

# CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

**VOLUME 1**



**YOUTH  
BIBLE LESSONS**

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**WEEKLY LESSONS  
FOR DISCIPLESHIP**

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# *Youth Bible Lessons*

WEEKLY LESSONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

VOLUME 1

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**CARIBBEAN NAZARENE PUBLICATIONS**  
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# Lesson Summaries

## LIVING THE HOLY LIFE

- Week 1 He Is Holy (Our lives are changed when we come to know God's holiness expressed in His love and justice.)
- Week 2 A New Law to Live By (Jesus can free us to live consistent Christian lives.)
- Week 3 A Gift We Don't Deserve (Holiness is a gift from God, which He gives to us even though we could never deserve it. Our responsibility is to respond to His gracious gift by staying close to Him and obeying His will.)
- Week 4 What Holy Is and What It Is Not (Holiness is an ever-growing relationship with God, not a cure-all to every problem in life. To those who seek holiness He gives the resources to live God-honoring lives.)
- Week 5 A Holy New Wardrobe (There are ways to develop habits that will reinforce the work of God in our lives.)

## FINDING GOD'S WILL

- Week 6 God Goes Global (God loves everyone and wants everyone to know Him and follow His will in their lives.)
- Week 7 Wholly His (God's will for believers is for them to give themselves fully to Him.)
- Week 8 God Gets Personal (When we follow God's will, He directs us down unique paths for our lives.)
- Week 9 Is There Anything I Can Do? (God's will is for Christians to be ministers of the gospel.)

## MY FAITH, YOUR FAITH

- Week 10 Is That Christian? (We must evaluate faith statements or beliefs through critical thinking and reflection.)
- Week 11 The Church Universal (Protestant Christians can affirm their faith while valuing the faith of Catholic Christians.)
- Week 12 What Jews Can Teach Christians (Christians can enjoy positive, healthy friendships with Jews.)
- Week 13 Dealing with Doubting Thomas (Christians must learn how to discuss their faith with logic and confidence.)

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## SERMON ON THE MOUNT

- Week 14 Kingdom Character (With Jesus' coming to earth, God's kingdom came to earth too.)
- Week 15 Authentic Christianity (Jesus challenges us to avoid hypocrisy by being truly righteous.)
- Week 16 Putting Him First (Jesus challenges us to make His priorities our priorities.)
- Week 17 Be Different (Jesus challenges us to move beyond religious dos and don'ts by practicing forgiveness, love, purity, and acceptance in all our relationships.)

## THE PARABLES OF JESUS

- Week 18 The Soil of the Soul (Once we choose to accept the gift of God's love, we are then responsible to provide the proper environment for it to grow and bear fruit.)
- Week 19 Consider the Cost (God encourages us to examine the cost of following Him before we do so.)
- Week 20 It's Hard to Be Humble (God graciously allows us to serve Him. Therefore, we are to live in humble gratitude.)

- Week 21 Free for All (Because God gives His grace freely, it may be given in ways and to those we don't expect.)  
 Week 22 Are You Ready to Party? (Christians are to be ready at all times for Christ's second coming.)

## THE CHURCH

- Week 23 Living the Mission (The Church is the dynamic, living expression of Christ in the world.)  
 Week 24 The Shared Life (The Church is called to be a community of faith where each Christian has a vital role.)  
 Week 25 God Cooks with Cracked Pots! (Since the Church is made up of imperfect people, it will have faults.)  
 Week 26 Who, Me? (God gives each Christian a significant role in His Church.)

## ROMANS

- Week 27 Not Ashamed (The Gospel message is powerful, dynamic, and valuable, and should be viewed with pride.)  
 Week 28 Facing Facts (God gives us a choice of eternal life with Him or without Him.)  
 Week 29 Membership Has Its Privileges (All choices have consequences.)  
 Week 30 Free at Last (Since Jesus broke the power of sin and death, we Christians can live free from the control of sin.)  
 Week 31 Wimps Need Not Apply (God's grace, revealed through Jesus, demands a response.)

## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- Week 32 You Can't Pick Them, But You've Got to Love Them (Relationships with parents require responsibility to develop and maintain, but the results often bring reward. All Christians are called to love and respect our parents.)  
 Week 33 He's Not Heavy, He's My Brother (Getting along with siblings requires that we build relationships.)  
 Week 34 - Loving Them to the Lord (Christians must witness to non-Christian members of their family.)  
 Week 35 New Relations (The blending of families through remarriage can be difficult, but God will help it succeed.)

## AVOIDING ABUSIVE LIFESTYLES

- Week 36 Looking for the Real Thing (Alcohol and drugs destroy healthy relationships with God and other people.)  
 Week 37 What's Eating You? (Our self-concept must not be based on our external appearance.)  
 Week 38 Throwing Out the Garbage (Pornography should be avoided because it distorts God's gift of sexuality.)  
 Week 39 When Loving Hurts (It is God's desire for all our relationships to be built on genuine love and mutual respect, so that we can live free from abuse, whether victim or abuser.)

### Optional Lesson

Sexual abuse (Incest - Sexual intimacy is a gift from God, designed to occur between husband and wife. However, many children and teens find themselves sexually victimized by a family member.)

### A LIFE OF SERVICE

- Week 40 Why Serve? (God has always intended for His people to express their love for Him by serving others.)
- Week 41 Lifestyle of Service (Christian servanthood is a deliberate decision that leads to lifelong habits of service.)
- Week 42 Service to the Needy (Seeing Jesus in everyone will challenge us to see and meet the needs of others.)
- Week 43 Service to the Lost (Christians are called to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of others.)
- Week 44 Service: It Does a Body Good (Christians are called to serve one another in love.)

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Week 45 Graduation -- Then What? (We can all choose to honor God with our work, regardless of our occupation.)
- Week 46 Community Connection (As youth mature and look to the future, they should experience Christian unity.)
- Week 47 Still Growing? (We must take purposeful strides toward Christlikeness.)
- Week 48 Is There a Future? (Christians can make plans because we know our future is securely in God's control.)

### IS MARRIAGE FOR ME?

- Week 49 Marriage: Good, Better, and Best (God designed marriage between men and women to reflect the kind of relationships He has with His people, based on love, faithfulness, and mutual submission.)
- Week 50 On Your Mark, Get Set . . . Wait (It is vital to prepare for marriage.)
- Week 51 Marriage in the Real World (We can best prepare for the normal problems and stresses of marriage by being committed to following God's will for interpersonal unity and by developing skills for unity.)
- Week 52 To Marry or Not to Marry (Whether you live as single or married, God has called you to build significant relationships that reflect God's love.)

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

- Week 53 Out With the Old and In With the New (We must take time to evaluate our lives and set goals.)

# How to Prepare a Lesson

## THE START OF THE YEAR

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

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

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

## THE TWO HOURS EACH WEEK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How to Present a Lesson

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

If you will follow the guidelines on “How to Prepare a Lesson” as you prepare for your lesson each week, then these suggestions on “How to Present a Lesson” should be helpful as well.

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

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

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

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

# Preparing the Teacher

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let your students know you believe they have a valuable contribution to make. Keep telling them until they believe it. Model this process in your own life. Take a risk and develop abilities that you have

## PREPARING THE TEACHER

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allowed to be dormant in yourself. Talk with your students about your struggles and fears of using untried skills and abilities.

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

# Seven Keys for Teaching Youth

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

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

## **Key #2: The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher**

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

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

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

## **Key #4: Good preparation is a must!**

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

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

Usually, the application of truth comes near the end of the lesson. This is the destination. It isn't enough to talk about the truth; we have to put it into practice (1 John 3:18). Yet, if you're unprepared to pace the lesson, you may not get to the crucial task of application at all. Too often, the most important part of the lesson never gets taught! Why? You run out of time. Good preparation is the remedy.

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

If your class is like most youth classes, the majority of your students don't come to class mainly because of the truth that you'll be teaching them. Many will come because they enjoy being with their friends. A

few come because their parents insist on it. Some come because they want the attention; some are hungering for an encouraging word; others come because it's the safest place they know. There are as many different reasons for being there as there are youth in your class. Your responsibility is to help create the kind of physical, emotional, and spiritual climate where they feel safe, accepted, valued, and challenged. That kind of environment doesn't happen by accident. It takes intentional effort.

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

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

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

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

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

# Holiness

Christians are to be holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16). Peter's reference to the Old Testament command (Leviticus 20:7) reminds us of God's continual call to His people. God chose us to exhibit in our lives the type of holiness that reflects His holy character. God demonstrated His great love for us by sending His Son to provide a way for people to come into holy relationship with Him (Ephesians 1:4-5). That life of holiness starts with salvation and progresses on to sanctification.

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

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

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

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

As you explain the concept of holiness, don't fall prey to thinking of holiness as an "it." Holiness is not a static thing. When you become holy, you don't automatically look like all the other holy people in the world. Holiness is a dynamic relationship with the God of holy love. Holiness is not a one-time experience at an altar of prayer but an ongoing relationship that works in real life situations. What may have begun with a moment of realization and a crisis experience doesn't stop there, no more than a marriage stops at the close of a wedding ceremony.

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

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

—Oswald Chambers

# WEEK 1

## Our God is Holy

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Samuel 2:2; Revelation 16:4-7; Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 John 4:7-12

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into three groups of one or more. Explain to the groups that they must each develop a drama about a very remote place that doesn't know the real God. The dramas must describe the god of that place (is it friendly and personal or distant and uncaring, etc.) and how the people interact with their god. Give them five minutes to create their dramas.

After five minutes, allow each group to perform their drama or explain their god to the rest of the class. When all three groups are finished, ask these questions: *Was it easy or hard to design your own god? Why? How did you decide what qualities your god should have? Were the gods you created similar to or different from God? What are some of the characteristics that God has?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

**'Holy' is one of the words that is used to describe God. Many people do not understand this word, but it is very important that Christians understand what it means.** Have 1 Thessalonians 4:7 and 1 Peter 1:15-16 read to the class. *These verses teach us that God intends for Christians to be holy. He is holy. He wants us to be holy as well. It can be difficult to know just how to live a holy life from day to day. We ask ourselves, 'What is holiness? I know God is holy, but can I really live that way?'*

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*While there is a human element in holiness, in that one must yield himself to God, the primary thing is the power of God that enables this to be done. This is more than just initial holiness (conversion); it is a deep cleansing of the heart from the nature of sin that separates us from God and keeps us from having the type of relationship He desires with us. Holiness (sanctification) is not just a temporary thing nor does it only apply to a part of us. Sanctification involves the whole person and will carry us through the final coming of Christ. God not only calls us to holiness, but He provides for what we need to have that type of relationship with Him. Holiness happens each day in the way we love God and, because of our love for Him, the way we love each other. Every thought and action is generated by a heart of love.*

Depending on the size of your class, divide back into the three groups (a group needs at least two persons for this exercise) or do this section together. Carrying on from the dramas created, give the youth ten minutes to decide how they would use the following verses to explain the real God to someone in each of the remote places developed in the dramas. After ten minutes, have the youth act out their mission drama.

Here are some suggestions about how the verses could be used:

- **Deuteronomy 32:4** – God’s holiness is seen in His strength, in the perfection of the things He’s done and created, and in the way He deals justly with people.
- **1 Samuel 2:2** – Hannah became fully aware of God’s complete holiness, both His power and His love.
- **1 John 4:7-12** – This passage explains the overriding aspect of God’s holiness - His pure love.
- **Revelation 16:4-7** – God is the ultimate in fair judges. His justice is a part of His holiness.

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*God’s love for us is truly awesome. His holiness is incredible. But it is not something that we view from a distance. He is real, and His holiness and love are to be active in our lives. Are you willing to allow God’s holiness and love to come into your life and begin to shape the way you think, feel, and act? As we close in prayer, let us thank God for being a holy God, whose holiness includes love, power, justice, and much more.* Then ask Him to help each class member in the weeks ahead to begin to form a personal idea of who God is and to decide what difference that will make in their everyday life.

# WEEK 2

## A New Law to Live By

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 7:15 - 8:4

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*I want to tell you about Joe. Joe is writing an exam, more specifically, his final exam. It is very important that he pass this course. As he nears the end of the exam, he knows his score is close. Joe's teacher is called out into the hall. Joe glances up when the teacher walks out, and as he does, he notices that the girl sitting beside him hasn't covered her test paper. She is a straight A student, and has already answered the main question that has Joe puzzled. Her answer is in plain view - Joe's inner struggle begins. He could easily check his answer with hers, and no one would know.*

Discuss these questions with the class:

1. *Does this type of situation really happen?*
2. *How real is the pressure Joe feels to pass?*
3. *What are some other struggles or tough daily choices people you know face? (drinking, having sex, stealing, lying, abusing people, etc.)*
4. *How do people sometimes rationalise or make excuses for doing the wrong thing?*
5. *Do you think willpower alone is enough to keep a person from doing the wrong thing?*
6. *Does it sometimes seem that no matter how hard you try do the right thing, you still end up doing the wrong thing?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Give a student a button-up shirt with small buttons, and a large pair of loose-fitting gloves. Then give him 30-60 seconds to quickly put on the gloves, and then the shirt. Let everyone have a chance. Some will find the task impossible, while others will just manage to do the job. After all have participated, ask them how they felt when trying to do a task that was almost impossible. Paul was a man who felt this same kind of frustration in his spiritual life. Read Romans 7:1-25 together.

*We all can relate to what Paul wrote. He wanted to do the right thing, but he couldn't because his sinful nature was just too strong. He realised that even if we know all the rules God has laid out for us, like the Ten Commandments, sin can keep us from doing what's right. Basically, Paul considered himself to be a prisoner to the power of sin. Likewise, we too can be caught in a war between our desires to do*

*right and our tendency to do the easy, selfish, and wrong thing. The words in verse 24 are those of a desperate man. If we were honest, we would admit that we have all been there, or even feel like we are still there. Sometimes even Christians have this struggle in their lives. Finally in Romans 7:25 - 8:2, Paul gives us the solution to the problem. He said that someone set him free, and that someone was Jesus Christ working through the Holy Spirit.*

*Let's hear some personal examples about how the Holy Spirit operates in our lives.* Ask for volunteers to give testimonies about how the Holy Spirit has freed them from the power of sinful attitudes or actions.

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Last week we learned that God is holy and His holiness is best expressed in His justice and love. The most visible way that God has shown His love was by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sins. The first step to holiness is asking God to forgive our sins and confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. If you haven't done that, or you have at one time but have slipped away, this would be a great time to take care of that. As I close in prayer, take a few minutes to silently talk to God.*

# WEEK 3

## A Gift We Don't Deserve

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Peter 1:14-16; Ephesians 1:4-5; Psalm 51:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Read the following 'letter' to the class.

*'I've been in a relationship with a wonderful girl for the past two years. It's been great, but lately, things have changed. She spends more time with other things and other relationships, and there are even times when I think she is considering leaving me altogether. I thought our relationship was growing, but now, she doesn't even return my calls or respond to my gifts. I try talking to her, but she says I'm smothering her and she wants more freedom. What else can I do? What advice can you give me?'*

1. *What advice would you give to the author?*
2. *If this were you, how would you feel?*
3. *What would you do? Be honest!*
4. *What if God wrote this letter?*
5. *How often do you think He feels the way this guy does?*
6. *How do you think our actions make God feel?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

20 Read Ephesians 1:4-5.

1. *Why did God choose us to be holy? (Because He loves us. God demonstrated that great love by sending His Son to provide a way for us to come into holy relationship with Him.)*
2. *What do you think our responsibility is once things are right between God and us? (Live a holy life.)*
3. *How do we live a holy life?*

Read 1 Peter 1:14-16 as a class.

1. *What is crucial if we are to live a holy life?* (Obedience. As we read in Ephesians 1:4-5, God calls us to be holy, because He loves us. If we love Him back, then we will obey Him. When we are obedient, we are able to resist conforming or becoming like the world, and we can exhibit in our lives the holiness that reflects God's holy character.)

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

1. *Why does Paul want us to be sanctified? (So we will be blameless.)*
2. *Is sanctification like holiness? (Yes.)*
3. *According to this verse, who really does the work of living a holy life – God or us? (God. ‘The one who calls you [God] is faithful and He will do it [make you holy and keep you blameless].’ While we must yield ourselves totally to God, the primary thing is that the power of God enables us to be holy. It is not by our own strength or ability, but by His, that holy living is possible.)*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*We know that God wants a relationship with us, that we have a responsibility to live a holy life, and that we can't live a holy life on our own power. The next question is, ‘How do I become holy?’ Wanting God more than anything or anyone else is the first step. The next step is asking God to sanctify you. King David once prayed for that very thing after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed. David repented with a deep realisation of his need for God's holiness. His plea was that God would create a new heart within Him, one that was free from the sins and the stain of sin that was there. Read his prayer found in Psalm 51:9-12.*

Close the lesson by inviting your students to enter into a relationship of holiness. If anyone wants to give themselves totally to God, invite them to pray. Perhaps they may even want to follow you in praying a prayer similar to the following: *Dear God, You are holy and awesome. I realise that I am unholy. I want to be like You, yet I keep failing. I ask you to cleanse my heart from all sin. Help me desire the things that You want. I know that You have given me all of You. Now, I give all of me to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# WEEK 4

## What Holy Is and What It Is Not

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Corinthians 13:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 4:7-21

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Pick a class member to serve as the 'mystery guest,' and give him the following questions and answers. Also before class, write each question on a slip of paper without the answers. Give one question to each student as they enter class. The goal is to ask the 'mystery guest' the questions, and then guess his identity by his answers.

1. *Are you alive or dead?* (I passed away some time ago, but my influence is still felt today.)
2. *Were you an international figure?* (Yes.)
3. *Were you prosperous?* (I used my belongings and influence for the betterment of all people.)
4. *Have any books been written about you and your life?* (Yes - many. I am an author myself.)
5. *Were you a religious leader?* (Yes, of a sort. I always felt that God was with me and those I led.)
6. *Did you found a movement?* (Yes, it touched nearly the whole world and still does today.)
7. *Were you a believer in 'purity'?* (Yes. Purity in all aspects of life was very important to me.)
8. *Do many people look up to you?* (I would have to say yes.)

Have the class guess the identity of the mystery guest. Do you think from his answers that he was a holy person? Have the mystery guest introduce himself as... Adolf Hitler.

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1. *How did you feel about this person before you knew who he was?*
2. *Now that you know who he was, what does that tell you about holiness?*
3. *Which is more true: 'A person's holiness is determined by what he does' or 'A person's holiness is determined by why he does what he does'? Explain.*
4. *Have you ever done something really good, but for the wrong reasons?*
5. *Were you holy because you did that good thing? Why or why not?*
6. *How about when you did something really good for the right reasons?*
7. *What makes the difference?*

*We are not the first group to wonder about what a holy person looks like. In fact, the early Christians in the city of Corinth had the same question.*

## TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*The church in Corinth had an incomplete picture of what it meant to be a spiritual person. They felt that one's holiness was measured by which spiritual gift they possessed.* Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-5, and ask the class to share what they think those verses are saying. Then read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

1. *Do you think some of the people who claim to be Christians might actually only be 'playing at' being holy?*
2. *How can you tell?*
3. *What are the signs of a person who lives a holy life?*

Read 1 John 4:7-21.

1. *What is the key characteristic of living a holy life?* (Love)

Read 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 12:14. *These verses tell us two important things about holy living. 1 John 1:9 tells us that God knows that we're not perfect. He knows we're sinners, and He wants us to know that He is the key to our holiness. We can't do it on our own. When we admit that we're wrong, His forgiveness, teaching, and presence in our lives make it possible for us to react differently to the conflicts of life in a holy manner. The second important thing, according to the Hebrews passage, is that holiness is an active relationship with God that has real effects on our relationships. Ultimately, the true test of our relationship with God is found in how we live out the life of love among others.*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Read 1 John 4:7-21 again carefully. Now read verse 18 again. Ask for volunteers to summarize why it is important to live a holy life. Lead in a closing prayer asking God to use what they've learned today to continue to build their relationship with Him. Ask Him to show them in the days and weeks ahead just what holiness can look like in their own lives.

# WEEK 5

## A Holy New Wardrobe

### SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Timothy 4:7-16

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*A habit is something we regularly do, often without thinking. Our habits can even be annoying to others.*

1. *What are some annoying habits that people have? (Burping, twirling hair, drumming fingers, etc.)*
2. *Why do you think these habits annoy you?*
3. *What is one habit that you have that you think might annoy someone else?*
4. *Do you think that there are habits that are good for you?*
5. *What are some good habits that you have? (Brushing teeth, taking a shower, eating properly, etc.)*

*Let's take a moment to talk about some habits that are of benefit to us in our spiritual life.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*We know that we do not become holy by simply doing what appear to be holy actions. Holiness is a relationship with God. But we cannot deny that God wants us to reflect His holiness through our actions and reactions. There are steps we can take to reinforce our relationship with the Lord, and there are habits that must be broken in order to strengthen our relationship with Him. Have the class name:*

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1. *habits they feel could hurt one's relationship with Jesus Christ*
  2. *habits that could help one's relationship with the Lord.*

If possible, have a guest speaker share how God enabled him or her to overcome their bad habits and build godly habits in their life.

