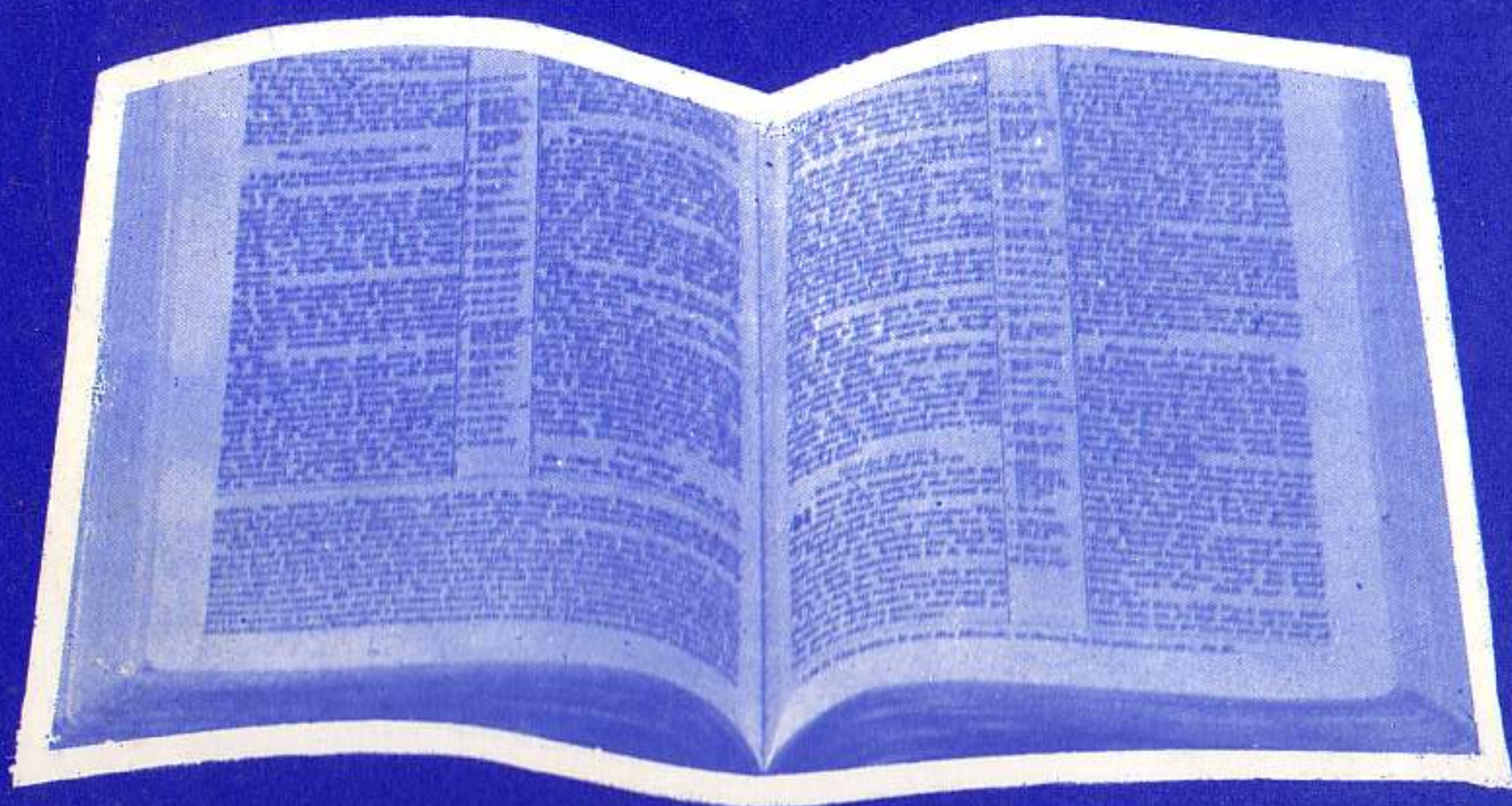


PROPHETS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND MERCY (TEACHER'S)



BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

**PROPHETS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND
MERCY
(TEACHER'S)**

BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

African Coordinated Curriculum for Bible Study

A5-3TE

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Chapter One

CHRIST HONoured AND REJECTED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 21:1-17, 33-46

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Matthew 21:8-11, 33-46

MEMORY VERSE: "...The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner..."
Matthew 21:42.

TEACHING AIM: To show students how Jesus is honoured and rejected today.

TEACHING AIDS: Write the memory verse on a chalk board or old newspaper. Draw a rectangle around the words. Collect enough small stones to give one to each person in class.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Jesus entered Jerusalem as the prophets foretold. (Read Zechariah 9:9.) He did not come as a warrior with a horse and chariot. He came as kings came in that time, riding on a colt. Matthew tells how the crowds cheered and spread their clothes and branches before him on the road. As I read the first verses, picture Jesus in your mind. Think about what the crowd was saying and doing." (Read Matthew 21:8-11.)

Say: "The people greeted Jesus shouting, 'Hosanna.' In the Psalms, 'Hosanna' means 'Save, we pray thee.' It is used here as a greeting like 'welcome.' People spread their garments on the road to be stepped

on. This gave honour to their king. As they sang 'Hosanna in the highest,' they called the heavens to join in honouring Jesus."

Ask: "Do you think it would have been wonderful to be there? Would you have taken off your jacket or shirt and laid it along the road? The Crowd honoured Jesus by their welcome. What are some ways we honour Jesus today?" [worship, sing, pray, witness]

Say: "Verse 10 says, 'All the city was stirred.' So many people came to welcome Jesus, it was like the whole city was there. Verse 10 says that many asked a question. 'Who is this man?'"

Ask: "What was their answer?"
[Read verse 11.]

Ask: "Who do people say Jesus is today?" [Son of God, a prophet, a good man.]

Ask: "Who does the Bible say he is?" [King of kings, Lord of lords, Emmanuel, the Way, the Truth, the Life, our Saviour, etc.]

Say: "After he arrived in Jerusalem he drove the money-changers from the temple. He healed the blind and lame. The angry religious leaders doubted Jesus' authority to do these things.

"The next verses are Jesus' answer to the religious leaders. To answer them, he told a parable."

Ask: "Will someone read Matthew 21:33-39?"

Say: "It is clear who Jesus was talking about in this parable. The owner of the vineyard was God. The

vineyard was the nation of Israel. The tenants were the religious leaders who were to lead Israel spiritually. Messengers or servants were the prophets. Jesus was the son."

Say: "God prepared the wonderful Promised Land for Israel. He gave them freedom to use the land as they chose. But he asked them to be his priests, to help others know him. He wanted them to obey his laws and be an example to other nations. This was the fruit he expected of Israel."

Say: "When Israel disobeyed, God sent prophets to remind them and bring them back to him. Israel refused to listen. They treated the prophets badly. They even killed some of them! When God finally sent his Son, they rejected him too. The parable says, they 'Took him outside the vineyard and killed him.' In the same way, Jesus was taken outside the city of Jerusalem to be crucified." (Read Hebrews 13:12.)

Say: "These wicked tenants openly disobeyed God's law. They killed his son. What are some ways we reject Christ today?" [Disobedience, treating people badly, failing to witness, refusing to accept him as Saviour]

Say: "God expected his nation Israel to bear fruit. He expects the same of Christians today."

Ask: "Can you think of some stories or verse which give examples of bearing fruit?" [The Good Samaritan; the wise man who built his house on the rock, fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23; faith like a mustard seed; the harvest of souls which we are called to bring in, and many more]

Ask: "What are some ways we as Christians produce fruit?" (Help the class discuss this, using the stories and verses given above and any others they can think of.)

Ask someone to read Matthew 21:40-46.

Ask: "What did the religious leaders say the owner should do to the wicked tenants?" [Read verse 41.] This was the judgement they deserved themselves for rejecting God and his Son."

Say: "Verse 42, our memory verse for today, is quoted from Psalms 118. 'The rejected stone' was a symbol for Israel. Israel was despised and rejected by the powers of the world. Even so, God used Israel to bring salvation to the world."

Say: "For the Christian, Jesus, not Israel, is the cornerstone. (Read 1 Peter 2:4-8a.) Jesus holds our faith together. He is the foundation on which we build." (Say the Memory Verse together.)

Say: "Israel rejected Christ. In verse 43, Jesus told them what would happen because they rejected him. (Read verse 43 again.) God's kingdom was taken away from them. It is given to those who produce fruit."

Ask: "What are some ways we can be fruitful and honour Christ today?" [Live our Christian life so the fruit of the Spirit is seen in how we treat others. Witness. Be kind. Obey God. Serve God and others]

Say: "By this parable it was clear that Jesus knew about the leader's plan to kill him. It is also clear that by killing Jesus they cut their relationship to God. In verse 43, Jesus said God

would choose new spiritual leaders who accept and obey him."

Say: "We see in verse 45 that the religious leaders knew the parable was about them. It was a great threat to their authority. Even so, they could not arrest him openly. Verse 46 says that the people thought Jesus was God's prophet. They would not allow Jesus' arrest. The leaders first had to make the people change their opinion of Jesus."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Jesus used parables to teach a moral or religious truth. Remember, a parable is a story which can be true. This parable told of events that actually happened. God chose Israel and gave them a good land. They rejected him, his prophets and his Son. Because of this, God rejected them as his chosen people. He would use others to spread his Good News."

Say: "This parable also teaches us important things. First, we must accept Jesus as God's Son and our Saviour. We must not reject him. Then, we must bear fruit. Without fruit, we are not really living in Jesus and depending on him. John 15 tells us that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. If we have no fruit, it means we are not a part of the plant.

Christians must bear fruit to show that they are really Christians."

Say: "The parable of the wicked tenants concludes our study of parables. It leads us to our study of the prophets, which we begin next week. In Amos, we will again see people like these wicked tenants. We will see the greed and disrespect for God's law which they had. We will see how the rich and powerful people in the days of Amos ignored God's laws. We will see how they rejected his prophets just as the religious leaders rejected Jesus."

(If you have a stone for each student, give it to them at this time.)

Say: "Let us read the Memory Verse again. As a reminder of this study I have given each of you a stone. Put it somewhere in your house where you can see it this week. It will help you to remember this lesson. Remember that Jesus is our cornerstone. He is the foundation of our faith. We honour or reject him by the way we live daily."

Say: "We will now pray. Ask God to make you a fruitful Christian this week. Ask him to help you honour him."

Close with prayer that each one will honour Jesus as they should.

Chapter Two

LISTEN TO GOD

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Amos 1:1; 7:1-17

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Amos 7:1-16a

MEMORY VERSE: "Now therefore hear the word of the Lord..." Amos 7:16a.

TEACHING AIM: To help students evaluate how they are obeying God's laws.

TEACHING AIDS: Make a plumb line; tie a long string to a stone about the size of a lemon.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Studying parables helped us understand better the teachings of Jesus. In the last week's lesson Jesus claimed to have the authority of a prophet. The religious leaders had not listened to the prophets. They did not listen to God's own Son."

Say: "Today we begin to study the Old Testament prophets. These men told people how to follow God. By studying their messages we can learn how God's laws apply to us today. Jesus said he came to fulfil the law and the prophecy. (Read Matthew 5:17.) A true prophet is a man sent by God to remind people of their responsibility to him. During the next weeks we will study the prophets Amos, Micah, Hosea and Isaiah."

