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THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

Written by Laura Lee Stewart

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CONTENTS

1. His Coming Announced
2. His Coming Awaited
3. His Coming Celebrated
4. The Promise Fulfilled
5. Jesus Says He is God's Son
6. Jesus Looks At His Calling
7. Jesus Declares His Work
8. Jesus Calls His Disciples
9. Power Over Demons
10. Power Over Sickness and Death
11. Jesus Forgives Sin
12. Jesus Changes Lives
13. An Active, Joyful Faith

CHAPTER ONE

HIS COMING ANNOUNCED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-38

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 1:26-38

MEMORY VERSE

". . . you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. . . " (Luke 1:31-32).

TEACHING AIM: I will lead my students to trust God more, because he is faithful to keep his promises.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Mary was not a rich person, she was not powerful and she was not famous. She was a person of true faith, and she had a strong desire to obey God. She knew about God's promise that he would send a Messiah someday, and she looked forward to that time. He would be the Saviour of the world. It is important to us that God chose that sort of person to be the mother of Jesus.

Likewise, Zechariah and Elizabeth were not powerful, rich or famous. They too trusted and obeyed God, and he chose them to be the parents of John.

We can see several things in the announcements of the angel to Zechariah and Mary that are similar. In each case, the angel appeared to announce the birth of a son who was to be important in God's plan. Both boys were named by the angel, and both would be born under special circumstances. Both would even be born into the same family. Their mothers were cousins.

There were also some very important differences in the two announcements. John would be a messenger whose job would be to prepare the way for Jesus. Jesus would be the Messiah, the Son of God who would die for the sin of the world. Both boys were called great, but Jesus was far greater.

John would be born to a very old couple who had feared they would not have children. Jesus would be born to a virgin named Mary. Mary was engaged to Joseph, but she was not yet his wife. When the angel told her she would be the mother of Jesus, she asked, "How can this be?" The angel answered that the Holy Spirit would cause Mary to have the child. He would be the Son of God.

Let us look at the announcements of these two births. Zechariah was a priest during the days of Herod, king of Judea. His wife

was named Elizabeth. Both feared God and obeyed him. They were called righteous and blameless. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren. They had become old people.

One day Zechariah was performing his duty as a priest before God. It was his turn to go into the temple and burn incense. The people remained outside and prayed there.

While Zechariah was in the temple an angel appeared to him and said, ". . . Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Luke 1:13). The angel continued to tell Zechariah other things about the boy who would be born into his home. Read those things in verses 14-17.

Zechariah began to question the angel. "How can I know this? I am an old man, and my wife is old too." The angel knew that Zechariah was not sure this could happen. He had some doubts in his mind. Therefore, the angel said his name was Gabriel and he had come from God with this message. But because of Zechariah's doubts, he would not be able to speak any more until the baby's birth.

The people were wondering why Zechariah had stayed in the temple for so long. It did not take long to burn the incense, but Zechariah had stayed. When he came out, he could not speak to them. The people thought he had seen a vision in the temple. He made signs to them, but he could not say any words. After Zechariah finished his work at the temple, he went home. Elizabeth conceived as the angel had promised.

A few months later the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth, a city of Galilee. There he appeared to a virgin who was engaged to Joseph, but she was not married to him yet. Gabriel's news to Mary was very serious to her. During her engagement she was bound to be faithful to the man who would marry her later. Only divorce could end the engagement. If the girl was not faithful, she could be killed by stoning. Mary knew that many people would not believe her. They would assume she had been unfaithful.

Mary knew these things, but she did not hesitate to agree to what the angel told her. She asked how this could be since she was not married, but she did not doubt that it could happen. She simply told the angel, "I will do whatever the Lord wants me to do." Mary did not ask for a sign to show her that the words of the angel were true.

The angel comforted Mary. He told her not to be afraid because she had found favour with God. Her faith and obedience in her young life had pleased God, and he had chosen her for a very special job. She would be the mother of his only Son. She would raise him and care for him as other mothers did their children. The baby she would have would be the Messiah. He would be the Saviour God had promised to send to save the world from sin.

Then Gabriel told Mary about her cousin, Elizabeth, and the child she would bear. She was already in her sixth month of pregnancy even though she had thought she was too old to have a child.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Samuel wondered why he had been called into the office. He had worked well during the years he had been with the company. He was on time to begin work everyday, and he had never had complaints about his work. But the messenger had said the boss wanted to see him.

"He did not have long to wait. The secretary said he should go right in.

"The boss asked him to sit in the chair near the desk, and he closed the door. Then he began to explain what he was thinking about.

"The supervisor of Samuel's department had been promoted to another job, and they were offering Samuel the job of supervisor. Would he consider the job?

"At first Samuel thought of how much he would like to take the offer. It would mean more money which he needed for his family. He would also like the idea of a promotion.

"Then he remembered the decisions the supervisor had to make and the way people talked about him. He was often criticized when the people did not like the decision. Samuel began to wonder whether he was willing to be criticized by his friends."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Luke 1. Tell the story of the announcement to Zechariah about the promised birth of John. Use your Background Study and the Bible verses. Then tell about the angel's visit to Mary to tell her about the birth of Jesus.

Write on the chalk board:

Similarities Differences

List the things that were similar and the things that were different under the headings. These too can be found in the Bible verses and the Background Study.

Emphasize the difference in the two responses to the angel's messages. Mary believed and agreed to do whatever God wanted. Zechariah doubted it could happen, and asked for a sign.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "What is your response to the call of God in your life? Do you need to understand all that is involved before you agree to do what God asks? Do you need to consider what all it would mean in your life?"

"Could God use you more if you would let him do anything he wanted to do in your life?"

"God has given every Christian a measure of faith. Without that faith the person would not be able to ask Jesus to come into his heart to save him from his sin. Faith grows stronger when we use it. Each time we exercise our faith, we see that God is faithful and just to do what he has promised. Then the next time we need him we are willing to trust him more.

"Will you use the faith God has given you today? Will you trust him to do his will in your life. Your faith will grow stronger, and you will be more usable to him."

CHAPTER TWO

HIS COMING AWAITED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-79

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 1:39-55

MEMORY VERSE

". . . My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46-47).

TEACHING AIM: I will lead class members to commit themselves to God to be used in any way he wants to use them.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Look over the Background Study for Chapter One before you begin the study today. You will remember that Mary had learned she would be the mother of Jesus. She had also learned that her cousin, Elizabeth, would soon have a baby. Both were special babies in God's plan.

Mary decided to go immediately to visit Elizabeth. It was about 130 kilometres to her house--a long walk for a young woman.

When Mary got to Elizabeth's house, she did not need to tell Elizabeth her news. As soon as she heard the greeting, Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy within her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. She began to speak like a prophet and called Mary the "mother of my Lord." Elizabeth said Mary was blessed because Mary believed God would do what he had promised. Read verse 45. If Mary had not been willing to believe what the angel told her, she would not have been usable to the Lord. She used her faith and said she was willing for God to use her in any way he wanted to do so.

The verses which follow contain a beautiful song of praise by Mary. It is a hymn of rejoicing which tells us how important Jesus' birth really is. Some of the words and phrases seem to come from the Old Testament.

There are two parts to the song of praise. The first, verses 46b-50, expresses praise for personal blessings. We see in these verses that Mary trusted God completely. Much of the message comes from Old Testament verses. Compare it to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

Mary rejoiced that God had chosen her in her humble condition. She would be called blessed by future generations. But Mary was

receiving God's grace. She was not the source of grace as some people try to say. What God was doing for Mary was a sign of what he was doing for all people.

The second part of the song of praise, verses 51-55, tells about the importance of God's act for Israel. Mary in her lowliness represents a humble and oppressed group of people. God's mercy and blessing is not for the rich and powerful people alone. Those people often think they do not need anything beyond themselves.

It is the Jewish nation in the person of Mary, that gives birth to Jesus. What God has done for her has really been done for all Israel. God's exalting Mary from her low condition was a sign of what he would do for his oppressed people and for all who would allow him to come into their lives.

Christianity brings death to pride.

Verse 51 says, " he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." When a man measures his life by Jesus Christ, he finds no room for pride.

Verse 52 says, "he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree." When we remember that Jesus died for all men, we cannot put a price on anyone's worth.

Verse 53 continues, "he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." Jesus takes away the concern for material wealth. He causes us to be concerned with more lasting things, those of spiritual value.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask for someone to volunteer to tell briefly what the lesson of Chapter One was about. Have the members turn to Luke 1.