Read Colossians 3:5-17 and 1 Timothy 4:7-16. *In Colossians, Paul says that if anyone is serious about living the holy life of Christ, then they need to act like it! That involves two steps. First, we have to put to death those sinful habits which keep us from being like Christ. Paul was quite careful with the words he used. He did not mean that we should use discipline and self-denial to keep these habits in check. Rather, anything that would keep us from fully obeying God and fully surrendering to Christ must be killed. The second thing Paul told his readers to do was to clothe themselves with the habits that please God. The way to do that is to open our eyes to the things Christ finds important, see things from His*

*perspective, and then live for those things. Notice that the habits Paul listed are those that have to do with personal relationships between people. Christianity is lived in community. Therefore we must work as hard at living peacefully together as we do in living peacefully with God. Ultimately, Christianity means walking and living like Jesus did.*

In 1 Timothy, *Paul addressed young Timothy, telling him that with God's influence on their lives, young people can be wonderful examples of holiness and Christianity. He encouraged Timothy to be diligent and not allow anyone to look down on him because he was young.*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*All of us can form habits that will help us live a lifestyle of holiness. During these lessons on holy living, we have been given opportunities to accept God's holiness by faith, for it is not something that we can 'earn' or 'buy'. While it is a gift, we can take steps to draw close to God, protect this precious gift, and encourage growth in our relationship with Him. John Wesley, one of the forefathers of the Holiness Movement, believed that it was important to take steps to protect one's relationship with the Lord. In fact, he believed so strongly in being held accountable for one's Christian habits that he formed small groups where believers would encourage one another to keep up the holy habits.*

End the class by encouraging each class member to find one or more 'accountability partners' who will help them develop 'holy habits.' This may be someone inside or outside of the class. The only requirements are that the person is a Christian and is willing to commit to encouraging the class member and hold him or her accountable for his or her actions.

# WEEK 6

## God Goes Global

### SCRIPTURE:

John 3:16-18; 1 John 2:17; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; John 6:35-40

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Prior to the start of class, choose three to five class members (or youth workers) to be contestants in this game. Give all the contestants pencils, paper, and a copy of the following words and definitions: *inveigle* (in-vay) -- speak violently against; *samfu* (sam-foo) -- Chinese woman's suit of jacket and trousers; *urticate* (ur-tick-ayt) -- sting like a nettle; *cabriole* (kab-ree-ol) -- the leg of a table that looks like a paw holding a ball; *aubade* (o-bad) -- music in the morning; *fovea* (fo-ve-ay) -- small depression or pit; *succour* (su-kor) -- come to the assistance of, give aid to; *graipe* (grape) -- three or four-pronged fork used for lifting dung or digging potatoes.

Before you begin, choose which contestant will give the correct definition of which word, while the other contestants make up their own definitions for the same word. The object then is for the rest of the class to guess which definition is correct. After the word is read and each contestant has given his definition, each class member must vote for the definition they think is correct. Contestants receive one point for every vote cast for their definition. Do this with as many words as you have time to cover. Then ask these questions:

1. *How difficult was it to know which definition was the real definition?*
2. *How easy is it to find the truth about something without going to the source?*
3. *Who or what are your best sources for truth?*

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### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*There is one more word for us to define today--the word 'will' as in 'God's will'. A dictionary definition of 'will' is as follows: 1. Faculty by which a person decides or conceives himself as deciding upon and initiating action; 2. Control exercised by deliberate purpose over impulse, self-control; 3. Deliberate or fixed desire or intention; 4. What is desired or ordained by a person.*

1. *Do you think this is a good definition of God's will?*
2. *How would you change it?*
3. *How hard is it to know His will?*

*We can hear others tell us what they believe God's will is, but we should look directly to the source (the Bible) to know what God's will is for everyone.*

Divide the class into five groups (or if your class size is less than 10, do this in pairs or as one group). Distribute pencils and paper, and make sure each group has at least one Bible. The task for the groups is to summarize the messages of their verses. They need to answer as many of the following questions as possible: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?, using the Bible as their primary source. Assign one of the following Scripture references to each group:

1. *Acts 20:21 (People must turn to God.);*
2. *Matthew 7:21 (Only those doing God's will enter heaven.);*
3. *2 Peter 3:9 (God doesn't want any to perish.);*
4. *1 Timothy 2:1-4 (God wants all to be saved.); John 3:16-17 (God sent Jesus to save, not to condemn the world.)*

After all the groups are finished, have them share their summaries. Ask:

1. *What did you find out about God's will?*
2. *What could you tell someone else about God's will for the world?*
3. *How easy do you think it is to follow this part of God's will?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Now that we know that God's will for everyone is salvation, all that remains to do is decide. It's up to us to meet God and accept His loving gift of salvation. This is a personal choice. No one can make it for you. We know that God loves us and wants us to be His. It's the truth, the real definition. Now it's up to you.* Encourage students to kneel at their chairs or turn their chairs to the walls of your class for privacy as they take these few moments to talk to God.

# WEEK 7

## Wholly His

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Peter 1:13-16; Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:1-4, 15-21; Romans 12:1-2

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

This activity can be done in small groups or as a single group activity. You will need at least five different colours of paper. If you are going to divide the class into smaller groups, cut the paper into pieces so each group can have all the colours. Have the groups put their chairs into circles, and place the paper in the middle of each circle. One at a time, each group member is to select the piece of coloured paper that they feel represents the kind of Christian they *are right now*. They then explain their choice and put the paper back on the pile. After everyone is done, each one should then take a turn and select a piece of paper that represents the kind of Christian they think God *wants them to be*. They then explain their choice and put the paper back in the pile. After everyone has finished, bring them back together. Ask them:

1. *How easy or difficult is it for you to know what kind of Christian God wants you to be?*
2. *What do you think God expects of Christians?*

*Last week we discussed that God's will for us is for all to accept Christ as Saviour from our sin. God also has a will for those who do choose to believe in Him.* Using a chalkboard or a piece of paper, make three columns with the headings: What We Know—What We Want to Know—How We Can Learn. Choose a secretary, and ask the class to respond to these questions:

1. **What We Know:** *What are things we already know about God's will for believers? What does He have in store for us to do or to be?*
2. **What We Want to Know:** *What do we wonder about when it comes to God's will?*
3. **How We Can Learn:** *How do we find the answers to our questions about God's will?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide the class into four groups of at least one person each. Each group needs at least one Bible, and is to imagine the following scenario: A friend from school comes up to them and says, 'Hey, I know that you are a Christian. Tell me how a Christian is supposed to live. How is he any different than someone who isn't a Christian?' Assign one of these passages to each group: 1 Peter 1:8-16; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:1-4, 15-21. Each group must decide how they should

respond to their friend, and if time allows, make up a drama about it. After everyone has finished, have them share their dramas or answers. After each group shares, ask them the following:

1. *What is the main point of this passage as it relates to God's will?*
2. *What attitudes were mentioned in your verses?*
3. *How can we live out those attitudes every day?*
4. *What kind of changes do we need to make in order to do God's will?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*There was a tightrope walker that enjoyed walking over deadly heights. One time, he stretched a rope over a huge waterfall. If he were to fall from the rope, it would mean certain death. A crowd gathered as the tightrope walker crossed on the rope over to the other shore. They cheered as he came back across. He then rode a bicycle across and back, and the crowd went wild. Finally, the tightrope walker put a small cart on the wire. He pushed it across and back, as the cheering grew louder. The crowd was huge now. The tightrope walker told the crowd to raise their hands if they believed he could do it again, only this time with a person in the cart. All hands in the crowd went up. 'Keep your hand up if you will be the one to ride in the cart', he said. All hands went down.*

1. *What happened to the crowd?*
2. *Why did they only believe until their own lives were on the line?*
3. *How do we do this same kind of thing to God?*

*We read in 1 John 2:17, 'The world and its desires pass away, but the [one] who does the will of God lives forever.' Do you want to do the will of God? Will you let Him carry you? Even when He carries you over a waterfall?*

Close with prayer

# WEEK 8

## God Gets Personal

### SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 29:11-13; 1 John 5:13-15; John 9:31; Psalm 37:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:18-19; 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:10-14, 16; Proverbs 1:4-5; Ephesians 5:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:1

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Blindfold two or three volunteers and take them out of the room. Give one of the remaining students a prize, like candy. This student becomes the 'true' voice. When the blindfolded volunteers return, the person with the prize must convince them to come to him to get the prize, while the rest of the class tries to direct the volunteers away from the prize. The first volunteer to make it to the prize 'wins.' After one minute, if a volunteer has not yet found the prize, tell them to stop. Then, ask each student one by one to call to the volunteers. The volunteers must choose a voice and move in that direction. When done, ask:

1. *Was it easy or hard to decide which voice to follow? Why?*
2. *What difference would it have made if you had known who had the prize?*
3. *Would it still have been hard to find?*
4. *Think about your lives. Why do you think God speaks to us about the direction we should take in our lives?*
5. *How can we know God's voice when He is speaking to us about His will?*

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### 30 TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have a student read Jeremiah 29:11-13. *According to these verses, God has a definite plan for our lives. What does it say is our responsibility in relation to God's will for our lives? The volunteers heard so much noise while trying to find the prize. Knowing which voice to follow would have made it a lot easier to find. There are many voices in our world making noise to get us to search for prizes other than the ones God has for us. It's definitely easier to discover God's plan for our lives if we recognize His voice.*

Put students into four groups of one or more. Assign each group a 'step' in the process of finding God's will. As a group, they must read and summarize the messages of the Scripture for their 'step'. When all are finished, have a spokesperson from each group present the group's findings.

**PRAY**—Talk to God, then watch and listen for an answer.

**Jeremiah 29:12**—Call upon Me. I will listen to you.

**1 John 5:13-15**—If we ask anything according to God's will, He hears us.

**John 9:31**—God listens to the godly person who does His will.

**READ—Know your desires and test them against Scripture.**

**Psalms 37:3-4**—Trust and God will give you the desires of your heart.

**2 Timothy 3:16**—All Scripture is useful.

**1 Timothy 4:1-5**—Follow good instruction, tested against Scripture.

**TALK—Talk with mature Christians.**

**Proverbs 1:4-5**—Let the discerning get guidance.

**2 Timothy 3:10-14**—Continue in what you have learned.

**1 Timothy 1:18-19**—I give you instruction.

**DO—Act on one of your options.**

**Ephesians 5:15-16**—Make the most of every opportunity.

**1 Thessalonians 4:1**—Follow good instruction.

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

1. *Does anyone here know God's specific will for your life? How did you learn what it was?*
2. *How long did it take? What helped you?*
3. *What are some mistakes you've made while trying to find God's will?*
4. *How have other Christians helped you discover God's will for your life?*
5. *What role has Scripture played?*
6. *What are the benefits of following His will? Any disadvantages?*
7. *What do you think happens when people choose to follow their own will rather than God's will?*

Close with prayer

# WEEK 9

## Is There Anything I Can Do?

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 25:31-46; 28:16-20; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; Acts 1:8; James 1:5-8

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have each class member pair up with someone with whom they feel comfortable sharing personal information. One by one, read the following questions to the class, and then have each pair discuss which of the four answers would most closely describe their likely response: 1. I'd do it! 2. Maybe, if no one was looking. 3. It's not really my style. 4. I would never do that.

1. *A friend says, "You're a Christian aren't you. Would you tell me about God?" Would you?*
2. *A visiting missionary talks about the needs of the people in another country. He invites people to come forward to pray about their involvement in ministering to others. Would you go?*
3. *You are walking across your school campus and see someone you don't know personally, but you feel God wants you to talk to or be friendly to him or her. Would you?*
4. *An elderly neighbor is struggling to lift and move a heavy object. Would you help?*
5. *You see a small child alone and crying. The parents don't seem to be around. Would you help?*
6. *Your friends are making fun of someone. Would you defend the person being made fun of?*

When finished, ask the following questions to the whole class:

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1. *Does God ask us to be involved in ministry? Why?*
2. *To whom does He want us to minister?*
3. *Do you think He picks specific people to minister for Him?*
4. *Are the rest of us off the hook? Why or why not?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide your class into four groups. Assign each group one of the following Scripture passages. They must read their passage as a group, and then share a summary with the rest of the class.

1. **Matthew 25:31-46**—To minister isn't just an option we should consider but is something that has eternal consequences -- heaven or hell. We can't be Christians and not minister!

2. **Matthew 28:16-20**—Jesus gave all the disciples the job of ministering. (Remind the class of the disciples' previous occupations: fishermen, carpenters, shepherds, tax collector, but no pastors!)
3. **Ephesians 4:1-16**—As each part (minister, teacher, encourager, etc.) gives, the Body grows.
4. **1 Peter 2:9-15**—We're all ministers (part of the holy priesthood). We're all called to speak about God and live godly lives before unbelievers so they'll see God in us and want to know God.

*If God calls us to minister, will He also equip us? Read these passages and discuss how God has promised to equip us to do whatever he calls us to do.*

1. Acts 1:8—You will receive power;
2. Romans 12:1-8—One body, many parts, different gifts;
3. James 1:5-8—Ask for wisdom, God will give it.

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

As a class, think about specific ways you can minister to others -- a one day event, a week-long activity, a weekly ministry, etc. Next, pick one or more ideas as a group project. After the project is chosen, ask the group to answer the following questions as they begin planning: *Why do we want to do this particular project? To whom do we want to minister? What are the needs of the group we want to help? What materials will we need? What result do we expect from this project? What result do we think God expects from this project?*

Your group will most likely not finish planning during the time available. The key is to get them started. Help them commit to completing their ministry project by providing a time and place for them to meet and follow through. Remind students that the ministries they are planning are very important, but equally important is the need to be available to God. Ministry is more than just an 'event'; it should be a lifestyle.

# WEEK 10

## Is That Christian?

### SCRIPTURE:

John 14:6; Romans 3:21-26; 6:23; 1 John 4:1-3

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Read the following testimony to the class, and have them discuss if there is enough information in it to safely assume that the speaker is a Christian. They must give reasons for their decision.

*'I believe that Jesus was a real person, not just some myth or legend. He taught us so much about God and loving each other. My Sunday School teacher has really helped me understand this. Her influence is also part of the reason that I don't pollute my body with drugs or alcohol. I believe that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit! God's people have also taught me about the meaning of service, so I help out when I can. Lastly, when I get discouraged, I pray, and God helps me.'*

*Although the testimony sounds Christian, we really need more information to find out if the speaker is Christian or not. In this case, the speaker is not a Christian, but a member of a cult. Often, beliefs that sound Christian are actually something very different.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Since we all talk with people who believe differently than we do, it is very important for us to understand what the Bible teaches about God, Jesus, Sin, Salvation, Life after death, and Spiritual practices. Ask the class to list their beliefs in each category. Read John 14:6; Romans 3:21-26; 6:23; 1 John 4:1-3 and make any additions that were left out, including the following:*

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- *God is the all-powerful, eternal Creator. He loves His creation and wants a personal relationship with His people.*
- *Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Virgin Mary. He died for the sins of all people, was raised from the dead, went up into heaven, and is coming again to get His followers.*
- *Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness. The cost of unforgiven sin is spiritual death.*
- *Jesus' death has made it possible for God to forgive sinners and restore them to a relationship with Him. This is all a free gift, received by faith, not by doing good things.*
- *Everyone will be judged by God. Those who have been forgiven and been made right with God will enjoy life with Him forever; the unforgiven will suffer eternal separation from God.*

- *It is important for Christians to read the Bible, pray, love others, worship God both alone and with others, take communion, and be baptized.*

*When someone tells you what they believe, what questions should you ask to find out if their beliefs are Christian or not?* (E.g. Has God always existed? Is Jesus God? Did he become human and die for our sins? Was He resurrected? Do you believe that sin separates us from God?)

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*What sources do people use when deciding what to believe? What sources should people use when deciding what to believe? There are six sources of faith: 1) Scripture; 2) Tradition--a teaching that has been passed down from generation to generation; 3) Authority--a respected believer or group of believers; 4) Reason--a logical conclusion; 5) Personal Experience--a result of something that happened to me; and 6) Intuition--a sense that something is right, often resulting from prayer.*

*If a belief is based on just one source, but contradicts what two or more of the others teach, it is probably false. It is important that we understand not only what we believe but also why we believe it.* Close in prayer asking God to help your youth become 'thinking Christians' who clearly know what they believe, why they believe it, and who are unafraid to talk about their beliefs with others.

# WEEK 11

## The Church Universal

### SCRIPTURE:

John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:1-6

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin by asking:

1. *Which churches (other than your own) do your friends attend?*
2. *How are their beliefs the same as yours? Different from yours?*
3. *In what ways, if any, do those differences put a strain on your relationship?*
4. *How are their worship services like yours and different from yours?*
5. *What kinds of religious activities do they do?*
6. *Do their beliefs really affect the way they live?*

*Differences in religious beliefs have caused many problems over the years. This is sad because in many cases our problems are the result of not understanding each other. One of the major religions of our area is Roman Catholicism. Let's see how much we really know about Roman Catholics.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*(While the Roman Catholic Church has reformed many of its doctrines that Protestants [the Nazarene Church being one] consider wrong, the practices of many individuals have yet to catch up with those changes. Thus, what a person believes may be very different from the church's beliefs.)*

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Ask the following True/False questions to your class, and discuss the answers.

1. *The Catholic Church teaches that unless you are part of that church, you are not a Christian and will not go to heaven when you die.* (False - Other churches are valid if they teach the Scriptures, life of grace, faith, hope, love, gifts of the Spirit, and baptism.)
2. *In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church sold forgiveness.* (True—Corruption like this brought about the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic Church no longer does this.)
3. *Catholics teach that forgiveness happens when a person confesses their sins to a priest.* (False - Catholics believe in truly repenting in their hearts, and trusting Christ for forgiveness. Some, however, wrongly assume that it is the priest who forgives sins rather than the work of Christ. Also, some wrongly believe they are forgiven by doing penance or good works.)

4. ***The Catholic Bible includes the Old and New Testament and 14 other books.*** (True - It contains the 'Apocrypha' - 14 books containing more information about Jesus' life and teachings, as well as other issues and traditions. Protestants do not accept the Apocrypha as authentic scripture.)
5. ***Catholics teach that you can pray for and give offerings for the dead, in order to help them escape purgatory more quickly and enter heaven.*** (True - Catholics believe purgatory is an afterlife place where so-called 'sinful' Christians go to suffer until they have been purified enough for heaven. Protestants do not accept this as a valid belief.)
6. ***Protestants and Catholics share many of the same basic beliefs.*** (True - Although many traditions are different, our roots and foundations come from the same scriptural source. All Christian Churches have their origin in the Catholic Church.)

Read John 17:20-23 and Ephesians 4:1-6. *What advice would Jesus and the apostle Paul give to Catholics and Protestants today? Help the class understand the difference between uniformity and unity. There are certain essentials that all Christians must practice, but some practices may be more culturally or historically based than scripturally based. What are some of the essentials of Christianity, and what is more culturally and historically based? Despite our differences in tradition and worship, Catholics and Protestants both serve the same Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

#### **ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

***How can Catholics and Protestants enrich each other's faith? How can each contribute to the faith of the whole Church? It is ironic that the Church preaches peace to the world when it is at conflict within itself.*** Pray for peace, love, and understanding in the Church, as Jesus did in John 17.

# WEEK 12

## What Jews Can Teach Christians

### SCRIPTURE:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Micah 6:8; Matthew 22:34-40

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into three groups.

1. Ask group one to discuss whether most people feel *hopeful* or *hopeless* about our world's future, and the reason why.
2. Ask group two to discuss if we as God's people feel *hopeful* or *hopeless* about our world's future, and the reason why.
3. Ask group three to discuss what roles God and God's people play in creating our world's future.

After five minutes of discussion, ask each group to briefly report their conclusions to the class. *These are among the most important questions of Judaism, the religion of Jews.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

On a chalkboard or paper, make two columns with the headings 'Same Beliefs' and 'Different Beliefs.' Have the class compare Christianity and Judaism, and write down the answers. (Below is a brief outline of Judaism's major beliefs.)

- There is one unique, Creator God.
- Jesus was a great Jewish teacher worth considering but not the Messiah.
- Sin is refusing to do good when given a chance; not a state of spiritual death but as a result of unawareness.
- One is saved by learning about one's basic goodness, doing good things, and obeying the Torah.
- The belief in life after death is debated - some believe in bodily resurrection and some do not.
- Spiritual practices include: knowing the Torah, praying, group worship at the Temple, rituals and holy days, doing acts of love, mercy, and justice, working for peace, harmony, unity.

