“I” IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 1)

Read  Job Chapter 1-Chapter 2:10

Background  
Job was a righteous man [did right in the eyes of God] who was very rich. Even after losing everything he owned and suffering from terrible sickness, Job still maintained his integrity and his trust in God.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible  
1) How did God view Job?  
A servant, unique, without blame (fault), a man who respects God and avoids evil (Job 1:8).

2) When Job lost everything he owned, including all his children, how did he respond?  
He worshipped God and praised Him. He did not blame God (Job 1:20-22).

3) What did Job do with his integrity during all this?  
He maintained his integrity and held onto it (Job 2:3 & 9).

Integrity is a commitment to what is right. It’s how you conduct yourself and the choices you make about right and wrong. The Scriptures say that, “The ways of the Lord are right” (Hosea 14:9). But how can you know that the Bible is true?

4) Match the Scripture to the Bible verse:  
   ____6____ “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” If Jesus is full of the truth, there is no room for anything else.

   ____5____ “This is the message that we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” Light is always equated to truth.

   ____4____ “I [Jesus] am the way, the truth, and the life.”

   ____3____ “All Scripture is God-breathed [inspired].”

   ____2____ “Every word of God is flawless.”

   ____1____ “All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.” God’s word is true yesterday, today and tomorrow.

1) Psalm 119:160  4) John 14:6
2) Proverbs 30:5  5) 1 John 1:5
3) 2 Timothy 3:16  6) John 1:14

Good Words To Remember  
“Every word of God is flawless” (Proverbs 30:5).
LESSON # 11
“I” IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 2)

Read  Titus 2:7

Review
Integrity is defined as a commitment to what is right. You can know what is right by knowing God’s words which are contained in The Bible. Integrity says that you choose to make the right decision, and then follow through with making the right decision. But first, integrity must be learned and established. One of the ways to learn integrity is to learn and know the Ten Commandments.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Match the Ten Commandments with their meaning:

1) You shall have no other gods before me
2) You shall not make for yourself idols
3) You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
4) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
5) Honor your father and your mother
6) You shall not murder
7) You shall not commit adultery
8) You shall not steal
9) You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
10) You shall not covet

__2____ Worship God only in the ways that He had told us
__3____ Honor God’s name by the way you act or talk
__5____ Give your parents respect, attention and obedience
__1____ God wants to be #1 in your life
__8____ Respect other people’s property
__10____ Be content with what you have
__7____ Honor God with our bodies; keep our thoughts, words and actions pure
__6____ Respect the lives of others
__4____ Take a day of rest as a gift from God and use it responsibly
__9____ Love truth and live truthfully

2) How can you practice one of the Ten Commandments this week at:

- **Home**  Spend a day with your family at home.
- **School**  If you borrow a pencil, return it when you are done using it.
- **Activities**  Play by the rules.

Good Words To Remember
“In everything set them an example by doing what is good...” (Titus 2:7).
LESSON # 12
“I” IS FOR INTEGRITY (Part 3)

Read  Philippians 1:27

Review
Integrity is defined as a commitment to what is right. You can know what is right by knowing God’s words contained in The Bible. Integrity says that you choose to make the right decision, and then follow through with making the right decision. But first, integrity must be learned and established.

The Promise Keepers organization lists seven promises to help people learn and practice integrity (This is the Practice Ministries kid version):
1) Honor Jesus in your prayers, worship and be obedient to His Word.
2) Develop good friends who have the same values and who will encourage and help you to make good choices.
3) Practice living a life that pleases God.
4) Help strengthen your family by living according to values that God teaches you through the Bible.
5) Honor and pray for your church’s pastor. Be active in your church and use the abilities God has given you to help strengthen your church.
6) Love people regardless of who they are or where they worship.
7) Show love for God and show love for your neighbor. Live your life in a way that would make others want to follow Jesus Christ.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Choose three of these promises and write one way you can keep each promise this week:
   - Call or visit someone who is sick or volunteer to do an errand for them.
   - Lead a family devotion at the dinner table.
   - Pray for your pastor and let him or her know that you are doing this.

2) The Bible says that our integrity will be challenged by temptation. Name three things you can do to stand up to temptation:
   - Ask God to shield you with the truth (Ephesians 6:10).
   - Pray with all kinds of prayers and requests (Ephesians 6:18).
   - Be alert. The Bible says to stay on the path that is right and avoid what is evil (Ephesians 6:18).