Say: "We do not know much about what Mary did at this time. Verse 39 tells us that she went with haste to visit Elizabeth and Zechariah. We do not know for sure when she talked with Joseph or her parents. Her concern seemed to be with talking to Elizabeth. Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah had studied the Scriptures and knew about the things that were taking place. It was no surprise to any of them that God was sending the Messiah. They had expected his coming because God had promised it. The surprise was their own part in that fulfilled promise."

Interpretation

Continue: "Mary went to a house in a city of Judah where her cousin lived. When Elizabeth heard her greeting, the baby in her womb leaped for joy. Even before their birth, John was thrilled

to be in the presence of Jesus.

"Then the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and she began to speak with words which sounded like those of a prophet." Have someone read her words from Luke 1:42-45.

Use your Background Study to talk about those words and their meaning. Then discuss the response Mary made to Elizabeth, also using your Background Study.

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Why did Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah understand the things that were happening to them? It was because they had studied the Scriptures and had believed the promises of God. God had promised to send a Messiah, and they knew he would do it. We too need to study the Scriptures so we will know what God has promised. We must believe in him and know he will do what he has promised.

"There is no place for pride in the Christian life. Jesus lifted the lowly people and humbled the proud. He expects his disciples to follow his example. We must not follow the proud or try to imitate them. We must help the needy and helpless, both physically and spiritually.

"God wants Christians to share his compassion, grace and love with all people. The strong and wealthy can have these graces, but the weak and poor can have them too. Christ accepts us as we are and leads us into the way he wants us to live.

"God uses people to fulfil his plans. He chose Mary to be the earthly mother of Jesus. He chose Zechariah and Elizabeth to be the parents of John the Baptist. God did not choose any of them because they deserved to be chosen. It was his grace that led him to give the places of responsibility to them. That is why he chooses certain people to be pastors and teachers today. He blesses his children and gives them opportunities to serve him.

"God expects his followers to be obedient to him. He expects them to believe that he will do what he has promised. Sometimes his promises involve spiritual things and other times they involve physical things. God does not always promise that we will understand what he is doing. He just requires that we obey him.

"Do you need to offer yourself to him and promise to obey him? Do you need to commit yourself to studying God's Word so you will know what he has promised? Do you need to ask him to use you in any way he chooses, without concern for what it will cost you? He will hear you if you pray to him right now. He will do what he has promised to do."

CHAPTER THREE

HIS COMING CELEBRATED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-20

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 2:7-20

MEMORY VERSE

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members understand that God considers everyone to be valuable.

TEACHING AIDS: Make a swaddling cloth according to the instructions in your Background Study to show how a baby was wrapped. If you do not have a piece of cloth, make it of paper.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

A census was taken in the Roman Empire about every 14 years so the government could assess taxes and so they could locate those who were liable for military service. Jews were exempt from military service, therefore a census in Palestine would have been mainly for taxation purposes. Any man who happened to be living outside his district had to return to his own home to be counted. God used this decree of the emperor to bring Joseph and Mary to the place where he had said long ago his Son would be born. Read Micah 5:2.

The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was almost 130 kilometres. Accommodation for travellers was very limited. Travellers brought their own food, and the innkeeper provided fodder for the animals and a fire to cook.

When Joseph and Mary arrived they found the town was very crowded. They were not able to find even the usual place to stay. They were shown to a place where the cows were kept. That gave them some shelter and some privacy.

While they were there, the time came for Mary's baby to be born. She gave birth to her first son and wrapped him in the swaddling cloths she had brought with her. The swaddling cloth was a square of cloth with a long strip coming off at one corner. The baby was wrapped in the square then the long strip was wound round and round him.

Mary laid her newborn baby in the manger. This is a place where the animals fed. She probably put some clean hay in the manger to make a tiny bed for her baby.

It is wonderful for us to read that the first news of the baby's birth came to some shepherds. Shepherds were despised by many people in that day. They could not attend all the services in the temple because they were in the fields with their flocks. They could not observe all the laws like washing their hands often. They were simple men of the fields, but they were the ones whom God told first about his news. The gospel is for all people. God does not exclude anyone who will come to him.

But we have learned that a lamb without any marks on it was offered in the temple every morning and evening. This was a sacrifice to God. Perhaps these shepherds were the ones who provided the perfect lambs for the temple offerings. It is a beautiful thought that the shepherds who provided these sacrifice animals were the first to see the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

Another custom of that day was that when a baby boy was born into a home, singers would come and greet him with simple music. Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, therefore the ceremony could not be carried out. It is lovely to think that the angels from heaven took that part and provided music to welcome Jesus. Read verses 13-14.

Notice the names which the angels gave to the baby Jesus. They called him Saviour which was familiar to Jews and Gentiles. It meant healer and deliverer. Christ means Messiah. He was the one who would rule as king in fulfillment of God's promise to David. Lord speaks of the divine nature of the baby who had just been born.

The shepherds did not only hear first, they also were the first people to tell the news. They were quick to respond to the news when they heard it, and they were quick to tell other people about it. They praised God for what they had seen and heard.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Begin today's lesson by asking members to share customs they observe when a new baby is born. If they do not want to share their own customs, perhaps they would tell some they have heard others tell about. Do friends take a gift to the child? Do they have a prayer of dedication for the new baby? Do they take the child to the home of the grandmother for some time?

How is a new baby dressed? Show the method of dressing a baby in the time when Jesus was born. This is available in your Background Study. The people did not think it was good for a new baby to move very much. It was bound so that it could not move freely.

Interpretation

Say: "Let us all open our Bibles to Luke 2. We will study today about the night when Jesus was born."

Tell about the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be counted for tax purposes. Explain that Joseph and Mary were not living in their home area at that time, and so they had to travel to Bethlehem because Joseph was of the family of David.

At the end of their long journey, the time was right for her to be delivered.

They were not able to find a place to stay in an inn, so they were given a stable where animals were kept. It was there that the baby was born. Mary wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. Read the Bible verses and the Background Study to prepare you to tell this story well.

Explain the custom that a new baby boy was welcomed by singing. Ask who sang to baby Jesus.

Invite a member to volunteer to tell about the shepherds who got the first news of the baby's birth. Let others in the class help to be sure all the details are included. Fill in any facts they forget.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We see in the story of the birth of Jesus that God is concerned with the poor and needy people. This does not mean that he has no concern for the great and wealthy. He cares for them too. It just means he cares for all people equally. Everyone needs salvation, and it is offered to all who will believe.

"Christians need to look for the true value of people. We cannot look at the outside of a person and know what God thinks of that one. We need to remember that he gave his only Son to die for that person. Each one has great value to God.

"When we study this lesson we see that people reacted in many different ways to the birth of Jesus. Some believed simply and sincerely. Some felt they must do something to earn forgiveness. They gave sacrifices in the temples regularly so they could be forgiven. Some were very religious, but they did not have time for Jesus. Some believed and showed compassion for people who were not as fortunate as they were. Some went on with their daily living as if nothing had happened.

"Do you see the same reactions to him today? Do you know people who fit each of those descriptions? Where do you fit in? What is your response to Jesus? Your response can be changed today. Talk to God about it as we pray."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:21-38

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 2:21-38

MEMORY VERSE

"For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples" (Luke 2:30-31).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members understand that God keeps all his promises.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk, paper and pencils

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The temple was very important in Israel's worship and hopes for the future. We have already seen some events that took place in the temple.

Mary and Joseph were careful to do what the law commanded. They circumcised their baby boy when he was eight days old (Genesis 17:9-14) and named him as the angel had said. Mary went to the temple for purification as ordered in Leviticus 12. She and Joseph obeyed Exodus 13:2,12-15 about the redemption of a first-born son. They presented him in the temple.

The offering made for Mary's purification in Luke 2:24 was ordered in Leviticus 12:8 for those who could not afford a lamb. This shows that Jesus was born into a home of poor, modest people, but his family observed all they knew of the Old Testament law.

Next we meet two very special people. They were both old, godly people who give us a good picture of faith. The first was Simeon.

We meet Simeon in the temple when Mary and Joseph took Jesus there. The old Simeon was one who expected the Messiah to come. He was a devout and righteous man. The Holy Spirit "was upon him," and it had been revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired him to go to the temple at a certain time on a certain day. It was at that time that Mary and Joseph took Jesus into the temple.

When Simeon saw them, he took the baby into his arms and prayed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared. . . ." (Luke 2:29-31).

