

Mar Thoma Sunday Schools

Diocese of North America & Europe



Curriculum

BEING GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S WORLD

Grade Five

(Samajam Curriculum – Junior Volume II)

Published By
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2006



MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

**Diocesan Bishop
Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos**

Foreword

Dearly beloved in Christ,

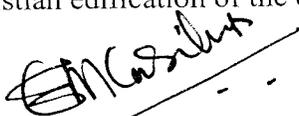
A new curriculum for our Sunday School has been a felt need in this Diocese. I am glad that the new curriculum is ready to be introduced in 2006. Here we are in the process of a transition from Cokesbury to the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam Curriculum. While retaining the essential elements and the frame work of the Samajam Curriculum, the lessons and stories are made more conducive to our situations and challenges. The overall theme is “Being God’s People in God’s World”

Summary of Work in Three Years: The work for the curriculum started in 2002 soon after the publication of the revised edition of the book, “The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision (CSS Publication, 2001) and the special issue of Messenger in January 2002 which explained the development of Sunday Schools in North America. The Diocesan Sunday School Council in 2002 entrusted the task of the new curriculum with Dr. T. M. Thomas, who had been active for the growth of the Sunday schools even from the beginning of the Diocese. (He was the first convener of the Sunday school committee formed at the Zonal Assembly of 1982, Philadelphia, presided by our late Suffragan Bishop Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius). Preliminary discussions were held at the Family Conference of Dallas, 2002. A plan of action and the Curriculum Format were approved by the Council at a special meeting of Sunday school teachers and officers at Regional and Diocesan levels at the Family Conference in Florida, 2003. Five lessons of all twelve classes were completed by the time of the Family Conference in New York 2004. These five lessons (Part III) were taught in the Spring of 2005. Necessary modifications were made and the new curriculum was released in the Summer of 2005. It is now being used in all Sunday schools of North America (nearly fifty) Sept. 2005 to June 2006 academic year. While teaching these lessons improvements are being made and a new CD will be distributed by the summer 2006. The target date for the completion of printing as a book is summer 2007. Though there are thirty lessons in each class we select 25 for each year. In addition to it, there are five lessons from the book, “Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision” for each class.

Unique Features of the New Curriculum: The manuscripts for the new curriculum were written by committees formed in all nine centers of our Diocese. All writers were expected to follow the same Format (Revised Format of 2004). Different from several other books, our curriculum includes a few values to be taught in each lesson. Today in most nations we can listen to the cry for values education, both secular and religious schools. Also, our curriculum includes two new items, one Bible Application (Bible Lesson for Our Times) and the other Life Response (Words for My Life). Here we can make the lesson appropriate for our times and relevant to the learner. Along with it there are the regular or usual items found in most lesson plans (aim, Bible reading, main ideas, memory verse etc.) There is a total of 14 items in all lessons.

I gratefully appreciate the hard work of the general convener of the New Curriculum, Dr. T. M. Thomas, Diocesan Sunday School secretaries, Mr. Thomas Koshy (2002-2005) and Mr. M. C. Varghese (2005-2008), Sunday School Council members, twelve committees each in charge of one book and others who helped for the creation of the new curriculum. Their names are mentioned in each book. Now it is our task to maximize the effectiveness of this curriculum. All Sunday School Superintendents and teachers are requested to follow the instructions of the convener in this regard.

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit , I commend this new curriculum for the Christian edification of the children in the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe.



Rt.Rev.Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos
Diocesan Bishop

July 4, 2006



MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

We remember with immense joy the great advancements we have made for The Mar Thoma Sunday School over the past three decades. The Indian immigrant community remained diligent in passing on the Christian faith and sustaining the spiritual growth for the second generation. In August 2000, Sunday School published “Order of Worship with Prayers & Hymns” with transliterated and translated versions of our traditional liturgy to bring our children to a deeper understanding. In June of 2001, our Sunday School published a Book “The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision” to share the faith and practices of our church to the young generation. After experimenting with several American Sunday School Curriculums for our needs, the Sunday School Teachers and the office bearers prayerfully made a leap of faith to develop a North American Mar Thoma Sunday School Curriculum with allegiance to the Sunday School Samajam Curriculum.

The collective product of the Mar Thoma heritage and the American Educational system was a Sunday School Student Book for every school grade at the appropriate vocabulary level and clearly articulated lesson with Values for Life, Words for Bible Times, Words for Our Times, Words for My Life, and Bible Learning Strategies and Activities. The first edition was released along with the Sunday School Centenary Celebrations by the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam President, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, at the 2005 Mar Thoma Family Conference. The year of our Lord 2005 will be remembered for ever in the history of the North American Sunday School for developing the curriculum. The leadership of Dr. T. M. Thomas for our Sunday School remains available from the time our activities began in this country. Dr. Thomas served as an inspiring leader, traveling the full length and width of this continent to organize the curriculum committees and to structure the final version. We are greatly indebted to him for the full time ministry that we receive from him to make all our publications a grand success. Moreover, the curriculum committee members, the clergy, staff and the office bearers deserve great appreciation for persevering to produce the first version and the revision of the full curriculum in a couple of years.

We have crossed a major milestone in the production of the curriculum. The next phase should be to bring excellence in teaching. We, teachers, should cultivate a habit of continuous learning so that we can serve in this ministry better more effectively and efficiently in these changing times. Please read the “Notes to Teachers on Teaching”. It is unique for each stage as we have divided twelve classes into five units. They are: 1. Preschool classes (Nursery and KG), 2. Primary (Grades 1, 2 &3), 3. Upper Primary (Gr.4, 5&6), 4. Junior High (Gr. 7, 8&9), and 5. Senior High (Grades 10, 11 & 12). A teacher in one grade of a stage is expected to read the “Notes” in other classes also because it deals with different stages of growth. A group effort, in the regional level, is encouraged for conducting teacher development workshops with expert assistance from professionals in the region. If there are geographical limitations as parish level workshop

would be adequate. The “Teacher Manual” prepared by Samajam as booklet, was sent to all Sunday Schools last year. It is suitable for such workshops and seminars.

We, as secretaries of the current and the previous term, are greatly privileged and blessed to serve in Sunday School. It is a great joy to be the instruments of His Grace to participate in this blessed organization that continues to exhilarate techniques and technology to bring every child to Jesus. May the Lord Almighty continue to bless the challenges that we undertake in His Mighty Name.

Thomas Koshy
Secretary (2002-2005)

M.C.Varghese
Secretary (2005-2008)

July 5, 2006

Mar Thoma Sunday School
Diocese of North America & Europe

Notes to Teachers on Teaching in Upper Primary Classes (Grades 4, 5 &6)

The primary classes are divided into two, First: Grades 1 to 3 and Second: Grades 4-6. Teachers are expected to read Notes to Teachers of Grades 1-3. Most characteristic features mentioned before continue to this stage. There are two terms, lower primary and upper primary (or junior or middle school) though they are not universally used. The term middle school is also vague because it refers to a few grades between lower primary and high school. Anyhow, we are not interested in the precise use of these terms.

Characteristic Features and the Learning of these children

As already mentioned in primary school years or ages 6-12, children are very active as they are full of energy and vigor, both physical and nonphysical. It is for this stage that the psychologist Erikson used the term “industry.” The emphasis we place on activities can be continued during these years. Projects assigned to these children are in groups, but expecting greater individual initiative and responsibility. Models and heroes presented to these children are drawn from real life situations.

Today we live in a world where universal primary education is the goal. The target is to provide education till the age of 12 or 14, usually grades 4-6. However, there are many countries which do not meet the goal of basic education for a few years. Along with the number or quantity, attempts are being made to improve the quality of primary education. It includes better building, facilities, improved curriculum and qualified teachers. Among them let me comment on one, qualified teachers.

Teacher Preparation: There are teacher preparation institutions or “training” schools and colleges to create qualified teachers. In the United States, Canada and some other countries, teacher preparation is offered in colleges, while in most other countries of the world, including India, teachers for primary or elementary schools are prepared in schools, usually a post-secondary training schools for two years. These two systems of teacher training carry with it two salary scales, higher salary scale for teachers in high schools and a lower one for primary schools. The former is considered more prestigious than the latter.

What is the qualification for becoming a Sunday school teacher? In my view there are two qualifications, one the knowledge of the Bible and the other a person’s commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior. Other than that, there is no formal preparation to become a Sunday school teacher. However, teacher preparation must be arranged in Sunday schools at parish, center and diocesan levels. Teachers must continue preparation (in-service) throughout their teaching career. A good teacher is always a student who continues learning in such formal arrangements. Also, the teacher takes time to prepare the lesson for each class. Preparation for Sunday school teaching involves time for devotion because the goal here is not limited to providing further information or knowledge, but to transform the child following the model of Jesus. There are goals or aims to be accomplished and each lesson is organized as an organic unit, one segment or

item related to the other. The teacher must be well-versed with this arrangement or organization of each lesson.

Sources: As already noted, primary school children learn better through activities. Teachers who prepared the new curriculum have done their share by suggesting suitable activities and projects. If teachers want more suggestions and ideas they can use the internet. (See the Resources given in the Notes to Teachers... grades 1, 2, & 3)

Teachers who maintain the habit of reading books for their preparation, let me suggest a book: Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. I recommend this book for Teacher Training Workshops.

Acknowledgement: Let me conclude this NOTES by expressing our gratitude to God Almighty, for His guidance, and say “thank you” to all those who worked closely with me. They include: first, our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, who entrusted a great responsibility on me and gave necessary guidance; second, the two secretaries, Mr. Thomas Koshy (2002-2005) and Mr. M.C. Varghese (2005-2008) and other Diocesan Sunday School Council Members for their whole hearted support; third, the Curriculum Committee Members who actually wrote the lessons in 12 classes following my directions (their names are listed at the end of each book) and last, but not least, all teachers and students for making use of this curriculum.

Dr. T. M. Thomas, General Convener
Diocesan Curriculum Committee

Lesson Format (Revised)

1. **Class:** There are 12 classes (Nursery, K .G, Grades 1-10)
2. **Title:** Refers to the title of the chapter or lesson.
3. **Lesson Topic:** Same as Title. It is used in the “ Table of contents” of each class.
4. **Lesson Theme:** Each lesson comes under one theme which is the same in all classes on any specific Sunday. (So introduce the theme at the Assembly.)
5. **Aim:** Purpose Of the lesson shall guide teachers for the lesson planning and presentation
6. **Bible Reading:** Each lesson is based on a specific Bible passage. Use New International Version, NIV.
7. **Values for Life:** A few values are taught through each lesson.
8. **Preparation:** Other terms are used: Introduction and Motivation.
9. **Bible Learning:
Main Ideas:** This is the body of the lesson. A few ideas are presented, one in each paragraph.
10. **Bible Learning:
Strategies &
activities:** The ‘how’ of teaching is covered here. The methods of teaching differ for each grade or age group.
11. **Bible Application
or Bible Words
for Our Times:** Lessons are related to the realities of our contemporary world.
12. **Life Response or
Words for My Life:** The lesson leads to personal commitment or life decisions.
13. **Memory Verse:** NIV is used for most lessons.
14. **Prayer:** Conclude the class with prayers given at the end of each lesson or extempore prayer.

Dr.T.M.Thomas

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Part I

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD

Chapter 1

God Creates Plants and Vegetation

Lesson Theme: God's Creation

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:11-13; Psalms 148

Aim: To be thankful to God for providing resources for humans through nature; specifically plants, vegetation, and trees.

Values for Life:

1. We should preserve plants and vegetation for the survival of all living beings.
2. We must glorify God for the wonderful resources.

Preparation:

Play a variation of the game Boggle: Give each student a time limit of 1 minute to list on paper all the fruits/vegetables they know exist. After the time limit is up, have one student at a time read out the names on their list. Students must cross out any of the food items already mentioned by another student. The winner of the game is the student who had the most number of items mentioned that no one else repeated. This activity will help the students build prior knowledge of the theme at hand.

Ask the students:

Who made all the items on your list?

When did God make all of the vegetables/fruits? On what day?

Explain to the students that they will be discussing the time of creation; specifically, the third day.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Creation on the 3rd Day:

On the third day, God separated the earth and the sea. When God saw that it was good, God created vegetation, different kinds of plants and trees; those that bear grain and also fruits. All that we have today in the form of plants and trees are God's gift to us. We are to be thankful to God for these resources.

Let's take a closer look at plants and vegetables that were used during Biblical times that are still being used today:

<u>Name of Fruit/Vegetable</u>	<u>Biblical Reference</u>
Lentils and Beans	Lentil and beans are a favorite food throughout the Near East. They can be boiled to make stew, like the one Jacob gave to Esau (Genesis 25: 29-34), or they can be mixed with other ingredients to make bread. The lentil is part of the pea family.
Cinnamon And Myrrh	The <i>anointing oil</i> was made from myrrh, cinnamon, cane, and cassia. Myrrh yields a fragrant resin from its cut stems; cinnamon is obtained from the bark of the cinnamon tree; cane from the root of a reed plant; and cassia from the dried flowers of the cinnamon tree.
Fig Tree	The fig is one of the most important trees mentioned in the Bible. It can grow to a height of 20-30 feet and produce two or three crops of fruit each year. The first figs of the year were a great delicacy. They were usually eaten fresh, but were also pressed into cakes to take on a journey. Abigail took pressed figs when she went to see David. (I Samuel 25)
Cumin	Like other ancient people, the Babylonians used spices to flavor their foods. One of the most commonly used spices was the herb cumin. It was grown for its aromatic seeds, which were ground up and used in place of pepper.
Olive	Olives were eaten fresh, and pressed to make oil. Olive oil was sometimes poured over someone's head as a sign that they had been called by God to do a special work. Jesus said that he had been "anointed" by God's Holy Spirit.
Grapes	The climate and soil in Israel are perfect for growing grapes, and their production has been important since ancient times. Besides being eaten fresh, they are dried for raisins or fermented to make wine. Wine in New Testament times was sometimes mixed with other ingredients. The Bible warns against getting drunk and recommends moderation when drinking wine.
Almonds	Almonds are the first fruit trees to blossom in Palestine and the nuts were a popular food in Biblical times.

We often take God's blessings for granted. God has provided all we need from what He has created. We have forgotten God's gifts. It is our duty and responsibility to preserve these plants and trees.

Strategies and Activities:

1. Among the fruits/vegetables mentioned above, the teacher should bring a few items to show class: lentil, cinnamon, fig...etc.

2. *Materials: one piece of blank paper per student, crayons/colored pencils.*

Have each student draw how they think the third day of the world might have looked like. Encourage them to use the Bible as a resource. After they are done, have each student share their artwork, giving them the opportunity to explain why they drew what they did.

3. What do you think the third day of creation looked like?
 - A.** Several large tidal waves appeared, the water broke, and soil and continents appeared. The earth suddenly burst forth with green and vines and every plant in the world and at one moment went into full bloom.

 - B.** A huge volcanic fissure opened from the earth and fire and magma and sulphur spewed forth.

 - C.** A giant cucumber burst forth.

 - D.** The ground became green with sprouting plants and the air became black with birds.

Bible Application:

We must be grateful to God for the different types of wonderful plants and trees on Earth, which are useful for all living things. We should show our gratitude (thanks) by praising and glorifying Him. Have you noticed the praise and glorification presented everywhere in Psalms? Read Psalms 148. Here, all creations are asked to praise the Lord. The last five psalms (Psalms 146-150) begin with an exhortation to praise God. They emphasize the need to praise God.

Life Response:

We see in Genesis 2:15 that the Lord God placed man in the Garden of Eden to “cultivate it and guard it”. God expects us to toil and preserve the creation. But do we remember the blessings God has given us? Through nature, God has created everything needed for man. But in our selfishness, we forget our responsibility to preserve and protect Nature. Remember that Nature is not a toy to be handled carelessly. God entrusted this Earth and all living beings in it in the hands of man. Let us use them wisely.

- 1) Encourage students to grow a small vegetable garden in their backyard.
- 2) Have students visit a local plant nursery.

Memory Verse: Genesis 1:29

Then God said, "I give you every seed bearing plants on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for your gifts through plants and vegetables. Help us always to be thankful to you for all that you provide us with. Amen.

Chapter 2

Our Environment Today

Lesson Theme: God's Earth

Bible Reading: Isaiah 24: 5-6; Genesis 1:9-11, 27-30

Aim: To understand that we are God's stewards.

Values for Life:

1. Polluting environment is a sin.
2. God expects us to preserve and nourish all creations with a sense of ownership.
3. We should love and care for nature and all living things.

Preparation:

Show students several newspaper articles describing natural disasters occurring throughout the world (*tsunami, earthquakes, forest fires, lack of rainfall...etc*) After discussing these current events, have students share any of their own personal experiences with natural disasters. Then ask the following questions and have the students discuss:

- 1) Why do you think all these events happen?
- 2) How can this be avoided?
- 3) What does the Bible say about this?