Good Words To Remember
“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27).
Read  John 1:1-10

Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) Joy is an attitude of knowing that Jesus Christ is in control of your life at all times.
Name three ways to practice developing an attitude of joy in your life.
- Praise God and do not forget all that He does for you (Psalm 103:2).
- Live in a way to please God first rather than others (Colossians 3:23).
- Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

2) What are some of the blessings that you can give thanks for?
Health, food, shelter, clothing, friends, family

3) What are some ways to maintain a joyful attitude in your life?
Pray, read the Bible, get good advice from friends, parents, grandparents, pastor, coach

Good Words To Remember
“I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
LESSON # 14
“L” IS FOR LOVE (Part 1)

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul describes what love does and what love does not do. What does 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 tell you love does?
Patient, kind, rejoices with truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres.

2) What does this verse tell you love does not do?
Envy, boast, proud, rude, selfish, easily angered, keeps a record of wrong, delights in evil.

3) Using 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as a reference, find three examples of what love is in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31).
• The father was kind to the son.
• The father rejoiced when the son came home.
• The father protected the younger son from the anger of the older brother.

4) Using 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as a reference, find three examples of what love is not in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31).
• The younger son was rude in demanding his share of the estate.
• The older brother kept a record of what his younger brother did wrong.
• The older brother was selfish.

5) What are three ways that you can practice loving others?
• Pray for them.
• Help meet their needs with the abundance you have.
• Be patient when things are not going the way that you want them to.

Good Words To Remember
“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Lesson Background
All of Israel, and many Jewish people from countries surrounding Israel were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Passover Feast, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus sent two of his disciples, Peter & John to prepare the Passover meal. This was the night of the Last Supper. After Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples; and took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Write down 1 John 5:3.
This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.

2) In the Garden of Gethsemane, how did Jesus show God that he loved him?
Jesus obeyed His Father, even though he did not want to go through with God’s plan (Matthew 26:36-39).

3) Jesus went through with his arrest & crucifixion even though he had the power to stop it. Why?
To fulfill the Scriptures (Matthew 26:54).

4) Read Isaiah 53:5-7. How did Jesus demonstrate love by his actions?
- He was physically hurt for the wrongs that we commit.
- He willingly took our punishment for us.
- He obeyed His Father for our benefit.

5) What are three ways that you can practice showing love by your actions:
- At Home Obey your father and mother - the first time.
- At School Pick the player usually picked last with the first pick.
- Anonymously Send a valentine to an unpopular person.

Good Words To Remember
“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18).
Read Matthew 22:34-39; Matthew 25:31-45

Jesus often used stories or parables to convey spiritual truths or illustrate a point he wanted to make. Jesus was with his disciples when he told them this parable.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Generally, what does Jesus want us to learn from the parable of The Sheep and the Goats?
To serve God by loving and caring for others.

2) What are some examples of love being demonstrated in this parable?
Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, give shelter to one in need, clothes those without, care for the sick, visit the lonely.

3) How does Jesus’ answer to the expert in the law in Matthew 22:34-39, fit together with the parable of the Sheep and the Goats?
Love your neighbor by helping to meet their physical needs.

4) Read 1 John 4:9-11. How can we show love for God?
Love one another.

5) How can you practice loving God in your:
- **Family** Helping a little brother or sister learn about God
- **School** Donate some clothes to a school who can give to those in need
- **Friendships** Pray for your friends

6) What are some ways that you can love your neighbor with your:
- **Time** Volunteer to help feed the hungry
- **Money** Contribute to charity or a family in your church
- **Abilities** Help a friend move

Good Words To Remember
“…‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:36-39).
Read  Psalm 95:1-7, Psalm 33:1

Music helps us to praise God, learn Scripture and remember Biblical truths.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Read Psalm 95:1-7. What are some reasons that we should sing praise to God?
He provides salvation, He is great, all creation is His, He made and formed us, He cares for us.

2) Read Psalm 33:1. What is another reason why we should sing praise to God?
It is right.

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow (The Doxology):
Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

3) What are some of the Biblical truths that this song tells you? Here’s a couple as an example (a verse is provided for the first two)
• “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it...” (Psalm 24:1).
• “Every perfect gift is from above...” (James 1:17).
• All of heaven’s angels praise God.
• Father, Son & Holy Spirit are all God.

