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Poetry in the Bible

Teacher

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
FOR ADULTS

YEAR 2-QUARTER 3-(REWRITTEN)

POETRY IN THE BIBLE
TEACHER'S LESSONS

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HOW THE TEACHER SHOULD PREPARE TO TEACH EACH LESSON

1. Read all the Background Scriptures. These will help you to know all the events related to today's lesson.
2. Read again the Scriptures Used in Today's Lesson. These are the verses you will discuss as you teach.
3. Read your Teaching Aim. Think about your students and how this aim applies to them. Think about the aim as you prepare to teach. This is what you want to accomplish through your teaching of this lesson.
4. Read the Central Truth of the lesson. This is the basic truth that this lesson will teach your pupils. Think about it and apply it to your own life. Then think about your students and how it is important for them to know this truth.
5. Memorize the memory verse for the day. This will encourage your students to memorize it, too.
6. Read and study all the material in the section called Getting Ready to Teach. You will not read this material to your pupils. It is background material for you, the teacher. It will help you understand the meaning of the verses. It will give you the background knowledge necessary for teaching the lesson.
7. If possible, read the lesson from the student's book as well. This will help you know what he will know as he comes to class. His divisions are like yours, although the information he is given is not usually just the same.
8. Study the Teaching Plan in your lesson. If you follow this plan, it will tell you just how to lead your class. It will make your job much easier. The students will be sure to learn the central truth of the lesson.

9. Look at the items listed under Helps for the teacher. Try to use these. They will be mentioned in the teaching plan. They will add variety and interest to the lesson. NOTE: When you are told to use a chalk board, you can use paper and a marker or pen instead.

10. Let students read Bible passage whenever possible. If your students cannot read, you will need to read the verses to them.

11. On Sunday morning follow this plan:

1. Welcome members and visitors.
2. Pray for the sick and troubled and for the class. (Use 2-3 minutes)
3. Teach the lesson (Use 40-45 minutes.)
4. Hear and answer questions from pupils (Use 5-10 minutes)
5. Close in prayer.

Lesson 1-Songs of PraiseTeacher's LessonBackground Scripture: Psalm 8, 24, 33, 36, 47Scripture for Today's Lesson: Psalm 33Memory Verse: "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live." Psalm 146:1.Central Truth: God is worthy of man's praise.Teaching Aim: To give students reasons to praise GodHelps for the Teacher: A large drum, three slips of paper with scripture references and questions (see Teaching Plan), pencils, chalk board and chalk, hymn books.Getting Ready to Teach:

We made our camp by the lake shore one night. In the distance I heard the steady beating of a drum. I looked at the twinkling stars. They seemed to be dancing to the rhythm of the drum. The waters of the lake were moving with its beat and the creatures of the night joined in with song. The beauty of nature around me seemed to be pulsing to the rhythm of the drum. I was as though I could feel the heart beat of God.

When I read the poetry of the Bible I have this same feeling - - that I can feel the heart beat of God. The beauty, rhythm and truth of the words make God more real to me than any other part of the Bible.

In this book we will study the poetry of the Bible: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and The Songs of Solomon. They are in the centre of the Bible just as our heart is in the centre of our body. They sing and dance to the heart beat of God and help us know him in a very personal way.

We begin our study with the book of Psalms. They tell of God's glory and man's response to him. The Psalms were written as songs of worship. The Jews sang them to show they knew God was with them.

The Psalms were written by different writers. They are hymns but many are prayers, too. The writers talked to God. They praised him for his mighty acts, his unchanging love, his faithfulness to his people, his provision for their needs, and his protection from their enemies. They show man's response to God - from deepest despair to highest praise.

The poetic language helps us understand the feelings of the writer. It helps us respond to God in the same way the writer has responded.

Praise the Lord: Read Psalm 33:1-5.

Today we will examine a Psalm of praise to God. As you study this psalm look for words that tell you what God is like. See what things he has done. Notice how the writer responded to the characteristics of God. Then join your heart with his in praise to God.

Praise to the Lord of Creation: Read Psalm 33:6-9.

God is worthy of praise for he created all things. He created it all by his word- a whisper (the breath of his mouth) - not a shout. His power is such that he can control all the waters of the earth - the oceans, lakes and rushing rivers. He sends the rain or withholds it as he wishes. He does this as easily as you put water from the tap into a bottle.

God piled up the waters of the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross to escape their Egyptian enemy. This song reminded the people that God had done this. It showed God's great power and his care for his people. The people responded to God with praise.

Praise to the Lord of History: Read Psalm 33:10-17.

God did not create the world and then retire. He is an active God. He has a plan for his creation. He will not allow evil to destroy it. He helps his people who are faithful to him and has done so through the years. Many of his mighty acts on behalf of his people are recorded in the Bible. History

books tell how he has continued to be faithful to his people. Strong armies, mighty strength or great wealth cannot save a nation or a man. But God will save those who trust him with faithful hearts. God's constant care for his people makes him worthy of praise.

Praise to the Lord of Life: Read Psalm 33:18-19.

When you think of God as the God of Creation and history - where do you see yourself? Are you not a part of his creation? Are you not subject to his power and authority? He sees all. His eye is upon you. He has given you physical life. He is the source of eternal life. He can save you from death.

He sees your heart. This gives you reason to obey him. It also gives you hope. He can see whether or not you trust him to be your Lord and Saviour. If you do, you can know that he will give you eternal life. That is reason to praise him, indeed.

Praise the Lord in Community: Read Psalm 33:20-21.

If you praise God as your Lord and Saviour, you are not alone. You are part of the family of God. God is pleased when his children come together to praise him.

You gain strength and joy when you worship God together. You also cause others to become aware of him. He gives you his grace in return.

Praising God should be the first rule of your life. It puts all else in the right order. As you praise God for who he is, you begin to see who you are. It helps you to keep your heart right. When you see God in all his power and goodness you can see your own sin. You can confess and he will forgive you. Then you will have even more reason to praise him. And so it goes. The rhythm of this great love of God - always pulsing out and drawing man back to himself. Do you see it in creation? Do you hear it in the Psalms? Do you feel it in your heart?

Teaching Plan:

Ask the class to close their eyes and put their fingers in their ears. Beat on a large drum. Then ask: "Could you hear the drum? Did you feel something?" (They should have felt the vibration of the drum.) Say: "Today we begin a study of poetry in the Bible. Poetry has a way of making people aware of their feelings, just as you felt the beat of the drum. This poetry is in the Bible to help you experience God in the depths of your heart where your feelings are."

Say: "Our study begins in Psalms." Explain what psalms are.

Ask: "What is praise?" (Answer: To speak with approval or show honour to someone.) Be sure to point out it is something you say or do.)

Ask: "When do you praise someone?" (Answer: When he has done something good.) Ask: "How do you praise someone?" (Answer: By telling him he did well, shaking his hand, telling others, etc.) Ask: "Why do you praise another?" (Answer: To show appreciation, make them feel good, etc.)

Tell each one in the group to praise the one beside him. (For example: "Your friendliness makes me feel good." "I like your hair-style," "You are a good cook," etc.)

Say: "Now let us think about praising God." Divide the class into three groups. Give each a pencil and a paper with scripture reference and questions. Tell them to list their findings.

Group 1: Read Psalm 8. Group 2: Read Psalm 24. Group 3: Read Psalm 47. Write these questions on each paper: 1. What reasons are given for praising God? 2. Who is to praise God? 3. How is God praised?

After ten minutes call the groups together and list answers on board or paper under these headings: Reasons: defeats enemy, made heavens, stars, moon, made man, gave man right to rule creation, strong, mighty,

made earth and all in it, gives salvation, Lord of all creation. Who: children, those with clean hands and hearts, those faithful to him, all people, the righteous, all inhabitants of the world. How: clap hands, shout songs of joy, sing psalms, hold him in high esteem.

Read Psalm 33 aloud. Add other things to the lists. Reasons: God is good, faithful, loves the righteous, loves justice, reveals himself to man, sees all, delivers soul from death, keeps us alive in famine, helps his people. How: with musical instruments, with a new song.

Say: "Now we will praise God." Repeat the memory verse together two or three times. Then let students say it one by one if they want to.

Invite students to praise God in sentence prayers. (eg. "I praise you for your love," etc.) You begin. Let others follow.

Pass out hymn books. Look for hymns of praise. Sing two or three.

Apply this Lesson to Life:

Say: "The writers of the Psalms had many reasons to praise God. We do, too. This week read from Psalms every day. Open your heart to receive God's blessings. Then give him praise as you see and accept these blessings. Remember, praise is something you say and something you do. Tell God how wonderful he is. Tell others how good he is to you. Sing his praises. Come to the church to praise him with other believers.

"Remember to praise those around you for the good they do. Live a life that is pleasing to God and to others. Let your life be a statement of praise to God."

Close with prayer that each will be faithful to praise God each day.

NOTE: Enlist 6 students to help you with the illustration used at the beginning of next week's lessons. Tell them the words they will need to say.

Things to Think About and Do:

Poetry expresses thoughts in a rhythmic and musical way. God often expresses himself in his creation with rhythm and music.

I. Think about rhythm in God's creation.

1. The rising and setting of the sun.
 2. The phases of the moon.
 3. The seasons of the year.
 4. Planting and harvest.
 5. The working of the body. Others? _____
-

These things show God can be trusted. Praise him for that.

II. Think about music in nature:

1. The songs of birds.
 2. The wind in trees and grass.
 3. Rain dripping from a roof or tree.
 4. The voices of happy children. Others? _____
-

These things show the beauty of God's creation. Praise him for that.

III. Read the Scripture to Study This Week each day. Make a list of all the reasons you can find to praise God. Praise him for them. Tell someone else the reasons you have found.

Scriptures to Study This Week:

Sunday: Psalm 8.

Friday: Psalm 103.

Monday: Psalm 20.

Saturday: Psalm 147.

Tuesday: Psalm 36.

Wednesday: Psalm 46.

Thursday: Psalm 84.

Lesson 2: Songs of LamentTeacher's LessonBackground Scripture: Psalm 40, 42, 51, 64, 77, 85.Scripture for Today's Lesson: Psalm 42:1-3, 6-7; Psalm 51:1-4; Psalm 85:1-6; Psalm 83:1-4; Psalm 64: 1-6.Memory Verse: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God." Psalm 42:11.Central Truth: God is the answer to man's problems.Teaching Aim: To help students find verses in the Bible to lift him up when he is unhappy.Helps for the Teacher: 6 baskets or bags for helpers, "burdens" written on 6 pieces of paper, four papers with topics and scripture references (see Teaching Plan), chalk board and chalk, sign which says "GOD".Getting Ready to Teach:

I was surprised by something a friend told me not long ago. He had spent some days with pastors and church leaders on a retreat. During a time of Bible study and sharing several in the group confessed to feelings of deep depression. In fact, more than one said he had thought of killing himself.

Committed Christians do not escape the unpleasant parts of life. Each of us has had or will have times when we feel sad. About one-third of the Psalms are laments or sad songs. As you look at some of these laments, compare the poets' feelings to feelings you have known. There is comfort in knowing another has shared your feelings. You can see also how the writers overcame their unhappy feelings.

Distress Read Psalm 42:1-3,6-7.

This Psalm was written by one who felt separated from God. He may have been in exile far from Jerusalem and the temple where he used to

worship God. He compared his longing for God to a deer longing for water in time of drought. Without water no man nor beast can survive. The poet felt it was as important to have contact with God as to drink water.

You saw last week that the presence of the living God was an important part of the Hebrew worship experience. Because he could not detect God's presence with him the poet was desperate. He was crying. He was so filled with grief that he could not eat nor sleep. Others saw his sad state and mocked him and his God.

Then the writer remembered his past experience with God in his homeland. He must have remembered God's promise to be with his people wherever they were.

Then his longing was satisfied in an abundant way. He had asked for a "drink of water." But God came to him in a mighty waterfall - as ocean waves. He was filled and covered with the sense of God's presence.

Your Sin: Read Psalm 51:1-4.

Often separation from God comes from sin in your life. You must face the fact of your own sin. God is holy. He cannot accept you with sin in your life. But he is gracious. He is able to remove your sin. If you confess he will forgive you, cleanse you and make you fit to come into his presence.

Here again the poet made a desperate plea to God. He was aware of his own sin. He knew even though his sin may be against another person, it was also against God. It was against God because God set the rules for living. When we break the rules we wrong God. Because God made the rules, he has the right to judge those who break them. He withdraws his presence from them. Life becomes miserable. Confession brings cleansing and restores fellowship with God. Then peace and joy return.

The Sin of Your People: Read Psalm 85:1-6.

There are times when God's people, as a group, need his forgiveness and direction. As a Christian, you are a member of God's family - a part of his body. You should feel a unity with God's people so that your prayers on their behalf are as strong as your prayers for yourself.

God expects you to bear one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2) But as you sing these sad songs on behalf of your people, remember the love, power and grace of the God to whom you are singing. It will lighten your load to know he carries it with you.

Enemies: Read Psalm 64:1-6; 83:1-4;

Another cause for a heavy heart is having enemies. Perhaps you do not have enemies, but you may have problems with someone. When your relationships are not right, you cannot be completely happy. Sometimes the problem is because you have not obeyed God's rules for good relating. Other times you have problems because you have obeyed God but his enemies oppose you.

In Psalm 64, an individual cries out to God for protection from his enemies. He calls on God to take his side. In Psalm 83, the enemy is opposing the people of God. There are times when Christians are opposed and persecuted as a group, especially when they live in an area that is largely pagan. If you have problems with people, you can identify with the psalm writers.

