

Words of LIFE

Christian Education book
for teachers of preadolescent
children ages 9-11.

[TEACHER]

Year

3



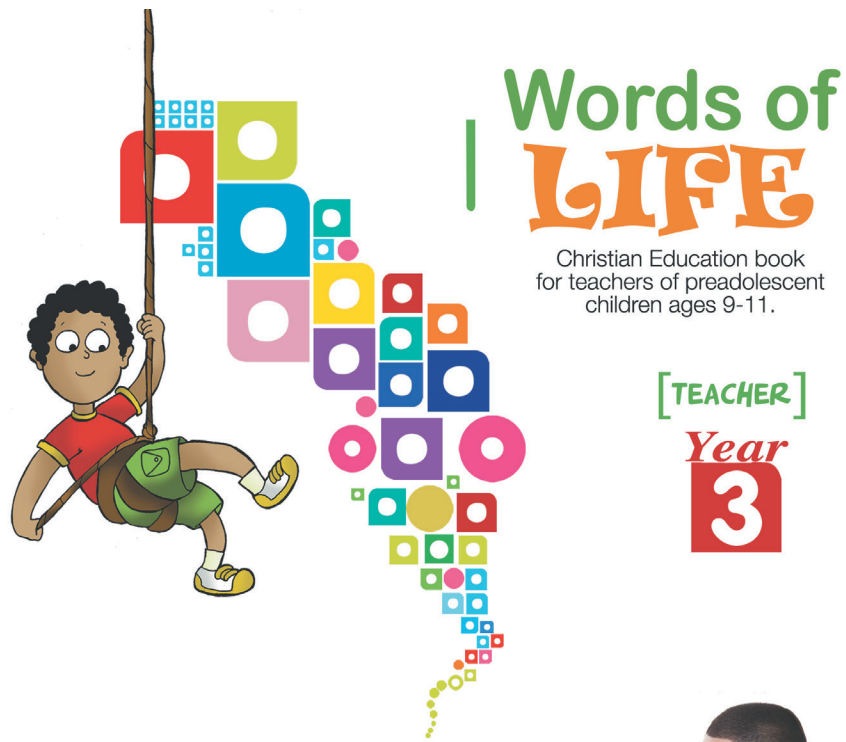
WORDS OF LIFE

This Teacher's Guide was designed for teachers of Pre-adolescent Children (9 to 11 years old)

TEACHER'S GUIDE YEAR 3

Corresponds to Year 3 of the cycle of three years of WORDS OF LIFE (Pre-adolescent Children)

Teacher's Guides.



Published by:

Mesoamerica Region Discipleship Ministries

<http://discipleship.mesoamericaregion.org/>

www.SdmiResources.MesoamericaRegion.org

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ISBN:978-1-63580-164-4

Category: Christian Education

Translated from Spanish to English by: Monte Cyr

Unless otherwise stated, all the Bible references are taken from the NIV version.

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These lessons are adapted from material originally published by WordAction Publications.



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HELPS FOR THE TEACHER

I. GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE LESSON AND THE UNIT

INTRODUCTION TO EACH UNIT

In it you will find the biblical basis for the whole unit, the biblical text, the purpose, the titles of the lessons and the reasons why the students need the teaching of this unit.

EACH LESSON CONTAINS:

Biblical References

Points out the biblical passage from which the lesson was taken. It can refer to one or more books or passages of the Bible. You must read the passage(s) and become familiar with them.

Lesson Objective

It clarifies where you should go with your students and what you should achieve through the teaching and learning process.

Memory Verse

It's considered more appropriate to use a single bible verse for the whole unit, with the purpose of emphasizing the central truth.

II. PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH!

Prepare Yourself to Teach! and Biblical commentary

This second section presents a help for the biblical study passage, which will expand your knowledge on the subject. It also includes a biblical context and the way in which children of this age learn. For greater effectiveness, take into account the following:

- Pray and ask for God's direction.
- Read the Bible passage several times and write down in a notebook the central ideas you find.
- Consult other versions of the Bible, biblical commentaries, biblical dictionaries, etc.
- Compare your ideas with those presented in this book.
- Meditate on each of them, and reflect on how the passage applies to your own life and the lives of your students.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LESSON

Here the different points of the lesson's development are identified. The Bible story must be presented with methods in which your students are actively participating. Be sure that the key points are clear in the minds of the children. You can practice the presentation of the theme in your home to be at ease in front of the students. Cheer up! The work is of the Lord, and you're an instrument in His hands to carry it out.

Bible story and Application for life

This is the moment for the student to reflect on his daily life. It's time to guide him to ask how his life is compared to what the Bible teaches. In general, these are activities with questions to answer in a personal way. Direct the preadolescent towards reflection and don't manipulate their answers, since these must be sincere and personal.

IV. ACTIVITIES

- a. In this section you will find another series of reinforcement activities for the lesson, such as tasks in the activity sheets and games.
- b. Memorization of the text, games.
- c. To End: moments of prayer and reflection.

Suggestions:

- Keep in mind that it's best to prepare your lesson throughout the week, giving God's Holy Spirit opportunities to teach you, give you illustrations for the lesson, etc.
- Visit your students at least once every semester.
- Pray and communicate with your students through letters, texts, phone calls, invitations, etc. Be sure to quickly contact them/visit them if they miss a class.

- Send a note to the student and / or parents and mention special facts in the student life, such as birthdays, special days, etc.
- Encourage your students through contests to motivate them to attend, learn, memorize verses, invite their friends, etc.
- Arrive early to be sure you have the room ready for the class.
- When preparing lessons, take into account the age, needs and problems of preadolescents.
- As the teacher, you're also a friend, counselor and Christian model worth imitating.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BIBLE MEMORIZATION

1. WHAT DOES THE VERSE SAY?

Have your students express what the verse says by using their senses.

See

- In the Bible.
- Visual Aids: on the chalk/white board, signs, posters, flashcards, etc.

Hear

- Read it out loud
- Record it and play it back

Speak

- Repeat it after listening to it
- Read it together and individually
- Sing it

Touch

- Write the verse.
- Fill in the blank.
- Solve a crossword
- Use hand motions

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Explore the definitions.

- Let the kids express what they understand about each Bible verse.
- Explain words they don't understand.

Discuss the context.

- For more explanation, use Bible commentaries, dictionaries and other resources.
- Investigate the background of the verse.
- Who is speaking and to whom are they speaking?

Illustrate it.

- Show pictures/illustrations of the text.
- Create your own drawings.
- Use hand motions, sign language or act it out.

3. HOW DO I APPLY IT TO MY LIFE?

Discuss the following:

- The daily life application of this verse.
- In which circumstances will it be useful and what effect will it have on your life and others' lives.

Remember a Bible verse:

- When you're being tempted.
- When you're troubled.
- When you want to encourage others.

The students, Their Behavior And The Teacher

1. Understand Your students and Allow For Normal Behavior.

- Children are active and curious.
- They aren't miniature adults: we must always differentiate between bad behavior and immaturity.

2. Create An Atmosphere That Promotes Good Behavior.

- Let children know that you love them and appreciate them.
- Show interest in what happens to them outside of class.
- Be organized in how you handle the students.
- Provide clear and consistent guidelines; let the children know what you expect of them.
- Don't show favoritism.

3. Acknowledge Your Position As A Teacher.

- Be in charge of the class.
- Be a figure of authority that students can follow.
- Become a friend to your students.
- Explain to them what is expected of them and give them good examples.

4. Use Methods That Involve the Children and Capture Their Interest.

- Be prepared and get to the classroom before any of the children.
- Provide a variety of activities that are appropriate for your students' ages.
- Use activities that capture their interest and ability.
- Allow children to choose some of the activities.

5. Focus on Positive Behavior.

- Limit the number of rules.
- When you correct a child, discuss it with their parent, guardian, or the person responsible for them.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN A CHILD MISBEHAVES?

1. Find the Cause of the Problem.

- Does the child have learning or medical problems that prevent their participation in class?
- Does he try to control the class?
- Is he academically talented and therefore bored with the class?
- When you know the cause of the problem, you may be able to correct it after talking with the child's parents.

2. Take Control of the Situation.

- Ignore behavior that doesn't interrupt the class.
- Include the child in learning activities.
- Let him see that you're observing his misconduct.
- Approach the child in a loving manner.
- Tell the child, quietly, what you want him to do.
- Teach students the consequences of continued misconduct.

3. Talk to Parents or the Person Responsible for the Child.

- If you know that you will most likely have to talk to his parents or guardian, do it.
- Start by telling the parents what you appreciate about their child.
- State the problem and ask for their ideas of how to resolve the problem..

LET'S MEET THE PRE-ADOLESCENT

This is an age of discovery.

- » They want to express their ideas.
- » They are physically and mentally “mature” enough.
- » They enjoy doing new activities.
- » They enjoy discussions that require complete answers.
- » They don't like “yes” and “no” answers anymore.
- » They enjoy working as a team.
- » They enjoy listening to stories, especially stories about Jesus.

As a teacher, encourage them to daily discover their life in Christ. Challenge them to do God's will.

When considering the characteristics of the development stage of your students, we include some tips to improve the dynamics of your class:

- Inspire your students with the stories of heroes of the Bible.
- Take the opportunity to teach them to memorize the Word, songs, and inspiring stories.
- Ask for the preadolescent's participation in the search of biblical passages, preparation for the classes, telling the Bible stories, doing dramas, looking for maps, doing puzzles, writing on the board or making posters about the lesson.
- Encourage them to participate with questions and answers to their classmates.
- Encourage them to imitate the biblical characters.
- It's an excellent time for them to form good habits such as: daily reading of the Bible, prayer, attending church, giving their tithes, talking to others about Jesus.
- Offer opportunities for students of this age to help others.
- Take this time to accept Jesus as their personal savior.
- Do extracurricular activities, lessons aren't only taught or learned in the classroom. Always ask for the help of other adults.

Christian Education Material for Children

Mesoamerica Region Discipleship Ministries presents with satisfaction its complete collection of Christian education books.

They were designed for teachers of children and for students from 4 to 11 years of age.

Children will learn the lessons of the Bible according to their age. And, by the end of their elementary school years, they'll have gone through the challenging biblical stories, as well as various topics appropriate to each stage of their childhood and pre-adolescence.

This material was designed as different steps to achieve a holy life. It contains clear and possible goals.

The teacher's book will help equip those who have the beautiful task of leading children to connect with the message that will change their lives forever.

By promoting the child to the next year-according to his age-he will have studied only once each of the books. When he reaches 12 years of age - if he started with the first book - he will have studied the eight books of this valuable collection.

The books are designed to be used in Sunday school classes, happy hours, Saturday Bible schools, children's clubs, discipleship classes, and schools in general.

This series aims to:

- a. Challenge the children to learn the Word of God.
- b. Encourage them to grow in their Christian experience as children of God.
- c. Guide them to accept Jesus as their savior and Lord.
- d. Help them grow in their faith
- e. Help them become part of the faith community, the church.

The following table will help you identify the corresponding book according to the age of the students:

- Preschoolers:4 and 5 years old (Year / book 1 and 2)
- Elementary:6, 7, 8 years of age (Year / book 1, 2 and 3)
- Words of Life (preadolescents):9, 10, 11 years of age (Year / book 1, 2 and 3)

TEACHING RESOURCES: RECIPES

Recipes for Play Dough or Molding Clay

Flour and Salt Dough

Ingredients:

2 or 3 Cups of Flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ Cup Fine Salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Warm Water

Food Coloring

Instructions:

Mix the flour with the salt and add the warm water little by little as you stir. If you want it to be colorful, add drops of food coloring as it thickens. The consistency of the dough will depend on the amount of water you add. Store in a closed container in the fridge.

Cooked Dough

Ingredients:

2 Cups of Flour

1 Cup Salt

1 Tablespoon Vegetable Oil

2 Teaspoons

Food Coloring

Instructions:

Mix the dry ingredients and then add the water and the vegetable oil. Cook the mix over low heat until it thickens, stirring it constantly. Take it away from the heat and let it cool. To make it the color you want, add drops of food coloring while you mix the dough. If kept in a closed container, it should last for over a month.

Mud Dough

Ingredients:

2 Cups of Dirt

2 Cups of Sand

$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup of Salt

Water

Instructions :

Mix the dirt, sand, and salt, and then add water a little at a time until you get a consistency that's good for molding.

Finger Paint

Ingredients:

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Cup Corn Starch

$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Powdered Soap

3 Cups Boiling Water

1 Tablespoon Glycerin

Food Coloring

Instructions:

Dissolve the starch in cold water. Pour it into the warm water slowly as you stir to avoid clumps. Add the soap and the glycerin. To add color, use food coloring. This recipe isn't toxic. If stored in plastic cups, it should last several days.

White Glue

Ingredients:

4 Cups Water

1 Cup Wheat Flour

½ Cup Sugar

½ Cup Vinegar

Instructions:

Boil 3 cups of water. Meanwhile, in a container, mix one cup of water, flour, sugar, and vinegar. When the water starts to boil, add the mix and stir slowly over the heat. If there are clumps, stir it more. If it's too thick, add water. If it's too thin, boil it for longer. Store in a jar with a lid.

PAPER FOR CARDS AND CRAFTS

1. Soak 6 sheets of paper or pages from a magazine torn into small pieces in hot water.
2. Put it in the blender with half a cup of oatmeal or flowers or vegetables such as carrots or celery.
3. Strain the mixture and add 4 tablespoons of glycerin and 6 tablespoons white glue.
4. Spread the paste on a plastic sheet/tray with a rolling pin or stick until thin and even.
5. Let it dry in the sun for two days.
6. You can use this paper to make cards, bookmarks, letters, etc.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING STUDENTS TO THE NEXT CLASS

Dear leaders and teachers of Sunday School and Christian education:

As is done for school, it's important for the children of the church to be promoted to the next class each year. As a teacher, it's very important that you're prepared to promote your students at the end of the course, which would be easiest at the end of the school year.

You may prepare a ceremony beforehand and give a certificate to the students who are moving on to the next class. The ceremony can be held at the church so the whole congregation may participate. Invite the parents and family members of the students. It would be a good time to get to know them and for them to attend the remainder of the service and listen to God's Word.

The teachers of the classes to which the students will be promoted should be present as special participants. It will be a significant moment for everyone when you as the teacher send the students to the next class with a hug, and the next teacher receives them likewise with a welcome embrace.

It would be nice if you had a poster with pictures of the students taken throughout the years they spent in your class. It would also be nice to share memories of the students while they were in your class: special prayers they said, the date they accepted Christ, stories they shared, questions they asked, and moments of joy or sadness they went through while in your class. Explain this to your students so they can agree with what you will share about them. This way they don't get embarrassed in front of the whole congregation.

Speak to the person in charge of Christian education or of the classes, so that at the ceremony, new books or Bibles can be given to the students for the following year. Encourage families from the church to gift a book to each student, especially to the ones whose parents don't attend the church or to the ones with financial struggles. In each congregation there are families that would gladly gift books to the students.

We wish you blessings in the challenges that the ministry of teaching presents for you and your congregation.

May the Lord give you grace and bless your important ministry.

Editorial Team

Certificate of Promotion

(student name)

is promoted to the _____ class

Church

Date

“My child, pay attention to what I say...” Proverbs 4:20a

Sunday School Superintendent

Teacher

Year 3

Introduction - Unit 1

THE BEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

Biblical References: Jeremiah 1:1-9; 25:1-14; 39:1-10; Ezra 1:1-5; Nehemiah 8:1-9:3; 9:38-10:39; Luke 4:14-32; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; Acts 17:1-12; James 1:22.

Biblical Truth: The Bible reveals who God is and how we should live for him.

Unit Memory Verse: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- ✗ Discover that the Bible is different from all other books, since God inspired it.
- ✗ Understand that the central message of the Bible is that God loves us and provided everything necessary for our salvation.
- ✗ Know that God's desire is that we read the Bible and obey it.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 1: The best book comes from God

Lesson 2: The best book helps us know God

Lesson 3: The best book tells us about Jesus

Lesson 4: The best book guides us

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Pre-teens will have a greater interest in the Scriptures to the extent that their knowledge of the Bible increases. They need to understand that the Bible, in many aspects, is a unique book. God inspired it and its message is the truth. They should understand that the Scriptures will help them know God better and that the Holy Spirit can guide their lives through its pages.

Pre-adolescent children enjoy using their growing ability to read. This is the ideal time to teach them to find verses in the Bible.

For younger children in your class, many passages can be difficult to understand and apply to their lives. This unit gives them realistic and practical suggestions so that the Word of God becomes an important part of their lives. For example, the reading of portions of the Scripture, and suggestions to ask for help from adults so that they can understand it and use it in their daily walk. This initial success in reading the Bible will encourage them to continue reading and studying it.

This unit also encourages students to memorize the books of the New Testament.

Lesson 1

The best book comes from God

Biblical References: Jeremiah 1:1-9; 25:1-14; 39:1-10; Ezra 1:1-5

Lesson Objective: That the children understand that the Bible is different than any other book because it was inspired by God. That they can understand how God inspired it.

Memory verse: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

In our society, non-Christian teachings compete with the Bible to influence the way children think. Today more than ever, children need to understand that the Bible is different from any other book. The students are mature enough to understand that it's much more than a book of interesting stories. It's the Word of God. It's unique! The Bible can guide their lives, help them make decisions and bring them to know the Lord.

Now that they're reading fairly well, your students can begin to explore the Bible for themselves. Each one should have his own Bible in a version they can understand. This program of study will guide them in the basic knowledge so that they can use the Bible effectively.

As a teacher, be sensitive to the different reading levels of the students. Encourage them to read, but don't force them. Those who read little, if their inability to do so shames them in front of the class, may see the Bible with displeasure. In that case, allow volunteers to read. This will give you more knowledge about students' reading skills, and you'll know who is uncomfortable reading aloud. If time permits, practice reading ahead of time with those who don't feel comfortable. Then give them easy passages to read as they feel more comfortable reading in class.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The Bible is the record of God's revelation to his chosen people. There are many antecedents of his encounters with his people. The Bible stands above everything. From ancient times, people of faith recognized that the writings of the Bible were unique. Compared to other religious writings, it was inspired by God. That means that God worked through special

individuals and gave them the message he wanted to communicate.

God chose Jeremiah for a special task, even before he was born. He was chosen to be a prophet. And moreover, God gave him his presence, direction and protection.

The Lord communicate many words to the mind of the prophet Jeremiah during a period that lasted several years. The expression, "the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah" appears 32 times in the Scriptures.

Jeremiah continued proclaiming the Word of God for 23 more years. Even though the people didn't respond, the prophet didn't stop. He knew that his message had been inspired and didn't depend on the acceptance of the people. We can thank God that he never abandons us. He constantly seeks us to reveal himself to us. He never stops loving us. We must commit ourselves, as Jeremiah did, to speaking to people about his love, and to remain faithful to him no matter how they respond to the message we proclaim.

Jeremiah lived and prophesied during the reign of the last five kings of Judah, a time of much instability, and announced that judgment was near. His warnings were ignored. But the test was not to see if the people accepted the prophet's message; but whether the words of the prophets were fulfilled or not (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

Jeremiah told the people over and over again that they must turn from their evil ways, but they never listened. That's the reality of human freedom or free will. Men and women who, despite God's warnings, choose to do wrong and turn their backs on him. They decide for themselves to accept or reject God's redemptive message. Jeremiah told the people that a time would come when the powerful Babylonians, under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, would invade Judah. They, together with their king, would take people into exile for 70 years.

Babylon did invade Judah and led all their leaders into exile. The policy of Babylon was to take the rich and powerful as slaves and leave the poor in charge of the country. In that way they assured their constant gratitude and loyalty.

Babylon was simply the tool that God used. However, it didn't remain in power for a long time. As Jeremiah prophesied, at the end of the time marked by God, it was defeated by Persia. The Lord used King Cyrus to fulfill his plan for the people to return to Jerusalem. We read in Ezra that Cyrus sent them to rebuild the temple of God. He re-established the policy of calming the gods of the

peoples he conquered, instead of taking images, as the Babylonians did. So, the Israelites were able to return to their land, and return to the temple everything that had been taken by Babylon.

In this way, Jeremiah's prophecy about 70 years of captivity was fulfilled, with the subsequent return to Jerusalem. God fulfilled his promise of judgment and redemption for the Israelites. Once again, he demonstrated that what he says is true, and that he's a just and forgiving God.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

1. Welcome the students.
2. If there are new children, introduce them to the class.
3. Give the class time and opportunity to meet and greet each other.
4. Have them tell the class about themselves, such as how old they are, who their parents are, if they have siblings, the name of their school, hobbies, etc.
5. Help them get to know you. Tell them your name, those of your family members, your interests, etc.
6. Give them the opportunity to tell how their vacation days were.

Choose one of the following activities to capture the attention of the pre-adolescent students, and prepare them to learn the biblical truths of this lesson:

Class rules

With the help of the children, think about the rules that they'll have throughout the year. Ask what rules they have in their homes. Remind them that in most homes, there are rules, but in some homes, no one seems to know what they are, so the children do whatever they want.

Tell them that rules are needed to have a well-run class, and that you would like their help in making the rules for the class. In that way, hopefully they won't see them as such an imposition, but will be easy to fulfill. As the class members give their suggestions, write them on a piece of posterboard so everyone can see and read them every time they meet. Be positive when writing. Instead of saying, "Don't talk when the teacher teaches," write, "Avoid talking when the teacher teaches."

Be a writer for a day

You'll need: Bibles, paper and pencils or pens. Say: *In biblical times, people who did a certain type of work were called scribes. What kind of work do you think a scribe did? The scribes carried out a job similar*

to the ones done today by secretaries. There weren't any computers, faxes, or photocopiers, they didn't even have pens or pencils. They used simple instruments, made of reeds, to write on scrolls. To write, the reed was dipped in ink.

Some reliable scribes were given the task of copying the Scriptures, word by word. They had to be very careful not to make any mistakes. When a scribe finished copying, he had to count all the words in the original text and compare them with the number of words in the copy. Then he had to make sure that the word that was in the center of the new document was the same as in the original document.

Allow students to be scribes for a day. Give each one a piece of paper, a pencil or pen and a Bible. Help them find 2 Timothy 3:16. Read it all together. Allow students to copy it as you recite it. Work with them to corroborate that what they copied is the same as found in the Bible. Look for the word from the center. Tell them to find the middle letter. (This is a good exercise, both for the student and for the teacher.)

Clarify: *Our Bible story today tells us about someone who received and made known the Word of God during the times of the Old Testament. We'll see what this person did and how God helped him.*

Where will you look?

You'll need: Several books, pens or pencils.

Before class, look for several books to show the students. Try to keep them varied, including cookbooks, dictionaries, a comic book, a history book, an encyclopedia, and a Bible.

In class, place the books on a table where all the students can see them. Lift up one of the books and ask, *What would you use this book for?* Let them answer. Then repeat it with the different books. Finally, show the Bible and ask, *What kind of information does this book provide? What makes the Bible different from all other books?*

The Bible is God's written message to people. It's a book of history, poetry, and prophecy. The Bible tells us the story of God and what Jesus Christ, his Son, did, so that we can develop a relationship with him. It shows us how we can have eternal life through Jesus.

In what book will you look?

Allow students to complete the activity sheet for lesson 1 from the student book. Discuss the information and illustrations that appear on the cover of each book. Ask them to write in the blank spaces next to each expression the letter corresponding to the book that they believe is correct. (Answers: 1. B -

2. A - 3. B - 4. B - 5. B - 6. D - 7. C - 8. B. Discuss the question: *Why do you think the Bible is important?* Let the students express their ideas.

Over the next four weeks we'll see how the Bible came to us. These lessons will help us understand that God inspired the writers of the Bible, and that it contains the truth.

BIBLE STORY

Before class, write on the board the names of: "Jeremiah, Zedekiah - Judah, Nebuchadnezzar - Babylon, Cyrus - Persia." In class, read the names to your students. Allow them to repeat them. Identify Jeremiah as the prophet of God. Ask: *What is a prophet?*

Tell them to write the word 'prophet' next to the name 'Jeremiah'. *The others are the names of kings and their kingdoms. Today's story includes all these names and places. Jeremiah was the prophet of God who lived during the time of the kings Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar.*

Read together with the students the biblical story from the activity sheet. Explain the passages that aren't understandable to them. Make the reading enjoyable. They can read by groups, all together, a boy, then a girl, etc. (Don't force anyone to read out loud who doesn't want to.) Emphasize when God speaks or gives a message to the prophet. Reading should never be boring or monotonous.

ACTIVITIES

You'll need: construction paper or posterboard, scissors, glue and colored pencils. Give the children the last student activity sheet. Ask them to cut out the names of the New Testament books, glue them on posterboard to make them firmer (if they can, they can be laminated with wide adhesive tape), and then cut them out. Distribute a plastic bag to store their cards. Ask them to memorize the names of the New Testament books.

Memorization

Look in the dictionary together for the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 that aren't known to them, such as: "rebuking", "righteousness", etc., and show the relationship they have with today's lesson.

Before class, write the memory verse on cards, one word for each cards. Make two sets of these. Repeat the verse all together. Then divide the class into two groups: boys and girls. Provide a set of cards to each team. Groups can sit around the table, or in a circle on the floor. Indicate the time to start the competition. The team that places the verse in the correct order in the shortest time will be the winner. You can give a candy or a pencil as a reward to each child of the winning team.

To End

Pray that the children will feel that you care about them, and want them to know and trust that the Bible is the Word of God. Also that we must believe God's Word and depend on it to be better and more obedient children of God. Invite them to return for the next class.

Lesson 2

The best book helps us know God

Biblical References: Nehemiah 8:1-9:3; 9:38-10:39

Lesson Objective: That the children understand that the Word of God shows us who God is and what he's like. That they understand what he expects from them.

Memory verse: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

When the Israelites rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, the people around them mocked them. When the people of God began to keep the Sabbath, again the people mocked them. They called them ridiculous, and tempted them to choose lifestyles that didn't please God.

Worldly influences and jokes surround Christians today. It's possible that your pre-teens learn in school that believing in God as the Creator is an outdated idea. They listen to advertisements that say if something makes them feel good, they can do it. Receiving these mixed messages often confuses them. To help them avoid confusion, the Word of God should saturate their lives. Help the children understand that God never changes, nor will his great

love ever be exhausted by them; and that following his instructions is the best option in life.

This lesson will help them make their decisions based on the Word of God and prayer. The Israelites heard the Word, and then they made decisions.

Your students will realize that God wants them to live in obedience and under biblical principles. As they develop their skills in reading the Bible, encourage them to apply those principles to their lives.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

After having been in exile for 70 years, the Israelites returned to Judah. Persia had conquered Babylon, making it possible for the exiles to return to their lands. The Israelites lived in conditions of poverty, in a nation in ruin.

Nehemiah, the cupbearer of the king of Persia, had heard about the poverty of his nation, and appealed to the king to allow him to return to Judah. The king agreed and sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem with officers and provisions.

When Nehemiah arrived, he organized the people to work on the walls of Jerusalem. Until the walls were raised, the people would be vulnerable to enemy attacks. Nehemiah organized them to work in specific areas. In just 52 days, the walls were rebuilt. In Nehemiah 6:16, we read: “When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.”

The Israelites were encouraged by the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem, and now they began to focus on the reconstruction of their spiritual life.

The men, women, and older children gathered in an open area near the Water Gate (8:1) to hear the reading of God’s Word. Ezra began to read the “book of the law of Moses.” All remained there from dawn until noon while Ezra read. Can you imagine what it would be like to be on your feet for that many hours? Evidently people were hungry to hear the Word of God and to have someone explain it to them.

As they understood what they were hearing, they became aware of their own disobedience. Soon everyone started crying. The leaders told them to not be sad, that they were there to celebrate with great joy.

After the feast of tabernacles, the people did three things through which they expressed their pain: (1) they fasted, (2) they dressed in rough clothes, and (3) they covered themselves with dust (9:1). They listened to the Word of God, confessed their sins, confessed God’s faithfulness, and worshiped Him.

The Israelites had made a complete turn around. They went from being those who had turned their backs on the Word of God, to now being those who, in repentance, presented themselves before God and worshiped Him.

Many times in the past, the Israelites had repented before God and had promised to follow him, but gradually they always returned to their old bad habits. However now, the exiled ones became aware of their disobedience of the past. In Nehemiah 9:38, we see how they made an agreement with God. The rulers signed the covenant and placed their legal seal on it, making the promise that they would be God’s people, separated, living under his laws, and keeping the day of rest. They made plans to support their priests, repair the temple, and assume full responsibility for maintaining it.

This promise showed a great contrast with previous behavior. What a difference it makes when people listen to the Word of God with an obedient heart! They learn it and apply it to the situations in which they live. In the same way, we have the responsibility to put into practice the Word of God in our lives. God’s position never changes. The fundamental call to his people is the same. We must love God, learn his Word, and live in obedience to his commandments.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of the following activities to focus your students’ attention on the biblical truth of today.

Review the New Testament books

During the class, ask for volunteers to recite the names of the first four books of the New Testament. Congratulate and encourage those who know the greatest number of books. Show the cards that say: “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John”.

Ask: *Why are these four books called ‘the Gospels’?* (The first four books are called the Gospels because they tell us the good news of the life of Jesus Christ.) Show the card with the name “Acts.” Explain that Acts is a historical book. It speaks of the early church formed by the believers who decided to love and follow Jesus Christ, its beginning, and its growth.

Show the 13 cards with the names of Paul’s 13 letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Say: *We call these 13 books of the New Testament the letters (or Epistles) of Paul, because he wrote them. From Romans to Thessalonians are letters he wrote to the early churches to advise them on specific needs. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are letters he wrote to young pastors. Philemon is a letter that Paul wrote to a man named Philemon concerning his slave Onesimus.*

Distribute the cards to the students. Then have them place them in the correct order on the board. Ask: *Why is it important to memorize the books of the New Testament in order?* (This will help us more easily find the books in the Bible and the biblical passages.)

The Bible helps us know God and know how he wants us to live. Today's Bible story will teach us what people learned when they heard the scriptures.

Who is God?

Before class, gather some things that communicate something about you. It can be a picture of you when you were a child, a notebook when you went to school, a trophy from a bible quizzing contest, etc.

In class, ask: *Do you know who I am? What do you know about me?* (The children may say that you're a teacher or that you like children, etc.) Ask: *What can you do to find out more about me?* (Possible answers: spend more time with you, find out more about your life, or talk with you more. Show a picture of when you were a baby, a current picture of you with your family, reading a book or notebook from when you went to school, and other objects that show your tastes or interests.) Show them the objects you brought and ask them: *What do these objects have in common.* (They help us know more about you.)

Direct your students to the first activity in Lesson 2 (Who is God?) of the student book. Ask them to answer the first question by drawing or writing what they know about God? Ask some volunteers to comment on what they put. Then read the second question on the activity sheet on the same page: "What would you like to know about God?" Similarly, let your students write or draw a picture in the space provided. Ask some volunteers to comment on their answers. Ask: *Where can we find the answers to questions about God?* (The Bible is the best place.) *Today's lesson will help us know more about God.*

BIBLE STORY

Today's bible story is chronologically after the previous lesson. Emphasize the rebuilt walls. *In this story, the Israelites stood for six hours while Ezra read the Word of God. Today we'll stand up for the reading of God's Word. Please remain standing in silence until I finish reading the Word and story.* If you're asked why they should stand, tell them: *The Israelites remained standing from dawn to noon to hear the Word of God that Ezra read, which means that they were standing for six hours. Listen to today's bible story, it will help us know better the experience of the Israelites, even though we won't be standing for six hours!* Read or tell the story.

ACTIVITIES

The Word of God teaches us

Say: *The Israelites learned the Word of God; they listened to it and promised to obey what it said they should do. What can we learn from the Word of God?* Ask the children to look at the second activity sheet. Each student should have a Bible if possible. Have them work in two's or three's to find the verses and fill in the blanks.

Answers:

- Genesis 1:1 - "In the beginning God (created) the heavens and the earth."
- Deuteronomy 4:7b - "The Lord, (our) God, is near us whenever we pray to him."
- Deuteronomy 10:17 - "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the (great) God, (mighty) and (awesome)."
- Psalm 37:3 - "(Trust) in the Lord and do (good)."
- Daniel 9:9a - "The Lord our God is (merciful) and (forgiving)."
- Psalm 145:13 - Your kingdom is an (everlasting) kingdom, and your dominion endures through all (generations)."
- Luke 10:27 - "(Love) the Lord your God with all your (heart) and with all your soul and with all your (strength) and with all your mind"; and 'Love your (neighbor) as yourself."

How can I know God better?

Direct your students to the last student activity. Ask: *"What do we use keys for?"* (to open doors) *"What can these keys open or help us discover about God?"* Allow students to express their ideas (make sure they mention the Bible). Ask them to write their ideas in the blanks inside the keys.

Ask: *How can you know more about a famous person?* (Read a book about that person.) *In what way can you know more about God?* (Bible reading) *When you love someone, you want to know that person better. When we love God, we want to know him better, the Bible helps us to know God better.* Allow students to complete the sentences that appear after the keys on that same sheet, whose slogan is: "Write a prayer of praise to God, and another to thank Him for His Word."

Memorization

Write the memory verse on the board. Let everyone repeat it. Delete one word at a time. Make a contest between boys and girls to see who wins. You can give them a bookmark for their Bible to those who say the whole verse without any mistakes.

To end

Pray for the students, praying that they love the Word of God and that they treasure it in their minds and hearts. Ask that some pray for children who have needs, or health problems.

Lesson 3

The best book tells us about Jesus

Biblical References: Luke 4:14-32 ; John 3:16 ; 1 John 4:9-10

Lesson Objective: To help the children know that the Bible tells us about Jesus, who came to show us the love of God.

Memory verse: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The children in your class come from different backgrounds and situations. Maybe some don't receive the proper love in their homes. Others have loving families who give them the care and guidance they need. Whatever the situation, each child needs to know that God's love doesn't change. They need to understand that God loves them and values each one as special.

One way to know God is to see how he acted with other people. The Bible tells us about them. Students will learn that the Bible is the book that talks about God's love for his people. And even more, they'll also discover that the Bible shows us how Jesus made it possible for everyone to experience his love through a personal relationship with him.

Pray that through this lesson, your students will be challenged to give an answer of love to God. If they have already accepted Jesus as their Savior, encourage them to develop their relationship with him by studying his Word. If there are some who haven't yet to accept Jesus, this lesson will give you an excellent opportunity to invite them to do so.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The biblical story today is centered in the synagogue. During the time that Jesus lived on earth, it was an important part of the Jewish community. This happened after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Babylonians had conquered Judah, destroyed their temple, and taken the people as captives. Now they were in foreign lands, surrounded by Gentile religious practices. To preserve their faith, the Jews came together to worship and teach the Word. At first they met in houses. Then they built the synagogues. The literal meaning of the word "synagogue" is "meeting" or "meeting place." The synagogues became the center of Jewish life and community while they lived in Babylon. (Children can draw a synagogue of adobe

or bricks, place windows, seats, etc. to decorate one of the walls of the room, or they can make a model with a cardboard box.)

During the time of Jesus, a synagogue could be built in any city where 10 or more Jews lived. When Jesus traveled from one place to another teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, he always attended the synagogues. The synagogue became the ideal place for the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the community. The services that were offered in them had three parts: prayer, the reading of the Law and the prophets, and an explanation of the Scriptures. It was the custom of the time to ask a visiting rabbi (teacher) to read the scriptures and explain them. This was followed by questions and debates.

Jesus was considered a rabbi or teacher. So when he visited Nazareth, his hometown, he was asked to read the scriptures in the synagogue. People had heard that in other villages he taught and performed miraculous healings. Possibly they were curious to see what Jesus was doing.

As was the custom of the time, when the assistant handed him the written scrolls, Jesus stood up and began to read the writings of Isaiah. They were the prophecies about the promised Messiah. When Jesus finished reading, he sat down (the teachers usually sat down to teach). Then, he said these wonderful words: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled before you."

Can you imagine the commotion that there would be among the people? Could Joseph's son declare himself to be the promised Savior? Was it possible to hear something like that? The people of Nazareth weren't ready to accept that truth about Jesus. On the contrary, the statement he made confused them and made them angry. The people of Nazareth rejected his message.

Jesus said that even though they rejected him, others wouldn't. Just as the prophets of the Old Testament went to the Gentiles when Israel didn't listen to them, so Jesus would bring God's salvation to all nations, both Gentiles and Jews.

The Jews in Nazareth couldn't believe what they were hearing. Although the people were waiting for the promised Messiah, they expected a king, not the son of a known carpenter. Although the people of Nazareth were ready to reject him, there were others who were eager to hear him. In Capernaum, people were amazed at his teachings and the authority with which he spoke. He spoke to them with all the authority that God had given him. And what was his message? The same that we're called to believe today: God is love and offers salvation to everyone who decides to believe in his Son, Jesus Christ.

You've already decided to follow him. And the students in your class? Pray that those who need to know Him will come to Jesus through your words and actions as a teacher of the class.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of the following activities to guide the children's attention to today's biblical truth:

New Testament Library

Prepare cards for each child to draw or assemble their own library with the cards of the names of the books of the Bible. If you wish, you can use the cards that you prepared the previous class. Show the children their own cards with the names of the books of: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Say: *The word 'Gospel' means 'good news.' Why are these four books called 'the Gospels' or 'good news'?* (The Gospels explain that the good news of salvation is available to all people through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.) As you discuss each card during this activity, ask the children to put them in order on the blackboard or paste magnets.

Then show your Acts card. Ask: *What is the book of Acts about?* (How the primitive church began and grew.)

Show the cards with the names of Paul's letters. Ask: *Remember the name of the person who wrote them?* (Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ) *When Paul wrote them, what were they?* (Letters) *Some of these letters were written to individuals, and others to churches; can you remember which ones were written to people and which were written to churches?* (Paul wrote from Romans up to Thessalonians to the first churches, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus were letters to Timothy and Titus, and Philemon was a letter from Paul to a man with that name.)

Now show the cards of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John and Jude. Say: *These books are the 'general epistles.' They weren't written for a particular church, but for Christians in general. Hebrews was written for Jewish Christians who wanted to give up their faith because of persecution to remain firm in their belief in Jesus. We don't know who the writer was. James was written by Jesus' brother; he teaches and encourages Christians in times of trial. Peter, the apostle, wrote 1 and 2 Peter about the Christian life. 2 Peter warns about the false teachers of the Church. The Apostle John wrote 1, 2 and 3 John, and the books of John and Revelation. 1 John talks about false teachers and gives Christians the security of salvation. 2 John teaches about Christian love. 3 John is a letter of thanks and encouragement. Jude was written by Jesus' brother called by that name, and warns of false teachers.*

Ask: *What is the last book of the Bible?* (Revelations) Hold the card up. *Revelations was written to Christians who were persecuted for their faith; it's a book of prophecies. It describes actions that Christians took and issues they would have to face before the second coming of Christ.*

Remove the cards from the board. Then place them on the table, with the written sides down. Have the students file pass, take a card and place it on the board in the right order. When all the cards are on the board, ask the children to say the names of the books in the correct order.

Say: *Learning the books of the Bible will help us find the chapters and verses with ease. Today's lesson is in the book of Luke. Is this a book in the Old or New Testament?* (New Testament) *Where did you find that book?* (Luke is the third book.) *Let's listen to what Jesus teaches us in today's lesson.*

What is love like?

Give your students the first sheet of the first activity of Lesson 3 of the student book. Ask them to look and discuss the figures that are there, and draw a cross next to each figure that shows a way Jesus expressed his love for people.

Ask: *Which figures show Jesus' love to others?* (All: Jesus showed his love by sharing his food with others, speaking to them and lifting up children, healing the sick, teaching people, and forgiving them in many ways. And he even asked for forgiveness for those who crucified him on the cross of Calvary.)

Jesus showed his love in many ways. We can learn to show love to others by reading the stories of Jesus in the Bible; let's see what he did in today's story.

BIBLE STORY

Read together the Bible story from the student activity book, lesson 3. You can divide the reading among several children who wish to do so. Stop reading to ask short review questions to see if everyone is following along. Find out if the children have questions.

ACTIVITIES

Finish the sentences

Tell your students: *Complete the five sentences at the end of the Bible story. You will have to look up the words in the Bible story.*

The Bible tells us

Say: *Let's look at what the Bible tells us about knowing God personally.* Have students work in small groups to read and complete the 5 sentences of the last activity sheet in Lesson 3 of the student book.

Say: *Sometimes there are people who know a lot about God but still don't have a relationship with him. Use your Bibles to know how to have a personal relationship with God. Look up the verses and order the letters to complete the sentences. (In parentheses we give the answers of the student book for you.)*

1. Romans 3:23; ADMIT that you have (sinned). This means that you disobeyed God.
2. 1 Peter 3:18; (BELIEVE) that God loves you. God sent his Son (Jesus Christ) to die on the cross, so you can be forgiven for your sins and be God's friend.
3. 1 John 1:9; Pray and (confess) your sins. Tell God that you don't want to disobey him anymore. Ask him to forgive you.
4. Ephesians 2:8-9; Have (faith) that God will fulfill his promise to forgive your sins and make you his child.
5. John 1:12; (Receive) Jesus as your Savior. Tell others what God has done for you. Love God and follow Jesus.

At the end of the work, say: *We'll have a moment of prayer. If someone accepted Jesus as their Savior, praise God for his Son Jesus Christ. If you now wish to accept Jesus as your Savior, pray and tell the Lord that you're sorry for having disobeyed him, ask him to forgive you, and then give him thanks for his forgiveness. Promise to love him and follow him.*

Ask those who accepted Jesus to talk with you after class.

Memorization

This must be a special moment in which students practice the memory verse. Make it fun, simple and fun. Form two teams: girls and boys. First, two boys will come to the front and write the first two words of the verse on the board; then two girls will come up and they'll write the two words that follow, and so on until the verse is completed. If a child doesn't remember the words, the pair will leave the game. The team that finishes with the most participants will be the winner. The verse has 16 words, including the Biblical quotation. Ideal to compete!

To end

Tell the children who accepted Jesus that you want to talk to them and their parents that same week. Encourage parents to continue praying and encouraging their children. Visit them during the week and pray for them. To those who had already accepted Jesus as their Savior, encourage them to remain faithful and obedient to Jesus. It's the best and most important decision of their lives, and will have eternal repercussion!

As a teacher, feel privileged to have been the bearer of the most wonderful message: to present the "good news" of salvation to a child. Pray for them and show them how happy you are for the decision they made today.

Lesson 4

The best book guides us

Biblical References: Acts 17:1-12; James 1:22

Lesson Objective: That the children know that it's their personal responsibility to learn the Word of God and obey it.

Memory verse: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The message of the Word of God is important for each pre-adolescent. Those who don't know Jesus should study his Word and learn what it means to

develop a personal relationship with him. Those who already know the Lord should study it to make their faith grow. Only if you study the Bible can you learn from it.

Your responsibility as a teacher is to develop plans for reading the stories of the Bible. It can include reading projects with drama, costumes, puppets, games, puzzles, competitions, cookies, drinks, etc., to encourage and challenge the children to read and know God's word. Maybe many of these activities can be developed outside of class time. As you involve students in reading and presenting the stories, they'll become accustomed and confident in their own ability to read, as well as delving into the Word of God.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Paul's second missionary journey included Macedonia, or what is now known as northern Greece. Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke traveled from Philippi to Thessalonica on the route called Via Egnatia. There are several places, including the old Neapolis, where the route is still visible. Thessalonica was 67 kilometers from Philippi. The men were detailed in Amphipolis and Apollonia. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, with an approximate population of 200,000 inhabitants. It had a large Jewish population and there was a synagogue there. Therefore, possibly these factors contributed to Thessalonica being a place that, logically, Paul wanted to visit.

When Paul began to preach and teach in the synagogue, some Jews and many Greeks, including a wealthy woman, accepted the truth that Jesus was the promised Messiah. But in Thessalonica there were also other Jews who weren't happy because of the great acceptance of Paul's preaching, and began to conspire against him and his people. These Jews planned a terrible accusation against Paul. Since they couldn't find him, they arrested Jason, the owner of the house where he was staying. In order to be released, Jason had to pay bail and guarantee that there would be no more problems. That meant that his property could be confiscated, and that he would have to face jail and even death itself.

Paul and Silas escaped from Thessalonica with the help of other believers and they walked towards Berea. This is modern Veria, which is located about 33 kilometers from Thessalonica, at the foot of a mountain. In Berea there lived a lot of Jewish families; there was also a synagogue there. That was where Paul preached the Scriptures, possibly on the passage of Isaiah 53, explaining that Jesus was the Son of God.

The inhabitants of Berea show us the way God wants us to respond to His Word. It's interesting that although Paul had also spoken in the synagogue of Thessalonica for three days, the Bible doesn't mention that the people of that place had made any kind of personal study. Conversely, the inhabitants of Berea searched the scriptures daily "to see if what Paul said was true."

Luke characterized the people of Berea as "more noble" people than the Thessalonians. They listened to the Word of God with an open mind. They had no religious prejudices, no pride. Their hearts and minds were hungry and ready to receive the Gospel. So must we respond in the same way to the Word of God.

To the extent that we become personally involved with God's Word, changes will occur in our lives.

The immediate results in Berea were greater than those in Thessalonica because the people there were more interested in knowing the Word of God.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of the following activities to prepare your students and get their attention for today's lesson.

Competition over the New Testament

Arrange the cards with the names of the New Testament books on the board. Then have the children practice saying the names of the books. Remove the cards and ask them to sit down. Give each child a Bible. Say: *Now we'll do a competition to see who finds the New Testament books more quickly in their Bible, I will choose a card, I will read the name of the book and I will say 'Now', and you will quickly search your Bible for that book of the New Testament When you find it, get up immediately.*

Mix up the cards with the names of the books, and place them on the table with the names down. Choose a card and read the name out loud. Tell them to quickly find that book in their Bibles. When they have found the first page of that book, they must stand up. You can designate a secretary to see how many boys and how many girls participated, and who won (if it was the boys or the girls).

Say: *I congratulate you for learning the books of the New Testament; this will help you study and learn the Word of God. Today's story tells us about some people in the New Testament, found in the book of Acts. What type is it? (It tells a story.) What story does Acts contain? (The one of the early church) Listen to what happened in today's Bible story.*

What's missing?

Before class, find or buy a jigsaw puzzle and a plastic or wooden car or plane model to assemble. Take out and hide the instructions to assemble the car or plane and the picture that will be formed when the puzzle is assembled. It will probably be on the cover, so if that's the case, look for one that's simple and with few pieces.

In class, place the pieces of the puzzle on a table. Allow the students to observe them. Ask: *Do any of you know what picture will be formed when putting together this puzzle?* Do the same with the parts of the car or airplane. Put them on the table, having removed the instructions on how to assemble it. Allow time for students to observe it well and try to discover what it is.

Guide them to look at the first page of activities in Lesson 4 of the student book.

Say: *If you want to make a cake, you must use certain ingredients.* Then have them look at the drawing of the puzzle, that of the model car or airplane, and that of the ingredients for the cake. Ask them: *What is missing from these three things?* (Instructions to assemble the model of the car or plane, the recipe, and the photo of the puzzle.) *Why is the recipe to make a cake important?* (It's impossible to make it without the instructions.) *Why is it important to have the final photo to put together the puzzle and instructions to assemble the model of the car or plane?* (We don't know what the figure or object is to be assembled without the instructions or the photos.)

Ask: *How is the Bible like a book of recipes or instructions for life?* (The Bible helps us know how God wants us to live. It also helps us to know how to love God and accept him as our savior.)

Ask: *What would happen if you have the recipe to make the cake and you don't follow the instructions?* (It won't go well and won't taste good.) *Do you think it's important to listen to the voice of God?* (Let them answer and say why.) *Let's see what some people in the New Testament did when Paul read them the Word of God.*

BIBLE STORY

Ask three girls and three boys to read the Bible story of Paul and Silas from the student book. Have them look for the story in the Bible; the children will see that the story was taken from the Bible. Ask if they have questions, or explain if there are difficult details for the children.

ACTIVITIES

The search for Berea

Have the students read the story of Berea from their Bibles. Ask them to answer question 1, and then follow the instructions in this activity of the student book (Search in Berea), to move forward through the circles to the end. Let the students continue reading the story at their own pace. If they need help, you can

guide them. Everyone should answer the questions until they get to circle 23.

Say: *We should be like those in Berea. When someone teaches us the Bible, we should listen to it and read the scriptures to learn more.*

Add: *If someone says something about the Bible that you don't understand, what can you do?* (Ask, read the passage again.) *Who can help you study the Bible?* (Parents, teachers, pastor, friends and God) *How can God help you study the Bible?* (Praying, asking him to help you understand what you read) *The Bible is a great tool that God has given us, but if we don't use it, it can't help us.*

Learn the Word of God

Allow a volunteer to read the instructions for the last activity of Lesson 4 of the student book. Say: *The Word of God tells us in James 1:22 that not only do we need to read the Bible, we must also do it, that is, do what it tells us. In what way can we do it?* (Allow students to answer.) Guide them to complete this activity, joining each phrase with the one that correctly completes the sentence. When they have finished, ask for volunteers to read the sentences. At the end they should mark with a star the one they'll put into practice during the week.

Ask them: *Which sentence did you mark with a star? That means you should do it during this week.*

Memorization

At this point the students will already know the verse of the unit. Have competitions between: girls and boys, mixed teams, small groups or individual races to see who knows the memory verse. Make this a fun and enjoyable time to remember and practice the verse of this unit.

To end

Pray together. Ask for volunteers pray and thank the Lord for His Word. May we all be readers and scholars of the Word.

Invite the children to come to the next class in which they'll start another interesting unit. Finish by singing an appropriate hymn or chorus about the Word of God.



Year 3

Introduction—Unit II

GOD'S MESSENGERS

Biblical References: Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 18:1-12; Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-24; Amos 8:1-8

Bible truth: God's message given to the prophets is still valid today.

Unit Memory Verse: *Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you.* (Jeremiah 7:23).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Understand the role played by the prophets and the methods they used to proclaim God's message to his people.
- Know the message of some of the prophets.
- To notice the importance of the prophet's message for God's people today.
- Obey the teachings of the prophets.
- Ask God to help them proclaim his message to other people.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 5: Isaiah

Lesson 6: Jeremiah

Lesson 7: Ezekiel

Lesson 8: Amos

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

At Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with his people. Through that covenant, people would love God and worship him alone. They would also treat others with love and respect.

The prophets were to warn the people that they were breaking the covenant with God. Although he is sovereign, he allows people to make their own decisions. The people decided to worship their neighbors' idols as part of their worship practices. God worked through his prophets to warn his people that he should stop doing that, and start putting him in the first place in their lives.

The Israelites used to blame past generations for the mistakes they made. But God warned them that each was responsible for their own acts and sins. The people heard the warnings, but didn't obey God. As a result, the prophets brought messages of judgment and condemnation. The pre-teens will learn in these lessons the way in which people respond to God and his message. This will remind them that they must put God first, and show love and respect for their fellow men. It's important that they know that they can't blame others for their mistakes. Each one is responsible before God. The warnings have shown the patience that the Lord has, his mercy, and his willingness to forgive when the people repent. Use this unit for your class to examine their relationship with God.

Lesson 5

Isaiah

Biblical References: Isaiah 6:1-13

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that just as God called the prophets to give his message to the people, they must also give God's message to the people that surround them.

Memory verse: *Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you (Jeremiah 7:23).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The years leading up to adolescence bring many changes. Especially boys tend to get away from hugs and signs of affection in public. They struggle between feeling loved and showing affection to other people. It's important for the your students to realize that God loves them. He always finds a way to communicate to people his love and what he wants for them.

One way through which God spoke to the people of Israel was through the prophets.

As the children study Isaiah's life, they'll learn about God's love, his holiness, and their need to receive forgiveness for their sins. It's good for them to know that Isaiah felt inadequate and worthless when faced with the presence of the Lord. God heard his cry and cleansed him of his sins. Then he called him to be the one to bring his message to the people of Judah. Isaiah's response to God was instantaneous and positive.

Our desire is that the preteens develop that same enthusiasm. It's important for them to know that today, people need to hear the message of God's love and forgiveness. Pray for the result of this lesson, so that the children can pass this message on to others; allowing him to take their weaknesses and give them his spiritual resources to be the "megaphones of God" in today's world.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Isaiah was a prophet of Jerusalem from 740-700 BC. During his ministry, he repeatedly warned his people that Jerusalem and Judah would be judged for their failures. Isaiah's spiritual experience was the vision of the temple of God (Isaiah 6). The vision defined and clarified the task he was doing. This well-known story began with a "splendid vision", continued with the acceptance of his weakness, and ended when he was ready to be sent.

A splendid vision

The story of Isaiah began with an inspiring vision of the throne of God. The presence of God filled that place. And the beings who praised God repeated: "Holy,

Holy, Holy" (v.3). In the Scriptures, repetition marks the importance and intensity of a truth. The repetition of the word "Holy" reveals a deep understanding of God, and is considered the heart of all human religious experience.

Acceptance of your weakness

In the presence of holy God, Isaiah became aware of his low value and the low value of the people for whom he had come. He refused to think that he could do anything for God. But he was not the only one who thought that way, since others, like Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, at first also resisted the call of God. The resistance to God's call isn't related to the personality of the individual, but to the fact of being in the very presence of God. Yes, for the biblical prophets, it was not enough to be in God's presence. They believed that their words had genuine power. They were the human expression of the Word of God and what they expressed changed the course of events. What can intimidate a messenger more?

Ready to be sent

One of the beings that surrounded the throne of God helped Isaiah to overcome his hesitation. A seraph took a burning coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's mouth with it. Instead of hurting him so that he wouldn't speak, this action removed his guilt and his sin was atoned for (verse 7). Through this incident, Isaiah received cleansing and purification. This qualified him to carry out the task that God had prepared for him.

Cleansed and trained, Isaiah was able to respond to God's call by saying: "Here I am, send me" (v. 8).

The book of Isaiah has been important for Christians of all ages. The inclusion of topics such as: the virgin birth, the Suffering Servant, and the Messiah, have helped Christians express their faith in Jesus. Some church scholars conclude that, along with the four Gospels, Isaiah is the "gospel" that contains the teachings of the Christian faith in its entirety.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose some of these activities to get the class's attention and deepen the lesson's impact today:

Communication station

Ask the students to identify the forms of communication shown in the first activity sheet from lesson 5 from the student book. Ask them to pair up with the person sitting next to them. Assign one or more questions to each pair. When the students have finished, ask them to their answers with the whole class.

- *What is communication?* (Talk, share ideas with others, listen to what others tell us)
- *Why do we communicate?* (We want to connect with others, express our thoughts and feelings to them, etc.)

- *In general, with whom do we communicate?* (Friends, family, teachers, God, etc.)
- *What kind of information do we transmit to others?* (Ideas, beliefs, feelings, opinions, emotions, etc.)
- *What skills do we use to communicate?* (Thinking, speaking, listening, language, answering, etc.)

At the end of the discussion, ask: *In what ways does God communicate with us?* (Through the Bible, through prayer, through ministers and teachers, etc.)

Today we'll talk about how God spoke to his people during Old Testament times. This will help us know that we're responsible for communicating the message of God's love to our friends, neighbors and family. We have no excuse for not talking about the Lord to others.

Mural: Spokespeople of God

You will need a large sheet of cardboard or poster board to line the mural, glue, card stock, figures, colored pencils or crayons, markers and scissors.

Say: *One of the most important things that this unit highlights is that God has called us to be its spokespeople, his messengers, as he did with the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos.* Draw or cut the figure of a prophet with a turban and beard to stick on the mural. (You can draw only his silhouette if you want.) Ask the children to draw and / or cut and paste different means of communication around the figure: smoke signals, a carrier pigeon, a megaphone, a telephone, a cell phone, a computer, a letter, a preacher, a horse (used to carry the mail in the past), a bicycle, a motorcycle and a truck (used to deliver correspondence), etc. This is a simple and interesting activity for children. You can explain to them that there were and there are media outlets that were tools to announce the message of God. Some children may not know that old smoke signals, carrier pigeons, or horses were used as media. Show the similarity between the media and the prophets that God raised to communicate / announce his message of salvation to the sinful people.

And just like the prophets, we're also responsible for communicating the message of God's love to our friends, neighbors and family. We have no excuse for not talking about the Lord to others.

How much do you know about Isaiah?

Encourage the children to tell what they know about Isaiah. Make a list on the board. Then give them reference books to see how many new things they can find out about Isaiah. Give them Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, Isaiah study books, etc. Ask students to raise their hands as they find new information. Continue adding more information to what is already written on the board. Say: *Today we'll study a specific moment in Isaiah's life: his call to ministry.*

BIBLE STORY

Here am I. Send me!

Hand out the student book activity sheet for lesson 5, which tells the story of the day. It's written as a script, to be acted out or read by them. For this you will need five volunteers for the following characters: Narrator, Isaiah, seraph 1, seraph 2, God. When you indicate it, they'll begin, and each one should read the part that corresponds to them as it's written in the activity sheet. At the end of the reading, there is a series of Points of Interest to discuss and review the story. Try to have all the children participate in the discussion.

ACTIVITIES

How are your ears?

Say: *God communicated with Isaiah through a vision, and he wanted him to communicate it to his people. Listening is a very important aspect of communication. Isaiah had to have the will to listen to God.*

Are your ears working? Are you a person who knows how to listen? Allow your students to rate themselves using the questions on the activity sheet. Begin by reading the score part. Then give time for them to think about the questions, and choose the option they most identify with, until the activity is over. When they're finished, say: *Are you ready to listen to God? What can you do this week to hear God better?*

Ask the students to write at the bottom of the page something they can do to strengthen their communication with God. For example: the student who reads the Bible from time to time may commit to reading it three times a week. Those who only pray when they're in an emergency can commit to pray regularly. Don't forget to ask them next week if they were able to keep their promises.

Memorization

The memory verse has 30 words, including the reference. Write it on strips of paper and share them among the students. They should learn the verse for next week and teach it to a family member. Encourage them to study it with a member of their family (father, mother, brother, grandfather, uncles, etc.). For the next class, the student should invite their family member and the two should together write the memory verse. If they do and bring the family to the class, they'll receive a special prize. (It's a good opportunity to give visitors a Bible or New Testament and invite them to the next class.)

To end

Make this moment a very important time, especially if there were "visitors" to your class. Pray for them, and for the message that God wants to give us all. Pray that the children are always ready to hear the voice of God.

Jeremiah

Biblical References: Jeremiah 18:1-2

Lesson Objective: That the students understand the significance of the sovereignty of God. That they know that he permits them to choose, but they're responsible for their choices.

Memory verse: *Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you* (Jeremiah 7:23).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

"Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears!" (Jeremiah 9:1)

The prophet Jeremiah had a special character. The Old Testament tells us more about the personality of this prophet than about any other. In many of the verses of his book, he describes himself as the "weeping prophet". One of the most salient is 9:1. One of the prophet's great sorrows was to see the fall of his people. His task was to announce the fall and destruction of the nation. What sadder task could a prophet carry out?

The public ministry of Jeremiah coincided with the final days of the kingdom of Judah. During the reign of the last kings, the prophet begged them to repent, save the nation and reverse their fall. Before his eyes full of tears, Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah was taken captive in the year 587 BC.

The Potter's Prophecy

Inspired by the Lord, Jeremiah paid a visit to the potter's house to see how he worked. "But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him." (18:4). This story was the heart of the message that God wanted Jeremiah to announce.

What was the center of the message? Some say that this is a figure of hope. When the clay loses its shape in the hands of the potter, he gives it the shape that he desires. In the same way, God would work with Israel, giving it a new form, leaving it perfect, without failures, until it truly reflected God's purpose.

