



The Disciple's Way

52 BIBLE LESSONS FOR YOUTH

The
Disciple's
Way

The Disciple's Way, Vol. 2
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52 Bible Lessons for Youth

VOLUME 2

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How to Prepare a Lesson

THE START OF THE YEAR

At the start of this year of teaching, take about two hours to put all of the things that you would normally use at the youth meeting in one packet or box. This will cut down on time each week that might otherwise be spent looking for the various items, since you will know where they are.

Keep a record of addresses, birthdays, and contact details of all the students in your class.

Briefly read through the whole book of lessons to get an idea of the various monthly emphases. This will give you an overview and a sense of direction. You will know how many lessons there are on each topic and not get ahead of yourself in the teaching.

THE TWO HOURS EACH WEEK

30 minutes **Read through the lesson and get introduced to it.**

A full week before you teach the lesson, spend time getting acquainted with it. Pray for God to give you wisdom and insights into the best way of presenting the material to your class.

10 minutes **Record your thoughts and ideas throughout the week.**

Keep a small lesson notebook or paper with you. As an idea comes to you, write it onto this paper so you will remember it later.

20 minutes **Read the Bible passage 3 or 4 times during the week.**

Allow God's Word to change you as you think on it and read it. This reading will allow the truth that you want to teach your class to impact your life first.

6 **50 minutes** **Bring your lesson together.**

Get everything that you will need from your resource packet. Read through your notes and organize the lesson into a format that suits you and that you will be able to follow and understand the best.

10 minutes **The last minute check-up.**

This is the last thing that you do before you go to teach your lesson. Make sure that you have your Bible, your lesson, and any other materials you need. Review your outline or notes in your leader's guide one last time. Finally, take a minute or two to commit this lesson to the Lord and ask Him to use you. You have probably already prayed this several times during your devotions, but acknowledge your dependence upon Him once more.

How to Present a Lesson

There are two qualities necessary to be a teacher of youth: You must love God and love young people. The most important thing you need to do is to help the youth in your class experience the love of God. You can do this by living out your personal relationship with Jesus in front of them and by teaching them to have their own personal relationship with God.

Youth should be actively involved in learning by sharing experiences and feelings, discovering truth, and choosing something they can do each week in response to the information learned in the lesson.

Your lesson time should be carefully planned and organized to put into practice your preparation and thought. We would like to suggest the following basic outline for your lesson time. Times given are based on an hour class. Numbers in parentheses are for 45 minute classes.

1. Arrive at least **10 minutes** before class to prepare your teaching area and set out any lesson materials that you may need.
2. Use the first **5 minutes** to greet your students as they arrive. Start with prayer (this is a good opportunity to allow the youths to learn to pray aloud in a group). Give them a chance to discuss the news and events of the past week. Pay attention and you will learn much about your young people. Take attendance and receive the offering. Follow-up on any assignment from last week and review last week's lesson.
3. The next **15 (10) minutes** should be used to introduce the lesson, starting with the LIFE section to get the youths' attention and turn the focus onto the subject for the week.
4. The next **20 (15) minutes** should be spent on the TRUTH section. Remember not to PREACH or READ to them. Present the lesson in your own words.
5. The next **15 (10) minutes** should focus on ACTION. Help the youth discover how the truths learned in the lesson apply to their everyday lives.
6. During the last **5 minutes**, close with prayer and clean up the class area before going on to church.

Review the success of the lesson as soon as you can. Spend a few minutes making a note to yourself of what worked and what didn't for future reference. Also note any important things that you learned about any of your students during the class. Always be aware of what your students are saying during the time that they are with you. You can learn much about them and their home situation in casual conversation. And remember teaching is all about building strong relationships with God and other Christian peers.

Preparing the Teacher

There are few things in life as disappointing as discovering that someone we trust is a fake. Some televangelists have left trails of devastated followers who placed their trust in people they thought were authentic and genuine, only to discover many of their spiritual heroes were fakes. The common result is for the disappointed, deceived, and betrayed believers to lose hope, not just in the leader, but in all that the leader was supposed to represent.

As someone who leads youth, you have a heavy responsibility. Not only do you have the difficult task of trying to help youths have a personal relationship with God, but you have the equally difficult task of living a life of integrity before your students. Remember that people learn more about Christ by watching your life, both in and out of class, than by anything you say, no matter how great your words may be.

Young people are very perceptive people. They quickly notice when our lives don't match our words. If we are saying one thing on Sunday and then do the opposite during the week, our students will tend to do what we have done, rather than what we have said. Furthermore, as far as they are concerned, what you have to say is no longer valid because you have not backed up your words with your actions.

Jesus calls us to be His followers. That means we are to be more than simply people who do all the right things. Instead, we are to be a people who show love and mercy in all areas of our lives. We are to have a moment-by-moment relationship with Jesus so real and vital that without it we would cease to have a reason for living. This is authentic Christianity. If you haven't already begun, won't you begin today?

Do you believe that youth can make valuable contributions to the Body of Christ? Do you allow your youth to minister to one another in your class? Do you give them significant roles? Have you ever let them lead sections of the Sunday School lesson, with your training and help? You may have objections: "I tried that once and it didn't work." "It takes too much time to train them to do it." "I'll only have to come behind them and do it right." Those are great excuses, but that's all they are--excuses.

Now is the perfect time for your youth to train for leadership. Expand your role as a teacher to include more than just giving information. Develop students into mature disciples of Jesus Christ who are capable of discipling others. All of your students have a God-given ability to minister to others. All they have to do is recognize it, develop it, and use it.

Pray that God will show them what their abilities are. Then pray with them for a way to sharpen that skill and for a place to put it to use. Encourage each student to begin exploring their abilities by getting involved in different ministries in your church. Challenge them to see a need and then do something about it, even if that means starting a new ministry in your church.

Let your students know you believe they have a valuable contribution to make. Keep telling them until they believe it. Model this process in your own life. Take a risk and develop abilities that you have allowed to be dormant in yourself. Talk with your students about your struggles and fears of using untried skills and abilities.

Walk through this process with them, encouraging them and letting them encourage you. Help your students find mentors who will help them develop the needed skills in their areas of interest. Many retired individuals would be more than willing to share their knowledge and wisdom with a youth.

Seven Keys for Teaching Youth

Key #1: Teachers (not printed materials) are at the heart of effective Christian teaching and learning.

Teaching youth lessons is essentially an interpersonal activity. It is an encounter between God, students, and teachers - and a good teacher is at the heart of that encounter. As the teacher, you are more than a mouthpiece for giving out important information. You have the opportunity to participate with the students in an encounter with the Living Truth in Jesus Christ.

Key #2: The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher

As important as you the teacher are, you are not beyond making mistakes. Thankfully, you are always team-teaching with the Holy Spirit, who is already preparing the hearts and minds of your students to receive and apply the lesson. There will most likely be times when nothing goes right, yet one of the students remembers that lesson as being the turning point in his or her decision to follow Jesus. What happened? The Holy Spirit was teaching in spite of you. He is also teaching through you - but it is always the Holy Spirit who ultimately teaches.

Key #3: The life of the teacher is as important as his or her words.

What you the teacher say is vitally important. Truth and wisdom are worth proclaiming well. However, it is when your words and actions fit together in a life of integrity that the student really internalizes the truth of the words you've taught. Your goal must be to have a relationship with your students where they can observe and experience the consistency between your life and the truth you teach.

Key #4: Good preparation is a must!

Even if you've been teaching for many years, you can't be effective without preparing each lesson with care. Effective preparation insures direction, discipline, and destination. Every lesson has a central theme or message - a direction. Unless you make that central theme a part of your thoughts and meditations, you can get wrapped up in other things and forget that you've gathered to teach significant truth, not simply to have a good time.

Discipline is not about keeping order, but about keeping everyone focused on the central theme or message. When you are not prepared, the activities will be incomplete, the transitions between ideas and activities will be awkward, and the supplies inadequate. You will likely lose the class to the leadership of someone else, who may not take the class where it needs to go.

Usually, the application of truth comes near the end of the lesson. This is the destination. It isn't enough to talk about the truth; we have to put it into practice (1 John 3:18). Yet, if you're unprepared to pace the lesson, you may not get to the crucial task of application at all. Too

often, the most important part of the lesson never gets taught! Why? You run out of time. Good preparation is the remedy.

Key #5: Content alone is not usually enough to attract and maintain interest in the lesson.

If your class is like most youth classes, the majority of your students don't come to class mainly because of the truth that you'll be teaching them. Many will come because they enjoy being with their friends. A few come because their parents insist on it. Some come because they want the attention; some are hungering for an encouraging word; others come because it's the safest place they know. There are as many different reasons for being there as there are youth in your class. Your responsibility is to help create the kind of physical, emotional, and spiritual climate where they feel safe, accepted, valued, and challenged. That kind of environment doesn't happen by accident. It takes intentional effort.

Key #6: A significant, consistent biblical focus is a must for true spiritual growth.

The Bible must be the central text for all Christian education, especially your youth lessons. Your primary responsibility as a teacher is to encourage serious consideration of God's truth revealed in Scripture. Whatever you do, you cannot bypass the Bible if you expect your students to mature spiritually.

Key #7: Spiritual growth is more a matter of transformation than information.

Just because someone knows something doesn't mean that he or she will do it. Spiritual growth is more than just knowing about truth - it is knowing the One who is Truth and being transformed by that experience. That is what Jesus' death and resurrection is all about. He died and was raised so that sins can be forgiven and cleansed; so that broken relationships can be healed; so that deadly habits can give way to spiritual disciplines; so that chaotic circumstances can find divine peace; so that spiritually dead people can live again. You must believe and pray that every one of your students can be transformed in this way. When that happens, real teaching has taken place!

(Taken from "Seven Convictions for Teaching Youth", written by Dr. Ed Robinson.)

Holiness

Christians are to be holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16). Peter's reference to the Old Testament command (Leviticus 20:7) reminds us of God's continual call to His people. God chose us to exhibit in our lives the type of holiness that reflects His holy character.

God demonstrated His great love for us by sending His Son to provide a way for people to come into holy relationship with Him (Ephesians 1:4-5). That life of holiness starts with salvation and progresses on to sanctification.

Paul's earnest plea for the Christians at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) was that God would entirely sanctify them. Paul knew that while there is a human element, in that one must yield oneself up to God (cf. 4:4), the primary thing is the power of God that enables this to be done. This was more than just initial holiness (conversion); it was a deep cleansing of the heart from the nature of sin that separated us from God and kept us from having the type of relationship He desired with us. Paul prayed that God would sanctify them "through and through"--in other words, that they would be complete. This sanctification is not just a temporary thing nor does it only apply to a part of us. Paul understood that this sanctification involves the whole person and will carry them through the final coming of Christ. God not only calls them to sanctification (holiness), but He provides for what they need to have that type of relationship with Him.

A perfect example of a prayer for sanctification to God is in Psalm 51:9-12. It was written by King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed (see 2 Samuel 11-12). David repented with a deep realization of his need for God's holiness. His plea was that God would create a new heart within Him, one that was free from the sins and the stain of sin that was currently present, thus restoring his relationship to God and its accompanying joy.

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Second by second the world walks deeper and deeper into sin. Actions once unthinkable are now seen by many as natural tendencies that no one could or should resist. They are told in formal and informal settings that all lifestyle choices are of the same moral value and that no one lifestyle is better than any of the others.

God's plan of holiness is the only lifestyle option for a Christian who wants to serve God. Choosing to live holy lives is our only hope for purposeful living, loving families, careers that invest in people's lives, and ministries that bring others to Christ. Holiness is not a quality people can have in themselves, but it is made possible by virtue of their relationship to the holy God. God himself has given us the responsibility of seeking holiness. And He has provided the only way to make holiness a reality in our lives - a relationship with Him.

As you explain the concept of holiness, don't fall prey to thinking of holiness as an "it." Holiness is not a static thing. When you become holy, you don't automatically look like all the

other holy people in the world. Holiness is a dynamic relationship with the God of holy love. Holiness is not a one-time experience at an altar of prayer but an ongoing relationship that works in real life situations. What may have begun with a moment of realization and a crisis experience doesn't stop there, no more than a marriage stops at the close of a wedding ceremony.

Holiness happens each day in the way we love God and, because of our love for Him, the way we love each other. Every thought and action is generated by a heart of love. If that sounds impossible to you, think about the results if we assume that such a calling is not possible: we have limited the power and love of God. God won't ask us to do or be something that isn't possible. A God of love would not do such a thing. If He has called us to a holy life (and He has), then He will provide the means of answering that call (1 Thessalonians 5:22-24).

It is quite true to say "I can't live a holy life"; but you can decide to let Jesus make you holy. "I can't do away with my past"; but you can decide to let Jesus do away with it.

-Oswald Chambers

UNIT THEME: A FRESH BEGINNING

LESSON 1

New Life

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:1-7; 4:22-24

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 2:4-5

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have each student develop a brief idea of the "ideal" life. They can either write about it or draw a picture that illustrates the idea. Have each student give their ideal life a name, one that helps to describe the "pleasure" this life would offer. After a few minutes, have some volunteers read or share their ideas. Then ask:

- 1. What does the world use to influence our likes and desires?*
- 2. Do you think these "ideal lives" would truly make a person completely happy?*
- 3. What's the WHOLE story?*
- 4. What are some of the short-term effects of this type of life?*
- 5. What are some of the long-term effects?*

Next, have your students write a brief sequel (or draw another picture) of their "ideal" life, telling the whole truth about it, both the short-term and the long-term effects.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have one or two volunteers read Ephesians 2:1-7. Then divide your class into two groups. One group will represent "God's Way" and the other group will represent "The World's Way." Have the groups list the different characteristics from Ephesians 2:1-7 that describe life according to their assigned "Way." Answers for "The World's Way" could include death, transgressions, sins, disobedience, sinful nature, etc. "God's Way" responses could include mercy, love, Christ, forgiveness, heavenly realms or places, grace, kindness, salvation, etc.

After each group has given their report, discuss the distinction between the world's way of life and God's way by asking these questions:

1. *How do you think the world defines "real life"?*
2. *How do you think God's defines "real life"?*
3. *Where do you think someone who lives the world's way will end up?*
4. *How about someone who lives as a Christian?*

Have two volunteers read Ephesians 2:4-6 and 4:22-24. After the students have read the verses, say: *These verses contain the answers to the questions concerning our new self in Christ.*

As a class, come to an agreement as to how to complete the following statements: *Provided By..., Because of God's..., Is created to be..., I am to live in ...* (each answer can be found in the scripture reading). After this is complete, ask the following questions:

1. *Given what we've read, how do you think we each become a "new self"?*
2. *As Christians, we are to try to live our lives being "like God." What does that mean?*
3. *Who or what can help us be "like God"?* (Explain that the Holy Spirit helps lead our lives of holiness and this lifestyle of holiness is impossible without His help.)

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

We began this session by coming up with our "ideal" lives. Later we realized that the "ideal" life didn't always produce ideal results. However, the "new" life Christ offers promises eternal life with Him. Ask the students if they will choose to live the new life. Then challenge them to write out a brief "WILL," giving their lives over to God's "Will" for their lives. This Will can include giving to God the things or behaviors that keep them tied to their old life of sin. After you have given them time to fill out their Wills, close by leading your students in a prayer for their new life. Ask God to give them discernment in seeing the ultimate results of a worldly lifestyle and a holy lifestyle. Challenge them to take their "wills" seriously and live the "new" life, asking God to give them His strength to not give in to the pressures of the worldly life. Remember to be sensitive to students who wish to accept Christ in their lives, if they have not done so.

UNIT THEME: A FRESH BEGINNING

LESSON 2

Amazing Grace

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 5:19-21

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 2:8

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin this lesson by informing your class that they are going to be involved in a "free-for-all." Ask them what they think you might mean by this (they might think you mean a "fight" or a class where they are free to do as they wish). After a brief discussion on what a "free-for-all" might be, inform them that they are going on a class outing to the children's class and adult class to give gifts that are "free for all." (Make sure both the toddler Sunday School teacher and the adult Sunday School teacher are aware of your coming. Give the teacher a brief explanation of what your students will be doing.) Pass out to your students the free gifts that they will give to the toddlers. These gifts could be sweets, a small toy, cookie, etc. Also, pass out a free gift to be given to the adults such as a pencil, pen, key chain, cookies, etc. (Make sure as you prepare your "gifts" that there will be enough for everyone.) Instruct your students to simply pass out their gifts to the children and adults. Once back in class, have your students discuss the various responses they encountered.

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- 1. How did the children respond?*
- 2. How did the adults respond?*
- 3. Were there any differences between their responses? If so, why would this be?*
- 4. Has anyone ever given you a gift for no reason? Who was it and what was the gift? How did you feel?*

As Christians we've all been given a free gift. We didn't deserve it, but God loved us enough to give it to us. Let's find out more about His love and that gift.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Designate a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:4-10. Then have your students work in small groups or individually. They can either write out their thoughts or develop them as artwork on a sheet of paper. They need to describe God's offer of salvation, how we can receive it, and some ways to respond to it. After about five to eight minutes, have them share their responses. Use the following as discussion prompts or to fill in any gaps.

- *Ephesians 2:4-6: What is the gift God offers?*
- *Ephesians 2:8-9: How can we receive God's gift of salvation?*
- *Ephesians 2:10: How do you think we should respond to God's free gift of salvation?*

Some of us may need practice responding in general. Sometimes we have to watch closely to see what's happening in our lives before we can respond to it. Let's do what we can to get our responders working.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Before class, write each of the following descriptions on one of three 3" x 5" cards or strips of paper (one description per card): 1.) Someone trying to climb a mountain. 2.) Someone trying to give a gift to someone who does not want to receive it, 3.) Someone who just won a million dollars. In class, give the cards to three of your most creative students. Have the students pantomime the situation on their cards. After each "performance," have the class try to guess what it is they are doing and use the discussion questions printed below.

After Performer 1 finishes, ask: *If we had to "earn" our salvation, what would be some of the ways we could do that?*

After Performer 2, ask: *Have you ever been rejected? How did it feel? Have you ever been given a gift that was rejected or not appreciated? If so, how did you feel? How do you think God feels when we reject His free gift of salvation in Christ?*

After Performer 3, ask: *What is the best way to live life? Do we have to win God's love? If we are already loved by God, what are some ways we can joyfully respond to His love? Why would we need to respond to His love, if we already have it?*

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: A FRESH BEGINNING

LESSON 3

United We Stand!