Help: Read Psalm 42:11. Memory Verse.

What can you do when you are feeling sad? The memory verse tells you. God is our helper. You need to remember this when you are unhappy.

Every Psalm of lament contained a solution to the psalmist's problem. Once he remembered who God is, he began to cheer up. Once he confessed

his sin, he began to sense God's presence. Then he was able to give his burden over to God with confidence that God was able to help.

As you read the Psalms of lament you may begin to see some of your own problems. You will also find the help you need. Then you will be able to praise God once again.

Teaching Plan:

Before class, (at the end of last week's lesson or during the week) ask six people to walk into class carrying baskets or bags that appear to be very heavy. Tell them to groan or cry or in some way to show great distress. Ask each one as he enters, "What is the matter?" Label each load with one of the following answers: 1) "My burden is heavy. I cannot seem to find God." 2) "I am weighted down by sin and I am miserable." 3) "No one else in my family is a Christian and I am concerned about that." 4) "I carry a heavy load of grief because of strife with another person." 5) "This burden is the problems of my church in the community." 6) "I do not know. I just feel burdened. I cannot say why." They should read the answer and be seated.

Say: "All these people are feeling badly. They are weighted down by their problems. They are unable to praise God. Perhaps some of you understand how they feel. You have felt the same way. In the Psalms you find expressions of such feelings. They are called "songs of lament." Today we will study some of these sad songs." Briefly share with the class what you learned in Getting Ready to Teach. Read each scripture reference and explain in your own words.

Say: "One way to deal with your problems is to see what the Bible says. Another is to talk to someone who has or has had a similar problem. Today we will do that. Choose which group you want to join. These are the groups." Name these topics: Group 1: Distress and Loneliness: Psalm 42.

Group 2: Sin: Psalm 51. Group 3: Problems with another person: Psalm 83.

Group 4: Persecution because of your faith: Psalm 64.

Be sure there are at least two in each group. Give them a paper with their scripture. Write the following instructions on the board so all can see:
1) Read the Psalm. 2) Identify the cause for the lament. 3) Find the solution to the problem. 4) Discuss some of your similar problems in light of what the psalmist says.

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Ten minutes before class time is over, call the class together. Ask for things they found to do when they are sad. List these on chalk board.

Possible Answers: 1) Call on God. 2) Tell him your problem. 3) Ask for his help. 4) Think about God, his goodness, power, justice, love. 5) Remember how God has helped you in the past. 6) Confess sin. 7) Ask for forgiveness and cleansing. 8) Ask God to avenge your enemies. Do not try to do that yourself. 9) Pray for your enemies to know God. 10) Trust God. 11) Praise God.

Say: "How do we get rid of those heavy burdens?" (Answer: Bring them to God and trust him to help you.) Ask those who brought in the "heavy loads" at the beginning of class to bring them forward and put them under a sign labeled "GOD."

Close with prayer that your students will be faithful to bring their cares to God. Thank him for being faithful to help.

NOTE: For next week, invite an older respected member of your church to give a short testimony about how God has led him and helped him. Be sure to ask him to mention things that he thanks God for.

Things to Think About and Do:

The following are things that can cause feelings of sadness or despair. Match the problem to the Psalm. Then read further and write the solution to the problem.

sin old age death temptation unfaithful friend fear
ungodly enemy

1. Problem (Psalm 41:9-12) unfaithful friend
Solution (Psalm 41:12) be faithful to God
2. Problem (Psalm 43:1-2) ungodly enemy
Solution (Psalm 43:3-4) read the Bible, go to church
3. Problem (Psalm 51: 1-2) sin
Solution (Psalm 51:3, 6-7) confess
4. Problem (Psalm 71:9-11) old age
Solution (Psalm 71:14-19) remember and praise God and hope
5. Problem (Psalm 56:3) fear
Solution (Psalm 56:3) trust God
6. Problem (Psalm 49:7-9) death
Solution (Psalm 49:15) God will save you
7. Problem (Psalm 142:3b-4) temptation
Solution (Psalm 142:1-3a) call on God for help

Scripture to Study at Home:

Sunday: Psalm 34

Monday: Psalm 40.

Tuesday: Psalm 77.

Wednesday: Psalm 58.

Thursday: Psalm 123.

Friday: Psalm 127.

Saturday: Psalm 137.

Lesson 3: Songs of Faith and ThanksgivingTeachers' Lesson

Background Scripture: Psalm 18, 23, 62, 66, 67, 75, 92, 111.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Psalm 23:1-6; 66:13-20; 111:1-9.

Memory Verse: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 118:1.

Central Truth: True faith in God results in thanksgiving to him.

Teaching Aim: To help student see the relationship between faith and thanksgiving.

Helps for the Teacher: Special guest to give testimony (See Teaching Plan)

Getting Ready to Teach:

"Thank you." These are two of the most important words in any language. A student may say to me, "You are a good teacher." That is praise. In response, I feel good about myself. But if the student says, "Thank you for teaching me," I feel good about myself and the student. He is expressing his faith in me as his teacher. We experience the joy that comes from a good personal relationship.

In this lesson we will study Psalms of faith and thanksgiving. We will see how faith in God leads to thanking him.

Affirmation of Faith: Read Psalm 23:1-6.

These may be the best known verses in the Bible. Many people have learned them. They are words of peace and comfort which come from one who had a firm faith in God. The author may have been David, Israel's great king who began life as a shepherd boy.

Many Old Testament writers referred to God as the Shepherd of Israel. The poet here compares God's care for his people to a shepherd's care for his sheep. David knew well the work of a shepherd.

Sheep are weak and simple animals. Their well-being depends on the shepherd's faithful care. They must trust the shepherd. The poet's relationship to God was based on trust. He thought how God cared for him in peaceful times and troubled times. God's faithfulness in the past assured him God could be trusted in the future. God not only cares for his people but he leads them in the right way. God is faithful, therefore he can be trusted. You can obey one you trust, knowing he will continue to care for you.

The way God leads us is not always easy. But he keeps his followers safe. Enemies cannot harm them. God's power and love protect his own. God gives many blessings. They are not just for this life but forever.

The poet felt very close to God. He was secure in his faith. He was not a distant worshipper or even an honoured guest at God's table. He was a beloved member of God's family. Such faith, affirmed by a faithful God, leads to expressions of thanksgiving and praise.

Personal Thanksgiving: Read Psalm 66:13-20.

Here the poet thanked God for answering his prayer and saving him from his enemies. He sang a hymn of praise to God and recalled how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt long ago. He said sometimes God may allow his followers to endure hardships. But, if they remain faithful to him, he always delivers them. This had been his personal experience and he felt compelled to express his thanks to God.

True thanksgiving is more than saying certain words. In fact, some languages have no words for "thank you." Thanksgiving is an attitude of the heart. It involves action.

Once I gave a poor man money to buy food for his family. He said, "Thank you." But he spent all the money on beer for himself.

Another time I gave my house helper extra money to buy medicine for her mother. She showed her thanks by working extra hours that week. Each one's actions showed the true attitude of his heart. Which one was really thankful?

The poet went to church and paid his vows. This means he probably had promised God a special sacrifice if his prayers were answered. The Old Testament believers often sacrificed animals to God to praise him or pay for their sins. Today we no longer make and pay such vows. Jesus made the sacrifice for our sins. Faith in him is all that God requires. Verse 18 clearly states that sin in your heart hinders prayer. But confession of sin and acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice causes God to hear and answer you. This is truly a reason to thank God.

The poet also praised God before others and told of God's faithfulness to him. Verse 17 says he praised God even before his prayer was answered. He knew God could be trusted. But he did not fail to thank God publicly after the prayer was answered.

Community Thanksgiving: Read Psalm 111:1-9.

The Israelites sang this hymn in worship services to remind them of God's goodness, faithfulness and mercy to them. It reminded them that he was fair in all his dealings. He always provided for their needs.

When they gathered for worship, they recalled God's goodness and told of new mercies. Their hearts filled with thanksgiving when they realized his faithful relationship with each one. It gave them courage to continue trusting him and praying to him. Their faith grew.

The memory verse helps us remember why we owe thanksgiving to God. The Bible says thanksgiving should be a part of all our prayers.

(Philippians 4:6) It will remind you of God's power and goodness and will make your faith stronger. Most of all, it will please God.

Teaching Plan:

Early in the week, invite an old, respected member of your church to come to your class Sunday to give a brief testimony of his faith in God. Tell him or her to be sure to include reasons for being thankful to God.

Open the class by reading Psalm 23 aloud. Tell your class about this psalm using background from Getting Ready to Teach. You may want to read to your class from this section.

Then introduce the one who will give the testimony. Thank the speaker when he has finished. Review what he said and how he has been thankful to God in his lifetime.

Discuss the difference between thanksgiving and praise. Use the example of teacher and student in Getting Ready to Teach.

Read Psalm 66:13-20 aloud. Ask: "Why is the poet thankful?" (Answer: God answered his prayer.) Re-read verse 17. Ask: "How did he pray?" (Answer: Aloud and he praised God) Ask someone to read Philippians 4:6 aloud. Say: "Thanksgiving was an element of prayer in New Testament times, too. It is still important today." Ask: "How did the poet show his thanks to God?" (Answer: 1) went to church; 2) made an offering (explain Old Testament sacrifice from Getting Ready to Teach) 3) told others of God's goodness.

Ask: "What condition was needed for God to answer the prayer?" (Answer: No sin in his heart.) Ask: "How do we remove sin from our hearts?" (Answer: Confess and God will forgive and remove it because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.) Say: "When sin is gone, you can give thanks freely, even before your prayers are answered."

Read Psalm 111:1-9 aloud. Explain the benefits of Community Thanksgiving. (see Getting Ready to Teach) You may want to read some of this section to your class.

Apply the Lesson to Life: Read Psalm 118:1, Memory Verse.

Read the memory verse. Then say it together. Ask: "What do you have to be thankful for?" Encourage students to think of many things. Ask: "How can you show your thanks to other people?" Discuss. (Responses should include 1) saying thank you; 2) returning a kindness; 3) good use of a gift, etc.) "How can you show your thanks to God?" Discuss. (Responses should include: 1) Say thank you; 2) be faithful and obedient; 3) Go to church; 4) tell others what he has done for you.)

Say: "This week be sure to thank people who help you or are kind to you. Remember the memory verse. Also thank God every day for his blessings to you. Tell others of his goodness to you. If you remember God's blessings to you, your faith will increase. You will also remember to say, "Thank you, God."

Close with prayer.

Things to Think About and Do:

I. Read Psalm 27. Write a reason for faith from each verse

1. verse 1: (God gives light, salvation and Strength)
2. verse 2: (God defeats his enemies)
3. verse 4: (experienced God in worship)
4. verse 9: (God has helped him)

Have you had similar experiences with God? What other reasons can you give for your faith?

II. From Psalm 66:13-20, list ways the poet expressed his personal thanksgiving to God.

1. (went to church)
2. (gave an offering to God)
3. (told others what God did for him)

Think about how your personal thanksgiving to God compares to the poet's.

III. Write down some blessings for which you are thankful. Then thank God for them.

Material

Spiritual

IV. Write the name of someone to whom you will show thanks this week.

Scriptures to Study This Week:

Sunday: Psalm 18.

Monday: Psalm 62.

Tuesday: Psalm 67.

Wednesday: Psalm 75

Thursday: Psalm 92.

Friday: Psalm 111.

Saturday: Psalm 118.

Lesson 4: Songs of the LawTeacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Psalm 1, 119.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Psalm 119:105-112; Psalm 1:1-3.

Memory Verse: "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord." (Psalm 119:1)

Central Truth: The key to a happy life for the Christian is to obey God's word.

Teaching Aim: To help the student see the importance of Bible study.

Helps for the Teacher: Lists of scripture references and topics (see Teaching Plan) pencils, chalk board and chalk, hymn books. A few grain seeds.

Getting Ready To Teach:

God planned for trees to grow up and rain to fall down. He ordered day to follow night in a way that can be measured. Stars move in planned courses. Seeds and animals reproduce their own kind. The world of nature functions by certain laws. God made these laws to govern his world. At creation nature began to obey the laws of God and there was beautiful music. (Job 38:7)

When God made men, he made rules for them, too. But men have rebelled. They want to do things their own way. The result is disaster and sorrow which hurt the law-breaker and all around him.

Yet it is possible for man to live in harmony with God. The Psalmists knew the secret which they revealed in beautiful songs. Today we will study some of these songs of the Law.

Light From the Law: Read Psalm 119:105-110.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. It speaks on a most important subject - the Law of God. We think of law as official rules. In the Bible God gives us his rules for living. "Law" in the Bible can also mean God's

teaching. God's guidance, even God's revelation. In verse 105 it is called "God's word." God uses his Word, the Bible, to teach us, to guide us and to reveal himself to us.

The poet describes God's Word as "light." It is impossible to find your way in the dark. You must have some light to guide you. Even a small light can show where to take the next step. Life is often compared to a journey. You must stay on the right path or you will become lost. The Bible is the light which will keep you on that path.

The poet has made a commitment. You need help to stay on the path. God provides the light you need. But you must use it. A torch on the shelf at home will not help you on the road. An unread Bible will not help you in life's journey.

God is described as light. His Word can bring you into the light of his presence. The Bible also reveals Jesus as the "light of the world." If his light is in you, it lights up his Word so that you can understand it.

Love of the Law: Read Psalm 119:111-112.