Others say that this is an image that shows God's total control. He does what he wants with people, without them being able to say anything. From this perspective, the potter's message is a message of judgment.

This illustration of the potter's work reflects the sovereignty of God. It's a story of the interactive relationship between God and his people. The action of not destroying the vessel, to remake it again, shows us that God can change his mind in the face of a catastrophe or positive situation, depending on how the nation acts.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Think of all the utensils we use to drink: Glass, china, aluminum, pewter, tin and plastic cups. They're all different vessels. They look and feel different because different materials are used to make them. But even so, they all fulfill the same function: they allow us to hold them and drink a variety of liquids.

The story of the potter and the work wheel reminds us that as Christians, we're unique and different. But still, we have something in common: we receive and give the love of Christ. The Potter designed us to carry out his mission. The problem arises when we allow things other than those he had planned for us to shape our lives.

These days, there are different influences that shape and transform the lives of our children. They're pushed and pulled in different directions. What are the influences that will succeed and shape their lives? This question raises the most important topic of our lesson today. Pray that the tender hearts and minds of your students will be sensitive to the patient hands of the Master Potter, who wishes to mold us into vessels worthy of being used for his kingdom.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Actions have consequences

Write on the board: "Small decisions" and "Big decisions". Separate them with a vertical line. Say: *Every day we all make decisions, some are small and have no significance, others are important and will have consequences over time.* Ask the children to mention small decisions they made last week, and also big decisions they made. Write them on the board. After writing each one, talk to them about the importance of those decisions. There will undoubtedly be decisions that would seem to have no importance now, but which will ultimately have serious consequences. For example: eating chocolates or drinking carbonated beverages in excess. It's possible that today's decision won't have major importance today, but in the future may cause health problems, such as tooth decay or obesity.

Explain to the children that all decisions have some kind of consequence. *Today's story shows us what happened to a people for having decided not to obey God. Disobedience brings serious consequences, not only in this life, but for eternity.*

BIBLE STORY

Newspaper "The Prophecy"

Hand out the activity sheet from the student book, lesson 6, of the article in which Jeremiah gives a report, entitled "A prophet learns a lesson from a potter." Ask a volunteer to read it.

At the end of the reading, ask: *Why did Jeremiah go to the potter's house?* (God asked him to.) *What did Jeremiah see when he came to the potter's house?* (The potter working on a vessel, which then broke in his hands, he then crushed it and started making a new one.) *What did God say he would do to Israel?* (If they didn't obey, he would force them to start again, just as the potter had done with the pot.) *Why would God do that to them?* (Because they were sinners and didn't want to obey Him.) *God loved them so much that He wanted to correct what was wrong. What did God tell Jeremiah that he should pass on to the people of Israel?* (I will allow a disaster to happen to you; therefore, turn from your evil ways.) *What would be the people's response?* (God said they wouldn't listen.) *With this in mind, what do you think happened to the Israelites?* (God punished them, Jerusalem was destroyed and most of the people were taken captive to Babylon.) *Why do you think God wanted the Israelites to obey Him?* (God loves everyone and wants the best for us.)

The Israelites continued behaving in an evil way and were still bad towards each other. And over time, they came to destroy themselves. That's why God put a stop to their evil. This allowed those who had remained faithful to God to begin again.

ACTIVITIES

What would you do if you were king?

Have the students turn back to the first activity (If you were sovereign...what would you do?). Inside each pot, they should write things they would do if they had total control of the world. Some of them could be: "feed the hungry", "heal the sick", "make sure everyone has a nice place to live", etc. After writing them in the center of the containers, they can color them. Discuss their answers as a class.

Say: *Today we'll talk about someone who has total control of the world, let's see why God is so important.*

Think about it!

At the end of the pot activity, ask the students to complete the "Think about it!" activity.

The potter (answers)

1. *How is God like the Potter?* (God and the potter are creators; both have power and authority over their creation; both seek to mold their creation to be excellent vessels.)
2. *How does it feel to be a potter?* (Powerful when making the vessel; Sad if you must destroy it.)
3. *How did you react when you had to destroy your creation?* (I have the power to do it, I can do it; but it makes me very sad because I love the vessel that I created.)

The clay (answers)

1. *How are we like the clay?* (We were both created; we're led by the supreme God; We're moldable.)
2. *How are we different from the clay?* (We can choose to obey or disobey God; we can decide how we'll finish.)
3. *How was Israel like the clay?* (They were disobedient to God, that's why he was ready to destroy those who disobeyed, and those who did good could begin again.)

Ask: *In what ways can we obey God, our Potter?* (We can obey his Word; communicate with him through prayer; worship him and do his will.)

Memorization

Write the memory verse on the board and repeat it with the children several times.

Before class, write the memory verse on cards, each word separately. Hide them in different places in the room. Ask the students to find them. When they have found them, tell them to stand next to each other with their card so that the verse is formed correctly. Then ask them to say it by heart. For those who know it, at the end of the lesson may be the first to leave the room.

To end

It's possible that the students have been touched by today's lesson. If there are some who haven't yet accepted Jesus as their Savior, this is the opportunity for them to give their hearts to Jesus and confess their sins.

Say: *God wants us to love him and let him be the Lord of our lives. Maybe some of you have never given your life to him, and want to do it today for the first time. Others may wish to dedicate their lives to the Lord.*

Find someone to take these children to a separate place to pray, or you can do so while an assistant stays with the rest of the class. Allow a moment to pray silently. Then guide them to make a confession prayer. It can be: *Lord, mold the lives of these children, just as the potter molded his vessel. Remove the rough edges that don't allow them to be useful vessels for you. Please forgive their sins, mold their lives in such a way that they're useful vessels. For your honor and glory, Amen.*

This class can be special for everyone. Ask the parents or relatives who came with your children to come forward and say the memory verse with their child. Prepare cookies and drinks to celebrate that the children invited the family to say the verse together.

If you prepared Bibles or New Testaments to give to parents or relatives, this is a good time to do so. Congratulate the parents who came. Say that the whole class is happy to meet them. Invite them to return when they wish and also give an invitation with the schedule of services. If possible, introduce them to the pastor and the Sunday School leader.

You know, you chose an excellent way to meet parents and do evangelism. Congratulations, repeat it as many times as you think best during the year!

Lesson 7

Ezekiel

Biblical References: Ezekiel 18:1-4; 19-24

Lesson Objective: To help the students know that they're responsible to God for their actions, and understand the importance of confessing their sins to him.

Memory verse: *Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you* (Jeremiah 7:23).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

"The devil made me do it!" is a phrase that can cause us to laugh. But we all know that it's human nature that leads us to excuse ourselves and escape our responsibility for the evil we did. People want to avoid the punishment and consequences of their actions. It's therefore easy to blame others, including Satan. However, we all know very well that there is nobody to blame for our actions but ourselves. In today's lesson, your students will learn that it's right to take responsibility for their actions, despite the consequences. As a result of this lesson, they'll learn that they can't blame their parents, siblings, ancestors, or peers for their own sins. We all face circumstances that influence our decisions, but each one is directly responsible before God for his choices. Sometimes, children are falsely accused and punished for the bad actions of others. It's possible that many times they can't prove their innocence. Therefore, show a compassionate attitude to those who have experienced situations of this type, and help them respond with grace and forgiveness to those who caused them evil.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The prophet

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was also a priest and prophet. But unlike him, Ezekiel prophesied far from Jerusalem. In the year 597 BC, he and some others were exiled to Babylon as a warning of what would happen to the entire nation. For years, Ezekiel sent messages with warnings to "his home."

He was similar to the other prophets: he communicated God's message through sermons, prophecies and laments. But at other times, he was different from the others. He provided intriguing details of visions he had had, such as that of a wheel inside another wheel (1:15-21) or the one of a valley with dry bones (37:1-14). In addition he acted out his messages.

In a way, Ezekiel is the most difficult to understand and the least read, unlike Isaiah or Jeremiah. However, many people find in Ezekiel a deeply inspiring prophet, because he used powerful and dazzling images.

Back to Proverbs

What does the proverb mentioned in Ezekiel 18:2 mean? Perhaps the people - both those who were in exile and those who had been warned of their imminent deportation - mentioned this proverb with a touch of fatalism. The people complained. They said that the present situation was problematic, and that due to the actions of their ancestors there would be an early destruction. It was their way of saying: "We can't do anything, but it's not our fault either". "Why are we being punished? It was their fault, not ours!"

In the discussion of chapter 18, Ezekiel responds emphatically, saying: "Each person is responsible for their own actions, and reaping the consequences."

The prophet exposes this point with the following details:

- Children obedient to God won't bear the blame of their disobedient parents to God, nor vice versa (v. 19-20).
- When the wicked repents, God forgives him and nothing he did will be remembered. That person will live (v. 19-20).
- Sadly, the opposite is also true. If the righteous one departs from righteousness and commits evil, no righteous things will be taken into account. His infidelity will be judged (v. 24).

This is the point that everyone - young and old - should remember: God gave us free will, and he respects our decisions. We won't be blamed for the mistakes or sins of others. But at the same time, we can't blame others for our mistakes and sins. Each one is responsible for what he does.

Remember that the last thing God wants is for someone to die in sin. With persistence, God insists on calling us and drawing us to him.

God rejoices when we return to him and choose life, because he isn't only a just God, but also a God of love who wants all of us to find life in him.

As you prepare this lesson, consider this in prayer: Ezekiel 8 removes any hope that we can justify our mistakes or sins by blaming others. Based on the example of Ezekiel, how can you help your students understand that they're responsible for their own choices and that they can't blame other people or circumstances?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Cycles

Ask the children what things or situations have a cycle. For example: the circulatory system (blood travel), the seasons of the year, the route of a train, etc. Ask them to write their ideas inside the wheel of lesson 7 of the student book activity sheet.

Ask them: *Can these cycles be broken?* (No, not without severe consequences.) *What happens if a cycle breaks?* (The seasons can't be altered except with the destruction of the planet or the sun; if there are stops in the circulatory system, we'll die; if a train is delayed or derailed, crashes can occur, causing deaths, etc.)

We have learned that there are cycles that cannot be broken, but there are other cycles that must be destroyed. Today we spoke of the cycle that the Israelites found themselves in - the cycle of sin - a cycle that had to be broken.

Important word

- **Responsible:** One can choose for himself between the good and the bad. Able to take responsibility for his/her actions and decisions.

Write the important word on a large card and hang it on a wall or on the blackboard. After teaching, ask students to give examples of how they're responsible. For example: "If I borrowed a book from my best friend, my responsibility is to return it to him," etc.

BIBLE STORY

Ask a volunteer to read Ezekiel's story from the student book, lesson 7, entitled: "The Bitter Cycle of Sin." At the end of the reading ask and discuss the following questions:

1. *What does the proverb mean: "The parents ate the sour grapes, and the children teeth are set on edge"?* (18:2) (Children sometimes pay the consequences for what their parents did, the effects of bad actions have consequences for a long time.)
2. *Why do you think God told Israel to never quote this proverb again?* (God created each one individually. Only the one who sins is the guilty one. The Israelites blamed their ancestors. God wanted Israel to break that cycle of sin.)
3. *If God doesn't want the wicked to be lost forever, then why does He allow evil to happen?* (He gives us free will: we can do whatever we want, He is just and gives us the opportunity to choose, even if we choose evil.)
4. *God forgets our evil if we go to him, but he also forgets our good if we return to evil. Is that fair?*

Strange symbols

One of the goals of this unit is to present to the class characteristics of four of the major prophets of the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos. Each of them has certain features that give their message power and interest. Isaiah is known by the images of the promised Messiah; both his birth and his ministry are fulfilled in Jesus. Jeremiah stands out for his care and concern for the people around him, and for that reason he is called the "weeping prophet." This week we're studying the prophet Ezekiel, whose most important characteristic is his extraordinary objectivity in the lessons he gave. After studying Ezekiel 18, expand your study to talk about this prophet and the original ways in which he gave the message of God. The book of Ezekiel is full of symbols.

Have your students find the activity: "Say it with pictures" on the activity sheet. Ask them to read all the biblical passages. Then have them draw the symbols, make a description of them, and explain what they mean. You can divide the class into small groups. (It may be difficult for them to draw the watchtower, so tell them they can draw a tall tower with the shadow of a person inside, or a hill with a man on top. In the same way with the backpack, in which case they can draw a suitcase for a trip.)

1. Ezekiel 3:16-21: the watchman. In the days of Ezekiel, the watchtower was positioned on the highest part of the walls that surrounded the city or on some of the highest and closest hills, from where the watchmen could observe the danger signs, like wild animals or invaders that came near to the city.

2. Ezekiel 4:1-3: a block of clay and an iron pan. The brick symbolized the city of Jerusalem and the problems that would ensue. The iron pan symbolized God's dislike of them.

3. Ezekiel 12:1-6: a backpack (what can be carried on the shoulders in a trip or move). It symbolized the nation of Israel taken into captivity.

4. Ezekiel 37:1-14: the valley of dry bones. This image symbolized Israel in exile and its eventual return.

ACTIVITIES

My responsibility

Divide the class into two or more groups to carry out the activity "My responsibility" of the student activity sheet. Tell them that in the free space, they're to make a list of all the things for which they're responsible for. This may include household chores such as taking

out the trash, making their beds; or more serious responsibilities such as studying, reading the Bible, praying, etc. Give them two minutes to do it. Then ask them to list them. Then they can read them aloud to the rest of the class. Ask the following questions:

- *What are the advantages of being responsible for something?* (They treat you like an adult, they don't blame you for the mistakes of others, you're in charge of yourself, etc.)
- *What are some of the disadvantages?* (You have to be more responsible, you can't blame others, you have to give up some things in order to fulfill your responsibilities, etc.)
- *Are we responsible for everything we do, even for the thoughts we have?* (Allow the children to answer.)

Memorization

This week the students will already know by heart the whole verse of Jeremiah 7:23. Ask for volunteers to recite it. If there are several who don't know it, write it on the board and, after several repetitions, erase one or two words at a time while they recite and learn it. Give a small prize to those who say it by heart (it can be a pencil, an eraser, stickers, etc.).

To end

Ask the children to pray for the most important responsibility and for the most insignificant one they have. Tell them that the Lord knows what their responsibilities are and is willing to help them. At the end, pray for the responsibility we all have to tell others that God loves and wants to forgive everyone. End with an appropriate chorus.

Lesson 8

Amos

Biblical References: Amos 8:1-8

Lesson Objective: Help the students understand that God cares about people, especially those who are treated unjustly.

Memory verse: *Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you* (Jeremiah 7:23).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Our society has greater economic advantages than Israel had during the times of Amos.

Prosperity brings its problems, such as religious indifference and complacency. Religious indifference means that people don't care about their neighbors.

In the times of the prophet, the independence of the rich who didn't recognize God brought as a consequence the oppression of the poor and the marginalized. The rich believed themselves to be powerful; they didn't feel responsible for others and didn't respond to anyone, not even God. For that reason, they treated the less fortunate of society with indifference and cruelty.

We don't need to spend much time with children to realize the obviousness of social injustice. Young children often take advantage of the weak or the disabled. It's not uncommon for preteens to use

others to achieve what they want. This lesson is a call to remember God's love for them and others. We trust that you will help them respond with love when they see or experience injustices at school, at home and in their daily activities. It will also help them to care for and act on behalf of the less fortunate.

The commandments of God call us to treat others with love, respect and justice. We can't persist in acting as if we were "gods". Only by walking in his will can we be humble enough to treat others as children of God.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Amos is one of the 12 "minor prophets," and his prophecies are of the utmost importance.

In vv. 8:1-8, he prophesied with determination: "Israel, this is over, and I will tell you why." Sound very loud? Surely yes, but that was the message that God had given the prophet. The Lord led him to give the message through an objective example.

The vision consisted of a basket of ripe fruit. This illustrated and emphasized that the nation of Israel was ready (mature) to be judged and destroyed. So the end was near!

The reason becomes clear in verses 4-6. In its days of prosperity, Israel deceived the poor. The merchants had become greedy. And what was striking was that the owners of the businesses kept the religious practices, closing their businesses on the Lord's day and during other festivities. However, their minds were occupied with themselves. Once the day of rest

was over, they opened their businesses to keep taking advantage of people with their purchases and sales.

In fact, the five visions of Amos have a similar note of divine judgment. Only in the last verses of the book (read 9:11-15) do we find words of hope. But still, we didn't find any note of repentance. Simply the Lord says that there would be restoration after the destruction. However, the final words of God aren't death. They are words of life!

Who was Amos?

Amos was not a priest, but a shepherd of sheep and took care of sycamore-fig trees" (7:14). It seems that he was one of the first prophets, who began writing about 760 BC. He had his home in Tekoa, an elevated area that gave him a panoramic view of the most important parts of Israel. That way he could see if the enemies were advancing. It was the perfect place to see the punishment of the nation.

The importance of Amos

Amos lived in an economically and militarily strong nation. As a prophet, he could see the danger of the moral collapse of his people, under the facade of strength. That was the focus of his prophetic ministry. Perhaps the saddest aspect of the book of Amos isn't the pessimistic tone of its pages, but the constant relevance of its message that transcends time and place. Humanity has changed very little, comparing today with what happened in the days of Amos. Today, the rich still take advantage of the poor, and the powerful oppress the weak. If Christians engage in such actions, we'll face the judgment that God imparted on Israel through Amos. The book of Amos reminds us that the faithfulness that God demands will be measured according to what we do for the weak and the less fortunate.

- *Why do you believe that God cares for the poor and the helpless in our world?*
- *In what way did Jesus show concern for the poor of his day?*
- *How does the mission of the church to evangelize and make disciples compare with the mission of dressing and feeding the poor?*

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

The football competition (drama)

Choose four volunteers to represent the following characters: the coach; Nicolas, an intellectual teenager; Thomas, an athletic boy, and Laura, a cheerleader.

After they perform the drama, which is the first activity of the student book, lesson 8, talk about the characteristics that we value in people, discussing the

following questions, and based on the presented drama:

1. *What characteristics do you consider important when choosing your friends? (Write on the board the suggestions of the children, some will say athletic, tall, good players, friendly, etc.)*
2. *Why are these characteristics important? (Because they'll help the team win, it will be a better team than others, together they'll have fun and enjoyable moments, etc.)*
3. *Has there ever been a time when you weren't chosen to play on a team, or were you the last to be chosen? How did you feel?*

Say: *We feel unimportant when they don't choose us but choose other children instead of us. In today's Bible story, we'll study people who were mistreated by others. Those who are unimportant to us are very important to God.*

Survey of poor people

You will need newspaper and magazine clippings with pictures of poor people, families and children, and clippings with pictures of rich people. Try to make them great for everyone to see. Give them to the children to stick on cards, and make a mural for the classroom. At the bottom of the cards you can write the memory verse.

Tell them: *Possibly all of us think we don't have enough money, but compared to other people, we're rich. Many people have less food or clothes than you, and many don't even have a house to live in. They are the real 'poor' of our world. While thinking of these people, answer the following questions:*

1. *How would you define a poor person?*
2. *Do you think that in the world there are many poor people or very few poor people?*
3. *What makes people poor?*
4. *When was the last time you saw a poor person?*
5. *When you see a poor person, how do you feel?*
6. *What is your responsibility towards the poor?*

Today we'll learn important things: what God feels for the poor and what Christians should feel for them.

What a basket!

Have the children follow the instructions on the activity sheet for "What a Basket!" to discover the hidden word: "Consequences." Then, answer the questions at the bottom of the page:

1. *What did the people do to make God so angry? (They mistreated the poor; they cheated in the markets / businesses; they were hypocrites; they kept the Sabbath but they were disobedient the rest of the week.)*

2. *In this passage, people were warned that their actions would bring consequences. What consequences? (The nation would be judged for ignoring and mistreating the needy.)*
3. *What did God mean when he told Amos that the fruit in the basket was ripe? (The basket of ripe fruits illustrated the mistreatment of the poor and needy, therefore the time had come when they would pay for their sins. The ripe fruit meant that it was time to “eat” it, but in the case of Israel, it was the appropriate time for judgment.)*
4. *One of the most important issues in this story is the social difference between rich and poor. Does this problem still exist in our society today? (As in the times of Amos, this is still a problem today.) In schools, poor children are mistreated by those who have more. Children who can't afford new clothes or who aren't fashionable are mocked by those who are always in fashion. There are many children who don't eat well because of lack of food, don't have adequate medical attention or don't receive the love of their family.)*
5. *Name other differences that divide people. (Money, intelligence, cunning, physical abilities, thinness, beauty, social recognition, fame, etc.)*

ACTIVITIES

Detectives of the Word: the two plots of Amos

To be good detectives we must study all the possibilities and observe all the details, small and large, and thus find the culprit. To be good detectives of the book of Amos, you will need your Bibles and a pencil. The book of Amos has 9 chapters. We'll divide the class into 9 groups of 1 or more people. Each group should investigate what the bad news was for the people of God. Because of the nation's own infidelity, God had one or more punishments for them.

Questions:

- *What were the punishments? Make a list of the ones you find in your chapter.*
- *Why do you think Amos was so negative? (Because the Israelites were unjust to their people, and had taken advantage of the weak.)*
- *The final part of the last chapter has good news. Why? (Because although there were so many in Israel who did the wrong things, God always believed that there were possibilities for people to change, repent and obey.)*

Tell the team that it was chapter 9 that you look for how God would bless your people.

Then gather all the groups so that each group gives their report as detectives of the Word.

Amos and the golden rule

The message of Amos isn't the only one in the Bible that talks about this. There are other messages where we're taught that we should treat others with justice, and have compassion and love for the poor and needy. Perhaps the best-known text of the Bible is that of Luke 6:31, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

This verse was called the "golden rule" because it has a great value that we Christians must learn. It's a very good rule to measure whether we're doing God's will in our dealings with others. Treating others as we would like them to treat us is an excellent way to summarize the book of Amos.

Ask your students how they would respond or act in situations such as the following:

- *You see kids ridiculing a child because their clothes are old or outdated.*
- *You see an old man sleeping under a bridge on a cold night.*
- *You see on television a report about very poor people who don't have food.*
- *You see a child who is short and thin. The kids in the neighborhood laugh at him.*
- *You see in your class a child from another country, who doesn't speak your language well.*
- *You see children in your church who don't have toys because their family has financial problems.*
- *You see a friend who has problems with a school subject in which you're very good.*

Memorization

Prepare two or three sets of cards. Write each of the words of the memory verse separately. Divide the class into several competing groups to assemble the verse correctly in the shortest time, and so practice it.

To end

Encourage the students to have an attitude of love and mercy during this week, and then give a report next Sunday about how they did. Ask them to think about how they felt by helping a less fortunate person or friend. You can bring a basket with a fruit for each child or you can split the fruit in half. Take small plates, a knife and napkins. While eating the fruit, you can ask review questions about the lesson.

This is also an excellent opportunity to do something practical and bring a basket with food to a family in need or give used toys in good condition to a child who doesn't have anything to play with.

End by praying for the children to have a heart that loves and helps their fellow human beings.

Year 3

Introduction - Unit III

JESUS IS UNIQUE

Biblical References: Matthew 3:1-17; Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18 ; 4:15-16 ; Mark 6:45-62 ; Luke 7:11-17 ; John 2:12-22 ; John 5:22-29; Women 8:31-34

Biblical Truth : Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who came as a man.

Unit Memory Verse: *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being* (Hebrews 1:3).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Learn that Jesus is totally God and totally Man.
- Reverence and love Jesus for who he is and for what he does.
- Accept Jesus as Savior and live confidently as his children.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 9: Jesus: God and Man

Lesson 10: Jesus: A Priest that understands Us

Lesson 11: Jesus: Miracle Worker

Lesson 12: Jesus Shows His Authority

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

In this unit, the pre-teens will be able to see both the divinity and the humanity of the Son of God. Jesus is the eternal Word who became a person like us. Jesus, the God-Man, brings us the most complete explanation of God. Through his humanity, he understands us and provides the example so that we too can live according to the leading of the Father. As Son of God, he knows and understands us, he is our Savior and advocate before the Creator.

The pre-teens are entering a turbulent stage of their lives in which they'll experience many changes. Therefore, they'll be encouraged to know that Jesus was once their own age. As a human being, he experienced all kinds of human needs and emotions. That means that he understands our experiences and needs. That encourages us to talk with Jesus as a friend when we discover that he understands us. Encourage your students, through this unit, to believe that Jesus can be their best friend, because that's what he is.

Jesus: God and Man

Biblical References: Matthew 3:1-17

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that Jesus is unique because he is divine and human at the same time; that's why he is perfectly qualified to be the Savior of the world.

Memory verse: *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being* (Hebrews 1:3).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

When Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize him, he was identifying with sinners. John the Baptist required that people recognize their sins before being baptized. Jesus, the Son of God, had no sin. However, he decided to relate to sinful humanity through baptism.

This was one more step towards the final and complete identification of Jesus with the people, his death on the cross. Nailed to it, he took the sins of the whole world, including those of the students in your class, so that we all have the opportunity to be saved.

It's not easy for adults - or children - to understand the humanity and divinity of Jesus. Our human tendency is to focus too much on his humanity or only on his divinity. This lesson will help the children understand some evidence of the two aspects of Jesus' nature.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

There is a possibility that by becoming so familiar with the Gospel of Matthew, we overlook the wonderful stories it tells.

Before arriving at Matthew 3, which is the biblical basis for this lesson, we see that the apostle told us of at least three miracles and mysteries. In 1:18, he explains the conception of Jesus, which was different from any other baby born before or after him. Mary "was found to have conceived of the Holy Spirit." In 2:2 and 2:9, we see that an element frequently used for navigation - a new star - guided the magicians to Jesus. In 2:11, Matthew reveals that John the Baptist was the prophet who knew that someone higher would come. That person would bring a new baptism: baptism by the Holy Spirit with fire.

These three passages contain so many miracles, and at the same time, mysteries!

In 3:13-17, we find the most important mystery: the completely divine and completely human nature of Jesus is revealed. This connection of the two natures present in Jesus at the same time is difficult to understand. Any comparison that we can use won't fully explain its unique characteristic.

It's this unequaled characteristic of Jesus that allows him to be our Savior. The perfect balance is necessary. The emphasis on just one of these characteristics would cause problems. If Jesus had remained simply divine, not only would he not have been human, but he wouldn't be able to relate to our problems and our nature. If Jesus had been only human - and not divine - what difference would there be between him and us? If it had been so, he wouldn't have had the ability to be our Savior.

The story that Matthew tells of Jesus' baptism clarifies that he was completely human and divine at the same time. The baptism of Jesus was a human symbol. Jesus revealed his human nature by submitting to this ritual. At the moment when the Lord came out of the water, a divine sign came: the sky opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Audible words from heaven verified that Jesus was the Divine Son of God the Father.

The human and divine nature of Jesus qualified him to be our Savior and our example. When we read Matthew's account, we understand that baptism was much more than washing with water. It symbolized an obedient submission to the will of the Father and the affirmation of the Spirit that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus came from heaven to earth to give us abundant life, freedom from sin and power to live in victory through the Holy Spirit. Isn't this reason enough to be immensely grateful to God?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Prepare your class in advance. Have everything ready for when the students arrive. Give them a loving welcome. Make children who are attending for the first time comfortable and don't forget to write down their names and contact info, and visit them or call them during the week.

Two different worlds

Give the children the first activity of the student book (lesson 9), and say: *Jesus is the only Person in history who is completely human and divine.* Ask the students to read the instructions aloud. Then, allow time for them to think, comment and write what they remember about the characteristics they already know about Jesus as human and as God. It can be his abilities, qualities, or events of his life. Help them

when necessary and mention biblical passages that remind them. Allow it to be a joyful, but also inspiring moment as you walk the life of Jesus. Explain: *Today we'll talk more about what is and means the fact that Jesus is God and Man at the same time.*

Important words

- **Divine:** God, or have the qualities of God.
- **Human:** mortal person, created by God.

Write these two words with their meanings on cards of appropriate size to place on the mural. You can take pieces of cardboard so that the children can write the two words in large letters and decorate them with colors and designs of their liking.

Provide markers, colors, crayons, beads, stickers, etc., so that they can decorate the important words of this lesson and unit. You can use figures from old Christmas cards to paste the letters of the figure of Jesus as a baby, or other pictures that show him performing miracles. This will help the children understand in a visual way that Jesus was truly human and divine.

Mural: "Jesus, is Unique"

Look for pictures of Jesus that show him doing miracles, walking on the water, being baptized, in the temple, among groups of people, at the Last Supper, etc. In class, ask students to help you line a poster with colored poster paper. You can make a nice border, made with wrapping paper and cut in wavy form or copies of silhouettes of Jesus. In the middle of the mural, ask the children to place illustrations of the Lord's life and miracles. Take this moment to talk with them about the various miracles, and emphasize the fact that he was God and human.

On one side of the mural, place the important words: Divine and Human.

Explain that the next few weeks they'll learn why we say that Jesus is Unique. There was not, is not, nor will there ever be another like him who is God and man at the same time.

BIBLE STORY

The radiance of the glory of God

Before the class prepare a sign that says "Jesus is human and divine." Write each letter on separate cards of the same size. When the children answer the questions correctly, they can come forward and place each letter in the correct order until the sentence is completed. Give the children the second activity sheet (The Radiance of the Glory of God). Read John 1:14 aloud. Explain that "the Word" refers to the Son of God before he was born, while he was in heaven.

Add: When Jesus was young, there weren't many people who knew he was the Son of God. They thought he was just a good Jewish person. But when Jesus was ready to begin his ministry, God decided to make his identity public.

Now ask the students to read the passage from Matthew 3:1-17. Then divide the class into two groups: red and green, or boys and girls. Ask them to read together. Allow time for questions about the passage read. Then move on to the second part.

Bible Quizzing

The two groups should be sitting one facing the other (prepare the room for this activity). You will ask the questions, and whoever knows the answer will stand up immediately and answer. If the answer is incorrect, the child who is sitting across from him or her will have the opportunity to answer. No one can help their teammate. Whoever says the correct answer will place the card on the mural until the complete sentence has been formed. A child will be the scorekeeper, who will take the count to know which team got the highest score (1 point per correct answer).

Explain: *Now that you know about Jesus' baptism, we'll see how much you remember about the story we read. If two children "jump" at the same time, one point will be given to each one.*

1. *From what material were John's clothes made? (Camel hair)*
2. *What did John eat? (Locusts and wild honey)*
3. *What did John tell the people they should do? (Repent)*
4. *Which Old Testament prophet mentioned John? (Isaiah)*
5. *Where did John the Baptist preach? (In the desert)*
6. *How does the prophet Isaiah describe the work that John the Baptist would do? (He would prepare the way of the Lord.)*
7. *What did the people do who were baptized by John? (They confessed their sins.)*
8. *What did John the Baptist call the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to see the people being baptized? (Vipers)*
9. *What did the Pharisees and Sadducees count on to believe that they were in a close relationship with God? (They were descendents of Abraham.)*
10. *What did John use to baptize people? (Water)*
11. *In what river did John baptize? (Jordan River)*
12. *What was John's purpose for baptizing people? (He wanted people to repent of their sins)*

13. *Who did John say would come? (One who was more powerful than him)*
14. *What kind of fruit should the Pharisees and Sadducees offer? (Worthy of repentance)*
15. *The one who came after John, with what would he baptize? (With the Holy Spirit and fire)*
16. *Who came from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John? (Jesus)*
17. *How did John react when Jesus wanted to be baptized by him? (He was surprised, he thought that Jesus should baptize him, and not the other way around.)*
18. *What descended like a dove on Jesus when he came out of the water? (The Holy Spirit of God)*
19. *What did the voice that came from heaven say? ("This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.")*
20. *Where would the straw burn? (In the fire that would never go out)*

If you wish you can give a bookmark or a biblical portion to reward the winning team.

ACTIVITIES

Brainstorming

Write on the side of the board the word "God" and on the opposite side "Human Being". Talk about the characteristics of Jesus as God. (He has always existed; he can heal sick people; he calmed the storm and the wind; he never sinned; he is all-powerful (omnipotent); creator of heaven and earth, loving, he knows all things (omniscient), he's everywhere (omnipresent), he raised the dead.)

Then ask about the characteristics of Jesus as a Human Being (he was born as a baby; he suffered temptations; he wept; he was hungry; he sweated; he got angry; he read; he got lost from his parents; he wrote; he slept; he was thirsty; he ate; he was whipped, crucified, etc.) Say: *We have found many characteristics of Jesus with his divine nature and as a human being. So, Jesus was like us. How do you feel when you understand this reality about him?*

God = Jesus

Ask the children to read Hebrews 1:3, and guide them to the activity on the activity sheet (Exact Representation). Say: *Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God, because He is all God; He reveals and expresses who and what God is. He also identifies himself totally with us because he is completely human.*

Lead the children in the activity so that they complete the two sentences at the bottom of the page. Say: *Jesus is one hundred percent God and one hundred percent human He is the only person about whom we*

can say this. Let's think, why is this important? Why is it significant for us that Jesus is divine and human?

Let the students talk about what they think about it. *Jesus can relate to us because he is human. He is the only one who can save us because he has no sin. It's something that we should be very happy about. Let's express our gratitude and joy to the Lord for sending Jesus Christ to be our Savior.* Provide time for students to complete the sentences:

- I'm happy that Jesus is fully human because ...
- I'm happy that Jesus is fully God divine (God) because ...

Memorization

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being ..." (Hebrews 1:3a).

Since the verse has 16 words, including the scripture reference, write each one on a different card. You can make two sets if you want to divide the class into two groups to have a learning competition.

- Hide the cards in the classroom, and ask the children to find them and assemble the text.
- Organize a race between two teams.
- Promote a march in the yard and let the children sing the text to the beat of a known chorus. Use your creativity to learn by playing.

To end

Ask the children to pray giving thanks to the Lord for the mystery of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. This is an excellent opportunity to ask the Lord to develop the faith of the students. It's good if you say that this is a mystery that we often wish to understand in its entirety, but that isn't possible. We can ask for explanations, look for answers, but they can never satisfy all our concerns. Some situations found in the Bible aren't easy to understand, and we can only understand them through faith.

Faith in almighty God, belief in the Christ who lived like us, who overcame temptation, who had strength to prevail over the most horrible death and who really understands us, will help us keep walking close to him despite the questions and concerns we may have.

Pray for your students ... that their faith will increase.

Jesus: A Priest that Understands Us

Biblical References: Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18 ; 4:15-16

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that Jesus, being completely human, was exposed to all types of temptations, and emerged victoriously from them.

Memory verse: *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being* (Hebrews 1:3).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

When the students of your class are asked: "How does God help us resist temptation?" They may say: "By making it disappear." People who have this concept are often disappointed. Children should know that God will help them resist temptation. Sadly, some don't recognize that help, and seeing that it doesn't disappear, they surrender to it. Then they blame God saying: "I asked the Lord to remove the temptation, but he didn't, so I surrendered to it."

It's good to know what kind of help God gives us to face temptation. This will help the children identify their own responsibility. Every day, they face some kind of temptation. In this lesson, they'll learn that temptation isn't sin. It's sin only if they surrender to it.

They'll also understand that God helps us in many ways. First, he alerts us when something is wrong. Second, he makes sure that the temptation isn't too great, so that we can resist it. And third, he provides us an escape to avoid sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). We must accept the exit that God gives us. That's our responsibility.

Jesus' experience in the desert will encourage the children. Seeing that the Son of God faced the temptation and emerged victorious, he will help them realize that they too can overcome.

Jesus showed us that a powerful tool in the face of temptation is the Word of God. This lesson challenges your students to learn Bible verses, since that will help them fight temptation. Jesus showed us the way. It's up to us to follow it.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The goal in the life of every Christian is to be like Jesus. Christ is our example of holiness in word, thought and action.

Seeing through the revelation of the Gospels what Jesus' life was like, it's easy to think that the same thing can happen to us too. Matthew 4:1 says: "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Can we expect less? It's important to know that throughout our Christian life, we'll also be tempted by the devil. And even though we pray, asking: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13), we shouldn't be surprised when temptation arises.

This shared experience is the basis of our special relationship with Jesus. Since he knows human suffering, he understands all the tests we go through as mortals.

However, He's also God. In no other religion is there such a relationship between humanity and divinity.

What temptations and weaknesses that Jesus went through allow him to identify so much with us? If we examine the first chapters of Matthew, we can identify several of them.

In Matthew 4:1-11, we see that Jesus knew what hunger was; he knew what human appetite was. He also knew the danger, and possibly felt the effect of adrenaline when the devil tempted to push him from the "pinnacle of the temple" (v. 5). Likewise, he learned what it was to desire power and fame.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) shows us that Jesus understood the human condition and all its consequences, and for that reason he taught about them. He knew that people lost their focus on the real mission (5:13-16), that they committed murder (5:21-22), and adultery (5:27-30); they also divorced (5:31-32). He recognized the human tendency to seek revenge (5:38-42), to accumulate material things (6:19-21, 24), to worry about food or clothes (6:25-34), to judge one another (7:1-5) and knew that they would need to seek the right help (7:7-12).

Due to his experience as a human being, Jesus knows what people are like. We can pray with the full confidence that Jesus understands us and that God will help us in whatever difficulties we have to face.

When preparing to teach your students, consider these two questions:

- Think of a time in your life that has been difficult. Do you feel that Jesus understood?
- Meditate on your preadolescence. What experiences can help you understand your students?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose some of these activities to focus the children's attention and prepare them to learn the biblical truth of today.

True or false?

Before class, write on the board the important word "Temptation" and its meaning. Also prepare a sheet for each student with the following statements, which you will also write on the board:

- Temptation is sin.
- Adults have more temptations than children.
- Temptations come from God.
- Jesus was tempted just like us.
- If you are tempted, it means that you're not close to God.
- Jesus can help us overcome temptation.
- There are some modern temptations that Jesus doesn't really understand.
- Temptation is something we all have to worry about.
- There are some temptations that are impossible to resist.
- There is nothing we can do to ward off the temptations of our life.

In class, say: *Today we'll talk about temptation. Does any of you know what that word means?* Allow them to respond. Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 1:14-15.

Then direct the students' attention to the important word and its meaning:

- Temptation: influence that produces the desire to disobey God and to do something wrong. Temptation isn't sin, but leads to it if the person decides to do wrong.

Say: *Let's see what everyone thinks about temptation.*

Give each child a copy of the sheet with the phrases about temptation and tell them to group together. They should write at the end of each sentence: true or false, as they see fit. When finished, you will read each sentence aloud to the class, and a volunteer will write on the board "true" or "false" next to that statement, and record the vote of the class.

Express: *During this activity, some interesting questions will come up. Let's learn more about Jesus' experiences in the face of temptation and how they relate to us.*

Talking about temptation

Hand out the first activity of the student book, lesson 10 (Let's Talk About Temptation). Tell them to get together again with a partner and talk about the

questions on that page. Give enough time for each person to tell about their experience. Then ask some volunteers to tell the rest of the class about their experiences. Then discuss the other questions on the page.

Clarify: *We all face temptations every day; sometimes we feel overwhelmed by it and we need someone to help us. Let's see if we can discover some truths about temptation in today's lesson.*

BIBLE STORY

The desert test

Before class, write these three questions on the board or a poster paper:

1. What did the enemy want Jesus to do?
2. Why was Jesus tempted to do that?
3. How did Jesus respond?

In class, remind the class of the theme of this unit: Jesus is Unique. Remind them: *Last week we learned that Jesus is completely God and completely Man. What Bible story illustrated that truth?* Let them respond. *Could you give me some examples of the qualities that show Jesus as God and others as a human being?* Allow them to give you examples. If they need help, review the Bible story from the previous class, as well as the verse of the month (Hebrews 1:3). Repeat the verse several times.

Ask: *Do you think that Jesus ever had to face temptation?* Let some respond. Tell them that the Bible passage they're going to read happened immediately after John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

Give your students the activity sheet, "Fully man, Fully God" (Matthew 4:1-11). Read the first verse. Explain that this passage describes the three temptations that Jesus had to endure. Then, divide the class into three groups and assign the following parts to each:

Group 1: verses 1-4

Group 2: verses 5-7

Group 3: verses 8-11

After reading the verses, ask each group to discuss and answer the three questions you wrote on the board, according to the part of the story that each one had. When they're finished, let them tell the rest of the class their answers.

ACTIVITIES

Choose some of these activities to help the students connect the biblical truth with their lives.

Truths about temptation

Say: *Now that we know some details about Jesus' experience in the face of temptation, let's go back to the sentences from the beginning in which we had to put true or false.*

Have volunteers read a sentence in turn. After reading each of them, provide the correct answer, and open the debate so that everyone can comment on it.

- *Temptation is sin. (False) Read James 1:14-15. Explain: All people experience temptations and that isn't a sin. It's when the person begins to think about the possibility or the idea of doing the wrong thing and finally does it that it becomes sin. Jesus was tempted. He experienced all kinds of temptations, just like us. But he didn't sin. He didn't give in to them.*
- *Adults have more temptations than children. (False) Make two lists on the blackboard, writing the situations with which children are tempted, and those that adults suffer. Help them understand that we all have to face temptations.*
- *Temptations come from God. (False) Read James 1:13. God sometimes allows us to have trials, but he never tempts us to do wrong.*
- *Jesus was tempted just like us. (True) Read Hebrews 4:15. Jesus truly suffered, was tempted in everything. It's not that he has specifically experienced every temptation we have, but he did experience all kinds of temptations.*
- *If you are tempted, it means that you're not close to God. (False) Jesus was closer to God than any other human being in the world and suffered difficult temptations. Generally, the closer we're to God, the more temptations we have.*
- *Jesus can help us overcome temptation. (True) Read Hebrews 2:18. Jesus has the ability to help us overcome temptation and the desire to carry it out. All of us can overcome them if we ask.*
- *There are some modern temptations that Jesus doesn't really understand. (False) Tell your students some of the reflections of the "Biblical Commentary". The specific temptations we face differ from those that Jesus experienced, but they're the same kind of temptations.*
- *Temptation is something we all have to worry about. (True) Read 1 Corinthians 10:12. Everyone must be alert to temptation. We don't have to be obsessed, but it's necessary to be on guard.*

- *There are some temptations that are impossible to resist. (False) Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. God allows us to be tested to a certain point. He knows what each one can resist, and that's why he will never allow us to be tested beyond that limit.*
- *There is nothing we can do to ward off the temptations of our life. (True False) Read: Matthew 18:7, 1 Corinthians 16:13, James 4:7, 2 Timothy 2:22, and Matthew 6:13. These passages show us that temptation is always present. But there are things we can do to face it: pray for help, resist those that come upon us, and flee from those situations where we're more likely to be tempted.*

He himself suffered being tempted

Give the students the last two activity sheet. Read the passages that appear there: Hebrews 4:16 and Hebrews 2:18. Say: *When we face temptations, we need someone to help us, and we have it! Jesus experienced all kinds of temptations, and overcame sin! He is willing to help each one of us overcome sin.*

Have the students look for a partner to talk to about the questions. After talking for several minutes, allow them to share their answers with the class.

Memorization

Repeat the verse of the unit together several times, until the children can say it by heart. Then, divide them into two groups, and ask them to sit down forming two circles on the floor. Give each group a blank sheet. When you give the signal, the first child should silently write the first word of the verse. When finished, they pass the sheet quickly to the person on their right, who will write the next word. Everyone has to remain silent. And so on until they have written all the words of the verse and the reference. The team that finishes first and does it correctly will win.

To End

Say: *In today's lesson we learned that everyone, both adults and children, is tempted daily to sin in different situations of our lives. We'll never be free from temptations, but we do have the weapons to face them. Jesus is the model of how to resist temptation without sinning. The Bible says that he was tempted in everything - just like us - but he never sinned, which is why he understands our situation better than anyone, and is willing to offer his help.*

Pray for the children, asking God to help them overcome every temptation that besieges them, and give them the strength of will to resist them firmly without sinning.

In Christ we find the solution and the model of how to live a life of holiness.

Lesson 11

Jesus: Miracle Worker

Biblical References: Mark 6:5-52; Luke 7:11-17 ; John 2:1-11

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand that since Jesus is God, he has power that humans don't possess, and compassion for us and helps us.

Memory verse: *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being* (Hebrews 1:3).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Your students live surrounded by superheroes. A new one is constantly appearing. These comic characters save the world from destruction daily. Children always enjoy stories with a happy ending. Even so, none of these heroes produces a significant change in their lives. Unlike these supermen and super fictional women, Jesus has real power, the greatest power. During his years on earth, he produced significant changes in people's lives. He showed compassion and love for them, healed the sick and raised the dead. He suffered temptations and showed us that he had the power to overcome them. He is the Son of God, and he came to show us what God was like. It's necessary that your students know that Christ today can produce a real change in their lives. He doesn't disappear when the screen goes off, like the heroes of television. Christ is real, powerful, and takes care of you and your students!

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The passages of Mark, Luke and John describe three miracles of which none of us living today have seen with our own eyes.

In the Gospel of Mark, we read that one night Jesus walked on a lake. He was alone ... praying, perhaps asking for the spiritual strength necessary to resist the popular efforts that were trying to make him king (John 6:14-15). He had sent the disciples ahead of him in a boat. It was a windy night. At a certain time, he noticed that they were fighting against the waves, and he walked towards them on the water. It seemed as if he would pass by and continue without stopping.

At that time there was a superstition among the Jews that made them believe that seeing a spirit/ghost at night was a sure sign of disaster. The terror of the

disciples was probably due to the fear of thinking that they had just seen a spirit on the water. Jesus spoke to them and calmed their fears. The winds also stopped.

Turning to Luke, we find Jesus interrupting a funeral procession, seeing that the only son of a widow had died leaving her helpless. Some believed that she was no longer of age to contract a new marriage and to give birth. Therefore, unless a family member helped her, she would be condemned to begging in order to survive and would be easy prey for the scammers. Jesus felt compassion for her and returned her son to life. That was the first miracle of resurrection. The other two were the daughter of Jairus and Lazarus.

In the Gospel of John, we read what is considered to be the first public miracle of Jesus. Together with his mother and his disciples, he had attended a wedding. The wine was finished. This was a real scandal in the society of those days!

Mary asked Jesus to help the host and thus save the reputation of the groom before the community. Still reluctant, Jesus accepted, turning the water into a kind of wine worthy of winning a prize in any contest.

John described it as the first miraculous sign of Jesus. For him, the key to the miracle was not in its spectacular nature, but in the fact that it showed Jesus as the Son of God.

None of these three miracles would be humanly possible. Only God is capable of doing them. Human beings perform miracles only in modified versions. A person can walk on water only if it's frozen or if it has some support under the surface. A doctor can resuscitate a patient who is "clinically dead". And some people have the ability and the knowledge to ferment grapes and transform them into wine.

These similar versions are helpful, but we need more than modified miracles. Human ingenuity and technology can't solve all problems. God is the only one who can solve every difficulty. Jesus opened the way for us to have a relationship with the miracle-working God.

Every miracle that Jesus performed had an immediate human benefit, and also demonstrated his divinity. When studying these stories, what do these miracles tell us?

They remind us of at least two important thoughts:

- The power to perform miracles by the earthly Jesus still resides in the risen Lord.
- Miracles are evidence that we can trust that God will help us. Of course, help will not always come in such a spectacular way. The Lord can work through modified versions that allow them to be

done by human beings (doctors, etc). In any case, we can depend on his divine help.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Extraordinary event

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 11 (Extraordinary Power). Ask a volunteer to read the instructions aloud. Ask them to draw or write some examples of extraordinary events they have witnessed, such as: fireworks, healing, the ocean, a tornado, lightning, volcanoes, earthquakes, sporting events, the Olympics, big musical concerts, etc. Then, let them share with the rest of the class.

Point out: *You drew or wrote really extraordinary things. Today we're going to talk about three miracles that will surprise us even more.*

Compassion in action

Before class, write each of the letters of the word "COMPASSION" on small sheets. Hide them in different parts of the room.

In class, ask: *How do you feel when someone you love is in pain?* Probably they'll say that they feel bad. Most would like the pain to go away from those they love. Some may even feel powerless because they can't do anything to make them better.

Tell them, *It's good that you want to help them get rid of the pain. There is a word that describes that kind of concern, that word has 10 letters, which are hidden all over the room. You have a few minutes to find them.*

When they have found the letters, tell them to put the letters in the right order to discover what word you're talking about.

Continue: *We call that kind of concern "compassion." To have compassion is to care enough for someone to try to help them. Has anyone ever had compassion on you or your family?* Allow the students to respond, giving examples of this. Emphasize that compassion is more than just feeling bad about what happens to someone. Compassion is actually helping them.

Explain: *In our Bible story today, we'll see various times when Jesus had compassion on people. Sometimes we have compassion and want to help, but we feel powerless and unable to do anything about the situation. However, Jesus had all the power of God. Let's see how he used it!*

BIBLE STORY

The three miracles

Clarify: *Since Jesus is completely God, he has all the POWER of God too.* Ask for volunteers to say some of the miracles that Jesus performed when he was on earth.

Say: *Not everyone who has power uses it for the good of others. Today we'll read about three amazing miracles that Jesus performed, and we'll also discover why he did them.*

Ask the children to group together in pairs and look at the next two student activity sheets (Images of Power). Provide enough Bibles for everyone. They're to look for the evidences of compassion and power that Jesus demonstrated in the three biblical stories and write them down. When they're finished, tell them to share their answers with the class. Complete their comments with the information provided in the "Biblical Commentary", and with the following statements:

John 2:1-11

- Evidence of compassion: The person in charge of the banquet had the responsibility to provide enough food and drink for the wedding, which could last up to a week. If Jesus had not supplied the wine, the host would have felt humiliated in front of all his guests.
- Evidence of power: Jesus had the power to instantly transform water into something else. Nobody else could do it.

Mark 6:45-52

- Evidence of compassion: When the disciples were terrified, Jesus told them words of encouragement. But he was also with them in the boat and calmed the storm.
- Evidence of power: The power of Jesus is greater than that of the laws of nature; that's why he was able to walk on the waters and make the wind stop.

Luke 7:11-17

- Evidence of compassion: Jesus felt sad to see that the mother of the deceased youth had to face poverty - or perhaps worse - not having anyone to help her. He offered words of comfort and healing for his son.
- Evidence of power: The power of Jesus is greater than the power of death. Therefore, he resurrected the young man.

Ask: *Is Jesus the same today as in biblical times? Does he still have enough compassion for people to help them? How do we know?* (Answers can be varied, but they must include that Jesus has compassion and power.) *The Bible says so. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." The experiences of people over the years and in the Bible confirm his compassion and his power. Being God, Jesus has all the power of God. We can count on his love and help.*

ACTIVITIES

The source of power

Take a light bulb to the class. Show it and say: *Human are partly like this little bulb that isn't connected to any source of energy; we don't have much power. Jesus was a man like us, but since he is also fully God, he has all the power of God.*

Screw the bulb into a lamp that's plugged in and turn it on. While doing so, say: *Jesus has powers that people don't have.*

Draw a large light bulb on the board. Ask a volunteer to write, in the lower part of the bulb (thread), some of the powers that we humans have. (Example: the power to make our own decisions, the power of the speaking, the power of prayer, physical strength, etc.)

Ask another volunteer to write in the upper part of the bulb (the oval part), the powers that Jesus has. (Example: power to resuscitate people, power over the forces of nature, power to heal, power to live without sinning, etc.)

Ask: *What or who is the source of ALL power?* (God)

Guide your students to the last activity in worksheet. Explain that "acrostic" is a type of poetry. Allow them to complete it based on the word "POWER". They should write words or phrases that describe: (a) the power of Jesus, (b) his compassion, or (c) situations in their life in which they need the compassion and power of Jesus in order to succeed.

Memorization

Before class, make a poster on poster paper or cardboard to write the month's verse (approximately 32 cm. x 32 cm.) Divide it into 16 squares (8 cm. x 8 cm.): 4 horizontally, and 4 vertically. Also, cut 16 squares of cardboard, where you will write each of

the words of the verse of Hebrews 1:3 (including the reference on one of them). Then cover them with transparent paper.

Glue the poster on one of the walls of the room and put a ring of adhesive tape on each of the 16 squares.

In class, direct the students' attention to the verse of the month. Read it and tell them to repeat it several times. Then show the poster on the wall. Place the rectangles with the words of the verse on the table, mixed up, face down. When you say "now!" a student will begin to order the words of the verse in the shortest possible time, taping the squares with the words in order on the poster on the wall. Time how long it takes him. When finished, repeat the verse together. Then, remove the words from the poster, place them again on the table face down and mixed up, and let another student participate. Continue like this until everyone has competed, repeating all together the verse each time someone puts it in order. The one who does it in the shortest time will win.

To end

Give each student a piece of paper, a pen or pencil and an envelope. Ask them to think of some need they have. Mention to the children that Jesus has compassion on us, and also has the power to help us. Say: *God ALWAYS answers our prayers, although sometimes the answers are different from what we hope for.*

Ask them to write their petitions on the paper, and when they have finished, put their paper in their envelope and keep it, trusting that God will answer their prayers.

Remind the children that prayer and daily reading of the Word are very good ways to be connected with Him.

Finally, pray for them, ask the Lord to help them trust that he loves them, knows their concerns and needs, and has all the power to help them and heal them, their families and friends. Encourage everyone to tell these miraculous stories of Jesus to those who don't know Jesus and are going through some difficulty or illness. Challenge the children to trust and ask God to help or heal them, since he has the power to do so.



Lesson 12

Jesus: Shows His Authority

Biblical References: John 2:12-22; 5:22-29; Women 8:31-34

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand that both Jesus and God have the same authority towards sin, both to judge and forgive.

Memory verse: *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being* (Hebrews 1:3).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The Jewish people had become accustomed to buying animals for their sacrifice upon arriving at the temple. Religious leaders took advantage of this system, transforming into a business that which had begun as a good work. It's important that your students understand that the attitude of the people who went there to worship God was changing. Instead of going to the temple, to God's Holy House, they seemed to be entering a circus performance. Jesus acted correctly when he condemned this practice of his time.

This lesson can help students grasp the idea that Christians should oppose sin and injustice. It will provide them with an opportunity to discuss when they should take that attitude and how they can do it.

Someday this week take a few minutes to evaluate the development of your class. Let these questions help you see your ministry from a different perspective: What do your students hear? Is everything that's said and done focused on God? What is the purpose of your class? Does the same purpose that was proposed in its original mission continue, to teach the children to know and follow Jesus Christ? Think about the methods you use or decide not to use. Do they help them understand and know God more, declaring his purpose in an obvious way?

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Today's lesson is about authority. The passages of Scripture that we'll read lead us to an important question: Where did Jesus get his authority?

In the opening chapters of the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus "cleansed" the temple. There were reasons for the animal sellers and the money changers to be in the vicinity of the temple for the time of the

holidays. Many of the worshipers came from very distant places and couldn't bring with them the animals necessary for the sacrifices. They had to buy them there. Likewise, most of the people used Greek and Roman coins daily. But these weren't allowed in the temple, since they had images of emperors (human beings). The money changers, then, offered a necessary service, exchanging those coins for others that didn't have images of men.

Why, then, did Jesus object if it was a legitimate business?

In the first place, because the sellers and money changers didn't negotiate in the surrounding area, but in the temple itself. And worse, they did their business in the only courtyard where the Gentiles could worship God. Instead of a solemn moment and the murmur of prayer, the bellowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep were heard. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petitions, a noisy trade was heard.

Second, it's very likely that sellers and money changers had increased the price of their services. People couldn't give their offering as they wished, because they were exploited.

Finally, Jesus knew what that represented. The worship in the temple was so focused on its own practices and traditions that it had strayed from its original purpose. And he had to confront that.

"Where did Jesus get that authority?" the Jews asked. He answered them by referring to his resurrection, which would reveal that he was the Son of God. In spite of everything, the Jews misinterpreted his answer. They assumed that he referred to the temple (to the building) that, after 46 years, was still under construction. (The construction of the temple began in the year 20 B.C. and didn't finish until 64 A.D. But the incident referred to occurred between the years 27 and 33 A.D.)

John 5:24-27 confirms the source of Jesus' authority. Receiving his message is the same as believing in God. Believing in him gives us eternal life, which is imparted by God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. God granted Jesus the power to judge who to impart that life to. This is a source of consolation for Christians. God was so generous that He gave His own Son. The only ones who have the power to accuse or condemn us - and also to protect us - are the Father and the Son (see Romans 8:31-34). Therefore, if we live according to God's purpose, as Jesus revealed, we have nothing to fear.

This is something that the money changers of the temple weren't willing to accept.

As you prepare this lesson, reflect on these questions:

- Did you ever think that because you weren't good enough to God, he wouldn't save you?
- Have you ever thought that salvation was for everyone, except for you?

If so, these verses are special for your life: Romans 8:31-34. If God gave his Son for you, he wouldn't spare the gift of salvation. If Christ gave his life for you, why would he now condemn you? He wouldn't deprive you of anything that would help you live for him. It's Satan who accuses you, not God. However, when the devil accuses us, we have a defense lawyer: Jesus, who is at the right of the Father to present our case.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Who's the boss?

Copy the biblical passages below. Cut each out one separately, fold them and place them in a basket or box.

In class, say: *Today we're going to talk about authority. What does it mean that a person has authority over you?* Allow them to respond. (The one in authority is the one who has the power and the right to tell you what to do, and make sure you do it.)

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 12 (Who is the Boss?) They must identify the five authorities that appear in the illustrations (police, teacher, judge, father, God).

Put the basket or box with the biblical passages on the table. Ask five volunteers to take one verse each, but don't read them until you tell them to.

Start a discussion with your students about these five authority figures. Start talking about the police, and so on. Ask: *Why should we obey them? Why do they have the right to tell us what we must or must not do?*

Encourage the children to talk about how they feel towards the police officers or to relate some experience they have had with them. Then, ask the one with the first passage to read it aloud. Talk about what these verses mean. Continue in the same way with the other four authorities.

Biblical passages:

1. "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that

which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended." (Romans 13:1-3)

2. "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you." (Hebrews 13:17)
3. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right." (1 Peter 2:13-14)
4. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." (Colossians 3:20)
5. "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands aren't burdensome" (1 John 5:3)

BIBLE STORY

Jesus' authority over sin

Ask the students to read the passage in John 2:12-22 from the student activity sheets. Before starting, take a moment to review the material. Encourage them to read the story with expression.

After they do, enrich the topic by commenting on the passage with what appears in the Bible Commentary. Allow students to work in small groups - no more than three or four - to answer the following questions. When they're finished, ask them to talk with the rest of the class about what they wrote. Give pencils and paper to work.

- *How do you describe Jesus' attitude toward sin? (He didn't tolerate it, it made him angry and he punished them.)*
- *Do you think he had the right to act as he did? Explain your answer. (Yes. He is the Son of God and feels the same way toward sin as does His Father, who shares his authority to judge with Jesus.)*
- *What title would you give to this Bible story? Why?*

Now have them look at the passage from John 5:24-29 that's printed on the student sheet. Once again,

have them read it out loud. Then tell them to work in small groups to answer the following questions. When they finish, they can discuss their answers as a class

- *What did the Father give Jesus? Why?* (v.27) (The authority to judge people, their motivations, thoughts, words and actions. Because Jesus is the Son of Man - Son of God - and because God wants people to honor and respect Jesus as they do the Father.)
- *Who will not be judged?* (v. 24) (Anyone who hears the words of Jesus and believes in him as their Savior.)
- *What will Jesus give?* (v. 25) (His life)
- *What will happen to those who have done what is good?* (v. 29) (They'll be resurrected and will live again.)
- *What will happen to those who have done what is evil?* (v.29). (They'll be resurrected and condemned.)
- *Compare this passage with John 2:12-22. How are they similar? What are the differences?* (Both show the displeasure of Jesus and God toward sin, and the manner in which they'll judge sin and the sinner. But also, this passage shows that those who accept Jesus as Savior will be victorious on Judgment Day.)