4) One of the most well known Christmas carols, O Come All Ye Faithful, describes Jesus as “Word of God Incarnate.” What does incarnate mean? (Hint: John 1:14).
Incarnate means to have a body. Jesus physically became a man, yet is still God (don’t ask me how).

5) Why is it important for us that Jesus became “incarnate”?
God wanted us to know Him as a person, so He let us know who He is through Jesus Christ.
Most importantly, without Jesus’ sacrifice, we would still have no hope of being with God in heaven.

As you sing songs in Sunday school or hymns in church or listen to your favorite Christian songs, think about what the words are saying.

Good Words To Remember
“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”
LEsson # 18
"M" is for message (part 1)

read  Matthew 26:57-64

opportunities to explore the Bible
1) Jesus claimed to be:
   - The Son of God. (Matthew 26:63-64)
   - Equal with God. (John 10:30-33)
   - God. (Exodus 3:13-14, John 8:58)

Jesus' claims were either true or false.

2) if Jesus' claims are false then he was:
   a) liar because ___d___
   b) a hypocrite because ___b___
   c) a demon because ___c___
   d) a fool because ___a___
   e) crazy because ___e___

   a) He only thought that he was God.
   b) He told others to live truthfully when he did not.
   c) He told others to trust in him for their eternal destiny.
   d) Jesus knew that he was not God.
   e) His claims led to his crucifixion.

if Jesus' claims that he is God are true, then you have two choices:
   1) reject Him as Savior and Lord and be willing to accept the consequences.
   2) accept Him as Lord and Savior.

If you choose to do nothing and make no decision, then you have accepted the first choice. If you have never considered making a decision to ask Jesus into your life, please consider accepting Him as your Savior. This is the most important decision that you or anyone will ever make, for the results of your decision affect you not only now but forever & forever.

Good words to remember
"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Review
Jesus made many claims about himself - many times he predicted his own death and that three
days later he would be raised to life. If Jesus said that he would be raised again from the dead
and in fact he wasn’t, then all of his other teachings and who he claimed to be would be in
question. His resurrection from the dead is the seal of God to the truth that Jesus is who he said
he was: The Son of God!

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) If Jesus was not raised from death to life, what does Paul say about our faith?
   Close the church doors, turn off the lights & go home (1 Corinthians 15:14).

2) If Jesus was not resurrected, what does Paul say about us?
   Again, our faith is useless and we are still in our sins and without a savior (1 Corinthians 15:17).

3) What is the truth about the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
   HE HAS RISEN INDEED! (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Setting The Background For The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ

Read John 19:38-42
4) Where was Jesus’ body laid after he was crucified?
   In a new tomb.

Read Matthew 27:62-66
5) What did the Jewish religious leaders do to make the tomb secure?
   Sealed the stone and posted a guard.

Read Matthew 28: 1-7 & John 20:2-7
6) What did Mary see on Sunday at the tomb? What did Peter & John see?
   • Nothing!
   • Only some strips of linen, and the burial cloth for the head.

For many people, the Bible’s account of Jesus’ resurrection is proof enough that he really was
raised, and Jesus is who He says he is! But many people either do not believe what the Bible
says, or don’t want to believe what the Bible says. In fact, some people have come up with other
explanations as to why the tomb was empty. We’ll see what they have to say and why they’re
wrong…next week!

Good Words To Remember
“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...” (1 Corinthians 15:20).
Some people cannot accept the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. There have been in fact, several theories introduced by individuals to try to explain why the tomb was empty on that first Easter morning.

The Wrong Tomb  
Read: John 20:1-3
This theory assumes that Mary went to the wrong tomb. If Mary went to the wrong tomb, then John & Peter must have also gone to the wrong tomb, and the Roman guard must have been at the wrong tomb. Also, the Jewish religious leaders would have wasted no time in going to the right tomb.

The Swoon Theory  
Read: John 19:31-35
This theory says that Jesus didn’t really die, but only fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood. He later revived and left the tomb. Everyone at the crucifixion site was sure that Jesus was dead. One of the soldiers even went over and pierced him to see if he really was dead.

