

VISITS WITH JESUS

A Bible Study Guide

By

Chaplain (Colonel, Retired) Norris M. Webster

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About the Author

Norris M. Webster is an ordained and experienced Baptist pastor and military chaplain. Chaplain Webster pastored Baptist churches in Indiana for twelve years before entering the U.S. Army as a chaplain where he earned the rank of Colonel with 26 years of active duty service.

Chaplain Webster holds an earned Master of Divinity degree with a major in theology from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. He has taught New Testament Literature at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana and has had administrative experience in higher education. Following retirement from the army in 1988, Chaplain Webster continued as pastor of churches in New York State, Pennsylvania, and Indiana.

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Introduction

Nine Bible lessons have been developed in which Jesus can be seen interacting with people around Him – from His birth to His resurrection. The selection and development of these Bible studies are predicated on the idea that it is through a relationship with another person that we get to know that person and he or she gets to know us, and that the relationship develops through frequent visits with that person. Each of these scripture passages illustrates how Jesus made a difference in the lives of the people who visited with Him. Likewise, these scripture passages reveal who Jesus was, what His mission on earth was, what His priorities were, and how He felt about Himself and those around Him. In all the circumstances in which Jesus encountered people, He made a difference in their lives -- sometimes obvious and other times not so obvious. Jesus said that He came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10-11). When we know His mind, are transformed by His Spirit, and experience the power of His resurrection, we will truly live before we die.

Henry David Thoreau was concerned about “living before he died.” He is often noted for his statement that most men “live lives of quiet desperation,” and made an attempt to avoid that kind of existence by living alone from 1845 to 1847 in the woods of Walden Pond, Massachusetts. In 1854, in the book *Walden*, he wrote, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”

Thoreau was correct in his belief that we can die without really living. But centuries earlier the Apostle Paul realized this and told us how to avoid dying without living. He discovered that living begins only when we turn from our own accomplishments and rely on what Christ did for us on the cross (Philippians 3:7-9). Yet Paul didn't stop there. He wanted to experience as much of Christ as he possibly could, longing to know Him in a deeply personal way (vs.10). Paul also wanted to fulfill the purpose for which Christ had saved him (vs.12-14).

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use these lessons along with the witness of other followers of Jesus to encourage the student to develop a relationship with Jesus and will experience the promised abundant life.

Theme: “Visits with Jesus” deals with the events of Christ, chronologically from birth to resurrection, as revealed in Scripture.

Presupposition: A relationship is only as strong as the communication between parties. Thus, since Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, regular visits are necessary, for non-believers and believers. Many non-believers have become believers from intentional visits.

Goal Statement: To expose every student to the many relationships Christ has with people by building on the events in His life and ministry, providing a foundation from these visits with Him, and equipping students for those unique visits in life crises when Christ will visit them.

Objectives: Students will:

- Meet Jesus through the scripture readings.
- Learn why Jesus came to earth.
- Learn how Jesus perceived Himself and His mission.
- Observe what different people thought about Jesus.
- Observe how different people responded to Jesus.
- Observe the way in which Jesus relates to people around Him.
- Learn how Jesus made a difference in the lives of those He touched.
- Learn how a relationship with Jesus can change their own lives.
- Learn concepts relating to Christianity and how to apply them in their own lives.
- Learn the different ways in which they can develop and maintain a relationship with Jesus.
- Come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and follow Him.
- Grow through these “visits” with Jesus.

Teaching-Learning Strategies

Our teaching goal is to enable students to think rather than giving them the answers. This starts with the beginning of the lesson (the “set”), continues through the reading of the scripture passages, and on through the discussion. “Teaching” to many of us often means lecturing, explaining, and giving answers in order to get information across to our students and to make sure that students “know” the information we want them to learn. When the goal is to provoke thinking, the teacher becomes an enabler, a catalyst, (rather than a “teacher/explainer”), creating an environment through which students learn. This is usually accomplished by question and discussion strategies. Questions lead from point A to point B in a somewhat logical sequential approach. Thus, the student learns through his or her own subjective experience, through the leading and enabling process on the part of the teacher. This is not to say that the teacher should do no explaining, but “explaining” should not be the primary approach. “Explain” when necessary and try to keep it to a minimum.

Alternate Approach to Teaching These Lessons

Experience has shown that the strictly discussion only method is less than successful with classes that depend totally on the interpreter. A discussion such as is suggested

with these lessons requires not only a trained and intuitive discussion leader but also requires an interpreter equally qualified in discussion techniques. The teacher must know what students are saying and how they are saying it rather than relying on the interpreter. This isn't possible with the back and forth in a translation situation. The other undesirable factor with translation is the amount of time that is consumed with the back and forth situation.

Concepts

The SET

The **“set”** is **not** an introduction; it is a preparatory step through which the student is subtly led into the subject to be discussed. It is a question, statement, or picture with questions and an ensuing discussion that is related to something in the passage that is to be read; therefore, the set starts the student thinking about the subject or the primary thought of the passage. It is a substitute for saying, “Today we are going to talk about ...” or, on the other hand, simply having students start reading the Bible passage without any introduction.

For example, a **“set”** for the teaching of the story of Jesus feeding the four thousand (John 6:5-15) might go like this. Offer the following question to the class, “Suppose you suddenly had two dozen people show up at your home at dinner time and you knew there wasn't enough food to even start feeding them. What would you do?” You would probably get responses such as “We would go buy some food,” OR “We would go next door and borrow some,” OR “We would tell our friends to go home,” and other similar answers. Be prepared to deal with responses like these in order to arrive at the idea that these suggestions would not work and to arrive at the idea that they would have to make do with whatever they had. Then, the set would proceed like this – “Suppose that you decided to use the little bread and meat that you had for sandwiches, and that every time you put your hand in the packages there was always more there to pull out, including some left over after everyone had eaten and was satisfied. What would you think about that?” Then, after responses and discussion, you would quickly relate this discussion to the experience in the story of Jesus feeding the four thousand and proceed with the lesson.

Each lesson will have a *suggested* “set” for the teacher to use. A creative teacher should feel free to devise a different “set.” Students’ responses will determine follow-up questions and discussion. The set should not be prolonged since it is only a preparatory step. The idea is to get students thinking about the “subject” that has been introduced through the “set.” Then – the subject of the scripture passage can be introduced, being careful not to answer any of the questions intended for the lesson. Following this preparatory step, the Bible passage(s) will be read, a few verses at a time and interspersed with questions.

Scripture

Except in the case of the most English-proficient students, the Scriptures should be read by the students in the native language and questions asked through the interpreter who in turn will answer the questions in the language of the students. Less English-proficient students may be able to “read” the English, but often do not understand it sufficiently or even not at all; they are simply “mouthing” the words. Even the most English-proficient students should read the scripture passages in their own language as well as alternately in English to make sure of their comprehension. Students need not be given copies of the questions. Longer passages should be read in sections and questions asked before moving on. Copies of the passages in the English *New Living Translation* (NLT) are provided in the Appendices B through J for use with the more English-proficient students.

Vocabulary

Every lesson has a list of vocabulary concepts that may cause students (and teachers) difficulty. While it is important that these words be understood by students, it is not intended for the teacher to make a conscious effort to teach them. The important thing is that teachers understand all the vocabulary items and be able to explain each one as needed. Observe as students answer questions to see if some of these concepts are not understood and then deal with them on the spot. Sometimes the apparent inability to answer questions is related to a lack of understanding of a vocabulary item.

Interpreters can be of great assistance in achieving the objectives of the Bible lessons. To do so, they will need to be able to translate not only the study questions but also your comments into the students’ language in order that less English-proficient students can comprehend them. Therefore, share with them ahead of time a copy of each Bible study lesson so that they can become acquainted with the scripture, the intent of the lesson, and the questions, so that they will be able to translate your comments to students as well as the students’ comments to you. It is important that you and the interpreter have a thorough understanding of what will take place in the class; you should communicate to the interpreter what your expectations are and what your approach will be. You will have to rely primarily on the interpreter in order to know whether students understand the material or are having difficulty.

Questions

There are three kinds of questions that we use in our presentations: Objective, Theme, and Subjective. Each is discussed below in detail.

Objective questions are at the literal level and are listed with each lesson. Questions will be different for each lesson since they are directly related to and dependent upon the scripture passages. Objective questions have right or wrong answers. They are for the purpose of laying the foundation for students' comprehension of what is being read.

Theme questions are directly related to the over-all theme of the Bible studies – developing a relationship with Jesus – and to some extent do not have right or wrong answers. These kinds of questions are often called *inferential questions* (or reading between the lines) and, thus, are somewhat subjective in nature. Often the answers to these questions will be different for each student. These questions will cause students to become acquainted with Jesus as portrayed in the chosen Bible passages and will reflect their understanding of Him.

Theme questions are of two different types – first, those which relate directly to the specific Bible study; secondly, those that relate to the overall theme of “Visiting with Jesus.” The students’ ability or willingness to respond, and their answers, will follow a developmental process – that is, students will be able to answer these questions as their understanding of the Bible studies deepens. By the time the last Bible study is completed, hopefully all students will be able to answer the primary theme questions. Some students, probably believers and those who are “educated” in the Scriptures, will be able to answer these questions right away. Teachers should attempt to develop the discussion in such a way that students will not be allowed to accept other students’ answers as their own. Students for whom these studies are new will gain answers in bits and pieces and in their own way. Each lesson may result in different answers to these questions. Accept all answers. Draw out students who are reluctant, but do not persist in pushing students for answers. Students will respond to these questions when they are ready. The following questions are the primary theme questions and will appear with each Bible study; they may be worded in slightly different ways and expanded depending on the specific lesson:

1. Who is Jesus?
2. Who does He claim to be? (OR, Who do others claim that He is?)
3. What do people think about Him?
4. How do people respond to Jesus?
5. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
6. What are His priorities?

Subjective questions, like the theme questions, are thought-provoking questions. Just as with the theme questions, they should be asked in such a way that students do not live in fear of giving a wrong answer – for example, using phrases such as “what do you think,” “what is your thought about that,” etc. There is no right or wrong answer for these questions. The responses will come from students’ own experiences with their visits with Jesus from lesson to lesson.

The teacher should resist responding to students in such a way that even remotely gives the idea that the student has answered incorrectly. One way of dealing with responses that really are incorrect, undesirable, or “way out,” is to ask another student, “What do you think about what Jimmy said?” OR, “Mary, can you add something to what Jimmy said?” OR “Can you help Jimmy with that?” In other words, students can help students. But, don’t allow students to put down another student’s response. It is beneficial for students to be encouraged to discuss answers among themselves.

The teacher should give every opportunity for each student to share understanding, feelings, and needs. Teachers must think and pray ahead of time about each question and possible responses. Be flexible and adapt to each level of grasping. Don’t rush; be patient. Be prepared for “surprises;” sometimes students come up with answers that we are not expecting. Accept all answers. Draw out students who are reluctant, but do not persist. Students will respond to these questions when they are ready. In fact, you may wonder by the end of the week whether certain students have any thoughts at all about any of these questions. But, remember, (to quote an English idiom) “still water runs deep.” You are only the sower; God brings about the harvest.

The following thought-provoking questions will be used for all lessons and appear with each lesson plan. They may be slightly modified to “fit” the specific lesson.

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you?
(e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Give adequate time for reflection and comment on these questions. Students will not come up with answers to them readily; in fact, some students will still be arriving at answers at the end of the last lesson. The question regarding *confession* is often difficult for many students. Confession has two admissions: First, admitting the wonderful truth about God in Christ to myself; secondly, admitting the painful truth about myself to God. If students have difficulty with the questions regarding “prayer” and/or

“being thankful,” remind them that we all have family members and friends who need prayer and that we all have something to be thankful for. This may be difficult for the non-believer.

Class Structure

Bible study is planned for two hours daily. During the first hour students will read the scripture passages and deal first with the objective questions. The objective questions are subdivided in order to ask questions after reading a few verses and then moving on to the next set of verses. Don't prolong the discussion of the objective questions since the theme questions and the subjective questions are primary to the studies; however, it is also important to deal with unplanned pertinent questions. Sometimes it is appropriate to deal with the objective and theme questions at the same time that specific verses are being read. During the second hour, students will deal with the subjective questions; it is during this time that students deal personally with the scripture and make application.

The questioning process should not be limited to the listed questions with each lesson. Each teacher is encouraged to add questions when deemed appropriate. In asking impromptu questions, it is best to avoid “yes-no” questions. The element of time will determine whether all questions of all three types can be dealt with. If time does not permit, it may be necessary to skip some objective and/or theme questions. However, be sure to cover some of the objective, theme, and subjective questions for each lesson.

Teacher Preparation

Each teacher should prepare ahead of time by:

1. Praying for yourself and each camper,
2. Carefully reading and studying each Bible passage,
3. Thinking about the intent of each lesson including the questions,
4. Making an attempt to answer questions in a subjective way,
5. Trying to anticipate students' responses to the lessons and accompanying questions.

In the following chapters, each lesson has a **Teacher Helps** paragraph and other suggestions. Teachers may want to pursue other Bible references and thoughts in addition to what is given with each lesson. Teachers should have an understanding of each Bible lesson and the intent of the lesson before presenting it to students. A good Bible dictionary and/or commentary will provide helpful information on vocabulary items and other concepts in the lessons.

Program Evaluation

Following the nine lesson plans there is an evaluation form that each teacher should complete. An evaluation will provide necessary information regarding the weaknesses and strengths of a format such as this. The goal of the evaluation is to determine whether the proposed Bible study curriculum “works” – if so, what was good about it? And, if not, where were its “failures?” The evaluation form can be found in Appendix A.

Lesson 1: BIRTH AND DEDICATION

Scripture

Luke 2:1-32, 36-38; Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

Objectives

The student will:

- Meet Jesus as a Child Who is the Son of God and born for a divine purpose.
- Observe how people of all kinds are drawn to Jesus and their reaction to Him.

Summary

In this first lesson, students will meet Jesus as the shepherds and the others did – when He was born. This lesson is crucial in three respects. First, it lays the foundation of who Jesus is and His mission on earth. Secondly, in this lesson we see the beginning of people’s responses to Jesus and the developing relationships that He will have with people. Each of the characters that played a part in this scripture, no doubt, could tell a different story about how the Child Jesus affected them and what the result in the long run was in their lives. Third, it can be seen also how God always presents His message to all types of people without discrimination – from the lowliest human being to the most aristocratic, the wealthy, and the well-educated. It is a wonderful beginning picture of Jesus as He physically enters the world of humanity.

Only the Gospels according to Matthew (chapters 1-2) and Luke (2:1-39) record anything about Jesus’ birth. Luke’s account is found in chapter 2. In chapter 1 he includes the backdrop of Jesus’ birth – the birth of John the Baptist, the announcement to Mary of Jesus’ birth, and the prophecy concerning Jesus. In chapter 2, Luke’s interest in history becomes evident as he dates the birth of Jesus (vs.1-2) in relationship to world history. Augustus (vs.1) was officially the Roman emperor from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, and under his reign the Roman world experienced unparalleled peace and prosperity. During the reign of Augustus, censuses were conducted for the purpose of taxation. Such a census was the reason that Mary and Joseph were on their way to Bethlehem. However, the main purpose of this incident is to show that Jesus was born in the town of David, which was Bethlehem (vs.4; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-6). Thus, God in His sovereignty used the decree of Augustus to accomplish His purposes.

Based on Matthew’s account in chapter 1 (and Luke’s), it would appear that Mary was now married to Joseph (in Luke 2:5), although the marriage had not yet been consummated. Matthew’s account (1:25) tells us that before Mary and Joseph

consummated their marriage, Mary “became pregnant by the Holy Spirit” (vs. 18). Therefore, Joseph had no union with her until after she gave birth (vs.25). In showing righteousness by an act of mercy, Joseph became a model for disciples (Matthew 5:6-7). Mary is referred to as Jesus’ mother (vs.18), but nowhere in Matthew is Joseph called His father (the NLT refers in Luke 2:22b and verse 39 to Mary and Joseph as Jesus’ “parents,” and the NIV says “Joseph and Mary” in both cases). Joseph was a righteous man and was therefore not willing to expose Mary to public disgrace (Matthew 1:19). The connection between the virginal conception and Jesus’ identification as “the Son of God” takes place by the divine initiative. We are told *that* the conception happened, not precisely *how*. The Spirit that would empower Jesus for service is active from the moment of conception to protect Him from the threat of evil and the pollution of sin. Why did God ordain such a conception? The answer - the Savior must be both human and divine.

The wrapping of Jesus in strips of cloth (Luke 2:7) was the usual way mothers took care of their children (Ezekiel 16:4). A second-century tradition places Jesus’ birth in a cave, but there is no compelling evidence for that. Jesus was born in a manger, that is, a place where domesticated animals were fed. The inn (Luke 2:7) was probably a public place where a number of travelers would spend the night under one roof. Possibly the manger was located under the open sky or in a barn somewhere. The text says nothing about animals being present.

The shepherds were not selected especially for the visitation because they were sinners or poor but because of their lowly status. They would take turns watching the flock at night to guard against wolves and thieves. The text does not indicate the time of year, although December, being that it is quite cold after dark in Israel at that time, would be an unusual time of year to be outside at night. The shepherds are told that the “good news” is for all the people (vs.10), and by this Luke is probably indicating the inclusion of the Gentiles. The significance of the birth is plainly revealed to the shepherds as Jesus is called *Savior* (Deliverer), *Messiah*, and *Lord* (vs.11). The story shows the spontaneous obedience of the shepherds (vs.16), the astonishment of those who heard the report of the shepherds (vs.17-18), and Mary’s careful reflection on the events that were occurring (vs.19).

Continuing in Luke 2:39, Luke notes that Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord. First, this male Child was circumcised (vs.21) in accordance with the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 12:3) and was named “Jesus” in keeping with what the angel of the Lord had instructed Joseph “because He will save His people from their sins.” (*Jesus* means “God is Savior,” Matthew 1:21.) Joseph, being a descendant of David (Matthew 1:6-16, 20) and Jesus’ legal father, was the one to name the Child. Thus, Jesus is certified to be a true descendant of David. Joseph’s righteousness is evident in his obedience to God’s word -- as delivered both through the

angel (Matthew 1:24-25) and through the prophet [as Isaiah foretold that “the virgin. . . will give birth” (Matthew 1:23)]. Mary’s child was the Savior Himself. They were *His* people, and He alone had the authority to forgive their sins (Matthew 9:1-8). Matthew 1:23 defined Jesus’ mission as fundamentally spiritual in character. Applying Isaiah 7:14, Matthew declared Jesus to be “Immanuel – which means, ‘God is with us (1:22-23).” The name *Immanuel* signals God’s presence without identifying the being of the child. “Immanuel” now bears a deeper meaning than was possible in Isaiah’s time. For Jesus does more than testify to God’s presence; *He himself is God* – now come personally to be with His people forever (Matthew 28:20).

Second, Mary was purified (Luke 2:22-24). The purification of Mary was stipulated by the Levitical Law (Leviticus 12:1-8). A woman was considered to be unclean for forty days after the birth of a boy, and when her purification was finished she was to offer sacrifices for cleansing. Mary and Joseph offered “either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:24; Leviticus 12:8) indicating that they could not afford to offer a lamb. Third, Jesus, as the first-born male of Mary, was presented to be dedicated to the Lord in keeping with Exodus 13:2.

While in the Temple, Mary and Joseph encountered Simeon. The Spirit had already revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he would see the Messiah of the Lord (Luke 2:26). This means that he was waiting for God to fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. The coming of the Spirit on a person in Luke (vs.25) usually indicates prophetic activity, and thus it is not surprising that Simeon prophesied. Simeon was ready to die because he had now seen the *Savior* (vs.29-30). When Simeon spoke of “all people” (vs.31), it is clear that Gentiles, “all nations,” were included, which verse 32 makes clear (Isaiah 49:6). After his positive prophecy Simeon turned to a more threatening matter. Jesus would be “rejected by many in Israel” and would be “the greatest joy to many others” (Luke 2:34), then added that Mary herself would experience anguish from the rejection which Jesus would encounter. At this point, Anna, a widow who had been around the temple for many years, appeared and began “praising God” (vs.38); like Simeon, Anna proclaimed redemption for Jerusalem (vs.36-38; here “Jerusalem” referred to Israel as a whole), linking that redemption with Jesus.