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Earth: God's gift to human beings

God created Earth on the third day. He divided the Earth into the land and the seas. As we have learned in the last lesson, God also produced plants, vegetables, and trees that would sustain human beings. Therefore, we see here that God gives the Earth as a gift to human beings.

Human Beings: God's Stewards

When God gave His gift of the Earth to humans, what did He expect from us? Did he give human beings the total freedom to do what they want to the Earth? In Genesis 1: 27-30, we see God giving all the products of the Earth to humans with some specific purpose. What is that purpose?

Read Genesis 1: 27-30

Here we have to understand that God chose human beings as stewards of the Earth. What does it mean to be a steward? The duty of a steward is to look after those things which God has given, because He is the sole owner. It is this concept of

stewardship that places responsibility on humans by God: It is to look after the created order, and to see that the resources of the Earth are not selfishly used.

Man sinned: Earth Cursed

As you read through Genesis, you will find that humans rebel against God (Genesis 3: 1-24). When humans rebel, even the Earth is cursed (Genesis 3:17). We see that if people have to survive, their relationship on Earth also has to be one of concern and care. It is our duty to see that God's gift of Earth is not used in a selfish way, and that we should be thankful to God for giving us this wonderful Earth, with all its bountiful resources.

God cursed the Earth, because of man (Gen. 3:17). Broken relationships are a result of man's disobedience and sin. In what areas did the relationships break? The areas between man and God, between man and man, and between man and nature. As a result of the broken relationship between man and God, there was injustice in the relationship between man and man.

Consequences of Pollution:

Today, we are very much affected by the pollution of the environment. The Earth, the water, and the air are being polluted. Natural disasters, such as heavy rain and lack of rain, are all the consequences of our selfishness and carelessness. "The people have defiled the Earth by breaking God's laws and by violating the covenant He made to last forever. So God pronounced a curse on the Earth. Its people are paying for what they have done. Fewer and fewer remain alive..." (Isaiah 24:5-6) This prophecy is true even today. So, if we do not act with a sense of ownership and responsibility, both Earth and man will be ruined.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

1. What did God call the dry ground and the gathered waters?
2. What does the verse "God created man in his own image" mean to you?
3. List all the responsibilities God gave the first man and woman he created.
4. What is the message of Prophet Isaiah on polluting the Earth?

Bible Application:

Don't we like to get liberated from pollution? "For the creation was condemned to lose in purpose that the creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God..." (Romans 8:20-21) Our sinful nature taints our thoughts and actions. Our fall into sin has distorted all aspects of the creation. Therefore, let us walk with God and be His partners in preserving Nature, through our noble thoughts and deeds.

Life Response:

- 1) Why should we consider Earth as God's gift to human beings?
- 2) How can we be God's stewards on Earth? List several ways.

Memory Verse: Psalms 24:1

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..."

Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for the Earth and all its resources. Help us to utilize the resources in an unselfish way. Amen.

Chapter 3

Animals: God's Instruments

Lesson Theme: God's Creatures

Bible Reading: Numbers 22: 1-38

Aim: God even uses animals to fulfill His purpose.

Values for Life:

1. Doing evil in spite of knowing what is good is against God's will.
2. We must not use the intellect God blessed us with to do sinful deeds.

Preparation:

Play a quick activity to start the lesson: Choose a letter from the alphabet. (ex: F) Give each student a time limit of 1 minute to write the name of every animal they know that starts with that letter (*ex: frog, fish, fox, flamingo, ferret... etc*). The winner of the game is the student who can think of the most number of animals within the time limit. Continue this game by having the winner choose another letter to play. Play this for about 5 minutes.

Have each student share any past experiences they have had with animals (*pets of their own, stories from when they went to the zoo...*) Explain to the students that God created animals, not just for entertainment, but for a specific purpose. Animals have often been messengers of God's word.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Balaam and Balak (the King of Moab)

Read Numbers Ch. 22: 1-38

This biblical story takes place on the plains of Moab, where the people of Israel are camping out. Balak, the king of Moab, sees the Israelites as a threat to his kingdom. He was terrified they would invade his territory, so he sent a message to Balaam the prophet asking him to curse the Israelites. Prophets, such as Balaam, were believed at the time to have the power to curse or bless anyone. When Balaam makes his intention known to God, God tells Balaam that the Israelites have been blessed and therefore cannot be cursed. Dismayed, Balak sends him another message, but Balaam is unmoved. Later on in the night, God allows Balaam to go, but conveys to him that he will speak only what God wants him to speak. (vs. 20)

God uses an animal to teach Balaam a lesson

The next day Balaam sets off, but an angel stood in the road. When the donkey Balaam was riding saw the angel, it shied off the road, but Balaam forced it to ride back on the road. This happened a second time. Finally the donkey lay down.

As Balaam was beating the donkey, God opened the mouth of the donkey and asked Balaam why he was beating him. Balaam replied that he would like to kill the donkey, mainly because the donkey was making a fool of him. The donkey then asked Balaam to remember a time if it had ever done this to him before. Balaam admitted that it had not.

It was then God opened the eyes of Balaam to see that an angel of the Lord was standing in his way with a drawn sword. The angel told Balaam that it was the donkey that saved Balaam's life. Here we see God using an animal to teach Balaam a lesson as well as to convey a message.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Let's take a closer look at different animals that were mentioned during Biblical times that are still seen today:

Animals	Biblical Reference
Donkey	The donkey that was a beast of burden in biblical times was quite different from the modern donkey from which we are familiar. It was a beautiful, graceful, and friendly animal, with a reddish-brown coat. Capable of carrying heavy loads, it was also used for plowing and threshing grain. Donkeys were held in high regard and were a measure of a person's wealth.
Sheep	Sheep are mentioned more than 400 times in the Bible. Their wool was very valuable, as it was the most useful and easily available fiber for making clothes. Their tanned skins were also used to make tents, shoes, and clothing. Sheep's milk was a basic part of the diet. It was more important than their meat, which was only eaten on special occasions.
Lion	In Samson's time, lions were common in Canaan. But their numbers declined and they eventually became extinct in the region in about AD 1300. Lions normally lived in thickets along the Jordan River.

Cobra	A cobra was one of the symbols of the Egyptian king's power and a representation of it was worn on the front of his royal headdress, supposedly to spit fire at his enemies. The venom of the cobra works by paralyzing the nervous system. When Aaron turned his staff into a snake it was probably a cobra.
Quail	Quails were the smallest and tastiest of the game birds hunted in biblical times. They migrate in large flocks flying very close to the ground. Quails were the meat which God gave to the Israelites when they were hungry in the desert.
Eagle	The eagle's strength and the speed with which it swoops on its prey are used in the Bible to picture powerful nations attacking Israel. Ezekiel described King Nebuchadnezzar as an eagle. Isaiah said that people who trust God will be like eagles, rising above their problems.

Short Answer Questions:

1. How did Balaam responded when his donkey spoke to him?
2. How do you think God felt when Balaam kept asking to go to Moab after He told him not to?
3. What did Balak feel when Balaam kept blessing Israel?

Matching Column

- a. Zippor _____ king of Moab
- b. Beor _____ father of Balak
- c. Balak _____ father of Balaam
- d. Pethor _____ Balaam's hometown

Bible Application:

Jesus Rides A Donkey

Jesus, who was on His way to Jerusalem, used a donkey as His “vehicle”. Ancient kings used horses in war and donkeys for endeavors to bring peace. As a result, Christ became the “Prince of Peace” by His choice of a donkey as his vehicle.

Biblical Writers About Balaam

Balaam blessed the Israelites instead of cursing them because of God’s intervention. King Balak sent him without rewarding him. The Israelites sinned because of Balaam. In the end, Balaam was brutally killed (Numbers 31:8) The Bible speaks of him as one who loved the wages of wickedness (2 Peter 2:15) and was a deceitful man (Jude 1:11). Balaam is also regarded as one who taught Balak to mislead the Israelites. Consequently, the Israelites sinned against God by committing sexual immorality and by eating food offered to the idols. Let us not walk into sin like Balaam, without our eyes wide open.

Life Response:

1. How are we warned today?
2. Should we ever do other than what God has said?
3. Does God guide us to make us happy or sad?

Memory Verse: Psalms 148: 7 & 10

Praise the Lord from the Earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths...wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds...

Prayer:

O Lord, we thank you for the different ways and means that you use to make known your will. Help us always to be sensitive to what you want us to do in our lives. Amen.

Chapter 4

King Cyrus-God's Anointed

Lesson Theme: Human Beings: The Crown of Creation

Bible Reading: Isaiah 45: 1-13; Ezra 1:1-11

Aim: God can act contrary to our beliefs to realize His mission.

Values for Life:

1. God is just and impartial.
2. God wants us to be alert and awake to fulfill our Christian duties.
3. Obeying and submitting to God's plans will lead us to blessings.

Preparation:

Mohandas Gandhi was one of the foremost political leaders of the 20th century. He helped to free India from British rule by a unique method of nonviolent resistance, and is honored by Indians as the "*Father of the Nation*". Gandhi was slight in built but had almost limitless physical and moral strength. Gandhi was one of the gentlest of men, but he had an iron core of determination. This combination of traits made him the leader of India's nationalist movement. He worked to reconcile all classes and religious sects, especially Hindus and Muslims. This unique method of solving conflicts was Gandhi's greatest legacy to mankind.

Gandhi was influenced by Jesus; Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was something that Gandhi cherished. God used Gandhi to realize His purpose as far as the destiny of India was concerned. In today's lesson, students will learn about a king whom God used contrary to the belief of the Israelites. The name of this king was Cyrus.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Jewish Community in Exile

The background of this incident is the time when the Jewish community was in exile in Babylon (Isaiah Ch. 40-55). Israel was the chosen one for God. Israel was to praise God, glorify Him, and give thanks for the great mercy and sing songs of gladness and rejoicing. However, the chosen people often forgot about God. The consequence of their disobedience is the exile to Babylon.

King Cyrus- Anointed By God

God, however, does not forget about Israel. He wants to continue His mission and that is why God elects King Cyrus. This is the only place in the Bible where a Gentile ruler is said to be "anointed." God is the power over all powers, and he anoints whom he chooses for his special tasks. Why did God anoint Cyrus? Because God had a special task for him to do for Israel. Cyrus would allow God's city, Jerusalem, to be rebuilt, and

he would set the exiles free without expecting anything in return. Few kings of Israel or Judah had done as much for God's people as Cyrus would.

Proclamation by Cyrus (II Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4)

The Lord inspired the mind of Cyrus. He sent a proclamation to the very corners of his kingdom. Do you know which group of people the proclamation was addressed to? The Jews. What does a foreign king want from them? Cyrus, king of Persia, declared, "The Lord, the God of Heaven has made me ruler over the whole world and has given me the responsibility of building a temple for Him in Jerusalem in Judah. Now, all of you who are God's people go there, and may the Lord your God be with you. You are to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple of the Lord." To his own people, Cyrus commanded, "If any of his people in exile need help to return, their neighbors are to give them this help. They are to provide them with silver and gold; supplies and pack animals, as well as offerings to present in the Temple of God in Jerusalem." Cyrus, therefore, encouraged and sent the people on their journey to fulfill this great commission. He also brought out the articles belonging to the Temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.

People Awakened for the Great Commission

The Lord motivated the people to do His will. An idol worshipper, Cyrus was used by God. We should to give priority to 'what was said' than to 'who said it'. How do we react? The Israelites were prepared to obey the voice of God. Obedience became a reason for their blessing. God used a heathen to punish and to redeem His people. God brought back the Israelites from an exile of 70 years as He had spoken through Prophet Jeremiah. God works in ways beyond our expectations. Cyrus became a channel for the salvation of the chosen people and the reconstruction of the Temple. King Artaxerxes became instrumental in the rebuilding of the fallen wall of Jerusalem. People fallen into idol worshipping were revived by an idol worshipping Persian king.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

- 1) Why was the Jewish community sent to exile?
- 2) What was the responsibility entrusted to King Cyrus?
- 3) How do you understand the term "anointed"?
- 4) If a person does not acknowledge the sovereignty of God, can God still use the person for His purpose?

Bible Application:

There are people with many beliefs because we live in a pluralistic society. So our challenge is to be tolerant to other faiths while holding on to the unique Christian values and beliefs.

Life Response:

What does this lesson teach us? God works through people in various ways to continue His work. God chooses people of His own liking to fulfill His purpose. Can we become humble instruments in His hands? The Lord desires us to be awakened so we can complete the mission in our own lives.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 45:5

I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me.

Prayer:

O Lord, we thank You for disclosing Your will through various means. Help us to be instruments to fulfill Your will. Amen.

Chapter 5

Heaven Rains Bread

Lesson Theme: Science and Faith

Bible Reading: Exodus 16: 1-21; Numbers 11:4-33

Aim: To know that with God, everything is possible.

Values for Life:

1. Things impossible for man are possible for God.
2. God's children should experience God's presence.

Preparation:

When you take a long trip, where do you get food to eat? Usually you stop at a restaurant and buy some. Or sometimes you pack your lunch in a picnic basket and take it along. The Israelites were on a really long trip. Their trip was 40 years long! Where were they going to get food? They couldn't carry enough to last them for a long time. They didn't stay any place long enough to grow any food. There were no stores to stop by. The number of Israelites taking the trip was more than 1 million people. That's a lot of mouths to feed!

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

The Journey of Israelites through the Wilderness

The Israelites have been delivered from the clutches of Pharaoh. As they moved through the wilderness, they could experience God's presence and also God's guiding hand. During the day, the Lord led them through a pillar of cloud, while at night the Lord led by a pillar of fire (Exodus 13: 21-22). But when they were caught between the Red Sea and the advancing Egyptian army, they started cursing Moses (Exodus 14: 11). Their faith in God who led them had been evaporated. However, God was faithful and helped the Israelites to cross the Red Sea. After this, the Israelites started to believe in the Lord. After a few days in the wilderness, we see the Israelites grumbling against the Lord.

God Provides Manna

It wasn't too long before the people began to complain, "We wish the Lord had killed us in Egypt, where we had plenty to eat. You brought us out to the wilderness to die of hunger." The Israelites tended to concentrate on their current troubles rather than look to the past for encouragement. Instead of remembering the great things God had done to free them from slavery, they complained about their hunger. Do you think God went to all that trouble, just to watch them die for lack of food?

God told Moses he would "rain bread from heaven". He provided manna, a new food that appeared with the dew each morning. Manna was white like coriander seeds and tasted like wafers made with honey (Exodus 16: 31) The Israelites were to gather each day the amount of food they needed for that day. No more, no less. Each day God would give them that day's food. They were to trust him each day for the very food they ate. On the sixth day, He would provide two day's worth of food, so no one would work to gather it on the Sabbath. If one of them was mistrustful, and tried to stock up, the food would melt or rot away. The Israelites baked, boiled and prepared the manna several ways. It tasted sweet, like wafers made with honey.

Moses didn't provide the manna; God did. The Lord provided meat at night and manna in the morning for the next forty years, or until they crossed over the Jordan. All of Exodus Ch. 16 gives instructions on gathering and eating manna. Every day for forty years, God provide their food! It should have produced a song of praise every morning and evening. "I saw God do it!" It was His supernatural gift. They did not work for it. They did not earn it. It was without money and without price. It was a free gift from God. All they could do was appropriate it. Every morning each individual bent over, picked it up and ate it!

Later on, we see a community complaining that there was no other food except manna. They suffered the punishment for the rebellion. God dislikes grumbling. Are we thankful for God's blessings? We need to be really grateful to our Mighty Lord.

Bible Learning and Activities

True or False?

- _____ The whole Jewish community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin.
- _____ In the desert, the whole community praised both Moses and Aaron for leading them out of Egypt.
- _____ God tested the Israelites to see if they would obey his instructions.
- _____ The Israelites are allowed to gather twice as much bread on the fifth day.
- _____ Maggots ate any leftover that the Israelites tried to save for the morning.

Short Answer Questions:

1. How did God respond when the Israelites complained about everything?
2. What were the Israelites afraid of?
3. How should we feel when God provides us with what we need?

Bible Application:

During natural disasters, such as a tsunami, tornado, earthquakes...etc, people who are most at need are given aid by “strangers” (people who did not know them). Throughout history, we see that the marginalized (people who are ignored in society) were given special attention. God is on the side of the victims.

Life Response:

When people are suffering, we have a responsibility to help them. As children, we can collect money by selling candy, cookies, and other small items. In God’s sight, such small actions are very valuable.

1. The Israelites complained to Moses, but who were they really complaining about?
2. When we are scared, what can you remember to encourage us? (ways God has provided for us in the past, ways He has provided for all His people)
3. Can we depend on God to provide for us?

Memory Verse: Exodus 15:2

The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the wondrous ways by which you make our life blessed.
Amen.