Explain: *God gave Jesus the authority to judge and forgive man's sin, but he deeply desires that we choose his remedy for sin instead of receiving the punishment.*

ACTIVITIES

God is for us!

Use the passage in Romans 8:31-34 to strengthen the student believers' confidence in God's love for them and in the certainty that he defends them. Ask them to read as follows: ask for a volunteer to read the first verse, tell them to stop, and ask the class to repeat it together. Allow time for them to write down words or phrases that catch their attention or touch their hearts. Do the same with the second verse and so on. This is a powerful and tremendous passage! Encourage the children to repeat each phrase with energy and conviction, believing what they read. If time permits, repeat it several times.

After finishing, ask them: *How do you feel about reading this passage, and what words or phrases touched you or moved you the most?* Allow them to comment on how these truths changed what they knew about God, about themselves and about others.

Memorization

Review the words of the memory verse (Hebrews 1:3) several times. Then organize a competition to see who can write the words of the verse faster as follows: divide the class into 2 groups and form two rows, facing the board. Have a clock with a stopwatch if possible to measure time. When you give the order, the first person of each row should run to the board, write the first word of the verse, and return to the end. As soon as they arrive, the second should go to the board and write the second word, and so on until they write the entire verse, including the reference. The team that finishes in the shortest time will win.

You can mix the groups and divide them differently (girls and boys, tallest and shortest, etc.) to compete again in this way. End by repeating the verse together.

Say: *During this month we said that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father, He is the only person in history who is fully God and fully man at the same time.*

To end

Ask them to repeat the verse of the month one more time. To those who said it correctly, give them a small certificate or prize.

Say: *Today we've talked about Jesus' authority to judge sin. He has the power and the right to punish the one who sins, but He also has the power to FORGIVE Him.*

In your own words, explain what God has done to provide us with a remedy for sin, through Jesus his Son. If you wish, tell your personal testimony.

Tell them to look at the last activity of the student activity book. Using the ABC's of that page, guide them to discover (or remember) the basis of salvation. Be sensitive to the direction of the Holy Spirit in that moment. If it seems appropriate, invite them to say a prayer of forgiveness and receive salvation.

You can guide them in a prayer like this: *Dear God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to earth to become a human like us. Since Jesus went through all types of struggles like us, he understands us. He was tempted in everything. He knows that if we accept the salvation you offer us, then we too can be free from the guilt and punishment for sin. Thank you for this wonderful gift. We're very happy to be your children! We trust fully in you, in the name of the Son of God, Jesus, Amen.*

Finish by singing an appropriate chorus.

Year 3

Introduction – Unit IV

JESUS, OUR KING

Biblical References: John 12:12-19; Zechariah 9:9; John 20:1-18; John 14:1-14; Acts 1:1-11

Biblical Truth: Jesus is our living King.

Unit Memory Verse: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ...* (Philippians 2:10-11).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Understand how the events of Jesus' last days on earth showed that he is our King.
- Understand that Jesus offers forgiveness of sins to all people.
- Know that Jesus will one day return to earth.
- Allow Jesus to be the King of their lives.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 13: Jesus: Our Special King

Lesson 14: Jesus Came Back to Life

Lesson 15: Jesus Lives!

Lesson 16: Jesus Promises to Return

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

The Jews had waited hundreds of years for their promised Messiah. The Messiah was going to fulfill the royal covenant that God had made with David, and he would be King forever. However, when Jesus arrived, the majority didn't recognize him as such, because he didn't fulfill the expectations of the Messiah (Savior) that they wanted.

The people wanted a powerful political king to rescue them from their Roman conquerors. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd rejoiced and shouted, "Hosanna!" which means: "Save us now!" At that time they accepted Jesus as their king. But, they weren't prepared to receive the King of Kings that God had sent.

This unit will help the students understand the kind of King Jesus is. It will show them that Jesus didn't come to be a king like those of the earth. He came to bring God's love and forgiveness to all who want to receive it. He came to be the King who governs our lives and knows us, contrary to the earthly kings who are distant and alien to the life of the people.

This unit will also help the children know that Jesus is a King who is alive, and who will one day return. The goal of these lessons is to help them understand that they need a Savior, and to accept Jesus as the King of their lives.

Lesson 13

Jesus: Our Special King

Biblical References: John 12:12-19; Zechariah 9:9

Lesson Objective: That the students know what kind of King Jesus is.

Memory verse: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ...* (Philippians 2:10-11).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Children of this age have knowledge of royalty from history and fiction stories. However, they may have false concepts about it.

In any case, the images of a kingdom are an important part of the Christian faith. Jesus is the fulfillment of the royal covenant that God made with David. His kingdom is the place where people recognize his lordship in their lives. One day his government will be total and complete.

This lesson will help your students discover what it means for Jesus to be the King of their lives, beginning with the decision to receive him as their Savior, and continues with the daily decision to love him and do what he wants, instead of doing what we want.

Can nine-to-twelve-year-olds do this? Yes. Although some children lack maturity, they have enough mental development to give their lives to Jesus. That's why it's very important that they listen to this concept, and begin to make decisions to put the Lord in first place.

Throughout this unit opportunities will be offered for students to receive Jesus as their Savior. Pray for your students, and be prepared to help them if they show that they're ready to take this step. Some of the children will have already made that decision. Others may not be ready yet. But some will be at the precise moment of taking this important first step: asking Jesus be their Lord and King.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

This was the welcome for a hero! The crowd cheered and shouted, rushing wildly at the Promised One. Emotion grew and people came closer, running over each other to see who was going to change their future.

For the Passover, the pilgrims and those who traveled to the holy place conglomered in the city. It was the time in which the liberation of the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt was celebrated. At that time, Jerusalem had a population of around 50,000 people. And scholars say that by Easter the population increased to 100,000!

Because the city was not large enough to accommodate such a large crowd, many had to camp on the hills outside the walls.

The news quickly spread that Jesus, who had raised Lazarus, would soon reach the city of Jerusalem. News of this miracle, which had caused a great sensation in the Jewish community, spread rapidly, convincing many that they should believe in the Jesus (John 12:11b).

The crowd shuddered excitedly. Many picked branches from palm trees, a national symbol of victory and triumph that they used to receive heroes and kings.

Some began to shout: "Hosanna!", an Aramaic word that means: "Save us now!" Others joined the crowd and exclaimed: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (John 12:13a) Without realizing it, they were repeating a blessing from Psalm 118. Then they added: "Blessed be the King of Israel!" This phrase deviated from what the first two tried to say; which clearly reveals the way the people were thinking. They were waiting for a national and triumphant leader. And they believed that Jesus would be the political king of Israel.

Jesus quietly entered the city in a procession, with leaves of palm trees and songs of victory, riding on a small donkey. Maybe a donkey seems ridiculous, but these were very important animals for the ancient Israelites. The kings rode on donkeys to show royalty, service and peace. Even King David and his sons used mules as royal mounts!

While the crowd roared with political fervor, Jesus quietly demonstrated his kingship, service and peace. As it's written in Zechariah: "See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9). The people were waiting for the Messiah to change the political reality of Israel. Instead, God sent a King to change them.

Personal reflection for the teacher

- What does it mean for you that Jesus is the King?
- What do you do to make Jesus the King of your life?
- What areas of your life do you need to put under the lordship of Jesus?
- How can you help your students welcome Jesus as King of their lives?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Who is Jesus?

After telling the story, ask the children what was the first thing they thought about Jesus and what he was like. Ask: *What do you know about Jesus? Who do you think he is? Why did he come to earth?* Allow students to draw or write their answers in the “clouds” of the first activity of the student book, lesson 13 (Who Is He?). When everyone is finished, encourage volunteers to tell what they think, feel or imagine about Jesus.

Say: *In Jesus’ time, people were waiting for a Savior, someone to rescue them from the Roman rulers. Hearing how Jesus taught and seeing or hearing about his miracles, many people believed that he was the Savior that God had promised to send. Let’s read the Bible story on the student activity sheet and discover the different groups of people who thought Jesus was the king, and why they were waiting for him.*

Proceed to the Bible Story section.

What is a king like?

Before class, get a stick about one meter long and make it into a scepter. On the top part attach a small ball, which can be made with aluminum foil, and give it the shape of a scepter. Line the stick and the ball with aluminum foil. Once you have made the scepter, cover it with golden paint and then decorate it to your liking.

In class, explain what a scepter is: *A king uses a scepter to show his power and authority. In the Bible, the king’s scepter is mentioned in the story of Esther (Esther 5:1-2). He extended his scepter to Esther showing her that she could talk to him.*

Playing, help your class think about what a king does. Tell them that you’re going to give them an idea to start, for example: “This is what a king does ...” Choose a child to start. When you point to him with the scepter, he has to say something a king does, for example: “A king fights against his enemies.” If someone doesn’t think of anything, or takes a long time to answer, they’ll have to go to the “prison” (a place outside the circle).

Have the children sit in a circle. Begin by pointing to a child with the scepter and say: “This is what a king does”. After he or she answers, point to another who must answer the same question, and so on with everyone. From time to time change the subject and say, for example: “This is what a king gets”, or “this is what a king says”, or “this is what a king does when he gets angry with someone.”

Play as long as time and interest allow.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus, save us now!

You will need markers or pencils for each child and the biblical story from the student activity sheet (Jesus, save us now!). Divide the class into 3 groups. Say: *There will be 3 groups of people in today’s story: 1) the crowd, 2) the disciples and 3) the Pharisees.* Assign each group of your class to one of these three groups. When listening to the story, each group should mark with an X the phrases in which something appears about the group to which they belong.

After reading the story, say: *Let’s review again what different groups of people thought about Jesus. Ask the groups to review the phrases they marked and tell what they learned about the Pharisees, the disciples and the crowd.*

Ask: *Why do you think the Pharisees were so angry at Jesus?* (Because they thought that he had come to establish an earthly kingdom, which meant that they would be in trouble with the Romans and that they would lose their power.)

Why do you think the crowd behaved the way they did? (They had seen the wonderful miracles - especially when Jesus resurrected Lazarus - and thought that he would be their King, that he would establish a kingdom, conquer the Romans, and at last everyone would be free.)

Why were the disciples confused with what was happening? (They didn’t understand what Jesus had meant when he spoke of the kingdom. Since they weren’t sure what kind of kingdom he was referring to, they didn’t know that the Lord, by allowing these events to take place, was fulfilling the prophecies.)

Say: *Today we know that Jesus came to be a special King of kings: the King of our lives. We’ll talk more about this during the lesson.*

Change the false statements about Jesus

In the student book, read with the children the false statements about Jesus, and allow them to answer by correcting those statements.

1. *Jesus had a very bright crown that showed the people that he was the king.* (False, Jesus never had a crown, except the painful crown of thorns.)
2. *Jesus wore a purple robe for everyone to see so they would know he was the king.* (False, Jesus’ clothing was simple, a carpenter’s clothes, he never said he was a King.)
3. *Jesus didn’t walk; he traveled in a chariot drawn by horses, with soldiers as escorts.* (False, Jesus walked all the time, never used a chariot, never had soldiers or escorts.)

4. *Jesus lived in a palace with many servants who did what he said.* (False. Jesus had no place to “lay down his head,” that is, sleep.)
5. *Jesus often stayed in other people’s houses, but only if they were rich and important.* (False.)
6. *Jesus spent most of his time talking to rich and important people.* (Jesus spoke with many people, not only rich and important ones, but also with the poor, with important religious people, with women, with fishermen and with children.)

ACTIVITIES

Important word

On a card made out of cardboard, write on one side the word “Passover” and on the other side its meaning: It was the annual celebration in which the Jews remembered how God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

The Passover meal reminded them of the meal that the Israelites had eaten before leaving Egypt. Then in punishment, God had killed all the firstborn of Egyptian families, bypassing the homes of Jewish families. They had celebrated the Passover from the time of Moses.

He is Jesus

Follow the instructions in the activity sheet for this last activity of Lesson 13. You will need pencils or pens for the children to write inside the letters.

Memorization

Ask: *What do you think the phrase in our verse “At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow” means?* Let the children discuss their ideas, and help them by asking them the following questions:

- *Have you ever seen what people do when they’re in front of a king?* (They bow.)
- *Why do they do that?* (As a sign of respect and to show that they know that the king has a position of great responsibility.)

Say: *Jesus is a great person, even his name is great. In the days of Jesus, a person’s name had a special meaning. Not only did it identify his family, but it also described something about person.*

Ask the children to look again at Philippians 2:9.

Tell them: *God gave Jesus a special name. His name means ‘Savior.’ This name is better than, and over, any other name. No other king here on earth can be given the name of Jesus, because no other person could be our Savior. So our verse means that we must show honor and respect to Jesus. In what way can we do that?* (In many ways: bowing our heads and kneeling when we pray, treating his name with respect, worshiping him, obeying him, and thanking him for being our King and Savior.)

Biblical Palm Trees

Before class, cut out palm branches with six leaves each from construction paper or other green paper. Give one to each child. On each leaf of the branch write the phrases of the memory verse: 1) That at the name of Jesus 2) every knee should bow, 3) in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 4) and every tongue acknowledge 5) that Jesus Christ is Lord. 6) Philippians 2:10-11.

Repeat the two complete verses several times and then ask the children to march through the patio or garden as a procession while they sing the memory verse (everyone can invent a musical instrument to play or a certain type of rhythm). Then ask them to hang their palm trees on one of the class room walls.

To end

Say: *When we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, he becomes our Savior. But Jesus also wants to be the Lord and King of our lives. The Lord wants to govern our thoughts, words and actions.*

Ask everyone, including the teacher, to kneel to pray in an attitude of honor and reverence to our King, Jesus Christ.



Notes

Jesus Came Back to Life

Biblical References: John 20:1-18

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that Jesus' resurrection gives them hope of salvation and eternal life.

Memory verse: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ...* (Philippians 2:10-11).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Children of this age who grew up in the church probably don't question the resurrection. However, it's possible that those who have another religious background don't know exactly what to believe about it. Today, children are taught to be "tolerant" of other beliefs, which means that "each person's belief is as valid as theirs."

Some of your students may not be clear that the belief in the resurrection is a powerful truth upon which the Christian faith rests. The story may seem like a fairy tale or simply a story that had a "happy ending" after the tragic reality of the crucifixion.

Help them to understand the reality of the resurrection and what it means to them. It's because Jesus lives that we have hope for salvation and eternal life. The great power that raised Jesus from the dead is present today to help us to have victorious Christian lives in whatever circumstances we have to go through, and to witness to others about Jesus.

As you teach the story of Mary Magdalene and her discovery, help the students understand how she felt. Discuss with the children what you feel about the resurrection. God raised Jesus from the dead. And he is alive! Still today!

Help them rejoice that Jesus is their Savior and risen King.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The resurrection of Jesus was crucial for the fulfillment of God's plan: the redemption of the world. Without it, the death of Jesus on the cross would have been only that of another martyr - certainly impressive - but without any power. However, for the followers of Christ, the resurrection guarantees eternal life and victory over sin and death.

Joseph de Arimathea and Nicodemus did something that involved some personal risk. Both were members of the court of the Sanhedrin of the Jews. They knew that Jewish law demanded that bodies be buried by sundown before the Sabbath. Because of that law and the circumstances surrounding his death, Jesus' body should have been placed in a common grave outside the walls of Jerusalem. However, Joseph and Nicodemus took a risk, and requested something that was against the law of ceremonial contamination in order to bury Jesus' body properly. That meant that their actions could exclude them from the whole celebration of the Passover and destroy their political and religious careers.

Joseph and Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body according to the custom typical of the Jews of the first century. This consisted of wrapping it tightly with scraps of cloth with spices, which included myrrh, aloe and sandalwood. These were placed between the body and the linen under the body.

Mary Magdalene, early that third day, went to the grave. Although she was not part of the inner circle of Jesus, she was one of the women who followed him devoutly.

Upon discovering that the stone had been removed from the tomb, Mary Magdalene ran to tell the disciples the incredible news: "Somebody had taken the body!" In that first century in Jerusalem, tombs were dug in the limestone hills around the walls of the city. The door to the tomb was a round stone four to six feet high (approximately 1 to 2 meters), which settled into a shallow hole when rolled in front of the tomb. Moving the stone door would have required tremendous force. It couldn't have accidentally opened. This caused Mary to conclude that someone had taken the body.

When Peter and John ran to inspect the tomb, they found that it was empty; but there were still the cloths that had covered Jesus' body. John noticed that important detail, which made him reject the theory of theft. Tomb robbers, in their eagerness, wouldn't have taken the time to unwrap the body and leave the cloths folded. Having realized this, John "believed" (20:8). Although he didn't yet understand the full meaning of the resurrection, he seemed to understand that Jesus had conquered death and was alive.

After the disciples left, Mary Magdalene remained behind crying, or "lamenting." When she bent down again to look inside the tomb, she saw two angels. They didn't give her a message, but their very presence indicated that something supernatural had happened.

Mary Magdalene couldn't process this truth until Jesus himself pronounced her name. In a few seconds, her great sorrow was transformed into immense joy. She addressed Jesus as "Raboni", a way to intensify the word "Rabbi" (teacher). In Judaism, that form was generally used to address God in prayer. The woman still didn't fully understand that her "teacher" was God, but it wouldn't take her long to learn it, and so her joy would be complete.

The Notes of the Life Application Bible (1925) indicate that people who hear about the resurrection of Jesus for the first time go through four stages until they come to believe:

1. The person can't believe such a fantastic story.
2. This is followed by the search for the facts.
3. Then, the acceptance of the facts as the truth.
4. And finally, commitment to the risen Christ.

When we reach the fourth stage, we experience the reality of the presence of Christ within us!

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Use these activities to prepare the children to learn the biblical truth of today.

Who answers faster?

Write the following questions on small cards. When the time comes for the activity, divide the group in two: they can be boys and girls or another division. Give each group the 10 cards with the questions. They'll also have an extra card to answer the questions. Everyone must remain silent. After reading the questions and writing the answers next to each number, they can read them out loud. The teacher will say if the answers are correct. The team that has the most correct answers will be the winner.

1. *Into what city did Jesus enter as King?* (Jerusalem)
2. *Who got angry when they saw Jesus enter the city?* (The Pharisees)
3. *What animal did Jesus ride to enter the city?* (A small donkey)
4. *Did the people throw precious flowers at the feet of Jesus?* (No, they shook palm branches.)
5. *What was it that people shouted to Jesus?* (Accept any of the following responses: "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!")
6. *Did the prophet Zechariah say that the Savior would enter Jerusalem on a donkey?* (Yes)

7. *Jesus' disciples understood exactly what Jesus was doing, and were excited about that. True or false?* (False, they didn't understand what Jesus had told them.)
8. *What miracle did Jesus do a few days before entering Jerusalem?* (He resurrected Lazarus.)
9. *What kind of King is Jesus?* (The King of our lives.)
10. *How did the lesson end last week?* (Jesus was entering Jerusalem and the people expected him to be the King.)

Say: *Our story today began after Palm Sunday. During that week, the joyful crowd transformed into a furious crowd, demanding that Jesus be killed. On Friday of that week, Jesus died on the cross and was buried. What happened next?*

Your feelings

(If there is a child in your class who has just experienced the death of a family member, you may prefer to skip this activity.)

Let the children work on the first activity of the student book, lesson 14 (Your Feelings), with the different expressions of the faces. Let each child choose and write under each face the feeling that corresponds to each: anger, surprise, fear, joy, sadness.

Then ask: *Which of these faces shows how you feel when you think or hear something related to death?* Give the children time to answer and circle the face of their choice. Then on the blank face, draw how they feel when they think about death.

Ask: *What words come to your mind when you think about death?* (The children's responses will be different and will include: fright, fear, sadness, fear of the unknown, being with Jesus, end of life, etc.)

Say: *Death is something that we don't like to think about, and we all have different feelings about it. In our story today, the followers of Jesus were fighting against their feelings. It was assumed that the Passover would be a happy celebration with their family and friends. But their best friend, whom they thought would be their Savior, had been crucified and was dead. Let's see what happened next.*

BIBLE STORY

Choose some of these activities to help the pre-teens understand the biblical story.

The tomb is empty

Always use your Bible to tell the story. The passage from John 20:1-18 is found in the student activity sheet. You can divide the reading among several children, read it yourself, divide the class into several reading groups, or whatever you prefer. Use your creativity to make this a very special moment.

How did Mary feel?

Have the students go to the next activity on the sheet. Tell them that as they read the Bible story, they should order and write from 1 to 4 in the blank boxes how Mary Magdalene felt.

ACTIVITIES

Choose some of these activities to help the children apply this biblical truth to their lives.

Important words

Last week we saw the word 'Passover'. This week we have the word 'Resurrection'. Use cards more or less 15 cm. x 11 cm to write this word. On one side of the card write the important word and the other its meaning. You can hide the cards in the classroom, and whoever finds one and can explain its meaning will be the winner. You can reward him with a candy or something small, like a balloon or a pen.

Resurrection: to return to life after having died. Jesus rose from the dead and lives today. His resurrection is the hope of all Christians.

"V" for Victory

For this activity you will need pencils or pens, crayons or markers and, if possible, decals with the theme of Easter to decorate the letter V.

Ask: *Why is Jesus' resurrection so important to us?*

Give the children time to think about the answer. Allow them to read the sentences written in the last activity of the student book (V is for Victory). Take turns reading the phrases. Talk briefly about each of them. Use these ideas to discuss.

The Resurrection shows us:

- *When Jesus rose from the dead, he defeated the power of death. That's why those who trust him can be sure that after his death they'll live forever in heaven.*
- *Since we know that we're going to be with Jesus, we shouldn't be afraid to die.*
- *God has great power! And the Bible (Ephesians 1:19-20) tells us that the same power that God used to resurrect Jesus from the dead is in us today to help us resist temptation and do the right thing.*

Have the students write a thank you prayer and decorate the "V" to their liking.

To finish this activity, have each student complete the sentence at the bottom of the page with one of the phrases surrounding the letter "V".

Say: *The resurrection of Jesus is one of the blessings, one of the greatest gifts, God has given us. During this Easter, give thanks to God for this gift.*

Memorization

Ask your students if they remember the verse they began memorizing the previous Sunday. If several raise their hands, allow them to recite it. If they still don't know it by heart, or they make mistakes saying it, use again the palm branches that you used during the previous class, or simply repeat the verse several times. First repeat phrase by phrase, until they can say everything complete and by heart.

To end

In every church there are several very happy and beautiful hymns or choruses that speak of the resurrection. It would be a good idea to sing one of them. If you have no talent for music, invite a young person to help you with this activity.

Conclude with a prayer, thanking God for the power that raised Jesus, which will help us so that we can live as he wants us to live, and because of Jesus' resurrection, one day we'll be with him and we'll see him face to face.



Jesus lives!

Biblical References: Luke 24:36-49

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that Jesus' appearances to his disciples is evidence that he was alive; death couldn't rule over him. That they would know that he lives today.

Memory verse: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ...* (Philippians 2:10-11).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

As the pre-teens grow, they begin to be more aware of what death is, and that it's forever. However, it's important that they know that death isn't the end. God raised Jesus, his Son, so that he would never die again. He is alive today! This is our "guarantee" that we'll also be resurrected after death.

In telling them about Jesus' appearances to his disciples, strengthen the students' faith in the resurrection of Jesus. He was not a ghost or a figure that the disciples imagined. He was their Lord, he was alive, he breathed, and he was someone they could touch. Jesus appeared to many people before returning to heaven. He wanted them to know that he was real and he was alive. That's why the disciples of the early church courageously gave their lives, even to death, at the hands of their persecutors. They knew that the resurrection had been real and that death was not the end. The disciples had the hope of the resurrection, just as we Christians do today.

Jesus didn't physically stay with his followers forever. He told them that he needed to leave. Your students need to recognize that when Jesus ascended and disappeared from the view of the disciples, he didn't cease to exist. He lives today and is our Lord, and sits at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The feeling of a terrible chill ran down the backs of those in the room. They had been informed that two people who were traveling on the road to Emmaus were joined by a third person, and that person was Jesus. With great enthusiasm, the two Emmaus travelers told the story to those who gathered around

them. They all whispered as they tried to understand how those two had seen Jesus.

Those who were there that day thought that they had seen a ghost, spirit or apparition. The spread of the story that they had seen the Lord multiplied. The disciples asked themselves: "What can this mean?"

Suddenly, in an instant, there he was, standing in front of them. Was it a ghost or someone real?

Jesus' followers were frightened by the violent events that had occurred days ago. When Jesus realized the fear that overwhelmed them, he consoled them and assured them that he was truly alive:

- First. He greeted them saying: "Peace to you!" (Shalom, in Hebrew). This was a common greeting in Jewish society, wishing well-being. In Luke, the word "peace" also carries the idea of salvation, so Jesus' greeting also expressed that broader meaning.
- Second. He calmed their fears and doubts by showing them his feet and hands. By inviting them to touch the places where he had been wounded, he allowed them to feel that he was real.

That physical evidence still left the disciples with doubts, who felt that what they saw was "too good to be true." Suddenly, Jesus asked them for something to eat! Although his resurrected body didn't need food, Jesus, when eating with his disciples, wanted to communicate that his presence was real.

Jesus' bodily resurrection is an important fact. Although Jesus' resurrected body was different from the one he had before, it was a real body. The Jesus who died was truly the Christ who was resurrected. As Christians, our hope shouldn't be founded on dimmed dreams, but on the actual experience of the One who, as commentator William Barclay said, "faced, fought, and conquered death and was resurrected."

- Third. Jesus reviewed with them the biblical evidence of the need for a suffering Savior. William Barclay explains: "The cross was not imposed on God; it was not an emergency measure when everything else failed and when circumstances went wrong. It was part of his plan. The cross is the place on the earth in which, in a moment in time, we see the eternal love of God."
- In conclusion. The evidences that Jesus offered to his disciples were convincing. They only needed something else before adopting his mission to share the good news with the world: the filling of the Holy Spirit. This would happen very soon.

Reflect on the following questions as you prepare your lesson this week:

- What scared you most as a child? What helped you overcome that fear?
- What is it that you fear most today? How can Christ help you deal with your fears?
- Jesus showed those who were gathered that he was truly alive and that he was real. How did you feel when you understood that Jesus is alive and that he is a reality in your life?
- During this week, pray for the students, naming each one so that they can meet the living Christ during the lesson.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Let's remember

Divide the class into two teams: girls and boys. Ask them questions in the form of biblical quizzing. The one who knows the answer will stand up immediately and answer it. If he says it correctly, he earns 10 points for the correct answer for his team. The group that has the most points will be the winner.

1. *Say the last four words of the memory verse. (Jesus Christ is Lord.)*
2. *What was the name of the woman who arrived at Jesus' tomb very early on Sunday? (Mary Magdalene)*
3. *How did Mary realize that something had happened to Jesus? (She saw that the stone in front of the tomb had been removed.)*
4. *Name the two disciples who saw the empty tomb. (Peter and John)*
5. *Which of the disciples was the one who first approached the tomb? (Peter)*
6. *What did the disciples see inside the tomb? (The cloth in which Jesus had been wrapped, and the veil with which they had wrapped his head, were folded.)*
7. *Who was the first disciple who believed that Jesus was alive? (John)*
8. *How many angels did Mary see in the tomb? (Two)*
9. *When Mary first saw Jesus, who did she think he was? (The gardener)*
10. *What did Jesus do to make Mary realize that it was him? (He called her by name.)*
11. *Describe Mary's feelings when she realized that Jesus was alive. (Joy)*
12. *Why is the resurrection of Jesus important for Christians? (It gives us hope for salvation and eternal life, and helps us live as Christians.)*

The message of good news

Have the students work on the first activity of the student book for lesson 15 (Message of Good News). A volunteer can read the instructions. Allow time for them to complete the sentences with the appropriate words. When they finish, they can read the sentences with the answers they chose. Then, allow a volunteer to read the message that was formed by writing the first letter of each word in the spaces at the bottom of the page.

Answers: (1) Judas (2) eternal (3) Simon Peter (4) us (5) save them (6) immense (7) save us, (8) angry (9) life (10) immeasurable (11) victory (12) every

(The phrase that will be formed with the first letters of each word is: "Jesus is alive.")

Say: Mary told the disciples that she had seen Jesus, but still they doubted. In today's lesson, we're going to see what happened.

BIBLE STORY

Special News Report

Before class, place the chairs in a semicircle in front of a desk where you have placed a microphone (either real or an object that simulates a microphone).

Place a chair behind the desk so that the person sitting there looks like a television commentator. Next to the desk place a chair for the guest to the program, which will be Simon Peter.

Ask two young people or adults, or your teaching assistants, to play the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee (Simon Peter). At the beginning of the week, make a copy of the reporter's and Simon Peter's dialogue from the student book (lesson 15) and give them to your helpers so that they have time to prepare.

Then, in class, develop the story through the story.

Share the "Good News"

Give your students the last activity from the student book (Share the Good News). Allow time for them to answer the questions and comment on their answers.

Mixed up message

Have the students sit in a circle. Begin the activity by passing on this message: "Listen to the good news: Jesus is alive!" But don't say it out loud, but whisper it in the ear of the child next to you in the circle. He should do the same and pass the message to the next child's ear. Continue like this until all the children have received the message. When the message arrives to the last child, he will say it aloud to the whole class. See how correct or incorrect the message was transmitted by comparing it to the original.

Express: *When we hear good news, we want to tell someone; sometimes we tell many people. Do you remember what Good News Mary told the disciples (that she had seen Jesus, that he was alive and was going to meet them in Galilee.) In today's lesson we saw how the disciples responded when they heard the good news of Jesus' resurrection of Jesus.*

Memorization

The children already have the text written on palm leaves. They can pick up the branches and repeat the activity of marching and reciting the memory verse: 1) That at the name of Jesus 2) every knee should bow, 3) in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 4) and every tongue acknowledge 5) that Jesus Christ is Lord. 6) Philippians 2:10-11.

Repeat the whole verse several times and then ask the children to march through the patio or garden as a procession, and while they're doing it, sing the memory verse (everyone can make or pretend to have a musical instrument to play, or have a specific type of rhythm). Then, they can hang the palm trees on the class room wall again, to repeat the verse next week.

To end

Sing a chorus or hymn with motions that you know about the resurrection with the class.

Ask the children to think of someone who needs to hear the Good News of the resurrection. Ask them to pray for God to give them the opportunity to tell the Good News of Jesus to that person during the week.

Make sure that all the students have their activity sheets to take home with them.

Remind your students that they should pray each day this week and have a time with God.



Jesus Promises to Return

Biblical References: John 14:1-4 ; Acts 1:1-11

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand that Jesus is alive and will return some day.

Memory verse: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord ...* (Philippians 2:10-11).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The most important decision that your students can make is to allow Jesus to be their King. It's one thing to recognize that Jesus, when he entered Jerusalem, was a King misunderstood by people, and quite another to accept him as the King who governs their lives. As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is the Lord. He rules with the Father and one day he will return as what he is, King of kings and Lord of lords, recognized throughout the earth.

Since this is such a crucial decision, pray for the students. Prepare your lesson carefully and seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. Your testimony may be the only opportunity for some of them to make this decision. If some come from homes of unbelievers, you may be the only Christian they know.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do my students understand what it means for Jesus to be the King of their lives?
- Who has a personal relationship with Jesus?
- What can I do to help those who still don't know Jesus personally?

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Everyone stared in amazement at the sky. At that moment, two men appeared in shining white gowns. They looked at the people, then at the sky and finally asked them, "Why are you standing there? This same Jesus will return."

This scene - a group of speechless men looking up at the sky without seeing anything at all - was undoubtedly strange. Life had been so different in those last days! Their beloved Master had been brutally murdered; then his body had disappeared, and within a few hours

people began to say that they had seen him. Finally, the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples to assure them of the reality of his resurrection and presence. But now, he was gone again, and this time the disciples knew for sure that the loss of his physical presence would be permanent.

One wonders, while the angels spoke to them, if the disciples remembered what Jesus had said to them at the last supper: "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:2-3)

The word "rooms" is often translated as "mansions," but the best definition would be "the place of dwelling." This approach doesn't take into account the size, shape or quality of the places of the dwelling but, first, Jesus would return, and second, that he would take his followers to be with him for eternity. During the forty days following the resurrection, Jesus met for the last time with his disciples here on earth. It becomes obvious from the question that the disciples asked Jesus about the kingdom of Israel that they still didn't understand their purposes. The Israelites had seen God as the sovereign King of their nation. And human kings, like David, were representatives of God. When the Israelites lost their independence, remaining under Roman rule, everyone, including the disciples, expected God to act in the sphere of politics. If Jesus was the Son of God, he would certainly deliver his people from Roman oppression! It's possible that the disciples had interpreted Jesus' statements about the coming of the Holy Spirit as the arrival of the earthly government they were waiting for.

Jesus ended those hopes, but offered them something better. Instead of ridding the Israelites of human oppression, Jesus came to deliver all people. Now the time had come to leave, but he assured his followers that he would return. Meanwhile, he would send a powerful helper: the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit would give the disciples power - which means courage, boldness, trust, knowledge, ability and authority - to testify of Jesus anywhere. That would include Jerusalem (their own city), Judea (their own country), Samaria (another culture near their land) and the whole world.

The angels' question in verse 12 caused the disciples to "come back to earth." "Why are they standing there? This same Jesus will return." It's true that we have to be in expectation of his second coming. But while we wait, we don't have to stand 'looking at the sky'.

Rather, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we have to follow Jesus, our King, and give the Good News to everyone he puts on our path.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Review with mime

Before class, write on cards the names of the characters in the stories, events and ideas taught in this unit. Some suggestions are:

People: Simon Peter, Mary Magdalene, John, the Pharisees, the angels.

Things: the tomb stone, palm branches, the donkey, fish, hands and feet pierced with nails, a crown of thorns, angels, perfumes.

Events: the crucifixion, the triumphal entry, the resurrection.

Ideas: king, death, be alive, be witnesses.

Put all the cards in a bag or box and have a student take one without looking inside the bag. Then without saying his word aloud, he must silently read the word to himself and then tell the class if his word is a person, thing, event or idea. (Maybe you'll have to help them with that part.) Then, he must act out his word using mime, gestures, actions and facial expression while the rest of the class tries to guess the word. After a class member guesses the word, or after a certain amount a time, another student chooses a word, etc. The student who guesses the most words will win. Congratulate the children for everything they learned.

Then say: *Before playing, I gave you some instructions so that you would know how to play the game. Jesus knew that his time with the disciples was running out, but he still had to give them some instructions. In our Bible study today, we'll discover what Jesus said to his disciples, and through them to us.*

Kings and kingdoms

Ask: *What do you know about kings and kingdoms? Allow your students to express their ideas. A kingdom is the place or country where a king, queen or governor rules. If you were king or queen, what would you like your kingdom to be like? A kingdom of wealth, money, fame, beauty, goodness, or some other kind? Think carefully about what you will decide.* Give your students a few moments to think about it. Then ask them: *What qualities would people have to have in order to belong to your kingdom?* Now allow each student to describe the kind of kingdom he or she would like to have and the requirements they would put in place in order to belong to that kingdom. Give some examples: *I am the king of the kingdom of money. In order for you to be a*

citizen of my kingdom, you have to have a lot of money. Or, I am the Queen of the kingdom of kindness. To be a citizen of my kingdom, you have to be kind to everyone. Make sure they understand that in this activity there are no right or wrong answers, but it will help them think about what they value.

If you made a scepter for the previous lesson, let the children hold it while describing what their kingdom would be like.

Say: *In the last three weeks we learned that Jesus wants to be the King of our lives. Today we'll learn more about the kind of kingdom he wants to establish in us. Let's find out what the Bible tells us.*

Thoughts about heaven

Hand out the first activity sheet from the student book, lesson 16 (Thoughts about Heaven), and read the verses that are written there, which give a brief description of heaven. Then ask the students to draw or write on each cloud what the instructions indicate. Then have everyone share their answers with the rest of the class if they feel comfortable.

Say: *We don't really know much about heaven, but the Bible tells us some things. We know, for example, that there are dwellings for us and that there is the throne of God. We also know that there will be no crying or pain, and that people will be praising God the Father and Jesus day and night.*

Since we don't know many details about heaven, many people have different opinions about what it will be like. Even the disciples weren't sure they knew what Jesus meant when he spoke of heaven and his kingdom. In today's Bible story, Jesus tells his followers a little more about heaven and about his return. Let's find out what the disciples learned.

BIBLE STORY

Do these activities to help the children better understand the biblical story and apply it to their lives.

"Jesus will return!"

Make sure all the students have a copy of the student activity sheet (Jesus will return!). The following characters will be needed: A narrator (the teacher or a helper), Jesus (one of the students), the disciples (a student who represents all the disciples, or two who read at the same time), two men (two students) and the chorus (the rest of the class). If you have a small group, a student can read more than one part. After reading or dramatizing the story, discuss the following questions (found in the activity sheet under the title: "Reflection.")

1. *What did Jesus tell the disciples to do?* (They were to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. They were to be Jesus' witnesses.)

2. *How do you think the disciples felt when they saw Jesus ascend into heaven?* (The answers can be varied: scared, sad, worried, confident about the promise that he would return, or other ideas.)

3. *What did the two men dressed in white tell the disciples?* (That Jesus, just as he had gone to heaven, would return.)

Jesus the King

At the end of this page of the student activity sheet there is an activity that will help you see if the children understood the Bible story. Give them time to circle the correct endings to the phrases, and then ask some volunteers to read them. Ask if they have any doubts or questions. (Answers: 1. a) 2. a) 3. b), 4. a) 5. b)

ACTIVITIES

How can we be ready for the second coming of Christ?

Give each student the last activity sheet (Ways to be prepared for the second coming of Jesus).

Say: *Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he promised that he would return. This list mentions some things that people believe can help us be ready to meet Jesus when he returns.* Have the children read them to themselves. Then you read it out loud. Tell them to draw a positive sign (+) next to those they believe will help us to be ready for Jesus' second coming, and a negative sign (-) next to those they believe they won't help us. Discuss which are the correct phrases and which are the wrong ones, and tell them why these aren't good ways to be ready for the second coming. Here are the answers to the wrong actions with their explanation:

- Go to classes where they teach the exact moment when Jesus will return. (Only God, the Father knows when Jesus will come again (Matthew 24:36). It's not good to try to solve this for ourselves. We have to be ready to meet Jesus anytime.)
- Obey Jesus every day. (Correct)

- Worry and be afraid for Jesus' second coming. (For people who love Jesus, his second coming will be a time of hope and joy. There will be no more sin. We'll live with Jesus forever.)
- Plan to become a Christian when you grow up. (Since Jesus can come at any time, that's dangerous. We have to be ready to meet him at any time.)
- Tell others about Jesus so that they can be prepared for his second coming.. (Correct)
- Pray for people who don't know Jesus. (Correct)
- Live however you want to because Jesus will take a long time to come back. (We don't know when Jesus will come back. It could be today.)
- Become a Christian now if you haven't already done so. (Correct)

Memorization

A fun way to learn the verses is to repeat the different parts of it separately, and then add the separate parts bit by bit, until repeating the entire passage. They can use for example a certain rhythm (such as: rap, hip hop or other music), clap to the rhythm of what they sing, etc. Divide the verse into the following parts and repeat each one quickly and with rhythm. This way of memorizing will facilitate the task:

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (take a short pause)

in heaven and on earth (take another short break)

and under the earth, (short pause)

and every tongue acknowledge (short pause)

that Jesus Christ is Lord” (short pause)
(Philippians 2:10-11).

Repeat it several times until they learn it by heart.

To end

My heart, the throne of Christ

Pray for the children. Provide an altar for your class where they can have the opportunity to accept Christ and be ready for his second coming. Ask them to sign the heart at the end of the last activity sheet.

Invite them to return next week, and tell them that the next unit will be a series of five lessons, which will talk about God's covenant of love.



Year 3

Introduction – Unit V

COVENANTS OF LOVE

Biblical References: Genesis 6:5–9:17; 12; 15; 17:1-21; Exodus 19–20; 24:1-7; 1 Chronicles 17; Luke 1:31-33, 68-71; 22:7-20.

Biblical Truth: God’s covenant invites people to have a love relationship with him.

Unit Text: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won’t be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:10).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Begin to understand what a covenant is.
- Know about the covenants that God made with his people.
- Trust in God’s faithfulness in relation to his covenants.
- Identify some of their responsibilities of being part of the people who made a covenant with God.
- Rejoice that they’re included in the new covenant of love and forgiveness offered by Jesus.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 17: The covenant with Noah

Lesson 18: The covenant with Abraham

Lesson 19: The covenant with Moses

Lesson 20: The covenant with David

Lesson 21: A covenant with everyone

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

At the beginning of this year, the children learned that God had a beautiful plan in mind when creating humanity. The Lord wanted people to worship him of their own free will and forge a relationship with him that was born from their hearts and not by obligation. Therefore, he gave us the power to choose. Sadly, Adam and Eve sinned, which brought disastrous consequences for the entire human race. In the middle of the year, the pre-teens will begin to see a new dimension of God’s plan. They’ll discover how he made covenants as a way to restore relationships with people who had fallen into sin. Through the study of these covenants, students will get a clearer picture of the pure and unchanging character of God. They’ll discover that the covenants made with the Lord aren’t cheap deals engendered in the minds of men. God is the one who initiates them, and we can trust that he will fulfill them. He wants his people to fulfill the obligations of his covenant, obeying his laws, not only to avoid punishment, but to maintain a good relationship with him. Finally, through Jesus, God offers a new covenant of grace and forgiveness that extends to all who receive him in their heart. Although the covenants we study in this unit are for a particular moment and situation, they all show God’s love, his grace and his commitment to his own.

Covenant with Noah

Biblical References: Genesis 6:5-9:17

Lesson Objective: That the students understand what a covenant is through the relationship between God and Noah, and that by knowing that God keeps his promises, strengthen their trust in him.

Memory verse: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Most pre-teens have already heard Noah's story and the flood. The ark and the animals intrigued them. They enjoyed knowing why God put the rainbow in the sky. But still, there is still much to appreciate from this important story.

The rainbow was a sign of the covenant that God established with Noah and with all living creatures. It symbolized the promise that God will never again destroy all living beings with a flood.

This lesson will help students understand the true meaning of a covenant. They'll learn that it's a gift from God, which includes an invitation to live in a proper relationship with the Lord. He creates, designs and offers all people a relationship based on an agreement. In response, we decide to love him. The children will discover in the following lessons that God's people decided to obey him as their part in the established covenant.

Some children feel so disappointed in certain friends or role models that they imitate that it's hard for them to accept the truth that God keeps his promises. These Bible studies show us that God is always faithful to them and will help your students grasp the concept that the Lord is trustworthy.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

For a proper understanding of this lesson, we must understand the meaning of the word "covenant." Generally, when we think of a covenant, we refer only to the terms of a "contract" or "agreement."

A contract is a document that expresses what is expected of each signatory party, and legally binds

them. It's established by mutual desire, and benefits both parties.

An agreement is an understanding reached between two people, but it's not always legally binding. It's informal, usually established orally, and is beneficial for both people.

Although a covenant can include aspects of both, it's much more than a contract or a simple agreement. It's a permanent promise made by one person to another. For example, a marriage is a covenant. Each spouse promises to love the other person "in times of happiness and in times of adversity, in wealth and poverty, in sickness and in health."

In the five lessons of this unit, we'll see that God makes two different types of covenants. In the first, the covenant that God establishes with Noah before the flood is a promise: to save him, a righteous man, and his family and other creatures. Noah's responsibility was to obey God and build the ark. After the flood, God made a second covenant with him and with all creation, which was a real and unconditional concession. In this covenant, the Lord promised never to destroy the earth with water again. The rainbow was a visible sign set by God as a seal and a reminder, for him and his creation, that he would keep his word forever.

Through that covenant between God and his creation, we experience his love. He loves us so much that he is willing to extend his commitment to us through a sealed promise or covenant.

In the same way, when we convert, we establish a covenant with God. We promise him that we'll love him regardless of the circumstances that we have to live. We give him our word that the relationship with him will be based on mutual love and respect. And he, in turn, promises us to help and protect us. Our responsibility to him is loyalty and obedience.

As we study the covenants or promises that God made to his people through Noah, Abraham, Moses and David, we'll see that this commitment of love from God remained throughout history.

In the final lesson of this unit, we'll study a new and always valid covenant established through the Son of God himself: Jesus Christ. His faithfulness to us doesn't change, and our best response to that covenant relationship is to love him with everything we are and decide to always obey him.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose some of these activities to capture the attention of your students and prepare them to learn biblical truth of this lesson.

Who was Noah?

Ask the following questions to find out what the students know about Noah. Give them time to think about their answers.

- *Who was Noah?* (A man who lived in Old Testament times.)
- *What do you remember about him?* (Allow them to respond.)
- *What did Noah do?* (He built the ark, saved his family and some animals.)
- *What things happened to him?* (He obeyed God; he survived the flood.)

After a brief discussion, pass out pieces of paper to the students, along with crayons or markers. Tell them to draw pictures that show what they remember about Noah. They can include the ark, animals, a dove, the rainbow, a flood on the earth, etc.

Paste the drawings on one of the walls. After the Bible story, look at the pictures to compare the perceptions the students had before and those they'll have after it. Were there some that were inaccurate at first and need to be corrected after the Bible story?

Say: *Our Bible story today will deal with Noah and his life. Listen carefully and see if you can learn something new about him.*

What is a covenant?

Ask your students what they think a covenant is. Hand out the first activity sheet from the student book (What Is A Covenant?). Tell them to circle the figures they think represent covenants.

Ask: *Which figures did you mark? Have them to point them out. Why did you choose those figures? Who are involved in those agreements? What do you think was promised in each one?*

Ask them to write down their definition of the word "covenant." Then, ask them to read what they wrote. Don't give them the definition yet since they'll discuss it later in this lesson. Use this activity to determine their current understanding of that word.

Say: *Today we'll learn what covenants are, who makes them, and what they mean. While listening to the Bible story, we want them to try to discover what a covenant is, who makes them, and why they do it.*

BIBLE STORY

Choose one of the following activities to tell the Bible story today.

A covenant for everyone

Distribute the activity sheet with the Bible Story. Read it or let some of the students do it out loud.

After the story, review the main points with your students. Ask:

- *Who made the covenant with Noah and why?* (God, because Noah loved him.)
- *Who was included in that covenant?* (Every living creature of that time, and all the generations that would come.)
- *What is the sign of that covenant?* (Rainbow)
- *What did he promise?* (That God would never again destroy the earth with a flood.)

Noah's story

Invite a man from the congregation to tell today's Bible story. Allow your guest to use the student book activity sheet to tell Noah's story. He can start this way: *Hello, my name is Noah. I want to tell you about the most important event of my life ... fact that changed the world!* Allow the guest to continue telling the story in the first person. He can use the following as a conclusion:

Now, every time you see a rainbow in the sky, you'll be able to remember my story - the story of Noah - and how God saved me from the great flood. And even more, when you look at the rainbow, you'll know that it has a deep meaning: God makes covenants with people, wonderful promises that help us know and follow him.

Thank your visitor for coming. Ask your class: *What did you learn, or were reminded of, in today's Bible story?*

ACTIVITIES

Choose some of these activities to help the pre-teens connect the biblical truth with their lives.

Which Part Belongs to Whom?

Make sure each student has a copy of the activity sheet. Tell them: *In a covenant, the two who establish it must do certain things. Read the sentences that appear here and decide who should fulfill each part, God or Noah.* Allow time for them to write down their answers on their activity sheet. Then, read each sentence and ask a volunteer to tell who had to do each part. Ask: *What was the most important thing Noah should do?* (Listen to, and obey, God.) *What did Noah do whenever God spoke to him?* (He listened to and obeyed God.) Have the children fill in the blanks. In the covenant Noah

made with God, what was his part? (Love God, listen to him, and obey him.) *What is the covenant that God made with his people?* (To love them and take care of them.) *When we love God and serve him, we make a covenant. That means we decide to develop a relationship with him and do what he wants us to do, knowing that we can trust that he is always faithful to his promises.*

Transform them into truth

This activity will help students gain practice in using the Bible. Make sure each child has one. All the sentences below are false. Allow your students to take a look at each one and change the phrase to true. Lead them to open the first book of the Bible: Genesis. It will be easy for them to find the various chapters and verses.

Say: *The phrases I'm going to read to you aren't true. I want you to modify them so that they become true?* Read the first sentence and ask if anyone knows how it can be corrected. If anyone says yes, give them the opportunity to respond. Then, read the reference passage and allow another student to look for it to verify the accuracy of the response. If no one knows it, look directly at the passage. Allow the first student to find it to read the correct answer. You can also divide the class into small groups, having them compete with each other to find each passage and answer the questions in the shortest possible time.

1. The names of Noah's three sons were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Genesis 6:10).
2. God told Noah how to build the cedar ark (Genesis 6:14-16).
3. The Lord told Noah to take his family and get into the ark because Noah was afraid (Genesis 7:1).
4. Noah refused to obey the Lord (Genesis 7:5).

5. It rained for 20 days and 20 nights (Genesis 7:12).
6. Water flooded the earth for 100 days (Genesis 7:24).
7. The ark landed on Mount Sinai (Genesis 8:4).
8. Noah released a parrot and a raven (Genesis 8:6-7).

Say: *After today's story, let's always remember the covenant that God made after the flood. The rainbow reminds us that he always keeps his promises.*

Memorization

Present the new verse of the month, Isaiah 54:10, using the last activity sheet from the student book. Read the passage to the students, and then read it together several times. Say: *What does this verse tell us about God?* (That he never changes, that you can trust him.) *What are God's promises to us?* (His love doesn't fail, he has compassion for his people.)

Have the students fill in the blanks, writing in their names to customize the verse. Tell them to take the sheet to their home and place it in a prominent place to memorize the text of the month more easily.

To End

To end today's class, guide your students in a silent prayer. First, give the directions. Then, wait about two minutes while each one silently prays.

Say: *Thank God for his love and for making a covenant with us. (pause) Thank God for his promise to never destroy the earth with a flood. (pause) Tell God how much you love him. (pause)*

Thank you, Lord, for loving us and providing the way for us to have a love relationship with you. Amen.



A Covenant with Abraham

Biblical References: Genesis 12 ; 15 ; 17:1-21

Lesson Objective: That the students grow up understanding what it means to fully trust in God, knowing that he will guide them throughout life.

Memory verse: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:10)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Children of this age don't like uncertainty. They want to know all the details of the activities or plans in advance. When families organize their vacations, children want to know where they're going, what they'll do and how long they'll stay.

Students will be able to connect with Abraham, a man who could only imagine when and how God would fulfill his promises. The Lord doesn't always let us know the complete plan.

Once we begin to develop an intimate relationship with him, from the covenant we made one day, we must trust that he will keep his promises. This lesson will help your students trust God even when they cannot see how he'll accomplish what he says. He isn't limited by time or resources, as people are.

Many students have a hard time believing in a God who keeps his promises because life is full of people who make promises without keeping them. They listen to all kinds of speeches on television, where irrational promises of enrichment, fame and popularity are made. That's why they find it difficult to know who they can really trust.

The Bible, through stories of fellowship with God from men like Abraham, shows us that he keeps all his promises. Help the children understand that God's promises are real.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Abraham is "the main character" of the book of Genesis for several reasons. The whole process of God's relationship with Israel begins with his story. In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham and tells him to leave his father's land and go to a new land somewhere to the west. God promises to bless him greatly if he agrees to carry out that pilgrimage with faith. Abraham packs his belongings, takes his family, and follows the instructions given by God. Because of this and other evidence of his trust in the Lord, Paul and the author of Hebrews describe him

as an example of faith.

In Genesis 15, God renews his promise to Abraham. There he tells him that he will inherit the land of Canaan and that his offspring will be innumerable. This promise of blessing is again summarized in Genesis 19. Here, the promise is conditioned on Abraham and his offspring living in obedience to God who loves them.

All these stories of Abraham must be understood through a single word: "covenant", a term that describes the relationship between God and his people. Through the covenant, he promises an eternal relationship with those who have placed their trust in him and obey his commandments.

When Abram was 86 years old, God invited him to take a walk and observe the night sky. "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if indeed you can count them ... So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:5-6). When Abram turned 99, God confirmed the promise more clearly and gave him a new name: Abraham. He went from being called Abram, which means "exalted father," to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." God's covenant established that Abraham's offspring would be made up of many nations and that he would always live in communion with God (17:5-7). Although Abraham, from a human perspective, thought that was impossible, God is faithful to his promise. The following year when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born. This leads us to ask ourselves the following question: Do we truly trust that God will fulfill all that he promised? God also made a covenant with Christians:

- "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).
- "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5).

If we live according to God's covenant, the result will be much better than we can imagine. "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The promise God made to Abraham escapes our imagination. But let's not forget that God is always faithful to his covenant.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Go for a walk

Before class starts, choose a place (another room or an outdoor place) where you can take the students.

When the students arrive, tell them that they're going to go to a special place, but don't tell them where. When everyone is present, start walking there. The children will surely ask you where they're going, but assure them that you know where you're taking them and that they

can trust you to guide them well. Also, make sure not to take the path directly to the chosen place, but take a tour and then guide them there. When they arrive at that special place, ask: *How did you feel when you didn't know where we were going? Was it difficult to wait until we discovered it?* Allow everyone an opportunity to respond before returning to class. (If time permits, you could have something special prepared for them to eat.)

Say: *It's hard to trust and follow someone when you don't know where you're going. Our Bible story today tells us about a man who obeyed God and left his home without knowing where God would take him.*

Broken promises

Pass out the first activity sheet from the student book (BROKEN!). Tell the students to draw their favorite belonging (object) in the space inside the box. Ask some volunteers to comment on what they drew. Then they can discuss the question: *How would you feel if someone broke that object on purpose?* Give time for everyone who wants to respond. You can also suggest that they write the answer.

Ask them to read the three promises. Say: *How would you feel if someone made those promises and then broke them?* (The answers may be varied, but should include: sad, angry, frustrated or betrayed.) Allow students to answer or write their answers.

Say, *Look at the bottom of the page. Read the phrases that are in the heart, those that say whether God fulfills his promises or not. How do they make you feel? Do you really think those phrases are true? Why or why not?* Allow them to give you the answers and the reason for them.

I think it's true because when I read the Bible, every promise God made he fulfilled. Our story today tells about a man who had to wait for God to keep his promise. Let's find out what the promise was.

BIBLE STORY

Genesis 12; 15; 17:1-21. Prepare in advance several questions related to the content of the biblical reading of the activity sheet. In class, ask four or five children to read the parts that you'll indicate. Choose students who read with comfort and enthusiasm. After they have done so, ask the questions as a review. If you wish, you can have a competition between girls and boys.

ACTIVITIES

What did God promise?

Have students direct their attention to the next activity (What did God promise?). Ask some volunteers to read the verses. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the promises. Give 2 to 3 minutes to discuss the verse and write sentences that describe the promise God made to Abraham. Then have them share with the rest of the class.

Finally, have them discuss the last two questions on the page. (Answers: God fulfilled the promises he made to Abraham. It was 25 years until Isaac was born and even longer until his descendants increased like the stars.)

Remind students that God always keeps his promises. Say, *Just as Abraham thought he was too old to be a father, there is nothing God has told us he will do in our lives, that he won't do. As God fulfilled his promise and gave Abraham a son, we can trust that He will never fail us.*

Trust in God

Explain: *Sometimes it can be difficult to wait and trust God. How can we learn to trust him more?* (Allow time to comment or give ideas.) Guide the children to the next activity sheet (How Can I Trust God?). Explain, *Here is a list of some things that will help us trust God more.* Ask them to read them silently. Ask: *How can these things help you to trust that God will keep his promises?* (Helping us know him better through stories like Abraham's that teach us that God won't fail us; remembering that God doesn't break his promises even when we doubt him.) Say: *Read the sentences on the list again. Write on the side of the sheet the two or three that you think will help you trust him more. Take the list to your home and put it somewhere where you see it and can remember. Do what you say there every day so that God helps you to trust him more.*

Memorization

Before class, write each sentence of the memory verse on a different colored sheet. The passage will be separated into five sentences, plus the quotation (that is, 6 sheets) as follows: *"Though the mountains be shaken / and the hills be removed, / yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken / nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, / who has compassion on you.*" / Isaiah 54:10

Use masking tape to fasten the sheets randomly on the walls of the room. Bring music containing the marked rhythm.

In class, tell the students to walk in a circle around the room while the music plays. When you stop the music, everyone must touch the sheet with the part of the Bible verse that's closest to them. If there is one left without anyone touching it, send one of the students there. Then tell them to read each part of the verse that they're touching. They must do it in the correct order. They can play as many times as time permits.

To end

At the end, ask your students to form a circle. Tell them to think of a way in which God has shown his love and faithfulness. Children can pray silently, thanking God because he always keeps his promises.

Then, pray for them, asking God to encourage them to always believe in him, and never doubt, despite the difficult circumstances in which they have to live.

Encourage students to continue working during the week in memorizing the verse.

A Covenant with Moses

Biblical References: Exodus 19-20; 24:1-7

Lesson Objective: That the students know that the 10 Commandments form part of the covenant that God made with the people of Israel, and that they identify actual ways in which they can obey God.

Memory verse: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:10)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Your students know that there are rules that we must follow, but they think they're restrictive. Many of them - when they can - don't comply with them, and try to see how far they can go without breaking the established law or getting caught. It's also common for them to resist when adults try to teach them to live according to those rules. That's why it will be important for you to help them understand that God's commandments are much more than rules to keep or violate. Divine laws aren't designed to create difficulties for us. God, through them, wants to enable us to live in a proper relationship with him and with our neighbor.

When we decide to love the Lord and obey his commandments, we participate in a covenant with the Almighty God!

The basic laws he established apply today as much as in the time of Moses. His Word doesn't change. Jesus came to keep the law, not destroy it. In fact, Jesus' teaching extended the scope of the law, encompassing much more than it originally included. For example, Jesus said those who disobeyed the commandments of "Do not kill" or "Do not commit adultery," weren't only those who did it, but also those who thought about it. He taught that our attitudes are as important to God as our actions.

Help your students understand that God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever! Since we know that he doesn't change, we can obey his laws with confidence.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Only three months after their escape from slavery from Egypt, the Israelites arrived in the Sinai desert. There they camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. Through Moses, the Lord led his people to that place with a special purpose. They would experience an encounter like never before with the Almighty God.

Moses followed the instructions of the Creator, preparing the people for that divine manifestation. They received directives on the way on how they should be in front of him, and the distance at which they could approach the mountain. If they disobeyed, they would die immediately. Those instructions would help the Israelites understand that they were serving a holy God. The appearance of God shouldn't be taken lightly, since it wouldn't be frequent.

On the third day, the people were trembling with fear as they watched the thunder, lightning and thick smoke coming from the top of the mountain. The earth shook violently under their feet. That way they understood, frightened, that they were in the presence of God.

The way Jehovah related to the people of Israel would change dramatically. Abraham had received the promise of a great offspring and a homeland. Now, God was offering the children of Israel the continuation of that covenant in a way that would separate them from the rest of the nations. They would become a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Through them, God would reveal his holy character to the entire world.

By giving them the commandments, He was telling them that their lifestyle should reflect his holiness. They must obey his laws fully, for they were His priests, that is, His representatives to the world. This was an obligation, and at the same time, a privilege.

But as representatives of God, the people of Israel didn't always live up to the circumstances, but often failed to disobey what he had taught them.

God gave his people the Ten Commandments along with other rules for worship and life. In response, the people promised: "We'll do everything the Lord has said; we'll obey." (Exodus 24:7) And although they tried, they didn't always get it. They continually fell into bad habits and wrong behaviors.