The Disciples Stole The Body  
Read: John 20:19
This theory says that somehow the disciples went to the tomb and stole the body. The disciples were locked in a room, huddled together and cowering with fear over what might happen to them. And what about the Roman guard, they were there. Could these fearful disciples take on a group of trained fighting soldiers and steal the body? Finally, the grave clothes were still there.

The Roman or Jewish Authorities Removed The Body  
Read: Matthew 28:11-15
If this is so, then why didn’t the authorities just produce Jesus’ dead body? This would have squashed Christianity in the cradle before it had a chance to begin.

Evidence For The Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- The Grave Cloths were left undisturbed lying in the tomb
- There were 10 separate appearances of Jesus to many different witnesses.
- If it was not the resurrection, then what transformed Jesus’ disciples from men who cowered in fear behind locked doors, into men who boldly proclaimed the message that Jesus is the risen Christ.

Do you believe that Jesus is resurrected & is who he says he is? If so, this is the message then, that Jesus Christ tells you to take into the world: “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).
LESSON # 21
“N” IS FOR NEW (Part 1)

Read  Luke 19:1-9 & Romans 12:2

Background
Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Tax collectors were notorious for collecting more than what was owed, and pocketing some of that money for their own gain. The Jews hated them, but Zacchaeus was just the kind of man that Jesus was looking for.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Why did Jesus want to stay at Zacchaeus’ house?
   To save a man who was lost (Luke 19:9-10).

2) Zacchaeus became a new man. In what way did he change? How do we know?
   His heart - his attitude changed. We know because of the outward expression of his inward change (Luke 19:8).

3) Read Genesis 5:1-3. What is the difference between Adam & his son Seth?
   Adam was made in God’s image; Seth was made in Adam’s image.

   Adam was created perfect. That was God’s original intent for you & me too. But then Adam disobeyed God and his perfect relationship with God and his perfect nature was damaged. The Bible says that Adam’s disobedience affects all of us. Instead of being made in the likeness of God, you and I are made in the likeness of Adam - disobedient toward God, our relationship with God imperfect because of our wrong thoughts and attitudes. So God came up with a way where his original intent for all of us could be accomplished. That “Way” is Jesus Christ.

   When you became a Christian, you were changed. You are no longer the same person that you were, because you are in the process of becoming more like the person who God originally intended for you to be; a person who lives a holy and obedient life, pleasing to God.

4) What the world says is important is sometimes in conflict with what God says is important. What are some ways that you can practice living a life that is obedient to God?
   • Ask God to help you live an obedient life.
   • Ask for advice from a parent or teacher or pastor or friend when you have a question about whether an activity or choice is right.

Good Words To Remember
“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Review
When you became a Christian, you were changed. You are no longer the same person that you were. You are being made new on the inside, because you are becoming more like who God originally intended for you to be - a person who lives a holy and obedient life, pleasing to God.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Why did Paul persecute the Christian church? What does persecute mean?
He was convinced that this was the right thing to do. Harass, mistreat (Acts 26:9).

2) What changed Paul from being a man who persecuted Christians into being a man who was perhaps Jesus' greatest follower ever?
A face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-5).

3) How does Paul tell us that we can be changed into the person God wants us to be?
Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

4) What does it mean to be filled with God's Spirit? (Hint: Think of a glass of water).
When water goes into a glass, there's no room for anything else except the water. You need to “drink in the Spirit” or allow God's Spirit to fill you up.

5) What are some ways that you can practice allowing God's Spirit to fill you?
- Allow God to show you anything He does not approve of in you (Psalm 139:23-24).
- Think of pure, right and admirable things (Philippians 4:8).
- Set your mind on God (Colossians 3:2).

Good Words To Remember
“...be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) What does Peter say to the beggar?
   *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth --walk!* (Acts 3:6).

2) Why was it important for Peter to use Jesus’ name?
   *The power was not Peter’s - the power is from the name of Jesus.*

3) Why do you think that God waited 40 years to heal this crippled beggar?
   *So that all the people would know it was by Jesus’ power and that Jesus is alive.*

4) What evidence of God’s power can you identify in the story about Peter & John?
   - A healing miracle.
   - The boldness of the apostles.
   - The miracle of salvation.
   - People praising God.