The path to eternal life is not easy. But with God's light to guide you, you will be able to spot the enemy and avoid dangers. When danger is near and enemies threaten, the poet knows where his help lies. He does not blame God for his troubles. Instead, he clings closer to God and trusts him to lead him safely through. He is faithful to God's law. He not only reads the Bible and learns what is written there, but he does what it tells him. Obedience brings protection.

The writer declares he will continue to study God's Word and act on it. He knows if he does, he will inherit the blessings God has promised the faithful. He sees the law as more than a set of rules. It is a way to God himself. Therefore, he loves God's Word because God himself is in it.

Happiness for Those Who Obey the Law: Read Psalm 1:1-3.

There are two kinds of people in the world - the wicked and the righteous. The righteous want to know God and obey him. The wicked ignore him or rebel against him.

The happy man is the righteous man. He tries to follow God's directions. His friends are others who follow God. He spends his time listening to God rather than gossiping or complaining. He knows God's Word. He keeps it in his heart. He thinks about what it means. It influences everything he does.

The poet compares the righteous man to a tree which grows at a place where two rivers flow together. The water supply is always present. This tree did not just come up from a random seed. It was planted. It was put there by someone who knew it could grow there. The roots could reach down and draw life from the water. God wants us to plant ourselves in his Word. If we reach into his Word, we will find what we need to live.

The well-watered tree does not die. It produces fruit as God designed it to do. A man who feeds on the Word will lead a life that bears spiritual fruit -- "love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22) Someone with those qualities will know the joy of pleasing God and men.

God's laws are designed to protect people. If they are obeyed, life is more pleasant for everyone. The memory verse assures us that God will count us righteous if we seek to know and follow his law. It shows us the best way to live. In it we find true happiness and reason to sing.

Teaching Plan:

Ask: "Can you tell the two kinds of men the Bible tells about?"

(Answer: the wicked and the righteous) Say: "The righteous man is like

someone who wants to go to the next village. He gets on the path and follows it. But the wicked are like the chaff of wheat." Hold up some grain. Crush it and hold it in the palm of your hand. Blow. Ask: "What happened to the chaff?" (Answer: it blew away) Say: "It has no use or destination."

Say: "Psalm 1 says the righteous man is a happy man. He is not sinless but he wants to try to please God. The wicked man does not want to please God" Ask: "How can you know how to please God?" (Answer: The Bible tells you.) Read Psalm 119:1, the memory verse, aloud. Say: "The 'blameless' are the righteous. They walk in the law." Ask: "What is the law?" (Answer: See Getting Ready to Teach, "Light From the Law.") Ask: "How do you 'walk in the law'?" (Answer: Obey) Say: "It is impossible to please God if we do not obey him." Ask: "Is it easier or more difficult to obey God today than when the Bible was written?" Discuss. Ask: "Is it possible to obey God's law?" (Answer: Yes, with the light of God's Spirit.) Ask: "How do we get this light?" (Answer: Faith in Christ brings his Spirit into our hearts.) Say: "Psalm 119 shows us how the Bible is a good path to follow. It also shows us how to follow it."

Divide the class into 3 groups. Give each group a topic and scripture references as follows. Tell them to write down what they find. After fifteen minutes come together and write on chalk board what they found.

TOPIC 1. What the Word Gives Me: Psalm 119:1, 11, 14, 21, 28, 34, 37, 41, 42, 43, 50, 66. (Answers: verse 1, the blameless way, v 11, answer to sin, v 14 delight, v 21 assurance evil will be punished, v 28 strength in sorrow, v 34 understanding, v 37 life, v 41 love, v 42 an answer for those who taunt me, v 43 hope, v 50 comfort in affliction, v 66 good judgment, knowledge,

TOPIC 2. What the Word Gives Me: Psalm 119: 74, 75, 77, 98, 111, 126, 128, 151, 160, 165, 173. (Answers: v 74 recognition by other believers, v 75

assurance of God's faithfulness and fairness, v 77 God's mercy, v 98 wisdom, v 111 joy, a heritage, v 126 assurance God will uphold his Word, v 128 guidance, v 151 brings God near, v 160 truth, v 165 peace, v 173 help.)

TOPIC 3. What the Word Requires of Me: Psalm 119: 2, 7, 11, 13, 15, 36, 42, 51, 63, 66, 79, 120, 136, 162. (Answers: verse 2 seek with all your heart, v2 obey, v 7 praise God, v 11 keep it in your heart (memorize), v 13 tell what you learn, v 15 meditate on it, v 36 value it above material gain, v 42 trust it, v 51 be faithful to it, v 63 fellowship with other believers, v 66 believe it, v 79 teach others, v 120 fear (respect it) v 136, sorrow when others disobey, v 162 rejoice in it.)

Write answers for all to see and discuss. Say: "As you can see, the benefits are far more than the requirements. Can you see the importance of Bible study to make your life what it is meant to be? You need to get to know your Bible. It speaks to your every need."

Apply this Lesson to Life

"I will give you some passages to read at home which are basic to understanding God's law. First, the Psalms all deal with the nature of God and his laws relating to man. Then Exodus 20:1-17 is God's law. If you compare the law to a person, this is the skeleton. Then in Matthew 5-7 Jesus explained the law. This is like the flesh and features of a body. Read these passages. The Holy Spirit breathes life into the law as he helps you apply it to your life. Then it becomes alive and beautiful. You become that righteous man who walks in the law and is happy."

Say: "There is a hymn that tells of the happiness that comes from obeying God's law. Let us close by singing 'Trust and Obey'."

Things to Think About and Do:

The Bible verses below tell about two men. One is happy because he is righteous. The other is wicked. Read each verse. Write the characteristic it tells about on the line following it. Write "righteous" or "wicked" at the top of each list.

The (righteous) man.

1. Psalm 119:2 (keeps
the law)
2. Psalm 119:7 (he
praises God))
3. Psalm 119:20 (wants
to know the law)
4. Psalm 119:27 (thinks
about the law)
5. Psalm 119:42 (trusts
in God's Word)

The (Wicked) man.

1. Psalm 119:21 (he disobeys
the law)
2. Psalm 119:69 _____
(tells lies)
3. Psalm 119:95 (tries to
destroy good)
4. Psalm 119:113 (is
double minded)
5. Psalm 119:139 (forgets
God's Word)

Which man is most like you? _____

Which characteristic of the happy man do you need to work on most?

Ask God to help you improve.

Scriptures to Study at Home:

Sunday: Psalm 54

Monday: Psalm 37:3-7, 30-31.

Tuesday: Psalm 73:21-28.

Wednesday: Psalm 112.

Thursday: Psalm 119:17-32

Friday: Psalm 119:41-48

Saturday: Psalm 128

Lesson 5: Songs of CelebrationTeacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Psalm 2, 20, 72, 139.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Psalm 2:1-3, 7-12; Psalm 20:1-9.

Memory Verse: "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

Central Truth: Christians have reason to celebrate - through Christ, God has conquered evil.

Teaching Aim: To help the student see how he can be a winner with Christ.

Helps for the Teacher: Paper crowns for kings, cloths for God and poet, two large paper charts with questions about Psalms (see Teaching Plan)

Getting Ready to Teach:

I live in a quiet area of a large city. I hear the usual sounds of daily life - the voices of people as they pass my house - cars and lorries as they bounce along the road - barking dogs and squawking chickens - the daily calls from a near-by mosque - sometimes music from a distant radio.

But there are times when the air is filled with the sound of music from a loud speaker. Even though the source may be far away, it seems to come from inside my house. Then I know someone is having a birthday or a wedding. It is a happy time and they want everyone to know about it. The family and their friends are celebrating. The music announces the celebration.

Some of the Psalms are songs of celebration. Today we will see the reason for the celebration. The reason is still valid today. Perhaps you, too, can join in the victory celebration.

Who Are the Losers? Read Psalm 2:1-3.

Psalm 2 is one of the Psalms of Celebration. These Psalms are sometimes called the Royal Psalms. Why? Because they relate to the kings

of Israel. Remember the Psalms were songs sung in the Hebrew worship services. This one probably was sung first when David was crowned. Sometimes when leadership changed, other nations ruled by Israel would try to rebel.

The Israelites believed their king was the ruler because God had chosen him. At first God said the people did not need a king because he was their leader. But the people were stubborn. They continued to ask for a king because other nations had kings. Finally God agreed. But he insisted on choosing the king.

Anyone who opposed Israel's king was opposing the almighty God. How could they hope to win against him? They were losers even before the battle began.

Who Are The Winners? Read Psalm 2:7-12.

David was king because God chose him, not because of royal birth. He was like God's adopted son. The riches of God were his. God said the nations would be his because God has the power to defeat any enemy. This was a reason for celebration.

But God did not want to destroy other nations. He gave them the chance to come to him and serve him. (In those days people showed respect and obedience to a king by kissing him.) All people are invited to serve God. Those who do are assured of being on the winning side. If everyone accepted God's invitation there would be no war.

Although God is merciful, he cannot allow disobedience. He will do away with all who oppose him. He will be victorious. Those who serve him will be winners, too.

Ask For Help: Read Psalm 20:1-5.

This Psalm of celebration probably was sung before a battle. Israel was at war often. It was a small nation surrounded by rich and powerful ones. These other nations thought they could conquer the small nation of Israel easily. But they did not count on Israel's help from God.

This psalm is a cry for God's help. The Israelites came to the temple where they knew they could find God. They recalled his help in the past. They reminded God of their own faithfulness to him. Then in confidence they laid their requests before him.

A Sure Victory: Read Psalm 20:6-9.

What a wonderful sign of faith - to know a prayer has been answered before you can see the results! This was the kind of faith the Israelites had. The enemy was more powerful and armed with the most modern weapons. But they knew their God could overcome.

Memory Verse: Read 1 Corinthians 15:57.

These Psalms of celebration were used in Hebrew worship long after David's time. Kings changed and the times were different. But the basic problem remained - the challenge and threat of pagan nations against God's chosen ones.

These Psalms tell of long ago but they also point to a future time when God will judge all men on the basis of their response to him and his annointed one.

Some battles of World War I were fought on African soil. There was a German officer who continued to fight in Tanzania after the war was over and his side had lost. This is like Satan. He continues to fight although Jesus has already won the victory. When Jesus rose from the dead he overcame Satan and death.

The anointed one who stands forever is Jesus, God's own Son. He came from David's line. If you follow Jesus you will still have to battle sin. But you can fight with confidence because victory is yours through Jesus.

Teaching Plan:

Ask: "When you see people coming from the sports field, how can you tell those from the winning side?" (Answer: Happy faces, shouting, celebrating) Ask: "How do the losers look?" (Answer: Sad, quiet, etc..) Ask: "Can you tell before the game who will win?" (Answer: No) Say: "In the game of life you can tell who the winners will be. Everyone can choose to be on the winning side. Today we will study some Psalms of Celebration. You will see how you can be on the winning team."

Say: "First we will look at Psalm 2. This was sung to celebrate the crowning of a king." Choose the six people to come to the front of the class. Dress them as told and tell them which verses to read. Be sure all understand what they are to read. Then have them read the Psalm. (If non-readers they can step forward as you read) 3 Kings of the earth (dress in paper crowns) read verses 2-3 together poet (drape in colored cloth) read verses 1, 10-12; The Lord (drape in white cloth) reads verses 4-6; David (wears crown) reads verses 7-9. Explain the meaning of the Psalm (Getting Ready to Teach)

Say: "The people also celebrated military victories. Psalm 20 is one of these." Tell the class to read verses 1-5 to find what the poet asked of the Lord. (Answer: v.1, protection; v.2, help; v.3, to remember their offerings; accept their sacrifices; v.4, grant their hearts' desire and plans to succeed; v.5, victory in battle; answer their prayers.)

Ask: "Why do you think they said, 'The God of Jacob?'" (Answer: It reminded them how God had helped their ancestors in times of trouble.)

Ask: "Why did he mention his sacrifices and offerings?" (Answer: To remind God of their faithfulness to him.) Say: "Remember that God's relationship with his people was based on a covenant. God would bless them if they obeyed him."

Now read verses 6-9. Ask: "What does verse 7 tell about the enemy?" (Answer: They had a strong army and good weapons.) Ask: "What does verse 8 say about the enemy?" (Answer: They will lose.) Ask: "Why do Israelites expect to win?" (Answer: Verse 7 says they depend on God's help.)

Apply this Lesson to Life:

Prepare the two charts which follow. Use large paper if possible. Show the chart for Psalm 2. Compare the phrases from the Psalm on the right to the present day phrases on the left. Discuss. Then fill the chart for Psalm 20. Possible responses are given in brackets ().

Psalm Two

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. nations of the earth | (non-Christians) |
| 2. The Lord's annointed | (Jesus) |
| 3. bonds and chords | (God's law) |
| that bind | |
| 4. Serve the Lord with | (honour God with |
| fear. Kiss his feet. | your life) |
| 5. Be wise O kings | (accept Jesus as |
| | Saviour) |

Psalm 20

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. troubles Christians | (temptations, persecu- |
| face today. | tions, death of loved |
| | one, poverty, etc.) |

2. enemies that seem unbeatable (AIDS, poverty, corruption in government, lack of education, witchcraft, etc.)
3. ways to meet these enemies. (v.1, Ask God for help; v.1, remember God's help in the past; v.2, be faithful to the church; v.5, live so that God is honoured in your life) [Explain: a banner shows whose side you are on.]
4. How can we honour God in our lives? (Discuss)

Read memory verse aloud. Explain its meaning. (See Getting Ready to Teach).