As Christians, we also have a responsibility to keep his commandments and reflect God's holiness to the world. We shouldn't fall into bad habits or behaviors that offend him and our neighbor. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live a life consecrated to the Father, through our relationship with his Son, Jesus.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Mention a rule

Ask students to get in groups of two or three, and think and then write a rule or law that applies to each of the following phrases:

- A rule or law that helps people drive cars more carefully.
- A rule or law that helps make the school better run.
- A rule or law for the house, which helps us to be healthier.
- A rule or law that allows the community or neighborhood where we live to be safer.
- A rule or law that can save someone's life.

Say: *Laws and rules are sometimes difficult to enforce, and some believe that they take fun away from life. But they're usually made by people whose greatest interest is our good, as our Bible story shows us today.*

What is the problem?

Write the word "responsibility" on the white board or poster.

Ask: *How do you define the word 'responsibility?'* Allow students to express their ideas. Write what they say on the board or poster. *One way to define responsibility is: a duty or requirement for which one has to respond. To carry out an action or decision is to be responsible.* Help students understand that concept using examples of daily life responsibilities that they must carry out. Encourage them to think of other examples of responsibility. Hand out the first activity sheet from the student book (What's the Problem?). The picture shows us a park. Ask them to look at the figure. Explain to them: *Let's pretend that you're enjoying a day in the park. What does the sign say about the grass? (Keep off the grass.) What does the sign say about the path? (Bicycle Path) What should you do with the trash? (Throw it in the bin that says trash.)* Have them discuss the questions that appear at the bottom of the sheet.

Possible answers to question 1: Ride along the bicycle path, don't litter, don't ride the bike on the sidewalk, obey traffic rules.

Possible answers to question 2: You shouldn't hurt yourself or hurt anyone else; the park should be a pleasant place to visit; and you should want to have the desire to return.

Continue: *If you ignore your responsibilities and break the rules, what could happen to you or other people? (You could hurt yourself or others. They could*

ban you from the park.) It's important that you follow the rules. They were generally made so that you and other people would be safe.

We all have responsibilities. In our Bible story today, people also learned about them. Let's find out what were the responsibilities and rules that God established for the people of Israel.

BIBLE STORY

A meeting on the mountain

Give your students the second and third activity sheets and look at today's Bible story. Designate some to read the different parts (journalist, Israelites). Try to bring a microphone for the journalist and costumes for the Israelites. If there aren't many students aren't many, they can read more than one part each.

After the presentation of the story, review what they learned the previous weeks. Say: *God continued to work throughout history offering his covenant, or promise, to everyone to give them the opportunity to live in a right relationship with him. What does it mean to live in a covenant relationship with God? (We commit ourselves to love him and obey him. We decide to abide by his rules and do what he wants us to do. We'll talk about him to others. We'll always keep in mind that God doesn't change, and that he loves us.)*

We agree

Ask: *What had God promised the Israelites? (That they would be his people.) What was the part of the covenant that they had to fulfill? What was their responsibility? Tell them to read Exodus 19:5-6: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you're to speak to the Israelites.* Allow students to write the missing words in the printed verse on the activity sheet.

Tell them: *The Israelites had to decide whether or not to obey God. Do you think the Israelites would still receive those blessings if they refused to obey? Why or why not? (No, because they would be rejecting the covenant that God offered them. They wouldn't be living in a right relationship with God. They would be ignoring their responsibilities.) When we decide to love God, we have responsibilities. That means we must live as God wants us to live, doing what his rules state that we should do, and obeying what he says.*

ACTIVITIES

Playing meaningless chair game

Put the chairs in a circle, one per child. Tell them: *We're going to play a game where you have to try to discover the rules for yourself.* It will be played just like musical chairs, but without removing any at first. Start the music and have the children begin to walk in a circle around the chairs until the music stops. When everyone has sat down, choose one and say that child should leave the game, because that was the chair you were going to take out. Now take it out. Then put the music back on and have them start walking again. Repeat the above. (Choose any chair and say that the child sitting in it should leave the game because that chair was the one you wanted.)

Ask: *Do you like to participate in a game where you don't know what the rules are?* (Allow them to respond.) *How did those who had to leave feel?* (Their responses may include: confused, angry, I found it unfair, sad.) *What makes a game easier to play?* (It has clear and defined rules.)

Clarify: *Games become very confusing when there are no rules or when someone changes the rules. In our story today, we saw that God gave rules to his people. He made a covenant with them so they knew what rules they should obey to live in a right relationship with him. With God, we'll never be frustrated because we don't know the rules. God clearly showed us the rules we should obey and he himself will help us keep them. If any of you have any doubts, pray and ask God to help you. Do you know what? God is good, and always hears our prayers. Without a doubt, he'll help you.*

The covenant people today

Say: *Today's Christians are part of the covenant people. Do you think the covenant people are still responsible today for obeying God's commandments?* (Yes) *What do you think is our responsibility?* (Obey God) Give students a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Ask them to work in pairs, making a list of some of the responsibilities that they believe God has given his people. When finished, ask them to share with the class what they wrote. Say: *God's commands for his people are serious. They were all made to protect us from evil and to help us have a right relationship with him.*

Now direct their attention to the last activity of the student worksheet to continue the debate. Read the sentences found on the sheet. Then, examine the situations raised. Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and respond after you read each situation.

Possible responses to situations:

1. Don't steal the candy. Tell your friend that stealing is against the rules that God established to live properly, and that you're not going to do it because it will harm you and the store owner.

2. Clean your room first because God tells us to obey our parents. If you have plenty of time, you can watch TV.

3. There is a time and a place for everything. If Sunday morning is the day you have to worship God and learn from him in your Sunday school class, then you must respect him and keep the Lord's day. That means dedicating that special day to him alone. You can have fun with video games at another time. You can also invite your friend to come with you and enjoy Sunday school!

Memorization

Before class, write the verse of the month in large print on a card. Skip some of the words (leaving free spaces), such as: "mountains", "hills", "removed", "covenant", "Lord", "compassion". Write those words on small cardboard cards, and cover them with transparent paper. Mix them well.

In class, have different children, in turn, take out one of the cards at random and stick it with masking tape in the correct place of the verse. The rest of the class will decide if the word is placed in the right place. When all are in place, recite the verse together. Then let the students, in turn, take off one of the words and ask the group to say the verse. Continue playing that way as long as time permits or until the students can say the verse correctly without any of the words on the cards.

To End

Tell students that for Christians, obeying the rules that God established in his Word isn't difficult because he promised that he would be with us and guide us at every step.

Finish with this prayer: *Lord, thank you for including us with your people with whom you made a covenant. Thank you, God, for loving and caring for us. Please help us obey your rules and commandments and do what you want us to do. Help us to be responsible so that other people can know and love you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Covenant with David

Biblical References: 1 Chronicles 17, Luke 1:31-33, 68-71

Lesson Objective: That looking at the covenant that God made with David will help the students understand that God keeps his promises in a much better way than we could ever hope.

Memory verse: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:10)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

At this age, children work well with daily repetition and with structures that help them feel confident and safe. They need to have a defined routine to perform their activities, such as homework or going to bed.

Most children of this age expect answers and affirmation. If, for example, you handed out gifts during some classes, they'll expect you to always do so. They may feel disappointed when things don't happen as they expect, but very satisfied when they happen better than they expected.

God extends his covenant to everyone, and promises to fulfill it. But people don't always fulfill their part of the covenant, just as it happened with the Israelites.

Help the students understand that God wants us to do our part in our relationship with him. It's up to us to love him, serve him and obey him. God promised that he would do his part, and he always keeps his promises!

In fact, God keeps his promises in a much better way than we can imagine.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

1 Chronicles 17. The author of Chronicles speaks of a time when, finally, peace came through David, who was the king of Israel. Chronologically, this happened after the battles he fought, towards the end of his life. But the chronicler places him here to emphasize David's interest in the ark of the covenant and the construction of the temple.

David was the king. Saul had been defeated in battle and David's authority had already been established.

For the first time, David had a moment to reflect on himself and his kingdom. And the first thing he noticed was that he lived in an elegant palace built with cedar wood. And on the contrary, there was no temple for God. The ark of the covenant, a symbol of God's presence, resided in Jerusalem in a tent built for this purpose (1 Chronicles 16:1); and the tabernacle, where offerings and sacrifices were made, remained in Gibeon (v. 39). Then, with the best intention, David asked Nathan, a prophet and his spiritual mentor, for permission to build a permanent residence for God. But David was known as a man of war and God denied him that privilege. Instead, his son Solomon, who was known to have brought rest and peace to Israel, would receive the honor of building the temple for the Lord.

In a magnificent exchange, God promised David that instead of the construction of the temple, he would allow him to erect a dynasty, a royal house that would remain forever. His family would represent a kingdom that would never cease and would bring salvation and peace to the people of God. David responded with great humility, recognizing that he didn't deserve the favor of the Lord.

But the divine plan went far beyond anyone's imagination: David would be included in the long line of Jesus' ancestors. And this kingdom would remain forever.

What a magnificent inheritance this man, whose humble desire was only to serve God, obtained!

Luke 1:31-33, 68-71. When Mary heard that she had been chosen to carry the Messiah in her womb, the angel assured her of the favor of God, applying the promise of 1 Chronicles 17 to Jesus: He would be given David's throne. "His kingdom will never end" (v. 33). Also Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, was a descendant of David (see Luke 3:23-38 and Matthew 1:1-17). Despite not being Jesus' biological father, he was the legal father. In Israel, a legal son participated in the family inheritance in the same way as a biological son.

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, added an important aspect to this description of Jesus: God redeemed his people by sending his Son, "a mighty Savior" (Luke 1:69). This implies the effectiveness of the saving work, which is both

ACTIVITIES

Competition over the covenant

Divide the class into two teams. Give each group a sheet with the following questions. Have the children sit in two circles (each group separately). Have a clock with a stopwatch to time the groups. When you give the signal, they'll start writing the answers to the questions in the shortest possible time. The team that finishes first and answers all correctly will be the winner.

1. *Who was David?* (The king of Israel)
2. *Who was Nathan?* (A prophet)
3. *What did David want to do?* (Build a temple for God.)
4. *What did message from God did Nathan give to David?* (That he wasn't to build a temple for God.)
5. *What did God promise David?* (That his son would be the next king and build the temple. And that one of his descendants would reign forever in Israel.)
6. *Who is the King who reigns forever?* (Jesus, the son of God and descendant of David.)
7. *Do you think that King David had an idea that God would send his own Son to be the King?* (No, that was much more than David could imagine or expect.)

Create your own prayer

Tell your students: *Today we're going to create prayers to thank God.* Distribute the last student activity (Create a prayer). Have volunteers read the prayers found there. Give each student a piece of cardboard or posterboard (the size of a letter sheet) to make a sign with the prayer of thanks, so they can take it home.

Say: *Cut out these phrases of thanks to God and stick them on your cards to make a poster that you will then hang in your room or home.* Allow time for them to do it. Distribute markers, crayons, stickers and figures to decorate the posters. Then have them write their names on them. At the end, ask some volunteers to read the prayers they made.

Memorization

Help those who are still trying to memorize the verse of the month, and reinforce those who already know it by heart with this activity. Write the memory verse (Isaiah 54:10) on the blackboard. Have students sit in a circle on the floor. Place an empty bottle in the center (approx. 1.5 liter), so that it lies down. Spin it at high speed. When the bottle stops, the child at which the mouth of the bottle points (the part where the lid is put on) will erase a word from the verse on the board. Then everyone must recite the text together. Keep playing so that every child has an opportunity to erase a word, and so on until everyone can say the memory verse without any written words.

To end

Have some children pray, thanking God for fulfilling his promise and giving us much more than expected or imagined: his Son Jesus.

Say: *Let's fulfill our part of the covenant by living each day for God. And ask him to help us do the right thing and to help others know him. This week, when you see your poster with the prayers of thanks at home, remember to pray and ask God to help you fulfill your part of the covenant and live to please him.*

Encourage your students to practice a daily devotional time alone with God, and to think about the seriousness of this covenant that we made with him, that it will last for eternity..



Lesson 21

A Covenant for Everyone

Biblical References: Luke 22:7-20

Lesson Objective: That the students understand and rejoice over the benefits of the new covenant of grace, love and forgiveness that God establishes with us through Jesus.

Memory verse: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you won't be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:10)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

In this unit, your students were introduced to the covenant concept. They also began to understand the depth of God's love for his creation.

God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David gave them guidelines on the way he used to relate to his people. This lesson adds a new dimension to the divine scheme of this covenant of mutual relationship. God, through his Son Jesus, made a new covenant of love, grace and forgiveness. When students decide to believe in Jesus Christ, serve him and live in obedience to him, they enter into a covenant relationship with God.

God, through that covenant, gives his people the freedom to approach him and know that they can be forgiven. We can decide to be part of the covenant people, through a personal relationship with Jesus.

Thank God together for his constant love and mercy shown through the covenants he made, and especially for the new covenant offered through Jesus. Use songs, poems, activities and have a moment of prayer to thank God for his love and forgiveness.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

In Luke 22:7-20, Jesus instructs Peter and John to prepare a place to celebrate the Passover meal, an annual celebration commemorating the departure of the Israelites from Egypt under the powerful hand of God. In this passage, Luke focuses on the institution of the Lord's Supper. Symbolically, Passover reminds the Jewish people of the liberation of slavery from Egypt. For the

disciples of Jesus, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper became a commemoration of his death on the cross, to free believers from the bonds of sin.

Jesus graphically shows the price of redemption. The new covenant would cost the sacrifice of his body and the shedding of his blood. But this atonement was done once and for all. There would be no more need to continue the cycle of sacrifices demanded by the old covenant. Jesus paid the price of our salvation once and for all. When we respond to God with sincere repentance, he forgives us and begins a new relationship based no longer on law and judgment, but on his love and mercy.

The sacrifices were an important part of the old covenant between God and his people. The people came before him, year after year, sacrificing animals without defect and offering the first fruits of their crops. These sacrifices reminded the people of the seriousness of sin, and offered a system by which they could seek God's forgiveness and develop a covenant relationship with him. However, this method had imperfect priests offering imperfect sacrifices, so the cycle of sin didn't end. When Jesus came to earth and died on the cross, he established a new covenant, transforming himself into the perfect lamb, sacrificed before God once and for all, through his atoning work on the cross. In that way, he freed believers from the bonds of sin. Now, he is our High Priest who is sitting to the right of the Father. He is our Intercessor and Savior.

As you prepare for this final lesson of the unit, rejoice in the new covenant of God's grace, available to all people through Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer. Pray for God to use this new understanding of the covenant relationship to attract each child to a deeper and growing personal relationship with him.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Let's repeat, repeat!

Before the start of the class, place two rows of chairs facing each other, about a meter away from each other. Use a sponge ball or a bag with seeds.

In class, have the students play the following game as a review of what they have learned about the covenants. Divide the class into two teams. Have each group sit in a row of chairs. Explain: *Each one must ask and answer a question so that we all know how much they have learned about the covenants in the first four lessons. Before beginning,*

who can define what a covenant with God is? (A covenant with God is a commitment between God and the person. Both make promises to each other. The Lord's covenant proposes a relationship of love with him.)

Give the ball or bag to the first student in the line of one of the teams. Say: *You must answer the question I ask you. Then, you must ask that same question to the child of the other team sitting in front of you while you throw the ball. And then that person must continue by throwing the ball to the next child on the opposite team, asking and answering the question, until all the members of each team have had the opportunity to answer. Begin by asking the following question: What was the most important thing you learned about the covenants?* They can play until all the students have had the opportunity to respond.

When finished, ask: *What was the covenant God made with David?* (He promised that one of David's descendants would reign forever.) *How did God fulfill the promise he made to David?* (Through his Son, Jesus.) *Jeremiah 31:31 says: "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah." Our Bible story today tells us more about the new covenant that God made. Let's find out what and for whom it was made.*

The invitation

Direct students to the first activity of the student activity sheet (Invitation). Say: *We have learned what a covenant is and how God proposes it to people, how he did it with Noah, Abraham, Moses and the Israelites and David. Can you tell me more about God's covenants? What was special about the covenant he made with David?* (He included him in the lineage of his own Son Jesus.) *God fulfilled his covenant with David when Jesus came to earth, and thus each person could decide to know and love God. Read the invitation that appears there. (Allow students to read it silently.) That's a special invitation that God offers us. If you want to accept it and be part of a covenant relationship with God, write your name in the blank.*

Allow the children to work together by completing the missing words in the sentences below the invitation. (Correct answers: commitment, promises, relationship.) When they have finished, ask a volunteer to read them. Ask: *Who can tell me what else the invitation says about entering into a covenant relationship?* (Provide time for students to discuss the topic. Some will

know that it means that God offered us salvation through Jesus Christ.)

Say: *The new covenant that God made through his Son, Jesus Christ, means that each person has the decision to love, obey and serve God alone. The Bible story tells us more about this new covenant made by God through Jesus.*

BIBLE STORY

The new covenant

Pass out the next activity sheet (The New Covenant). Read it while they follow along. If you have good readers, then have them read the story in turns.

Today's lesson on covenant has an important message for your students. They need to understand that God wants to have a personal relationship with each of them.

Ask: *What did Jesus offer his followers?* (A new covenant) *Who is that new covenant for?* (For all those who wish to have a love relationship with God.) *If you want to know the love of God and want to love him too, what should you do?* (Accept this new covenant relationship with God through his Son, Jesus.) If any child expresses interest in accepting Jesus as their Savior and living in a covenant relationship with God, use the ABC's of salvation from lesson 12 as a guide.

ACTIVITIES

Let's review the covenants

Pass out the next activity sheet (Review the Covenants). Have someone read the instructions. Give them time to work on the activity. If they want, they can do it together.

When everyone has finished, allow some volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class (Noah, all living beings / Abraham, his family / Moses, the Israelites / David, his son and the kingdom of God) Ask: *How does each of these small pictures illustrate the covenants?* (The world, to Noah. Because God promised that he would never destroy the world with another flood. The baby, to Abraham. Because God promised him a son in his old age and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. The Ten Commandments, to Moses, because God promised him that he would help and protect the Israelites if they obeyed Him. The crown, David, because God promised him that one of his descendants would reign forever.

Tell the students to find the figure of Jesus. Ask: *For whom did God make the new covenant? (For all people.) In the square, draw yourself or write your name. Through Jesus, God made a new covenant of love for all people, and that includes you! Do you want to accept Jesus as your Savior? (If any of the students shows interest, meet them at the end of the class.) When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we decide to live in a covenant relationship with God.*

The people of the new covenant

Invite your students to make a poster or banner to celebrate that they're included in the new covenant with God through his Son Jesus.

Hand out the last activity sheet (The People of the New Covenant). Provide markers or crayons for use in the design of their banners. Encourage them to take it home and show it to their relatives.

Say: God wants us to know him and develop a relationship with him. He wants to bless us and help us live for him. But sin separates us from God, and the Bible says that we have all sinned. However, we can be thankful because, through Jesus his Son, we can be forgiven and enter into a new covenant relationship with him.

Memorization

Before class starts, draw a vertical line in the center of the board.

In class, separate students into two teams. Let them form two rows, sitting one behind the other on the floor, facing the board. Say the verse of the month together. Have a clock with a stopwatch on hand to keep time. When you give the signal, the first person of each group will go to the board and write the first word of the verse. Then he will

run back and give the marker or chalk to the next row mate, and then that first person will go and sit at the back of the line. Whoever has the marker should write the second word on the board, and so on. Continue playing until a team correctly completes the Bible verse, in the shortest possible time. At the end, say the verse together.

Then, have each student say the verse of the month. To all who do it correctly, give them a small certificate or prize (a sticker, a bookmark for their Bible, etc.).

To end

End by singing a chorus or hymn that talks about the covenant with God. You can use recorded music, or invite someone from the church to accompany you with an instrument.

Tell your students: Every person who has accepted God's proposal to live in this new covenant, through Jesus, is part of the Lord's family. We can sing and rejoice when we know we're living in a relationship of covenant with him.

End by giving the children an opportunity to thank Jesus for his death and resurrection, which allows them to know God and love him. Pray, thanking God for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, and for his sacrifice on the cross. Ask God to help students live each day by pleasing him, and to remember their commitment in the covenant with Christ, and their responsibility as members of his family to obey him and live as he wishes.

Encourage the children to have a daily devotional time alone with God.



Year 3

Introduction – Unit VI

JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY

Biblical References: John 16:17-19; 17:1-5; 17:6-19; 17:20-26

Biblical Truth: Jesus, our high Priest, teaches us that we can tell him all our worries in prayer.

Unit Memory Verse: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Know that Jesus prayed for himself, for his disciples, and for all believers, including them.
- Discover practical ways to develop their communication with God through prayer.
- Strengthen their relationship with the Lord through daily prayer.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 22: Why should we pray?

Lesson 23: Jesus prays for himself

Lesson 24: Jesus prays for his disciples

Lesson 25: Jesus prays for all believers

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Pre-teens have different concepts regarding prayer. For some, it's a way of asking for things. For others, it's a cry for help in times of crisis. Throughout this unit, the children will learn that prayer is constant communication with God, which includes praise, thanks, worship and requests.

All Christians must be imitators of Christ. He gave us the example of spending time alone with the Father in prayer every day. When studying Jesus' priestly prayer, students will feel the importance of praying for other Christians, just as they pray for their own personal needs.

Teaching about prayer can never replace the practice of prayer. This unit will encourage the children to pray frequently. By experiencing communion with God, they'll get closer to him. They'll begin to receive answers to their prayers. In this way, their appreciation for the ability to communicate with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe will grow.

Why Should we pray?

Biblical References: John 16:17-17:19

Lesson Objective: To strengthen in the preteens the regular practice of prayer; to help them understand that it's a means by which we can tell God our concerns; and to be grateful for the privilege of praying on a regular basis.

Memory verse: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

There are many people for whom it's hard to believe that they can speak directly with God. We generally have to use the correct channels to talk to a government leader, or even our boss. But some feel they aren't worthy to speak with God, and seek a mediator who can speak for them. This lesson will help your students understand that Jesus taught us that we have the privilege of being able to speak with God directly. Jesus is our high priest, our intercessor. He carries our message directly to the presence of the Creator of the universe!

For some children, prayer is usually a way of asking for things. For others, it's only a cry for help in times of crisis. It's necessary for them to know that prayer is a daily communication with the Lord to praise, thank, worship and present our requests.

Keep in mind the passage in Hebrews 4:15-16 to discuss it with your class during this unit: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Jesus, a religious Jew, was originally from a people who valued prayer. Every morning and every evening the Jews recited the SHEMA, three short passages of Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41). And three times a day, morning, afternoon and night, they prayed the Tephillah or the Eighteen Blessings. For Jesus, however, prayer was much more than a habit to repeat three times a day. Many times he moved away from the crowd, and even his disciples, to

pray alone; and sometimes he spent the whole night in prayer (read Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12). At other times, he climbed a mountain to pray, accompanied by his disciples (see Mark 6:46; Luke 9:28). Of course, at the time of greatest pressure of his life, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane and cried out to the Father with all his heart (see Matthew 26:36-44).

The habit of prayer was part of Jesus' daily life, and it was very natural for him to use it as a farewell to give an example to the people. Knowing that he would soon die on the cross, Jesus prayed a prayer known as "the priestly prayer" (John 17). He did it in the presence of his disciples during the last supper, which was in a very real way, his farewell speech. In other parts of the Bible, we also find farewell speeches. A prominent place is the book of Deuteronomy. As he approached death, Moses sang a significant hymn (31:30-32:47) and gave his blessing (33:1-19). The words of farewell (be it a song, a speech, or a prayer) have greater meaning because the author at that time communicates the most important thing before facing death.

The disciples had a unique privilege: to be in the presence of Jesus daily. They could see and talk to him. But now, Jesus would no longer be with them. How would they talk to him if he wasn't going to be there anymore? How could they survive in a world of problems without his power to help them? We can imagine the doubts and fears that the intimate circle of Jesus would face.

The priestly prayer offered by Jesus that night was intended to show them that their greatest resource was the power of prayer. God the Father was only a word away, and now Jesus would be too. Although he was going to be physically absent, he would be closer than ever through prayer. The amazing thing for any Christian today is the reality that, by quieting our minds and hearts, we have our Heavenly Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ at a distance of a word.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

You have a message

Pass out the first activity of the student activity sheet, lesson 22 (You have a Message). Have them write or draw shapes of ways by which we communicate. Consider giving a small prize to the student who makes the longest and most complete list. (Examples: telephone, carrier pigeons, talking, fax, e-mail, letters, smoke signals, signs, facial expressions, actions, telegrams, cell phones, radio, television, Internet, and others.) You can bring some of these items to the class to illustrate the lesson. After a few minutes, let the students share their answers with their classmates.

Tell them: *One would think that with all these excellent ways to communicate, we should be very good at the art of communication. However, sometimes we struggle, especially when it comes to communicating with God.*

Today we'll talk about the importance of communicating with God.

What I know ... about prayer?

Ask the children to complete the statements on the second activity sheet (What I know about prayer).

When students finish writing, ask them to share what they wrote. Listen to what they say among themselves. That way you can have a better perspective of what they understand about prayer. Express: *Prayer is a privilege. We're honored that God wants us to communicate with him. Through prayer we can tell him our concerns and openly communicate any burden of our hearts.* Then, ask the following questions. Let the students answer:

- *If when you were a small child you prayed before bed, what was your prayer like?*
- *Do you think God hears each of our prayers?*
- *Why is it sometimes a struggle to pray?*
- *Tell us about a time you prayed and God answered your prayer.*
- *Why does it seem to us that God doesn't answer all our prayers in the same way or as we would like him to answer them?*

Today we'll talk about prayer, and we'll see the experiences Jesus had in relation to it.

BIBLE STORY

The full picture

As you will see, our passage this week is long, a large portion of two chapters, 16 and 17, of the Gospel of John. Don't try to read this whole passage of Scripture in class. It is suggested that to understand the full context, you and your class should study Jesus' prayer in the following three lessons. Use these questions to help your class understand the full picture of this important prayer:

- *What were the circumstances surrounding this prayer? To answer this question, we need to search our Bibles. In chapter 12, we see that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. There was a great celebration. The crowd cried out: "Hosanna!" Then in chapter 13, we observe Jesus the night before the crucifixion. The disciples were with him eating at the last supper. It's there where he told them he would leave.*
- *What emotions did the disciples have while Jesus talked with them? They were sad because their best friend would leave them. They were disturbed. They wondered what the future would be like. They were very afraid. They thought about how they would serve without Jesus.*
- *What was the main message that Jesus gave to those sad, troubled and fearful disciples that night? Even if*

he left, he wouldn't actually abandon them. Just as he himself showed them how he connected with God the Father through prayer, he told his disciples that they could also connect with him through prayer. The same resources that he had at his disposal when he was on earth would be available to them after he had gone to heaven. Jesus told them that prayer would be the answer to their doubts and questions. A key word of Jesus here is: "trust" (16:33).

- *How did Jesus address God in that time of prayer in chapter 17? He talked to God as if he were standing beside him, listening and answering what he was saying. We see in v. 1 that he addressed God as his Father.*

Ask the children: *What general principles about prayer can we learn from the passage we're studying today?*

Steps to pray

When telling the Bible story, mention that this prayer was prayed by Christ in his last week of life. Say: *Today we're going to study what we call Jesus' "priestly prayer". In the Old Testament, a high priest was the priest who led others. Moses' brother Aaron was the first high priest. Today, our High Priest is Christ.*

This is Jesus' farewell address. He prayed while having dinner with his disciples for the last time. He knew that he would soon die on the cross, so he took advantage of one of the last opportunities he had left while he was alive on earth to pray for believers.

Direct your students to the third student activity sheet, (Steps to Prayer) or write the five portions of Scriptures on a blank sheet. Divide the class into 5 groups and assign each group one of the passages. The answers should be in response to the question: "What does this passage teach us about prayer?"

1. **John 16:19-24.** (Jesus will take our petitions to God. We can ask God for anything, according to his will. When we pray, we do it in Jesus' name.)
2. **John 16:32-33.** (God is with us even when we're in trouble. He is only a prayer away. Prayer brings us peace.)
3. **John 17:1-5.** (In prayer, we remember all the gifts God gave us and we can thank him for his goodness. We also ask him to make us like Jesus.)
4. **John 17:6-12.** (Only God can protect us from evil. Through prayer, we find the power and strength to live in this world, even when the world treats us badly.)
5. **John 17:13-19.** (We're special to God. In prayer we remind ourselves that we can speak directly with the God of the universe, who wants to separate us - "sanctify us" - from the world. When we speak to God, we have deep joy.)

Allow the 5 groups to tell the rest of the class what they learned, including what they thought their passage said about prayer. Give them the opportunity to ask any questions of the text that they didn't understand. Finish this activity by asking: (Note: in this lesson we won't be studying chapter 17 in detail. We'll simply see that Jesus, in times of difficulty and trials, sought prayer as an answer. In the next three lessons, we'll discover the three parts of the priestly prayer of Jesus found in this chapter.)

ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to capture the attention of your class on the subject of prayer.

Side by side, prayer partners

Divide your class into pairs. Have them sit on the floor, back to back, and then try to stand up supporting their backs with that of their partners, both at the same time, but without falling. Give a few minutes for them to try. Then ask: *What did you have to do to stand up without falling?*

Point out: *Sometimes we have to learn to support each other. This is a truth in our spiritual life too. In the following weeks, we'll make the effort to pray for each other.*

Read the following verses to the class: *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).* With this in mind, ask the children to find a friend who can be their prayer partner. If some don't have a partner or find it difficult to find one, tell them that you will help them. Then they can join with their prayer partner and ask each other how they can pray for each other.

A Card to Call God

Hand out to your class the last student activity sheet (A Card to Call God). Tell the class: *You were chosen to design a 'card to call God'. Use what you just learned from the Bible to create a card that you could use to call heaven, including a number and a slogan.* Remind them that some people spell their phone number instead of giving the numbers. (For example, 777-PRAY, is 777-7729). Write the corresponding letters and numbers before the class and allow the children to use them.

Some ideas for the slogan can be: "We attend 24 hours a day", or "Free call to heaven", etc. After a few minutes, allow them to show their work to the rest of the class. You can also add the quote from Philippians 4:6-7.

Youth testimony

Look for a young person in your church who has recently received the answer to a prayer request, or just someone who has an active prayer life. Let them tell of their experience to the class. They could also tell how they plan their prayer time each day, or what things they pray about, and how important communication with God is for them. If you can't find a young person, look for an adult or you can tell the class a story about the power of prayer.

Memorization

Use this biblical activity to learn the memory verse by heart. Explain the meaning of the words: "anxious", "transcends", and others that may be difficult for children.

Before class, write each of the phrases (as found below, separated by the bar), plus the reference, on card stock. Children should learn the verse by heart, and then put it together in the correct order, as if it were a puzzle.

In class say: *We have talked about the importance of prayer. Jesus prayed when faced with difficult circumstances. Now we'll learn a passage that tells us how we should pray.* Read the memory verse: *"Do not be anxious about anything, / but in every situation, / by prayer and petition, / with thanksgiving, / present your requests to God. / And the peace of God, / which transcends all understanding, / will guard your hearts / and your minds / in Christ Jesus / (Philippians 4:6-7).*

Mix up the cards with the written phrases and place them on a table. Tell the students that after reading them, they should put them in the correct order. If you wish, you can divide the class into two groups for better competition. If so, you will need two sets of phrases. You can repeat this activity in the four lessons of the unit. At the end of the unit, you can prepare prizes for those who learned the text by heart. Think of giving them some fruit, such as an apple, orange, etc. They shouldn't always be sweets.

To End

End today's lesson by thanking God for the gift of prayer. Ask him for wisdom to pray the right way. If you decided that the students would have prayer partners, plan a time for them to talk to each other about their concerns, so they can pray together. Encourage them to set aside moments during the week to pray together and separately for each other.

Consider praying for one or two requests from the church each week. During this unit, remind your students to pray for these requests on a regular basis in their private prayer times. They can send a card to the person they're praying for. That way they'll know that the class is presenting their name to the Lord every week.

Jesus Prayed for Himself

Biblical References: John 17:1-5

Lesson Objective: That the children know that Jesus gave us an example to help us evaluate if our petitions give glory to God or not.

Memory verse: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Many times, the pre-teen's prayer list is composed only of personal requests. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to ask for "daily bread." However, the emphasis of that prayer was to glorify God, that his will would be done. And Jesus continues with the same theme in his priestly prayer.

It's very possible that the pre-teens don't understand it well if they don't understand that Jesus was asking to be glorified because of the ministry he developed and his obedience to the cross.

They may believe that his request to the Father to glorify him was selfish. But if they understand that Jesus relates glory to obedience to suffering and death, they'll see that it was not a selfish prayer. The prayers where Jesus asks for himself contrast with selfish prayers. In his priestly prayer, by praying for himself, Jesus provides us with a model of how we should pray to the Father, and what to ask from him. After studying this example, your class will be able to evaluate their personal requests and see if they honor God with them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Since Jesus knew that he would soon die on the cross, he prayed the prayer known as "the priestly prayer." We observe that it's composed of three parts. In verses 1-5, Jesus prays for himself. In verses 6 -19 he prays for his disciples. And in verses 20-26, he prays for those who were to believe later, a category in which we're included.

In the first five verses of the prayer, Jesus asks God to glorify him so that in turn, he could glorify God. Jesus reminds the Father that this glory has been revealed: "I have finished the work you gave me to do" (v. 4).

Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of the glory of God. He showed the world what God is like. Those who come to the Father through Jesus Christ share his glory. That means he changes them and transforms them so that they're increasingly like Christ.

The cross was the glory of Jesus, because it was the fulfillment of his task. If it had not ended on the cross, Jesus' ministry would have been incomplete. He came to earth to show God's love to all people through his life, his teachings, his sufferings and his death. If Jesus had not gone to the cross, God's message would have been a contradiction, because he would have put a limit on his love - there would be a price that his love wouldn't be able to pay. There is only one way to glorify God: obedience. Jesus brought glory to God through his perfect obedience to the Father.

Jesus' request for himself must always be considered in the context of his obedience to death, so that God would be glorified.

The crucifixion was the instrument used by the Roman Empire to show tremendous humiliation. What irony! Jesus used this means to show his infinite love and the glory of God. Even though many refused to see the glory of God on the cross, some did, including the ruthless Roman soldiers who witnessed Jesus' death and exclaimed: "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Jesus recognized the power and authority that the Father had given him. However, he didn't use that power for his own glory, but instead used it in obedience to bring people closer to God.

It's an interesting cycle. God glorified the Son by giving him power and authority. Jesus glorified the Father by obediently using that power for others to know God. When people know God, they also give glory to the Father and the Son.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

It's hard to be humble

Before class, get a trophy, the bigger the better. If you can't get one, make one of cardboard or other materials and paint it silver or gold.

In class, hand out the first activity sheet (It's hard to be humble) and ask the students to imagine that they participated in a contest or competition and won an important prize. And now they should write a short thank-you speech, which they'll deliver at the awards ceremony. After giving them a few minutes, allow some volunteers to come to the front, accept their "trophy" and say their speech.

Say: *Have you ever met people who want to receive all the glory and honor for themselves? It's difficult to be humble. Today we'll learn what it means to be humble like the example of Jesus.*

Important word

Glorify: to give honor or praise to someone. Ask the class if anyone knows what the word “glorify” means. Write the word and its meaning on the board. Explain the definition. Give examples. Say that you're going to talk about that word.

Then, start a competition using the following biblical verses to give your class the background of the word “glorify.” Each student should have their Bible.

Say: *I'm going to read a Bible verse and then I'll ask you a question. Look for the verse as quickly as possible and try to find the answer. When you have both the Bible verse and the answer, raise your hand. (Be careful! Preteens tend to raise their hands when they find the verse without having the answer. Remind them that it's necessary to have both.)*

- *Exodus 15:11. Word that describes the glory of God. (Awesome)*
- *Psalms 19:1. What or who declares the glory of God? (The heavens)*
- *Psalms 57:5. Where do we find the glory of God? (In all the land)*
- *Psalms 102:15. What will the kings of the earth do with the glory of God? (They'll revere it.)*
- *1 Corinthians 10:31. What actions should give glory to God? (Everything we do, whether drinking or eating.)*
- *Revelation 19:1. What belongs to God? (Salvation, glory, and power)*

Say: *Now we'll continue talking a little more about what it means to glorify God.*

BIBLE STORY

In my own words

Say: *Today we're going to talk about prayers that are selfish and those that aren't. Let's analyze the prayer Jesus prayed.*

Give the students the second activity worksheet (In My Own Words), and give a few minutes for them to silently read the passage from John 17:1-5.

Ask: *Do you think this prayer was selfish? (Allow them to answer.)*

You will now have the honor of paraphrasing (explaining in your own words) this passage. Allow

enough time for them to write on the bottom of the sheet. Then, let each one read what he or she wrote.

Ask the following questions for students to go deeper into Scripture:

- *At the beginning of his prayer, what did Jesus ask God to do? (That he glorify him.)*
- *What did that mean? (Some preteens may think that Jesus asked him to magnify him in people's eyes. Help them understand that his greatest desire was to glorify the Father.)*
- *Jesus knew that Judas would betray him. However, before praying he said: "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him." Why do you think Jesus said that he and the Father would be glorified if Judas had gone to betray him? (This could be a mystery for the class, as it was for the disciples as well. Tell them that Jesus knew that the cross was going to be very painful and that he was going to die there. His pursuers wanted that humiliation for him. However, he knew that his death would bring salvation, and in that way he would glorify God.)*
- *If the cross means pain, humiliation and death, why is it seen in churches and the jewelry we wear? (The cross was the deepest show of God's love. Jesus glorified God because he obeyed him both in his life and in his death on the cross. God glorified Jesus by raising him from the dead and taking him to heaven to be with him.)*

ACTIVITIES

Acrostic: PRAY

Write the word “PRAY” on a card, with large capital letters, which can be filled or colored.

Write the word “PRAY” vertically on the board. And then with the class' help, write a phrase about prayer for each letter. And then have the children copy the word “PRAY” and the acrostic phrases on the prayer sheets they'll make on cardboard or posterboard that you will provide them.

Once they have been copied, ask them to paint or color the word “PRAY.” They can glue seeds, beads, glitter, etc.

If you wish, the students can make two small holes on the top of their pray posters and put a strong thread or string through the holes so that they can hang it in their bedroom or home, like a painting, and remember what it means to pray.

Direct line to heaven

Pass out the third student activity sheet (Direct Line to Heaven). Help them think about the different types of prayers: those which please God, those which sadden him, those which he answers with a “yes”, those with a “no”, if they can’t talk can they still pray to God, and Does God always listen when we pray.

Ask them to write their answers below each question, and then discuss them with the rest of the group.

Finally, add: *God always hears our prayers, and his ear is attentive to our prayers. We can speak with him at any time, place, time and circumstances. He always listens to us. Sometimes he doesn’t answer all our prayers the way we want him to, but he answers them in accordance with his plans, instead of the way that’s most convenient for us. That teaches us to trust and wait on him, knowing that he is always watching us, hears us and fulfills his will in our lives because of the great love he has for us.*

Memorization

Use this activity to present and help your class learn the memory verse by heart. Being the second lesson of the unit, explain once again the words: “anxious”, “transcends”, and others that may be difficult for the children.

You will have the cards with the puzzle text from the previous lesson.

In class say: *Now we’ll continue to learn the verses that tell us how to pray.*

Read the verses, and have the children repeat them several times.

Place the 12 cards with the written sentences on a table, and mix them up. Tell students that after repeating the verse, they should put the cards in the correct order.

To end

How should I pray?

Say: *Asking is just one of several ways to pray. Other ways are to confess, ask forgiveness, thank God for all he does and gives us, and praise the Lord for how wonderful he is. We’ll practice some of these prayers. For that, you have to write and finish the sentences that are on the last student activity sheet (How Should I Pray?).*

Confess: God, I apologize for ...

Thanks: God, thank you for ...

Ask: God, please ...

Praise: God, you’re amazing or because ...

Ask some volunteers to read their prayers aloud. End by praying for the students and thanking God for having “prayer” as the most effective means of communicating with the him.



Jesus Prayed for His Disciples

Biblical References: John 17:6-9

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that God is with them when they face a hostile world, in the same way that Jesus was with his followers.

Memory verse: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Christian pre-adolescents have to face constant opposition in relation to their beliefs. Many times they feel lonely and vulnerable because they're believers. They live the reality of "being in the world but not being part of the world".

This lesson will help them discover that Jesus knew those difficulties many centuries before they were born. Not only did he know that his disciples would feel like foreigners in a world that hated them, but he did something to help them.

In the second part of the priestly prayer, Jesus prayed for the disciples. Children can identify with the first followers of Christ. By learning more about Jesus' prayer for his disciples, and by reflecting on the way God answers the prayer, they'll grow with the confidence that God can help them. By feeling his protection, they'll be encouraged.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:6-9 also applies to today's Christians, since these things are needed to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ today. In his prayer, Jesus made four important requests to the Father:

Protection

He understood that there were two enemies that his disciples would face, and said: "The world hated them" (17:14). The world didn't receive his message, and tried to silence Jesus. To his disciples, he left the same message to spread, so they couldn't expect better treatment from an unbelieving generation than Jesus had received.

In addition, Judas, who had moved away from the intimacy of the group to do the will of the devil, was a horrifying example of the power of the evil one.

Thus Jesus prayed that the disciples would be protected from the "evil one" in the midst of a world that hated the Gospel. The words "evil one" indicate that the Bible doesn't consider "evil" as an abstract term. Evil is an active and personal power that's always in opposition to the goodness of God.

Jesus' prayer was that God would protect them: "by the power of your name" (17:11). This was not a weak protection. The name of God reveals his character and nature. "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." (Proverbs 18:10).

Unity

In the power of God's name, the disciples would be protected and united. Jesus wanted them to have the same unity he had with his Father. It was a unity of purpose and strength. "All for one, and one for all" is a modern saying that can help us understand how the disciples should unite to spread the Gospel, and to endure the persecution that would come upon them.

Joy

Jesus' desire was for his disciples to have "my complete joy in themselves" (17:13). Disappointment and despair weren't attitudes he wanted for them when carrying out his mission. Rather, Jesus had restored "the joy ... of salvation" (Psalm 51:12) that marked the arrival of his kingdom.

Sanctification

Finally, Jesus prayed for his disciples to be sanctified. In this case "sanctified" means "set apart" and "dedicated to the cause of God." Jesus was praying that they would be separated from the evil of this world - that is, holy and spotless - and dedicated to fulfilling his mission. The task of the disciples was not new, but the continuation of Jesus' mission.

The holiness of the Father was the basis of the Son's mission. That holiness, separation from sin and dedication to a life of righteousness, is what Jesus longed for for his followers.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Survival kit

Take a box or duffle bag to your class in which you have placed some of the items that you think would be of the utmost importance to survive if you were stranded somewhere. Show students each article and explain what they're for. (No doubt you'll place a Bible

or New Testament as one of the items.) Give them the first student activity sheet of lesson 24 (Survival Kit). Say: *Take a few minutes to write or draw everything you would need to survive if you were stranded somewhere.* Give them time to do it, and if they don't know what to write, help them with creative ideas (food, toothpaste, medicines, music, etc.).

Notice if anyone writes "prayer." If some do, ask them to describe the reason why they need prayer to survive. If no one in the class mentions it, ask if they don't believe that prayer is necessary to survive.

Say: *Prayer, or communication with God, is like air to breathe. It's absolutely necessary. Today we'll talk about how important it is for the Christian's life.*

In Jesus' sandals

Before class, look for sandals the size of your students' feet. Draw a thought bubble on the board. This should be large enough for all children to write what they think.

In class, tell them to close their eyes. When there is silence, say: *Imagine that you're Jesus. You know that you'll soon be arrested and that you'll die. You know that the disciples will face very difficult times. You're almost ready to go to heaven. You know that people don't understand. They'll laugh at your disciples, hate them, and try to kill them. You love your disciples. They're your best friends. It breaks your heart to know that they, and those who will believe in you in the future, will face a lot of opposition. What can you do; you only have a little time to be with them before going to the cross. Now is the only time you have the opportunity to pray to the Father for your friends, the disciples. What would you ask for?*

Ask them to open their eyes. Place the sandals on the floor in front of the board and tell them to imagine that these were the sandals Jesus used. After giving them time to think, invite them, one by one to put their feet inside the sandals and write their ideas in the bubble.

Say: *Now we'll see what Jesus really asked when he prayed for his disciples.*

BIBLE STORY

I have a dream...

Divide the class into pairs. (If everyone already has their prayer partner, they can be divided that way.)

If you did the activity "In Jesus' sandals" say: *Now we're going to read Jesus' prayer for his disciples. We can find it in John 17:6-19. Last week we talked about Jesus' priestly prayer. We learned about the first part of the prayer where Jesus prayed for himself: his desire was to glorify the Father. In the second part of the prayer he*

asked for his disciples. Next week we'll reveal the third part, and there we'll find a beautiful surprise, the best of all! Ask them to look at the student activity sheet at today's story: "I have a dream ...", and read the passage. They should work with their partner to answer the following questions:

1. *How does Jesus describe the relationship of his disciples with God? (v. 6, 8 and 9)*
2. *What is Jesus' dream for his disciples? (v. 11)*
3. *What does Jesus ask of the Father for his disciples? (v. 11, 13 and 17)*

After a few minutes, allow several groups to present their answers to the rest of the class. Some possible answers could be:

1. They were from God / They were obedient to God / They accepted the Word of God / They believed and had confidence in Jesus.
2. That the Father would protect them and help them to be one, as Jesus and the Father are one.
3. That the Father would protect them / That they would have the full measure of Jesus' joy / That the Father would truly sanctify them.

At this time, briefly explain the meaning of the word "sanctify" (to separate and make holy). Say this was part of Jesus' dream for his disciples. Clarify that Jesus didn't want God to take them out of the world. Why? Allow one or two students to answer.

Ask: *What would the world be like if God took away all believers, if after becoming a Christian everyone disappeared? Allow them to comment on what they think about it (there would be no Christians to witness to others, etc.).*

ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to capture the attention of the students concerning today's topic.

Let's measure the progress

Pass out the third activity sheet (Progress Report) and read the instructions. They're to evaluate God's answers to Jesus' prayer, based on what they know about the disciples. They're to read and answer the following statements.

1. *The disciples realized how important they were to God. Yes or no*
2. *The disciples stayed together and built a church. Yes or no*
3. *The disciples found protection from the evil one. Yes or no*

4. *The disciples had the full measure of joy that Jesus had. Yes or no*
5. *The disciples knew that God's Word is truth. Yes or no*

Ask: *If Jesus' prayer could do all this for the disciples, what can it do for you today?*

Memorization

Get out the cards from the previous classes with the memory verse. Mix them up well. Repeat the verse several times and give the children time to assemble it on the table. If there are volunteers who know it by heart, you can ask them to write it on the board.

To end

The doctor is present

Lead the children to take a few minutes to take an "exam" of their lives with God. Say: *To do this you must answer the questions of the last activity of the student*

activity sheet (The Doctor Is Here).

- *How do you feel about your relationship with God?*
- *How do you feel living as a Christian in a non-Christian world?*
- *What do you need from God right now?*
- *What is something that could take you away from your relationship with God?*

God ALWAYS listens to us when we talk to him!

Talk with everyone about their answers after everyone has finished the activity.

Have moments of prayer that are meaningful to children. Allow them to have appropriate time to pray and cry out to God with all their heart.

Encourage them to tell about their prayers that God has answered in the next class.

Lesson 25

Jesus Prayed for all Believers

Biblical References: John 17:20-26

Lesson Objective: That the students feel confident, knowing that Jesus prayed specifically for them.

Memory verse: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

One of the most significant experiences that preteens can have is to find an adult mentor to accompany them, encourage them, and pray for them by name. The spiritual impact of a person and such a prayer is very important.

In the last lesson, the children discovered that Jesus prayed specifically for his disciples who lived and ministered with him for three years. He prayed aloud, and in their presence, so that his joy would also be theirs.

As Jesus' disciples and current helpers, your students can put this example into practice, and pray for their friends.

Throughout this lesson, they'll be glad to know that Jesus prayed specifically for the believers of the future. That includes them, you and me.

In a real way, more than 2,000 years ago, Jesus approached them that day, encouraged them and prayed for each one by name.

It's important that the class knows that Jesus prayed for them, and that he asked the Father that future believers be united with one another, and also united with God. This unity comes only by being in Christ.

The children need to know that Jesus said he would give them the same glory that he had received from the Father. He prayed that they would have the courage to walk in his footsteps.

The unity between believers and the glory he gave us has a purpose: "I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23).

When you pray for your students, you're participating in the same prayer that Jesus prayed for them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

In his prayer for future believers (John 17:20-26), Jesus asked for three things: unity, glory and love.

Unity: Jesus made this request twice: “That all of them may be one” (v. 21), and “that they may be brought to complete unity” (v. 23). This unity includes three characteristics which cannot resemble a simple human agreement:

1. First, it would be supernatural, exemplified through the unity of the Father and the Son (vs. 21-22). As Christians, we’re directly involved in the unity with the triune God.
2. Second, it would be visible. The unity that Jesus had with the Father, and desired for his disciples, would show the world that he had sent his Son into the world.
3. And third, it would be evangelistic. The world would believe that God sent Jesus into the world upon hearing “their message” (v. 20). That Gospel had been extended by the first disciples, but also by the generations of Christians that would come later.

Glory: Jesus prayed for future believers to enjoy a glorious relationship with God, following the example of his own life. That included the cross, which Jesus saw as a glory instead of defeat. It also included his obedience to the cross. That same obedience is what Jesus expected from his followers: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24) It’s not a new concept; however it’s difficult. A well-known preacher said: “There is no crown of glory without the anguish of the cross.”

Love: Jesus prayed that the lives of future believers would be full of love. Not only a human or fraternal love, but the love of God. The love that God the Father had for Jesus, and the love of Jesus who lives in believers; the love that “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:7-8). The love of God creates a solid community of faith, unified and glorified. It’s that love that Jesus said would identify us as Christians: “By this everyone will know that you’re my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). That love would show itself to the world, and by that love the world would know that we’re different.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Commercial announcement about prayer

Divide the class into groups of three members each. Give each group a blank sheet and pencils or

pens. Ask them to write a commercial advertisement about prayer. If they wish, they can adapt one that’s currently on radio or television.

After five minutes, ask the different groups to make their ad as if they were on television. Then the class can vote and choose the two best ads. Give the instructions for the election; for example which was the most convincing and the most striking. Ads can be based on all the lessons in this unit.

Finally, they can make a prizes for each child of the two winning groups. Prize: gold or silver paper and blue cardboard. Cut circles of gold or silver paper (about 8 cm in diameter) and glue them on white cardboard circles of the same size. In the center of the circle, write with an indelible marker: “#1 PRAYER”. At the bottom of the circle, glue two strips [ribbons] of blue or red cloth of about 20 cm. long by 5 cm wide. Get hook pins for clothing (take care that children don’t poke themselves). Then have the winners put the decorations on their chests.

Who is praying for you?

Pass out the first student activity sheet for lesson 25 (Who is Praying for You?). Tell the students to answer the questions. When finished, ask some of the class to share with the class what they wrote, as a testimony.

Clarify: *Today we’ll learn that there was someone who prayed for each of you, long before you were born.*

BIBLE STORY

Jesus prayed for you

Say: *This is the time to reveal the third part of Jesus’ prayer. Do any of you know who Jesus prayed for in this part? Wait for the answers.*

Emphasize: *Yes, Jesus prayed for you and for me. He prayed for each one of you, for each one of us. Let’s read what the prayer says.*

Look at the Bible story on the second and third student activity sheets (Jesus Prayed for You), and read the passage from John 17:20-26.

Allow time for them to read, answer and discuss with the class the questions found at the bottom of the activity sheet.

1. What phrase of this prayer refers specifically to you?
2. In this prayer, what does Jesus ask God to give us?
3. Why do you think Jesus prayed this prayer?
4. How can this prayer affect your life?
5. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus prayed for you while he was still on earth?

Say: *Jesus prayed for believers in the future. That included you, and those who would know Jesus because of what we'll tell them about him. How does that make you feel? What can we do so that the prayer continues to multiply?* Let the children express their feelings and ideas.

Review Questions

Everyone should have their Bibles, that way they can answer the questions, based on John 17:20-26

1. For whom does Jesus pray? (v. 20)
2. Why does Jesus pray? (v. 21)
3. Why does Jesus ask that believers be united? (vs. 2,3)
4. What does Jesus want for believers? (v. 24)

If you wish, you can add more questions. You can also make this time into a fun competition between boys and girls.

ACTIVITIES

How can I pray without getting bored?

Write on different colored cards ways in which children can pray without getting bored or feeling that prayer is something monotonous. Put the cards in a bag, and ask them to take out one, read it aloud to the class, and take it and pray as indicated during the week. And even after the unit over Jesus' prayer is over, children can continue to exchange cards every week, put them back in the bag, and take out others to pray differently each week. You can replace those that are lost or ruined.

The suggestions to put on the cards are:

- Sing a prayer in the form of a hymn or chorus. They can hum that prayer song every day that week.
- Walk through the garden, patio or park and thank God for every small or large object you see. For example: flowers, birds, insects, trees, houses, people, service stations, buses, etc.
- Choose a specific time to pray every day: at breakfast, at recess, at lunchtime, or when you go to bed.
- Pray only one minute, nothing more, every day.
- Today pray on your knees.
- Pray standing in one place today.
- Today pray lying down or sitting.
- Today pray with a friend.
- Write your prayer today. It may be very brief, like: "Jesus, I love you."
- Today pray only for your family.
- When you hear these sounds, pray as follows: when you hear the first bell of the day, pray for your friends.

When the second bell rings, pray for your family. When you hear the third bell, pray for your teachers.

- Read the Lord's Prayer today.
- Learn the Lord's Prayer by heart. Think of every word of that prayer that Jesus teaches us.
- Pray with someone in your family: dad, mom, a brother, a sister, your grandparent, etc.
- Today only thank God.
- Today just ask for what you need.

And now that?

Ask: *What things make a group united?* (Shared goals, common interests, the same friends, the same school, the same church, etc.)

What things make a group divided? (Fights, misunderstandings, speaking badly of others, making unpleasant jokes, making fun of others, making others feel inferior, having prejudices, etc.)

Hand out the last student activity sheet (And Now ... What?) and allow time for them to read the questions and answer them on the sheet. Then they can tell the rest of the group what they wrote. Lead them to reflect on how we can put Jesus' prayer into practice in our daily lives in the different areas where we move.

Memorization

Take out the cards from the previous classes with the memory verse, mix them well, repeat the text several times and provide enough time for the children to assemble the text - puzzles on the table. If there are some who know it by heart, ask for volunteers to write it on the board. You can bring a fruit, such as an apple or orange, to reward children (don't forget to bring paper towels or napkins to clean their hands).

Talk to the pastor and ask him to give the children the opportunity to recite the verses of the different units during Sunday services.

If you wish, at the end of the year you can invite parents to attend the class, and have the preteens recite all the verses together. They'll surely be very happy to see their children participate and learn the Word of God.

To end

Encourage your students to keep praying. Say how significant prayer should be to them, and that since Jesus gave it so much importance, they should as well. Prayer keeps us connected with the Lord. How happy it should make us to know that there is someone who listens to us all the time and intercedes for us!

Ask them to pray for you, and then finish by you praying for them.

Year 3

Introduction – Unit VII

SACRIFICE FOR SIN

Biblical References: Genesis 3:1–4:16; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 4:9-10; Isaiah 1:13-17, 19-20

Biblical Truth: Jeremiah 7:21-26; Micah 6:8; Malachi 1:6-14; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 9:23–10:14,19-25; 1 John 4:10; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:14–5:10

Unit Memory Verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).*

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Grow in their understanding of the seriousness of sin and the depth of God’s mercy.
- Know what God did throughout history to grant forgiveness of sins.
- Understand why Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for sin and the mediator between God and people.
- Feel grateful to Jesus for giving himself as a sacrifice for sin.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 26: Sin is Something Serious

Lesson 27: What is a Sacrifice?

Lesson 28: Is Sacrifice Enough?

Lesson 29: Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice

Lesson 30: Jesus, the Perfect Priest

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Sacrifice isn’t often something that preteens experience every day. For many, sacrifice is something that went out of style. It also has a very negative meaning. For most people, a sacrifice is something we should avoid. The idea that God asked people to sacrifice an animal can be annoying. All this, combined with the complex nature of the relationship between the Old Testament sacrificial system and Christ, makes this unit a challenge for you, and of great importance for the children.

In this unit, they’ll learn that sin disrupts a person’s relationship with God. The way people restored their relationship with him was by making temporary sacrifices. However, the sacrifices had to be repeated again and again, and didn’t modify the human condition. Students will learn that our salvation, which is offered to us for free, cost Jesus’ life. It will also be a cause for celebration for them to know that Jesus became our perfect sacrifice once and for all. Not only did it end the need for additional animal sacrifice, but the sacrifice of Christ has the power to transform our lives. That’s what our hope for a restored relationship with God is based upon.

Sin is Something Serious

Biblical References: Genesis 3:1–4:16; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 4:11-12

Lesson Objective: That your students understand that, although sin is something very serious, God is merciful and loves sinners.

Memory verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit* (1 Peter 3:18).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Most children of this age have already experienced changes in relationships, in the broadest sense of the word. Some of their experiences are normal, almost inevitable. Friends move and we lose contact with them. People's interests change and separate us. But in other circumstances, such as the divorce of parents, divisions within a family, or the end of a friendship, the cause is sin.

In this lesson and unit, your students will discover the high cost that sin caused, and the wonderfulness of God's grace. Sin is disobedience to the will of God, which disrupts the fluid relationship between him and the individual. Sin was what led Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden and resulted in the first murder. Since then, everything remains the same.

But from the very beginning, God provided what was necessary to restore the relationship of love between himself and his people. First, he accepted the sacrifices of his worshipers. Then he established a sacrificial system. Finally, he offered his own Son, Jesus, as the perfect and final sacrifice for our sins.

The Scriptures clearly state that God intends an intimate relationship with his people. Through time, he has sought to reach all people. Each student must decide if they want to enjoy that relationship with the Lord.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Genesis 3 is the introduction to the tragic chain of events that culminates in chapter 4. In chapter 3, the idyllic life that took place in Eden came to a catastrophic end. The pure and unobstructed relationship that once existed between Adam, Eve and God was annihilated as a consequence of sin.

We often think that the first sin occurred when Eve bit the forbidden fruit. But the separation from

God happened much earlier. In responding to Satan's insinuations, Eve began to doubt the goodness of the Creator and assigned wrong motives to God. We see evidence of this in Eve's answer to the snake's question about eating from the trees in the garden.

The cunning of the snake was also manifested in its statement that by eating the forbidden fruit, Eve would become like God. Adam and Eve, in many ways, were already like him, because they were created in his image. The deception with which Satan sought to involve Eve was to assure her that she would become like God, rebelling against him.

This chapter shows that sin is an intentional action or set of attitudes that violate a known law of God. In this way, it damages the relationship between the person and the Creator.

Where once there was open and sincere communication, now there is discomfort, deceit, guilt and evasion. God's holy presence became a threat instead of a warm well-being. The garden ceased to guarantee comfort and security, to become a suitable place to hide from the Lord.

God's mercy manifested itself from the beginning. Adam and Eve didn't die immediately, although they did lose the quality of life with which they were created.

Rather, God covered their shameful nakedness, and for that he sacrificed some of his creation to make them clothes. In addition, Genesis 3:15 is considered as the first suggestion of God's redemptive plan through Christ.

The events reported in chapter 4 occur in a radically different spiritual setting. Sin is now a constant obstacle that prevents intimacy with God.