**Jews take many of their beliefs from the Talmud (their 'teachings') which includes the Old Testament.**

- **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and ask: Do you believe this? Why?**

- Read Micah 6:8 and ask: *Do you believe this? Why?*
- Read Matthew 22:34-40 and ask: *How would Jesus respond to these questions? What beliefs do Christians and Jews have in common?* (One holy God, loving Him first and foremost, loving other people and acting in justice toward them)

*Jews believe that to prepare the world for the Messiah's rule, God needs people to spread love through good deeds. Therefore, the Jewish community works hard to help God create a better world. This commitment is summarized in Micah 6:8. What ways can Jews do good deeds in the world?* Ask someone to record everyone's answers. If the class struggles with finding answers, give them categories to consider, like relationships, poverty, health, education, crime, politics, and the environment.

*The Jews see the world as full of hope, not permanently evil. How can Christians grow by letting Judaism challenge their faith without giving up their belief in Christ?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Jews try to maintain a balance between the personal spiritual life and social involvement in the world. They feel that the only true test of their love for God is if they share God's love with the rest of the world. As Christians, how do we measure up to this challenge? The Jewish community is respected for doing good work in the world. Sometimes we Christians are so busy taking care of our own spiritual needs that we fail to do God's work of peace and justice in the world. Doing good deeds is an excellent way to express our love for God and for other people. But we can't forget that good deeds only express our love for God; they don't earn God's love for us. That is free and unconditional. Let's ask God to lead us to people and places where we can get busy as His agents of love in the world. And also, let's ask God to lead us to people and places where we can communicate unconditional love in a humble manner.*

# WEEK 13

## Dealing with Doubting Thomas

### SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 19:1-4; Acts 17:16-34; Romans 1:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have the class define the word ‘atheist’ (someone who believes there is no God). *How would an atheist answer the following question: ‘What questions do you have about Christianity that keep you from believing in God?’* After your students have thought of several questions, ask them to point out questions they asked while they were searching for God.

*All of the tough questions of faith have one big question behind them—the question of God. ‘Is there a God? Does that God care about me? Can I know that God?’ If those questions can’t be answered, then a life of Christian faith can never be built.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Imagine that you are staying at a friend’s house. As it gets late, the two of you start talking about personal things: who you like, your hopes for the future, etc. After awhile, the conversation turns to religion and church, and your friend asks you how anyone can really know for sure if God is real. How do you answer him or her?* Divide the class into teams of two and have them come up with an answer for their friend. Teams can use any evidence they want, including Scripture, in their answer. When time is up, bring the teams back together to share their answers with the class.

**Read 1 Peter 3:15.** *Peter understood that the evidence behind our faith might be just what our friends need to answer their questions. However, we need to remember that faith is a gift from God. No one can be ‘argued’ into spiritual life. A step of faith is necessary.*

**Read Acts 17:16-34.** *How did Paul succeed in witnessing to these people? Leading people to Christ doesn’t happen because we argue well. It happens because we take time to understand and build relationships with them, allowing God to work through us to bring them to Himself.*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

List the following statements in two columns on a chalkboard or large paper—put half of each statement in one column and the other half in the other column. Make sure you mix up the order. The object is for the class to match up the two halves of each statement. When each statement is completed, ask for volunteers to then put the statements in their own words.

1. Walk. . . your talk. (Your lifestyle, attitudes, and values must back up your words.)

2. Earn the right . . . to be heard. (It takes time for two people to develop a trust that allows for deep sharing about life's most important issues.)
3. Behind every angry question . . . is a hurting heart. (Many doubters have had a bad and/or hurtful experience with the church or with religion in general.)
4. When you don't know the answer . . . admit it. (Be honest when their questions stump you. But don't stop there. Find the answers to their questions, and then go back to them with answers.)
5. Know what you believe . . . and why you believe. (Be ready to give a reason for your faith.)
6. Don't be afraid . . . to be human. (Being a Christian doesn't make you perfect. You will still fail. But you can live with integrity and commitment to the truth and to God.)

Challenge your class to pray daily for an opportunity to share God's love and the gospel message, through both words and actions, with their friends. Close with prayer.

# WEEK 14

## Kingdom Character

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 5:1-10

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into three or four small groups. Assign each group a different well-known celebrity from current society, such as the President, a movie star, a musician, or a sports figure. From what they know of their celebrity, the groups must list the person's top five values - the five things that person believes are most important. (Athlete—health, Politician - freedom of speech, etc.)

After groups have finished their lists, tell them that their celebrities have requested to be elected as chairman of their youth group or class, and they are the campaign committees. Let them have several minutes to discuss campaign strategies, and then start the debate. During the debate, each group will have the opportunity to campaign for their celebrity, using the values that they listed earlier. Act as moderator and give each group a chance to respond to questions such as:

1. *What's the first thing your celebrity will do as youth group chairman?*
2. *What activities would the youth group do if this person were in charge?*
3. *Tell us why your celebrity is qualified for this position.*

As they answer each of these questions, be sure to point out any answers that are inconsistent with each celebrity's posted values. After each group has had a chance to argue their case, have an election to see which celebrity wins.

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1. *What did this activity tell you about values?*
2. *Which of the values that you saw listed for the celebrities are values that you hold?*
3. *Why do you consider them important?*
4. *What values do you think a Christian should have? Why those?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have the class turn to Matthew 5:1-10. (Use the Message translation if available.) Read aloud verses 1-2, and then have students take turns reading verses 3-10. Ask the class to define the following terms:

- *Poor in spirit (One who recognises his spiritual poverty apart from God),*
- *Mourner (One who has no other option but to put his hope in God, who will comfort him),*

- *Meek (One who humbly relies on the Lord to provide for him),*
- *Righteous (One who has been made right with God, and is loyal to Jesus and God's kingdom),*
- *Merciful (One who loves one's enemies, gives to the needy, and forgives as God forgives),*
- *Pure in heart (One who has integrity and is holy.),*
- *Peacemakers (One who brings reconciliation during conflict),*
- *Persecuted (One who faces rejection, hatred, and even death for Christ's sake.).*

*The Beatitudes show us Jesus' worldview. In what ways are the Beatitudes different from the worldview of our society? Why do you think Jesus would ask His followers to be so radically different from the world? If you had to come up with a description of a Christian based solely on these verses, how would you describe one?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Others can see what we really value by how we live.* Have students take turns sharing one value named in Matthew 5:1-10 that they want to be evident by their lives. Give each person a piece of paper, and urge him or her to write a letter to God, asking for His help in living out the Kingdom worldview. When they have finished their letters, have them put them in envelopes, seal them, and address the envelopes to themselves. Plan on posting or delivering the envelopes in about six weeks. It will serve as a reminder of this lesson and encourage them to continue adopting a Christian worldview. Close the session with prayer, thanking God for His worldview and asking Him to help each person develop His kingdom values in their lives.

# WEEK 15

## Authentic Christianity

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18; 7:21-27

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into three groups of one or more. Give the groups these instructions: *All of us encounter things that look really good on the surface, but when we dig a little deeper, we find they aren't quite what they seem. These things can be called counterfeits (not genuine). I want each group to come up with three examples of things you would call counterfeits.* When finished, have the groups share their examples and explain why their examples are counterfeit. (Examples include such things as weight loss offers, get rich quick offers, counterfeit money, etc.) *It's easy to identify some things or people as fakes or counterfeits. But, how easy do you think it is to tell if someone is a real Christian or just a counterfeit?*

*Rate these qualities on a scale of 1-10 on their importance in identifying a true Christian.*

- 1. Careful student of the Scriptures*
- 2. Excited and active in his or her stand for God*
- 3. Loves to go to worship and prayer*
- 4. Memorises Scripture*
- 5. Not afraid of praying in public*
- 6. Active in the local church*
- 7. Fasts regularly*
- 8. Has a desire to stand up against ungodliness.*
- 9. Has a firm grasp of basic, foundational theological truths*

After the class has rated the qualities, tell them, *these are the qualities of the Pharisees in the Bible. Jesus called His disciples to go beyond these qualities and to be authentic in their faith. You can not tell if someone is an authentic Christian just by what he does or doesn't do, or even by how they look. It goes much deeper than that.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Using your three groups again, assign each group one of the following passages: Matthew 6:1-4, Matthew 6:5-8, Matthew 6:16-18. Ask each group to read through their passage and identify the

differences between being a true Christian and being merely a religious person. When the groups are ready, have them report on their findings. Next, ask the following questions:

1. *It seemed that each passage mentioned an action and how it should be performed. Do you think it was the action itself that Jesus considered to be 'Christian' or 'unchristian?' If not, what do you think He was trying to get across?*
2. *Today, how hard is it for you to tell an authentic Christian from someone who isn't?*
3. *How can you tell an authentic Christian from someone who is just playing at Christianity? (Attitude)*
4. *If Christianity is as much attitude as it is action, how do you measure attitude?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have each class member determine whether phrase 1 or phrase 2 fits them best.

1. *Do I follow Christ all of the time (2), or just when it is convenient (1)?*
2. *Do I just obey the rules of Christianity (1), or do I have a real relationship with Christ (2)?*
3. *Do I always let others know what I have done for God (1), or do I usually keep it to myself (2)?*
4. *Do I gladly tell others what Christ is doing in my life (2), or do I keep quiet about Christ (1)?*
5. *Am I more concerned with what others think (1) or with what God thinks (2)?*

All of the phrases with a (1) are the types of things that religious people do, while the phrases with a (2) are the types of things an authentic Christian would do. How do you rate? Close with prayer, asking God to help each one present to be authentic in their Christianity.

# WEEK 16

## Putting Him First

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 6:19-34; 19:16-30

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask each class member to write down their schedule for a typical week - like they would in a diary. Have them include everything that they do: school, sleep, eating, homework, going to church, sports, devotions, work, etc. Then, have them add up the total amount of time that they spend on each item. When they are finished, ask them to list the 10 activities that take up the greatest amount of their time.

*One way of judging what is important to us is by looking at the amount of time we spend doing those things.* Ask each person to share the top three activities they spend their time on. Write these on a chalkboard or paper. Next, determine the top three activities for your class as a whole. *We tend to spend our time on the activities that are most important to us. We often call these our priorities. From this list, we've determined what our priorities are. Is your list an accurate portrayal of the priorities of your life? Why or why not? What would you consider to be your true priorities?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide your class into two groups. Assign one group Matthew 6:19-24 and the other group Matthew 6:25-34. Ask each group to read their scripture and boil it down to a single sentence that tells in their own words what God's priorities are. When each group has finished, have them read their sentence to the rest of the class. Possible priorities may include: not storing up treasure on earth but in heaven; not serving two masters but only one; not worrying about anything because God will take care of you; seeking God's kingdom first.

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- 1. In what ways are the priorities we listed earlier different from God's?*
- 2. In what ways are they the same?*
- 3. When they're different, how can we know whose perspective, ours or God's, is right?*

Using the same groups, ask each group to look up Matthew 19:16-30 and make up a modern-day paraphrase of this story. The story is to revolve around a typical youth and the one thing that he or she would have the hardest time giving up in order to follow God. When they are ready, have each group act out or tell their story in front of the class.

After each of the groups have finished, ask:

- 1. Why do you think it's so hard for us to make our priorities the same as God's?*

2. *Do you think God asks us to give up too much?*

3. *If we follow our own priorities, what usually happens? What if we follow God's priorities?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Making God's priorities our priorities can sometimes be a difficult thing. Sometimes it means that we have to give up something that we thought was really important. (You as the teacher might even want to share an experience from your own life at this point.) But when we find ourselves seeking after what God wants, then what was important to us before is replaced by other, better things. Matthew 6:33 really is the key to getting our priorities in line with God's: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." As we learn to seek first His kingdom, God will certainly supply us with what we need to be members of that Kingdom. What are some practical steps that we can take to help keep our priorities in line with God's?*

Close by having the students pray silently, asking God to help them learn to seek His kingdom first and that their priorities would be like God's.

# WEEK 17

## Be Different!

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 5:17-48

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into two or more groups, depending on the size of the class. Say, *Many people think Christianity is only a list of dos and don'ts. That's why some people refuse to become Christians. In your group, take three minutes to come up with as many dos and don'ts about Christianity as you can. Try for at least 10. Be prepared to mime the list for the rest of the class to guess your responses.*

When the time is up, each group should mime their list of dos and don'ts for the other groups and see if they can guess each do or don't. Let groups take turns miming one at a time. Make it clear before the miming that once a do or don't has been mimed, it cannot be used by another group. When all the groups have finished, ask them the following questions:

1. *Why do many people think that Christianity is only a list of dos and don'ts?*
2. *If you got rid of all the dos and don'ts, what would you have left of Christianity? (You would still have a relationship with God and with other Christians.)*
3. *It is true that Christianity comes with guidelines and rules. Why do you think that is?*
4. *What purpose do rules serve?*

Give them a few moments to think and respond and then state: *Most rules are designed to help you strengthen the relationships you have. Ultimately, it is our relationship with God and others and not whether or not we followed a bunch of rules that is the basis of faith.*

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### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*The nation of Israel had always had laws, since the days of Moses. But from the time of the prophet Ezra on, greater emphasis had been placed on the study of the law. This intensive study caused many traditions to spring up that came to be regarded as important as the law itself. Pretty soon these traditions were so numerous that it took special people called scribes just to interpret the law. By the time of Christ, there were so many traditions that people didn't know which were really part of the original laws and which had been added. As a result, the people were required to obey all the laws, no matter how many there were. For example, there were 39 different actions that were prohibited on the Sabbath day. You can imagine the problems the average Jew faced in trying to carefully follow the details of tradition the scribes interpreted. It's no wonder some Jews forgot the more fundamental*

*concerns of the law itself. That is what Jesus called them (and us) back to. In today's scripture, Jesus dealt with some of the old laws that the people had been following. However, He urged them to follow not just the letter of the law, but to look instead at the intent. He asked them to think about why the law was given in the first place.*

Divide your class into four groups. Assign each group one of the following passages: Matthew 5:21-26; Matthew 5:27-32; Matthew 5:33-42; Matthew 5:43-48. Have them read their passage and then match it with one of the four following statements:

1. *Reconciliation and forgiveness should characterise all our relationships. (Matthew 5:21-26)*
2. *Purity is to characterise our relationships and behaviour with members of the opposite sex. (Matthew 5:27-32)*
3. *Radical love should characterise all our relationships with our enemies. (Matthew 5:43-48)*
4. *Acceptance and compassion should characterise all our relationships. (Matthew 5:33-42)*

When all four groups have finished, have group one read its scripture passage to the class and tell which statement matched their passage. Ask: *What had the Law emphasised before and to what did Jesus bring new attention?*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have the class answer the following statements to themselves, using the answers of

1) All the time 2) Sometimes 3) Never.

1. *I treat those of the opposite sex with complete respect.*
2. *If someone hurts me, I am able to respond in a Christian manner.*
3. *I treat everybody the same.*
4. *When I am tempted by pornographic material, I resist looking.*
5. *I express love to everyone I meet.*
6. *I help those in need.*
7. *I am able to contain my anger when someone offends me.*
8. *I avoid insulting others, even if in fun.*
9. *I treat others the way I would like to be treated.*

Close with prayer, asking God for strength and courage to live and love as He asks us to live and love.

# WEEK 18

## The Soil of the Soul

### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 8:5-15

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*Stories are a big part of our lives. When we were kids, we loved hearing stories and having them read to us. Some of us learned about Jesus and other people in the Bible through stories. What were some of your favorite stories as children?*

Once they have each had a chance to recall childhood stories, continue by saying, *We not only listen to stories, but we also tell stories in order to relate an experience to someone who was not able to experience it with us. This morning I would like to give you some time to tell each other stories.* Consider giving them a topic to help get them started (childhood accidents, school, summer). Once everyone has had a chance to tell a story, have the class (or their group) vote on their favorite one and maybe have some kind of silly award(s) for that person or persons. Use the following discussion questions to wrap up this section: *Why do you think we like to tell stories? What kind of story did we most enjoy hearing?*

*Jesus understood the importance of stories. In His day, most people couldn't read and daily events weren't written down very often. So, people passed stories along to each other. In the next few sessions, we're going to look at some of Jesus' stories. Each of His stories had a purpose for its bearers, both then and now. In the story we are going to look at, Jesus used different types of dirt to describe our souls!*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

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In small boxes or plastic bags, have various soil samples available (gravel, mud, sandy soil, planting soil, soil with weeds in it, soil with rocks, etc.). As students look at the different samples, say, *Looking at these different kinds of soil and others that you are aware of, take a few minutes to think about what type of soil you would use to describe yourself.* (Someone might choose rocky soil because he sees himself as "rough and tumble." Someone else might choose mud because she thinks she's "rich and creamy.") When everyone is ready, have each person share which kind of dirt best describes them.

Next, ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 8:5-8. Then ask the rest of the class to explain what they think Jesus meant. Then have another volunteer read aloud Jesus' explanation in Luke 8:11-15. (Consider using Eugene Peterson's translation, *The Message*.)

*God wants to plant His Word in all of us; however, the human heart is no easy field to cultivate.*

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

Bring some seeds to class and give one to each person. Say, *Place the seed in the palm of your hand and hold it out in front of you. Now, I want you to make that seed grow! Ready? Go!*

Once they have told you that it's impossible, say the following in your own words: *What is it that makes something grow, anyway? What is it that makes a puppy become a full-grown dog? What is it that makes a little seed a huge tree? What is it that makes a baby become a toddler, a child, a youth, and then an adult? Have you ever thought about it? What an amazing thing that is taking place! People have tried to duplicate this process on their own, but no one knows how. We may know what elements contribute to growth, but we can't actually make it happen! We are also unable to make God's Word grow in our hearts. But what we can do is to create the right environment for growth to occur. The rest is a miracle of God, just as a seed becoming a flower is a miracle.*

Close with prayer, asking God to create and keep the right kind of receptive soil in each person's heart.

# WEEK 19

## Consider the Cost

### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 14:25-33

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have available some catalogs, magazines, newspapers, tape, glue, scissors, and markers, and one plain paper bag for each student. Explain to everyone that they are to use the bag and the supplies to portray themselves. They can use pictures and words and draw on the bag. Have them use the outside to describe their outward characteristics and the inside for the more internal aspects of who they are or who they want to become. When finished, have each person share their bag, describing himself or herself and what's important to them. Then say, *These examples show us how uniquely we're created.*

1. *How does it make you feel to examine yourself like we've just done?*
2. *Are you comfortable with the things that are important to you?*

*While most of us are aware of our talents and abilities, we don't spend much time thinking about why God created us as He did. Have you ever wondered what Jesus might have in store for you? We each have to answer a fundamental question: Will I allow God to be in charge of what I have and who I am?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have four people take turns reading from Luke 14:25-33. Then ask:

1. *These words are pretty strong! How do they make you feel?*
2. *Have you ever considered what it might cost you to be a Christian?*
3. *What parts of what Jesus said cause you to worry? Why?*
4. *What do these words say to you about how a Christian should be?*

Next, read them the following true story. *Jim was a youth who loved playing the game of basketball. He lived, ate, slept, and dreamed basketball. And he was good at it. But as seriously as Jim took basketball, he also took his faith seriously. God had called him to preach, and he had promised to obey God. One day as Jim was spending time with the Lord, he struggled over the two loves of his life—basketball and Jesus. It seemed that the Lord said to Him, 'Jim, give me the basketball!' 'Why, Lord?' 'Because you can't serve both of us. Basketball cannot be first in your life if you're going to serve Me.'" It was a tough choice, but Jim had his priorities straight. He put the basketball on the shelf and quit playing the game he so loved. He continued to prepare for ministry and kept his relationship with the Lord in first place.*

*Some time later, as he was once again having his devotions, it was as if he heard the Lord again. 'Jim!' 'Yes, Lord.' 'Catch!' God gave the basketball back to him. The Lord knew Jim could be trusted—that the game of basketball would never be in first place. Jim had been tested like Abraham—and he passed the test. Jim went on to be a star basketball player in college. His Christian witness on the court was so strong that he came to be known as 'Gentleman Jim' and was eventually elected to the NAIA College Hall of Fame. But even more importantly, Jim went on to be a pastor, a missionary, and a college president. He is Dr. Jim Bond, a former general superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene. He is still living by the lessons he learned as a youth.*

1. *Do you think God was fair with Jim? Why or why not?*
2. *How difficult do you think Jim's sacrifice was for him?*

*God does not ask us to sacrifice things for no reason at all. In Jim's case, he needed to make sure Jim's priorities were right. Not everything God asks us to give up is bad. Often, if it is good, we discover that He gives us back the thing that was hardest to give up. All He asks is that we trust Him, and keep Him first.*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Read the words of the following Steve Camp Song, 'Could I be called a Christian?' *'Could I be called a Christian, if everybody knew the secret thoughts and feelings of everything I do? Could they see the likeness of Christ in me each day? Or could they hear Him speaking in every word I say? Could I be called a Christian, if my faith I did not show? If I did not go to places where the Lord would have me go? If I do not love His truth? If I do not guard His trust? If I cherish more than Jesus, my greatest hidden lust? Could I be called a Christian and believe not His holy Word? If I take Him as my Savior and then refuse Him as my Lord? If I don't love the outcast and am not burdened for the lost? If I fail to deny myself each day and take up my cross?'* Ask the class to silently reflect upon the following questions: *Am I willing to give up all that I am for all that He is? Am I willing to pay the cost?* Encourage them to think about the items on and in their Bag and reflect on their priorities. Close by having each person pray silently & share with God their fears or concerns about the cost of being a Christian.