Mary and Joseph ". . . marveled at what was said about him"
(verse 33).

Then Simeon said some important words to Mary. He told about the work Jesus would do and about what would happen to him. First, Simeon said Jesus would be the cause that many would fall. This may sound hard, but it is true. A man's judgement is based on his reaction to Jesus Christ.

Jesus would be the cause for many to rise. Jesus lifts all who will believe in him out of the old life of sin and into the new life of glory.

He would meet with much opposition. All who do not surrender to him are at war with him. There is no neutral ground.

The second person we see in the temple was a prophetess named Anna. She too was old, she was a widow and she had known sorrow, without growing bitter. Although Anna was 84 years old, she never stopped hoping. When we know God as a loving Father, we can rest knowing he controls everything.

When Anna saw the baby Jesus, she recognized him. She gave thanks to God and spoke of him to all who were looking forward to his coming.

She never stopped worshipping. She spent her life in God's house with God's people. God gave us the church as a great blessing. We rob ourselves when we neglect to worship with his people.

She never stopped praying. Anna kept her contact with God who was her constant strength. In him her own weakness could become strength.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Say: "We continue to study in the book of Luke today. Let us turn to the second chapter."

Ask who would volunteer to tell briefly what we have already learned about this wonderful story.

Interpretation

Say: "Today we find Mary and Joseph doing all the things that were required to keep the law. When a baby boy was born into a home there were some requirements. Let us watch for them as we read these verses." Have a member read Luke 2:21-24. Tell the members to tell you what was required, and you write it on the chalk board. Then from your Background Study show them from where the requirement came. Write this too on the chalk board. Your list should look like this:

Requirement

Commanded

Circumcision on eighth day

Genesis 17:9-14

Named Jesus

Angel

Present first child to the Lord

Exodus 13:2,12-15

Offer sacrifice (Mary's purification)

Leviticus 12

Say: "Mary and Joseph did what was required to keep the law. When they went into the temple they met two very special people. We want to learn something from these two people. They were Simeon and Anna, and their stories are told in Luke 2. Both were old. Both were godly. Both believed the promises that God would send the Messiah to save the world. They spent most of their time in the temple worshipping and praying."

Divide the class in half, and divide those groups into about five people for each small group. Tell half of the people to read about Simeon, Luke 2:25-35, and the others to read about Anna, Luke 2:36-38. Give a pencil and paper to each group so they can write notes about what they learn. Tell them to prepare to tell the other groups about the one they are studying. Use your Background Study to help them include all the material about these two people.

Let the groups work separately for about ten minutes and then bring them back together. Give them time to report what they have learned. Be sure each group has an opportunity to say something.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Jesus was reared just like any other baby boy born in his day. His parents observed the laws of the land and of the Scriptures. They had no special favours because he was the Son of God. But some people knew he was different.

"Let us think about the two old people we have talked about. The Holy Spirit showed each of them that the baby was the promised Messiah. They had believed and expected him to come."

Explain from your Background Study what Simeon told Mary and Joseph about Jesus' life and ministry.

"Simeon praised God, blessed the baby Jesus, blessed Mary and Joseph and told about what Jesus' life would be like.

"Anna found her strength for her old age and for her condition of being a widow in the temple. She kept her hope in God. She knew he would do what he had promised. She worshipped him constantly, and she prayed night and day. Do you need to find strength as Anna did? Are you faithful to be in the church for every opportunity of worship and prayer? Do you need to ask God to help you be faithful in these areas?"

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS SAYS HE IS GOD'S SON

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:80; 2:39-52

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 2:39-52

MEMORY VERSE

". . . How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).

TEACHING AIM: Members will learn about their responsibility to teach their children about God.

TEACHING AIDS: Every member needs a Bible.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Luke 1:80 tells us all we know about the childhood of John. He was a boy who liked the outdoors. He spent much of his time in the wilderness.

Likewise, we know very little about the childhood of Jesus. When Mary and Joseph had finished all they needed to do in Jerusalem they returned to Galilee to their own city, Nazareth. Luke just tells us ". . . the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him" (verse 40).

The next event he described was several years later. Jesus was 12 years old, and his family went to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. This was not unusual. They went to this feast every year. The difference was that a Jewish boy became a man at the age of 12. This time Jesus went with them to observe the feast. He had to take the responsibility of obeying the law for himself now.

When the feast was over, his parents began the journey home. They travelled in a large group of friends and relatives. Usually the women in the caravan started earlier and walked slower. The men would start later and meet the women by evening. Mary and Joseph started home with their friends. Each one probably thought Jesus was with the other one. When they met for the evening they found that Jesus was not there.

Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem to search for the boy. During the Passover the Sanhedrin met in the Temple court to discuss matters about God and about religion. Anyone who wanted to could listen. It was there that Mary and Joseph found Jesus.

He was listening and asking questions from the teachers. He was searching for knowledge like a good student would.

Mary and Joseph were astonished when they saw him. Mary told him they had been looking for him. Jesus replied, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Jesus thought they would know he would be busy doing the work God, his Father, had given him to do.

Jesus knew by this time who he was. But that knowledge did not make him proud. He did not look down on his humble earthly parents, gentle Mary and hardworking Joseph. He went home with them to Nazareth ". . . and was obedient to them. . . " (verse 51). The fact that he was God's Son made him the perfect son of his human parents. He did not feel excused from earthly responsibilities.

Sometimes people wonder why Mary was astonished at Jesus' words in the temple. They wonder why she marvelled at what Simeon said when he saw her baby. Mary knew her baby was God's Son, and he had a special work to do.

We must remember, however, that Mary did not know all that was going to take place. She did not have a clear understanding of how his mission would be fulfilled. She probably had more questions than answers most of the time. She believed, but she did not understand how.

God is good to us when he does not tell all that will happen at one time. It would be too much for us to bear. This was certainly true in Mary's life. It is true for most of us.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Let us begin our study today with a Scripture search of Luke 1 and 2. I shall ask a question, and when you find the verse which answers that question, please stand up. I will call on one of you to read the answer. All answers will be in Luke 1 or 2. You should tell which verse you are reading."

1. What kind of work did Zechariah do? (Luke 1:5)
2. What name did they give their son? (1:13 or 1:63)
3. What happened to Zechariah in the temple? (1:11)
4. What sign did the angel give Zechariah? (1:20)
5. Who else had a visit from an angel? (1:27)
6. What was Mary's answer to the angel? (1:38)
7. What did the angels tell the shepherds? (2:10)
8. After they visited the baby Jesus, what did the shepherds do?

(2:20)

9. Where did Anna, the prophetess, stay? (2:37)

10. What do we know about Jesus' childhood? (2:40)

Interpretation

Say: "The verses that follow tell about an important time in the young life of Jesus. He was 12 years old. At the age of 12, a Jewish boy became a man. He was responsible to obey the law for himself at that time. He was no longer excused because of being a child. One of the requirements of the law was that every man must go to Jerusalem to the feast of Passover.

"After the Passover, the travellers returned to their homes in large caravans. The women usually started earlier and walked slower. The men caught up with them by night, and they camped together.

"It was not until they two groups met that Mary and Joseph knew Jesus was not with them. They returned to Jerusalem to look for him. It was three days later when they found him. He was listening to the teachers and asking them questions.

"Verse 48 says Mary and Joseph were 'astonished' to find him there. Jesus, however, was surprised that they did not know he would be there. He was learning what he could for the work God had given him to do."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We can learn many things about raising children from this Scripture lesson. First, we see that what Jesus knew about God up to this time was what he had learned from Mary and Joseph. He knew that Mary and Joseph considered it important to obey the law, whether it was the law of the land or the law of the Scriptures. When Mary and Joseph planned to go to the feast, Jesus planned to go also. Children see what parents do, and they do the same things. If they see parents going to church, they want to go. If parents read the Bible and pray, children learn that is important. If parents fail to teach their children about God, the children will not love and respect him.

"Jesus learned to obey his parents. Even after he knew he was God's Son, he went back home with his parents and obeyed them. If a child does not obey his parents, he will probably never obey God.

"Jesus amazed the teachers with his questions and understanding. This was not a new subject to him. He had probably heard the Scriptures read at home every day. Parents should read the Bible with their children. They should teach the children that the Bible is God's Word for them. They should learn to love and read

it.

"Ask God to show you what you need to do in your home to raise your children the way he wants you to raise them. Ask him to give you wisdom to teach them about him."

