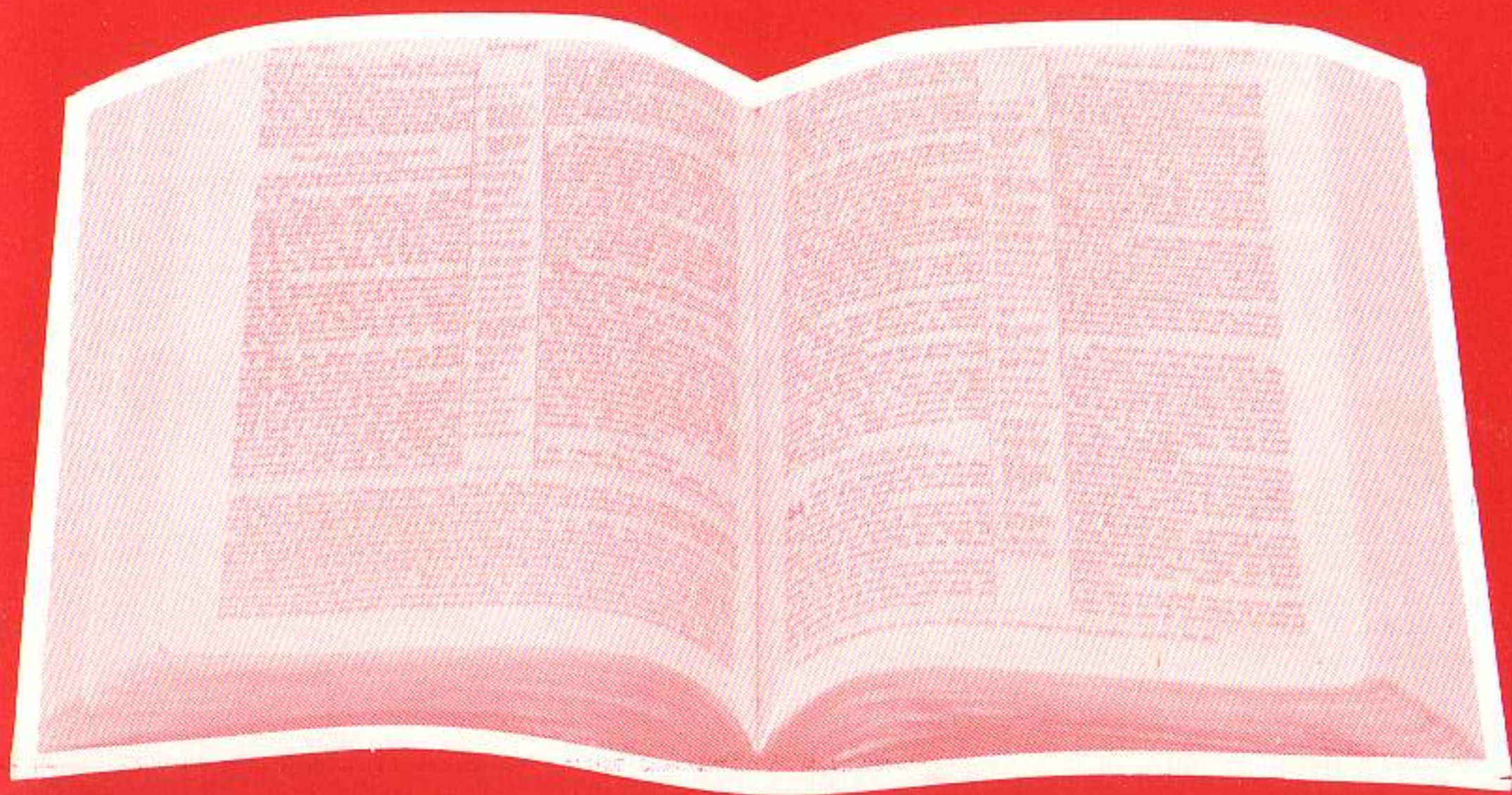


Revised

THE LIVING GOD SEEKS MAN TEACHER



BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

THE LIVING GOD SEEKS MAN

(TEACHER)

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

Africa Coordinated Curriculum
for Bible Study

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A8 - lTe

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CHAPTER ONE

LOOKING FOR A NEW BEGINNING

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 40; Galatians 4:1-6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Isaiah 40:27-31; Galatians 4:1-6

MEMORY VERSE: "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope" (Psalms 130:5).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God has prepared a way for people to begin again in Jesus, his Son.

TEACHING AIM: The students will learn that God used the Old Testament law to prepare the world for a new beginning in Jesus Christ.

TEACHING AIDS: Write the following unfinished sentence on the chalkboard or on a large paper: "If I could make a new beginning in my life, I would...."

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Isaiah 40 concerns events which took place in Babylon before 538 B.C. The Prophet's voice spoke to comfort the Jewish people. They were lonely and discouraged because they were in exile in a foreign land.

King Josiah began to reign when he was eight years old. He reigned for thirty-one years. His death marked the start of a troubled time in Judah's history. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, reigned only three months before he was exiled to Egypt. A second son, Jehoiakim, was forced to change his loyalty from Egypt to Babylon.

Then, in 601 B.C., Jehoiakim joined in a revolt against Babylon. This ended when Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, took over Jerusalem. Three thousand Jerusalem citizens including the king, the queen mother and the officials of the city were taken to Babylon. This was the first of three captivities to Babylon.

People are often sad when they are living in a country that is not their own. They want to see things they saw when they were children. They desire to be with the people they left behind.

When a person is forced to live in a foreign country, the sadness is even greater. He cannot return home for any reason. They must remain in a foreign land. Bitterness against the captors and the longing for home become very great indeed.

Some people have to leave their country and live in another as refugees. They have the same longing to return to their country as it was once, but they cannot.

The Jewish people, living in exile, experienced all these feelings of homesickness.

Then God spoke to the people in their captivity through his prophet. He told the prophet to comfort God's people. Nowhere else in the Bible are the prophets commanded to comfort the people. Usually they were told to condemn the people for their sin. This time, he was to comfort the exiles.

God told his people that their sin was forgiven. Then he went on to tell them who he was. This would remind them of who they were in God's plan.

In the verses in today's lesson, Isaiah 40:27-31, the exiles questioned God to see if he really cared about them. The prophet answered that their idea of God was far too small. They were to wait for the Lord until he renewed their strength.

To wait for the Lord means to wait anxiously. This is like waiting for the harvest to come, or like watchers waiting in ambush to begin an attack. The exiles were to wait to be returned to their homes until the Lord was ready. But they were to wait with eagerness. Waiting for the Lord in this way means responding to him in faith.

Galatians 4:1-6 describes a child who inherited from his father. He was cared for by guardians and others until he was old enough to care for himself and his property. Paul used this to show the people that they were like little children living under the law until Jesus came. Through Jesus, the law was fulfilled and man became free.

Verse four of this passage tells that when the time was fully come, God sent Jesus. All of history was ready. Israel had waited for the Lord for four hundred years between the close of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Roman government had built fine roads. The gospel message could be carried easily to all nations. When the time had fully come, the angel spoke to Mary. Jesus was born.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Point to the words on the chalk board and say: "Here is a sentence that is not complete. Would one of you complete it for us?" Let the students share what they would do to make a new beginning in their lives. In some classes, the teacher may need to be the first one to share if the students are shy or easily embarrassed.

Allow each student who will share to do so. Encourage them and do not show any feeling about what they might change in their lives.

After they have told what they would change, say: "In each of our lives, there are things we would like to change so we can start over again. Our lesson today is about how we can start over, how we can find a new beginning."

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles to Isaiah 40. Say: "This chapter was written to comfort God's chosen people. They were in exile in Babylon, and they were longing for their own homes, their customs, their country. What does it mean to be in exile?" Allow students to discuss this. If there is one who lives outside his tribal area, ask him how he feels about living where he lives. Ask him how he would feel if he had been forced to leave his home and compelled to stay outside his home area. Lead the discussion to the conclusion that being an exile is very unpleasant.

Have someone read verses 27-31. Say: "In these verses, God through his prophet told the people they must wait for the Lord. They must wait to return to their homes until the Lord was ready for them to return. But many Bible students feel that these verses were not only to the exiles in Babylon. They were to all the Jewish nation. The whole nation, indeed the whole world, waited for the Lord for many hundreds of years. They waited for him to send the Messiah. What does waiting for the Lord mean?" Allow the students to discuss this until they have given an explanation like the one in the Background Study, "waiting eagerly for God" or "responding in faith to him."

Have the students turn to Galatians 4:1-6. Ask one to read this Scripture. Use the material in the students' books and that in your Background Study to explain what these verses mean. Pay special attention to verse 4.

Say: "God sent his Son, Jesus, to be the Messiah. He was the one the people had waited for so long. He was the Ruler who would lead Israel. Before Jesus came, people found favour with God only through obeying

the law. The men who interpreted the law had made it seem like slavery to the people. Every part of a person's life was dictated by law.

When Jesus came, the law was fulfilled. No longer did the people have to follow it as the basis for pleasing God. They could find favour with him through trusting his Son, Jesus.

In Jesus they could have a new beginning, a new life. They could be free."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Say: "Do you understand how you can have a new start?" Give the students time to discuss this. Say: "If there is one here who has not trusted Jesus as your Saviour and you want to do so, please stay a few minutes after the class leaves so we can talk together. If you are already a Christian, can you have a new start? How?" Let them discuss this. Say: "We can wait for the Lord, and he will renew our strength day by day. We can depend on God."