# WEEK 20

## Free for All

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 20:1-16

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

You'll need enough 'awards' (sweets or prizes that are all the same) for each person to receive one. Prior to class, determine the kind of game you'd like to use in this opening activity. The game you choose must have definite winners and definite losers. For larger groups, a team relay may work best. For medium-sized classes, a version of 'Simon Says'. Play the game until a winner is determined. Ask the winner to come forward. Say, *You did very well. You deserve a prize. Give them a prize.* Then say, *Now who came in second? You did very well too. You deserve a prize. Give them a prize just like the winner's.* And go right down the line, saying the same thing and giving the same prize to each finisher, regardless of what place they came in. Your students may object to this. Give them a chance to make a few comments, but don't explain your actions just yet.

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Ask a student to read today's parable from Matthew 20:1-16. (If your class is drama-oriented, read the parable and then have them act it out.) When finished, ask, *What are our modern methods of dealing with fairness or the lack of fairness?* (Riot; sue one another; march on the capital city; go to the media to receive national attention; shoot the other person; etc.) If you can, bring some clippings out of the newspaper regarding some current high profile cases or situations where someone is not being treated 'fairly.' Once you have discussed it, say, *But as Christians, how are we to approach the idea of fairness in light of this parable?* After they've had a chance to discuss for a moment, say, *Let me give you an example that is a little closer to home. It is Saturday morning and you are at the church because we are having a fund-raiser for the youth group to earn money to pay for camp. The fund-raiser is a car wash. It starts at 10 A.M. and is supposed to end at 2 P.M. The youth leader has told everyone that the money raised from the car wash will be split evenly among all those who work. Well, at 1:30 Jim and Greg show up. When it comes time to split the money into everyone's accounts, the youth pastor gives everyone (including Jim and Greg) the same amount! Is this situation fair? Why or why not? Would you speak up? What would you do?*

After the students have had time to honestly discuss the situation, say, *In both of these stories, the people who thought they were being treated unfairly lost sight of their original contract or agreement. In the parable, the workers agreed to work the day for a certain amount. With the car wash, you agreed to attend in order to raise money to go to camp.*

1. *What do you think God was trying to teach us about His grace through today's parable?*
2. *How does this affect the way we view our neighbor?*
3. *How does this affect how WE offer grace and/or mercy?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Distribute paper and pencils. Say, *Take some time to think about your own life at home, at school, and even here at church. Think of a real situation in your life and write down the facts of the situation. Then say what you think is fair or unfair about it. When you are done, fold your paper and give it to me.* Once everyone is finished, have volunteers come and pick one and read it aloud to the class. Then as a class, discuss ideas for a just solution. Through the discussion, help them transfer what they are saying into how they view fairness and will act it out.

Close the session by encouraging your students to watch for, and practice throughout the week, justice as Jesus taught it in this parable. Consider having your students close in sentence prayers, asking for God's perspective on each of their personal situations.

# WEEK 21

## Are You Ready to Party?

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 25:1-13 (25:31-46)

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have the students think of things that they know without a shadow of a doubt will happen tomorrow (such as the sunrise). List these on a chalkboard or paper, or if your class enjoys drawing, put a large sheet of paper on the wall for them to draw the things they know will happen. You may even consider having them play a game of charades to portray their sure happenings.

Next, suddenly surprise them with the following party announcement: Today, class is going to be a big party! Distribute streamers, balloons, hats, noisemakers, etc. Put on music as they begin to decorate. Have goodies to eat.

As the party is getting under way, set a timer for one minute and have the class throw the timer to one other until it goes off. The person holding the timer when it goes off is out and must finish working on the decorations. If the timer goes off while it is in midair, the person who last touched it is out. Play the game until only one person is left. If you do not have a timer, use a sand timer from a board game and simply hand the timer around the room in an upright position.

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

When the game is over, set the timer for one more minute. When it goes off, have everyone stop what they are doing, and return to the group. Say, *How does being unprepared for things make you feel?* Ask your students to share funny stories about times they have been unprepared. Say, *There is something we do not often think about that is going to happen, just as sure as the things we listed a few minutes ago. And it's going to be a huge change in our lives. It is the Second Coming of Christ. What do you already know, or what do you wonder, about the Second Coming? Do you ever worry you won't be prepared when He comes?*

Read Matthew 25:1-13. Ask:

1. *Who does the bridegroom stand for?* (Jesus)
2. *Who do the 10 virgins stand for?* (The Church or Christians)
3. *What does this say about when Jesus will come again?* (No one knows for sure; it could be any time)
4. *What does this say about our responsibility?* (Be smart; be ready; be about God's business, such as doing the things in Matthew 25:31-46.)

Have each class member answer the following questions to him or herself: *If Christ returned today or tomorrow, how would you respond to the following questions:*

1. *Were you a friend of Jesus when He was hungry?*
2. *Were you a friend of Jesus when He was thirsty?*
3. *Were you a friend of Jesus when He was a stranger?*
4. *Were you a friend of Jesus when He was sick?*
5. *Were you a friend of Jesus when He was in prison?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*We know Jesus will return, so we must decide what difference this knowledge will make in our lives and in the choices we make. Is there a difference between the kind of person Jesus wants to find when He returns and the kind of person you and I are today? Thankfully, if we've accepted Christ as Savior and we're living for Him, we don't have to worry; we only have to be prepared to meet Him. What are some things you can do so that you are not caught unprepared by His coming?* Ask students to write their responses on a sheet of paper, writing down changes they want to make in their lives to be ready for Jesus' coming. If you know that some students are not ready, be attentive to their needs and be prepared to help them accept Christ as Savior. Once everyone has had adequate time to work on their plan of action, explain that the party they had begun was in celebration of Christ's Second Coming. Finish the party, and then close with prayer.

# WEEK 22

## *It's Hard to Be Humble*

### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 17:7-10

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Break the class into groups of two or three, and give each group a large piece of paper and a marker. The groups must then draw all the different ways that their parents provide for them. (Life, food, home, money, clothes, etc.) If they do not have parents, encourage them to think of those who provide for them. When finished, have each group read their list to the class.

1. *It's impossible to pay our parents back for these things. So what can we do to show our gratitude?* (Obey them; try to please them, love them)
2. *Now think about what God has done for us. Name some of the things He's done for us.* (Provided forgiveness and salvation, loves us, created us, provides for us, etc.)
3. *Can we adequately pay Him back for all that He's done for us?*
4. *How do we show Him our gratitude for all that He's done for us?* (We serve and obey Him.)
5. *Is it right then, to expect rewards or praise for serving God?* (No)

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Read the following statements to the class, and have each person keep track of their points.

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*For each of the following that are true about you, you get one point:*

- *You helped prepare a family meal this week.*
- *You got an A on a test this week.*
- *You turned homework in early this week.*
- *You helped a friend in some way this week.*
- *You were a peacemaker in some way this week.*
- *You apologized to someone this week.*
- *You read the Bible somewhere besides in church this week.*

For each of the following that are true about you, you lose one point:

- *You got into a verbal or physical fight this past week.*
- *You disobeyed someone in authority this past week.*
- *You were late for something this past week.*
- *You haven't read your Bible outside of church this past week.*
- *You owe someone an apology.*
- *You never offered to help anyone this week.*
- *A friend really needed you this last week, and you didn't help him or her.*

Give a treat to those who ended up with at least two points. Ask: *Honestly, what do we usually expect in return for doing something good? Why? Aren't we just supposed to do what is right and good?*

Have someone read Luke 17:7-10.

1. *How should servants behave?* (Live selflessly, do things with a humble attitude, seek to please God first.)
2. *What keeps us from adopting this attitude?*

*We shouldn't serve just to prove what a good servant we are or to try to earn God's love. We were created to serve, and therefore we must not do it to receive praise or recognition.*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*What happens when we serve others?* (We help others. Our lives are usually changed. God uses our service to change us to be more like Jesus.) *We learn to serve by serving others. When that happens, God can use those opportunities to create some incredible changes in our lives.* Close in prayer, asking God to help your class learn about humility as they serve one another in the upcoming week.

# WEEK 23

## Living the Mission

### SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask your students what their favorite store is; take a vote if necessary. Tell them that they have been elected to the board of directors of this. Business has been slow lately, and as customers and board members, they are to evaluate the purpose and goals of their store. Spend about three minutes briefly discussing these questions:

1. *Why is this store in business?*
2. *What is its purpose for existing?*
3. *What service does the store provide, or product does it make, to fulfill its purpose?*
4. *What else should the store be doing to stay in business?*

Next, ask your students how they might respond if the organization in question were the Church (the Church universal, not just a denomination or local congregation). Be sure to point out that while the church has business affairs, it is much more than just a business.

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

**Say:** *Have you ever tried to describe what the Church is to your unchurched friends? The Church is not always easy to describe, but knowing how to describe it is important for Christians. It gives us a purpose. Let's take a look at what God intends for His Church to be and do.*

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Tell your students that you are going to read aloud some Scripture passages. They are to listen carefully for words or phrases that relate to the purpose of the Church. Then they are to write down as many of these and other biblical words and short phrases they can think of that describe the identity, actions, and purpose of the Church. For the best interaction and brainstorming, try to arrange your students in small groups.

Read Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 28:18-20; and Acts 2:42-47. Pass out a blank sheet of paper and a pencil to each group, and then tell the groups to begin making their lists.

When the groups are finished, have one student from each group read one word from their list. As they do, copy the word onto a sheet of newsprint or poster board. Have the other groups cross those words off their lists if they are there. Then have the next group read one word from their list that has not been

named yet. Have the groups continue taking turns doing this until all the groups have shared or crossed off all the words on their lists.

Ask your students to review the list of words on the board as they respond to the following questions:

1. *Which of these words do you think best expresses the main purpose of the Church?* (Worship, evangelism, discipleship, teaching, missions, Christlikeness, etc.)
2. *Why do you think so?*
3. *If you could use only four of these words to describe the Church, which four would you choose? Why?*
4. *What recommendations for the Church would you make if the Church is to continue and grow in the future?*
5. *What do you think is God's desire for the Church?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Say, Most organizations have a mission statement that tells their guiding philosophy or their reason for existence. What would you say if you had to write a mission statement for our church? Well, now you have the chance.* Divide your students into groups of two to four. Have each group work together to develop a mission statement that will state the biblical purpose of the church from today's lesson. When finished, have each group read their statement for the rest of the class. Then brainstorm ideas for helping the church to carry out its 'mission statement'.

Close with prayer.

# WEEK 24

## The Shared Life

### SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 4:1-6, 29-32; John 17:20-23

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*Say, Some people have said that the church is a lot like a soccer game—thousands of people who are badly in need of exercise watching 11 people who are badly in need of rest playing the game. What do you think this illustration means? Imagine this room is a soccer field. Where do you see yourself? Are you a player? Coach? Trainer? Second String? Injured Player? The Ball? A Spectator? A Referee? A Cheerleader? The Half-time Entertainer? Choose who you feel like you are in this class. Write on your paper where you see yourself. Don't include your name. When you are through, wad it up (like a ball) and toss it in my direction.* After students have determined who they are in the game, read aloud each response. You may want to keep a tally to see if there would be enough players to actually play the game. Then ask this question: *Now that we've thought through our present involvement in this class, tell me, where would you like to be?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

1. *What are some things you think keep us from being a real community or team?*
2. *What about insults?*
3. *Why do you think someone would put down another person?* (Hide their own pain, make themselves feel more important, get attention, etc.)
4. *How does it feel when you are insulted?*
5. *What are some of the negative effects of this type of verbal abuse?* (Poor self-esteem, depression, discouragement, wasted potential, etc.)

*Many people live in a destructive emotional environment every day. However, God wants His Church to be different. In fact, God calls us to be united.*

Ask someone to read Ephesians 4:1-6, 29-32, and someone else read John 17:20-23. Then say: *Today you are going to be songwriters! Based on what we've heard just now from Scripture, I want you to write words that will express what you think God wants the Christian community to be. You can choose song tune you want. You can work alone or with a group of no more than three others.* Make sure every student or group has access to a Bible to refer to the passages again. When done, have each person/group present

their song to the class. Allow the other students to ask questions of the songwriter about the meaning of the lyrics.

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Let's take a step today toward becoming a more caring group. One way to do that is to encourage and pray for each other. We're actually going to play our own 'soccer game'!* Have your students sit in a circle. Kick a small ball to someone in the circle. That person can then share a way that the church has helped them, or they can share a prayer request. If they share a prayer request, stop and take time to pray for that request, thus demonstrating what it means to be the church. When finished, that person kicks it to someone else. Continue play until everyone has had an opportunity to participate. If your class is too large to allow everyone an opportunity to participate in the time allotted, break into two or more groups to do this activity simultaneously. Then ask these discussion questions: *How hard was it for you to share how others in this church have helped you? Why do you think that is? Do we not know each other well enough? What would make it easier? Was it easy or hard for you to ask others to pray for you or your needs? Why is that? What would make it easier? Becoming a caring community involves more than what we just do here. We must make encouraging and helping others a way of life for us. Think of one way that you can help someone outside our class this week.*

Close the session by having students ask God to help them find ways to build community with the people in the group, in the church, in their homes, and at their schools.

# WEEK 25

## God Cooks with Cracked Pots

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Corinthians 3:1-9; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Read the following story to your class: *On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often happen, there was once a simple little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat. However, the few devoted crewmembers constantly watched over the sea, going out day and night searching for the lost. Because of the lifesaving station's success, other people from the community wanted to get involved as well. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The lifesaving station grew. Soon, some crewmembers began to feel that the building was too simple. So, they replaced the cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members. They decorated and furnished it beautifully and used it as a club. Many crewmembers lost interest in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. They still believed in saving lives; they simply didn't want to do it themselves. They were too busy with their growing social club. About this time, a large ship wrecked off the coast. The hired crews brought in many cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and some even had different colored skin than the club members. The beautiful new club was in chaos. Soon after that, there was a split in the membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the lifesaving activities because they were a hindrance to the social life of the club. Others insisted that lifesaving was their primary purpose. Finally, those in favor of continuing their lifesaving mission were voted down. If they wanted to continue saving lives, they would have to build another lifesaving station down the coast—which they did. However, as the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and then another lifesaving station had to be built. This happened over and over again, and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.*

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*When was the lifesaving station most effective? Where did it go wrong? At what point did the station fail to achieve its original purpose? What would you say is the 'moral of the story?' In what ways do you think the Church is like a lifesaving station? What is the purpose of the Church? How can the problems that the lifesaving station experienced be avoided in the church?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide your class into two groups. Assign group one 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 and 2 Corinthians 4:7, and group two 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10. The groups are to write down words or phrases that describe the churches in the passages. After they have finished, have each group describe to the class the negatives

and positives of their particular church. Make note of the fact that no church, like no person, is without its problems and faults.

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

You will need about two meters of rope and two prizes. Place the prizes on opposite sides of your class area. Recruit two volunteers, and tie the wrist of one volunteer to the wrist of the other volunteer. One volunteer must try to reach one prize, and the other is to try and reach the other prize. (Place the prizes far enough apart so that both prizes cannot be reached at the same time.) The goal is for the volunteers to figure out that if they cooperate, they can both walk to one side, get the prize, and then walk to the other side and get the other prize. When finished, ask these questions: *Was it necessary for someone to lose for someone to win? What was the key for both people to get a prize?* (Cooperation) *When we face problems that involve other people, how do we often respond? How should we respond so that everyone wins?*

*When we face a problem, we must remember that:*

1. *You may not have all the facts.*
2. *Try not to overestimate or underestimate the size of the problem.*
3. *Don't involve people who aren't involved.*
4. *The goal should be restoration, resolution, and forgiveness, not 'winning.'*
5. *Realize that some people seemingly live to create problems.*
6. *Don't let the problem sidetrack you from your God-given mission.*
7. *Keep your faith that God is still in control—no matter what.*
8. *Be open to God's solution; pray for it; wait for it. It's important to learn that even if everything is not perfect, we can still fulfill our mission if we work together and allow God to be in control. However, we need to be willing to overlook or forgive others for their failures, mistakes, and shortcomings.*

Close with prayer.

# WEEK 26

## Who, Me?

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Timothy 4:12-16; Ephesians 4:11-16

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Form groups of three. Each trio must cooperate to find a large ball or bulky object (which you have placed about 5-8 meters away), pick it up, and bring it back to the starting spot (through an obstacle course if you choose). Each person in the groups is limited to certain abilities. Person One can see and talk but can not touch the ball. Person Two can not use his right arm and hand and can not talk or open his eyes. Person Three can not use his left arm and hand and can not talk or open his eyes.

1. *For each of you, what was the hardest part of this activity?*
2. *Why was each role important to the group?*
3. *What would have been different without one member of the group?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide your class into two groups, and give each group something to draw with and a large sheet of paper. Have one group read 1 Timothy 4:12-16 and the other group read Ephesians 4:11-16. Each group is to draw a picture that shows the condition of Timothy or the Ephesian church before reading Paul's letter and another picture that shows their condition after they read and acted upon it.

*Timothy's leadership and ministry efforts may have been challenged by older people in the church. It could have been that his gifts were being ignored; he may have been discouraged by the lack of support; he may have not given enough time to reading, exhortation, and doctrine; he may not have meditated on these things and may not have been wholehearted in his involvement with them.*

*The Ephesians were not listening for God's calling on their lives. They were like children who could be tricked, not growing spiritually as they should have been. That, and their apparent lack of unity, was keeping them from becoming Christlike.*

Ask each group to share their scripture with the rest of the group and explain their drawings. *We must realize and act on the fact that all of us have an important role in the church. If we do our part, others will be stronger as a result. But some of us may think, 'I can't do anything that would help others.' Think again. We all have gifts—God has given them to us.*

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

- 1. What are some of the unique gifts that youth can use to help or encourage others?*
- 2. What are the unique problems or challenges that these abilities might present? (Faith that God can do anything—It can be a challenge to others to trust God more, but we have to realize others may not understand and share our enthusiasm, etc.)*

*Let's look at some ways that we can use our God-given gifts.*

Before class, make a list of the ministries in your church. Include ministries that could exist but don't yet. Some suggestions are: Church Greeter, Food or Clothing Bank worker, Sing in the Choir, Clean the church, Tutor Children, Baby-sit for free, Church Usher, Participate in a Drama Team or Puppet Ministry, Encourage Others, Teach Children's Sunday School, Lead a Bible Study, etc. Read through the ministries list, and ask students to pick out ministries that they would be interested in being involved in. Ask for their suggestions of any other ministries they feel need to be started at their church. Encourage everyone to try something. Challenge your students to talk that same day to the leader of the ministry they selected and discuss how and when they can help with that ministry. Close with a prayer of commissioning, asking God to give wisdom, strength, and His presence to each of the youths as they accept the challenge of ministry.

# WEEK 27

## Not Ashamed

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 1:16-17

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have the class define the words 'value' and 'ashamed'. (Value—To consider or rate highly. Ashamed—The shameful feeling related to a person or deed.)

1. *What are some things you value highly?*
2. *What would it take for you to be ashamed of those things/people you value?* (They would have to cause me disappointment or hurt.)

As the teacher, share about the most recent time you were ashamed of something you did. After you have shared, ask one or two volunteers to describe a time when they were ashamed or greatly embarrassed. Ask:

1. *Why did you feel ashamed or embarrassed?*
2. *Were the things you were ashamed about things you considered respectful, honorable, or valuable?*
3. *Embarrassment and shame come when we involve ourselves in something we do not value. On a scale from 1-10, how valuable is the gospel to you?*
4. *What makes it so valuable?*

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### 68 TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Ask someone to read Romans 1:16-17. *Why is Paul so proud of the gospel? Do you think he has a right to be? There were also others who were not ashamed of what it said. Let's examine how some individuals stood with pride for the gospel message.* Divide the class into three groups, and assign each group either Acts 6:8-12; 7:56-58, Acts 16:16-34, or Acts 4:13-22. They must answer the following questions concerning their passage:

1. *Who was proud?*
2. *How did they show it?*
3. *Were there any visible results?*

When finished, have each group report on their findings and analysis of the passage. Use the following information to 'round out' what the groups share.