CHAPTER SIX

JESUS LOOKS AT HIS CALLING

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:4-13; Luke 3:1-25; 4:1-13

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 1:4-13

MEMORY VERSE

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members remember that they have a constant helper, the Holy Spirit.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

We will use the Gospels of Mark and Luke for the remaining lessons in this book on the life of Jesus. Today we go back to John who became known as "the baptizer."

John was a man who liked the outdoors. He spent much of his life there living a very simple life. The clothes John wore were simple and from the outdoors. He wore camel's hair and a leather girdle or belt. His food was locusts and wild honey, things he could get easily. He did not bother to cook food and prepare special dishes. He ate what he could get quickly when he was hungry.

John gave his life to preaching and calling people to repent. He baptized those who repented of their sins.

People came in large numbers to hear what John said and to be baptized by him. Why was John able to convince so many people?

First, John sincerely believed and lived his message. His words and his life rebelled against the way people were living. He lived in the wilderness. It was one of the hardest deserts of the world. There he would be able to hear the voice of God speaking to him.

His clothes were not like the fashions of the day. They probably reminded people of the prophets of the past times. They too lived simply. John's food was also the simplest he could get. It was probably the food of the poorest people. These things showed people he was not interested in what he could get for himself.

When John spoke, people listened. He preached by example as well as by words. In every way, John's daily living required the least

possible amount of work. He lived the message he preached.

People listened to John's message because they knew he was telling them what they were waiting for. In their hearts they knew they were sinning against God. John said they should repent and prepare for the coming of the Lord.

People also listened to John because he was so humble. He said he was not even fit to do the work of a slave. The dirt roads in that day were very dusty in dry weather. In wet weather they were rivers of mud. The sandals people wore were just straps of leather which passed between the toes to hold a leather sole to the foot. Taking sandals off a traveller was very dirty work. Only a slave did that work. John said he was not worthy to untie the sandals from Jesus' feet.

John asked for nothing for himself. He had been given a task of preparing the way for Jesus, and he did only that. He baptized, but he told people his baptism was only with water. One was coming who would baptize in the Holy Spirit. Water could cleanse the body, but the Holy Spirit could cleanse the heart of a man or woman. John's baptism was just a sign that the person had repented.

Read verses 9-11. Why did Jesus want to be baptized? He had no need to repent because he had no sin. Jesus was baptized to show that he was beginning the work God had given him to do. He had lived for 30 years in Nazareth and had done his duties well. Maybe he had waited for a sign, and the coming of John was that sign. Jesus knew the time had come for the beginning of his ministry.

This act also identified Jesus with the people who were turning to God. It was as if Jesus joined with the people who wanted to do God's will.

This was a time when God showed that he was pleased with Jesus. He sent his Spirit in the form of a dove to Jesus, and a voice came from heaven saying, ". . . Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Jesus would not have wanted to face his ministry without that knowledge.

The Spirit which God sent also enabled Jesus to do the work ahead of him. His ministry would be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Today we find the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth once again. He is now a grown man, but he is not like we might have expected him to be."

"Let us think of the time when a baby is born into a home in our day. The parents often think of things they hope the child will do or be. What are some of the hopes parents have for their children?" Give opportunities for the members to suggest things. Surely someone will say they hope for the child to get a good education. Someone may suggest they hope the child will accept Jesus and be a fine Christian. Other items might be to own a nice home, have good health, a good job, a nice family, plenty money, and be successful in business. Agree that these are good things to hope for a child to get.

Interpretation

Say: "If Zechariah and Elizabeth hoped for these things, they did not get many of them. Their son was very different from what the world sees as successful. He lived in the wilderness. He wore only camel's hair and a leather belt or girdle. His food was locusts and wild honey." Use your Background Study to help you describe this man. Tell about his work in preaching and his purpose of preparing the way for Jesus. Have a member read Mark 1:4-8.

Talk about why so many people listened to John and accepted his baptism. Emphasize that he wanted no glory for himself. He did everything to point people to Jesus.

Discuss Jesus' baptism and why he was baptized. Have someone read verses 9-11.

Read verses 12-13. Say: "Jesus had just seen God's sign of approval, the dove. Next he was sent into the wilderness. He was tempted and tried there, but he did not sin. The angels helped him. Jesus did not have to fight his battle alone, and we do not either. We have a Helper, the Holy Spirit at all times."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "John's message to all people was 'Repent.' He did not want glory for himself. He tried to lead all men to Jesus. This gives us a picture of our work also. We must try to bring people to Jesus. He can meet their needs, but we cannot. He must get all the glory. He is worthy, and the glory is his.

"We need to remember the humility of John. He said he was not worthy to untie the sandals from Jesus' feet. We too are unworthy, but he lets us work for him. We should be thankful for every opportunity to speak for him.

"Jesus was baptized, and he has told us to be baptized also. We should follow him in baptism so the world will know we belong to him.

"When Jesus went into the wilderness, he faced many temptations. We can read more about them in Luke 4. But Mark 1:13 tells us the

angels helped Jesus during his temptations. We should remember that the Holy Spirit will help us during any kind of trouble we face. He will give us strength to face any trial. We can call on him at any time and he will hear us.

"Let us thank him for being our helper at all times."

CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS DECLARES HIS WORK

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-30

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 4:14-24, 28-30

MEMORY VERSE

". . . The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

TEACHING AIM: I will teach members to trust in Jesus.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth, he went to his hometown, Nazareth of Galilee. It is right that Jesus offered the gospel to his own people first. He also made them decide whether they were going to accept him.

On the sabbath day, he went to the synagogue as his custom was. You will remember that Jesus and his family did everything they could to obey the law. Look back to the time of his birth in Chapter Four of this book to recall some ways they kept the law.

The synagogue was the centre of religious life. There was only one temple, which was in Jerusalem, but the law said where there were ten Jewish families, there must be a synagogue. So in every town and village people met in the synagogue to worship.

There were no sacrifices in the synagogues. They had to go to the temple for that. The synagogue was for teaching.

The service of the synagogue had three parts. Prayer was offered in the worship part of the service. Then there was the reading of the Scriptures. Seven people from the congregation read in the Hebrew language, and it was translated into the Aramaic or Greek languages: Finally, there was the teaching part of the service. There was no one person who did all the teaching. Any person could be asked to speak and the people would discuss. That is how Jesus got his chance to speak. Up to that time Jesus was respected by the people. No one opposed him then.

During those days everything was written on rolls (scrolls). When a person would read the Scriptures, he stood for the reading. Then he handed the scroll back to the person who was in charge of caring for them, and he sat down to teach. The speaker gave the address while sitting. The Rabbis sat to teach.

It is not clear if the Scripture verses to be read in a service were chosen by the head of the synagogue or not. Perhaps the choice was left to the reader.

The verses Jesus read, written in Luke 4:18-19, came from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. The Spirit, mentioned in verse 18, goes back to the time when Jesus was baptized. God sent the Holy Spirit to anoint him for the work he was going to do. A dove came to Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, ". . . Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

Jesus brings good news to the poor. The verses later say to the captives, to the blind and to those who are oppressed. These words speak to people who are spiritually empty. The gospel is for all people whose only hope is that God will forgive them, set them free and heal them. The good news is that God is doing those things.

Jesus came to declare that the time had come. The waiting was over. God had fulfilled his promise to send the Messiah. Jesus was that Messiah. Read Luke 4:21.

At first the crowd "spoke well" of him. They found his words to be gracious. But they did not really understand who Jesus was. To them he was Joseph's son, one of the boys raised in their own place. Perhaps they had seen him playing with their own children. They had watched him learning to do carpentry work as Joseph taught him.

The people had heard of some things Jesus had done in a neighbouring town. He had done some miracles there, and they wanted to see them too.

Jesus said to them, ". . . Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country' (verse 23). This was a proverb of that day. It shows a doctor being told to prove that he can heal by healing himself. Then he can heal other people. This shows us that the attitude of the people was of disbelief.

Jesus then mentioned two people from the Old Testament who refused to perform mighty works for their own people. Elijah and Elisha both did for others what they could not do for their own. This shows that the people actually resisted the message of the Old Testament which they claimed as their own. It also opens the way for the gospel to reach out to Gentiles, and the Jewish people did not like that idea at all. The people Elijah and Elisha had helped were Gentiles. Jesus would also help everyone who would believe, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

The people wanted to destroy Jesus, but he walked through them and escaped miraculously. It was not time for him to be killed, so they could not harm him.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Are some of you living away from home? Or have you ever lived away from where your family lives? What does it feel like to return home? What does the family do to welcome one who has been away?" Let the class discuss this for a few minutes. Then say: "Today we will see what happened to Jesus when he went back home. His welcome was not all pleasant."