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER TWO

PREPARING THE WAY

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:
Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1-4; Matthew 3:1-12; John 1:6-8, 19-28

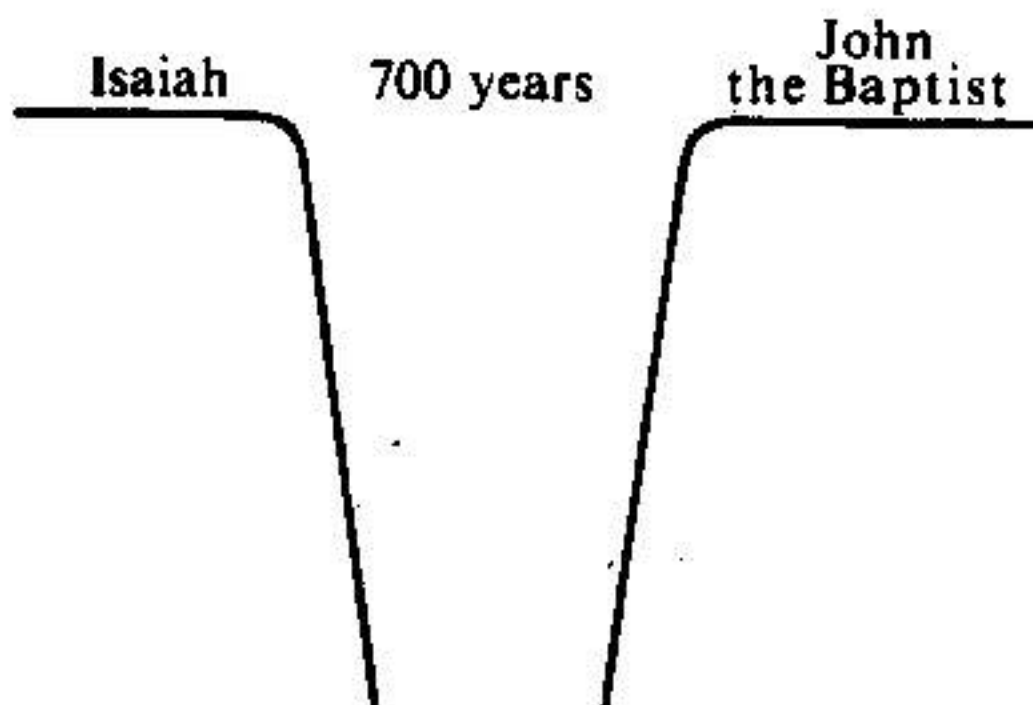
VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Isaiah 40:3-5; Matthew 3:1-12; Revelation 20:11-15

MEMORY VERSE: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to understand that each person must personally accept Jesus as his Saviour.

TEACHING AIDS: Make this picture on the chalkboard or on paper:



PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Isaiah 40:3-5 is part of the Scripture studied in the last lesson. It was

written to comfort the Jerusalem exiles in Babylon. These three verses assured the people that their way home would be made easy. These verses also told of a messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

The Messiah is mentioned throughout the Old Testament as the Redeemer, the one who would come to restore the chosen people to their rightful place. The word, Messiah, has the same meaning in the Hebrew language as the word, Christ, has in Greek. At the close of the Old Testament, Jewish people were anxiously waiting for the Messiah. They thought he would overthrow the Roman government and have a new Jewish kingdom upon the earth. Before the Messiah came, a messenger would come to get things ready for him.

Malachi 3:1-4 was written by an unknown prophet during a period of spiritual depression. People were discouraged at that time. The book was written to remind the people of all God's promises to send a messenger, a redeemer, a refiner, a Messiah, the Christ.

All four Gospels (Matthew 3:3, 11:7-10; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23) identify John the Baptist as that messenger whom God promised to send to prepare the way for the Messiah. Hundreds of years had passed since God had promised to send the messenger. Then, God

fulfilled his promise by sending John the Baptist.

By the time that John the Baptist appeared, the Jewish people had begun to realize that the time of the prophets was over. No prophet's voice had been heard for 400 years. Then, from the quietness and loneliness of the wilderness, came John's voice calling the people to repentance. He recognized himself as the messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord. He came dressed in simple garments, eating simple food, but preaching a mighty message.

The preparation John was to make was in the hearts of the people. It did not matter to John who the people were. He called them all to change their ways and repent of their sins. There were none who were sinless. Even the religious leaders were filled with sin. For this reason, John the Baptist did not participate in the usual Jewish religious observances. He kept himself apart. The people had to go out to the Jordan River to hear his message.

When the religious leaders wanted to be baptized, John refused. He said they could not be baptized until they repented. They could not claim to be without sin simply because they were of the Levite tribe or were descended from Abraham.

In Matthew 3:12, John told his listeners what the end result of their decision would be. Those who had repented would be gathered into the storehouse as wheat. This meant they would be safe in God's hands

throughout eternity. Those who failed to repent would be like the chaff to be burned.

The two Scriptures from John 1 tell who John said he was. He had come to light the way for the Messiah. He was not Elijah, but his work was like Elijah's.

Revelation 20:11-15 tells about the day when everyone will be judged. This judgement will come and those who have accepted Christ after repenting of their sins will find their names written in the book of life. Those whose names fail to appear in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire and burned forever.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Use the picture you have drawn as you say the following: (Point to the word Isaiah and say:) "When Isaiah lived, he was a prophet for the people of his time. But he was a prophet for later times as well. He told the world in Isaiah 40:3-5 that one would come to prepare the way for Jesus."

(Point to the gulf of space where the words, 700 years, are written and say:) "After Isaiah spoke, a great many years went by. The people waited for God to make his promise come true. They had nothing but their faith and God's promise to depend upon."

(Point to the name John the Baptist and say:) "It was 700 years before God fulfilled his promise. Then he sent John the Baptist to the world to prepare it for the coming of the Saviour."

Say: "Our lesson today is about this man, John the Baptist. We will learn what work he did and why that work was so important."

Interpretation

Tell the students to open their Bibles to Matthew 3:1-12. Read the passage to the students. Let one of them describe John the Baptist. Encourage members to add to the description until you have a clear picture of the man. You will want them to say more than that John wore a garment of camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey. Ask them if they think he was wild looking, if he was strong or weak, if he was timid or bold, if he was someone they themselves might want to see and hear. You are doing a character study with the students so John the Baptist will come alive for them in their thoughts. This is not a fairy tale. John the Baptist really lived and preached. You want the students to get an idea of the pull this man had for the people. They not only came to see him, but they did what he told them to do.

Now ask: "What was John the Baptist's purpose in asking the people to repent?" Allow enough time for discussion. Make sure the students see that he came to prepare the way for the Lord. Let one read Isaiah 40:3-5 and another read Malachi 3:1-4.

Ask: "Did John the Baptist make the way in the desert straight? Did he lift up the valleys? Did he make the rough places plain? Lead the students in discussing that John the Baptist did

these acts in the hearts of the people. He had them prepare their hearts for Jesus to come in. Then when it was time, he stepped aside and pointed the way for men to follow Jesus.

Say: "When the Pharisees and Sadducees who were the religious leaders came to be baptized, John refused. Why?" Lead the students to understand that these had refused to repent. They only wanted to please the people by doing what John asked. John knew they had not repented.

Application To Our Lives

Have one student read Matthew 3:12 and another read Revelation 20:11-15. Say: "This is a picture of what happens as a result of our decision to choose Jesus. If we accept him as our Saviour, we are the wheat, and we will live eternally with God. Our names are written in the book of life. If we refuse Jesus we are the chaff which will be burnt forever in the lake of fire. Each of us must make the decision for ourselves. Many people think that because they were born into a Christian home, they are Christians. This is a terrible untruth. Others think they are saved because their parents are saved. This also is untrue.

Each person must decide whether he will choose Jesus or not. Our families cannot save us. Only Jesus can save us, and he does that only after we have consciously decided to choose him as our Saviour." Ask if there are any questions about any of the lesson.

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER THREE

CELEBRATING THE PROMISE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Luke 1:26-55; John 1:1-5, 9-18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Luke 1:39-55

MEMORY VERSE: "...he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:49).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God can use his children to do his work when they are willing and ready to be used.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to be ready to do God's will.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Today's lesson is about the joy that both Mary and Elizabeth felt when they learnt they were to have parts in the greatest drama known to man, the birth of the Messiah. Their joy brought them to celebration, and that celebration continues today. All Christians celebrate Christ!

Luke 1:26-55 begins with the sudden appearance before Mary of the angel, Gabriel. Knowing the Jewish customs of the time Mary lived will help you understand the importance and deep meaning of this appearance.

The Jewish world had waited for their Messiah, their Deliverer, for hundreds of years. They lived under the rule of the Roman government, as did most of the known world at that

time. Rome had conquered the lands and could demand what they wanted from the people. Taxation by the rulers was heavy and burdensome for the people. Decrees and demands from Rome had to be obeyed. One example of these decrees was the one which caused Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem to be counted on the eve of Jesus' birth.

As the Jewish people remembered the prophecies about a Messiah, they connected them with the situation that existed. It was quite natural, then, for them to expect their Deliverer to overthrow the tyrant, the Roman government. Nothing in the Old Testament said anything about the Messiah setting up an earthly kingdom, but this was the belief most of the Jews held.

Many Jewish women prayed that they might be the mother of the Messiah. What an honour that would be! Their son would rule the Jewish world, and they would benefit greatly.

A Jewish woman was betrothed or engaged to be married for one year before she was really married. This betrothal was as binding as marriage and could be ended only by divorce. A woman found pregnant during this betrothal was stoned. She was to keep herself for her husband.

When Gabriel came, Mary was certain to have known what the possible results would be. She would almost certainly be divorced by her

husband to be. She might be stoned. Everyone would talk about her for as long as she lived if she was not stoned. Yet, Mary accepted what was offered to her. She only asked that she be told as much as possible about what was to happen. She did not demand a sign from the angel.

When Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth would also bear a son, she decided to travel to see her. Elizabeth lived about 113 kilometres from Mary, and Mary made the trip by walking. When she saw Mary, Elizabeth's child within her leaped with joy.

Read Mary's praise song to God for choosing her to be the Messiah's mother. It is in verses 39 through 55.

Mary's song can be compared to Hannah's song in 2 Samuel 2:1-10. She recognized that she would not only be remembered throughout all time, but she would be remembered as one who blessed the world. She was amazed that God has chosen her to be his Son's mother.

John 1:1-5, 9-18 tells who Jesus is. He is called the Word which was with God from before the beginning of time. He was Creator with the Creator, he was Light with the Light. He came to the Jewish people who rejected him. His wider task was to give power to those who received him to become the children of God. He was fully and wholly God, but verse 14 tells us that he was wholly man. He came to the world so we could know God.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Say: "In the first lesson of this book we studied the way God used the Old Testament law to prepare the world for a new beginning in Jesus Christ. We saw that the Old Testament looked forward to Jesus. The second lesson was about the way God used John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus to come into the world. Our lesson today is about a celebration, the celebration of God's promise to send the Messiah. God used two willing women in his plan to send his only Son into the world."

Interpretation

Tell the students to open their Bible to Luke 1:26. Read verses 26 through 38 out loud. Ask the following questions to lead the students through these verses. They may answer in their own words or read a verse or two of Scripture to answer the questions. If they cannot answer a question, use your Background Study to answer the questions fully.

1. What is the sixth month named in verse 26? (They may need to read the verses before verse 26 to answer this question.)
2. Who was Gabriel and what work did he do?
3. Who was Mary?
4. What does "betrothed" mean?
5. How did Gabriel greet Mary, and how did that affect her?
6. What assurance did Gabriel give Mary to calm her fear?
7. Who was to be Mary's Son?

8. What question did Mary ask Gabriel?

9. How did Gabriel explain to Mary the way she would be able to bear God's Son?

10. What proof did Gabriel offer that he was telling the truth?

11. What was Mary's answer to Gabriel?

Say: "God asked Mary to do a very difficult job. She agreed to do this job, although she knew it might cost her greatly. In the days Mary lived, it would have been expected that she would be stoned to death if she became pregnant before she was married. Her betrothed could divorce her quietly and send her away if he did not want her killed. What Mary was agreeing to do was a very difficult thing to do. But she chose to do as God asked. This must have taken great courage for her."

Tell the students to look at Luke 1:39-55 while someone (a good reader) reads these verses. Then say: "Mary must have decided to leave Nazareth right away. Her journey was a long one of 113 kilometres to her cousin, Elizabeth's house. She walked all the way. When she arrived her cousin greeted her in such a way that Mary's faith in what the angel had told her was made stronger." Have a student read verses 42-45. Say: "When Mary heard these words, her heart was filled with joy, and she praised God in the song recorded in verses 46-55."

"All of these verses prove to us that Jesus was completely human. He was born of woman, just as we were. Now

let us look at John 1:1-5 and 9-18." Have these verses read aloud, or you read them. Ask the students what John was saying in these verses. Make certain they understand that the Word is Jesus and that he was completely God. He was with God and was God in the beginning and before the beginning of time. He took on flesh and lived on the earth for awhile to fulfil his own plan to reveal himself to mankind. Ask the students if they have questions about these verses. Answer these questions if you can, or tell the students you will have the answer the next time you meet.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God chose Mary to do a very hard job. He still asks people to do jobs for him today. Some of these jobs are easy to do, others are very hard. Let us think of some of the things God might ask us to do, or has already asked us to do. We shall write these jobs on the board as we name them. I shall be first." Write: Teach a Bible class. Then let them name jobs and write them on the board. Let them see that God has work for us to do.

Say: "When God calls us to do a job, sometimes we fail to do the job because we were not listening when God called. We need to listen to God every day. We need to have some time with him every day when we can talk and listen. When God asks us to do a job and we do it, we are blessed and our faith and strength is increased. I will pray this week that God will give each of you some special work to do and that you will say yes to him."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROMISED ONE ARRIVES

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 1:17-2:6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Matthew 1:17-23

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed be the Lord... not one word has failed of all his good promise..." (1 Kings 8:56).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God kept his promise and sent the Messiah to save his people from their sin.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to know that God always keeps his promises.

TEACHING AIDS: Ask two students to use the verses in Matthew 1 and prepare to do a short play.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In the last lesson Mary went to her cousin's house. She remained there for three months, then she returned to her home village of Nazareth. Arriving in Nazareth, she may have gone directly to Joseph to tell him of her condition.

Joseph was faced with a problem. He and Mary were only betrothed at this time. For her to be pregnant would bring shame on them both. Joseph was a just man which meant two things. First, he knew the Jewish law and lived within its limits. Second, and perhaps more important, justice lived in Joseph's heart. He did not want to hurt Mary if he could prevent it. If he followed the Jewish law, Mary

would be stoned. Not knowing what to do, Joseph went to bed.

During the night, God solved Joseph's problem for him by sending an angel with a message. This was the same angel who had visited Mary. The message was the same, Mary would have a Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. Only the explanation was different to fit the needs of the receiver. The angel called Joseph's attention to the Scripture from Isaiah 7:14. This reminder would comfort a just man like Joseph who knew the Scriptures.

Awaking from his sleep, Joseph did what the angel had told him to do. He took his wife and "knew" her not until the child was born. This means he had no sexual relationship with her until Jesus was born.

Matthew 2:1-6 takes place in Bethlehem, a little town five or six miles from Jerusalem. This was where Mary and Joseph had travelled to be counted in the census. (See Luke 2.) Some time after Jesus was born, perhaps as long as two years later, some wise men came seeking him. We are not told how many wise men came. We only know they came to worship him, not as God, but as a king.

These wise men were probably from Persia where they acted as priests to the Persian people. Originally, they may have been of the Median tribe. They studied the stars constantly and

were men of holiness and wisdom. They had seen a star which may have been much brighter than the others in the heavens. To them, this star meant that a king had been born. They came to reverence him.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they came naturally to the ruling king, Herod. If a king had been born, surely he had been born in the royal household. Herod knew nothing about the birth of a king, and he became upset. He called in some of the priests and religious leaders and asked them where such a king might be born. Remembering Micah 5:2, they told Herod that the long-awaited king would be born in Bethlehem.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Begin the lesson by having the short play that you assigned earlier in the week. (See Teaching Aids.) After the play is finished, ask: "How would you have felt if your fiancée had become pregnant and you knew you had not been involved?" Let the class discuss this for a bit. Then ask, "After the angel came and explained what had happened to Mary, how would you have felt?" Again give the class time to discuss this.

Say: "It is not always easy for people to accept what God plans. It may have been difficult indeed for Joseph to accept the angel's message. Even then, Joseph knew he and Mary must be prepared to be ridiculed and talked about. The betrothal period was to be a period of time when the man and woman had no sexual

contact. To marry Mary immediately as Joseph was told to do did not solve the problem completely. After all, Mary was already three months pregnant. All the village would assume that Joseph was the father. This was hard for a just man like Joseph to accept."

Interpretation

Read Matthew 1:18-25 aloud for the students to hear. Say: "In verse 21, the angel told Joseph to name the child Jesus. In Isaiah 7:14 the child is to be called Immanuel. Can you think why there are two names here for the same baby?" Give the class an opportunity for discussion. Listen to see if they can make the connection that the two names really mean the same thing. Say: "Yes, both names mean 'God is with us.' Jesus came to the earth to show us what God is like."

Ask the students if they have questions about these verses in Matthew 1.

Read Matthew 2:1-6. Say: "These wise men who came to worship Jesus have always had some mystery about them. Legend has built up around them until it is necessary for Christians to return to the Bible to see what the truth really was. Legend says there were three of them. The Bible does not give their number. Legend gives them names. The Bible does not. Legend says one was young, one middle-aged and one was old. The Bible does not mention age. Legend says their gifts had special significance. The Bible does not say so.

"Whoever these three wise men were, they came from the East where they had seen a star of unexpected brilliance. It told them that a king had been born. At that time there was a general feeling of expectancy over all the world. Ancient writings said a world-wide ruler would come from the Judean nation. When the star suddenly appeared, these wise men set out early to be among the first to welcome this new king and give him homage."

Tell the class they may want to read on through Matthew 2 to find the results of the trip of the wise men.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God always keeps his promises, even though it may take hundreds of years for him to keep them. Sending his only Son to the earth was one of the promises God made that took hundreds of years to accomplish."

"We can depend on God. When he promises, he fulfils. When we study the Bible and know the events God has promised, we can know for sure that those things will happen. For

example, God has promised a judgement day and that day will come.

"Let us look at some other promises God has made." Read these Scripture references and have a student read the Scripture. Discuss each one as to whether God fulfils his promises.

1. John 15:7
2. Matthew 20:23
3. Mark 16:16
4. Matthew 21:22
5. John 3:16
6. Proverbs 8:17
7. 2 Corinthians 1:5
8. Matthew 10:32
9. Micah 5:2
10. Proverbs 3:6

Use as many of these Scriptures as you have time for. Reading them and discussing them should convince everyone in your class that God does keep his promises.

Say: "If you have not trusted in God, reading his promises will help you do so."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAN OF COMPASSION

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:14-21; 5:17-26; 13:10-17

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 4:17-20; 5:18-25

MEMORY VERSE: "...the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted" (Isaiah 49:13).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus knows everything about me, and he still loves me.