Matthew in chapter 2 describes the visit of the Magi. Matthew calls them Magi (Greek *magoi*, hence Latin *magi*). They came from the East (vs.1b), probably from Babylon. Later Christian tradition would call them “kings” (Psalms 72:11; Isaiah 60:3). The tradition of three kings arose from the number of gifts they presented (Matthew 2:11); however, the exact number of the Magi is unknown. Verses 2 and 11 carry forward two themes. First, the Magi honor Jesus as king – as one who is *already* a king and not merely destined to become one. Secondly, in Matthew the very first people to worship Jesus were Gentiles. Their zeal to worship the Child highlights the indifference of the Jews (none of whom join the Magi for the short trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem) and

the hostility of Herod. A star variously identified as a comet, a supernova, a planetary conjunction, or a unique supernatural phenomenon, prompted the Magi's visit. The Magi's language ("His star," vs.2) strongly suggests that they had studied the Scriptures as well as the heavens. Prophecy had indicated that a star (Numbers 24:17-18) would herald Israel's king, and that the Gentiles would come to His light to pay Him homage (Isaiah 60:3).

Jesus was threatened by Herod. God saved this Child from slaughter so that He might reverse the fortunes of God's people, turn sorrow into joy, and usher in the new covenant promised by God (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28).

Matthew closes chapter 2 with the pronouncement that Jesus will be called a Nazarene (not a Bethlehemite). This is in keeping with prophecy that Messiah's town is despised (Isaiah 49:7, 53:2-3; John 1:46). This provides a fitting conclusion to a birth announcement that began by identifying Jesus as "the son of David" (Matthew 1:1), but now ends by expressing His humble and lowly origin.

Teacher Helps

As you prepare for this first lesson there are a few things to keep in mind: an understanding of some of the *Hebrew history* underlying this story and the *background* for the coming of Jesus; the very important *concept of God* Who started it all; and *vocabulary items* that students may have difficulty with.

1. Review Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 1 for the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. This will also provide a review of the prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah as well as some of the concepts regarding the purpose of His coming. Read Matthew 2 for the story of the visitation of the Magi and the outcome. In case questions come from students regarding the events of Luke 2:21-22, review Leviticus chapter 12 that discusses the purification laws and rites for women with newly-born children.
2. We often forget, when we attempt to present Jesus to the unsaved, that they may not know Who God is, as unreasonable as this may seem to us. We make the assumption that everyone knows about God. But, to make sure that "God" is understood by all, the first item in the theme questions deals with the concept of God. The answer to this question is not given in the scripture reading, but God is mentioned in Luke 2:13. This is the kind of question that each student must answer for himself or herself. No other student (nor you, the teacher) can supply this answer. Come back to this question from lesson to lesson if it seems that there is still confusion on the part of some students as to Who God is.
3. There will possibly be vocabulary items that need to be covered to make certain that all students will comprehend the meaning in the verses. Suggestions for vocabulary study are: shepherd, angel, heaven, Heavenly Hosts, Christ the

Lord, Magi, consecrated, dedicated, manger. Be well acquainted with the meaning of all these items as well as other concepts.

Set

I want you to imagine with me that you are out in the country on a very dark night. It is very quiet. What would you expect of this experience? How would you feel in the dark? How would you feel if “something or someone” suddenly came out of the completely dark sky, a bright light came on, and this “something or someone” started talking to you?

Questions

Objective

Luke 2:1-32, 36-38

1. Someone is going somewhere in these verses – who is it and where are they going? (vs. 3-4-5)
2. Why were they going to Bethlehem? (vs. 3, 5)
3. What happened while they were there? (vs.7)
4. Who were in the fields? (vs.8)
5. What happened? (vs.9)
6. How did the shepherds feel about the angels appearing to them? (vs.9)
7. What did the angels say to the shepherds? (vs.10-14)
8. What did the shepherds do? (vs.15)
9. What did they find? (vs.16)
10. After finding Mary and Joseph and the baby, what did they do? (vs. 17-20)
11. What was the baby’s name? (vs.21)
12. Where did Mary and Joseph take Jesus? Why? (vs. 22-24)
13. Who did they meet? (vs.25)
14. What did Simeon do? (vs.28)
15. What did Simeon say? (vs.29-32)
16. Who else did they meet in the temple? (vs.36) Who was she? (vs.36b-37)
17. What did Anna do? (vs.38)

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

18. Who came to Jerusalem? Where were they from? (vs.1b)
19. Why did they come to Jerusalem? (vs.2)
20. What led them to Jesus? (vs.2b, 9)
21. What did they do when they found Jesus? (vs.11a)
22. What did they give Him? (vs.11b)

Theme

1. In verse 13, “God” is mentioned. Who is God?
2. Why did the Magi “fall down and worship Jesus?”
3. Who is Jesus, according to this scripture?
4. To you, personally, Who is Jesus?
5. Who do the characters in this scripture say Jesus is?
6. What do these various people think about Him?
7. How do the shepherds, His parents, the Magi, Simeon, and Anna respond to Jesus?
8. Why did He come?
9. What will His priorities to be?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 2: HIS BAPTISM

Scripture

Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6, 11, 13-17; Romans 10:9-11, 13 Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; John 3:5;
Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4

Objectives

The student will:

- See Jesus as the model of obedience and humility as He communicates to John the Baptizer that He wants to be baptized.
- Learn that “confession,” “repentance,” and “belief” are prerequisites for salvation.
- Learn the meaning and purpose of “baptism” as testimony and obedience.
- Observe Jesus’ confirmation by the Spirit of God.
- Learn that the experience of baptism brings us into an intimate relationship with Jesus.

Summary

Baptism is often the subject of a lot of discussion: first, the mode of baptism, second, the purpose of baptism, and third, whether it is even important.

1. The English word “baptism” comes from the Greek word baptisma which means to “dip” or “put in.” Throughout the centuries since the time of Christ, the mode of baptism, however, has been interpreted in various ways: to immerse, sprinkle, pour. Throughout the New Testament, as implied by the Scriptures which talk about baptism being representative of the “burial and resurrection of Christ,” baptism is taken to be immersion. Why else would John have been baptizing where he did – “at Aenon because there was plenty of water there” (John 3:23) – “in the Jordan” (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:9)? And Matthew 3:16 clearly says that “Jesus came up out of the water” as does Mark 1:10.
2. Church groups also do not agree as to the purpose of baptism; infant baptism is seen as making a covenant with God, in lieu of the circumcision that seals the sanctification of Hebrew infants. Those who baptize “believers” only, see baptism as “an outward sign of an inner reality,” or being born again spiritually as a symbol of the rebirth. For some churches baptism means the beginning of salvation. For others, it means the entry into the church.
3. Baptism is often eliminated by people who are “saved” -- that is, they accept Christ in camp or an evangelistic meeting and the experience is either forgotten

and they drift away or they continue as though the experience were completed. Those who drift away will often fall back on their “being saved” although they have not been baptized nor are they active Christians. Baptism is not understood as a necessary next step in obedience. Perhaps it is because baptism is and has been perceived as a part of the initiation rite into the formal church that it is seen as not necessary for salvation. These people, and others, obviously do not understand the reason for baptism.

The selected Bible passages in this lesson point out three things. First, Jesus is the model of obedience and humility. Secondly, there is a process of faith and action, including baptism that brings the whole person into loving trust and obedience to Christ. Third, life will be empowered by the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we increase in an intimate relationship with Him.

Jesus is the Model of Obedience and Humility

John the Baptist, Elizabeth’s son and Jesus’ cousin, was to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus. John was known as the “Baptizer” because he preached to his fellow Jews that they should repent and be baptized. He was a Nazarene (one who was pledged to deny himself the luxuries of society and human comforts to demonstrate his love for God) and is thought by some scholars to have been an Essene, a sect of devout Jews who practiced ritual cleansing as a means of affecting great purity by means of immersing the body in water. In the Essene community, near the Dead Sea, ritual baths have been found which were for this ritual cleansing, something like baptism. This may explain why John practiced baptism. Baptism was not a Jewish ritual at this time; later Jews would baptize Gentile proselytes. That cleansing with water was an important ritual among the Jews can be seen from Mark 7:3-5 and from John 2:6.

When Jesus was about thirty years of age, He went to John to be baptized. This event is recorded in all four Gospels -- Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34. John had called for repentance. He refused at first to confer his baptism on Christ. But Jesus said, “It must be done because we must do everything that is right” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus repented of no sin, for He had none. But He identified with sinners in order to be their sin-bearer and presented Himself in a state of humiliation. If the work He had engaged to accomplish was to be completed, then it was appropriate for Him to take on Himself the likeness of a sinner, and to fulfill all righteousness. Baptism was a symbol of the suffering that lay ahead of Him – His death and resurrection. He In presenting Himself for baptism, dedicated or consecrated Himself to fulfilling all righteousness and was obedient to this requirement.

Jesus’ coming to John the Baptist also served the purpose of His being formally presented to the public for the confirmation of His role. John was the representative of

the law and the prophets and by John Jesus might be introduced and thus be publicly recognized as the Messiah of Whose coming the prophecies had spoken for many ages. When Jesus came up from the water, the Holy Spirit visibly descended upon Him in the form of a dove. It was the anointing of the Spirit that made Jesus, *the anointed*, the Christ. At least Jesus and John (and perhaps the onlookers as well) heard the voice of God stating His approval of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34). Thus, He was confirmed as the Son of God. This was the first of three public confirmations of Jesus – the second was at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), and the third was just before His suffering (John 12:28).

Baptism Is a Process of Faith and Action

It appears that the early Christians interpreted baptism in various ways – as a symbol of a person's death to sin (Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27), of the cleansing from sin (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:26), and of the new life in Christ (Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3). Baptism was a common event of Christian worship. However the interpretation, there is a sequence of important prerequisites for baptism: *repentance, belief, confession, and then baptism.*

The great rite of John was baptism, but the great duty commanded was *repentance* – this is more than sorrow for sin; it is a determination to abandon sin and live a new life. It means a change of the will, or heart, new purposes, a determination to leave off sinning, the internal change which resolves to serve the Lord. Sorrow is not just repentance, but “godly sorrow [which] produces repentance” (II Corinthians 7:10). The convicted, brokenhearted, sorrowing sinner, believing that Jesus is Christ, is to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Baptism itself, a burial in water, a “baptism into death,” a symbol of the burial of one who dies to the old life, is a confession of sins. The act of obedience of baptism is an outward expression of both faith and repentance.

The Christian baptism requires a *belief* in Jesus as Savior and Lord (Mark 16:16). There is a difference in John's baptism and the Christian baptism: John called for repentance, and not to the faith of Christ. Those whom John baptized were, in fact, rebaptized by Paul (Acts 19:3-5). The belief must not be only a mental assent, but a belief from the heart, the very seat of one's being (Romans 10:9). Believing the gospel message and believing in Christ as Savior are the conditions of pardon of sin. Such a belief is a power over life (Acts 18:24-25). It influences the actions and brings us into obedience in yielding to Christ.

When the sinner repents and believes, then he must *confess*. For the importance that Jesus attached to confession, see Matthew 10:32 and Luke 12:8. This means a verbal confession. Confession is “with the mouth” (Romans 10:9-11). The faith of the heart must be openly confessed. This is a test of the faith. That our faith moves us to

confession is to us an assurance of salvation (I John 1:9). The whole Christian life is a continual confession.

Life is Empowered

The fact that every follower of Christ has died to sin is shown by his baptism (Romans 6:3-4). All its symbolism points to death; it is a baptism into the death of Christ. To be baptized into Christ means to enter into a vital union with Him, so as to be found in Him. That the subjects of baptism are partakers of His death is shown by the form of baptism. It is a burial -- immersion (Colossians 2:12). The point is that a burial implies death. Baptism is a burial; therefore the subject has died. As Christ died through sin, we die to sin; as the crucified Christ was buried, we who have died to sin through the gospel are buried with Him. As death and burial separate us from the natural life, so death to sin and burial into Christ should completely sever our relation to sin. We are raised from the burial as He was raised from the grave, and we rise to a new life through faith. The glorious power of the Father lifted up Christ from the tomb. So we, too, rise from the watery burial, with death and burial between us and the old life of sin, in order to walk "in newness of life." Paul teaches that we must re-enact the tragedy of the cross, the agony of the garden, the complete submission to the divine will, confession of Christ, crucifixion (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:5), death (Romans 6:3), burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), and being raised with Christ (Romans 6:5; Colossians 2:12, 3:1). When baptism is interpreted as *immersion*, then *emersion* is understood and is symbolic of the resurrection of Christ. Thus, *emersion* is as significant as *immersion*. Baptism would be meaningless and in vain were it not for the resurrection of Christ. It points directly to the burial and resurrection of the Lord.

Baptism, being a public expression of an inward experience, lets the world know of one's repentance, belief, and confession. We are baptized into Christ, the Savior (I Peter 3:21). Baptism is "an appeal to God from a clean conscience," not as the Jewish ceremonial washing, which was only a purification of the flesh. The sinner asks what to do to remove the sense of unforgiven sins and how to make his conscience inoffensive. Baptism is the answer. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be "born of water" (baptism) and "of the Spirit" referring to the inward, or spiritual change that takes place (John 3:5). Without the Spirit, the expression of baptism becomes a powerless ritual which is void of the original purpose. Baptism is our obedient testimony to and faith in Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and hope. Just as baptism was the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it is a beginning for us – a new focus, new expectations, new community relatedness, and participation.

Teacher Helps

You should be prepared to deal with students from various religious backgrounds who are accustomed to baptism being other than by immersion and having a different purpose. A thorough knowledge and understanding of the scripture passages and the accompanying concepts will aid you with these discussions. It is best not to argue with students nor try to convince them of a different mode and meaning of baptism; let the Scriptures speak.

Review the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist and the prophecy concerning John -- Luke 1:5-20, 57-80.

Think through your own understanding of the concept of baptism. What is your own belief concerning baptism (how and when it is done and for what purpose)? You may come from a persuasion that believes in some other form of baptism than immersion and for another purpose. Reconcile your own belief system before trying to get it across to someone else.

Vocabulary items to be familiar with are: *Judean, preaching, baptized, wilderness, sin, Kingdom of Heaven, Jordan Valley, Jordan River, Holy Spirit, Galilee, saved, confess, Christian.*

Set

Did you ever see someone baptized? What happened? Why was that person baptized?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6, 11, 13-17

1. Who is the person mentioned in verse 1?
2. Where was he located and what was he doing? (vs.1)
3. What was he saying to the people listening to him? (vs.2)
4. To whom was John preaching? (vs.5)
5. What was the result of the listeners hearing John? (vs.6)
6. What is the prerequisite for baptism? (vs.11)
7. In the second part of verse 11, what was John predicting?
8. Who came to John? (vs.13)
9. Why did He come to John? (vs.13)
10. What was John's response to Jesus and why? (vs.14)
11. Why did Jesus want John to baptize Him? (vs.15)
12. How was it confirmed that Jesus was the Son of God? (vs. 16-17)

Romans 10:9-11, 13; Mark 16:16

13. What is necessary for being saved? (vs.9)
14. What is it that we must confess and believe? (vs.9)
15. What is the result of confession and belief? (vs.10)
16. Who does this apply to? (vs. 13 and Mark 16:16)
17. What is “baptism?” (1 Peter 3:21 and John 3:5)
18. What did Jesus say was necessary for entering the Kingdom of God? (John 3:5)
19. What is necessary besides turning from our sins? (Acts 2:38)

Theme

1. Who is Jesus? How was this confirmed?
2. What did John think about Jesus? What do you think about Jesus?
3. How would you have responded to John if you had been in that crowd?
4. What does this scripture say about Jesus as a model of obedience and humility? How was Jesus' obedience confirmed?
5. In John 3:5, Jesus says that being “born of water” is important for entering the Kingdom of God. What does this mean?
6. Why is baptism important? What does this say to you about the obedience of baptism?
7. Why is baptism “an appeal to God from a clean conscience?”
8. John talked about repentance; what is repentance and what is it that we repent of?
9. John also talked about confession; what is confession and what is it that we confess?
10. What is it that we are supposed to believe about Jesus?
11. Why is it not enough to believe?
12. Put in sequence – belief, confession, baptism, and repentance. Which comes first, second, etc.? Why?
13. Read Romans 6:3-4a. In these verses, how is it that baptism brings about a relationship with Jesus and what is the result?
14. Why do you think Jesus came?
15. What were His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you personally? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that causes you to be thankful?
 - a. Causes you to confess?
 - b. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - c. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 3: TEMPTATION

Scripture

Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18; I Corinthians 10:13; Luke 22:40

Objectives

- Observe the humanity of Jesus.
- Observe how Jesus struggled with His own identity.
- Observe how Jesus resisted temptation by using the Word of God.
- Learn that God provides the means of resisting temptation.
- Learn how he/she can handle temptation.

Summary

In the temptation of Jesus in the Judean desert -- lasting forty days and nights, as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13 -- we see Jesus in action against His opponent, the Devil. This event followed His baptism, the beginning of His preparation for ministry (Matthew 3:1), and is the last event before His public ministry. Forty days and forty nights is a Biblical number that connotes a period of testing preceding Christ's assault against hostile forces and recalls Israel's forty years in the wilderness (Noah [Gen 7:17, 8:6], Moses [Exodus 24:18, 34:28, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18], Elijah [I Kings 19:8]).

In the temptations that follow His forty-day fast, Jesus faced up to all He would have to go through in His ministry. He now had power: to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, and to raise the dead. How would He use it?

- To satisfy His own needs?
- To try God out?
- To compel a following?
- Would He use His power to favor Himself?
- Would He trust Himself entirely to God and tread the path to the cross?

Jesus replied to Satan's test questions in words from Deuteronomy (8:3, 6:16, 6:13) – key passages from Israel's forty years in the desert, when God tested their obedience to Him (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Jesus' temptation is a study in contrasts (fertile plain/desert, Jesus/Satan, angels/wild animals [Mark 1:13b]) to underscore the truth that Jesus, the Son of God, represents heaven's power unleashed against the hostile, wild, and destructive forces of Satan.

Jesus represents ultimate victory, analogous to the temporary victories of those pivotal Old Testament figures that preceded Him. Two themes tie this event together. First, Jesus by the power of the Spirit overcame the Devil by citing the Word of God. Second, the Devil challenged Jesus' filial obedience as God's Son. Jesus showed before His ministry began that His trust and obedience were in His Father.

This experience was Jesus' second confirmation of His identity. It was at His baptism that His Father first gave Him confirmation (Matthew 3:16-17). The experience in the wilderness was an interlude, so to speak, between the confirmation at His baptism and His transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). The latter confirmed Jesus and His purpose on earth. He struggled with the same identity questions that we do – Who am I? Who do I think I am? The whole wilderness experience was a struggle with identity. It was a time of soul searching, of intensity, and of focus. The wilderness provided isolation from the world where He could confront His inner self. Not only did Jesus struggle with identity as we do, but He faced the same temptations as we do. In reality, the temptation of Jesus was part and parcel of the struggle for identity. It was through this experience that He received further confirmation of His identity and also through the fact that angels ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11). ¹(See NOTE in *Teacher Helps*.)

While Jesus was alone with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Devil tempted Him with three temptations:

1. Satisfy His own hunger, thereby demonstrating distrust of the Father,
2. Seize dominion of the world before the Father gave it to Him, and
3. Test God to see if He would save Jesus from self-indulged danger, thereby indulging His own self-will.

Jesus was full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit, which implied that Jesus conquered the Devil by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit led Jesus into the desert and the Devil tempted Him (Matthew 4:1) for the purpose of testing His commitment to sonship and to the mission as defined at His baptism (Matthew 3:17). The reality and severity of the tests must not be minimized. By relying on the Father and the Spirit, Jesus remained sinless and *able to resist*, and *conquer* the Devil. Unlike the nation of Israel, Jesus remained faithful in the desert. We, too, can rely on the Spirit to resist temptation and to conquer the Devil.

In the first of the three temptations, (Matthew 4:3-4; Luke 4:3-4) the Devil tried to convince Jesus to use his status as God's Son to satisfy His own physical desires, instead of trusting in the Father to provide His needs. The Devil, far from questioning Jesus' sonship, capitalized upon it: "*If You are the Son of God*" (Matthew vs.3). He sought to draw Jesus away from submission to the Father into an independent, self-serving use of His status. Moreover, in tempting Jesus to satisfy physical cravings, he recommended a mission more concerned with social reform than with spiritual upheaval

(Matthew 1:21). In quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus affirmed His dependence on the Father, Who had not yet ordered an end to the fast, implying that the satisfaction of physical desires cannot take precedence over faithful obedience. He showed His reliance on God's Word by quoting the Scriptures from Deuteronomy (a book associated with Israel's wilderness wanderings) as He did in response to each of the three temptations. Here He reaffirmed that His mission was to be primarily spiritual in character. Mere social reformation would rob man of his most desperate need – to receive God's Word and to be rightly related to Him.