Say: "Before we begin our study, let us review a bit of the history of the nation of Israel. Remember that after

Solomon's death, the kingdom divided into two parts: Israel, the north and Judah in the South. Judah was ruled by the descendants of King David. Some of these kings led the people to follow God. Most did not. Israel was ruled by people from many different families. None of these kings led the people to follow God. In fact most of them worshipped idols and led the people to do this, too. Many committed terrible sins against God and against the people."

Say: "Today we will study the prophet Amos. Amos prophesied to Israel, the northern kingdom. As we read the Scripture verses for today, I will ask a question, then will read the verses to find the answer."

Say: "The first question is: 'Where was Amos from?' Turn to Amos 1:1 and look for the answer." Ask a pupil to read the verse. [Tekoa]

Say: "Tekoa was in Judah, the southern kingdom. Amos left his home country and travelled to the north to give Israel God's message."

Say: "Now turn to Amos 7:14-15. The second question is: 'What was Amos' work?'" Read the verses. [Shepherd, caretaker of figs trees, prophet]

Say: "Amos came from the small country village of Tekoa in the land of Judah. God called him to be his prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He answered, 'The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?'"

Say: "Now let us read Amos 7:1 and answer this question: 'What was the first judgement the Lord showed Amos?'" Ask someone to read. [Swarm of locusts]

Say: "If locusts ate the crops there would be very little food for people. Amos prayed and God did not send the locusts." Read Amos 7:2-3.

Ask: "In Amos 7:4, 'What was the second judgement?'" Ask someone to read. [Drought which brings fires]

Say: "The great deep in verse 4 was water beneath the earth's surface. To destroy this meant they could not grow food. Again Amos' prayer for Judah stopped this disaster." Read Amos 7:5-6.

Say: "Before we read Amos 7:7-9, I want to show you how a plumb line is used. (Take the stone tied to the string and hold it against the wall. Explain that this straight line shows whether or not the wall is straight and strong.) Read Amos 7:7-9.

Ask: "What did God measure by the plumb line?" [My people Israel]

Ask: "What did God see as he measured?" [People were not straight, did not follow God's law]

Say: "God told the people they were like a wall that is out of line. Such a wall cannot be trusted to stand. It must be destroyed so a new strong, straight wall can be built. In the same way, people who did not stand strong and follow God's law would be destroyed. God said he would begin his judgement by destroying their holy places of idol worship. Also, he would take the ruling power from King Jeroboam's family. They would not continue to rule in Israel."

Ask: "What is the plumb line God's people follow today?" [The Bible the Ten Commandments, the life of Jesus Christ]

Say: "Let us now read Amos 7:10-17 and look for the answer to this question: 'Who was Amaziah?'" Read these verses. [The priest of Bethel] "Why was he angry?." [Amos' prophecy said their king would die and they would go into exile.] "What did he tell Amos to do?" [Return to his own land, prophesy there, never again prophesy in Bethel.]

Say: "Amaziah was Chief Priest at Bethel and to the king's royal court. He was not God's priest. When Amos told people that God was going to destroy their holy places, this threatened Amaziah. He said Amos' preaching would destroy the country. He ordered Amos back to Judah. Amaziah did not want the people to turn to God in repentance. If they did, he would lose power."

Say: "Let us read Amos' answer to Amaziah in verses 14-16a. (Ask someone to read.) In these verses, Amos explained that his call to be a prophet was from God. God was his employer. Prophets to the King's court were paid from the court treasury. Because the king paid them, they only said things which would please him. Amos said the Lord ordered him to prophesy. He was not being paid by the King to do this. Amos told the king the truth. He told him and every citizen that they must fulfil their covenant with God. To do this, they had to do away with injustice, inhumanity and immorality. They had to tear down their places of false

worship. Amos warned them to listen to what God said."

Ask: "What are some ways people break God's laws today?" [Lie, cheat, steal and many more sins.] Let students name some.

Ask: "What can Christians do to obey God and be an example to the world?" [Be honest. Help those in need. Pray. Study the Bible. Attend church. Share God's salvation with others.] Let students suggest other things.

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Israel thought they had God's blessing because many were rich. God revealed to Amos that this did not mean they had God's blessing. In fact, many were rich because of sin. Many were greedy and selfish. God told Amos to try to get the people to listen to him. He told them to leave worldly values and return to the values of God. Is our nation today like Israel? Do people value God's laws and try to live by them?"

"Many people today do not worship God. They worship power, money and beautiful things. They lie cheat and steal to get these things. They have no respect for God's law. To be blessed by him, we must worship and obey him. If we do not, we may suffer punishment like Israel did. Israel was punished because they did not listen

to God. It is important for nations to listen to what God says today, too. When people refuse to live by God's commands, disaster will come."

Say: "God's people must always choose to live as God wants us to. We must listen to God and obey him. What are we to do to obey him? First, God gave us the Ten Commandments to guide us. Then Jesus gave us a new commandment to love one another. If we really love each other, we will not sin against each other. We will please God and our fellow man. Christians are especially blessed to have the Bible. It tells us everything we need to know to please God. It tells us how Jesus lived. We know that if we follow his example, we will please God. It is important for Christians to study God's Word, so we will know what he wants us to do. People who seek to know and do God's will are blessed. They are given many ways to serve God and others."

Say: "Let us close with prayer. Let us ask God to show each of us the things we do which break God's law. Let us ask for strength to change the things in our lives that do not please Him. Let us praise God because he gave us the Bible and Jesus to be our guides."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Three

THE POOR, WEAK AND HELPLESS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:
Amos 2:6-15; 8:4-14

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Amos 2:6-10; 8:4-7

MEMORY VERSE: "Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate..." Amos 5:15.

TEACHING AIM: To help pupils identify actions that hurt the poor. To help them understand that if Christians do these things, it hurts their witness.

TEACHING AIDS: Write the word "HYPOCRITE" in bold, dark letter on a chalk board, poster paper or an old newspaper.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Praise the Lord!" "Amen!" Do you hear the people in your church shout these word of encouragement to the preacher? The people encouraged Amos as he preached against the foreign nations of Syria, Moab and Philistia. But when he said Israel must be judged for their sins, the "Amens!" stopped. Israel had become God's enemy because of their sins against the poor. God promised he would punish them for their actions."

(Put the paper or chalk board with the word, HYPOCRITE, in front of the class.)

Say: "A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be someone he is not. One example of a hypocrite is a Christian landlord who charges too much rent

for poor housing. Another example is the Christian businessman who refuses to pay fair wages."

Ask: "Can you give other examples?" Let pupils answer.

Say: "The word sin means 'To refuse to obey a set of laws.' It is to rebel. God sent the prophet Amos to tell Israel their sins. He also predicted the judgement that would come. As we read the verses in today's lesson, listen for sins of Israel. When we finish the Bible reading, I will ask you to name these sins. After we have named them I will explain them." Ask someone to read Amos 2:6-8.

Ask: "What were Israel's sins against the poor, weak and helpless?" [Verse 6 - sold their fellowmen into slavery to pay debts, verse 7a - trampled the head of the poor, verse 7b - profaned God's name by committing sexual sins, verse 8a - took the only warm garment a poor man owned and kept it to sleep on, verse 8b - drank the wine of the crops they took as fines from the poor, celebrated their greed in the temple]

Say: "God saw that people were sold into slavery to pay the smallest debt. This made him very unhappy. He had given laws to Israel to protect the poor. (Read Exodus 23:6-8.) Judges ignored the laws to please the rich. They took bribes from them and became rich themselves."

Say: "In verse 7a, we see that the rich 'Trampled the head of the poor.' This means they totally defeated them.

Trampling them referred to cruel acts against people who could not defend themselves. The rich become richer as they collected debts from the poor."

Say: "Verse 7b refers to the practice of temple prostitution. God's law forbade these acts." (Read Deuteronomy 23:17.)

Say: "Verse 8a mentions the rich sleeping on clothing taken in pledge. Exodus 22:26-27 required those who loaned money to return to clothes given as deposits at sundown. In this way, the person was protected from the cold night air. (Read Exodus 22:26-27.) The rich Israelites did not obey this law. In fact, they brought the clothing into the temples of worship and used it as sleeping mats."

Say: "Exodus 22:25 told the rich not to take interest when they loaned money to a poor man. The rich Israelites ignored this law. They even fined the poor for late payments. When the poor had no money, they paid their fines with food and drink. The rich used these goods during temple festivals. The poor had nowhere to turn for help. The rich controlled everything."

Say: "In Amos 2:6-8, Amos told Israel the ways they had sinned. In verses 9-10, he reminded them of the ways God had blessed and protected them. God had blessed Israel more than any other nation in the history of the world. He had favoured them with his presence and protection. He revealed his power and his purpose to them." Read Amos 2:9-10.

Say: "Verse 9 mentions the Amorites. They were a powerful enemy yet God helped Israel defeat

them. Verse 10 refers to God's greatest act in Israel's history, the exodus from Egypt. God led them to freedom in the land of promise. He fed and cared for them for 40 years in the wilderness. They should have been grateful. They should have obeyed God's laws. Instead they used their power to persecute the poor."

Say: "Amos receive a vision from God in Amos 8:103. He saw a basket full of summer fruit. This symbolized the end of the harvest season. Just as the harvest was over, so was God's grace to Israel. Judgement was about to come."

Say: "Listen for more sins committed by Israel as we read Amos 8:4-7. Ask a student to read these verses?"

Ask: "What are the sins listed in these verse?" (Read the answers given, if students do not understand the meaning of the verses.) [verse 4 - trample or defeat the needy, verse 5 - finish worship quickly so they could sell their goods again, use false measures and weights when selling, balance scales in favour of the merchants, verse 6 - bought their own poor people as slaves, mixed trash with wheat and sold it for high prices.]

Ask: "Do merchants do these things today?" Discuss.

Say: "The poor were forced to sell themselves into slavery to pay their debts. The words of verse 7 encouraged them. It was God's promise that the keeping a record of these evil deeds." (Read verse 7 again.)

Say: "God promised 'by the pride of Jacob' to remember this selfishness

and dishonesty. Usually the Lord swears by himself. There is no one higher or greater by which to swear. Israel should have taken pride in God alone. God knew they were more proud of their ancestors. They thought that just being a "child of Israel" would save them. They did not remember that they had to obey God's laws to be acceptable to him. God swore on Israel's "pride of Jacob" to emphasize Israel's disobedience."

Say: "What does this lesson mean to us today? Let us discuss some questions to help us apply the truth of this lesson to our live today." (Read each question to your class. Lead in discuss.)

1. What kind of help do the poor receive from churches today?

2. Is there justice in the Courts for poor people today? Give some examples. Is there a lack of justice? Give examples.

3. How do businessmen today force some people to live in poverty? How do they "trample the head of the poor?"

4. How have we treated the poor in ways that will not please God?

5. Is your church helping needy people? If not, what can you do to help in the future?

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Ask someone to read the memory verse, Amos 5:15.

Say: "'Goodness' in the old Testament is always related to how man treats his fellow man. The 'good' man is not only religious but also moral. In order to 'establish justice in the gate,' he defends the poor, weak and helpless. He obeys Gods laws which protect the poor."