When the Bible talks about the Kingdom of God, it is speaking about when Christians are obedient to God and do His will. When you allow God’s power to fill you in order to do what He wants you to do, you are helping to build the Kingdom of God. God’s power gives you the courage and the authority to do His work, through the Holy Spirit. His power is available to you right now, but you have to draw upon it. How do you go about doing that? It starts with prayer: “Father, I want to be obedient to You. Please use me today however You want to, to help build Your Kingdom. Amen!

5) What are some ways that you can help build God’s Kingdom:
   - At Home: Pray or have family devotional.
   - At School: Say a kind word to a classmate that is having a rough time.
   - At Church: Help a family in need, help teach Sunday school.

Good Words To Remember

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power...” (2 Timothy 1:7).
LESSON # 24
“P” IS FOR PRAYER

Read Matthew 6:9-13

Background
Many people use the letters A-C-T-S as ingredients to help them cook up a recipe for prayer. Each letter stands for an ingredient in the recipe:

• A stands for Adoration
• C stands for Confession
• T stands for Thanksgiving
• S stands for Supplication

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) Match the letter that describes the verse in the Lord’s prayer.
___A___ Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name (verse 9).
___T___ Your kingdom come, your will be done (verse 10).
___S___ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (verse 13).
___C___ Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (verse 11-12).

(A) Adoration (Giving praise)
(C) Confession (admitting sin)
(T) Thanksgiving (Giving thanks)
(S) Supplication (Humble & earnest request)

2) Write down some ingredients that you can put in your prayers this week:

• A Great, Holy, Amazing, Perfect, Just, Loving
  (What words can you use to praise God)
• C Wrong thoughts, attitudes, actions, words
  (What do you need to confess to God)
• T Family, health, salvation
  (Who or what can you give thanks to God for)
• S Growth in my faith, salvation for a friend who is not a Christian
  (What needs or requests do you have of God)

Good Words To Remember
“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).
Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) What are two good reasons to respect God?
   • For our own good (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).
   • It’s the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10).

2) What are ways that you can practice showing your respect for God?
   Obey His commands found in His word.

3) What are two good reasons to honor or respect your parents?
   • God says so (Deuteronomy 5:16).
   • To learn what is right (Ephesians 6:1).

4) What are ways that you can practice showing respect for your parents?
   • Do as they ask you - the first time.
   • Pray for them.

5) Dads, what is one responsibility you have toward your children?
   Teach your children God’s word (Ephesians 6:4).

6) Dads, what ways have you found to do this in your family?
   • Read the Bible, devotions, example.
   • Use everyday occurrences to teach: honesty, love, charity.

7) What are two good reasons to respect your teachers?
   • Because of their work (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
   • Because of their authority (Matthew 10:24).

8) What are ways that you can practice showing respect for your teachers?
   • Listen, be the one to set an example for others.
   • Help out when appropriate or possible.

Good Words To Remember
“Show proper respect to everyone...” (1 Peter 2:17).
Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) Read Philippians 2:3-4. How can you respect others by being considerate?
   - Say please and thank you.
   - Listen when others are talking or performing.
   - Apologize if you make a mistake.

2) How can you practice respecting other people’s property?
   - Keep public items (books, basketball goals) in good condition so that others can use them.
   - Keep things where they won’t get lost.
   - Return them promptly.

3) Read Psalm 139:13-14. How can you respect differences among others?
   - Remember that God made us all for a purpose.
   - Look for the positives in differences.
   - Find out what you can learn from them.

4) How can you practice respecting others this week?
   A family member Honor their requests.
   A classmate Stick up for him or her when others tease.
   A teammate Show up to practice on time.
   Your pastor Tell him or her a specific thing you learned in church.

Good Words To Remember
“...look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).
LESSON # 27
“R” IS FOR RESPECT (Part 3)

Read   Daniel 1:8-16

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) In what ways does Daniel show respect for his body?
Daniel cared what food and drink went into his body.

2) How can you practice having respect for your body?
Get adequate sleep and exercise, put only good things that will help you into your body.

3) How is your mind like a computer?
What goes into your mind stays in there.

4) How is your mind like fertile soil?
Words and thoughts are planted and take root.

5) What happens when you plant truth seeds into your mind?
The truth grows and comes out.

6) How can you practice putting truth into your mind?
Think of the truth, things that are right and pure (Philippians 4:8).