1. *Acts 6:8-12; 7:56-58—Stephen. Stephen was not afraid to say what he saw and believed, and he was stoned to death as a result. Notice that a man named Saul was witness to Stephen's murder, and through Stephen's witness, the gospel changed Saul from being a persecutor of the Church into Paul, the proclaimer of the gospel.*
2. *Acts 16:16-34—Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas were thrown in jail because of their faithfulness to the gospel (they took away the income of evil men by driving demons out of a fortune-telling slave girl). In jail, their witness continued. They sang and prayed out loud so the other prisoners could hear them. The miraculous earthquake that freed them is secondary to the fact that their witness resulted in the salvation of the jailkeeper and his entire family.*
3. *Acts 4:13-22—Peter and John. After the Sanhedrin had told them to stop speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and John boldly responded that they didn't answer to men but to God.*

*These people proclaimed the gospel message with such confidence because they knew without a doubt that the message was honorable and true, and very valuable to their world!*

1. *What do you think the gospel has to offer our world today?*
2. *How prepared are you to be someone who's not ashamed of telling others about the gospel?*
3. *What would keep you from being proud of the gospel? Read Mark 8:38.*
4. *Why is it so important to not be ashamed of the words of Jesus?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*No matter what we do in life, as Christians we are called to proudly proclaim the gospel. Read Romans 1:16-17 again. Paul, and we, are able to not be ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God. This same power is available to us today, as we seek to spread His message.*

Close by praying for the students as they seek to proudly proclaim the gospel message.

# WEEK 28

## Facing Facts

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 1:18-20; 2:1-3, 11-15; 6:23

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have each class member write down three statements that could be true about themselves but really are not, and one statement that is definitely true. For example: 1) I like to play cricket (false). 2) I have three brothers (false). 3) I like peas (false). 4) I can stand on my head (true). Collect the statements when everyone is done. Mix them up and then give one to each student, making sure no one gets his or her own paper. Have students announce whose paper they have, read the paper, and then let the class decide which of the four statements is the true one.

1. *How easy is it to distinguish half-truths from real or whole truths?*
2. *How do you tell the difference?*
3. *What are some things you've heard people say that you would consider half-truths about God or about being a Christian?* (Being good or going to church is what being a Christian is all about, etc.)

*All of us tend to live in half-truths from time to time. Let's see what Scripture has to say about living in those half-truths.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Make three columns on a chalkboard or large piece of paper. For the first column, ask the class to call out as many sins as they can think of in 30 seconds. When finished, move to column two and ask them to call out actions that might simply be considered 'sort of wrong or bad. Give them the same time limit. Then, move to column three and ask them to call out actions that would be considered good things, even righteous things, which people do. Ask: *Do people who act this way need salvation?*

Ask someone to read Romans 1:18-20 out loud. *How does this relate to what we discussed in the three columns? How does this relate to people who've never heard about Jesus?* (All people will be judged according to the judgment they have delivered.) Read Romans 2:11-15. *What does this tell us about our lists? Have another student read Romans 6:23. Paul is using business terminology here with the word 'wages.' In a normal job, would someone who hadn't earned the money get paid? What does that say to you about what waits for us when we sin?* (We will get what we deserve.)

Copy the 'Good Reasons' below, and distribute one each to five class members. Then choose a sixth person to play the role of God. Each of the five will come before 'God' on Judgment Day and give his

‘good reason’ why God should let him into heaven. ‘God’ will listen to each reason and decide, based on what has been learned about the real God and sin in this lesson, whether to let the person into heaven.

‘Good Reasons’—

1. *I have never broken a law in my life!*
2. *I often helped others.*
3. *I never cheated on an exam or told a lie.*
4. *No one ever told me how important becoming a Christian was.*
5. *I was a church member and was very faithful in my attendance.*

After the five plead their case before “God” and “God” has given his decision, ask:

1. *What effect would these excuses have on the real God?*
2. *Would He invite these people into heaven?*
3. *Why wouldn't any of these excuses work?*

*The truth is that we can try all we want, but we can never be good enough to earn God's forgiveness. It is a free gift.*

#### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Sin separates us from God. If you were to face God's judgment today, would He see a life filled with His righteousness? Or would He see someone who has been trying to fool himself and others? Even if we are living good lives, that is not enough. Do you want to make things right with Him now?*

Close the class session by giving opportunity for anyone who desires to pray for salvation.

# WEEK 29

## Membership Has Its Privileges

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 3:21-24; 5:1-11; 6:23

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Read the following statements one at a time, and after each statement, have your class respond by holding up the appropriate number of fingers. One finger means that the statement is not very important to him; two fingers means he has to have it or do it; three fingers means it is definitely not him; four fingers means he might or he might not do it or want it. Give students the chance to discuss their response. Choices: *1) Take a job that pays a large salary. 2) Pray regularly. 3) Be a role model for someone younger. 4) Date many different people. 5) Have God control your life. 6) Look attractive. 7) Stay out of trouble. 8) Earn good grades. 9) Spend time with your family. 10) Experience the most out of life. 11) Give your money to help someone. 12) Read your Bible daily. 13) Have only Christian friends. 14) Have a lot of fun. 16) Give your time and energy to your local church.*

*Can you think of a choice that we make that doesn't have any consequences? (There are none.) How can we determine if our choices will result in good or bad consequences? (There are no 'right' answers to this question.)*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide your class into two to four small groups, and divide the following scripture verses between them. Each group must read their verses, determine the choices that are implied, and then determine what the outcome or consequences of those choices are.

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1. **Romans 3:22**—Choice: To believe; Outcome: The righteousness of God.
2. **Romans 3:24**—Choice: Accepting His grace; Outcome: We are justified.
3. **Romans 5:1**—Choice: Being justified; Outcome: Peace with God.
4. **Romans 5:3-4**—Choice: Rejoice in suffering; Outcome: Perseverance, character, and hope are produced, and the love of God is poured out within our heart.
5. **Romans 5:9**—Choice: Being justified; Outcome: We are saved from wrath.
6. **Romans 6:23**—Choice: To sin; Outcome: Death.
7. **Romans 8:1**—Choice: Accepting Jesus; Outcome: No condemnation.
8. **Romans 8:2**—Choice: Accepting Jesus; Outcome: Freedom from the law of sin and death.

9. **Romans 8:14**—Choice: Being led by the Spirit; Outcome: Being sons of God. When finished, ask each group to pick a spokesperson to share their findings.

After all groups have reported, ask:

1. *According to what we've read here, what do you think choosing God brings us?* (Blessings, becoming part of His family, freedom from sin, spiritual growth, etc.)
2. *When have you or someone you know experienced blessings as a direct result of making a choice that honored God? Tell us about it.*
3. *How about when we don't choose God? Based on what we've read, what happens then?* (Pain and condemnation)
4. *What are some real-life examples of people who've experienced pain as a direct result of not choosing God?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Even among groups of people who have attended church all their lives, we tend to find those who have never taken seriously the fact that they need to choose salvation, to accept God's free gift. I'd like to offer that opportunity to you this morning. If you've already decided to be a Christian and you stand by that choice today, pray about other choices you're facing right now. Identify the choices and ask God to help you choose wisely, in a way that would honor Him and would draw you closer to Him. If you haven't chosen to be a Christian, you have a very important decision to make. Pray about the choice to become a Christian. Ask the Lord to show you His love, tell Him about your sins, and remember He loves you and wants you to love Him.*

# WEEK 30

## Free at Last

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 8:1-17, 20-21; 2 Corinthians 3:17

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

As your students come into class, tie the hands together of at least half of them. Once their hands are tied, begin class by singing a chorus with lots of motions. Some favorites are 'Pharaoh, Pharaoh', 'Spring Up, O Well', 'Clap Your Hands', and 'Sing, Shout, Clap'. Keep up the tempo to further complicate things. Once they have struggled through the songs, ask them to do another activity which would be difficult to do in bondage. (Shake hands, draw on the chalkboard, jump rope, etc.)

*What did it feel like to be in bondage? It's frustrating to not be free to do what you want, isn't it?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*God created us with a built-in freedom to make choices. He wanted our desire to serve Him to be our choice. This is illustrated in the story of Adam and Eve. They had this freedom, but when the serpent prodded them, they chose to live for themselves rather than for God. We have the same choice today. Because of the sinful nature within us, we tend to choose selfishly. Only through Christ can we be free from that bondage to ourselves. We can choose to be free to follow Christ Jesus and live by the Spirit!*

*Romans 8 lays the blame for our bondage squarely on our tendency to yield to our sinful natures, that is giving in to our own selfishness, rather than being tricked by an evil third party.* Ask someone to read Romans 8:1-17, 20-21. Instruct the class to listen for any phrase or statement that could be connected with the idea of freedom. Have the passage read a second time. As it is read, have them call 'stop' and identify any of the statements concerning freedom. Have a secretary record the statements. Following is a list of many of the statements they will find:

1. *There is no condemnation (8:1);*
2. *We are free from the law of sin (v. 2);*
3. *We are free from the law of death (v. 2);*
4. *We no longer have to walk according to the flesh (v. 5);*
5. *We no longer are hostile toward God (v. 7);*
6. *We are free to please God (v. 8);*
7. *We will live and not die (v. 13);*

8. *We have not received a spirit of slavery but a spirit of adoption (v. 15);*
9. *We are free to be His children (v. 16);*
10. *We are freed from slavery to corruption (v. 21);*
11. *We are free to experience the glory of the children of God (v. 21).*

*With real freedom comes the desire to please God and not ourselves. We can stand firm on the fact that God's way is the only way to true freedom. God's way fills our need for freedom; in fact, He can help us redefine freedom.*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Write 2 Corinthians 3:17 on the chalkboard or large paper.

1. *What did freedom mean to you before this lesson?*
2. *How is that definition different now?*
3. *Do you think that God's definition of freedom will keep you from doing what you want to do with your life? In what ways?*
4. *How is God's freedom true freedom?*

Have the class repeat the following after you:

*Because Jesus died on the Cross,*

*I can experience God's love and forgiveness.*

*I am no longer a slave to sin.*

*I am now free to be all God has created me to be.*

*I am truly free.*

Pray together a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for what God has accomplished in them and you.

# WEEK 31

## Wimps Need Not Apply

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21; 13:8-10

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, gift-wrap a box with a gift inside to give away. When you are ready to begin class, place the box in the middle of the classroom and ask the class to try to guess what it is. Do not encourage them to pick it up or open it up, but if they choose to do so, so much the better. See if anyone opens the box, without your suggestion, to find out what's inside. If someone correctly guesses what it is, or opens the box to see what it is, award them the gift. Whether or not someone has opened the present after about three minutes, ask the following questions:

1. *What was the best way to find out what was inside that gift box? (Open it.)*
2. *Using that analogy, how do you discover God's gifts for you?*
3. *What kind of initiative do you need to take in order to receive God's greatest gifts?*
4. *How do you think God would respond if you were to take the initiative and seek Him?*

*There are many hindrances that keep us from seeking and giving ourselves to the Lord. What are some of the reasons that people your age struggle with totally committing their lives to the Lord? Have a secretary write them on the board. Then, brainstorm ways to triumph over each of the struggles they listed (e.g. How do you get over shyness? How do you get past fear? How do you work through feelings of doubt? Etc.).*

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### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Struggles that keep us from being our best in God are all around us. We've listed many of them already. These struggles do more than just affect us spiritually. They also affect our bodies, minds, and wills in a way that keeps us from being someone God can use or be in relationship with.*

Read the following list of struggles many of us face. As you read each one, have the class decide if the struggle originates in the body, mind, or will: *lust, gluttony, doubt, apathy, laziness, materialism, intellectualism, selfishness, relationships, pride, conceit, self-control, danger, accepting God's love, truthfulness. How can we give God all of our struggles and shortcomings at once?*

- Have a student read Romans 12:1-2. *If you were a radio announcer, how would you read these two verses so that everyone could understand them? Have each student give it a try. What do you think it means when the Bible says, 'present your bodies a living sacrifice'?*

- Read Romans 9:21. *When we surrender ourselves to God, does He have the right to do with us as He wants? What are some of the things God wants for us?*
- Read Romans 8:9-21 and 13:8-10. *What are some of the ways that giving ourselves to God is seen in the way we act toward others?* (E.g. In Romans 8:9, love is without hypocrisy.) *Giving of ourselves to God affects the way we live and love. We will be able to understand His perfect purpose for use in our lives and be confident in loving others.*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Give a piece of paper to each person, and have them put their names on them. Then, each person must pass their paper to the person to their right. After receiving the paper, they must write down a gift/characteristic/talent that they see in that person that could be used greatly for the Lord if it were surrendered to Him. Pass the papers to the right again, and repeat the process until the papers are back to their owners. When students get their papers back, give them a moment to read the comments; then instruct them to write down on the back of the paper a description of what they might become for the Lord if they were to surrender themselves totally to God. Pray for each of your students, asking God to use their surrender for His glory.

# WEEK 32

## You Can't Pick Them, but You've Got to Love Them

### SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 6:1-3; Exodus 20:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*Parents—everyone has them. Sometimes you really love them, and sometimes they seem to be difficult to live with. We all wish we had one of those perfect families where everytime a problem came up, things were quickly sorted out, everyone had his say, and everyone lived happily ever after. But unfortunately, those types of families rarely exist. Even the best families have times of struggle and conflict. However, it is important to work through those times. Listen to this situation:*

*Bob was excited about the big party that was to be held at Greg's house. The best part was that Greg's parents would be out of town, so there would be no adults around. It was supposed to be the best party of the year—everyone was going to be there! When Bob told his parents about the party, they talked about it and decided that he shouldn't go, since there were no adults attending. They were afraid things could get out of hand. Bob was upset and tried to change their minds—without success. That Friday, Bob went against his parents' wishes and sneaked out of the house and went to the party. When he got home, his parents were waiting, upset that Bob had disobeyed their decision. They put Bob on restriction for the next month. Bob became angry and told them that they were being unreasonable and that he hated them.*

1. *What could Bob and his parents have done to resolve the conflict?*
2. *How should Bob have responded to his parents' decision?*
3. *What are some of the conflicts you've had with your parents, and how have you been able to work through them?*

*So often it's easy for us to pick out the things we don't like about others. But in most relationships, there are good things mixed in with the not-so-good things. Let's take a moment and think about our parents. Don't think about the negative things, but think about the good things! Try to pick out at least two things that you think your parents are doing right. It may be a vacation you took or the way they dealt with a particular issue, etc.*

**TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):**

Divide your class into two groups. *From the first parents, Adam and Eve, all the way down to our parents, there are times when conflicts come up between parents and their kids. But we have to work through the tough times and work at developing strong relationships. The Bible gives us some guidelines on how we are to interact with our parents.* Assign one group Ephesians 6:1-4 and Exodus 20:12. Assign the other group 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Each group must rewrite their passages in their own words, and say how they think their scriptures relate to them personally and to youth in general. When everyone is finished, have each group report on their findings.

1. *What is most frustrating to you about your parents? Why?*
2. *If you could change one thing about your current relationship with your parents, what would it be? Why?*
3. *What are some of the characteristics of a healthy parent/youth relationship, according to Scripture?*

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

*The Bible gives us some basic principles for living. While these principles are true in our relationships with friends and acquaintances, they also apply to the way we deal with our parents. Earlier, we listed some of the characteristics that Scripture said should be present in our relationships with our parents. Now that you've looked at those characteristics, how do you think you measure up? How do you see your relationship with your parents in light of this scripture? What can you do to build that relationship or maintain a good relationship?*

Close in prayer.

# WEEK 33

## He's Not Heavy, He's My Brother

### SCRIPTURE:

1 John 4:20-21; Colossians 3:12-14; Luke 10:38-42; 15:11-32

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*How many of you have brothers and/or sisters? I'm sure you never fight, never get upset with each other, and say only nice things to each other. Right? Probably not. What are some of the things that you fight about?* (List their responses on a chalkboard or large paper under the heading 'Frustration'.) *How do you react when these things happen?* (List under the heading, 'Expression'.) *Most of us, no matter how old we are, have times when we don't get along with our brothers and sisters; when we don't react in the most God-honouring or productive way.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*We will be looking at five sets of siblings found in the Bible, and the areas of frustration each experienced.*

Divide the class into five groups with at least one Bible per group. Assign each group one of the following passages: Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha); Genesis 25:19-34 (Jacob and Esau); Genesis 4:2b-8 (Cain and Abel); Genesis 37:2-23, 28; 45:4-8 (Joseph and his brothers); Luke 15:11-32 (Prodigal son and his brother). Each group is to read their passage and decide what the 'Frustration' was between the siblings, and how they 'Expressed' that frustration. When finished, each group must report on their passage and give the 'Frustration' and 'Expression' they found. Be sure to point out the similarities in their frustrations and those that the biblical characters faced.

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- 1. What does it mean to 'clothe yourselves' with these qualities?*
- 2. How do we 'bear with each other'?*
- 3. How are we to forgive others?*
- 4. How does the Lord forgive?*
- 5. Why is love the one characteristic which encompasses all the rest?*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*God created us with a variety of emotions that emerge as we respond to situations: love, happiness, fear, jealousy, sadness, and even anger. While none of these emotions are bad, how we deal with those emotions is critical. Jesus experienced those same feelings, and He gives us specific instructions for dealing with them. In Matthew 18, Peter asked Christ, 'How many times should I forgive my brother . . . ? Up to seven times?' Jesus responded, 'Seventy times seven.' He talked about being peacemakers and going the extra mile, instead of judging and returning evil for evil.*

*There is a famous picture of a boy carrying another little boy on his back. You can tell by the picture that it was hard work for the one boy to carry the other. But the caption under the picture is, 'He's not heavy, he's my brother.' Many times, we have experiences with our family members that are difficult to bear. But we are called as Christians to love and support them. Let's examine some scenarios to see how we should respond as Christians. 1) Your little brother always tags along with you when you want to go out with friends. 2) Your sister's boyfriend just broke up with her and she is in a bad mood and yells at you for no reason. 3) No matter how hard you try in anything, your younger brother always does better than you and everyone teases you about it. 4) Your sister wore your favourite shirt without asking, and now there is a big stain on the front.*

Read 1 John 4:20-21. *God has made it quite clear that if we are going to live for Him, we have to love our brothers and sisters. What are some specific ways we can better love them?* Close in prayer, praying specifically that God would enable each class their relationships with their family.

# WEEK 34

## Loving Them to the Lord

### SCRIPTURE:

Mark 5:18-20; John 1:40-41; Matthew 5:10-12, 14-16

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, write the different roles of family members on separate strips of paper (mother, father, older and younger brother, older and younger sister, stepmother, stepfather, stepbrother, stepsister, etc.) Place a small cross on one-half of the cards to designate that family member as a Christian. Give each person one of the strips of paper. They must then act out the role of the family member whose title they have been given. Every answer they give and everything they do must reflect the point of view of that individual's role in your class 'family'. If they have a cross on their paper, they are to play their role as a Christian. Have each person pin or tape their role to their shirts/dresses so everyone can see their role and act accordingly.

Read the following situation: *Grandma and Grandpa have decided to give this family a large sum of money. In fact, they are giving the family U.S. \$5000. This money can be spent any way the family wants to spend it, but there is one catch; the whole family must agree on how it is to be spent. You are now at the meeting where this will be decided. I am the lawyer who has been put in charge of the money. Work together to decide how you will spend this money.* (Give the 'family' about ten minutes to discuss how they think the money should be used. Remind them that they are to act as they think their particular family member would act.)

*All of us are part of a family. Each family differs in its physical makeup (some have one parent, some two, some no siblings, some many), as well as in its spiritual makeup (some choose to follow Christ, others don't). This often makes life difficult in a family.*

1. *What are the greatest struggles in dealing with non-Christians in your family?*
2. *What is the hardest thing about being a Christian in a non-Christian family?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

1. Have Mark 5:18-20 read. *Here was a man who had been banished by his family and friends because of his condition.*
  - *What did he want to do after Jesus healed him?* (Go with Jesus.)
  - *What did Jesus want him to do instead?* (Go back and tell and show his family the change.)
  - *If you had been a family member and seen this change, how would you have responded?*

2. Read John 1:40-42.

- *What is significant about Andrew's actions?* (He wanted his brother to experience what he had experienced.)

3. Read Matthew 5:14-16.

- *Why is it so important to let our light shine?*
- *How hard is it to let your light shine when the rest of your family doesn't care whether it shines or not?*

4. Have someone read Matthew 5:10-12.

- *Have any of you ever been persecuted by your family for your faith?*
- *How did you deal with it?*
- *What does Christ mean when he says, 'Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven . . .'?*

*As Christians, we cannot just block off part of our lives for the work of the Lord. We are called to do everything (work, play, talk, study, live in a family, etc.) as unto Christ (Colossians 3:17).*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*It is God's plan for everyone to come to Christ. Since the beginning of time, God has given ordinary people like you and me the opportunity to grow by bringing others to Christ. For some of us, it was a friend who introduces us to Christ; for others it was a preacher; yet for others it was a member of our own family. Here's what Scripture says about witnessing. (Have a someone read Matthew 5:14-16.)*

*What have you learned today that you feel will help you in building relationships with, and witnessing to, non-Christian members of your family?*

Close in prayer, asking God to help all of you develop skills in witnessing and showing His love to family members.