In the second temptation (Matthew 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12), the Devil said in effect: Since you are God's Son, give the Father an opportunity to honor His promise (Psalm 91:11-12) and suggested that Jesus should leap, that the angels would protect Him and prove God's love (Matthew 3:17, 4:6; Luke 4:10). The choice of "the highest point of the temple" (450 feet above the Kidron Valley) urged a public display of Messiahship. Satan urged Jesus to leave the Servant's lowly path and to use His divine power to gain popular acclaim – which would merge easily with popular ideas about the Davidic Messiah. Jesus did not reject the Devil's scriptural argument (God does protect the godly), but He refused to perform such a whimsical act because that would involve testing God (Deuteronomy 6:16).

In the third temptation (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8) the Devil depicted himself as a king with vast holdings (Matthew vs.8-9; Luke 4:6) and asked accordingly that Jesus pay him homage – for which he shall grant the *desired end* (rule over "nations of the world and all their glory" (Matthew 4:8), without the costly *means* (John 3:15-17). Jesus' answer (from Deuteronomy 6:13) was that worship and service belong to God alone, and thus it was unthinkable for Him to worship the Devil in order to gain earthly power and glory. Jesus recognized that worship should not be divided between God and Satan (God *alone* is worthy of worship) and indeed *cannot* be. In obedience to the Father, Jesus would gain the world's kingdoms not by worshipping Satan but by wrestling them from his grasp (Matthew 12:25-30, 28:18).

Jesus not merely resisted but conquered the tempter; in obedience to Jesus' command, the Devil departed (Matthew 4:10-11). The Son who refused to break His long fast by the wrong means (Matthew vs.2-3) now received provisions (Matthew vs.12). The bond between Father and Son was confirmed (the Devil could not sever it), and the Son was ready for His appointed mission.

Jesus as a man discovered what it was to be tempted. The experience gained through this temptation equipped Jesus to help His people in their temptation. He was enabled to resist temptation as He will enable believers to resist theirs. This statement serves to demonstrate how completely and unqualifiedly the Son of God became a man like other men, though without sin. Though He was the Son of God and a sinless man, He was not exempt from the principle that it is through temptation that a person discovers the

true nature and cost of obedience. He was familiar with temptation, and it is precisely that perfect obedience and faith in times of temptation which fit Him for His role as Savior. The necessity of obedience to Christ is not in contrast to the necessity of faith, for true faith and obedience are always found together, the latter the product and the sign of the former (Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:15-16).

Jesus warned the disciples about temptation and told them to pray that they wouldn't fall into temptation (Matthew 26:41). Given the boasts of Peter and his subsequent denials of Jesus (Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75) and the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 20:23; Mark 10:35-39) and the disciples desertion of Jesus (Matthew 26:56), the warning is noteworthy. Jesus exhorted His disciples to pray that they should not enter into temptation. Jesus functioned as the model.

Paul urged the Corinthian Christians who were entrenched in the firm defense of their conduct (as were Peter and the sons of Zebedee years earlier) to be careful (I Corinthians 10:12-13). No temptation, even of pride and stubbornness, was theirs alone. Temptation is something that has proved itself to be common to the experience of all God's people before and since. God can be trusted not to allow temptation to go beyond our ability to resist if we will look and not ignore the way of escape He will provide.

We see Jesus through this experience as fully human and fully divine. Jesus was tempted as we are -- through physical hunger, greed, pride, and the desire for power. Just as He overcame this, we can also. He provides a model in this experience of how we can use the Word of God in coping with temptation. He returned from the wilderness ready to start His ministry all the stronger for the experience.

Teacher Helps

You should have a thorough understanding of temptation – what it is and what it is not. It is often thought that it is sinful to be tempted. On the contrary, *yielding* to temptation is sin. It is very important in this lesson that students understand this. Jesus did not sin in being tempted, just as we do not sin in being tempted. But it is our humanity that provides the crack through which temptation can sneak in, an opportunity carefully seized by the Devil. Students should be led to the understanding that there is delivery from temptation and how it is we are delivered. It is through this visit with Jesus that this message is made clear.

¹Six times an angel or angels attended (or will attend) Jesus. An angel announced the conception of Jesus; a host of angels published His birth; in His agony an angel comforted Him; at His resurrection an angel rolled the stone away from the sepulcher; at His ascension the angels attended Him up to Heaven; at His second coming, He shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

The following vocabulary items may become a problem: *tempted/temptation, the Devil, Satan, Scriptures, Temple, wilderness, Holy Spirit.*

Set

Did you ever find yourself in a situation where you wanted something so badly that you could hardly resist doing it or having it but you knew that it was wrong? Did you give in to it? Or did you successfully resist it? How did you handle it? What was it that made you want it so badly?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 4:1-11

1. Where did Jesus go? (vs.1)
2. Why did He go? (vs.1)
3. How long was He there? (vs.2)
4. In what physical condition was Jesus at the end of this time? (vs.2)
5. What happened while He was there? (vs.2)
6. Who tempted Jesus? (vs.2)
7. What were the different ways in which Jesus was tempted? (vs.3, 5, 8)
8. How did Jesus handle these temptations? (vs. 3-4, 7, 10)
9. What did Jesus use against the Devil? (vs. 5-7, 10)
10. What happened to Jesus once the temptations were completed? (vs.11)
11. How is Jesus' humanity and temptation experience of benefit to us? (Hebrews 2:18)
12. What is provided for us when we face temptation? (I Corinthians 10:13)
13. In this verse, what does Jesus tell us to do in order to cope with temptation? (Luke 22:40)

Theme

1. What were the human traits that the Devil used against Jesus?
2. What does this say about the nature of Jesus? What can we say about Jesus' humanity? How is Jesus like us?
3. What was it that Jesus used against the Devil all three times to cope with the temptation?
4. For us, then, what can we use to cope with temptation? What else? What does God provide for us as we cope with temptation?
5. Who is Jesus? How did Jesus struggle with His own identity?

6. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
7. What do people think about Him?
8. How do people respond to Jesus?
9. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
10. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 4: CHOOSING THE DISCIPLES

Scripture

John 1:35-37, 40-51; Matthew 4:21-22, 9:9; Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:14b-19; Luke 14:25-27, 33-35; Matthew 10:1, 8

Objectives

The student will:

- Learn that to become a disciple means to make a disciple.
- Observe that being a follower of Jesus requires obedience to Him and trust in Him.
- See in Jesus that praying is paramount in making decisions.
- See that Jesus empowers His disciples through their relationship with Him.
- Learn that there is a cost in being a follower of Jesus.

Summary

A “disciple” is a student or follower of some doctrine or teacher. The Greek word literally means “a learner.” However, a disciple is not first a learner, but a follower. Jesus called first for a commitment to His Person, which in turn entails obedience to His teaching. A disciple of Christ, then, is one who:

- Believes His teachings,
- Rests on His sacrifice,
- Absorbs His Spirit, and
- Imitates His example (Matthew 10:24; Luke 14:26-27, 33).

The Gospels record the calling of only seven of the twelve of Jesus’ disciples – Andrew, Simon, Phillip, Nathaniel, James, John, and Matthew, except, of course, for Matthias who was chosen to take Judas’ place (Acts 1:26). The New Testament does tell us, however, that there were twelve. There is evidence, also, that there were many more disciples of Jesus. For example, in Luke 10:1-20 we are told about an additional seventy-two disciples that Jesus sent out to go ahead of Him into the villages where He planned to go. Also in John 6:60-71 there is the account of “disciples leaving” Jesus. We do not know the number, but the word “many” is used. Perhaps this was because of the great cost of being His disciples (see Luke 9:57-62).

Jesus lived in a world permeated with the Greek practice of a “teacher” gathering disciples who would follow him around. The “teacher” would travel throughout the

countryside teaching his own followers as well as others who would draw near. The “teacher” simply “collected” disciples as he went about the countryside, much as a snowball collects more snow and debris as it is rolled across the ground. There was also the practice of the “teacher” taking his own group of “students” off by themselves where he could talk with them and teach them privately. This explanation is not to minimize the spiritual aspect of Jesus and His disciples, but may in part explain something of the culture of that time and also why there were a large number of disciples of Jesus who were unnamed.

In John’s account (1:35-37, 40-51) we meet the first four disciples that Jesus called: Simon, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel. John the Baptist saw Jesus and ushered his own disciples into Jesus’ company. This account models for us the true character of discipleship. First, disciples must follow Jesus (vs.37f, 43); they must “come and see” (vs.39, 46), experiencing for themselves the truth of Christ; then they must go and bring others. Andrew found his brother Simon (vs.41) and Philip found Nathaniel (vs.45). Second, we read a roll call of titles for Jesus – Lamb of God (vs.36), Rabbi (vs.38), Messiah/Christ (vs.41), Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Joseph (vs.45), Son of God (vs.49), King of Israel (vs.49), and Son of Man (vs.51). Disciples must know whom they follow. The first question the disciples asked Jesus, “Where are you *staying?*” (vs.38) employs a vital word for John. “Staying” or “abiding” appears throughout John’s Gospel 40 times and describes the union of the believer with Christ. (See John 8:31, 35, and 14:10, 15:4ff.)

Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts of the calling of Simon (known later as Peter), Andrew, James, and John, are almost identical but differ from John’s and Luke’s accounts (4:18-22 and 1:16-20 respectively) . In Matthew and Mark, Jesus issued a sovereign command: “Come, be My disciples.”

In contrast to Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, Luke helps explain why the disciples followed Jesus (4:38-39). They had already seen His miracles and had heard His word (5:1-11). Peter’s query about letting down the nets (5:4-5) is understandable because the best fishing in deep water was done at night, and during the day they fished in shallow water. However, Peter respected Jesus enough (“Master”, vs.5) to do what He said. The tremendous quantity of fish staggered Peter, and he is profoundly struck by his own unworthiness (vs.8). Luke adds that the incident had the same impact on James and John. The account in Luke says nothing about Andrew.

In all three accounts, Jesus told them they would *fish for people* (Matthew and Mark) and in Luke, *now you’ll be fishing for people*, inspired by the men’s occupation and by His announcement of the kingdom. The Greek word for *catch* includes the idea of catching them alive. These “fish” would be drawn from darkness into light and from

death to life (Matthew 4:16). By having deliberately chosen ordinary Galilean fishermen as His disciples, Jesus heightened the physical model of fishing to great proportions, calling them to the urgent task of fishing for men. It was a situation of disclosure/commitment that called for immediate decisions, and all four responded “at once,” immediate and decisive. The story closes with the disciples leaving everything and following Jesus (Luke 5:11).

John’s account (chapter 6) seems to contradict the accounts in the other three Gospels; however, the difference may have been one of timing. One suggested scenario is the following: perhaps the happening in the Gospel of John came before that in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and perhaps Peter and Andrew were companions of Jesus but not in a formal way as disciples. John doesn’t say that Jesus actually “called” Andrew, Simon, and Nathaniel, but He did invite Philip to be His disciple (1:43). It was later that Jesus issued the invitation to Peter to follow Him. Did Peter already know Jesus? It would appear that there was some relationship between Jesus and Simon already, for in Luke 4:38-39 we find Jesus at Simon’s home (assuming this is the same Simon) healing Simon’s mother-in-law. It isn’t until after this (5:10-11) that Jesus formally called Peter to discipleship.

Three of the Gospel writers tell us about Matthew (Levi) being called (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32). Levi is a model of discipleship because he “left everything and followed Him” (Luke 5:28). Jesus called first for allegiance to His Person (Matthew 9:9b; Mark 2:14b; Luke 5:27b). Levi was a different sort of person -- he was a hated tax collector. Tax collectors were despised in Jewish society because they collected taxes for the Romans and also because they used the tax system to line their own pockets. Moreover, the occupation made one ritually unclean. Confirming the genuineness of his own commitment, Matthew invited into his home to a banquet – and into Jesus’ company – those with whom he was well-acquainted and who, like him, needed God’s forgiveness. Some have asked how Levi could throw a great banquet if he had left everything (Luke 5:28-29). However, it is another way of saying that Levi left his former occupation and transferred his allegiance to Jesus or (another suggestion) he physically left “his tax collection booth” (table, papers, etc.) where he had been sitting. The Pharisees and the scribes, who emphasized segregation from anything that would make one unclean, were surprised when Jesus went to this banquet attended by tax collectors and other sinners (Matthew 9:11; Mark 12:16; Luke 5:30) and asked Jesus’ disciples why He would “eat with such scum.” Matthew was a sinner to whom Jesus offered forgiveness. In this context “sinners” would refer to those who were ritually unclean. These people having dinner with Jesus were considered unclean; Jesus Himself, by eating with them, would contract uncleanness. Jesus defended His association with sinners by enunciating the principle that the doctor comes to aid the sick, not the

healthy (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). Jesus explained the meaning of His illustration -- His ministry was not for the righteous but for sinners (Matthew 9:13b; Mark 2:17b; Luke 5:32). Here the "healthy" and "righteous" refer to the Pharisees. The story does not teach that the Pharisees were actually righteous, only that they presumed they were. Jesus came to call those who were aware of their spiritual need.

The Choosing of the Twelve

The religious leaders had begun to reject Jesus (Luke 4:14-37). He responded by choosing a faithful remnant, the Twelve, who would be responsible for communicating His message to others. This selection is recorded in Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 3:13-15; and Luke 6:12-13.

Jesus withdrew to a mountain for the purpose of calling out the Twelve. Apparently Jesus took with Him a larger group from which He selected the Twelve (Mark 3:13-14; Luke 1:13). This number was deliberately chosen: it recalled the twelve tribes of Israel and signaled that Jesus had come to reconstitute the people of God. The Twelve are further identified as Apostles (Matthew 4:2; Mark 2:14; Luke 1:13). Apostleship (meaning "messenger," "sent one") was the appointed goal of discipleship; thus Jesus authorized them to go forth to gather His harvest (Matthew 9:38, 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8).

Jesus' withdrawal to a wilderness mountainside with His core of followers suggests three motifs. First, His sovereign choice of "those He wanted" attests to Jesus' conscious design and control of His ministry and its progressive unfolding as He patiently worked out the implications of the presence of the kingdom. Second, Jesus shared in an initiatory way with His disciples the presence of the kingdom, for they were to be sent out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. Third, the wilderness is seen to be the setting for the disciples' testing and training, recapitulating Jesus' own wilderness experience and the wilderness experience of Old Testament Israel, the number twelve designating the new Israel that Jesus is calling into being. Jesus' patient training of the Twelve would continue according to His schedule. The names of the Twelve are recorded in all three accounts. Simon Peter heads up every list of the apostles in the New Testament. Bartholomew is sometimes equated with Nathanael. Mathew and Levi are different names for the same person. In New Testament times a person commonly had more than one name. The Zealots were members of a nationalistic religious party in Israel that led the revolt against Rome. Judas son of James should be identified with Thaddaeus in Mark's list. The meaning of "Iscaiot" is disputed. Probably it means "a man from Kerioth," a city which was in southern Judea. It may also mean "assassin" or "liar." In any case, Judas' name evokes the memory of his betrayal. The variety of names and types gets our attention

and presents a rather well-rounded picture on the part of God: four fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot, five unknowns, and a betrayer -- all common laypeople. This is the new community in embryo.

We see in Jesus' calling His disciples a very deliberate and meaningful approach to making sure that the Twelve are the appropriate individuals for His purpose. Jesus recognized that His ministry on earth would be taken over by these men. Therefore, it was important that they be the "chosen" ones. The significance of this process is indicated in two ways: His use of prayer and His intent for the disciples.

First of all, Jesus prayed (Luke 6:12). This was such a significant event in Jesus' life and ministry that He prayed all night! How many of us pray *all night* for something? Luke doesn't say what Jesus prayed about, but undoubtedly He prayed that His Father would guide the selection process in order that the right persons would be selected. Jesus very likely prayed, also, that He would have a clear perspective as to what would be their task in carrying on His ministry and that He would have the wisdom to train the disciples for the extremely important tasks that would be theirs. That prayer was important to Jesus is evidenced by the many times that He modeled the use of prayer before the disciples and the many times He instructed them as to the importance of prayer and even how to pray. Many times He withdrew from the crowds to pray in a private place; the disciples witnessed all these times. In fact, Jesus pointed out numerous times that prayer is essential (see Matthew 6:5-18, 21:21-22, 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 18:1-8, 22:39-46.).

Secondly, Jesus had a very clear-cut purpose in mind for the disciples' training and the tasks that lay ahead of them. This purpose can be seen clearly in the instruction that Jesus gave the disciples (see Matthew 10:5-42; Mark 3:15, 6:6b-13; Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-24), even to the selecting of Judas who, He knew, would betray Him. But, again, the selection of Judas was for a purpose.

Much of the disciples' training and learning was tacit and not from direct instruction. That is, they went with Him everywhere He went, saw all that He did, and heard all that He preached to the crowds around Him. The disciples learned from Jesus' modeling. They were also the recipients of much private instruction and explanation. Much of Jesus' preaching was for the disciples' benefit. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:20-49) is one example of Jesus' teaching on discipleship. The entire Sermon on the Mount was meant as instruction for the disciples although a large crowd also was listening. As He teaches the disciples, He calls the crowd to discipleship. Jesus speaks not of what disciples ought to become, but of what they already are (Matthew 5:13-14) – namely, those who exhibit the qualities celebrated in

the Beatitudes. In salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), nature and function are one. As salt, disciples are a preservative to impede the spread of evil in society. As light, they bear a positive witness to that society. If what the disciples really are is clearly to be seen, nonbelievers will glorify the heavenly Father by becoming His children. Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples as to what the future would hold for them. In some cases this became a discussion of the cost of discipleship. In one account (Luke 14:25-27, 33-35), Jesus challenged a large crowd of His followers to think carefully about the radical commitment that He demanded. Jesus invited all to follow Him. Yet, following Him was not easy but required ruthless self-denial. The call to hate one's family members is startling (14:26). Obviously, Jesus was not speaking of "psychological hatred." This was the use of an intentional exaggeration (hyperbolic language) indicating that no one can take precedence over Jesus. One must renounce "even his own life" and be willing to follow Jesus in the way of death. Those who were not willing to follow Jesus in such a radical way could not be His disciples. Jesus gave two illustrations to show the need for counting the cost before embarking on the road to discipleship. First, someone building a tower (Luke 14:28-30) would surely calculate the cost of the project before starting. A half-finished building would be the object of ridicule. Second, no king would plan to wage war against an enemy without considering ahead of time the probability of success (vs.31-32). The application from the two illustrations is given in verse 33. Before embarking on the road to discipleship one must recognize from the beginning that Jesus demands total and complete commitment. Only those who have such a radical commitment can be Jesus' disciples. The illustration of the salt made a similar point (vs.34-35). A disciple who is not salty is one who ceases to be radically committed. Such disciples are "good for nothing." It is likely, although Luke doesn't say so, that many left Him after this discussion of the cost of discipleship. John tells us that many of Jesus' followers left Him (John 6:60-71) because of His teachings. (See also Luke 9:57-62.)

We see in these accounts several models for us. We see the model of "each one bring one," so important in evangelism, exemplified by Andrew bringing his brother Simon and Phillip bringing Nathaniel to Jesus. We also see in these instances of Jesus calling the disciples that they were quick to respond; this illustrates the obedience and trust that is necessary in becoming followers of Jesus. Jesus is also very clear about what the cost of discipleship is: disciples must love Him more than their own lives, they must carry their own cross, and they must give up everything for Him. We see in the relationship that Jesus developed with His disciples how they became empowered to follow Him and carry on His ministry. As an extension of Jesus' ministry, they were to preach the nearness of the Kingdom and to do works of healing. They became channels of grace to those in great need. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit, which is characterized by "power" which works, "love" which cares, and "self-discipline" which controls (II

Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13) even as we through a relationship with Him will be empowered to follow Him and carry on His ministry of evangelism and discipleship.