PART II GOD'S WONDERFUL PEOPLE

Chapter 6 Christ-Centered Family

Lesson Theme: Family

Bible Reading: Luke 1:5-25; 57-66

Aim: To teach that family fulfills its divine purpose only when it is centered in God.

Values for Life:

1. Family is a great gift of God.
2. God's words nurture and enlighten our hearts.
3. Nothing is impossible with God.

Preparation:

Each of us is born in a family. The "family" typically consists of father, mother, and children. Sometimes "family" may also consist of grandparents, uncles, and aunts. These types of "extended families" are often found in our Indian culture. Children make the family happy and complete.

Let us see how God intervened in a particular family who did not have children. Both the husband and wife had become old and they had given up their hope of having children.

Motivation:

Do you remember from the Bible anybody who waited so long to have children? Also, do you know anybody among your relatives or in our community who waited a long time and then had the miracle of having a child or children born to them? Can you imagine how happy and joyful they are?

Bible Learning : Main Ideas

A righteous and blameless family – Zechariah and Elizabeth

When Herod was the king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was also a descendent of Aaron. Thus, both of them belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi. They were upright in the sight of God and observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. Their life was a testimony and a witness for others. They were honest and dedicated and accepted the realities of life as they came by.

Though Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous, they were childless

Though Zechariah and Elizabeth lived a God-centered family life, they were not blessed with a child. Though they were unhappy, they did not lose hope nor allow their

devotion to the Lord suffer. In Luke 1:13, the angel tells Zechariah not to be afraid and that God has heard their prayers. Moreover, the angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah when he was burning incense in the temple of the Lord. From this we understand that they led a very prayerful life even in the midst of pain, and also showed utmost devotion and commitment as far as the matter of worship was concerned.

A Home blessed with an answer to their prayer (Luke 6:13)

Zechariah was serving in the Temple. There the angel Gabriel appeared before him. The angel of the Lord asked him not to be afraid for the Lord had heard their prayer. They were happy to be blessed with a child in their old age. He had suffered a lot of ridicule, contempt, and disappointment. So he asked for a sign to be sure of this blessing. The angel asked him to name their son 'John'. But no one in their family had this name. The angel also told them about their son's mission and purpose in life. The angel told them that, he will live and work "strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah." (Luke 1:17; Malachi 4:5).

Lack of Faith is Dangerous

Zechariah didn't believe the angel's words. He was made unable to speak because of his skepticism. Lack of faith is a punishable sin. Blessings flow when we trust in the promises of God, "For there is nothing that God cannot do." (Luke 1:37)

Finding Joy in Life and Worship (Luke 1:13-17; 57-58; 64-66)

Joy and excitement filled the life of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The vision shared at the time of worship blessed their barren life. Their son would be a reason of joy to many. Their neighbors and relatives rejoiced. Worship should be an occasion to experience God's presence and hear His voice. Are we able to find joy in worshipping God? Can we share the joys of others wholeheartedly?

Dedicating the Child (Luke 1:59-66)

On the 8th day, the elders of the family came to circumcise the child. They decided to name the child after his father Zechariah. But Elizabeth asked them to name him John. Since Zechariah could not speak, he wrote and showed the same name. Immediately his mouth was opened and he began to speak, praising God. Unless God enables us, we cannot praise God (Psalms 51:15). Luke 1:67-69 is Zechariah's song of praise. He prayed to God to fulfill His divine plans through their son. Therefore, their son became a forerunner preparing the way for the Lord. Zechariah committed his son for God's purpose. People wondered, "What is this child going to be like?"

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

A. Fill in the Blanks

1. Herod was the king of _____ at/during the time of Zechariah and Elizabeth.
2. John will be filled with _____ even from birth.
3. John will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of _____.

4. The angel Gabriel appeared to _____ when he was burning incense in the altar.

B. Short Answer Questions

1. What was the angel's message to Zechariah or what was the mission of John revealed through the angel?
2. What was the character of Zechariah and Elizabeth?
3. Why Zechariah could not speak when he came out of the temple?

Bible Application

God always listens to our prayers, but He answers in His own time. Delay does not mean absence of listening or response, though it is often hard for us to accept it. Our families should be God-centered like the family raised by Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Life Response

Are our homes also blessed? The worship, prayer, faith, hope, and dependence of Zechariah and Elizabeth on God led to the blessing of this family. Similarly, the family of Mary and Joseph also was Christ-centered and they too were blessed (Luke 2:41-52). Let us fulfill God's will by living a life centered in Christ.

Memory Verse: Luke 1:6

Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

Prayer

O, God, we thank you for the gift of family – for our father and our mother and our family members. We pray that our family would be centered in you so that we all would be blessed. Amen.

Chapter 7

The Man Blessed for Obedience

Lesson Theme: Humanity, One in Unity

Bible Reading: Genesis 11:31—12:1-9

Aim: Abraham was obedient to God, so God made him a nation.

Values for Life:

1. God’s call includes obedience and obedience brings blessings.
2. God transforms people who accept His call.

Preparation:

United States is a country full of immigrants. Everyone migrated to this country with the possible exception of the Native Americans. People usually migrate to other places looking for jobs and better living conditions. You can ask your parents about their various experiences and why they wanted to come to America. When you move from one place to another there is a lot of preparation involved, both mentally and physically.

Motivation:

Only God’s promise to Abraham caused him to move from his country to another unknown place. How often do we obey God’s commandments and listen to his call?

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Terah -Abraham’s father

Terah lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Terah left Ur with his son Abram, his grandson Lot (son of Haran), and his daughter-in-law, Sarai, (Abram’s wife). Terah left Ur to go to Canaan. However, when they came to Haran, they settled there instead of going to Canaan. Terah lived 205 years. He died in Haran.

Call of Abram

The Lord called Abram and told him to leave his country, his people, and his household and to go to the land that the Lord would show him. God gave Abram the promise of many blessings. (Genesis 12:2-3) Abram obeyed God. He left Haran with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot and all the wealth he had accumulated in Haran. He arrived in Canaan. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. Canaanites lived there at the time. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” Abram built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. From Shechem he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar and worshipped the Lord. Then he set out and continued towards the Negev.

God's Promise to Abram

When God called Abram, he obeyed God wholeheartedly. However, he experienced many problems and troubles:

- a) Abram and Lot traveled together from Ur to Canaan. However, they had to separate. What happened to Abraham and Lot? *Read Genesis 13:1-13*
- b) Abraham went to rescue Lot. *Read Genesis 14:1-16*
- c) Ishmael was born. *Read Genesis 16:1-4*

God had promised to make Abram a great nation and Abram wished to have a son through his wife Sarai. Since Abram was going to be the father of many nations, God also changed his name from Abram to Abraham. We see God blessing him with a son, when he was 100 years old (*see Genesis 21:1-2*). This was the beginning of the formation of a great nation that God had promised and the fulfillment of one of God's promises.

Though obeying God's call may lead us to face problems and painful experiences and demand a great deal of patience, God in his right time will fulfill his promises that he makes to the people who are called, to fulfill His own great purpose.

Blessings God Promised (Genesis 12:2-4)

God's call demands obedience. Obedience brings blessings. In this passage, we read about 7 covenants God made with Abram:

- a. I will give you many descendants and they will become a great nation.
- b. I will bless you.
- c. I will make your name famous.
- d. You will be a blessing.
- e. I will bless those who bless you.
- f. I will curse those who curse you.
- g. Through you, I will bless all the nations.

Characteristics of God's Call

1. God calls different people in different ways---some through dreams, some through messengers and some through visions.
2. Through God's chosen people, He reveals His plans and wishes. These people are called to be God's messengers in this society.
3. When He calls, God demands complete obedience.
4. His call includes joy as well as sorrow.
5. People obedient to God's call enjoy His blessings and guidance. You may have to wait patiently. But God fulfills His covenant.

Abraham's Worship (Gen. 12:7-8)

During his journey, wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he built an altar to the Lord and called on His name. Committing oneself into God's hands is the right worship. The Lord made a covenant with him at Shechem. There he built an altar (12:7). At Bethel (12:8) and between Ai and Bethel (13:4), he built altars and worshipped God. Near the great tree of Mamre at Hebron (13:8) at Beersheba (21:33), he praised God. On one of the Moriah mountains he built an altar. There he sacrificed a ram instead of his son

(22:13). Even foreigners had a wonderful opinion about Abraham. Abimelech said about Abraham, “God is with you in everything you do.” (21:22)

Abraham is Made into a Great Nation

God made Abraham’s name great. He made him into a great nation. But he had to wait long years to be blessed with the promised offspring. Isaac was born to Abraham when he was 100 years old. This began the birth of a great nation. He was also called the Man of Faith (Gal. 3:9). He is the only man acclaimed as God’s Friend (2 Chron 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Jews took pride in calling him ‘Our Father Abraham’ (John 8:53). After Jesus, the blessed state of being at “Abraham’s side” was a credit for them (Luke 16:22-30). Paul proclaimed the truth that “Through you God will bless all mankind” (Gal. 3:8). Therefore, all who believe in Christ are credited as children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7) Do we deserve this credit?

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

1. Ask your parents about their experiences of leaving their parents and families when they came to America.
2. If God calls you to go through a path that you don’t like, will you obey God?
3. Abraham did not know the problems and difficulties he will face. Yet he obeyed God. Can we do that?

Match the following:

	A		B
1.	Abram		Shechem
2.	Ur		Canaan
3.	Terah		Chaldeans
4.	Moreh		205

True or False

1. Terah took his son Abram, and his wife, Sarai, his daughter-in-law, Sarai, and Lot (son of Haram), and settled in Haran.
2. Abram pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.
3. Abram set out from Shechem and continued to Negev.

Short Answer Questions:

1. What was the blessing Lord God gave to Abram when He called him out of Haran? (Genesis: 12:2-3)
2. Why did Abram and Lot separate?

Bible Application:

When we listen to hear God's voice. He will talk to us and direct our paths. In Isaiah 30:21 says "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is a way; walk in it..."

Life Response:

When we are obedient to God, he will bless us and direct our paths. We will never know what plans God has for us. When we obey God's call, we may have to go through painful experiences and a lot of waiting. God will fulfill his promise in His right time.

God calls us these days through missionaries, the word, our conscience, and even through nature. Even our sufferings and illnesses may be God's way of calling us. When we take the path of destruction God calls us in various ways. Without inquiring about what lies in the future, Abraham obeyed God wholeheartedly. Dedication is depending on God to walk the way He leads us. The simple truth is included in Abraham's divine call.

Memory Verse: Genesis 12:2

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Prayer

Lord, help us to obey and listen to your call and help us to be faithful to you.
Amen.

Chapter 8

Behold, the Lamb of God

Lesson Theme: God Revealing in History

Bible Reading: Matthew 3: 1-12

Aim: To show Jesus Christ through our life and deeds

Values for Life:

1. We should show Jesus to others through our life situation.
2. We should confess our sins and bear good fruit in keeping with repentance.

Preparation:

You have probably heard about India's greatest missionary, Sadhu Sundar Singh. Once, Sadhu went to England for a missionary meeting. In the evening, he decided to visit one of the houses in the neighborhood. When he reached the house, he gently knocked at the door. A small girl heard the knocking, and opened the door. With surprise, she ran inside shouting to her mother "Mommy! Come and see, Jesus is standing outside!" When the small girl saw Sadhu she felt as though it was Jesus! How do we show Jesus Christ in our life?

Today we will study about a person named John the Baptist, whose main aim in life was to show Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, preparing the way for the Lord.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

John the Baptist Prepares Himself as the Forerunner

John the Baptist knew that God had given him a very specific task. To prepare himself for this task, John chose the most unusual place of preparation: a desert. It was in the desert that he disciplined his life to this Godly purpose. Moreover, the dress in which he appeared, the food that he ate, and the overall manner of his life was a perfect witness to his divine calling and purpose. John's clothes were made of camel's hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. His diet consisted of locusts and wild honey. What John the Baptist wanted to show in his life is a perfect example of the divine calling that God had given to him, and he made a dedicated effort to prepare himself for the same.

John the Baptist becomes the forerunner of the Lord

John the Baptist is known as the "...voice crying in the wilderness..." (John 1:23), a voice that announces that the kingdom of God is at hand and hence everyone should repent. Specific instructions were given to the tax collectors and soldiers regarding how they should live and act (*Luke 3:10-14*). He rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees and calls them a brood of vipers (*Luke: 3:7*). When people asked John whether he was Christ (*Luke 3:15-27*), he replied negatively and added that he will baptize with water, but the one who comes after him is mightier than him and that he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This was in reference to Jesus Christ. John never tried to take the place of Jesus Christ nor did he try to fool people by claiming himself as Christ.

In fact his whole philosophy of life was to show Jesus Christ to the world. This is revealed in his statement: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (*John 3:30*).

The Greatest Man (Matthew 11:11; John 5:35)

Jesus witnessed about John the Baptist that he spoke on behalf of the truth; he was like a lamp, burning and shining (*John 5:35*). Therefore, John is also known as the ‘Rising Star of the New Testament’. He is the only person, praised by Jesus, “I assure you that John the Baptist is greater than any man who has ever lived. But he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John.” (*Matthew 11:11*). The most blessed man is he who is great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us humbly dedicate ourselves before God to become great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

True or False

1. John the Baptist came and preached in the desert of Judea, saying “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”._____
2. Prophet Jeremiah spoke this: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him’” _____
3. John the Baptist said: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” _____

Fill in the blanks

1. People went out to John from _____ and all _____ and the whole region of the _____.
2. When John saw many of the _____ and _____ coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them “You brood of vipers!”
3. John said the one coming after me will baptize you with _____ and _____.

Short Answer Questions:

1. How did John the Baptist prepare himself as the forerunner of Jesus?
2. How did John prepare the way for the Lord?

Bible Application:

You have to be a good Christian to invite other people to Christ through your words, deeds, and life. In what ways can we practice these?

Life Response

How can you reveal Jesus to your classmates in the school? Why it is difficult to show Jesus in our life situations?

Memory Verse: Matthew 3: 2

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Prayer

“O, God, wherever you place us, help us to reveal Jesus Christ to others, through our lives. Give us your grace and strength to do it. Amen

Chapter 9

Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening

Lesson Theme: Response to God's Revelation.

Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 3:1-21

Aim: How to respond to God's call.

Values for Life:

1. The secret of success in life is prayer.
2. Even today, God is calling many to carry out His plans.

Preparation:

What would you like to become when you grow up? Your answer may be one among many: a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer, a scientist, or a missionary. Why did you select this particular profession?

The late Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius, Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church is known for his zeal and endeavor in fulfilling the missionary calling of the church. The bishop once described why he became a full-time minister. While he was searching for a productive job, he heard God calling him to ministry. He ignored the call for a time and tried to get another job. Eventually, he answered God's call. Of his call he said, "When God called me, I had no other response but to say yes to what God intended to do in my life." He became well-known among Christians throughout India and in other lands. In today's lesson, we will learn about Samuel, a boy who was a gift to his parents from God.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Hannah's prayer to God for a child

Samuel's parents were Hannah and Elkanah. Samuel was born to them after many years. Hannah had been barren and even her husband Elkanah could not comfort her. Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, would often provoke her in order to irritate her. She went to the temple of the Lord and prayed for a child while weeping bitterly. She makes the vow that if the Lord would give her a son, then she would offer the son to the Lord. (1 Sam 1:11-12). The temple priest, Eli was observing Hannah while she was praying. She was only moving her lips without her voice being heard. Eli misunderstood her to be drunk and rebuked her. Hannah told that she was not drunk and that she was only showing her pain before the Lord. When Eli understood her despair and anguish, he blessed her and said "Go in peace, may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him". Hannah went home and she was no longer sad (1 Samuel 1:12-17).

Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord

Soon after the Lord answered Hannah's prayer and she bore a son. She named him Samuel. After he was weaned, she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh to Eli and offered Samuel to the Lord (1 Sam 1:28). They worshipped the Lord. Hannah prayed and exulted before the Lord (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

God Calls Samuel

Samuel grew up with Eli in the house of the Lord. Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men. However, Eli was growing old, weak, and his eye-sight was also becoming poor. One night Samuel heard a voice of someone calling him. He ran to Eli thinking that he had called. But Eli sent him back to sleep saying that he did not call. This happened again. When it happened the third time, Eli realized that it was God who was calling Samuel. Eli told Samuel that if He calls him again, he should say "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening". When God called Samuel again, he replied the way that Eli had told him to do. This was the beginning of Samuel's ministry in becoming one of the greatest prophets and judges of Israel.

Victory through Prayer

Hannah was blessed with Samuel through her prayers. Samuel also was a man of prayer. He found victory through prayer (7:5-10) When people asked for a king, he prayed to God (8:6). It was his habit to intercede in prayer (12: 19-23). He addressed the people as a good leader (12:1). The psalmist has included Samuel among those who called the Lord (Psalms 99:6). Prayer is the secret of success in life.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**Answer the following:**

1. How many times God called Samuel?
2. Who were Samuel's parents?
3. Who used to provoke and irritate Hannah?
4. Who misunderstood Hannah as drunk and rebuked her?
5. Where was Lord's temple when Hannah brought Samuel?