Why did Cain and Abel bring offerings? The Bible doesn't say so. Nor does it explain why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's, although we do find some evidence. Abel brought "the fattest" from among the firstborn of his sheep, but Cain brought "the fruit of the earth" (v. 3-4). In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews says that Abel gave his offering by faith, suggesting that Cain might not have done so (11:4).

But yet, verse 7 says that Cain had the opportunity to avoid the entanglement of sin. He chose not to prevent it and sinned. Then he discharged his spiritual frustration on his innocent brother. Despite God's judgment on his sin, Cain also experienced the unspeakable mercy of the Lord. He didn't kill Cain, nor did he allow others to do so. Instead, he had mercy and made a mark on him that allowed him to survive.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Problems and more problems

Divide the children into three groups and hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 26. Assign each group one of the three events for them to complete. Give several minutes for them to work. When regrouping, ask them to read their comments, starting with "Friends get angry at each other when ...". The rest of the class will listen and eventually participate with new ideas. You write on the board what the children say. Do the same with the other two groups.

Say: *Relationships between people are important to all of us, but there are many situations that can be misunderstood and put us in confrontational situations. Ultimately, instead of having good and strong relationships, they break up ... and they end badly ... all because of sin. Today we'll learn from two broken relationships and how they were restored.*

Remember Genesis

With all the children sitting in a circle, do this game to help them remember the first events reported in Genesis. Have a soft ball or a bag full of seeds. You'll say a statement and gently throw the ball to the child who must answer, then the child returns the ball to you. Students must complete the statement with the phrase in parentheses.

You can add others that come to your mind (prepare in advance):

- *God created the first people and made them* (in his image).
- *God didn't want Adam to live alone, so He gave him a* (wife).
- *Adam's wife's name was* (Eve).
- *God told him that they should work and* (name the animals).
- *God told them that they were to rule over* (the birds of the heavens, over the fish of the sea and all that was in the garden).
- *God came to the garden and* (visited them).
- *Genesis shows us that God wanted to have a* (loving) *relationship with people.*

Add sentences if you have time. Then add: *Despite God's wonderful plan for people, something went wrong. Let's see what happened in today's Bible story.*

Important words

Write important words on good-sized cards to place on the board to be studied during the unit.

Sin: begins with rebellion against God. The person does what he wants, instead of the will of the Lord. This leads to disobeying God. Disobedience means not doing, or doing the opposite of, what God wants from us.

The fall: it's what we call what happened with Adam and Eve. They were disobedient to God. They could no longer have a good relationship with him. For that reason, all creation suffered.

Transgress or transgression: knowing and choosing to disobey God.

Righteous: one who has a right relationship with God. The person who is obedient and does the will of the Lord.

Unrighteous: one who is separated from God by sin, and lives in disobedience.

BIBLE STORY

Divide the class into two groups to read the Bible study passages: Genesis 3 and 4:1-16 to answer the questions in the second student activity sheet (Broken Relationships).

In the garden:

1. What did God forbid Adam and Eve to do? (Eat fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.)
2. What made the forbidden fruit so tempting to Eve? (It was attractive, good food, source of wisdom) Affirm that most of Satan's temptations are like this. He tempts us by making us want a lot of attractive possessions, or to satisfy normal physical desires in the wrong way. He also tempts us to become the god of our own life instead of relying on the true God.
3. In what way did Adam and Eve's disobedience affect their relationship and communication with God? (It shattered the relationship of love and trust that they had previously. Now they felt ashamed and fearful to the point of hiding from the Creator instead of enjoying him as they had done before.)
4. What were other results of their disobedience? (Friction between Adam and Eve blaming each other, pain, heavy and frustrating work and, eventually, death.)
5. In what way did God show his mercy towards Adam and Eve? (By providing clothing to cover themselves.) It seemed cruel, at first, for God to throw them out of the garden of Eden. Actually, this was an act of love and mercy since there was another tree in the garden: the tree of life. If they had eaten this fruit, they would have lived forever in their sin, with fear and separated from God. The Lord didn't want that to happen.

In the field:

1. Why was there a problem between Cain and Abel? (Cain's jealousy because God didn't accept his offering as he did with Abel's.) See v. 3 and 4.
2. How did Cain sin? (He got mad at Abel, killed him and lied to God.)

3. In what way did God show mercy to Cain? (He put a special mark on him so that others wouldn't kill him.)

In conclusion, Adam and Eve paid a terrible price for eating the forbidden fruit. Why does God consider sin something so serious and horrible? Let the students present their ideas. Remind them that God created us to relate to him and our neighbor. Sin breaks and destroys that ability; this is what makes sin so serious.

ACTIVITIES

What is sin?

Give cards for students to write the definition of sin, which they already studied in the Important Words, and you explained during the lesson. Then, ask those who want to read their definition to raise their hands. Explain and clarify the concept if there are doubts. Point out that you'll continue studying during the unit about how sad and bad sin is and its consequences. Then talk about the statements in the last student activity sheet (What is "Sin").

Memorization

Write the memory verse and reference on cards, one word on each. Before class, hide them in different places in the classroom. Practice the passage you wrote on the board several times. Explain the importance of Christ's sacrifice to reestablish God's relationship with people, shattered by sin and the fall of Adam and Eve. Ask the children to look for the cards. When they find them, they must form the Bible verse correctly on a table.

To end

Talk to your class about how this was a sad and serious story, but that it didn't end with the sin of Adam and Eve, nor with the murder of Abel. God already had his son Jesus in mind, who would be the Savior of the world. Remind the children that God's love and grace are greater than any sin. He prepared the way to give us freedom from sin.

Sing an appropriate chorus or hymn and dismiss the children with prayer.

Lesson 27

What is a Sacrifice?

Biblical References: Leviticus 1:1-9; 9:1-24 ; 1 John 4:9-10

Lesson Objective: To help the children comprehend that although sin is something so costly, God always provides a way for us to be forgiven.

Memory verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

"Sacrifice" is an interesting word. What images come to your mind when you think about it? Could it be that of an altar bathed in blood? Maybe that of a known missionary who leaves his family and friends to go to a distant place?

These images suggest that many of us see sacrifice as something distant, an irrelevant concept that has little or no impact on our daily lives.

For many, sacrifice isn't only unimportant, but also expresses something negative. This may be true for some students in your class. They live in a

world that emphasizes privilege and consumption, not renunciation. The idea of sacrifice may seem old fashioned, not to say unpleasant. For this reason, students must understand the biblical concept of sacrifice.

In this lesson, they'll learn that sacrifice is the purpose of God's grace, and made it possible to restore the relationship between himself and the fallen human race as a result of sin. Instead of allowing the immediate death of Adam and Eve, God allowed the sacrifice of animals and products of the earth to replace human life. Later, the Creator, in the person of Jesus Christ, would give his life as a final sacrifice for sin.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

It's surprising that the Bible doesn't clarify the origin of sacrifice. After Adam and Eve sinned, it was reasonable to wait for some instructions from God about how they would relate to him in the future. But he said nothing. Still, we find that sacrificial offerings were made to God from the beginning. In Genesis 4, we see Cain and Abel presenting their offerings.

Many assumed that God rejected Cain's sacrifice because it was not done with blood, but this is doubtful. When God established the sacrificial system after the exodus, it included grain offerings. It's much more likely that Cain's heart and motives weren't correct. This is important when the Hebrews offered

their sacrifices to God without interest in pleasing him; he was not satisfied with that.

Sacrifice involves bringing an offering as a gift to God. The terms “bring” and “offering” are typical of the Hebrew language. Both suggest the idea of giving voluntarily, and three of the five major offerings were voluntary. Here again the importance of a correct attitude in relation to God is clear.

Usually, we think of sacrifices as a way of obtaining forgiveness for sins. But in reality, there were different types, symbolizing different aspects of the relationship with God. Some focused on getting favor from him, others were to recognize God’s provision and express gratitude.

But remember that the Creator takes sin very seriously. To restore the relationship with him, a person must give up something valuable. For this reason, different levels of offerings for the poorest and richest people were described. An additional sign to denote the seriousness of sin was, in most cases, the sacrifice of an animal’s life.

Our attitudes towards sin are often taken very lightly today.

We say: “The devil made me do it.” God doesn’t agree with this. Sin is serious and costly.

Sinners must recognize their sin. At each sacrifice of an animal, the worshiper had to place his hand on the head of the beast in question. By doing this, the person admitted that there was sin and that this animal was dying in his place.

Often, people in our society try to put blame for their bad deeds on someone or something other than themselves. We cannot deny the many factors that contribute to lead us to act badly. But we must remember that sin is the violation of a known law of God, and this makes us accountable to him.

“The wages of sin is death.” Animals for sacrifice were to die, symbolizing that the sinner deserved that end because of his failure. Finally, Jesus Christ sacrificed his life to free us from our sin. Never forget that it’s we who should have been hung on that bloodstained cross. Only the best we have is enough for God. In burnt offerings of communion and guilt, the animal offered must be without defect. That perfect animal symbolized the moral perfection that the Holy God demanded, and the perfect nature of the real sacrifice that Jesus Christ would offer.

Although today we don’t offer perfect animals in sacrifice, the principle remains in force. We must offer God the best we have, all our heart, soul, mind and strength as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose some of the following activities to help the children understand today’s biblical truths.

What is sacrifice?

On the board draw lines for each letter of the term “Sacrifice.” Ask students to add the letters, one by one, until they discover the mysterious word. Hand out the first activity sheet of lesson 27 from the student book. Ask the children to write the definition of “sacrifice.” Then they can tell the rest of the class. Discuss the definition of sacrifice: to give or get rid of something valuable in order to receive something much better. Sometimes the sacrifice benefits the person who gives it. On other occasions, it favors someone else.

Then guide the students to look at the figures on the page and ask them to comment on what types of sacrifices the people there would have made to achieve what they have in life. (For example, a runner will have sacrificed his favorite foods to be in good physical condition. The graduate will have sacrificed a lot of time studying, would have sacrificed going out with his friends in order to study with dedication and obtain a degree and a career. The couple will have left their parents to marry and form their own home, etc.)

Ask: What do you think when you hear the word “sacrifice”? Is it a good word or an ugly word for you? Last week we learned how serious sin is. All of us should have died for our sins. But God had another plan to deal with them. That plan implied sacrifice. We’ll learn more about this.

Sacrifice: Yes or No?

Give the children the second activity sheet (Sacrifice in Action). You can divide the class into four groups to address the four situations that occur. Once they have talked and exchanged ideas, they can regroup and comment on their opinions about what is Sacrifice in Action.

BIBLE STORY

Sacrifices for sin

You can start by mentioning something about the background of the sacrifices with the following comments:

- 1. The Bible doesn’t tell us when God asked people to offer sacrifices.*
- 2. But we know that it was very early in history, since Cain and Abel offered sacrifices of their cattle and harvest.*

3. *The custom of offering individual or family sacrifices continued until God rescued the people from slavery in Egypt. For example: Noah offered a sacrifice after leaving the ark (Genesis 8:20).*
4. *When the people camped at the base of Mount Sinai, God gave detailed instructions on how the sacrifices would be made in the future.*

Read with your students Leviticus 1:1-9, describing what the burnt offering consisted of. This offering presents three aspects that were true for most sacrifices.

Lead the students to complete the student activity sheet called: "Sacrifices for Sin." The missing words in the first column are in bold type:

1. The person was to bring a **perfect** animal to be sacrificed.
2. The person put his **hand** on the **head** of the animal that would be sacrificed.
3. The person **killed** the animal. The priest sprinkled the **blood** of the animal on the altar.

You can tell them that this may seem to be horrendous for us, but God wants to show us, by this means, three very important truths.

In the opposite column write:

- A. Sin brings death. (Corresponds to point 3.)
- B. Sin has a price. (Corresponds to point 1.)
- C. Sin makes us feel guilty. (Corresponds to point 2.)

Let the students read Leviticus 9:22-24 in unison. Finish the Bible study by saying: *God created people to have a close relationship with him. The Old Testament sacrificial system gave God's people a way to restore this relationship and obtain peace and joy that it produces until God sent his Son Jesus as the final and perfect sacrifice for the sin of all who repent.*

ACTIVITIES

God's incredible sacrifice

Give the children the last student activity sheet (God's Incredible Sacrifice). Ask them to open their Bibles to 1 John 4:9-10 to complete the biblical text. Once completed, let the children explain in their own words what they understood from the verse. Clarify the wrong concepts. The importance of the text is that they understand that God sent his Son Jesus Christ to pay for our sins. That is, Christ died (the offering and perfect sacrifice) instead of us.

Memorization

You already have the memory verse written on cards. Practice the verse you wrote on the board several times. Explain again the importance of Christ's sacrifice to reestablish God's relationship with people, shattered by sin and the fall of Adam and Eve. Place the cards in a bag or in a box. Ask the children to take a word and try to remember the previous one and the one that follows. While they're pulling different words, they are to be put in order until the text is complete. If there is a child who doesn't know the words, another can help him.

To end

Challenge the students to think during the week about how many sacrifices they would have to make if they were in Old Testament times. Tell them that they can tell about their experiences during the next class.

Encourage the children to think about how God sent Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. And for that we should be grateful. Give thanks because Christ covered all our sins with his blood and we no longer have to make animal sacrifices.

Don't forget to give them their work to be taken home.



Notes

Is Sacrifice Enough?

Biblical References: Isaiah 1:13-17, 19-20; Jeremiah 7:21-26; Micah 6:8; Malachi 1:6-14; Romans 12:1-2.

Lesson Objective: That the children will comprehend that religious activities, sacrifices, and worship that don't come from a heart of love and obedience displeases God.

Memory verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit* (1 Peter 3:18).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Things aren't always as they seem. Despite our tendency to judge people and objects by their outward appearance, it's rarely possible to do so correctly. An apple may seem perfect outside but be rotten inside.

This principle also applies to our spiritual life. It's very easy to look spiritual by saying the right words and acting as if God were the most important thing in our life, without this being true.

Preteens aren't immune to practicing the "religious game." Spiritual pressure to conform contributes to this problem. If being a good child generates the approval of others, some of them will try to act in this way, without worrying about their inner life. The children who struggle to find a real spirituality often have a strong sense of guilt. They don't want others to know the emptiness that there really is in their lives.

Through this lesson, children will learn that God wants us to love and obey him sincerely, not just through religious activities. Pray for them. Ask the Lord for each of them to experience a true and deep spiritual life.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Recognize that there are "real Christians" and others that are not. This isn't a new issue. Around 700 B.C., the prophets of God warned the people that "non-real" religion didn't please God. Religious forms, however elaborate, cannot replace faith, love, and obedience.

Isaiah 1:13-17, 19-20. In the eighth century B.C., Jerusalem faced imminent bloody attacks and defeat at the hands of the Assyrians. Meanwhile, people

practiced rituals according to the Law of Moses, but lived immorally and corruptly. They committed murders, deceptions, oppressed the poor and rejected God in their hearts. They believed that by pretending and carrying out an "external religion," they would be protected from the wrath of God.

Isaiah condemned the people for their lack of internal commitment, and warned them that the "forms" of worship cannot replace true goodness. God demands morality, social and individual righteousness, and personal holiness.

Jeremiah 7:21-26. Although Jeremiah preached between 626-580 B.C., both the political and social situation and his message were similar to those of Isaiah. The southern kingdom was under the threat of Babylon and yet, the people relied on ritual without obedience. But without sincere regret and the desire to please God, this had no value.

Malachi 1:6-14. This passage was written between the years 458 and 400 B.C. Times of discouragement and disappointment were realities for God's people. They were returning from exile, but their expectations about the arrival of a Messiah weren't fulfilled as they expected.

The prophet condemned the priests for accepting offerings of blind and sick animals. The law required that animals sacrificed to God shouldn't have any kind of defect (Leviticus 22:20-22; Deuteronomy 15:21; 17:1).

Through these sacrifices, the people and the priests didn't give God something of true value. Their first mistake was to believe that a messy ritual could replace the commitment of the whole heart. The second mistake was to think that God would accept just any old offering to replace a relationship of love and obedience.

Micah 6:8 and Romans 12:1-2. Here is briefly presented what God expects of his people: religious obedience coupled with righteousness in our relationship with him and with our neighbor.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose this activity to capture the children's attention and guide them to the truths of God's Word.

What's going on here?

Give the children the first student activity sheet for lesson 28 (What's Going on Here?), and have them look at the pictures & describe what's happening in each of them.. (The girl wants to drink milk, but it's spoiled. The boy wants to eat an apple and discovers

that there's a worm watching him.) Ask: *Has this ever happened to you?* Give them blank sheets of paper to tell about their experiences. Tell them: *This teaches us an important truth: we cannot always discover what is inside by simply looking on the outside. Today's lesson will teach us that this principle also applies to people on many occasions.*

BIBLE STORY

The four most unpopular writers in the world

This dramatic presentation should be prepared class and used during class as an introduction to the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi.

Support material: replicas of scrolls with the names of the four authors written on the outside. Books lined with black paper can also be used, clearly showing the names of those who wrote them.

Announcer - (With enthusiasm) Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you to today's episode of The Most Unpopular Writers of the World. Each week, we carefully review the list of books less read and appreciated by all people, and we chose the four least popular ones for you. And now, let's give the warmest welcome to the presenter of The Most Unpopular Writers in the World. (The announcer applauds and encourages the audience to do the same.)

Presenter - Good morning audience! Today we have for you a special program. We're going to interview four writers who really represent the term "unpopular."

These guys really know how to scare the public! I can't imagine how they managed to get their books to print and from there to bookstores. We'll give our best boo welcome to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi. (Dramatically point out, one at a time, the four students who represent these characters.)

Audience - (All together) We hate your writings. Yes, we hate them even though we've never read them. Boo! Boo! Boo!

Presenter - Isaiah, let's start with you. I was looking at your book a little and I can assure you it's quite loaded. By writing it, were you trying to make people angry? I mean, when you say something like this: "Do not bring me a more vain offering; incense is an abomination to me ... your solemn feasts are hated by my soul", or like this: "Take away the iniquity of your works from before my eyes."

Supposedly, you were delivering a message from God to the people, but believe me, this doesn't sound like a message from the God of love in whom we believe.

Isaiah - I wasn't trying to make people angry, but I was trying to wake them up. Look ... God is a God of love. But he is also a holy God. He cannot be in contact with a people who rebel against him, disobey him, and do evil. And all this is what the people are doing. They behave by pretending to love God, offering him all kinds of sacrifices, but at the same time, they commit murders, steal from the poor and do all kinds of bad things. And yet, they expect God to protect them from their enemies.

Presenter - (Thoughtful) - Hmmm ... well, I guess you're right. But still, it's not very popular with readers. But I can assure you that our next guest is even more unpopular than you. Jeremiah ... what do you have to say in your own defense?

Jeremiah - What can I say? You know, I was known as the weeping prophet, and my writings were so unpopular that they took me to be in jail for a while.

Presenter - Well, I really can't say that I blame those people. But let's listen to the public's opinion. Friends, what is your response to these examples taken from Jeremiah's writings?

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I didn't just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you'll be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you. But they didn't listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts."

Audience - (In unison) Jeremiah, you have great success in writing things we won't read! Boo! Boo! Boo!

Presenter - Well ... now you see, Jeremiah, why our audience chose it to be part of the list of the most famous unpopular writers in the world of all time. What is your final reflection?

Jeremiah - Only this: God still loves his people despite their sin and hypocrisy. All he asks is that when they offer sacrifices, they love and obey him. My writings aren't popular, but if the people had obeyed them, they would have avoided 70 long years of captivity in Babylon.

Presenter - (Somewhat confused) - Well, yes ... but ... we must continue. Let's listen now to our next guest: Malachi.

Micah - (Interrupting) - Hey! When is it my turn? I wrote, more or less, at the same time as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Shouldn't I be next?

Presenter - Now Micah, keep your unpopular book closed for another minute. We'll talk about it in a timely manner (frowning). And now, let's go back to Malachi ...

Malachi, you wrote a few years later than Isaiah and Jeremiah. But it seems to me that you continued talking about the same old and unpopular subject. Couldn't you find something fresh, novel and more pleasant to readers?

Malachi - Well, I was a prophet, not a public relations officer. My message came directly from God for his disobedient people. There they were, back in their land. But ... did they learn anything from their captivity? Nothing that has been evident.

Presenter - I find some very strong accusations in your book. Audience, pay attention: "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you wouldn't light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands." What can you say to justify this, Malachi?

Malachi - The people of God were offering sacrifices with sick and injured or lame animals, the kind that you wouldn't give away to your worst enemy, and then pretended that God would bless them. It was horrible!

Presenter - Well, what he says seems quite true, Malachi. But, still, I imagine if there would be a more positive message ...

(Micah interrupts by waving his hand.) - When is it my turn? I think it's my turn. I have a positive message. Listen to this: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Presenter - Not bad, Micah, not bad. Too bad your book was not popular either, because you seem to have some good practical advice.

(The presenter looks at the audience.) "Well folks, our time is up, but let's give a lively farewell to the world's most famous and unpopular writers.

Auditorium - (All together) We love your writings. Yes, we love them, and we'll read them completely. Yes, yes, yes ...

Presenter (amazed) - Hey, that's not our customary farewell. Operator, cut! ... Goodbye People. See you next week.

Explain to the class that while it's true that the drama was funny, it taught us the reality of a disobedient people and a prophetic message that

wished to draw their attention to the seriousness of their sin and disobedience to God. The prophets gave the message, they obeyed God, but the people were still immersed in their own evil, so they suffered sad consequences.

Senseless sacrifices

Divide the class into three groups and turn to the three different parts of the second activity sheet (Who Said the Following?) Give Isaiah to a group, Jeremiah to another, and Malachi to a third. Ask them to read the passages in their Bibles and answer the questions. Then, when regrouping, have them share their answers with the whole group.

Ask the children: *If you could give advice to the people of the Old Testament, what would it be?* Allow the children to respond. (Possible answers: obey God. Give the best to the Lord. Love God with all your heart. Do what he says, etc.)

ACTIVITIES

The sacrifice is enough

Pass out the last activity sheet (Sacrifice). Ask the children to complete the acrostic with words or phrases that describe:

1. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for each one of them.
2. Their response to that sacrifice.

If you wish, you can give them some ideas to complete the acrostic. But it would be ideal for them to write their own thoughts.

Memorization

Use the memorization activity from the last class. At this point, the children should know the full verse by heart. Ask them to recite it. Help those who don't know. Organize competitions by dividing the class into several groups so they say it without reading it.

To end

Encourage the children to participate in class each week. Pray for and with them so that today's truth is a reality in their lives. God doesn't want our sacrifices. The Lord desires our love and obedience, which comes from a pure heart.

Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice

Biblical References: Hebrews 9:23-10:14, 19-25; 1 John 4:10

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand that Jesus' death was the best sacrifice possible, and they should be grateful that Jesus died for them.

Memory verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit* (1 Peter 3:18).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The previous two lessons prepared the way for this lesson. In those, the children saw how complex and costly it was for the people in the Old Testament to maintain a relationship with God. While the sacrificial system was a gift of God's grace that made it possible to restore their relationship with him, it's unquestionable that this was not the Lord's final answer to the question of sin.

This lesson will make it clearer how privileged we are to live in "the culmination of the ages" (Hebrews 9:26), with the arrival and sacrifice of Christ. In a way not experienced by people in the Old Testament, we have access to the permanent, powerful and effective forgiveness of sins provided by Christ. The children need this kind of forgiveness. Some, despite their young age, have already practiced some kinds of very serious sins. Others suffer a perpetual state of guilt, which results from a legalistic interpretation of the biblical requirements for a holy life.

When preparing this lesson, pray that your students feel Christ's love for them and know how to reciprocate. For some, this means offering praise to God for Jesus; for others it will mean seeking the salvation that only he can provide.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

One of the most frequent comments they made about me as a child was: "She is original." Looking back, I suspect they were mainly referring to my disconcerting habit of saying what I thought. I was an expert in expressing myself clearly, inappropriately, and at the worst possible time. It was a true miracle that my mother didn't succumb to shame before I reached 10 years.

Usually when we talk about something original, compared to a copy, we're referring to something positive. Our passage in Hebrews compares Christ's finished work for our salvation (the original) with the provisional sacrificial system of the Old Testament (the copy). We'll see why.

In the same way that a mother's work never ends, the work of the high priest in the Old Testament never ended. Every day, year after year, the priests offered the same sacrifices. On the contrary, the work of Christ is finished, finished. Christ sacrificed his life once and for all time, then ascended to heaven and "has sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12) to show that his work is complete.

The work of Christ is "perfect." For most of us, the word "perfect" means "absolutely perfect," "without any fault." But in the book of Hebrews, as in other parts of the New Testament, "perfect" means "something that fulfills the purpose for which it was designed."

Christ's sacrifice was perfect for who he is. No lamb or sheep could serve as a substitute for a human being made in the image of God. Jesus, as a man without sin, and at the same time God, was the perfect sacrifice for us.

Christ's sacrifice was perfect because he offered what God most desired, total obedience to his will. Unlike the Old Testament worshipers, Christ obeyed God perfectly in everything, and thus became the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Finally, Christ's sacrifice was perfect for what he made possible; he brought sin and guilt out of us. The Old Testament sacrifices provided a way to deal with sin and receive forgiveness until God sent the perfect sacrifice. But by the same repetition, those sacrifices became more of a reminder than a means to avoid sin. Jesus' sacrifice defeated both: the guilt and power of sin in the life of the human being.

The work of Christ "perfects". Hebrews 10:14 says: "For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." This describes the work of our justification, by which our sin is removed and we're put in proper relationship with God. But, this sacrifice not only makes us acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, it also makes us holy. This refers to the process of sanctification by which believers are made more and more like Christ. For us, this is to fulfill God's purpose, that is, we're to be perfect.

Take time to reflect on what Christ did for you and express your true gratitude.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of the following activities to guide the children's attention and prepare them for today's biblical truth.

What did you bring to church today?

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 29. Ask the students to make a list or small drawings of everything they brought to church today. Then ask some volunteers to tell the class what they wrote or drew. Pay attention to items that have to do with church and worship (Bibles, hymnals, pencils, notebook, offering, etc.). Emphasize the picture of the girl who is pulling the cow into the sanctuary. Ask: *Did anyone bring something like this today? Why or why not?*

Ask volunteers to read the notes on the page and answer or comment on the questions. Talk with them about their answers as to why we don't bring such sacrifices. It's possible that some understand well the fact that we no longer need to do so because Christ died on the cross for our sins.

Say: *The verse of Hebrews 10:10, '...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' gives us the idea of what today's study will show us; why Christians don't sacrifice animals. We'll also discover why Jesus' sacrifice is so much better than Old Testament sacrifices.*

Mural "Christ is the Bridge"

Prepare a large mural with the children. You'll need wood colored paper, markers, crayons, a figure of Christ, glue, scissors, cardboard, etc.

Cover the bottom of the mural with clear paper. Prepare signs that say: 1. Christ crosses every border; 2. God; 3. People.

In the middle of the wall, make a large cross in brown or wood-colored posterboard. Place sign #1 as the mural title. On the left side of the cross place the word "God," and at the foot of it, on the right side place the word "people." In the middle of the large cross place the figure of Christ. This mural can remain for several weeks. If you wish, you can place an altar of sacrifices, a priest, and small posters with appropriate phrases and important words from the unit's lessons on the sides. For example: sin, sacrifice, Christ: perfect sacrifice, spotless lamb, a sheep, a goat, a dove, etc..

BIBLE STORY

The seriousness of sin and its consequences!

Give the second student activity sheet to the children (Sin is Serious and Brings Sad Consequences!). Say: *This lesson demonstrates the seriousness of sin. It also points out that in the Old Testament, for some sins, there were no sacrifices provided and, therefore, weren't forgiven.*

Assign students all passages in the Bible study (Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 13:6-16; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Leviticus 20:9). Once they find and read the passages, ask the students to say what was the consequence of each sin committed.

- Working on the Sabbath: death by stoning
- Worshipping other gods: complete destruction of the city, people and their property
- Disobeying parents: death by stoning
- Cursing parents: death

Then lead the students to Leviticus 5:1-7. There they'll discover that there were sins that weren't intentional. And the offering for such sins was a lamb or a goat. And if they didn't have money for that offering, it could be a turtledove or two pigeons (v. 7).

Mention that today, when we hear so much about the God of love and forgiveness, it can be difficult for us to understand such drastic penalties for sin. But we must remember that God was trying to teach the people - who had lived in great sin for centuries - about his holiness and the need for them to have clean lives. Each of these sins was deliberate disobedience to a clear command given by God. Finally, have all the students read John 1:29. Then ask them: *Why do you think John compares Jesus to a lamb?* (Because as the lamb for sacrifice, he gave his life for the sinner.)

Also mention that Jesus' sacrifice for the sin of the human race achieved what animal sacrifices never made possible. Although there is forgiveness for our sin today, we must never sin on purpose against God.

A day at Ruben and Sara's house

Ruben - Sara, I have to go to the temple tomorrow and take an offering.

Sara - And what did you do now?

Ruben - I made a false oath to our neighbor Elias. Now I realize that I sinned and I must take that offering to God.

Sara (Looking at her husband carefully) - What will you take as an offering this time?

Ruben - I'm very sorry Sara, but I'll have to take Tamara, your favorite goat. I know that you love her

very much for all the milk she gives us ... she is also the only one who is in a position to be offered. She isn't lame, nor is she blind.

Sara - Well Ruben, what can I do? I don't think you have sinned on purpose; you also have to obtain God's forgiveness.

Ruben - Yes, it's true. I want so much to stop disobeying God. Also, I always wonder when I give a sacrifice if I'm really forgiven and clean.

Sara - And I wonder what will become of us when we no longer have animals to offer ...!

This situation with Ruben and Sara could have been a very common and worrisome situation in Old Testament times. And if you were children at that time, you might wonder if that would end someday. These types of offerings, sacrifices and situations were every day, every week, every month, for more than 1,500 years.

But there were also special days that required a variety of offerings. Can you imagine the amount of sheep, goats, cows, and pigeons that died because of sins?

But those offerings weren't God's final plan to deal with sins. The wonderful day arrived when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into the world to be the perfect sacrifice, and with this the need for thousands and thousands of offerings ended. So many sacrifices would no longer be necessary. Christ was THE SACRIFICE par excellence. His blood shed on the cross of Calvary covered "multitudes" of sins. He brought to the cross ALL the sins of those who repent, ask forgiveness with faith, and believe in the perfect sacrifice, Christ the Son of God.

Good News from the book of Hebrews

Pass out the third student activity sheet (Good News from the Book of Hebrews). Ask them to read Hebrews 9:24-28 and follow the instructions. Discuss their answers as a class.

How many sacrifices are necessary to pay for your sins ?

Pass out the last student activity sheet (**How many sacrifices are necessary to pay for your sins?**). Read the instructions with them. Explain: *You are to write a prayer to God, thanking Him for sending His Son, Jesus, to cleanse you from your sins.* After everyone is done, ask for volunteers to share their prayers with the class.

Memorization

Make a race track of "biblical text" in the courtyard or other open space. Separate girls from boys. Make a finish line with something. Tell them that they should run quickly, say the memory verse well and in an understandable way. When one has finished saying it, another will run and repeat the passage. If someone makes a mistake, forgets or omits some part, they must return running to the end of the line until their turn comes again.

The team that finishes first with all its members next to the "finish line" will be the winner.

Warning: nobody can help their teammates. If someone does, the two children will return to the end of the line for not complying with the rules.

To end

Everyone can thank the Lord because it's no longer time to make sacrifices of animals.

- Give thanks for the perfect sacrifice made by Christ on the cross of Calvary.
- Give thanks for the blood of Christ shed for each one of us.
- Sing praises for the complete and forever Sacrifice: Christ Jesus
- End with a song of thanks to the Lord.



Jesus, the Perfect High Priest

Biblical References: 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:14-5:10

Lesson Objective: That the children would understand the role of the high priest, primarily that of Jesus as the perfect High Priest, as a mediator between God and people.

Memory verse: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Preadolescent students are familiar with the concept of limited access.

The “Private” notice on the door of an office, the secret agent service that protects a government leader, and the security measures used regularly at an airport remind us of our limitations.

Children of this age have probably already experienced the frustration that “limited access” causes. For example, maybe they wanted to personally greet a celebrity and someone stopped them in the attempt. The privilege of accessing a certain situation depends on many factors such as age, education, social status, and several others.

“Limited access to God” was a reality for humanity in general before the arrival of Jesus Christ. On occasion, God met ordinary people. But the vast majority of people depended on priests to gain access to him for them, especially when they sought forgiveness for sins they committed.

Through Jesus, students in your class can have direct and unlimited access to God. The days are over forever where, to get closer to him, we had to turn to an earthly person. This is possible because Christ is next to the Father, and at the same time, by our side. With Jesus as our high priest and intercessor, children can approach God freely and confidently, knowing that he always understands them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

God created the priesthood to serve, comfort and help his people and to make possible the relationship between himself and his people. The benefits of the priestly task were fully manifested in the person of

Jesus. Here are some reasons that prove that he is the great high priest (Hebrews 4:14) and an effective mediator between God and us.

Jesus completed the work of reconciling God and the people (Hebrews 2:9) and, as we saw in the previous lesson, his sacrifice was done once and for all (Hebrews 9).

Also, unlike the Jewish high priests, Jesus is perpetually representing us before God.

Jesus Christ could be fully identified with those whom he serves as the high priest. The New Testament points out (Hebrews 5:1) that the earthly high priests were chosen among men. The reason for this was that the high priest needed to identify with the weaknesses and suffering of the people he served.

By the fact that Jesus became a man, he could identify fully with us. With the exception of sin, he experienced all aspects of human life: hunger, thirst, sorrow, all emotions, and also the toughest temptations.

Actually, he endured more temptations than we’ll suffer in our entire lives because, unlike us, he never gave in to them. Since he suffered the worst scourges that Satan could conceive, he knows how difficult it is to resist temptations. The help he can give us includes understanding, instructions, support, strength and a perfect example of how to react to suffering and temptation.

Jesus was “perfected” through suffering. How can someone, who was already morally and spiritually perfect, become even more so? Before becoming a man, Jesus had not experienced hunger, thirst, suffering, or temptations.

He had not had the requirement to remain faithful to God in the midst of rigorous and constant opposition. What made Jesus “perfect” was what he experienced on earth.

Remember that “perfect” means mature, complete and able to achieve the purpose desired by God.

God’s purpose for Jesus was to be the “author and finisher” of salvation for the fallen human race (Hebrews 12:2). The only way he could do that was to experience every aspect of human life and resist temptation until the end.

Jesus is a faithful high priest. He lived his life faithfully serving God and now, also faithfully interceding for us. He isn’t a hesitant, elusive or capricious helper, but someone totally reliable and always suitable to help us in every experience of our lives

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Use some of the following activities to direct your students' attention to today's topic.

The meaning of mediator and important Words

Write the Important Words with their definitions on large cards and place them on the mural at the foot of the cross.

Pass out the first student activity sheet (What is a Mediator?). Tell them to choose what they believe is the meaning of the word "mediator" (the answer is Figure No. 3). *"Mediator" means: one who helps to have peace or reach an agreement with people or groups in conflict. The mediator cares about the interests of both parties.*

We recognize Jesus as our mediator. (Write this word on a card and attach it to the mural, next to the cross.) Jesus, through his sacrifice and death on the cross, made it possible for there to be peace and friendship between God and us human beings. Now, Christ intercedes for us before the Father.

Intercede: present the needs or interests of one person to another. To help someone understand another. To pray for the needs of people. In heaven, Jesus is the one who intercedes for us before God.

Priest / high priest: is the person who speaks to God about people and vice versa. The priest is the one who intercedes by praying to God for people. They help God and people have an intimate relationship. The high priest is the most important priest. We call Jesus high priest because he is the most important and the best that ever existed.

Remember, a mediator considers the views and interests of the two parties or groups with whom they're working. The mediator tries to have peace and agreement among all.

Give students an example of how the Mediator works. Say: *Suppose Alan told some lies about Randy, and now he's worried. Randy is very angry and doesn't want to accept Andy's apologies. The mediator speaks with the two boys, and tries to help Randy understand why Alan did what he did. He also encourages Randy to forgive Alan. He previously spoke with Alan and offered him some ideas that will help him improve the situation with Randy.*

Allow three volunteers to perform a dramatization of this situation. When finished, give a moment for the children to ask questions.

Say: *The mediator's task is very important. It's always desired that relations improve, that there's forgiveness and understanding of one another, and that in the end there's peace between the parties.*

Our Bible study today is about a person who is the mediator between God and the people. Who do you think that person is? (Jesus) We'll discover why Jesus is the perfect mediator between God and us.

"No passing"

Before class, prepare several 50 cm x 20 cm signs on cardstock or other stiff material. Write the following sentences:

- Forbidden to Pass
- Employees Only
- Don't cross
- Entry is prohibited
- Road Closed
- Don't enter
- Private

Show the signs to the children. Ask them: *When you see these signs, what messages do you receive? (We cannot pass, if we aren't the employees we cannot enter, forbidden to cross, etc.) Can you think of other signs like this that you've seen? How do you feel when you're prohibited from entering certain places?*

In the Old Testament, people felt that way in relation to God. They couldn't address him directly or in a simple way. People could go to God only through the priest. For example, if the person wanted to offer a sacrifice, he couldn't do it in his own yard. He had to take the offering to the temple and let the priest offer the animal, and he would ask God to forgive that person. Today that has changed. In our study, we'll discover that we can communicate with God directly, without the help of an earthly priest.

BIBLE STORY

What exactly is a priest? And what is the priesthood?

Give pencils and paper to each student. Say: *What comes to your minds when you hear the word priest? Allow them to write their definitions. Ask them to tell what they wrote. Do you think it's a positive or negative idea? Do you know what a priest does?*

Hand out the 2nd and 3rd student activity sheets (What is a Priest?, Priesthood). Explain that there is information about the priest and the priesthood there; what a priest is and what his responsibilities are. Read through these two pages with them, allowing those who want to read out loud to do so. Ask the students to draw a circle around new words or interesting concepts not known to them while the pages are being read. Explain what they don't understand and clarify doubts.

Add: *In Old Testament times, when God taught people about himself and how they should relate to him, people felt limited and couldn't directly access Him. The purpose was that God wanted to teach them to respect him; he didn't want to be treated lightly or irreverently. That was why God gave them priests, to help people get close to him in the right way.*

Today we don't have priests, in the same way that we no longer offer animal sacrifices. That's because Jesus is our high priest, the perfect sacrifice.

I need a high priest!

Divide the group into four groups. Ask each group to look up their assigned scripture passage from the following list. Follow the instructions of the last student activity sheet for this lesson.

- Hebrews 2:14-16. When Jesus died and rose again, he destroyed the power of Satan. This power determines that when we obey Satan and sin, we deserve the penalty of sin, punishment and death. But Christ died and rose again so that we can trust him and be forgiven. We no longer need to fear the punishment of sin and death. Through him, we receive forgiveness and eternal life.
- Hebrews 2:17-18. Jesus suffered temptations of all kinds. However, he didn't sin. Therefore, he can teach us how to resist temptation. He can also encourage us when we're tempted and give us the victory.
- Hebrews 4:14-16. Just as Jesus experienced and overcame temptation, we can come to him humbly and confidently, for help to overcome temptation.
- Hebrews 5:7-10. Although it seems strange, Jesus, the Son of God, became "perfect" by living on earth as a human being. That's why he is able to understand and help us in every way. He couldn't have done it if he didn't go through all those tests. In this way he becomes our "perfect" Savior.

Have each group explain their passage, and discuss as a class.

Although this text isn't on the student activity sheet, it will help you complete the teaching. Ask everyone to look up:

- 1 Timothy 2:5. This passage reminds us that Jesus is the only mediator we have and need. Because he is God, he can help us know the Creator. Because he is human, he understands us and can help us live for God.

Explain: *If you had to say in your own words why Jesus is a perfect priest and mediator for us, what would you say?* Let several students respond (Jesus had the

kind of human experiences necessary to be our priest. He is both human and divine. He went through all the circumstances that we also go through. He understands God, and us.)

Tell the children to complete the student sheet activity, expressing in writing how they want God to help them.

ACTIVITIES

Memorization

Repeat the memory activity from the last class. Make a race track of "biblical text" in the courtyard. Separate girls from boys. Make a finish line with something. Tell them that they should run quickly, say the memory verse well and in an understandable way. When one has finished saying it, another will run and repeat the passage. If someone makes a mistake, forgets or omits some part, they must return running to the end of the line until their turn comes again.

The team that finishes first with all its members next to the "finish line" will be the winner.

Warning: nobody can help their teammates. If someone does, the two children will return to the end of the line for not complying with the rules.

To End

This being the last lesson of the unit, prepare some simple prizes to offer to the children who learned the memory verse. It can be a fruit or cookies (they shouldn't always be treats). Also a pencil, pens, stickers, etc.

You can organize a competition of questions and answers as a review of the unit and give prizes to those who finish in first, second and third place. Use your creativity to make the class flashy and enjoyable for students. That way they'll want to return.

End with a prayer of gratitude for Jesus Christ, our high priest:

- Because he gave his life as the best and perfect offering.
- Because we no longer need to bring animals to sacrifice for our sins.
- Because Christ intercedes for us before the Father.
- Because in his death he washed away all our sins.
- Because we can go to the Father praying at any time, without the need of a priest.
- Because God listens to us directly.

Encourage the children to return for the start of the next unit, which will talk about "lives transformed by Jesus."

Year 3

Introduction – Unit VIII

LIVES TRANSFORMED BY JESUS

Biblical References: John 4:1-30, 39-42; John 9; Luke 8:26-39; John 3:1-18

Biblical Truth: Jesus makes a differences in the lives of all who know him.

Unit Memory Verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him isn't condemned, but whoever doesn't believe stands condemned already because they haven't believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).*

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Understand that a personal encounter with Christ can make a big change in people's lives.
- Discover the difference that comes from developing a relationship with Christ.
- Follow Jesus Christ's example and make a difference in the world around them.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 31: The Woman with a Past

Lesson 32: A Man Blind From Birth

Lesson 33: A Victim of Evil

Lesson 34: A Teacher Wants to Know

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Pre-teens may think that the world is a terrible place. Crimes, diseases, poverty and immorality have devastating effects. Many of them feel that they cannot do anything about it, and therefore feel frustrated. In a subtle way, peer pressure can lead them to compromise their beliefs. Some will feel ashamed of their faith. But it's important they know that there is someone who can produce a significant change. Jesus Christ makes a difference in the life of each person who responds to him personally.

The Bible is much more than a book of interesting stories. Each of the people that the children will encounter in the four lessons of this unit was transformed because they had a personal encounter with Christ. It changed the way they saw themselves. And they faced opposition because they were filled with inner strength after meeting him. Today's pre-teens need the confidence that's acquired only when they know the Lord personally. Pray that each of them will receive this gift from God that is salvation, and that they give their lives completely to Christ.

The Woman With a Past

Biblical References: John 4:1-30, 39-42

Lesson Objective: That the students know that Jesus loves everyone and wants to change their lives, and that they can feel his love and know that he forgives all sin.

Memory verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him isn't condemned, but whoever doesn't believe stands condemned already because they haven't believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The Samaritan woman didn't fit in and she knew it. That's why she arrived at the well at noon. At that time there were no groups of people making fun of her, pointing her out, laughing, or even ignoring her. Guilt and loneliness were her only company at that time of day. It was there, at the water well, where she met Jesus.

Surely some of the preteens will feel like her: alone, displaced, without love and without friends. They have begun a stage of their life in which they don't fit in with any particular group. They're no longer children, but neither are they adolescents. They want more freedom, but they aren't legally mature to do some things, such as driving a car, or making more serious decisions.

Preteens face many pressures during this time of their life. In school, both teachers and principals preach about "tolerance", but in the schoolyard or the cafeteria, the dynamics between them are totally different.

Likewise, preteens with spiritual sensitivity can feel a great distance between themselves and God. But this lesson will help them see that there is someone who wants to destroy the barriers that separate them from God. That someone is Jesus. He can change their life, if they'll let him.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Fences and walls

Did you ever think about the walls and fences you know?

I've seen some that are very dramatic. For example, I've visited some prisons with high walls and threatening

barbed wire fences around them. I've seen the top of exterior walls of houses that had pieces of glass of different sizes. Once I walked around what was left of the Berlin wall, and I realized the difference between the buildings that were seen on each side of the wall (those in the east were ruined, and those in the west were well maintained and painted). I also saw common fences of white color, others of black iron, and even others of rustic wood, which divided one house from the other.

Why do we raise fences and barriers around us? If we debate this subject, we'll find two different opinions. Some will say, "We need fences and barriers to protect us from people who want to hurt us or steal our belongings." Others may argue, "It's not good to put up fences or bars; they'll think we're afraid."

We can discuss whether it's better that the walls are made of wood or brick. But we must realize that there are other barriers, often invisible, that cause problems among people. Language, especially by its own sayings and terms of a place, can differentiate those from "inside" from those from "outside." Personal attitudes of certain groups can lift barriers between people. Also, discrimination in any form in which it occurs (because of the color of skin, the country where one was born, gender, level of intelligence or culture, economic level, etc.) can create barriers. They get in the way, and often they seem insurmountable.

It's not good for us to hide behind "excuses" of a cultural nature, saying, "This is the way we do this or that thing here." In the scene described in John 4, Jesus broke down two of those cultural barriers. The woman at the well asked him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (v. 9)

The way Jesus responded to her broke down the barrier between "the elect" and "the rejected", as well as between men and women. Jesus didn't let cultural rules prevent him from testifying to the truth of the Gospel. By reading the passage carefully, we see that Jesus never condemned the woman. He clearly described her way of life, but never mentioned the word "sinner." Jesus started from the place where she was. With his attitude and his actions, he released her so that she could begin a new stage of her life. He also helped her see herself as someone loved by God, despite her circumstances. For that reason, she recognized Jesus as the Messiah (a new revelation for her) and could see herself as a witness of Christ (an extraordinary goal).

Meditate on the following:

What are the invisible fences that preteens raise around them to keep "strangers" away?

Ask yourself as a teacher: What are the cultural norms or prejudices that stand in my way in dealing with the real needs of the children in my class?

Important words

- **Unconditional love:** love that has no limitations or conditions; Love that cannot be won or lost. The person who decides to love without conditions does it regardless of what the other person is like or what he did or didn't do. Unconditional love doesn't end even if it's not reciprocated by the other person. That's the kind of love God has for us.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

The most important day

Hand out the first student activity sheet (What a Difference a Day Makes). You'll need pencils or pens for your students to write or draw what happened on the most important day of their lives. Encourage them to think about what that day was and how it changed their life. Say: *We can all remember the most important day of our life.*

Ask the children to show their drawings and tell what happened on that day so important to them. You can bring something prepared in advance or you could also draw your most important day.

Explain: *Just as we had a very important day in our life, there was a woman who also had a very special day. Today we'll learn about the life of that woman who lived in biblical times. We'll see what happened in the most important day of her life.*

BIBLE STORY

Jesus and the woman by the well (drama)

If possible, before class give copies of the drama from the second student activity sheet to those who will be participating in the drama so they can read through it beforehand and be prepared. (You'll need a narrator, the Samaritan woman, and Jesus.)

Allow time for the group to read and act out their parts of the drama in front of the class.

Narrator: Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her;

Jesus: "Will you give me a drink?"

Narrator: His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

Samaritan Woman: "You are a Jew and I'm a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

Narrator: For Jews don't associate with Samaritans.

Jesus: If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Samaritan Woman: Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?

Jesus: Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Samaritan Woman: Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.

Jesus: Go, call your husband and come back.

Samaritan Woman: I have no husband.

Jesus: You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.

Samaritan Woman: Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.

Jesus: Woman, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you don't know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Narrator: What Jesus was saying to the woman was that the place where a person worships is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that we worship God from the heart.

At the end of the drama, hand out activity sheets #2 & #3 and ask volunteers to read the following passages to discover how this story ended: John 4:25-30, 39-42.

Then ask them to answer the questions that appear there:

1. *The Samaritan woman had several problems. What were they? (She was a Samaritan, she was a woman without many rights, she was a sinner.)*
2. *Why do you think Jesus talked to her? (Jesus loved all people unconditionally, no matter who the person was, what she was like, or what she had done.)*
3. *The disciples were away buying food. What do you think they would have done if they had been there when Jesus and the woman started talking? (Maybe they would have been amazed, angry at the woman, questioned Jesus.)*

4. *In what way did Jesus bring about a change in the life of the Samaritan woman? (Jesus told her about the love of God. Although the Bible doesn't tell us about the changes she experienced, we can say that the change in her life was very great. She ended up testifying about Jesus to others and she did it with great enthusiasm.)*
5. *On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = not important and 10 = very important), how would you rate the change in the woman's life, and why?*

ACTIVITIES

What would you do?

Ask the children to think about the following situations and then explain what they would do in each of these cases. You can divide the class into four groups. Make two photocopies of each situation (one for you and one for the group to which it's assigned).

Situation 1: You entered the school cafeteria. Sitting at a table alone is Mary, your classmate. You heard that her grandmother is very sick. At another table is the group of girls you want to make friends with. Who would you sit with?

Situation 2: You had a big fight with your friend Paul. He told you that he was very sorry, but you're still offended. Today he came to your house after school to play with you on the computer. What would you do?

Situation 3: One of the girls in your school started a rumor about someone. Now no one speaks to her because they're all mad at her. One day, you see her walking home alone. You don't like her either, but you start wondering what Jesus wants you to do about it.

Situation 4: Several people from another culture moved to your neighborhood. Many of those children are in your class. They act and are different from your friends. Not everyone speaks your language well. The most "popular" boys in your class stay far away from them. What would you do?

Finish by praying for the children in your class. Ask the Lord to help them be kind to everyone, regardless of the culture or skin color they have, or the language they speak, etc.

God has the power to give us all a loving heart towards our neighbor.

Jesus loves everyone

You'll need a small ball. Guide your students to read John 3:16-18. Ask them to stand in a circle. Toss the ball (which represents the world) to one of the students in the circle.

Whoever catches the ball must name a type of person whom God loves (for example: a drug addict). Then, that child will toss the ball to someone else in the circle. That person should then repeat what the previous child said and add another category (for example: a liar). And

so on until everyone has had a chance or until they have no more ideas.

Say: The biblical message is that God loves everyone equally, including you and me. That doesn't mean that he approves of sinful actions or attitudes. He never stops loving us and never stops looking for us. Jesus wants everyone to come to him.

Memorization

Write the memory text on cards. Since this is a very long text, it may be difficult for some of the children. But if you write the phrases separately on various cards, at the end of the unit, the children will know it by heart. In this unit there are four lessons. In each lesson we'll repeat the same memorization activity for part of the text. Using cards, write one phrase on each card:

1st. class session: *For God so loved the world / that he gave his one and only Son, / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal life.*

2nd. class session: *For God didn't send his Son / into the world/ to condemn the world,/ but to save the world / through him.*

3rd. class session: *Whoever believes in him / isn't condemned, / but whoever doesn't believe / stands condemned already / because they haven't believed / in the name of God's one and only Son. / (John 3:16-18)*

4th. class session: Practice the whole text.

Practice several times playing different ways:

- Getting in a circle and passing a ball or bag full of seeds from child to child, while repeating the parts of the text.
- Marching through the patio and singing to the rhythm of a rap or hip-hop song.
- Having competitions between girls and boys.
- Mixing the parts to assemble the text as if it were a puzzle.
- Writing the words on the board and deleting them while they learn the text.

To end

Ask the children to comment on the last activity sheet for this lesson. Tell them to observe the differences that exist between all the people in the drawing. Give the opportunity to discuss as a class. Remind your children that God loves all people, no matter what their race, social position or sins they have committed in the past.

Finish by praying for your students to be kind and patient with people from other cultures and with everyone who is different from them.

Say, "We're all creations of God, and he loves us all equally. Jesus loved a sinful Samaritan woman. He left us the best example to follow, so we need to imitate him."

A Man Blind From Birth

Biblical References: John 9

Lesson Objective: That the children comprehend what spiritual blindness is, and that they know that this type of blindness is much more serious than physical blindness.

Memory verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him isn't condemned, but whoever doesn't believe stands condemned already because they haven't believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

We live in a world of darkness. People desperately go to many places in search of answers, peace and tranquility. Self-help books, material stuff, education, drugs, religion, fun, etc. are some of the things that people turn to to try to have a full life.

Today, many people confuse “spiritual blindness” with acceptance and tolerance. Preteens are taught to be tolerant, but not in the sense of respecting the rights and opinions of others, but in accepting that any belief is correct and right; that there are no absolute truths; that everything is relative: what is “good for others” is “good for me”.

This lesson emphasizes that Jesus is the true light in a world that lives in darkness.

Preteens are deciding who and what they'll believe. They need to know that, if they allow him, Jesus will illuminate their lives and open their eyes to the truth.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

She arrived at the gala party in her golden carriage, her hair perfectly arranged, wearing her carefully chosen dress. The moment she entered the great hall, all eyes turned to look at her. “Who is that beautiful woman?” they asked. Despite their doubts, they had to admit it: yes, it was one of the maidservants, it was Cinderella. Those who had ignored or treated her with cruelty should now recognize her royalty.

In the same way, when he returned to his home, all eyes were fixed on him. He walked without help.

His neighbors, who knew him as the “blind beggar,” approached to see him. A murmur began to circulate among the people: “No, it can't be ... he was blind from birth ... but ... yes, yes, he looks like him ... could it be him?”

The one who had been blind spoke immediately and said it was he. His neighbors wanted to know, and demanded to know, who had healed him.

In biblical times, there was a belief that diseases were punishments for sins committed. “There is no suffering without there being iniquity,” some rabbis said.

Many believed that the sins of the parents marked the children. Others believed that a child could sin before birth. In this way, a miraculous healing like that of a blind man had its physical and spiritual implications.

Jesus rejected the prejudices of his days. In addition, healing a blind man was the most common miracle. Isaiah had predicted that that would be one of the signs of the Messiah.

Without knowing exactly who the Messiah was, the healthy man told the crowd about his health, the mud, the pool, and how he had received his sight. Faced with surprise and skeptical looks, the man clung to his story ... Jesus had healed him!

He was brought before the Pharisees for another series of interrogations, which led everyone to a theological debate. These were legalists, and they had a long list of “you shouldn'ts” for the Sabbath. They considered it work to put on some mud and heal, and that was forbidden.

But the Pharisees' real problem had to do with their prejudices and jealousy towards Jesus. They didn't feel they had sufficient proof to convince themselves that Jesus was good, or that he could perform miracles no matter what day it was. They decided to remain “blind” to the truth.

So they interrogated the parents of the former blind man. They affirmed the identity of their son, and assured them that the miracle had happened. But because of fear of what the Pharisees could do to them, they decided not to express their faith.

What was their son doing in the meantime? Although the Pharisees had questioned him, made fun of him, and threw him out, the man remained faithful to his story and to Jesus. Verse 27 suggests that he already considered himself a disciple of Jesus. His faith continued to increase.

Then, Jesus appeared again. This time he came to heal the soul of the man who had been blind, and lead

him to the kingdom of God. On both occasions, the man accepted by his own will that Jesus worked in his life until his faith, at last, became worship (v. 38). The transforming power of Christ can make us new creatures, bringing light into our dark life. But as with the blind man and the Pharisees, each of us has the option to choose. We can't help being physically blind. But we can refuse to "be blind by choice." For your personal reflection, teacher:

- What differences do you find between the health of your life now and the one you led before you met Jesus?
- Have you allowed Christ to remove all the "blind spots" of your life, or are there still areas where you're "blind by choice"?
- Which of your students need to see what Christ can do in their lives?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

What would your life be like if ... you couldn't see?

Give the first student activity sheet (What would your life be like if ... you couldn't see?) to the class. Encourage them to imagine and think about what their lives would be like if they couldn't see. Tell them to also think about what it would be like if they couldn't dress themselves, eat, go for a walk, go to school, or play their favorite sport because they were blind. Ask them to draw or write their answers. What would they do in a similar situation? How would their lives be affected?

You can ask them to walk, write, or perform some other action with their eyes closed for a few moments.

Say: *Blindness is something serious. We rely on our ability to see to do everything we do, from getting dressed to riding a bicycle or reading a book. Blind people learn to function in life, but it's not easy.*

Our Bible story today is about a man who was born blind. We'll also see how Jesus called some people blind who weren't physically blind. What do you think the Lord meant by calling them that?

BIBLE STORY

The Sunday newspaper

Pass out the second student sheet activity (The Day of Rest Gazette). Allow time for them to read the passage of John 9:1-12 as a class

Ask: *How would you feel if everyone thought that your parents sinned since you're blind, or that you're blind because you disobeyed God before you were born?*

Ask the students to respond. (Don't let them mention names of people who have a physical problem.) Ask the children to write their answer on the lesson activity sheet.

Then read John 9:13-34.

Explain that the Pharisees tried to keep the law of Moses perfectly. That's why they had created many rules so that people wouldn't break the laws. For example: the fourth commandment says: "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." Moses had told his people that on the Sabbath they shouldn't work. The Pharisees had written many rules, describing what activities were included as work and which ones they could do. For the Pharisees, mixing saliva with a little dirt was work. It was also healing people. That's why, for them, Jesus had not respected the day of rest and, consequently, was a bad person.

Ask the children to write in their own words what happens in this passage.

Finally read John 9:35-41

Explain that the Pharisees' real problem was that they loved their own rules more than God. They worried more that their little rules were followed than applying the great commandment that God had given them to love others as oneself.

They couldn't accept that they were wrong. They were "blind" to the truth. And instead of believing in Jesus, they decided to hate him and became jealous upon seeing the kind of person he was.

- *What did Jesus heal the blind man from?* (He healed his eyes so he could see. But later he also healed his spiritual blindness, helping him understand that he was sent by God to save him.)
- *Why didn't the Pharisees believe in the healing Jesus had done?* (They refused to believe that he was the Son of God and could do miracles. They were blind to see the truth about Jesus.)
- *Who was truly blind in this story?* (The man was physically blind, but he believed in Jesus. The Pharisees remained blind because they refused to believe in Christ.)

Finish by asking:

- *Why is it important that we can "see" spiritually?* (We need to know the truth about Jesus Christ; we must believe in him in order to develop a relationship with God.)
- *What can we do if we're "spiritually blind"?* (Ask Jesus to help us to know him, to believe in the truth, and to love him.)

ACTIVITIES

Which one is worse?

Divide the board into two and write these two questions found in the third student activity (Which is Worse?). Write one on the left and the other on the right of the board for students to read, think and discuss:

1. *Which do you think is worse, physical or spiritual blindness? (Allow students to respond.) What disadvantages do the two types of blindness have? (Write under each question what they say.)*

2. *From which of the two did Jesus heal the man in the story? What did the man do for Jesus to heal him? (Allow the students to respond. Talk about the man's faith. The man believed that Jesus could heal him from his physical blindness and also believed that Jesus was the Son of God, so he was healed of his spiritual blindness.)*

Another way of doing this activity could be that you write these questions on four papers. Divide the class into four groups, divide the questions and ask the groups to write their opinions.

Then everyone will meet again and each group will tell the rest what they thought about each question.

Memorization

Continue repeating the parts of the memory passage given in the previous class and add the portion for today's lesson (2nd class session).

1st. class session: *For God so loved the world / that he gave his one and only Son, / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal life.*

2nd. class session: *For God didn't send his Son / into the world/ to condemn the world,/ but to save the world /through him.*

3rd. class session: *Whoever believes in him / isn't condemned, / but whoever doesn't believe / stands condemned already / because they haven't believed / in the name of God's one and only Son. / (John 3:16-18)*

4th. class session: Practice the whole text.