TEACHING AIM: I will use this lesson to teach my students that God cares for them as no one else can.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board and chalk.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

If we read all of Luke 4, it seems that the first public act of Jesus after his temptation was his return to read in the synagogue of his home town, Nazareth. The other Gospels put the events in a different order, having Jesus come to Nazareth after several other appearances and some miracles. Luke may have put the event here to show that Jesus would be rejected by his own people, but accepted by the Gentiles. Whatever the case, we should keep in mind that Jesus had been away from Nazareth for a period of time and had become known in other places.

It is well to remember that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and lived there during his young adulthood. He was a

carpenter in the town and was well-acquainted with his fellow citizens. During those thirty years, Jesus must have lived an extraordinary life since he was without sin. The people may have been amazed at Jesus' conduct, but they finally had grown used to it. Now the "perfect man" had returned to his home town, and the people were eager to hear what he had to say.

It was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue. When he got there, he sat down with the other people. First, the Law was read, then a portion from the Prophets was read. If a competent teacher was present, he was asked to bring a lesson following the reading from the prophets. Jesus was handed one of the Isaiah scrolls, and he read from it, standing up. Then he sat down to deliver the lesson or sermon, as the custom was in the synagogue.

Jesus had read the Scripture portion which was from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. Then he told his listeners that the Scripture was fulfilled in himself. The anger the people showed a little later was because Jesus had said he was the Messiah. He also told them he had come not only to Jews, but to Gentiles as well. To a Jew this was heresy. They did not think the Gentiles were worthy to be saved.

The second Scripture is Luke 5:18-25. Jesus was in a house teaching. The crowd was thick around the house, and no one could enter through the door. Some friends brought a sick man to Jesus for healing, but they could not enter the house because of all the crowd.

Palestinian houses were built with an outside staircase which led up to the roof of the house. The roof was flat and built of beams which had been laid from wall to wall. In between the beams were compacted twigs compacted with mortar. It was an easy task to remove some of this matting between the beams and to let the man down with ropes to the feet of Jesus.

Seeing their faith, Jesus forgave the man's sins. Immediately the religious leaders there questioned his authority to forgive sins. Jesus asked them which was easier, to forgive sins or heal sick people. Then he healed the man, and he and his friends went away rejoicing.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "What is compassion?" Discuss this word until the group has decided that it means to care enough to do something about it. (Among many cultures, compassion is masked behind an attempt to hide tender feelings. If this is true in your culture, spend some time talking about being gentle, tender-hearted and sympathetic. Tell your students that to weep is not a sign of weakness, but it is often a sign of great strength. Even Jesus wept.)

Say: "Let us think of some situations in our own lives when we have seen people who were compassionate." (Again, this may be hard for your people. Help them to think of crippled children or people with diseased hearts. What did the nation do to help? If your church has given something like crutches or

wheelchairs to people who needed them, remind the class of the event.)

Say: "Jesus was a man of compassion. He came to the earth on a mission of compassion."

Interpretation

Ask the students to turn to Luke 4:17-20. Read this to the class. Then, ask: "Can someone explain what was happening in these verses? Where was Jesus? Why was he there? What did he say about himself?" Let one student explain these verses. Allow others to add their thoughts. Add your own from the Background Study. Make sure they understand that Jesus was telling the world why he had come to earth. He was to heal the sick, make the blind see, raise the dead, preach good news to mankind.

Tell the students to turn to Luke 5:18-25. Read this or have it read aloud. Say: "This story shows the compassion of Jesus. He saw the man, recognized his need and forgave his sins. Later he healed his body. Can you think of other times when Jesus showed compassion? Use your Bible, and we will write each act on the board." Use plenty of time doing this activity. Your reason for doing it is to show the students how many times Jesus showed mercy and compassion to those round about him.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Jesus was a man of compassion when he lived on the earth. He is still a man of compassion. He cares for us today just as he cared for those who lived when he was on

the earth. Since God and Jesus are one, the same characteristics exist in each." Read Psalms 139. Say: "This psalm tells us exactly how well God knows us. No one else is able to know us like God does. How wonderful to know that he knows us so well and he cares for us so much. The Bible tells us that he knows how many hairs we have on our heads!"

"Jesus was our example of compassion. It is true that we cannot do the miracles Jesus did, but we can feel compassion as he felt it. Perhaps our own responses to our compassion will not be very spectacular, but God will be pleased."

Ask one of the students to read the Introduction of their lessons, the story

of the old woman. Say: "There are lonely people around us. We see them every day. How can we show them our compassion."

Ask: "Can you think of other ways we can show compassion? There may be acts we can do as individuals, or we may need to join with others to respond to a situation." Let the class name as many situations as they can where they can show compassion.

Say: "We must remember that we may feel sympathy for someone, but unless we take action to help we have not shown compassion."

Close in prayer asking God to show the class ways to be compassionate this week.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MASTER TEACHER

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:17-28; 7:24-28; 10:24-25; 13:33-52

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Matthew 5:17-20; 7:24-26, 28-29; 13:34-35

MEMORY VERSE: "Make me to know thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths" (Psalms 25:4).

CENTRAL TRUTH: The Word of God is the standard of measure for what is right and what is wrong.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to learn to determine what is right and what is wrong by searching the Bible to find the truth.

TEACHING AIDS: Before your students arrive, write the names of all kinds of churches in your area on the board; i.e. Baptist, Catholic, etc.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Matthew 5:17-28 we read Jesus' statement that he came to fulfil the law. This seems to contradict other Scriptures (Luke 16:16; 13:10-17; Mark 3:1-6; Romans 10:4) where Jesus is breaking the law or is said to be the end of the law. Paul wrote to the Galatians that he, through the law, had died to the law that he might live to God. What, then, is Jesus saying?

The Jews used the word "law" to indicate four different things. First, it could mean the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Or, it could mean the Ten Commandments. Or, they might be referring to the Pentateuch and the Prophets which was all the Scripture to them. Or, they might mean the scribal law or oral law.

The scribal or oral law was that set of laws that religious leaders had made to define God's more widely stated law. The basis of God's law was that men were to love and revere God, and they were to love and revere each other. The religious leaders decided that the people could not understand the law unless it was defined better. They solved the "problem" by adding many man-made laws to God's laws. An example of this is God's law to keep the sabbath holy by doing no work that day. The scribes defined what work was to the point of saying that a tailor was breaking the law if his robe had a needle sticking in it. This was bearing a burden which was work.

Jesus said he came to fulfil God's law, not the scribal law. Then he went on to show that he had authority over all the law and named some instances to point out his truth. He used the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" to explain that murder is having anger in our hearts toward our fellow man.

Matthew 7:24-28 gives us a picture of two ways to build character. We can build solidly upon the stone foundation of Jesus' teaching, or we can build foolishly upon the sand of

the world's teaching. Jesus was a carpenter, and he knew how to build a house. He knew where to build them as well. He ends this passage by saying that not only must we hear his words, we must act on them.

Matthew 10:24-25 tells us that the student is never better than his master. Christians are never better than Jesus. The fate Jesus suffered on the cross can be demanded of us, his followers.

In Matthew 13:33-52, we find a series of parables. Jesus, the Master Teacher, was using items common to his listeners to explain eternal matters. All of these parables tell the value of the kingdom of God. It is like yeast that spreads through the whole loaf. Indeed Christianity has spread throughout the world. It is like good seed that brings forth a bountiful harvest. It is a pearl of great price, it is a treasure hidden in a field, it is a net thrown into the sea to draw men.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Why are there so many different kinds of churches? They all claim to be Christian churches, yet there are differences. Why?" Give the students plenty of time to discuss this question. Lead them to the conclusion that men interpret what the Bible says in different ways. Say: "Yes, we have all these churches, (Point to the chalk board.) and they all have different beliefs, but often the beliefs are different because of what men add or take away from the Scripture. Our lesson today is about how Jesus felt about man-made laws that had been added to God's laws."

Interpretation

Ask a student to read Matthew 5:17-20. Say: "The Law and the Prophets that Jesus is talking about is the Old Testament. These were the laws that were read in the synagogue each sabbath. They were God's laws that if followed would allow man to live in peace with God and with his fellow men. Jesus said he came to fulfil this law, which was simply to love God and man.

"In verse 20 Jesus states that the Christian's righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. These were religious leaders of the day. The scribes were those who taught the law, and the Pharisees were those who followed the law completely. However, the law that the scribes and Pharisees were so cautious about was the mountain of man-made laws that had been added to God's laws. Why do you think men had made extra laws?" Allow the students to discuss this thoroughly, helping them to see that they wanted to make the laws completely clear to all the Jews.

Say: "In trying to make God's laws clear, the scribes had managed to make them so burdensome that men could follow them only if they forgot everything else in life except the law. This was never God's intention. He meant for us to love one another. But if we have to follow thirty laws to show that love, we forget to love and only follow the law. Jesus rebelled against this body of man-made law and found himself in constant disagreement with the religious leaders of the day because of it."

Application To Our Lives

"Even today men try to impose their own thoughts and ideas into God's laws. If a church has a rule or law, there must be a scriptural basis for it. In our church we have laws or rules. We must be careful that all our rules and beliefs are directly from the Bible. For instance, we believe that each person must be saved. We cannot be saved because our parents are Christians. Our basis for this belief is John 3:18." Have someone read that verse.

"Another belief we have is that we are saved by grace, not by doing any good thing." Have someone read Ephesians 2:8.

"Still another belief we have is that we must be regenerated. We find this in John 3:3." Have this read. "Let us also read Matthew 18:3 where we find the same command.

"We believe that if we are saved, we will have eternal life. This is found in John 3:36 and John 5:24." Have these read.

"We believe that Christians must be baptized by being totally immersed in water. Let us read Matthew 3:5-6, 16 and Mark 1:5.

"We believe in missions. That means we believe every person has the right to hear the gospel and accept Jesus. We find that in Matthew 28:18-20." Have this read.