Short Answers Questions:

1. Why Samuel is considered as a gift of God to Hannah and Elkanah?
2. How did God call Samuel and how did he respond?

Bible Application:

When we present our request to God through prayer, he will hear our prayer. Prayer is the secret of success in life.

Life Response

If you are in Samuel's place and God calls you, what will be your response? When God called Moses, he tried to avoid the call, pointing out his shortcomings (Exodus 4:10). But God gave Aaron as a partner and used Moses to carry out His plan.

Paul also showed obedience to his divine vision. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he went even to Europe to tell the Good News (Acts 10: 6-10). Even today, God is using many to carry out His plans. We should have a positive attitude when we respond to God's call.

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 3:10

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"
Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening".

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for listening and answering our prayers. Lord, help us to recognize and obey your call. Amen.

Chapter 10

The Council at Jerusalem

Lesson Theme: Modern Human Ventures

Bible Reading: Acts 15:1-35

Aim: God honors faith of an individual more than the rituals.

Values for Life:

1. We are saved not through rituals and rites, but through our faith in Christ because of God's grace.
2. Seek and obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit to solve problems through prayerful compromises and peaceful talks.

Preparation:

You have probably heard about many social, religious, and cultural groups trying to satisfy the physical and spiritual needs of particular groups or individuals. In most of these groups, admission is open to all without the observance of any rituals. But then there are groups who admit people only if they do certain rituals. For example, some groups do not provide membership if they wear gold ornaments or if they have certain types clothing, hairstyles, etc. In today's lesson, we will study how such a problem arose in early Christian church and how James, Paul, and Barnabas solved it.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

The Dispute at Antioch

Many of the early believers who became Christians were Jews. These Christians had undergone circumcision according to Moses' law when they were Jew. The practice of circumcision at that time was common only among the Jews. Now, when the Gentiles became Christians, some Jews who had become Christians demanded that the Gentiles also should be circumcised. This argument occurred in Antioch when some men came down from Judea and were teaching the believers there. It became a serious issue between these men and Paul and Barnabas and other believers in Antioch. Since the issue could not be settled amongst themselves in Antioch, Paul, Barnabas, and some other believers were appointed to go to Jerusalem and discuss the matter with the apostles and the elders.

People used by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:13-20)

The Council at Jerusalem was presided over by (moderator) James, the brother of Jesus. He was accepted as the Leader of the Church at Jerusalem for his unique personality. He was known as 'Righteous James'. He agreed with Simon Peter. Quoting the words from the Old Testament prophets (Amos 9:11-12), he

continued with his speech, “And so all the rest of mankind will come to me, all the Gentiles whom I called to be my own—who make this known long ago” that have been known for ages. God’s mission includes the Gentiles also. Therefore we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. We should not force them to accept the laws. But they have to keep themselves pure. They have to abstain from 4 things: food polluted by offering to idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. James’ advice to write to the churches about these things was acceptable to all. They need to keep certain conditions in food habits of both the Jews and the Gentiles. But they need not take circumcision. This suggestion demanded adjustments from both sides. “For the Law of Moses has been read for a very long time in the synagogues on every Sabbath”, was the statement that brought joy to the Pharisees as well. The leadership was acceptable to all. James was a great man of prayer. It is said that the skin on his knees had hardened like that of a camel because of kneeling down and praying.

The Council then sent Judas (Barnabas) and Silas along with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They brought with them the Council’s report and read out to the Gentile believers. It marked a turning point in the history of the Church.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Who said to whom?

1. “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”
2. “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”
3. “No! we believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus we are saved, just as they are”
4. “It is my judgment therefore that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God”

Answer the following:

1. Who went to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about the dispute in Antioch?
2. Who started the argument in Antioch?
3. Which are the places Paul and his friends traveled through to go to Jerusalem?
4. What are the four things James wanted the Gentiles to abstain from?
5. Who were sent with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch?
6. To whom did the apostles and elders sent their greetings with Paul and Barnabas?

Short Answer Questions:

1. What was the problem at Antioch among the Gentiles and the Jews?
2. How did the apostles and the elders solve the problem at Jerusalem?

Bible Application:

The early leaders of the church should be an example for us. We should rectify our problems as fast as possible. Gather together in prayer, and speak with love. Address each other with respect and patience. Accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit and exalt the name of Jesus.

Life Response

What do we do when differences of opinion arise within our own church? The early leaders of the Church should be examples for us. We should rectify our problems as fast as possible. Gather together in prayer; speak with love. Address each other with respect and patience. Take the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we will be able to exalt the name of Christ Jesus by maintaining our harmony and fellowship. “He must become greater; I must become less”, should be our attitude. Our salvation is not because of our rituals and rites. It is because of God’s grace alone. “For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith.”

Memory Verse: Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith –and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be humble, by remembering that we can never stand before you by the merit of our works, but only by your grace. Amen.

PART III GOD'S PURPOSE FOR GOD'S WORLD

Chapter 11 Bringing the Dead to Life

Lesson Theme: Nature of God

Bible Reading: Luke 7: 11-17

Aim: To understand that God gives us new life.

Values for Life:

1. Jesus is compassionate and merciful to those in difficulties
2. Jesus redeems us from death and leads us to eternal life.

Preparation:

Whenever a loved one dies, there's grief to those left behind. But there are some deaths that spur greater grief than others. We use a special word to describe those deaths. We call them "untimely." When people die of old age, we accept these as an inevitable part of human life. Also, there are deaths of children, sons, daughters, youth, and young mothers or fathers. Those deaths are untimely. We struggle to bear the grief when such losses occur. When they happen, we feel something has gone terribly wrong. We think that they shouldn't have happened; the universe is out of control: Where is God in such an hour? Was He on the job at all?

In a little town called Nain, just six miles from Nazareth, and a full day's journey from Capernaum, Luke alone records the aftermath of one untimely death.

Show students several current newspaper clippings describing examples of real-life tragedies. As the children pass these around, ask:

- *Does God allow these to happen? If so, why?*
- *Does God play favorites?*
- *What does the word "compassion" mean to you?*

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

The Compassion of Jesus

As Jesus was entering the town of Nain, he found a crowd following the dead body of a person, who was the only son of a widow (Luke 7:11). Seeing the grieving woman, Jesus was moved with compassion. The following list is several passages in the gospel where we find that Jesus was moved with compassion:

Example of Christ's Compassion	Bible Reference
Seeing the crowd hungry	<i>John 6: 1-11</i>
Healing the sick	<i>Mark 6: 53-56</i>
Healing the Roman officer's servant	<i>Luke 7: 1-10</i>

Jesus always understood what a person went through. Whether it was physical or emotional, Jesus was always there to help the suffering people because of his attitude of compassion. In today's passage we see Jesus going to the widow, filled with pity, telling her not to cry. It was Jesus' compassion for the suffering people that made him do miracles.

The Power of Jesus

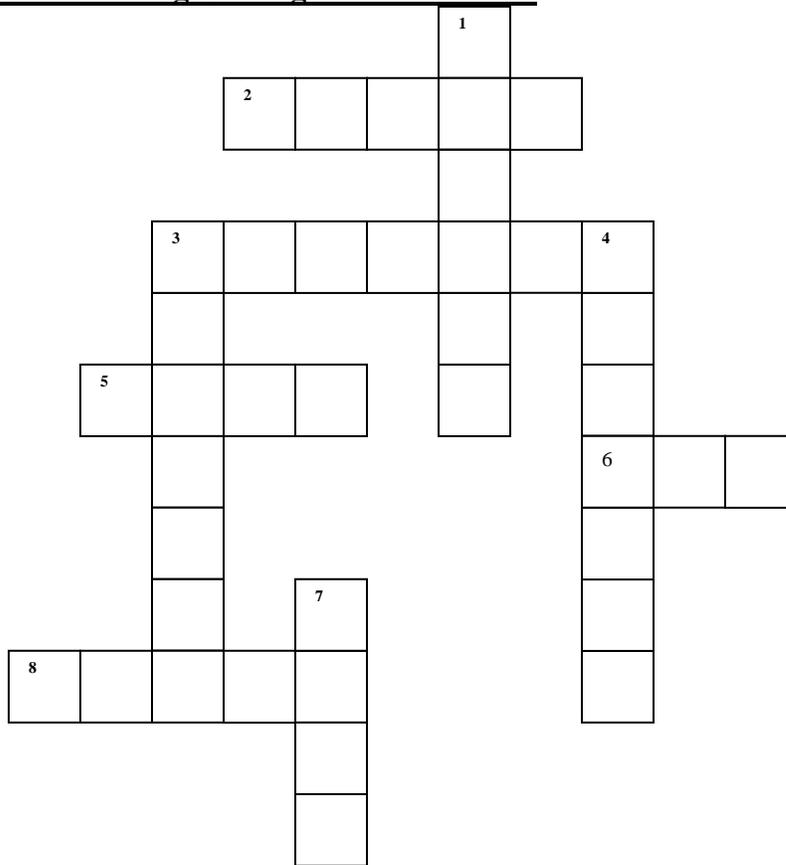
When Jesus told the widow, "Don't cry", they were not words that were meant to soothe her for the time being. They were words of assurance and power. Following this, Jesus touched the coffin and the men carrying it stopped. Jesus said, "Young man! Get up, I tell you!" Immediately the dead man rose up and started talking. The people were filled with fear and they praised God. The miracle that took place illustrates the power of Jesus. Jesus has the power to heal and remove sickness. Through this we experience healing and new life. Jesus came into the world so that we might have life in all its fullness. Jesus gives us strength in weakness, by healing us and therefore giving us new life.

Short-Answer Question

1. Why did Jesus heal all the sick people he saw? Why didn't Jesus raise all the dead people he encountered?
2. How do you explain Jesus raising the widow's son at Nain while passing many graveyards on his route?

Bible Lesson for Our Times

1. What is the cost of compassion? Give examples of people today who make sacrifices in a spirit of compassion.
2. Can you be a true disciple and be dispassionate toward people in need? Why or why not? Explore the question by selecting examples of people who respond to the needs of others in our world.
3. How can a sense of compassion help you to pray effectively?

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**Across:**

2. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out---the only son of this mother, and she was a _____” **Luke 7: 12**
3. “A great _____ has appeared among us, “they said. **Luke 7:16**
5. The name of the town Jesus was in during this time. **Luke 7:11**
6. Jesus said “Do not _____” to the mother when he saw her. **Luke 7:13**
8. The news of this miracle spread throughout _____. **Luke 7:17**

Down:

1. When the dead man began to talk, Jesus gave him back to his _____.
Luke 7:15
3. The people were all filled with awe and _____ God. **Luke 7:16**
4. Jesus _____ the coffin before telling the man to get up. **Luke 7: 14**
7. The dead man sat up and began to _____. **Luke 7:15**

Life Responses

What do we learn from all this? If you were to take aside Peter or James or John and ask them, "*Does Jesus really help people because he has compassion on them? Or is this all scripted?*" He would probably laugh; put his hand on your shoulder, and say. "*Oh, he really DOES have compassion -- it's no act. The only reason I'm here is because of his compassion for me. I've seen his heart broken time and time again for the people he ministers to. It's real love all right -- genuine compassion....But a strange question. Why did you ask that?*" We ask and wonder because compassion in the Creator of the Universe

is almost too good to be hoped for, too good to be true. But we find it deep within the heart of Jesus, and that compassion spills out toward you and your needs, too.

Our life is enriched because of the acts of compassion of many others. In turn, we have a responsibility to make sacrifices for others who are in need of help.

Memory Verse: John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the compassion I see displayed so spontaneously in Jesus. I'm so glad that you are overflowing with such compassion. Increase my faith in your love and compassion. And help me to be filled with your compassion also. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Chapter 12

The fellowship that transformed the demon possessed man

Lesson Theme: God in fellowship with human beings

Bible Reading: Luke 8: 26-39

Aim: To understand that Jesus offers fellowship to people in isolation

Values for Life:

1. God gives fellowship to those who are isolate from society.
2. Contact and fellowship with Jesus transforms everyone.

Preparation:

Ask the children if they have seen or heard about problems that demons can create. Demons are believed to be evil spirits that affect human behavior. Demon-possessed people behave in various strange ways---hurt themselves and hurt others through their words and actions.

Tell the children that today's scripture talks about the damage demons can do in human lives. Demons can destroy people physically and emotionally. Demons grab people's attention, by telling lies about themselves, and can make us really miserable. Share a demon you can resonate with. (give instances by the teacher and students)

Our scripture portion today talks about the dangers that a demon-possessed man cause to himself and others. In our day-to-day lives, we face bad situations when we become angry and hurt not only ourselves but those around us. However, the love of Jesus and fellowship with Him can bring in lasting change for the better.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

No situation is too difficult for Jesus

Jesus and his disciples were sailing across the Lake Galilee. They were going to the land of Gerasenes. As Jesus stepped ashore, he encountered a man who was demon-possessed. This was a man who stayed not at home, but at burial caves; he did not wear any clothes. The moment the demon-possessed man saw Jesus, he cried out and asked Jesus what he wanted to do with him. The man was actually asking Jesus why he was coming to see him. Though this man did not lead the "normal" life, Jesus is found going to the place where this man lived. There is no situation in life where Jesus cannot enter and do his ministry.

Jesus gives transformation

How did Jesus offer transformation to the demon-possessed man? The most beautiful action that Jesus did was asking the man his name and his identity. The demon in the man replied that his name was Legion. It was then that Jesus healed the man by driving away the demons from his body to the herds of pigs nearby. At that

moment the insane man became sane. It was the encounter with Jesus that transformed him for a new fellowship with God.

We have a God who is with us, who offers us fellowship, even when we have nobody to care for, or offer friendship. Let us experience that love that God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Activity: Demons can affect us physically and emotionally and make us hurt ourselves and others. They can create in us fear, anger, worry, etc...Ask the children to think about any such bad influences that hold them down. They do not have to share - just think about them. Then ask them to think about how much more energy they would have if they are able to shrug off such influences.

Optional Activity: Since we do not have a herd of swine in our classroom -- let alone a cliff to drive them over, we can try something else. Show them a big bowl of water and Alka Seltzer tablets. Tell the children to: one by one, take one of the tablets, think about a demon you want to let go of, put the demon on the back of the alka-seltzer and drop it in the water. Watch what happens to the tablet! Then invite another child to do the same - keep going until each child has "drowned" a demon, taking a turn, you, also. This is the way evil spirits or bad influences disappear from us when the love us Jesus comes into our hearts and minds.

Short-Answer Questions:

- 1) What is the condition of "the man" in this story?
- 2) Why didn't the demons want to get out of the man?
- 3) Why did Jesus tell the man to go home and not follow Jesus?

Bible Lesson for Our Time:

1. Do we at any time isolate our friends or family members without giving them our friendship and fellowship?
2. Since Jesus does not expect us to inflict insults or injuries on others and drive them over a cliff, what could Jesus be telling us to do with the bad influences that torment us?

Life Response:

The healing stories from Jesus' ministry are stories that inspire us and give us a sense of purpose about our mission today. Jesus gave power to the early disciples so that they could heal and help others. They were not called to be just preachers and storytellers. They were sent to bring real help and wholeness in the world around them. That is our calling too. We are sent to bring health and wholeness back into the world in the name of Christ. We will be greeted and welcomed in many places. We will be rejected in our efforts of ministry at other times. In such cases, we take stock of what has happened, shake the dust off our feet, and move on.

Memory Verse: 1 John 1: 7

“But if we live in the light as He is in the light then we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son purifies us from every sin.”

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we thank you that you want us to be free from sickness, dangers, evil spirits, and difficulties. We know that you want to give us strength, courage, and a good life. Help us and lead us to be a God-fearing child. Amen.

Chapter 13

Peter Denies Jesus

Lesson Theme: Broken relationship
Bible Reading: Luke 22:31-34 & 54-62

Aim: We should stand for truth when faced with fear for life, problems and difficulties and witness Jesus.

Values for Life:

1. Wrong companionship leads us off course.
2. True repentance is the way to mend broken relationships.

Preparation:

We are often fearful and selfish and do not think or care about denying our trusted friends, relatives, or even parents when faced with problems and difficulties. Faith in God requires that we should be trusting God and be sincere and truthful.

- (1) What is meant by “denial”?
- (2) Why do friends deny friends? Have you ever been denied by anyone?
- (3) When we are trusted by someone, why should we not deny them?
- (4) Can God deny us and why not?