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-6; 2:19-22

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 4:2

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin this lesson by passing out one very small stick (toothpick) to each of your students. Ask your students to break the stick. Ask them if breaking it was easy. After this, select the strongest (physically) person in your class and ask him or her if they can break toothpicks with their bare hands. In front of the class, have the person you selected attempt to break a bundle of 30 toothpicks held together by a string or elastic band. Ask the following questions:

- 1. How many toothpicks did we break when we were all breaking toothpicks?*
- 2. Which way of breaking the sticks do you think worked best? Why?*
- 3. Why do you think it is easier to break those sticks than the ones banded together?*

Give them a moment to respond and then say: *What we've demonstrated just now is the dynamics of unity among members of a group. Unity makes us stronger, able to accomplish more.*

- 1. What happens when we are not united?*
- 2. What do you think are some things that tend to keep members of a group from being united?*
- 3. What is a "union"?* (A confederation of independent individuals for some common purpose).
- 4. In what ways do you think accepting Christ as our personal Savior is like joining a union?*
- 5. Just what type of "union" do you think we join when we receive Christ?*
- 6. What are the benefits of joining Christ's "union"?*

To grow in Christ we must learn to answer God's call for unity. Let's see what we can do on our own to achieve unity.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Before class, write on strips of paper (enough so each student has a strip) titles of well-known songs (hymns, choruses, and even simple secular songs--for students with little or no church background). In class, ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:1-6 and a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:19-22. Give each student one of the paper strips with the song title on it. Then have your entire class stand and conduct the song they received (Ham it up!) as if they were a choir director or an orchestra conductor. Have them sing and direct their songs at the same time. (If students don't recognize the song you've given them, have them sing whatever song they know.) After a brief time of chaos, have your students answer these debriefing questions:

1. *How do you think we sounded? Why?*
2. *Do you think we experienced unity? Why or why not?*
3. *Weren't we all singing together?*
4. *What do you think we need to do to experience unity in our singing?* (Sing the same song.)
5. *Taking what we've learned just now about how unity works, do you think God is pleased when we try to serve Him independently from one another?*

Create a job description, of sorts, based on the scripture reading. For example, what is the Holy Spirit to do? What are the prophets and apostles to do? Also discuss the tools that are needed to accomplish the job (humility, etc), as well as who is supposed to be the residence of the Holy Spirit (us). Encourage your students to give unity a try and put behind them any quarrels they may have with each other. *We've examined almost all the players in this life game of unity--almost. What about us? Where do we fit into God's plan for unity?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:7-16. On a chalk board or a piece of paper draw a body as best you can. *The human body is made up of many different types of cells. Each type is able to perform a distinct and valuable function in sustaining life in the body. The Body of Christ is a glorious mixture of personalities, races, and cultural backgrounds. With so many differences, what do we as Christians have in common?* Give them a chance to think aloud, and then have them read Ephesians 4:4-6. Have them identify the seven "ones" mentioned in those verses. List these on the chalkboard as they are identified: One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father. Next have your students brainstorm a list of differences that Christians can have without affecting the unity of the Body.

Close with prayer, emphasizing unity.

UNIT THEME: A FRESH BEGINNING

LESSON 4

An Armor-Plated Christian

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10-18

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 6:11

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into two groups. (If your class is small, stay together as one group.) Distribute recent newspapers, magazines, or any other publication to each group. Have one group cut out headlines and stories that they feel illustrate evil in our society. Have the other group cut out headlines and stories that they feel illustrate people standing firm against evil. After a few moments of searching and cutting, assemble your class back together and have each group share their stories. After they've shared, ask the following discussion questions:

- 1. Which group do you think had the easier task, the one looking for evil or the one looking for good?*
- 2. Why are papers full of bad news?*
- 3. Is there more evil than good or does evil just sell more papers?*
- 4. Which story of evil influences frightens you the most?*
- 5. Which story that illustrated people standing firm against evil inspired you the most? (This question assumes your students found such a story! If they have not had any luck with these newspapers, ask them to share a similar story from their experience.)*
- 6. Do you think Christians have more protection from evil and more power against evil than non-Christians? Why or why not?*

Let's take a look at how God prepares us to face evil and triumph over it!

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Designate a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:10-17. Divide your class into six groups. (If your class is small, do this activity as one group.) Give each group a sufficient amount of tinfoil and newspaper (one roll of foil should be sufficient). Say to your students: This passage compares a

Roman soldier's armor and the spiritual armor we all have in Christ. Let's construct our own version of these pieces of armor. Have each group construct a piece of the armor listed in Ephesians 6 as outlined below:

1. Group One: The Belt. This portion of armor was usually made of leather or metal plates.
2. Group Two: The Breastplate. These breastplates were usually made of leather, bronze, brass, and sometimes of gold.
3. Group Three: Shoes. These were often brass or leather coverings that protected the leg, knee, and ankle.
4. Group Four: The Shield. This oldest and most common weapon of defense was often made of bronze and copper or leather and wood.
5. Group Five: Helmet. Ancient helmets resembled skullcaps made of leather.
6. Group Six: Sword.

When this task is completed, ask these questions:

1. *Who is our enemy?*
2. *How does our enemy attempt to defeat us?*
3. *What are his flaming arrows?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Choose an outgoing person for the class to dress up in the armor. As your student puts on the "armor" one piece at a time, have them discuss the use of that particular piece of armor and what kind of characteristic of evil it protects us from. Examples of this could be: "sword": Knowing the Word of God protects us from being led astray by lies and deceptions. The Word of God is represented as a sword because it separates the right from the wrong, what is true from what is false. "Prayer" is the final essential piece to complete our armor. *Let's take a moment to pray for God's help, especially when we face difficult situations, and for His guidance, so that He'll teach us how to use the gift of the armor of God.*

UNIT THEME: KNOWING GOD

LESSON 5

Stewards of the Kingdom

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 24:45-51

MEMORY VERSE

Acts 17:24-28; Philippians 3:17-21

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Prepare several small cards with names of items written on them. These items should range from the inexpensive to the extravagant; from items that are eatable to durable items. Examples might include: book, a small tool, clothing, toothpaste, paper, sweets, or bigger items such as a car, house, or machinery. Distribute the cards, and instruct the class that someone has asked to borrow this particular item (or type of item) from them this week. *How would you as the owner of that item wish for it to be treated?*

Take a moment and allow the student to discuss how they would want their property to be treated if someone borrowed it. Make a list on the chalkboard or piece of paper. Note the difference between costly and cheap items, between items that are used up when loaned and items that show little sign of wear when used in the right way. Also ask, *“Who would you be willing (or not willing) to loan these items to?”* Now ask them to turn the tables a bit, and look at the item from the point of view of the borrower. *What difference does it make in your treatment and use of the item when you know it belongs to someone else?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have 4 volunteers read the 4 different passages of scripture, then divide your class into 4 groups, if possible. If you have a smaller class, divide them into only 2 groups, and a group can be just 2 people. Assign each group a concept and key scripture relating to stewardship: Image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), Servanthood (Matthew 24:45-51), Sonship (Acts 17:24-28), and Citizenship in the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:17-21). Ask them to develop a brief three-to-five-minute presentation on how they think that particular concept relates to an understanding of whole life stewardship. As they work through their passages, guide them to find answers that are really relevant to the scripture and the concepts listed.

Next, distribute news items of tragedies, problems, controversies, or any sampling of difficult situations cut from your local newspaper (or copies of the nearest large city paper). Look particularly for situations caused by misuse or misunderstanding of God's principles. Examples might include stories of theft, community unrest, addictive behavior, controversy involving finances, domestic violence, world poverty crises, ecological disasters, etc. Keeping your class in their small groups, distribute these clips among them. Ask them to pinpoint how a proper view and proper acts of stewardship might have eliminated or could help alleviate the problem involved.

1. *How does the life of the believer differ from that of the unbeliever in our approach to life and its difficulties?*
2. *What responsibility does a Christian have in addressing community and world problems?*

Do your best to get class members to be as creative and specific as possible.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Write the word "stewardship" in bold letters on the chalkboard or piece of paper. Play a word association game, asking, *What words come to your mind when I say the word "stewardship?"* After several suggestions, ask the class to come up with a group definition of the word. Remind your class that while God wants us to be good stewards of our possessions, He also wants us to be good stewards of our relationships, time, resources, etc.

End with prayer.

UNIT THEME: KNOWING GOD

LESSON 6

Is There Ever Enough Time?

SCRIPTURE

Luke 10:38-42; 1 Corinthians 7:29; Ephesians 5:15-17; Colossians 3:23, 4:2-5

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 5:15

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

As a group read Ephesians 5:15-16 and Colossians 4:2-5. Then write out the words “Make the most of every opportunity” on the chalkboard or piece of paper. Divide the group into two sections. Assign one to the life of Jesus in the gospels, the other to the life of Paul in Acts and in the epistles. Have each group come up with at least four life examples of how Jesus or Paul practiced time stewardship – using their time well. Give both groups a chance to present their findings and comment.

- 1. How might Jesus and/or Paul become models for our personal time management?*
- 2. What are some of the limitations you face that they didn't face?*
- 3. How does your sense of mission filter the activities you choose to do and not do?*
- 4. What steps are you taking to train others, who will carry out the mission after you have gone?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Ask someone from the group to read 1 Corinthians 7:25-38 aloud to the class. Ask the class for insights they may have concerning the situation to which Paul was writing. Do they agree/disagree? Have the group respond to the following statements as true or not true in their own lives:

- 1. I often forget things, like messages, deadlines, and appointments.*
- 2. I find myself often spending my time and energy on unproductive activity.*
- 3. My time for relationships with others is lacking.*
- 4. I have difficulty feeling good with the quality of what I am doing.*

5. I spend too much time on things which ultimately don't matter or are inconsistent with my purposes in life.

Divide into 3 smaller groups and assign each group with a different scripture.

1. Only one thing is important: Luke 10:38-42. (Our time must be structured around the principle of getting closer to Jesus Christ.)
2. Make the most of every opportunity: Ephesians 5:15-16; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 3:23; 4:5. (Our time must be controlled by a sense of mission.)
3. The time is short: 1 Corinthians 7. (Since the Lord is returning, we need to have a sense of urgency about doing the Lord's work.)

Have your students write a commercial, either for television or radio, to be read or acted out. These commercials should emphasize the importance of the main principle in the scripture about being a good manager of their time. After giving each group five to six minutes to prepare, have them present their commercial. After their commercial is done, have them talk about their particular area and why they portrayed it as they did.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask each member of the class to move into a group of two or three people whom they feel have similar approaches to their use of time. They are then to share with one another what they have found in making the most of their time. The sharing should be free of imposed guilt or over-instruction. The clusters may close the session with prayer for each other.

UNIT THEME: KNOWING GOD

LESSON 7

A New View of Blessings

SCRIPTURE

Luke 10:25-35; 12:13-34; Acts 20:32-35; 2 Corinthians 9; Ephesians 1:3

MEMORY VERSE

Eph. 1:3

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Write the follow statements on a chalk board or piece of paper and allow your students to agree or disagree with them:

- 1. Riches have nothing to do with whether or not someone is a Christian.*
- 2. Jesus commands us to give all we have to the poor.*
- 3. If we follow Jesus, we will probably become wealthier.*
- 4. In this world, the rich will continue to prosper while the good suffer.*

Ask the group to respond to the soundness of these statements. Are they totally true, partially true, or totally false?

- 1. How might someone have arrived at each of these conclusions based on his or her interpretation of Scripture?*
- 2. How might they be corrected?*

If you want to have some fun with this, contact four members of the class prior to the session, and assign them one of the four statements. Have them do some research and be ready to argue for the truth of their statement. Introduce the session with a remark that you are going to discuss Christians and their money, and have one of them immediately speak up with their “argument,” followed quickly by the other three.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your class into three groups. Assign each group one of the following parables to look up and read together: Luke 10:25-37; Luke 12:13-21; and Luke 16:19-31. Then have each group, based on their parable, answer the following questions.

1. *What was the person's approach to wealth?*
2. *What was the result of that approach?*
3. *What may be a "parallel parable" to this perspective today?*
4. *How might a different response on behalf of the person have resulted in a different ending?*

Gather everyone back together and have a spokesperson from each group present their parable to the rest of the groups, based on the answers to the four questions above. After each group has presented, list on a chalkboard or piece of paper the characteristics of the three main characters--both similarities and differences.

Should you have someone in your church whom you feel lives a model life in his or her stewardship of money, have that person come in and speak to the class concerning his or her experiences. You might have several who could come and form a panel. Having older, more experienced persons who have, both in business and in personal living, learned the art of faithful stewardship, may be especially beneficial to young people, who may still be dealing with lifestyle choices which will set their patterns for life. Encourage them to ask questions and discuss the responses.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

As a group, decide on a project, either short-term or ongoing, that will give you a chance to be involved financially in living out the kingdom of God. To begin with, read Acts 20:34-35 and 2 Corinthians 9:11, and emphasize God's intent in supplying us with whatever wealth we may have, so that we might be able to help others. Ask the class for suggestions of ways they, as individuals, might get more involved in helping others financially. Then move into the discussion of a group project. Suggest that they get involved with AIDS orphans, or a hospital that treats AIDS patients, or supporting a family in their community who has experienced great tragedy. They may be young people, but there is something they can give, whether time or money.

UNIT THEME: KNOWING GOD

LESSON 8

My Body, His Temple

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 8:5; 139:13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Ephesians 5:28-29;

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

MEMORY VERSE

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before the session arrange to have some valuable items in the class. You may need to contact some members of your church to help you make a fairly good representation of valuables. Display the items at the beginning of the session. Ask the class members how much they think each is worth. Opinions will vary, of course; some may express disbelief that the prices might be so high. Ask, *What makes these items worth that much?* Some might respond that the price the seller is charging determines its worth; however, stores are full of items that are overpriced and never bought. *What establishes an item's worth? Generally, it is what someone is willing to pay for it.*

Then ask, *What is your body worth?* Though it's a hypothetical question, you might get answers ranging from the actual cost of the chemicals, to a large amount of money someone might pay to have the treatment they need to stay alive. Refer the group to 1 Corinthians 6:20a. *What was that price that drove Paul to tell us that we are to give our bodies to God?* (His Son, Jesus Christ) Be sensitive to the fact that some of your young people may be struggling with issues of bodily stewardship, such as sex or alcohol. Try not to single anyone out or make anyone feel uncomfortable with this topic. The goal is not to publically disclose anyone. Use this as a transitional statement into the presentation of the study.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Read the following scripture passages: Psalm 8:5; 139:13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Ephesians 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. Then divide the class into three discussion groups and assign to each group one of the three major body stewardship issues such as self-esteem, sex, and alcohol. Ask them to create statements concerning these issues and the Christian way of life, using the scriptures just read, for a world that seems to be heading in another direction.

How would you communicate biblical principles in a way that non-believers could understand and relate to? Advance preparation would make the discussion better. Take the time early in the week to contact three of your class members to ask them to lead the discussions, giving them the scripture references and some topic ideas.

When the groups are finished, ask them to present their conclusions to the class. As the leader, play the role of the unbeliever, and respond to or disagree with their approaches, challenging them to go deeper in their thinking. A variation of this approach would be to have the three class members prepare information on their particular topic and be willing to serve as part of a panel. Each of the three would give a brief presentation and then field questions from the group. Ask some class members to think from the perspective of a non-believer and challenge the views of the panel, so that deeper discussion may follow.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

There are two ways you can approach a commitment time for class members to present their bodies as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1).

1. Give each member of the class a sheet of paper, and have them write three things they can do this week in their particular area of struggle to be a wiser steward of their bodies. When all have finished, have a prayer of commitment to live out what was written.
2. Have your class members pair up with someone they can share about a particular struggle and have a prayer of commitment together.

Close in prayer for each other.

UNIT THEME: GAINING WISDOM

LESSON 9

Whose Am I?

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139:13-14; 1 Samuel 16:7; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 2:20

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 139:14

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Distribute pens or pencils and paper to your students. Ask them to fold the paper in half. Tell them they have 47 seconds to write at least 10 words on the paper that describe themselves physically, spiritually, or intellectually. (Make sure you let them know that you will be reading their descriptions to the class so they won't write anything personally embarrassing.) They should not let anyone else see their descriptions. After time is up, collect the handouts in a random order. Read them to the class, asking them to guess the identity of the author. If you have a large class, read only the handouts you have time for.

Following this activity, keep the handouts close by so that you can distribute them again. In your own words, say, *We each have our own identities, but sometimes we find out we are really a lot like many other people our own age.*

1. *How important is it to be like other youth your age?*
2. *What are the characteristics of a typical youth?*
3. *Would a typical youth on television or in a magazine look and act in the ways we just described?*
4. *How important is it to God that we look and act like everyone else?*
5. *Are there any characteristics listed that would be inappropriate for a Christian youth to have? Which ones? Why?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Give your students a collection of buttons, string, beads, or any other useful arts and materials you can gather from around the church or house. Tell them that they have approximately five minutes to build a model of a tool or machine they could use at home or

school. When they have finished their models, or when five minutes have passed, have each person pass his or her creation to the person to their right. This person will attempt to explain his or her neighbor's design--without any help from the creator. After a few attempts, allow students to explain their own creations.

We learned something important from this experiment--only the creator understands best how his own creation works. It's the same way with God. He created us and understands us better than anyone. Let's see what the Bible has to say about what God intends us to be.

Ask volunteers to read each of the following scriptures. After a volunteer reads each Scripture passage, ask the class to respond to the question printed beside that reference:

1. *Psalm 139:13-14: Why can we trust God to help us find our identity?*
2. *Ephesians 2:10: What was God's plan for us when He created us as His "work[s] of art"?*
3. *Galatians 2:20: What does it mean for our identity to be "crucified with Christ"? How could we begin to take on the identity of Christ?*
4. *1 Samuel 16:7b: How does God see us differently from the way our friends see us?*
5. *What inner qualities in our lives would most please God?*

If we accept Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives, we should find our identity in Him. Let's look at some characteristics of Christ.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Redistribute the papers from the first activity so each person has his or her own paper. Make sure each student has a pen or pencil. Have them turn to the opposite side of the paper. Ask your students to list 10 words that describe the character of Jesus Christ. Ask them to be prepared to refer to a particular story or passage about Jesus that demonstrates each of their words. After they have finished, allow volunteers to share some of their descriptions. Explain that our goal as Christians is to take on the identity of Christ. *Look at the characteristics of Christ that you have written on your handouts. Circle any words that could describe you right now.* Don't circle words that don't apply to you right now. (Give your students some time to circle their words.) *All of us can see that we probably have a number of changes or areas of growth that need to occur before we become totally like Christ.*

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: GAINING WISDOM

LESSON 10

Train Your Brain

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:13

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 1:13

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Place a bell or other noisemaker in the center of the room or table and divide your class into two groups. Have the teams line up, either seated or standing, at equal distances from the bell. Read the following 5 situations aloud, beginning each with the question "What would you do if . . . ?" Tell your students there is no right or wrong answer; you are just looking for the quickest response (whoever can get to the bell and ring it first). Use some other signaling device if a bell would be too disruptive to other classes in the area.

What would you do if . . .

- *You saw someone shoplifting in a store?*
- *Your best friend wanted you to help him cheat on a test?*
- *You realized one of your classmates had brought a gun or knife to school?*
- *You found out after you got to a party that there was alcohol there?*
- *Your friends wanted you to skip school to go to the mall with them?*

You may want to give a small prize to the team with the most answers. *Many times we make quick choices in our life without thinking about the consequences. Today we will find out how God wants us to use our minds in a responsible way for Him.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Ask for one volunteer from each group who is willing to pantomime something for the class. The volunteer may tell his or her own group members what will be acted out, but the other group will try to guess what he or she is doing. One person will pantomime the process of a **caterpillar turning into a butterfly**; the other person will pantomime the different stages of a **baby growing into an adult**.

Have each person do their pantomime with the group guessing. After they are done, explain the following: *You have just seen illustrated for us a process of transformation--a striking change in appearance or character that can involve the entire body or mind. We are going to read about a transformation that God wants to take place in our minds.*

Have someone read **Romans 12:1-2** aloud to the class. Then ask your group to respond to the following questions:

1. *In what ways can we offer our bodies as a sacrifice to God?*
2. *What do you think it means for our minds to be transformed?*

Transforming our minds also means getting the mind ready for action.