Let class members who want to tell why they want to celebrate. Be sure the ones who are Christians know they have victory in Jesus. Assure the others that victory can be theirs if they accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Close with prayer for victory in all their lives.

Things to Think About and Do:

1. Psalms 2 and 20 tell why Israel could celebrate. Below are some of the reasons. Match each reason to the verse which tells about it.

- A. The lack of power of the heathen rulers and the mighty power of God. (D) 2:7
- B. Advice to the earthly rulers to serve God and honour his King. (A) 2:8-9

- C. The fate of the heathen and the fate of the godly. (B) 2:10-12
- D. God's special choice of Israel's king. (E) 20:6
- E. Faith that God would hear the king's prayer and bless him. (C) 20:8

2. In these Psalms of Celebration David and his line were "God's anointed."

Who holds that title today? (Jesus)

3. Do you expect to be a winner in the game of life? _____

On what do you base your answer? _____

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Psalm 28:1-19.

Monday: Psalm 37:34-40

Tuesday: Psalm 72.

Wednesday: Psalm 89:19-37.

Thursday: Psalm 124

Friday: Psalm 132:11-18.

Saturday: Psalm 139.

Lesson 6: Tested By SatanTeacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Job 1:1-2; 13.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Job 1:8-12, 20-22; 2:4-10.

Memory Verse: "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of this present darkness, against hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."
(Ephesians 6:12)

Central Truth: God allows his faithful servants to suffer trial, but does not cause them.

Teaching Aim: To help the student understand that suffering comes from Satan, not God.

Helps for the Teacher: Chalk board and chalk; strips of paper with characteristics of God, Satan and Job.

Getting Ready to Teach:

"Why has God done this to me?" cried Robert as he sat on the street begging. His ragged pants covered one leg that ended in a stump at the knee. Robert had been well-to-do. Then tragedy struck. Within a short time he lost his business, his house was destroyed in a flood and his wife and baby were drowned. He lost his leg which had been caught under a heavy tree uprooted by the flood. Now he had nothing and blamed God for his misfortune. What would you say to Robert if you could speak to him?

Job is a man in the Bible who suffered much like Robert. As we study his story for the next five weeks, we will see how God dealt with him in a personal way. From his story we will see how God relates to man in the midst of good times and bad.

Satan's First Challenge: Read Job 1:8-12.

The first five verses of the book present Job as a real man who lived in a real place. His name is mentioned many times in the Bible. He was a man of the ancient world, possibly living before Hebrew history began. But his story was known by them and by people of other ancient cultures. Job was known as a man who related openly, honestly and faithfully to God.

At the beginning of the story Job was a wealthy, powerful man. He was also good. He honoured God and related well to other men. He was greatly blessed by God. In those days people thought material blessings were a result of being faithful to God.

The story begins as God's angels gathered before his throne. One of them was Satan. His name means "adversary" (the accuser). He roamed the earth to see if men were living as they should.

Satan, also known as the devil, began as an angel of God. But he was not content with his position. He wanted to be as powerful as God. As a result he was cast out of heaven. He has roamed the earth ever since working to bring evil, pain and suffering into the world.

God said Job was an example of a man completely faithful to him. Satan said Job was faithful because God had blessed him so greatly with wealth and a large family. He said if all that was removed he would turn from God.

God gave Satan permission to remove Job's material blessings. But God was sure Job would remain faithful to him.

Tragedy Strikes Job: Read Job 1:20-22.

Satan succeeded in removing Job's possessions and all his children in one day. Imagine the tragedy if this happened to you. Whether you had little or much - many children or one - if all were taken away you would know the same misery and shock as Job.

In Job's day there were certain ways to show you were grieving. He tore the clothes he wore and shaved the hair from his head. At the same time he fell to the ground to show that in spite of his sorrow he still worshiped God.

He acknowledged all he had came from God. God had the right to give him blessings and to remove them. He did not blame God for acting unjustly. Satan's Further Scheme: Read Job 2:4-6.

Job's response to tragedy seemed to prove God right and Satan wrong. When God met with his angels again he praised Job for remaining faithful. But Satan was not willing to accept defeat. He said Job would surely turn from God if he had to endure physical suffering. He said Job would do anything to protect his own body - even curse God.

God was sure of Job's faith. He agreed that Satan could harm his body, but he could not take Job's life.

Tragedy Strikes Again: Read Job 2:7-10.

This time Job was struck with painful sores all over his body. His suffering was so great that he left his house and went to sit by the garbage dump outside the city. This showed the low opinion he had of himself. He counted himself as useless trash. He sat there and scratched his sores with a piece of broken pottery. Can you think of a sadder sight?

Then Job's wife came to him. You might expect her to show sympathy for her suffering husband. Perhaps she did, because if Job cursed God as she suggested, God might strike him dead. This would end his physical suffering.

But Job could not curse God whom he loved and worshipped. He did not know Satan had caused his problems. He must have thought God was the cause, as his wife did. Nevertheless, he accepted his fate. In fact, he did more than that. He continued to worship God.

The Cause of Suffering: Read Ephesians 6:12, Memory Verse.

There is good and evil in this world. Men face the possibility of both each day. Often our choices determine what we will experience. If you waste your money on gambling you might suffer poverty.

But there are times when things beyond our control happen to us. Christians and non-Christians share alike in these kinds of experiences. A flood will effect good and bad people in a village. Sickness can come upon anyone. When you face loss and suffering there are two important things to remember: 1) Satan is the cause of the bad things. The memory verse reminds us of this. 2) God will not allow those faithful to him to be completely destroyed. Remember - a faithful Christian has God's promise of life and blessings which are eternal.

Teaching Plan:

Pretend you are Robert. Tell your story. Then ask the class to give you their opinions about your misfortune. Who is to blame? What are you to do?

Then say: "For the next five weeks we will study the experiences of a man who endured much sorrow and suffering. You will see how he related to God through his tragedy." Tell the class who Job was. (See Getting Ready to Teach) Say: "As we study today's scripture we will see who is to blame for the suffering in the world today. We will see what part God takes in a suffering world and how we should react when we have to suffer."

Say: "There are three main characters in today's lesson - God, Satan and Job." Write their names across the top of the chalk board or a large paper. Tell who Satan was. (See Getting Ready to Teach)

Give out the strips of paper on which you have written the actions and characteristics (not the name) of the people listed below. Be sure each

student has at least one strip of paper and that all the papers are given out. Tell them to decide who their paper refers to as you read the scripture verses in today's lesson. After reading and discussing the verses, let the students read their papers and you record it under the correct name. (If you teach non-readers, you read each paper and let the class decide who it describes.) Discuss each character and his characteristics.

SATAN: 1) challenged Job's faithfulness; 2) tested Job; 3) caused Job material loss and physical suffering.

GOD: 1) blessed Job with material blessings and a large family; 2) trusted Job's faithfulness to God; 3) allowed Job to be tested; 4) put a limit to Satan's power.

JOB: 1) blameless and upright; 2) feared God; 3) turned from evil; 4) suffered; 5) knew blessings came from God; 6) did not take advice contrary to God's teaching.

After discussion say: "Satan and God are still active in today's world. Satan is the cause of evil, pain and suffering. God is still in control. All of us stand in Job's place. We must decide how we will respond when we face difficulty. Will we be faithful to God or will we turn from him? In light of what we have learned about the source of pain and suffering, what do you have to tell Robert now?" Let several respond.

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Say the memory verse together as a reminder that evil and suffering come from Satan not God. Remind the class of last week's lesson. God has overcome Satan. We have victory through Jesus. Say: "In the meantime we must live day by day and sometimes we will experience suffering. Some of us are having a difficult time now. Put yourself in Job's place. What causes

you pain and suffering today?" List responses on the board or paper. Say:
 "Based on today's lesson how can you deal with these problems?" Discuss.

Close with prayer for the burdens your students bear.

Things to Think About and Do:

Satan is still active in the world today. Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. Then write on each line something you found out about God, Satan, or how you can react when sin and suffering come into your life.

GOD

1. 1 Peter 5:7 (cares for you)
2. 1 Peter 5:10 (can strengthen you in suffering)
3. 1 Peter 5:10 (will give you an eternal reward)
4. 1 Peter 5:11 (will defeat Satan in the end)

SATAN

5. 1 Peter 5:8 (wants you to sin and suffer)

YOU

6. 1 Peter 5:6 (humble yourself before God)
7. 1 Peter 5:7 (tell God about your fears)
8. 1 Peter 5:8 (be alert)
9. 1 Peter 5:9 (resist Satan through your faith)

Think of some problem you have right now. Think about the truths from this passage of scripture. Pray for God to help you apply it to your situation today.

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Genesis 3:13-19.

Thursday: 1 John 3:4-10.

Monday: Matthew 4:1-11.

Friday: 1 Peter 5:6-11.

Tuesday: Luke 22:31-33.

Saturday: Read your Bible Study lesson

Wednesday: Ephesians 2:1-8.

Lesson 7: Job's Search for AnswersTeacher's LessonBackground Scripture: Job 3:1-14:22.Scripture for Today's Lesson: Job 3:2-3; 8:3-7; 9:1-3; 13:20-24; 14:13-15.Memory Verse: "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us." (Psalm 62:8)Central Truth: To have a good relationship with God, we must be honest with him.Teaching Aim: To help students identify ways to express their feelings honestly to God.Helps for the Teacher: The words "Job's Steps in Coping with Suffering" on chalk board ; chalk.Getting Ready to Teach:

"How are you?" "I am fine."

This is a standard greeting and response in English.

The response says all is well. There are no problems. Of course, in many cases this is far from true. With greetings this is acceptable. But often people take this attitude in other areas of life. They refuse to admit their problems to other people - sometimes even to themselves.

Ignoring a problem will not make it go away. We must examine it and deal with it. Problems bring out our feelings and feelings determine our actions. To act right, we must understand our feelings.

You can sometimes hide your feelings from other people. But you can never hide anything from God. You need to be honest with him. Then you can know the full joy of relating to him as his child.

Job's Lament: Read Job 3:2-3.

Last week we left Job sitting in the ash heap. He had suffered personal loss and physical pain. Even his wife seemed to be against him.

When Job's friends heard of his plight, they came to mourn with him and comfort him. They mourned silently for a week. Then the awful silence was broken. The cry which rang out was worse than the silence. From this point in the story, the author used poetry to express the strong feelings and deep truths. Poetry is a fitting way to tell the rest of Job's story.

Job expressed his misery. He wished he had never been born. His suffering was so bad that it overshadowed all of his life before this. He cursed the day he was born.

Job's Friends Give Advice: Read Job 8:3-7.

Job's friends must have loved Job to come to be with him in his time of suffering. Bildad was one of Job's friends, but he did not comfort Job. Instead of showing pity, he accused Job and his children of wrong-doing. Bildad wanted to help Job. But he had the wrong idea about how sin and suffering relate. He, like most people of his day, thought all who suffered had sinned. He encouraged Job to confess his sin. Then, he thought, Job's fortunes would be restored. Job's other friends offered similar advice.

Job's Reply: Read Job 9:1-3.

Job also thought sin was the cause of suffering. At the same time, he knew he was innocent. His friends had failed to help him find the reason for his suffering. He felt hopeless. He had tried to please God. But he knew it was not possible for man to be perfect. Job wondered, "How can imperfect man defend himself against the all-powerful God?" Remember, Job still thought all his problems were sent by God.

Appeal to God: Read Job 13:20-24; 14:13-15.

For a while Job pleaded his innocence with his friends. Then he realized he should not be disputing with them. Instead, he should take his

case directly to God. God was the one in control. Only God could give him the answers he needed.

Job knew God was fair in all his dealings. But he needed courage to face God who was all powerful. Therefore, he asked for two things:

1) to come into God's presence unharmed, and 2) to be allowed to speak and receive God's reply.

There was no sign from God, so Job dared to speak. He asked God to show him his sins, for one can be guilty of sin and not know it. Still there was no response. God seemed to be treating him as his enemy.

In Job 14:13, Job seemed to give up hope of getting an answer in this life. Then he asked the question every man asks sooner or later - "Is there life after a man dies?" Job hoped there was. But no one knew for sure until after Jesus arose from the grave with the good news.

Job seemed to accept that he would suffer for the rest of his life. But he held on to the hope that someday - perhaps after his death - he would receive relief and answers to his questions.

Hope: Read Psalm 62:8, Memory Verse.

When I read Job's words, coming from the depths of his confusion and despair, I want to tell him, "Yes, Job, there is life after death. Yes, there is someone to plead your cause - Jesus Christ. God did not bring all of this on you. Satan did. God knew you were strong and faithful. He knew you would not fail him. Just hold on a little longer."

The memory verse tells us this in a few words. We need to remember we have a God who cares. He can equip us to do and to endure great things for him. All he requires is our faith and our honesty.