Practice several times playing different ways:

- Getting in a circle and passing a ball or bag full of seeds from child to child, while repeating the parts of the text.
- Marching through the patio and singing to the rhythm of a rap or hip-hop song.
- Having competitions between girls and boys.
- Mixing the parts to assemble the text as if it were a puzzle.
- Writing the words on the board and deleting them while they learn the text.

To end

It's very important that each student understands the meaning and importance of spiritual blindness. Let them know that we're all "spiritual blind" at birth, and that the day we met, believed and accepted Jesus into our lives, we received healing and could begin to really see.

Also guide them to understand the urgency of being able to help all those around them who are "spiritual blind", because they don't know Jesus, to receive spiritual sight. Tell them to pray for them, asking God to help each person believe in God. Everyone who believes in Jesus is healed from their spiritual blindness.

Finish by singing an appropriate chorus or hymn and discover the key word of the last activity of this lesson (See the Truth).

Notes

A Victim of Evil

Biblical References: Luke 8:26-39

Lesson Objective: To help your students understand that Jesus' power is greater than any kind of evil, and that they can count on him when they're confronted by sin and evil.

Memory verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him isn't condemned, but whoever doesn't believe stands condemned already because they haven't believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Your students live in a world that generally denies the power of God, and even his existence. It also glorifies the power of evil. We have every reason to worry about the influence of evil in the lives of our students.

Although children are maturing, most preteens don't see the consequences of sin and evil. Their youthful curiosity, combined with the pressure of friends, can influence them to experience new sensations. Children need Christian parents, teachers and models to help them recognize the dangers that surround them.

On the other hand, they don't need to live in fear. Jesus' power is stronger than any kind of evil. Satan and his demons were defeated because Jesus died on the cross and was raised to life. Even though the enemy works hard to deceive and do wrong, God gives us his grace and his power to overcome Satan.

The key to defeating sin and evil is the Christian's relationship with the Lord. This makes all the difference between success and spiritual failure. The closer you're to Christ, the stronger you'll be. Encourage your class to strengthen their personal relationships with the Lord so that they can overcome evil.

Personal thoughts for you:

- What kind of evil do you see influencing students?
- How can you pray for them this week?
- What weapons do you use to overcome evil in your life?

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Horror stories are exciting in our culture. Many people enjoy and have fun listening to stories that scare them.

In the gentile region of the Gadarenes, there were probably many fables of terror that made people tremble or made them look over their shoulders, or avoid dark alleys. Living very close to there was a man possessed by demons.

The region of the Gadarenes was near the sea of Galilee. In that area there were 10 independent Greek cities, known as Decapolis. One of the important cities was Gadara; the demoniac lived nearby. The condition of the man is one of the most clear examples of what Satan and evil promises and offers.

- Sin promises freedom, but gives chains.
- Sin says: "You're in control, you have the helm, you're the one who drives," but the person possessed by Satan had no power, not even to protect himself.
- Sin promises: "You are one of the group", but the man in the story lived alone, in "the deserts" (Luke 8:29).
- Sin says: "You are the center of attention and you'll have fun," but Legion lived in the graves, the place of the dead.
- Sin says: "You are important," but the given name of the demonized man was no longer remembered. He was so dominated by demons that everyone knew him by the nickname "legion."

When Jesus spoke to the possessed man, the demons replied: "Do not mess with us, leave us alone." Ironically the demons invoked the power of God and cried out for mercy. They knew that the power of God is greater than that of Satan.

But why didn't Jesus destroy or imprison the demons? In other words, why did God allow evil to continue? The answer is that it wasn't yet the time indicated (Matthew 8:29) for the destruction of the evil one. The day will come, but in the meantime, God works to overcome the evil of our lives, until finally he judges and destroys it completely.

The people were "scared" and asked Jesus to leave (v. 34). Although they had trembled in the fear of the demons that possessed the man, they couldn't deal with the supernatural fear infused by the power of God.

In most cases, Jesus told the people that he healed to not say anything about his miracles. But this time, he instructed the man to go to his house and tell them what had happened to him. There are many reasons for this.

First, this would extend Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles.

Second, although the Gentiles also waited for the Messiah, they didn't try to force Jesus to assume political power as the Jews did.

Finally, the dramatic change in the life of the man would be the positive proof that something miraculous had happened. Mark 5:20 says that the man spread the news throughout Decapolis.

We must fear evil, enough to stay away from it. But we must also remember that the power of Jesus is greater than the power of darkness. The Lord has the power and authority to change our lives, to sweep away everything old and bring in everything new. What power is your whole life based on?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

What is evil?

What do we mean when something is bad? Give students the activity sheet from lesson 33 (What is Bad?). Ask them to circle everything that is "bad". Say: *Our world is full of evil and evil influences. Many times we cannot decide if something is bad. Draw a circle around the things that you think are bad.*

When they have finished, ask: *Why do you think those things are bad? Why did you choose that? Evil is powerful and scary. We can't control it. But we don't need to live in fear. Today we'll see why.*

Rotten apple!

Before class, look for an apple or other fruit that's beautiful and bright on one side, and rotten on the other. You must hide or cover the bad side of the fruit with your hand.

In class, show the children the beautiful fruit you brought (cover the ugly side) and ask:

- Is this a beautiful and delicious fruit?
- What makes you think that it's a delicious and beautiful fruit?

Then turn the fruit so that the children see the rotten side. Ask:

- Is it a good fruit?
- How do you know that this fruit is rotten?

Say: *Sin and evil are like rotten fruit. At first we don't see the bad parts. Many times the rotten part is inside the fruit, and we don't realize it until we take the first bite and ... Yuck! We have a piece of spoiled fruit in our mouth, ugly and in rotten condition. If we don't cut the rotten part out, what happens? (The bad part ruins the rest of the fruit.) If we have a fruit basket, what happens*

if we let the bad fruit touch the rest of the healthy fruit? (All fruit will also be ruined.) Today we'll see how evil affected a man and enslaved him until someone powerful (Jesus) arrived to free him.

BIBLE STORY

Incredible but Real! Crazy pigs

As you begin the story, show students where this story is in the Bible. Ask the children to read the story from the student activity sheet.

Assign the parts of Scott and Legion. The rest of the students will be the audience that will watch the news. If you want, prepare a costume for Legion and a microphone for Scott.

After the drama discuss the following questions:

1. *How did evil affect the man known as Legion? (Evil consumed him; he was totally out of control; he lived alone; he was a danger to himself and others. Possibly at one time he had everything, but now, nothing.)*
2. *Who was more powerful than Legion? (Jesus)*
3. *Describe how this man's life changed after his encounter with Jesus. (Help the children think about all the positive things the man now had:*
 - a. *A relationship with God, peace, acting on his own will, freedom from evil*
 - b. *A house, clean clothes and food, a job, etc.*
 - c. *He was interacting with other people*
 - d. *He had a family that loved him and was not afraid of him.*
 - e. *Friends, he was part of the community*

Ask a child to read Mark 5:18-20. Explain that Decapolis was a city full of Gentiles who knew very little about the true God. What effect would the healthy man have caused by going to the city and telling everyone about the power of Jesus?

The great truth that the Word of God leaves us is this: "Jesus has power over any kind of evil."

Mural: "The crazy pigs"

Draw a pig in the center of a large piece of posterboard, and ask the children to color it. They can paint or color mud around the animal's feet. Then, draw or cut from newspapers and magazines the things that can be bad for anyone. If you don't have pictures, they can write the words, like stealing, lying, etc. When they finish the drawings, ask them to glue or tape them on the posterboard around the pig. Tell them to comment on the photos or figures they placed around the pig.

ACTIVITIES

Hand out the 4th activity sheet (Overcoming Evil), and ask the students to complete the crossword puzzle.

Across

- Name of the possessed man. (Luke 8:30) (Legion)
- Creatures that ran into the lake and drowned. (Luke 8:32) (Pigs)
- _____ every kind of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22) (Reject)
- Who is more powerful than demons? (Luke 8:28) (Jesus)
- I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have _____ the world. (John 16:33) (Defeated)

Down

- _____ from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (Psalms 34:14) (Turn away)
- Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with _____. (Romans 12:21) (Good)
- Dear friend, don't _____ what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. (3 John 1:11) (Imitate)
- The man from whom the _____ had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, ... (Luke 8:38) (Demons)
- Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who _____ that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:5) (Believes)

At the end of the crossword, talk about the questions and answers as a class. Lead them to think about what bad things they'll face during the coming week. Encourage them to remember what they learned in this class, and that when faced with evil, they should pray and ask the Lord to help and care for them. He will give them the strength to overcome "evil with good."

Memorization

Continue repeating the parts of the text given in the previous two classes and add the portion of this lesson. (3rd class session)

1st. class session: *For God so loved the world / that he gave his one and only Son, / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal life.*

2nd. class session: *For God didn't send his Son / into the world/ to condemn the world,/ but to save the world /through him.*

3rd. class session: *Whoever believes in him / isn't condemned, / but whoever doesn't believe / stands condemned already / because they haven't believed / in the name of God's one and only Son. / (John 3:16-18)*

4th. class session: Practice the whole text.

Practice several times playing different ways:

- Getting in a circle and passing a ball or bag full of seeds from child to child, while repeating the parts of the text.
- Marching through the patio and singing to the rhythm of a rap or hip-hop song.
- Having competitions between girls and boys.
- Mixing the parts to assemble the text as if it were a puzzle.
- Writing the words on the board and deleting them while they learn the text.

To end

Make a circle with the children. Two boys or two girls should hold hands and pray for each other. Each one will pray for his partner saying something like this: "Lord, I beg you to help (name) to be brave every day, to overcome evil." The other partner will pray the same way.

End with an appropriate chorus and a prayer for the children.

Invite them to return for the last class of the unit. If you wish, you can prepare a small party in honor of those who didn't miss any classes, or those who learned all the memory passage by heart.



Notes

A Teacher Wants to Know

Biblical References: John 3:1-18

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand what “born again” means, to take that step and start their personal relationship with Jesus.

Memory verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him isn't condemned, but whoever doesn't believe stands condemned already because they haven't believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Adolescence is close for you students. They have already begun the search for the discovery of who they are. Some will look at their friends, sports heroes or movie stars as models of what they want to become. Others will find definition in what they do: sports, good grades in their studies or hobbies, etc. Some will identify in great measure with their families or church people. Whatever path they take, this process can produce fear for children of this age, even if they don't admit it. Remember when you were this age!

The church can provide a safe place where pre-teens can conduct their identity search. Who better to help boys and girls find themselves and their purpose for life than God and strong Christians as models?

In the first three lessons of the unit, the pre-teens learned about the difference Jesus made in the lives of the people he met. This lesson will help the students identify the most important difference Jesus wants to make in their lives. Like all people, they need a personal relationship with Christ as Savior and Lord.

This week, think about each of the students. Who are Christians? Who probably aren't? How many are insecure? Ask God to help you deal spiritually with each of them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

If you've ever held a newborn baby, you know what happens to us immediately. Looking at this person so small and full of joy and innocence, a huge smile

illuminates our face. Seeing their expressions, we begin to think about their potential. What will they be when they grow up? Where will they live the day they leave home? What great achievements will they make? What reputation will they have?

Babies remind us that each person comes to this life with a fresh and clean beginning. They don't have baggage to carry; they don't have memories or history. Life is just beginning for them. Everything in their journey of life is ahead; there is no past that overwhelms them.

John writes of a man who learned that God's kingdom is full of newborn babies, people who experienced a fresh start and a new day. Whatever was in their past was left behind; they're only interested in the future. Nicodemus came to Jesus concerned about his past. Jesus told him that what really matters is the future; a future that will start fresh and new.

Nicodemus was an important man in his world. He was like a teacher teaching generations of students. He took his position seriously as a member of the Jewish council and as a Pharisee.

In addition to his religious beliefs and tasks, Nicodemus couldn't ignore the miracles performed by Jesus. And secretly at night, he sought the Lord with the desire to find the answers to his questions and doubts from another teacher, a fellow professional who came from God.

Jesus answered his question before he could ask it: "... He who is not born again cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus was stunned. How can he be born again? What did Jesus really ask Nicodemus?

In a moment, Jesus threw aside all the knowledge of Nicodemus, that great teacher of Israel, and told him that he should start from scratch; that he needed to be made new. Imagine suddenly understanding that you must forget everything you already know and start completely again.

The entrance to the kingdom of God isn't achieved by human action. We cannot push or build a means to enter. When we're born again, we give freedom to God to mold and guide us. Our old sin and guilt are removed and we understand that we're clean and innocent again, like a newborn baby. Everything inappropriate that defines people, status, their failures, pride, their history, etc. becomes part of the past by allowing God to perform the miracle of a new beginning and a consequent life.

Personal thoughts for you:

- What happened to you when you were born again into the family of God?
- In what ways has your life been different since then?
- How can you tell that story to the pre-teens?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

The best gift

Pass out the first activity sheet from the student book, lesson 34 (The Best Gift). Say: *Gifts are special and we enjoy them a lot when we receive them. Draw or explain on the gift box of the student activity sheet, the best gift you've received in your entire life.* Allow time for the students to finish. *What was your best gift, and explain how you felt upon receiving it.*

Gifts can be diverse. They have all shapes, colors, types and prices. Today we'll learn about a gift that costs us nothing, that comes from God, and that's the best gift a person can receive in his whole life.

Who?

Before class, attach a sheet of cardboard/posterboard to a wall or blackboard where you can glue or tape pictures of your students and you. Everyone should bring a photo of when they were children or babies to this class (request them in advance).

When they arrive at the class, place a number behind each photo, and give the same number to the student who gives the picture (with the purpose of returning the photo to the right person, especially if the class is large). Attach the photo of each child to the poster. Don't allow children to look at the pictures until it's the appropriate time. Leave space between the photos to be able to write the names.

Say: *Each of us were babies at one time. Today we'll look at our photos from the time when we were children or babies.*

Now show the poster with the photos and let the students guess who the children in the photos are. Laugh with them and listen to their comments. Once the photographs are recognized, or the children finally say who they were in the picture, write the names under each of them. You can place the picture on one of the walls of the room for a few weeks, and then deliver the photos back to each child.

Comment: *How would you feel if someone tells you that you should be a baby again? Would you like it or not?* Let the children respond, and say why they would like it or why not.

Continue: *Being babies for some is a bad idea. After all, babies do very little. They have to rely on other people helping them. But once upon a time, Jesus said that to a very respected teacher. He said: "You have to be born again." Let's see what Jesus meant by those words.*

BIBLE STORY

Ask two boys read the Bible story in the form of dialogue. One will represent the part of Jesus and the other the part of Nicodemus. You can read verses 1 and 2. Encourage the students to read with emphasis.

Born again?

Once they finished reading the Bible; Ask the following to help the pre-teens understand the phrase "born again."

- *What is the relationship of believing in Jesus with being born again?* (When a baby is born, a new life begins. The same happens when we say "born again." Before being "born again," we had no spiritual life. In other words, we didn't know God, and we didn't love him or obey him. But when we trust that Jesus is our Savior, God changes our inner selves. Now we want to love him and obey him. That is, a new relationship with God begins. That's "born again." This is another type of birth, it's spiritual birth.)
- *Verse 16 says that those who believe in Jesus will receive eternal life. So what does "believe in Jesus" mean?* (We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that his death on the cross made it possible for God to forgive our sins. We trust that he loves us and helps us to change. What we used to do wrong (sin), now we don't do anymore. We used to sin, but not now. God's promise of a new birth is for us now; because we believe, now we can ask Jesus to forgive our sins, and make us "born again." In this way, we have a new relationship with God.)
- *What do you think is "eternal life"?* (It's life that has no end. But it's also something else; it's a different life that God gives us. In this new life, we enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord; it's a relationship of love and obedience to him.)

At the end of this part, find out if the students have any questions. Then ask or review to see if everyone understood what was said. Ask them to explain how they would teach a friend about being "born again."

Finish by saying: *Being born into this world is a wonderful event. We begin life with thousands of opportunities and possibilities. And being born in the spiritual life is extraordinary; it gives us the possibility of a relationship with God here on earth and for all eternity.*

ACTIVITIES

A note for my friend

Distribute cards made with small 10 cm x 10 cm cards/paper. Ask the children to write to their friends who don't know Jesus. Ask them to think of a name. Now that they have the name, they should write the idea of being "born again." When they finish, they can read their notes to the class. (Clarify misconceptions)

Memorization

This is the last class of the unit. No doubt you have already planned to have a small celebration. Ask the children who learned the entire Bible passage to tell the class. Encourage those who have some left to learn. Talk about the importance of keeping the Word in our minds and hearts. You can give a small gift to the children who learned the biblical passage.

1st. class session: *For God so loved the world / that he gave his one and only Son, / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal life.*

2nd. class session: *For God didn't send his Son / into the world/ to condemn the world,/ but to save the world /through him.*

3rd. class session: *Whoever believes in him / isn't condemned, / but whoever doesn't believe / stands condemned already / because they haven't believed / in the name of God's one and only Son. / (John 3:16-18)*

4th. class session: Practice the whole text.

Practice several times playing different ways:

- a. Getting in a circle and passing a ball or bag full of seeds from child to child, while repeating the parts of the text.
- b. Marching through the patio and singing to the rhythm of a rap or hip-hop song.

- c. Having competitions between girls and boys.
- d. Mixing the parts to assemble the text as if it were a puzzle.
- e. Writing the words on the board and deleting them while they learn the text.

To end

Love cards

Pass out the last student activity sheet - Cards of Love (page #3 on one side with page #4 on the other). Guide the children in what they'll write on one side of the cards, and the scripture verse will be on the other. Ask them to think about specific names to whom they'll give them.

This is a good time to pray for the people who will receive the love cards.

Then explain the verse on the other side of the cards. Remind the children of the importance of confessing their sins to Jesus. He is willing to forgive them and give them the opportunity to be "born again" as Jesus told Nicodemus. We can all receive the free gift of salvation.

This is the time for the children to enjoy the experience of salvation. Have a call to the "altar" and encourage the pre-teens, by faith, to enjoy this new birth. Tell them that they can accept the wonderful gift of salvation. Pray with them and for them. If there are children who accepted Jesus, ask them to tell about their new experience. Mention that they now have a new life because they were "born again" in their spiritual lives.

End with a prayer of thanks to the Lord and a song of praise for his love and forgiveness.



Year 3

Introduction – Unit IX

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

Biblical References: Acts 2:1-47; 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 10:1-48; 12:1-24

Biblical Truth: The Holy Spirit grants the Church the power to carry out the task that God entrusted to her, to survive and grow.

Unit Memory Verse: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- To get a better understanding of how the Holy Spirit carries out his work in the Church.
- Develop their trust in God by understanding that he protects and enables us to carry out the mission of the Church.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 35: The Church: Glorious Birth

Lesson 36: The Church: Learns to Walk

Lesson 37: The Church: A Community of Love

Lesson 38: The Church: Facing the Challenges

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

““What doesn’t cost anything isn’t worth it.” This popular saying can be applied to almost every area of our lives. It implies that we don’t find the value of things until we’ve invested money, time, energy or reflection into it.

Many pre-teens don’t properly appreciate having the opportunity to meet regularly in the church. They may not know that in some parts of the world, Christians still suffer and risk their lives simply by expressing their beliefs.

This unit will help them have more appreciation for the church and for the task that the Holy Spirit carries out in it. It was only by the Holy Spirit that believers remained faithful after generations of intense persecution. These Christians were able to bear it because they loved God and wanted to share the message of Christ with others.

The Church: A Glorious Birth

Biblical References: Acts 2:1-47

Lesson Objective: To realize that the arrival of the Holy Spirit transformed the disciples' lives and guided the birth of the church.

Memory verse: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Growing up attending church isn't enough to be a Christian. An experience that transforms the heart is necessary. The presence of the Holy Spirit, which gives us the power to live and witness effectively for Christ, is indispensable. This lesson will teach the pre-teens that God sent the Holy Spirit in order to empower Christians to live a life worthy of the Gospel. For the continuity of the Church, members need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be trained by him. It's through the power of the Spirit that the Church survives and grows. Children of this age need the help of the Holy Spirit to live as Christians. They're already part of the Church. They can be counted among leaders in the future. This lesson will help them grasp the importance of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The events of the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, are important for our understanding of how the Church should be and what it should do. As we read these 47 verses, we'll notice at least seven significant ideas:

1. Believers waited for the Holy Spirit. About 120 of them were in a room, in the upper part of a house, known as the "upper room", where "They all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14). They expected God to fulfill his promise: send the Holy Spirit and restore the kingdom of Israel at a time determined by him. Only God can provide what the Church needs. Human efforts can never replace the Holy Spirit.

2. The first gift of the Holy Spirit was the ability to present the Gospel in other languages. They were immediately able to communicate the Good News in different languages, although they had never spoken them before. Even today, the Church communicates the Gospel in a way that's understood by all.

3. Some of the people who heard the believers talking misunderstood them. When the Gospel was proclaimed in different languages at the same time, those present were perplexed. The truth of the Gospel is always a threat to an egocentric lifestyle. These troubled people found an explanation for what was happening: they said that the disciples were drunk, because they didn't believe in the Holy Spirit. Christianity is also rejected in similar ways in our day.

4. Peter's sermon reveals the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Peter was the least likely candidate to be the first preacher. He who had denied knowing the Lord now humbly proclaims the truth that Jesus is the expected Messiah for all. Only God can make such a big change.

5. The Holy Spirit is for all people. Peter and the believers of the early church weren't the only ones to receive this power. "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39). Two thousand years isn't too much time or distance, that is, we're also included in that promise.

6. All Christians are called to be ministers, trained by the Holy Spirit. The 120 that were assembled proclaimed the Gospel on that day and in the following years. It was the Holy Spirit who prepared the Church to preach the Gospel in public, to attract a crowd and say something worthy of being heard. Today, it's also the Holy Spirit who gives believers a variety of gifts for ministry. Some are called to preach and teach, they equip the rest to develop the ministries given by God.

7. The Holy Spirit creates a community. A careful reading of Acts 2:41-47 reveals how the first believers lived their lives together. They weren't a group of individuals demanding their rights. Rather, they show us that "community" is the central idea of the book of Acts, and the Holy Spirit of God is the main actor in this work.

This chapter of Acts is an early look at the Church. Although this Pentecost was something spectacular and unrepeatable, it reveals what the normal church experience should be like. Wind and fire were somewhat abnormal, and the languages used that day may have been a unique experience. But the fact that the Holy Spirit brought new life, fellowship, worship, freedom, humility and power must be a vital part of the Church ... always..

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Use some of these activities for students to deepen their knowledge about the beginnings of the Christian church.

Let's generate power

Give the children the first student activity sheet for lesson 35 (Generate). Ask them to follow the instructions to fill in the keyword at the bottom of the page. (Answers: Batteries, Fire, Wind, Water, Electricity. What do each of these generate? POWER)

Say: Power is what the Holy Spirit gave the first Christians to preach the Word of God. That power was the key to the strength that the first disciples felt. Remember the story of Peter, a scared man who denied the Lord. After receiving power from God's Holy Spirit, he is now someone full of the power of the Spirit who preaches the Good News to the crowds.

From fear to faith

You'll need a small ball or a bag full of seeds or sand. Ask the students to sit on the floor, forming a circle. Say: Let's talk about when you have felt fear. Start by telling about an experience of yours when you were afraid. Then throw the bag to a student and let him tell about an experience in which he has felt fear. Continue playing until everyone has an opportunity.

Comment: *We have seen that both children and adults have been through moments of fear. What can you do when you go through circumstances that make you afraid? What would help you to be brave? How do you overcome that feeling?*

After listening to their various answers, ask if they know any character in the Bible who felt fear. (Peter and the other disciples when Jesus was arrested; the shepherds when the angels announced Jesus' birth; the Israelites when they were about to enter Canaan, etc.)

Ask: *Have you ever been afraid to tell other people about Jesus? Then add: When Jesus was in the middle of his trial, Peter was afraid to admit that he knew him and that he was one of his disciples. But something happened to him later that helped him overcome his fear. Let's see what caused that change in Peter, from a fearful man to a man full of faith.*

Clay Churches

Look for some significant facts that happened when your church was built. Find out names of believers and pastors of those times, for example, and try to find some photos.

In class, write on the board the words "Church", capital C, and "church" in lower case c.

Ask the children if they know the difference in the meaning of those two words. Then explain that the word "church" in lower case c refers to local congregations anywhere in the world. It's a small or large group of believers in a certain place; such as your local church. The word "Church" capitalized refers to the Christian church, to all who believe in Jesus Christ; that even includes those who have already died. Every Christian who believes in Christ and is saved, from each denomination, is part of the body of Christ: the Church.

Give a piece of clay or play-doh (recipes at the beginning of this book) to each student and say: *Think about what you already know about the local church and about the Church, the body of Christ. Then with your clay, make a symbol that describes these churches.* (Possible symbols: globe, a cross, one or more people, a dove, a building, etc.) Generate enthusiasm in them to be creative in their designs.

Once they're done, have them show their drawings to the class and explain why they chose that symbol and what it means to them. Give an explanation about the history of your church and allow time for questions.

Then say: *Today we'll learn how the Church (capitalized) was born.*

Important words

Write the words and their meaning on posterboard to place on the mural.

- **Power:** in the New Testament, it is seen in the bearers of authority and powerful actions. Jesus had and has the power to forgive sins. The disciples and the church had and have the power to proclaim the Gospel.
- **Pentecost:** a religious festival dating from the Old Testament. It was celebrated 50 days after the Passover (Easter for us Christians). We Christians celebrate it as the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the day the early Church was born. In the Old Testament it was a celebration that showed joy and gratitude for the abundant harvest.

BIBLE STORY

Power at Pentecost

Pass out the 2nd and 3rd pages of the student activity sheet that has the Bible reading and the activity that follows (Before & After). Choose volunteers for each part to read and dramatize Acts 2 with lots of expression and enthusiasm. Remember that Peter was an effusive man and showed great authority.

When they finish reading, guide the children to the “Before and After” activity. Provide time for them to look at the Bible quotes for how they were before Pentecost and how they acted after the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.

ACTIVITIES

The Church: Mural

You’ll need a light colored poster paper to line the mural (place a contrasting border), photo, drawing or the silhouette of a church, scissors, glue, masking tape, pictures of the students when they were babies, your own baby picture, signs with the important words of each lesson, etc. Ask students for their help to assemble the mural. Two or three of them who like to draw can make the church and place it in the center of the mural. On one side reserve a place for important words. Inside the outline of the church, paste the photos of your students, your photo and the figures of the apostles. In each lesson you can add pictures according to the teaching.

Explain: *This month we’ll learn how the early church began to take its first baby steps and how God, through his Holy Spirit, was moving in every aspect. Since we’ll talk about a baby church, we’ll put up our pictures of when we were little.*

Give the students colored paper or posterboard to make a beautiful background that they’ll place behind the photos. Let them trim their edges and put up their photos. Write the name of each child on their photo.

The Church that grows

Say: *All babies need care, love, food, toys, diaper changes and also new clothes because they grow so fast. Likewise, our church needs care because it’s always growing. If a baby doesn’t grow, it will soon get sick and die. The church needs our care, it needs new people, it requires nourishing itself with the Word of God so as not to get sick and die (that is, to close its doors). All of us, not only adults, but also children like you, can do a lot to care for and grow the church.*

Ask: *What can we do to help the church grow?* (Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us, preach, attend services, announce the Gospel of Jesus to other people, invite others to come to services, clean the church, decorate, place flowers, give our offerings, use our talents, sing, take on responsibility and leadership, etc.)

I want to encourage you to get involved now. You don’t need to wait until you’re adults to participate in the life of the church. There is much you can do now. (It will be helpful for them if you speak with the Sunday School Ministries director or their pastor to plan some kind of simple service activity. It may be to clean certain areas of the church, paint, decorate,

provide a special participation during the service some Sunday during the month, etc.) Allow the children to be an active part of the church today, and not just spectators or visitors one hour a week.

Help is here!

Give the children the last activity of this lesson (Help Is Here!). They must follow the instructions in crossing out specific letters to find the appropriate words. Say: *These are some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps us to do what God asks of us. Find the words and write them on the lines provided.* Help the children who don’t know the meaning of some words. Give examples. They are: 1. courage, 2. bravery, 3. understanding, 4. faith, 5. strength, 6. direction, 7. determination, 8. power 9. patience and 10. testimony.

Memorization

Divide the text into two parts. The first part will be learned during the first two classes and the second in the remaining two.

First part: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”*

Second part: *“... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20)*

At the time of memorization, write the first part of the text on the board. Repeat it with the students several times. Divide the class into two groups. Then give a blank sheet of paper to each group and pencils to each child. The first child will write the first word of the text, immediately pass the paper to the next person, who will do the same with the second word and so on. The team that finishes first writing the text correctly will be the winner. Prepare some prizes for children who learn it by heart. In the first part of the text there are 25 words. In the second part there are 24 words, plus the reference.

To End

Pray together that God may guide you as a teacher to help children be part of the church today, that they feel love and concern for their church as if it were their second home, and that they can grow up loving their church in such a way that they want to be involved and be a part of the ministry.

Encourage students to ask the Lord to help them serve in the areas that they wish in age appropriate tasks: involving them in choirs, in reading the Word, in collecting offerings, in welcoming people as they arrive at church, in cleaning, etc.

Pay special attention to recognizing that God may call some to full-time Christian or missionary service.

Finish this lesson with a prayer and an appropriate challenge.

The Church: Learns to Walk

Biblical References: Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37

Lesson Objective: To help the children know some of the first steps of the early church and how we can imitate them today.

Memory verse: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The approach you give to this lesson is very important. If you tell the pre-teens the way the early Christians lived as if it were a “story” that has already happened, the result will be negative.

But if you present it as a role model for today, it will be very different.

We’re sure that if the Lord could give us advice on this point he would say: “Do as they did, because they clearly understood the Gospel of Jesus Christ!” You as a teacher know very well that some teachings of the Bible constitute a true “counterculture” in many respects. It seems that we should always row against the current.

Therefore, many things that seem “normal” to the world, God doesn’t approve. And on the other hand, the ways of life taught by the Gospel are madness to a secular mind.

This lesson is precisely very special for our times and may seem very rare, depending on the approach given by the teacher.

Giving from what they had to meet the needs of the brothers and sisters in the faith, remaining united in love every day, living in obedience to the teachings of Christ, and having such a positive public testimony sadly isn’t always seen in how Christians behave in our churches today. As a teacher, use your skill and creativity to instill in the preteens the idea that that was - and still is - the right thing to do. The apostles and the first Christians worked as people full of the Holy Spirit. Without doubt, the unity to which the Lord had called them was powerful. That unity and love between them enabled them to share much more than a spoken message; they shared their earthly possessions. That was a powerful lived-out message.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The way Christians lived in the early church was the way the Lord had planned the lives of his children. Jesus Christ didn’t come to earth to found a new religion. There were already many at that time. He came to bring a different way of life. To change people’s hearts. And when the heart changes, the way we behave is completely different.

Selfishness gives way to generosity. We begin to discover the joy generated by the fact that we stop thinking only of our needs and give of ourselves to others.

It’s very important that the preteens understand that the Christian life is precisely that, a way of life and not a religion full of regulations and a long list of things that can and cannot be done.

That life, simple, generous, clean, is what pleases the Lord and is what we see clearly in Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”

This means that there was a total unity of belief and spirit. And that produced a beautiful harmony.

But in addition to practicing that unity of belief, the Word says that they were faithful to those teachings the apostles had given them. That is, they kept and obeyed those principles.

At this point, it’s good to stop to imprint something vital in the minds and hearts of the preteens: that the Bible isn’t just a book to know, but a book to live out. That’s how those early Christians acted. They lived what they believed.

That’s why every teaching we read in the Bible must be put into practice so that Sacred Scripture fulfills the function for which God placed it in the hands of mankind. The Word expresses it well: “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17).

But there is a very prominent point in the texts we’re seeing. It’s about the enormous generosity that those early Christians demonstrated.

Generosity always accompanies sensitivity. If we’re sensitive to what is happening to our neighbor, then help and giving are set in motion.

Verse 45 says that they sold their property and possessions and gave the money to the apostles to distribute according to the needs of the people.

In the world, we’re taught to accumulate for ourselves, to have more. However, the Bible instead tells us to open our hands and hearts to share. He tells us that the one who gives more will have more, and the selfish will end up being poor. “One person gives freely, yet gains even

more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:24-25).

Because they were full of the Spirit, they were very happy to go to the temple every day to worship God and thank him for so many blessings. Also, since they shared everything, everyone’s needs were met. They gathered at home and broke bread to eat it with joy and simplicity of heart (v. 46).

They got along well and were honest and helpful to others. They were loved by all! They were “praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (v. 47).

In a word, the Christians of the early church authentically lived what they believed.

Today in many Christians, the inconsistency between what they say they believe and the way they live is noted. This drives people away from the Gospel.

In those early days of the church, the Lord, as a sign of his pleasure for those very correctly lived out lives, granted them power to perform miracles, signs and wonders; so much so that people were amazed at what they were doing. And that gave even more authority to their preaching, and every day more people faithfully decided to follow Jesus. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47).

Teacher, take advantage of this unit and challenge the children to be giving from what God gives them. Encourage them to share “something” of what they have (possibly a used toy, in good condition and clean; a package of cookies; or as a class go to an old person’s home and clean the yard or garden, etc.) Encourage them to think of something that they themselves can do on their own. They may know a needy person or children who they wish to help. Rest assured that the preteens will never forget this kind of practical lessons. It can be an all-day Saturday picnic project at someone’s house or a Saturday afternoon project for a couple of hours; they can use their creativity. Talk to your pastor and the owner of the house before carrying out the project; they’ll help you with more concrete ideas.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of these activities to prepare your students for today’s Bible story.

Then and now

Give the children the first activity of the student activity sheet for lesson 36 (Then and Now). Ask the children to read the verses indicated and mark the figures. At the end of this section, they can color the figures. Provide crayons and colors.

Important word

Write the important word on a good-sized card, along with its meaning. Then place it on the mural of this unit that talks about the Church.

- **They persevered:** they continued, they persisted. This means that the apostles and early Christians, although some had been persecuted, didn’t abandon the faith. They continued to love those who knew and accepted the message of the Good News. The power of the Spirit was real, so they wholeheartedly shared what they had with those who had needs.

Pass out the next two pages of the student activity sheet (The Community of Believers, Believers Share and Care). There they’ll find that there are two biblical passages: Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37. Divide the class into 2 or more groups, assign one of the passages to each group, and ask each group to read their passage and complete the sentences at the bottom of each page. When everyone is finished, discuss their answers. Encourage them to feel challenged to share with others the blessings God gives them.

Say: That time was very special for all Christians. There was unity and fellowship. The presence of the Lord was with them.

Complete the verses

Write these two verses on strips of paper, one for each child. Divide the class into two groups: girls and boys. Hand out the strips with the texts (with blanks where the answers in parenthesis are), a Bible and a pencil to each student.

The team that finishes first completing the two verses will be the winner.

1. Acts 4:32. “All the believers were (one) in heart and (mind). No one claimed that any of their (possessions) was their own, but they shared (everything) they had.”

2. Acts 4:34-35. “there were no (needy) persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses (sold) them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the (apostles’) feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had (need).”

Show Others You are Interested (cards)

Help the children prepare small cards for important people in their lives or for people or children who need to know Jesus. Pass out activity sheet 4 (Show Others You Are Interested). Ask the children to follow the instructions. Provide cards, scissors, colors, crayons and markers, glue, etc. to make the cards.

Memorization

Divide the text into two parts. The first part will be learned during the last class and this class, and the second part during the remaining two classes.

First part: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”*

Second part: *“...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20)”*

At the time of memorization, write the first part of the text on the board. Repeat it with the students several times. Divide the class into two groups. Then give a blank sheet of paper to each group and pencils to each child. The first child will write the first word of the text, immediately pass the paper to the next person, who will do the same with the second word and so on. The team that finishes first writing the text correctly will be the winner. Prepare some prizes for children who learn it by heart. In the first part of the text there are 25 words. In the second part there are 24 words, plus the reference.

To end

Give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity he gives us to be able to give, share and help those in need. Organize a basket or love box for people in your church who are going through need. If you think of a family with children who attend school, you may be able to help with school supplies. Allow the project to be organized by the children; it will be more exciting for them.

Pray for the family that the class will help. Also for the students willing to participate in the project.

To finish the class, ask each child to pray by giving thanks for:

- Their family.
- Their friends.
- Salvation, etc.

Everyone should close their eyes and mention something they're very grateful for. Wait for those who are thinking. It doesn't matter if they repeat the same thanks. In the end, mention those things that they didn't remember, maybe health, freedom to worship God (there are many places where they can't do that), school, church, people who love us, etc. Finish by praying for each of the children, referring to them by their names. Thank the Lord for them. Sing an appropriate chorus.

Notes

The Church: A Community of Love

Biblical References: Acts 10:1-48

Lesson Objective: That the pre-teens understand that God doesn't favor certain people, therefore, we must learn to overcome our prejudices and show love to all, even to those who are different from us.

Memory verse: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Like all people, pre-teens also experience prejudice and rejection in two ways: (1) prejudice shown towards them and (2) prejudice they experience towards other people. Also, like the rest of us, they find it easy to identify with those who are most similar to them in meaningful ways. This can lead them to ignore and even mistreat those who are different. Your students need to recognize this trend and work to avoid it, and begin to understand that it's easy for us to overcome prejudice if we try.

We often grow up with certain ways of seeing people, and we may not even notice that our views are prejudiced. Usually, it requires God's help to overcome these attitudes. In any case, the church must be the quickest to welcome all kinds of people. Christians should be ready to share the gospel with everyone. They must also welcome everyone into their fellowship, no matter how different they may seem, either because of their race, their culture, their social or economic status, etc.

While teaching this lesson, be sensitive to class members who may experience more prejudice than others. Encourage them to talk about their experiences if they feel comfortable doing so, so that other pre-teens begin to understand how harmful prejudices are and the rejection and pain they cause.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Chapter 10 of Acts is a dramatic chapter that shows how barriers are broken down. A new vision of the kingdom of God opens before our eyes.

- In the gospel according to Saint Matthew, Jesus

gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven (16:19). Now in Acts, we see Jesus unexpectedly open the doors of the Christian faith through Peter to many "outsiders." In Acts chapter 2, we see the doors open for the Jews, and now in chapter 10, the doors of the kingdom are completely open to the Gentiles.

- Certainly, this was a dramatic development in the life of the new church because maintaining identity was a very serious matter for the Jewish people. The openness offered was a huge commitment by the church. Nowadays, eating a little pork or marrying someone of another nationality or race may seem like something without much importance. But these matters were of the utmost importance to the identity and survival of the Jewish nation and the new church.
- But where would all this change lead? Peter had no idea; he only knew that the Spirit guided him. By following the men sent by Cornelius, the apostle showed himself to be open to the Spirit. Verse 28 says, "He said to them: 'You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.'" The Holy Spirit doesn't neglect the Law of God, but widens the boundaries created by human beings.
- At one point it was clear that the issue here was not about impure food, but about impure people. We may ask ourselves: Why did God allow them to become "pure" Jewish Christians and "impure" Gentiles? God, in fact, is calling all people to his table, to share bread and have communion in his name.
- These events can raise a tricky question, how can we include all people as God does and, at the same time, make the church a godly community?

The only way to answer this is to ask ourselves some questions.

- How do we know when the Spirit of God leads in a new direction?
- Which of the "old rules" are important to keep?
- Which of the "old rules" are no longer needed?
- If we're guided by the "old rules", do we show favoritism to some and reject others?

Peter's audience changed, but his message didn't. He preached to Jews and Gentiles the same message: the need for faith in Christ Jesus to be saved. Cornelius and his family were Gentiles, "pious and God fearing" (10:2). After this meeting, it became clear that Cornelius, while being a gentile, was acceptable to

God, and didn't need to convert to Judaism. However, his own righteousness was not enough; he simply needed, like each one of us, to give his life to Christ.

- Those who are different from us today are in the same situation. The different color of their skin, culture or language, doesn't disqualify them from becoming Christians.
- The good news is that if we follow the Holy Spirit, God will take care of all the details. If we preach the gospel to all people, the faith community (the church) can deal with the diversity of those who respond to God.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Different as day and night

Hand out blank paper and pencils. Ask students to find a partner and draw or describe two friends they know who are very different - like day and night. It may be that one is short and the other is tall, that they speak different languages, that their skin color is different, that their personalities are different, etc. Remind them that they must only talk about the characteristics and good attitudes of their friends, and not with the intention of making fun of others. When they have finished their work, ask for volunteers to tell the class about their two friends.

Then say: *Just as we see differences in our friends and people we know, today we'll study two characters from the Bible that were different as night and day. Normally, it would be impossible for them to be friends. But something happened that changed that. We'll see what happened in chapter 10 of Acts.*

Important words

Write the following words and their meaning on good-sized cards or posterboard. Explain each word so that the students understand them when you teach the lesson. You can write them in such a way that children can decorate or color them. Leave enough space in the letters for the children to work. Once finished, place the signs with the words on the mural. Say: *All these words aren't only related to the early church, but to the church today.*

- **Acceptance:** showing love to others for what they are. As Christians, we must show love to all people, even those who are different from us.
- **Communion:** fellowship as a result of having things in common; union among all who believe in Jesus.
- **Separation:** distance, absence, out of contact with another person, stop being friends, etc.

- **Impure:** according to Jewish law, certain foods were prohibited.

Surprise!

Give the children the first activity of the student activity sheet for lesson 37 (Surprise). Ask them to discover words that are good surprises (love, acceptance and fellowship) or bad surprises (sin, separation, impurity). Say: *In life we often have bad surprises that we cannot avoid. But there are bad surprises that we can change, such as sin, separation and what is impure. If we give our lives to the Lord, bad surprises can turn into good surprises. We all like good surprises. In today's Bible story, we have two important characters who got a good surprise from God. The Lord led them to love each other, to accept and have communion with each other. This experience was part of the church in its first steps.*

BIBLE STORY

New friends!

Pass out the 2nd and 3rd activity sheets (New Friends). Assign the different parts to the students to read. After the dialogue and knowing the events between Peter and Cornelius, allow the pre-teens to respond with their opinions to the following points according to what they read and heard.

1. Do you think that if Peter and Cornelius knew each other before God spoke to them, they probably had suspicions of each other (No doubt, but remember that the Holy Spirit was working in the church, that is, in every believer. People sought God. Their sins were forgiven. Their lives were changed.)
2. Do you think there would have been a division even though Cornelius worshiped God? (It's possible if Peter and Cornelius had not obeyed God's vision. Peter was guided by the Spirit, just like Cornelius.)
3. Do you think Peter looked at Cornelius as a second-class citizen, or less? (At first, but not after his vision from God.)
4. Is it possible that Peter wouldn't have met with Cornelius for fear of becoming impure? (Yes, it's possible, but the vision God gave him was special, and Peter wanted to obey the Lord.)
5. Do you think Cornelius was less prejudiced? (He certainly had his prejudices, but he loved God and was obedient.) Remind the children that most Romans didn't respect the Jews. The Lord was working in the heart of Cornelius, so he told him

to send for Peter. Cornelius was humble in letting Peter teach him the Good News.)

6. After God's revelation, did Peter treat Cornelius like any other new believer? (Probably, he was willing to teach Cornelius, his family and the rest of the believers there.)
7. Do you think Peter was willing to go to Cornelius' house? (He was, and with a good attitude.)
8. What was Cornelius' reaction to Peter? (Acceptance. Peter stayed at Cornelius' house for several days, and taught and preached to the locals.)
9. What was the response of both men? (God helped both of them. Peter and Cornelius were able to overcome their prejudices. God showed the truth to both of them, and they were willing to consider new ideas, instead of continuing with their prejudices, which led to division.)

Overcoming prejudice was a very important task for the early church. If this church spread the gospel only to the Jews, it would never fulfill the great commission, Matthew 28:19-20. Thus it was possible that soon, more gentiles than Jews would go to church, and the gospel spread throughout the world.

If the gospel had not gone to all peoples, perhaps none of us would have ever heard of Jesus.

Make sure they understand the meaning of the words "acceptance" and "companionship." Talk about how these qualities helped the church grow in biblical times, and how it helps now.

Ask the children answer the questions at the bottom of the Bible story.

ACTIVITIES

Can I Enter?

Pass out the last activity sheet (Can I Enter?). Ask the children to circle the people they think deserve to enter the castle, and complete the sentence: *(All) those who accept Jesus as their Savior can enter the castle (heaven)! It doesn't matter what language they speak or what nationality or race they are.*

Memorization

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).

Ask students to read the biblical text together. Emphasize the italicized words and ask:

1. *Of whom should we make disciples?* (all nations, all people)
2. *How?* (By helping people become followers of Jesus, baptize them, and teach them)
3. *We are to make disciples of whom?* (of Jesus)

Ask: *Is there anyone who is excluded from this plan of God?* (no) *So if this is true, how should we treat people who are different from us?* (With love, compassion, and respect. Some are already our brothers in the faith through Christ, or are possible candidates who will accept Jesus as their personal Savior.)

We continue with the mode of this unit. Now they'll learn the second part of the text, but review the first part. In this and the next class they'll learn the rest of the biblical text and the reference.

First part: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..."*

Second part: *"... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20)

At the time of memorization, write the second part of the text on the board. Repeat with the students several times. Divide the class into two groups. Then give a blank sheet of paper to each group and pencils to each child. The first child will write the first word of the text, immediately pass the paper to the next child who will write the second word; and so on. The team that finishes writing the text correctly is the winner. Prepare some prizes for the child who learns it by heart. In the first part of the text there are 25 words. In the second there are 24 words plus the reference.

To end

Ask the children to pray and ask the Lord to help them be loving to all people, even if they're different from them. Tell them to remember that God doesn't "favor anyone," that he loves us all equally.

God wants to be our Savior, no matter our race, the color of the skin, the language we speak, the social status we have, or the studies we have taken.

Pray for your class so they can proclaim the gospel to all people.

The Church: Facing the Challenges

Biblical References: Acts 12:1-24

Lesson Objective: Recognize that although God doesn't prevent all Christians from suffering persecution, he keeps the Church alive and growing.

Memory verse: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Most children of this age have never faced death. Many haven't even experienced the death of a close friend or relative. It will be difficult for them to understand what the Christians of the early Church had to endure.

In any case, preteens need to know at least a glimpse of the struggle, the difficulties, and the severe persecution that the Church has experienced throughout history. Understanding this aspect of the life of the Church will be a good "antidote" against the "gospel of health, wealth and happiness" that's so popular among Christians today.

They'll also grow with the confidence that the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, will survive the challenges it faces. It will help them to remain firm in their faith, even if it can produce unpleasant feelings at times.

Children need to understand the powerful external forces that oppose the Church, and also the internal forces, such as indifference, disunity and lack of faith which are usually the most serious.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Despite the opposition, the church continued with its task. They understood that the Gospel was for everyone, so they did everything in their power to get people to listen to the message (Acts 11:19-21). The Christians in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch, and he recruited Paul to help him in teaching (11:22-26).

Paul and Barnabas felt that the Holy Spirit moved with power in Antioch, but things got horrendous in

Jerusalem. King Herod began to persecute Christians, trying to please the Jews. He sent someone to kill James. He then imprisoned Peter with the intention of killing him after the Passover. Herod thought that he could stop the advance of the Gospel by killing preachers.

This presents us with a disturbing question: Have any of us suffered death threats to stop us from talking about Jesus?

Surely, in 99 percent of cases, the answer is no. But do we ever wonder why we aren't threatened? Probably because our words don't shake the power structure or influential people.

The teaching of the early Church, with Peter in front, threatened the safety and comfort of powerful people. Because of this, the leaders wanted to stop the advance of the Gospel. For this reason, Herod ordered the persecution of its most prominent representatives (James was killed with a sword and Peter barely escaped for a time.)

God protected the Church in the midst of the persecution. Although Christians suffered in many ways, God guaranteed that the Church wouldn't stop in its task of preaching the Gospel (Acts 12). He helped Peter out of prison and brought down his main persecutor: Herod.

How did the Church react after the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter?

What could a weak and defenseless Church do against the enormous power of Rome?

The believers gathered to pray.

Many people wouldn't think of a prayer meeting as the first alternative against persecution. "Fire against fire" may seem more reasonable. But the Church didn't have an army. Nor did it have political influence. Not even weapons to defend themselves against the oppressors who attacked them.

But they prayed.

Prayer caused the prison doors to open. Prayer freed Peter from the chains and took him to the house where the prayer meeting was being held. Prayer defeated evil as no other weapon could. Prayer sustained the Church in a time of enormous threats.

Acts 12 is a powerful chapter because it reminds us that God takes care of us in the midst of problems. "The chapter begins with the death of James, Peter in prison and Herod triumphant; and ends with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God triumphant."*

Our Christian lives will probably not be as dramatic as Peter's. Our persecution is probably not as severe

as James's. It's doubtful, though not impossible, that someone wants to kill us to stop our teaching.

But, with the enormous changes that our world is experiencing, it's good for us to remember the two things we'll learn today from this passage:

- That Christians aren't immune to persecution, but in facing it, God doesn't abandon them.
- That persecution won't destroy the Church. God guarantees it.

*John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts*, in *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 213..

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

The church in Antioch

Pass out the first student activity sheet for lesson 38 (The Church in Antioch). Ask for volunteers to read the four sections based on Acts 12:1-24. You may want to comment on what they read. Then ask questions about the main characters in the passage. Mention that more and more Gentiles accepted Jesus as their Savior. People believed in the message given by the apostles. The Gospel message extended to other countries.

Important words

Write the words and the meaning on posterboard and place them on the church mural. You can make an extra set so that when you arrive, hide the words in the classroom and then have the children look for them.

- **Pray:** personal communication with God.
- **Persecution:** physical abuse, ridicule and other kinds of suffering that a person experiences from others because of what he believes or does.

Say: *The beginnings of the Church were difficult times for the apostles and followers of Jesus. They suffered ridicule, scourging, all kinds of punishments, even jail and death for believing in Christ and not giving up their faith.*

They held on to faith, prayer and the confidence that the Lord had not left them alone. They were experiencing first hand the promise left some time before: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..." (Acts 1:8). They trusted that power.

BIBLE STORY

"The Great Escape", drama

One week before class, take the parts taken from the Bible for students to study for the drama. Another option is for them to act out what you read from Acts chapter 12. You can be the narrator. Assign seven

roles to different students: Herod, Peter, the angel, two guards, Mary, Rhoda. The rest of the class will be part of the group of believers. Encourage them to be creative. They can wear clothes made with blankets and sheets.

At the end of the drama, use the following questions as a review:

- *What was Peter doing when the angel entered the prison the night before his trial and possible execution? (Sleeping)*
- *Do you think King Herod had more power than Peter and the Christians who prayed? (No, they trusted God.)*
- *What do you think was Peter's attitude towards his problem? (Although we don't know for sure, it seems that Peter wasn't afraid. He knew that James had already died. He probably expected to be next. Even so, he slept peacefully. He trusted God, even though he could be executed in the morning.)*
- *What do you think about the power that rulers and kings have? Who is more powerful? (Listen to the answers and clarify concepts.) Tell the students that there was a time in the life of the Church when Christians confused and embarrassed their persecutors. They faced suffering and death with joy and courage.*
- *What did believers do to try to get Peter out of jail? (They prayed, it was the best they could do. Going to the Lord with their problems was the way to show everyone that they trusted God and depended on him.)*
- *Do you think they did everything they could to get Peter released? Were there no other things that could have been done to present a petition to Herod or organize a demonstration in front of the palace? (Praying was the best thing they could have done. By presenting their problems to God, the Christians proved themselves dependent on him. They might ask God what else they could do. Praying and seeking the help of the Lord is always wiser than try to get out of trouble with human answers.)*
- *What should be our attitude towards persecution? (We can trust that God will always be with Christians during the persecution. Although he doesn't always prevent persecution, he gives them strength and helps them face the situation.)*

Ask two students to read Matthew 16:16-18 and Acts 12:24. *What do these verses say about God's ability to keep the Church alive despite persecution? (We can trust that God does this. He promised that nothing and no one will destroy the Church.)*

Teacher: While the issue of persecution is true, it can scare and worry children. Be positive in your presentation. We know with certainty that God promises to be with us, even in the most difficult moments. That's what the preteens should carry in their hearts and thoughts. They must have the faith and the certainty that the Lord has all the power to help them face persecution, no matter how it's presented.

ACTIVITIES

Unstoppable!

Pass out the 2nd and 3rd activity sheets (Unstoppable!) Ask them to cut out the pictures of the people and paste them on the map to show how the church expanded from Jerusalem to other parts of the world. This is a good time to do a simple review of Paul's travels. Students need to understand that the message didn't stop despite the persecution, but quite the opposite. Believers were looking for where to preach. They moved to other cities where they could talk about Jesus; that way the message spread.

If the Church had not spread with the message of salvation, it would never have reached us today. We must thank God for the courage of the first Christians, because despite the persecution, they continued to preach the Good News of salvation ... "to the ends of the earth."

Book separator or bible bookmarks

Before class write the Bible references on small squares of paper, so that the children can paste them on a bookmark. The purpose of this work is so that the preteens can read the references when someone makes fun of them or says bad things because they're followers of Jesus.

During class everyone can read the passages. This will generate confidence and remind them that they aren't alone.

During the class, give each student a 20 cm x 5 cm posterboard strip. Ask them to color, paint or paste stickers on one side to decorate their Bible bookmark. On the other side they'll glue the paper squares with the biblical references. At the top of the bookmark, they can make a small perforation and place a thin ribbon or colored yarn.

Scripture references:

Psalm 23:4. God is with us always.

Matthew 28:20 Jesus promises to be with us always.

1 Peter 4:19. We can surrender to God.

Revelation 2:10 God promises his reward to those who suffer for him.

Memorization

This is the last class of the unit. We hope the children have learned the complete memory passage. Encourage those who learned it by heart to recite it. You can have a competition to see how many girls and boys learned it correctly.

First part: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ..."

Second part: "... and teaching them to keep all the things that I have commanded you. And I am with you every day, until the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Pass out the final student activity sheet (How to Grow). Explain: *You are to use the key on the page to decipher the messages. You will discover some ways in which you can help the church grow. Then, you can use the code to create your own message.* Discuss their answers.

To end

Sing a chorus or hymn appropriate to the series of lessons about the Church.

Pray all together for God to help you be brave and have the courage to announce the message of Jesus to all people. Pray for the children so they don't feel ashamed to tell others about their faith and love for the Lord.

Ask if there is a student who wants to remember the name of someone who makes fun or belittles him for being a Christian. Pray for those people, that they won't want to continue making the child feel bad.

This is a good time to pray for those who suffer persecution in countries that aren't open to the Gospel. Many missionaries and Christians are victims of persecution for their faith in Christ.



Year 3

Introduction – Unit X

PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

Biblical References: Ephesians 6:14; Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18; Ephesians 6:15-16; Philemon; Ephesians 6:17; Ephesians 6:18-20; James 5:13-20

Biblical Truth: God's armor helps us stand firm against evil.

Unit Memory Verse: *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand* (Ephesians 6:13).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Understand that there is a greater evil in the world than the things we see or experience.
- Know that God is more powerful than any evil, and that he provides us with all the armor necessary to overcome it.
- Identify the pieces of God's armor and how each one helps us fight against evil.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 39: Use the belt and breastplate

Lesson 40: Use the sandals and shield

Lesson 41: Use the helmet and the sword

Lesson 42: Armed and ready for action!

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Children of this age face evil constantly. They're exposed to violence and immorality on television, movies, cartoons, and on the news. They even see the result of evil in the lives of their neighbors, schoolmates, friends and even in their own homes.

This unit will help them recognize the enemy that promotes all this disorder, and to identify God's plan to defeat him. They'll know what tools they have to resist evil and grow as Christians. These lessons will make them understand the value and need for prayer in their fight against evil.

Use the belt and breastplate

Biblical References: Ruth 1, 2

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand that Jesus overcame temptation, and that for that reason, if they put their trust in the truth and righteousness of God, they too can stand firm against temptation.

Memory verse: *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand* (Ephesians 6:13).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The world can be a dangerous place for children. They face many pressures when choosing friendships and things that are not of God. They're immersed in a spiritual battle and need the tools to fight. These lessons about the armor of God will give them those tools and the necessary strength to trust him, his truth and his righteousness. They'll grow confident when they learn to use them and apply them during the study of the Word and prayer.

By understanding how Jesus resisted temptation, they can trust that he will help them to do the same. Early preparation can be the difference between despair and victory.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The Christian life is more than what happens in the physical realm. It's true that we face challenges based on pressures and problems that the world and other people present. But there is a major battle that we're called to fight, a spiritual struggle against evil. We discover that we must confront the one who directly opposes God, and that's Satan.

Before we came to know Christ, the enemy considered us surely lost. Lost of the joy of salvation and lost of the redeeming power of having a right relationship with Christ. Satan didn't have much to fight to possess us. We weren't a threat. But when we came to Christ, things changed. We were no longer lost. We were found and claimed by God. Satan was no longer happy.

So we discover that now we're constantly under spiritual attack. But that doesn't mean we must live in despair or defeat. Now we're called to depend on God's

strength and every piece of armor that he provides us to resist evil. Whether we feel strong or weak, there is a lesson about God's armor that we must learn. It's not about what we can do, it's about what God can do through us. This is well demonstrated in the person of Jesus, his Son.

Before beginning his earthly ministry, Jesus went to the desert and spent 40 days and 40 nights alone, preparing, fasting and praying. Weakening from hunger and the elements, he was exhausted and seemed to be without resources. At that time, Satan saw a great opportunity to distort God's plan for the redemption of mankind. The great deceiver believed that he could sidetrack Jesus' mission.

He challenged the Lord by twisting the truth of the Scriptures. The arguments seemed reasonable, but they weren't. Jesus faced lies with the truth. He knew the Scriptures, used the "belt of truth." We must also be prepared, so it's necessary that we know the truth.

But Satan didn't stop at lies. He attacked Jesus' relationship with his Father. He tried to introduce doubt about whether God had the best in mind for his Son and his creation. This was another great trap, and Jesus knew it. Satan cannot bring us peace, joy, righteousness, or eternal life. The Lord put on the "breastplate of righteousness" and chose to trust his relationship with the Father.

When preparing for this lesson, consider your battles and struggles with the physical and the spiritual. The armor of God is your guard against the attacks of any kind, which Satan undertakes. You aren't alone. You can stand firm. You can resist.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Use one of the following activities to guide students to the truth of God's Word.

Resist! Stay firm!

Give the children the first student activity sheet for lesson 39 (Resist! Stay Firm!). Divide the class into two groups and assign each group one of the situations presented in the activity. Have each group discuss their situation and then decide how they would act. Then have each group report on their answer, and then discuss as a class.

Say: You may not face these specific temptations, but you will face temptations of one kind or another.

Have the preteens write or draw about the temptations they face or will face, in the blank box. *Say: We must all put on the armor of God, so that when the devil comes, he will find us firm" (Ephesians 6:13).*

Important words

Write the important words on posterboard to place on the mural. If possible, draw or copy a soldier's armor, part by part. You can ask one of your students who is good at drawing to do this work. Under each piece, write the name and its meaning.

- **Armor of God:** the soldier uses the armor to protect himself in battle. God's armor is our protection against evil. When we wear this armor, we stand firm against temptations and make wise choices every day.
- **The belt of truth** (Ephesians 6:14): This piece of God's armor reminds us that he is always truthful, that is, he tells the truth. When we put on the belt of truth, we choose to live with God's truth and obey His Word. We prefer to tell the truth because that's another way of obeying God.
- **Breastplate of Righteousness** (Ephesians 6:14): This piece of God's armor reminds us that as Christians, we choose to do the right thing, to do God's will and maintain an intimate relationship with him. The breastplate of righteousness is ours because we believe in Jesus Christ, his Son, and choose to follow him.
- **Evil one / evil:** any person or anything that opposes God. Evil is the opposite of good, and God is good. The devil opposes God. The devil is bad.
- **Temptation:** that which separates us from God. Everything that occupies the place of God in our lives.
- **Fasting:** to give something up for the purpose of worshiping God. Jesus refused to eat when he was in the desert.