Say: "Almost 2,500 years have passed since Amos prophesied in Israel. Times have not changes much. God's people still sin. When we sin against others we sin against God. Any nation which does not care for the poor is guilty of sin. When we Christians forget the poor and think only of our own pleasure, we disobey God. We ruining the witness of the church. We become hypocrites like the examples we gave at the beginning of this lesson. We must live the words of our Memory Verse. We must hate what is wrong. We must love and help others in need. We must defend the rights of the helpless."

Say: "Pray that God will help each of us see in ourselves the wrong things we do. Pray that he will help us stop doing things which hurt others."

NOTE: *For next week, ask a student to be ready to read Amos 5, reading like he is Amos preaching.*

Chapter Four

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RIGHT LIVING

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Amos 5:1-27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Amos 5:1-27

MEMORY VERSE: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" Amos 5:24.

TEACHING AIM: Helps students see that true worship of God is shown in how we treat others.

TEACHING AIDS: Before the class begins ask one member who reads well to pretend he is Amos. Ask him to read Amos 5 for the class as though he were Amos preaching to people in the market.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Remind the student whom you have asked to read Amos 5 that he will read after you have introduced him.

Say: "This morning we have a special guest. Before he came here, he was a shepherd who owned his own flock. He also worked in his vineyard. He comes from Tekoa in the land of Judah. He is going to share the message God has given him. Listen to his prophecy."

Say: "Amos, welcome to our class this morning." (The student you asked to read Amos 5 will read it as though he is Amos preaching a sermon.)

After he has read, say: "Thank you, Amos. Friends, you have heard the words of God warning us to do good.

not evil. If we truly love God, We will show it by how we treat other people."

Say: "Now let us look at the meaning of Amos' sermon." Ask a student to read Amos 5:1-9.

Say: "Amos pleaded with the people to listen. In verse 2 he compared Israel to a woman who will die young. Israel's cities would be empty. None would come to help them. This tragic end was predicted because Israel refused to listen to God."

Say: "Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba were places of religious activity. They were places where King Jeroboam I had built altars and idols for the people to worship. The Israelites were very religious. They loved to go and take part in the rituals of worship. But what do these verses say that they failed to do?" Look in verses 4 and 6 for the answer. [Seek the Lord]

Say: "They did not really want to know God. They did not want to obey him. They only wanted to act religious in their 'holy places.' Verses 5-7 said these places would be destroyed."

Say: "Verses 8 and 9 are probably the words of an ancient Hebrew hymn. It stresses God's power both to create and to destroy. Israel would see god's destruction in the days ahead."

Ask a student to read Amos 5:10-13.

Say: "In the time of Amos, cities and large towns were enclosed with walls. They protected them from their enemies. Gates were opened during

the day and closed at night. Inside these gates were palaces where the elders sat and ruled the city. This is where court was held. When someone brought charges against another, the elders at the gate listened and passed judgement. There was no appeal. Their decisions were final. These elders were bribed to rule against the poor. Justice and truth were ignored and forgotten. Even worse, the people hated anyone who made them listen to the truth. They did not want the court system to work. If it did, they knew they would be convicted."

Say: "Amos reminded them that the poor had to sell their land to pay their debts. They then had to rent that same land to grow their food. They paid a large part of their crop as rent. Rich land owners took their profits and built huge stone houses. The poor lived in houses made of clay. Because the rich cheated the poor, God's justice would come. The rich would not live in their mansions nor enjoy the wine from their vineyards. Enemies would take them into exile and enjoy the harvest from their land."

Say: "God told them he knew exactly what sins Israel had committed. He knew they bribed judges and mistreated the poor in the courts. Those who usually protected the poor could do nothing. The condition was hopeless. It was not safe for them to speak out against these injustices, so they remained silent. Should Christians today remain silent when people are being abused? Can we help them?" Discuss this issue.

Say: "Let us continue to look at Israel. They did not have to be

destroyed. If they would do good, not evil, they would live. If they obeyed God, his presence would be with them." Read Amos 5:14-15.

Say: "Because of their great wealth, Israel believed God favoured them. They loved to say, 'God is with us.' Amos reminded them that God would be with them only if they did right. 'Right' meant obeying God's laws, not just doing religious rituals and ceremonies. If they did right, Amos said perhaps they would escape God's judgement. Or possibly only a few of them, a faithful remnant, would be safe. (Read verse 15b again.) The majority of them would likely fall to their conquerors."

Say: "Verses 16-20 are words from God himself. (Read Amos 5:16-20) God takes up the cry against his people. He predicts the great grief that will come to them. In their pride they bragged, 'the day of the Lords will come.' They thought this meant more blessing. Actually, 'The day of the Lord' was God's judgement against his rebellious people. Verses 18-19 show that there will be no way of escape."

Say: "Israel believed their festivals, sacrifices and offerings fulfilled God demands. They believed that Because they followed these rituals, God had to fulfil his promises." Read Amos 5:21-24.

Say: "Amos shocked his listeners! He said that God hated the offerings of those whose actions and attitudes were evil. God wanted to see justice and righteousness in every part of their lives. Let us read verse 24

together. This is our Memory Verse for today." Read the verse twice.

Say: "God wanted two things; justice and righteousness. Justice referred to decisions of the court. These decisions should have insured the rights of all people. God wanted all people to treat others with justice. A just man is fair to all people, rich or poor."

Say: "A righteous man does good because he is like God. He follows God's laws and plans. Righteousness is a way of life that makes us right with God and-with other people. The way we treat the poor and needy shows how much we love God. It shows how much we love his law. Worship is one way we show God our love. Amos believed that true worship was service to people in need. Without service to others, other worship is meaningless." Discuss this idea with the students.

Say: "Israel had two different kinds of rivers. Some always had water, like the Jordan River. Others were dry most of the time but flooded during the rainy season. 'Justice' and 'righteousness' were to flow from God's people like the Jordan river. It constantly flowed with waters from the mountains of Lebanon. At this time the flow of justice had been stopped by the trash of sin. God wanted the trash removed. Is sin blocking the flow of justice and righteousness in our lives?" Discuss

APPLICATIONS TO OUR LIVES

After discussion, Say: "This is the third Sunday we have studied the message of Amos. He begged the people of his day to turn from their

greedy and evil ways. He reminded them that God wanted them to love others and be kind. Love and kindness were more important than anything else in God's sight."

Say: "Last week we discussed how the poor are treated here in our Community. Think again about what these studies have meant to you. Have you made any changes in your life because of them? Are you more aware of the poor? Do you act more kindly to beggars?" Let students discuss.

Say: "Does it surprise you to think that God may hate our worship? If our actions and attitudes are not just and righteous, God hates our worship. How do you think God sees us and our worship? Is it acceptable to him?" Discuss.

Say: "God does not accept our empty promises and prayers. He wants obedience. He does not want to hear us say how much we love him. He wants to see our love in action. He does not want to hear about our love for our family, friends or people in need. He wants us to show that we love them by our actions. God wants us to do exactly what the Memory Verse says. He wants us to 'let justice and righteousness flow down like waters.'"

Say: "Let us ask God to help us see how we can minister to the needy in our community. Let us ask him to help us see those who are in trouble. Let us ask him to give us courage to insure that justice is done."

Close with prayer, praying for each of these things.

Chapter Five

DON'T PREACH AT US!

BACKGROUND

Micah 2:1-13

SCRIPTURE:

SCRIPTURE FOR TODAY'S
LESSON: Micah 2:1-4,6-11

MEMORY VERSE: "Learn to do good; seek justice; correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" Isaiah 1:17.

TEACHING AIM: To help students evaluate how they use the power they have been given.

TEACHING AIDS: Write the following relationships on board or paper:

Church leader - Church member
husband - - - - - wife
employer - - - - - employee
parent - - - - - child
Office holder - - - - - citizen
teacher - - - - - pupil

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Today I want to introduce you to the prophet Micah. Amos Hosea prophesied to Israel in the North. Micah and Isaiah preached to Judah the South. Micah is probably the least known of the four. He is best known for his prophecy that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem in Micah 5:2." Ask a student to read Micah 5:2.

"The days in which Micah preached were days of strife and change. Assyria was an evil and powerful nation which threatened world peace. Later the Assyrians invaded and destroyed Syria and Israel."

Say: "Micah was born in a small village, Moresheth, near the Philistine border about 20 miles from Jerusalem. An international road from Assyria to Egypt ran through the valley. Many messengers travelling from Jerusalem to Egypt passed Micah's quiet village. He was very aware of what was happening in the world."

Say: "Micah's name means 'Who is like the Lord?' His parents must have been religious to give him such a name."

Say: "He was most likely a peasant farmer from the country. If he was like most people from the country, he probably did not like cities. He knew wealthy rulers who cheated the poor lived in cities. Unfaithful priests, dishonest judges, and false prophets also lived there. When Micah went to the cities, he became the spokesman for poor and mistreated people. He was against thinking. In Micah's view, a person who followed God was fair honest and considerate. A godly person walked closely with God. Micah knew God was active, alert and anxious about his people. He was concerned that so many were suffering because of selfishness and greed. Micah boldly preached against the sins of the people. He prophesied exile as punishment for their sins. His listeners told him to shut up. They did not want to hear about or admit their sins."

Say: "During our study today we will think about the people in our own

nation who are suffering. We will ask ourselves if we are doing anything to cause this suffering and pain. If we are, we must be ready to change what we are doing."

Say: "Now let us look at our Scripture passage for today. Will someone please read Micah 2:1-4?"

Say: "Making plans for our lives is not wrong. In fact, it is very good. However, it is wrong if we must hurt others to fulfil those plans. Verses 1 and 2 describe people who make a false God out of money. They coveted the possessions of others. They took what they could by any means possible. These wicked people lay awake at night thinking of ways to use their power. They planned how they could take the land, houses and inheritance of the poor. Taking the inheritance of others was a very serious offense. God had given land to each tribe to be theirs forever. All property sold during time of poverty would be returned after seven years. This would ensure that no one would ever be poor for long. But these wicked people loved wealthy more than God. They wanted to gain property more than to obey God's law."

Say: "Can you think of any examples of this happening in our nation today?" [People who take money from others to invest, then steal it, bankers who use investors money for their own gain, families who fight over inheritances, businessmen who try to deceive others, etc.]

Say: "Judah's leader's had the power and influence to get whatever

they desired. People with power have a responsibility to use that power wisely. They need to help those they govern, especially the weak and poor."

Say: "The wicked were not the only ones making plans. In verse 3, who else had a plan?" [God]

Say: "Micah described God's plan of disaster for those who abused their power. He described a long line of captives, one behind the other. Each one was tied to the neck of the person in front of him. Yokes on their necks forced them to lower their arrogant heads. They would lose everything and suffer the humiliation of being taken captive. All their plans to cheat others to gain wealth would be useless."

Say: "Verse 4 says that other nations would laugh at Israel's ruin. They would sing songs telling how they divided Israel's fields."

Ask a student to read verses 6 and 7.

Say: "The people refused to believe Micah's message. They told him to stop his false preaching. God had always protected them. Surely Micah was wrong! Verse 7 lists four questions they asked Micah to prove him wrong." Let us look at these now:

1. They asked: "Will disgrace overtake the house of Jacob? God had chosen Israel to fulfil his plan of salvation. They did not believe he would allow them to be cursed or destroyed. He needed them! He had promised to bless the world through the seed of Abraham. How could he accomplish this without them? If he did not have them, God himself would be disgraced. He would not be able to

fulfil his plan for blessing the whole world through Israel."