Say: "We believe many things, but we need to be certain that our beliefs are based in Scripture. When someone

comes to us with an idea that we have not heard before, we need to ask him where the belief is stated in the Bible. If our own church leaders teach us something new, we need to make sure

it is in God's Word before we accept it. We can learn to use our Bibles to search for truth. We do not have to believe the things the world would like us to believe. We have the truth in the Bible."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:
Mark 8:27-38; 10:32-34; 15:21-39

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Mark 8:27-38

MEMORY VERSE: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus suffered terribly for our salvation, and so we must expect to suffer too.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to begin to understand the realities of what their decision to follow Christ might be.

TEACHING AIDS: Collect stories of Christians who have suffered for Jesus. These may be from personal interviews, from books or from your own life. Write on the chalk board or a paper this question: "Have you suffered for Christ?"

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Jesus had reached a point of crisis in his life. Ahead of him, the cross

waited, but he was afraid that he was the only one who could see it. Had he come, taught, healed, raised the dead without revealing himself to his disciples? Did they really know who he was? Mark 8:27-39 contains the question Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" The answer was very important.

The place where Jesus and his disciples were walking that day was an area known for the worship of gods. The birthplace of Pan, the Greek god of nature, was supposed to have been on the hillside close by. A mighty temple of marble dedicated to Caesar, who was considered a god, was a little further up the hill. Here Jesus asked who the world thought he was.

The disciples answered that some of the people thought Jesus was Elijah, John the Baptist or another Old Testament prophet. But Jesus probed more deeply, "Who do you say that I am?" Had he failed? Had his disciples failed to recognize him? Then Peter said, "You are the Christ." This word, Christ, meant Messiah or anointed

one. Jesus told them not to tell anyone because the world was expecting the Messiah to do things Jesus himself could not and would not do. He was not the earthly conqueror the world expected.

Then Jesus began to teach them what the Messiah or Christ was to do. He was to suffer and die. This was such a foreign idea to his disciples that Peter became upset and began to tell him he was wrong. At that moment, Jesus was tempted as much as he was tempted in the wilderness. He was God, after all, and could be a conqueror and rule an earthly kingdom. But he knew this was not God the Father's plan, made before the world was created. Recognizing that Peter was being used by Satan, he told him to get behind him, out of his sight. He would do God's will.

A multitude came at this time and Jesus began to teach them all. These next statements were not for the apostles alone. They were for every Christian who would ever live. Jesus taught them (and us) three things. We must deny ourselves. This means we must put our will under the rule of God, submitting ourselves to him. We must take up our crosses daily. This means we must give ourselves in service to God and man. We must follow him. This third command means we must choose him every day of our lives. Every new day, we must consciously choose to follow Jesus, rather than the world.

Jesus ended this teaching session by saying that a Christian might lose himself in the service of Christ and

find that he had won eternal life for himself. Or, he might lose himself in gaining all the world can give in wealth, in learning, in recognition, in power and lose his life to spend eternity in hell without Jesus.

Jesus continued to tell his disciples that he must suffer and die. Read Mark 9:30-32 and 10:32-34. We see in Mark 15:21-39 that when the time actually came for Jesus to suffer and die, the disciples could not accept it. In Luke 24:44-49 after his death and resurrection, Jesus again had to teach them who he was so they could go out to take the gospel around the world.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Call the students' attention to the question on the chalk board. Say: "We do not like to suffer. Suffering brings pictures to our minds of times when our bodies were sick. We may have been ill at home or in hospital. Wherever we were, we do not like to remember those times. For a while the memories are too painful, then we gradually begin to forget how miserable we were. We blot the experience from our minds. We suffer in other ways too. Some of us may remember times when we lost our jobs. We suffered then when we could not buy the things we and our families needed.

"Sometimes a friend can make us suffer. You may have trusted someone and told them something you would tell no other. Then that person was not worthy of your trust and told someone else your secret. Or, you may

have had a friend turn against you or use you badly. These were painful times for you.

"Perhaps there is someone here who has been hurt by a child of yours. You did the best you could for the child, then he or she rejected you. He may have made fun of you, calling you names. These, also, are times of suffering.

"Our question today is not about the suffering we do in living our normal lives, but about suffering for Christ. Has anyone here really suffered for Christ?" Give the students plenty of time to discuss this question. You may learn that you have people who have really suffered for Christ's sake. Or, you may find that no one in the class has actually suffered on his behalf.

Say: "Our lesson today is about our suffering Saviour, who not only suffered for our sakes, but has the right to call upon us to suffer for his sake."

Interpretation

Say: "One day Jesus and his disciples were walking in an area that many people considered a holy place because other gods were worshipped there. As he walked, Jesus began to wonder if his disciples really knew him. Let us read about our Scripture for today, Mark 8:27-38." Ask these questions to guide your students in a discussion of the lesson. Use your Background Study to add information to the discussion.

1. What question did Jesus ask?

2. What answer did they give?

3. What was Jesus' second question?

4. Did the disciples answer correctly?

5. Why did Jesus tell them to tell no one who he was?

6. What did Peter do that caused Jesus to call him Satan?

7. There are three things Jesus says the disciples must do. What are they? What does each mean?

8. Are you ashamed of Jesus? what does that mean?

9. If we are not ashamed of Jesus we will tell others about him, will we not?

10. Is it possible that telling others about Jesus will cause us to suffer?

Tell the students that those who speak up for Jesus may often suffer for him.

Application To Our Lives

Use the stories you have collected to show that people do suffer for Christ. You may want to include some of the following to impress upon your students that their decision to follow Christ may bring suffering to them.

1. John Huss, a man who refused to follow the traditions of bishops was convicted as a heretic and was burned at the stake at Constance, 6 July, 1415. John Huss said that Christ, not the pope, was the head of the church. He also said that all Christ's faithful people, not the cardinals only, were the body of the church.

2. Peter, the apostle, was ordered to be crucified by Nero. Jerome, a historian, says that Peter was crucified upside down because he felt he was unworthy to be crucified as Jesus was.

3. Paul suffered death under Nero as well. He was beheaded.

4. James was thrown from the battlements of the temple, then stoned and finally was killed by a blow on the head.

5. Thomas died in India, slain by a dart.

Tell the stories you have collected. There are many in Africa today

because of the religious persecution which has happened in many countries.

Say: "There may come a time when you will be called upon to suffer, and even to die. The way to which Christ has called us is not an easy way. But we can say with Paul, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18).

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LORD OF LIFE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 6:35-51; 11:1-53

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: John 11:1-27

MEMORY VERSE: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me..." (Galatians 2:20a).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God has all power. He controls all of life and death.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to learn that God is all-powerful. He is able to help them in every situation because he is Lord of life and death.

TEACHING AIDS: Pencils and paper and small pieces of paper on

which you have written the assignments mentioned in the Interpretation.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Soon after Jesus fed the 5000, he went away into the hills to be alone with God. When evening came, Jesus had not returned, so the disciples got into a boat and started across the sea to Capernaum. Suddenly, a great wind came upon the sea. When the disciples were three or four miles out to sea, they saw a figure coming toward them across the water. Jesus had decided to join them.

The next day, the crowds caught up with Jesus again, and we read in John

6:35-51 that he continued teaching them. In this lesson, he told the people that those who believed in him would be raised from the dead on the last day. Read verses 39, 40 and 44.

In John 11:1-27, we have the wonderful story of the restoring of life to Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. Strangely, this story is only in the Gospel of John. Matthew, Mark and Luke do not include it in their Gospels.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus were close friends of Jesus. When Jesus was tired, he often went to their home for rest and refreshment. When Lazarus became ill, Mary and Martha sent a hurried message to Jesus. They said, "Lazarus is sick." They did not have to ask Jesus to come to them. They knew he would come without a request from them.

Jesus, however, decided to wait for two days before he travelled to Bethany. He waited until he knew Lazarus was dead, then he said, "Let us go to him." Now Bethany was very close to Jerusalem where the religious leaders were. It would be dangerous for Jesus to go there. Thomas told the other disciples that they all must go, and if necessary they would die with Jesus.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. Decay of his body had already started. Hearing that Jesus had come, Martha ran out to greet him. Martha, always busy, was the first to reach Jesus; and she said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"

(verse 21). She continued speaking and showed great faith in Jesus.

Jesus told her that her brother would rise again. Remembering Jesus' teaching, Martha said she knew he would rise on the last day. But this was not what Jesus had in mind. He said he was the Resurrection and the Life. He had power over life, and he had power over death.

Martha hurried to call Mary. Mary came with the same questions and statements that Martha had had. When Jesus saw her sorrow, he wept. Then he went to the tomb and asked that the stone covering the cave be removed. Martha tried to prevent this because Lazarus had begun to stink inside the grave.

Lifting his eyes, Jesus thanked God for hearing him. This must have surprised those with him, because they had heard no prayer. Then, with a loud voice, Jesus called Lazarus to come from the grave. Immediately he walked out. Seeing how restrained he was with his legs bound, Jesus told them to take the grave clothes off him. Bodies were wrapped in linen garments with the hands and feet bound tightly in bandage-like wrappings. A towel covered the head. These were the clothes Jesus demanded be taken off. Lazarus was free to live again.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "When death comes to someone we love, we feel great sorrow. The sorrow is not for the one who

died if he was a Christian, because he has gone to be with God. We sorrow for ourselves because we will miss being with that one we loved. We may have to adjust our lives. We will have to become used to not talking with him. The sorrow is very real. We feel great pain.

"Our lesson today is about a death, about sorrow, about comfort and restoration. As we study, let us remember that the greatest lesson we can learn today is that Jesus is Lord of life and death."