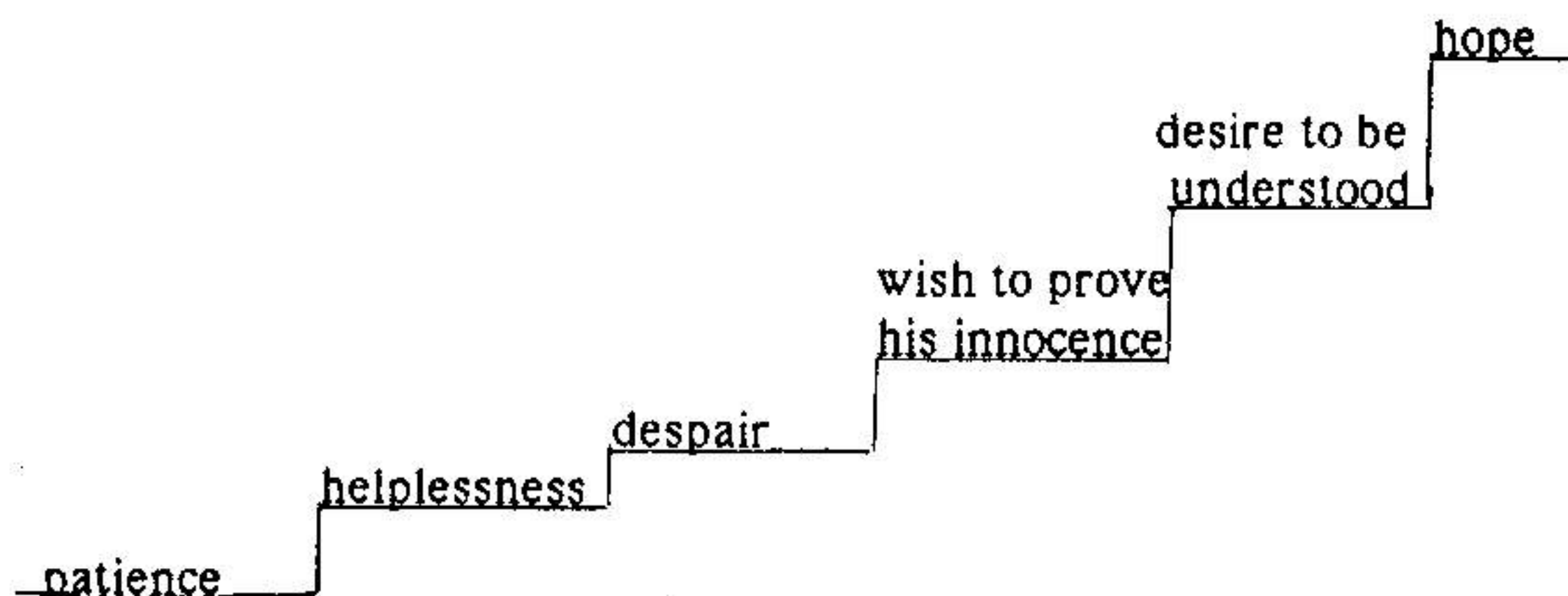
Teaching Plan:

Greet the class and ask: "How are you today?" They will probably reply that all is well. Then ask: "How are you - really? Are you well? Tired? Happy? Hungry? Angry?" Say: "These are all feelings. You feel some things in your body, such as hunger. You feel other things with your mind and heart, such as love. Feelings can be positive or negative. Positive feelings are not always good. Negative ones are not always bad. For example, anger is a strong negative feeling. It makes you want to attack something you do not like. Can you think of a time when anger is good?" (Ans: Anger at sin- like Jesus' anger at the money changers in the temple.)

"Today we will study Job's feelings as he endured his suffering. We will see how he expressed his feelings to his friends and to God. We will see how Job's feelings changed as time passed. Perhaps you will understand Job's feelings because you may have felt the same way yourself."

Ask: "What happened to Job in last week's lesson?" Review last week's lesson briefly. Ask: "What are some of the feelings Job might have felt?" (Answer: Shock, pain, anger, etc.) Say: "Despite Job's negative feelings, he still trusted God. He showed patience." Show the chart on which you have written "patience." Add the other words as the lesson progresses.

Job's Steps in Coping with Suffering



Say: "Now look at Job 3:2-3 to see Job's feelings. What feelings did Job show here?" (Possible answers: Anger, hopelessness, frustration) Write "helplessness" on the second step. Say: "Job could do nothing about his losses and pain. Therefore, he felt helpless."

Say: "Job's friends tried to advise him." Read Job 8:3-7. Ask: "How do you think Job felt after his friend spoke - better or worse?" (Answer: Worse) Say: "In fact, he probably was beginning to feel despair." Read Job 9:1-3. Discuss. (See Getting Ready to Teach, "Job's Reply") Write "despair" on the third step.

Say: "Job expressed his despair to his friends. Now he talked to God. Read Job 13:18-24. Ask: "What feelings does he express here?" (Answer: He wanted to prove his innocence and to be understood) Write "wish to prove his innocence" on step four and "desire to be understood" on step five.

Read Job 14:13-15. Ask: "What feeling do you sense at the end of this passage?" (Answer: Hope) Write "hope" on step six. Discuss. (See Getting Ready to Teach, "Appeal to God") Review Job's steps.

Point out that Job felt misunderstood by God and man. But he was seeking help by honestly expressing himself to God. That gave him hope.

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Read the memory verse together two or three times. Divide the verse into three parts. Ask the class to put the meaning of each part into their own words. (Possible responses: "Trust in him at all times, O People" - Once you put your trust in God through faith in Jesus, you must remain faithful. "Pour out your heart before him." - Tell God just how you feel, even if your feelings are negative. "God is a refuge for us." - God will not fail us. He cares for us. He will not let us be destroyed.)

Discuss how you could express your feelings to God in these situations:

1) If you had a serious money problem; 2) lost a loved one; 3) had a painful physical problem. Discuss each example.

Ask: "How could you help someone with any of these problems?"

(Answer: show concern; try to understand, do not blame the person) Say: "This week in your prayers, praise God for who he is. Then try to express your feelings to him. He will reward your honesty."

Close with prayer: Let members make requests for themselves or others they know with problems.

Things to Think About and Do:

- I. Read the Scriptures to Study at Home. In each someone is pouring his heart out honestly before the Lord. They remind us to be honest before God.
- II. Try to tell God your honest feelings. Fill in the lines below to tell how you feel. Then pray the prayer to God.

"Dear God,

Thank you for being my God and Saviour. Thank you for letting me come before you to tell you what is in my heart. Thank you for helping me.

I am afraid because _____

I do not understand _____

It does not seem fair that _____

I worry about _____

I do not like _____

I cannot see the answer to _____

Help me to face these problems. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Psalm 5:1-6.

Monday: Psalm 6:1-10.

Tuesday: Psalm 13:1-6.

Wednesday: Psalm 16:1-8.

Thursday: Psalm 17:1-6.

Friday: Psalm 22:1-11.

Saturday: Psalm 31:9-16.

Lesson8: What About the Wicked?Teacher's LessonBackground Scripture: Job 15:1-21:34.Scripture for Today's Lesson: Job 18:5-8; 19:23-27; 21:7-16.Memory Verse: "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." (Psalm 1:6)Central Truth: God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous.Teaching Aim: To help the student understand the ultimate fairness of God.Helps for the Teacher: Slips of paper with debate topics and scripture for today's lesson; chalk board and chalk.Getting Ready to Teach:

Have you heard something like this before? "It does not seem fair. I work hard. I try to please my boss. I am always on time. I never miss work unless I am sick. I do the best I can. Why did Charles get a raise instead of me? He comes late every day. He does not come at all if he has something else he wants to do. He disappears for an hour or more at tea time. More than once I smelled beer on his breath when he came back.

"He is the boss's son-in-law. But I think a man should be rewarded for his effort. I say again, it is not fair!"

Is life fair? Or to say it another way, is God fair? The Bible says he is. But often life makes us wonder. Job faces this question today. What about the rewards of obeying God? And what about the wicked?

Is Suffering a Result of Sin? Read Job 18:5-8.

As you recall, Job's friends had come to comfort him. But, in fact, they managed to make him feel worse. They said his suffering was a result of sin in his life. We know Satan was the cause, but they did not know that. Nor did they know what happened after a man dies. They thought punishment and reward must be given in this life. They had no idea of eternal life.

Still Job could think of no sin in his life. He could not think why God was punishing him. He tried to convince his friends of his righteousness.

Job and his friends continued to discuss the subject of suffering. But it was no longer a friendly discussion. They accused Job of sin. Job insisted on his innocence. In doing so, he challenged the religious thinking of his day.

His friends thought the righteous did not suffer. Since Job was suffering so much, he must be very wicked. They wanted to help him so they tried to get him to admit sin and seek God's mercy. Then he would be delivered from his misery.

This passage describes the fate of death which awaits a wicked person. There Must Be Justice: Read Job 19:23-27.

Job's disease was destroying his body. He must have been close to death. But he continued to insist on his innocence. He said he wanted his words written down. He knew someday, perhaps after his death, he would be proven innocent. In fact, he felt sure God would prove his innocence.

A "redeemer" was someone, usually a family member, who would defend an accused relative in a court of law. Job said God would be his Redeemer in the end rather than his tormentor. Job spoke with a faith in God that surpassed that of most people of his day. He knew in his heart that God would not reject him forever. Job believed in a just and saving God.

Many people say this passage points to the coming of Jesus as Redeemer of man. Job knew nothing of Jesus - but he knew enough about God to know that God did not want anyone to be destroyed. Somehow God would provide a way of salvation. Job's faith was growing stronger.

The Wicked Appear to Prosper: Read Job 21:7-16.

Job disputed with his friends on another point. He disagreed that the wicked were always punished in this life. Some lived long lives and enjoyed

good health. In fact, they often seemed to prosper more than the righteous. Their ill-gotten wealth and position provided for the needs, pleasures and privileges of their children.

The wicked wanted nothing to do with God. They wanted to do things their own way. They were more interested in profit than prayer. How could his friends confuse him with a wicked person? He had loved and honoured God in all his ways. Job was convinced that his friends were wrong.

God's Justice: Read Psalm 1:6, Memory Verse.

This verse points out that Job and his friends were right about some things and wrong about others. The wicked are punished. They do suffer, though not always in this life. God does know what is happening to the righteous ones. He keeps his eye on them. The New Testament says they cannot be plucked from his hand. (John 10:28)

But there is pain and suffering in the world. The world's standards are not always fair. Each man must decide for himself where his loyalty lies. Then he must take courage to live by his faith no matter what happens to him. Being a Christian does not cause suffering, but there are times when your faith could lead to suffering. Times of suffering are times of testing. When you face your test, let the truth of the memory verse sustain you.

Teaching Plan:

Greet the class. Ask: "Did you try being honest with God last week by using the Think About and Do page?" Let some share their experiences if they want to. Then ask: "What about those questions that said 'I do not understand -' and 'I do not think it is fair that -'? Did anyone say you think it is unfair that the wicked seem to escape punishment for their wrongs?" Let class respond. Say: "This was something that bothered Job. Today we will look into this problem with Job and his friends."

Divide the class into two groups. Each group should choose three members to speak for the group. Give each group a topic: Topic 1: A person always gets what he deserves in this life. Topic 2: In this life, the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

Say: "You may not agree with the statement of your topic, but it is your job to find evidence to support it." Tell them to search the scriptures for today's lesson for evidence to support their statement. Write references on the chalkboard or paper so all can see them. They may add other examples or evidence they have observed or experienced in their own lives.

Give them about 15 minutes to prepare for the defense of their statement. Then let the teams debate. Each will try to prove the truth of the statement which they are defending. You keep things orderly by allowing one from one team to speak and then one from the other. Continue alternating speakers for about 10 minutes. Then call for a concluding statement from each team. Ask the class to choose a winning team. Then discuss their choice by using the plan which follows.

Ask: "What are some things in this life that seem unfair to you?" Give them time to name several. Then ask: "By what standards are you judging - the world's or God's?" Ask: "What is success?" Say: "Let us make a list of how God and the world judge success." Write the following title on the chalkboard or large piece of paper. Let students tell you what to write in each column. Some possible responses are shown here. Students may list as many as they like.

The World's Standards	God's Standards
<i>(material wealth)</i>	<i>(knowing God)</i>
<i>(family happiness)</i>	<i>(Living to please God)</i>
<i>(good health)</i>	<i>(Using talents for God)</i>
<i>(opportunities to advance)</i>	<i>(Helping others)</i>

Ask: "Do you think all rewards and punishments are withheld until after death?" Discuss. Let them give examples to support their answers.

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Read or say the memory verse together several times. Then say: "Look at the first half of the verse." Let members share how this is true. Then say: "Look at the second half." Ask: "How can you accept this as truth?" (Answer: By faith; your experience of the truth of the first half of the verse; the testimonies of many other Christians of today and the past.)

Now ask the class to re-consider the outcome of the debate. They should conclude that in this life you do not always prosper or suffer as deserved, but in the end, in eternity, God will see that justice is done. The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished.

Encourage the class to remain faithful to God no matter what the world offers them or does to them. God will see that they are rewarded, perhaps in this life, and certainly in eternity.

Close with prayer.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read each question. Then, using your own words, write the answer you find in each scripture passage.

1. What about suffering?

Matthew 16:21 (Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross)

Romans 8:17 (if we suffer with Jesus we will be rewarded)

Hebrews 11:24-26 (To suffer for Christ's sake is better than wealth)

1 Peter 5:13 (Pray when you are suffering)

James 1:2-4 (Suffering can help you grow in faith)

2. What about the wicked?

Psalm 94:3 (The wicked seem to be winners)

Isaiah 55:7 (God will forgive the wicked if they ask him to)

Ezekiel 3:18-19 (God wants you to warn the wicked of their fate)

Matthew 13:49 (The wicked will be punished in the end)

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Psalm 5:4-12.

Monday: Psalm 10:3-12.

Tuesday: Psalm 10:14-18.

Wednesday: Isaiah 63:7-9.

Thursday: Matthew 25:31-46.

Friday: Philippians 4:4-8

Saturday: Revelation 20:11-15.