Teacher Helps

There are a number of concepts in these Bible selections which the teacher should research and become well acquainted with: *Lamb of God, Messiah, Christ, Moses and the prophets, Nazareth, Israel, King of Israel, Son of Man, booth, apostles, and demons.* These concepts are important to students' understanding of the background of what is going on here as well as an understanding of Who Jesus is.

A search through the four Gospels will reveal a number of times when Jesus took the disciples aside to teach them privately and answer their questions. A study of these instances will reveal the relationships which Jesus developed with His disciples that would empower them to carry on His ministry.

The following are additional references in connection with the lesson objectives:

1. The cost in being a follower of Jesus -- Luke 14:25-27, 33-35;
2. Jesus empowers His disciples -- Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 3:14b-15; II Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13.

Set

Did you ever play a game where someone was chosen leader and then that person went among the group and selected team players? (This could have been a drama or anything that required selecting participants.) Tell us about the process. What happened? How many were selected? On what did the leader base his decision?

Questions

Objective

John 1:35-37, 40-51

1. What caused Andrew to follow Jesus? (vs. 35-36)
2. After making that decision, what was the first thing that Andrew did? (vs. 41-42a)
3. What did Andrew tell Simon? (vs.41b)
4. What was the result of this? (vs.42a)
5. Who did Jesus find the next day? (vs.43)
6. What was the first thing that Phillip did? (vs.45)
7. What did Phillip tell Nathaniel? (vs.45b)
8. What was Nathaniel's attitude about this news? (vs.46)

9. What convinced Nathaniel that Jesus was Who Phillip claimed Jesus was? (vs. 47-49)
10. What did Jesus predict would happen for these men if they would follow Him? (vs. 50-51)

Matthew 4:21-22

11. Who were the two disciples that He found this time? (vs.21)
12. What were they doing? (vs.21b)
13. What was their response to Jesus? (vs.22)

Matthew 9:9

14. Who was Matthew? (vs.9a)
15. What did Jesus ask him to do? (vs.9b)
16. What was Matthew's response? (vs.9c)

Luke 6:12-13

17. What did Jesus do "all night?" (vs.12)
18. What did He do the next day? (vs.13)

Mark 3:14b-19

19. After Jesus had selected the Twelve, what seemed to be His purpose for the disciples? (vs.14b-15)
20. Does anything jump out at you about any of the twelve disciples in this list? (vs.16-19)

Luke 14:25-27, 33-35

21. What were the three things that Jesus told the crowd were the requirements to be His followers?

Matthew 10:1, 8

22. What did Jesus give the disciples authority to do?

Theme

1. How important was prayer in making the decisions about disciples? How do you know this?
2. What was the other important factor in Jesus' decision-making process?
3. What was Jesus' purpose in calling the disciples?
1. How did Jesus empower His disciples?

2. What seemed to be the required response from those Jesus called to be disciples? What part did obedience and trust play in this situation?
3. What is the model for followers of Jesus in the example of Andrew and Phillip bringing someone else to Jesus?
4. How do you feel about the “cost of discipleship” that Jesus talked about?
5. In our lives today, what would we have to give up to follow Jesus? Who, or what, would enable us to do this?
6. Who is Jesus?
7. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
8. What do people think about Him?
9. How do people respond to Jesus?
10. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
11. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 5: THE TEACHER (Rabbi)

Scripture

Matthew 5:1-26, 39-42; 7:7-11, 24-29

Objectives

- What it means to be “blessed” by Jesus.
- From Jesus the meaning of “living purposefully.”
- The purpose and significance of the “Holy Word.”
- Values and behavioral changes that come from this relationship with Jesus.

Summary

In Matthew 4:23-25 we find a condensed record over time of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus taught anywhere He happened to be. The synagogue (Luke 13:10), the Jewish house of worship where the Jews met every Sabbath, provided Jesus a congregation and a suitable place for teaching as did the entire countryside. In addition, He taught

1. In homes (Matthew 13:36; Mark 2:1-12, 3:20, 9:33),
2. On the lakeshore (Mark 2:13; Luke 5:1; John 6:22),
3. On a mountainside (Matthew 5-7),
4. In the hills (John 6:3),
5. From a boat (Mark 4:1-2),
6. In the Temple (Luke 21:37-38; John 7:10-53),
7. In the villages (Matthew 11:1; Luke 4:31, 13:22; John 7:1), and
8. In His own hometown (Luke 4:1-16).

Huge crowds followed Him everywhere He went (Mark 1:35-39, 6:30-34, 10:1; Luke 4:42-44, 6:17-19, 9:10-11, 12:1, 14:25; John 6:22) so much so that He had to withdraw to private and secluded places to pray and to talk with His disciples. The crowds were drawn to His teaching because they were “amazed at His teaching” (Matthew 7:28; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:32, 36), “impressed with His teaching” (Matthew 22:33), “astonished at His teaching” (Matthew 13:54), and said that “He taught as One Who had real authority” (Mark 1:21-22). The outcasts of society rallied to hear His teaching (e.g., the story of Zacchaeus, Luke 19:7; tax collectors, Mark 2:15-16) as did the learned and wealthy.

The Hebrew word from which “Teacher” comes literally means “My Master.” His ministry consisted of teaching, preaching, and healing. He was called “Rabbi” on one

occasion (John 1:38), which is an Aramaic word meaning “Teacher” and is a title of dignity given by the Jews to their doctors of law and to distinguished teachers. Jesus was also called “Master” (Luke 5:5), “Lord” on several occasions (Matthew 8:2, 6, 8, 21, 25, 14:28, 30, 16:22, 17:15, 18:21, 20:30, 31, 33; Luke 5:8, 12), “Good Teacher” (Luke 18:18; Mark 10:17), and “Teacher” on many, many occasions (Matthew 8:19, 12:38, 19:16, 22:16, 24, 36; Mark 4:38, 5:35, 9:5, 9:17, 9:38, 10:20, 35, 51, 11:21, 12:14, 19, 32, 13:1; Luke 7:40b, 8:49, 9:38, 10:25, 11:45, 20:21, 21:7; John 1:49, 3:2, 6:25, 8:4, 9:2, 11:8, 13:13). He referred to *Himself* as “Teacher” (Mark 14:14) and discussed His own teaching (John 7:14-19, 12:49-50). He stood authoritatively in the midst of His disciples and instructed them in the wise ways of living.

Jesus is known as the Master Teacher. All four Gospels depict Jesus as a literary genius. He is shown to be a master of all the devices of the Old Testament poetry:

Parallelism -- a comparison made between two things – For example, “That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don’t really see. They hear what I say, but they don’t really hear, and they don’t understand.” (Matthew 13:13);

Metaphor -- a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance -- For example, “... They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.” (Matthew 15:14);

Simile -- a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared -- For example, “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that is thrown into the water and gathers fish of every kind.” (Matthew 13:47);

Paradox -- a statement seemingly self-contradictory but in reality expressing a possible truth -- For example, “For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:30);

Hyperbole -- an intentional exaggeration not intended to be taken literally -- For example, “I say it again – it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” (Matthew 19:24).

His teaching reflected the style and standpoint of both the prophets and the Old Testament wisdom literature.

The Old Testament promised a great prophet who would convey God’s Word finally and decisively to His people (Deuteronomy 18:15). A prophet is depicted as a person who receives God’s Word and passes it on to His people. In order to function as a prophet, a person had to receive a clear word from God. He stood in God’s stead before the people and God used his mouth to communicate what He wished to say. Jesus was that prophet (Acts 3:22-26). During His earthly ministry He taught His followers the things of God, by both word and deed. Jesus emphasized the blessedness of those

who “hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 8:21). Jesus’ basic message was “turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17). Everything else that He taught flowed from this general theme.

Jesus made many of his points by means of parables – on the one hand, stories with a single point in which the details have no meaning (Matthew 13:33-35), or, on the other hand, a story illustrating a major point and perhaps other minor points, in which the details are meaningful (Matthew 13:36-43) and which could be taken at two levels -- the superficial or the more perceptive. The parable became Jesus’ primary teaching tool, which both revealed and hid the truths He wanted to communicate (Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10). He privately explained the true meaning of His parables to the Twelve (Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:33).

All four of the Gospel writers depict Jesus as a teacher, but it is Matthew who especially portrays Jesus as a teacher. He gives us five systematic accounts of Jesus’ teachings for the church’s inner life and evangelistic mission: the first is the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7); the second, Jesus’ charge to the twelve (9:35-10:42); the third, the parables about God’s kingdom (13:1-52); the fourth, “life in God’s community” (chapter 18); and the fifth and last teaching section, “judgment” (chapters 23-25).

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew chapters 5-7 is the first and longest of the five sections in which Matthew gathers together the Lord’s teaching and stresses Jesus’ authority as a teacher. In this teaching Jesus showed His followers how people ought to live – not simply according to a set of rules but by an inner revelation of attitude and outlook. The glorious thing is that, having set a seemingly impossible standard, He went on to give men the power to live up to it. Jesus taught His disciples a new way of life. He took over the Old Testament commandments to love God and one’s neighbor and filled them with new life and vigor.

1. In Mt 5:1-12 Jesus turns ordinary human ideas about happiness upside down. Contrary to general opinion, it is not the go-getters, the tough ones, those who bend the rules, who are the real successes. The truly happy ones are those who recognize the spiritual poverty (vs.3) of self-reliance and learn to depend wholly on God. Everything else follows from this. The people who can be certain of a future are the humble, the forgiving, the pure, those who set their hearts on what is right, who try to heal the rifts. These are the ones who put the seasoning into life, who stop the rot, who light up the way. By what they do and say and how they react, they show men something of what God Himself is like.
2. Next, Jesus speaks not of what disciples ought to become, but of what **they already are** (5:13-16) – namely, those who evidence the qualities celebrated in the Beatitudes. In salt and light (vs.13-16), nature and function are one. As *salt*,

disciples are a preservative to impede the spread of evil in society. As *light*, they bear a positive witness to that society. If what the disciples really *are* is clearly seen, nonbelievers will glorify the heavenly Father by becoming His children.

3. In Mt 5:17-20, Matthew records what Jesus said about the Law. Jesus had not come to abolish the Law (vs.17) or even to remove its smallest part (vs.18). At the same time He expounded the Law in the light of the dawning kingdom (4:17). As “fulfill” applied to both Law and Prophets, it meant not merely that Jesus fulfilled certain prophecies or that He kept certain laws. Rather, in this context it meant “fill up;” far from abolishing the Old Testament, Jesus brought it to completion (vs.17) by ushering in the kingdom of God. The age of “the Law and the Prophets” prepared for, and is now superseded by, the age of Messiah (11:12-13). Jesus censured the religious leaders, not for taking the Law too seriously but for failing to take it seriously enough (23:3, 23); the disciples’ righteousness must surpass that of the religious leaders (as verses 21-48 will make plain). Verse 19 applied especially to disciples; as those who have experienced radical grace (vs.3-12), they were ready for radical obedience.
4. Jesus continues in verses 21-48 addressing topics relating to the Law. Nothing can ever supersede or do away with the law God gave through Moses. But the law is a minimum standard. It can deal only with actions, not with the thoughts that give rise to them. Sin begins in the mind and will. That is where it must be rooted out. Jesus took six examples to show what the principles expressed in the law involve at the personal level. The six examples are: murder (vs.21-26; Exodus 20:13), adultery (vs.27-32; Exodus 20:14), divorce (vs.31-32; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:1-12), oaths (vs.33-37; Numbers 30:2 and see Matthew 23:16-22), retaliation (vs.38-42; Exodus 21:24), and love for enemies (vs.43-48; Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:29-37). Each of these sets God’s Word to ancient Israel over against Jesus’ own authoritative pronouncements -- “But I say ...” (vs.22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). The standards of the new society – God’s kingdom – are way above the standards of the courts of law.
5. Turning to *chapter 6*, we see Jesus tackling the three pillars of Jewish piety (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting) which had become an outward “show” (vs. 1-18). He pointed out that what goes on deep inside - motives, thoughts, intentions - is what matters in religion. God gives no prizes for an outward show of piety. So Jesus tells us to give, pray, and fast without drawing attention to ourselves - and God will reward us. Our prayer is to be simple and trusting. We are to come as children to our Father, eager to please and conscious of our failings. (Luke 11:2-4 also records the Lord’s Prayer.)
6. Jesus next (6:19-24) turns to the subject of one’s attitude toward material possessions. Verse 19 denies the *permanence* of earthly things, not their *reality* or *value* (vs.11, 31-32). But, by contrast, heavenly treasures can be neither

stolen nor destroyed (vs.20); for heaven is where God dwells (vs.9-10); it is *He* who makes heaven secure. One stores up heavenly treasure by knowing God (vs.6) and advancing His rule (vs.33). As the functioning of the body depends on good eyesight, so living in the world demands the right perception of reality (vs.22-23), which means seeing everything under God's sovereignty (vs.24) and in light of eternity (vs.19-21). While a servant may serve more than one master, a slave *cannot*; divided allegiance between God and money is impossible. Yet slavery to God brings perfect freedom.

7. In verses 6:25-34, Jesus describes living without anxiety, that is, the practical effects of obeying the teaching of verses 1-24. God's slave has but one task - to obey Him (vs.24); he depends on the Master to provide his needs (vs.31-34). As one who has no rights, the slave joyously receives food and clothing and all the wonders of the natural world as gifts from a Lord Who is also his Father (vs.26-33). Freed from bondage to money, he is able to enjoy the things that money can buy. Not so the slave of money: given the elusiveness and the vulnerability of his treasures, he is perpetually anxious (vs.19-21, 31-32). He who rejects the true God for a false one (vs.24) loses this world as well as the next. Men can choose what to set their hearts on. They can go all out for money and material things or for God and spiritual things, but not for both. Everyone must decide his own priorities. Those who put God first can rest assured He knows all their needs and will not fail to supply them. They can be free from worry.
8. Lastly, (7:1-27) Jesus addresses the subject of one's attitude toward others and God:
 - Do not be harshly critical (vs.1-5)
 - Do be discriminating (vs.6).
 - Never give up praying (vs.7-11).

Verse 12 summarizes all that Jesus taught about human relationships -- always treat others as you would like them to treat you. Jesus addressed persons who had heard His teachings, were aware of the options, and had to now choose one gate or the other; His admonition to them was to make sure they were on the right road to eternal life (vs.13-14), because there are plenty of people out to mislead (vs.15-20). And many more are self-deceived (vs.21-23). In the story of the wise and foolish builders (vs.24-27), the foundation represents two sets of people who have heard the teaching of Jesus. Both will experience the same kinds of difficulties. What distinguishes the two is that only the first does what Jesus has taught. Building on this foundation means both hearing and obeying Jesus' teaching (vs.24-25). A lawless life-style rests on a foundation, which is *no* foundation (vs.26-27), and thus has neither basis for living nor protection against destruction. Words are not enough; the only safe course is to act on what we hear Christ say.

At the end of the teaching (vs.28-29) Matthew relates to us how Jesus' listeners are impressed and amazed by the note of authority with which Jesus teaches. They have heard no one before like this man. Jesus' authority comes from His person and from His fidelity to the Old Testament, as distinct from rabbinic traditions. Still, Jesus calls not just for amazement (vs.28) but for allegiance (vs.24-27).

Teacher Helps

Read and study the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5-6-7). Think about how Jesus' teachings impact your life and will impact the lives of your students. Put yourself in the place of students as they read and discuss Jesus' teachings. Some of His teachings may cause students to question the reality and practicality of what they read.

- Mt. 5:1-12 address what it takes to be blessed or happy.
- Mt. 5:13-16 discuss purposeful living.
- Mt. 5:17-20 contain Jesus' clarification of His purpose and the significance of the Word.
- Mt. 5:21-26, 43-48; 7:7-11 and 24-29 address relationships, values, and behavioral changes. (See James 1:19-27.)

Full understanding of the following concepts is important for the reading and comprehension of the scripture passages: *blessed, justice, merciful, prophets, trampled, abolish, Law of Moses, idiot, reconciled, hate, prayer, and authority.*

NOTE: The five sections/teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount may be too lengthy for some classes and the amount of time given; if so, you can be selective. These are only samples of His teachings. "No one teaches like Jesus."

Set

Do you like teachers? Why? or Why not? What is a good teacher? What is the result of having a good teacher?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 5:1-26

1. What are the conditions by which we are blessed? (vs. 1-12)
2. What are the rewards of these blessings? (vs. 1-12)
3. What are the three things that Jesus tells His followers to be like?
4. What does Jesus say is the result of obeying God's laws? (vs.19b)
5. What does He say is the result of disobeying God's laws? (vs.19b)

6. What are the several different kinds of “wrong” behavior that Jesus deals with? (vs.21, 22)
7. What does He say will be the result of these behaviors? (vs. 21-22)
8. What does He say to do about these behaviors? (vs. 24-25)

Matthew 5:39-42

9. What does the law of Moses say to do if someone does something to you? (vs. 38)
10. What does Jesus say to do about seeking revenge? (vs. 39-42)

Matthew 7:7-11

11. What is the result of asking something of God? (vs. 7, 8)
12. What is the result of continuing to look for something? (vs. 7, 8)
13. What is the result of continuing to knock? (vs. 7, 8)
14. Who do these good gifts come from? (vs. 11)

Matthew 7:24-29

15. What did Jesus say would be the result of listening to and obeying His teachings? (vs.24)
16. What did He say would be the result of disobeying and not listening to His teachings? (vs.26)
17. What did the crowds think about Jesus’ teaching? (vs. 28-29)

Theme

1. Why is prayer important to the followers of Jesus?
2. What does it mean to be “blessed” by Jesus?
3. How do we live purposefully? How do Jesus’ teachings help us live purposefully?
4. What is the purpose and the significance of the Holy Word?
5. How does a relationship with Jesus help change our behavior?
6. Why is it important to listen to and obey His teachings?
7. Who is Jesus?
8. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
9. What do people think about Him?
10. How do people respond to Jesus?
11. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
12. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 6: MIRACLES

Scripture

Matthew 4:23-25; John 2:1-11, 5:1-13, 16-21

Objectives

- Observe that Jesus compassionately deals with people's needs.
- Learn Jesus' emphasis on higher priorities.
- Learn how Jesus explains His relationship with the Heavenly Father.
- Learn that faith produces miracles, not the reverse.

Summary

A "miracle" is defined as an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (Matthew 12:38; John 2:18). It is an occurrence at once beyond nature and beyond man. It shows the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind, a power interrupting the fixed laws which govern their movements, a supernatural power. An atheist must, as a matter of course, deny the possibility of miracles, but to one who believes in a personal God, who in His wisdom may see fit to interfere with the ordinary processes of nature, miracles are not impossible nor are they incredible.

In Matthew 4:23-25 and 15:29-31 we find condensed records of Jesus' labors and teaching over time. The synagogue, the Jewish house of worship where the Jews met every Sabbath, provided for Jesus a congregation, a suitable place for teaching, and places for miracles to take place. He sympathized with all human suffering and healed the body in order that He might heal the spirit (Matthew 9:35-36, 14:14; Mark 6:33-34). Jesus' miracles fulfilled the prophecy that said, "He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases" (Isaiah 53:4).

Crowds followed Him wherever He went (Matthew 19:2, 20:29; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 5:1-3), so much so that He, because of a frequent need to withdraw, had to go up into the hills for privacy – to pray (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35), to talk with His disciples (Matthew 13:36, 14:13, 17:1; Mark 3:13), and in some cases just to get away (Mark 3:20; Luke 5:16). His fame spread, due to His teaching and miracles, caused great crowds to gather from all Palestine (Matthew 9:26, 14:35-36; Mark 1:45, 2:1-2, 3:7-12, 6:56; Luke 5:15, 6:17-19, 7:16-17), areas north of Palestine including Decapolis (a

district containing ten cities east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee) and Syria, which was the great Roman province north and east of Palestine containing the cities of Damascus and Antioch. Notice, in the ministry of Jesus, that

1. He was active,
2. He went where people were,
3. He went where the busiest people were (fishermen, those at work, and those preparing to work),
4. He went where worshipping people were,
5. He went where needy people were.

The Gospels contain stories of about thirty-five different occasions when Jesus performed various kinds of deeds that seemed miraculous to those who saw them. Many of these are recounted in at least three of the gospels and many in all four. In addition, there are several passages where we are told in quite general terms that Jesus performed miracles.

More than half of these stories about Jesus tell how He healed the sick of various diseases including fever, leprosy, dropsy, paralysis, blindness, deafness, and dumbness. In other cases He cast demons out of people who were suffering from physical or mental disorders. Three times we read that He raised people from the dead.