2. "Is the Spirit of the Lord impatient? Israel had been taught that God is slow to anger. They had seen this again and again in his own dealings with them. They wanted to believe this was still true."

3. "Are these his doings? Israel did not believe God would do as the prophet warned them. It seemed to be inconsistent with God's actions to them in the past. They did not believe he would 'change his mind.'"

4. "Does God do good to the upright, as he promised? The answer to this question is YES! God blesses those who do right. But Israel and Judah had failed to live by the demands of God's laws. They had kept their part of the covenant. So now God did not have to continue to bless and protect them. Micah's message condemned those who failed God. It blessed those who walked uprightly. God would be with them through all the trouble." Read verses 8-9 to the class.

Say: "These verses separate the good people from the bad 'rose against' God's good people who were being treated as enemies rather than friends. God condemned the leaders for treating their own people - especially women and children - as enemies."

Say: "Women alone (widows) had no way to defend their rights. God's law commanded that they be protected. To neglect this duty was a serious offence. (Read Exodus 22:22-24.) Micah 2:9 states that women failed to receive the blessing

God planned for them. They would lose sight of God's glory in exile, for they, too would be punished. Greedy leaders caused great sorrow for God's upright people."

Say: "The rich and powerful ignored God's law. They treated their own countrymen as enemies. They evicted widows from their houses. Can you think of examples of this happening today?" Let students respond.

Say: "Listen to verses 10-11. (Read these verses.) Time for repentance had passed. Micah told them in verse 10, 'arise and go.' The proud, greedy leaders would face the same fate as the widows and orphans. They would lose everything they had. These evil people would march to destruction. Micah accused them of wanting false prophets who preach 'wind, lies and drunkenness.' He knew they did not want to hear his message of judgement."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Micah's message was not popular in his time. It is not popular, not to preach the truth and point out sin. But it is just as important today for us to obey God. We must study God's requirements and live by them. Our friends need to hear us talk of God. But even more, they need to see him in our lives."

Say: "Our study today has told us about the suffering of the poor and helpless. We have thought of people in our nation who also suffer. We have seen how cruelly people with power and authority can act. Now it is time

for us to see ourselves in our places of power."

Show poster or chalk board to the class. It should be prepared as suggested in Teaching Aids.

Say: "Let us choose one of these relationships and talk about it. Let us begin with the parent and child relationship. Think of the Power you have over your child. Ask yourself, 'Have I always acted in a godly way toward my child? (Let students discuss this question.) Ask yourself,

'Do I need to make any changes in my attitudes or actions in this relationships?' Let students share their ideas.

Discuss other relationships given using the same questions.

When discussion is over, close in prayer. Ask God to help each one to act in a godly manner in all his relationships.

NOTE: *Ask a student to prepare to read the story in the pupil's book.*

Chapter Six

GOD DESIRES PEACE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Micah 4:1-8; 5:2-5a

SCRIPTURE FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Micah 4:1-4; 5:2-5a

MEMORY VERSE: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Micah 4:3b.

TEACHING AIM: Help members evaluate their desire for peace. Plan to be a peacemaker this week.

TEACHING AIDS: Ask a pupil to prepare to read the true story given in the pupil's lesson. Use chalk board to list items of peace members suggest.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "During the time of Micah the nation of Judah lived under the threat of war. In Micah 5:5-6 we see that the evil nation of Assyria is the enemy." Read Micah 5:5-6.

Say: "Micah taught that God wanted peace, but first there had to be War. War would come as punishment for the attitudes and practices of the people of Judah."

Say: "God, through Micah, foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. Let us read it in Micah 3:12. (Read.) But God also foretold the restoration of Jerusalem and a time of peace. It seems God gave both Micah and Isaiah the same message. First, let us read Isaiah 2:1-4. Now turn to Micah 4:1-4. You will see that the words are just the same."

Say: "Both Isaiah and Micah lived many years before Judah's exile. They warned Judah of exile. But they also had a message of hope. God revealed the plan for exile and also revealed the end of the exile."

Say: "Let us read Micah 4:1-2. (Ask one to read.) Long ago people believed gods lived on mountain tops. That idea is used here. In his 'latter

day' God would show he was far above all gods. 'The mountain of the house of the Lord would be higher than any other. Many people would go to it.'

Ask: "Why did people from many nations go to the temple?" [To worship to be taught by God.]

Ask: "What does God do for those who seek him?" [Teach them]

Ask: "What would result from learning God's ways?" [People would walk in his path]

Say: "People from many nations would come to God's house. They would come to Jerusalem searching for the true God. They would find him in the God of Israel. Proud nations would admit they needed his teachings. God would share himself, his purposes and desires for people's lives. People would choose to walk in God's paths."

Say: "Now let us read Micah 4:3-4." Ask someone to read.

Ask: "What did God promise would happen when his judgement was accepted?" [Swords could be made into ploughs-no need for weapons; peace between nations; people able to rest in peace, security and prosperity]

Say: "Micah's vision of peace showed the farmer sitting among his vines and trees. He had no fear of the armies of the enemy. They would not destroy his crops as they over-ran his fields. He was secure in God's peace. This is a beautiful picture! We can imagine what our world could be if nations would let Christ's love bring peace. Nations could work together to help all people. Money used for arms could be used for farm machinery to

produce food for the hungry. Everyone would have enough, as God planned."

Ask: "What keeps this peace from coming to our world today?" [Man's selfishness; failure of nations to look to God for help]

Say: "Now let us look to see how God planned to complete his plan. Will someone read Micah 5:2-5a?" Ask someone to read.

Ask: "What has God done to make his promise come true?" [Sent a ruler to be born in Bethlehem, the Messiah]

Say: "Micah foretold the birth of the new king, the ruler of Israel. He would be born in Bethlehem. We know who he is! Jesus, our Lord and King."

Say: "Let us read verse 3 again. (Read) Here God used the common experience of pregnancy and birth to describe a nation's suffering prior to God's deliverance. (Read Psalms 48:6 and Isaiah 21:3) Perhaps Micah was also suffering and exile from God."

Say: "God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to defeat the evil leaders of Judah and Israel. Many Israelites were exiled to those countries. But a few faithful people stayed in Israel. He worked out his plan with the small, faithful remnant who remained. In verse 3, he speaks of all Israel being united again after a time of suffering."

Ask: "How will the new king rule? [In the strength of the Lord] What would be the result of this kind of rule?" [All would be secure.]

Say: "Because this new king would rule in the Lord's strength, all would be safe. No one would fear him nor

would they fear any other nation. He would bring perfect peace."

Ask: "What can those who believe in Jesus expect from God today?"
[Security and peace]

Say: "Micah's prophecy says the Messiah will bring unity to the world. When people accept him they will live in peace with God and with each other. This can only come when people obediently submit their wills to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. God never forces himself on anyone. You are free to accept or reject Jesus. But remember, peace is available through Jesus."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "The world needs peace more urgently today than ever before. Weapons of destruction are ready to be used in war. Atomic weapons of the United States alone could destroy all life on earth. More and more nations are storing atomic weapons."

Say: "Micah gave the people Judah the foundations for peace: Listen to God's teachings, walk in his paths, worship and obey him. These are just as true for us as they were for Judah."

Say: "Now listen to a true story of how to overcome evil with peace and love." (Ask the person you chose to read the story from the pupil's book to read it now.)

Say: "This was a brave woman. Her peacemaking brought a change in the

life of this soldier and perhaps many others."

Ask: "If we had peace in the world, we would need no weapons. There would be money to spend on projects which would help people. How might we better use money which buys guns and pays the army now?" Write answers on chalk board. [Build training schools, libraries, clinics, schools pay for agriculture and water projects; improve roads and transportation; improve communications systems; and many more which students may name]

Say: "Unfortunately, we do not control this money, so these ideas may not happen. But each of us can be a peacemaker in his own community. Can you think of a way you can bring peace in your family? In your church? In your village? In your country?" Let students suggest ways. Discuss your ideas with them.

Say: "God wants peace. He sent the Prince of Peace to help us find peace in our lives. He blesses peacemakers. Will you plan to do one thing to be a peacemaker this week? I hope you will be ready to tell us about it next week."

Say: "Let us read the Memory verse for today." Read it twice.

Say: "Now let us pray that God will help each of us to be a peacemaker this week. Let us also ask God to give peace to our nation."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Seven

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF US

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Micah 6:1-16

VERSES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:
Micah 6:1-13

MEMORY VERSE: "...What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

TEACHING AIM: To help students understand that in order to please God, we must be just, love kindness, and walk humbly in submission to God's will.

TEACHING AIDS: On a chalk board or poster write the title "What God Expects of Us." Leave space to write below the title.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "The title of our lesson today is 'What God Expects of Us.' Before we begin the Bible study, let us think about what we believe God expects of us as Christians." Lead students to discuss. Write a list of the things they suggest on the board under the title.

Say: "Have you ever been to a trial in a court of law? Have you watched the judgement of the village elders? A trial took place in Micah 6. Turn in your Bible to Micah 6. According to verses 1-2 who were the judge and jury?" [The mountains and hills] Read these verses.

Ask: "Who is the prosecutor? [God] Who is accused?" [Israel.]

Say: "God accused Israel of their sins in verses 3-5. Will someone read these verses?" Ask someone to read.

Ask: "What were God's charges against Israel?" [They were tired of God and they forgot all the ways God had provided for them.]

Say: "In verse 3, God questioned his people as though he could not believe the nation's attitude toward him. His question implied that the people should have answered, 'You have done nothing to make us weary.' God had indeed done all that needed to be done. No one could bring charges against him. In fact, Israel had historical proof of God's power and love."

Ask: "What had God done for Israel in the past that he now reminded them?" [Verse 4: brought them out of slavery in Egypt, provided Moses, Aaron and Miriam to lead them, verse 5a: Balak, King of Moab, was so afraid when Israel entered his land, he asked Baalam to curse them. God would not allow this. He told Baalam to bless his people. verse 5b: On the journey from Shittim to Gilgal God parted the Jordan for them to cross in safety.]

Say: "God's blessings were many! God had done everything he could to save his people. He promised them blessing and protection against their enemies. In return he asked them to commit themselves to him and to his law. Israel had agreed to do this. If they remembered their history, they

knew God always blessed and saved them. They could never accuse God of unfaithfulness. Could they say the same for themselves? No! They had not accepted their responsibility toward God. They had been unfaithful in their worship and in their obedience."

Say: "In verse 6, Israel began their defense against these crimes. They answered God's accusation with questions. God's charge was that they were tired of him. They piously asked what they should bring to show God they were not weary of him? Listen for four things which they offered to give him. Will someone read verses 6 and 7?" Ask someone to read.

Ask: "What are the four things they offered?" [Burnt offerings of calves a year old, thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil, their first-born child]

Say: "Most people of early history sacrificed to their gods. They did this to calm the god's anger and to be blessed by him. God required Israel to sacrifice, also. Sacrifices served two purposes: to show gratitude to God and obtain his forgiveness. Sacrifices were made to show repentance for their sins. But God required more than sacrifice. In fact, he asked Samuel to tell Saul "to obey is better than sacrifice." (Read 1 Samuel 15:22.) These people had failed to obey. In fact they brought offerings to God to make him do what they wanted. They believed they could force God to bless them. Bringing offerings and worshipping daily meant God had to give them what they wanted. How wrong they were!"