Interpretation

Say: "This story for today took place early in the ministry of Jesus. He had done some miracles in neighbouring towns, but at this time he was in Nazareth. He had lived there as a child and had played with the other children. He had helped Joseph in the carpentry shop and had learned to do carpentry work himself. The people knew him well as one of them.

"On the sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue as he always did. They asked him to read and speak there." Use your Background Study to explain about the service of the synagogue. Tell what Jesus read and what happened.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit more than the other writers of Gospels. He pointed out that Jesus was 'full of the Holy Spirit' (4:1), and he was 'led by the Spirit' to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. If Jesus needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit, then as Christians we also should be filled and led by the Holy Spirit.

"Jesus went to the synagogue on the sabbath 'as his custom was' (verse 16) to worship. It should be our custom also to be in God's House on his special day for worship. At times there were things Jesus did not like about the way things were done in the synagogue or in the temple, but he did not stop going there. He went regularly and tried to change the bad things. What were some things he did not like about the temple or synagogue? (pride, bad attitudes about other people like Gentiles and selling sacrifice animals in the temple)

"When Jesus went to Nazareth, he allowed time for the Holy Spirit to prepare the people for his coming. He did not rush in and try to convince people. We too need to ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of people when we are going to witness to them. We cannot change them. We cannot save them. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to do that work. We can only ask the Holy Spirit to use us as he would like.

"The people of Nazareth wanted to see Jesus do miracles. But God's power is not just to be seen. He uses it to help people.

"When we love Christ, we will obey him and follow him. We will accept his work. What is his work? To seek and to save the lost.

"What is our work? To seek the lost and lead them to him."

CHAPTER EIGHT

JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-9; 9:1-6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:4-11

MEMORY VERSE

". . . Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17).

TEACHING AIM: I will lead members to commit themselves to being disciples of Christ.

TEACHING AIDS: A mirror (If you do not have a mirror, pretend to have one.)

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

It is very interesting to study the men Jesus picked to be his first followers. First we should notice some things they were not. They were not from important families. They were not wealthy. They were not well educated. They were simple people, fishermen. Read Mark 1:16-20.

When Jesus called them, they were busy doing their day's work. They were on the Sea of Galilee catching fish and mending nets. Jesus told them to follow him and they would become fishers of men. It was like saying they would bring large numbers of people into the kingdom of God.

We could look at the calling of Amos in the Old Testament. He said, ". . . I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy. . .'" (Amos 7:14-15).

Jesus called all these men from their everyday work and had a special job for them to do. He simply said to them, "Follow me," and they followed. He did not offer them a salary or any benefits. The job he offered required them to give up all their old lives and do what he said.

The two sets of brothers had followed Jesus earlier (John 1:35-42), but this time they were called to follow as disciples. A disciple is a learner. These same men would be called apostles later, those sent on a mission. But before they could be sent, they had to learn.

We read that the event in Luke 5 takes place at the Lake of

Gennesaret. This lake is also called the Sea of Galilee in some places in the Bible. It is the same place where the calling of the fishermen took place.

Luke 5:4-11 gives us an idea of the kind of person Simon was. We see this type of behaviour many times in the life of Simon who later became known as Peter. Simon was surprised by Jesus' command in verse 4. The fisherman said what he thought quickly but did what Jesus said.

Jesus told Simon to push his boat out into deep water and lower his net for a catch. Simon answered that they had worked all night and had caught nothing, but at Jesus' word he would do it. We see here the authority of Jesus. We see also the power of his words. When Simon lowered the net, he caught a great number of fish.

Simon became a disciple of Jesus because of Jesus' call. It was not because Simon was worthy of the position. The word of Jesus was assurance and call to him. The disciple knew his weakness. He knew he was not capable of "catching men" any more than he was capable of catching fish the night before. God's kingdom does not depend on the ability of those who preach and teach. Their effectiveness is already guaranteed by the one who calls them into service. When they do what God calls them to do, they succeed. There is no way to fail when God has planned the work.

The first disciples were fishermen, but that does not mean they had to be poor. They could have had several ships and a good bit of equipment. Perhaps they even had a business with many responsibilities.

But they were willing to leave it all and follow Jesus. One who is called must be willing to leave everything and give himself completely to the new work.

There is one other change we should notice. Look at Jesus' ministry. Before this he had been in the synagogue preaching to people.

(See Chapter Seven of this book.) At this time he had gone out to where the people were. He would still go to the temple and the synagogue, but he would not stop there.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Today we are going to think about the time when Jesus chose his first disciples. He did not choose them quickly. He took time to study each one and to pray for God's leadership.

"Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel came to know Jesus before the events of today's lesson. Let us all turn to John

1:35-51. We won't read all these verses now, but you could read them at home. As we look at those verses we remember that these men had already followed Jesus in one way. They had accepted him as Saviour. Andrew had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah when he told his brother, Simon, about him. But then the men had gone back to their work. Jesus did not ask them to leave their work at that time, and so they returned to it."

Interpretation

Say: "The Bible verses we read first today are from Mark 1:16-20. Who will read those verses for us?" Have one person read.

"Simon and Andrew were brothers. What work did they do?" (They were fishermen.) "They earned their wages by fishing. They got food, clothes and all their needs for themselves and anyone who depended on them by fishing. It was a very important part of their lives.

"Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.' What do you think Jesus meant by 'fishers of men?'" Allow members to discuss this. Be sure they understand that the men would draw men to Jesus and so bring them into the kingdom of heaven.

Ask: "Did the men refuse the call?" (No. The men left their nets and followed Jesus.)

Ask: "What wages did Jesus offer to pay?" (None. He did not mention wages.)

Say: "We see another set of brothers. Who were they?" (James and John) "What did Jesus ask them to do?" (to follow him) "Did they agree?" (yes)

Say: "Now let us turn to Luke 5:4-11." Have someone read these verses. Use your Background Study to tell this story clearly. Answer any questions the members ask.

Application To Our Lives

Pick up the mirror you have brought and show it to the class. Ask them what it is. Look into the mirror and ask what they think you are seeing. (your face) Let some of the members look and ask what they see. They will see their faces.

Say: "Let us ask God to give us a spiritual mirror today. Let us ask him to help us see what he always sees about us. He knows what is inside us. He knows what we are thinking and what we are going to think. He knows what we do and why we do it. Even more important, he knows what we could do and what we could be if we would let him work in our lives.

"We thought about four men today whom Jesus chose to be his

disciples. He also chose eight other men. They preached and taught. They healed people in his name. They helped many people who had needs. But Jesus also needs disciples today who will do what he wants them to do. Some will preach. Others will teach. Some will witness to neighbours. Some will help sick people. All Jesus' disciples today will believe in him and be willing to follow him. They will not be concerned with what it will cost them. They will just obey him.

"Will you bow your heads now and ask God to let you be one of his disciples today. Tell him you will obey him. Tell him you want to do whatever he wants you to do." After a few moments of silent prayer, lead in a prayer of asking God to use each of you.

CHAPTER NINE

POWER OVER DEMONS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:29-39; Luke 4:31-44

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 1:21-34

MEMORY VERSE

"And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him'" (Mark 1:27).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members understand that Jesus has power over all evil.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

We have learned about the synagogue services in other chapters of this book. Look back if you do not remember those lessons.

The services had been almost the same in the synagogues for many years, but it was about to change. Jesus, the Messiah, had come and had begun his ministry.

You will remember that there were many synagogues. There was only one temple, and it was in Jerusalem. But the law required that wherever there were ten families of Jewish people there must be a synagogue. The purpose of the temple service was worship. The synagogue service contained prayer, Bible reading and teaching. There was no one person who did the teaching. There were several officers of the synagogue, but any person who was able could be asked to explain the Scriptures. Any time a visiting teacher was there, he was asked to give the sermon.

Jesus made it a custom to go to the synagogue on the sabbath, and so he was invited to speak many times.

Today's lesson takes place in Capernaum. On the sabbath Jesus went to the synagogue. As usual, he was invited to teach.

When the people heard Jesus' teaching, it was very different from what they had heard all their lives. He taught like someone who had authority. He taught like he knew what he was talking about. His words were not like the scribes, and they were the experts in the law. They began their teaching by saying, "There is a teaching that" Then they would quote the authorities. When Jesus taught, he did not need to quote anyone. He spoke with his own knowledge.