The remaining stories show His power over things – to feed a large multitude with very little food, to walk on the water, to still a storm, to curse a fig tree so that it withered away, to change water into wine, and to catch enormous quantities of fish.

These stories testify to the tremendous impression which the work of Jesus made on those who saw it. The crowds reacted in positive and understandable ways to His miracles -- people were “in awe” (Luke 5:26, 9:43), “stunned” (Mark 2:12), “amazed” (Mark 7:36-37; Matthew 15:29-31); they “rejoiced” and “praised God” (Matthew 9:7-8; Mark 2:12; Luke 5:25, 13:17, 18:43), said “nothing like this has ever happened in Israel” (Matthew 9:33b). Even if the stories were legendary (which they are not), one thing is certain at the outset - we cannot dismiss the miracles to try to have a non-miraculous Jesus. They are an integral and central part of the story. Why, then, do people try to dismiss them?

First, it is argued that science rules out the possibility of miracles. Second, it is argued that we have no reliable historical evidence for miracles.

If only one miracle could be claimed as historical, this would be sufficient both to demonstrate that miracles are possible and to make further ones probable. Such an event is the resurrection. The evidence that reliable witnesses claimed to have seen Jesus alive after His death is incontrovertible (I Corinthians 15:3-9). The only explanation that makes sense of the evidence is that He was miraculously raised from the dead.

If the resurrection did take place, then it makes the fact of other miracles highly likely. First, it establishes the possibility of the miraculous taking place at all. It means that God can act in the natural order in an unusual manner. Second, the resurrection is God's "Yes" to the life of Jesus – including Jesus' own claim to work miracles (Luke 7:21-22, 11:19-23).

The evidence is confirmed by the reliable historical tradition that Jesus did work miracles, which is found in the Gospels. To be sure, we cannot test and affirm on purely historical grounds the truth of every single miracle story.

The Purpose of the Miracles

One important point often raised against the historicity of the New Testament miracles is that similar stories are told of other great men of the period. However, the stories of Jesus display some important differences from those told about other men. Jesus' miracles tell us something about Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus shows that He is just like His Father, Who never stops working. The Son does only what He sees His Father doing. Like the Father, "the Son gives life to anyone He wants to." The importance of Jesus' miracles lays not so much in the miraculous power which He displayed in them, as in the significance attached to them.

1. In general they were affected by His simple word (Mark 1:25-26, 2:11) or touch (Mark 5:41) rather than by the use of magical devices.
2. They were meant to bring glory to God not glory to Him (Luke 7:16).
3. Jesus never let anything deter Him from His ministry (Luke 13:31-32).
4. They testified to God's love for suffering humanity (Mark 1:41, 8:2; John 9:39).
5. They fulfilled the Old Testament promises of the coming time of salvation when God would heal human's bodies as well as their souls (Luke 7:22; Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 61:1)
6. They were done in order to lead humans to faith in the saving power of God at work in Jesus. The powerful works of Jesus were designed to evoke a response, to reveal who Jesus was. They were signs that led elsewhere – to faith (John 4:50). However, they were not always compelling signs of God's power: the Pharisees attributed them to the power of Satan (Mark 3:22). (¹ See NOTE in teacher helps.) But to those with the eyes to see, they constituted the sign that God was at work in Jesus in fulfillment of His promises, and were meant to awaken and confirm faith in Him (John 10:38).

Jesus had great compassion for those He met who were in need (Matthew 9:35-36). He expressed this *compassion* at various times. The following are a few miracles that specifically show this expression of compassion:

1. Jesus restored the sight of two blind men (Matthew 20:29-33).

2. Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-15).
3. Jesus fed the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9).
4. Jesus fed the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13).
5. Jesus healed the man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-5; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-17).

Jesus also made much of the faith of the individual needing healing. He specifically commented on the fact that it was *the individual's faith* that brought about the healing. Such miracles are the following: Jesus healed

1. The man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-5; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 5:12-13).
2. The centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).
3. The paralytic (Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25).
4. The woman with an issue of blood (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:40-48).
5. Ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19).
6. Jesus restored the sight of two blind men (Matthew 9:27-30).
7. He cast a demon out of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).
8. He restored Bartimaeus' sight (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43).

Jesus also commented that it was due to unbelief and lack of faith that He couldn't do miracles (Mark 6:5).

John, the Book of Signs

John, in his Gospel, selects from Jesus' many miracles certain "signs" which show most clearly Who He was. Everything he wrote was subordinated to the main aim of bringing the reader to faith (20:30-31). All have a purpose – they actively support the claims Jesus made and are intended to lead to faith. All of the signs might be viewed as giving the reader evidence for the truth of Jesus' claims – that He is the Son of God. First, the combination of miracle and belief is what distinguishes John's theme "signs." Secondly, the powerful works of Jesus are designed to evoke a response, to reveal Who Jesus is. They are signs that lead to faith. This is the aim that John had for his reader of the "Book of Signs." Third, "Many people saw the miraculous signs He was doing and believed in His name" (2:23). The seven "signs" are:

1. Turning the Water into wine at the marriage in Cana (2:1-11).
2. Healing the official's son (4:43-54).
3. Healing the lame man on the Sabbath (5:1-15).
4. Feeding the five-thousand (6:1-15).
5. Walking on the water (6:16-21).

6. Healing the blind man (chapter 9).
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44).

Jesus' first miracle, *The Turning of the Water into Wine* (John 2:1-11), has a rather domestic setting – a wedding to which Mary was invited, as was Jesus along with His disciples. It is assumed that Mary was “family” at this wedding, and, if so, Jesus was, too. One assumes, also, that the disciples with Him were the six He had just called: James, John, Andrew, Peter, Phillip, and Nathaniel. If Mary was “family,” then it is only normal that she would be concerned that the good wine had run out and turned to Jesus with her concern. Was she simply commenting to Jesus that the host's good wine had run out? Or was she pointing out to Jesus that there was a problem that He could solve? We don't know.

The wedding festivities lasted several days, and when the wine ran out the bridegroom (who footed the bill) must have been highly embarrassed. It was the practice in Bible times to offer the best wine first when the appetites of the guests were the sharpest and most critical; then when the appetites had slacked off the host would pass out the lesser wine. In compassion, Jesus steps in and provides wine in six large stone jars holding 75 to 113 liters each (120 to 180 gallons altogether). These jars were ceremonial water jars that Jews used for cleansing the hands and the body. He told the servants to fill the jars with water and take them to the host.

The story is framed by two statements: “they have no more wine” (vs.3) and “you have saved the best [wine] until now” (vs.10). This is a commentary on the bankruptcy of Judaism and the arrival of Jesus. The new wine is abundantly superior to the old. Moreover, that which contained the “old” must pass away. Here the new wine of the Gospel is contrasted with the water of the old faith (vs.6). Jesus had come to bring something really new. The “old” was the Jewish institution of the ceremonial water; Jesus replaced it with the “new.”

Imagine the host's surprise, on tasting what he assumed was wine, to discover it was better than the earlier wine. And imagine the servants' surprise when they found out that the jars contained wine – instead of the water they had filled the jars with. Certainly the bridegroom got more than he bargained for when he invited Jesus to the wedding feast. (We get more than we bargain for when we invite Jesus into our lives and develop a relationship with Him.) Undoubtedly this miracle brought about a lot of questions and gossip since the servants knew what had happened. It probably brought about a change in master-servant relations. This miracle tells us something about the relationship between Jesus and His mother. It shows us the respect He held for His mother. The incident must have been a confirmation for her. It certainly brought out a

revelation to Jesus' disciples: Jesus' authority over nature and Jesus' willingness to provide for others' needs. They already believed, but their faith became firmer.

John records another miracle that exhibits Jesus' power and something of His priorities when He *healed the lame man on the Sabbath* (John 5:1-47).

Jesus and the Sabbath received prominent attention in connection with this miracle, as with other miracles. A feast in Jerusalem, the weekly Sabbath, a day of worship and rest, prompted Jesus to return there. At this festival Jesus worked a healing miracle (vs.2-9), a conflict followed (vs.10-18), and then Jesus provided a major discourse explaining the authority of His work and His divine identity (vs.19-47).

The miracle took place at the pool of Bethesda. John notes that various people with infirmities waited at the pool, hoping to benefit from healing power associated with the site. The lame man thought the water had healing power and apparently was not looking for someone to heal him. In this instance we see Jesus' compassion for this man who is unable to move himself to the water, an action that had to be done very quickly in order to be the first person into the water when the waters were "troubled." Jesus knew the man would never make it. So, He asks the man if he "would like to get well." And, of course, the man answers in the affirmative. Jesus ignored the pool's supposed powers and with a word healed the man (vs.8-9). Jesus simply told him to "pick up his mat and walk." Observe the process of the lame man being healed: Christ *first* addresses the man, next He commands, following *this*, the man obeys with an obedience of faith. *The conclusion* is -- in the act of obedience he is healed. Christ is the healer, but the lame man is healed by the obedience of faith.

All well and good! But, it was the Sabbath and this aroused objections among the Jewish leaders. When the now-healed man carried his bed he violated a well-known Sabbath prohibition. But since he did not know Jesus he could not indicate to his accusers who directed him thus. This came later in the temple (vs.14) when Jesus and the man met again. Jesus used the physical healing as proof that the spiritual cure, the man's forgiveness, was equally real. Jesus warned the man in verse 14 about something worse happening to him if he did not stop sinning. Does this imply that the man's paralytic condition was because of past sin? It is unclear, but it is certain that human misery and penalties may be caused by sin.

The religious authorities objected to Jesus healing on the Sabbath – a day of rest when no "work" could be done. Jesus clashed with the religious authorities a number of times over healing (which was perceived as "work") on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-5, 6-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6; John 7:21-24 and chapter 9), as He did on this occasion. It was not the general principle of the Sabbath that Jesus disagreed with (He regularly attended the synagogue) but the petty restrictions imposed by the religious authorities, which often worked against God's purpose in giving people a weekly day of rest. In all of these instances Jesus used a comparable argument against the religious leaders. God's activity in the world did not finish with the creation. He told

them, in essence, there is no suspension on the Sabbath of works of benevolence and mercy. Jesus told them on one occasion (Matthew 9:13), quoting from the Old Testament, to “go and learn the meaning of this scripture: ‘I want you to be merciful; I don’t want sacrifices’ (Hosea 6:6).” Jesus’ priorities, as expressed in this dialogue with His critics, revealed that He valued life over laws and regulations. Jesus, through this miracle, showed that He is just like His Father, Who never stops working. The Son does only what He sees His Father doing. Like the Father, “the Son gives life to anyone He wants to.” Here the Jews attacked Him on two counts – Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy -- because He put His own work on the same level as God’s and because He claimed to be God’s Son (5:17). ¹(See NOTE in Teacher Helps.)

Jesus rejected the accusations of the Jewish religious leaders. The root cause of this rejection is found in verses 41-44. The problem is not intellectual – it centers rather on their inner disposition. He said, “You do not have the love of God in your hearts” (vs.42). Jesus was angered not because they refused to glorify Him (vs.41) but because they refused to glorify God (vs.44). The desire for human praise, affirmation, and prestige had crippled them and they could not love God (vs.44a). Human dignitaries were esteemed (vs.43b), but the Son who bears divine credentials was rejected. The very Scripture that they used to condemn Jesus would soon bring the severest judgment upon its possessors (vs.45-47).

In this miracle Jesus was described in the context of the Sabbath, and elements from the Sabbath were swept up and given fresh definition. Jesus is the replacement. As in the miracle at Cana, Jesus replaces the “old” with an abundance of the “new” – a freedom from the power of the restricting “laws” governing Sabbath behavior and a lifting of their hearts and minds to the true subject of worship.

John tells us that from this time on the Jewish religious leaders planned to kill Jesus (vs.18). He had already angered them when Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:13-20). The situation on this particular Sabbath was the beginning of the persecution, which would follow Jesus and end finally with His crucifixion. His resurrection would prove what He told them – that He is the Son of God.

We see through Jesus’ miracles that He was perceived as the Messiah (John 2:23), even though many of the very people who said that He was the Messiah did not understand what this meant and would eventually turn against Him (vs.24). We see also through His relationship with people that Jesus changed lives even as He can change the lives of human beings today. We see His relational skills at work with those around Him – the authority with which He spoke to the Jews, the compassion He had

with His mother at Cana, and the compassion that He expressed for the paralytic He healed as well as with many others whom He healed.

All of this applies as well to the miracles in the early church. The early Christians displayed powers similar to those of Jesus. We hear of sick people being cured, the dead being raised, the miraculous release of prisoners, and even the power to inflict physical judgment. These were signs that the same power of God which was at work in Jesus was still at work in His disciples, confirming their message of salvation, and also warning of the reality of God's judgment.

This same power of God is at work today. It is realized when humans submit their lives to God's control – He takes the "old" and replaces it with the "new."

Teacher Helps

Read all of John chapter 5; study especially verses 16-30, in which Jesus sets forth His claim to be the Son of God, and verses 31-47 which give Jesus' further discourse in defending Himself against the Jewish religious leaders – namely His very pointed accusations of the Jewish leaders. These two sections give us a very clear picture of Jesus' priorities and mission. Reading the other references to Jesus and the Sabbath will also give a picture of Jesus: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-5, 6-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6; John 7:21-24, chapter 9 – the arguments that He used against the Jewish authorities and the arguments that He used in His own defense. What were the disciples observing through these incidents? What relationships were developing with the disciples?

Leaf through the New Testament and study the many miracles that Jesus performed; note His attitude toward and relationship with the people healed as well as the bystanders' attitudes to include the Jewish religious authorities' attitudes. Take note of the outcomes of these miracles relative to whether the healed persons' lives were changed in a spiritual way and how their relationships with Jesus changed. Put yourself in the crowd witnessing the miracles. How would your life have been changed as a result of witnessing miracles? What is your belief today in the possibility of miracles? Do you believe that Jesus' miracles really happened or were they just coincidental kinds of events that could be explained away by circumstances or by a scientific explanation? There may be students in your classes, steeped in science and products of the "Age of Rationalism," who will want to challenge the veracity of the miracles.

¹In addition to accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, the Jewish religious leaders in John 5:18, in essence, accused Jesus of blasphemy when He claimed to be the Son of God, although in this case the word "blasphemy" was not used. ("Blasphemy" simply

means to dishonor or revile God; words or actions that dishonor God.) There are other times when the Jews openly accused Jesus of blaspheming in a similar way -- Matthew 9:3, 12:24; Luke 11:15. At other times the Jews actually used the word with the same meaning -- Matthew 9:34, 12:24; Mark 2:6-7; Luke 5:21. Jesus answered their accusations and discussed blasphemy in Matthew 12:25-32. The Jews themselves blasphemed when they dishonored God by attributing Jesus' miracles to the Devil when they in reality came from God.

There are several vocabulary items, which are important for students' understanding of these scripture passages. Be prepared to discuss any of these that students might have problems with: *Galilee, Good News, Syria, Judea, the Ten Towns, gallon* (in metric terms, 3.8 liters), *Capernaum, Sabbath, the Father*.

Set

Have you ever seen a miracle take place? What is a miracle? How would you feel if you did witness a miracle?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 4:23-25

1. What do these verses say about Jesus' popularity?
2. What was Jesus doing as He traveled around the country?

John 2:1-11

1. Where was Jesus in this passage? (vs.1)
2. What miracle took place in this scripture? (vs. 7-10)
3. Who was responsible for Jesus doing this? (vs.5)

John 5:1-13, 16-21

1. Where was Jesus in this passage? (vs. 1-3)
2. What was going on? (vs. 3-5)
3. What was wrong with the man mentioned here? (vs. 5)
4. What did Jesus do? (vs. 8)
5. And, what happened? (vs. 9)
6. What was the problem that occurred? (vs. 9b-11)
7. Why were the Jewish leaders upset at Jesus? (vs.16, 18)
8. What did Jesus tell the Jewish leaders? (vs.17, 19-21)

Theme

1. Why did Jesus turn the water into wine?
2. Why do you think Jesus healed the man by the pool?
3. How does Jesus deal with people's needs?
4. How does Jesus deal with your needs?
5. What was Jesus' priority (as revealed in His response to the religious leaders)?
6. What was Jesus' relationship with God?
7. Which comes first – faith or a miracle? Does faith produce miracles or do miracles produce faith? Why? or Why not?
8. Who is Jesus?
9. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
10. What do people think about Him?
11. How do people respond to Jesus?
12. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
13. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 7: THE SAVIOR

Scripture

John 3:1-21

Objectives

- That Jesus deals tenderly and patiently with us.
- That Jesus is the only means of salvation and the only hope for eternal life.

Summary

The theme of salvation – God as Savior – runs throughout the Bible. God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Redeemer (also called a Savior, or a Messiah) who would destroy Satan and restore them to a right relationship with Him (Genesis 3:15). Other references in the Old Testament are the following: Exodus 14:30; Numbers 10:9; Deuteronomy 33:29; Judges 2:16-18; I Chronicles 11:14; Job 22:29-30; Psalms 28:8-9, 34:6, 37:40; Isaiah 30:15, 43:11-13, 45:21-22, 59:1; Jeremiah 30:10-11; and Hosea 13:4.

The theme of salvation is the heart of the Christian message; the four gospels present Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior: Matthew 1:21, 10:22, 27:42; Luke 2:11, 8:12; John 3:17, 4:42, 10:9; Acts 2:21, 4:12, 16:30-31; Romans 5:9-10, 10:9-13; I Corinthians 3:15; Ephesians 2:8; I Timothy 1:15, 2:4, 4:10; and Hebrews 7:25.

The Gospel according to Luke focuses on Jesus' ministry as the Savior and begins with the story of Jesus' birth and dedication. The angel Gabriel told Mary that her child was the very Son of God and the Savior of His people (Luke 1:32-35). The angels pointed out to the shepherds that the Child Jesus was the Savior (Luke 2:11). In the temple, Simeon identified the child Jesus as the Savior (Luke 2:30) -- a *suffering* Messiah as well as a *glorious* Messiah (vs.34-35). Luke further shows how Jesus lifted lost men and women out of their sins and brought them back to God.

Five titles of Jesus reflect something significant of His person and/or work. The name *Jesus* (which is identical with *Joshua* and means "God is Savior") emphasizes His role as the *Savior* of His people (Matthew 1:21) even though Jehovah was the only Savior of His people (Isaiah 43:11; Hosea 13:4). It states that the Father Himself has clearly called Jesus, "God" (Hebrews 1:8). *Christ* is the New Testament equivalent of *Messiah*, a Hebrew word meaning "anointed one" (Acts 4:27, 10:38). This title emphasized that Jesus was divinely appointed to His mission, that He had an official relationship to God

the Father – that is, He had a job to do and a role to discharge at the Father's appointing.

John the Baptist testified to Jesus being the Savior and called Him the Lamb of God. Just as the sacrificial lamb was killed and offered as a means of remitting the sin of the people, Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29-36). Jesus laid aside His divine majesty and assumed human nature. He submitted Himself to all the sufferings of His earthly life, including death itself. He did this to accomplish God's plan to redeem mankind from sin. Jesus presented Himself as a priestly sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrifices were *expiatory* (because they "put away" sin, thus restoring the worshiper to the blessings and privileges God intended for him) and *vicarious* (because another life was offered for sin instead of the life of the worshiper). Christ's once-for-all sacrifice was both expiatory and vicarious, and it gained for His people eternal salvation.

Jesus voluntarily went to His death, not as a defeated hero, but in victory. It was not the result of a tragic moral decision on His part, but was the climactic step of His consciously chosen way to triumph and glorification.

Jesus spoke of Himself as the "Savior," the means of salvation (Luke 4:18-19; John 6:47) and presents seven different images of Himself, often called the "I Am" sayings, that are vital to human life and, when summed up, present Jesus as Savior. The Gospel of John highlights these sayings.