Interpretation

If you have six or more students present, divide them into three small groups. If you have only six present, two people will be in each group. If you have less than six, you will need to let the whole group discuss each of the three questions. Give each group one of the following assignments. They will use their Bibles and their pupils' books to do the work. Give each group a pencil and paper, and tell them that one member of each group will write a short report for the whole class.

Group 1: Read John 11:1-5. Be prepared to tell the class who Lazarus was. You will also tell the class why Jesus delayed his journey to Bethany.

Group 2: Read John 11:6-16. Report to the class the meaning of these verses.

Group 3: Read John 11:17-43. Use your own words to tell the class what happened in these verses.

Give the class ten minutes to work on their assignments. If it is a sunny day, the groups may want to go outside to work. After ten minutes, the class will come together again and each group will report to the class.

Ask: "Did any of you have trouble with your work?" Help any who did. Then listen to the reports. Congratulate each group. Add to their information if you need to, so they can understand the Bible lesson.

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Does Jesus raise the dead today?" Let the class discuss this.

Ask: "Why did he raise Lazarus?" (to bring glory to God)

Ask: "If raising someone today would bring glory to God, would God do so?" Give the class time to discuss this. Help them to see that God almost always allows his laws (the laws of nature) to govern life and death. If a person dies, God allows him to remain dead. If someone came back from the dead today, much confusion might result. Sometimes we hear that someone has been raised from the dead. Such news is always met with disbelief. God will not allow his Name to be defiled. That is why today he does not allow us as Christians to raise dead people. He allowed Jesus to do so to bring himself glory and to show that Jesus is Lord of life and death."

Say: "Though God may not allow our dead to be raised now, he will raise them and all of us on the last day. This is a great comfort when we face the death of a loved one. We will meet him again at the day of

resurrection when Jesus will demonstrate his power over death again."

Ask for questions. Answer them or promise to get answers by the next class meeting.

Close the meeting with prayer for those in need around you.

CHAPTER NINE

THE EMPOWERED PEOPLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:

Acts 2:22-41; Romans 1:14-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Ephesians 1:1-2:10; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:2-4

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Ephesians 1:16-2:2, 4-6; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:2-4

MEMORY VERSE: "May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy" (Colossians 1:11).

CENTRAL TRUTH: The power of the Holy Spirit is available to all Christians.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to begin to use the power God makes available to Christians.

TEACHING AIDS: Early in the week, assign four students the Scriptures named in the pupil's Introduction so they can tell these stories.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Acts 2:2-4 tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit while Acts 2:22-41 is a

portion of the sermon Peter preached that day.

Luke, the author of Acts, does not tell where the believers were on the day of Pentecost, only that they were together. They had been in the upper room where they had been meeting for prayer and worship, or they may have gathered in the court of the temple. As they were continuing together, a sound like a mighty rushing wind came to them. Then an appearance like tongues of fire rested on each of them. The fire seemed to come from one central force. The Holy Spirit filled each of them and enabled them to speak in foreign tongues which were understood by people from other lands.

We need to make certain that we understand that this is not the first appearance of the Holy Spirit. To the contrary, the Holy Spirit had been active throughout all time, even moving upon the face of the waters during creation. (See Genesis 1:2.) He had always been the enabler, the source of divine power. In Old

Testament times, however, the Holy Spirit came to the aid of kings, prophets and judges rather than to all believers. At Pentecost he showed himself to be available to supply power to every Christian.

Peter's sermon was mostly taken from Joel and Psalms 16 and 110. He told the Jews they had killed the Messiah. They and the Romans were guilty. Peter spoke with such power that 3000 people believed him and accepted Jesus that day.

Romans 1:14-17 has Paul saying he wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel there. Paul said that the gospel is the power God uses to bring men to salvation. For Paul, life and salvation were the same thing. This salvation, Paul said, would be given to those with faith. It does not matter whether the man is of one nation or another. In verse 17, Paul said God's righteousness is revealed to those who are faithful, who are themselves righteous. In other words, Christians become righteous by exercising faith.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul recalled the first time he came to the Corinth church. He said he came with very great simplicity. He had just come from Athens where he had tried to deal with the philosophers and had failed. He had learnt that there is power in simplicity. All he wanted to preach was Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. He recalled, too, that he had come in a trembling manner the first time he came. This meant he was very excited about sharing the good news. His fear was not of the people. He had fear of

wanting to say just the right words to honour his Lord. He wanted his listeners to be convinced, not by the wise sayings of men, but by the power of God.

Ephesians 1:1-2:10 is a very difficult passage of Scripture. Paul, the writer, called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. Though not one of the twelve, Paul was commissioned alone after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He greeted his readers by calling a blessing from God. Then he began to give God's plan of redemption. God always intended that men should live in harmony with him. In the Garden of Eden, God had the companionship of Adam and Eve until sin destroyed the relationship. In Old Testament times men maintained their relationship with God by a system of sacrifices and offerings. They were looking forward to the cross. In the New Testament, we can see God's plan to bring men in harmony with himself all through the Gospels.

First, Paul said God had foreknowledge as to who would be his sons through Jesus. The blood of Jesus brings us redemption and forgiveness through his grace. He went on to say that the believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our future inheritance (life with God forever).

Paul, assured the believers that he prayed for them continually. He thanked God for them, then asked God to give them wisdom, revelation and knowledge. He asked God to give them enough light to see God clearly and understand him fully.

Then Paul looked at Christ, recognizing his mighty power, the very power of resurrection. He is above every ruler, authority and power. He reminded people that Christ is the head of the church which is his body.

Paul then turned his attention to the believers. He told them they were once dead, but now they are alive with Christ. They are able to sit with him in heavenly places and share in the great riches of his grace (his love which we do not deserve). No man can please God by his works without faith. It is God who has brought the believers into harmony with himself. There is nothing man can do to bring this harmony. We as Christians are his workmanship.

Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-20 is Christ's commission to us. He promised power, but only so we can tell the world about him.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Before class time, assign each of the four stories from the pupils' Introduction to students. Ask them to read these in their Bibles and be ready to tell these heroic stories in class. (Daniel, Samson, Gideon and Elijah)

Begin your lesson by asking each of the students to tell the story you have assigned him.

When the last student has completed telling his story, ask: "Where did each of these people get the power they needed to perform these deeds?" Agree with the students that the power came from God.

Say: "We, too, have power to do God's will. It is available to us at any time."

Interpretation

Say: "Today, we are going to use our Bibles to study God's power. We have heard how God gave power in the Old Testament. When Jesus died and rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples on several occasions. He told them he was leaving them a big job to do, but he was going to make sure they had the power to do the job. Let us find and read Acts 1:8." Have this verse read. Then say, "Let us find and read Matthew 28:18-20." Have this verse read. Say: "Notice that Jesus claimed all the power in heaven and in earth. That some power was to be made available to his disciples. Jesus went back to heaven, and his followers met and prayed and waited for the power."

Ask one student to read Acts 2:2-4. Say: "This was Pentecost, the time the Holy Spirit arrived to empower all Christians. Until this time, the Holy Spirit had helped prophets, judges and kings. Now he would be available to every Christian. On the day of Pentecost, Peter used this new power to preach a sermon and 3000 people were saved."

Have the students turn to Ephesians 1:16. Have one read through Ephesians 2:2.

Say: "These verses tell us that Paul prayed for the Christians. What did he ask God to give them?" From their books and Bibles the students should be able to discuss these verses. Add

material from your own Background Study if you wish.

Say: "God has made great power available to us."

Application To Our Lives

Ask the students if they have felt this power we have studied today. Let them discuss this spiritual power for a time. Probably, very few of your students have felt this power very often.

Say: "We have this great source of power to use, but so many of us fail to use it. We try to do everything in our own power, not the power of the Holy Spirit. We should understand that this power is to be used to bring men to God. We cannot ask God to give us power to jump from the ground up into a tall tree. That is foolish, and God would not do it. But if we want to witness to our friend, God will give us the boldness and the words to say to him. If we want to write a great book to glorify God, and we ask for power to do it, God will give it to us.

If we want to teach a lesson about God or preach a sermon, God will give us the power to do it."

Ask: "How do we get this power?" Let the students say we ask God for it.

Ask: "Will God always give this power?" Give time to discuss this. If they fail to say yes, you say that God gives power to the righteous. If we have unforgiven sin in our lives, God will not give us power. Tell them that God uses clean vessels for his work.

Have the students bow their heads and close their eyes. Ask them if they would like to have power in their spiritual lives. Tell them they must confess their sins and ask God to forgive them. Remain quiet for a few minutes to allow them to do this. Then tell them God will answer their prayers now, especially if they ask for power to do his work. Say a short prayer thanking God for your students and asking him to give them knowledge, wisdom and power.

CHAPTER TEN

A WORSHIPPING PEOPLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 1 3:12-17; 1 Peter 4:7-11; James 2:1-4; Acts 2:42-47

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 4:7-11

MEMORY VERSE: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all

wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

CENTRAL TRUTH: A Christian church works, serves and worships together.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to see that Christians love each other and work together.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalk board, chalk, pencils and paper.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 we see some things Christians should do in their daily living (*Broadman Commentary*, volume 10). First, everything a Christian does should be for the glory of God, even our eating. If we damage a weaker Christian by eating something he considers wrong, we have not glorified God.

Second, in every situation we need to apply Christian love. We should never be offensive to anybody. Third, we need to live lives that will be pleasing in the sight of all men. This does not mean to give up our Christian ideals, but rather to live them pleasingly. Fourth, in all we do we need to try to help those around us find salvation. Fifth, we need to live Christ-like lives so others may copy what we do.

Colossians 3:12-17 might be called "things Christians need to start doing." Being holy or good is more than just not being bad. Being holy and Christian means to be actively involved in doing things. We must be compassionate, kind, lowly, meek, patient and forgiving. We must allow the peace of Christ to be the ruling factor in our lives. We must let the word of Christ live in us richly. Unless it does, we cannot teach or help

another. We need to give glory and thanksgiving to God continually.