Now have someone read 1 Peter 1:13. After the scripture has been read, ask,

What are some examples of ways you can "prepare your minds for action"? I want you to include things to avoid, so our minds are free of that which inhibits us from taking on the mind of Christ and doing His will, and things to do. If they need help, suggest that things to avoid might include certain music, activities, or magazines that might contradict Christian values. Things to do could include daily Bible reading, taking sermon notes, joining a Bible study group, and improving their performance at school.

God needs Christians to be well informed and good thinkers in order to make wise decisions. We have many decisions in our lives which are not easy to make. God wants us to use our minds to make wise decisions that are pleasing to Him. Let's stop and take a look at how well we are doing at preparing our minds.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

What are some jobs within the church that require good thinking skills? They will probably list things like church treasurer, board member, pastor, Sunday School teacher, etc. Remind them that they are preparing their minds even now to fill these jobs, and that every decision we make affects our future.

Close the session with prayer. Thank God for giving each person a good mind. Pray that He will empower your students to use their minds to serve Him.

UNIT THEME: GAINING WISDOM

LESSON 11

Handling Freedom

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:11-23; 1 Peter 2:16-17, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 2:16

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide a chalkboard or flip chart into two sides. *Let's brainstorm all the things you can now do that you were not allowed to do when you were five years old.* (For example, crossing the street by themselves, staying at home alone for a short time while their mother goes to the store.) List their ideas on one side of the board or flip chart.

Now describe the responsibilities you now have that you did not have when you were five years old. (For example, taking out the trash; taking care of younger brothers and sisters; keeping their bedroom clean; or helping with other cooking and cleaning chores around the house.) Write these on the opposite side of the board.

When both lists are complete, explain, *Everyone would probably agree that our freedom increases as we grow up, but so does our list of responsibilities. The same thing is true in the spiritual aspects of our lives.*

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TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have two students volunteer to read the story of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11-24. One person should read the son's story in verses 11-20a. Then stop the reader and ask your class the following questions:

1. *What things might the son have been running away from at home?*
2. *What do you think he was hoping to find when he left home?*
3. *What was it that he really found?*
4. *What was the son's attitude when he finally returned home?*

Have the second volunteer read the father's story in verses 20b-24. Then ask these questions to the group:

1. *How did the father's reaction differ from what the son expected?*
2. *Do you think the son deserved a celebration given in his honor?*
3. *In what ways can we compare the father's actions to our Heavenly Father?*
4. *What do you think the son learned about the true meaning of freedom?* (Be sure someone points out that real freedom comes when we accept the limits God gives us. They are intended for our protection, and they are always accompanied by responsibility.)

Next, ask someone to read 1 Peter 2:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Ask the students these questions to help them discover the responsibility of service that accompanies our freedom in Christ:

1. *What responsibility comes along with our freedom in Christ?*
2. *What was Paul's main reason for becoming a slave to others?*

When we find true freedom in Christ, we want to be obedient to Him. One of the best ways we can do this is to begin to serve others.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask your students to take a few minutes alone to silently evaluate their servanthood to others and to Christ. If anyone wants to share where they find themselves spiritually, tell them they are welcome to do that, but don't single anyone out or embarrass anyone. After a few moments of quiet time, ask your students to bow their heads as they finish their own personal evaluations. When everyone has finished and have their heads bowed, pray aloud for your class. Ask God to help your students find their freedom in Him and begin to accept the responsibility He wants to give them. Pray that God will show them how to be obedient to His will by finding places they can serve.

UNIT THEME: GAINING WISDOM

LESSON 12

Taking Responsibility

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 24:15; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:3-8

MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 24:15

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask a volunteer to play the parent in this activity. Write about 10 questions like what is listed below, on a small slip of paper, and place the slips in a small box or jar. The volunteer "parent" will draw one of the questions from the box and ask specific class members to answer by giving excuses. He or she may ask the same question of more than one person, but make sure everyone gets a chance to answer at least once. The "parent" should respond to the excuses in typical parent fashion. Some questions are: Why didn't you clean your room like I asked you to? Why do you always go to be with your friends when there's work to be done around here? How did you get a bad mark on your maths? Why is it you spend so much time with your friends and never have time to help out around the house? When everyone has had a chance to respond to the questions, allow students to choose some favorite excuses. Ask them to pick the "craziest excuse," "most believable excuse," and the "hardest excuse to argue with."

Making excuses is something we're all good at, but it's really just a way of avoiding responsibility. Sometimes we complain about our responsibilities, but they must be shared by everyone if the family is to work together properly. We must also take on responsibility if we want our spiritual lives to be successful.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

If there is adequate space in your classroom, ask four volunteers to demonstrate how each of the following people would run a race. If there is not room to actually run, let them use small toy cars or mime the actions of each person.

1. Kevin is running because his friends are in the race. He doesn't want to put out too much effort, and he doesn't care if he wins.
2. Tania is really interested in running the race. She makes a great start but gets easily distracted along the way as the spectators are waving at her.

3. Dexter has decided to enter the race this morning. He has not prepared, finds himself quickly out of breath, and quits after 100 yards.
4. Tracie has been training for this race for the past six months. She sets her eyes on the finish line and is determined to take home the prize.

After the mock race is completed, ask students these questions:

1. *What advantages did Tracie have to help her win the race?*
2. *What things kept the others from winning the race?*

Next, have someone read 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. Then say, *Our spiritual lives can be compared to running a race. If we plan to win the race, it's going to take discipline. That means accepting some responsibility for our own spiritual training instead of always relying on others.*

Have someone read Philippians 2:12-13. Ask the students, *What did Paul expect the Philippians to do?* (Live in such a way that you show you belong to God; continue to obey God; accept responsibility for living in harmony with others.)

God has given us resources and tools for fulfilling our spiritual responsibilities. Let's take a look at a few and see how we can make use of God's resources.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask volunteers to share their responses aloud with the class.

1. *Who was mainly responsible for your spiritual growth when you were a child?*
2. *What are some specific things they planted in your life?*
3. *Now that you are growing up, who is mainly responsible for your spiritual growth?*
4. *In which areas have you begun to fulfill your responsibilities in ...*
 - a. *studying God's Word*
 - b. *memorizing Scripture*
 - c. *treating others with respect*
 - d. *sharing your faith with friends*
 - e. *resisting temptation to sin*
 - f. *becoming a servant*
 - g. *improving your mind*
 - h. *developing Christlike attitudes*

Have a student look up and read 2 Peter 1:3-8. Explain that, God has done everything He can do to give us the power to live holy lives. The responsibility to make these things grow in our lives is up to us! Through the help of the Holy Spirit we must cultivate these qualities in our lives.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: GAINING WISDOM

LESSON 13

Too Close To the Edge

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 1:10-19; 14:12; Matthew 16:21-25

MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 14:12

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, write out several tempting situations on small slips of paper (sexual temptations, alcoholic temptations, lying, fighting, stealing, etc). In class, put them in a can, jar, hat, or other container. Have one of your students randomly select one of the situations and read it aloud. Ask the person whose birthday is closest to the reader's birthday to respond to the situation. Allow other class members to briefly offer a different response if they wish. Repeat until all 10 (or selected) situations have been discussed. Allow for a variety of answers, and don't discourage any of their thoughts or ideas. Encourage them to look at the values behind the decisions that can be made in each situation. When they have finished discussing the last scenario, ask them the following debriefing questions:

1. *How do you go about making difficult choices?*
2. *Why do you think we sometimes give in to the temptation to do something selfish or dangerous?*
3. *What do you think keeps you from giving in to temptation to do what's wrong?*

Often we are tempted to do things we know are wrong. There is excitement in doing something that is forbidden or that we have never done before. It is tempting to go along with the crowd or to try something that sounds exciting. The problem with following our desire for thrills is that the consequences can be quite serious. Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about risky lifestyles.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your students into four groups, assigning one of the following portions of Scripture to each group. If your class is small, remember that one person can be a group and that you can assign a group more than one passage.

- **Proverbs 1:10-14**
- **Proverbs 1:15-19**
- **Proverbs 14:12**
- **Matthew 16:24-25**

Instruct each group to read their assigned scripture and work together to condense it down to its basic meaning, using everyday language. Allow five to seven minutes for them to work on this. Offer assistance and suggestions to help them get started. When they are finished, ask each group to select one person from their group to read their passage of Scripture and another to read their revised or condensed version.

After each group has reported, ask the class to respond to the following questions:

1. *What kinds of things do you get asked to do today that are like the verses in Proverbs?*
2. *What other kinds of things do others try to get you to do?*
3. *What do those verses say will be the end result of someone who chooses to please their selfish desires all the time?*
4. *What kind of life does Jesus suggest we live?*
5. *What kind of example did Jesus give us to follow?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Hand out a piece of paper and pencil to everyone in class. Ask them to think of some of the negative risks they have been tempted to take. Prompt them with some examples. Assure them that they won't have to share their answers with anyone else. If they wish, have them use a symbol to represent the risk. After they've taken a moment to recall these temptations, ask if they can think of any risks they've taken as a Christian? Tell them to write them down on the same sheet of paper. After a minute or two, allow the students to share some of their Christian "risks."

Life with God isn't necessarily without its risks. However, the risks we take with God are good and they benefit others. The other risks and temptations that are selfish can be very destructive, not just for ourselves but also for others that might be involved or affected by our decisions. What kinds of risks do you want to take?

As you close, lead the class in a directed prayer. Have them thank God for giving them the courage to take the right risks. Ask the students to pray for guidance when they are tempted to take the wrong risks. Encourage them to ask forgiveness for any choices they may have made to give into temptation.

UNIT THEME: A NEW LIFE

LESSON 14

Temple Abuse

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 6:12-13a, 19-20; Ephesians 5:15-18;

MEMORY VERSE

1 Timothy 4:8

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin class by spreading out some color advertisements found in magazines, or think of some examples of ads you may see on the streets. The ads should be examples to start discussion about drinking, smoking, eating disorders, sexual relationships, etc... Not all the ads even have to be about a "bad" habit; it could just be a picture of a model that typifies what a woman or man is "supposed" to look like. Have the class divide into groups. Try to keep the groups small. Tell them they can each select an ad for their group (encourage diversity among the groups; you don't want every group doing something on alcohol or smoking). After each group has an ad, challenge them to create an "after" picture for the ad. For example, if one group selects an ad for smoking, they can draw a man who has bad teeth, lung disease, and is coughing. If some in your group prefer drama over art, allow them to put together a short skit demonstrating "before" and "after."

Give the groups five minutes to prepare their ads. Then have each group present their "before" and "after." When every group has had an opportunity to share, lead the class in a discussion time with these questions:

- 1. What habits were represented here?*
- 2. Why does the media tend to portray these habits as exciting and beneficial?*
- 3. Do you think your "before" or "after" pictures/skits more accurately represents the habit? Why?*
- 4. Do you or others you know of have to deal with these kinds of issues?*
- 5. How could these kinds of habits affect a relationship with God?*

We may think that what we do with our body isn't very important to our walk with God. Let's see what the Bible has to say about these habits.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Next, put up a large sheet of paper or cardboard from a box on which you have printed all the Scripture verses for this lesson (do this before coming to class). Divide your class into three groups. Have the groups examine the verses and identify words or phrases that refer to either "body," "mind," or "spirit," depending on their group's designation. Group One should look for references to body, Group Two for references to mind, and Group Three for references to spirit. When everyone in a group agrees on what words relate to their designation (body, mind, or spirit), have them draw a line under it, circle it, put brackets around it, etc. on the verses you have printed out. This can be a lot of fun if all three groups work at once.

The result should be a complicated maze of circles, lines, and brackets. Several words or phrases will be marked by two or three different markings. Point out that the Bible views humans as whole persons and that what happens to our bodies has an effect on our minds and spirits as well. Discuss what the effects of sexual promiscuity or substance abuse can have on the whole person. Make sure that you refer the students back to the passages of scripture, and also refer them to other scriptures that refer to keeping our bodies as temples of God.

Today we have heard what life is like when we cause damage to our bodies instead of following God's directions.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Next, hand out small pieces of paper. Instruct each student to write "I Choose" at the top of the paper then challenge them to write a phrase or a list of habits that they are choosing to either give up or avoid. Example, "I choose not to have sex before I am married." Or, "I choose not to drink alcohol." Or, "I choose not to smoke and destroy my body." Have them sign it at the bottom. Then hand out envelopes and have them put the paper in the envelope, sealing it. Before they hand it in to you, tell them to write their name and address on the outside of the envelope. Assure them that their papers will not be read. After a month or so has passed, mail or pass out the papers as a reminder to their commitment.

Close in prayer, asking God to help your students develop good habits that will help them be able to serve Him better and allow them to enjoy life to the fullest.

UNIT THEME: A NEW LIFE

LESSON 15

Victory Against Violence

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:17-21

MEMORY VERSE

Micah 4:3

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring to class several newspapers from the past week, or think about some of the recent news reports from your community, country, or the world regarding wars and violence. Have your students search the papers or watch the video and list how many violent acts were reported and what type (murder, robbery, rape, assault, etc.). After several minutes have each student share his or her list.

Following the reports, ask these questions or similar ones using your own words:

- 1. What kind of violence seems to happen most often?*
- 2. What is your experience in school with violence?*
- 3. How does it make you feel when you hear, see, and read about violence?*
- 4. Why do you think people act so violently?*
- 5. What kinds of feelings or emotions generally lead to acts of violence?* (Anger, jealousy, rejection, disappointment, failure)
- 6. How do these feelings lead to violence?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your class into two groups. Give each group a pencil, a piece of paper, and at least one Bible. Group One will be the Do's, and Group Two will be the Don'ts. Have them write the name of their group on the top of their paper. Then ask them to look up Romans 12:17-21 and follow along as you read it out loud to them. When you are finished reading, ask each group to refer to their Bibles and write down each of the "do's" or "don'ts" (depending on which group they are in) they can find in the passage. Explain that the word "do" does not have to be written in every case; it can be implied. For example, verse 21 reads, "[do] overcome evil with good."

The complete list of Do's should include these phrases: "do be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody," "do live at peace with everyone," "do leave room for God's wrath," "do feed and give a drink to your enemies," and "do overcome evil with good." The Don't list should include: "don't repay anyone evil for evil," "don't take revenge," and "don't be overcome by evil." Have each group report on the do's or don'ts they found in the passage.

Then ask the following questions in your own words:

1. *Do you think it is realistic to live by the do's and don'ts of this passage? Why or why not?*
2. *How would the world or our community be different if everyone lived this way?*
3. *What kinds of things can we do that would be right in the eyes of everybody?*
4. *Can you think of anything else the Lord might want us to give to our enemies, besides food and water?*

Ask your students to look up and read Micah 4:3, then ask them to think of one word that sums up the message of this verse (peace, tranquility, nonviolent, calm, disarm, etc.). List their suggestions on the chalk/marker board. Then ask them to respond to the following questions:

1. *Do you find it easy to trust the Lord to settle your disputes and arguments with others? Why or why not?*
2. *Describe a time you allowed God to settle a dispute you had with someone.*
3. *What are some modern examples of swords, plowshares, and pruning hooks?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Think of several violent situations in which your students could find themselves. Place those situations in a container or hat and have them draw the situations out one at a time, read them aloud, and then develop a peaceful resolution to the situation. This is an opportunity for your students to put to good use the things they have learned in the scripture lesson today. Be sensitive to the fact that some of your students may come from violent home situations. If you know about this, don't single that student out as they may be struggling with it. It might be best to talk to them privately after the class is dismissed to find out they feel and how they are coping. Close this lesson in prayer, asking God to show the young people how to be peacemakers.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 16

The Fruit of the Spirit - Love

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22- 23; 1 Corinthians 13

MEMORY VERSE

Mark 12: 30-31

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

Ask the youth to explain the different ways that they understand the term “love.” Then divide the class into groups of three or four and ask them to put together a drama or compile a song that reflects what their concept of love is. Based on the drama/song, ask:

1. *What did you hear about “love” in these presentations?*
2. *How do you know if you have love for someone or something?*
3. *Is it easy or hard to love people?*

The concept of love has been watered-down in our society. We say we love ice cream, we love playing basketball, we love the latest popular song, we love our mother, we love our girlfriend, and we love Jesus. The word “love” can’t mean the same thing in all of those instances. It’s important for us to see what Jesus meant by “love.”

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TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

Divide the class into three groups and explain to them the three kinds of love (eros [love for self-gain], philio [love for a friend], and agape [unconditional love for anyone]). Assign one type of love to each group, and have them find examples in the Bible where their particular type of love is portrayed. They are also to create a drama which shows what this type of love would look like today. After about fifteen minutes, call them all together.

Let each group report back and then discuss the following questions with the class:

1. *What do we learn about each of the three kinds of love from these groups?*
2. *What kind of love is the most commonly found in our society? Why?*
4. *Is the outcome of eros, philio, and agape always good or bad? Explain.*

Everyone, no matter who they are or how rich or famous they are, is in need of love – to give and to receive.

Ask someone to read or recite aloud John 3: 16.

1. *This is probably the first bible verse that most of us memorized. Why is this verse so important?*
2. *What's the whole point of the verse?*
3. *What was God's motivation for sending Jesus to his death for us? Was it because we were so good, or we were so worthy, or because we loved him so much or because he owed us? (It was simply love.)*

Have someone read Mark 12:30-31 aloud to the class.

1. *When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, these verses were his response. We understand why we are to love God with all that we have, but why the second part? Why do you think Jesus would say that second in importance only to loving God is loving others?*
2. *What does it mean to "love others as yourself?" What does that look like?*
3. *Is that easy or hard to do? Explain.*
4. *How is it possible to love others as ourselves when they are mean to us? (Jesus is our example. Look at what he endured so that we could be saved. Jesus promises that he will never leave us or forsake us. He promises us power to carry out his leadership in our lives.)*

These passages summarize what real love is all about, and what our attitudes must be towards love. God loved us so much and so unconditionally that he gave his son Jesus to die for us. Our response to that unconditional love that was poured out to us should be to love those around us. No, loving others isn't easy. It's actually very very very hard. Our society has taught us that we are to love others when they do good things for us, when they're nice to us, and when we get something in return. But that isn't Jesus' way. He loves with no guarantee of being loved back. He loves even when that love isn't returned to him. That's real love!

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

Have the group stand together to close. Either have 1 Corinthians 13 written on the board for the group to read together, or have the group repeat the words after you. However, they are to replace the word "love" with their name. Start with verse 4, for example. "_____ (name) is patient, _____ (name) is kind). Remind them that this is a commitment prayer to make these qualities practical in their life. Challenge the group in some way to portray the perfect love of God wherever they go. End by praying for the students.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 17

The Fruit of the Spirit - Joy

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:9-11

MEMORY VERSE

James 1:2

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

- 1. I want each of you to share with the class about a time or times when you experienced a lot of joy, like when your sports team won, you won a big trophy, you received something special from a friend, you won an award, etc.*
- 2. Did your joy last forever? What eventually took that joy away?*

The joy that we'll be talking about today is a product of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The joy that is produced is not given by the world when you get a gift or when your sports team has won, and it doesn't go away when things don't go your way; it's an everlasting joy that survives the worst storms of life.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Read Gal. 5:22-23 to the class. *Why do you think Paul refers to these attitudes as Fruit of the Spirit?* (Like a tree produces fruit, the Holy Spirit produces these attitudes in our lives when we are obedient to Him.) *Over the next several weeks, we are going to be studying the Fruit of the Spirit. Last week we talked about Love. What do you remember about love? This week we are obviously talking about Joy.*

Tell the students the story of Job (found in Job chapters 1-42), and then discuss as a group:

- 1. If you were Job, how would you have felt after you had lost everything? Joyful?*
- 2. Read James 1:2. This says that we are to be filled with joy when things are tough. How is that possible? Can we have joy in suffering? How?*
- 3. Define "joy."*
- 4. Does joy come from external or internal sources?*

5. *Read Romans 15:13. Where does this passage say that joy comes from?* (trusting in God)
6. *What do you think Job had that made him react with an attitude that would not forsake God?* (He had trust in God. Even though he didn't understand why God had allowed these bad things to happen to him, he trusted that God knew what He was doing.)
7. *Is there a connection between our relationship with God and joy? If so, what is it?* (trust)
8. *What is the relationship between joy and hardship in the Christian experience?*

Divide the class into three groups and ask them to talk about:

1. *Some of their own situations when they were confronted with their joy being taken away.*
2. *How they reacted in that situation.*
3. *How they could handle things differently next time and keep the joy that Christ has given them.*

Discuss their answers as a large group.