1. **"I am the bread of life"** (John 6:22-59). Jesus had just fed the five thousand. When the people followed Him to obtain more food (they were all in favor of a Messiah Who could provide free meals for the asking), Jesus pointed out to them that no one could live without food, but that life is more than physical existence. Jesus came to provide bread for the spiritually starving. He is the giver and the gift itself. He is the bread of the new life, the One on whom we depend entirely for existence. And the bread we feed on – the source of life for us – is His death. Because sin has placed us under God's sentence of death, we live only because of Christ's death on our behalf. We know life only as we make His death and all it means our own. The forgiveness His death has brought is the meat and drink of Christian living. Each one of us must receive it for himself.
2. **"I am the living water"** (John 7:37-39). He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles and drew His imagery from the ceremony appointed for each day of the festival, when water from the Pool of Siloam was offered to God. Jesus is a bubbling spring, reviving and transforming the thirsty human heart.
3. **"I am the light of the world"** (John 8:12-20). Jesus again used one of the ceremonies of the feast to explain His own mission. At dusk they lit four great golden candelabra to symbolize the pillar of fire by which God guided His people

through the desert by night (Exodus 13:21). Jesus lights the way through life for all who follow Him. He strengthens His claim to be, in a unique sense, God's Son.

4. **"I am the good shepherd"** (John 10:1-21), the true shepherd. The phrase sums up so much -- the close, personal relationship between Himself and each of His followers; the absolute security we have in Him; His leadership and guidance; His constant company; His unfailing care; and His sacrificial love.
5. **"I am the resurrection and the life"** (John 11:25-27). Lazarus, His very dear friend, had died. When Jesus arrived at the family home, He responded to the sisters' grief by saying that He is the means of spiritual life. He then backed up His claim by raising Lazarus from the dead.
6. **"I am the way, the truth, and the life"** (John 14:1-14). The disciples were worried and upset by the thought of Jesus' death. Jesus Himself was concerned at the effect His death would have on them. His death meant His return to the Father. He created the approach-road for men and women to come to God.
7. **"I am the vine"** (John 15:1-17). In the Old Testament, Israel is the vine -- so often failing to yield fruit (see Galatians 5:22-23). But Jesus was the true vine, the fulfillment of God's purpose where Israel had failed. Those who believe in Him are branches. Every branch of a vine grows directly from the main "stock." When they are cut back, branches which have borne fruit are pruned to within an inch or two of the stock. They then "abide" in the stock for most of the year as it grows round them. Then the branches grow out rapidly to bear fruit again. Branches which have not borne fruit at all are cut right back and are fit only for burning. Jesus said, "There is no judgment awaiting those who trust Him. But those who do not trust Him have already been judged..." (John 3:18). They will be "cut back."

The Requirement for Salvation

While Jesus is in Jerusalem at Passover, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Him secretly at night (John 3:1-21). It is from this account found only in the Gospel of John that we learn, in Jesus' own words, that men need a spiritual re-birth in order to enter God's kingdom. The new age Jesus was announcing was not to be bound by the old cycle of physical birth and death. It was to be a radical new beginning, a new quality of life -- eternal life. Verses 16-21 contain the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus came to save, to be the Savior -- but the consequence of His coming, for those who refuse Him, is judgment.

Nicodemus' approach appeared to be well-intentioned, but his spiritual perception was inadequate. There is no evidence that Nicodemus became a believer, but it appears that he was a sympathizer. He reappeared at a Sanhedrin meeting giving advice sympathetic to Jesus' case (John 7:50-51). And later his sympathies became rather

explicit -- Nicodemus joined Joseph of Arimathea in anointing and burying the body of Christ (John 19:38-40).

Nicodemus' question was based on a misunderstanding of Jesus' spiritual intent. As is so often true in Jesus' teaching, Nicodemus' question served to transport the discussion to deeper levels of thought. In this and other such discourses, questions posed to Jesus enabled Him to transpose the topic to a higher plateau (e.g., chapter 14). Earthly understanding must give way to spiritual understanding. Here Nicodemus made these comments (vs.2, 4, 9), to each of which Jesus responded tenderly and patiently (vs.3, 5-8, 10-15).

When Nicodemus inquired about the character of Jesus' signs, Jesus replied that rebirth is a prerequisite for seeing the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus' misunderstanding (vs.4) is based on a literal understanding of the Greek phrase Jesus used -- "to be born [again] of a woman." How can anyone be born twice? But Jesus meant being born, given life, "from above." In other words, those attempting to enter the Kingdom must be born from "above," or that place from which Jesus originated. The Christian, as it were, must become like Jesus who is "from above" (vs.31). This birth must consist of water (baptism, which is the outward expression of repentance) and the Spirit (brought by Jesus). This experience cannot be quantified but, like the wind, emerges under the power of God (vs.8).

The deficits in Nicodemus' understanding are common to those who cannot understand heavenly things (vs.12; I Corinthians chapter 2). But the key that will unlock the problem is the complex of events which includes Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension (vs.13-15) -- Christ's glorification. It is the result of this work that will release the Spirit.

In further discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus explained how this gift of spiritual birth offered to him might be obtained. Belief in the Son gains eternal life (vs.15, 16, 18). Disbelief gains judgment and condemnation (vs.18, 19, 36). This sums up the worldview characteristic of John's Gospel; there is no equivocation here -- one is either attracted to or repulsed by the light (vs.19-21); one pursues either truth or evil. Yet the coming of the Son was not inspired by a desire to condemn -- it stemmed from love (vs.16). But judgment was an inevitable result. Light brings exposure (vs.20); it reveals who we really are.

Jesus, Savior, is the King of a spiritual kingdom -- that is, He rules in the hearts and lives of His people. By reason of His spiritual kingdom, Christ is called the "head" of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Christ intercedes for His people (Hebrews 7:25). He entered the Holy Place of Heaven by means of the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice that He

offered to the Father. In so doing, He represents those who put their faith in Him and reconciles the sinner to God (Hebrews 9:24). God expressed His love for mankind by sending Christ to redeem us from our sins (John 3:16). In every event, God has attempted to bring His creatures back to Him. So when Christ came into the world, there was no change in God Himself, only a change in His relation to sinners. Christ's sacrifice covered the guilt that stood between sinners and God.

Teacher Helps

Christians take for granted that the rest of the world understands our "jargon;" but this is not the case. If people in Jesus' day didn't understand, how can we assume that people in today's world will understand? Keeping in mind that there will be nonbelievers in your class, who like Nicodemus, cannot conceive of "being born again," try to put yourself in their place. How would you react if told that you had to "be born again?" If your students asked you to explain the concept, how would you answer them? How would you explain even the need to "be saved?" (Read I Peter 1:23-25 for a discussion of "being born again.")

Follow the Scriptures given in the two introductory paragraphs of the *Lesson Summary* to trace the concept of "Savior" throughout the Bible.

The following examples of Jesus' patience and tenderness may be helpful for students to read if needed. Look for others:

1. John 10:11, 14, 15, 17 -- when He explained to the crowd, "I am the Good Shepherd;"
2. John 11:35-36 -- when He dealt with Mary and Martha at Lazarus' death;
3. John 20:24-29 -- when He dealt with Thomas' disbelief;
4. John 21:15-17 -- when He confronted Peter after his denial.

The following are concepts that students will need to understand in order to comprehend the reading: *Savior, salvation, saved, born again, Pharisee, miraculous signs, eternal life.*

Set

If someone told you that you had to be born again, what would you think? What would you ask that person? How would you respond to that person?

Questions

Objective

John 3:1-21

1. Who is Jesus talking to? (vs.1)
2. Who is Nicodemus? (vs.1)
3. What did he say to Jesus? (vs.2)
4. What did Jesus tell him? (vs.3)
5. What problem did Nicodemus have with what Jesus said? (vs.4)
6. How did Jesus explain being “born again?” (vs. 5-6)
7. What is necessary in order to have eternal life? (vs. 15)
8. What caused God to give His only Son? (vs. 16)
9. Who can have eternal life? (vs.16)
10. Why did God send His Son into the world? (vs.17)
11. What is the result of not believing in Jesus? (vs.18)
12. What is the result of believing in Him? (vs.18)
13. Why do people NOT believe in Jesus? (vs.19)

Theme

1. How did Jesus seem to be dealing with Nicodemus?
2. What do you think Jesus meant by “being born again?”
3. What does it mean to “believe in Jesus?” What is it that we are supposed to “believe?” Why is it necessary to believe in Jesus?
4. Do you think Nicodemus believed in Jesus? Why or why not?
5. In verse 19, what does “light from heaven” mean?
6. What does it mean to live “in darkness?” What does “light” do?
7. Who is Jesus?
8. Who does He claim to be?
9. Who did Nicodemus claim that Jesus was?
10. Why did Jesus come? (i.e., His own view)
11. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that:
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?

- c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
- d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 8: DESPAIR

Scripture

Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:44, 47-53

Objectives

During this lesson, the student will learn to:

- Understand the nature of despair and recognize its symptoms;
- Respond to the temptation to despair with hope and confidence by following the example of Jesus Christ; and
- Trust in Christ and rely on Him in dealing with depression and despair.

Summary

Prior to this experience, Jesus had just been welcomed into the city of Jerusalem by throngs of people (some of whom were His followers, but most of whom were not). Shouts of praise for Jesus were heard as He triumphantly entered the city – the happening which we celebrate on Palm Sunday. Jesus was not fooled by this apparent adoration and acceptance by the crowds. He knew that most of the tide of feeling of the crowd would turn against Him within a few days just as it had seemingly turned for Him at this time (John 2:23-25). But, the disciples were taken in by all the praise and adulation. It was like a mountaintop experience for them. Little did they know they would be plunged into a shocking experience and into the depths of despair, even though Jesus had tried to forewarn them!

This visit to Jerusalem was for the purpose of celebrating the Passover with the disciples. It was His last night – so much to say, so much to do. It is likely that Psalm 143:4-5 had been going through Jesus' mind during that evening:

“So My Spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed. I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all Your works and consider what Your hands have done.”

He and the disciples gathered for the Passover meal they had each celebrated from the time they were young – yet this night Jesus adds something new. His hands broke the bread. His hands held up the cup. Twelve hours later, those hands that broke bread and held the cup would be nailed to a cross. Body broken and blood shed – to provide the forgiveness for us, out of love, and free us from slavery to sin.

They completed the Passover dinner. Judas left to finalize his arrangements to betray Jesus. Jesus and the remaining disciples departed the upper room and went to the

Garden of Gethsemane where He frequently went to pray (Luke 21:37). (“Gethsemane” means “oil press,” and would indicate that a press for making oil out of the olives, stood there.)

Jesus’ went into the Garden of Gethsemane carrying a load of despair –

1. He was troubled over the events to come;
2. He was grieved over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44);
3. He knew His disciples would lose their faith in Him that night;
4. He knew that one of the disciples, Judas, would betray Him;
5. He knew that Peter would deny Him even though Peter had assured Jesus of his loyalty (Peter was sincere, but he didn’t know his own weakness);
6. He knew that all the disciples would forsake Him and would “runaway” (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50).

As they entered the garden, Jesus spoke to eight of the eleven disciples to wait and watch; perhaps against premature surprise (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32). The great crisis was at hand, and it was casting its dark shadow on the spirit of the Lord. In this hour of the power of darkness He felt that He must seek comfort from His Father. He took with Him the three (Peter, James, and John) who had always been a kind of inner circle, who had been witnesses to His transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-11; Luke 9:28-36) and to one of His greatest miracles (Mark 5:37-43). He told them to “pray” (Luke 22:40) and to “watch” (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34). A few verses later He emphasized the importance of prayer in the disciples’ lives.

While Jesus agonized in prayer, the disciples fell asleep. Three times He returned to find them asleep. That He prayed three times indicates the intensity of His feeling of despair. We should not forget that Jesus was, after all, fully human as well as fully divine. The motivation for His return to the disciples may have been the craving for human sympathy in His hour of awful agony. However, each time Jesus returned He found the three disciples asleep. Why were they asleep? Luke says it was because they were “exhausted from grief” (22:45). Matthew (26:43) and Mark (14:40) imply that they were tired – “they just couldn’t keep their eyes open.” Jesus said, “the spirit is willing, the body is weak” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). This alludes to the physical needs of the body which overcome the spiritual weaknesses that humanity is plagued with (the means by which Satan tried to tempt Jesus). This would seem to be the case inasmuch as Jesus told Peter “to pray that you will not be overcome with temptation” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40). And Luke records that Jesus repeats it a few verses later (22:46). Jesus did not direct them to pray that NO temptation would befall them, but that they might not be overcome by temptation. The need of such prayer was shown by Peter’s denial. How Jesus’ reproachful response to finding them asleep must

have lingered in Peter's mind after he realized that he had denied Jesus three times just as Jesus predicted he would.

It is Luke who depicts most vividly the agony of Christ's prayer in the garden. So intense was Jesus' last plea – God willing He might be spared the terrible suffering about to begin -- that His sweat fell like great drops of blood. What was it He shrank from? Surely it wasn't simply physical suffering. The "cup" referred to a form of execution in the ancient world; it was filled with hemlock, a poisonous drink. In Jesus' case it represented the betrayal, the trial, the mockery, the scourging, the cross – all of which He knew was coming. His request, in prayer, was that He be spared this suffering; yet He was so committed to His mission on earth as Savior, that he further prayed, "I want Your will, not Mine" (Matthew 26:39, 42; Luke 22:42; Mark 14:36), an example of perfect faith – the kind of faith required for answers to prayer. We can never know just what He faced during that lonely hour. But the prospect which filled Him with such horror was God's judgment on our sin – the penalty which would have been ours had Christ not paid it for us (I Peter 2:24).

Was Jesus' prayer answered? The writer of Hebrews says it was (5:7). Luke's account indicates that an angel came and strengthened Him (22:43). Finally His soul was calmed and He was ready to face His death and all it would mean (Matthew 26:44-46; Mark 14:41-42). The time of despair has passed. He was once more utterly in command.

At this point Judas, who knew where to find Jesus (John 18:2), arrived with a company of armed men. He identified Jesus for the soldiers by kissing Him (Matthew 26:47-49; Mark 14:44-45; Luke 22:47-48). No man can ever have been so completely in control of such a situation as was Jesus at this time. He expressed only love for the traitor. When Peter drew His sword and cut off the ear of one of the temple servants (John 18:10), Jesus healed the injured man (Luke 22:51). Our sense of justice certainly would have dictated something quite different from Jesus' compassionate attitude towards the situation. But Jesus put into action what He had taught them in the Sermon on the Mount about seeking revenge and loving one's enemies (Matthew 5:38-48) – exhibiting a powerful model to the disciples.

It is somewhat incongruous that the temple authorities brought a "mob" (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47; John says a "battalion of ... soldiers" 18:3; KJV says "multitude") with them to arrest one person and in the middle of the night at that! Jesus seemed almost to have been amused at their coming in the night and with such a large group of arresting soldiers. Jesus knew the religious authorities were afraid of the crowds! If the temple authorities had tried to arrest Him during the daytime, they knew they might have incited the crowds against themselves (Matthew 21:46, 26:3-4; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 20:19)! Jesus told the arresting "mob" that He had at His command "... more than twelve legions of angels ..." (NIV Matthew 26:53; NLT says "... thousands of

angels ... ”). Roman legions were made up of more than 6,000 soldiers. That would make more than 72,000 angels that Jesus could have called upon for rescue!

As Jesus was led away for trial and humiliation, and ultimately to His death, He knew that once again He had defeated Satan’s urging to protect Himself from harm and suffering and thus giving in to His human nature. His divine nature had won out again over Satan with the help of His Heavenly Father. He had come to fulfill the Scriptures. He knew it must be so. He knew, also, as He had told His disciples that He would win out over death.

The arrest of Jesus brought the twelve disciples to a state of despair – so much so that the eleven “ran away” – a despair that was not to be dispelled until some days later. Judas was driven into such deep despair that he committed suicide.

Teacher Helps

Read and compare the four Gospel accounts of the following:

1. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19);
2. The Last Supper with the disciples before He was arrested (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-38);
3. The background of the betrayal of Judas (Matthew 10:4, 26:1-5, 14-16, 20-25; Mark 3:19, 14:10-11, 18-21; Luke 6:16, 22:1-6, 21-23; John 6:70-71, 12:4-6, 13:2, 21-30) and Judas’ suicide (Matthew 27:3-5; Acts 1:16-18);
4. The time in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:39-54; John 18:1-11);
5. Jesus’ arrest and trial (Matthew 26:57-27:31; Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-15; Luke 22:54-23:25; John 18:12-19:16);
6. Peter’s denial (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27).

A careful reading of Jesus’ prayer in John chapter 17 will give you an insight into Jesus’ deep concern for His disciples and what they were going to face, not only in the days to come, but also in the years to come after His ascension.

Reread the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapters 5-7) to remind yourself of what Jesus preached about relationships with others (e.g., Matthew 5:43-48, this is one thing He preached about seeking revenge). It will give you an insight into Jesus’ actions during this period of despair.

Since this lesson leads into the death and resurrection of Jesus, read ahead for the events yet to come to see the connection with Jesus’ arrest (Matthew 27:32-28:20; Mark 15:21-16:19; Luke 23:26-24:49; John 19:16-21:24).

Several vocabulary concepts could give difficulty. It is important that students understand the full meaning of the following words for complete understanding of the message of the scripture: *despair, Gethsemane, olive grove, anguish, distress, "cup of suffering," watch, grief, soul, betrayal/betrayer, fervently, agony, and mob.*

Set

What does a soldier do on guard duty? Why is he on guard duty? What would happen to him if he went to sleep while on duty?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:44

1. Where is Jesus? (vs. 36)
2. Why did Jesus come to Gethsemane? (vs. 36)
3. Who was with Him? (vs. 36-37)
4. Who did He take further into the garden with Him? (vs. 37)
5. What did He tell Peter, James and John to do? (vs. 38)
6. What was wrong with Jesus? (vs. 38b)
7. How many times did Jesus go further into the olive grove to pray? (vs. 39, 41, 44)
8. When Jesus returned each time, how did He find Peter, James, and John? (vs. 40, 43, 45)
9. What did He say to them? (vs. 40b-41, 45b)
10. What was Jesus praying about? (vs. 39b, 42, 44)
11. What was Jesus' mood while He was praying? (vs. 39b, 42, Luke 22:44)

Luke 22:47-53

12. Who came to Jesus and what did this person do? (vs. 47)
13. What happened to Jesus next? (vs. 50b)
14. What happened to the High Priest's servant? (vs. 51)
15. How did Jesus respond to this? (vs. 51)

Theme

Think back to "Jesus as Teacher" (Matthew 5:43-48) and what He said about revenge – how did He apply His own teaching to this situation? What would have been justice in this situation? What would you have done?

1. Why do you think that Jesus didn't work a miracle here and strike them all dead?

2. What do you think about Judas? What was wrong with Judas greeting Jesus with a kiss?
3. How important was prayer in Jesus' life? How do you know?
4. How important is prayer in the life of Jesus' followers?
5. How are we "sleepy?" How is "temptation" related to being "sleepy?"
6. Who is Jesus?
7. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
8. What do people think about Him?
9. How do people respond to Jesus?
10. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
11. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is the passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

Lesson 9: HIS DEATH and RESURRECTION

Scripture

Matthew 20:17-19; Romans 4:25; Luke 24:13-17, 19b-24; John 21:1-17

Objectives

- Jesus' death took place so that they may have eternal life.
- The resurrected Jesus relates to His followers intimately, personally, socially, and spiritually.
- Jesus is still the great teacher.
- Love is the highest priority as Jesus deals with Peter and us.

Summary

Jesus began well ahead of time to prepare His disciples for the suffering that lay ahead of Him (and them). There were several times He predicted His death and described in detail what was to come (Matthew 17:22-23, 20:17-19; Mark 8:31-33, 10:32-34; Luke 9:21-22, 44-45; John 16:16-20) -- none of which the disciples understood. Jesus fulfilled the role of the servant of the Lord in suffering humiliation and death (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). He laid down His life as a ransom to save men from death (Mark 10:45; John 10:11-18). Jesus voluntarily went to His death, not as a defeated hero, but victorious, as He overcame the despair He experienced in the garden. The result of what would appear to us as a tragic moral decision on His part was in reality the climactic step of His consciously chosen way to triumph and glorification. It is this decision that brings us to a relationship with Jesus. Accounts of Jesus' trial and execution are found in Matthew 27:11-56; Mark 14:53-15:1-41; Luke 22:54-23:1-49; and John 18:12-19:37.

Jesus' death brought His disciples to a state of despair and fear for their own lives (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50; John 20:19). They had never fully understood that Jesus, as Messiah, was not that glorious king who would reestablish the throne of David and end the reign of the Romans over Israel (Luke 23:21). Nor had they understood that His death was required for Him to fulfill His mission on earth and become the Savior of the world. But, in three days time this was to change. ¹(See NOTE in Teacher Helps.)