In James 2:1-4, we see that partiality and faith in Christ do not belong in the same life. It was quite common during the times when this letter was written to treat the rich people better than the poor people. It was not unusual for people to be reseated at a meal because someone of higher rank came in. The higher rank ate near the host close to the head of the table. The poor ate near the foot of the table. It must have been embarrassing for the poor people to be asked to move down to allow a better dressed person to take their seat. The writer of this letter says we must not judge people according to what they look like outside. All are the same before God.

Acts 2:42-47 shows nine characteristics of the early church (Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*). 1. The church was a learning church. It spent much time in learning about God. 2. It was a fellowshiping church. They ate together and prayed together. 3. It was a praying church. Everything was determined by prayer. God was consulted before action was taken. 4. It was a reverent church. The fear that was present was reverence for God. 5. It was an active church. Miracles took place and signs of great wonder were often seen. 6. It was a sharing church. Each helped the others as he could. 7. It was a worshipping church. They attended the temple services daily. 8. It was a happy church. They showed their joy. 9. It was a church full of likeable people who were able to draw others to Christ.

First Peter 4:7-11 also points to the activities of Christians. As we wait for Jesus to return we must remain sane and sober in our praying. This means we must stay in control when we pray. We need to keep loving those around us and show them hospitality as often as we can. (Hospitality is sharing our homes and our blessings with others.) Each of us must use our God-given gifts for the good of others.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Tell this story: "There was a young man named John. His parents did not know Jesus. They fought and argued a lot. They never showed John that they loved him. As he grew up, he stayed by himself most of the time. He was afraid to like people. He was afraid they would not like him.

"John was lonely and did not enjoy living. One day he met a Christian young man. This man tried to be his friend. He talked to John. He did good things for him. The young man was friendly and joyful.

"After several weeks, John asked the other young man a question, 'How can you be so happy all the time?' He replied, 'It is easy. I have the love of Jesus in my heart. Jesus loves you too, John. He died for you because he loves you so much.'

"John accepted Jesus as his Saviour. Then he had love in his heart for the first time in his life. He had real happiness.

"When we live the love of Christ before other people, we can see the same results this young man saw."

Interpretation

Tell the students to open their Bibles to Acts 2:42-47. Tell one student to read this passage. Have another to use his pupil's book to explain what the early Christian church was like. When he finishes, say: "Let us write the characteristics of the early church on the board." Let the students name each of the characteristics. Use your Background Study of these verses to complete the list if the class fails to do so.

Say: "This is a good list of characteristics. Now let us think about our own church and each of these characteristics. Let us see how we compare to that early church." Use some time doing this activity. If your church fails to measure up to these characteristics, discuss the reasons.

Say: "Let us make another list. Let us decide on some things we can do as a class so our church will become more like the early church." Let the students make suggestions. You may have things like: invite church members to our homes for meals, pray for each church member by name, make up a prayer list of all the church members so we can remember them and pray for each one at least once a month, visit people who have been absent to see why they are not coming to church, etc.

Ask: "What shall we do with our list?" Perhaps the members will say to give it to the pastor. Help them to see that it would be good to share it with the pastor, but the work will have to be done by class members. They may want to present the list to the whole church at a business session.

Have someone read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Ask the class what kind of gifts God gives us. Discuss this for several minutes. Say: "We need to use our gifts for the good of others in the church since the church is the body of Christ. I want each of you to think about which gift you think God has given to you."

Application To Our Lives

Ask the students if anyone will name the gifts they think God has

given to them. Often we think we have a certain gift, but others who know us well will recognize that we do not have that gift, or they will say they agree with us. They may show us other gifts we have also.

Tell the members to think about the gifts they have this week and plan one way to use their gifts during the week for the good of another church member.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A SERVING PEOPLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Corinthians 8; Titus 3:8-14; James 2:14-17; 1 Peter 2:9

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; James 2:14-17

MEMORY VERSE: "And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians serve God by serving other people.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to be able to name specific ways they can serve others.

TEACHING AIDS: Pencils and paper for each student.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The Jerusalem church was the first church and has been called the mother church. Second Corinthians 8 was written to encourage the wealthy Corinthian church to take up a collection for the church at Jerusalem. We are not told why this was necessary. Perhaps it was because Jerusalem was the centre for the Jewish religion, and many people travelled there to worship. Among them may have been many poor people. Whatever the reason, the Jerusalem church needed money to give to the poor.

The Corinthians had begun taking up money a year before, but it had stopped. Now, Paul urged them to complete the collection and send it on to Jerusalem. He gave two examples to encourage them.

First, he cited the Macedonians. Because of their extreme poverty due probably to persecution, Paul had not asked them to give to the collection. But they had begged for the opportunity to give and had found great joy in doing so.

The second example Paul used was Jesus Christ himself who gave up his place in heaven to die on a cross to save all mankind. Jesus had given his life for others.

Then, Paul said the Corinthians had always done an outstanding job at everything they had set out to do. He recognized that their failure to be generous would lead to dry and dead spirits. He wanted them to be generous because there might come a time when they, too, would be in need.

In Titus 3:8-14 Paul urged the people to do good deeds for others. He warned against people who talk, talk, talk without taking any action. If these refused to stop their talk, Paul said they were to be ignored because their purpose was not to glorify God. Paul encouraged the Christians to do enough work not only to take care of their own needs, but to have enough extra to help others.

In James 2:14-17, we have James' warning that faith which does not result in action is a dead faith. He said that a Christian response to another's need is to take care of the need, not just to pray for God to fill the need.

First Peter 2:9 states that Christians are priests. We are to represent God to mankind and bring them to God even

as the priests had done. Christians are a special people, chosen to do good work.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Give the paper and pencils to the students. Tell them to write all the ways they can think of to serve others. If you have class members who are unable to write, you will need to have another student write for them, or you may do it yourself. Have each student write his name on his paper and give it to you.

Read these lists aloud without telling who wrote each one. Read them as if they were just one long list.

You will probably be surprised that the lists are very short. Most Christians never really try to think of ways they can help others.

Do not comment on the activities they have named at this time. Just read the list and say, "These are some ways we can serve others."

Interpretation

Ask a student to find and read 1 Peter 2:9. Using their Bibles and their pupils' books, allow the students to tell you what this verse means.

Ask a different student to find and read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. Say: "Paul was asking the Christians at Corinth to take up an offering for the Jerusalem church. We are not sure why the church in Jerusalem was lacking funds, but they were. To encourage them to give, Paul told them about how generously the Macedonian church had given. The

Macedonians were very poor indeed. They had been persecuted, and most of them had had their property taken away. Because of their extreme poverty, Paul had not asked them to give. Yet they had begged to be allowed to participate in the offering.

"One very strong statement that Paul had made about the Macedonians was that they had first given themselves to God. If we give ourselves to God, that means we have given him all our possessions as well. Paul suggested that this was the reason they were able to give with such a free hand. They knew all they had belonged to God.

"The Christians at Corinth had wealth. It would be easy for them to give, especially if they remembered that Jesus Christ himself had given his life for them. However, Paul knew that it is sometimes harder for the wealthy to give than for the poor to give from the little they have. This church had already started to collect this offering once, but it had stopped before the collection was complete."

Have a third student read James 2:14-17. Say: "When we say we have faith, it is easy for people to believe us if we prove our faith by good deeds. The man in the Introduction in your books said he had faith. The people doubted that he did have faith, though, because his life showed no good deeds. There are few people more unhappy than Christian people who neglect to do good for others."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "I want to tell you a story about a man and his wife. This story is

about their activities during one week of their lives.

"Ezekiel and Anna had been married for ten years. They had three children. Ezekiel worked in a quarry. His work was hard and sometimes dangerous. Anna cared for the home, the children and farmed some land near their home. The family did not have much money, but they were able to take care of their needs.

"On Sunday while they were at church Ezekiel and Anna heard that Mama John was sick again. The old woman had been ill for almost a year now, and most of the church members were tired of hearing about it. As they walked home, Ezekiel told Anna, 'I am sorry Mama John is ill again. I wish I had money to take her to the doctor.' Anna was sorry to hear his words because she too was hoping they would have money to pay for the doctor.

" 'Never mind,' said Anna. 'I will go over to her house and take her the food I prepared this morning.' Anna spent three hours with the sick woman, talking with her as she cleaned the small house. As she left, she gathered up the dirty clothes and bed linens to take home to wash. Ezekiel spent his day of rest feeding the children and caring for them in Anna's absence.

"On Monday, Ezekiel stopped by Mama John's house to visit with her for a while. He learnt that Anna had already been there, bringing back the clean clothes and more food. The old woman was feeling much better.

"On Tuesday, terrible news went through the village. One of the teachers at the local school had been killed as he crossed the busy highway. His wife and children had seen the accident and were in shock. As soon as Anna heard the news, she hurried to the teacher's home where she spent the rest of the day cooking food and comforting the family. That night Ezekiel helped the other men build the coffin.

"On Wednesday, the family made several trips to the teacher's house, bringing plates, food and bedding to care for the guests coming in.

"Thursday was the day Anna helped clean the little church. Sometimes she was the only person who came to clean, but she always got there to make sure the church would be clean for worship services on Sunday.

"On Friday, Ezekiel received his salary. He remembered that the

teacher's family would need money now. He took out a portion of his salary and gave it to the teacher's wife when he went by on his way home. That night several guests were at Ezekiel's home because the funeral was to be on Saturday.

"On Saturday after the funeral, Anna went home with the teacher's wife to be with her during the first lonely hours. Ezekiel stayed at the church to help clean it since the funeral service had made it necessary to clean again. He noticed several benches that needed repair and made plans to do that work the next week."