Mural: God's Armor

Ask all the children to help you put up a background paper to line the mural. This may be a Saturday project. Prepare a small picnic for the whole class. Everyone can bring their bag with food and you provide the drink. Make this a pleasant moment that everyone can enjoy. If a student or you made the soldier's armor, ask the children to color or paint it. Then place the parts on the mural, with the important names and words. As a title use: The armor of God. As they color, paste and assemble the mural, explain that in class, and throughout this unit of four lessons, they'll learn in detail what each part of the armor means. Encourage them to come to each class.

BIBLE STORY

The temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18.

Divide the class into three groups. Assign a section of the Bible story to each of them. You can use the script from the 2nd and 3rd activity sheet pages or straight from the Bible. You as a teacher can present the first section of the story. Allow the groups to present the story in an orderly manner.

Teacher (Section 1)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. He didn't eat at all during that time. He was hungry.

Group 1 (Section 2)

While the Lord was in the desert, the devil came to tempt him. Satan wanted to separate the Son from the Father.

The devil looked at Jesus. He was probably watching him with contempt. "If you're the Son of God," he said, "tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus knew what the devil was trying to do; he knew it was bad. Then he used the scriptures to answer him. "It is written: Man won't live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The Lord knew these important verses. Everyone can read them in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 8:3. He used the scriptures to resist temptation. The Word is a very powerful weapon.

Group 2 (Section 3)

The devil was not willing to give up. He wanted Jesus to betray God. Then he "took him to the holy city, and put him on the pinnacle of the temple." When the Lord looked at Jerusalem, Satan tried to use Scripture against him. "If you're the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." The devil thought shrewdly, "I already tricked you, ha-ha, I already have it. You cannot contradict me if I use the Scriptures." But he was wrong. Jesus knew the true meaning of the passage and replied: "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" This verse is Deuteronomy 6:16. The Lord knew what the enemy was talking about.

Group 3 (Section 4)

Do you think that with this the devil ceased his efforts? No. He continued to tempt Jesus to betray God. He decided to try again.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” What a beautiful sight. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

This was an even bigger lie. The devil isn’t the owner of the world, therefore, he cannot give it or take it. The world is God’s creation. Jesus said, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” This time he used this passage from Deuteronomy 6:13 to tell the devil: “Leave me alone. Leave now. Nothing you can say or do will turn me away from God.” What an extraordinary triumph!

Satan got the message. He left Jesus and God sent his angels to take care of his Son. The Lord used the Scriptures to defeat temptation. We too can use the Bible to resist it.

After the story, use the questions in the 2nd student activity sheet to help the students review the lesson.

- *How did Jesus wear the Armor of God to overcome temptation? (He chose to trust God and responded to the devil with God’s Word.)*
- *The Belt of Truth. What lies did the devil use to try to deceive Jesus? (The devil told Jesus that he would have power if he rejected God’s authority and trusted him instead.) How did Jesus respond? (Jesus chose to trust and obey God.)*
- *The Breastplate of Righteousness. Righteousness means being accountable to God; to do what God commands. How did Jesus respond with righteousness when he was tempted? (He chose to trust God instead of getting immediate relief for himself. Righteousness includes trusting God and obeying Him.)*

Read Hebrews 2:18 with the students. It says that we can trust him to recognize temptation, and with his help, overcome it.

ACTIVITIES

My commitment

Give the children the last activity sheet (My Commitment). Ask them to complete the commitment. Explain: *You can trust God when you put on his armor. Stand firm in his truth. Study his Word. Trust in his love and spend time talking to him through prayer.*

Then ask them to turn in their Bibles to Matthew 4:4, 4:7 and 4:10. Ask the children how they would say those verses in their own words.

Say: *These verses tell us how Jesus resisted temptation. We can do it too.* Point out what Matthew 4:10 means to you. Then read Hebrews 2:18. Ask: *Who can we turn to when we face temptation? (To Jesus) The Lord was tempted, he knows and understands us very well when we’re tempted. We can trust that Jesus will help us stand firm against temptation.*

Memorization

Before class, write the memory verse on cards, each word separately, and hide them throughout the room. Then write the verse on the board and ask the students to repeat it several times. Then, have the children look for the cards and assemble the Bible verse on the table in the correct order. You can use this activity in the other classes of this unit.

To end

Pray together, asking the Lord to help you stand firm in the face of any temptation that Satan presents to you.

If there is time, talk to children who have difficult struggles. Assure everyone that Jesus understands and can give them the strength to overcome their temptations. Finish singing an appropriate chorus.



Use the sandals and shield

Biblical References: Ephesians 6:15-16; Philemon

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that salvation delivers us from fear and sin. Onesimus is a good example of how, through his trust in God, he was not afraid to return to a difficult situation.

Memory verse: *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.* (Ephesians 6:13)

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Fight or escape! When Onesimus was in trouble, he chose to escape. When children are in trouble, the world tells them they have two options: fight or escape. Onesimus discovered a third option: he understood that trust in God brings salvation. And salvation provides the courage to face fear and embrace freedom, rejecting the tyranny of sin.

This lesson provides the opportunity to present this third option to the preteens. They don't have to resign themselves to fight. Nor do they have to run away from their fears. They can find strength in the power of God, put on the armor he provides, and trust in the Lord when things go wrong.

Encourage students by telling about a difficult situation (age appropriate) that you were able to face and overcome with God's help. Encourage them to think about the situations they may face. Use this story to help them be ready and use the faith God gave them to persevere in any circumstance.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The problem

Slavery is a problem that society has always struggled with. It was the cause of innumerable struggles through the centuries, and the early Church was no exception, since from its beginning the Roman Empire accepted slavery as a common practice.

Our story today is about the slavery of a person: Onesimus. He was a slave, an object owned by a master to whom he stole something and escaped seeking his freedom. The man fled from Colossae to Rome. What Onesimus discovered in Rome was true freedom in

believing in Christ. Meanwhile, his master Philemon remained in Colossae. He too, having trusted Jesus as his personal Savior, experienced a new freedom. He was now a Christian, a new creation in Christ. He was a leader in the church in Colossae and opened his home to hold meetings and have fellowship with other believers. While still a slaveholder, he was responding to a higher call for his life, the call of Christ.

The appeal

Paul knew the situation Onesimus faced in Colossae. Roman law declared that if a slave stole and fled from his owner, he could be put to death. Someone capable of doing something like that was considered useless to their master. Paul also understood that Onesimus' usefulness was not based on the benefits he could offer as a slave and object, but rather on becoming part of a community of believers. This is the appeal that Paul presents in his personal letter written to Philemon, from imprisonment in a house in Rome. The apostle wrote: "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord." (Philemon 15-16).

Paul could order Philemon to treat Onesimus as himself. But instead, he appealed to Philemon's love for Christ. The apostle did this knowing that if he gave Philemon the freedom to choose what to do with Onesimus, he would treat him as an equal, without rancor, for the love of Jesus. Paul's hope was that Philemon would extend the forgiveness that he had received from Jesus Christ to his former slave, receiving him as a brother in Christ.

Freedom

Onesimus was already experiencing true freedom in Christ. He received God's forgiveness and began an intimate relationship with him. But he also needed to restore his human relationship with Philemon. It's for this reason that Onesimus returned to Colossae. Salvation didn't exempt him from facing the consequences of his past attitudes. However, it was his trust in God that led him to return to his master. Paul trusted, by sending Onesimus back to Philemon, that the early Church would serve as a place of forgiveness, grace and freedom. There would no longer be slaves or free, there were only those forgiven by Christ.

What counts is the love that transcends our differences and the faith that frees us from sin. Teach your students to love, accept and extend the grace of God to all who they find along their way.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Shoes and freedom

Before the beginning of the class, choose a good variety of shoes. Start with baby, sports, work, ladies, party, beach sandals, etc. If you don't have all this variety of shoes, try to borrow some.

In class, place them on a table in a corner of the room. Ask the children to observe them carefully and explain what these shoes are for and on what occasions they would wear them. Ask: *Have you tried to cross a paved street without shoes during the hot midsummer? The pavement is extremely hot. Did anyone try to walk without proper shoes on the ice? It's unbearable ... the cold is very intense! What freedom does it give us to wear shoes?*

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 40 (In Your Opinion, What does Freedom Mean?). Give pencils, pens, markers, crayons, etc. Tell them to think of words or draw things that describe freedom. What freedom does God give you? Give time for them to think, write, and draw. Discuss their answers as a class.

Important words

Write the words and their meaning on cards. After you have taught them to the children and given examples, you can place them next to each of the figures that will already be placed on the mural prepared for this unit: "The armor of God."

- **Footwear / sandals** (Ephesians 6:15): This piece of God's armor reminds us that as his children, we must always be ready to tell others the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. Telling others about Jesus is the best news that can be given to a person.
- **Shield of faith** (Ephesians 6:16): This piece of God's armor protects us from moments that can discourage us or generate the desire to return to our old ways of living and turn our backs on the Lord. When we choose to have faith and believe in God, we decide to live bravely, with the courage he gives us, even if others laugh, make fun of us or persecute us.

If you wish, you can play a game with the important terms you used in the last class and in today's class. Write them on medium-sized cards (10 cm. x 10 cm.), Place them in a bag or envelope. Ask the children to form a circle. While you walk outside the circle clapping, the children will pass the bag or envelope around the circle. When you stop clapping, look quickly at the group and the child who has the bag takes out a card and says the meaning of the word

written on it. If that person doesn't know the mean, he can walk to the mural and read it. Continue the game for several minutes or as time permits.

BIBLE STORY

Philemon

Before the start of the class, photocopy and cut out the section on the events in the life of Philemon and Onesimus below. Paste each of them on paper that appears to be an old scroll. Roll them up and number them: 1, 2, 3, and 4.

In class, give four volunteers the scrolls. Let each of them open them (in order from 1 to 4) and read it to the class. Help the rest of the students respond in the "class" sections.

1. The greeting

Reader 1: Dear Philemon, it's so good to be able to write to a co-worker for Christ. I am a prisoner because of the Lord, but Timothy and other brothers are of great help to me. I raise my prayers. "Grace and peace to you, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (v.1).

Class: Paul begins his letter by appealing to Philemon as a brother and fellow worker in Christ.

2. Expression of gratitude and prayer

Reader 2: My dear friend, I thank God, always presenting you in my prayers. I heard very good things about you. I heard of your great faith in Jesus. Also of the love you have for your brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray "that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ" (v.6). When you have time to share your faith in Jesus with others, God's love will grow even more in you. We have great joy and consolation in your love; I thank you for everything you gave me.

Class 2: Paul talked about Philemon's love for others and how this encouraged him. He describes his prayers for Philemon and everything he did for him.

3. The request

Reader 3: It's your great love that helps me know that I can write this letter and ask you something so great. I am an old man and a prisoner, I trust you'll do the right thing. I know you'll do what God asks you to do, and also what I ask you for the love you have for Jesus.

I write to you about someone you and I know. I mean Onesimus who was your slave. He was with me and became like a son to me. You won't be able to believe the tremendous change that God made in

his life! Now he is a believer in Christ. He loves Jesus and recognizes the evil that he did to you. I admit that once he was useless to you, but now he's useful to you and me (v. 11). This is why I send him to you again. I would like for him to remain here with me so that he may serve me here in prison (v. 13), to speak of Christ with others, but I won't do this without first speaking with you.

You must decide what to do with Onesimus. I know and I trust that you'll do what is right. Isn't it a wonderful thing that he comes back to you, not as a slave, but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother (v. 16). So, if you consider me as your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me (v.17). If he owes you something, I will pay it to you. Treat Onesimus as you would treat me. I have written to you, trusting in your obedience, knowing that you'll do even more than I say (v. 21).

Class 3: Paul appeals to Philemon's love for Jesus and his friendship with him. He trusts that he will treat his former slave as he would treat him personally.

The farewell

Reader 4: This is all I have to write to you. I want you to prepare an accommodation for me. I hope to be free and visit you soon.

Thank you for receiving Onesimus with the love of Jesus. I am praying for you. May Jesus be with you. Signed: Paul.

Class 4: Paul concludes his letter with a note about his hope to visit Philemon. He blesses him and expects Philemon to be a blessing to Onesimus.

After the story, use the following questions from activity sheet #2 to help the students review the Bible story.

- *Since he was a slave who had stolen from his boss and escaped, Onesimus was in serious danger of death if he returned. How Scary! What freed Onesimus from his fear? (Salvation) What transformed Onesimus? (His faith in Jesus)*
- *What changed in Onesimus? (He became a believer, a follower of Jesus. He recognized his sin and repented. He knew that no matter what happened Jesus would be with him.)*
- *What does the armor of God have to do with this story? (Footwear sets us up for salvation and Onesimus was willing to do this.) Paul talked about the Gospel with him. The shield of faith is freedom from fear through faith in God. Onesimus knew that he could have freedom in Christ, freedom to return to a difficult situation without fear, because God would be with him.*

- *How can you have the same freedom as Onesimus? (When we believe in Jesus and become his followers, we're made children of God. So, no matter what happens, he is with us. We can be freed from fear by trusting in the Lord.)*

ACTIVITIES

Dear _____

Give the last student activity sheet to the children. Ask them to write their names in the line provided at the top of God's letter to them. Ask everyone to read it silently. Explain: *You can trust God when you put on his armor. You can trust that he loves you, that he wants the best for you, and wants everyone to believe in his Son Jesus Christ. He longs for you to be his child too.*

After reading God's letter to them, give them the opportunity to write a letter of response to God. It can be a letter of thanksgiving for his armor, for his salvation that they have already received, or a letter of accepting God's salvation at this time.

While the Holy Spirit guides you, invite the students to bow their heads and pray. Ask if anyone has an interest in being saved. Use the invitation for children to accept Jesus as their Savior, The ABC's of salvation, found in lesson 3.

Make this the most important moment of your life as a teacher of this particular class. Think like this moment won't be repeated again. Always have an assistant who can continue with the class when you have this type of invitation. Pray with and for them. Tell parents of their children's decision. Your class, the church and the parents, are your best allies to care for and shape the lives of these preteens who begin their walk with Christ. Thank the Lord because you're a key part of children's lives.

Memorization

Before class, write the memory verse on cards, each word separately, and hide them throughout the room. Then copy the passage on the board and have the students repeat it several times. At the end, have the children look for the cards and assemble the Bible verse on the table in the correct order. You can use this activity in the following two classes.

To end

Sing an appropriate chorus or hymn. Then pray with the children, that the Lord will help them to always have their armor on to defeat Satan. Pray that God will give them the strength to announce God's love to other people.

Invite students to return to the next class to continue learning more about God's armor.

Lesson 41

Use the helmet and the sword

Biblical References: Ephesians 6:17; Acts 8:26-40

Lesson Objective: To help the children understand that we can find answers, especially about salvation, in the Word of God. We must also tell others.

Memory verse: *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand* (Ephesians 6:13).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

In the world we live in, children often receive the message that the truth is relative or, at best, is what we want it to be. What is true in a given situation? It's a very common way of trying to solve the situations they face. What preteens need to know is that the truth isn't relative to us. The truth is defined by God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and everything in it.

So, if God is the one who defines the truth for us, where can we find that truth? The answer is in his Word. We find the truth for an honest and dignified life in the Bible. The Word of God is the map that we must follow. We learn from it what it is to love and serve, who Christ is, how we can be his followers, and what God expects of us. When teaching this lesson, use the Bible and encourage students to use it frequently. This will provide them with a road map that they can follow for the rest of their lives to find the truth.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Salvation is a gift from God. It's a gift that Christians should share with others and not keep it just for ourselves. Sometimes this call to share can seem overwhelming. We can feel that task is impossible. When we feel incapable or overwhelmed, we need to stop, step back, take a breath, and stop depending on ourselves. We need to remember that it's not only up to us, that we're not alone.

When we live equipped with all the armor of God, we're surrounded, full of and trained with the power of the Holy Spirit. When doubts appear, we can wear the helmet of salvation to protect ourselves from them. Remember that God is working around us every day, not just on the defensive, but also on the offensive. We

must lean on the Word of God and pray. Then let him enable us to testify and prepare the people who will accept the message. It's as simple as that!

Like Philip, we can be obedient and talk about salvation, even when something unexpected happens. Philip didn't plan to end up on a road in the middle of the desert talking to an Ethiopian government official, but that happened. His obedience gave this man, this seeker of truth, the help to understand what he needed. His next step was that of the spiritual pilgrimage; he needed to receive salvation.

What was the result? The Ethiopian returned home rejoicing in his new faith. He understood the Scriptures better, understood that the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is Jesus Christ, and he changed his world (Ethiopia) for Christ.

What can we learn from this story? First, that God only requires obedience to answer his call. He prepares the ground. He makes the plans. We just have to answer and follow him.

Second. When he asks us to go, we must go, search and find people in their place of need. Listen to what they're asking. And then asking, God, how do you want to use to meet this need? Going is the answer to a disoriented and suffering world. Our task is to go to this world.

Finally, when we obey, when we go, when we speak ... he is present. The Lord will open the doors and change lives. We can trust and obey God, because we know that he is working in our lives and those of the ones we meet on our pathway.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Where are you looking for answers?

Pass out the first student activity sheet for lesson 41 (Where are you looking for answers?). Ask them to circle where they seek help or answers from when they need them, and then rank them from 1-10.

Ask them this question at the bottom of their activity sheet: *Is there something or someone else you turn to for answers?* (Children's responses will be different.) *There's a place where we can all go and always find answers. Let's see what the Bible teaches us about this.*

Important words

As in the previous classes, write on posterboard the important words and their meaning and place them on the mural and make reference to them every time you mention them during the lessons. Make another set of cards to place in the bag or envelope and then use them to learn, playing with the students. You can use the mode from the last class if you wish: play in a

circle and take out the cards and give the definitions.

- **Helmet of salvation** (Ephesians 6:17): This piece of God's armor helps us choose salvation. God works with us to do what is good and right. It helps us live each day for him, and supports us so that we can choose what he wants for us.
- **Sword of the Spirit** (Ephesians 6:17): This component of God's armor (The Word of God) gives us wisdom on how to deal with the difficulties of life and defend ourselves against the attacks of the devil. It helps us depend upon the strength God gives us when facing difficulties. When we read his Word and pray, he is with us at all times and in any place. We're never alone or defenseless!

Drawing and writing

Give the children a sheet of construction paper. Provide colors, crayons, paint, etc. Ask them to draw the different pieces of God's armor. Next to each of them they are to place the name and its meaning. As they finish, they can stand up and show the class their work and comment on what they have learned. As a review, prepare in advance appropriate questions from the previous two class sessions.

If there are children who are skilled at writing, they can write a letter to a friend telling them what they know about God's armor. The purpose of this activity is that they remember what they learned and express aloud the names of the parts of the armor, their meaning, and what each piece represents for themselves.

BIBLE STORY

An Ethiopian seeks the truth

Pass out the 2nd and 3rd activity sheets. Assign the different characters to various students. Have them read the story to the class.

After the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, have the students open their Bibles to Acts 8:26-40. Divide the class into two groups. Have one group prepare three questions about Philip and the other group will do the same about the Ethiopian. One member of each group will present the three questions to the other group to answer. For example, he can say: God told Philip to go to the Ethiopian and tell him about Jesus. What happened when Philip obeyed?

After each group has formed their questions, have them ask the questions to the other group, who will answer, and vice versa. Add your perspective to those of the preteens.

Add: *God calls his followers, even today, to go and tell others about Jesus. As Christians we should talk to others about our Friend and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

ACTIVITIES

The truth in the Word of God

Hand out the last student activity sheet (You can find the truth in the Word of God). Divide the class into three groups. Assign the letters A, B, or C to each group. Ask them to read, think, and answer the questions about their passage as indicated on the activity sheet. When each group is finished, have them give group reports on their passages and answers and discuss as a class.

Point out: *You get to choose. You can live in a right relationship with God. You can love and serve Jesus. You can decide to follow and go to Jesus for the answers.* Allow students to make a commitment to the Lord. A few minutes of silence will be useful to complete the spaces provided in "My Promise".

Encourage them: *Once you decide to live for Jesus, you can go tell others, as Philip did with the Ethiopian.*

Review Competition

Write a series of questions on today's lesson on paper. For example: Where was the man in the chariot from? (From Ethiopia) Place the questions in a box or basket. Divide the group into two, they can be girls and boys, or as you see fit. You will ask the questions to one team at a time, and one child will be the scorekeeper and will award one point for each correct answer. The team with the most well-answered questions - that is, with more points - will be the winner. You can prepare prizes for everyone. Remember that fruit is much healthier than sweets or candy.

Memorization

Divide the class into two groups. Give each of them a blank sheet of paper and pencils. All together review the text several times. At the end, have each child write a word from the verse in the correct order and the biblical reference at the end. The team that finishes first and without errors will be the winner.

To end

Sing an appropriate chorus. Then pray for the missionaries who fulfill the task of preaching and teaching others, as Philip did. If you have the opportunity, ask the Lord to guide you to make an invitation to the children who wish to serve God in special ministries, such as being missionaries or pastors. Encourage them to continue seeking God's will for their lives. They can start serving the Lord now by telling others about Jesus and the salvation that only he can give.

Armed and ready for action!

Biblical References: Ephesians 6:18-20; James 5:13-20

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that prayer is an indispensable resource in our fight against evil and that we can pray for all our needs.

Memory verse: *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand* (Ephesians 6:13).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Some children see prayer as something that's practiced before eating, going to bed, when facing a problem, or during family devotions. They repeat the prayers they learned when they were younger without thinking about the great resource that prayer is. Pre-teens must understand that prayer is direct access to God. Praying is more than repeating meaningless words. It's more than just thanking him for food, or that God accompanies us for the rest of the day without major problems. To pray is to talk, like the conversations we have with our parents, brothers or friends.

In order for them to truly understand the power and importance of prayer, your students need to see it in action. You can do two things. First, pray with and for your students in their presence. Second, write down the class' prayer requests, or needs, and the answers to the prayers. Include your own requests. Keep a prayer diary. During class go to the previous week's requests. Review the requests and encourage the students to tell about the responses received. Continue to pray for those "still pending" needs. This interaction in prayer should be something prominent, a priority, in your classroom. It's important that your students grow in their understanding of the power and privilege of praying.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Very often as Christians, we see prayer as the last resort. It's what we turn to when all else fails. This perspective is the opposite of the correct one. Prayer is our greatest offensive weapon in a world overwhelmed by sin. Prayer is where we find the amazing, because we have a personal, two-way conversation with God.

Christianity is unique in the sense of being the only religion that has a personal and living God. It's the only religion where it's possible to have access to the Creator. It's the only religion that provides its people with conversation in prayer with God. We must live in unceasing prayer in response to this amazing gift.

How is that possible? Our lives can be so well tuned to God that everything we do, say and choose is a prayer.

In addition, prayer can be both a ritual and a habit. By spending time, quality planned time, each day with God, prayer becomes a spontaneous reaction for each and every situation. When we receive a phone call from a friend, our first response may be to offer a brief prayer. When we receive a letter or an e-mail from a family member at a time of crisis, we first pray.

As the habit of prayer grows, we'll find greater dependence upon God. Every choice, every desire, every need can be presented to our Lord in prayer.

Pray without ceasing, pray in faith, and as James says, let's pray for each other. Live a life of prayer in front of your students. Above all, pray for your fellow believers. It's the prayer support that gives us the spiritual discernment we need to live in victory over sin. It's prayer that will give us the strength we need to be strong for God, even when faced with incomprehensible evil.

The power of God is greater than we can imagine. The results of prayer, the answers we receive, will go beyond what our thoughts imagine. To pray without ceasing is to have unlimited hope.

Prayer retreat

As you prepare this lesson about prayer, set aside a time to pray. Reserve a few hours, a day or as much time as you can, for you and God. Spend a night of quiet and loving conversation with him. Let God direct your prayer. Let him guide you on what, why and who to pray for.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Important words

Write the important words and their meaning on posterboard to add to the mural of God's armor.

- **Prayer / pray:** Talk with God. It includes an introduction as a greeting: "Dear God ...". It also includes worship or praise and a time of gratitude. There is no established order for the way we should pray.
- **Prayer requests:** Personal needs for which we request God's intervention on our behalf.
- **Faith:** Trust that God will do what he has promised. We have faith in God when we put him first in our lives and allow him to lead us in decision making.

Letters and hidden word

Pass our the first student activity sheet for lesson 42. Ask the children to find the hidden letters in the picture to decipher the word (pray). Ask: *When do you prefer to communicate (pray) with God? Do you have special times with your families to pray? What is the most important request you have made to the Lord? Can you tell us about that?*

You can tell the children about special requests you have made and how the Lord answered or didn't answer as you asked, and how you felt. Take this opportunity to explain that prayer doesn't mean that the Lord will answer everything we ask with a yes. Or that the

Lord doesn't listen to us because there is no response according to what we want, or the way we want.

BIBLE STORY

A prayer of faith

Pass out student activity sheets #2 and #3. Read the Prayer of Faith from James 5:13-20 with your students.

Ask: *Why do you think God calls us to pray?* (Prayer is our opportunity to speak with him. It's through prayer that we gain strength and understanding.) *To pray is to talk with God. When we love someone, we want to talk to that person. When we love God, we want to talk to him. How do you know when your parents want you to do something?* (Our parents tell us.) *Would we know what our parents want if we never talk to them? Will we know things if we don't listen?* (No) *The same goes for God. We need to spend time talking with him to know what he wants us to do. We have to listen to what he tells us through the Bible, from other people and also through our conversations with him through prayer.*

ACTIVITIES

They talked with God

Before class, write on paper strips the names of Bible characters who prayed / talked with God. In the same number of strips, separated, write the clues about what happened to those people. Place the strips with names in a box, and the clues in another box. Prepare a good amount so that there is a written strip for each child.

Clues and characters:

1. This king who asked God to give him wisdom. (Solomon)
2. This person asked God to take care of his disciples. (Jesus)
3. This prophet asked God to help him decipher the king's dream. (Daniel)
4. These three men who praised and spoke of God were thrown into a blazing furnace and the Lord protected them. (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego)
5. This obedient woman said: "Behold, the servant of the Lord, may it be according to your word." (Mary, the mother of Jesus)
6. This man spoke with God and the prison doors were opened. (Peter)
7. This man spoke with God and Pharaoh let the Israelites leave. (Moses)
8. This woman prayed to God, and God gave her a son. (Hannah, Samuel's mother)
9. This man was willing and said: "Here I am, send me" and God used him. (Isaiah)
10. This man gave glory to God and killed a giant. (David)

11. This man pleaded and said: "I have no one to help me into the pool." (The paralytic from Bethesda to Jesus before being healed, John 5:7)
12. These 10 men asked Jesus for mercy and were healed. (The 10 lepers, Luke 17:13-14)
13. This man cried out to Jesus: "What have You to do with me, Jesus?" and he was healed. (The demonic Gadarene)
14. This woman listened to Paul. She chose to pray and give her life to Jesus. (Lydia)

If you wish, you can add more questions and answers.

In class say: *Today we learned about one of the important parts of God's armor. What is it?* (Prayer) *Who can talk to God?* (Anyone) *Did the people in the Bible talk to God?* (Yes) *Can you name some of those characters who talked to God?* (Let the children answer.) *We'll play a game that will help us remember several characters who prayed to the Lord.*

Have half of the class take out a strip of paper from the clue box and the other half from the character box. (Make sure you have the exact number of clues for half of the class.) Say: *Each of you has a strip of paper that says something about a character in the Bible who prayed to God. Others of you have the name of that character. Now, calmly, and without speaking loudly, you should look for the character that matches the given clue.* Allow time for the children to find their partner. Say: *The Bible is the Word of God. In it we see through all its pages that there were people who prayed to God, and that God responded to their requests. We can learn from these examples that we can pray to God at any time and in any place.*

Prayer Pyramid

Give the children the last activity sheet (Pyramid of Prayer). Ask them to write or think about how they can pray in each area of the pyramid (family, church, school, city and country, world). Encourage your children to use the prayer card to remember the requests they present to the Lord. Each day, they can remember more easily if they see the requests written. The card can be placed next to their bed or on the breakfast table.

Memorization

Since this is the last lesson of the unit, prepare special and simple prizes to the extent possible for the children who learned the memory verse.

If you wish, have a small party for the children who learned all of God's armor and its meaning.

To end

Pray for the children. Give thanks for those who helped with the assembly of the mural. Thank God for his kindness and for everything he taught from this unit. You can have moments of thanks to the Lord.

End with a special prayer for your children and ask them to pray for you. Deliver the work to be taken home. Invite everyone for the next unit.

Year 3

Introduction – Unit XI

THE ROAD TO JOY

Biblical References: Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 14:1, 7-11; Matthew 5:4,6; Luke 18:9-14; Matthew 5:7,9; 18:21-35; Matthew 5:8; 13:44-46; Matthew 5:10-12, 43-48; Luke 23:26-27, 32-43

Biblical Truth: Christians experience true joy by having a proper relationship with God and with other people.

Unit Memory Verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Discover as the people of God, and in light of the beatitudes, the attitudes and priorities that help us live a life of growing joy.
- Know the difference between the concept that the world has about happiness, and the joy that Christians experience.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 43: The Road to Humility and Generosity

Lesson 44: The Road to Righteousness

Lesson 45: The Road to Mercy and Peace

Lesson 46: The Road to a Pure Heart

Lesson 47: The Road to Persecution

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

In our world, many would say that happiness is having what they want, when they want it. Many advertisers appeal to this feeling in children, making them feel unhappy if they're deprived of everything that society imposes on them. They very easily convince them that happiness is found in material possessions. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches what the true source of joy is.

By studying the beatitudes, the preteens will learn to live a lifestyle that's contrary to that culture. It's important that they examine their motivations and desires, and that they know how God wants them to live in this consumeristic world, which seeks pleasure that will never make them truly satisfied.

The Road To Humility And Generosity

Biblical References: Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 14:1, 7-11

Lesson Objective: Help the children understand that the Beatitudes are to be lived here and now; and especially understand what it means to be “poor in spirit” and “meek.”

Memory verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

A plaque in a gift shop said: “Dear God, I would like to have the opportunity to prove that money doesn’t buy happiness.”

What brings happiness in this world? Too often, as the thinking above suggests, we focus on money, material goods, personal achievements or external circumstances. We think that if we find the right job, or we have the latest electronic device, we’ll be happy. Many preteens find themselves basing their happiness on their possessions and achievements, especially when they compare what they have with what their peers possess.

God has a different plan. True contentment and joy aren’t found in what we do or have, but in whom we serve. Jesus develops this message in The Beatitudes.

Pre-teens are developing their concept of life. They’re beginning to make their own choices according to what they value most, why things are worth fighting for and what faith means to them. They’re building their own image that’s under the ruthless attack of their peers, who often oppose and belittle them. Jesus’ words are true and worthy to be our standard of life. Children of this age can spend their lives trying to reach a fruitless image that gives them peace, or they may discover that true joy and peace are achieved when we recognize the tremendous need we have of God, and live our lives in humility and generosity.

A highlight of my childhood was when we formed the “Western Band”. Although the name doesn’t seem so, this group was formed by a dozen children who rode their bicycles, ran as fast as they could and incessantly shouted like crazy, from end to end through the streets of the neighborhood. The group was huge.

This band soon needed some requirements for their membership, which were few but very specific. Each member had to own a bicycle, commit to running wildly and make a lot of deafening noises. It was a great band while it lasted: around noon. Despite it’s short livelihood, I see a parallel with the Sermon on the Mount and The Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) mark the beginning of the so-called Sermon on the Mount. The word beatitude isn’t found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word blessing. Some translations of the Bible use the word happy. But many times, happiness is related to circumstances of a lucky life. Instead, blessed refers to the deepest well-being and spiritual joy that comes from being in proper relationship with God. The meaning of The Beatitudes is that Christians can experience peace and inner joy despite external circumstances. It’s not an emotion in itself, although it results in joy.

The Beatitudes announced the important values of the kingdom of God, which Jesus announced. Membership of the kingdom of God imposed, as in the “Western Band”, specific requirements to its members. Certain characteristics must identify those who claim to be part of it.

It becomes instantly apparent that the values of the kingdom of God are directly opposed to those of the world. For example, its members must be “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). Instead of being arrogant, seeking self-righteousness and self-reliance, God’s people must recognize their absolute poverty before God. They understand that they must depend completely on God for their life, salvation and righteousness. This attitude is incompatible with spiritual pride. True humility is achieved when we recognize all that we are, or hope to become, comes from God.

The term “meek,” used in Matthew 5:5, is often misunderstood. Many people associate meekness with shyness or false humility. Meekness isn’t a form of weakness. Rather, it comes from our recognition of God’s sovereignty and the humble acceptance of our poverty. Recognizing that we’re “poor,” we discipline ourselves to respond to others with generosity and patience, not arrogance. The circumstances of life are

accepted from the hand of God without resentment. This may include accepting a low social status, as illustrated in Luke 14:1, 7-11, in the parable of those invited to the wedding.

The Beatitudes are as valid today as they were 2,000 years ago. Pray for you and your students to discover the joy of living as members of the kingdom of God.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose an activity to help the students understand today's biblical truths.

Mural: Steps to joy

You'll need scissors, poster paper or wood-colored construction paper to line the mural, paper of various colors for shoe prints, various sizes of photocopied or cardboard shoe prints to trace on paper, glue or staples, etc. Line the bottom of the mural. Then ask the children to cut various sized footprints. These will be to paste on the contours of the mural and create an edge with them. Write on a large card: The Beatitudes. Ask students to write a list of things that make people happy. Then, place them on the mural from the most important to the least significant. In the center of the mural you can paste a picture of Jesus.

While they work, ask students what makes people happy. Say: *All people want to be happy. We spend most of our time trying to do things to achieve that. Today's study will teach us that there is only one thing that can bring us true happiness. In the next five weeks, we'll study the biblical passage of Matthew called The Beatitudes. This is Jesus' teaching about what will give us true joy. Each week, we'll add to the mural new ideas that arise from our study of The Beatitudes. This passage from the Bible is one of the most beautiful for studying and learning from Jesus' teachings.*

I'm looking for a job

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 43. Ask them to circle the person / profession they would like to be when they grow up, or draw one if theirs isn't there. Ask: *What do you want to be when you grow up?*

Then direct their attention to the second question: *Who do you want to be when you grow up?* Explain that the first question refers to our actions, our roles, and our responsibilities in life. The second, on the other hand, has to do with our inner life, with our character. Ask students to describe the type of character they would like to have.

Say: *Deciding what we'll do in life is very important. And we can serve God with almost any career we choose. Who we'll be as adults is a much more important issue. This will depend on the decisions we make today. In the*

coming weeks, we'll learn what Jesus teaches us about the lifestyle of someone who wants to follow God. In The Beatitudes, which is where we find Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus describes the character, qualities and actions that Christians should have.

Important words

- **Blessed:** To enjoy God's approval, and experience spiritual delight as a result. People who are members of the kingdom of God, and who live the way he wants, are blessed.
- **Poor in spirit:** This is how people who are humble are described. Those who realize that they cannot do anything without the help of the Lord. Those who depend on God instead of depending on themselves.
- **Meek:** This is the name of people who are humble before God and patient with others. The meek are those who realize that they depend on God in everything.

Write the important words and their meaning on brightly colored cards so they can be placed on the side of the mural.

If you wish, make another set to hide in the classroom and organize a competition between boys and girls. Ask them to search for the words, and when they find them, say what their meaning is. Those who found them first and know what they mean, are the winners. Prepare small prizes so that upon reaching the end of the unit, you can deliver them to those who participated, as well as to those who learned the text.

The entire passage of The Beatitudes is a beautiful biblical portion for children to learn by heart.

BIBLE STORY

"Struggling to sit at the party"

Prepare a guest to present the monologue during class. This is found on the 2nd student activity sheet (Ben). Have a costume from the time of Jesus if you wish. The monologue is based on Luke 14:1, 7-11.

Ask the children if they have gone through a similar experience. Let them ask questions about the story. Apply the teachings of The Beatitudes regarding the monologue.

Let's talk about the monologue

- *On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you classify people's attitudes at the wedding party? Ask them to explain their answers.*
- *What attitudes guided people to behave the way they did? (Pride, they probably thought they were more important than others and deserved the best seats, etc.)*

- *What qualities could those people have had to look more like those Jesus taught about in The Beatitudes? (Be humble, think others are important, etc.)*

Ask students to read Matthew 5:3,5. Highlight the blessings for those who are poor in spirit and for the meek.

- Have the students notice that the poor in spirit and the meek are already enjoying the kingdom of heaven here on earth; “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v.3).

ACTIVITIES

The beatitudes

This is an excellent unit with five lessons. Children will have time to learn all the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12. Prepare a special prize for those who remember all the memory verses. Challenge them to do it. Promise that at the end of the unit, they’ll receive a reward. If you wish, you can have the prize on a shelf in the classroom for them to see every day of class. You can reward first, second and third place. Use your creativity and resources regarding the award. The purpose is for children to learn this important portion of the Word, which contains great teachings for the joyful Christian life. Give the prize at the end of the unit. Think of small gifts for the rest of the children. Talk to your Sunday School leader regarding the necessary resources and the budget for your class. There are also parents and adults who want and can collaborate for these types of projects. Don’t feel that you’re alone.

Let’s go skiing

Hand out the 3rd activity sheet (Let’s go skiing!). Ask volunteers to read Luke 14:1 and Luke 14:7-11 to the class, and then have the students complete the activity on the page. After they have finished, ask them to share their answers.

Hand out the last activity sheet (Attitudes). Discuss with the students the questions that talk about attitudes. Provide opportunities for questions. (Clarify concepts.)

- *Do you live as if you need God, or in general, do you try to do everything on your own?*
- *Do you always want to be first in everything, or do you also allow others to be first?*
- *Do you speak badly about others to take advantage of them, or do you speak well of others and treat them the way you want to be treated?*

Memorization

Write the Bible memory verse on 15 cards. Before class, hide them in different places in the classroom. Write the passage on the board and review them several times. Then ask the children to look for the cards and assemble the puzzle. If you want to have a competition between boys and girls, prepare two sets of cards. Remember that they learn by playing and having fun.

Express words of encouragement to those who learned it. Challenge those who need more time. Remember that not everyone learns at the same speed.

To end

Pray together for the Lord to make you poor in spirit and meek, indispensable qualities for living in peace and harmony with others. And above all, for the Lord to continue working in your life and in those of the students.

If there is a chorus or hymn related to the theme, you can sing it at this time.

Say goodbye to the children and tell them to read Matthew 5:4, 6 and Luke 18:9-14 for next Sunday.



The Road To Righteousness

Biblical References: Matthew 5:4, 6; Luke 18:9-14

Lesson Objective: To help the students understand the concepts and meaning of “mourning” (feeling pain) and “hungering and thirsting for righteousness,” according to The Beatitudes; because God promises that they’ll be blessed.

Memory verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Children at this age conceive faith in different ways. Many see their attendance at the church as an opportunity to be with their friends. Some, who grew up attending church, begin to think, will there be anything more than this? Others still assume that being a Christian is a matter of carefully obeying a list of things that can be done, and avoiding others which are prohibited.

Jesus was clear in teaching that the life of faith is much more than this. Pre-teens are now ready to take responsibility for personally developing their relationship with God. Being what God wants us to be includes a complete commitment to love and obey God. It’s the desire, not only to be good as a person, but to actively work in the extension of the kingdom of God here on earth.

Pre-teens aren’t too young to understand this concept. Rather, if they aren’t challenged with the real Gospel message, they may end up rejecting the faith because they consider it very simplistic and, therefore, inadequate to satisfy the needs of their lives. This lesson challenges them to seek satisfaction and joy in the commitment to God and the righteousness he desires.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:4-6. Sometimes we do a good job of hiding our true needs, hiding them in some ways that may be good, but ultimately make us forget that only in God can our lives have meaning and fulfillment.

The first step in going to God is to “mourn” (or feel pain). This includes the penalty for our sins and repulsion for the sin that infects the entire world. Even in the midst of this sorrow, there is comfort because

God sent a Savior who forgives our sins. One day, the Lord will destroy all his enemies.

The word “righteousness” has many meanings. First, it is to be in proper relationship with God. But verse 6 covers two other aspects: personal righteousness, that is, doing what God diligently asks. And social righteousness, or the desire that all people experience what is just and right. Therefore, we aren’t content with just one type of righteousness, we must yearn for both.

To better understand the concepts “hunger” and “thirst” we must place ourselves in the time of Jesus. At that time, the daily salary was barely enough to avoid dying of starvation or hunger. Finding clear and drinkable water was also very difficult, and the weather was hot and dusty. When Jesus speaks of “hunger” and “thirst” here, he refers to the appetite and thirst of those who are desperate for some food or who will die if they don’t drink some water soon. Thus seen, this is a request, a challenge and a demand. How much do we really want righteousness? Do we crave it as much as someone who is dying of hunger or thirst?

Luke 18:9-14. These verses show the difference between the desire for internal righteousness and piety and external hypocrisy. That difference isn’t always clear in our lives. The Pharisees were people who honestly tried to follow God with all their hearts. Actually they were an example of a warped spirituality in their culture. Sometimes, what looks good on the outside may not be so on the inside.

The key to understanding this passage is how we choose to approach God. The prayer of the Pharisees was a list of their good works and comparisons, which they made among themselves and with others, to appear good. But, the publican’s (tax collector) prayer showed a deep recognition that he desperately needed God. He cried out for mercy.

When we approach God, it must be with a deep awareness of our need for grace and forgiveness. Trying to prove our dignity and worth through works, comparing ourselves to others, makes us worse sinners. And using prayer to try to convince God that there is something good in us isn’t what he wants.

But, presenting ourselves to God, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, guides us to receive his provision.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose from these activities to present the biblical concepts of today's class.

Important words

Write the important words and their meanings on cardboard cards.

- **Mourn:** feel deep pain for the sins committed, and for all the sin and evil in the world.
- **Righteous:** it means being in right relationship with God and obeying Him.
- **Righteousness:** He who seeks it is righteous and fair in thoughts, words and actions. It also includes the desire that all people experience what is good and fair.

Upon arrival to class, place the important words on the mural. Give examples of each. You can use them to organize competitions with the children in your class for them to get acquainted with the words.

Lunchroom stories

Pass out the first activity of lesson 44 (Lunchroom Stories). Say: *In the student activity sheet, you'll find three scenarios that show three possible ways to satisfy one's hunger and thirst. Ask the children to act out the scenes.*

- *Which of these methods to satisfy hunger and thirst do you think is the best? (None of the methods shows the correct way to do it.)*
- *What do you think is wrong with these ways of satisfying hunger and thirst?*
- *If you were to talk to other children, what would you say about satisfying their hunger and thirst? (Making rude jokes won't help them when they're thirsty or hungry; don't speak; it's not important to satisfy your hunger and thirst; don't worry, you can endure hunger and thirst, etc..)*

Comment: *Humanly speaking, we all have the need to satisfy our hunger and thirst. But there is another kind of hunger and thirst that human beings suffer from, and that is spiritual hunger and thirst. In today's Bible story, we'll learn about how to meet those needs with the approval of God.*

I feel this way when I'm hungry and thirsty

Write this phrase, "I feel this way when I'm hungry and thirsty", twice on the board, once on the right and once on the left. Divide the group in two. All the children are to think about how they feel when they're hungry and thirsty, and one at a time, and write those feelings on the board. When finished, compare the lists.

Comment on how difficult it is when we feel hungry. Ask the children to tell about a situation in which they

suffered hunger or thirst. (Start by telling them about one of your experiences.) How did they feel?

Say: *Going hungry and thirsty isn't a pleasant experience. When we're hungry, we want to eat and satisfy our stomach over and over again. When we're thirsty, we desperately want to drink water. Our Bible study talks about a certain way of being hungry and thirsty. We'll discover how to meet those needs. As we study the Word of God, remember that we're talking about feeling hungry and thirsty.*

BIBLE STORY

Before beginning the Bible study, explain to the students that there are some terms they need to know to understand what the Bible tells us. Those words are in Matthew 5:4 and 6. One is "mourning", which is synonymous with pain or sorrow; the others are "hunger and thirst" and the last "righteousness." (You'll have the words placed on the mural.)

Ask if they know the meanings. Add your comments.

Explain: *"Mourning", in Matthew 5:4, is to feel a deep pain for our sins, and for all the evil that exists in the world. In Matthew 5:6, "hunger" is what people feel when they lack food. "Thirst" is the desire we feel when we have nothing to drink. "Righteousness" is the good that results from a proper relationship with God to do his will. Keep these words in mind when we talk about our Bible story.*

The Pharisee and the tax collector

Hand out the 2nd and 3rd activity sheets (The Pharisee and the Tax Collector). Ask volunteers to read the Bible story (Luke 18:9-14). Ask them to be expressive in doing so. Clarify: *These two people were hungry and thirsty for spiritual things. They both wanted to receive God's approval. They both wanted to have the peace and joy that's received from the Lord, though they did it in different ways. We'll discuss who did better and why.* Generate a debate on the questions at the end of the story of the Pharisee and the publican of the student activity sheet.

- *What did the Pharisee do that was wrong? (He bragged about himself. He implied that he was the righteous one, and that the tax collector was the thief, the unrighteous one.)*
- *What would the Pharisee think if he had heard Jesus say that he was wrong and that the tax collector was right? (He wouldn't have believed what Jesus was saying. Possibly he would have been bitter and angry because he was sure he was righteous. He would surely have been annoyed a lot with Jesus.)*

- What was the correct attitude of the tax collector? (He was humble before God. He quickly admitted that he was a sinner and needed the help of the Lord. (Beatitude #1, Matthew 5: 3). He felt pain / mourned for his sins (Beatitude #2, Matthew 5:4). He was “hungry” for righteousness, forgot his pride and asked God to help him. (Beatitude #4, Matthew 5:6).
- How can we, as Christians, have an attitude that is more like the tax collector and less like the Pharisee? (Try to live as the Beatitudes teach us: be humble, be mournful for our sins, and be hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of God.)

Hand out the last activity sheet (Blessed are those...) Ask the students to quote Matthew 5:6. Say: *Jesus promised that if we're hungry and thirsty for righteousness, he'll help us to be satisfied. Besides, if we feel real pain for sin and we desire righteousness as we have talked about, our righteousness will increase. That way our joy will grow, knowing that Christ forgives us and approves of what we do. All this will give us the assurance that when Christ returns, he'll find us faithful and righteous.*

ACTIVITIES

Game and review

Form a circle with all the students. Bring a soft ball or small bag full of seeds or sand to class. You'll stand in the center of the circle, throw the ball gently to a child and ask some of the questions below. You should have studied them in earlier. The child who doesn't know the answer will have to leave the circle and find and read the answer in his worksheets or Bible. Once they know it, they'll raise their hand and ask permission to return to the circle, repeat the question with their answer, and return to the game.

Questions:

1. *Who are the characters in the story?* (The Pharisee and the tax collector)
2. *What were these two men looking for?* (God's approval, inner peace, to satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst, to be righteous)
3. *How did the Pharisee seek God's approval?* (He let God know how “good” he was; he compared himself to the tax collector; he regarded him with contempt.)
4. *How was the tax collector searching to be righteous?* (With pain and humility he confessed his sins to God and asked the Lord for help.)
5. *What prayer was pleasing to God and why?* (The tax collector's prayer, because he recognized his need, felt pain for his sins, and depended on God to receive mercy and salvation.)
6. *Say one of The Beatitudes in which the Pharisee failed.* (The 4th that we have studied.)

7. *Say The Beatitudes by which the tax collector lived.* (1, 2, and 4)
8. *What does “to mourn” mean?* (To feel pain for our sins and all the evil in the world.)
9. *What kind of comfort does God promise to those who mourn?* (The comfort of knowing that Jesus forgives sins and that one day he'll take away all evil.)
10. *What is “righteousness”?* (Being in good relationship with God and doing what he likes. That includes trying to help other people be righteous.)
11. *What does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness”?* (To want to do God's will with all your heart and seek his help to achieve it.)
12. *What did Jesus mean when he said: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they'll be filled”?* (They'll be more and more righteous, filled with his presence, joy, peace, etc.)

Picture: Blessed are the...

Distribute crayons, posterboard, stickers, glue, etc. Direct them to the last activity sheet of this lesson (Blessed are those ...). Ask the children to color it to take home and hang it on a wall in their bedroom. If they wish, they can stick it on a piece of cardboard of the same size, so that it's firmer. Say: *This will remind you that we'll be filled with spiritual blessings. This is a promise from the Lord to all who seek it. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled (Matthew 5:6).*

Memorization

You already have the memory verse on the 13 cards from the last class. Before class, hide the cards in different places in the classroom. Write the passage on the board for review. Ask the children to look for the cards and assemble the puzzle. You can give small prizes.

To end

End the class with an invitation to those who wish to seek the righteousness discussed in the lesson. No doubt there will be willing hearts that are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Ask the Lord's direction for your students, and for you to guide this invitation.

If there are children who accept the invitation, ask for the help of another teacher or assistant to let the children out, so that they can talk and pray quietly after they're dismissed from the class.

Pray for the children, for Jesus to continue shaping their willing hearts. End the class with an appropriate chorus or hymn.

The Road To Mercy And Peace

Biblical References: Matthew 5:7, 9 ; 18:21-35

Lesson Objective: Help children recognize the importance of being “merciful,” and seek to achieve peace among those around them.

Memory verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Some preadolescent-aged children face a constant barrage of contempt from their siblings, peers, and even adults. When they're hurt, their natural reaction is to respond in the same way. Hurtful words seem the norm, it's no exception at this age. Without God's help, many pre-teens often hold a grudge against those who offend them. They can plan ways to get revenge and hurt their tormentors as much as they were hurt.

Some parents teach their children to hit when they're hit, and to defend themselves when they're attacked. Although this lesson won't tell students to let others beat them, it will help them understand that Jesus taught about mercy and forgiveness, and urged us to try to achieve peace among people.

Forgiveness is the heart of our relationship with God and with our neighbor. The forgiveness of our sins is what makes it possible for us to forgive those who hurt us. Pre-teens should know that through the grace of God, we can show this mercy. They can also help others discover how to live in love and peace.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:7. Mercy is more than compassion. Compassion is an emotional response to a situation that leads the person to feel sorry, but not to get involved. Mercy amounts to recognizing the need and also accepting the responsibility to do something about it. Mercy is active, not passive; it's something we do.

The Hebrew word for mercy is “chesed,” and it means that a person puts himself in the place of another, and thinks and feels how he does. Chesed (mercy) also includes the idea of looking for the roots of the other person's attitudes, understanding why he acts in this or that way. This isn't easy when someone hurts us; it's natural to feel angry and offended.

In Jesus' day, the Romans didn't show any kind of mercy or sorrow, nothing they considered to be perceived as a sign of weakness. The Pharisees had no mercy towards those who didn't reach their standard. Suffering was the punishment deserved for sin, and “an eye for an eye” was the rule of their time.

Our world is no different. The message of Jesus is the same for us today. Even when they hurt us, showing mercy is the way to live as God planned.

This point is illustrated in Matthew 18:21-35, in the parable of the servant who wouldn't forgive. The ability to show mercy is rooted in the realization of the mercy God showed us. We have to recognize the terribleness of our state as condemned sinners, if not for the mercy of God. As the servant without mercy, we can never pay our debt to God. We must have mercy or we'll perish.

The main point of this parable is very emphatic. If we want forgiveness from a perfect God, and won't extend the same grace to someone who did us wrong, we totally lose sight of what Jesus came to do and what we should do. God wants us to see things through his eyes, which are eyes of love and grace. We forgive others, not because we're afraid of the consequences of not doing so, but because we want to imitate our heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus.

Matthew 5:9. As in the case of showing mercy, being peacemakers is a deliberate activity. The Hebrew concept of peace - “shalom” - isn't simply the absence of conflict or problems. This verse was written for people who lived under the “Roman Pax”, that is, the peace imposed by the rule of the Roman army. With their legions, they managed to end the war, but failed to establish shalom, that is, harmonious cooperation aimed at the welfare of all. This is the work of God, and should also be the work of his people.

Peacemakers are those who are dedicated to the task of reconciling hostile people (individuals, families, groups and nations). We may not be able to bring the peace we desire, but by our efforts, we keep alive the vision of God, of love and well-being for all.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Important words

- **Mercy / Merciful:** Mercy includes understanding, patience, kindness, love, help, and forgiveness of one another. It's constantly remembering what God does for each one of us and doing the same for others.
- **Peacemakers:** those who pacify and establish peace; who appease the emotions of those who fight or are enemies.

Write the important words on appropriate and good-sized posters to place on the mural.

Who needs mercy?

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 45 (Who needs Mercy?). Discuss the meaning of mercy. Then ask: *Who needs mercy in the illustration?* (Everyone needs the mercy of God and other people.) Add: *Perhaps you've never thought that you need to receive and give mercy. Today we'll learn more about what mercy is and why it's so important.*

Mercy. What is that?

Divide the class into two groups. Give them a few minutes to think of one or two definitions of "mercy". Ask them to explain their definitions. "Mercy is ..." Correct any mistakes. (They may give ideas such as: being kind to other people, not taking revenge, helping others, treating people better than they deserve, etc.)

In the original language, the word "mercy" had several meanings. Mercy is much more than a simple kind feeling towards other people. Mercy is an active word, or verb. Sometimes, it's giving someone something they need, like money or food. Biblical mercy also means that we should try to understand people, why they do what they do, so we can love them even when they hurt us. Merciful people remember how much God loves them and how many times he has forgiven them. This helps them to forgive others. In our Bible study today, we'll learn more about being merciful.

BIBLE STORY

The Servant Who Didn't Want To Forgive

Ask the students to group up into teams of three or four members. Explain to them: *In your groups, you'll have the opportunity to listen to God and your companions as you learn the Bible story. I will read a story (parable) from the Bible twice. Jesus taught this story after Peter asked him how many times he should forgive someone. Up to seven times? Peter asked. To which Jesus replied that he should be willing to forgive up to seventy times seven.*

The first time I read, just listen. Listen if there is a word or phrase that catches your attention. When I read the story a second time, choose the word or phrase you consider the most important. Before reading, let's pray for the Lord to help us hear what he has to tell us today.

Read Matthew 18:23-35 twice. The second time, emphasize some words. When you finish reading, say: *I'll give you a minute of silence.*

Ask the children to discuss among themselves the words or phrases that caught their attention. Tell

them to explain why they chose those phrases. When you see that they have finished discussing, say: *Thank you for your comments. Now we all want to know what caught your attention from the biblical reading. What did you think Jesus wanted to teach with this story?* Give them time to talk. (We hope they understand the main point of the story, the need to show mercy to one another. Some will notice the contrast of servants' attitudes, others the need to feel sorry for others, others will talk about the importance of forgiving, of having patience, etc.)

Pass out the second activity sheet (The Servant Who Didn't Want to Forgive). Have them discuss the questions and answers in their group. Then each group can share their answers with the class.

While discussing their answers, emphasize the following points:

1. Whether the person deserves mercy or not, we must still be merciful. Refer the children to Romans 5:8 and 10, which describes God's mercy towards us, who don't deserve it.
2. Forgiving with the heart has more than one meaning.
 - a. It's to forgive others with a heart full of love for God, who forgave us first.
 - b. It shows us that forgiving isn't only a cozy feeling, but is a feeling of love and compassion towards others. When others have mistreated us, it will take time for feelings towards that person/s to change. But in the Bible, the "heart" includes our will, that is, the determination to do what is right. When we forgive with our hearts, we determine to treat that person/s as Jesus would have treated them: with patience and love.
 - c. Forgiving with the heart is more than saying mere words. It includes our feelings, and our determination to do what is right.
3. Finish the study by asking the students to write in a single sentence the summary of what they learned today.

ACTIVITIES

Public opinion

Pass out activity sheet #3 (Public Opinion). Divide the class into two teams, those who will be in favor of being merciful, and those who will be against it.

Explain: *Those in favor will try to convince me that this whole issue of having mercy is the best way to find joy in life. Those who are against it will try to persuade me that being merciful is a bad idea.*

Allow time for children to prepare their arguments for and against. Then ask them to give their explanations. We hope that students will have fun with this way of learning. After each side has been presented, tell them that they worked hard to make their presentation, that they made a good summary of their case, etc. Then express your “verdict.” If possible, tell of a personal experience about having mercy towards someone and the final results. End with a round of applause for all participants.

My statement

Pass out the last student activity sheet (My Declaration). Say: *We’ve talked a lot about showing mercy to others. But mercy is a word that has action, it’s something we do, not just something we talk about. It’s important that we express how we’ll live this important beatitude.* Have them read the Declaration aloud and all together. Ask them to look for a place in the room with some privacy to complete the Declaration and

write names of people to whom they’ll show mercy this week. Then sign the Declaration. They can fold it in half so nobody reads what they wrote.

Memorization

Perform the activity of the last class. Encourage children to say the text by themselves. By this class, they should know the passage very well. If there are children who don’t know it or are new to the class, ask those who have already learned it to help them study it. You can organize a competition for girls and boys. Ask them to come forward one person from each team at a time and write the text on the board. Give 10 points to each one who wrote it without errors.

To end

Pray and sing. Ask God to help you all to be merciful and carry out the commitment made in the Declaration.

Lesson 46

The Road To A Pure Heart

Biblical References: Matthew 5:6; 13:44-46

Lesson Objective: That the children understand their commitment to God and recognize the place he must occupy in their lives.

Memory verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The parables we’ll study in this lesson represent the most important thing in life: a deep committed relationship with God. This relationship isn’t just another activity; it’s a central point of our entire existence.

Students of this age are in a stage of development in which their conscience begins to offer them misleading options. Many times they feel truly guilty as a result of bad decisions made. We often attribute the work of our conscience to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who gently worries us to help us consider our actions and do the right thing.

The Bible speaks in many places about purity of heart. Children may feel that this is an unattainable goal; but it’s simply a call to trust in Christ, to live as

he lived. The call to live in purity is both a promise and a commandment.

The most significant goal you can have as a teacher is to help children of this age to make a decision for Christ before they finish primary school and enter into the uncertain terrain of adolescence. Today’s lesson is an opportunity for the pre-teens to examine their relationship with Christ and instill in them the desire and power to have a pure heart.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:8. The idea of purity runs through the entire Bible and is one of the most unifying themes. Purity ... it often makes us think about acting in a right and pleasant way to God. But it also includes the idea of being complete. Being pure of heart implies the divine cleansing performed by God that, as a result, produces unity of purpose and desire. Remember that the heart was considered in biblical times to be the center of a person’s will and emotions. The heart represents the purest essence of who and what a person is.

Many times we’re aware of the inconstancy of our heart in its desire to be what God aspires it to be. Sometimes the confusion comes through temptations. Other times, our life is full of good things that please us and that slowly distances us from the Lord. Jesus reminds us that the greatest treasure we can possess is our relationship with God; A heart focused on the purpose of living with Jesus as Lord. A pure heart

shows evidence of a total commitment and full communion with God.

Matthew 13:44-46. This chapter is full of very colorful parables. The two included in the passage of our study, despite being among the shortest, are significant portraits of the value of the kingdom of God, another way of referring to our relationship with Christ.

These two parables are similar in meaning and basically lead us to the same point. Whether we find the treasure by chance (hidden in a field), or after a careful search (the pearl of great price), the character of each story shows that in life, there are things that have an incalculable value that cannot be measured in human terms. All that we could have or get is nothing compared to the value of what was found. Did you ever experience those moments of lucidity, of clear vision in which God shows you the wonders of his love and grace? You desire, like that of the people in these parables, is focused on rejoicing over the incredible treasure of your relationship with God.