The people were surprised at Jesus' words, but his actions were even more shocking. There was a man in the synagogue who had an unclean spirit. He began to make a noise, and Jesus healed him.

The people of New Testament times believed sincerely in the presence of demons. A person who believed he was possessed by a demon thought he was controlled by a being within himself. Therefore many of these people cried out when they met Jesus. They knew people said Jesus was the Messiah, and they knew the Messiah brought an end to demons. The man with a demon spoke as a demon when he came into the presence of Jesus.

Many people used spells, formulas and rites to drive demons out, but Jesus just spoke a word and the demon was gone.

After the synagogue service, Jesus went with his friends to the home of Peter. Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Jesus went in, took her hand and lifted her up. The fever left her immediately, and she served them.

The things Jesus had done could not be hidden. By evening Peter's house was a busy place. Many, many people came bringing their sick to Jesus. They knew he could heal them.

There is a serious problem here however. People came to Jesus because they wanted something from him. They did not come because they loved him. They did not come to him as the Messiah who would take away the sin of the world. They came for what they could get from him. Is that a problem today? Do some people pray to God only when they have trouble?

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Let us begin today by pretending we are living many years ago. We live in a place called Capernaum. We are Jewish people.

"Today is the sabbath day, and so we will go to the synagogue. There we will hear prayers, Bible reading and teaching. We know the Scriptures say that God will send a Messiah someday. He will take away the sin of the world. But God said that many hundreds of years ago. Many of our people still believe he will do it.

"For today we go to the synagogue. We do not know who will teach the lesson. If a visitor is there who knows about such things, he will be asked to teach. If not, one of the old men will do it. This is the same thing our people have been doing for hundreds of years.

"Now I want you to tell what you think the people really think about going to the synagogue. Do they like going? Is it interesting to them?" Wait for the members to answer. They may say that the people like to go visit with other people. Some may

be tired of the services. Encourage them to say what they think.

Interpretation

Say: "Now let us see what happened. The people went to the synagogue. Yes, there was a visitor. He was Jesus of Nazareth. He was one who had grown from childhood in Nazareth. But people from other places had said he did wonderful things.

"When the service began, Jesus was the teacher. When he opened his mouth, the words were very different from anything the people had ever heard before. The scribes who usually taught always said what someone else said. Jesus taught from his own knowledge. He did not need to quote anyone else. He spoke from his own authority. His words were wonderful. This service was different from any other the people had ever attended.

"Then Jesus heard a man disturbing the service. His cry to Jesus showed he has a demon. Jesus spoke, and the man was healed. No one had ever done that!

"After the service Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter. Several other people went too. When they got there they found Peter's mother-in-law very sick. Jesus took her by the hand and healed her. She began serving them.

"In a little while Peter's house was very busy. People began to bring their sick from everywhere to Jesus. He healed them, and he cast out demons. The demons knew who Jesus was, but he would not let them speak."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Jesus can defeat and destroy all kinds of evil even today. His power has not weakened. Jesus' power is far greater than Satan's power. Jesus can destroy all evil spirits.

"Jesus will clean a life of all evil when the person will let him. Then that person must fill his life with God's Word, with prayer and with the power the Holy Spirit gives him. If he does not do this, the evil will return. A life can not remain empty. It either has God's power or Satan's power.

"Some people still believe that evil spirits can be cast out by charms and witchcraft. This is not true. Satan will not cast out one of his own. Matthew 12:28 says, ' . . . it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons. . . . ' Jesus has power over all the forces of evil.

"God intends for his kingdom to destroy evil and not to ignore it or run away from it. Christians must let God defeat all evil in their lives. Then they can be useful to him.

"Christians are stronger when they stay close to Jesus. Satan

wants to urge Christians to push away from Jesus just a little bit. He wants Christians to compromise. After that, he will encourage the Christian to move even farther. This weakens the Christian and lets Satan come between him and Jesus.

"Will you pray that God will remove all evil from your life? Will you ask him to keep you close to him?"

CHAPTER TEN

POWER OVER SICKNESS AND DEATH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 5:21-43; Luke 7:1-23

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 5:21-43; Luke 7:11-23

MEMORY VERSE

"And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them'" (Luke 7:22).

TEACHING AIM: I will show that Jesus' power and compassion are available to everyone at all times.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

It is very sad when a child is sick. The sick child in today's lesson was 12 years old. That adds sorrow, because in Jewish custom a girl became a woman when she was 12 years and one day old. This girl was at the beginning of womanhood. It was a very sad time for death to come.

Jairus, the girl's father, was a very important man. He was a ruler of the synagogue. This meant he was in charge of managing the synagogue.

He did not usually take part in leading the services, but he was responsible to see that someone else did that work. He was the one who saw that everything ran smoothly. He was one of the most respected men in the community.

But something happened to Jairus when his daughter got sick. He forgot his position in the community. He forgot his pride. He forgot his dignity. He just went to Jesus and fell at his feet and begged him to go to where his daughter was. He wanted Jesus to lay his hands on the little girl, and Jairus knew she would be well. As Jesus and Jairus started toward Jairus' house, a large crowd of people followed them.

There was a woman in the crowd who had a serious illness. She had had a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had suffered much, and she had gone to many doctors. She had used all her money but was no better. She had even gotten worse. It was a very difficult illness to treat. The lady was sick, poor, weak, and unclean according to Leviticus 15:25-27.

The woman had heard about Jesus. She knew he had healed other

people, and she wanted very much to see him. But there were so many people who wanted to go with Jesus, that the woman could not get to him. She thought if she could only get close enough to touch the robe he was wearing, she would be healed.

The woman made her way closer to Jesus, and finally she was able to reach out her hand and touch his robe. Immediately she knew she was healed.

Jesus also knew that something special had happened. He turned to the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" The disciples thought it was strange for Jesus to ask this. They knew so many people were crowding around him. Surely many of them had touched him. How could they tell who had touched him.)

The woman was afraid because she knew what had happened. She, an unclean person, had touched Jesus. She came before Jesus with fear and trembling and fell down before him. She told the whole truth of what had happened. Jesus said to her, ". . . Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (Mark 5:34).

While Jesus was still speaking to the woman, a messenger came to say Jairus' daughter had died. Jesus told Jairus not to worry, but to believe. Read Mark 5:35-43.

The Gospels record two other times Jesus brought the dead back to life. One was Lazarus in John 11:1-44. Another was the son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7:11-17.

Jesus gave the widow's son back to her because of his compassion for her. A widow always has a hard time, but in that day a widow without a son was in a desperate condition. This was the woman's only son. She depended on him for support, protection and to be with her. He was her hope for the future. Without him there would be no grandchildren to carry on the family name.

Luke 7:18-23 takes us back to John. He was in prison for speaking the truth so boldly. His disciples kept telling him what Jesus was doing. What question did John send to Jesus? (verse 19)

Does John's question seem strange to you? Remember that Jesus was not acting even like John expected him to. John thought of judgement on evil. This came from Old Testament passages. Jesus reminded him of other Old Testament verses that spoke of the Messiah's compassion to help with people's needs. Read Isaiah 29:18-19 and 35:5-6. Even John had not understood the Messiah completely.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Mr. David was a very successful business man. He had worked

hard, and his company had made a lot of money. He had a nice house and was able to send his children to the best schools. One of the things Mr. David enjoyed most was his shiny black car. It was so easy to drive across town to take care of his business.

"One day Mr. David and his son were in the car. As they crossed an intersection, an oncoming car failed to give right away. There was a loud crash, and then all was quiet. Mr. David looked at his son, and he lay quietly with his eyes closed. The father tried to speak to the boy, but he would not answer.

"Mr. David got out of the car and waved to stop a car. 'Please help me,' he cried. 'My son is injured and needs to go to hospital. Will you help me?'

"Mr. David waited outside the door of the hospital room. Nothing seemed important except the life of his son. The business, house and car meant nothing now. He could only wait."

Interpretation

Say: "Jesus crossed the sea again and a crowd of people gathered around him as usual. One of the crowd was a man who was a ruler of the synagogue. His name was Jairus.

"Jairus was an important man, and he had an important job. But at that time he seemed to be in distress." Use your Background Study and the Bible verses to help you tell the story of Jairus and his daughter. Tell also about the interruption on their way when the woman came to touch Jesus' robe.

Tell the members of your class to turn now to Luke 7:11-23. Tell about the widow of Nain whose son had died.

Finally, continue in that chapter to explain about John being in prison.