# WEEK 35

## New Relations

### SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 29:1-30; 30:1-24; Exodus 1:22—2:10; 2 Samuel 13; 1 Kings 11:1-4

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, have a piece of coloured paper for each class member. Cut each piece of paper into three pieces, keeping each 'puzzle' together. Then lay one sheet of paper, loosely pieced together, on each student's chair. After your class has entered, instruct them to trade two of their pieces for two pieces from other class members—any colour and any shape. When they are finished, ask if anyone can take the pieces they received and form a complete sheet of paper. Most will not be able to. Pass out scissors, and then give the class 20 seconds to trim and fit their sheets.

1. *In what ways could the task you just accomplished be compared to families that have experienced divorce/death and remarriage?*
2. *How easy is it for a stepfamily to create a complete family?*
3. *What makes it difficult?*
4. *How often are there gaps or holes in blended families?*
5. *What are those gaps?*

*Life is tough for any family these days! Sometimes, the family we start out with falls apart, and we are left to deal with the pieces. Sometimes those pieces include strange living situations, like family members living kilometres apart, or people we never knew before sharing our house!*

1. *What are normal emotions for someone to experience in this kind of situation?* (anger, bitterness, sadness, fear, betrayal, etc.)
2. *What changes would occur if your parents married someone else and you were forced to live with a whole new family?* (Where you live; where you go to school; bedrooms situations; daily schedules; parental discipline and rules; household responsibilities)

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Did you know that the Bible deals with stepfamilies?* We're going to look at 5 such families. Divide the class into 5 groups, and assign one of the following scripture passages to each group: 2 Samuel 13 (Amnon and Tamar—half brother and half sister); Exodus 1:22-2:10 (Moses and the Pharaoh's daughter); Genesis 29 (Jacob, Leah, and Rachel); Genesis 30 (Jacob, Rachel, and Bilhah, Rachel's

maid); 1 Kings 11:1-4 (Solomon and his wives). The groups must read the passage and summarise the family situation for the class.

*Next, let's look at some scripture passages that deal with seven basic truths/commands about relationships.* Assign each class member one of the following passages. They must read their verse and come up with a 'Truth/Command for Relationships'.

1. **Romans 3:23; 2:1; 1 John 1:8** (Everyone makes mistakes.)
2. **Ephesians 4:31-32; Luke 17:3-4; Matthew 12—15; 1 John 2:1** (Forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others is crucial.)
3. **James 3:5-6; Ephesians 4:29** (Watch your tongue.)
4. **Hebrews 3:13; Matthew 10:42; 5:7** (A little encouragement goes a long way.)
5. **1 Corinthians 12:25-26; John 15:9-13** (Spend time with each other and build bonds of love and caring.)
6. **2 Timothy 3:14-16; Matthew 7:24-25; Ephesians 6:17** (Build a solid foundation in the Word.)
7. **1 Timothy 4:12; Ephesians 6:10-19** (Stand firm in your faith.).

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Members of blended families face many different challenges in the process of growing together as a family. Those challenges are often painful, and all of them require adjustment. One important thing to remember is that building a new family takes time. Time to be sad at the changes, time to form new relationships, and time to build new traditions. There is no magical cure to make all the differences vanish and everyone live happily ever after. It takes time, commitment, and love. All relationships take work. This is especially true when there is a uniting of two families. Ask class members to look over the 'Seven Truths/Commandments of Relationships' again, and ask them to choose one that they need to give attention to.*

Close in prayer for your class and their families.

# WEEK 36

## Looking for the Real Thing

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 6:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:5, 9-10; 7:1

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask your class the following True/False questions to see what they already know about drugs and alcohol.

1. ***The drug most commonly used by youth is marijuana.*** (False—Although marijuana is the most frequently used illegal drug by young people, alcohol is a powerful depressant that is classified as a drug and is used more often by youth.)
2. ***Alcoholism runs in families.*** (True—The children of alcoholic parents are most likely to become alcoholic themselves if they are involved with alcohol.)
3. ***Trying a drug just once can't hurt you if you are careful.*** (False—Your body can have a bad reaction to the drug and/or your behavior can be altered sufficiently to cause you to take dangerous risks.)
4. ***The worst that can happen if you drink a lot is that you get sick and have a terrible hangover.*** (False—Each year, youth drink themselves into alcohol-induced comas and die from respiratory paralysis.)
5. ***Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower can be a good way of sobering up.*** (False—Alcohol is absorbed almost immediately into the bloodstream and takes about one hour per drink to be burned up by the body. Showers and coffee have no effect on the blood level of alcohol—only time will help.)
6. ***A person cannot become addicted to diet pills and prescription drugs.*** (False—Diet pills and prescription drugs can cause psychological and physical addiction if not used properly.)
7. ***Cigarette smoking only hurts your lungs and heart.*** (False—Cigarettes contain nicotine, a drug that causes physical and psychological dependence. The use of any drug, including nicotine, while pregnant can cause serious medical problems for an unborn baby.)

***What reasons do youth give for drinking or using drugs?*** (List their responses; e.g. peer pressure, curiosity, fun, escape from life, adult examples, feel like an adult, rebel, etc.) Review the list and point out that most of the reasons deal with how people feel about themselves. Ask your class to describe some of the feelings that might be linked to each reason. (Loneliness, hopelessness, acceptance, desire to be happy, etc.)

## TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Although the Bible does not contain any passages that say, 'Thou shalt not use drugs or smoke or drink alcohol'; there are lots of YES scriptures for us to use as guides for our choices.* Divide your class into two groups.

Group one must look up the following passages and respond to the corresponding questions:

1. *When we use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, do our actions reflect a life that glorifies God?* (Romans 6:11-14; Colossians 3:2; Ephesians 2:10)
2. *When we use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, are we always able to be self-controlled?* (Colossians 3:17; Galatians 5:23; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8)

Group two must do the same with the following passages and questions:

1. *With what we know about the effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, can we be users and still honor our bodies as temples where God resides?* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:5, 9-10; 7:1)
2. *Will what I do affect others in a positive way or a negative way?* (Rom. 14:1, 13, 21; 1 Corinthians 8:9; Matthew 18:6)

When finished, have each group present their answers.

*Since everything we do reflects our worship of God, what does that tell us about drinking or using drugs or tobacco?* (All these things destroy not only our bodies but also our lives.) *At what point does a person who uses drugs, alcohol, or tobacco decide to become an addict?* (No one consciously 'decides' to become an addict.) *What is good about these things?* (Nothing. Drugs or alcohol can lead us to hurt or kill others in car accidents or by taking risks when our minds are not clear. Second-hand smoke is damaging to others. Homes are broken, children are abused, and spouses are beaten under the influence of alcohol and drugs.)

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Some of you have already made the decision not to use drugs or alcohol. That's great, and I am proud of you. However, if you have not yet made that choice, I urge you to do so today. The longer you wait, the harder it becomes, and the more negative consequences you will have to deal with. Nevertheless, despite whether or not you have said no to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, Jesus loves you and wants to give you a life full of peace and health. He promises to give you the 'abundant life' if you'll let Him.

# WEEK 37

## What's Eating You?

### SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 1:27; Psalms 8:4-8; Romans 7:15-25; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 2:10

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*How many of you know the story of Snow White? One of the lines from the story was a question that the wicked queen asked of her magic mirror: 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?' She wanted to be the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. When the mirror replied, 'Queen, though you are fair, Snow White is now more lovely than you', the queen was so angry she tried to have Snow White killed. No matter how beautiful the queen was, she was never satisfied. Most of us feel okay about our appearance. But some people are so dissatisfied with their looks that they go to great lengths to change them. These efforts consume their time, energy, money, and sometimes their health.*

Have your class think of two or three well-known fashion models in popular magazines. Ask these discussion questions:

1. *What do these people look like?*
2. *What 'message' does their appearance send about how we should look? (Image is everything. If you want to be popular, you have to be beautiful or handsome, and definitely skinny.)*
3. *How do these people keep their bodies that way? (Personal trainers, dietitians, and chefs to monitor and prepare their food. Some spend hours each day in health clubs, while others starve themselves.)*
4. *How realistic are some of their methods? (Not very!)*

*How we look is often linked to how we feel about ourselves. We must remember that we all have deep feelings about our bodies. Each person in this room is incredibly valuable, regardless of how we look. If you joke or make fun of the way a person looks, it hurts them deep inside and does nothing to help.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

In this activity, your class is posing as a doctor on a radio call-in show where people can call in and have their questions answered on the air. Choose five class members as the 'callers' and give each of them one of the following questions. Then one at a time, a 'caller' will ask his or her question, and the entire class must then decide on a response, based on their reading and understanding of the scriptures provided.

1. **Caller No. 1: Hello, Dr., my name is Mary. I feel like I am just a speck in this whole universe. I don't matter.** (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:4-8—God created us in His image, He holds us in high regard, and He cares for each one of us personally.)
2. **Caller No. 2: Hi, I'm Jim. I don't know why, but I feel that I am worthless. I can't do anything right. I'm a big zero.** (Ephesians 2:10—It is God who gives us worth and value.)
3. **Caller No. 3: Hello? Dr., I feel like I have no control over my life!** (Romans 7:15-25—When we feel out of control in any area of our lives, Christ will provide.)
4. **Caller No. 4: Hi, I'm Emma from Beantown, and I hate my body!** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20—Our bodies are the temple of the Spirit of God.)
5. **Caller No. 5: Dr., you're my last hope. I've tried to change so many times, but I can't!** (2 Corinthians 5:17-20—When we are connected to Jesus, He'll help us grow into a beautiful and new/useful creation by transforming us.)

After all callers have received advice from the class, ask:

1. *Which of the callers do you most identify with? Why?*
2. *How do you deal with these types of feelings?*
3. *How do you think God views your problems?*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*Watching what we eat or drink and making a conscious decision to choose healthy foods are the beginning steps to a healthy, productive life. How we take care of our bodies is an important part of our service and worship to Christ. Eating right, getting enough sleep, exercising, practicing good personal hygiene, avoiding harmful habits, and having regular checkups are all positive things we can do to maintain healthy bodies. Remember that your body is the temple of the Spirit of God. Commit today that you will live a healthy lifestyle that honors God. You are worth an incredible price because God has made you in His image. Take care of yourself. End in prayer.*

# WEEK 38

## Throwing Out the Garbage

### SCRIPTURE:

Proverbs 6:25-26; 7:21-27; Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 4:8

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

*What are some examples of things or people who are distorted in how they are portrayed - that is, that thing or person appears one way in movies or magazines or on television, but in reality is very different?*

*Sex is something that is often distorted. We call that pornography. Pornography exploits the people pictured, and it distorts our natural desires. Are some forms of pornography more damaging than others? How do young people first get involved with pornography? Have five volunteers read the following:*

*Voice 1: Pornography works its way into our subconscious and is stored there permanently.*

*Voice 2: Each lewd picture we see, each vulgar word we hear, each violent scene we watch is accumulated and stored away in our minds. The images so fill our minds until we become unclear as to the natural boundaries of sex. Our values and choices change as we slowly accept these things as normal or acceptable.*

*Voice 3: Pornography distorts the concept of true love.*

*Voice 2: Rather than sex being a way to share marital love, it becomes a way to exercise control and exploit God's gift. In pornographic settings, sexual partners are used only for self-gratification and quickly discarded. Children, animals, and individuals of our same sex are all potential sexual partners to be used and controlled.*

*Voice 4: Pornography promotes violence.*

*Voice 2: Pornography often shows individuals overpowering a weaker person. Women and children are victimized. Often women are shown in some sort of bondage, instilling the wrong idea that forced sex is fun. Some pornography suggests that violence and rape are acceptable parts of sexual activities, and goes so far as to show individuals being viciously raped, tortured, and sacrificially murdered. Human life has no value.*

*Voice 5: Pornography destroys our ability to engage in healthy sexual relationships.*

*Voice 2: As people fill their minds with images contrary to God-honoring sexual relationships, normal sexual desires are diminished to the point that pure love seems completely unattractive and*

*unfulfilling. Only the ever increasing rush and intensity that pornography provides will satisfy. Normal, husband-wife sexual relationships are not enough to meet their needs.*

## TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Pornography appeals to the sex drive that God has placed within us. The Bible is filled with stern warnings about the consequences of using God's gift of sex in a sinful way.*

Read Proverbs 6:25-26; Proverbs 7:21-27; and Matthew 5:27-28.

1. *What are some of the consequences of choosing to use sex in a sinful way?*
2. *What did Jesus mean when He said, 'Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart'? (Jesus knew that sexual sins begin with a person's thoughts and desires. It matters just as much what a person desires as what he does. Sexual activity outside of marriage is sinful, but so is lusting. Jesus is concerned that our heart (desires) be pure. If our heart is pure, our actions will surely follow.)*

Read Romans 12:2 and Philippians 4:8 aloud. *We need to 'be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind' if we are going to conquer sinful influences. When we allow God to renew our minds, He restores our vision of what He values, and therefore, what we should value. He wants us to focus on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy. Allowing our minds to be shaped by such thoughts will keep our actions on the right track.*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*You may be thinking, 'This lesson has nothing to do with me. I don't look at dirty magazines or movies.' Yet, this lesson is for everyone. These passages speak to each of us. What are we feeding our minds? How do we look at the opposite sex? What kinds of conversations do we have with our friends? What kind of music do we listen to? We all need to be transformed by God so that we more closely reflect His image.*

Close in prayer, asking God to help each person make good choices about what goes into his or her mind.

# WEEK 39

## When Loving Hurts

### SCRIPTURE:

Exodus 21:12-15; Judges 19:16-29; 2 Samuel 13:1-22; Psalm 55; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; Colossians 3:1-15

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask for definitions of 'abuse'. *Abuse happens all the time to all kinds of people. People who abuse other people do so because it makes them feel superior and gives them a sense of power. Victims feel violated, overpowered, and unable to get away. Maybe you know someone who has been abused. Maybe you've experienced it yourself.*

1. *What are some of the relationships that people have?* (Friends, boyfriend and girlfriend, coworkers, employers, mother, father, sister, brother, etc.)
2. *Abuse happens between people who have some kind of bond. What are some of the qualities you feel bind people together?* (Love, friendship, respect, physical needs of protection and support, etc.)
3. *What are some of the qualities you would identify with an unhealthy relationship?* (Jealousy, dominance, disrespect, selfishness, fear, etc.)
4. *When those qualities enter a relationship, abuse can occur. What are the different types of abuse you know about, and what are the characteristics of that type of abuse? List answers on the chalkboard or paper.* (Psychological abuse, which includes mental and emotional abuse; physical abuse, which includes sexual and nonsexual physical abuse)

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### 92 TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*As we have seen, abusive relationships take many forms—physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal. Abuse isn't new. Any time sin is in the picture, abuse can be found . . . even in the Bible!* Divide your class into four groups, and have each group read one of the following Scripture passages: 2 Samuel 13:1-22; Judges 19:16-29; Exodus 21:12-15; Psalm 55. Ask someone from each group to summarize the scripture for the rest of the class. As they present their summaries, prompt them with these questions:

1. *What kind of abuse is described in your scripture?*
2. *What were the attitudes and feelings of the abuser?*
3. *What were the attitudes and feelings of the victim?*
4. *What can we learn from this passage?*

Have your class look up Colossians 3:1-15. Then draw two stick figures on a chalkboard or a large piece of paper. Above one write 'Leave It Behind' and above the other write 'Put It On'. As you read through the scripture with your students, have them write or draw the specific qualities on the appropriate stick figure. Discuss how these figures illustrate the proper qualities of healthy relationships.

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*We've talked about avoiding abuse, but what do you do if you are already caught up in an abusive relationship? Here's how!*

- 1. Remove yourself from any physical danger. Leave the house, call the police, do whatever you need to do to be safe.*
- 2. Let someone know that you are being abused . . . they may not be able to guess it. Talk to some trusted adult—your parent(s), a teacher, your pastor or youth leader.*
- 3. Do not believe that what is being said or done to you is your fault or that you deserved it in any way.*
- 4. Do not think that you are a weak or worthless person because you got into an abusive relationship.*
- 5. Get into counseling to help you deal with the emotional and psychological issues the abuse caused.*

*These are some ways for an abused person to break the cycle of an abusive relationship. But the most important part of the 'cure' comes only from the Great Doctor - God. What is God's part in the healing processes? Even though it may seem too difficult, Luke 1:37 says, 'Nothing is impossible with God.' Romans 8:37 says 'We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us'.*

Close in prayer.

# OPTIONAL LESSON

## *Sexual Abuse*

### FOR THE TEACHER

Sexual intimacy is a gift from God, designed to occur between husband and wife. However, many children and teens find themselves sexually victimized by a family member. The result is guilt, fear, distrust, and even physical and psychological damage. If your students show any indication that this may be a situation to which they can relate, consider using this optional lesson to help begin God's healing.

Dealing with the issue of incest is always a painful experience. It may be particularly difficult for you, the teacher, because you know the victim and you may know the perpetrator. You will be faced with sorting through your own feelings about the issue and dealing with your responsibility to the victim. It is sometimes easy to not want to believe the victim's story if you have a relationship with the abuser, but remain open, and listen to what the victim says, and take appropriate action.

Do not become an instant "therapist" as you teach this lesson. Don't ask or expect students to "spill their guts" in class. Let your class know you are willing to speak with anyone after class. Seek qualified, professional help for any individual in your class who may be coming to terms with incest in his or her own life. Have the names and numbers on hand of qualified Christian counselors and agencies located in your area. Be prepared to ask your pastor to help you contact the authorities. It is your legal responsibility to do so.

To prepare, read Leviticus 18:6-18; Genesis 19:31-36; 11:29; Exodus 6:20; Genesis 38:16-18; 2 Samuel 13. Here you will find laws that clearly condemn sexual relationships between close relatives and accounts of incestuous relationships.

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94 God designed the act of sexual intimacy to be the uniting of a husband and wife emotionally by shared desires and feelings and physically by sexual intercourse. When contaminated by sin, sexual intimacy becomes merely the acting out of the base desire for control and self-gratification. Intimacy is lost, and abuse results. Revealed incest brings anger at the violation of innocence of those unable to understand and unable to protect themselves; anger at the deep pain inflicted on the bodies, the hearts, and the memories of the victims; and anger at the deceit that entraps those so eager to love and please.

Sexual abuse can take different forms beyond that of physical contact. There is visual sexual abuse, in which adults or older siblings force younger family members to disrobe and be examined. Forced viewing of pornography also constitutes incest. Verbal sexual abuse involves the discussion of sexual activities, fantasies, or objects. In an abusive situation there can be a mixture of more than one type of abuse.

Even if the abuse occurred when they were very young, victims of incest will have psychological, physical, and even spiritual scars from the abuse. Often incest victims repress the memory of traumatic incidents. It is a tactic enabling them to live through the trauma. Once the memories are freed, victims may feel a sense of worthlessness and shame, coupled with terrible guilt. Symptoms of these feelings are depression, low self-esteem, eating and sleeping disorders, sexual inappropriateness, and aggression.

Finally, when abuse takes place in homes where there are strong religious ties, spiritual scarring can occur because of the distortion of spiritual truths. Often abusers from "religious" homes use scripture to "back up" the abuse. A child may hear, "Honor thy father and thy mother," or, "Children obey your parents," as part of their abuse. Perpetrators manipulate scripture to cause guilt and compliance to their demands. Remind your students that evil happens because of the wrong choices of sinful people. Innocent people suffer, but God suffers with us.

So what can we do? As a teacher, there are 3 goals you can achieve when dealing with a person who is a victim of incest:

1. Provide a safe and supportive environment for victims to break the silence of their abuse and to begin the healing process.
2. Hold the perpetrator accountable to the church and the local authorities for his or her actions.
3. Provide an atmosphere where repentance, redemption, forgiveness, and restoration can occur if and when the victim and abuser are able, with God's grace, to begin the process of reconciliation.

## SCRIPTURE:

Leviticus 18:6-18; Genesis 19:31-36; 11:29; Exodus 6:20; Genesis 38:16-18; 2 Samuel 13

## LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin the class in prayer, asking God to help guide and direct this lesson. Ask for wisdom and healing in dealing with those who know someone who has been a victim of incest or who has been a victim themselves. Ask students to define incest. Write it on a chalkboard or on a large piece of paper. After you come up with a workable definition, read the scenarios and questions below:

1. *David's older brother, Mike, likes to embarrass him by forcing David to look at pornographic magazines. How do you think David felt? Do you think this is sexual abuse?*
2. *Sandy's dad thinks it's funny to rip off her towel when she walks from the bathroom to her room after her shower, leaving her standing naked and humiliated in the hallway while he stares at her body and laughs. Do you think this is sexual abuse?*
3. *Jenny's dad comes into her room at night and exposes himself to her but never touches her. Do you think this is sexual abuse?*
4. *Jeff's mom has given him back rubs ever since he can remember. She's great at it, and he enjoys it. Sometimes she touches him in ways that get him sexually aroused. Do you think this is sexual abuse?*

*All of these incidents involve sexual abuse by a family member to another family member. What were some of the common characteristics of each of these scenarios?* (Each involved a relative. Each abuser used his or her position of maturity or power to seduce the victim. Each abuser was a person whom the victim should have been able to trust. Each victim felt violated. Sexual abuse does not always have to involve sexual contact. Sexual abuse can be visual or verbal, as well. Whatever the type of abuse, the abuser willfully overpowers the victim in some way and causes him or her emotional trauma.)