A key point in these narratives is that when the kingdom of God (the treasure or the pearl) is found, whoever finds it must always make a choice. You must choose whether or not you'll make the effort to obtain it. The cost is very high, in this case it implies giving one's whole life. But the value of this decision is incalculable. The parables teach us that, although the cost is high, it's well worth it.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose one of these activities to emphasize today's teaching.

Important words

- **Commitment:** it's an agreement to do something. Another meaning includes being completely in favor of someone or something and giving yourself totally to that person, activity or thing.
- **Purity of heart:** a person "pure of heart" is full of love for God. He occupies the first place in his life. Since the person loves God completely, he or she does the will of the Lord ... always!

Write the important words and their meaning on good-sized posterboard or cards to place on the mural.

Mural - What is most important?

You'll need: magazines with abundant illustrations, scissors, poster paper or large size cards, glue, markers.

While students arrive in the classroom, have them search through the magazines you brought to class

and cut out figures of things or situations that society / people value very much. Then they are to stick them on a poster to make a mural. Have them leave a space to place the title.

At the end of the mural creating, mention that everything there are things or situations that people value. Ask:

- *Which of these things or situations are the most important to you?*
- *Is there anything you didn't paste on this poster that has more value for you? What is it? (They may mention family, friends, love of loved ones, health or studies. Accept their answers.)*

Continue: *Jesus has something to teach us today, something that has great value. It's so high that there is nothing else to which we can compare it.*

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 46 (Which of these activities involve a big commitment?). Tell the students to circle or star the activities that involve a big commitment.

The hidden treasure

Before the students arrive, hide a real paper currency bill or coin somewhere in the room. Draw a bill or coin like the one you hid. Show the students the picture while explaining that they should search for the hidden treasure, which is a replica of the one in your hands. If students don't find the bill or currency, then you should give them some clues. If someone finds it, let them keep it. Consider having a small prize (sweet) for the rest of the group.

Ask: *How many of you knew that I really had hidden money? How many of you thought you would get to keep the money?* Based on the answers children give, choose some of the following questions:

- *How much interest / desire did you have in finding the "treasure"? Explain.*
- *How did the level of interest in the "treasure" affect the way you sought it?*
- *What would you have done if you had known that the money was real and that you could keep it?*
- *What kind of treasure would you consider valuable enough to search with all your heart and persistence?*

Point out: *Our Bible study refers to finding a hidden treasure. What kind of treasure do you think the Bible is talking about?*

BIBLE STORY

Pure hearts and priceless treasures

Ask the students to read Matthew 5:8. Ask them: *What do you think Jesus intends to teach us in this Beatitude? A pure heart is a heart that has been given completely to God. A person with a pure heart desires an integral relationship with the Lord more than anything else in the world. These people give everything they have in life to live as God expects them to do. With God's help, their hearts remain clean and free from sin.*

On one occasion Jesus told two stories to illustrate the importance of desiring a pure heart. Let's look at these parables.

Hand out student worksheets #2 (Buried Treasure) and #3 (The Pearl of Great Price). Divide the class into two groups and assign one of the stories to each group. Their task is to look for a way to present their story to the class. Ask them to also read the biblical passage where the parable is. (They can present their story read, with mimics, like drama, etc.)

At the end of the presentations, have them look at and answer the questions found at the bottom of the Pearl of Great Price page.

- *What differences exist between these two parables? (The treasures are different: a treasure is hidden underground; the pearl is possibly for sale.)*
- *How are they similar? (The two men have great interest, one in the treasure and the other in the pearl; both the hidden treasure and the pearl are very important to them. They both sell everything they have to get the treasure and the precious pearl.)*
- *Why do you think Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to the treasure and the pearl? (Explain to the children what the kingdom of God is: it's wherever the Lord is the King. God reigns in the lives and hearts of the people who love and obey him, that is, Christians. Jesus says that belonging to God's kingdom and having a relationship with him is like looking for a treasure so great that we would give everything we have in life to possess it.)*
- *What do these stories tell us about ourselves as the children of God? (We hope that children grasp the main idea. That is, being in the kingdom of God, and having a relationship with him, is the most important treasure we can possess in life.)*
- Have the children read the Beatitude found in Matthew 5:8 in unison. Ask them: *How does this Beatitude relate to the two parables that we're studying? (Those who are pure in heart will see the Lord. They'll do the impossible to be part of the*

kingdom of God, and they'll love and obey Him.)

Explain: *This Beatitude has a promise for now and for the future. People who love God will "see" him in this life. They'll see the love, care and power of God every day. They'll also "see God" in the future in heaven. That's why having a pure heart is a guarantee for joy.*

ACTIVITIES

Am I pure in heart?

Pass out the last activity sheet (Am I Pure Of Heart?) Have the students answer the questions.

- *Remember the last time you had some free time. What did you do?*
- *What are the four activities that you spend the most time doing during the week?*
- *What are the five most important things in your life?*
- *What is it that makes you happy?*

Allow everyone to participate by sharing their answers if they want to. Ask questions and make comments to make sure the children understood the lesson.

Memorization

Encourage the children to say the memory verse by themselves. By this class they should know the passage very well. If there are children who still don't know it or who attend for the first time, ask those who already know it to help them. You can organize a competition between girls and boys.

To end

Pray for the children, that they can enjoy a pure heart at this early age. Remember, as a teacher, the greatest responsibility that you have is to lead the children to the Lord. This lesson is very appropriate to invite them to accept the Lord as the King of their lives.

Prepare an appropriate chorus or hymn for today's teaching.

After the prayer and the hymn, say goodbye to the children with a warm invitation for the next class, the last of this unit.

You may want to prepare a small celebration for children with good attendance, and for what those who have accepted Christ in their hearts.

The Road To Persecution

Biblical References: Matthew 5:10-12, 43-48; Luke 23:26-27, 32-43

Lesson Objective: That the students understand that we Christians shouldn't be surprised if we're persecuted, that it's a privilege to suffer for Jesus. In turn, God will sustain us with his presence and promises.

Memory verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* (Matthew 5:6).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Do your pre-teens face persecution at times? Some will say yes. It's very difficult to identify religious persecution in a world that makes tolerance one of its greatest virtues. Surprisingly, those who proclaim tolerance more earnestly are those who least tolerate Christians. Christians are often ridiculed and presented with distaste by the media. While children of this age don't usually suffer physical persecution, they should be able to identify with the other ways Christians are persecuted today.

Preteens go through a stage of their lives in which they don't want to be different from their peers. And the simple act of attending church generates some discrepancy with others of their age. Students in this group who express their faith seriously and live in accordance with those values will agree. It's possible that some of them are ridiculed and ostracized for their religious convictions.

The Bible talks a lot about this matter. Jesus was perfect and didn't commit any sin, and for this cause he suffered persecution to the point of death. He left us a model for living in deep commitment to God, regardless of cost or consequences.

This lesson also points to the promises of the Beatitudes that God gives to those who experience persecution in his name. Students will learn that the Lord will be with them when they're persecuted.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:10-12. The teachings of Jesus about persecution in the Sermon on the Mount disturb most people. The reason is that they don't represent the common thought of our time, nor in the first century of Christianity.

Even so, it represents the heart of Jesus' teachings on how God wants his children to think and live. Not surprisingly, the Sermon on the Mount is described as "the upside down kingdom" or as "Christian counter-culture" because many of Jesus' ideas are directly in opposition to what people think as natural. And it's exactly from there that the power of the kingdom of God is derived. What seems foolish in the eyes of the world, is actually the wisdom of God. Jesus begins his contradictory teaching about persecution by saying that we shouldn't be angry or discouraged when we face the wrath of unbelievers. Rather, we are to rejoice. When we experience persecution, we're part of a long and prestigious line of believers who were attacked and injured by those who didn't believe. When we're harassed because of Christ, we can rejoice because we're counted with those who belong to the kingdom of heaven, not the kingdom of earth.

In case this isn't enough, the "incomprehensible" teachings continue. In Matthew 5:43-48, he says that rejoicing in persecution isn't enough, but that we're called to love and pray for those who persecute us. Loving those who love us is easy, but loving those who hate us is difficult. In reality, it's impossible; as impossible as being "perfect ... as our Father who is in heaven is perfect." It's impossible if we just use our resources and human inclinations. Our natural response to persecution is anger, hatred and revenge. It's only because the Holy Spirit of God fills our hearts with his love and perspective that we can find a way to rejoice in the persecution, and love and pray for our enemies; In other words, being perfect at heart as God is.

Luke 23:26-43. Jesus supported his teaching words about persecution by being the best example. Despite his innocence, he experienced enormous mental and physical anguish before his crucifixion. He suffered whipping, ridicule and other abuses. He was mocked by the same people for whom he was lovingly giving his life.

You can read Jesus' response to the persecution in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus practiced what he preached! He prayed for those who sent him to a cross of persecution, suffering, and death. In doing so, he made it possible for us to have an authentic relationship with God. He is worthy of our consecrating our lives, even when others persecute us.

The persecution was a real threat to the early church as well. We read of martyrs killed by lions or by the sword. Similar types of persecution continue today.

The reality is that more Christians have died for their faith in the last 100 years than in the previous 2,000 years. Many countries around the world make Christianity a crime that deserves prison punishment or even death itself. Some of us experience the freedom of a tolerant government.

The issue of persecution isn't as far away as we may think. The world will never be a true friend of the Christian; it really can't. Christians in all countries will always be in conflict with the unconverted and will always feel the sting of opposition, either through hostility expressed in the form of lashes or through words.

The words of the Sermon on the Mount aren't easy to digest, especially those that deal with persecution and enemies. But by finding the spiritual strength to overcome despair, caused by persecution and the difficulty of loving our enemies, we'll find that we're approaching the very heart of God.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Important words

- **Persecution:** physical abuse, ridicule, derision or other kinds of suffering that a person experiences from another because of what he or she believes.
- **Righteous/Righteousness:** is to be in a correct relationship with God and obey him because of that relationship. To be fair / righteous in thought, word and actions.

Write the important words and their meaning on posterboard to add to the mural.

Persecution

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 47 (PERSECUTION). Ask the class: *What do you think when you hear the word "persecution"?*

Express your ideas with a drawing or writing in the space provided on the activity sheet. Let everyone share who want's to. Listen to the comments, explain the meaning of the word persecution, and tell of some experience that you've had with it.

Ask someone to read Matthew 5:10-12. Say: When you think about what persecution means, do the words "rejoice" and "happiness" come to your mind? Allow students to answer. That isn't what I think at first either; but still, Jesus says that we are to "rejoice and be glad."

Tradition tells us that many of the disciples and early Christians suffered persecution, like Matthew who was dragged to death; John was put in a pot of boiling oil, survived and was banished to the island of Patmos; Peter is said to have been crucified with his head down; James was beheaded; Judas was killed with arrows; many Christians were covered with pitch and set on fire like torches, which was done as a tribute to the Roman emperor Nero; others were thrown into the lions' pits. At present, a 23-year-old Christian woman was sent to a forced labor camp and was beaten there every day; A Christian was forced to sit naked for three days in frozen water, while asking him questions about his faith in Christ. In one country, one in five Christians is in prison for believing in Jesus Christ. In another, Christians are taken prisoners and receive electric shocks, which leads to the death of some of them.

BIBLE STORY

From a sermon to suffering

Distribute the 2nd and 3rd student activity sheets to the children (From a sermon to suffering). Ask them to read from the Bible Matthew 5:10-12 and 43-48. Then ask:

- *In Matthew 5:10, what kind of sufferings is Jesus talking about? (Sufferings for trying to live rightly for God) Teacher, be sure that children understand what righteousness and righteous are. Refer to the important word on the mural.*
- *According to v. 12, what is the reason why we should "rejoice and be glad" when we're persecuted for righteousness' sake? (We can look forward to the reward in heaven; we're part of an immense group of Christians who suffered earlier and suffer in our day.)*
- *According to v. 43-45, how should we treat those who persecute us? (With love, kindness and prayer.)*

- *How reasonable are these instructions? Is it easy to do that?* (Accept the students' answers. If you have any experience, you can tell it. Maybe they're suffering from mockery or contempt for their faith. This is the right time to encourage them and challenge them to continue showing love and patience to those who hurt them but don't believe in Jesus.)
- *How did Jesus treat those who made him suffer?* (Jesus asked the Father to forgive them. He didn't respond angrily to anyone who insulted him. He forgave the thief who was next to him when he repented. And most importantly, he died for the sins of all mankind.)
- *How should we treat people who treat us badly?* (We need to act as we have been taught throughout Matthew 5. We must follow Jesus' example of loving and forgiving.)
- *How can suffering become joy?* (It's not easy, but it's not impossible either. God is attentive to help us fight with the weapons of Jesus' love. When we're close to God, he gives us thoughts of peace and love towards those who do us wrong.)

Ask the children to complete the student activity sheet questions and then write an article for The Jerusalem Newspaper about the persecution of Jesus and how he acted towards those who made him suffer.

Give the opportunity for the children to ask questions if they're unsure about something. Encourage them to know that although it's not easy to love those who harm us, it's not impossible to treat them as Jesus treated those who persecuted and crucified him.

ACTIVITIES

The road to joy

Give the children the last activity sheet (The road to joy). Explain the instructions and give them time to complete the "Road to Joy" activity. When they're finished, as a class compare whether the answers are right by comparing them directly to the biblical list of the Beatitudes.

Special Prize

No doubt the children will have looked forward to this moment with great enthusiasm, especially those who prepared and learned The Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-12. Ask them to take a seat to start the "contest." Listen to participants carefully

and with your Bible open as each student recites the Beatitudes. Accept the version from which the child learned the passage. Choose whoever recites it without mistakes for the first prize. You can designate the parameters to award the prizes. Another idea is to give equal prizes to all who learned the assigned passage very well. Be careful that there are no offended or sad children who didn't receive a prize.

To take home

Print out the Beatitudes on nice paper and give one to each child. Then ask them to color the margins or paste on stickers, glitter, etc. Take the same size posterboard and guide them to stick the sheet with the Beatitudes onto the posterboard. Instruct them to make two small holes at the top to put yarn to hang it up.

At the conclusion of the class, make sure they take their creation home and read it when others make fun of or do things that sadden them. Also, they should tell their parents what the Beatitudes mean. Assure them that we can live the Christian life with joy.

To end

Ask students to give thanks in prayer for:

- What they learned from The Beatitudes.
- For the example that Jesus left us.
- For the stories learned.
- For the treasure and the pearl of great price that we have in the salvation that Jesus gives us.
- Because he promises us the kingdom of heaven.
- Because if we mourn, he will comfort us.
- Because if we're hungry and thirsty for righteousness, he will satisfy us.
- Because if we're pure of heart, we'll see God in heaven.

Prepare a celebration for finishing this special unit. You can offer cookies, fruit and milk or water to enjoy with the children.

Congratulate those who accepted Jesus. Invite parents; they're a crucial part in the lives of their children. Remember, you're not only teaching the preteens, you're also touching the life of each family.

Year 3

Introduction – Unit XII

THE TRUE CELEBRATION

Biblical References: Luke 1:5-25, 57-70, 76-77; John 1:6-9; Luke 1:26-49; Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-18; Luke 2:1-20; Luke 2:21-40

Biblical Truth: Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to be our Savior.

Unit Memory Verse: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

Unit Objective

This unit will help students to:

- Understand that at Christmas we celebrate God’s plan to save people from their sins.
- Understand the meaning of the incarnation and why it’s important to them.
- Appreciate the faithfulness of God, which enables us to carry out his plans.
- Receive the gift of God’s salvation, reaffirming what he really did for them.
- Celebrate Christmas this year, recognizing its true meaning.

Unit Lessons

Lesson 48: We Celebrate God’s Plan

Lesson 49: We Celebrate The Birth Of Jesus

Lesson 50: We Celebrate The Birth Of The Savior

Lesson 51: We Celebrate God’s Faithfulness

Why pre-teens need the teaching of this unit

Since pre-teens are usually immersed in materialism and other secular aspects of Christmas, they may have lost sight of some of the true wonder of this time. This unit will help them discover and better appreciate the path to salvation that God planned, prepared and gave us through the birth of Christ.

It’s good to encourage children to celebrate the incarnation of Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, in addition to being the Son of God. The eternal Son of God came into the world in the form of a baby. Jesus had both natures: the divine and the human.

In one of these lessons, they’ll celebrate the biggest announcement ever delivered. It was not announced by the press in a large city, but through humble shepherds from one of the hills of Bethlehem. The angels said: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” The long-awaited and promised Messiah had come to redeem the people from their sins. Seeing the faithfulness of the Lord to Simeon and Anna, children can trust that God will also be faithful in keeping his promises to them.

Finally, seeing the ways God prepared for the birth of the child Jesus, they’ll also be encouraged to trust that God has the ability to carry out his will in any situation. Through this unit, help students take the time to celebrate all the wonders of the Christmas Story, thanking God for all that he has done, is doing, and will do in their lives.

We Celebrate God's Plan

Biblical References: Luke 1:5-25, 57-70, 76-77; John 1:6-9

Lesson Objective: That the children understand the ministry of John the Baptist, who prepared the people to receive the Savior; and also to get ready to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas: the birth of Jesus.

Memory verse: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Christmas is a time of various activities for most elementary school children. Many are involved in a whirlwind of programs and parties, church activities, and traditional Christmas celebrations with their families.

For them, simply being with the whole family represents a lot of time and effort. It's also true that the secular aspects of the Christmas celebration would seem to be the most fun for most. What child doesn't like to have fun, receive gifts and have lots of free time?

What we can do throughout this unit is to help them focus their attention on the wonderful story of Christ's birth and the person of Jesus. Our goal isn't necessarily for children to forget Santa Claus (Father Christmas) and everything that story represents, but we can try to change the strong focus of celebrating Christmas.

Each of the next lessons is intended to help the preteens better understand and thank God for all that he gave us on that first Christmas.

Pray a lot this month for each lesson. Ask God to help you so that each child can celebrate the birth of Jesus with its real meaning, and receive him as their Savior and Lord.

A final reflection: if the preteens seem more distracted or behave worse than usual, understand that it has to do with the date and be patient.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

For most of us, Christmas is a time of intense preparation: gifts, elaborate meals, special programs, and festive social events. We Christians call the time preceding Christmas as the "time of advent," which means that it's "coming" or "coming." During the

time of Advent we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of the Savior. This implies fasting, prayer, and reflections on our lives.

However, preparation for Christmas doesn't originate from us. Christ's was the result of God's plan, devised before the creation of the world, and careful preparation carried out step by step through hundreds of years. Through Abraham, God formed a family that became the nation in which the Savior would be born. Through the prophets, God spoke about the coming of a Messiah and the task he would carry out. Finally, as the time of Jesus' birth was approaching, God sent a precursor that would help people prepare for the salvation God offered them. This "preparer" was John the Baptist.

John's parents had a pious marriage, both from priestly families. While they were imperfect human beings, the use of the descriptive phrase "righteous in the sight of God" indicates that their hearts were right and focused on God.

At that time in Judaism, there were a number of priests who took turns serving in the temple. The priests were organized into 24 groups of about 1,000 each. At the time of this story, Zechariah's group was in service, and he had been chosen to light the incense in the holy place. For most priests, that was an opportunity that occurred once in a lifetime. We can be sure that the apparent coincidence in the selection of Zechariah at that particular time was not a coincidence, but a part of God's plan.

After his initial fear at seeing the angel, Zechariah calmed down as the angel told him that God had answered his prayers. It's very likely that Zechariah had prayed both for the arrival of the Messiah and for the arrival of a son. In that culture, being sterile was a disgrace, and was often regarded as a sign of God's disapproval. The birth of a child would remove that stigma.

The name John means: "The Lord is full of grace." And truly his birth was a gift of grace to Zechariah and Elizabeth. In addition, part of John's task as a forerunner would be to let the people know that God had not forgotten them, and that by grace he would send the Savior that was promised long ago.

John's role was very similar to that of the Old Testament prophets, particularly that of the prophet Elijah. We tend to think of the prophets only as those who predicted future events. However, an important aspect of their ministries was the preparation of the people for something new that God would do for them. The prophets tried to help people get away from their sin and return to God. That's what John would do in preparing the Jews for the arrival of Jesus.

While they didn't worship idols as in the time of Elijah, for many people at this time the worship of God was more of a ritual than a reality. John would denounce their sins, and help them become aware of their need for a Savior. Then he would guide them to respond with regret and repentance

Zechariah's first response to the angel's message was one of disbelief. But by the time when John was born, he was able to grasp the meaning of that event, and referred to Isaiah's prophecy about a forerunner (40:3-5) by applying it to his son.

God's preparation for the first time of advent was almost complete. Soon, the Savior and his predecessor would be born.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Use these activities to help your pre-teens focus their attention and prepare to learn today's biblical truth.

Christmas symbols

Show students the figure of Santa Claus / Father Christmas. Tell them: *What do you think of when you see this Christmas symbol?* Let them give their opinion. (Fun, joy, give or receive gifts, goodness, warm feelings of happiness, etc.) *Having Santa Claus as a symbol of Christmas isn't bad, since it comes from legends about a nice person named St. Nicholas. We can say many good things about him.*

Now show a figure of the baby Jesus in the manger. Ask: *What do you think of when you see this Christmas symbol?* (God, salvation, forgiveness, someone who gave up everything to come to earth for us, etc.)

Say: *The title of the group of lessons we're going to study over the next few weeks is: 'The real celebration.' What comes to your mind when you hear this title?* (That at Christmas we have a better symbol than Santa Claus. Jesus reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas: God's plan to save us from sin. We can enjoy the joy that Santa Claus brings, but the real true symbol of Christmas for Christians is the Child in the manger: Jesus.)

Preparation

Hand out the first activity sheet for lesson 48. Read the instructions to the students and have them answer the questions.

Important word: forerunner

You'll need two dictionaries in class: one a regular dictionary, and the other a Bible Dictionary. Explain to the students that an important word in this lesson is "forerunner" or "precursor." Have one of them search for it in the dictionary, while another searches for it in

a Bible dictionary. Talk about the meaning of the term. Comment: *In ancient times, when a king went to a new place, he sent a special messenger, a forerunner, before him. This messenger told people that the king was about to arrive, so they could prepare for his arrival. The necessary preparations were often extensive: the improvement of the routes, the search for places for the king to stay, and the provision of food for him and his court.*

Our Bible study today is about John the Baptist, who is called the 'forerunner' of Jesus. Considering what we have just seen, what do you think was the task that God gave to John the Baptist? (Prepare people for the arrival of Jesus.) We'll learn more about this today.

BIBLE STORY

Preparing for the first Christmas

Present the Bible study by saying: *God carefully prepared the first Christmas. Our Bible study today describes a very important part of those preparations.*

Pass out the second activity sheet (Preparing for the first Christmas). Assign each of these passages to a student, pair, or a small group. Allow time for them to read their passage, and then rewrite their passage in their own words, giving it a title. Then regroup them and ask them to comment on what they wrote with the rest of the class. If necessary, add the following comments to what your students say.

Group 1: Luke 1:5-17. *The angel's announcement.* While Zechariah, a pious priest, was offering incense in the temple, an angel appeared to him with surprising news. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth would have a son named John. John would be filled with the Holy Spirit and help people to be made right with God. In many ways, John resembled the prophet Elijah.

Group 2: Luke 1:18-25. *"I can't believe it!"* Because they were old, it was difficult for Zechariah to believe the angel's message. Gabriel replied: "Because you didn't believe in the message I gave you from God, you cannot speak until this promise is fulfilled." The truth is that when Zechariah left the temple, he couldn't speak, he only communicated by signs. However, not long afterwards, he and Elizabeth knew with certainty that they were going to have a child.

Group 3: Luke 1:57-66. *"He is a boy, and his name is John."* When Elizabeth had the baby, her neighbors came to celebrate with her and Zechariah. They assumed that the baby would be called Zechariah, like his father. "No," said Elizabeth, "we'll call him John." Everyone was surprised, because that name didn't belong to any of their relatives. That's why they checked with Zechariah to see what he thought.

On a tablet he wrote: “His name is John,” and he immediately regained his speech. His first words were of praise to God.

Group 4: Luke 1:67-70, 76-77. *Praises and prophecies.* Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah praised God for having fulfilled his promise to save his people. And he made reference to the promises that God had made to King David and the people through the prophets. He also spoke about the role that his son would have to play in God’s great plan of salvation: John would prepare people to receive Jesus; He would help them know that he was coming, and would exhort them to repent of their sins.

Group 5: John 1:6-9. “*Testimony of the light*”. God sent John to do a special task. That task was to testify (tell) people about Jesus, “the light of the world,” so that they could believe in him. John was not the Savior that God had promised, but it was he who testified about the Savior.

Finish the Bible study by asking them: *Why do you think God so carefully prepared the coming of His Son into the world? Why send a forerunner? Why not simply send Jesus to speak for himself?* (Possible answers: an important event requires careful preparations. The coming of Jesus was the greatest event in history, and an important part of God’s plan of salvation.)

Have students find Mark 1:4-5 in their Bibles and then read it in unison. Point out that John’s ministry was successful because it helped many people repent of their sins. That was the best preparation for the coming of Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

Choose one of these activities to help the pre-teens connect the Bible story with their lives.

More about John

Hand out the third activity sheet (More about John). Ask the students to look up the verses and complete the acrostic, using the questions as clues.

Preparations for this Christmas

Lead the pre-teens to brainstorm about how they could celebrate with their family this Christmas, taking into account the true meaning of Christmas. Tell them to make a list on the board or on a poster with all the ideas they can think of to celebrate. (For example: read the Christmas story from the Bible; listen to and sing Christmas carols; put up Christmas decorations that have a special meaning, including a manger and the characters of the Bible story that

they themselves have made; dramatize the Christmas Story with their the siblings and cousins; choose a family in need to help on this special occasion; reduce the cost of gifts for their family and use the money to help others, etc.). When finished, ask them to seriously consider what they personally will do to prepare for Christmas this year. If possible, divide them into small groups and discuss what they think about this and take note of their ideas, and then apply them to their families. Then regroup them again, and ask a volunteer from each group to read what they wrote down.

Memorization

Billboard / Mural: “Christmas Stars”

You’ll need: poster or lining paper, posterboard, silver or aluminum paper, glue, markers, adhesive tape. Before or during class, prepare 34 paper stars with the students, and write on each of them one of the words of the unit verse (including the reference in the last star). If you want you can make a star larger than the rest, and place it in one of the corners of the mural.

Have the pre-teens help you assemble the billboard of this unit so that you can memorize the verse together. Provide them with poster paper of dark blue color, with which they can cover the billboard, as a sky. (They could also paste it on one of the walls of the room). Bring two or three samples of the stars you made. Provide silver sheets on which they can mark the outline of the stars and cut them out (or make stars on posterboard or cardboard and cover them with aluminum foil). Ask the children to make 34 stars, one for each word of the verse. (If you don’t want to make so many stars, divide the verse and write short phrases on each star.) Then, they can paste the stars on the billboard, with the text correctly arranged. Put a title on the billboard.

Say: A special star guided the wise men toward the newborn Jesus. These stars will help us learn and remember a special truth about the Lord. This truth is the key idea for this unity.

Help students pay attention to the words of the memory verse. When they finish the billboard, read the biblical passage together, and repeat it several times.

To end

End with a prayer, thanking God for preparing that first Christmas so carefully. Ask the Lord to help each child think about Jesus while making preparations for this Christmas.

We Celebrate The Birth Of Jesus

Biblical References: Luke 1:26-49; Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-18.

Lesson Objective: That the students understand what the incarnation means, thank God for what he did by identifying with us and saving us, and receive Jesus' forgiveness for their sins.

Memory verse: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

If you ask them: "What makes Christmas special?", most of the pre-teens who attend church will answer: "That Jesus was born." But if you dig deeper and ask them: "Why was the birth of Jesus special?", you may see them go blank or answer you with a "I don't know". This lesson will help children answer this question.

As God became man and lived here on earth, he experienced what happens to us. He knows what love, friendship, and having good times are. He also knows what pain, hunger and suffering are. And he knows how we can resist temptation. In today's terms, we could say that: "He already went through life's experiences and overcame sin."

That's an important truth that the pre-teens can affirm. They're beginning to discover what it means to be independent, make some choices, and make some of their own decisions. They're struggling to affirm their identity and want someone to understand what happens to them.

An old chorus says: "No one understands us like Jesus." The preteens need to know the God who understands emotions and thoughts. That person is Jesus, who was man and God at the same time. He didn't come only to experience human life, but to change people's lives. He came to give us salvation, help us overcome sin, and restore our relationship with God.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The incarnation is one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith for two reasons:

1) "Incarnation" means that Jesus "became flesh." Therefore, the first mystery is to understand how

someone who was totally God could at the same time become totally human, without diminishing any of his divine qualities.

2) Likewise, it's equally difficult to understand why the Almighty God lowered himself to the condition of a humble human being. The only answer is his great love for the world. It's something we can accept only by faith, not by reason.

What would it have been like to be the parents of Jesus, the God - Man? It certainly wouldn't have been easy. Nevertheless, Joseph and Mary accepted the challenge and became the earthly parents of the One who came to save his people from their sins.

Luke 1:26-49. Joseph and Mary were engaged to marry. The engagement commitment at that time was more significant and created a greater bond than the one that exists today. Often, many months passed between engagement and marriage. In addition, the commitment could only be broken by divorce.

Mary was perplexed at the message of the angel Gabriel that she was going to have a baby. She knew she was a virgin. How could she be a mother? The angel told her that the baby would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. It's possible that Mary knew the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son ..." Thinking of that verse surely would have comforted her. The fact that a virgin would be the mother of the Messiah was a clear sign that truly that child was the Messiah. Regardless, Mary trusted God and submitted to his plans, even though it could spoil her future marriage, causing her public shame and even death. Later, filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth confirmed God's message to Mary. She responded with a song of praise to God for his power, his holiness, his mercy, and his faithfulness to her and her people.

Matthew 1:18-25. Imagine Joseph's feelings when he discovered that Mary was going to have a baby. He knew he wasn't the father. However, he knew Mary. How could this have happened? Joseph could decide to shame Mary publicly or divorce her secretly. But he had compassion and decided on the second option. However, before he could carry out his plan, an angel assured him that Mary's son had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Like Mary, Joseph also accepted God's assignment for him: to be the earthly father of the Savior, the "God with us."

John 1:1-18. Jesus is God incarnate, God made flesh. We only know from God what he wanted to reveal to us. Jesus reveals to us the deep heart and character of God.

The “Life Application Study Bible” emphasizes that by becoming incarnate, Christ became our perfect teacher, showing us how God thinks and how we should think. He also became our perfect example, being our model of life. Finally, in his perfect sacrifice, he made the removal of our sins possible.

Personal reflection: During this week, think about all the circumstances that we must go through, both good and bad. Reflect on the fact that the Son of God chose to live in that condition with everything included, except sin, to redeem us from our sins. Then, express your gratitude to God for being “God with us,” our Savior.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

How are your preparations going?

Before class, write the name of each of the preteens on small pieces of paper. Then fold them and put them in a gift bag.

In class, say: *Last week we promised to focus our Christmas preparations on Jesus. Let me tell you what we’ll do now.*

Give the gift bag to one of the children. Ask him to take out a paper and read the name that appears there. That person should tell how their preparations are going in placing Jesus as the most important thing. Reaffirm the efforts that the student has made, and allow others to make suggestions to help him. Then, he will be the one to take out the next name. Continue that way, until everyone has had the opportunity to participate.

Clarify: *We have all made efforts to focus our Christmas preparations on Jesus. Surely we discovered that it wasn’t an easy task. But the good news of Christmas is that Jesus lived as a human being. He knows exactly what we can do and what we cannot do. What would have happened if Jesus had not come into the world?*

Divide the children into four groups. Pass out the first student activity sheet for lesson 49 from the student book (What Would Have Happened If Jesus Had Not Come to Earth?). Each group will discuss one of the questions. Give several minutes for discussion. Then, get back together and have each team talk about their answers.

1. *What do you think the world would be like if Jesus had never come?(There wouldn’t be any Christians; we wouldn’t be forgiven; there wouldn’t be any crosses or any other Christian symbols; there wouldn’t be any churches; Christmas wouldn’t be celebrated, there wouldn’t be a New Testament, etc.)*

2. *How would that affect your faith in God? (We wouldn’t have the teachings of Jesus to help us understand the greatness of God’s love for us. Our beliefs would be more similar to those of the Old Testament people. We probably wouldn’t believe in God as our “Father.”)*
3. *What would life be like in your country? (No one would be a Christian, we would all belong to other religions. The laws of the country wouldn’t be influenced by Christians. Our country would be an even more dangerous place to live.)*
4. *What would your personal life be like?(Accept their answers.)*

Say: *I’m sure we agree that our lives would be totally different if Jesus hadn’t come to earth that first Christmas. The word we use to describe what Jesus did when he came to earth as a baby is “incarnation.” Incarnation means that he became a human. The Son of God always existed and will always exist, but at one point, he came to earth as a human. This event changed history in many ways, more than we can imagine. This is very important for each of us. We’ll discover more about this in our Bible study today.*

BIBLE STORY

The miracle of the incarnation

You can present today’s Bible study in different ways.

Option 1: In small groups

Divide the class into three groups. Ask one of them to dramatize Luke 1:26-49 from the second student activity sheet. If possible, provide costumes typical of biblical times, or they can bring them from their homes.

Have a second group read Matthew 1:18-25 from their Bibles, taking turns.

Finally, have the third group recite the passage from John 1:1-5, 10-14 from the third activity sheet, saying it all together at one time.

Give the three groups time to prepare before presenting it to the rest of the class.

Option 2: The whole group

Assign roles in the dramatization of Luke 1:26-40 from the second activity sheet to different students. (You’ll need four volunteers to act as narrator, angels, Mary and Elizabeth.)

After they perform the drama, ask the students to read the other two passages mentioned (Matthew 1:18-25 and John 1:1-5, 10-14).

Use these questions regardless of the option you have chosen (small groups or a single group).

1. After the dramatization of Luke 1:26-40:
 - *According to this passage, how can we know that Jesus is God?* (He was called “Son of the Most High” and “Son of God.” Elizabeth called Jesus: “my Lord.” Mary said: “God is my Savior.”)
 - *How can we know that Jesus was also human?* (He was born of a human mother.)
2. After reading Matthew 1:18-25:
 - *What two names did the angel give Mary for the child that would come?* (Jesus and Immanuel). “Jesus” means “the Lord saves,” and Immanuel means “God with us.”
 - *How was “God with us” when Jesus came to earth?* (The Son of God lived with people as a human).
3. After reading John 1:1-5, 10-14:
 - *Is there any information about Jesus in this passage that surprised you?* (Perhaps that Jesus was present at the creation of the world.) Remind the pre-teens that before coming into the world as Jesus, the Son of God, he lived with God and participated in everything he did.
 - *How else can we say about “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”?* (The Son of God became man and lived with us.)

End by saying: *The title of this Bible study today is ‘The miracle of the incarnation.’ Considering what we have read and talked about, what was the ‘miraculous’ fact that the Son of God became man and lived on earth?* (Accept the answers of the students. *Since Jesus became a man, he knows what it’s like to be human, and understands what happens to us. But since he is also totally God and never sinned, he can bear our sins and help us live for God.*)

ACTIVITIES

Did Jesus experience it?

Before class, write the following actions on small pieces of paper, one per paper. Fold them and put them in a bag or box:

Being hungry / Playing with other children / Getting tired / Getting dirty / Loving your mom and dad / Helping with household chores / Crying / Getting hurt / Rejoicing / Disobeying parents / Listening and reading the Torah (Jewish Bible) / Go to school / Be tempted to do something wrong / Worship God / Get along with your siblings / Be discouraged.

In class, have the preteens take turns in taking one paper out of the bag and saying if it’s something that Jesus experienced as a human being when he lived on earth.

Then tell them that Jesus experienced all these things - he was even tempted to sin - but he didn’t do anything sinful (like disobeying parents or God).

Finish this activity by asking the children to tell you why Jesus is our perfect Savior. (His life shows us that we can love and obey God and overcome temptation, without doing bad things. He knows God and can reveal him to us. In heaven, he prays for us.) *Jesus is our perfect Savior because he is God and man at the same time.*

What God did

Pass out the fourth activity sheet (Jesus is). Give the students time to use the blank space to write a letter to a friend telling about what God did when he came to earth as a man and why that’s important for them and for others. Then ask for volunteers to tell the class what they wrote.

Memorization

If the pre-teens didn’t make the star billboard last week, let them do it now. Practice this game so you can learn the unit verse. Choose one of them to participate first. While the rest close their eyes, he will take two stars off the billboard. He will then tell the class to open their eyes and identify the two missing words. Then they will say the verse together. Then, that child will give the stars to another person. After the group closes their eyes, he will place one of the stars back on the bulletin board in the right place and take out another. Then, the others must identify which word was replaced and which word was removed. Then say the verse together again. Continue to do so as long as time permits or until everyone has had the opportunity to take out and change stars.

Say: *The word that sums up what this verse says about Jesus is ‘incarnation.’ Let’s repeat this word together. Incarnation means that ‘he became flesh’, or in other words: ‘he became human’. Through the incarnation, Jesus, who was God, became man. He was completely God, but now he had also become completely man. We cannot understand this mystery, but we believe it by faith.*

To end

Say: *The second week of Advent reminds us of God’s love. He loved us so much that he sent his only Son to earth as a man to show and tell us about his love. Christmas is a special time to delight in God’s love and enjoy it with others. During this week, let’s think about the love of God and the sacrifices Jesus made when he came to earth as a man. Let’s not forget to talk about this great love to the people around us.*

Take some time to pray for the children. Ask God to help them understand the mystery of the incarnation, with the sole purpose of giving each of us his great love.

We Celebrate The Birth Of The Savior

Biblical Reference: Luke 2:1-20

Lesson Objective: That the students recognize that the birth of Jesus was a crucial event in God's plan to save the world from its sins, and that they rejoice and receive the gift of salvation by understanding what God really did for us.

Memory verse: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Pre-teens generally enjoy the gifts they receive at Christmas, especially if it's what they asked for. They rejoice with the fun of giving and receiving gifts. And they're often quite creative when choosing them.

A young man wrote a poem about each of his family members (10 in total), expressing what each of them meant for his life. Then he wrote it on the computer, searched for the right photos, attached them, and sent them to his family. For the recipients, it was a gift that was priceless, and that will be kept as a treasure forever.

In this lesson, the pre-teens will remember the greatest of all gifts: that of salvation, which was possible through Jesus, our Savior. They'll hear the story of his birth and the wonderful message that the angels gave to the shepherds. And they'll understand that the same message has value for them today: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Salvation is the most important present anyone could ever receive. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to find out who in your class is prepared to receive that gift. Those who are already Christians may want to reaffirm their decision and seek greater depth in their relationship with Christ. Some may not be ready to receive the Savior, but they need to hear God's plan of salvation. This lesson will give you that opportunity.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

A decree of an invading emperor, the collection of taxes, and a woman giving birth in a stable isn't the framework with which one would relate to the happiest event in history. However, these facts are familiar to those of us who know the story of Christmas.

Perhaps that familiarity it has for us allows us to see the incredible irony of the situation. Rome was oppressing Israel. Tax collectors overcharged, scamming people. There was no decent room where Joseph and Mary could stay after that long and painful journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But in the midst of pain and suffering, God was at work. Jesus, the Savior of the world, was born.

Such an important event required a spectacular announcement. It was a custom in the Roman Empire that poets and speakers declared peace and prosperity before the birth of someone who would become emperor. When Jesus was born, the angels proclaimed Good News of joy and peace, not because of the arrival of an emperor, but because of the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord.

However, we can again notice the irony. Who received the message? Neither rich men, nor aristocratic princes in large palaces, nor the political elite, but humble country shepherds.

These men belonged to one of the lowest classes of Jewish society. The shepherds rarely attended religious ceremonies because they couldn't leave their flocks alone. People saw them as very dirty people. They were social outcasts. Even so, they were the first to whom God chose to give the wonderful news.

What was the angel's message? It was the greatest message humanity had ever received. A message of great joy for all the people, even for the humble shepherds. The long-awaited Savior had arrived! A multitude of angels praised God and announced peace to mankind.

The coming of Christ meant peace. Peace with God for those who believe and receive the Savior. That peace comes into our lives when we establish a proper relationship with the Lord and live in harmony with each other.

What did the shepherds do? They hurried to Bethlehem to look for the baby Jesus. The Greek word "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah."

After finding the child, the shepherds went to tell people what they had seen and heard. They told them everything with such enthusiasm that the people

who listened to them couldn't reject the message: "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (Luke 2:18).

When the shepherds returned to their flocks, they could never be the same again. Nor could the rest of the world be. The Savior had arrived!

Reflection for you, teacher: reflect on what the Savior's arrival in your life meant. Then imagine for a moment that you're part of that angelic choir. Write words of joy and praise to the Savior.

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Review again

Before class, prepare two sheets to place on the billboard. Divide each one in half vertically. On the left side write "Divine" (God) and on the right side "Human".

In class, review with the pre-teens the meaning of the word "incarnation." (The moment when Jesus, the Son of God, became man) Then divide the class into two teams. Give one of the sheets and a marker to each one. Explain that when you give the signal, each team should make a list on the left side with as much evidence as possible that affirms that Jesus is divine. When you indicate that time is up, the students are to stop writing. At the second signal, they should write down as much evidence as possible on the right side that affirms that Jesus became man. When you indicate time again, they'll stop writing.

Then, each team will read their list of the characteristics that confirm Jesus' divinity. (His father is God; he was always with God; He was present during creation; He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, etc.). Notice which team wrote the most characteristics.

Then, ask them to read the list of characteristics that confirm the humanity of Jesus. (Born of a human mother; experienced human emotions; had pain, hunger, fatigue, etc.). Again, look at which of the two teams wrote the greatest amount of evidence.

Say: *Jesus was divine and human. He is the only being in the universe that has both natures. That made him perfect to become the Savior of the world. Today we'll talk more about this happy news: that Jesus is the Savior of the world, but that He is also OUR Savior.*

It is more blessed to give than to receive!

Hand out the first student activity sheet (It is more blessed to give than to receive!). Give the students time to write the names of people they want to give something to this Christmas inside the ornaments, and then on

the packages, draw a picture or write a description of the gifts that they would like to give to the people whose names they wrote in the ornaments. When finished, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote.

Say: *Giving gifts is an important part of the Christmas celebration. And although many times you can remove the true celebration from the center, let's not forget that giving a gift was an important part of the first Christmas. What was that gift? (The birth of Jesus, our Savior.) In our Bible story today, we'll learn more about this special gift.*

BIBLE STORY

Rejoice, your Savior is born!

Hand out the second activity sheet (What a Message!) Divide the class into two groups. Provide enough time for each group to read its part, and the "Everyone" part beforehand. Where it says "teacher" you'll read. Then, ask them to come together and read "What a Message!" Encourage students to read slowly and with a lot of expression.

When they're done, pass out the third activity sheet. Give the first three interview questions to the first group, and the last three to the second group. When everyone is finished, have group two take turns being the interviewers and ask the questions to group one. Choose some students from group one to act as shepherds and answer the questions.

Then, those of group one will ask the questions to those of group two.

Conclude the Bible study by asking:

- *What was the news that the angels gave to the shepherds? (That Jesus, the Savior, was born; that this news was for all the people; that through Jesus, God had brought peace.)*
- *As said by the angels, what was the purpose of the birth and life of Christ? (To be the Savior of all people.)*
- *In your opinion, what made this news "good news"? (Accept what the students respond: that Jesus came to save all people; that we can have peace in our lives if we accept Jesus as Savior.)*

ACTIVITIES

Choose one of these activities to help the pre-teens connect the biblical truth with their lives.

The angels celebrate

Choose a Christmas carol or Christmas anthem. Ask a musician to accompany you with an instrument, or play recorded music with that theme. Encourage

the pre-teens to sing it if they know it. After singing, distribute paper and markers. Ask them to draw pictures illustrating what the carol says. They can portray the angels full of joy, giving the news to the shepherds, or another of the scenes mentioned in the song. Encourage them to show their work to everyone and tell what they drew. If you wish, they can place the figures on the mural.

It cannot clean itself

Before class, prepare the following: a stained garment (clothes) and other clean ones. Be sure that the stains you made won't come out using only water, but requires the cleaning product that you'll bring.

In class, show the students the stained clothes.

Ask: *Can this garment clean itself? Let's imagine that this garment could think and speak. What would happen if it said to itself: 'I want to clean myself. I will do my best to make myself as clean as possible' Could it do it? Wait to be answered. What would happen if I put this garment next to others that are clean? Allow them to look when you put them next to clean clothes. Can the clean clothes being around the dirty one clean the stains? Let them respond. And what would happen if I put the dirty garment in this bucket of clean water? What would happen? Let them watch the garment soak in the water for a few moments, and ask them to respond. Then put a cleaning product (soap powder or liquid) on the garment and start rubbing it. Show the class the process by which the dirt of the garment begins to be removed and is finally cleaned.*

Tell them: *This garment represents our life, and dirt represents the sin that's in it. We cannot take away our sins just by thinking good things or by trying to be better. We cannot take away our sins simply by getting together with good people (like when I put the dirty garment next to the clean ones) or by going to church (when I put it in a bucket with clean water) The soap that I used represents Christ. Christ's purpose in coming to earth was to save us from sin and to present ourselves clean and pure before God. There is no other way by which we can receive forgiveness for our sins and restore our relationship with God except through Jesus. Through his birth, life, death and resurrection, he made it possible for us to be free from all sin, as soap did with the dirty garment (show it).*

Memorization

Today we'll work with some parts of the memory verse (John 1:14). Have the pre-teens form a standing semicircle. Throw a ball to one and say the first part of the verse. He must repeat it and then throw the ball back to you. Continue like this by throwing the ball to the rest of the students, but changing the

instructions for each one. For example, tell one: "Say the part I told you and add a few more words," and to another: "Say fewer words than before," to another: "Say the next sentence after the one I said before," to another: "Say only the reference," to another: "Say only the important words of the verse." Keep it up until everyone manages to say the whole verse.

To End

Salvation: The best Christmas gift

Before class, carefully prepare the manner in which you'll make the invitation or the call to the pre-teens to give their life to Christ. Assign the three verses of the fourth student activity sheet to three volunteers. Before class, ask some of the children who have already given their lives to Jesus to have their testimony prepared to tell the class. Think of a quiet place where you can pray with the pre-teens who respond to the call or invitation. If possible, have another person to stay with the other students while you pray with them.

In class, hand out the fourth activity sheet. Say: *Today we talked about the good news that the angels gave to the shepherds. What was the good news? (That Jesus, the promised Savior, was born.) The angels emphasized that this good news was for 'all the people. Who did "everyone" include? (The elderly, adults and children of all races, countries and languages.) All people in the world can have peace with God and a good relationship with him if they accept Jesus as their Savior. Maybe some of you have already taken that step. And maybe others haven't yet. Let's see how each of us can receive the best Christmas gift of all time.*

Read the ABC steps of salvation from the student activity sheet. Ask those you had designated to read the scripture passages that correspond to each step. After reading each step, ask them if everyone understood or if they have doubts or questions.

Then ask the volunteers you prepared to tell what Jesus did in their lives.

Say: *If anyone has never asked Jesus to be their Savior, this is a good opportunity to do so.* Mention that you're happy to pray with them.

Pray with those who answer the call. Ask the other class members to pray silently at that time. Or tell your assistant to keep the rest of the students doing another activity (such as making Christmas cards). If no one wants to pray the prayer of surrender, ask a volunteer to pray, thanking God for sending Jesus as our Savior.

You may end by singing the Christmas carol they sang at the beginning.

Lesson 51

We Celebrate God's Faithfulness

Biblical References: Luke 2:21-40

Lesson Objective: That the children will have the certainty that God always fulfills his promises, trust in God's promises of salvation, and demonstrate it in their daily lives.

Memory verse: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Pre-teens live in a fast paced world of changes. Many times parents, although well intentioned, are caught in that rhythm and it's difficult for them to remember everything they promised their children. Some children get mad at their parents or friends when they fail to keep their promises.

The encouraging truth of this lesson is that there is Someone who always was and will be faithful. From the quiet days of the Old Testament, to the hectic days of the New Testament, and to the incredible pace in which we live today, God has always remained faithful. He doesn't forget what he said he will do; He always keeps his promises.

When studying the history of God's faithfulness to Anna and Simeon, the preteens will feel encouraged. God made us many promises: of salvation, of victory over temptation and sin, and of an eternal home in heaven. The record of God's promises fulfilled throughout history is impeccable. Today's children can count on God to be faithful to them too.

As a preteen teacher, you're someone important in the process of building student faith. Faithful Christians are a visible expression of what God's faithfulness is. Ask him to help you be the faithful teacher to help build in your students an unwavering faith in him.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Fidelity isn't an easy quality to find these days. Unfortunately, there are always those who promise easily, and with equal ease break their promises. Too often, children are victims of that

unfaithfulness. One mother told how her ex-husband had repeatedly promised her children that he would take them to have fun together. However, time after time, he broke his word without a phone call or explanation!

On the contrary, today's text is a story of faithfulness, both divine and human. As we saw in the previous lessons, God always keeps his promises. In this lesson, we'll see again how God was faithful, both with Joseph and Mary and with Simeon and Anna.

Jesus was born to Jewish parents. Joseph and Mary lived in harmony with the Mosaic law and religious customs of the people of God. The law required the circumcision of male children on the eighth day, and the purification of the mother 40 days after her son was born. Joseph and Mary faithfully obeyed both customs.

The circumcision ceremony symbolized the separation between Jews and Gentiles, and emphasized the special relationship they had with God. As part of that event, Joseph and Mary officially named their son Jesus, just as God had indicated through their messenger angels.

After the birth of a son, according to the ceremony, for 40 days the mother was considered impure and couldn't enter the temple. On the 40th the parents went to the temple to present to the priest an sacrifice and an offering for sin. The wealthy people brought a lamb for the sacrifice, and a dove or pigeon for the sin offering. And the poor, like Joseph and Mary, could bring two turtledoves or two pigeons. Again we see their faithfulness in doing what was required, regardless of the cost that would require.

That day, God confirmed the birth of the Messiah - as a fulfillment of his promise - to two special people: Simeon and Anna.

Even in times of moral and spiritual decline, God has his devoted followers. Simeon was one of those men. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that before he died, he would see the promised Messiah. That day, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Simeon had gone to the temple. When Joseph and Mary arrived with the baby, he was in the atrium.

Although Simeon took the child in his arms, his prophetic vision allowed him to see in Him the One who would bring us salvation. His prophecy about Jesus included these important truths:

- That Jesus was the Savior of the world, and not only of the Jews, but Gentiles as well.
- That while Jesus came to bring salvation to the whole world, man's response determines who would have the experience of salvation.

Anna, whose name means "full of grace", was pious as well, and well respected as a prophetess. She also recognized in the child Jesus the promised Savior. Because of her age and reputation, her report will surely have had even more credibility.

Reflect a few moments about God's faithfulness to you. How has this affected your life? In what ways were you and are you faithful to God? And what about the preteen class?

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Choose some of these activities to help focus the children's attention and prepare them to learn today's biblical truth.

Coat of arms

Before class, draw a basic coat of arms. Make an enlarged copy for each student. In class, say: *In ancient times, families often created a design in the style of a badge or flag, shaped like a shield, which showed something about that family or what it represented. That was called a "coat of arms." Today you can make a coat of arms for Jesus.*

Have the students propose some ideas of designs that could go in the coat of arms of Jesus. (Symbols such as the manger, the cross, a heart that represents love, words like "promise," "Savior," or "Immanuel," a figure of Jesus, etc.)

Give time for everyone to design the coat of arms. When they're done, ask them to show and explain it to the class. Finally, hang up or paste the different coat of arms in the classroom.

Say: *During this month, we have been talking about the fact that Jesus is God and man at the same time. Since he is God, he is equal to God in everything. Today we'll learn about one of God's special qualities: his faithfulness. We'll see what that means, and why God's faithfulness is important to us.*

What's so special about Christmas?

Hand out the first student activity sheet for lesson 51. Divide the class into three groups and assign one question about Christmas to each group. They should discuss their question and answer it as a group.

Then request that they discuss their responses with the entire class.

1. *Why talk about Jesus?* (Jesus is the reason for Christmas. If he had not been born to be our Savior, that special day wouldn't exist.)
2. *Being with family and friends is what makes Christmas so special, right?* (Again, the meaning of Christmas comes from the birth of Jesus, the Savior.)
3. *Jesus was a good man, but how can we be sure that he is the Son of God? Other countries and religions have their special holidays too. Christmas doesn't have to be more special than other celebrations. What's so great about Christmas?* (While Jesus became a man, he was also God. At Christmas we celebrate the incarnation, the moment in which God became man, and in that way he came to live with us and was our Savior. That makes Christmas different and more special than any other important event.)

Remind them: *In these last three weeks, we have remembered how God promised, prepared and made possible the incarnation, that is, the birth of the Savior. We saw how God fulfilled his promises. Today we'll learn about another promise that he fulfilled.*

BIBLE STORY

God's amazing faithfulness

Tell the Bible story, using the one found in the second student activity sheet. The moment you tell the part of Simeon, show them the figure where he holds the child in his arms.

After the story, tell them: *The title of today's Bible story is "God's amazing faithfulness." What does faithfulness mean?* Allow the children to respond. Ask the pre-teens to give you some examples of faithfulness. (Those who keep their promises. God is always faithful and wants his children to be faithful. People who come to work and do well are faithful. Those who join a church and live as God teaches them are faithful. Those who keep their promises are faithful.)

Reflect on the following questions:

- *Who was faithful in this story?* (Everyone. Joseph and Mary were faithful to their religious duties. Simeon and Anna faithfully

served God. God faithfully fulfilled his promise to send a Savior and allow Simeon to see him before he died.)

- *Is it important for us that God is faithful and keeps his promises?* (Yes, it's very important, because we couldn't trust him if he broke them.)
- *In your own words, summarize what this Bible story teaches you.* (God is faithful; we can trust him, etc.) Clarify any misunderstandings that the children may have.

If time permits, instruct your students to complete the incomplete word verse, found in the student activity sheet, below the story. John 1:14.

ACTIVITIES

Choose some of these activities to help the pre-teens connect the biblical truth with their lives.

Important word: Fidelity

Write the word "Fidelity" on the board. *Fidelity means that God is faithful because he doesn't change. He never stops loving and helping us, he always was and always will be. He offers us forgiveness, peace, his presence, strength and hope. He is faithful to each one of us.*

"Great is your faithfulness"

Before class, ask a member of your church's praise team to sing a hymn in the class that talks about God's faithfulness. If possible, ask a musician to accompany them with a guitar, piano or other instrument.

In class, introduce your visitor and say: *Today (say the name of the visitor) came to sing to our class a hymn that speaks about God's faithfulness.*

After the song, explain what the lyrics say. If you need to, clarify the terms they don't understand. Let the children also sing the song along with the visitor.

Memorization

Ask the pre-teens to put the stars with the text of the month on the mural to review it together. Remove the stars and mix them up well. Then, call someone to put them back up in the correct order. When finished, repeat the verse together. Do the activity again, allowing a different student to participate each time.

Point out the phrase: "full of grace and truth."

Ask what they think that phrase says about Jesus. Say: *In the original language of the Bible, those words mean "inexhaustible love and faithfulness." Jesus is full of inexhaustible love and faithfulness because he is God.*

To end

Thank God for his faithfulness

Hand out the last student activity sheet. Choose three volunteers to read the sentences at the top of the page. Then tell them: *It's important to know that God fulfilled the promise he had made to Simeon. But what promises can we expect God to fulfill for us today?*

Have a biblical competition using the passages that appear there.

The pre-teens must have the Bible closed in their hands.

Say the reference that they are to look for. Then say: *Go!* The pre-teens will then look for the passage. The first one to find it reads it.

John 3:16

John 6:37

1 John 1:9

1 Corinthians 10:13

Hebrews 2:18

Jude 24

Briefly discuss the promise mentioned in each verse.

Ask: *Which of these promises is the most important to you?* Encourage the pre-teens to say what they think. Tell them about some of the biblical promises that have been meaningful and have been fulfilled in some areas of your life throughout your walk with the Lord.

Ask: *What value would these promises have if we didn't know that God is faithful?* (Little or none) *Let's have the confidence that God will always keep his promises.*

Provide time for them to write their thank you letter to God. Then, encourage them to read it. End by praying together for each other, asking God that they would learn to trust that he always keeps his promises, and to believe that despite the fact that people fail us, God never lets us down.

Christian Education Material for Children

Mesoamerica Region Discipleship Ministries presents with satisfaction its complete collection of Christian education books.

They were designed for teachers of children and for students from 4 to 11 years of age.

Children will learn the lessons of the Bible according to their age. And, by the end of their elementary school years, they'll have gone through the challenging biblical stories, as well as various topics appropriate to each stage of their childhood and pre-adolescence.

This material was designed as different steps to achieve a holy life. It contains clear and possible goals.

The teacher's book will help equip those who have the beautiful task of leading children to connect with the message that will change their lives forever.

By promoting the child to the next year-according to his age-he will have studied only once each of the books. When he reaches 12 years of age - if he started with the first book - he will have studied the eight books of this valuable collection.

The books are designed to be used in Sunday school classes, happy hours, Saturday Bible schools, children's clubs, discipleship classes, and schools in general.

This series aims to:

- a. Challenge the children to learn the Word of God.
- b. Encourage them to grow in their Christian experience as children of God.
- c. Guide them to accept Jesus as their savior and Lord.
- d. Help them grow in their faith
- e. Help them become part of the faith community, the church.

The following table will help you identify the corresponding book according to the age of the students:

- Preschoolers:4 and 5 years old (Year / book 1 and 2)
- Elementary:6, 7, 8 years of age (Year / book 1, 2 and 3)
- Words of Life (preadolescents):9, 10, 11 years of age (Year / book 1, 2 and 3)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING STUDENTS TO THE NEXT CLASS

Dear leaders and teachers of Sunday School and Christian education:

As is done for school, it's important for the children of the church to be promoted to the next class each year. As a teacher, it's very important that you're prepared to promote your students at the end of the course, which would be easiest at the end of the school year.

You may prepare a ceremony beforehand and give a certificate to the students who are moving on to the next class. The ceremony can be held at the church so the whole congregation may participate. Invite the parents and family members of the students. It would be a good time to get to know them and for them to attend the remainder of the service and listen to God's Word.

The teachers of the classes to which the students will be promoted should be present as special participants. It will be a significant moment for everyone when you as the teacher send the students to the next class with a hug, and the next teacher receives them likewise with a welcome embrace.

It would be nice if you had a poster with pictures of the students taken throughout the years they spent in your class. It would also be nice to share memories of the students while they were in your class: special prayers they said, the date they accepted Christ, stories they shared, questions they asked, and moments of joy or sadness they went through while in your class. Explain this to your students so they can agree with what you will share about them. This way they don't get embarrassed in front of the whole congregation.

Speak to the person in charge of Christian education or of the classes, so that at the ceremony, new books or Bibles can be given to the students for the following year. Encourage families from the church to gift a book to each student, especially to the ones whose parents don't attend the church or to the ones with financial struggles. In each congregation there are families that would gladly gift books to the students.

We wish you blessings in the challenges that the ministry of teaching presents for you and your congregation.

May the Lord give you grace and bless your important ministry.

Editorial Team

Certificate of Promotion

(student name)

is promoted to the _____ class

_____ *Church* _____ *Date*

“My child, pay attention to what I say...” Proverbs 4:20a

Sunday School Superintendent

Teacher



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