Lesson 9: Job's TrialTeacher's LessonBackground Scripture: Job 22-31Scripture for Today's Lesson: Job 23:1-4, 10-11; 29:11-17; 31:24-28, 33-34.Memory Verse: "Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity." (Job 31:6)Central Truth: A clear conscience strengthens one's faith.Teaching Aim: To lead the student to identify one area of his life where he will work for a clear conscience.Helps for the Teacher: small object (see Teaching Plan), a blank piece of paper and pencil for each student.Getting Ready to Teach:

I visited my friend, George, in jail. He would stand trial in a few days. He had been accused of stealing from the petty cash where he worked. I thought George must be innocent. We belonged to the same church. He was a good man. But my opinion would not determine George's fate. The judge would pronounce George innocent or guilty after he heard the evidence.

George was cheerful as usual. When I wished him well at the trial, he said, "I do not fear. I am innocent. And I know the judge is a fair man."

George was confident because he had two things in his favour. He was innocent and the judge was a fair man. Today as Job goes on trial before God, he felt confident for the same reasons.

Job's Search for a Fair Trial: Read Job 23:1-4; 10-11.

Job's "friends" claimed he was a sinner who deserved to suffer.

Although they came to comfort Job, they were intent to prove that suffering is punishment for sin. At first they called Job a sinner. Then they accused him of many specific sins. In fact, they told lies to win their argument.

This was a turning point for Job. He saw he could not get a fair hearing from these men. They were not interested in his innocence. Last week we learned God does not cause his children to stumble. Rather he tries to help them. Job began to seek God earnestly. He saw that only God would give him a fair trial and perhaps release him from his suffering.

But Job could not find God. He was silent. Nevertheless, Job did not give up. He believed God knew where he was and how he had lived. Job was innocent and God was fair.

Job Defends His Public Life: Read Job 29:11-17.

In chapters 26-31, Job spoke in his own defense. First he praised God. He proclaimed his goodness, his power, his authority and his fairness. As he recounted God's dealings with the wicked and the righteous, Job began to think. Maybe he was not being punished by God. Perhaps God was testing him. We know this was the case. (Job 1:8; 2:3)

Job compared his experience with the process of refining gold. Gold becomes shiny only when it passes through fire.

Job admitted no man can really understand what God is doing. After all, God is God. A lesser being cannot expect to fully understand him.

Then Job told how he had lived and how he had obeyed God. He had been fair in all his dealings with men and generous and helpful to the poor and needy. The people had honoured and respected him. Job expected God to honor him also for being such a righteous man. What had gone wrong?

Job Defends His Private Life: Read Job 31:24-28, 33-34.

After telling of the deeds which had been seen by men, Job defended his inner life - what he had thought and his reasons for living as he had. God knew these things even if men could not discern them.

Job admitted that good things can be done while evil thoughts still hide in the heart. If he did good to receive praise from men, God could condemn him. Pleasing God should be the righteous man's motive. But Job went on to say he was a man of integrity. His actions came from the beliefs of his heart. His motive was to please God, not to receive the praise of men. The Defense Rests: Read Job 31:6, Memory Verse.

Job had traveled the road from prosperity to pain, poverty and suffering. Along the way his ideas of God began to change. His faith in God did not change. He always knew God was there. He knew God cared for him. He knew God punished the wicked. He knew he was righteous. Therefore, his suffering could not be punishment from God. But what part did God have in it? He still did not know. He thought perhaps it was a test of his faith.

He presented his plea of righteousness. He could do nothing else. He was satisfied to wait before God for a verdict. He could endure his suffering, knowing a just God was aware of his plight and concerned for his welfare.

He wanted an answer from God, but he had faith. His faith and his own innocence gave him courage and patience to wait for justice to be done.

Teaching Plan:

Place something small enough to be hidden in a hand or pocket where all can see. Call two people to come to the front of the room. Tell the rest of the class to close their eyes. Whisper to the two that one should take the object and sit on it. Tell each to deny taking it when asked.

When they return to their seats tell the class to open their eyes. Show the object is gone. Say: "We will now have a trial to see who is the thief." Let class members question the two. Search the hands and pockets of each. Finally, show who has it.

Then ask each of the two: "How did you feel? Were you afraid you would be caught?" Point out that the one who was innocent should have felt very confident because he knew he was innocent. Therefore, he could not be proven guilty. Ask: "Did each have a fair trial?" (Answer: Yes) Ask: "Can you always count on a fair trial in a court of law?" (Answer: Not always) Ask: "What about when you stand before God? Is he fair?" (Answer: Yes, always) Ask: "Then should you be afraid to stand before God?" (Answer: Not if you are innocent) Say: "This is where we find Job today. He has examined his own life very carefully. He asked God to show him any hidden sin. God was silent. Therefore, Job's conscience was clear. His friends have ignored his plea of innocence. They continue to insist he is a sinner. They even made up lies about Job to try to prove he is suffering because of sin."

Ask: "Where can Job turn for a fair trial?" (Answer: To God) Say: "Read Job 23:1-4 to see what Job's problem is today." (Answer: He cannot find God.) Say: "Read verses 10-11 to see why Job is not afraid to look for God." (Answer: God knows all Job's ways; Job has tried to be obedient.) Ask: "Does God know the way you take?" (Answer: The Bible says he does.)

Say: "Think for a minute. If God tried you, would you come forth as gold?" Tell the class gold becomes shiny as it passes through fire. This is a poetic way to say, one who is faithful through trials can stand pure before God.

Say: "Job looked over his life one more time." Read Job 29:11-17 to see how he had lived and what others had thought of him. Discuss. Say: "Job had been approved by God and man. But sometimes a person's actions may look right. Others may think he is wonderful. But in his heart he may be hiding sin. His attitudes and motives may be wrong." Read Job 31:24-28. Ask: "What secret sins are described here?" (Answer: greed, pride,

ambition) Read 31:33-34. Ask: "What sin does this tell about?" (Answer: Fear of doing evil because of what man would say rather than to please God.) Say: "But Job could find nothing for which he should be punished by God. He could face God in confidence. Knowing he was innocent gave him strength to stand his trial. He was ready to hear God's verdict."

Say: "Job 31:6, our memory verse, shows why Job was able to stand before God with confidence. What does the first part tell about God?" (Answer: He is fair.) Ask: "What does the second part tell about Job?" (Answer: He was a man of integrity. He acted as he believed in his heart. His motives were pure.)

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Ask: "Can you honestly stand before God and say this verse to him? Let us take this time to do as Job did. Let us each look into his own life. Can you stand before God as one who trusts in him through faith in Jesus? Have you acted fairly and honestly before men - where you work? At home? In your community? Have your attitudes and motives been pure? Have you acted from the beliefs in your heart? Maybe there is something you have done that was wrong. Perhaps you have not done something you should have done." Give each a small piece of paper and pen or pencil. Say: "Write down a specific area in which you will try to be pure before God. Pray about it silently." After a few minutes of silence say: "Put this paper somewhere so you can remember to pray about it often."

Close with prayer. Thank God for Job's example. Ask God to help each class member to seek to stand before God with integrity.

Things to Think About and Do:

I. As Job suffered, he remembered better days. Read the passages below which describe the blessings of those good days. Write down any similar blessings you may have received. Thank God for them.

1. Job 29:1-4. Job enjoyed what God did for him.

What God has done for me: _____

2. Job 29:18-20. Job enjoyed what he had.

Things I have to enjoy: _____

3. Job 29:21. Job enjoyed people's attitude toward him.

What people think of me: _____

How can remembering these good things help you when times are not so good? _____

II. A person of integrity can stand before God unafraid. Write down what you need to do in order to improve your relationship with God.

1. My relationship with Jesus _____

2. Something I should stop doing _____

3. Something I should do _____

4. An attitude I need to change _____

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Job 22:21-30.

Thursday: Job 28:12-19.

Monday: Job 23:6-7.

Friday: Job 28:20-28.

Tuesday: Job 26:7-14.

Saturday: Job 31:1-8.

Wednesday: Job 27:1-6.

Lesson 10: God's Appearance and Job's Response Teacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Job 38:1-42:17.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Job 38:1-7; 42:1-7, 10-12a.

Memory Verse: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth." (Job 19:25)

Central Truth: God's power, wisdom and justice make him worthy of our trust.

Teaching Aim: To challenge each pupil to commit his life to God through faith in Jesus - or if already a Christian to give to God an area of his life which he has not yet committed.

Helps for the Teacher: Cloth for blindfold; picture of the president of your country.

Getting Ready to Teach:

I know the president of my country. I know his name and many facts about his life. I recognize his picture and his voice on the radio. I was very near him once when he passed in a car. My friend knows him personally. The president knows my friend's name. They have spoken and eaten together. Though I know the president from information, my friend knows him from experience.

Job knew about God and had tried to serve him. At last he had a personal encounter with God. It brought about a great change in his life.

God Confronts Job: Read Job 38:1-7.

Job had been searching for God for a long time. As he tried to obey, he learned much about him. But he could not find God himself and that is what he wanted.

If you have ever been in the open country, perhaps you have seen a whirlwind. It twists and turns across the land. It rises up and touches down

at random, picking up loose dirt and trash. Job must have felt his life was caught up in a whirlwind. He could not tell where he was going. In his confusion and pain, he felt he was being destroyed.

Finally in the midst of his suffering, God spoke to Job. Instead of explaining Job's suffering, he asked Job questions. Job was not able to answer the questions. They revealed clearly to Job the nature of God- his wisdom and power and the perfection of his creation. They showed Job how small his power and knowledge were in contrast. God was teaching Job a lesson in humility.

Job's Confession: Read Job 42:1-6.

Twice God asked Job to answer him but Job was so overwhelmed he could not. Finally he was ready to make a brief, humble reply. He acknowledged God's power and his right, as creator, to do anything he wished. He could bring to pass all he had planned.

Job confessed his knowledge could not equal God's. Job had no more doubts concerning God's working in his life. He knew God had a purpose for his suffering and it was for good.

This personal encounter with God caused Job to bow before him. He confessed his unworthiness to demand anything of God. Job had not been wicked and lawless as his friends had said. But he had not realized how great God was. He asked God to forgive him.

God's Judgement on Job's Friends: Read Job 42:7.

Job's friends had argued to the end that Job was being punished for his sin. God wanted them to understand their mistake. He spoke to Eliphaz, the leader of these men. God commanded them to offer a sacrifice to show they admitted their mistake (sin) and were sorry.

Job Blessed Again: Read Job 42:10-12a.

God told Job to pray for his friends and he did. Though he still suffered, Job was willing to reach beyond himself and pray for his friends.

After that, Job was returned to his former state. His health was restored. He became richer than before. His friends came back to rejoice with him. He had ten more children. His life was better than before.

Job had been faithful to God and God had rewarded him. The term "evil that the Lord brought upon him" does not mean God was unjust or treated Job in an evil way. It refers to all the trouble God allowed Satan to bring to Job. (Job 1:2; 2:6)

Blessed Assurance: Read Job 19:25, Memory Verse.

Early in Job's ordeal, he expressed hope. He felt God would some day rescue him from his troubles. Job's hope was realized as he encountered God and humbled himself before him. There had been times when Job felt God had forsaken him. But just at the right time God revealed himself to Job. God had been involved all the time.

God never neglects his people. He shares all their joys and sorrows. He stands ready to save them through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ.

Teaching Plan:

Ask for a volunteer to stand in front of the room. Ask the others to form a circle around him. Tell him to look at each person in the circle. Then tie a cloth over his eyes so he cannot see. Tell those in the circle to walk clockwise around him and then stop. Name a person in the circle and tell the one in the center to find him. After a minute, tell the one being sought to call the seeker's name. Tell him to keep calling until he is found.

Repeat the game several times with different ones in the center. When all have returned to their seats, say: "This game shows us something

of how Job felt. He was searching for God but could not find him. Then God spoke to him. Job found God and his life was changed."

Remind them that Job had asked God to hear and answer him several times. Read or have pupils read the following passages aloud to see what Job said to God: Job 10:2 (He asked God to condemn him and explain his suffering); Job 13:3, 21-22 (He said he would present his case to God if God would take his hand off him and stop frightening him); Job 31:35 (He asked for a list of his sins in writing.)

Say: "Finally God did speak." Read Job 38:1-7 to see God's attitude toward Job. (He rebuked Job because he failed to see that God had a good plan for his life and all the universe. It was so good that all creation shouted for joy, v.7) Say: "Job, and all of us, are part of God's plan."

Read Job 42:1-6 to see how Job was changed by his encounter with God. Ask: "What did Job say God could do?" ((Answer: All things) Ask: "What did he say about himself?" (Answer: He had not really known God before.) Ask: "What did he say he would do?" (Answer: Repent for his wrong attitude toward God.)

Say: "At this point in the book of Job, the writer stops using poetry. We are told in plain language what happened to Job and his friends. Read Job 42:7 to see what God said about Job's friends." (Answer: He condemned them because they had wrong ideas about God.)

Say: "Read verse 8 to see what God said must be done about their sin. (Answer: They were to make a sacrifice to show they were sorry.) Ask: "What must Job do?" (Answer: Pray for them.) Say: "Job and his friends did as God commanded. Despite his pain and problems, Job obeyed God and prayed for his friends. This pleased God and his friends. It shows no matter

how bad your situation in life, you can still be useful to God and others through prayer."

Say: "The following verses show what happened to Job. Read 42:10-12a." Ask: "Were any of Job's questions answered?" (Answer: No) Say: "Job had to be content to trust God's actions and goodness." Ask: "How did God show his goodness to Job?" [Answer: Restored his fortune (was richer than before); children, health and friends; gave him a long life.]