Say: "So Israel's reply was a pious question. What did God want of them? Should they bring the best calves, more sheep than the law required, a continuous flow of olive oil to impress him? Should they offered their first born child? They mentioned this because neighbouring nations did this. They sacrificed their children to win favour from their gods. This act was never required by God. It was condemned. (Read Deuteronomy 18:10.) Micah knew the people were willing to break the law to show their "devotion." They would offer their most precious possession, their first-born son, to save themselves. Of course, God did not want any of these things. None of these sacrifices was acceptable to him."

Say: "Verse 8 told Israel just what God did require. It is our Memory Verse for today. Let us read this together."

Say: "These words are the truth of our lesson today. This verse gives us instructions for daily living. "What is good" please God. He blesses this. He accepts this as our worship."

Say: "God said, "to do justice." This means to do right as God reveals it, to be fair and not show favourites. To Israel it meant justice in the courts for widows, orphans and the poor. They had to be treated the same as the rich and powerful."

Say: "'To love kindness' is to show mercy. This goes beyond justice. Justice is to get exactly what is deserve. Mercy is getting something good that is not deserved. Kindness is loyal love which wants the best for the other person. It is to be good natured

and generous to others. God explained how to do justice and love kindness in the last six of the Ten Commandments." Read Exodus 20:12-17.

Say: "To 'walk humbly with your God' describes a life of submission to God. It may mean serving others-even the lowest class in society. It may mean persecution. 'Walking humbly with God' means giving any service God requires without pride. It means living in simple submission to his will and purpose."

Say: "From this verse, we see that the value of any offering is in the attitude of the giver. We will look at it again as we conclude our study."

Say: "Now let us get back to the trial. In verse 9-12, God gave evidence that Israel had failed to act as God's people." Read verses 9-12.

Say: "Faith and love for God are shown in how we treat others. Honesty and concern for others is a result of our faith. Our actions must show our commitment to God."

Say: "God claimed that Israel had not shown their faith in action. In verse 9 God began a list of charges against Judah. What were his charges?" [Some becoming wealthy through wickedness, unfair measures and scales in the market, violence, lies and deceit.]

Say: "Dishonest business continued. The wicked filled their houses with treasures bought with money gained by cheating, stealing and deceit. Religion and business were completely separate. They ignored God's laws for fairness and kindness in everyday living. They should have obeyed all his

rules, not just the rules about worship."

Say: "Israel was guilty. They knew it. They had been caught by their sin because God sees everything. There was no appeal to higher court. God is the ruler and judge of the universe!"

Say: "Verse 13-16 explain God's punishment for their crimes. Ask someone to read these verses."

Ask: "What did God say would happen to them?" [Verse 14-hunger, loss of all savings and possessions; verse 15-no benefit from work done; verse 16-desolation, other people would scorn them.]

Say: "Selfish deeds do the rich against the poor would end with God's wrath and destruction. In verse 13 God declares that Judah's ruin had already started. Hunger, loss of possessions, defeat and scorn were coming. The case against Israel was closed. There was no appeal."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Let us look again at the list we made at the beginning of this study. 'What Does God Expect of Us?' Do we want to add anything?" Allow students to respond.

Say: "Could the Memory Verse be a summary of all we have listed? Let us read it together. This verse is the answer to the question, 'What does God expect of me?'"

Say: "You may say 'I never do any of the sins of Israel we have talked about. I never lie, use deceit or violence, mistreat the poor.' This may be true. Perhaps you have never done any of these things. However, can you say your truly do the three things God

requires that we read in the Memory Verse? How can non-Christians see and know God's mercy and justice? They must see it in the lives of Christians. God uses his children as instruments to express his loves to others."

Say: "Pray that you will live by God's requirements listed in the Memory Verse. Pray that God will give you an opportunity this week to help someone who has been mistreated. Pray that God will use you as an instrument of his love."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Eight

NEEDED: LEADERS UNDER GOD

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Hosea 4:1-9, 7b-10; 8:4-8

VERSES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:
Hosea 4:1-6; 7:7b-10

MEMORY VERSE: "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind..." Hosea 8:7.

TEACHING AIM: To lead members to accept their responsibility to lead and influence others to be faithful and moral.

TEACHING AIDS: Write an outline for the lesson on the chalk board or poster board as explained in "Teaching the Lesson". Put each heading on a separate line.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "There is a game children play which is called 'Follow the Leader.' One child is the leader. All the children must do what he does. Let us see how we do as we play it this morning. Let us all stand up. Now you do as I do-follow the leader. (Teacher, stand on one foot, wave hands in the air, laugh, do whatever you like. Students should follow you, doing

what you do. Finally sit down-students should sit, too.)

Say: "Very good! This is a children's game, but it is an example of life. People follow their leader's examples. Spiritual or political leaders must lead their people wisely."

Say: "Hosea is the prophet we will study in these next two lessons. Hosea's name means 'salvation' or 'deliverance.' The theme of this book is God's long lasting love."

Say: "Hosea prophesied near the end of the reign of King Jeroboam II in Israel. Confusion, bloodshed and revolt tore the nation after Jeroboam's death. While Israel's power weakened, Assyria's power grew greater. Enemies from outside and bitter disagreements within brought the downfall of the kingdom.

"Conditions that other prophets had seen before continued. Rulers, leaders, and priests were poor examples for the people. Courts were corrupt. Judges were bribed and plots against the poor were common. A few people lived in luxury. Most lived in poverty. Leaders were not trusted because they were not faithful."

Say: "Israel was Hosea's own land. He spent his life trying to call his people back to God. In Hosea 1:2 we read God's command to Hosea. (Read this verse.) Some people think God told Hosea to marry a prostitute and he obeyed God's command. Others believe Hosea married Gomer, a pure woman, who later fell into sin. Then God told Hosea to take her as his wife, again. However you interpret it, it is a picture of suffering love. It shows how love suffers when a loved one falls into sin. It is a parable to show the love of God for sinful Israel. Chapters 1-3 tell Hosea's tragic story. You may want to read these later. Chapters 4-14 are the messages Hosea gave his people."

Say: "Today we will follow an outline of our verses." Write each point of the outline on the board. Read the verses given. Discuss each passage and read the explanation given. Do not write what is written after the word "Say." All verse come from Hosea.

Write: 1. Conflict came from poor leadership.

Write: A. Conflict with God (Hosea 4:1a).

Say: "God had a controversy with Israel. 'Controversy' in the Old Testament is a legal term for a lawsuit. God had a legal problem with Israel. They had broken the law. There was no faithfulness, kindness or knowledge of God in the land. The prophet announced that Israel's contract or covenant with God had been broken. Judgement was coming. Israel was charged with lacking everything good and being evil in every way."

Write: B. Conflict with man (Hosea 4:2).

Say: "Verse 2 lists the terrible evils in the land. All broke the Ten Commandments. This was proof that Israel disobeyed the laws God gave when he made his covenant with them. The priests did not discourage sin. The more the people sinned, the more they made sacrifices for forgiveness. This brought more money and food to the priests."

Write: C. Conflict with Nature (Hosea 4:3).

Say: "Hosea describes the whole land grieving over Israel's punishment. All nature would also share in the disaster."

Write: D. Conflict from copying nations (Hosea 7:8-9).

Say: "Hosea referred to Israel as 'Ephraim.' Ephraim was the strongest of all the ten Northern tribes. It may have been Hosea's own tribe."

Say: "Hosea gave reasons why the nation had lost their place as God's holy and separate people. First, Israel joined alien nations and their beliefs. This weakened their own worship of God. They lost the traditions and customs which made them different. It was like adding so much water to the soup, that the taste was lost."

Say: "Another reason was being one-sided - 'a cake not turned.' The people cooked bread on hot stones or in a heated oven. If it was not turned, it burned on one side and was raw on the other. Hosea probably referred to material wealth on one side and spiritual poverty on the other."

Write: 2. Reasons for poor leadership.

Write: A. Lack Knowledge of God (Hosea 4:4-5).

Say: "God held Israel's priests responsible for Israel's moral decay. They had failed to provide spiritual leadership. No one respected the priests. There was bitter quarrelling between the people and priests. God's judgement on the priests and prophets would be especially harsh. God referred to Israel as their 'mother.' The people would be destroyed because the priests failed to teach Israel about God. They forgot and rejected the law of their God. They forgot their duty to instruct the people in the way of the law." Read Deuteronomy 33:10.

Write: B. Lack of faith in God (Hosea 7:7b).

Say: "The Kings also had a duty to be faithful to God. They led the people. If they were unfaithful, the people would be unfaithful. In this verse God laments that none call upon him. They have all forgotten God who gave them the ability to be king."

Write: C. Ignorance of spiritual conditions (Hosea 7:9)

Say: "Verse 9 says that strangers were taking away their strength, and they did not know it. Grey hairs, a sign of old age, were upon Israel's head, but he did not see them. These are physical symbols telling a spiritual truth. Often those who are losing spiritual strength are last to understand what is happening. Failing spiritually, like growing spiritually, is a slow process. Israel did not see how it was changing. But the change brought conflict with God and with other people."

Write: D. False Pride (Hosea 7:10)

Say: "Finally, Israel was too proud to confess her sins and turn to God. Pride was the final reason the nation was punished."

Write: 3. Need for good leadership

Write: A. To bring peace among men

Write: B. To avoid God's wrath (Hosea 4:6; 8:7).

Say: "In Hosea 4:6 it was clear that judgement was certain. They had rejected God and his law. Therefore God would reject them as his people."

Say: "'To sow the wind' was to live a selfish life of rebellion against God. Israel had sown seeds of swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery and 'breaking all bounds'. Because of this rebellion, they would 'reap the whirlwind.' Their harvest would be destruction, defeat and exile."

Write: C To lead the people back to a knowledge of God.

Say: "Israel needed leaders who were obedient to God. They needed leaders strong enough to lead them back to God. Unfortunately, God found none, so Israel was rejected as God's protected and blessed people."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "We have discussed the reasons for and results of poor leadership. We have stressed the need for good leadership. Has the world ever had good leaders?" Let students discuss and name some if they can.

Ask: "Have you known any good spiritual leaders? Can you name some?" Let students discuss. [Obedience, knowledge of God and his laws, faithfulness, courage, etc.]

Ask: "Are we spiritual leaders? How should we live today as faithful Christians?" Discuss. Remember last week's Memory Verse.

Say: "Godly leaders are necessary in our world today. Every Christian is responsible for choosing godly leaders in his own nation. Each is responsible for being a spiritual leader himself. Mothers and fathers lead their children. We all must lead our neighbours, family, friends and fellow workers. In this way, we will help others know God and obey him. Then

they can experience his love and salvation in their own lives."

Ask: "Do you have the qualities of a good leader? Are you obedient? Do you know about God? Are you faithful to him? Are you bold and courageous? Do you live as the Bible teaches?"

Say: "Let us pray that God will help us be faithful leaders. Our nation, our churches and our families need good leaders."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Nine

GOD'S LOVE FOR PEOPLE

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Hosea 11,14

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Hosea 11:1-9

MEMORY VERSE: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" Jeremiah 31:3.

TEACHING AIM: To help members see God's love in the patience he showed Israel and to respond to God's love with love, faith and obedience.