Give the papers back to the students. Ask them if they would like to add to their lists. Talk together about activities they might want to add. Ask the students to try to do at least one act of service this week.

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A RECONCILING PEOPLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Galatians 3:27-29; 6:1-7

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 6:1-5, 7

MEMORY VERSE: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God wants man to have a perfect relationship with him. He made that possible in Jesus Christ.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to know that all men can be reconciled to God, no matter what sins they have committed.

TEACHING AIDS: Write RECONCILE on the chalk board or paper.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In the verses, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Paul wrote some very important truths. Each need to be studied carefully.

Verse 16 says that before we were converted, we regarded all men, even Jesus Christ, from a human point of view. That means we judged all men as the world judges. We did not have God's viewpoint. Paul may not have seen Jesus while he was alive. If he did, however, he thought of him as a trouble maker, a man who deserved death on the cross. After Paul's conversion, he no longer thought of Jesus in that way at all. Rather, he was able to see Christ as the love gift God sent to the world. He saw him as the willing sacrifice for Paul's own sins.

In verse 17, Paul stated that at conversion men become new creations. They are in Christ, a part of his very being. The old man with his old ways of thinking and judging and living has gone away. A new man is left in his place. Paul was amazed that this was true, although he himself was an excellent example. The rampaging persecutor of Christians, Saul of Tarsus, became Paul, the man who said "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Verse 18 tells how this miracle was accomplished. Man in the old creation (before conversion) was away from God. God could not stand his sin-filled presence. Through Christ, though, God reconciled man to

himself. Notice that man did not reconcile God. He could not do such a thing. God had to do the reconciling. Man was not angry with God, but God was angry with man. When we think that Jesus had to die on the cross in our place, that we were supposed to suffer that bitter punishment, we see that God was very angry indeed with man.

The second part of verse 18 says that God gave the Christian the ministry of reconciliation. This reconciliation is not between man and man. This reconciliation is between God and man. We must be busy telling the world about Jesus Christ.

Verse 19 makes the meaning of verse 18 clearer. Paul said God no longer sees the sins of man once he has been reconciled to God.

Verse 20 tells us that we are Christ's representatives here on earth. That means we are taking his place to show the world God's love. We are his ambassadors.

An ambassador must be very sure of the message he is giving. He cannot represent himself at any time. He must represent Christ. Through our message men will be reconciled to God.

Verse 21 shows that God put our sins upon Christ. The Holy One became the bearer of the sins of the world. The sight of Christ bearing our sins made God turn his eyes from him when he was hanging on the cross. All this Christ did so we could become righteous.

Galatians 3:27-29 says those of us who have been baptized in Christ have literally put on Christ. God sees us through the blood of Jesus Christ, and he does not care who we were before. We are all the same to him now, and we deserve the inheritance of eternal life.

In Galatians 6:1-7, Paul told us how to help our Christian brother. He said that if a man "is overtaken in a trespass" others should help. This means if a man sins, others should help him find forgiveness. The word Paul used here for trespass is the same word used for someone who accidentally slips on a dangerous path. This is not wilful sin that Paul spoke about. If a Christian sees a brother who has slipped, he must not condemn the brother, he must help him see his sin and ask for forgiveness.

In verses 3-5, Paul advised Christians to give up conceit. We must not think we are excellent creatures because of something we have done well. We should think of how much better we could have done that work.

In verse 7, Paul said the crop we reap is what we have sown. If we sow good seeds, we will harvest a crop of goodness.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "What does the word, reconcile, mean?" Point to the chalk board. Give time for the class to discuss this.

Say: "Often we need to be reconciled to different people in our

lives. We have an argument or a difference of opinion. This leads to bad feelings. The only way to reconcile most difficulties of this kind is through forgiveness. Our lesson today is about reconciliation, but this is a special reconciliation. This is God reconciling man to himself."

Interpretation

Say: "Before we became Christians we must have looked terrible to God. Nothing covered us over. God could see every sin, every ugly thing we had ever done or said. God decided to reconcile man to himself. He was angry and upset with what was going on, so he provided the means for reconciliation through the person of Jesus Christ. We will study 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 verse by verse."

Use your Background Study material and the discussion of the students to go through these verses. Make sure each person understands that God did the reconciling.

When you complete the study of these verses, ask someone to read Galatians 6:1-5 and verse 7. Again use your Background Study material to explain these verses. Help the students see that they are responsible to pick up a fallen Christian and put him back on the road again.

Say: "Our Memory Verse tells us that God sees us through the blood of Christ. He cannot see any differences in us. He is completely impartial to us, once we have been reconciled to him."

Application To Our Lives

"When we understand that God can not see our sin any longer because of

Jesus' blood, we can understand that everyone can come to him and be saved. It does not matter what sin has been committed, God can forgive it and cover it in Jesus' blood.

"Convicted killers have been able to read the Bible while they were in prison and have been reconciled to God. It does not matter how bad a man or woman has been, God can save him.

"Often when we witness to our friends and neighbours, they say they

cannot be Christians because the sins they have done are too bad. Perhaps there is someone in this class who feels this way. It is not necessary to clean up our lives before we become Christians. All we have to do is accept Jesus and our lives are instantly freed from all the sins they had in them. God is ready to reconcile any man to himself and to cover his sins."

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to help all of you to be bold in the ministry of reconciliation.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A PEOPLE OF HOPE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:
Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-25; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3; Revelation 21:1-7

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-25

MEMORY VERSE: "But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

CENTRAL TRUTH: We can be sure of our salvation when we have trusted Jesus as our Lord.

TEACHING AIM: I want to remind my students that, if they are Christians, they can be sure of their salvation.

TEACHING AIDS: Place four chairs at the front of the meeting area.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 5:1-5 tells us that Christians have confidence that they will share God's glory. This is our assurance that we will spend eternity with God.

Verse 1 says that since we have been justified by our faith, we have peace with God. When we received Christ in faith, this peace began. This peace is like a safe haven or harbour where the storm winds are unable to touch us. We do not have to continue our struggle. We can rest in safety.

Verse 2 tells us we have been brought in to grace. It is like grace is

the temple of God, and Christ is the doorway to God. We rejoice in our hope of spending eternity with God. At present and as long as we are in our mortal bodies, it is only hope, not reality. But the hope is certain and sure. It will come.

Verse 3 is an assurance that we will suffer. But our sufferings will produce endurance. This endurance is much more than humbly bowing our heads and accepting the stresses and pressures of life. Instead, this endurance is reaching out toward life and pressing forward even though troubles are present.

In verse 4, Paul told us this endurance would produce character. He meant all the parts of who we are. He went on to say this durable character would produce hope in us. The more we endure, the greater our expectation of future glory with God.

Verse 5 assures us once again that this hope will become reality because God has loved us and promised us an eternity with him.

Romans 8:18-25 is a continuation of Paul's thoughts concerning the hope that Christians hold.

Verse 18. While it is true that we suffer in the present life, these sufferings are nothing when compared to the glory that will be our reward.

Verse 19. All creation, all nature, everything God made look forward to the time when God will transform or change our bodies. We are not told what our bodies will be like. We just know they will not be subject to decay.

Verse 20. When man sinned, he brought evil into all of nature. God cursed the ground because of Adam.

Verse 21. Even nature itself will be remade at the time man is remade. This glorious new creation is the new heaven and new earth mentioned in Isaiah.

Verse 22. If we look around us, we know that the whole world is in agony. This agony will end with its recreation.

Verse 23. Not only nature, but Christians also groan as we await our renewing.

Verse 24. Our salvation lies in this wonderful hope that we have: God will fulfil his promise to us. The hope is for something none of us has ever seen.

Verse 25. We continue to hope for this as yet unseen thing with great patience. The patience mentioned here is the same as the endurance spoken of in Romans 5:3.

First Thessalonians 1:1-3 is Paul's greeting with recognizes the undying hope of the church.

Revelation 21:1-7 is a picture of the new heaven and the new earth. This is the time when Christ will be enthroned and will claim Christians as the sons of God.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Have someone tell (or read) the story at the end of the lesson in the pupils' books. It is in the What This Means To Me section of lesson 13.

The story is about a visitor in a potter's place of work.

Say: "This is a picture of what man has done to God's creation. God made a perfect world. But sin came in through Adam and Eve. Every person since then had decided to sin. Sin has ruined much of God's perfect world. But God still loves us and the rest of creation. When the time is right, Jesus will return; and God will remake his creation. It will be perfect again.

Interpretation

During the week contact three of your students. Ask them to serve on a panel for the next time the class meets. They will sit in chairs in front of the group. You will ask one of them to explain Romans 5:1-5. Another will explain Romans 8:18-25, and the third will tell how these Scriptures apply to our lives. You as teacher will act as the leader of the panel. Tell the students to use their pupils' books and their Bibles. If it is convenient, share your book with them as well.

At the class meeting, tell the students that today you will have a panel discussion. Say: "I have asked three people to serve as panel members." Introduce the three to the class, and have them come forward to

sit in the chairs you have placed in front of the group. You sit in the fourth chair.

Begin by asking the first student to explain Romans 5:1-5. Ask questions and allow the class to ask questions so a clear meaning of these verses is gained.

Continue with Romans 8:18-25 in the same way with questions after the student has finished the explanation.

Ask the third student to tell why these Scriptures are important to us.

Conclude the panel by asking if there is someone who wants to add anything to what has been said. Following this, thank your panel members, and let them return to their seats in the group.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We Christians continue to hope. The precious promises God has made to us will be fulfilled. We need to remind ourselves every day that what we experience at this present time is not what we will experience one day. In future we will share God's glory."

Conclude the session with prayer.