The joy that we're talking about is what we have when we are followers of Christ. The joy that Jesus had while physically on earth was one that came because of his relationship and trustful obedience to his Father. A natural outflow of our relationship with Christ is the fact that we have joy unspeakable, or joy that never dries up, a joy that is not dependent upon our situation. It doesn't mean that we always have to walk around with a big smile on our faces, but it does mean that we can have joy even when things are difficult.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask the students to identify three or four people they know who they think are truly joyful. The students are to go to those people sometime during the next week and ask them about their joy, and how they keep that joy regardless of the circumstances.

I want to challenge you to think about Job and what he went through when you are going through trials and tribulations. Remember that Jesus went through sufferings and disappointments, but because of his trust in his Father, he kept that joy.

Close with prayer

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 18

The Fruit of the Spirit – Peace

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; Hebrews 12:14-15

MEMORY VERSE

John 14:27

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

“We want peace at all cost even if we have to fight for it.” This is a saying that sums up the world’s concept of peace. In these times of political, social, and personal turmoil, it’s hard to even think of a true and lasting peace.

Give each student a pencil and paper and ask them to draw a picture that sums up the concept of peace. After everyone is done, ask each person to explain their picture and why they drew what they drew.

- 1. How much of what you drew is based on the media, and how much is based on your own understanding of peace?*
- 2. As Christians, what should be our attitude towards peace?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

The word peace, according to the pictures, brings up images of quietness, of a lack of problems, of quiet waters, no fighting, etc... Is that really what peace is all about – the absence of problems or difficulties? Have someone read John 14: 27 aloud to the group. Then divide the class into two groups. We are going to have a debate. Group one will defend the peace that God gives against the other group who will defend the peace that the world gives. You will have 10 minutes to prepare to defend your position.

Start the debate after they have had time to prepare. Give each side the chance to present their argument and respond to the argument of the other group.

Follow the debate with these questions:

1. *Is peace the absence of conflict?*
2. *What kind of "peace" does the world give to us?*
3. *What do you think is Jesus' understanding of the term "peace?"*
4. *Is there a difference between being peaceful and having peace?*
5. *Why do you think that Christ makes sure that he speaks of "Peace, I leave with you" and "My peace I give to you?" Why does he want to make sure that the disciples know that it is HIS peace that HE is leaving with us?*
6. *How can an invisible God bring peace?*
7. *Is the peace that Christ speaks of really possible in our lives?*

When looking through the Scriptures, we find that Jesus' life was never without conflict with His family, His friends, His followers, and His enemies. But in spite of all this turmoil, he never lost that inner peace that he now promises to leave with the disciples then ... and now. Jesus had peace because he stayed focused on God's will and purposes. He trusted in God, even when things around him seemed crazy and out of control. Jesus didn't define peace as the absence of conflict, but an assurance in the middle of conflict that God was still in control and loved him dearly and worked on his behalf. We too can experience real peace if our attitude is like that of Jesus.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

This week I want you to pay attention to newspapers, TV, radio, or any other form of media and see how many promises of peace there are. Weigh this against the peace of Christ that is spoken about in John 14:27.

Pray that your students will want the peace of Christ in their lives.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 19

The Fruit of the Spirit - Patience

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; Ecclesiastes 7:8-9

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 5:3-4

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

Start this session with a simulation game. Do a mock classroom lesson and ask a few easy questions like, *“What day is it today?” “How many books are there in the bible?” “What were the names of Jesus’ disciples?” “What are the 10 Commandments?”* Etc... Let the students raise their hands if they know the answers, but always select the same person (with whom you have talked with beforehand) to answer all the questions. Tell the other students that you’ll get to them, but don’t. Arrange with the student to answer with long answers and wrong answers, and regardless of the answer they give, you as the teacher accept it. Make sure that you test their patience to the utmost, and then start the lesson with some of the following questions:

- 1. How did it feel to be ignored?*
- 2. What emotions crept in when I ignored you when you tried to answer?*
- 3. How difficult/easy was it to stay patient through the whole exercise?*
- 4. Did you grow impatient? Why or why not?*

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TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

As you know, we’ve been studying the Fruit of the Spirit. Which fruit did we study last week? (Peace) What do you remember about the fruit of peace?

Have someone read Galatians 5:22-23 aloud to the class. *I’m sure you’ve figured out that today we are studying the fruit of patience.*

- 1. How would you define patience?*
- 2. Where do you think patience comes from? Where or how do you get it?*
- 3. Do you think having and displaying patience is important? Why or why not?*

Let’s see what else the Scriptures say about Patience.

Distribute the following scriptures among the members of your class to look up, and discuss the questions as a class, or divide into small group and discuss in groups:

- Prov. 19:11
 - a. *What gives you patience according to this verse?*
 - b. *How does wisdom give you patience?*
 - c. *What does it mean to “overlook an offense?”*
 - d. *How does patience help you do that?*
- Col. 3:12-13
 - a. *This verse says that we’re to clothe ourselves with patience. What does it mean to clothe yourself with something? (completely cover yourself)*
 - b. *So what does it mean that we are too “clothe ourselves with patience?” What would that look like in our world today?*
 - c. *How does patience help us “bear with each other and forgive” each other?*
- Prov. 16:32
 - a. *What is the point of this verse?*
 - b. *Why are those two things shown as opposites – a patient man and a warrior?*
 - c. *What do most people tend to be – patient people or warriors? Why?*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14
 - a. *The last prt of the verse says that we are to “be patient with everyone.” Does that really mean “everyone” ... even the people who treat us bad or drive us crazy? (yes) Why?*
 - b. *How is that possible?*
 1. *Why is it hard to be patient?*
 2. *What is the core issue in impatience? What is main reason that we struggle with patience? (Selfishness – we want what we want, how we want it, when we want it. And if that doesn’t happen, we get frustrated and angry ... impatient.)*
 3. *What is the core issue in patience? What motivates us to be patient with others? (Love – we care enough about them to put their needs before our own. If they don’t do what we want when we want, because of our love, we are okay with that.)*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

I want to close by giving you a chance to think about yourselves ... and patience. Would you describe yourself as a patient person? This is probably an area that most of us struggle with a lot. It’s so easy to get caught up in looking out just for ourselves and expecting everyone to be on our timetable. We work hard, and we expect everyone else to as well. We make changes, and when others don’t when we think they should, we get frustrated and impatient with them. Today we’ve seen that as Christians, patience is supposed to be an integral part of our lives. That we need to be patient with each other, and that love is what is at the heart of patience. So how are you doing in the area of patience? Do you need to allow God to make some changes in your attitudes and actions in regard to patience? It’s not something that comes easily, but it takes commitment, hard work and love.

Close the session with prayer.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 20

The Fruit of the Spirit - Kindness

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:29-32

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 4:32

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

I want you to call out all the words that you associate with the word “kindness.” List on white board, chalk board, or large paper for the class to see. When a student calls out a particular term, let him/her explain why they chose that term.

Tell us about a time when someone was kind to you, or you were kind to someone, even if you or they didn't deserve it.

Make sure that the students have a firm grip of the concept of the term “kindness” before going into the next section.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

Have someone read Galatians 5:22-23 aloud to the class. *Last week, we talked about which fruit of the spirit? (patience). What do you remember about the fruit of patience? This week we're going to be talking about kindness.*

Have someone read Ephesians 4:29-32 aloud to the class. Divide the class into small groups and have them discuss the following questions:

- 1. Do verses 29-31 have anything to do with being kind to others? If so, how? If not, why not?*
- 2. Why does “unkindness” grieve the Holy Spirit?*
- 3. In verse 32, the Apostle Paul links “kindness” and “compassion” and “forgiveness” together. Why do you think he does that?*
- 4. Who is our supreme example of this?*
- 5. How did he show it while physically on earth and today?*

Have the groups come back together after about 10-15 minutes to report back on their discussions.

Divide back up into the groups. Each group is to come up with a drama that shows what kindness could look like at their school or home or community.

Have each group present their drama.

1. Is it easier to be kind to our friends or people we feel deserve it? Why or why not?

God's Word is very clear – we are called to live lives of kindness to one another. While it's easier to be kind to a friend or a person who we feel deserves it, we are called to be kind to everyone. Even though there were times when Jesus became frustrated at certain people, he never treated them with unkindness. Neither should we.

Jesus showed kindness when he went to the lepers and knelt down next to them and healed their sores; when he called the little children to come to Him; when he raised the widow's son back to life; when he healed the demon possessed man; when he went to Zacchaeus' house for dinner; when he befriended the friendless and outcasts of society; when he hung on the cross as people yelled out insults at him; and the list goes on and on and on. True and genuine kindness, without seeking anything selfish in return, is what Jesus was and is all about.

1. How was Jesus able to be kind to people who were mean to him, to "turn the other cheek?"

(Love)

2. How does love enable one to be kind – even to those who are mean to us?

Developing kindness in our life as a fruit will also help us to start forgiving those who have wronged us, those who have treated us unfairly, and those who don't "deserve" our kindness.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

Close this session by asking the youth what they as a group could do to show kindness to people in their community or school. Encourage them to make and carry out concrete plans.

End with prayer for the students to have and exhibit the fruit of kindness.

Next week we'll be talking about gentleness and goodness. Please come to class acting and even dressing gentle and good.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 21

The Fruit of the Spirit – Goodness and Gentleness

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3, 5:8-10

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 4:2

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

Since you asked the class last week to come to class acting and looking gentle and good, hopefully they will. You may need to remind them as they arrive. When you are ready to start, ask them the following questions:

- 1. What does gentleness and goodness look like?*
- 2. Can you dress in a way that makes you more gentle and good?*
- 3. Our society often attaches the quality of gentleness to women and not to men. Do you think men can be gentle? Explain.*
- 4. Is being good a practical issue that is shown by outward actions, or is it basically an interior attitude?*

Divide the class into two groups. Give group one the word “gentleness” and group two the word “goodness.” Each group is to come up with as many explanations and definitions of these words as possible. Then, have them act out, in one story, all the different words that they gave to describe their word. For example, if they came up with ten words that describe gentleness, they have to act out all those words in one story. Give them about 10-15 minutes, they need to come together and give their performances.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

Today, we continue our discussion of the Fruit of the Spirit. Which ones have we talked about so far? Have a class member read Galatians 5:22-23 aloud to the class. We’re going to talk about two of the fruit today – goodness and gentleness.

Have a class member read Ephesians 4:1-3 aloud to the class.

1. *What is Paul urging his readers to do in verse 1?*
2. *What is the “calling you have received” that Paul refers to? (We are to follow Christ and reflect him in all we are and all we do.)*
3. *Paul goes on in verses 2-3 to describe what we must do in order for our lives to reflect Christ in all we are and all we do. What must we do?*
4. *There is a connection between all of these descriptions of what we should be doing with our lives. What is the connection between gentleness and all of the others that are mentioned?*

Have another class member read Ephesians 5:8-11 aloud to the class.

1. *What does “darkness” refer to?*
2. *Who are “children of the light”?*
3. *What does it mean by “fruit of the light”? (Something that is produced or is a by-product of the light. Just like mangos are produced by mango trees, so goodness, righteousness, and truth are produced in the lives of people who are in the light.)*
4. *What are these “fruit of light”?*
5. *These fruit are contrasted to the “deeds of darkness” in verse 11. According to these verses, if we are children of the light, if we are Christians, what should be seen in our lives?*

In Ephesians 4 and 5, Paul urges the believers to be “completely humble and gentle” (4:2) and to “bear with one another in love”. Goodness is being good, nice, respectful, and loving to people, no matter what they have done or who they are. Genuine goodness is what God wants, not the hypocritical goodness of the Pharisees who were only “good” to impress others. James tells us that if the good we do is not for the right reasons, it is like filthy rags. Gentleness is following the example of Christ when He spoke, when He was faced with accusations, and even when He was faced with death. It includes turning the other cheek, responding to insults with words of kindness, etc.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

With all the discussion about gentleness and goodness, it is important that we find a way we can live these concepts out in a practical and dynamic way. I want to challenge us to adopt an attitude of gentleness and goodness that flows into the lives of the people around us. Let our gentleness and goodness be evident to all people so that they can see Jesus through us.

Close in prayer and let the students pray for each other.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 22

The Fruit of the Spirit - Faithfulness

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 5:8-9

MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 28: 20

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

As the students come into the class, have them sit on anything but chairs. It can be a tree-branch that looks like it's about to break, a piece of make-shift chair that you quickly put together, etc. Have as many of these unstable "chairs" as possible available for the students to sit on. You will find that many of the students will not want to sit down because they don't trust the "chairs". Then ask:

1. *Why was it so difficult to sit down on a "chair" that looked unstable, even though it might be able to hold your weight?*
2. *Is there a difference between trust and faith??*
3. *What are some of the things/people that you have faith in? (church, parents, government?, friends, etc.)*
4. *What are some of the things/people that you don't have faith in at all? Why?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

Which fruit of the spirit did we talk about last week? (goodness and gentleness). What do you remember about the fruits of goodness and kindness? This week we're going to be talking about the fruit of faithfulness.

We're going to look at the story of Abraham to help us get a good idea of what faith looks like. Tell me what you know about Abraham.

After the class has mentioned all they know about Abraham, have someone read Genesis 22: 1-18 aloud to everyone. Divide the class into two groups. Group 1 is to re-enact the story of Abraham and Isaac. Group 2 is to act out what they think the story would have been like if Abraham had refused to go up the mountain and sacrifice Isaac.

After 10-15 minutes, have the groups come back together and present their dramas. Then ask the following questions:

1. *How do you think Abraham felt when God asked him to sacrifice his son?*
2. *Why did Abraham go through with it, even though Isaac's death would put an end to the promise that God had made to him that He would make a great nation through Abraham?* (He had such faith in God that he knew that either God would raise Isaac from the dead or provide for some other miracle.)
3. *What do you think would have been the consequences if the second group's story was the real story – if Abraham had refused?*
4. *If Abraham would have said no, do you think God would have built the Israelite nation around someone else?*
5. *What do you think would have happened to Abraham?*

Because of Abraham's life of faithfulness to God, God blessed him greatly and he became the father of a great nation – the people of God.

1. *Jesus also lived by faith. What was his ultimate act of faith?* (He left heaven to become a man, experienced life as we do, then suffered and died on the cross.)
2. *What were the consequences for him of his faith in God?* (God sustained him during the difficult times, and raised him from the dead.)
3. *For us?* (We can be forgiven of our sins and have eternal life.)

Ask a class member to read Hebrews 11 aloud to the class.

1. *What stands out to you from this passage?*
2. *What definition of faith do we get from this passage?*
3. *What is the difference between "faith" and "faithfulness"?* (Faith is trust in God that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He promises He will do. Faithfulness is holding steady to faith and living life by faith, even when things get really difficult. This can be seen easily in Heb. 11:35-38.)

Ask someone to read 1 Peter 5:8-9 aloud to the class.

What is Peter trying to communicate to us about faithfulness? (Stand firm. Remain faithful! We aren't the only ones who have difficulty. There are Christians all around the world who are living faithfully in the face of difficulties.)

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

I want to challenge you this week to grow closer to Christ through your devotions, prayers, listening to the Word of God, etc. The faith that we seek will grow stronger as we grow closer to Christ. The better we know Him, the easier it is to have faith and live faithfully in Him in our daily lives.

Close in prayer.

UNIT THEME: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 23

The Fruit of the Spirit - Self-Control

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-9, Genesis 39:5-20, Judges 14-16,

MEMORY VERSE

Galatians 5:25

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

Ask the class to stand in a circle with one person in the middle. The object of the game is for the person in the middle to try to get someone in the circle to smile or laugh. They can make funny faces, say something funny, etc to get someone to smile or laugh. They just can't touch anyone. The people in the circle have to look at the person in the middle, but they must try to keep a straight face. If someone in the circle smiles or laughs, they have to trade places with the person in the middle of the circle and then they must try to get someone in the circle to laugh, etc.

- 1. How difficult was it to keep a straight face and not smile or burst out laughing?*
- 2. What was the best way to keep from smiling or laughing?*
- 3. How easy was it for the person in the middle to influence people to smile or laugh, even though that person didn't want to?*
- 4. How does this game relate to real life, and how people sometimes get us to do things we don't really want to do?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS)

Last week, we talked about which fruit of the spirit? (faithfulness). What do you remember about the fruit of faithfulness? This week we're going to be talking about self-control. What do you think "self-control" is? We're going to take a look at two young men and their self-control.

Divide the class into two or more groups. Half of the groups are to look at one part of Joseph's life as found in Genesis 39:5-20. As a group they are to act out the passage and then describe how Joseph did or did not use self-control. The other half of the groups are to look at one part of Samson's life as found in Judges 14:1-3, 10-13; 15:3-8; 16:1,4-6, 15-21. As a group

they are to act out the passage of Judges 16:15-21 and then describe how Samson did or did not use self-control.

After 10-15 minutes, have the groups give their presentations. Follow up with these questions:

1. *Why do you think Samson gave in to the advances of Delilah?* (He was only interested in having fun and getting what he wanted now, without thought of the consequences of his actions.)
2. *What were the consequences of Samson's lack of self-control?* (blindness, prison, loss of leadership opportunity, embarrassment to his family, eventually a premature death.)
3. *How might Samson's life have been different if he had lived a life of self-control, instead of chasing after all of those girls or losing his temper or making foolish bets?* (He could have become a great leader of Israel!)
4. *Why do you think Joseph was able to stand firm against the advances of Potiphar's wife?* (He valued obedience to God and doing the right thing over a short-lived pleasure.)
5. *What were the results of Joseph's self-control?* (In the short term, he ended up having negative consequences (prison). However, in the long-term his self-control eventually made it possible for him to become second in command of Egypt and save his family and many people in Egypt from starvation.)
6. *What do you think would have happened to Joseph if he had given in to Potiphar's wife?* (He would have eventually been found out and probably killed. He would never have been trusted again.)
7. *Is having self-control and doing the right thing usually the easiest thing or hardest thing to do? Why do you say that?*

Too many people are failing morally because of lack of self-control. More look like Samson than Joseph in their decisions and lives, and as a result, they are having to pay the negative consequences. It's important that we adopt the attitude of self-control that we also see in Jesus. Jesus was tempted to be selfish, take short cuts, give in to temptation, settle for second best, etc. However, because of his self-control, he didn't, and remained the sinless sacrifice for our sins. Let's put on this fruit more than ever because the devil is ready to devour us when we have a lack of self-control. Like Jesus and Joseph, we need to value obedience to God and doing the right thing over short-lived pleasure.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

How are you doing in the area of self-control? Is it a fruit that is being produced and displayed in your life? What are some changes that you need to make? What are some attitudes that you need to change? In what areas do you need to make God a higher priority? Pray to God that He will help you grow stronger and stronger in having that self-control that He calls each of us to have.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 24

No Fear?