TEACHING AIDS: Prepare to tell of a time when you personally felt God's loving care for you. Or prepare to tell of a time when you experienced God fulfil one of his promises in your life.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Hosea described God's love in two ways. First, he described it as a

husband's love for his wife. Because of his own unhappy marriage, Hosea had a greater understanding of God's love. He loved Gomer even though she was unfaithful. God loved Israel even though she was unfaithful. Gomer left Hosea with a broken home and three children. Even so his love for her did not die. Israel left God for pagan idols and worldly wealth, but God's love never died. Hosea hated the sin Gomer committed but loved her. God hates sin but loves the sinner. Then, Hosea described God's love as a father's love for his son. We will look at these verses today."

Say: "Hosea called Israel to repent. He longed for them to see their failure and come back to God. If Israel would come back, god's anger would stop. In Hosea 14, Hosea described the blessings that would come to Israel if they would repent. Israel would enjoy the fruits of repentance: beauty as the

lily; strength as roots of trees in the forest; fruitfulness and usefulness as the olive tree, fragrance of wine. If only Israel had listened! In 721 BC, Hosea's prophecy came true. The Assyrians captured Israel and led her into captivity."

Say: "Do you believe that God loves you? Read today's Memory Verse. It plainly states that God's love is everlasting and faithful."

Ask: "Would one of you like to tell about a time in your life when God showed his love and faithfulness to you in special way?" Give students time to share. Teacher you should also share the testimony you prepared.

Say: "As we read Hosea 11:1-4, look for things God did for Israel to show he loved them." Ask someone to read these verses. [Brought them out of slavery, taught, healed and protected them, provided food and safety.]

Say: "Verses 1-3 picture a father and his young son. God chose to love Israel as his child. 'Ephraim' was Hosea's loving name for Israel. Perhaps he was from this tribe, the largest of all the Northern tribes. Hosea shows a picture of a father loving teaching his son how to walk. When Ephraim fell, God lifted him up. When he was hurt, God cared for his wounds. Many only see God as an angry judge in the Old Testament. Hosea's picture shows God's tender love for sinful man."

Say: "Verse 4 compares God's care with that of a father kindly tending the animals who plow his field. He eased the yoke when the burden was heavy. He fed them when the work was done."

Say: "God chose Israel for a special job. It was through Israel that God planned to solve the problem of man's rebellion. God began his work of salvation by choosing Israel to be his instrument. He loved them as his children. The more God called, the more they moved away from him in sin. They rejected God's love and turned to idol worship-the worst sin of all."

Say: "As we read verses 1-4 again, listen for ways Israel rejected God." [Would not repent and turn to God, worship false gods and idols, had no gratitude to God for his kindness to them]

Ask: "What was God's judgement on Israel?" Ask someone to read verses 5-7. [Exile, destruction of the cities, "return to the yoke" or slavery, certain judgement]

Ask: "Why would God judge them like this?" [Because they had rebelled against him and his law, to help them return to him]

Say: "God said he would discipline his people. They would 'return to the land of Egypt.' This meant they would go back to exile and slavery, not literally to Egypt. Hosea knew Assyria would conquer and exile them. Because Israel refused to return to God they had to return to exile. They would lose all of God's wonderful blessings. Nothing would stop this judgement."

Ask: "What did God feel about Israel's rebellion?" Listen as I read verses 8 and 9. [Grief, anger, love, compassion and mercy]

Say: "God loved his rebellious people and wept because he was

forced to discipline them. But his great love did not allow him to leave them in their sin. He had to bring back to him, even if suffering was necessary to do so. God hoped the punishment would make them turn back to him. God did not want to give them up, but he knew it was necessary for repentance."

Say: "God mentioned the cities of Admah and Zebolim. These were two cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah in the book of Genesis. Let us read Genesis 19:24-25 to see the kind of judgement that was coming to Israel."

Say: "God did not spare his people at the last moment. Even so, he suffered when it was necessary to judge them. Verse 8 shows the sorrow and compassion God felt over Israel's refusal to repent. Verse 98 promises God will not bring on them the full force of his fierce anger. He will not totally destroy them. Hosea expected a remnant to be saved because God is merciful. He is different from man. The "Holy One" is one set apart or separated. Only God is holy, but he can help us be holy. Holiness comes from him. God wanted Israel to be holy. They had refused to become what God wanted them to be. They had failed to be his priests. They had not shown others the truth. They had not brought others to God. They had not accepted their responsibility to God. Because of this, judgement was coming."

Ask: "Are there times today when we do not accept our Christian responsibility? Can we think of some examples?" Let students respond. [Fail

to share our faith with others, fail to be a good example to others, fail to stop committing a particular sin, etc.]

Ask: "Do you ever turn your back on God's plan for you? What are some ways we can be responsible Christians?" Lead in discussion. [Tell a friend how God has helped us through a time of trouble; help a friend in need tell a lost person how Jesus saves; follow Jesus' example for living]

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Israel hurt God by their sin and rebellion. We must ask ourselves if there is anything in our lives that brings pain to God. Is there anything that forces his judgement on us?"

Say: "Remember, no matter how bad the sin in your life, God is waiting for you to return to him. Hosea forgave Gomer. God was ready to forgive Israel in just the same way. God loved them and waited for them to return to him. Although Israel's rebellion blocked God's plan for them, in the end, God triumphed. Just as Hosea bought his wife back from slavery, God would bring Israel back from exile."

Say: "God's perfect love finally and completely destroyed the power of sin at the cross of Calvary. Jesus's power can overcome sin in our lives. Through Jesus, our sins are forgiven. Through him, we have power to resist Satan and evil. Let us remember God's promise to us in 1 John 1:9. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins....'"

Say: "Just as God had requirements for Israel, he has them for us. God is

the one who has given the plan for our salvation. To be saved, we must follow it. If you want to be saved, God requires you to repent of your sins. That means to turn from them; do not do them any more. Then you need to confess your sins to God and believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour. You need to pray and invite Jesus into your heart and life as Lord and Saviour. If you have never done this, will you do it now?"

Ask: "Do you know a lost person who needs to turn to God? Will you share with that person this week? Share the steps we listed just now." Review these if necessary, then read again the preceding paragraph.

Ask: "Would you tell us the name of a lost person you know so we can all pray for him?" Let students share names of lost people they know. Pray for each of these people by name.

Say: "Today we have learned that unfaithfulness breaks God's heart. We have seen God's love and patience with Israel as he dealt with them. Let us pray now that we may all experience God's forgiving love. As we pray, pray again for those you know who need to experience God's forgiveness. Pray for those who need to trust Jesus as Saviour."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Ten

WHEN GOD'S LOVE IS REFUSED

BACKGROUND

Isaiah 5

SCRIPTURE:

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Isaiah 5:1-7, 20-21.

MEMORY VERSE: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20.

TEACHING AIM: To help students see the results of refusing God's love. To help students understand their own response to God's love.

TEACHING AIDS: Ask a student who reads well to prepare to read Isaiah 6 to the class.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Ask: "Have you ever felt God wanted you to do something special? Perhaps you heard your pastor speak about a need and ask for a volunteer to help. Did you think you might be the one to help?"

Say: "Isaiah received a call to be God's messenger in a vision. I have asked a student to read Isaiah 6 so we can hear God's call and Isaiah's reply." Tell the student to read now.

Say: "Today we begin a four week study from the book Isaiah. I will tell you something about the life and time of Isaiah. We do not know much about Isaiah's personal life. His father was named Amoz. (Read Isaiah 1:1.) Isaiah Prophesied in Jerusalem, his

home town. It is possible that his call came in the temple which King Solomon built."

Say: "Isaiah's wife was called 'the prophetess.' Their two sons had special names. The name of his first son was Shearjashub. This meant 'a remnant shall return.' This showed that the faithful who did repent would later return to Judah. Maher-shalal-hash-baz, his second son, meant 'the prey hastes.' His name told of judgement which was coming soon."

Say: "God's call to Isaiah came the year King Uzziah died. (Read Isaiah 6:1.) Uzziah had had a long, peaceful and prosperous reign. He was the only King Isaiah had ever known. When Uzziah died, Assyria's power grew and threatened Judah's independence. Conditions were changing for Judah."

Say: "Amos and Hosea influenced Isaiah. The evils they preached against in Israel were also present in Judah. Isaiah courageously spoke out against these. He preached against corrupt evildoers who had forsaken the Lord, against prostitutes and murderers. He preached against those who broke the law and covenant and had no regard for common men. In Isaiah 1, Judah was called 'Sodom and Gomorrah,' after the evil cities of Abraham's time." Read Isaiah 1:10.

Say: "Religious life in Judah was like that of Israel. People came to the temple to worship and bring sacrifices, as usual. But everyday living was totally ungodly. Isaiah declared that these sacrifices and prayers were useless and offensive to God." Read Isaiah 1:11, 15.

Say: "Like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah begged for repentance. He declared Judah would be saved only if they returned to God." Read Isaiah 1:16-17.

Say: "At one time, Isaiah used a song as a parable. In it, he told the listeners about Israel and Judah. Let us read this song in Isaiah 5:1-7." Ask someone to read these verses.

Say: "When Isaiah sang this song, Jerusalem was crowded with farmers. They had come to celebrate their harvest. Isaiah's song about a farmer must have interested them. Surely they stopped to listen to it."

Say: "Let us look at an outline of the song." Use a board or paper.

Write: 1. The owner prepares the vineyard. Ask a student to read Isaiah 5:1-2b.

Ask: "What was the song about?" [A love song about his vineyard.]

Ask: "What did the farmer do to the vineyard?" [He dug it, cleared it, built a watchtower, dug a wine vat and looked for a good crop.]

Say: "The owner did everything right. He selected fertile soil, fenced it, dug and cleared out the stones. He planted the best vines. he built a tower to spot thieves so the vineyard was protected. He was so sure of a big harvest that he built a wine press. he expected a good crop."

Say: "God, 'my beloved,' was the owner of the vineyard. Judah was the vineyard. However, the listeners did not know this yet."

Write: 2. The vineyard fails. Ask a student to read Isaiah 5:2c-4.

Say: "After all was done, the singer sang the final words, 'But it yielded wild grapes.'"

Ask: "Are wild grapes sweet?" [No, they are bitter.]

Say: "This was a sad result for the farmer who had worked so hard. Most of the listeners were farmers. They understood his disappointment. Isaiah asked them to decide who was at fault. They knew the farmer had done his best. He was not to blame. He had done everything necessary to guarantee a good harvest. They undoubtedly approved the steps he would take against the vineyard. They did not understand that Isaiah's song was a parable. To judge the vineyard was to judge themselves."

Write: 3. Destruction of the vineyard. Ask a student to read Isaiah 5:5-6.

Ask: "What would the farmer have to do to his vineyard?" [Destroy it because it was worthless to him.]

Say: "The farmer would remove the hedge of protection. Without the stone wall the hedge, animals would trample the vines. No one would prune the branches or hoe the ground. It would soon ruin. We have seen deserted coffee farms or sisal fields. The clue is quickly lost without care."

Say: "The song said rain would be stopped. Only God could command the clouds not to rain. This was their first clue that God was the owner."

Write: 4. What the story means. Ask a student to read Isaiah 5:7.

Ask: "Who was the farmer in the parable?" [The Lord of hosts.]

