



JOHN

A glimpse at the Word made flesh

**WORSHIPING OUR
SOVEREIGN GOD**

Come let us worship and bow down

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

From generation to generation



GOD'S WORD



FOR LIFE

LEGAL NOTICE

Thank you for ordering this digital license of God's Word for Life. This license authorizes you to use the material in your local church. One license should be purchased for each person who will be using this file. For classes that have rotating teachers, one license should be purchased for the total number of teachers in a given week. You may purchase additional licenses at pentecostalpublishing.com. In accordance with U. S. and international copyright law, this material may not be shared beyond the local assembly without written permission from Pentecostal Publishing House.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

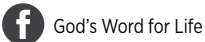


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series 1:

John

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------------------|----|
| 1.1 | March 3 | The Word Made Flesh | 8 |
| 1.2 | March 10 | The Unseen Harvest | 16 |
| 1.3 | March 17 | When the Light Shines | 24 |
| 1.4 | March 24 | The Good Shepherd | 32 |

Series 2:

Worshiping Our Sovereign God

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|---|----|
| ES | March 31 | This Glorious Gospel | 40 |
| 2.1 | April 7 | The Transfiguration of Jesus | 48 |
| 2.2 | April 14 | Jesus Calms the Storm | 56 |
| 2.3 | April 21 | The Triumphal Entry | 64 |
| 2.4 | April 28 | Worshiping the One Who Sits on His Throne | 72 |

Series 3:

Elijah and Elisha

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|--------------------------|-----|
| 3.1 | May 5 | The First Last Meal | 80 |
| 3.2 | May 12 | Fire from Heaven | 88 |
| 3.3 | May 19 | Success in Succession | 96 |
| 3.4 | May 26 | Healing for the Outsider | 104 |

***ES** indicates Easter Sunday.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

©2024 Pentecostal Publishing House
36 Research Park Court
Weldon Spring, MO 63304
www.pentecostalpublishing.com
All rights reserved.
Manufactured in USA
Spring 2024, 6932421.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor in Chief:
Robin Johnston

Associate Editor, Curriculum:
Lee Ann Alexander

Adult Editor, Curriculum:
LJ Harry

WRITERS:

Johnnie Peyton, Melinda Poiras,
Jaimee Smith

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked "NKJV™" are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Do not reproduce, distribute, or transmit any part of this publication in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods without possessing prior documented approval from Pentecostal Publishing House, a department of the United Pentecostal Church International. To request permission, contact customerservice@pentecostalpublishing.com.

GETTING STARTED

The first page of each week's material will help you to become familiar with the Truth about God, Truth for My Life, Focus Verse, and Lesson Text to be used in your Sunday school class or small group setting.



SG TEACHING OUTLINE

LESSON 1.1

Lesson Title: The Word Made Flesh

Icebreaker: What first comes to your mind when you think of Christianity?

I. IN THE BEGINNING

- A. The Logos
- B. Creator and Giver of Life
 - » In what ways do Jesus' words bring life besides physical healing?
- C. The Light
- D. I Will Use My Words to Speak Life
 - » Who has spoken life to you? How can you speak life to others?

II. WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

- » How is God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ in your life?
- A. The World Received Him Not
 - » Have you ever faced rejection for the sake of the gospel? How did you respond?
- B. Power to Become the Sons of God
- C. The Word Made Flesh Brought Grace and Truth
- D. I Will Show Others Grace as I Have Received Grace
 - » How can you show God's grace in your present circumstances?

Prayer Focus

- To speak life to others
- To show grace to others

9

SMALL GROUP TEACHING OUTLINE

The second page provides a Small Group (SG) Teaching Outlines so you can follow along with the main points of the lesson if you choose to bring your Daily Devotional Guide to church. The outline also includes the lesson's discussion questions so you can be prepared for discussion if you meet in small groups.

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 1:1-14

John's Prologue (which encompasses John 1:1-18) sets the stage and introduces major themes for the remainder of the fourth Gospel. These eighteen verses stand as one of the most powerful expositions on Christ's superiority of being, singularity of existence, supremacy of glory and power, and centrality of focus. John was enraptured with the essence, nature, and work of Christ, whom he identified clearly as God, the Creator and self-existent one by whom all things exist and are held together.

"In the beginning," the opening phrase of John's Gospel, corresponds directly to the opening words of Genesis. The readers and hearers of the Book of John would have instantly had their memories pulled to the Hebrew Bible, the opening scene in which the Creator spoke everything into existence.

The language of beginning insinuates a start of something unprecedented. Just as the opening words of Genesis chronicled the story of Creation, John is chronicling new creation in poetic literary fashion. These two creations are not separate; they are intimately connected. In both instances, the "Word" (Greek: *logos*) is the agent of creation. Moreover, the *logos* is not a separate entity—the *logos* is God Himself!