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 41:10; John 14:27; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18

MEMORY VERSE

1 John 4:18

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, write each of these phrases on separate pieces of paper (enough for 1 for each of your students): electrical outlet, growing old, fire, rooftops, snakes, AIDS, doctors, death of a loved one, public speaking, spiders, family breakup, failing a class, the opposite sex, getting laughed at, birds. At the start of the class, tape or pin one of the pieces of paper or label onto the back of each student. Don't let them know what words are on their backs. Then give the group three minutes to mingle around the room and ask yes/no questions to other students in an effort to correctly guess the words that are taped on their backs. Here are some sample questions: Is this an animal? a place? a person? a thing? an activity? Is this something that happens to you? Is this something you encounter every day?

After three minutes, let your youth take off the words off their backs. Ask volunteers to take turns explaining how a person could have a healthy or unhealthy fear of each item.

Healthy fear can keep us out of danger and on the right track, but when any fear dominates our lives, it's out of place.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Before class, write the following biblical references on a large sheet of paper: Proverbs 3:25; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:5; 1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:7; Psalm 19:9; John 14:27; Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 1:21; Psalm 2:11. Leave enough space for the verse to be written beside each reference. Make a duplicate copy of the sheet and take both copies to class.

Divide your group into two teams, and have each team form their own single file line. Place a small table, desk, or chair at the head of each line. Place a Bible and one of the large sheets of paper with the biblical references on each table. At your signal, one player from each team races to its table, looks up the first verse, writes it down next to the reference, then rushes back to his or her team. The next player in line should look at the first letter of the first word in the verse,

then write down something that people are afraid of that begins with this letter (e.g., H - Hurricane). After writing down the fearful object, the student returns to his or her team, tagging the next runner. Repeat this procedure for each verse on the sheet of paper. Unless you have a large class, students will do one or both activities more than once.

After the relay is complete, have various members of the class read the same scriptures out loud to the class: Proverbs 3:25; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:4-5; 1 John 4:16-18; 2 Timothy 1:7; Psalm 19:9; John 14:27; Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 1:21; Psalm 2:11. After a scripture passage is read, ask the class to summarize or explain the meaning of that passage, and what it says about fear. Then move on to the next passage and do the same until all of the passages have been read and summarized. When you're done with all of the passages, ask:

1. *How would you summarize what all of these verses say about fear?*
2. *Are we ever commanded to fear anything or anyone? If so, whom?*

It's important to have healthy respect for God, but we don't need to be afraid of a relationship with Him, because God is love and He loves us (read 1 John 4:16-18 aloud again). Knowing that will eliminate any fear of God we may have. And once we have a relationship with God, we gain a new perspective of all our other fears (read 2 Timothy 1:7 aloud again). Let's think about the ways fear affects our daily lives.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Distribute to each student three or four pieces of paper cut to the size of a standard business card. Have them write one of their own fears (or fears of their friends) on each card (fear of failure, the dark, public speaking, witnessing, peers, etc). Place all the cards in a hat, box, bowl, or bucket. Then let your students take turns drawing one card from the collection and read it aloud. Ask your students to respond to the following questions:

1. *How common do you think this fear is: very common, fairly common, or fairly unusual?*
2. *What are some possible causes for this fear?*
3. *How could God help someone who has this fear?*
4. *How could we help someone who has this fear?*

Repeat this procedure and these questions for each card in the collection or until 10 minutes is up.

Close in prayer asking God to help each person conquer their fear with His help and guidance.

UNIT THEME: GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 25

Bearing Your Sorrows

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 20:14-18; 31:12-13; Psalms 6:1-9; 13; Matthew 26:36-39

MEMORY VERSE

Psalms 13:5

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Sitting in a circle on the floor with your class, tell the class about a time when you were depressed, down, or discouraged. Your honesty will lead the way for others to feel comfortable sharing. After you've told your story, pick up a ball of yarn or string, and holding the end of the yarn/string, toss the ball to a student. (As you hold the end of the string, the ball will start to unravel, connecting the two of you.) The student who catches the ball tells another story about a time when he or she was down or discouraged (or the student may choose to pass). He or she then holds on to a length of yarn and tosses the ball to another student. When everyone in the circle has had a chance to speak, the group will be connected by a web of yarn. *We've all experienced sadness or discouragement. When you've gone through something hard, you're able to understand and help others who are down--just as this ball of yarn connects all of us and draws us closer through our tough times.*

62 Ask a volunteer to stand up, then wind the yarn around that person. As you wind the yarn or string around the volunteer, say, *When you're really down and feeling all alone, you can shut yourself into a cocoon, while a web of depression spins tighter and tighter around you. That's when it's vital to turn to God and seek His comfort and His help for your situation.* Unwrap the yarn from the volunteer and then move to the next phase of the lesson by saying the following in your own words: *When we're down, we need to turn to God and get His perspective. Let's see what Scripture says about depression and discouragement.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your class into three groups, and have each group read these assigned passages:

- Group 1--Jeremiah 20:14-18
- Group 2--Psalm 6:1-9
- Group 3--Matthew 26:36-39

Have each group identify:

1. *Who is the main person in their passage?*
2. *What's going on – what is the problem?*
3. *What emotions did he experience?*

After about 10 minutes, combine as a class again and have each group read their passage to the class and give a report on their passage. Next ask the class to respond to these questions:

1. *Why do you think the Bible records these experiences?*
2. *What is your reaction to these men and their discouragement or depression?*
3. *Have you ever felt the same way?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask a volunteer to read Jeremiah 31:12-13 aloud to the class. *These hopeful words come from Jeremiah, the same prophet who frequently felt discouraged or depressed. Even in the worst situations, God gives us something to look forward to. It's important for us to see beyond a bad situation, perhaps even finding good things that could result, which in turn helps us develop a sense of hope. A multitude of "sad things" can get us down--some small, some traumatic. But when we give our sad situations to God, waiting upon Him and seeking His perspective, He can give us peace and comfort that make sad situations more tolerable. We might even be surprised by joy!*

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 26

Handling Your Anger

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 4:4; Proverbs 22:24-25; Mark 3:1-5; Ephesians 4:26-27, 29, 31-32

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 4:4

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Take an impromptu poll of your group by asking, “What makes you mad?” Have a volunteer record all responses on a chalkboard, marker board, or flip chart. After completing the group poll, have everyone pick his or her No. 1 response by reading the list aloud and asking for a show of hands on each item. Tally the top five causes of anger in your students' lives. Which of the causes listed seem out of line? Which seem most justified?

Ask your students to come up with different situations where they were truly angry. Allow several people to share, but don't let it get out of hand. After they are done, ask the following questions:

- 1. Which of these situations would make you angry?*
- 2. Which would make you the angriest? Why?*
- 3. What would you do with your anger? What impulses would you have toward the ones that angered you?*
- 4. Would you act on those impulses? Why or why not?*
- 5. How do you typically express your anger?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Separate your class into four groups of one to five members each, and have each group look up all of the four lesson scriptures: Mark 3:1-5; Proverbs 22:24-25; Psalm 4:4; Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-31. (If your class is bigger than 20, enlarge the size of the groups; if your class is smaller than 5, do this activity as a class.) Assign each group a different question from the following list:

1. *According to your assigned passage, when is anger ever appropriate?*
2. *According to your assigned passage, what's the difference between appropriate and inappropriate responses to anger?*
3. *According to your assigned passage, what is the effect on others when our response to anger is appropriate?*
4. *According to your assigned passage, what is the effect on others when our response to anger is inappropriate?*

When each group has finished, have them take turns sharing the results of their discussion with the rest of the class. Use your classes' answers to these questions to start a discussion.

Have you ever felt like screaming and yelling? Do you ever wish you could grab an annoying person by the throat? It's hard to admit to such troublesome, guilt-producing feelings. But when we're angry, we have to acknowledge it. We must be willing to examine what is making us angry--not just pin the blame on someone and explode. Maturity means taking responsibility for our own feelings--not denying them, not hiding them--but honestly examining the causes of our anger.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32 aloud. *These verses tell us that we are not to hold on to our anger, rage, bitterness, and so on, but rather to be kind and compassionate. How do these verses direct us to turn our anger into kindness and compassion? (By forgiving one another).*

Ask volunteers to describe a time or situation in which they were forgiven, either by God or by another person. These examples can be as personal and serious or as minor and lighthearted as you and your students feel to be comfortable.

Then, ask volunteers to describe a time when they forgave someone else and how that act relieved or decreased their feelings of anger.

Close the session by asking your students to reflect on some anger-inducing situation or person they will deal with in the near future. As they do so, pray for God's grace and strength for them, that they may respond with kindness and compassion, thus turning anger into an opportunity for forgiveness and redemption.

UNIT THEME: WALK BEFORE THE LORD

LESSON 27

The Human Need

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:1-24; Psalm 51

MEMORY VERSE

Jeremiah 17:9

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

I want you to think back over various news items you have seen or heard on television, radio, or in the newspaper which illustrate how desperately wicked the human heart can be. The news is always filled with stories of murder, violence, and war. Examples are abundant.

Next, I want you to share stories with the class about a time when you watched a small child and the child showed evidence of selfishness or self-will. Here again, examples are abundant, because this is a universal problem. Young children have not learned to mask or hide these tendencies as older children and adults do. They just come right out and say it: "Me first." "That's my toy." "I want to play it my way."

What are some needs you may have had, but because you were not aware of them at the time, you didn't seek to get them met. Examples might include:

- *A tooth decaying for a long time before pain started.*
- *A mechanical problem with the car which did not show up for a long time and led to costly repairs.*
- *A leak in the roof that wasn't apparent until rain began to drip into the house.*

Christians have a need for a pure heart and yet may not even realize it.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

I want you to look through your Bibles and find verses or examples of people who illustrate the root problem of the human heart toward self-preference, or selfishness. Since this is one of the central themes of the Bible, there are many examples. If they have trouble getting started, prime them with:

- Cain killing Abel
- Lot selecting the best pasture land
- Jacob deceiving Esau
- Laben deceiving Jacob
- Peter and the disciples denying Christ

Have the class turn together in their Bibles to Genesis 3 and have students take turns reading the verses of chapter three aloud. Let's think about the biblical account of the Garden of Eden. *What do we see about human nature from this story? What do we learn about ourselves from this chapter?*

Have your students list on a sheet of paper examples they have noticed in their own lives, past or present, when they displayed actions or attitudes which promoted self-preference rather than self-denial. Allow several minutes for this exercise. If you have time, allow your students to share some of their more humorous or nonembarrassing examples.

From today's lesson we can conclude:

1. *The human heart has a predisposed tendency to please itself, even if that pleasure comes in direct conflict with God's will.*
2. *Every one of us has been infected with this problem whether we realize it or not.*
3. *The problem is not solved when we become Christians. When we get saved, our past sins are forgiven, and we are given new life in Christ, yet we still have a preference for self. Thousands of believers have testified to this problem down through the centuries.*
4. *Every believer has a need to have this root problem dealt with so that he or she can be all that God intended.*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Close the class with a time of silent prayer. Encourage your students to examine their own hearts in the coming week to see if they have a need for a deeper work of God. Remind them that next week's study will consider God's promise and provision to meet our need for heart purity.

UNIT THEME: WALK BEFORE THE LORD

LESSON 28

The Divine Promise

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 19:2; Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 14:17

MEMORY VERSE

Leviticus 19:2

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Open today's topic with a discussion comparing the raising a child, to God's provision for *holy living*. **Simply ask the question: *What must a parent do to raise a healthy, independent, responsible child?*** Focus the question on different ages, up to the age a child typically leaves home or gets married. After your class has responded, focus on things the parents provided for their children, and how necessary they are in a child's development. Let them know that today we will discuss some provisions God has provided for His children to live the holy life.

Next, invite class members to share a time in their lives when they worked on a plan or a goal that took a long time to bring to fulfillment. Examples might include an athletic accomplishment, an academic accomplishment, or a musical accomplishment.

As you know, goals like these are not reached overnight. It takes a lot of planning and work over a long period of time to see it through. It's a lot like God's plan for our salvation, which we're going to study in today's lesson. Putting this concept of God together with the information we learned from last week's lesson yields these facts:

1. *God is holy.*
2. *We're created in His image and are to reflect it.*
3. *Sin has alienated us from God.*
4. *Therefore, God has initiated a plan to not only forgive us of our acts of sinning, but also to restore our moral image in such a way that it's possible for us to reflect His holiness in this world.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Not only does the New Testament reveal what God had in mind for us from the beginning, but we see hints of His plan throughout the Old Testament as well. One of the best examples is found in Ezekiel 36:25-27.

Have a class member read these verses aloud to the class. Then discuss as a class:

1. *Who is speaking in the passage? Who does the "I" refer to?* (God)
2. *Who is God speaking to?* (The Israelites then and us today.)
3. *What does God say he is going to do?*
4. *What does he mean by a "heart of stone" and "heart of flesh"?* (Heart of stone is a heart hard and against God. Heart of flesh is one that is tender toward God.)
5. *What is God's Spirit going to do in us?*

Divide your class into small groups and have someone in each group read Isaiah 6:1-8 aloud to the group. Next, each group member is to put themselves in Isaiah's place and describe how they might have felt if they had experienced what Isaiah did. Or, if the students would feel more comfortable writing it down, they can write it and share it together. They can also prepare a creative way to tell how Isaiah may have felt either through a skit, song, etc.

Bring the groups back together and report on what they discussed. Next, ask your class the following questions:

1. *What do we learn about God from this passage?*
2. *What do we learn about the need of the human heart from this passage?*
3. *What do we learn about ourselves from this passage?*

From the discussion above, as a class, create a list of all the things the Holy Spirit does to help us succeed as Christians. Pass out sheets of paper and have your students write these down to keep in their Bible this week. Instruct them to put a check mark by the things the Holy Spirit has been doing in them in the past month. Then have them put an X by the things they may need the Holy Spirit's help with in the coming weeks.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

As you bring this lesson to a close, invite class members to share brief testimonies concerning various ways the Holy Spirit has been helping them during the past month. Point out from this exercise that God is doing everything He can to make us successful as Christians.

UNIT THEME: WALK BEFORE THE LORD

LESSON 29

The Human Requirement

SCRIPTURE

Romans 6; Romans 12:1-3; Galatians 2:20

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 12:1

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have the class members relate an experience they might have had of winning a prize. It can be anything from winning a prize at a party, to a sweepstakes through the mail, or calling in to a radio show, etc. Now explore with them what they had to do to win. Most will probably answer, “Not much.” Note, however, that they had to do something, even if it was as simple as going to a party or filling out an entry blank or making a phone call.

Give each student a piece of paper and have them write their definition of “consecration.” Then have them get in pairs and share their definitions. Have each pair work out a definition they can share with the class. Bring everyone back together and report on their definitions.

Next, invite class members to share their worst failure at personal discipline. It might be anything from not being able to stay on a diet to being undisciplined in practicing an instrument. Ask, Why is being disciplined so hard?

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Ask several class members to read Romans 6 and Romans 12:1-3 aloud. Then discuss:

1. *What does Paul mean when he wrote that we died to sin?* (Sin no longer has any power over us because we have allowed Christ to “kill” the sin within us. Christ has forgiven us from our sinful actions.)
2. *How are we united with Him in His death (6:5)?*
3. *In what ways can we offer our bodies to Christ (6:13)?*
4. *What do you think Paul means by referring to Christians as being “slaves to God” (6:22)?*
5. *How do we offer ourselves as living sacrifices (12:1)?*
6. *How would you describe the concept of God’s grace (12:3)?*

After the discussion is over, divide the class into several small groups. (If you have a small class, keep them as one group.) Using the scriptures listed above, have the class discuss the difference between consecration and sanctification. Point out that the first is what we do; the second is what God does. Have each group share characteristics of each with the rest of the class. List as many areas of discipline as the class can think of which should be reflected in a believer's life as an "instrument of righteousness."

I want you to think about the example of a dirty or distorted mirror. Imagine that our life is a mirror that is cleaned when we are forgiven of our sins, and it is more perfectly adjusted toward God when we are sanctified. Now we more clearly reflect His image through our lives. This is not to say we did not reflect God before we were entirely sanctified. We now, however, reflect Him better because He has more control over our lives. This wonderful plan is God's, but He does not fulfill it all by himself. He requires something from us.

1. *We accept His offer of sanctification by faith.*
2. *We offer ourselves back to Him in consecration.* (We give everything we are and have to God)
3. *We discipline ourselves to stay clean.*
4. *We live daily by His grace.*

It's that simple: Present yourself, make your request, have faith, believe, live by His grace!

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

If you feel comfortable in doing so, ask a class member early in the week to share his or her experience of personal consecration and sanctification with the class. This can be a sensitive topic, so be careful. Be sure the student will know how to express it humbly emphasizing the grace of God, not personal effort. If done properly, this can be a very effective conclusion to the class session.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: WALK BEFORE THE LORD

LESSON 30

The Human Response

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Galatians 5:22-25

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 12:12

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Give each student a piece of paper and a pen or pencil and have them write thoughts that come to mind when they hear the words “saint” or “holy person.” After allowing two minutes for them to think and write, invite them to share their answers with the entire class. You might summarize a consensus of what the majority think these words mean. You might point out that sainthood is not reserved only for the elderly who have been Christians their whole lives.

Then, on that same piece of paper, ask your students to answer the following question: *Who is the holiest person you have ever known? Why?* Let class members introduce who that person was (or is) for them, particularly pushing them to describe what it was (or is) about the person that made them so holy.

After the introduction(s) have been made, summarize which descriptions had to do with inner qualities and which had to do with outward expressions of holiness. That follows the main outline of today’s lesson.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Ask several students to look up the following scriptures and read them aloud to the class: Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Galatians 5:22-25; 1 Corinthians 12:12.

1. *What is the central message of these passages?*
2. *What do they say about our responsibility as Christians?*

I want us to start thinking about the church's social involvement in the world and the responsibility we have to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and take care of the dying. Divide your class into small groups. List several social issues facing your community, such as AIDS, poverty, orphans, etc. Instruct each group to answer the following questions:

1. *What involvement should Christians have in these areas?*
2. *What could I do to get involved in social change?*

After the groups have had time to discuss, have one member from each group report their conclusions to the class.

Living a spirit-filled life gives us freedom from self-will and self-seeking pursuits, and allows us to be all God intends us to be, both within ourselves and in our relationships with others. The goal of such a life can best be described as Christlikeness. In giving our entire lives to God, we become more like Christ. We take on the family resemblance. What a wonderful blessing from God! Humanity was fully open to the will and purpose of God in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, we became estranged or separated from God, but God already had a plan devised to restore us. When we repent, seek God's mercy, and totally open ourselves to Him, He restores our hearts to the way we were before the Fall. Now, that's good news!

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

You might want to allow time at the end of this session for class members to write a thank-you note to someone in the Christian community who has been a blessing, an encouragement, or a helper to them. Obviously, this activity will take time, so be sure to allow adequate time for this. Also provide paper and pen or pencil for your students.

Ask your class members to respond to the simple question: *What is the bottom line of what it means to live a holy life in our world?* Their answers will help them summarize what they have learned the past few weeks. It will also give you feedback as to what they considered important, and where you might want to pursue further study.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LESSON 31

An Unlikely Beginning

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 1:6-2:10

MEMORY VERSE

Lamentation 3:22-23

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask several members of your group to share times in their life when they were disappointed because someone had broken a promise to them. As the teacher, prepare your own example as well and share it first. After all have shared who want to, ask them how it felt to have that promise broken.