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to read one of the following Scripture passages and be ready to paraphrase it:

1. *Leviticus 18:6-12; 18:12-18—the law given to Moses about the issue of sexual relationships between relatives*
2. *Genesis 19:31-36—Lot's daughters getting him drunk and sleeping with him for their own sexual fulfillment*
3. *Genesis 38:16-18—Judah was tricked into sleeping with his daughter-in-law*

Next, have one person read aloud 2 Samuel 13:1-37, or divide it up between several students. Before the reader begins, ask your students to think about these four things as the passage is read and then discuss the questions after the passage has been read:

1. *What were some of the different feelings or emotions that the girl had about the abuse?*
2. *What might have been some of the reservations she had about letting someone know about the abuse?*
3. *What might have been some of the signs that abuse was taking place?*
4. *How do you think the abuse could affect her in the future—physically, emotionally, and spiritually?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Go over this information with your class allowing for comments from the students.

#### *Six Thoughts on Sexual Abuse*

*Sexual abuse can happen in any home. Abuse does not only happen in "bad" homes. It can happen in respectable homes, "religious" homes, and even in parsonages.*

*No one has the right to violate your body or your emotions. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal, visual, and psychological.*

*A parent does not have the "God-given right" to use his or her child's body for their sexual pleasure. The scripture "Obey your father and your mother" does not give the parent the right to be sexually abusive to his or her child.*

*A child or young person who has been sexually violated by someone who has forced himself or herself on them physically has not lost their "true virginity." The loss of virginity comes when one makes a conscious decision to allow another person to have sexual relations with them.*

*Not telling someone that you are being sexually abused can only cause more pain for you. Some victims feel if they tell, they will cause the family to be torn apart, or people will not like them for telling. Sometimes that does happen for a time. But the truth is the abuser is responsible for any "trouble" his or her actions may create. In not telling, you are not allowing yourself to begin the healing process, and the abuser is not being held accountable for the abuse. In some cases, an abuser may be abusing more than one person in a family. Only by telling the truth can the abuse stop and healing begin.*

*Children are never responsible for their being sexual abused. Nothing you can say or do ever gives another person the right to violate you. Adults are responsible to keep control of their own sexual desires and actions.*

*Then say, As part of the family of God, we are called to help those who are hurting . . . to be Christ's hands, feet, and words. Sometimes we are called to step in and help. As a class, let's decide what we would do if: a friend told us that he was worried about what an older brother was doing to his younger brother; a sibling told you that one of your parents was abusing her; one of your friends was acting afraid to go home and made comments like, "I get really scared at night . . . stuff happens"; a friend told you that they were worried because there was something terribly wrong with them . . . they liked to "fool around" with their younger sister or brother. Let's decide how we could be a support to someone who has been abused.*

Discuss and then close with prayer.

# WEEK 40

## Why Serve?

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 20:25-28; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Micah 6:6-8

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Distribute newspapers and/or newsmagazines. Working in groups or individually, students must find and cut out articles that deal with human needs and/or problems in society. When completed, have each group or individual share their findings with the class. (List their findings on a chalkboard or paper.) Next, ask the class to list what they think are the causes or factors of each particular problem. For example, homelessness is a major societal problem. Factors that lead to homelessness might include the loss of a job, financial problems, drug abuse, etc.

- 1. How do you feel about the needs you discovered, and why do you think you feel that way?*
- 2. Have you personally known anyone in a situation similar to the ones we've discussed? Explain.*
- 3. How does society respond to these needs? What about God? What are His responses?*

Have each student keep at least one article or headline for use later.

*As we've analysed these needs, we see that MANY things combine to create needs in our society. How does it make you feel when you're confronted by so many needs of society? What can we do?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

On a large piece of paper, write out Matthew 20:25-28; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Micah 6:6-8. Cut the paper into three oddly shaped pieces, making sure each passage is intact. Give the pieces to members willing to read them aloud. Have the scriptures read in the following order: Deuteronomy, Micah, and Matthew. After each person reads, have him or her come to the front with his or her 'puzzle piece' and place it on the floor for everyone to see. Then, have a class member record for the class any 'Steps for Service' outlined in that particular passage. Examples are: Walk in His ways, Love Him, Serve Him, Obey His commands, Act justly (fairly) Love mercy (compassion, forgiveness), Walk humbly with (Submit to) God, and so on. Then use the following question to wrap up this section:

- 1. How are these verses like a puzzle? (They are interconnected, fit together to make a whole)*
- 2. Based on what we have read, what do you think is the definition of a servant?*
- 3. In what ways do you think our love for God leads us to serve Him?*
- 4. How does the message of the scriptures help us determine how to meet society's needs?*

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

*Together we can start to get beyond ourselves in service for others. When everyone does their part, incredible things happen. God blesses our efforts as we live out our faith in service for others. We are His hands, His feet, and His voice here on earth. As a class let us take some time to consider what we can do to demonstrate what we've learned today. Earlier, we identified the underlying needs that make up larger societal problems. From those needs, let's pick one and focus on it right now.*

- 1. Why did you choose that particular need?*
- 2. What part does prayer play in helping to build a solution to this problem?*
- 3. What distinct steps could we as a group or individually take to help meet this need?*
- 4. What are some ways we can prevent feeling overwhelmed and helpless?*

*We have identified some very real and very huge problems in the world. By dividing those into smaller problems, we discover that the way to help others is to be servants; giving what we can, using our abilities and doing our part in tangible ways to make a difference, etc. If we are serious about God's call to serve, we have to do more than just talk about it. We have to actually serve. As we close in prayer, I want you to pray specifically that God will show you how he can use you to serve others.*

Have each class member keep the article or headline, which was used at the beginning of the lesson, in their Bible to serve as a special prayer reminder for the needs of their community and the world.

# WEEK 41

## Lifestyle of Service

### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 12:35; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have each person think of one thing he or she would consider as a major accomplishment in his or her life. (E.g. school assignment, memorising lines of a play or music, creating something, getting a job, etc.) Have them write a short phrase or title that identifies that accomplishment, then list the steps they took to achieve that goal. When everyone is finished, have each person share his or her accomplishment. Then go around the circle again, having each member tell what it took to accomplish that task. Encourage them to be specific. After everyone has shared, ask the following questions:

1. *How did it feel to accomplish what you did?*
2. *Did you get frustrated in the process?*
3. *Consider giving up?*
4. *Who or what helped you to keep going?*

*Just as these accomplishments were completed one step at a time, so it is when we serve others. That first step is making the decision to be available for God to use us.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Read Luke 12:35; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11. After each passage is read, have the class members list on their papers one point that applies to them personally. Next, discuss each passage, using the questions provided below. List the main points on a chalkboard or piece of paper.

1. *What do you think it means to be ready for service as mentioned in Luke 12:35?* (Jesus told His disciples to always be ready to serve and seeking for the Lord to instruct us how He wants us to serve. Such readiness means being prepared to listen and obey the Holy Spirit's leading in all areas of our lives. This is possible only when our attitude and heart are willing to serve.)
2. *Describe the example Jesus set for us as described in Philippians 2:1-11.* (Most people want to determine for themselves their course in life. In essence they want to be their own God. Jesus was God, but He didn't strive to hold on to that equality with God. Although He had all the power in the universe at his fingertips, He chose to be weak, and give up all He had, to meet our needs. He humbled Himself to the position of a servant to humanity.)

3. *Why do you think it is so important to serve others? (1 Peter 4:10-11)* (Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5 that we are to have the same attitude that Jesus demonstrated. We too are called to give all we have to God, to be used by Him in service to others. God honors our willingness to become servants by providing His power through Christ Jesus, to give us the power to serve.)
4. *What are some examples of a lack of compassion frequently seen in society?* (prejudice, racial violence, etc.)

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*God calls us serve, but we often hesitate. We may feel that we do not have the skills to meet the needs of others. Also, there seems to be so much need—what can one person do, we ask ourselves. Mother Teresa, the famous missionary who worked with poverty-stricken people in Calcutta, India, was asked how she could even attempt to meet the overwhelming needs of so many people. She replied that she does it one person at a time. God understands our concerns and fears. We are each created by God for a purpose, and we have been promised the strength that we need to carry out that purpose! Everyone has the potential to make a difference in the world ° for Jesus' sake.*

*Now, let's look at where we are going.* Have the class share what their occupational plans are. Have them explain how they can be servants in those vocations. Push them to come up with at least four examples. Discuss what could happen if every class member would give just one hour a week to community or church volunteer work. Discuss the consequences of this. Being a servant starts at home, at school, and in our daily lives with family and friends.

Close with prayer.

# WEEK 42

## Service to the Needy

### SCRIPTURE:

Proverbs 31:9; Matthew 25:31-46; James 2:14-17

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Bring telephone books, with both white and yellow pages, to class. (Your church may have extras you can borrow.) Divide your class into groups of two or three, and distribute the phone books so that each group gets at least one book. Share with your class that often, the best opportunities for service go unrealised because we don't know where the opportunities are. For that reason, we're going to compile a list of service organisations in the area, including address and phone numbers.

Ask students to look for agencies, such as the Red Cross, community homeless shelters and soup kitchens, Salvation Army, crisis pregnancy centres, and other service groups. Remind them that many churches also offer such programs. Once groups have had enough time to complete their list, discuss the results of their findings, using the following questions:

1. *How difficult was it to locate service organisations?*
2. *How many did your find?*
3. *Did this surprise you?*
4. *How many churches listed their compassionate ministry services?*
5. *Why do you think so many organisations like the ones you found have to exist?*
6. *What are some ways we can use this information?*
7. *Are there ways others in our church could benefit from this compiled list?*
8. *Why do you think people don't just help each other, instead of needing these organisations to help?*
9. *What are some reasons you've found that keep you from serving others?*
10. *Do you ever see yourself involved in long-term service to others?*

*Sometimes, we are our own biggest hurdles when it comes to serving. We worry about what others will think and we question our abilities. It's time we remind ourselves why we should serve.*

**TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):**

Keeping the same groups as before, assign one of the following Scripture passages to each group: Proverbs 31:9; Matthew 25:31-46; and James 2:14-17. Have each group read and decide what their passage has to say about the following: helping the needy, service to others, attitude in service. Next, have each group rewrite their passage in their own words, and present it to the rest of the class in any way they'd like: drama, rap, new words to an old tune, a poem, mime, etc. After they've made their presentation of the Scripture, ask the following questions:

1. *According to these passages, why should we be involved in service to others? (The Lord has asked us to, we have a responsibility to look after the unfortunate, those who serve others will be serving the Lord, pride and arrogance will befall those who live solely for self and not for others, etc...)*
2. *According to the scripture we've heard, whose responsibility do you think it is to care for the needy?*
3. *Do you think God is pleased with the job we are doing in caring for the needy?*
4. *If being a Christian means we are like Christ, it makes sense that our actions will be like His. When we consider all Christ has done for us, it seems like we would want to share that with others. Why do you think we often find it hard to follow through on our good intentions?*

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

Give each student or group some paper and envelopes, and instruct them to select a service organization from their lists and write to that organization. The letter is to inquire about the type of assistance that is available at that particular agency, what one has to do to qualify for assistance, and what volunteer projects and work opportunities are available for people their age. Students should complete the envelope with their home address or the church address and a stamp. (Rather than writing a letter, if the organization is local, someone from the group may volunteer to go to the organization and find out the information in person, and then report back to the group at a later date.)

End by asking God to show you local opportunities for service and ways that your class can get involved.

# WEEK 43

## Service to the Lost

### SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 8:35; Romans 3:23

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Select one to three students to leave the room. After these "seekers" leave, select two to six volunteers ("knowers") to instruct the seekers when they return. Next, create an obstacle course using all class members and classroom objects as needed. One at a time, the seekers will enter the room blindfolded and try to go through the obstacle course. Half of the knowers will always give correct instructions, and half will give wrong instructions (to confuse the seeker). Once each seeker has had a turn, ask the following:

1. *Knowers - How did you feel when the seeker either followed or ignored your instructions?*
2. *Seekers - How did you feel while you were listening to advice?*
3. *How did you choose whom to believe?*

*Everyone is a seeker - we are all seeking God, the truth, the purpose to life, etc. Many voices claim to have all the answers: parents, teachers, friends, the media, our own convictions, etc.*

1. *How do we decide who is giving us the correct advice?*
2. *Spiritually speaking, who are the knowers, and who are the seekers?*
3. *How can we be positive knowers in influencing other seekers for Christ's sake?*
4. *How can meeting someone's spiritual needs help meet his or her other needs?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have a class member read Matthew 28:18-20, then ask these questions:

1. *What does Christ ask us to do?*
2. *Why is this important?*
3. *What is His promise to us?* (He will be with us always.)

Now have Mark 8:35 read, and ask:

1. *What is Jesus saying to us?* (We will forfeit our lives if we try to save ourselves. Only He can save us.)

2. *How does this apply to our witnessing to others?* (If we don't witness, others will probably go to hell.)
3. *How hard is it to give up your life in order to do Christ's will?* (Hard, we don't always see the results)
4. *What's the hardest thing about witnessing?*
5. *What are some ways of overcoming those obstacles?*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*A key in reaching the lost is to share what Christ has done in YOUR life. That is called a testimony. EVERYONE has a testimony! You just have to know how to share it. A testimony includes:*

1. *How you came to know Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.*
2. *How you are growing in your faith. Share about your devotional times, relationships with others, letting Him take control of a situation, trusting Him with problems or your future, etc....*
3. *Words of encouragement - reminding them of God's faithfulness as evidenced in your life.*

*The other key is to have an organized plan of how to share the gospel message. However you choose to present it, the gospel message should include the following scriptural facts:*

1. *Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23), and the penalty of that sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23).*
2. *God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die so that we could be saved. (John 3:16)*
3. *Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He suffered and died on the Cross. (1 Peter 2:24)*
4. *When we trust in God and ask Him for forgiveness, He forgives us and we become His children. (1 John 1:9, John 1:12)*
5. *Heaven is the destination of the true believer. (John 14:2)*

*God calls us witness. His Holy Spirit goes before us, with us, and after us to prepare the hearts of those who need Christ. Remember, Jesus has to be real in your life for you to be effective in sharing your faith. You can only share what you already have. All God requires of us is an obedient heart. HE will provide the opportunities to witness, the words to say, and the desire to see our friends and loved ones come to know Him as their Saviour. Someone you know needs Jesus.*

Close the session by asking students to pray silently for a specific friend or loved one who does not know the Lord.

# WEEK 44

## Service: It Does a Body Good

### SCRIPTURE:

Acts 2:42-47; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:23-25

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask students to pair up with someone of approximately the same size. Instruct them to stand back-to-back with their elbows locked together. Keeping their elbows locked, they are to slowly sit down, and then stand back up. After each group has done this successfully, have the groups then link with other groups and repeat the actions as a larger group. Keep doing this until the whole ‘body’ is connected. When finished, ask:

1. *How did it feel to try to sit and stand?*
2. *What role did your partner(s) play in the success of the task?*
3. *What made it easier?*
4. *What made it harder?*

*You literally supported and helped each other to accomplish this task. Helping one another reach a common goal can be harder than it looks. It takes teamwork. That's why we're here today—to carry out the tradition set by Jesus of caring for His Body of Believers by giving, loving, and serving.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Ask for volunteers to read Acts 2:42-47; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:23-25.

106 Summarize the following: *After the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers at Pentecost, they continued to show their faith through their actions (Acts 2:42-43). As needs arose, the believers cared for them through sacrificial giving (vv. 44-45). People sold their own possessions in order to assist those with even less. Such servanthood was part of the reason the Early Church grew daily (vv. 46-47). Never before had a group of people so lived out what it meant to be God's people. This had a profound impact on those around them when they saw love and grace given out generously. They saw the best example of the Church in action—members caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (4:11-16), tells us all God's people, no matter their age, have a place to serve in the Body of Christ. As everyone does their part, the whole body 'builds itself up in love.' We live in a world where it is easy to get pulled down and pulled away from our faith. An excellent place of protection and encouragement can be in the church, the Body of Believers.*

Divide the class into groups of 2-3. Each group is to come up with at least seven ways they can build up believers and help strengthen their faith. After they have completed their lists, choose 2-4 people to be the 'Get Real' board. Since it is easy to think of ways to encourage others, the 'Get Real' board will help class members keep their ideas realistic. With the 'Get Real' board sitting up front, have the groups share their findings. As they share, the board should say at will, 'Get Real!' and make the groups defend their remarks with how realistic, effective, and logical the ideas are.

*It's not enough to come to church and just talk about serving others. God calls us to be prepared for service, and active in sharing our faith, our lives, our money, and our talents with others.*

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Tape sheets of paper (one for each person) at eye level around the room. Instruct everyone to write his or her name at the top of one of the sheets. Explain that they are to go to one another's sheets and write compliments to the owner. Compliments should be based on what the writer appreciates about the person. (You may prefer to do this activity verbally instead of through writing.) Conclude the activity by asking:

1. *How did it feel to express your feelings for others?*
2. *Was it harder or easier than you expected?*
3. *Why is it important to let others know that we appreciate them?*

*Sometimes it's hard to know how to put our feelings for others into words. Learning how to express gratitude and learning how to accept kindness are important - it encourages the one you are addressing and it encourages you.*

Close with prayer

# WEEK 45

## Graduation—Then What?

### SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 3:1-3, 17; Proverbs 15:22; Romans 12:3-8

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, collect several items or pieces of clothing generally associated with different careers. As the students enter the class, invite them to look through the items and to decide which item represents what they think they will be doing in 10 years. Then have students, one by one, quickly show the class the item they've chosen and share briefly their plans or dreams for the future. For those who can't find an item that pertains to them, have them draw a picture of what they think they'll be doing in 10 years and share it with the class.

After everyone has had an opportunity to share, ask these questions:

1. *How often do you think about what you're going to do with your life?*
2. *How important is it to you to know what lies ahead?*
3. *What role does God play in your future dreams?*
4. *How many of you hope to be married? Be parents? Own a home? Have a car?*
5. *How do you make those dreams realities?*
6. *What steps do you think a person needs to take at your age right now to realize a future that includes their dreams?*

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*Obviously, the future doesn't happen overnight. There are things we all have to learn, ways we need to grow, and life decisions we need to make. We get to the future one day at a time. And what we do each day influences who we will be and what we will be doing.*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Ask someone to serve as secretary, and have students list all the jobs or roles they think a person serving God can have. Have them list as many job titles as possible. Then ask them how a Christian in each of these jobs could honor God? (Have them tell about real-life examples if they've seen them.)

Ask a class member to read Colossians 3:17 to the class.

1. *Which do you think is more important: choosing the right job or deciding to serve God in any job? Why?*

2. *Do you think there are jobs or careers or areas of ministry that are more important to God than others? If so, what would those jobs be?*

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:3-8.

1. *From what you see in this passage of Scripture, are there any gifts more important than others?*  
(None)
2. *What does that tell you?* (The body does not have just one part that can function without the others. All the gifts are of the same importance yet different in function.)
3. *Are there any careers, then, that are more important than others?*

Have the class look at the job list they made. *What talents or gifts do you think are necessary or appropriate to do those jobs?* (Have the secretary list these next to the job title.) Sometimes we don't pursue certain jobs because we don't feel qualified for them. However, often it's easier to see our gifts when others point them out. Let's help each other out by identifying possible careers we think our fellow students could have as a result of their gifts.

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Give each class member a piece of paper, and instruct him or her to write their names on the top and pass it to the person on their left. Then each person is to look at the name at the top of the handout; list one job/career he or she thinks that person could have, and then pass it to the left again. Keep going until each person has his or her own paper. Then have each person read one job/career listed on the paper that he or she never considered before. After everyone who wants to has shared, ask:

1. *Were you surprised at what was listed on your paper? Why or why not?*
2. *Do you believe what others have seen in you?*

*Now, take the jobs listed on your paper and add any others you think are possibilities. Then turn over your paper and list the top three jobs or careers in which you feel you might do well.*

Close in prayer, asking God to help your class in the days to come to look to Him as they sort through their dreams and hopes for the future.

# WEEK 46

## Community Connection

### SCRIPTURE:

2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 13:11; Psalm 133:1

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Distribute pencils and paper to each member of the class. Have each student write his or her name in the center and then, he or she must list around their name all the groups of which they are a part: school clubs, youth group, church, family, sports teams, job, etc. Once they have finished, they are to draw a small circle around each item, and then draw a line from each circle to the center circle, which has their name in it.