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Jesus knows Peter’s weakness, but still loves him

As human beings, we have several weaknesses. Jesus knows our weakness. Jesus is able to take care of us and strengthen us if we pray for strength. This is what we learn from Luke 22:31-34. Satan asked God to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus did not allow Satan to do it. Why? Because Jesus knew that Peter was weak and will lose his faith. Instead, Jesus gave Peter a task to strengthen his fellow disciples.

Like many of us, Peter did not want to admit his weakness. He boasted and said “Lord I am ready to go with you to prison and to death”. When we read this, it reminds us that Peter was like us. Instead of admitting our weakness and humble ourselves, we do the same thing that Peter did. When Peter boasted about his readiness to die for Jesus, Jesus knew that Peter is a coward and that he will deny him three times before the cock crows. Jesus told Peter in advance as to what is going to happen, but Peter did not pay any attention. When God speaks to us through His words, we also fail to listen and go the wrong way.

Peter denies Jesus

Read Luke 22:54-62 to see what Peter did when Jesus was taken to the high priest. When the people took Jesus to the high priest, Peter followed him at a distance. When he entered the courtyard and sat with them at the fireplace, a servant girl saw him and said “This man was with him”. He denied. A little later, a man said “You also are one of them”. Peter denied the second time. An hour later another man said “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Peter thus denied Jesus the third time. Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. Then Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Peter remembered what the Lord had spoken to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter loved Jesus and followed him wherever he went, but he didn’t want to get into any trouble. We also love Jesus, but we fail him in front of our friends and peers in schools, playgrounds, etc. if we are asked to witness our faith. We often do not want to even admit that we are Christians or give God the glory that He deserves. When Peter realized his mistakes, he wept bitterly and repented his weakness.

History says that Peter also was crucified head down because of his wish that he should kiss his Lord’s feet in death. His faith made him strong to face death.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Use the movie “Quo Vadis”.

Fill in the Blanks

- (1) Jesus prayed for Simon, so that his _____ may not fail
- (2) Peter denied Jesus in the firelight before a _____.
- (3) When Jesus turned and looked at _____ he remembered the _____ the Lord had spoken to him
- (4) “Before the rooster crows today, _____ will _____ me three times.”

Mark True or False

1. Satan asked Jesus permission to sift his disciples as wheat
2. Peter followed Jesus when they took him to the house of the high priest
3. When Peter remembered that he denied Jesus, he went outside and wept bitterly

Short Answer Questions

- 1) Why did Peter deny Jesus?
- 2) To whom did Peter deny Jesus?

Bible Lesson for Our Times:

- (1) God will strengthen us in our weakness if we pray for strength. What are some situations where we fail in our life at home and school? How do we get strength in such situations?
- (2) We should not deny our faith in face of problems and difficulties. Discuss such problems and learn how to stand for our faith in the world today.

Life Response:

God will never disown us even if we deny him because His love for us never changes, but we have to admit our mistakes and repent and pray for strength to be faithful Christians.

Memory Verse: Mathew 10:32

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven”

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for the life and witnessing of Peter in spreading the gospel. Amen

Chapter 14 Faith Saves a Life

Lesson Theme Reconciled to the Community
Bible Reading: Luke 8:40-48

Aim: Steadfast faith and trust in the power of God can bring us miracles

Values for Life:

1. God knows us individually even among the crowd.
2. Jesus who knows all our needs is always with us.

Preparation:

Life cannot always be peaceful and happy. There may be situations when we have to face dangers, sickness, and problems. However, our trust and prayers could eventually bring us relief.

- (1) Have you been sick? What did you do to get well?
- (2) Do you pray for healing when you are sick?
- (3) Do your parents pray for you when you are sick and why?

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Steadfast faith in Jesus brings healing

When we read Luke 8:41-42, we see that the ruler of a synagogue named Jairus came to Jesus begging him to come to his house to heal his twelve-year old daughter who was sick. On his way, a big crowd followed and he could not move forward. There was a woman in the crowd who was sick, bleeding for twelve years. She had lost everything trying to find a cure for her sickness. No one could heal her. She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his garment. Imagine what happened? She was instantly healed.

Jesus' reaction to the woman's faith

Though the woman had very secretly touched Jesus' garment, Jesus knew what had happened. He asked "Who touched me?" Everyone denied touching him. Peter said that it is difficult to know in such a big crowd. But Jesus said "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Then the woman came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:

Discuss any miracle that has occurred in your life.

Fill in the Blanks

1. A man named Jairus, a ruler of the _____ came and fell at Jesus' feet.
2. Jairus daughter was _____ years old
3. _____ said to Jesus, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."
4. Jesus said to the woman, "Daughter, your _____ healed you. Go in _____."
5. Jesus said, "Someone touched me; because that _____ has gone out from me."

Short Answer Questions

- 1 What type of faith do you see in the woman? How did she show this faith?
- 2 How do you explain Jesus' reaction to the woman?

Bible Lesson for Our Times:

Are miracles, like the healing of the woman, possible in today's world? In the discussion examine the assumption related to modern medicine. It has limited healing to the body, physical aspects only. Jesus is always concerned with the healing of the whole person. In Jesus, healing is not limited to the body but to the whole being.

Life Response:

When we sincerely hope and pray for God's help in healing and other needs, He will strengthen us and sustain us through our problems. When we experience wholeness through our faith, we have to witness our faith in Jesus to the world.

Memory Verse: Luke 8:48

Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for healing in our lives. Help us to stand firm in faith and proclaim your wonderful deeds to other people. Amen.

Chapter 15

The Body of Christ - The Living Christian Community

Lesson Theme: Eternal Purpose in life
Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-31

Aim: To promote understanding that church represents the body of Christ and each member is an important part of the body of Christ.

Values for Life:

1. Spiritual gifts are the divine grace for various services.
2. Church is the body of Christ and believers the parts of that body.

Preparation:

The family is made up of two or more persons, normally husband and wife and their children. They love, care, and support each other. They depend upon each other for love, affection, care, satisfaction of various needs (e.g. food, dress, education, etc.), physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Similarly, the church is made up of a number of families/persons. They come together as one body for a common purpose: to praise and worship God, our Creator.

1. Think of our human “person” as one body, but having different parts or organs.
2. Think of the church as one body, the body of Christ, having many persons or families.
3. Think of the different parts or organs of the human body enjoying different gifts of functions.
4. Think of the different parts or organs of the human person working in “unity” as one
5. body
6. Now think of the church, the body of Christ, working together as one body in unity.
7. Think of the church, the body of Christ, being blessed with different gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Unity in Diversity

In the scripture passage, Paul uses the picture of a human body to describe church as the body of Christ. Though the body is made up of different parts or organs, they exist in “unity” as one body, each part or organ doing different functions according to its ability, skill or expertise. Each and every part or organ is important in relation to the functioning of the total body. No part or organ can be considered weak or unimportant in relation to another part. The proper functioning of each and every part or organ depends upon the proper functioning of all other parts or organs.

Similarly, each person or family is an important part of the church. In the same way a person has different parts or organs, the church has different persons and families in the body of Christ. So, when people or families come together to worship God, we say we have unity in Jesus. They exist and depend upon each other and work together in edifying the body of Christ. It is this unity in relation to each other which makes us a living or active Christian community.

Each person is blessed with a particular gift

According to Paul, the Holy Spirit gives each person a particular gift of the Spirit. These gifts may be different and sometimes common. It is God who decides which gift should be given to a particular person. In I Cor. 12, we find that God has given the gift of faith, healing, interpretation of the word of God, speaking in tongues, service, and so on to each person according to God's calling or blessing on each of them. No person can say that he or she does not have any gift from God. It is when we realize and acknowledge that gift we become members of the living community. The church as a living community is deemed to enjoy unity in spirit through the different gifts that its members may be blessed with. The church is thus a place of unity, harmony, and cooperation.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:

The church as a body of Christ is illustrated in the work of Ashram. It is a place where mission activities are done by a group of dedicated Christians who live as a sharing community. One such Ashram is Satal, situated in North India, founded by Dr. Stanley Jones, a friend of the Mar Thoma Church from America. See his photograph on p. 56 in the book: The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision, CSS Publication 2001.

Discuss with the children the work of the Satal Ashram situated near Nainital in Uttar Pradesh, where the inmates lead a life of meditation, hard work and witnessing among the people living near the Ashram. (Ashrams are places where people live away from the hustle and bustle of cities to lead a simple Christian life of unity just the way Jesus wanted all of us to live). In the Ashram there are no hierarchies. Everyone is equal and everyone has got a specific responsibility. Together they become the members of a dynamic living community.

Fill in the Blanks

- 1.. Now the body is not made up of _____, but of _____.
- 2.. The body is a _____, though it is made up of many _____.; and though all its parts are many, they form _____.
- 3.. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many _____.
- 4.. Now you are the body of _____, and each one of you is a part of it.

Short Answer Questions

1. What do we mean when we say that the Church is the body of Christ?
2. What is meant by unity in diversity?

3. How diverse gifts have unity in the Spirit?
4. How do we make the Church a living community?

Bible Lesson for Our Times

1. Describe the prayer fellowship in the church? How can we improve it?
2. How do you make use of different gifts from the Holy Spirit for the growth of our church?

Life Response:

Ask each student the gift he believes God has bestowed upon him and then discuss with him/her a plan as to how to use that gift for the glory of God. Then prepare an order of worship incorporating the different gifts of each student for a prayer in the class.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:12

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for you have given all of us different gifts. Help us to use these gifts for the glory of your name and blessings upon our church. Amen.

PART IV
GOD WITH GOD’S WORLD AND GOD’S PEOPLE

Chapter 16
Thresher Becomes Rescuer

Lesson Theme: With God everything is possible

Bible Reading: Judges 6, 7, & 8

Aim: To understand that God reveals and fulfills His plans through people who are humble and obedient to God.

Values for life:

1. God uses people who are humble and gentle to fulfill His mission.
2. God prefers hard working people more than lazy ones.

Preparation.

In the Old Testament, we have heard about many great people and their achievements. We can see that God uses all sorts of people like you and me to do His work.

Biblical Heroes	How they Served God’s Work
Joseph	Save the family
Moses	Lead the Israelites out of Egypt
Esther	Save people from massacre
Mary	Mother of Jesus
Peter	Apostle and founder of the Church
Paul	Great disciple
Gideon	Delivers Israelites from the Midianites

As we see above, God has used many ordinary people to accomplish great things.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Gathering the People and Preparing Them

Gideon was the son of Joash and was a farmer boy. He was threshing wheat at the bottom of the wine press to hide the grain from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him to go and fight against the Midianites. The angel said, “Mighty Hero, the Lord is with you”. Gideon, along with ten thousand men, got ready to fight against the Midianites. God then set one condition: that Gideon will select the people who are going to fight. The men were taken to a stream and told to drink water from it. Those who drank the water with their tongue as a dog taps and those who knelt down to drink were separated in to two groups. Only 300 men drank the water from their hands and they were selected to go with Gideon to fight and others were sent home.

Extraordinary War

Gideon defeated the Midianites in an unusual way. He gained courage by first spying on the enemy camp (7:13). He divided the 300 men into three companies. He then placed the trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. He told them to do just like he did. At midnight, Gideon and the 100 men reached the edge of the camp. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The other two companies also did the same. They shouted “Sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”. In the Midianite camp there was a mad rush. Thinking that Israelites were in their camp, they turned on each other and killed many. They all ran away. God does not save His people with spears and swords. The Lord goes to war and redeems his people miraculously. “Your people did not conquer the land with their swords; they did not win it by their own power miraculously. “It was not buy their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was Your right hand , Your arm and the light of Your face, for You loved them.” (Psalms 44:3).

Let God Use Us

God used William Carey, a cobbler, wonderfully in India. Gideon was an ordinary farmer. But when God used him, he became a savior for the whole community. The Israelites wished to make Gideon their ruler. But he gently refused it (8:22). He denied making himself or his son a ruler when the Lord was there to rule over them. Humility and gentleness mark out great people. God uses such people for His mission. Gideon the brave and shrewd warrior governed Israel for 40 years. Gideon is counted among the great men of faith. (Hebrews 11:32). Divine trust, obedience, humility, and self-sacrifice--let it all shine in our lives too.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

1. Why do you think God used Gideon to defeat Midianites?
2. Give examples of great men in the Bible whom were used by God at various times to accomplish His mission.
3. What is unique about Gideon’s war?
4. Identify a few people in our times who have attempted great things for God

Tell students about a selection that has to be made for a group event consisting of only 5 members as a team. There are ten students total that wish to make the team. Make 10 cards with odd and even numbers and tell each member to pick a card. Those with odd numbers will make up the team this time and others will not. God has a purpose to select few out of the ten thousand to fight against the Midianites.

Life Response:

Most of us want to know God’s plan for our lives but we are not always sure how to find it. God wants us to be faithful and obedient in order for Him to give us more responsibility. God uses us in spite of our limitations and failures.

Bible Application:

Gideon, though just a farmer, was used by God to become the rescuer of the people of God. Gideon was a simple and humble man. God used him to get His purpose fulfilled. Wherever true humility resides, there we see the results of greatness.

Memory Verse: Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Prayer:

Lord make us humble and obedient in your presence. Give us the strength to face all conditions through your power. Mold us like the clay in the hands of the potter and make us good instruments for the use of your kingdom. Amen.

Chapter 17

Help To a Poor Widow

Lesson Theme: History of Salvation

Bible reading: 2 Kings 4:1-7

Aim: To understand that it is the duty of a believer to encourage, strengthen, and help those in despair.

Values for life:

1. God's children should become God's instruments.
2. When we live a life filled with Christ's love, we too will be able to do good for others.

Preparation:

In December 2004, we heard about a big natural disaster that hit many parts of India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Thousands of people were killed and many lost their houses and all belongings. It was the great tsunami disaster. Millions of dollars were poured into the hands of relief organizations such as the Salvation Army and many religious groups. The U.S. government was a main contributor with money, man power and medicine. Our Church also participated in the mission and collected a large sum of money.

Can you think why people help others in danger and trouble the main motivation behind all these works is compassion? Do you remember any projects you involved as a youth group to help others? Today in our lesson, we will learn about a prophet who helped a widow when she had a financial crisis,

Bible learning: Main Ideas

One day the widow of a member of the group of prophets came to Elisha the prophet and cried out, "My husband who served you is dead and now a creditor has come threatening to take away my two sons as slaves." In those days, poor people and debtors were allowed to pay their debts by selling themselves or their children as slaves. If she would not give money, then she had no other option than to give away her children. To Elisha's question she answered that she had only a small jar of olive oil at home. Elisha wanted to help her and told her to collect empty jars from her neighbors and get into the room with her sons alone and pour the oil into the jars. She poured the oil into all the jars she has collected. She could continue to pour oil until she had no more jars left to fill. With just one jar of oil, she could fill several jars just because God had blessed her. She could then sell the oil and pay back her debt. Here we see Prophet Elisha and her neighbors helped her to solve her financial crisis and there by save her children. The widow and her children survived with the oil that was left over.

Elisha the prophet went about doing many miracles and helping many and doing good. We can also help others in need with our resources God has given us. This will

look like miracles in the eyes of others but it is God who works through us when we surrender completely to Him. It is a high calling of God to move among people and bring courage and happiness into disheartened and bewildered soul.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:

Short Answer Questions:

1. Recall two incidents when you helped somebody in need and they needed your help very badly.
2. Why did Prophet Elisha ask the widow to collect jars from her neighbors?

Bible Application.

In Ephesians 3:20 it says that our God is able to provide us abundantly more than we ask. The only condition is that we shall have a strong faith. The number of jars the widow gathered was an indication of her faith. God's provision was as large as their faith and willingness to obey. We shall be cautious of God's blessing be discontinued due to our lack of faith and obedience. Trust God completely. Help the poor and the less fortunate people and learn to share our possessions with others if it helps to reduce their miseries and agony.

Life Response:

Jesus has said "...Whatever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me." There are millions of people around us who are less fortunate than us. It is our moral responsibility to extend a helping hand to the suffering. Mar Thoma Church has in India lot of destitute homes, orphanages, hospitals with the purpose of helping those in needy.

Memory Verse: Mathew 25:40

The king will reply, I tell you the truth , whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine , you did for me'

Prayer

Lord let us be compassionate with those that are in need. Enable us to trust you completely and be obedient so that you can work through us. Amen

Chapter 18

Author of Life

Lesson Theme: Fullness of life in Jesus Christ

Bible reading: John 3: 1-8

Aim: To create an awareness that a relationship with Christ transforms life.

Values for Life:

1. No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.
2. The word of God purifies us and the Holy Spirit strengthens us.