Ask: "Who was the vineyard?" [The house of Israel, the men of Judah.]

Say: "Often in the Old Testament, the vine is used as a symbol; for Israel, God's chosen people. By his song,

Isaiah was telling the men of Judah that they were like the spoilt vineyard. God would destroy Judah like this vineyard. He would take away his protection and leave them to do as they pleased. Destruction would come. Their land and nation would be ruined."

Ask: "What fruit had God been expecting from them?" [Justice and righteousness.]

Say: "'Cry' is a legal term for an appeal of one who has suffered a great injustice. Judah, like Israel, had oppressed the poor. They appealed to the courts for justice, but received none. God heard their cry. He would give justice to the faithful few who were obedient to him."

Ask: "Why do you think the vineyard, the people of Judah, produced bad fruit?" [They refused God's love and instruction. They did not obey his law or listen to his prophets.]

Say: "We will now read Matthew 7:17-20." Ask a student to read these verses.

Say: "We see in these verses the same teaching as in Isaiah's parable. Judah was a 'bad tree,' so it produced bad fruit. Because of its bad fruit, it would be destroyed."

Say: "Let us now read Isaiah 5:20-21." Ask a student to read.

Say: "Isaiah listed Judah's sins in this chapter. He cried 'woe' to the sins of greed, drunkenness, lying, immorality, pride and injustice. He accused them of not knowing the difference between good and bad. They actually called good things bad and bad things good. They had

become totally blind to their own sin. This condition would lead to their destruction."

Say: "Israel refused God's love and protection. They did not obey his laws. This produced rotten, wild fruits. Let us now compare good and bad fruit. God said Israel disobeyed him and produced the bad fruit of greed. What good fruit would be produced if they obeyed God? What is the opposite of greed?" [Generosity or unselfishness.]

Ask: "If the bad fruit is drunkenness, what is the good fruit?" [Sobriety, being filled with the Holy Spirit.]

Ask: "If the bad fruit is lying, what is the good fruit?" [Truthfulness]

Ask: "If the bad fruit is immorality, what is the good?" [Morality]

Ask: "If the bad fruit is pride, what is the good fruit?" [Humility]

Ask: "If the bad fruit is injustice, what is the good fruit?" [Justice]

Say: "All of these good fruits are what God expects of us."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "In closing we will read John 15:5-9. This gives the answer to the problem of the unfruitful vineyard." Ask a student to read these verses.

Say: "We are the branches. We must be attached to Jesus, the vine. Only in this way will we be able to bear good fruit and bring glory to God."

Say: "God has a right to expect us to love him because he loved us first. God's greatest gift to us was love. He showed this love by sending Jesus. To refuse to accept Jesus is to refuse God's love. To refuse Jesus is to choose judgement and death. To accept him is to choose joy and everlasting life."

Chapter Eleven

THE LORD OF HISTORY

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Isaiah 10:5-15; 14:24-27, Chronicles 32:9-32

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Isaiah 10:5-7,15; 14:24-27

MEMORY VERSE: "The Lord of host has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand'" Isaiah 14:24.

TEACHING AIM: Lead students to see God working in history. Help them to acknowledge God's power and purpose in their lives.

TEACHING AIDS: Get several newspaper. Mark stories about world or national events which show God's power and influence.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "In the last 100 years men have wondered, 'What is God's plan for the world?' There have been two world wars and small wars in various parts of the world. Idi Amin terrorized Uganda. Corrupt leaders have stolen from the people in their nations. Crisis in the Middle East has brought

uncertainty and fear. People have wondered if God was in control. Recently we have been encouraged by certain world events. The Berlin wall was torn down. Atheistic Communism has lost its controlling power. Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Certain corrupt leaders have been removed from power. God is able. He cares about his people. (Use newspaper articles you have prepared. Lead the class to discuss how God is active in these events.)

Say: "Today's study shows how God controls history. The prophets foretold that Assyria would be used by God to bring judgement on his people. It happened just as they said. Samaria fell! Israel was an Assyrian province. They had been conquered by their enemy."

Say: "The march from Samaria to the border of Judah took about two days. Judah stood face to face with Assyria. A peace treaty had been made by King Ahaz and the king of Assyria years earlier. The people believed that this treaty would keep them safe. Some areas surrendered to Assyria. They were spared destruction but were heavily taxed."

Say: "Hezekiah, the current King of Judah, decided to rebel. Isaiah tried to stop him but did not succeed. During this revolt, Assyria attacked Judah and destroyed 46 of her cities. Assyria's record claimed that they shut Hezekiah up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. But God watched over his people. He was in control. He did not allow Assyria to conquer Jerusalem."

Say: "Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 10:5-7." Ask someone to read these verses.

Ask: "How did God plan to use Assyria?" [As a weapon, rod and staff, against a godless nation.]

Ask: "Did Assyria want to be used by God?" [No.]

Ask: "What did Assyria want to do?" [Destroy and conquer Judah.]

Say: "Assyria was the most brutal and feared nation of the ancient world. They have been compared with the Nazis of World War II. They were determined to conquer and rule the whole world. Assyria wanted to conquer Judah and Jerusalem. They had no desire to help God punish Judah. They only wanted to destroy Judah and make them part of their empire."

Say: "God can use men and nations even when they do not want to be used. Assyria expected to conquer Jerusalem. They did not know that the Lord was using them as a rod to correct his people. When he finished correcting Israel, the 'rod' would be broken. God controls the events of history. The final outcome is never in doubt."

Say: "In 2 Chronicles 32:20, we see that King Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed for Judah. God heard them and answered."

Say: "The Assyrian army left Jerusalem as suddenly as it came. According to 2 Kings 19:35, an angel of the Lord killed 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. Let us also read 2 Chronicles 32:21 to see what else God did."

Say: "God forced the remaining soldiers to return to their country in shame. The king of Assyria suffered the greatest shame. He was killed by his own sons in the temple of his false god. What a shameful end for such a proud man!"

Say: "God spared Jerusalem for two reasons. First, he wanted to expose the pride and weakness within Assyria. Second, he wanted to show his power to the people of Jerusalem. He wanted to lead them to humility and repentance. God still loved Israel even though he was angry with them. God disciplines those he loves." Read Deuteronomy 8:5.

Say: "Because they were such strong conquerors, Assyria believed their gods were stronger than other nations' gods. The truth was that God used Assyria as a weapon against his rebellious people. God had judged Judah's pride and arrogance. (Read Isaiah 9:8-12:0) He would also judge the pride and arrogance of Assyria." Ask a student to read Isaiah 10:15-19.

Say: "Verse 15 describes the foolishness of Assyria's boasting. The axe, saw, rod and staff are not powerful unless someone uses them. Because Assyria was God's tool, they were dependent on God. It is stupid to think the tool can control the one who uses it. Verses 16-19 describe the total destruction of the Assyrian empire."

Say: "Isaiah 14:24-27 describes God's judgement on Assyria. While I read these verses, listen for how God would judge the Assyrians." [He will break and trample Assyria, remove

their control from the whole earth and all nations.]

Say: "These verses tell of the coming downfall of Assyria. The Lord had a plan and purpose. It was fulfilled. Verse 24 makes it clear that God himself is the one who shapes history." Ask one to read verse 24 again.

Say: "This clearly teaches that God is Lord of all nations. This is our Memory Verse for today. Let us read it aloud together."

Ask: "Do you think the people of Judah believed God was the God of all the people of the world?" [No. They thought he was their God alone.]

Ask: "Did Isaiah understand that God was the God of all people of all nations?" [Yes. He wrote the words of verse 26.] Read verse 26 again.

Say: "God first broke the power of Assyria over Judah. But finally, all the nations, under Assyria's rule would be free. God would remove their burden of oppression from all people. Isaiah knew God was the Lord of all nations, not just Israel. God is concerned for all people everywhere who are oppressed."

Ask: "Has God used Christians, churches or nations to help people who are oppressed and mistreated today? Can you give some example?" [Christians in the Soviet Union have prayed for freedom for many years, the church had a big part in overthrowing Idi Amin in Uganda, Christians have helped victims of war in the Middle East, etc.]

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Our study today has helped us understand that nations who oppress people will be judged by God. He will not allow evil to continue forever. He will stop evil leaders and nations."

Say: "Each of us needs to ask ourselves, 'Am I oppressing someone weaker than myself? Do I treat all people with kindness?' If not, we too will be judged. God expects kindness and mercy from his people."

Ask: "What is God's purpose or plan for all people?" Help students discuss. [God wants all people to come to him. Those who do will be saved. Those who continue in sin and evil will be destroyed.]

Ask: "What are we Christians called to do to complete God's purpose for the world?" Let students answer. [We are to share the good news of the gospel with everyone we can. We are to help God draw people to righteousness and salvation.]

Say: "God is in control. He continues to draw men to himself. At times, he punishes people to help them seek him. Punishment for sin does not mean he does not love his people. In fact, God disciplines those he loves. He disciplines to draw us to him. He wants to bless us and save us. Salvation is available to all who accept his plan and purpose."

Say: "In Isaiah 2:4, Isaiah prophesied peace and victory for the cause of righteousness. Revelation 11:15 tells of the final victory which results in God ruling as king. Philippians 2:10-11 tells us that in the end all will worship Jesus as Lord. (Read these verses.)

"God will be the victor. He is in Control. He has a job for each of us to do to make his plan succeed. Let us pray that God will help us see his plan and his purpose in our lives."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Twelve

GOD'S CALL TO FAITH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Isaiah 30; 31; 32:16-18; 37:5-7

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Isaiah 30:15,18;31:1-3,6; 32:16-17;
37:5-7

MEMORY VERSE: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength..."
Isaiah 30-15.

TEACHING AIM: Help members understand that trust in God should

be the Christian's security. Trust in personal wealth or the nation's strength will not save us.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Ask: "Can anyone recall some of the facts we have studied about Isaiah's life and his call from God?" [His father was named Amoz. Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem, his home

town, He was called by God in the temple while he was worshipping. He was married and had two sons. Isaiah became a prophet the year King Uzziah died. Amos and Hosea influenced Isaiah. He preached against corruption. He begged Judah to repent. He declared that sacrifices and prayers were useless and offensive to God without repentance.]

Ask: "What was the situation in the nation of Judah when Isaiah began his ministry?" [Assyria's power was growing. Judah was threatened by her. Their sin had made them weak.]

Say: "The King of Egypt had promised to help Judah. Encouraged by this, King Hezekiah decided to declare his independence from Assyria. Men in Jerusalem believed Egypt would help them fight for their independence. Isaiah warned against depending on Egypt as an ally. This was not God's plan. Egypt would assist only after receiving large payments and gifts. (Read Isaiah 30:6.) Isaiah warned that seeking Egypt's help would bring them shame and confusion. In the end Egypt would fail to help them."

Say: "The lesson today challenges us to trust in the power of God, not the power of men."

On the chalk board, write: HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Say: "Isaiah gave this message to the people of Judah. As we study today, we will try to apply these words to our lives."

Say: "We will begin by reading the Memory Verse together."

Say: "These words are Isaiah's answer to Judah's problem. Return to

God. Trust him to be your strength and your protection. Isaiah begged the men of Judah and Jerusalem to trust God to get them out of their difficulty. In every crisis, Isaiah taught that faith is the center of man's relationship with God. Faith and humility before God bring peace and security."