In the stillness of that first Easter morning the extraordinary news gradually broke; the light dawned. The tomb was empty. Jesus was alive! The details given in the four Gospel accounts of what took place on that momentous morning are difficult to harmonize (Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). The fact

that it happened is clear and has stood up to the most searching examination. Like reports of any major event, it is difficult to piece together the information of a number of independent witnesses. But it is obvious that all the sources had the same basic information to tell. No matter what the variation in detail, the main facts are absolutely clear – God raised Jesus from the dead! ²(See NOTE in Teacher Helps.)

As day broke on that Sunday morning, Jesus' followers were shadow-men, at best only in the shadows and in hiding (John 20:19). When Jesus died, the group became a body with its heart wrenched out. They were terribly afraid. They were without hope. They did not expect a sequel to the story (Mark 9:10) – death was final in their experience! Peter, the natural leader, was crushed beyond bearing by the knowledge that he had denied Christ and that he had let Jesus down by going to sleep in Jesus' hours of agony in the garden.

Yet within twelve hours everything changed. Not only was the tomb empty, but Jesus Himself was seen on at least five different occasions by more than sixteen of His followers. In fact, Jesus was seen over a period of forty days by more than 500 (1 Corinthians 15:5-9). It really was Jesus, not a ghost (Luke 24:39). They recognized Him (Matthew 28:9-10, 16-17; Mark 16:9-11, 12-13; Luke 24:31; John 20:16, 20, 28, 21:7). They saw the crucifixion scars (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 27). He ate with them (Luke 24:41-43; John 21:13; Acts 1:4). Despondency and mourning became things of the past. Fear was gone, and in its place there was indescribable joy. In spite of this evidence, the religious authorities instructed the soldiers guarding the tomb to put out the word that His disciples had come during the night while they were asleep and stolen His body (Matthew 28:11-15). Some guards! Matthew 28:4 tells us the truth: that the guards were so afraid when they saw the angels who came to roll away the stone that they “fell into a dead faint!”

The two on the Emmaus road (a town about 11.1 kilometers from Jerusalem) were typical of the rest. Like the rest of Jesus' followers, they were sorrowful and grieving, and like the rest of His followers, they had forgotten Jesus' promise that on the third day He would be raised from the dead. Luke gives us this account as taking place on the same day of the resurrection (Luke 24:13-34). The men didn't recognize Him. It would appear that it was part of God's plan for them to recognize Jesus in their own time (vs.16); it had taken three years for Jesus' message to penetrate His followers' minds and be understood. This day was no different! They still didn't understand!

Jesus noticed their countenances (vs.17). They, assuming that Jesus was a stranger, proceeded to relate to Him, with accuracy, all that had happened in the last three days. Verse 21 reveals their remaining misconception of Jesus' mission on earth. Their account stopped short with rumors of His resurrection. There was no evidence that they believed the rumors. Jesus, still not recognized by them, was impatient with their lack of faith and disbelief and pointed out to them the prophecies (that they as Jews knew)

that talked about His mission and sacrificial death. Still, they were not shaken out of their despondency. As they neared their home in Emmaus, and in keeping with the Jewish custom of hospitality, they asked Him to spend the night and share a meal with them. ³(See NOTE in Teacher Helps.) He agreed, and when He “broke the bread, and gave thanks” (vs.30), suddenly they were able to recognize Him (this was the first clue) – blessing the bread was a practice of Jesus’ that they had witnessed many times. The second clue was probably His hands – when He handed them the bread they undoubtedly saw the nail prints. At that point He disappeared. Excitedly, they immediately left their food and went to Jerusalem to the disciples to testify to His resurrection. Verse 32 might be interpreted as their saying, “Something was familiar about this man, but we couldn’t put our finger on it!” or “Something about this man rang a bell!” Like many of us, they might even have meant, “Oh, we knew it all the time!”

Another account of Jesus being seen by His followers is found in the Gospel according to John (21:1-23). John tells the story from experience because He was there. He tells us how Jesus came to seven of the disciples as they were fishing -- just as in the old days. John remembered how many fish they caught and their surprise and relief at finding the net intact. He remembered how Jesus gave Peter the chance to cancel out his three-fold denial with the three-times-repeated question -- “Do you love me?” – and how Jesus restored Peter to his old place as leader and gave him the task of caring for His people. Peter became a new man as a result.

It was this experience with Jesus that brought Peter face to face with the One Whom he denied and the fact of his denial. Peter must have been terribly despondent with the memory of His denial of Jesus and how he had let Jesus down during the time of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is during the first few hours after Jesus was arrested that Peter, in spite of his earlier resolve, denied Jesus - not one time, but three times -- (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:15-27). Jesus had told Peter that he would deny Him, but Peter was brought up short when it happened exactly as Jesus had said it would (Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:31-38). Peter had been so sure that he would never deny Jesus. Jesus turned and looked at Peter after the third time. This “look” must have lingered with Peter all through Jesus’ death and the aftermath! If Jesus had spoken reproachfully to the three disciples after finding them asleep, how this must also have lingered in the mind of Peter along with the memory of his denial of Jesus. Peter wept bitter tears (Mark 14:72; Luke 22:62), knowing what he had done.

And now Peter is confronted, not once, but three times, with the question “Do you love Me?” The verb in the Aramaic that Jesus used (*agapa’o*), which we translate as “love,” meant “to love in a sacrificial way.” The first time, Jesus adds “...more than these” to His question. Peter is probably somewhat in chagrin; he answers, “Yes, Lord, You know I love You.” Peter didn’t use the same verb for “love” as Jesus did; the verb Peter

used (*philet'o*) meant “love as for a friend.” Was Peter sidestepping the issue? Didn't Peter know the difference between these two verbs? Peter likely understood the two verbs. Was Peter unable to say that he loved Jesus in a sacrificial way? Perhaps Peter was remembering Jesus' discussion of the cost of discipleship when He said, first, “love me more than you love life” (Luke 14:26); secondly, “... the one who would follow Me would have to ‘carry his own cross’” (Luke 14:27); and third, “... a follower ‘must give up everything for Me’...” (Luke 14:33). Perhaps Peter was remembering that Jesus said “the good shepherd gives up his life for the sheep (John 10:11).” We can only speculate as to what was going through Peter's mind and his interpretation of the questions of Jesus. The second time the question is asked, the question and Peter's response are the same. It was not until the third time the question is asked that Peter began to be humbled; the scripture said that he “was grieved” (John 21:17b). Jesus used a different verb the third time – the same verb (*philet'o*) for “love” that Peter had used the first two times. Was Peter grieved because Jesus was pressuring him? Or was Peter grieved because of his own failings? It was probably at this time that Peter was fully confronted with his denial of Jesus, recognition of the fact that there was a weakness in his own life, and with the realization of what love for Jesus meant. Peter recognized this and surrendered himself completely to the control of Jesus by saying, “Lord, You know everything.” Why did Jesus ask Peter this question and why three times? Was it truly to test Peter's love for Him, as we might assume on the surface? Was it to point out to Peter that he was human and that humans have weaknesses? Or was it to remind Peter of what “love” for Him meant? Remember how Jesus told Peter to “pray so you won't be tempted?” Peter sounded cocky, before the crucifixion, when he assured Jesus (and himself) that he would never deny Jesus; but this time the cockiness vanished.

Whatever the reason for the questions and Peter's answers, it became a confirming experience for Peter. Jesus had answered Peter all three times with “feed my lambs – feed my sheep,” which might be interpreted to imply that Jesus was giving to Peter the responsibility of shepherd – of leader. It was vital that Peter and the rest of the disciples should follow Jesus' own example in dealing with the little ones under their care. And finally Jesus told Peter, “follow me,” just as He had three years earlier. Jesus had confirmed Peter's position as disciple, as student, and now gave him the responsibility of carrying on His ministry in the world and spreading the Good News. The other disciples, who undoubtedly overheard this conversation, were likewise confirmed and strengthened by it.

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He turned over His ministry to His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:7-8) in what we usually call “The Great Commission,” with the promise that He would be with them in the Person of the Holy Spirit. This indeed was confirmation for these disciples who had run away and had forsaken Him in fear for their own lives. This was a turning point in the disciples'

lives – they now understood what Jesus’ mission was and what His death and resurrection meant – and were ready to take over this ministry. We find Peter and the rest of the disciples early in Acts with new vigor and assurance when they (Peter especially) boldly and without fear spoke out in Jerusalem to the throng of Jews assembled there (Acts 2). The Scriptures say that “about three thousand in all” were added to the church that day (Acts 2:41).

Subsequent Christian history rests on the historicity of the resurrection. Nothing else can account for the facts. Because of the resurrection we have victory over sin and have eternal life (Romans 6:9-11; I Corinthians 15:1-20). If there had been no resurrection, there could have been no miracles, and there would be no hope (I Corinthians 15:12-19).

Teacher Helps

This is the final lesson – the lesson that should bring home to students the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the hope that they can have. Prepare carefully and prayerfully for this final evangelistic effort.

As you read these scripture passages, put yourself in the story and ask yourself how **you** would have:

1. Reacted when Jesus was arrested in the garden (stand up and fight or run away?);
2. Responded during the trial, in Peter’s place, if you had been asked whether you were one of Jesus’ followers;
3. Reacted when the women told you that Jesus had risen from the dead;
4. Responded if Jesus had asked you, “Do you love me?”

Study these scripture passages carefully, asking yourself what kinds of questions and concerns that your students will have. Try to anticipate those questions and the kinds of answers that you will have.

The following vocabulary items may cause students difficulty. Be prepared to note students’ confusion as you ask the questions below and be prepared to either explain these words or to aid students in other ways: *Son of Man, crucified, betrayed/betrayer, mocked, sin, Emmaus, Messiah, prophets, Moses, eternal life.*

The following notes from the *Lesson Summary* offer further explanation of details from the scripture passages.

¹The prophecies, including what Jesus Himself said (Matthew 12:39-41), indicated that Jesus would be “in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” There were

times that Jesus said “three days,” “the third day,” “three days later,” and “on the third day” (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; John 2:19-22; Luke 24:7, 46). If one takes “three days” literally, assuming that it means 3 x 24 hours = 72 hours, then the accounts of His burial and resurrection do not correlate with the prophecies. That would put His resurrection sometime on Monday (the second day of the week). The Scriptures are very clear that He was buried quickly in order to be buried before the Sabbath started, which was at 6 p.m. on the sixth day of the week – which would be Friday based on present-day Jewish Sabbath practices. If we consider Friday, Saturday, and Sunday on a calendar, it amounts to three days – buried on Friday, in the grave on Saturday, raised on the third day -- would agree with Sunday. As for the “three nights,” we must assume that there is something in the meaning that we just can’t grasp, because obviously, if we assume that He was buried on Friday and raised from the dead on Sunday morning (the first day of the week), there were only two nights in the grave. There may a student who will quickly do the arithmetic and raise questions about the validity of the Scriptures. Be prepared!

²A note here about the verb “raise” is in order. We normally say that Jesus rose from the dead, which puts the emphasis on Jesus’ action. Did He “raise” himself? A rereading of Mark 16:6 and Matthew 28:5-7 will reveal that Jesus was “raised from the dead.” Elsewhere the accounts say that Jesus “rose” or that “He has risen” (“rose” being the past tense form of “rise,” and “risen” being the past participle of “rise”). This may seem like a discussion on semantics, but there is a theological issue here. There are two English verbs “raise” and “rise.” Rise means to “get up from a setting or lying position,” literally “to move oneself.” Raise means “to cause to be raised, to be moved by an agent.” The point is that God raised Jesus from the dead. It was God’s plan. God started the action by raising Jesus from the dead and Jesus completed the action by responding (as did the paralytic when Jesus said “get up, pick up your mat, and walk” – Jesus raised the man, and the man got up (or rose up) (Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25)). Just as Jesus was always obedient to God’s commands, He was obedient this time also.

³The custom of hospitality can be traced back to the Old Testament. Three Old Testament people “entertained angels without knowing it.” Abraham (Genesis 18:1ff); Gideon (Judges 6:11ff); and Manoah and his wife, who were the parents of Samson (Judges 13:2ff). In Abraham’s day (and in Jesus’ day), a person’s reputation was largely connected to his hospitality – the sharing of home and food. Even strangers were to be treated as highly honored guests. Meeting another’s need for food or shelter was and still is one of the most immediate and practical ways to obey God. It is also a time-honored relationship builder. Hebrews 13:1-2 suggests that we also might actually entertain angels (as Abraham did).

Set

Have you ever known of anyone being raised from the dead? What would happen if someone announced to the world that so-and-so, who was dead, was now alive? How would you feel if someone told you that this person had been raised from the dead? What would you tell the messenger? What would have to happen before you would believe it? Would you then believe it? Why or why not?

Questions

Objective

Matthew 20:17-19

1. To whom was Jesus talking? (vs.17)
2. What did Jesus say was going to happen? (vs. 18-19)

Romans 4:25

3. Why was Jesus going to die?

Luke 24:13-17

4. What happened? (vs. 13-15)
5. What did Jesus say to them? (vs.17)

Luke 24:19b-24

6. So, what were they sad about? (vs.19b)
7. How did they describe Jesus? (vs.19c)
8. What did they say had happened to Jesus? (vs.20)
9. After He was crucified, what did the men say had happened? (vs. 22-24)

John 21:1-17

10. Where the disciples and what were they doing? (vs.1-2)
11. What was the result of their fishing? (vs.3c)
12. Who came upon the scene? (vs.4) who did the disciples think He was? (vs.4)
13. What did He ask them? (vs.5)
14. Then what did Jesus tell them to do? (vs.6)
15. What did they do and what was the result? (vs.6b)
16. What did Peter and the rest of the disciples do?
17. What did Jesus ask Peter? (vs. 15-17)
18. How many times did He ask Peter this?
19. What was Peter's answer to Jesus?
20. How did Jesus respond to Peter each time?

Theme

1. Why did Jesus die? For whom did Jesus die?
2. What is necessary to claim the eternal life that Jesus died for?

3. What is meant by “eternal life?”
4. Why was Jesus raised from the dead?
5. What caused one of the disciples to realize that it was Jesus?
6. What evidence is there that Jesus was still the same Jesus after the resurrection?
7. What did the disciples learn from Jesus in this post-resurrection event?
8. What in this passage would seem to indicate that love is a high priority?
9. How do you think Peter felt about the questions that Jesus asked him? Why did Jesus ask Peter these questions?
10. Why did Jesus seem to link “love” with “feeding sheep?” What did Jesus mean by “feed my sheep?”
11. What have you learned about Jesus from these events?
12. Who is Jesus?
13. Who does He claim to be? (or, Who do others claim that He is?)
14. What do people think about Him?
15. How do people respond to Jesus?
16. Why did He come? (i.e., His own view)
17. What are His priorities?

Subjective

1. What is this passage saying about Jesus?
2. What does this passage say to you? (e.g., meaning, setting, purpose, message)
3. What is there in this passage that
 - a. Causes you to be thankful?
 - b. Causes you to confess?
 - c. Causes you to pray for someone else?
 - d. Gives you new insight for change and spiritual growth?

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APPENDIX A: PGM EVALUATION

BIBLE STUDY: VISITS WITH JESUS 2013

Using the following sliding scale format, answer each question by marking the appropriate place on the scale. Feel free to make comments.

Please circle the level class you were working with.

Beginner 1	Beginner 2	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate	Advanced
1	2	3	4	5

Part I: Questions 1 through 7 pertain to the PRINTED MATERIALS.

1. In general, what is your overall evaluation of this Bible Study Curriculum?

Poor			Good				Excellent		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. How well achieved was the overall goal throughout the curriculum?

Overall Goal: “To expose every student to the many relationships Christ has with people by building on the chronological events in His life and ministry, providing a foundation from these visits with Him, and equipping students for those unique visits in life crises when Christ will visit them.”

Not achieved			Partly achieved				Well achieved		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. How well was the Bible Study theme carried out throughout the lessons?

Theme: “Visits with Jesus” deals with the events of Christ, chronologically from birth to resurrection, as revealed in Scripture.

Not well			Fairly well				Well carried out		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. How well were the over-all objectives carried out throughout the lessons?

Objectives

Students will:

- Meet Jesus through the scripture readings.
- Learn why Jesus came to earth.
- Learn how Jesus perceived Himself and His mission.
- Observe what different people thought about Jesus.
- Observe how different people responded to Jesus.
- Observe the way in which Jesus relates to people around Him.
- Learn how Jesus made a difference in the lives of those He touched.
- Learn how a relationship with Jesus can change their own lives.
- Learn concepts relating to Christianity and how to apply them in their own lives.
- Learn the different ways in which they can develop and maintain a relationship with Jesus.
- Come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and follow Him.
- Grow through these “visits” with Jesus.

Not achieved			Partly achieved				Well achieved		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. How helpful to you were the Lesson Summaries?

Not helpful			Somewhat helpful				Quite helpful		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. How /helpful to you were the Teacher Helps?

Not helpful			Somewhat helpful				Quite helpful		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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7. How well were the objectives for each lesson covered in the lesson materials?

Not much			Partly covered				Well covered		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Part II: Please respond to items #8 through #12 regarding the use of THE BIBLE STUDIES IN YOUR CLASS.

8. Did you attempt to use the discussion format? (If "yes," or "sometimes," please respond to Items #9 and #10. If "no," proceed to Item #11.)

No			Sometimes				Yes		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. How well did students participate in class discussions?

Some students participated Most of the class participated All students participated

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

10. How well did your interpreter handle the discussion format?

Not well Fairly well Quite well

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

11. How well achieved were the objectives of each lesson?

Not much
achieved

Partly achieved

Well

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

12. How well did the content of the lessons fit into the two hours provided daily?

I often
ran out of time

I usually
covered the whole lesson

I was able
cover each lesson

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

COMMENTS

Appendix B: SCRIPTURE

Lesson #1: Birth and Dedication

Luke 2

1. At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.
2. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)
3. All returned to their own towns to register for this census.
4. And because Joseph was a descendent of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.
5. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time.
6. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.
7. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.
8. That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep.
9. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened,
10. but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone!"
11. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!
12. And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"
13. Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God:
14. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors."
15. 15. When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."
16. They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.
17. Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.
18. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished.
19. But Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often.
20. The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said.

21. Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.
22. Then it was time for the purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.
23. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord."
24. So they offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."
25. Now there was a man named Simeon who lived in Jerusalem. He was a righteous man and very devout. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he eagerly expected the Messiah to come and rescue Israel.
26. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah.
27. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required,
28. Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,
29. "Lord, now I can die in peace! As you promised me.
30. I have seen the Savior
31. You have given to all people.
32. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

36. Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher, and was very old. She was a widow, for her husband had died when they had been married only seven years.
37. She was now eighty-four years old. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer.
38. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about Jesus to everyone who had been waiting for the promised King to come and deliver Jerusalem.

MATTHEW 2

1. Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem asking,
2. "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him."
9. After this interview the wise men went their way. Once again the star appeared to them, guiding them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was.
10. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!

11. They entered the house where the child and his mother, Mary, were, and they fell down before him and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Lesson #2: Baptism

MATTHEW 3

1. In those days John the Baptist began preaching in the Judean wilderness. His message was,
2. "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."
5. People from Jerusalem and from every section of Judea and from all over the Jordan Valley went out to the wilderness to hear him preach.
6. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.
11. I baptize with water those who turn from their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am – so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
13. Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John didn't want to baptize him. "I am the one who needs to be

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baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

14. But Jesus said, "It must be done, because we must do everything that is right." So then John baptized him.
15. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.
16. After his baptism, Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.
17. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him."

ROMANS 10

9. For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

10. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.
11. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed.”

MARK 16

16. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.

I PETER 3

21. And this is a picture of baptism, which now saves you by the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from a clean conscience.

JOHN 3

5. Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit."

ACTS 2

38. Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

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Lesson #3: Temptation

MATTHEW 4

1. Then Jesus was led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted there by the Devil.
2. For forty days and forty nights he ate nothing and became very hungry.
3. Then the Devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change these stones into loaves of bread."
4. But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God.'"
5. Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple,
6. And said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He orders his angels to protect you. And they will hold you with their hands to keep you from striking your foot on a stone.'"
7. Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'"
8. Next the Devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him the nations of the world and all their glory.
9. "I will give it all to you," he said, "If you will only kneel down and worship me."
10. "Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him.'"

HEBREWS 2

18. Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted.