7) What is special about your body?
It is God’s temple. What goes into God’s temple should be pleasing to Him (1 Corinthians 3:16).

8) This week, how can you practice respecting:
   • God  Put only what God would approve of into your mind & body.
   • Others  Think of how Jesus would treat them.
   • Yourself  Take care of the body and mind that God gave to you.

Good Words To Remember
“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27).
LESSON # 28
“S” IS FOR SERVANT

Read    John 13:1-14

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) What does the Bible say the attitude of a servant should be?
   Humble, considering others before yourself (Philippians 2:4).

2) How did Jesus teach his disciples to be servants?
   By His example (John 13:14-15).

3) What are some ways you can encourage others this week?
   • Say a kind word
   • Help with a project
   • Attend church or Sunday school regularly

4) What are some ways you can give to others this week?
   • A family or charitable organization in need.
   • Volunteer your time to help tutor a classmate.
   • Send a card to or visit a friend that is ill.

5) Who can you pray for this week?
   • Our country’s & local leaders
   • Your pastor
   • Someone who you dislike

6) How can you find out about people who are in need?
   • A Church bulletin
   • A Radio newscast
   • The newspaper

7) This week, who is someone you will:
   Encourage ______________________________________________________
   Give To _______________________________________________________
   Pray For ______________________________________________________
   Care For _____________________________________________________

Good Words To Remember
“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men...” (Ephesians 6:7).
LESSON # 29
"T" IS FOR TRUSTWORTHY

Read Daniel Chapter 6

Background
Daniel was a young man who was captured along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and taken to Babylon when king Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city of Jerusalem in Judah, in about 600 B.C. Daniel had risen to a very high position among the king’s advisors. Later, Persia (the country of Iran today), defeated Babylon and Daniel remained in a very high position under the king of Persia.

Opportunities to Explore the Bible
1) What are three characteristics of Daniel that made him a great leader?
   • He could be trusted to get the job done (Daniel 6:4).
   • He was honest (Daniel 6:4).
   • He did his work completely and carefully (Daniel 6:4).

2) What is an example of Daniel’s dependability?
   He would stick by a commitment he made (Daniel 6:10).

3) Why was Daniel able to do such a good job for the king?
   He asked God for help (Daniel 6:11).

4) The dictionary defines trustworthy as being reliable and dependable. Why is it important for you to be reliable and dependable with what you’re given to do?
   So that you will be trusted with bigger responsibilities when you are ready.

5) Write down how you can practice being trustworthy this week:
   At Home Take care of your responsibilities without being told.
   At School Do your work carefully and completely.
   In Activities Be on time.

Good Words To Remember
"They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy" (Daniel 6:4[b]).
Read  Stories of Thanksgiving (Thanksgiving Lesson); Psalm 105:1-2

Opportunities to Explore the Bible

1) Where does everything you have come from?
The Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it (Psalm 24:1).

2) What has God given to us?
   • Eternal life as a gift (John 3:16)
   • An abundant life (John 10:10)
   • More than we can imagine in the life to come (1 Corinthians 2:9).

3) How can you be thankful even in difficult circumstances?
   God can always bring good out of bad (Genesis 50:20).

   We have lots to be thankful for. But the second part of Thanksgiving is the giving. The Bible says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion [because you have to], for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

4) How can you practice using your abilities, your time, and your money to give?

   A brand new way I can use my abilities to help others
   • In my community is:  read at a children’s hospital
   • Outside my community is: go on a family short term mission trip

   A brand new way I can use my time
   • In the community is:  organize a neighborhood clean-up
   • Outside my community is:  be a pen-pal

   A brand new way I can use my money
   • In the community is:  contributing part of my allowance to a charity
   • Outside the community is:  help sponsor a missionary

Good Words To Remember
   “Make known among the nations what [the Lord] has done” (Psalm 105:2).
Read  Cosmic Christmas (Christmas Lesson); Luke 1:26-Luke 2:30

Opportunities to explore the Bible

1) Who is Satan?
   He is an angel, who incited 1/3 of the angels in heaven to make war against God and His heavenly angels, and losing was hurled to earth (Revelation 12:7-8).

2) Why did Lucifer or Satan wage war against God?
   He wanted to be worshiped as God (Isaiah 14:14).