Divide your class into 2 or 3 groups and give each group one piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Tell your students that it is going to be their job to set up a new government for their very own country. Tell them they must name their country, set up the form of government (monarchy, dictatorship, democracy, etc), they must set up some of the basic laws for the country, find a leader, a currency, a religion, etc. They will also start their country by having it be inhabited by the immediate families of those represented in this classroom.

After 10-15 minutes, have everyone come back together and have the groups give a report on their new country. Then ask:

- 1. Why did you pick the leader that you picked?*
- 2. Do you think your leader is the most qualified for the position?*
- 3. How important is a good leader to the success of your country?*
- 4. How does it feel to be able to make decisions about starting a new country all your own?*
- 5. Do you think your country will be successful?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Keep your class in the groups they were in for developing their countries. Give each group one or two, depending on how many groups, of the following passages: Exodus 1:6-7; Exodus 1:8-14, Exodus 1:22, 2:1-2a; Exodus 2:2b-6. Their task is to be prepared to explain what

happens in their scripture portion, and then give an alternate ending for that portion of the story. Encourage them to use their imaginations. For example, the first group might come up with an alternative ending like this: The Israelites became so populous that they took over Egypt and became the rulers. After the first group has shared its alternate ending, say, "But what really happened was..." and then let the next group take over. Continue until the last group has shared its alternate ending. At that point, you will need to take over to explain how the story really ends.

After this activity, ask the following questions:

1. *Why did God keep His plan hidden for so long?*
2. *Why did God choose to work through humans? Why didn't He simply intervene directly?*
3. *Think about your own life. Do you feel as though you don't qualify to do the work of God? Do you feel like you are spiritually weak? Do you question God like the Israelite people did?*

God wants to use you, even if you question what He is doing, and even if you don't feel worthy. He chose His children from a nation of slaves, and He chose them to become a great nation. He can free you from your slavery to sin and make you into a great spiritual leader.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

As you start to close the session with prayer, you may need to remind your students: *Sometimes God answers our prayers with silence. Just because we don't hear God's voice all the time doesn't mean that He's not active in our lives. The Bible tells us that He often works in the background, unseen by most.*

Divide your class into two or three very small groups, and give them a few minutes to share with each other the life situation in which they currently find themselves, good or bad. If your group is like most, there will be several who are experiencing difficult and dark times where God seems distant. Close by asking each person to pray silently or aloud for the other members of the small group.

UNIT THEME: GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LESSON 32

An Unlikely Leader

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 3:1-15

MEMORY VERSE

Acts 7:33-34

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Pair off your class into groups of 2. Put people together who may not know each other very well. Have them face one another and ask the question: “Who am I?” Have them answer this question to their partner by starting out their statement with, “I am the type of person who is...” and have them complete the sentence. Some people will probably be able to do this for a long time, while others will struggle more with this. Give several minutes for this activity.

Next, ask your students to give you their daily routine. What is a “normal” day for them from the time they wake up to when they finally go to sleep at night?

Today's lesson is about the individual God chose to lead the nation of Israel during a time of crisis. Unfortunately, this individual, at least when we see him, meets very few of the qualifications we might expect to find in a great leader, and he is unable to deal with the change that God is going to bring to his daily routine.

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TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have your students read Exodus 3:1-15. After they have finished reading this, discuss the following questions as a group:

- 1. Having been raised in the court of Pharaoh, how do you think Moses felt, now 80 years old and working as a lowly shepherd for his father-in-law?*
- 2. What do you suppose his plans were for the rest of his life?*
- 3. Why does God choose to appear to Moses in the burning bush?*
- 4. What did God say Moses was to do and why?*
- 5. What was Moses' response to God's request?*
- 6. Do we respond to God's requests in the same manner?*

Now give the class members a moment to place themselves in Moses' place. *I want you to think about what it would have been like to have been in Moses' place. What would it have been like to be a shepherd in the mountains, having a wife and family, and the responsibilities of life?*

Now, hand out pieces of paper and pens or pencils to each student. Have them write out a journal entry as if they were Moses. Encourage them to write it using "I" and "me" instead of using Moses' name. Encourage them to consider Moses' hopes and fears, the thoughts and emotions he may have had, and not just the events that took place on that day. Afterward, allow some volunteers to read their journal entry out-loud and discuss that person's perspective.

Most people would feel overwhelmed and incapable of doing what God has asked them to do. When God was speaking to Moses through the burning bush, He revealed a part of Himself that had never been revealed before. He gave Moses His name: Yahweh, I Am. This opened a relationship between God and man that had not existed previously; a relationship characterized by intimacy, closeness, communication, availability and vulnerability.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

God calls every one of His children to do a specific task. Not everyone is called to preach or teach, but we are all called to be His witnesses. It is possible that some of your students are struggling with their call. Perhaps they don't know what their call is, or they are thinking about a call into some sort of full-time Christian ministry. This might be a good time to share your life calling, and to bring the pastor in, or some other leader in the church, and have them explain their call to the class. Everyone is called in a different way and to different things, but hearing about someone else's call may allow the young people to see things in a different light and begin to understand the call of God.

Close your session in prayer, praying specifically for each of your students and the call that God has placed upon their lives. If possible, pray for each student by name, praying specifically for their needs as an individual.

UNIT THEME: GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LESSON 33

An Unlikely Plan

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 14:1-31; John 15:19-16:4

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 8:37

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Open your lesson by having your students share their favorite Bible story with the class. Next have them tell their favorite story that includes a miracle, and then ask if they have experienced any miracles in their own lives. Some may say no, while others may have miraculous stories to tell. *Sometimes God chooses to intervene in human affairs in amazing ways, and other times, He does not.*

Divide your class into two or three groups, or if you have a small group, they can work as one group. Hand out 1 piece of paper to the group leader and a pen or pencil. Tell them that for a moment they are all going to pretend that they are builders, and their job is to think of all the logical steps that it takes to build a building from the ground up. Explain that it is important that everyone agree on the steps because if someone just shows up one day and wants to build the building their way, the building will never be completed correctly, and it may eventually fall to the ground. Encourage the students to discuss and compromise on the steps that should be taken to construct this building. They cannot simply set out to build without a plan of action.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

It might be a good idea to prepare this scripture passage of Exodus 14:1-31 in a story form to be told to the students rather than having someone read the passage aloud. During the week, read through the story and become very familiar with it and retell the story. Don't memorize it word-for-word, but tell it in your own words and don't worry if you leave out certain words or details. Try to be spontaneous and make it interesting to listen to, being animated.

After you have told the story, have several volunteers pretend that they are news reporters doing a radio broadcast. Have one person pretend to be back in the main studio and the other people "out in the field" where the stories are taking place. Station one person at the Egyptian

camp, one at the Israelite camp, and have some people conduct interviews with Moses, Pharaoh, an Egyptian soldier, and an Israelite. For maximum effectiveness, have the students prepare this in advance at some point during the week, if possible. Or ask a student ahead of time to play a certain part, give them the assigned scripture, and allow them to develop what they are going to say based on the scripture.

Next, have a volunteer read John 15:19-16:4. *In this passage of scripture, Jesus stresses that Christians should expect to face opposition.* Ask,

1. *Why should Christians expect opposition?*
2. *Why doesn't God promise us a safe and successful life?*
3. *If you were to summarize this passage in one sentence or less, what would you say?*

Although we are Christians, we WILL face hardship. However, God promises that the Counselor will come to comfort and bring the truth.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Close your session out today by asking your young people to sit quietly and reflect on the following areas in their life:

- *Is there some bondage in your life you need to be freed from?*
- *Has God performed a miraculous act in your life and you have not thanked Him properly for this act?*
- *Think about how you can tell a struggling acquaintance that our God wants to deliver people from the situations that make us feel hopeless and helpless.*

Close in a word of prayer, asking God to be with each of your students and help them to see the freedom Christ offers from the bondage and slavery of sin.

UNIT THEME: GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LESSON 34

God Who Is Near Yet Far

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 33:12-23

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 13:12

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin your class by handing out three small pieces of paper to each person in the room. Have each person write one thing on each piece of paper that no one else in that room, knows about them. Make sure they know that these are things the class will eventually find out.

After they have finished writing these three things on their paper, have them hand the papers back to you. Read each of them aloud and have the rest of the class guess who wrote the event or thing on the paper. Whoever wrote that particular event should say it was them after everyone has made their conclusion on who it was. When finished, ask:

- 1. How well can we really know someone?*
- 2. Can we ever know everything there is to know about someone? Even our best friend or family members?*
- 3. Has anyone that you know ever turned out to be very different from what you first thought them to be?*
- 4. Do you think we can ever know God as well as we know our parents or our best friend?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your group into three small groups. Assign each group one section of today's scripture in Exodus 33: verses 12-14, 15-17, and 18-23. For each group, ask the specific questions that follow so that they can discover what the scripture is saying.

1. Verses 12-14:

- Why do you think Moses felt the need for deeper knowledge of God at this point in his journey?*

- *What kind of knowledge was Moses seeking?*
- *What did God mean when He told Moses, "I know you by name"?*

2. Verses 15-17:

- *On a scale of 1-10, how important do you think Moses considered God's presence?*
- *Why do you think God was pleased with Moses?*

3. Verses 18-23:

- *Why is it impossible for humans to see God in all His glory and still live?*
- *Why did God allow Moses to see His back but not His face?*
- *How could Moses and the people relate to a God who was so completely different and far above them?*

After the groups have finished with their questions, bring everyone back together and have the groups report on their passage.

Next, divide your class into two groups. Have one group turn to Exodus 33:12-23 and identify words and phrases that seem to emphasize that God is not entirely knowable by humans, that His ways are beyond ours, that He is worthy of worship and that He is free to do as He wills. Assign the second group to also read through the passage and highlight words and phrases that talk about the nearness of God. Have this group also think about passages of scripture that talk about God as a father and a friend. Allow each group to report on their findings to each other.

Now let's look at these questions again:

1. *Since God is our father and our friend, is it possible to ever really know God and know everything about Him?*
2. *Can we get close enough to Him to understand and know Him the way we know our family and friends?*
3. *Do you think our human minds could ever comprehend the vastness of God and the mystery of His ways?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have someone read aloud 1 Timothy 6:15-16 and John 14:23. I want you to consider the question, What can I do this week to show greater reverence to God? After you have allowed them to think about this for a moment, ask: What can I do this week to cultivate greater intimacy with God? Close your class with a session of prayer. You can either encourage your students to all pray in unison, ask a member of your class to close in prayer, encouraging that person to remember the needs of the class to draw closer to God, or close in prayer yourself and pray individually for each student.

UNIT THEME: GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LESSON 35

A Holy God, A Holy People

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 11:44-45; 18:1-5; 20:22-26; 22:31-33

MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 12:14

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin your class by asking:

- 1. What are some rules and things you have to do at home that you don't like? If so, why don't you like them?*
- 2. Are there any rules at school that you don't like? If so, what are they and why don't you like them?*
- 3. Are there rules in your community that you think are a bit strange? If so, what are they and why do you think they are strange?*
- 4. Are there rules within the church that you don't like? If so, what are they and why don't you like them? (If there are, allow them to talk about it and be open. Don't get on them for their lack of understanding about certain aspects of the church, or for maybe not agreeing with a particular aspect of holiness and the Christian life. This is a time in their life where they should be allowed to ask questions, but as a teacher, you need to be prepared with the answer and guide them in the right direction.)*

During the week, do some research in the book of Leviticus (not the scriptures above) and find some of the laws that the Israelites had to keep in order to be a holy people, wholly consecrated to God, and share them with the class. *Some of these rules were pretty unusual, and some may have seemed crazy to some of the people. They may not have enjoyed having to keep all of these rules. However, God made the rules for a purpose, just as parents, teachers, and communities make their rules for a purpose.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your class into groups and give them all the scriptures to look up. Encourage them to start looking for the differences in each passage. They may appear to be similar, or the same, on

the surface, but there are some differences within the passages that are important. You may want to draw a grid like the one below.

Leviticus	11:44-45	18:1-5	20:22-26	22:31-33
Alike				
Differences				

After this is complete, ask:

1. *What does it mean when God says He is “holy”?*
2. *Why did God require His people to be Holy like Him?*
3. *What is the relationship between the call to be “separate” from the nations, the call to be “clean,” and the call to obey God’s commands in these verses?*
4. *Leviticus is dominated by two recurring ideas: law and holiness. What is the relationship between these two ideas?*
5. *Several times in these verses the words appear, “I am the Lord.” What is the significance of this repeated phrase?*

Try to get a discussion sparked among your students and encourage them to ask questions as well since they may not fully understand the holiness of God and His desire for us to be holy.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

For the closing activity, bring a beautiful glass, pottery, or wooden bowl from home, or borrow one from a friend. Explain the activity to the friend, so they know what is going to be done to their bowl. Place that bowl on the table and allow the students to look at it and ask them if they think this is a special bowl, what occasions could it be used for, etc. After they have considered the bowl for a bit, pull out a bag of dirt and dump the dirt into the bowl, allowing the bowl to become very dirty. This may surprise the students because the bowl looks like a treasured possession. Explain to them that: Our lives are special, just like this bowl, and they are meant to be kept holy and different from the rest of the world. When we allow sin to live in us, it is just like dumping dirt into a beautiful bowl. God is saddened when that happens because he knows that He has created us to be special and holy and set apart for his purposes.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: LIVE COURAGEOUSLY

LESSON 36

God Raises Up a New Leader

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 1:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:9

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

To help make your point for the lesson today, it may be a good idea to ask someone else to teach the lesson, just to show that God chooses new leaders to take over. It might even be more effective if you ask one of your young people to lead the lesson, unless you have a group that does not usually behave very well. In that case, choose an adult.

Start the class by playing a simple game of “Follow the Leader”. Chose one of your students who may not be very good at leading, and have them lead the class through a series of twists and turns. Walking in circles, going outside, walking around trees, etc. Use this simple child’s game to illustrate the need for a leader and the need for cooperative followers, at times.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Read Joshua 1:1-11 aloud before dividing your class into several small groups. After they have been divided into groups, hand each group one sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. Have them answer the following questions:

- 1. How do you think Joshua felt knowing that he would be the leader of the Israelites?*
- 2. How do you think the Israelite people felt when they heard of Moses’ death?*
- 3. Three times in verses 6-9, the Lord encourages Joshua to be strong and courageous. Do you think that Joshua was really that fearful? Why?*
- 4. In verse 7, what specific steps did God instruct Joshua to take in order to be successful?*
- 5. In verse 9, what does God indicate is the “antidote” or solution to fear?*

Next, go over the memory verse for today (Joshua 1:9). *Notice that God makes two specific kinds of promises in this verse. The promise of spiritual blessing extends to believers in Christ, Abraham’s descendents. God also promises the physical promise of the land being abundant and*

producing. Believers can be confident that God will always be with them. The physical blessing was a blessing that stated the land would prosper and be fruitful. This promise was exclusive to Abraham and his descendants.

Whether an organization is secular or Christian, it is important for them to have a good leader. As a group, make a list of the characteristics that make a good leader, then ask:

- 1. How does God's work in our passage help you to respond to present leadership or leadership changes in your life or in your church?*
- 2. How does Joshua's response to God motivate you to respond to overwhelming responsibilities in your own life?*
- 3. How do you feel about the changes that are taking place in your life now?*
- 4. In order for leaders, or any Christian, to claim God's promises for success, what command in this passage needs to be heard? Why?*
- 5. Which command given to Joshua would be the toughest for you to obey? Why?*
- 6. Which promise to him would be the most helpful? Why?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

In closing, hand out pieces of paper and pens or pencils to your students. Encourage them to think about godly leaders in their own lives, whether it's their pastor, their parents, or some other person in the church. Have them write a short thank you note to that person, telling them they are thankful for their godly example and their leadership within the church and in their life.

Close the session with a guided prayer for the leadership of your congregation, and for each person in your class as they are the future leaders of the church. Remind them that leadership, especially spiritual leadership, is a difficult job and we should pray every day for our leaders.

UNIT THEME: LIVE COURAGEOUSLY

LESSON 37

Stepping-Stones of Faith

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 3:7-17; 4:19-24

MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 4:24

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

As much as you can during the week, contact your students and ask them to bring something with them that reminds them of a special time, or a very special gift they have received in their life. This object could be anything. Have each member of the class share the significance of the object they brought and share why it is so meaningful to them. If a student has an object that is too precious to bring outside of their house, allow them just to tell about it and why it is so meaningful to them. Remember to bring in something yourself and share with your class why this object is so important to you and what happy memory it reminds you of.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide the scriptures for this week into three sections, and divide your class into three groups, or if it is a small class, keep them as one group.

1. **Joshua 3:7-13:** Have someone read the passage aloud and have them answer the following questions:

- a. *What do you think were Joshua's expectations as he gave these instructions?*
- b. *What do you think were the priests' expectations as they heard these instructions?*
- c. *What do you think were the people's expectations as they heard these instructions?*
- d. *For a moment, put yourself in the company of the Israelites. Your leader has just told you to cross the river during a flood. What is going on in your mind?*

2. **Joshua 3:14-17:** Have someone read the passage aloud and then answer the following questions:

- a. *What is the significance of the ark of the covenant?*
- b. *This event reminds us of the crossing of the Red Sea. What symbolic meaning did these events have for the Israelites? Or were these just very practical measures God had to do to get the people of Israel across those two bodies of water?*
- c. *Why do you think the waters did not part until the priests' feet touched the water?*

3. **Joshua 4:19-24:** Have someone read the passage aloud and then answer the following questions:

- a. *What significance did the 12 stones gathered from the riverbed have for those who witnessed this event firsthand?*
- b. *What significance was intended for the stones to have for future generations?*

Allow your youth to reflect for a moment on their spiritual journey. If one or two wants to share aloud, allow them to do so. They should think of important memories of spiritual decisions: places, people, experiences, and so on. Then ask each person in the group to identify one significant spiritual touchstone event, moment, or person who guided them and allowed them to see things in a different spiritual light, or perhaps guided them to a higher spiritual level.

If possible, briefly recount the history of your local church. If you don't know the history, perhaps the pastor or some other church member would be willing to join the class for this moment. Provide enough detail so that the group can sense God working through your congregation over the years. If possible, in order to tie closely to today's Bible study, identify 12 memorable events in the life of your church

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

As you begin to close this class session, challenge your group to commit to two important spiritual formation responsibilities in the days ahead:

1. Purposefully remind themselves of past meaningful activities that show God's greatness and goodness, and
2. Purposefully look for new memorable activities that show God is still at work in their lives.

Emphasize that the purpose of the monument that Israel built with the 12 stones was not just to remind themselves of God's faithfulness, but also to use as a teaching tool to remind future generations of God's faithfulness.

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: LIVE COURAGEOUSLY

LESSON 38

God's Victorious People

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 6:1-16, 20

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 15:58

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Think of some riddles or puzzle stories that you have heard that you can share with your class. Give the group several minutes to discuss it amongst themselves and find the answer. If they find the answer, that is good, but if they don't, then give them the answer eventually.

The Israelites faced a difficult puzzle problem in trying to get into Jericho. It seemed completely impossible to conquer this challenge. However, God took an impossible situation and made it possible.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have a class member or members read Joshua 6:1-16, 20 aloud to the class. *It has now become your job to be the military strategist for Israel. I want you to look at the situation before you and decide if the Israelites are going about it the right way, from a military point of view.*

If this problem is looked at from a strictly military point of view, the Israelites might as well give up, but with God on their side, then that's a different story.