I CORINTHIANS 10

13. But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

LUKE 22

40. There he told them, "Pray that you will not be overcome by temptation."

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Lesson #4: Choosing the Disciples

JOHN 1

35. The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples.
36. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and then declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!"
37. Then John's two disciples turned and followed Jesus.
40. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of those men who had heard what John said and then followed Jesus.
41. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon, and tell him. "We have found the Messiah" (which means the Christ).
42. Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "You are Simon, the son of John – but you will be called Cephas" (which means Peter).
43. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, be my disciple."
44. Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.
45. Philip went off to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the

prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the Son of Joseph from Nazareth."

46. "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from there!" "Just come and see for yourself," Philip said.
47. As they approached, Jesus said, "Here comes an honest man – a true son of Israel."
48. "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. And Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."
49. Nathanael replied, "Teacher, you are the Son of God – the King of Israel!"
50. Jesus asked him, "Do you believe all this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."
51. Then he said, "The truth is you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down upon the Son of Man."

MATTHEW 4

21. a little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father. And he called them to come, too.
22. They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

MATTHEW 9

9. As Jesus was going down the road, he saw Matthew sitting at his tax-collection booth. "Come,

be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

LUKE 6

12. One day soon afterward Jesus went to a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night.
13. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles.

MARK 3

14. He sent them out to preach,
15. And he gave them authority to cast out demons.
16. These are the names of the twelve he chose: Simon (he renamed him Peter),
17. James and John (the sons of Zebedee, but Jesus nicknamed them “Sons of Thunder”),
18. Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon (the Zealot”), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

LUKE 14

25. 25. Great crowds were following Jesus. He turned around and said to them
26. “If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.
27. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me.”

33. “So no one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me.
34. Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again?
35. Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for fertilizer. It is thrown away. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!”

MATTHEW 10

1. Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.
8. “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!”

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Lesson # 5: Teacher

MATTHEW 5

1. One day as the crowds were gathering, Jesus went up the mountainside with his disciples and sat down to teach them.
2. This is what he taught them:
3. “God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them.
4. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5. God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them.
6. God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full.
7. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
8. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God,
9. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.
10. God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
11. God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers.
12. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too.
13. You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.
14. You are the light of the world – like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see.
15. Don’t hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all.
16. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.
17. “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them.
18. I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God’s law will remain until its purpose is achieved.
19. So if you break the smallest commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
20. But I warn you – unless you obey God better than the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees do, you can’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all!

21. You have heard that the Law of Moses says, 'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.'
22. But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.
23. So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,
24. leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.
25. Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and thrown in jail.
26. I assure you that you won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.
39. You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.'
39. But I say, don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too.
40. If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too.

41. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles.
42. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow."

MATTHEW 7

7. "Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened.
8. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.
9. You parents – if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead?
10. Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not!
11. If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."
24. "Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.
25. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock.
26. But anyone who hears my teaching and ignores it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand.

27. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will fall with a mighty crash.”
28. After Jesus finished speaking, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,
29. For he taught as one who had real authority – quite unlike the teachers of religious law.

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Lesson #6: Miracles

MATTHEW 4

23. Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues, preaching everywhere the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed people who had every kind of sickness and disease.
24. News about him spread far beyond the borders of Galilee so that the sick were soon coming to be healed from as far away as Syria. And whatever their illness and pain, or if they were possessed by demons, or were epileptics, or were paralyzed – he healed them all.
25. Large crowds followed him wherever he went – people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

John 2

1. The next day Jesus' mother was a guest at a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee.
2. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration.
3. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother spoke to him about the problem. "They have no more wine," she told him.

4. "How does that concern you and me?" Jesus asked. "My time has not yet come."
5. But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."
6. Six stone waterpots were standing there; they were used for Jewish ceremonial purposes and held twenty to thirty gallons each.
7. Jesus told the servants "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled to the brim,
8. He said, "Dip some out and take it to the master of ceremonies." So they followed his instructions.
9. When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over.
10. "Usually a host serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone is full and doesn't care, he brings out the less expensive wines. But you have kept the best until now!"
11. This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first display of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

John 5

1. Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days.
2. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches.

3. Crowds of sick people – blind, lame, or paralyzed – lay on the porches.
5. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.
6. When Jesus saw him and knew how long he had been ill, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”
7. “I can’t sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am trying to get there, someone else always gets in ahead of me.”
8. Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your sleeping mat, and walk!”
9. Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up the mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath day.
10. So the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! It’s illegal to carry that sleeping mat!”
11. He replied, “The man who healed me said to me, ‘Pick up your sleeping mat and walk.’”
12. “Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.
13. The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.
16. So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules.
17. But Jesus replied, “My Father never stops working, so why should I?”
18. So the Jewish leaders tried all the more to kill him. In addition to disobeying the Sabbath rules, he had spoken of God as his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.
19. Jesus replied, “I assure you, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.
20. For the Father loves the Son and tells him everything he is doing, and the Son will do far greater things than healing this man. You will be astonished at what he does.
21. He will even raise from the dead anyone he wants to, just as the Father does.”

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Lesson # 7: Savior

JOHN 3

1. After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee,
2. came to speak with Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you."
3. Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."
4. "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"
5. Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.
6. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven.
7. So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again.
8. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."
9. "What do you mean?" Nicodemus asked.
10. Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things?
11. I assure you, I am telling you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe us.
12. But if you don't even believe me when I tell you about things that happen here on earth, how can you possibly believe if I tell you what is going on in heaven?
13. For only I, the Son of Man, have come to earth and will return to heaven again.
14. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so I, the Son of Man, must be lifted up on a pole.
15. So that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life.
16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
17. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.
18. There is no judgment awaiting those who trust him. But those who do not trust him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of God.
19. Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.
20. They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness. They stay away from the light for fear

their sins will be exposed and they will be punished.

21. But those who do what is right come to the light gladly, so everyone can see that they are doing what God wants.”

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Lesson #8: Despair

MATTHEW 26

36. Then Jesus brought them to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, "Sit here while I go on ahead to pray."
37. He took Peter, and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he began to be filled with anguish and deep distress.
38. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me."
39. He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine."
40. Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you stay awake and watch with me even one hour?"
41. Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!"
42. Again he left them and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away until I drink it, your will be done."
43. He returned to them again and found them sleeping, for they just couldn't keep their eyes open.

44. So he went back to pray a third time, saying the same things again.
45. Then he came to the disciples and said, "Still sleeping? Still resting? Look, the time has come. I, the Son of Man, am betrayed into the hands of sinners.
46. Up, let's be going. See, my betrayer is here!"

LUKE 22

44. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.
47. But even as he said this, a mob approached, led by Judas, one of his twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus and greeted him with a kiss.
48. But Jesus said, "Judas, how can you betray me, the Son of Man, with a kiss?"
49. When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, "Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords!"
50. And one of them slashed at the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.
51. But Jesus said, "Don't resist anymore." And he touched the place where the man's ear had been and healed him.
52. Then Jesus spoke to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard and the other

leaders who headed the mob. “Am I some dangerous criminal,” he asked, “that you have come armed with swords and clubs to arrest me?”

53. Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But this is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns.”

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Lesson #9: Death and Resurrection

MATTHEW 20

17. As Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him.
18. “When we get to Jerusalem,” he said, “the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die.
19. Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, whipped, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.”

ROMANS 4

25. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.

LUKE 24

13. That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles out of Jerusalem.
14. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened.
15. Suddenly, Jesus himself came along and joined them and began walking beside them.
16. But they didn’t know who he was, because God kept them from recognizing him.
17. “You seem to be in a deep discussion about something,” he said. “What are you so concerned about?” They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.

19. “The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did wonderful miracles. He was a mighty teacher, highly regarded by both God and all the people.
20. But our leading priests and other religious leaders arrested him and handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him.
21. We had thought he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. That all happened three days ago.
22. Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report.
23. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive!
24. Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, Jesus’ body was gone, just as the women had said.”

JOHN 21

1. Later Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened.

2. Several of the disciples were there – Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.
3. Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.”
4. At dawn the disciples saw Jesus standing on the beach, but they couldn’t see who he was.
5. He called out, “Friends, have you caught any fish?”
6. “No,” they replied.
7. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and swam ashore.
8. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only out about three hundred feet.
9. When they got there, they saw that a charcoal fire was burning and fish were frying over it, and there was bread.
10. “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said.
11. So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.
12. “Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. And no one dared ask him if he really was the Lord because they were sure of it.
13. Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish.
14. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.
15. After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.
16. Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.
17. Once more he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”

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Annex 3: Despair

Scripture

Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:44, 47-53; Hebrews 4:15-16

Objectives

During this lesson, the student will learn to:

- Understand the nature of despair and recognize its symptoms;
- Respond to the temptation to despair with hope and confidence by following the example of Jesus Christ; and
- Trust in Christ and rely on Him in dealing with depression and despair.

Summary

Throughout His years of ministry on earth, there was never any doubt in Jesus' mind about His ultimate purpose for coming to earth or about the cruel death that He would suffer. From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus foretold His own rejection and death with absolute certainty¹, and once His disciples recognized Him as the Messiah, His predictions became even more specific². Not only did He tell them *that* He would die, but He also told them details about *how* and by whom, and that afterward He would be raised from the dead, something that even his enemies acknowledged³.

¹ See:

Luke 17:25: *"But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."*

Luke 18:32: *"He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him ..."*

Mt 17:12: *"But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."*

Mk 9:12: *Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?"*

² See:

Mt 16:21: *From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

Mk 8:31: *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*

Jn 12:32: *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*

Jn 8:28: *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he ..."*

Mt 20:18: *"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death."*

³ See:

Jn 2:19: *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*

Mt 12:40: *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

The very idea of abandoning His mission was repugnant to Him. So firm was His resolution that when Peter tried to dissuade Him, Jesus sternly rebuked Peter as the voice of the devil:

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." (Mt 16:23)

Just a few days before His crucifixion, He said, *"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour."* (Jn 12:27)

That night, Jesus, as a human was afraid His fear was magnified by the clarity of His foreknowledge about what He was about to suffer. His appeal in Gethsemane also contains a strong element of faith in the infinite mercy, grace, wisdom, and power of His Father Who can do anything that does not contradict His very nature.

We recognize Jesus' obedience in going to the cross, but His agony in the garden was also part of His suffering for us. By experiencing the rejection of a desperate prayer for deliverance, He identifies with us, even in despair. How else could He empathize with us, unless He had shared in the pain of having hope denied and being left alone? The writer of Hebrews states, *"Therefore in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God ... For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* (Heb 2:17a-18)

His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane gives us an example of how to respond with hope in a hopeless situation, and His response to the refusal of Heaven to deliver Him from the fears that He faced gives us confidence that He understands our situation when we pray for deliverance but it doesn't come.

His distress had been building up for many days.

Mt 17:9: *As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."*

Mt 20:19: *"...and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"*

Mt 17:23: *"They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.*

Mk 9:31: *"...because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."*

Mk 10:34: *"...who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

Lk 9:22: *And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

Lk 24:7: *"The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."*

Mt 27:63: *"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'"*

Earlier that week, He entered Jerusalem to the praises of many who would later call for His crucifixion. He cried over the city and people He loved, because He saw that their rejection of Him would result in their destruction a few years later.

Just a few hours before, at His last supper with them, the disciples whom He had been teaching for three years about humility began arguing over who was the greatest. Their questions at the dinner revealed that they still didn't understand Him or why He came. Those who were about to abandon Him boasted about their loyalty, and, during the Passover meal, he offered the token of honor to the man who was about to betray him. That alone would be enough to bring on a crushing depression in anyone.

But Jesus knew everything that was about to happen when He entered the Garden to pray. He knew what He had to do. And when He got on His knees, He entered into our despair by experiencing a hope that was denied. If anyone's prayer deserved to be answered, it was His. But his prayer for deliverance was not to be granted. In fact, that night, He would suffer the heartbreak of having every hope stripped away and every avenue of escape blocked.

His friends failed to deliver him. One of his closest friends betrayed Him. His inner circle fell asleep instead of joining Him in prayer. When the moment of testing came, all of his friends fled. And shortly after that, one who had just professed eternal loyalty unto death denied Him three times in His hearing.

The religious leaders failed to deliver Him. The Sanhedrin consisted of the leaders of the Jewish faith, and they were supposed to recognize the Messiah when He came. But they condemned Him to death in an illegal and unjust trial.

The government failed to deliver Him. Even if his friends left him and the religious leaders were blinded in their faith, there might still be hope in the impartiality of Roman justice. But, even though the governor repeatedly stated that Jesus was innocent, he still had Jesus brutally scourged and then condemned Him to death.

And finally, as He hung on the cross, Jesus felt the abandonment of His Father, who turned His face away, as Jesus became sin for us. And so we heard a cry from the cross that seems to suggest that, for a brief moment, Jesus identified even with the atheist who wonders, "Where is God?" Consider His cry:

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"; which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?".
(Mt 27:46)

Jesus knew all of this as He knelt in the Garden. But Gethsemane was a decisive turning point, because Jesus resolved to continue on – to do the right thing – regardless of the pain or outcome. His steadfastness in the face of hopeless suffering has made Him our understanding and compassionate brother. His response has made Him our

example. His triumph has made Him our High Priest and intercessor. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us,

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:15-16)

Although Jesus' request was denied, His prayer in was heard. Luke tells us that an angel came and strengthened Him (Lk 22:43). Likewise, God has promised to give us the ability to go through whatever trial we go through, but we must take the path He gives us. (1 Cor 10:13) At Gethsemane, Jesus received the strength to persevere in the task that was set before Him and resolved to complete it. By His obedience, he not only accomplished God's purposes, but became "completed" in perfection. The author of Hebrews says,

"... In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, He was heard because of His godly fear. Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Heb 5:7-9)

Because of His heartbreaking journey through hopelessness, Jesus understands despair. We can follow His example not only because he persevered, but because of Who He became as a result. He understands despair and has compassion on those who feel hopeless because of what He went through; but, as risen Lord, He can offer us God's strength and grace to make it through our trials.

You never have to face despair alone. Jesus has experienced it as deeply as anyone else on earth. He has also promised us that we will never be alone in our trials, and has promised, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* (Heb 13:5).

Application

What are some of the lessons we can take from Jesus' suffering in the Garden?

- You must not allow depression to turn into despair. Despair means losing all hope. But even when all hope appears to be gone, it is important not to give up. Continue to do the right thing regardless of your feelings, just as Jesus fought against His feelings and did what He knew was right.
- Because you search for a way out of your problem when you are depressed, you are more likely to give in to temptation and do something you know is wrong out of desperation. Sometimes that is the very test. God often teaches us through the very things we worry about. Even Jesus "learned

- obedience through what He suffered.” So ask yourself, what is God trying to teach me? Ps 32:8-10. Submit to the lesson.
- Sometimes, the lesson is simply to wait. Even if you don’t see the answer right now, God does. You don’t always have to come up with the solution or worry about the outcomes.
 - Never give up. Suicide is the ultimate form of despair. If Judas had waited, he could have gone back to Jesus and received forgiveness, but he didn’t live long enough to see the resurrection. You always have the option to wait to see what God will do next. No matter how you feel, there is always hope, and He is always there, ready to forgive and receive you in love.
 - Focus on the future. When we are depressed, we tend to focus on a particular, short range outcome or fixate on some feared outcome that we can’t see beyond. The disciples feared arrest, but Jesus looked beyond the cross. The Bible says that He actually had joy, because His vision wasn’t stuck on His current suffering but rather on the glory that would come later. *“For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Heb 12:2) Those who are in Christ have the promise from Him of a joy that will make all of our current problems fade away. Focusing beyond our current problem helps us find the resolve to do the right thing now. Look beyond the thing you fear. Consider the promises of God – eternity with Him in heaven.
 - Watch your health. Depression can be exacerbated by fatigue, physical condition, health problems, and stress in other areas. Like the disciples, we sometimes feel too tired or weary to pray. Our physical condition can sometimes contribute to our fears and cause us to run away from problems just as they did. So when you are depressed or facing challenges, get some rest, and always try to stay in physical shape so that you have the stamina to continue even in difficult situations.
 - Pray and enlist the prayers of friends, but remember that you are depending on God; even if they fail you, God won’t. You aren’t depending on your friends, rescue, or even a pleasing response from God.
 - Jesus warned Peter to *“pray that you will not be overcome by temptation”*, not that he would not encounter any. Prayer won’t get you out of every temptation, but, through prayer, you can receive the strength and resolve to resist and overcome them.
 - Even if it appears that there is no way out, we should turn to God, Whose mercy is unlimited and may provide a way. Jesus’ knew he had to suffer, but He still asked for relief. God did not provide an escape, but strength to make it through. It was up to Jesus to take that grace and live it out courageously.

- Jesus had to go through this alone, but you don't. "Now we have a great high priest who has suffered in all things as we have, but without sin." If you are in Christ, you've got Him. Prayer is our lifeline to the One who said, "*I will never leave or forsake you.*" (Heb 13:5)

As the writer of Hebrews points out (Heb 4:15-16), Jesus is both our High Priest intercessor and our example. His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane proves that He understands despair, and His response shows us how we may deal with it, and His understands the most

Nature and Symptoms of Despair

Some experts look at despair as a biological problem – a chemical imbalance in the brain, and, indeed, there are often physical reasons accompanying feelings of despair. But whether or not the cause is merely chemical or brought about by circumstance or psychology, there are some general characteristics of despair.

Despair can arise from the loss of meaning or from an overwhelming and apparently-unsolvable problem. Viktor Frankl, the prominent psychiatrist who survived a Nazi death camp, defined despair as "suffering without meaning". But even where this is purpose in life, despair may also be characterized by feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, powerlessness, and pessimism. In either case, it leads to a spiritual and psychological paralysis and apathy. People who are moving toward despair may experience suicidal thoughts, anxiety, insomnia or hypersomnia, irritability, cognitive impairment or other factors.

In the end, the person may stop trying to evade or solve the problem or to find meaning, and may take self-destructive action to escape it. Therefore, it is important for a person who feels the onset of despair to get help in finding solutions to their problems or meaning to their suffering. But since one of the characteristics of despair is surrender and apathy, it is important for Christians to be sensitive to those around them so that they can reach out to the person who is depressed and near despair, because they may not ask for help even if they desperately need it.

Responding like Christ

To despair is to lose all hope and be overcome by a sense of futility or defeat. Therefore, the cure for despair lies in hope, purpose, and faith.

- Hope. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to be spared from the suffering of the cross. Yet His hope was not in deliverance, but in the steadfast love and faithfulness of His Father. All of those who have put their

- faith in Jesus Christ can trust in a loving God, Whom Jesus invites us to call “Father” (“Daddy”). The prophet Jeremiah writes, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you.”* (JER 29:11-14a)
- Purpose. Jesus never forgot His purpose in life, and that strengthened Him at a time of great testing. Many young people are searching for meaning in life and a cause worth living for. Jesus gives us a purpose far bigger than we can imagine when we accept his command to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. (LK 10:27) Writing to the early Christians, St. Paul wrote that, *“God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* (PHIL 2:13) And in the book of Romans, Paul declares that, *“... in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to His purpose. For Those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.”* (ROM 8:28-29) So we can be confident that God is working our His purpose for us and through us, even when we meet problems that seem hopeless to us. The Bible reminds us that we don’t need to understand everything that God is doing in our lives. Our fate is in the hands of a loving God who can be utterly trusted, and we can confidently pray, with the Psalmist, *“The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me. Your love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not abandon the works of your hands.”* (Ps 138:8) Therefore, as we face trials that sometimes seem insurmountable, we can face them – even face failure – with the confidence that *“He Who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Phil 1:6)
 - Faith. Christ called on His friends to pray with Him, but His faith wasn’t in them. His faith grew out of His relationship with His Father. It wasn’t a list of “do’s and don’ts” but a personal trust in the God Who loved Him. We should not wait until we are in our own Garden of Gethsemane to start building that relationship with our Father. If we trust in Him daily, when we face great trials, we will have the confidence to go to our heavenly Father, trusting that He will care for us.

Depending on Christ

Because Jesus persevered through the darkest despair, we can be confident that He understands our feelings of depression and despair. Because of His death for us, we can be confident of His love for us. Because of His triumph over death at the

Resurrection, we can be confident of His help that will carry us through dark valleys that we could not go through by ourselves.

Questions

1. Jesus' mission was so firmly fixed in His mind that He resisted every effort turn Him from His task. What would bring Him to ask His heavenly Father to remove it from Him?