He had preached so boldly and that was the reason for his being there.

John, who had always loved to be outside, was now being kept in a small room. It must have been very hard for him. Your Background Study and the Bible verses tell the story.

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Jesus' power and compassion are always available to those who have faith in him. He meets everyone's needs according to what is best for that one. He does require faith in him.

"Jairus would have turned away in great sadness if Jesus had not said to him, 'Do not fear, only believe' (Mark 5:36). Those words made a great difference to him that day.

"Jesus wants us to believe in him and trust him even in times of great sorrow and doubt. He has power to help us through those times. No one else has that power.

"The thing we must remember is that Jesus demands that we have faith in him before he will meet our needs. Those who do not have faith go away empty. Do you have faith in him today? Do you know for sure that he can meet every need you have? He will give you that faith if you ask for it."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JESUS FORGIVES SIN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 2:15; Luke 7:36-50

MEMORY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members understand that God forgives everyone who will repent and come to him for forgiveness.

TEACHING AIDS: Write on a chalk board or large paper, "Jesus Forgives Sin."

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Galilee was the province in the north of Palestine, and it was on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called most of his disciples in Galilee. He did much of his work there in towns like Nazareth, Cana and Capernaum.

Simon Peter lived in Capernaum, and Jesus often stayed with him and the other disciples. It became the headquarters of his ministry. So Capernaum was at the north of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus performed many miracles there, and he taught truths that changed the way people thought. People had to decide whether or not they would believe in Jesus. They could not be neutral.

Read Mark 2:1-5. Jesus had just returned to Capernaum from preaching in other places in Galilee. Great crowds of people started gathering around him. He preached to them, probably the message in Mark 1:15. Read that verse. They were probably in the home of Peter and Andrew.

While Jesus was preaching there were so many people there that there was no room to stand even at the door to hear. But four men came toward the house carrying a man on a bed. The man was not able to walk.

They went up on top of the house which was flat. That roof was used often as a quiet place to rest. There was a stair on the outside of the house which led up to it. The roof was built in a way that it was easy to do what they had in mind. It would not even damage the house very much. The roof had flat beams laid across about a metre apart. The space between them was filled and packed tight with clay. Sometimes grass even grew on the roof

The men took off part of the roof between the beams. Very carefully they lowered the man on his bed so he was just in front of Jesus. The four men and the paralysed man all believed that Jesus could heal him.

When Jesus saw what was happening, he must have smiled. He said, ". . . My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5).

This may seem odd as a way to begin a cure, but it was good for that day. People believed sin and suffering were closely connected. If a man was suffering, he must have sinned.

As you read on through verse 11, you will understand more of this story.

Luke 7:36-50 gives us another story of how Jesus treated sinners. This takes place in the courtyard of the house of Simon, the Pharisee.

Wealthy people often built around an open courtyard. There would be a garden and perhaps a fountain in there. They could eat their meals there during warm weather.

It was the custom that when a rabbi was at a meal in a place like that, all kinds of people were free to come. They could listen to the teaching. That is how the woman got in there.

When a guest entered a house, some things were always done for him. The host kissed the guest as a sign of respect. The sandals were removed and the dust washed from the feet. (Remember the lesson in Chapter Six, page 21.) The cool water poured over the feet cleaned, cooled and comforted them. Either they burned incense or put a drop of perfume on the guest's head. None of these were done for Jesus.

Guests did not sit at the table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow to leave the right arm free. The feet were stretched out behind the person.

Why did Simon have Jesus in his home? He probably wanted to impress people.

The woman was a bad woman, a prostitute. She had probably heard Jesus from the edge of the crowd. When she saw Jesus, her tears fell on his feet. It was an immodest act for a woman to appear in public with her hair unbound. That shows she had forgotten the crowd and was thinking only of Jesus and her need.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Jesus had been going around to the synagogues in Galilee. He had gone back to Capernaum in the lesson for today. People had

heard what he had been doing in other places, therefore every place Jesus went, there were many people. Some wanted to hear his wonderful teaching. Others hoped to see him do a miracle.

"Jesus did not own a home of his own, so he often went to stay with Simon Peter. Life in Palestine was very public. People did not close their doors unless a person really wanted to be alone. The door was opened in the morning and anyone could go in and out. An open door was an open invitation to come in."

Interpretation

Use your Bible and your Background Study to tell the two stories in the lesson today. Try to make the stories seem very real to your hearers. Explain why making a hole in the roof did not damage the house very much.

Jesus knew there was much illness. He also knew that the greatest source of man's trouble was that his life did not agree with God.

Talk about the belief in those days that when a man was suffering it meant he had sinned. Have someone read John 9:1-3. Explain that we understand now that this is not always the case. Many people suffer because of their sin, but sickness does not always mean sin. Sin does always bring suffering, however.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Mark and Luke show us again that Jesus had great compassion for people. He did not like to see anyone suffer. He healed sick, blind, and lame people to ease their suffering.

"These lessons from the Bible also show us that Jesus knows all that we are thinking. If we look at Mark 2 and read the rest of the story, we learn that some scribes were 'questioning in their hearts' after Jesus said the man's sins were forgiven. They thought Jesus should not say that because only God could forgive sin. They did not know that Jesus was God. Jesus knew about the thoughts of those men and told the paralyzed man to walk so they could see that he had authority. The Luke verses also show that Jesus knew the thoughts of the Pharisee about Jesus." Have someone read verse 39. "Jesus knew also the reason for the woman's tears. He knew she had great sin and she was sorry for that sin. Anyone who comes to Jesus in sorrow for the sin of his life, repenting of his sin and surrendering to Jesus, will get forgiveness. He will not turn anyone away. Jesus never refuses to forgive a person who truly repents and seeks forgiveness."

Ask: "Do you really believe that God will forgive any sin? Is there anything that he will not forgive?" Let members discuss this for a few minutes. Help them understand that the only sin that he will not forgive is refusing to come to him in faith asking for forgiveness. He will not force us to be forgiven, but he will not ever turn away one of his children.

Say: "Let us bow our heads now and talk to God about the sin in our lives. You pray to him quietly and ask him to forgive you. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9)." Close in prayer after the silent prayers.

CHAPTER TWELVE

JESUS CHANGES LIVES

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:34-38; Luke 19:1-10

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 8:34-36; Luke 19:1-10

MEMORY VERSE

"For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

TEACHING AIM: I will show class members that Jesus changes our lives and leads us to new life in him.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Read Mark 8:34-36 carefully. Jesus would pay a high price for the sin of the world. Here he tells what it will cost man to really follow him. Jesus stated very clearly what it would mean. He did not ever say the way would be easy. No one should ever say he did not understand.

The first requirement was to deny self. This does not mean just giving up things. It means giving up self. One must say no to self so he can say yes to God. No longer will the person be able to do whatever he wants to do. The Christian is bought with a high price. He is required to obey Jesus at all times. He must say no to ease and comfort. He must say no to his own desires. His purpose in life is to do what Jesus Christ commands.

The second requirement was to take up his cross. When a person was carrying a cross in those days, it meant he was on his way to be executed. Crosses meant death. The disciple must be willing to be considered a criminal and to face death.

Thirdly, a disciple had to follow Jesus. This meant he would be loyal to Jesus. He would do what Jesus told him to do. These three things were required for a person to be a Christian.

Now look at Luke 19:1-10. Jericho was a very wealthy and important town. It's location gave it a lot of visitors. There was a great palm forest there, and balsam trees grew well. Dates and balsam were important items for world trade. All these things made this a centre of great taxation.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He had reached the top in his work, and he was the most hated man in the district. He was wealthy, but he was not happy. He was lonely, an outcast among his own people. Zacchaeus heard that Jesus welcomed tax

collectors and sinners. Perhaps he would help him!

It took a lot of courage for Zacchaeus to even go into the crowd. Many people would be glad to get a chance to kick or push him. One thing was sure. He could not see. Zacchaeus was a very short man, and no one would make room for him. Then he saw the sycamore tree. It was an easy tree to climb, and Zacchaeus was desperate. Jesus would pass that way, so Zacchaeus climbed the tree. Read verses 5-10 to see what happened.

Zacchaeus did some things to show that his life was changed. He decided to give half of his goods to the poor. He would use his remaining wealth to pay back what he had taken from others. In doing this, he went beyond what was required legally. He wanted to show that he was a changed man. Jesus assured Zacchaeus of his salvation in verse 9. He never turns anyone away who comes to him in sorrow for his sin. Anyone who repents and follows Jesus will be saved.