Preparation:

Christian Barnard is a world famous cardiac surgeon. He was the doctor who performed the first heart transplant surgery successfully. He gave hope and comfort to thousands of people with heart problems that cannot be solved through medicine or bypass surgery and had no hope of survival. The only way out for transplants was a new heart from a donor. Today, we learn how Jesus gives a new life and hope to millions with a different kind of heart surgery. St. Paul has said if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old is gone and we start a new life. Jesus said “I am the way, the truth and the Life”. Let us follow that Jesus and start a new life.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

A Man Eager to See and Hear Jesus

Pharisees were a group of religious leaders whom Jesus and John the Baptist often criticized as hypocrites. Most Pharisees were jealous of Jesus because he questioned their authority and challenged their views. Nicodemus though was a Pharisee was also a learned teacher and he came to Jesus to know for himself certain answers for his questions. Nicodemus was eager to hear about life and its meaning. He wanted to know how he could attain salvation. Jesus here in the lesson talks about two types of birth: the physical birth and the spiritual birth. Spiritual birth is the born again experience.

What is “Being Born Again?”

Nicodemus didn’t understand what Jesus means by “being born again”. Birth in the physical brought us into this world. We enter the Kingdom of God because of spiritual birth in the Holy Spirit. This birth from God is a birth from heaven. We call this transformation. To be “born again” is to be in a new state of life centered in Christ with a new ambition and a transformed way of living.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

1. What is being born again mean?
2. What is the need for being born again

Bible Application:

Jesus said that unless we have a spiritual rebirth we cannot inherit heaven. Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior the Holy Spirit will anoint us and we will be forced to lead a different life. Saul when transformed by Jesus became a totally new person and later became one of the greatest apostles. God is three persons in one the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God became man in Jesus so that he could die for our sins. Jesus rose from the dead to offer salvation to all people through spiritual rebirth. It is the Holy Spirit that God left with us in the earth after His ascension to heaven that gives one the rebirth or born again experience .It is now available free to all who trust and believe in Him.

Life Response:

Like Nicodemus we are also confronted with the same question: how can we go to heaven? The answer is simple. Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, believe in the Holy Trinity and get anointed by the Holy Spirit. We cannot claim to be followers of Christ just because our parents are Christians or because we go to church every Sunday and attend Sunday School. To become a true Christian, we have to know Christ personally and this we can achieve through daily prayer, bible reading, Sunday School classes etc.

Memory Verse: John 3:5

I am telling you the truth replied Jesus, “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and spirit.”

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you dying for us on the cross. Help us to accept you as our personal saviour. Anoint us with the power of the Holy Spirit and lead us in the way you want us. Amen.

Chapter 19

Jesus, the Leader of Our Salvation

Lesson Theme: Work of the Holy Spirit

Bible reading: Acts 3:1-12

Aim: To understand that it is Jesus who leads us to salvation.

Values for Life:

1. We can be saved only through Jesus Christ.
2. We should be faithful witnesses of Christ even in the midst of trials.

Preparation:

Ashley was a brilliant student. She studied hard in school and always made the honor roll. During the midterms, she fell ill with a fever on the day of her Math exam. In spite of her illness, she still took the exam. She was sure she had failed the test, but was surprised to hear that she passed! Seeing her surprise, her teacher told her that she had been given a “grace” mark. And so she had passed when technically she had failed. She thanked God for her success. What does grace mean to you? Grace is undeserved kindness showed upon us. We can be saved through grace even though we are sinners. This lesson is about an experience that took place in the lives of Peter and John in the earlier Church.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Peter and John healed a lame man at the temple gate in Jerusalem when they went for the 3 o’clock prayer service. The lame asked them for money but Peter said, “I do not have any silver or gold but I will give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ, get up and walk”. The lame man was healed immediately! Following the incident Peter started preaching in the temple about Jesus crucifixion, His resurrection and the prophecy about all these in the Old Testament. He told the people gathered there to repent and turn to God so that God will forgive their sins.

Now hearing this, the Saducees, priests, and the temple guards arrived. These priests had special influence and were close relatives of the high priest. The Saducees were members of a small but powerful Jewish religious sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They stood to gain financially by cooperating with the Romans who were the rulers of the country. Most of those who carried out Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion were from these groups of people. These people were very much disturbed by Peter’s teachings. As a result of this preaching, Peter and John were brought before the high priests Annas and Caiphas and also other family members of the high priest. Peter, when asked to give explanation of what he has done in Church and his teachings, was filled with the Holy Spirit without fearing the consequences and told that these were the people who actually killed Jesus. But God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. He also said that there is no other way but to repent and believe in Jesus Christ to attain

salvation “The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.” Acts 4:11. The cornerstone unites two walls at the corner of a building and holds the building together. Peter said that Jews rejected Christ but he has become the cornerstone of God’s church.

It’s Unjust to Obey Man more than God (Acts 4:13-20)

The Council wondered at the courage of the apostles. They realized that these ordinary unschooled men had been with Jesus. They had proof of the miraculous healing that the apostles had done. Now what were they to do? The leaders conferred together carefully on this matter. They warned Peter and John not to speak any longer. They knew it was a punishable act to go against the decision of the Council. Yet they fearlessly answered, “You yourselves judge which is right in God’s sight---to obey you or to obey God.” They also said that they could not help speaking about what they had seen and heard. From that day on God began to use these apostles more.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

1. What was the main emphasis about preaching of John and Peter?
2. Do we dare stand up as witnesses for Christ when situations are against us?
3. Who were the people who crucified Jesus?
4. Explain the transformation in the life of Peter before and after Crucifixion.

Bible Application:

Many people react negatively to the fact that there is no other name other than Jesus to call on for salvation. God Almighty has designated Jesus to be the savior of the world. This is a teaching not from a particular church or Sunday School but God himself has taught us during his ministry in the world. We can be open minded in many issues when we deal with other religions but not on how we are saved from sin and its bondage. No other religious leaders could die for our sins. No one came to the world as God’s only son. No other leader rose from the dead. Our focus shall be on Jesus whom God provided as the way to have an eternal relationship with himself. There is no other name or way other than Jesus. We have to decide whether we repent our sins and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ so that He will lead us to salvation. It is in Jesus Christ that one finds salvation. To preach boldly like Peter and John about Jesus is also our responsibility.

Memory Verse: Acts 4:12

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for giving Jesus Christ your son for us in whom we find our 1 salvation. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for us on the cross. Enable us to stand for you every day life. Amen.

Chapter 20

Abiding In His Word

Lesson Theme: Commitment to Jesus Christ

Bible Reading: Psalm 119: 97-120

Aim: To realize the importance of the Word of God.

Values for life:

1. The Word of God is the source of light to God's people.
2. The Word of God leads us to purity, truth, and freedom.

Preparation:

Do you read books? What sort of books do you like? (*Have students share they types of books they read at home/school*) Books give us knowledge and information. It nurtures our mental growth. We have to read to acquire knowledge. Books have a wealth of information and the more you read, the richer and more perfect you become. Reading the Bible is different than reading a comic, a story book, or a science textbook. This is the word of God written for us by God's designated people over years to teach, guide, mold, comfort, and to make us ultimately committed children of God. The Bible contains God's divine word that gives us hope and allows us to live life happily in the midst of different circumstances. Do you read Bible every day? What is your role in your daily family prayer at home? In today's lesson we will see how King David who wrote many of the psalms gives importance to the word of GOD.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Psalms 119 has 22 sections. This is the longest and biggest chapter in the entire Bible! Each section corresponds to a different letter in the Hebrew alphabet and each verse beginning with the letter of its sections. David says that word of God will always lasts for ever. The faith in the law of the Lord has helped David face sufferings and tribulations with joy and the reason for his very existence was because of his trust and obedience to the instructions in the word of God. David says everything has a limitation but the word of God has does not have no limit. Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away but the word of God will not pass away".

The word gives us hope, life and comfort in all situations. If we live and practice and set the parameters of our lives as per the word of God, we can have a victorious life like David. David also says that he loves the word of God because when he meditates on it he becomes wiser .The word of God is sweeter than honey and enables us to lead a pure life devoid of temptations and sins. Thus the word of the Lord to David has become a lamp to guide and also a light to the path.

If we listen and obey the word of God our life will be blessed. If we abide by God's words wherever we are placed the word of God becomes a lamb that will guide us in the paths of life and also light that will show the right way. We have to think how much importance we give to God's word in our lives.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

1. Do you read Bible every day both morning and evening?
2. What version of the Bible you find it easy to read and understand?
3. How is the word of God useful to us?
4. Explain a situation in life when the word of God has become "...a lamp unto your feet and a light for the right path..."
5. How many books are there in the Bible? How many in Old Testament and how many in New Testament? Can you try to memorize the books of the Bible?

Bible Application:

Love for God is love for the Word of God. He keeps intimacy with us through the Word. We should pay attention to the following facts:

1. Learn the Word. It is the work of mind. Pray to God to open our mind to read and meditate on his words carefully.
2. Accept the word of God. IT is the role of the heart. Accept and believe that it is the Word of God for us.
3. Obey the Word of God. It is the action of our will.
4. Spread the Word of God to others. To experience its sweetness it has to be shared.

Life Response:

We are living in a world full of corruption and sinful attractions that can divert our attention and scatter our thoughts. We have to examine for ourselves and determine how one can stay pure in a contaminating environment. We can not do this by our own planning. We need the counsel and strength more dynamic than the tempting evil influences around us. The uniqueness of the Bible is that God, who is the author, has not only set standards and guidelines for us to live every day through the Bible but also visits us every moment in our lives and strengthen us. All we have to do is to read the word of God and allow Him to direct us and respond to His directions.

Memory Verse: Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Prayer.

Lord Jesus, Thank you for giving thy word to guide us and lead us through our daily lives. We are surrounded by darkness and evil but thy word is the lamp post that shows us the way. Enable us meditate on your word and become wiser and stronger to live according to thy will every day. Amen.

Part V
GOD’S WORK AMONG GOD’S PEOPLE

Chapter 21
Care For The Disabled

Lesson Theme: God’s Work In History

Bible Reading: 2 Samuel 9: 1-13; 16:1-4; 19: 24-30

Aim:

To show that we need to take care of disabled people.

Values for Life:

1. It is our duty to help those in need.
2. God’s children should be kind and compassionate.

Preparation:

Johnny was standing on the side of the road, waiting to cross to the other side. Cars and buses were whizzing past him in both directions. Standing near the crosswalk, he was waiting for the right moment to cross the road, when suddenly someone tapped him on his shoulder. The stranger asked Johnny, “*Excuse me, can you help me cross to the other side of the road?*” Johnny looked up and saw that the man was blind. Johnny felt sorry for him, and realized that it was His duty to help the man. So he took the blind man’s hand, and slowly helped him cross to the other side of the road. The blind man continued on his journey, after thanking Johnny profusely.

You also might have encountered an experience such as this. Did you act just as Johnny did? Today we are going to learn about our duty to help disabled people around us, through a story in the Old Testament.

Main Ideas:

The Plight of Mephibosheth.

Who was the first King of Israel? Saul. Mephibosheth, was the crippled son of Jonathan, the only son of Saul. Saul and Jonathan were killed in the battle with the Philistines. Hearing this said news, his nurse picked up Mephibosheth (*who was 5 at the time*) and fled. In her hurry, she dropped him and Mephibosheth became crippled in both feet.

It is here that Ziba (*one of the householders in Saul’s family*) mentions Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth who was lame and living in obscurity. David sent for Mephibosheth and he was bought into David’s court. David told Mephibosheth not to be afraid and assured him that he had very good intentions for Mephibosheth. He gave to Mephibosheth all the land Saul had, and put Ziba in charge of the land. Ziba was then ordered to look after Mephibosheth’s property.

The Treachery of Ziba

Ziba was entrusted to manage the estates of Mephibosheth, but he only had evil intentions. So he masterminded a dubious plan. Ziba gave David a handsome present of provisions in order to gain his affection. When Ziba felt that David trusted him enough, he accused Mephibosheth of treason. David believed Ziba's accusations and gave orders to seize all of Mephibosheth's land. David had him convicted, and gave the land to Ziba.

Mephibosheth seeks David's help

In 2 Samuel 19: 24-30, we find David returning back to the kingdom, after his banishment. Mephibosheth met King David in dirty clothing to show empathy for David's suffering, and complained to David about Ziba's treachery. David realized his mistake and divided the land between Ziba and Mephibosheth. The property rights were vested with Mephibosheth and Ziba was asked to till the land by paying rent to Mephibosheth..

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**Short Answer Questions :**

1. How did David help Mephibosheth?
2. Why did Mephibosheth seek help?
3. How did David help Mephibosheth when he realized that Ziba had cheated Mephibosheth?
4. How can we apply today's Bible lesson in our daily life?

Fill in the blanks :

1. _____ was the father of Mephibosheth.
2. Jonathan was the son of _____.
3. David and _____ were good friends.
4. David wanted to show kindness because of _____'s special request.
5. David heard about Mephibosheth through _____.
6. Ziba was a family member of _____.
7. King David orders that Mephibosheth would eat with _____.
8. Ziba was a _____ man.
9. Mephibosheth revealed his sincerity when he said that

10. David divides the land between _____ and _____.

Bible Application:

Mephibosheth was faithful to the king who was merciful to him. He did not forget the kindness of the king. He remembered them and showed gratitude. His love, respect, affection, care, gratitude, and indebtedness are all evident in his words. What is our attitude to the disabled? We need to help and care for them. It is our duty. Let us fulfill this duty faithfully.

Life Response:

The Mar Thoma Church has championed the cause of the poor, the oppressed, and the down trodden through various outreach activities, such a medical mission, relief work, shelters, counseling centers, homes for the poor, and marriage assistance. The Mar Thoma Church plays an important role as an advocate, leader, and provider for the needs of the poor, the sick, and the suffering. How can we help the church to continue such activities for the needy?

Memory Verse : 2 Samuel 9:7

“Don’t be afraid”, David replied. “I will be kind to you for the sake of your father, Jonathan”.

Prayer :

O Lord, we pray for the children who are handicapped. We pray for the organizations that work for them. Help us, so that we also can be a help to them.
Amen

Chapter 22

Reformation of the Church

Lesson Theme: Wider Fellowship

Bible Reading: 2 Chronicles 34:1-33; 35:1-2

Aim: To emphasize the need for reformation whenever the church moves away from its mission.

Values for Life:

1. Hearing the word of God will encourage us to abandon any evil ways.
2. Leadership is influence. Good leadership can give good influence.

Preparation:

If you were given an option to choose between a well maintained, clean house and a dirty house, which one would you choose? Of course, you would choose the clean house. After choosing the clean house, what would happen if you didn't clean inside the house? After a while, the clean house you chose would become dirty, and you would no longer feel like living in the house. This was because, when dirt started slowly accumulating, time was not spent in cleaning the house. The church is also like that, often when people become passive and less interested in the activities of the church, the church can become a place where a lot of wrong activities and practices can become a way of life inside the church. In the process, the church deviates from its God given goals and responsibility. It's in such a state that reformation becomes inevitable. Today we are going to read about a king who purified the temple of the Lord from all unholy activities.

Bible Learning:

Background of Josiah's Reformation

A decade after Josiah became king, seeing the dilapidated (rundown) condition of the temple, Josiah asked Hilkiah, the high priest, to repair the house of the Lord. During the repair, Hilkiah found the book of the Law, which was later handed over to Josiah. Josiah sent for Huldah, the prophetess, to reveal what the Lord had commanded through the law. Josiah knew that Judah and Israel had forsaken the Lord, and hence the wrath of the Lord would be upon them. Josiah tore his clothes in distress because of this. The prophetess Huldah also communicated from the word of the law that because of the unholy practices that had crept inside the house of the Lord, and because the people forsook the Lord, He was angry. But since Josiah was humbled before the Lord, the Lord foretold that He didn't see any evil coming upon them.

Different facets of reformation

Since Judah was under the Assyrians, a lot of cult practices and cult places came into being. When Josiah found out that this was against the law of the Lord, he decided to cleanse the house of the Lord.

The cleansing or reformation was done in the following ways:

- a. Burned the vessel made for Baal
- b. Deposed idolaters priest
- c. Broke down the houses of male prostitutes
- d. Destroyed the altar at Bethel
- e. Removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun
- f. Removed all the shrines kept at high places
- g. Removed wizards and idols from the land of Judah and Jerusalem

Covenant Made by the King and the People to Obey the Word (II Chron 34:29-36)

Once Josiah gathered all the elders and the people of Jerusalem in the church, he read all the words in the Book of the Covenant which he had been found in the Temple of the Lord. The king renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations, and decrees with all his heart and all his soul and to obey the words of the covenant written in this Book. He caused all the people to worship the Lord, their God. Leadership is influence. Right Leadership can enforce good influence.

The Celebration of Passover

This was the climax of reformation, and this was celebrated in a grand style that many people often compared it to the one celebrated during the time of Samuel. Thus Josiah brought about reforms throughout the land of Judea and in the process establishing the law of the Lord in the hearts and minds of people.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**Short Answer Questions:**

1. What was the cause of reformation during the time of Josiah?
2. What were the unholy practices that were prevalent during the time when Judah was under Assyrians?
3. How did Josiah cleanse the temple of the Lord?
4. Is reformation necessary in the church today? Why?