1. *In verse 2, God speaks to Joshua saying, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands," as though it has already occurred. What do you think would be Joshua's reaction to this, knowing how difficult it would be to penetrate the walls of the city?*
2. *Had you been inside Jericho, knowing the strength of its walls and the superiority of its army, and the inferiority of Israel's army, what would you have thought as you saw them marching around the city, day after day, blowing horns?*
3. *If you had been a common Israelite, what would you have thought of this exercise?*
4. *Why did God have the Israelites engage in this seemingly preposterous exercise? Why not just knock the walls down without all the marching and blowing of trumpets and shouting?*
5. *What lesson do you suppose God was teaching Israel during this seven day period of time?*

The story of Jericho reminds us that God is in the business of giving victory to His obedient people. We need to admit our inability to handle some of these situations on our own and give our troubles and our battles to God. He can fight them for us and He will win the victory.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

During the week, collect broken pieces of brick or small rocks, enough to hand out one to each member of your class. At the close of the class time, distribute a piece of broken brick, or a rock, to each member. *I would like you to carry this with you throughout the week to remind you that God is there to help us fight our battles and win. He will help us break down our walls if we only ask Him for the help.*

Close with prayer.

UNIT THEME: LIVE COURAGEOUSLY

LESSON 39

God's Thankful People

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 136:1

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin your class by having members of your class complete the following sentences:

1. *“The best gift I have ever received was...”*
2. *“The best gift I have ever given was...”*
3. *“Today I am most thankful for...”*

Have your young people share their answers with the whole class, or have them pair up with another student in the class to share.

We say thank you and give thanks for many things in our lives. Sometimes, to express our thanks, we write a note, do something special for someone, or simply tell them “thank you”. A spirit of thankfulness is supposed to characterize God’s people, but are we always more thankful for the things we do have, or more resentful of the things we don’t have?

1. *After you have received pay for a job you have done, or received money as a gift, what is your favorite thing to do with the money?*
2. *Do you spend it all?*
3. *Do you think about giving any of it away, or giving some to the church?*
4. *If you do spend it, do you spend it on something that will be practical and of use to you, or something silly?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Ask a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 aloud. After this is complete, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. *Why do you think the instructions to bring agricultural offerings were given prior to actually possessing the land?*
2. *What was the significance of Israel retelling its story when it presented offerings to God?*
3. *What was the mood of the first fruits celebration?*
4. *From this passage, what do we learn about God's priorities?*
5. *What were the Israelites affirming when they presented their offerings?*
6. *Can a person truly enjoy anything from the hand of God without offering a symbol of thanksgiving in return?*
7. *Do you ever offer anything to God as a thanksgiving for the things He has done for you?*

Thankfulness can be expressed in many different ways. Let's brainstorm some ways to:

1. *show our thankfulness to people* (send a thank you note, say thank you, do a favor for someone, etc)
2. *show our thankfulness to Christ* (working in the church, doing something for someone else, paying tithes and offerings, praise and worship, etc).
3. *I want you to do a personal evaluation of your thankfulness. Do you concentrate on what you don't have rather than the gifts God has given you?*
4. *Do you look at people in your community with more than you and wish that you had as much "stuff" as they do?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

During this week, I want to challenge you to look around you and notice all of the blessings God has given you. I want you to say thank you to God, your parents, and anyone else who blesses you throughout the week. I encourage you to have an attitude of thankfulness throughout the whole week. Also, I would like you to write down 3 things every day you are thankful for.

Close in a prayer of thankfulness to Christ for all that He has done.

UNIT THEME: ARE YOU READY?

LESSON 40

Good News from the Living Lord

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 1:1-10, 17-18

MEMORY VERSE

Revelation 1:8

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY)

Give the students newspapers and have them look up good news stories. It will probably be very difficult to do this since most of the newspapers these days have only bad news. After they searched the papers for good news, ask them the following questions:

- 1. Why is it so difficult to find good news in the world today?*
- 2. Is there any good news in the world? Explain.*
- 3. Can we find good news in the Bible? Explain.*

Because it is so difficult to try and find good news in the world today, we have to go to other avenues or other places to try and find good news. The Bible seems to be able to give us the good news that gives us the hope that we need.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES)

Divide the group into two and announce a debate. Group 1 will look for good news in the Old Testament, and Group 2 will look for good news in the New Testament. They have to come up with as many good news statements in the Bible as they can.

After 10-15 minutes of research, have the group come back together and start the debate. The debate is about where we find the better news, in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. Guiding questions could be the following:

- 1. How do we define good news?*
- 2. What is the difference, if any, between the good news of the OT and the good news of the NT?*
- 3. What news according to the OT/NT group is the best news?*

Have a class member or members read Revelation 1:1-10, 17-18 aloud. *What good news does this passage provide for John's readers and for us? It was John's experience in worship that provided his inspiration to write to the churches that were being persecuted. His worship experience is also reflected in his messages to those in the grips of persecution. John's letter opens in verse 4 as he offers grace and peace in the name of the Triune God. The churches find themselves helpless to deal with their circumstances, but John reminds them that God is still in control, as he is God the Father, "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (v 4b). John also reminds the churches that Jesus is worthy of our praise with the great doxology where John praises the Lord for His relation to humanity in Christ Jesus. The final promise that John shares is that our Lord is going to be returning again, and those who love Him will find comfort and joy in that day. The One who was at the beginning with God, the Father, will be faithful to the end.*

Have you ever tried to run a race while watching your feet or worrying about what is going on along the side of the road? The experienced athlete knows that he must lay the distractions aside and simply run. In the same way, when we practice praise and adoration for Jesus, our focus moves from ourselves and our circumstances onto Jesus Christ. Although John was alone on an island, he was not separated from Christ. We see Christ coming to John as he is worshipping Him in the difficult times. When John saw Christ, he was overwhelmed by His holiness, and Christ reached out and touched him, reminding us again of the tenderness and personal caring of Jesus.

Jesus spoke to John in a most personal way saying, "I am the First and the Last...I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive forever and ever! I hold the keys to death and Hades" (vv 17-18). When Christ defeated death by His resurrection, He made it possible for His victory to be ours, as well. Those who believe have the assurance that because He lives, we, too, shall live. Although John was in one of the most difficult places to live, he continued to praise God always and his focus was on the King of Kings. John had an encounter with Jesus that was so personal he could not help but be overwhelmed by the glory of Christ. Jesus responded immediately with comfort and reassurance, both by His words and by His touch. When we are truly in the Spirit of worship, as John was, we are likely to encounter Jesus.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE)

Do you feel so overwhelmed by the circumstances around you that your life is out of perspective? Does your life need praise and adoration in worship of God to put it back into perspective? Has God ever dealt with you in such a way during worship, public or private, that you knew there was something He wanted you to do? This is the best time to worship God. It is during these times of difficulty that God reaches out and waits for us to respond. Like John, we can receive a revelation about His glory in our lives. Don't allow yourself to ignore the voice of God or allow it to fall into all of the background noise that surrounds your life. Listen carefully for His voice and call upon him, despite the situations and circumstances.

Close in Prayer.

UNIT THEME: ARE YOU READY?

LESSON 41

Remaining Faithful in Hard Times

SCRIPTURE

Revelations 2: 8-11, 3: 7-13; Acts 7: 51-60

MEMORY VERSE

Revelations 2: 10b

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask:

- 1. Have you ever seen a person killed or persecuted because of his Christian faith?*
- 2. What do you think you would do if you were persecuted because of your faith?*

Read aloud to the class Acts 7: 51-60, about the story of Stephen who was killed for his faithfulness to the Christian faith. Ask students to share examples of Christians they know or contemporary stories of people who were killed for their faith in Christ. (Have examples ready in case your class members don't have example.)

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide the class into two or more groups. Each group must choose an incident in the Bible where one or more persons were killed or persecuted for their faith in God, yet remained faithful to God. (Examples might include Peter, Stephen, the Church of Smyrna, Philadelphia, Jesus, etc...). Ask them to prepare a drama set in today's times that shows that incident. Bring everyone back together after they have their dramas prepared, and have them perform their dramas for the class.

After the dramas have been performed, choose two class members to role play officers in the "Christianity Police" who are tracking down Christians and arresting them. Have them interrogate suspects from the dramas one by one using these questions/ comments:

1. *Would you be willing to deny your faith if we gave you 1 million dollars USD?*
2. *We know you're a caring and generous person because of your faith. We will feed all the poor people in your community, and help provide jobs and homes for everyone, if you will deny your faith. Will you do it?*
3. *We will inject you with the AIDS virus and you will die slowly if you don't disown your faith. Will you deny God so that you can live?*
4. *We will remove all your privileges and kill your family if you don't disown your faith.*
5. *We will give you an important post in our government if you will deny your faith.*

Discuss: *Is it easier or harder to stay faithful when the threats are so openly and directly related to our faith?*

Christians are threatened every day in some places of the world because of their faith. Many other Christians are confronted with more subtle pressures to divert them from Christ. In today's world, people are succumbing to the pressures of the world in many ways. They give up parts of their Christianity, doing things that deny the holiness of God, without even noticing. In the Bible, Jesus, Stephen and others show us that we must not give in when we face adversity, even when people laugh at us or tell us that Christianity is worthless, irrelevant or impractical. When we remain firm through the trials and tribulations, God will strengthen us and build our perseverance (Romans 5:3). Remain faithful to God and know that He is with us in any trial or tribulation that we are experiencing.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Discuss: *Is there something we can do about the persecution of believers?*

Pray for the youth to stand firm when they are persecuted because of their faith. Thank God that in many countries there is freedom to practice our faith without fear for our lives. Pray for the persecuted believers, that God will help them stand firm.

UNIT THEME: ARE YOU READY?

LESSON 42

Worshipping the Christ, the Lamb of God

SCRIPTURE

Revelations 5: 1-14

MEMORY VERSE

Revelations 5: 12

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

If possible, bring a lamb into the yard of the church or take the youth to a place near the church where there is a lamb. Otherwise, try to bring a photo of a lamb. The lamb should be spotless and very young. Ask students to call out as many words as they can that come to mind when they see a lamb. (Answers could be: clean, pure, spotless, healthy, innocent, etc...) Then use the following questions to lead the discussion:

1. *Are all animals born with the same qualities as a lamb?*
2. *What makes lambs so unique?*
3. *In your opinion, what is the animal that best describes you?*
4. *Who do you know that seems most like a lamb?*
5. *What qualities of a lamb could be seen in Jesus?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Tell the story of the lamb of Passover as told in Exodus 12. Then ask the students to form groups and search the Bible for as many stories as possible that speak of a lamb. (Half the groups will look in the Old Testament and the other in the New Testament). After ten to fifteen minutes, ask them to come together and give their reports. Discuss the following questions:

1. *Why was it a lamb that was sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins?*
2. *Could they use any other animal for that kind of sacrifice?*
3. *Why didn't they sacrifice a fatted calf or a goat for the remission of sins?*
4. *Can we find any parallel between the lambs that were sacrificed and Jesus?*
5. *What does this teach us about the Lamb of God who was sacrificed once for all our sins?*

Have someone read Revelations 5: 1-14 aloud to the class. *In this passage, John wiped the tears from his eyes to see the Lion. But to his surprise, he saw a lamb instead. In the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the way of sacrifice in the Old Testament was still observed. Therefore, the sacrifice of lambs was part of the daily ritual in the Temple. The lamb chosen for sacrifice had to be spotless and without blemish. This lamb was slain for the people to receive forgiveness. The whole concept of sacrifice is given a new meaning with the description of Jesus as the Lamb of God. Jesus was the Lamb slain once for all. We will never need to sacrifice lambs again to wash our sins with their blood. When we praise and proclaim the Lamb, we proclaim that the old system of sin and sacrifice is dead. The new era of eternal life through Jesus Christ has come.*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

This week, as you are going to school, work, sports, etc., I want you to think of the Lamb who was sacrificed for your sins, a sacrifice once for all for you. During your personal times of worship and Bible study, give yourself to Jesus in a new way, for He deserves your praise.

Close with prayer, giving praise, worship, glory and honor to the Lamb of God who died so that we might live with Him forever.

UNIT THEME: ARE YOU READY?

LESSON 43

The Endurance of the Saints

SCRIPTURE

Revelations 7: 9-17

MEMORY VERSE

Revelations 7: 14-15

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring to class a piece of rope or clothesline. Draw a line down the middle of the class (You may need to do this activity outside the classroom). Put the rope on the ground across the line you have drawn. Divide the class into two very unequal teams, where one will be much stronger than the other. They will do a competition called “tug of war.” Both groups will take hold of the rope, one team on each side. At your signal, they must pull on the rope trying to pull the other team across the middle line. Tell the groups they must not let go of the rope, no matter what. The group that pulls all of the other team’s members across the line will win. After this game, ask the following questions:

- 1. To what extent was it difficult to hold your position when the other team was so much stronger / weaker than yours?*
- 2. How does this game reflect so well on what actually happens in life?*
- 3. What 'rope' do you hold tightly to in your life?*
- 4. Who or what is at the other end of your rope?*
- 5. Do you sometimes feel that you are being pulled somewhere you don't want to go?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

(Before class, secretly ask 2-3 young people who are direct enough to help you in this session). Tell the class any story you think of. Then, ask some very easy questions, requiring simple answers (What was the name of the person in the story, etc..). In answering the questions, your assistants will say the wrong answers, and must be very persuasive and very persistent in what they say. The goal for you and your assistants is to convince the rest of the class to change their opinion on what they thought was the truth. After several minutes, some of the young people may begin to doubt themselves. Then ask the following questions:

1. (to your assistants) *Was it difficult to influence everyone else in your thinking?*
2. (to those who changed their minds after listening to the arguments of your assistants) *Why did you change your answers after listening to the arguments of these other people, even though you were initially sure you were right?*
3. (to those who didn't change their minds) *Why didn't you change your mind? How did you stay strong in the midst of the pressure from others?*
4. *Why do people who know the truth sometimes give way under the pressure of other people to change their beliefs or actions to what they initially thought was wrong?*
5. *Is it very difficult to resist people's attempts to change your mind when they seem to care so much about you?*

Have someone read Revelations 7: 9-17 aloud to the class. *The Bible says very clearly that we must cling to the truth, no matter what happens or what others say. As Christians, we go through many trials and temptations in this world where we live. It is very important that we hold on tightly to the truth, as Jesus did. We live in a very difficult time when our faith is constantly tested. The book of the Revelations was written to encourage believers and to remind us that we must stand firm to end.*

Reread Revelations 7:16-17 aloud, and have the class call out some of the rewards that God will give to those who remain faithful to Him to the end.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Discuss the pressures that youth face to abandon their faith. Remind them that those who have a strong relationship with Jesus are unlikely to be shaken when they are buffeted by the winds of life, while those whose roots are shallow in their Christian experience are more likely to let go and give in to pressure.

Pray with young people to cling to Jesus, no what they encounter in their lives.

UNIT THEME: THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

LESSON 44

The Road to Greatness

SCRIPTURE

Mark 9:33-35; 10:33-45

MEMORY VERSE

Mark 9:35

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Give a candy bar to one student in your class. Making sure that everyone can hear you, say to this person: ***“I give you this candy bar. What you choose to do with it is completely up to you.”*** Although you should not tell the student this, he or she has three choices: put it away and save it for later, consume it in front of everyone, or share it with the class. Once a decision has been made, ask your class the following questions:

- 1. Did (insert name) choose to give or to receive?*
- 2. What would you have done if I had given you the candy bar?*
- 3. What opportunities have you had in your lifetime to give to others?*
- 4. What has God given you that you could use to serve others?*

After several students have responded to each question, move into the next phase of the lesson by putting the following into your own words: ***Sharing, giving, and serving are not natural actions for most people. Even Jesus' disciples, who spent a lot of time with Him, had a hard time accepting His role as a servant. Let's take a look at the Scriptures and see what they have to say about Jesus, His disciples, and service.***

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have someone read Mark 9:33-35; 10:33-45 aloud to the class. Divide your class into groups of two or four members each (you may need to join a group yourself to avoid three-member groups). Assign each person one of the following tasks for the small-group discussion: Timekeeper; Discussion Guide; Recorder; Reporter. For two-person groups, combine the first two and last two tasks together. The Discussion Guide should lead the group in discussing the passages read, focusing on how we as Christians should be servants of all. The Recorder should

write the group's responses and comments. After eight minutes the Reporters from each group will share a report from the group with the rest of the class.

Three times Jesus predicted His suffering, death, and resurrection, and each time the disciples misunderstood His meaning (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-35; 10:33-45). The second of these episodes suggests that the disciples were thinking of Jesus as an earthly king and themselves as in line for some position of leadership. When Jesus confronted them about their aspirations, they remained silent, indicating that they suspected such ambition was out of line with Jesus' purpose (9:33-34). Jesus filled the silence with a comment that reversed all human ideas of greatness and rank. Greatness comes through service to others, marked by self-sacrifice. The third prediction of Jesus' destiny is the most detailed of the three. James and John blatantly asked to sit at Jesus' right and left hand, positions of power and prestige, perhaps at the messianic banquet. The symbolic language of the cup and baptism have different meanings when applied to Jesus and to the disciples. Jesus' reply indicates that the disciples did not realize that His Messiahship included suffering and a death. Verse 45 encapsulates Jesus' unique role and work in the salvation of the world as a "ransom for many" (a ransom is the price paid to release a slave from bondage). The disciples were naive to think that they could do the same. Nevertheless, they could participate to some degree in Jesus' mission through humility and service (10:43-44).

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

At the end of your session, decide on a date when your class can go together and spend a day serving. Options include working at an AIDS hospital, playing with orphans for a day, clean-up around your church or the home of an elderly church member, etc.

End the class with a closing word of prayer, asking God to help each member of the class to be a servant this week to their parents, friends, and family.

UNIT THEME: THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

LESSON 45

The Last Supper

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:22-26; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

MEMORY VERSE:

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Send half of your class (Group A) out of the room. Explain to the remaining students (Group B) that they are to pretend that they are from another world and don't speak any Earth language. They are to somehow get the message across to Group A that they are to eat an apple but not the center of the apple. Then bring Group A back into the room and let Group B try to communicate their message without speaking. After two or three minutes, give a real apple to Group B and let them try again, using the apple to illustrate any way they wish.

- 1. What one word best describes your feelings as you participated in this activity?*
- 2. What difference did having an actual apple make in your efforts to communicate?*
- 3. Have you ever had difficulty getting someone to understand you?*
- 4. What is one youth lesson from the past that you remember? Why is that one memorable?*

There are four levels of teaching: verbal, visual, simulated experience, and direct experience. We can explain their effectiveness in three phases: I hear (verbal) and I understand. I see (visual) and I remember. I do (experience) and I am changed. Which method seems to be most effective? Why? Jesus frequently used direct experience to teach His disciples. Let's take a look at a powerful message Jesus communicated to His disciples through the Passover meal.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Have a volunteer read Mark 14:22-26 aloud as the rest of the class reads along silently from their Bibles. Help your students explore how the elements of the Last Supper relate to the Jewish celebration of Passover. Point out that Jesus made changes in the ritual meal at the breaking of bread and the blessing of the third cup to explain His upcoming Passion. Ask the following discussion questions:

1. *How do you think the Passover supper helped the Jews remember their rescue from slavery?*
2. *What do you think went through the disciples' minds when Jesus led the Supper differently than it had ever been done?*
3. *What would you have remembered about that Supper, if you had been present?*
4. *Jesus used the Passover meal to explain the significance of His life and death. How do you think Jesus' sacrifice compares to God's release of the Hebrews from slavery?*
5. *What do you understand or experience whenever you have participated in Communion?*

I Corinthians 10:16-17 reflects on the early Christians' understanding of Jesus' words and actions. When they met for worship, they also had a meal. Paul assumed that, through the Spirit, Jesus was present at this meal as truly as He had been host of the Last Supper (v. 16). The worshipers shared two common bonds: between themselves and their risen Lord, symbolized by the cup; and between their fellow worshipers, symbolized by the bread (v. 17). They shared the benefits and provisions of the new covenant, brought about by their living Lord and His redemptive actions, past, present, and future. (Use this passage, also in your discussion above.)