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Show a picture of the president of your country. Ask: "Who knows this man? What do you know about him?" Let several respond. Ask: "Do any of you know him personally?" Say: "It makes a big difference when you know someone personally. Earlier we talked about what happened when Job met God personally. Those of you who know Jesus personally as Saviour can compare your experience to Job's. How was it like Job's? How different?" Ask some to share with the group. Be prepared to give a brief testimony of your own experience.

Ask: "Is it possible for anyone to encounter God personally?" (Answer: Yes) Ask: "What are some ways this can happen?" (Answer: Through Bible study, prayer, worship experience, etc.) Say: "Job had failed to commit himself wholly to God in the areas of loss and pain. Are there areas of your life that need to be given to God?" Let them think.

Say: "Early in Job's suffering, he had expressed hope in a saving God." Read Job 19:25. Say: "Job believed his redeemer would come to him. His faith was rewarded by an encounter with God. Many say this verse points to Jesus as man's Redeemer. Believing this can bring an encounter with God."

Close with Prayer. Ask all to bow their heads and pray silently. Ask those who have never had a personal encounter with Jesus to pray for that

experience. Ask the others to pray for them, too. Then ask the committed Christians to search their hearts for some area of their life that has not been given to God. Ask them to offer this to God.

Offer to be available to any who want to share something with you.

Things to Think About and Do:

Here are some questions about Job's encounter with God. Think about them. Then write your answers.

1. Did God tell Job why he was suffering? (no)
2. What did God mean to do for Job by appearing to him? (reveal himself, let Job know he was there)
3. What was the point of all God's questions to Job? (to help Job see that compared to God's power and purpose, he needed to be more humble)
4. Did God answer Job's questions? If not, what did God teach Job which solved his problem? (God had a plan for Job's life and it was good)
5. Write two or three sentences to tell something you have learned from this study of Job.

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Job 38:8-15.

Monday: Job 38:16-24.

Tuesday: Job 38:25-33.

Wednesday: Job 38:34-41.

Thursday: Job 39:13-18.

Friday: Job 39:19-30.

Saturday: Job 40:1-14.

Lesson 11: Practical LivingTeacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Proverbs 1, 3, 6, 11-12, 15, 18, 21.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Proverbs 1:7; 6:6-8, 16-18; 12:18; 15:1; 18:7-8, 21; 21:2-3.

Memory Verse: "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

Central Truth: Our faith should be visible in daily commitment and practice.

Teaching Aim: To help the student see how the Bible can help him in his daily walk with God and man.

Helps for the Teacher: Papers with group topics for discussion and scripture references (see Teaching Plan)

Getting Ready to Teach:

For ten weeks we have been studying poetry in the Bible. We have seen how God speaks to the heart of man. In our study of Psalms, we saw how God reveals himself to man and how man responds. In Job, we saw how God dealt with one specific man. We struggled with Job as he came to know God in a real and personal way.

For the next three weeks we will look at you and your relationship to God. We will see how your relationship to God affects your life and how you can commit your life to him so others will see his goodness, power and love.

A proverb is a wise saying which points to truth in life. All cultures have their proverbs. Sometimes it is a simple statement. It can be a question. It might be a long story or a practical example. Often the language is poetic or symbolic. There are many proverbs in the Bible.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings. The writers were the thinkers of the Hebrew community. All they said was influenced by their faith in God and their experience with him in life.

Some of these proverbs are advice on how to live. Others are observations on life in general. Over the years these proverbs have been proven true. You will surely see people you know in them. You may see yourself, too.

Wise Living: Read Proverbs 1:7.

This verse has been called the foundation on which all the other truths of the book have been based.

The word "fear" means respect and awe for God's great power - not a cowardly feeling. "Knowledge" means wisdom or practical insight - knowing how to act in ways that give meaning and value to life. True wisdom comes from God. You must know God to have the wisdom you need to do the wise actions taught in this book.

Fools are the opposite of wise people. They are not always stupid. Some may know many facts and appear clever. But if men do not know God's wisdom and do not want to learn from him, they are fools.

Wise Speech: Read Proverbs 12:18; 15:1; 18:7-8, 21.

A person's speech is like water from a well. It reveals what is down inside. Evil speech reveals an evil person. It can cause trouble, sorrow and death. Righteous speech reveals a righteous person. The righteous person speaks words that up-lift and inspire.

What has been said cannot be taken back. You have to live with the results of what you have said. Gossip and careless talk can bring injury to yourself or others. So it is important to think before you speak. The tone of voice is important. A loud, angry voice usually calls forth an angry response. But a quiet controlled word can bring calm to a stormy situation. Above all, if you are wise, you speak the truth.

Wise Actions: Read Proverbs 6:6-8, 16-18.

The writers of Proverbs were active people, gaining wisdom as they put God's commands into action. God is an active God and he expects his people to be busy about his business. Here the lazy man is told to change his ways. He is told to observe the ant, a tiny creature whose life is organized, busy and productive.

The righteous man pleases God in all he does. But the wicked cause God's anger. Proverbs is full of the kinds of actions that please and displease God. These can be summed up in verses 16-18. As you read each negative action listed, think of its opposite which would please God.

Wise Relationships: Read Proverbs 21:3.

The Hebrews were very strict in their religious practices. Sacrifices were prescribed by God. They were a sacred duty. They were meant to be an act of faith and love. But often they were just routine acts with little or no meaning.

God said he would rather see his people relating to each other and outsiders in a just and honest way than to go through a meaningless act of offering sacrifices. This shows the great importance God puts on personal relationships. You cannot relate rightly to him if you refuse to deal justly with your fellow-man.

Wise Attitudes: Read Proverbs 21:2.

All your speech and all your actions flow from what you are at the core of your being. And that is where God sees you and wants to deal with you. This verse points us back to the earlier statements on wise living. Our hearts must be turned over to God in complete trust before we can hope to live successfully. Evil, even when it is carefully hidden in the depths of your

heart, cannot be hidden from God. If you want to be wise, your thoughts as well as your words and actions must be turned over to him.

True Wisdom: Read Proverbs 3:6, Memory Verse.

This verse gives you the key to wise living: be aware of God's will and presence in all that you do. Look for his direction in his Word, from the sermons you hear and from the counsel of committed Christian friends. God will answer your cry for wisdom. Commit your life to him - all that you do and say - even those secret thoughts of your heart.

Teaching Plan:

Greet the class. Ask any who want to, to share about commitments they made to follow Christ more completely as a result of last week's lesson.

Give a brief review of the lessons so far in this quarter. (See Getting Ready To Teach)

Say: "Today we will begin a unit of study on you and your personal relationship to God. What does that relationship mean to you and your daily living? Today we will look at the book of Proverbs in the Bible." Tell what proverbs are. (See Getting Ready to Teach) Say: "Every culture has its proverbs. Can you think of some from our culture?" If they cannot, you begin a common one and see if they can finish it. Do this several times.

Ask: "Who lives better, a wise man or a foolish one?" (Answer: Wise)
Ask: "What do you think makes a man wise?" Let them answer. Then give a brief introduction to Proverbs. (See Getting Ready to Teach)

Ask someone to read Proverbs 1:7. Ask: "How does the Bible describe a wise man?" (Answer: One who knows and obeys God) Ask: "Who is a fool?" (Answer: One who refuses to acknowledge and obey God.)

Say: "We need wisdom in every area of life - in our actions, our speech, or relationships, even our thoughts. There are many proverbs dealing with each of these areas. We can look at only a few today."

Divide the class into four groups. Give each group references to read. They should discuss what each proverb means in their own lives.

Group 1: Wise Speech: Proverbs 12:17-19, 22-23; 13:5; 15:1; 16:23; 18:7-8, 21, 21:6;

Group 2: Wise Actions: Proverbs 13:20; 16:3; 17:15, 23; 19:24; 22:29; 23:31-32; 24:21-22.

Group 3: Wise Relationships: Proverbs 5:18-19; 6:20; 19:17; 21:21; 22:6; 25:21-22; 30:10-12, 17.

Group 4: Wise Attitudes: Proverbs 14:29-30; 15: 27, 32-33; 21:4; 22:1; 23:4-5, 17.

Sit with each group for about five or six minutes to get an idea of their understanding of the scriptures. Guide them where needed.

Come together for the last 15 minutes of the class. Ask someone from each group to tell how they re-worded and applied one of their proverbs.

Apply This Lesson to Life:

Say: "We live in a practical age. People are interested in truths that work and produce results. The writers of Proverbs observed life and reported what succeeds.

"The wisdom of Proverbs is supported and repeated in many parts of the Bible. Many of Jesus' teachings touch on the truths in Proverbs.

"If you want to live wisely, study the proverbs of the Bible. Look at life around you to see how correct they are. Then look at yourself. If you see yourself revealed in any of the foolish ways to live, ask God for the

courage to correct your ways. He promises wisdom to all who ask. He gives wisdom to all who obey him.

"The memory verse tells us how to live wisely." Say it together. Say: "This is a covenant agreement God makes with you." Ask: "What is your part?" (Answer: Make God a part of every aspect of your life.) Ask: "What is God's part?" (Answer: He will guide you in the ways of wisdom.)

Close with prayer. Thank God for making his wisdom available to men. Pray that your pupils will seek and live by that wisdom.

Things to Think About and Do:

1. Read Proverbs 3:1-11. Read the ways these verses say you can express your "fear" (acknowledgement, respect, awe, reverence) of the Lord:

- ___a. Keep God's Commandments. ___b. Be merciful and truthful.
- ___c. Trust fully in the Lord. ___d. Be humble. ___e. Depart from evil.
- ___f. Give worthy offerings to the Lord. ___g. Accept the Lord's correction.

2. Evaluate your faith in the Lord using the list above. Put a + before the ones you do. Put an X before any you need to improve on.

3. Match the following blessings of wisdom with the verse that tells about it.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| a. Favour in God's sight | <u>(b)</u> 3:2 |
| b. Long life | <u>(a)</u> 3:4 |
| c. Material blessings | <u>(d)</u> 3:6 |
| d. Direction for your life | <u>(e)</u> 3:8 |
| e. Good health | <u>(f)</u> 3:12 |
| f. Correction of error in your life | <u>(g)</u> 3:13 |
| g. Happiness | <u>(c)</u> 3:10 |

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Proverbs 1:1-7.

Monday: Proverbs 3:13-18.

Tuesday: Proverbs 5:1-23.

Wednesday: Proverbs 22:17-19.

Thursday: Proverbs 23:29-33.

Friday: Proverbs 24:15-20

Saturday: Proverbs 30:10-31.

Lesson 12: Dealing With Frustration and Despair Teacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Ecclesiastes 1-3; 5-7; 9; 11.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Ecclesiastes 1:17; 2:1, 3, 10-11; 3:1-8, 11-12; 5:8, 10-13, 18-19; 6:10; 7:8-10, 13-14; 9:3-4, 7-10; 11:4-6.

Memory Verse: "For I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." (2 Timothy 1:12b)

Central Truth: Only union with God can give life meaning and hope.

Teaching Aim: To lead pupils to state how they should live in light of their knowledge of God and the world.

Helps for the Teacher: Six small empty boxes or tins with labels (see Teaching Plan); a small ball; strips of paper with scripture references (see Teaching Plan); paper and pencils for pupils.

Getting Ready to Teach:

I watched my four year old neighbour singing happily as he beat on some old boards with a hammer. After a while he stopped singing and began to cry. He threw the hammer down and stomped away frustrated.

I walked over to him. "What is the problem?" I asked. "I cannot get my house to stand up," he cried. When I looked closer, I saw he had no nails to hold the boards together. No wonder he was frustrated.

Many people live their lives like my young friend builds houses. They do not have what they need to be successful and they are frustrated. The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible deals with the problem of frustration and the despair which often follows.

The Futility of Wisdom and Pleasure: Read Ecclesiastes 1:17; 2:1, 3, 10-11.

Wisdom helps you lead a good life. There are two kinds of wisdom - the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God. Proverbs describes the value of

the wisdom of God. Ecclesiastes tells what happens when men rely on their own wisdom. The writer said human wisdom is like "feeding on the wind." It does not nourish or satisfy.

When wisdom failed he turned toward pleasure. The first pleasure he tried was wine. If he had listened to God's wisdom, he could have avoided an unpleasant experience. But he had to see for himself. He suffered the physical effects of too much wine and failed to find life's meaning there.

He tried to find satisfaction in acquiring things and pleasures. But he always wanted more- whatever he saw he wanted. None of the pleasures helped him. He still felt empty and unsatisfied.

Human Effort is Pointless: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11-12. 9:11; 11:4-6;

The writer believed everything in life had been planned and man could make little change. Many people see life like that- a series of events that happen over and over in order. They do not see God's goals and leading of the world toward a great climax. The poet did not know man could fit into God's on-going plan. He saw human effort as useless.

As man relates to God he understands the purpose for his life. God made man seek the eternal. He wants to know his life will not end. Human history will end, but the man who trusts God knows he will live forever with God. In addition, God will show him how to live this life in a useful and satisfying way.

The Futility of Wealth: Read Ecclesiastes 5:8, 10-13, 18-19; 6:10.

Many people, rich and poor alike, think more money or more property is the the answer to all life's problems. The writer knew wealth does not satisfy. Man always wants more. He always sees someone richer or something new to try to make more money. Tricksters plot and beggars beg for another's wealth. When money is your first love, you cannot sleep

because of the constant threat that it might be lost or stolen. When a man loses wealth, the disappointment and bitterness are worse than poverty. If he gained his wealth through dishonesty, he loses his righteousness which is worth far more than the money he gained.