3) What is Satan’s plan?
   To lead people away from God (Revelation 12:9)

4) God has given to all mankind a gift. What is that gift?
   Freedom to make choices (Genesis 2:15-16).

5) What comes along with that gift?
   Consequences of that freedom (Genesis 2:17).

6) What became the consequences of that gift?
   Sin entered into the world, and separation from God through sin (Romans 5:12).

7) What is the name of the second gift that God gave to mankind?
   Immanuel – God with us (Matthew 1:23).

8) Why did God give us this gift?
   Because He loves us He will save us from our sins (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

9) What did God tell Gabriel to tell Mary to name this gift?
   Jesus (Luke 1:31).

Good Words To Remember
“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).
EASTER
THE DRAGON

Read  The Dragon (Easter Lesson)

Opportunities to explore the Bible

1) Who is God?
He the King of kings (Revelation 19:16).

2) Why is Jesus called our King?
He governs, defends, sustains, and redeems us (Psalm 9:8, Psalm 72:4, Isaiah 46:4, Titus 2:14)

3) What is the devil portrayed as in Scripture?
A Dragon (Revelation 20:2)

4) What is the dragon’s plan?
To lead people astray from God (Revelation 12:9).

5) How has he done this?
He has blinded people to God, by deceiving them (2 Corinthians 4:4, Revelation 20:10).

6) Why did God send Jesus to us?
To proclaim release of prisoners from darkness and captivity (Isaiah 61:1).

7) How did Jesus provide save us from the dragon?
By his death he destroyed the power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

8) What does God offer to us?
Forgiveness and salvation (Acts 26:18)

9) What does the Bible say will happen to the dragon?
He will be thrown into an abyss and locked up, released, and finally put away forever (Revelation 20:2-3; 7-10).

Good Words To Remember
“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5).
NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Write a prayer for the people of our country. There are 5 groups listed below to help you:

1. Government: For God to help them make good decisions and stand by them
   Federal, state, local leaders, military services

2. Churches & Ministry Organizations: For truth to be upheld
   Your pastors, congregation, denomination, organizations that help your family

3. Businesses & Industries: To reflect Godly influences, and value truth & decency
   Entertainment, media, industries (pick one or two)

4. Families: To live by Biblical truth
   Parents, kids, extended families, broken families, neighbors, friends

5. Ourselves: For renewal, moral strength

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Good Words To Remember
“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).
The thought of “telling your story” – how Jesus Christ came into your life, can be a little uncomfortable. Perhaps you’re afraid of failing or that you won’t know what to say. But if Jesus Christ is in your life, you do have a story to tell, and learning how to tell your story may be just what it takes to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into someone’s life.

So, here we go…if you’ve never thought much of how to tell someone your story, here are some ideas and suggestions for putting your story together.

**Conversion**

If you remember a specific time, place or event when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life, then perhaps “conversion” fits best. If conversion fits best, try shaping your story around these questions:

- What was your life like before you invited Jesus into your life?
- What led (events, conversation, etc.) you to accept Jesus as your Savior?
- How and when did you receive Christ as Savior? As Lord?
- How has Jesus changed your life?

**Journey**

If your faith seems more like a journey, then perhaps “Spiritual Journey” fits best. Try these questions:

- What have been some key events in which God has worked in your life?
- What experiences, circumstances or people helped develop your faith in Christ?
- How would your life be different without Jesus? (i.e.: lifestyle, attitudes, priorities, relationships, etc.).

**Sharing The Gospel Through Your Story**

Try fitting these questions in your story:

- How do you understand God’s purpose in creation? (Ephesians 1:5)
- How do you understand your purpose in life? (Matthew 22:27-29)
- How have you experienced sin in your life? (John 14:15)
- What are (were) the consequences of that sin? (Isaiah 59:2).
- How did you put your faith in Jesus Christ (the solution)? (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- How have you been reconciled to God (what were the results)? (Romans 5:11).
- What role has the church or others played for you? (1 Corinthians 12:27)

**Putting Your Story Together**

- What elements of your story might be interesting to someone else?
- What Bible verses might you include under each of the previous questions?
- What experiences in your life can form illustrations to help you tell your story?
- Write your story as if you were telling someone else
- Keep it between 3-5 minutes

On the following page, write out your testimony – your story - of how you invited Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior and Lord!
Good Words To Remember

“One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25).

Practice Ministries Bible Studies