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Jesus and His disciples had gathered to recall God's saving actions in the history of Israel. I want us to do something similar according to the following three guidelines: (Your students can also work individually if you think it will be more effective.)

1. *Share one great thing God has done in Creation.*
2. *Describe two great things that God has done for His people in the past.*
3. *Describe three good things God has done for you.*

You can have class members share their answers if they are comfortable doing so. Next, share your testimony, describing how you have experienced the benefits of Christ's sacrificial suffering and death. After you share your story, ask a few volunteers to share theirs. Then ask your students to describe a time when Christ seemed most real or close to them.

Jesus promised to be present at the great Banquet in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25), He was assuming that He would be raised to new life. Because He is alive today, He can meet with us in a personal way.

Conclude with a class prayer of thanksgiving and commitment, followed by a group reading of a portion of the Great Hallel, Psalm 136:1-3.

UNIT THEME: THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

LESSON 46

Why Did It Have to Happen That Way?

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:53-65

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Read aloud to your class the following story, stopping to ask the debriefing questions where indicated.

One rainy evening, a man sat at home waiting for his wife and children to return from a church service. He was sitting in a chair, reading, when he suddenly heard a noise. It was quickly followed by another and another. At first, he thought someone was trying to break into his home, but when he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in front of his house. They appeared to be lost and were caught in the wind and rain, trying to find shelter from the storm.

"I can't let these poor birds die," he thought to himself. "But how can I help them?" He then remembered a small shelter he and his son had built in the back yard to store tools. He quickly took a jacket to cover himself and started to run toward the small shelter in the back yard. He opened the doors wide and lit a lamp that was stored in the shelter, but the birds did not come in.

"Food will bring them in," he thought. So he hurried back to the house for bread crumbs, which he sprinkled on the ground to make a trail into the barn. To his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the storm. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction . . . except into the dry, lighted barn.

"If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety," he thought. Just at that moment, he could hear the singing from the nearby church. He stood listening for a moment as the sounds floated on the air. Suddenly, he sank to his knees in the pouring rain. "Now I understand," he whispered. "Now I see why You had to do it."

1. What did this man try to do for the birds?
2. Why do you think he went to all the trouble he did?

3. *What do you think was the purpose of Jesus' life on earth?*
4. *What misunderstandings of Jesus have you heard others express?*

After reading and discussing the story, say, *Now we are going to investigate the response of some other people who misunderstood Jesus.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide your class into five groups, or work as one large group. Assign the following passages to each group, as well as handing them a piece of paper: Mark 14:53-56; Mark 14:57-59; Mark 14:60-61; Mark 14:62; Mark 14:63-65. Ask each group to discuss the main point(s) of passages they have been given, and draw a picture that illustrates the truths. After five to eight minutes, ask the groups to explain to the whole group their drawings and the action depicted. As each group takes a turn, ask the class to respond to the questions below.

Questions for Mark 14:53-56:

1. *Who were the officials that gathered for Jesus' trial?*
2. *Why do you think these Jewish officials wanted to put Jesus to death?*

Questions for Mark 14:57-59:

1. *What made the accusation in verse 58 so serious?*
2. *Why do you think these witnesses could not agree on the charge that Jesus threatened the Temple?*

Questions for Mark 14:60-61a:

1. *Why do you think Jesus did not respond to the accusation that He had threatened the Temple?*

Questions for Mark 14:61b-62:

1. *When the first two accusations failed, the high priest took over the questioning. Why do you think he asked Jesus if He was the Messiah?*
2. *Why do you think Jesus answered this question?*

Questions for Mark 14:63-65:

1. *Why do you think Jesus accepted the humiliation and abuse of the Sanhedrin?*
2. *What can we do to respond like Jesus did?*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Close the session with prayer, thanking God for His presence, especially during times of persecution. Pray for courage and boldness.

UNIT THEME: THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

LESSON 47

Through Death to Salvation

SCRIPTURE

Mark 15:1-2, 15-39, 43-46; Colossians 1:19-22

MEMORY VERSE

Colossians 1:21-22

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring to your class some building blocks or anything that can be stacked (i.e., soup cans, boxes, books, or any combination). Divide your class into two or more teams. Each team is to build a structure as high as possible with the available materials. However, tell them in advance that they will later remove the foundation, one piece at a time. When the structure is complete, measure whose structure is the highest. Then have members of each team try to remove one piece at a time from the bottom level of their structure without causing the structure to collapse. The winner is the one whose structure stands the longest. When it finally does fall, ask the following questions:

- 1. What was the hardest part of this activity?*
- 2. What strategies seemed to produce the best results?*
- 3. What does it take to make a strong foundation?*
- 4. What is the foundation of your faith made of?*
- 5. How well do you think your faith could withstand crisis, opposition, or suffering?*

Any structure or idea is only as strong as its foundation. Today we're going to look at a foundational part of the Christian faith.

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Explain to the class that you are going to present them with a hypothetical situation in which you will act as a person who is skeptical about the trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death. *It is amazing to me that you can rely so much on one event when you have no way of knowing if it truly happened. For all you know, someone dreamed up the idea of a*

god who becomes a human and is killed then resurrected from the dead. What grounds do you have for claiming that God forgives your sins? Upon what do you base your faith?

When finished, ask them the following questions:

- 1. How would your Christian faith differ if Jesus had not died?*
- 2. How do you know Jesus died?*

After a few students respond, have the class open their Bibles to Mark 15:1-46 and have someone read it aloud to the class. Instruct them to call out every word and phrase that describes some act of physical abuse taken against Jesus.

Now that the facts surrounding the Crucifixion have been explored, we need to understand the significance of this event and how it relates to us personally.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have someone read Colossians 1:19-22 aloud to the class. Then discuss the following questions:

- 1. What do you think the words "reconciled" in verse 20 and "alienated" in verse 21 mean? (List students' answers on a chalkboard. Webster's defines "reconciled" as restored to friendship or harmony; "alienated" means to be unfriendly, hostile, or indifferent with someone to whom one was once attached.)*
- 2. Have you ever experienced either of these conditions?*
- 3. Verse 20 states that Jesus' blood, shed on the Cross, brought peace between God and us. Why do you think people are hostile toward God?*
- 4. According to verse 19, it was God who used Christ's death to make peace and to bring reconciliation. What feelings do you have when you think about God paying such a high price to do this?*
- 5. Taking all of this into consideration, how should we live our lives?*

After this discussion, give each student a pencil and a sheet of paper. Have your students write a letter to God. They could thank God for his reconciling work through the Cross and explain how they want to live their life differently now that they understand all that Christ endured on their behalf. If your students are comfortable with the idea, have them read parts of their letters aloud. Otherwise, pray a closing prayer and let the letters remain personal and confidential.

UNIT THEME: THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

LESSON 48

Alive Again!

SCRIPTURE

Mark 15:47--16:8; Colossians 3:1-2

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 8:11

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Describe the following situation to help your students understand what it's like to get a new start in life. *I want you to imagine that the next day you go to school you find out that there was a fire in the main office and all of the school's records were burned up. In effect, you have a clean slate and a chance for a "do over" on your grades.* Then ask these questions:

1. *What would be your first response to the news that all your records were lost? Why?*
2. *What classes would you take again? Why?*
3. *Which classes would you drop? Why?*
4. *Which teacher would you avoid? Why?*
5. *What study habits would you change? Why?*
6. *What friend would you study with? Why?*

7. Would you hang out with the same group of friends? Why?

After several students have responded to each question, say the following in your own words: *Just like getting a new start at school after the grades are burned, Jesus Christ offers us a "do over," if the story of the tomb is in fact true.*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Read the following and give your students some time to think about what is being read, then discuss the questions at the end. *As Roman soldiers, they were a part of an army that conquered the entire Mediterranean world. They wore a leather breastplate and helmet, and were equipped with a 20 cm knife and a sword. They were thoroughly trained on how to fight and kill. The disciples left Jesus in His time of need, but they wanted to steal His body and start the rumor*

that He was raised from the dead. Two disciples have been known to carry a weapon, but they had no formal military training. Faithful, believing women remained with Jesus till the bitter end and now they want to help retrieve His body. Neither of them have had military training and they have no weapons. The tomb is made of solid rock on three sides. There is no way to break in without making a lot of noise. The entrance of the tomb is blocked by a large rock. The rock has been rolled into a crevice and sealed.

Next, have the students brainstorm some ways to rescue and revive the "Messiah", if they were in the position of the disciples and women. After a few minutes of creative problem-solving, have the entire class review their responses and evaluate them to see if any are realistic solutions, considering the situation. Allow them to act them out, if they wish. Then ask the following questions:

- 1. Looking at your "Messiah," and thinking about what he went through, what do you think are the chances He was still alive when He was put in the tomb?*
- 2. What would the disciples have to gain by stealing Jesus' body?*
- 3. Who do you think would win a fight between the Roman soldiers and the disciples?*

Next, have read Mark 15:40—16:8 aloud to the class, then ask:

- 1. After thinking about this theory, how likely is it that the disciples acted as body snatchers? Why or why not?*

In 1 Corinthians 15:6, the apostle Paul accepted the report that over 500 people saw Jesus alive after He had been crucified. Now it's time for us to decide whether or not we believe that Jesus is alive today.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Read aloud Romans 8:11. *We began this lesson by talking about all past records being lost and having the opportunity to have a fresh start. Because of Christ's resurrection, we have an opportunity for a "do over." The Spirit that raised Christ from the dead can live inside of you if you invite Him in.*

Have a student read aloud Colossians 3:1-2. *Is your heart set on things above, or is your mind still on earthly things? Are your habits and your thoughts buried with Christ?*

Close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help each of your students to set their minds on Christ.

UNIT THEME: OUR PROMISED GIFT

LESSON 49

The Promised Gift

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9: 1-7

MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 9: 6

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring to class enough small wrapped gifts to give one to each class member (candy, pencil, etc... as well as a small mirror). Give everyone one of the wrapped gifts, but tell them not to open their gift yet. Ask: *What would you wish for if you could make a wish that would change the world?* Give them time to think and respond.

One of you has a gift that shows what will change the world, but don't open your gifts yet.

Truth (What the Bible Says):

Divide your class into three groups to search the Scriptures and find where it talks about the greatest gift (there are several verses). After 8-10 minutes, have the groups make their reports as if they were one of the three Magi (Matthew 2). Each of the 'Magi' will present his verses and explain why he thinks that his way of seeing things is correct. Encourage groups to be creative in preparing their reports/performances so that they are relevant to our culture today. Lead a discussion with these questions:

1. *What makes a promised gift so important?*
2. *Is it important that the promised gift is actually given?*
3. *Have you ever been promised a gift that you never received? If so, how did you feel when you didn't receive it?*
4. *How did you feel when you did receive a promised gift?*
5. *What makes a special gift?*

Have someone read Isaiah 9: 1-7 aloud to the class. *The greatest promise that was made in history was God's promise of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God spoke in detail through Isaiah about the Messiah who was to come. Israel went through a series of good and bad periods in their service*

and worship of God. They continually gave in to the temptation to follow the false gods of other nations, and they continued to fall into the slavery of sin. God gave Isaiah a sign of hope to share with the people of Israel and the world. Isaiah saw that a great Light would be given. This Light was Jesus, who came in the form of a newborn baby. He brought hope, peace and joy to the world. The good news is that this hope, peace and joy is available to us all even today.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Now let the young people open the gifts that you distributed. Someone will unwrap the mirror. *The greatest gift that was given to this world is Jesus Christ, who came to transform this world. Jesus continues to make this change to the world through our lives. I told you earlier that someone here would receive a gift that shows what will change the world. That gift is a mirror that when you look into it shows this world changer. We are now a great gift for the world, because we have the message of salvation.*

Close the class with prayer, praying that young your people will see the promised gift in themselves and freely share this gift with others.

UNIT THEME: OUR PROMISED GIFT

LESSON 50

Preparing for the Promised Messiah

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3: 1-12

MEMORY VERSE

Mark 1: 3

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

For today's lesson, unroll a carpet or make preparations to indicate that a very important visitor is coming. Ask someone with a big voice to help you in announcing the arrival of each youth when they enter. It would also be good to have music playing or something to make this event even more important. The person who announces people should be dynamic, making announcements spectacular and interesting by adding details of honor about the person.

When everyone has entered, let the youth sit down and allow the excitement to subside. Then start by asking the following questions:

- 1. What does it feel like to enter as a celebrity?*
- 2. Do you feel that everyone looks at you when someone announces your entry?*
- 3. Do you feel more or less in control of the situation when someone announces your arrival?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Divide the class into two groups. Have someone read Mark 1: 3 and Matthew 3: 11 aloud to the group. *These passages describe the announcement by John the Baptist about the coming of Jesus. Your task as groups is to design advertising for the coming of Jesus. You should make an introduction of about 10 lines in which you announce the coming of Jesus. You can make this announcement either by singing, doing a rap, etc...*

After 10-15 minutes, bring the groups back together and have each group perform their announcement. After the groups have all made their presentations, discuss:

1. *How do you think John felt about being the announcer of a great man like Jesus?*
2. *How do you think the people felt when John made the announcement?*
3. *Is it only the duty of a 'John the Baptist' to announce the coming of Christ or does everyone have the duty or responsibility?*
4. *How do you tell people of our time that Jesus has come?*

The coming of Christ was announced several times in the Old Testament. Ask two students to read Isaiah 9: 6 and Micah 5: 2. We find that the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the New Testament. John the Baptist was the one who, according to prophecy, would announce the coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ). Although he made the first announcement when Jesus began His ministry, it is now the responsibility of the Body of Christ (all believers) to announce the coming of Christ. Jesus came to fulfill His ministry and reconcile man with God. The prophets have predicted, John the Baptist announced, and we have the privilege and responsibility to speak of His first and second coming.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Encourage your youth to find creative ways to announce to others that Jesus is has come and is coming again. Take a few moments and have them share some ideas about how they can reach their friends with this message so that they actually listen.

Close by praying together for God to help in this task.

UNIT THEME: OUR PROMISED GIFT

LESSON 51

Rejoice! The Savior is Born

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1: 18, 2: 7

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 2: 2

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Show the young people a photo of a queen or king, and ask them to describe the kind of place the king or queen was probably born, and under what conditions this person was probably born? Then show them a picture of an ordinary person with nothing special and ask the same questions. Discuss:

- 1. Do you think that the hospitals where they were born and the care they received at birth were different? Why?*
- 2. Which of these people would have received the best treatment if they were in the same hospital? Why?*
- 3. Who would have received the most attention at birth? Why?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

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Tell your young people the story of the birth of Jesus as found in Matthew 1. Divide the class into groups and ask them to reconstruct the story of the birth of Jesus as if it happened now. They are to make the story very realistic and show how people would react to the fact that he was a king who was born in these conditions. Give them a few minutes to prepare their parts. After their performances, ask the following questions:

- 1. Why was the king born in a barn?*
- 2. Why do you think the three Magi ignored the fact that the baby was born in a barn to poor parents?*
- 3. How would you react if you were one of the shepherds who experienced this?*
- 4. How do you think that Jesus and his family would have been treated if this story had taken place today?*

The whole story of Jesus is amazing, and Jesus was an extraordinary person. Joseph and Mary were to marry. But before they could get married, an angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah. Although the Messiah was the 'King of the Jews', instead of giving birth in a palace, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable. The birth of Jesus in a manger was a way to show that He had come as a servant, and He was going to bring into question what people expected of the Messiah. Jews could not understand this, and so far, many of them still don't accept Jesus as Messiah. We, however, see the birth of Jesus, foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament, announced by John the Baptist, as the birth of the Messiah who came to die for our sins.

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask:

- 1. Does the Story of Jesus' birth have anything to say about the birth of children today?*
- 2. How should this story affect our attitudes towards children, towards abortion etc...?*
- 3. How should this story affect us and the decisions we make and the lives we live?*

Encourage your young people to think about the birth of Christ as being a second chance that was given to humanity. With the birth of Christ, the relationship which was broken between humanity and God had a chance to be restored.

Close by allowing your youth to pray, thanking God for the birth of Jesus Christ and the restoration that took place in this birth.

UNIT THEME: OUR PROMISED GIFT

LESSON 52

Jesus – God's Gift of Life

SCRIPTURE

John 1: 1-18

MEMORY VERSE

John 1: 14

LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring to class a few small animals, or take your youth to see some small animals, or describe a herd of animals that are important in your area. Describe this scenario to your youth: *These animals all have a serious disease that will kill them within 24 hours. However, you have the cure for this illness. If you give it to them, they will be healed. I want you to explain to the animals what they have to do to receive the remedy.* Ask students to write what they would say to the animals. Use the following questions to help focus on the lesson for today:

- 1. Would the animals understand what you want to tell them?*
- 2. Were you disappointed that you had the cure for the disease but couldn't communicate it with them?*
- 3. In your opinion, what is the best way to communicate this message to these animals?*
- 4. What is the importance of survival for you?*
- 5. What is the importance of survival for the animals?*

TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS):

Form two groups, one working on the Old Testament and one on the New Testament. Explain that since the days of Adam and Eve, people living on earth have had a terrible and deadly disease. Each group should study what the Bible says about the disease that struck all men. They must also find information about the cure for the disease. It is very important that they find and cure the disease.

After they have returned and have submitted their presentation, ask the following questions:

1. *What disease is mentioned in the Bible?*
2. *What is the remedy and how should it be administered?*
3. *Who came to warn us of this disease?*
4. *Did they succeed?*
5. *Does this disease still exist or has it been eradicated?*
6. *Is it necessary for someone else to come and speak to others about the disease and the cure?*

(Note: The disease is sin. God has the remedy of sin. He sent many prophets and teachers to communicate His message, but he had to send His Son Jesus Christ to provide the remedy. Make sure the youth realize there is a cure for this disease. Jesus came to give us this remedy, and it's our responsibility to tell others about the remedy.)

Have someone read John 1: 1-18 aloud to the class. *When sin entered the world, God wanted to reconcile us with him. The reconciler has come in the form of Jesus, who dwelt among us (John 1: 1) in order to bring us back to the place where we should be. Only through Jesus can we be reconciled to God when we accept Him as Lord and Savior. Thank God for His plan of salvation which is being accomplished through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Encourage your young people to share with others the 'cure' that God has given to all those who are afflicted by sin, if only they want to believe.

Finish the session with a prayer, thanking God for the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, and asking God to guide your young people towards those whose heart is hungry for the message of salvation.

THEMES

A FRESH BEGINNING

KNOWING GOD

GAINING WISDOM

A NEW LIFE

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

WALK BEFORE THE LORD

GOD WORKS HIS PLAN

LIVE COURAGEOUSLY

ARE YOU READY?

THE TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

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