1. *What are the different groups you are a part of? Identify in each group the person to whom you're the closest to in that group, and write that person's name in that circle.*
2. *Why are those people so special?*
3. *Are these people close to you because of what they give you or because of what you give them?*
4. *Do you really need them in your life?*
5. *Which group or person has the greatest impact on your life? Why?*
6. *Now imagine that group or person was no longer a part of your life. How would that impact your life?*

*You've just illustrated your own personal community. Now that we know what groups of people make up our community, let's find out what God thinks about our choices of community.*

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### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have someone read 2 Timothy 2:22.

1. *What do you think is meant by 'desires of youth'?*
2. *Who do you know that you would consider to be one of 'those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart' (i.e., a strong Christian)?*
3. *Why does Paul place pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace in the context of a group?*

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 13:11. Then have someone else serve as secretary. Ask your class to call out four or five behaviors they consider childish. After the secretary has listed these, have the group name four or five behaviors they would consider mature. Then ask:

1. *When you are an adult, which behaviors do you want to exhibit—mature or childish?*
2. *What behaviors do you want those around you to exhibit?*

Have another student read Philippians 3:17. Ask your students to make a third list—those Christlike qualities they consider important enough to imitate. (E.g.: honesty, integrity, compassion) Then ask them who tends to show those qualities most - - their peers or adults who are close to them?

Read Psalm 133:1.

1. *Why is it important to live in unity?*
2. *Does spiritual maturity play a part in this unity? If so, how?*
3. *Does your most significant group from our first activity live in Christlike unity?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*We can choose to be immature and have a future full of rocky relationships with parents and others in our lives, or we can choose maturity and build stronger relationships with the people we'll soon be relating to on an adult level.*

Close in prayer, asking God to help each person in their relationships as they move into adulthood.

# WEEK 47

## Still Growing?

### SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 5:13—6:3; Philippians 3:12-16; 4:8-9

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Before class, tear up a single sheet of paper into smaller pieces. On one piece put a star, on one a circle, on one a triangle, etc., until each piece has a symbol on it. Then put the pieces in a bowl or other container for students to draw from. To begin the session, pass the bowl around the group and have each person select a piece of paper.

- Ask the person who has the paper with the star to share where he or she was born, what he or she likes to do in his or her spare time, and the year he or she remembers becoming a Christian (if he or she is a Christian).
- Then ask the student with the circle to share his or her favorite gift they've ever received, how long it takes him or her to get ready in the morning, and what he or she thinks is the best thing about being a Christian.
- Next, ask the person with the triangle to share his or her shoe size, what he or she likes most about his or her family, and to describe how his or her life might be different if he or she weren't a Christian.
- Next, divide the class into pairs and have each pair share when they became Christians, what they've been doing with their lives since that time, and one struggle they've had in their spiritual life.

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112 After five minutes, pull the group back together and ask the following discussion questions:

1. *How easy was it to talk about your personal spiritual history?*
2. *Is it something you pay much attention to from day to day?*
3. *How difficult was it to talk about your spiritual struggles?*
4. *How important is it to you to grow spiritually?*
5. *Do you find it an easy or hard thing to do?*

As you lead the discussion, keep in mind that for many of your students, the hope of a real, growing spiritual life may be dimmed by the realities of their everyday failures. They often feel too 'unholy' to ever be a growing, thriving Christian. Use the remainder of the lesson to show and encourage them that

while our salvation isn't based on what we do, we're never to quit trying to get closer to God. At the same time that we're moving toward Him, He moves toward us.

## TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 5:13-6:3 to the class, and then ask the following questions:

1. *What food analogy does the writer of Hebrews use here?* (Milk is for infants and solid food for the mature.)
2. *What would milk be compared to in our spiritual walk?* (Hearing and believing in the gospel)
3. *What would solid food be compared to?* (Bible reading, praying, journaling, etc.)

Next, divide the class into small groups and tell them that each group each have five minutes to come up with as many analogies as they can that describe our spiritual walk (Paul used milk and solid food). Some examples include: getting a dollhouse as a gift and building a house on your own; flying a paper plane and flying a real jet, etc. After the time is up, allow each group to share their answers.

## ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Divide your class into at least two groups, and assign each group either Philippians 3:12-16 or Philippians 4:8-9. If you have broken up into more than two groups, some groups will have the same assignment. Instruct the groups to write a letter to their youth group, using the passages originally written to the Hebrews/Philippians. Once the groups have had enough time to complete the assignment, ask a volunteer from each group to read their letter to the class.

*These verses tell us that we should be persistent in growing spiritually. One way to achieve that kind of maturity is to intentionally plan the direction we want to go spiritually. I want you to think of at least three ways you plan to grow in your spiritual life during the next year.*

Close in prayer, asking God for help as your students pursue these goals.

# WEEK 48

## Is There a Future?

### SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 29:1-14; Romans 8:38-39; Proverbs 23:18

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Have everyone in the class get a partner. Then blindfold one person in each pair. The partner who is not blindfolded must now lead his or her 'blind' partner as the teacher leads all the pairs as a group on a 'trust walk'. Stress that the partner who can see is responsible for the safety of the partner who cannot see, and the one with the blindfold must trust his or her partner and allow the partner to lead. After you are halfway finished with the trust walk, have the partners switch the blindfolds, with the former 'blind' partner now leading and the former leader now following.

After you've returned to the classroom with the group, ask the following questions:

1. *How did it feel to be blindfolded and have to trust the person who was leading you?*
2. *Did you always trust your partner to keep you safe? Why or why not?*
3. *Does your trust in people tend to depend on how well you know the person?*
4. *In our world today, are there many people you can put your trust in 100% of the time? Why or why not?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*We aren't the first generation to have a hard time finding people we can always trust.* Have someone read aloud Jeremiah 29:1-14.

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*Jeremiah 29:1-14 is the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the Jewish survivors who had been taken into exile in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. During this time, many false prophets had told the people that they would be returning to their home shortly, when in reality, the exile was going to be a long one. Jeremiah reassured them that, no matter what they had been through, and no matter what they were facing now, God was still on their side. With Him, there is always hope. Further, Jeremiah conveyed God's message for the people to continue in relationship with Him, rather than sit and wait for the better days. Despite rough times and questionable predicaments, those who were exiled were not to give up hope in God because He had plans for them.*

1. *How do the Israelites' concerns parallel with our concerns (or lack of trust) in the world today?*
2. *What do you think God is saying to the Israelites?*

Have two students read Proverbs 23:18 and Romans 8:38-39 respectively, then ask the following questions:

1. *Based on what we've read here, who do you think we can trust?*
2. *Why can we trust God?*
3. *What did Jeremiah say about what God will do for us?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*It's terrific to know that God is in control even when the world seems out of control and it seems you can't trust anyone. Let's take a few moments and think about what that means for each of us.* Encourage your students to spend a moment in silence identifying their fears, both present and future. It might even be good to give them an opportunity to write these down. Then, give them a chance to commit these fears to a God that has proven to be trustworthy.

Close in prayer, allowing students to pray out loud if they wish. Encourage them to mention specific areas of their lives that they plan to trust God with now and in the future. Close the prayer time by singing a familiar chorus with lyrics that emphasize trusting God.

# WEEK 49

## Marriage: Good, Better, and Best

### SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 24:3-8; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ephesians 5:21-25

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Invite one or two young married couples to come and share with the class what they feel are some of the keys to having a good marriage. Next ask your class for any others that weren't mentioned.

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Read Genesis 2:18-25.

1. *Why did God think Adam needed a mate?*
2. *What does it mean when it says, 'they will become one flesh'?*

Give each person paper and a pencil. Then ask everyone to write down the characteristics of a person they could be united to and 'feel no shame' (vs. 25).

Have someone read Exodus 24:3-8. *The Lord was making a covenant with the Israelites. A covenant meant that both sides had obligations and responsibilities to one another. Each was responsible to ensure that the other was cared for.*

1. *Why do you think God made a covenant with the Israelites?*
2. *Why was this important to do?*

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116 Have everyone make a list of the obligations and responsibilities they feel they would need to do in order to establish a covenant with a mate.

Ask someone to read Jeremiah 31:31-34. *Here God makes certain promises and commitments to the people.*

1. *Why was it necessary for God to make these promises?*
2. *How would you have felt if God had made these promises to you?*

Ask each class member to write down several promises and commitments that they would want to make to their future mate.

Read Ephesians 5:21-26.

1. *What does Paul mean when he says to 'submit'? (Submit does not mean 'obey'.)*

2. *What connection is there between 'love' and 'submit'?*
3. *In what ways should our relationship to our spouse imitate God's relationship with us?*

Ask your students to write down ways that they could show love by submitting to their spouse.

*Once we understand the love that God has for His people, and the incredible things He will do to share that love, we see that we have a huge responsibility to love our future spouse in the same way.*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Give each student an index card or small piece of paper with a vertical line drawn to divide it in half. Tell them to write only on the left side of the card, and to write the numbers 1-4.

1. *Write a word or phrase that describes the attitude you want your spouse to have toward God.*
2. *Write a word or phrase that describes how you want your future spouse to treat you.*
3. *Write a word or phrase that describes how you want your future spouse to view your dreams or career goals.*
4. *Write a word or phrase that describes how you want your future spouse to respond if (and when!) you disappoint him or her.*

Give the students a chance to talk about the words they chose. Then close this lesson by repeating the list above but with your students as the object of each sentence, having them write their responses on the right side of each card. Example: 1. Write a word or phrase that describes the attitude you want to have toward God. Allow the students some time to look at their cards and see how similar or how different their responses were based on what they wanted their spouse to commit to and what they were willing to commit to. Ask your students to pray and ask God to help them become the kind of person who commits to relationships that honor God. Allow them to pray silently for a few moments and then close by praying for all of your students. Consider keeping the cards and displaying them as a reminder during the next three lessons of this series.

# WEEK 50

## On Your Mark, Get Set . . . Wait!

### SCRIPTURE:

Luke 14:28-30; Hebrews 13:4

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Divide your class into two debate teams. One team will defend the statement ‘**Most people are ready to get married when they're 18.**’ The other team will provide arguments for ‘**Most people are not ready to get married until they are at least 25.**’ (By defending these two positions, both you and the students will begin to see the standards they use for deciding what levels of emotional maturity, education, life experience, etc. are necessary for a good marriage.) Following are some examples:

#### Ready at 18

- *The law says you're an adult, so you should be ready to take on adult roles.*
- *If you're in love, any age is a good age to get married. So why not 18? (It's only a number!)*
- *If you wait too long, you may not be able to find someone to marry you.*

#### Not Ready until at least 25

- *If you finish school or get started in a job, you have more to share with someone else.*
- *Waiting until you're older gives you more emotional maturity.*
- *Waiting until you're older gives you time to be prepared to be married.*

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118 Allow the teams five minutes for preparation and five minutes to present their arguments and rebuttals. After the debate, spend five minutes to discuss these questions:

1. *What things do most people you know consider when deciding when to get married?*
2. *What do you think it takes to be ready for marriage?*
3. *Is being ready more a matter of the heart or of the mind? Or both?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

1. *Describe a time in your life when you had to get ready for a big event or change.* (E.g., moving; the start of a sport season; matrix, a concert or drama, graduation, etc.)
2. *What ‘experts’ (advice givers) played a part in your preparations?* (Possible answers: Coaches, parents, friends, counsellors all had roles in the preparations.)

3. *What different types of preparation did you make?* (For example, getting ready for a drama requires planning times to do homework; practising on your own; attending rehearsals; etc.)

Read Luke 14:28-30. *How does this image of building a tower relate to marriage?* (It is far better to know what marriage is all about before one enters into the commitment, than to get married and find out you weren't prepared to make it work. Wise people know what they're getting into, and prepare for it, before they enter in.)

Read Hebrews 13:4.

1. *How does one 'honour' marriage?* (Value it. Approach it with the respect and planning it deserves.)
2. *How does one keep the marriage bed pure?* (Sexual immorality and/or adultery must not have any part in marriage—before or after.)

*Readiness for marriage is a matter of both the heart and the mind. More than that, it's also a matter of the soul. And readiness in all three areas is not easily achieved. Anything worth doing is worth preparing for. And those preparations might include many people and many different activities.*

#### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Have students brainstorm and write down the personal goals they have before they get married. Answers might range from 'Finish University' to 'Ride my bike across the country' or 'Get started on a career'. When they are finished, have them sign and date their sheet. Encourage them to place it in a prominent place to serve as a reminder to them of what they hope to accomplish before marriage.

Close with a prayer for the fulfillment of their dreams and goals.

# WEEK 51

## Marriage in the Real World

### SCRIPTURE:

Romans 15:5-6; Ephesians 4:1-3

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Begin the class session by asking,

1. *What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, 'And they lived happily ever after'?*
2. *What's your favorite fairy tale or story?*
3. *Fairy tale stories offer some pretty interesting, and often false, ideas of what 'true love' is supposed to be like. We hear these ideas about love all the way from early childhood. Unfortunately, most fairy tales don't say much about love in real day-to-day life. Is it possible to still live 'happily ever after' with the kinds of problems that exist in some relationships?*
4. *Do you think there are any reasons why stress and problems might be important to a happy relationship?*
5. *Have you ever had a friendship that went through a stressful time?*
6. *How did working through the problem make your friendship stronger?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

*Even the best relationships have stresses and require give-and-take. Struggles are not always a sign of an unhealthy relationship. In fact, the opposite may be true. Many times, difficult situations and hurt feelings are the catalysts to building a better relationship.*

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Before class, clip out newspaper articles that affect couples or families (bankruptcy, crime, death, job losses, etc.) Read each article and ask the class,

1. *If you were married and this happened to your spouse (or your spouse was responsible for this), how do you think you'd feel?*
2. *How might you react? (For example, an obituary could signify the death of a spouse's parent; a spouse could be the victim of a crime such as a mugging, rape, or shooting; etc.)*

After you've talked about four or five articles, divide the class into four small groups. Give each group a marker and a Bible. Have each group choose an article you discussed. Encourage them to continue

thinking of how they'd react if they were married and in these situations. Then give each group one of the following scripture passages and questions:

1. Read Ephesians 4:3. *If your goal is to 'make every effort' toward unity and peace in your marriage, how might you react?*
2. Read Ephesians 4:2. *Four keys to unity are listed here. What are they? If you followed them, how might you react?*
3. Read Romans 15:5. *How would knowing that God will give you the gifts of endurance and encouragement help you react if you were involved in this situation?*
4. Read Romans 15:6. *If everything you do is intended to 'glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', how would you react in this situation?*

After everyone has finished, have each group share their findings with the class.

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

*A good friend is hard to find. Marriage is, at its heart, friendship. Practicing unity in your current friendships is the best way to prepare for all adult relationships, including marriage.*

Read each of the following situation sentences, stopping after each one for the class to discuss how they would respond to their 'friend'.

- *Your friend tells you he or she feels hurt because you haven't done anything together for awhile.*
- *A friend tells someone else your secret.*
- *Your friend confides to you that his or her parents are divorcing.*
- *Your friend seems disinterested in church lately.*
- *You made the team, but your friend didn't.*
- *You don't know what you did wrong, but your friend seems distant and angry.*

Discuss how similar responses can help a married couple deal with the struggles they face. Close in prayer, asking God to help you and your students strive toward relationships that honor Him.

# WEEK 52

## To Marry or Not to Marry

### SCRIPTURE:

1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 26-34; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-12; 1 John 4:12

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Say: *We all have preconceived ideas about what others' lives are like. This week, we'll be talking about single (or unmarried) adults.*

1. *I want you to complete this sentence with the first thing that comes to your mind: If you are single, you are probably ...* (Lonely, wild, ugly, homosexual, busy in your career, uninterested in sex, waiting for the right person, able to spend more money than a married person, afraid to grow up, etc.)
2. *Where do we get our ideas of what single adults are like?*
3. *What are some words that describe how TV or magazines portray singles?* (Strange, funny, lots of free time, happy being single, career-oriented, down on relationships, etc.)
4. *Do you know anyone who fits these descriptions or even comes close?*
5. *What are some ways single people are just people, not any different from the married adults we know?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

1. *Who is the most successful Christian person you know who's also single?* (You might be ready to mention single adults who are leaders in your church or neighborhood, or celebrities your youth are familiar with. If you have time and access, look up magazine articles on these celebrities, and bring them to class.)
2. *What are some of the potential difficulties these celebrities might have juggling their careers with relationships and with church activities?*

Next, divide the class into two research teams. Assign one of the following Scripture passages and thesis statements to each team. Then have the teams search their Scripture passages for phrases that support their thesis statement.

1. *1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 26-34. Thesis: Building relationships and serving God is a balancing act.*
2. *1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-12; and 1 John 4:12. Thesis: You can serve God through your relationships.*

When finished, bring the teams together and have them share their scripture and report their findings. After both presentations, discuss:

- *In these passages, Christians are urged to serve God and to build Christlike relationships. How do these words apply to youth that are making choices for their future careers and families?*
- Read 1 Corinthians 7:26-31. *Paul uses the phrases 'the present crisis' (v. 26), 'the time is short' (v. 29), and 'this world in its present form is passing away' (v. 31). In our lives today, how do these phrases apply?*

Look at your single Christian celebrities again. Discuss:

1. *In this time in history, what makes the Christian witness of these people so vital?*
2. *All of these people have jobs or careers in which their Christianity is a focal point. In what ways do you think it's easy for a single person to be visible in service to God?*
3. *Are there some types of service that seem most suited to single people? Or married people?*
4. *Is anyone exempt from giving their all to serve Christ?*
5. *Is anyone exempt from giving their all in building relationships?*

### ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):

Ask your students to share their dreams for their futures: *When you're 30 years old, what kind of career do you hope to have? What will you have to do to have that kind of career?* (Emphasize the need for education and how hard it is to go through college if we are married.) *How do you hope to be serving God?* (Talk about what it means to serve God and the many areas of service. Some people serve in full-time jobs as pastors or missionaries, Christian entertainers or educators. Others serve by opening their homes for Bible studies, teaching Sunday School, or supporting those in full-time Christian work.) Read Jeremiah 29:11 to the class then pray for persistence as each youth develops relationships, whether they are married or single, with others that reflects God's love.

Close with prayer

# WEEK 53

## Out With the Old and In With the New

### SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 54:6-7, 89:1-2, 94:17-19,22; Psalm 51:1-17; Matthew 14:22-31; Psalm 18:1-6, 16-17, 103, 1 John 1:9

### LIFE (WHAT HAPPENS TODAY):

Ask each class member to share the following with the class:

1. *What is the best thing that has happened to you over the last year?*
2. *What is the worst thing?*
3. *How would you rate the last year, with 1 being terrible and 10 being great?*
4. *What things/events do you hope will happen during the next year?*

### TRUTH (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES):

Read Psalm 54:6-7, 89:1-2, 94:17-19, 22. *The Psalmist had seen firsthand the many things that God had done, the ways that God has rescued him time and time again. He couldn't help but praise God. What about you? Has God done anything in your life during this past year? What? (Be specific.)*

Give each class member three blank slips of paper and something to write with. Ask for a volunteer to read Psalm 51:1-17 & Matthew 14:22-31. *God is incredible to us, yet like the Psalmist and Peter, we at times have let our focus move from God, and we fail Him.* Have each person write down the ways that they've failed God in the past year. (Didn't stand up for Him, disobeyed Him, compromised your beliefs, didn't witness when He asked you to, let something claim #1 spot in your life, etc.) When everyone is finished, ask for volunteers to share what they've written.

Read Psalm 18:1-6, 16-17, 103, 1 John 1:9. *Even when we fail God, He promises to forgive us and remember our sins no more. He makes us new creatures, pure and clean before Him.* Have each person bow their heads in a moment of silent prayer, asking God to forgive them for failing Him, and thanking Him for His forgiveness. Next, have everyone rip their slip of paper into tiny pieces, signifying God's forgiveness of their sins.

**ACTION (WHAT CAN I DO IN RESPONSE):**

*The start of a new year serves as a great beginning point for making significant changes in our lives and setting goals. Let's take some time now and set some goals for ourselves—specifically goals that will help us grow in our relationship with Christ.*

Have each class member answer the following questions on one of their blank slips of paper:

- 1. Commitments or changes I will make to keep or make Jesus the #1 priority in my life during the next year are ...* (E.g. read my bible and pray daily, attend church each week, not fight with my brothers or sisters, obey Him in everything, etc.)
- 2. The specific ways I plan to carry out my commitments are ...* (E.g. set aside a time each morning before school to read my Bible and pray, ask my friend to take me to church with him/her each week, etc.)
- 3. What do you sense God is calling you to do or be during this coming year?*

When they are finished answering the questions, have them write duplicate answers on their other blank slip of paper.

*It has been proven that we do much better at keeping our commitments if we have someone who will remind us and check with us on a regular basis to see how we are doing. Think of someone that you would trust to hold you accountable. If that person is in this room, go to him or her after class is dismissed and ask him or her if he or she will agree to hold you accountable to your commitments. If the person tells you they will, give them one of the slips of paper with your commitments. If that person isn't in this room, find them sometime this week.*

Close with prayer.