Fill in the Blanks:

1. The King Josiah asked _____ the high priest to _____ the house of the Lord.
2. During the repair, Hilkiah found _____
3. The king sent for _____ the prophetess to _____ the book of the law.

4. The king knew that Israelites had _____ the Lord and so God was angry with the people.
5. The king decided to get rid of all _____ practices in the church.
6. The people of Judah started cult practices because they were under the rule of _____ who did not worship God.
7. The king Josiah was bale to stop all people from worshipping false Gods and establish the _____ of the Lord in the _____ and _____ of people.

Bible Application:

As the symbol of the reformation, they celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem. Josiah appointed priests and encouraged them to do their duties. When he sought and understood the word of God, he himself, his home and the land were reformed. He became an instrument in the hands of the Lord for a change. Martin Luther opposed the superstitions and evil rites in the European Church when he understood the Word of God. As a result, the Reformation took place in Europe. Education, contact with the missionaries and the influence of

Life Response:

Education, contact with the missionaries, and the influence of the Word brought about reformation and purification in Malankara under the leadership of Abraham Malppan. It was beginning and continuation. Reformed Churches are interested in ecumenism. They need to become lively. The believers should have a spiritual reformation to bring it to the level of faith. Let us pray and work for it.

Memory Verse: Luke 19:46

“It is written,” he said to them, ‘My house will be a house of prayer’, but you have made it ‘a den of robbers’”.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to actively participate in the activities of our Church, so that we always realize God’s purpose for us. Give the church leaders the grace and strength to guide the Church in the right path. Amen.

Chapter 23

Jesus Paid the Price for Us

Lesson Theme: Foundations of Faith

Bible Reading: Isaiah 53: 3-12

Aim: To understand that Jesus suffered the contempt, scorn and pain and died on the cross for our sins.

Values for Life:

1. Christ took up our sins in his body and carried it to the cross.
2. Our reconciliation with God was brought by Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Motivation:

Nathan and Adam were good friends. Nathan was a quiet boy while Adam was very mischievous. Every day in class he would play various pranks. Since they were friends, Nathan advised Adam a lot, and asked him to refrain from such activities. One day Nathan saw Adam stealing a pen from one of his classmates. The class mate reported the stolen pen to the teacher. In order to find the culprit, the teacher started searching the bags of all the students. Nathan knew his friend Adam would be caught, and so without Adam knowing, Nathan removed the stolen pen and put it into his bag. The teacher finally came to Nathan's desk. While searching Nathan's bag, the teacher found the pen. The teacher started beating Nathan, but he never admitted that it was his friend Adam who stole the pen. He wanted to transform his friend. The sight of Nathan taking the punishment for his actions opened Adam's eyes. He repented of his ways, and he became a well-mannered boy. Today we are going to study about our Lord Jesus Christ, who though not a sinner, was made to pay the penalty meant for a sinner.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Jesus suffered for our sins

When God created human beings, He gave them the freedom of choice. So human beings had the right to obey or disobey God. But human beings willfully disobeyed God and were thus liable for punishment. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6: 23). But it is here that we find the love of God, who sends forth His son Jesus Christ, who in the language of Paul came down from the glories of heaven, took the form of a servant and humbled himself to death on the cross (Philippians 2 : 5-11). In the passage that we read, Isaiah describes the suffering that Jesus underwent. Isaiah says that He was rejected and forsaken by men, an obvious reference to the disciples who ran away during the arrest and trial of Jesus and also all those whom Jesus had helped. Though He was not at fault, Jesus was beaten, wounded and bruised. Yet, like a lamb led to slaughter,

without even a murmur, He suffered. Isaiah says that because of our sins, Jesus bore the suffering, so that the lost human race could be redeemed.

Human beings resolved and reconciled to God.

Because of the sins of human beings, the relationship between God and human beings was broken. But after Jesus Christ's death and His sacrifice, the relationship between us humans and God was restored and reconciled. We have been made the sons and daughters of God. So it has become our duty to confess our sins and to receive Jesus Christ in our life, so that we can live as redeemed boys and girls.

Short Answer Questions:

1. Why did Jesus choose to suffer?
2. What was the result of Jesus' suffering?
3. What should we do because Jesus died for us?

Fill in the blanks:

1. God gave us the freedom of _____.
2. Human beings willfully _____ God and thus was liable for _____.
3. The wages of sin is _____.
4. Because God loved His children, God the Father sent His only son _____ to _____ for us on the _____.
5. Because of the sins of human beings _____ between _____ and _____ was broken.
6. Because Jesus Christ died for us, the relationship to God has been _____ and reconciled.
7. We have been made the sons and daughters of God because of _____.
8. It is our duty to _____ our sins and to receive _____ in our life.

9. For God so _____ the world that He gave _____
_____ so that whoever believes in _____ may
_____ but have _____.

Life Response:

The footnote of a picture of crucified Christ reads, "I did this much for you. What did you do for me?" This challenge from the cross is for us (2 Cor 5:14-15). We should believe that Jesus died for us. He became a sacrifice on the cross for us. We should confess our sin, repent and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The beginning of a Christian life is in coming into a personal relationship with God. Let us live as God's children redeemed by Jesus.

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for them and was raised again.

Prayer:

Lord, we are sorry for our sins. We thank you for your son Jesus Christ. We remember the sufferings of Jesus for our sins. Help us to live as your children. Amen.

Chapter 24

Nehemiah's Victory Over Enemies

Lesson Theme: Hindrances to God's work

Bible Reading: Nehemiah Ch. 4:1-23; 6:1-19

Aim: To understand that by leaning on God, we can overcome obstructions.

Values for Life:

1. We can face opposition courageously with strong faith and dependence on God.
2. We should not fear the consequence if we are to use the available opportunities fruitfully for Christ.

Preparation:

Mother Teresa (1910-1997) is among the most well-known and highly respected women in the world in the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1948 she founded a religious order of nuns in Calcutta, India, called the Missionaries of Charity. Through this order, she has dedicated her life to helping the poor, the sick, and the dying around the world, particularly those in India. Her selfless work with the needy has brought her much acclaim and many awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Once, Mother Teresa decided to build a home near a Kali Temple in Calcutta for the destitute (poor) and the dying. Since the plot of land was near the Kali temple, there was heavy opposition to her work especially from the priest of the Kali temple. Despite the protest and objection, Mother Teresa strived hard and finally had the destitute home built near the Kali Temple.

One day a few years later, walking on the streets of Calcutta to pick up the needy, she found an old man lying in one of the streets. She carried the man to her home and started looking after him, and also taking care of his needs. The man who was close to his death was overwhelmed by the service rendered by Mother Teresa. Before he died, he made the following remark: "All through my life, I was serving Goddess Kali, who I could not see. I am happy now because I could see and meet that Goddess!" With those words, he died. It was then Mother Teresa realized that the man was none other than the priest of the Kali Temple.

Today, we are going to study about a leader who, in spite of opposition, went forth completing a task which was of utmost importance. The name of the leader is Nehemiah. Let us see how he achieved his mission.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Nehemiah, the Cupbearer

Nehemiah, whose very name meant "God comforts", was a great leader. The Israelites had been exiles for 70 years in Babylonia. Nehemiah was the leader of the third and last group of exiles to return to Jerusalem. He was the cupbearer to the king in the citadel of Susa (*the winter palace of the Persian Kings*). It was a job entrusted to the most

trustworthy man. The cupbearer had to taste the drinks before the king so it can be tested for any food poisoning.

The Pathetic Condition of Jerusalem

The Jews who returned to Jerusalem renovated the Temple under the leadership of Ezra. The wall of the city had been broken down and its gates had been burnt. The wall was to protect the city from the attack of robbers and prevent the mingling with foreigners. The wall could not be reconstructed because of opposition from enemies. When Nehemiah heard of the decrepit shape of the wall, he mourned, fasted, and prayed before God. Nehemiah then requested King Artaxerxes to send him to Jerusalem to reconstruct the wall. The king sent him out to Jerusalem, along with army officers and cavalry men. The first 6 chapters describe the rebuilding of the wall.

Rebuilding of the City Wall

One night, Nehemiah secretly inspected the Jerusalem wall. Later, he called the priests and officials together to inform them of the plan to reconstruct the walls. He said “The God of Heaven will give us success. We are his servants and we are going to start rebuilding...” But Nehemiah had to face many obstacles:

1. Sanballar, Tobiah, and Geshem, and the enemies lead by those men mocked and scorned the Jews. (Neh. 2:19; 4:1)
2. The enemies created trouble among the people. This turned the people against the leader. (Neh. 4:12-13; 5:1-13)
3. The enemy tried to kill Nehemiah. He faced the threats courageously instead of hiding in the Temple. (Neh. 6:10)

Nehemiah Overcomes Opposition:

Nehemiah overcame all the opposition and won over the enemies with God’s help. (Neh. 6:10):

1. Nehemiah was a leader who cared for his city. He was burdened in the spirit for his mission. We should have a burden in the spirit of our own mission.
2. Nehemiah was a great man of prayer. He prayed before starting any endeavor, big or small (Neh. 1: 4-11).
3. Nehemiah worked with his men. He stayed in the city with the people and toiled with them. (Neh. 4:16-23).
4. He believed and depended on God. He took courage from God. With this strength, he encouraged and influenced the people (Neh. 2:20).
5. Nehemiah was a self sacrificing leader. For the good of his people, he left all his luxuries and lived in Jerusalem. He brother and himself, for they did not accept any allowances from the king as the governor’s due (Neh 5:14). He did God’s work without expecting any reward.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the specialties of Nehemiah's prayer?
2. How can we overcome oppositions?

Life Response:

Nehemiah was a man of extraordinary courage. His dependence on God gave him courage to face all oppositions. He proclaimed about "the gracious hand of my God upon me" Let us use the opportunities for God's work just like Nehemiah. Let us adopt a style of acquiring courage through prayer not fearing the consequence.

Memory Verse: Ephesians 6: 10-11

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his might power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Prayer:

O Lord, enable us to trust in You. Give us courage to face troubles. Help us to work together while overcoming all feelings of jealousy and resentment. Amen.

Chapter 25

God Calls Even the Unwilling

Lesson Theme: Response to Hindrances in God’s Work

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 1:1-10

Aim: To learn that we should obey God’s call.

Values for Life:

1. God has a purpose for each of us.
2. We, the handiwork of God, have been created in Christ for the good of humanity.
3. God not only demands from us but enables us to do his work.

Preparation:

Who was the leader used by God to bring out the Israelites from slavery? Moses. At which place did he receive God’s call? On the Mountain of Horeb, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush (Exodus 3:2). Even after hearing God’s voice what was the response of Moses? “I am nobody. How can I go to the King and bring Israelites out of Egypt”. (Exodus 4:10). The Lord strengthened Moses who kept making excuses for himself. God promised to be with him and taught him what to say (Exodus 4:12). Moses then obeyed God’s call. Let us learn about another prophet who responded to God’s call and was used by the Lord.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Jeremiah, One Born in a Priestly Family (Jer 1:1; 2 Kings 2:26)

Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, was born at Anathoth. The word Jeremiah means “God establishes”. In the Bible, we see two books of Jeremiah: Jeremiah and Lamentations.

The Call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:1-5)

In those days, Egypt and Babylon planned to attack Judiah. At this critical moment, Jeremiah received God’s call. At only 20 years of age, God called Jeremiah and appointed him directly for the work of a prophet! The word of the Lord came to him saying that God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother’s womb, and that He set him apart and appointed him. We see 3 peculiarities of God’s call here:

1. *God’s prior knowledge about Jeremiah*
2. *The sanctification (I set you apart)*
3. *Purpose of God’s call (appointed as a prophet to the nation)*

God has called us also. We are God’s handiwork, and He has already prepared for us to create a life of good deeds. (Ephesians 2:10) “...The Lord does not look at the things as man looks at. I do not judge as man judges. Man looks at the outward appearance, but I look at the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

Jeremiah’s Response (Jer. 1:6)

Jeremiah put forward many excuses not to take up the prophetic mission. He said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young” (he was only 20 years old). He could not understand God’s intention in calling him without calling the nobles, priests, and other important people.

God strengthened Jeremiah by promising to be with him. He was only to speak what God commanded him to. God made His purpose clear to Jeremiah, “Today, I give authority over nations and Kingdoms to uproot and pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant”, was God’s command (1:10). And the word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the Jewish king Josiah. He served for more than 40 years.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

Like Jeremiah, we are used to making excuses to our parents, teachers, and even to God. In the space below, compare and contrast the excuses made by Jeremiah and yourself:

Jeremiah’s Excuses	Your Excuses

Matching Column:

- a. Jeremiah _____ priest at Anathoth
- b. Amon _____ son of Hilkiyah
- c. Hilkiyah _____ father of Josiah

Short Answer Questions:

1. What was God’s message to Jeremiah?
2. If God calls you, what will be your response?

Bible Reading:

The power of God’s word is evident in two ways: either destructive or constructive. We see this in God’s command to Jeremiah (John. 1:1). We should trust in Jesus Christ, the personification of the word. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God’s punishment.” (John 3:36).

Life Response:

Life is full of troubles. We have to face them. We need to experience the presence of God to withstand such situations. “My God is with me. The Lord is sufficient to guide me.” Let this be our faith, hope, and comfort.

Memory Verse: Jeremiah 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

PART VI OUR MISSION IN GOD'S WORLD

Chapter 26 Abraham's Intercession for Sodom

Lesson Theme: Personal Values

Bible Reading: Genesis 18:16-33

Aim: To teach the importance of intercessory prayer.

Values for Life:

1. Meditation is the responsibility and spiritual right of God's children.
2. People who plead to God should have acquired experience in hearing His voice.

Preparation:

Augustine led a life lost in worldly pleasure and of his own choice. He turned a deaf ear to God's commands and also disobeyed his parents. Monica, his mother, continuously prayed for him. Even when he came home very late, he used to see his mother kneeling and praying for him. She continued to pray for her wicked son. In the end, her prayers were answered. The influence of God's word transformed him. He confessed his sins in God's presence. He prayed with tears of repentance. He grew up to become St. Augustine. This lesson is about a great man of faith with a spiritual burden who interceded for the salvation of the people of a city.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Abraham, God's Friend

We have learned about Abraham, who received God's call and divine visions and led a successful spiritual life. "Father of Believers" (Gal. 3:7) is one of the titles for Abraham. Another one is "God's Friend" which only Abraham was entitled to. We find a record of this in three references (II Chron 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). He maintained this status in his relationship with God, man, brother, and wealth.

Lot, Who Loved the World (Gen. 13)

Lot was Abraham's nephew. He too had followed Abraham. But he was not blessed with divine vision. He loved his wealth and material possessions. When the wealth increased, there arose hostility among the shepherds of both Abraham and Lot. In the end, both Abraham and Lot had to part company. Lot was given the first chance to select the land of his choice. This proves Abraham's attitude towards wealth. Lot did not wait to give his paternal uncle the chance to choose. This shows his selfishness. Remember that selfishness leads to dangers. Lot and his family were captured slaves. When Abraham came to know of this, he took 318 trained men, defeated the enemies and redeemed Lot, his people, and his wealth. Jesus' attitude of "Love your neighbors" is revealed.

God Reveals His Intentions to Abraham (Gen. 18: 1-23)

Three men came to the entrance of his tent, when Abraham was living near the great trees of Mamre. He gave them a warm welcome and fed them. They then blessed Abraham. They told him that both he and Sarah would have son by the following year. They also told him about the disasters that were to befall on Sodom because of their wickedness. Abraham became very sad to hear that the people of Sodom (*including Lot and his family*) would be destroyed.

Abraham pleaded with God for the people of Sodom. He pleaded 6 times for the people, and God listened to his cry. Abraham pleaded by reducing the number of innocent people he would try to find for the Lord from 45 to 40, then 30, 20, and 10. Finally, the Lord told Abraham that he would forgive the land if he could find at least 10 people who were not sinful. But God could not even find 10 men!

God destroyed the land with fire and burning sulphur (19:24). The whole city was wiped away. As Lot's wife tried to run away, she turned back take a look at the burning Sodom, but when she did, she became a pillar of salt (19:26). The life of Lot reminds us how great the fall of man can be if he turns away from Christ to hug worldly ways.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**Short Answer Questions:**

1. Why was God unable to hide the plan to destroy Sodom from Abraham?
2. How did Abraham obtain the courage to intervene with God?
3. What was Abraham's attitude towards wealth? What was Lot's attitude?