Say: "Now we will divide the class into four groups. You will read the Scripture verse assigned to your group. As you read, look for words that describe God. These will be words like holy, patient, powerful, etc."

Say: "Group 1: will read Isaiah 30:15 and 18. Group 2: will read Isaiah 31:1-3, and 6. Group 3: will read Isaiah 32:16-17. Group 4: will read Isaiah 37:5-7. Each one should read to yourself the verse assigned to your group. Be ready to give characteristics of God you see in these verses." Wait for students to finish this.

Ask: "Will someone from Group 1 read these verses to us?" Isaiah 30:15 and 18.

Ask: "What qualities of God are mentioned in these verse?" Write answers on chalk board as members reply. [Holiness, strength graciousness, mercy, justice]

Say: "Let us look at these verse together. Ask students to turn to Isaiah 30:15 and 18."

Say: "Verse 15 is Isaiah's proposal for what should be done. They must not rely on Egypt for protection but trust in God. "Returning" means that men must turn their lives and thoughts back to God. "Rest" is depending on him. "Shall be saved" is to be set free. Judah would be free from her enemies

if she would just trust God and his strength."

Say: "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you. Wonderful blessings are described in verses 19-26. All would be theirs if they repented and trusted in God. Isaiah encouraged the people to wait for God's help in trust and obedience. God waits for us. We must learn to wait and trust in God."

Say: "Sadly, Judah rejected Isaiah's advice. Assyria's army advanced rapidly. They defeated the Egyptians. We remember from last week that they destroyed 46 towns in Judah. They captured 200,000 prisoners. There was destruction all over Judah. Only Jerusalem was saved."

Say: "Will someone from Group 2 please read your verses?" Isaiah 31:1-3, & 6.

Ask: "What qualities of God did you find here?" [Holiness, wisdom truthfulness, 'Does not call back his words', strength against enemies.]

Say: "Let us all look at Isaiah 31:1-3, & 6."

Say: "Judah believed the power of a nation was in the strength of her armies. They trusted in the military strength of Egypt. Isaiah reminded Judah that God alone is able. God sent his prophet with a message for them. God would arise against the sin of disbelief. He would cause them to fail. This message would come to pass. God does not call back his words. There was no escape from the judgement of God."

Say: "Verse 3 compares the power of men and the power of God. Judah had to choose between God and the

force of men and weapons. The Lord "stretches out his hand" to the helper and the one who is helped. Both Egypt and Judah will stumble."

Say: "Verse 6 is a plea for the people of Israel to 'turn to him.' They must return to God whom they had forsaken."

Ask Group 3: "Will one of you read your verses?" Isaiah 32:16-17.

Ask: "What words describe God in these verses?" [Justice, righteousness, peace, quietness and trust.]

Say: "Verse 16 tells the effect of the outpouring of God's Spirit on Judah. Justice will be found in the wilderness, the land which is not cultivated. Righteousness will be in the fruitful or cultivated field. This justice and righteousness will bring peace to the land. When people show proper reverence for God they respect each other. 'Peace' is a state of well-being, prosperity or fullness of life. Isaiah said that such a blessed life comes from righteousness."

Say: "Group 4, we are ready for your answers. Someone please read the verses to us." Isaiah 37:5-7.

Ask: "How is God described in these verses?" [Fearless, powerful to remove the enemy.]

Say: "Isaiah 36 and 37 tell of the events which took place during the invasion of Judah. The Assyrians demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. King Hezekiah tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth. He went into mourning and sent for Isaiah to join him in prayers." Read Isaiah 37:1.

Say: "Verses 5-7 are God's reply to Hezekiah's humble prayer. It is a

message of hope. 'Do not be afraid,' he told him. God would protect them. They would not be helped because of Judah's righteousness. They would be helped because their enemy had mocked God! The Assyrian army did leave as God promised. (Read Isaiah 37:36-37.) The King of Assyria 'fell by the sword' when he returned home. (Read Isaiah 36:38.) The kingdom itself was completely destroyed 20 years later."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Today we have learned that we must have faith in God. The words

of the Memory Verse remind us of this important truth. If we turn to God and trust him, he will be the source of our strength." Read the Memory Verse together.

Say: "We have listed many qualities of God from these verse. It has been a good reminder of all the things God is to us. We are encouraged again to have faith in God and to trust not in our own power, strength or wealth."

Say: "Let us pray that God will help us remember to trust in him only for our security."

Close with prayer.

Chapter Thirteen

THE COMING MESSIAH

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:2-7; 11:1-10

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Isaiah 9:1-7; 11:1-10

MEMORY VERSE: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'"
Isaiah 9:6.

TEACHING AIM: To help students see that God's kingdom on earth can come only through Jesus. By sharing Jesus we can help bring that about.

TEACHING AIDS: Prepare to share the act of faith you did as a result of last week's lesson.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Last week as we finished the lesson we suggested that you put your faith into action. Would someone share how you did that this week?" Allow a brief time for students to share. If no one is ready, share your own experience.

Say: "Our faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. Isaiah had faith that God would give his people peace. He prophesied this as he told of the coming of the Messiah."

Say: "Isaiah lived 800 years before Christ was born. It was one of the most violent times of war and bloodshed the world was ever known. Isaiah lived daily with uncertainty and violence. Even so, he prophesied a time when both man and nature would be at peace."

Say: "Isaiah was no longer a young man. Some say that, as he grew older, he saw events of the future more and more. He longed for the time when God would raise up the ideal king from the house of David. The verses for today's study show that he expected the Messiah to come during his lifetime. We can look at Isaiah's prophecy from where we stand today, knowing Jesus. We rejected at his birth and life as we see how God fulfilled this prophecy."

Say: "Isaiah 9:1 described the gloom and anguish in the part of Israel called Galilee. (Read this verse.) Zebulun and Naphtali are the two tribes from that region. In the middle of all this sadness, something wonderful happened. Will someone please read Isaiah 9:2-7?" Ask someone to read.

Ask: "What are some reasons the sad people to rejoice?" [The light came; the nation was restored; the burden of the oppressor was removed; war ended.]

Say: "Assyria had conquered the Galilean part of the kingdom of Israel. The people of the region, particularly the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, were in dark despair. Suddenly a great light burst upon the darkness. It compared with the first light of God's work of creation. The light was the Messiah. The prophet was sure these events would occur. He described them as though they had already happened."

Say: "Israel is the nation described in verse 3. Their great joy is like that of a farmer who has safely gathered in

his crop. It was like the joy of the soldier dividing the spoils of victory.

"The first reason for their rejoicing was that the power of the conquerors had been broken. They had been treated like animals, yoked with a heavy burden and beaten with a rod. The burden was now gone and the beatings stopped. 'The day of Midian' referred to God's using Gideon's small army to save Israel from the Midianites. Israel was weak and helpless again, like during Gideon's time. But God would once again bring a mighty victory. In verse 5, the war ends. Blood-soaked garments on the battlefield would be gathered up. They would be completely destroyed with fire."

Say: "A greater reason for their joy was the birth of a very special child. In ancient times, kings were given names which described them and their might. The names of this child revealed the work he would do. He would be the deliverer. He would be the king in whom God placed his own strength and power. He would guarantee a reign of peace."

Ask: "One of us will read Isaiah 9:6-7. We will listen for the names given to the child, as they are listed." Ask someone to read these verses.

Ask: "What are the names you heard?" Write on chalk board. [Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.]

Say: "These four names describe the promised King. They refer to the way he will rule. He will give his people good counsel and guide them in his way. He will be the most mighty

king of all because he is God himself. His kingdom will be endless - Everlasting. He will care for his people like a loving Father. He will bring peace to all. "Peace" in the Hebrew language means much more than being without war. It is the rich, joyful life that only the children of God understand. Wisdom, power and peace mark the eternal reign of this king."

Say: "These words describe Christ as powerful king. What does 'Christ is King' mean to you? Is he the king of your life?" Let students respond. [If we are saved, Jesus is the Lord of our life. "Lord" means king or ruler. He should rule in our lives. We should obey him and follow his example in all parts of our life.]

Ask: "Does knowing the prince of peace gives us inner peace?" [It should because he lives within us. If we let him rule, he will keep us in his perfect peace.]

Ask: "Does having this peace make us want to try to help others come in into the kingdom of God?" [It should if we love them as God does. He wants all to come to him. We should share with others to please him.]

Say: "Let us now read Acts 3:1-8." Ask someone to read these verses.

Say: "This is an example to remember. The disciples shared what they had to bring about God's kingdom on earth. If you have faith, you can help others have faith. If you have Jesus, you should share him with others."

Say: "Let us now review a bit of history before we go to our next

verses." Let someone read Isaiah 10:24.

Say: "The Assyrian army was threatening Judah. Someone read Isaiah 10:33-34 to see what happened."

Say: "This was a prophecy concerning Assyria. They would be cut down as trees. When the Assyrian 'cedars' (Trees) were chopped down, they died. After they were gone, God would raise up new 'trees.' (Read Isaiah 11:1) A shoot would grow from the 'stump' of Jesse, King David's family. This verse describes the new life which would come to that family."

Say: "Let us look now at Isaiah 11:2-10. This time as we read, listen for characterises of the coming Messiah." Ask one to read.

Ask: "What are characteristics of Jesus you see in verses 2 and 3?" Write them on the board. [The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, he will have the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord.]

Say: "The new king would have the power of God's Spirit upon him. He would have certain special characteristics. He would be intelligent having the spirit of wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He would be a practical and strong ruler, having the spirit of counsel and might. Above all, he would fear the Lord and find all his joy in him."

Say: "Look at verses 4 and 5. How will the Messiah act?" [He will judge fairly, bless the meek, destroy the wicked, be righteous and faithful.]

Ask: "How will nature react to the Messiah?" Let us look at verses 6-8. [Wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, calf

and lion will no longer be enemies. The cow, bear, lion and o will eat together. A child can be a shepherd without danger and play safely with poisonous snakes.]

Say: "Let us read again verses 9-10." Ask one to read these verses.

Say: "All of creation will enjoy his peaceful reign. Even the natural enemies of the animal world will be at peace. Earth will be restored once more to the peaceful paradise God created in the beginning. The reason for this peace is that the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth. It fills it as completely as water covers the sea. This can only happen when Jesus reigns. When Christ rules in the hearts of people, God's perfect kingdom will come. An "ensign" is a flag. It is the Messiah, raised high for all to see."

Say: "These verses in chapter 11 show a picture of perfect peace among God's creatures on earth. What is your idea of perfect peace?" Let students discuss.

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "We may have different ideas about outward peace.

"But we must agree that inward peace comes only when Jesus comes into your life. God's kingdom can come only through his Son. Sharing Jesus is the most important thing we can do to bring God's Kingdom to earth."

Say: "Let us read again the Memory Verse together."

Say: "We have discussed the names that describe Christ. He is Wonderful Counsellor. Thank him for what his counsel means in your life." Pause for members to pray silently.

Say: "Now pray to him as Mighty God. Praise him for the way he works mightily in your life." Pause for prayer.

Say: "Pray now to the Everlasting Father. Thank him because he is eternal and you will share eternity with him." Pause for prayer.

Say: "Praise him as your Prince of Peace. Praise him for the peace he brings to your life." Pause for silent prayer.

Then pray aloud praising God for Messiah, Jesus. Praise him for all he does for us.