Through the ages men have thought wealth buys happiness because of the things it can buy. But experience has proven happiness does not come from wealth.

Making a Frustrating Life Better: Read Ecclesiastes 7:8-10, 13-14; 9:3-4, 7-10.

The writer believed life continued after death, but he did not know what it would be like. He concluded you should make this life as good as you can. He noted some things that do not make life better. Now we will see what he thought made life better.

First, he suggested patience. Time spent regretting the past or wishing for things to return to how they were is wasted. Every phase of life has joys and frustrations. Neither the past nor the future is better than the present.

The writer decided life was in God's hands and a man could not change God's plans. He could adjust to it, try to find his place in God's will and learn from it. People need good and bad experiences. The good encourages and gives opportunity. The bad helps them consider the serious values of life.

The writer concluded that the best approach to life is to enjoy the good things, work hard, and remain faithful to God. A faithful marriage partner can make life better, too.

Life At its Best: Read 2 Timothy 1:12b, Memory Verse.

Today we have another source of knowledge about life- divine revelation. God has revealed truths men could never find by themselves. Christians know that putting your trust in Jesus as Saviour and following him

makes life meaningful. Those are the nails you need to build a strong and beautiful life, that will last forever.

Teaching Plan:

Say: "Today we meet the writer of Ecclesiastes, looking for meaning in life. Here are some things people have hoped would give them meaning in life." Show six empty tins or boxes you have prepared with the following labels:

Hard Work Eccl. 2:10-11	Money Eccl. 5:10-13	Pleasure Eccl. 2:1	Wisdom Eccl. 1:17
Alcohol or Drugs Eccl. 2:3	Power or Position Eccl. 5:8		

Ask 6 people to come forward and take a box or tin. Read out each label and ask the one holding it to tell what is inside. (Nothing) Read the verses to show the emptiness of these things.

Say: "Today men are frustrated as they search for meaning in life, just as they were in the poet's day." Divide the class into two groups. Give one the scripture references. Let the other identify the frustrations named. If you have non-readers, you read the scriptures and have them name the frustration described.

1.) Eccl. 3:16 (lack of justice); 2) 4:1, (oppression); 3) 4:4, (competing for position); 4) 4:8-11, (loneliness); 5) 5:1, (meaningless religious practices); 6) 5:8, (authority); 7) 7:7, (bribery); 8) 7:10, (longing for former times); 9) 7:13-14, (wondering about the future); 10) 7:26, (illicit sex); 11) 8:14, (inequity between wicked and righteous); 12) 12:12 (intellectual pursuits).

Ask: "Can you think of other causes for frustration or despair?"

(Possible responses: AIDS, unemployment, illness and lack of good medical care, poverty, problems with children.) Give time for comments on any of these.

Read Eccl. 3:1-8. Say: "Today we think this passage is beautiful poetry. It comforts us to know God has planned the cycles of life and allows man to experience many different emotions. But the poet says God controls everything and man is useless. Why do anything beyond what is necessary for daily survival? The writer is frustrated because of his view of life."

Say: "The poet's view of a man's life is like this turning ball." (Roll a ball over and over in your hand as you speak.) "It just turns round and round but goes nowhere. He was right when he spoke of the cycles of life. But he was wrong when he said man was going nowhere." (Roll the ball on the floor toward a chair or someone.) Say: "As this ball turns over in cycles it moves toward a target." Tell about God's ongoing plan for man and the earth in Human Effort is Pointless. (See Getting Ready to Teach)

Say: "Despite the poet's faulty view of life he gave some good advice for living." Read Eccl. 7:8-10, 13-14; 9:3-4, 7-10.

Ask: "What is missing from the poet's life?" (Answer: Jesus Christ.) Discuss how Jesus can make a difference and give life meaning.

Apply this lesson to life

Say the memory verse together. Say: "This verse helps us remember that God leads us in ways that will make life meaningful."

Ask: "In light of what we know of Jesus and what we know of the world, how can you live a meaningful life?" Give each paper and pencil. Ask them to write a statement of how they should live. Share yours and then let others share. You can help students who do not write to state in a few words what they have decided.

Close with prayer.

Things to Think About and Do:

I. The poet was frustrated by life and found no satisfaction. When Jesus came he had the answers men are looking for. On the left are references to problems the poet could not solve. The references on the right give answers from Jesus or his followers. Write the letter of the answer on the line by the problem.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>(d)</u> Ecclesiastes 4:4 | a. 1 Corinthians 5:17 |
| 2. <u>(b)</u> Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 | b. Matthew 6:25-33 |
| 3. <u>(a)</u> Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 | c. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 |
| 4. <u>(e)</u> Ecclesiastes 7:9-14 | d. Colossians 3:23-24 |
| 5. <u>(c)</u> Ecclesiastes 2:12-17 | e. John 11:25-26, 14:1-6 |

II. What is your greatest frustration? _____

In light of this study, what can you do to overcome it? _____

What advice can you give to a young person who is searching in the wrong places for meaning in life? _____

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

Monday: Matthew 6:25-33.

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23.

Wednesday: Ecclesiastes 2:24-26.

Thursday: Colossians 3:23-24.

Friday: Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.

Saturday: John 11:25-27.

Lesson 13: Knowing and Showing True LoveTeacher's Lesson

Background Scripture: Song of Solomon 1:1- 8:14.

Scripture for Today's Lesson: Song of Solomon 1:6; 4:9,12,16; 5:10-11,16;
6:2-3; 8:6-7.

Memory Verse: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25)

Central Truth: God's love should be the pattern for all man's relationships.

Teaching Aim: To help the student see how the marriage relationship should show God's love for man.

Helps for the Teacher: 1 1/2 loaves of bread or some kind of fruit; a knife;
list of some of the characteristics of love (See Teaching Plan).

Getting Ready to Teach:

If you could state the theme of the Bible in one word, what would that word be? I think it should be "love." God loved man and made a perfect world for him to live in. He gave man opportunity to know him. After man sinned, He gave his Son so man could return to a holy relationship with him. Love describes God. (1 John 4:16) It is the most important thing God asks man to do. (Matthew 12:30-31)

It is fitting that our final lesson in this unit of Poetry in the Bible should be about a love song. King Solomon wrote over one thousand songs. The one in today's lesson is considered the best by far. The Song of Solomon is also known as the Song of Songs.

You can enjoy the beautiful language alone, but scholars have studied the ancient writing and discovered a beautiful story as well. It is the story of a young girl and her bridegroom who love each other very much.

In this poem she is not with her new husband. She recalls her experience with her beloved and their words of love for each other. She is

sure their love is pure and endless and that they will be reunited. The story describes the quality of love that God had in mind when he planned the marriage relationship. Some have compared the love of marriage to God's love for his chosen people or Jesus' love for the church.

The Beauty of the Bride: Read Song of Solomon 1:6.

People of many lands consider dark skin to be beautiful. This girl had dark skin but she seemed to be ashamed of it. She said her brothers had forced her to work out of doors. This work had made her skin very dark. She had been working so hard she had neglected her looks.

Maybe she was modest and unaware of her own natural beauty. In other parts of the poem her beloved praises her beauty highly. Or maybe she wanted to be beautiful for her beloved and feared she would not meet his standards. Whatever the reason for this outcry, it shows a characteristic of true love. You want to please your loved one.

The Beloved's Praise of His Bride and Her Response: Read Song of Solomon 4:9, 12, 16.

"My sister, my spouse" is an expression of tenderness. The groom felt as close to her as to a member of his family. In fact, the marriage had united them as one. He did not hesitate to tell her how he felt.

The groom's love for his bride left him weak in her presence. Her beauty overwhelmed him. He may have meant there was more beauty in one of her eyes than in all the features of any other woman. Or he may have meant only one glance from her was enough to make him desire her.

Her love was his alone. He compared her to his private garden. In those days springs and fountains were often covered to keep out impurities. These words picture the value and beauty of sexual purity.

The bride's response showed her willingness to allow her husband the pleasures of her body. They were only for him and not to be exposed, offered or shared with any other man. She was not ashamed to offer her body to her husband. Sexual pleasure was both pure and delightful to the bride and groom. They understood it was created by God to make marriage a deep and joyful relationship.

The Bride's Praise of Her Beloved: Read Songs of Solomon 5:10-11, 16.

The bride found her husband handsome and told him why. She praised his physical features. She said his mouth was sweet because he spoke gently to her. She called him her friend - one she could trust to share the deep feelings of her heart. The man and wife who are friends as well as lovers are fortunate indeed. They share all of life, not just a house and bed.

The Sweetness of Their Sharing: Read Song of Solomon 6:2-3.

These verses answer the question, "Where can the bridegroom be found?" Because of his faithfulness, the bride knew he would come to her. He would not look for pleasure or female companionship elsewhere. Each was faithful and trusted the other to be equally faithful.

True love is shared. Each gives himself to the other. True love is exclusive- shared only with one other. A person in love is not complete alone. He or she is made complete by union with the beloved - just as two halves make a whole. Three persons cannot share that wholeness any more than three halves can make one whole.

The Strength and Value of Love: Read Song of Solomon 8:6-7.

The bride said she wanted her husband to think of her as a part of himself - even when they were apart. She wanted him to let others know of his commitment to her. The wedding ring is sometimes a symbol of this kind of commitment.

True love cannot be destroyed. Death, the strongest power on earth, cannot destroy true love. Love is more precious than all the material things you can own. The husband and wife who truly love each other have the most valuable human experience a person can know.

God's Love: Read Ephesians 5:25, Memory Verse.

We are told to love as God loves. He loved so much he gave all. Jesus was God dying for sinners. Those who accept his sacrificial love form the church. Jesus spent his life on earth showing love. Then he died so we could be saved and continue to show that love to others.

That unselfish, caring, sacrificing, gentle-yet-strong, faithful-to-the-end kind of love should guide all we do. If it does, it will be visible. Then others can get a picture of God. That kind of love is irresistible - in a marriage and in the troubled world in which we live.

Teaching Plan:

Take a whole loaf of bread or a piece of fruit. Cut in half. Show the two halves. Put them together again. Say: "Two halves make a whole." Then bring out another half from a bag or box. Ask: "Can we make the bread (or fruit) more complete by adding a third half?" Say: "Married love is like this." Explain the mutual sharing and exclusiveness of married love. (See Getting Ready to Teach, "The Sweetness of Their Sharing")

Say: "Today we will conclude our study of poetry of the Bible. Our lesson is on Song of Solomon. It is a good way to end our study because it is one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible. Its subject is love. It is suited to poetic expression because it deals with deep feelings." Tell them about the book from the introduction to Getting Ready to Teach.

Say: "There are many kinds of love." Ask: "Can you name some of these?" (Answer: 1) parent-child; 2) brothers; 3) friends; 4) married

love; 5) love of God for man and man for God) Show the list of "Some Characteristics of Love" which follows. Say: "As we read today's scripture passages we will try to identify these characteristics as described in the poet's words. I will write the reference by the characteristic." Read the verses aloud. Explain from Getting Ready to Teach. Write the reference beside each item on the list.

Some Characteristics of Love: desire to be worthy (1:6); pure (4:12); see the beloved as beautiful (4:9-10; 5:10-11); sweet talk (4:11; 5:16); exclusive (4:12); welcome-unselfish-giving (4:16); trust (4:16); mutual feeling (4:16); faithful (6:2-3); oneness (8:6a); cannot be destroyed (8:6b-7a); of the highest value (8:7b).

Divide into two groups. Ask Group 1 to discuss how these characteristics apply to married love. Group 2 should discuss how they apply to the Christian life.

Come together after about 15 minutes. Let each group share their findings briefly.

Apply this lesson to life

Say: "Someone has said, 'Your life may be the only sermon some people ever hear.'" Ask: "What does this mean?" (Answer: People who do not go to church may see something of God's love as they observe your life.) Ask: "Do you think this is true?" Discuss briefly.

Say the memory verse. Ask: "What does this tell us about how we are to relate to our spouses?" (Answer: Like Jesus relates to the Church) Ask: "How is that?" (Answer: love, give self, etc. See list of characteristics above)

Ask pupils to decide how they can show God's love in their marriages by choosing one of the characteristics listed earlier to demonstrate this week. If they are not married they should apply it to someone else in their family.

Close with prayer.

Things to Think About and Do:

I. Match the scripture reference with the ways the bride and groom expressed their love for each other.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>(1)</u> a. 4:9-11 | 1. The groom's praise of the bride |
| <u>(3)</u> b. 4:12 | 2. The romantic invitation and acceptance |
| <u>(2)</u> c. 4:16-5:1 | 3. The bride's sexual purity |
| <u>(5)</u> d. 5:10-11,16 | 4. Recognition of the strength, value
and lasting nature of love. |
| <u>(6)</u> e. 6:2-3 | 5. The bride's praise of the groom |
| <u>(4)</u> f. 8:6-7 | 6. The exclusive nature of their love |

II. How can the ways the bride and groom expressed their love be helpful in the marriage relationship today? _____

III. How do your ideas of love compare with the love expressed by the bride and groom? _____

IV. What can you do to better show God's love in your home? _____

Scriptures to Study at Home This Week:

Sunday: Genesis 2:20-25.

Monday: Hosea 2:18-23.

Tuesday: Mark 10:2-9.

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 7:2-5.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Saturday: 1 Peter 4:7-11