Luke 19:10 are words of Jesus that mean much to people of all times: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." This was the purpose for Jesus' coming into the world as a man. What is the meaning of the word, lost? It means something is in the wrong place. Something is lost when it gets out of its right place and into a different place. When we find such a thing, we return it to the place where it belongs. A man is lost when he has wandered away from God. He is found when he takes his place as a child who obeys his heavenly Father.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Today we will study two Bible passages, one from Mark and another from Luke. Let us turn to Mark 8:34-36. Jesus had just been talking about the things he would have to suffer for the sin of the world." Have one member read verse 31.

"In these verses he began to talk about the requirements for a person who would follow him as his disciple. We will notice here that Jesus never said the way would be easy. He did not pretend that there would not be any trouble for his followers. He told them clearly what to expect. Let us look in these verses for three things Jesus said his followers must do."

Interpretation

Write on the chalk board (or on a large paper) the three requirements for disciples as you talk about them. Have someone read the three verses, Mark 8:34-36.

Say: "What is the first requirement for one who wants to follow Christ?" As the members answer, write "Deny self."

Ask: "What does it mean to deny one's self?" Be sure the members understand that it does not mean denying things that one needs. It does not mean punishing one's self or doing things to one's body. It does mean giving God first place in your life. No longer is the person concerned first with doing what he wants. He must do what Christ wants. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. . . " (Galatians 2:20).

Ask: "What is the second requirement?" As they answer write "Take your cross." Talk about this requirement, and be sure that they understand that crosses meant death. A person who carried a cross was on his way to death. There was nothing attractive in a cross. Jesus was beginning to talk here about the way he would die for the sin of the world.

Ask: "What is the third requirement?" Write "Follow me." Explain this requirement.

Turn to Luke 19:1-10. Let members help you tell the story of Zacchaeus. Let them recall from other lessons what it meant to be a tax collector. Be sure they explain that Zacchaeus had much money, but he was very unhappy. He had no friends. He was probably the most hated man in Jericho. He had cheated people, and no one trusted him any more. Ask one member to begin the story of Zacchaeus. After a bit ask who would like to continue the story. Use this method to let several people take part if they know this familiar story.

Lead members to tell about the change in Zacchaeus' life. Have them show what he did to prove that he was a different person.

Emphasize that Jesus accepted Zacchaeus when he repented, as he always accepts anyone who comes to him.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Every person is like Zacchaeus was before he met Jesus. He is selfish, corrupt, rebellious, empty, seeking for something, wanting peace but never having it until he comes to Jesus. God has power to change that kind of life into something good. His power makes it possible for a person to have a new life. He can get new ideas of what is important. He can have a new purpose for his life.

"The difference between the old life and the new life is putting God at the centre of the new life and putting self aside. We called this denying self." (Point to the chalk board.)

"The new life in Christ then means to take up our cross. This does not mean to bear some little troublesome condition. It means to be prepared to die for him." (Refer to the board again.)

Continue: "Lastly, we must follow him in whatever he asks us to

do.

Are you prepared to do these three things? Even if you have professed faith in Jesus as your Saviour a long time ago, he may be calling you to walk closer to him. Will you pray to him now telling him you want to be the disciple he wants you to be?"
Close in prayer.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AN ACTIVE, JOYFUL FAITH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 5:27-6:11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 5:27-36

MEMORY VERSE

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

TEACHING AIM: I will help members know the meaning of real joy and peace.

TEACHING AIDS: Every member needs a Bible. Write the title of the lesson on a chalk board or large paper.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The Pharisees had accused the disciples of Jesus of working on the sabbath. The disciples had pulled some grain, husked it between their hands and eaten it. This would have been alright on any other day of the week. It was not an accusation of theft. They said the disciples were working on the sabbath. Read Deuteronomy 23:25.

The Pharisees accused Jesus many times of breaking the sabbath. They had forgotten why the sabbath was given to men. They thought man must be controlled by the sabbath. They had set up many rules to determine when the sabbath was being kept. Jesus observed the sabbath as God meant for it to be observed. He did not feel bound by the rules man had made.

Jesus did not deny the charge. He defended the disciples by talking about something in the life of David. Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. If the Pharisees condemned the disciples, they would also have to condemn David. They did not want to do that. Jesus was showing that man's urgent needs should be taken care of, even on the sabbath. Jesus actually returned the sabbath to its purpose in the beginning. This really means Jesus had authority over the sabbath. The Pharisees did not understand or accept this. They did not accept that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Pharisees did not quit. They continued to watch Jesus to see what they could accuse him of doing. Jesus often healed on the sabbath, and the religious leaders condemned him often. Notice that those who blamed Jesus were never the ones who had physical needs. They were those who had spiritual needs, but they did not know it. Jesus thought of healing people, of forgiving them, of helping them. The Pharisees thought of accusing and killing.

Mark 3:1-6 tells about Jesus going back to the synagogue. That was a brave thing to do with the problems between him and the religious leaders.

In the synagogue there was a man who had a withered hand. Some illness had taken the strength from his hand. Jesus looked at the man and at his accusers. He asked the experts a question: "Is it lawful to do good or to do evil on the sabbath day?" Jesus was thinking of doing good for the man. They were thinking of killing Jesus.

Jesus healed the man with a word. The Pharisees went out and tried to think of a way to kill Jesus.

Now read Luke 5:27-36. Luke shows that Jesus was a friend of sinners. This put him at war with the Pharisees. This clash came after Jesus accepted an invitation to go to Levi's house for dinner. Eating together is a close kind of fellowship. The Pharisees, however, thought this should be done only with those who observed the law.

Levi's guests were of two groups. Neither group met the qualifications of the Pharisees. Tax collectors were outcasts. Remember Zacchaeus in Chapter Twelve. "Sinners" meant the common people who did not usually worry about the religious claims of the Pharisees. Sinners were accepted by the Pharisees only when they repented and became Pharisees.

The religious leaders were trying to be saved by separating themselves from other people. Jesus brought people together and met their needs. He talked about people who need a physician. They are not, people who are well, but people who are sick.

Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know that their own attitude toward sinners was sinful. Later he told the parable of the prodigal son and his jealous older brother. Read Luke 15:11-32. The Pharisees said Jesus was a sinner because he met with sinners. Jesus said they were sinners because they refused to do so.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "We finish studying this book today, and we want to learn about 'An Active, Joyful Life.' What does it mean to be happy (joyful)?" Let members discuss this a few minutes. Perhaps some will mention having things that make life easy. If so, ask, "Why do we sometimes read of people who are very rich being very sad and lonely? Sometimes we even hear about their taking their own lives." Wait for discussion.

Emphasize that things do not make people happy. They must have peace in their hearts to know real joy.

Say: "We study today about some people who thought they could get salvation by keeping many rules. They were called Pharisees."

Interpretation

Say: "Please open your Bibles to Mark 2:23." Have four people read three verses each, finishing with Mark 3:6.

Ask the following questions, letting the people use their Bibles to find the answers.

What day did this story take place? (sabbath)

Where were Jesus and the disciples? (walking through grain fields)

What did the disciples do? (plucked ears of grain to eat) Explain that this was not a problem. It was alright for hungry people to eat some of the grain as they passed through the field.

Why did the Pharisees accuse the disciples? (working on the sabbath)

What was Jesus' answer? (verse 25-28)

Now tell the story of Jesus' healing the man who had a withered hand.

Help members understand that Jesus met the needs of people. He said the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.

Now turn to Luke 5:27-36. Use your Bible and your Background Study to talk about the feast in Levi's house. Talk about the attitude of the Pharisees.

Application To Our Lives

Explain that the Pharisees were trying to get salvation by obeying many laws. Jesus wanted people to be free in him. He did not want people to break God's laws, but he did not want them to make up other laws to bind them. Jesus wanted people to have abundant life. He said in John 10:10, ". . . I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." That means life would be full and pleasant.

Say: "Man often likes a religion of keeping rules. Obeying laws helps man think he has done something to earn salvation. Jesus said this was not the way a man or woman could be saved. It is only by his name that we can be forgiven of our sin. Acts 4:12 says, '. . . there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'

"Christians should do some things. They should not do other

things. But these things do not make people Christians. They only help people live a better life as a Christian. When a person receives Jesus in his heart, he gets peace and joy. As he walks with him every day, he develops a stronger faith. Will you ask him to strengthen your faith right now? Ask him to give you joy and peace." Close in prayer.