Bible Application:

Intercession is the divine duty and responsibility of God's children. Believers should intercede with a burdened heart. Haven't we learned about Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Nehemiah, Paul, and Jesus Christ who all interceded for the people? Moses fought a spiritual battle through intercessory prayer when the people struggled against the enemy (Exodus 17:10-13). The secret success of Nehemiah, who worked for the good of his people, was this intercession (Neh 9:1). Paul aroused the people and interceded for the spiritual growth of believers. Jesus in his prayer before his arrest meditated for himself, the disciples, and for all the believers (John 17). The Holy Spirit also intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Romans 8:27)

Life Response:

People who plead with God should be trained to hear the voice of God. Even in this day in age, God looks for people who can plead with Him, mediate between man and God. Let us recognize God's call and commit ourselves to this service.

Memory Verse: Matthew 5: 44-45

“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Prayer:

Lord, teach us to pray as we should. Help us to realize that You are the true source of wealth. Help us to pray with a spiritual burden for those who are perishing. Amen.

Chapter 27

Mission and Response

Lesson Theme: Outreach

Bible Reading: Isaiah 6: 1-13

Aim: To be ready when God calls us.

Values for Life:

1. The vision of the holiness of God makes us realize our sinful state.
2. Only if there is a burden of the spirit and commitment, we will be able to take up a divine ministry joyfully.

Preparation:

During Old Testament times, merely being in the presence of God was regarded as being fatal. In this chapter Isaiah comes before the presence of God. He is so overcome by the experience that he cries out, “Woe to me!” God is gracious to Isaiah, however, and gives him a special mission. Through this famous story we will learn something about God’s call to us.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Isaiah

God called Isaiah to be a prophet. Isaiah was in the temple of God. There he saw a vision. It was the vision of the Lord sitting on his throne, high and exalted and his robe filled with the whole temple. Seraphs (the flaming creatures) were standing and calling out to each other “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty is Holy.”

Isaiah Took Refuge in the Presence of God (Isaiah 6:1)

The main theme of chapter 6 is Isaiah’s vision of God. He saw this vision in the year of King Uzziah’s death. King Uzziah ruled Judah for 52 years. He took care of the welfare of the people and did everything that pleased God (II Ch. 26). When Uzziah was popular and powerful, he became proud and did many foolish things. As a result, he was afflicted with leprosy and was sent out of the Church. He died as a leper. Upset and troubled by this, Isaiah took refuge in the presence of God. It was at this time that Isaiah received the vision. When we face problems that seem to have no solution, the most suitable place to go is the presence of God. Do we go there in times of crises?

When He saw God, He saw Himself and Repented (Isaiah 6:5)

Before seeing the holiness of God, Isaiah saw the iniquities of others and said, “You are doomed” (Isaiah 5:8,11,19,20-21) But the vision of God helped Isaiah to see himself. Those who see God should see themselves. Like others, they are also unclean. In the presence of God, all are equal.

Isaiah Was Purified (Isaiah 6:6-7)

The Prophet was purified by fire. One of the seraphs took a hot coal from the altar, touched his lips with it and purified him. Isaiah did not try to justify himself saying that he was only an ordinary sinner like any other man. Instead, he confessed his sin before God and the Lord purified him. In the Old Testament, the altar was the divine arrangement to purify the sinners. In the New Testament, the cross is the divine arrangement to purify the sinners “The blood of Jesus purifies us from every sin.” (I John 1:7)

Isaiah Obeyed the Divine Commission (Isaiah 6:6-13)

When Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will be my messenger?”, he responded positively and dedicated himself. God is inviting all of us. Isaiah’s response was, “I will go! Send me.” We should see ourselves and our society as it is. Like us, everyone needs salvation. Therefore, the message of salvation should be given to all. God expects from us the willingness to serve and the dedication to say, “I will go. Send me”.

Bible Application:

The secret of Isaiah’s success in life was his vision. All children of God should have the experience of Isaiah. He had 5 kinds of experiences.

1. Conviction (6:5)
2. Confession (6:6)
3. Cleansing (6:7)
4. Consecration (6:8)
5. Commission (6:9)

May God help us to do his work fruitfully.

Short Answer Questions:

1. What is God calling you to do?
2. What wonderful answer did Isaiah receive to his cry of pain? (v 6-7)
3. Name one of God’s responses to Isaiah’s question “For how long, O Lord?”
4. What heavenly being was seen in Isaiah’s vision?
5. When was Isaiah aware of his own sinful nature?
6. What was Isaiah’s mission?

Life Response:

In your daily prayers ask God to let your mission in life be known and for God to give you the strength to respond as Isaiah did.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” and I said, “Here am I. Send me!” ...”

Prayer

Lord, help us be ready for your calling as your prophet Isaiah was. Amen

Chapter 28

A Unique Family

Lesson Theme: Role of the Family/Institution

Bible Reading: Luke 10: 38-42; John 11: 1-44

Aim: Our family should be a family that is a witness to the Lord.

Values for Life:

1. Divinity is the crown of a family. Its greatness lies in hospitality; satisfaction is wealth and its beauty is in its arrangements.
2. Finding satisfaction in the Lord is a great achievement.

Preparation:

Start with a discussion of what happens when friends/family get together. Ask the class:

- Did anyone go to a friend or relative's house for Thanksgiving or Christmas? Did people come to your house instead? Who cooked the food? Who helped clean up? Which of you helped?
- Why do so many people go to somebody else's home for holidays?
- Did the host or hostess (who did all the work) get to socialize much with the guests? How much did they enjoy the holiday? Did they catch up on what's going on with their loved ones? So, was this much of a holiday for them?
- What's the most important thing about get-togethers?

Now let's look at a story in the Bible about what happened when Mary and Martha had a very important guest in their home.

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

The Chief Position Was Given to Jesus (Luke 10:38-39)

In this family, the chief position was given to Jesus. They welcomed Jesus and his disciples with great love and joy, which is why they came to visit them frequently. During this surprise visit, Martha went to the kitchen to prepare food for the guests. Mary, however, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to his teachings. In our families, do we give Jesus the place of honor? Families should be God-centered. Today, there are a number of self-centered and money-centered families. The family of Ananias and Sapphira gave more importance to money and their end was tragic. As it states in Psalms 53:2, "those who worship God are wise."

Carefully Studying the Word of God (Luke 10:38)

Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Jesus praised her attitude. "Mary has chosen the right thing and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41). Knowledge is a valuable wealth that nobody can take away; knowledge of God is something great. In her eagerness to serve, Martha forgot her priority. She was burdened by her work.

Sharing Problems with Jesus (Luke 10:40)

What was Martha's complaint? She was upset over all the work she had to do. She complained that Mary had left her to do all the work by herself. She could have this to Mary alone. Why did Martha choose to tell Jesus? Martha knew that Jesus was able to find a solution for her problems. Jesus can solve our problems also. "Leave your troubles with the Lord, and he will defend you." (Psalms 55:22)

Jesus was Sufficient for their Problems (John 11:14,21-36)

Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, was ill. Though his sisters informed Jesus of the news, he did not go to their house for two days. Lazarus had died before Jesus came (11:14). Jesus came to Lazarus' house, shared their grief and wept. Deeply moved, Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and asked them to take away the stone. He told them that they could see God's glory if they believed. Then he looked up and prayed. After the prayer, Jesus asked Lazarus to come out. Lazarus was brought back to life! He became a living witness of resurrection. Seeing this miracle, many people believed in Jesus. Because of this unique family, God's name was glorified.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**Short Answer Questions:**

- Why was Martha upset?
- What did Jesus tell Martha?
- Why was Mary's choice better?
- Does this mean that chores aren't necessary? Doesn't somebody have to cook and clean? What could Martha have done different?

Bible Application:

Jesus wants us to live in our hearts. We must have God-centered homes and families. The walls of families should build on a foundation of working together, loving and respecting one another, and being faithful to one another. Love is their roof. Christian families that are filled with the love and peace of God are beautiful replicas of heaven on Earth. May our families be unique models, witnessing God's grace.

Life Response

1. Focus on elements of peacemaking. How might the sisters have responded better? What could Mary have done out of consideration for her sister. How could Martha have resolved her disagreement with her sister?
2. On the white board, write a heading for Mary and one for Martha. Ask the children for words to describe each woman.
3. Have the students think about one thing they wish they hadn't said to a family member or friend this week. (*ex: Did you tell someone you hated them? Did you tell someone they were dumb?*). Remind them that even though Jesus rebuked Martha, Jesus didn't say Martha was wrong or bad. Jesus just wanted Martha to remember what was really important.

Memory Verse: Luke 10: 41-42

Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

Prayer

Dear God, help us not be so busy with school and activities and sports that we forget to be quiet and remember you and pray to you. Help us to listen to you as Mary did. Amen.

Chapter 29 Rejoicing in Suffering

Lesson Theme: Life-Style: Self-Emptying

Bible Reading: Job Ch. 1 & 2

Aim: To understand that only those who depend on God can convert misfortunes into opportunities and rejoice in suffering.

Values for Life:

1. The response to our crises reveals our character.
2. We must be glad to realize that God is working in our life. Then we can find goodness in affliction.

Motivation:

In India there is the CMC Hospital in Vellore. In this hospital worked one of the greatest Christian missionary doctors named Dr. Mary Varghese. The uniqueness of Dr. Mary Varghese was that she was a surgeon who performed her operations and surgeries on a wheelchair. While studying in medicine, Mary Varghese faced a tragic accident, which left her body paralyzed from the waist below. Even during such a painful period, she managed to pass her medical exam and soon she became a doctor. As her illness became more severe, she was forced to seek refuge in the wheel chair. But she did not lose hope. Even in the midst of such severe adversity, she began trusting the Lord more and more. Soon her fame spread far and wide. "Take my hands" is the biography of this great doctor.

Have each student discuss the various struggles they are facing in life at the moment. Ex: struggles with parents, school, friends etc... How are they dealing with all their struggles? What do they do when they are really frustrated?

Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Struggles of Job

Job lived in the land of Uz. He was a great and wealthy man with 10 children, plenty of flocks and herds, and a large number of servants. The Bible says he was blameless and stayed away from doing evil.

Soon, so many misfortunes came to him, one after another. He wasn't just facing one hardship in life. As he was dealing with the loss of his material wealth, Job was told about the tragic death of all his children. In spite of all these tragedies, Job stood firm depending on God. Are our struggles as severe as Job's struggles? Can we call ourselves blameless and God-fearing like Job?

Facing hardships in life through faith and endurance

Job's struggles do not end in Chapter 2. In the following chapters we read that his body was full of sores and it was very painful. Even his wife turned against him and asked him to curse God. But Job said, "I was born with nothing and will die with nothing; the Lord gave and now he has taken away. May His name be praised". Job's faith gave him strength to face life even though his life was full of struggles and hardship. How do we react when we are faced with hardships?

The Sympathy of Friends (Job 2:11-13)

When Job's four friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu, heard how much Job had been suffering, they came to comfort him. They sat on the ground with him for 7 days and nights without saying a word, showing sympathy. They then argued with him and blamed him. According to Elihu, those who do evil suffer because of their sin. The righteous will be rewarded for their goodness.

Outcome of Job's faithfulness

As you read through the rest of the book of Job you'll see how God was faithful to Job and blessed him even more than before. Sometimes we expect God to answer our prayers immediately. If our prayers are not answered we either give up praying or walk around complaining or turn away from God. Just like Job, we have to truly trust in God. To truly trust in God means to patiently endure all the struggles of our lives without complaining and to believe that God does everything for our own good, even if we can't understand the reasons.

Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities

- Divide the entire class in groups of 2 or 3. Have each child discuss the same struggles they had discussed in the beginning of class. Ask the group to come up with a practical plan on how they are going to face their struggles. What are they going to do differently from the way they have been dealing with their struggles? (*For teachers reference: students can come up with the idea of praying for each other daily so God will give each one of them the strength to face their struggles ...etc*)
- *Make a comparison of Job's wealth of children, herds and flocks, before and after the tests:*

	Before Job Was Tested (Job 1:2,3)	After Job Was Tested (Job 42:12,13)
Sons		
Daughters		
Sheep		
Camels		
Oxen		
Donkeys		

Short Answer Questions:

1. Is it right to blame others for our miseries?
2. Does adversity give us a new meaning in our lives?

Bible Application:

The Lord has made Job prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. God added more years to his life (42:6). The life of Job teaches us how we can gain victory over adversity. Complete dependence on God will enable us to outlive crisis. If we are able to face misfortunes courageously, they will become opportunities for great achievements.

Life Response:

Put into practice some of the suggestions they discussed in their groups on how to deal with their struggles. Read the rest of the book of Job to get a better understanding of how Job faced his struggles through faith in God.

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 3:17

It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for one's good than for doing evil.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to be happy even in times of trial, knowing that everything works for the good of those who love God. Help us not to complain, but help us to trust in you and have the faith and endurance like Job. Amen.

Chapter 30

The Service of a Slave Girl

Lesson Theme: Service

Bible Reading: 2 Kings 5: 1-18; Mathew 5:45-48

Aim: To show God's unconditional love by sharing with and helping others in their times of suffering.

Values for Life:

1. God seeks and loves not the talented, but the faithful.
2. We will be blessed when we show the true faith we have.

Preparation:

Once a tired ant came to the shore of a lake to quench its thirst. While trying to drink water, the ant fell into the lake. The attempts of the friends to save the ant were unsuccessful. A dove that sat on a tree nearby was watching this scene. The dove then plucked off a leaf and placed it near the ant. The ant climbed on the leaf and was saved. Thanking the dove, the ant went away. Like the dove, we should help others as often as we can. Today, we will learn how a slave girl helped her master in a foreign land.

Bible Learning: Main ideas

Servant Girl of Naaman in Syria

This girl was one of the Jewish slaves brought to Syria from Israel. There is no mention of her name or whereabouts in the Bible. But this nameless character was able to perform a very important mission. She shared the faith she had with others and the Lord was honored. She was a servant in the house of Naaman (means harmony), the commander of the army of the King of Aram. The King respected him and considered him a great man. But his high position never made him happy. The servant girl realized that her master was suffering from leprosy. Leprosy is a skin disease that infects through contact. The lepers at the time were usually kept away from society. Although Naaman tried to keep his disease a secret, it quickly spread and he was not able to hide it anymore. His experience was just the opposite of the meaning of his name.

The Servant Girl Shared Her Faith and Truth

This girl wished to see her master cured of his disease. For that she did her part faithfully. She had already heard of the works of Prophet Elisha in Samaria. She made use of the opportunity to speak about God and the miraculous powers of the Prophet. Naaman then made arrangements to visit Elisha, bringing along with him gifts of silver, gold, and clothing. Instead, Elisha asked the king to send Naaman to him. He sent a messenger to Naaman who was outside the house, and instructed him to wash himself 7 times in the Jordan River.

God wants our obedience and humility.

Naaman was not readily willing to accept Elisha's instructions to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River because that was beneath his standard. The River Jordan was a small, muddy river. But Naaman's officers helped him see that if he wanted to be cured, he had to lower himself to the status of a commoner and obey the prophet's orders. When Naaman dipped himself 6 times, there was no change. But after the seventh dip, he was completely cured. His flesh became firm and healthy, like that of a child.

Naaman Decides to Worship God

Naaman came back to Elisha, to thank him and to offer him some gifts. But the Prophet refused to accept the gifts. Naaman then promised Elisha that he would never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. In order to worship God in His own earth, Naaman took home 2 mule-loads of earth from Isreal. *(In the ancient world, it was commonly thought that a deity could be worshiped only on the soil of the nation to which he was bound.)*

Bible Learning: Strategies & Activities

Ask your students whether they have ever known anyone a little different than them, maybe a person with a terrible illness. Ask them how they treated that person, and how that person responded. What did the student learn about God's love and compassion from that experience?

Short Answer Questions:

- 1) How did the servant girl honor God's name?
- 2) What did Naaman expect Elisha to tell him to do?
- 3) What did you learn about Elisha's character from his actions?

Bible Application:

- 1) Do we have the strength and courage to accept and help someone who may be different than us?
- 2) How often do we share the message about God with our friends?
 - a. Think about the kind of life Naaman led as a well-respected man with such a dreaded skin disease.
 - b. Think about how insulted Naaman felt to be told by Elisha to wash himself in such a small, muddy river like the Jordan.
 - c. Think about the courage and concern of the Israelite servant girl when she decided to tell her master, Naaman, about the prophet in Israel who could cure him.
 - d. Try to think about how humble we have to be to receive and listen to God's instructions even though it may not make sense.

Life Response:

When God works His miracles, he wants us to first understand that it is not because of our merits but because of His grace that we are blessed. And in order to understand that important fact, we have to humble ourselves in front of everyone. It is that humility that defines Christian love.

Because of the servant girl, Naaman and his family came to know God. This little girl was proud of her God and shared her faith with others. As a result, the name of the Lord was honored. Let us be bold and proud to share the good news of the Lord with people we know.

Memory Verse: Matthew 5: 16

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Prayer:

Heavenly and gracious Father, we thank You for the many blessings we take for granted everyday. Help us to feel comfortable enough with our faith so that we may share Your love and compassion with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

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