The Word's life and light are so powerful that darkness could not "comprehend" what was happening. This Greek word (*katalelaben*) is difficult to translate. Other versions render the meaning "overcome" (ESV, HCSB, NIV), "grasp" (NASB), "mastered" (NET), "extinguish" (NLT), and "understood" (Mounce). Possibly all these meanings can be seen when the incomparable power of God's light is juxtaposed against the pitiful inferiority of darkness. Similar to the way darkness in a room automatically disappears when lights are switched on, the light of Christ destroys the darkness of sin and death even more quickly and efficiently.

The Word refused to stay separate from His people. He chose to come in flesh (which He created) and dwell among His people. The word *dwell* can also be rendered "tabernacled" and evokes imagery of the ancient Israelite Tabernacle which centrally existed in the camp, the central focus of all Israel (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 1:14). John's Prologue and Gospel is an exposé of a God who not only exists in supremacy above all creation and in preeminence before all creation, but loved His creation enough to dwell constantly among them.

"IN THE BEGINNING," THE OPENING PHRASE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL, CORRESPONDS DIRECTLY TO THE OPENING WORDS OF GENESIS.

10

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

The third page of each lesson will give you a "high level" Biblical Overview of the Lesson Text. The content will explore the text, its background, and any other pertinent information to help you better understand the setting, purpose, and message of the text.

DAILY DEVOTION

The remaining pages will guide you through your week of personal devotion and study. You are encouraged to complete the Bible Reading plan for each day and explore a portion of the text with the help of a section of Biblical Insight on that part of the text. Next is a Daily Devotion to read and a prompt to reflect and pray about the principles presented.

DAY 1

John 1:1-2

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

Biblical Insight

The introduction of the Word (Greek: *logos*) in John's Gospel is a grand, poetic opening that progressively reveals His identity. The Word existed, first and foremost. That much is undeniable. The Word was "with God," carrying the connotation of being in intimate relationship with God. Essentially, the Word is close enough to God to render the two indistinguishable and inseparable. No distinction is possible or necessary; God is the Word, and the Word is God.

Daily Devotion

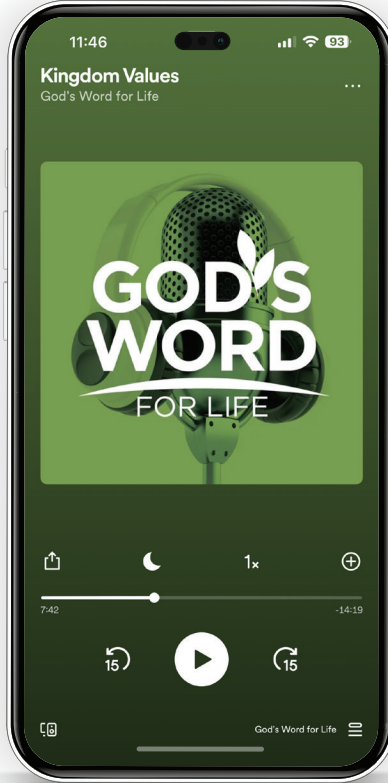
"Thick as thieves" is a phrase you might hear someone's grandmother say if you listen long enough. The words are meant to denote closeness, kinship, walking together, sharing secrets, being "in cahoots"—to reference something else a grandmother might say. The phrase carries the same meaning as the term "peas in a pod" which connotes up images of two round green shapes which look exactly the same and dwell together in a tiny, confined space. This is the concept we seek to wrap imagery around, whether you have reached senior status or not. God and His Word are "thick as thieves." God and His Word are "in cahoots." God and His Word are "two peas in a pod." If you see one, you have seen the other, for they are one and the same.

Reflection and Prayer

» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?

11

LEARNING AND LIVING OUT GOD'S WORD FOR LIFE



Join podcast host LJ Harry on the God's Word for Life companion podcast every week. Each episode complements the God's Word for Life Lesson Guide, Daily Devotional Guide, and the Small Group Guide as we think deeply about how God's Word impacts our lives. The podcast is a great tool for families and groups to listen to and discuss what we are learning from God's Word. The podcast shares stories and passages in Scripture with fresh insights to encourage followers of Jesus. Like the guides, each episode features discussion questions to help us apply what we are hearing and start conversations about God's Word.

Enjoy the God's Word for Life companion podcast as we learn and live out God's Word for Life.

CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@GodsWordforLife



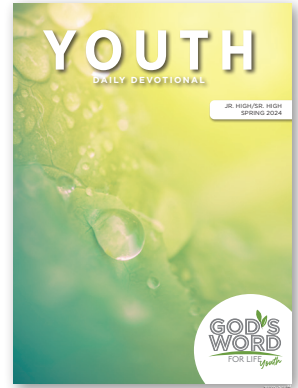
@GodsWordforLife



@GWFLife

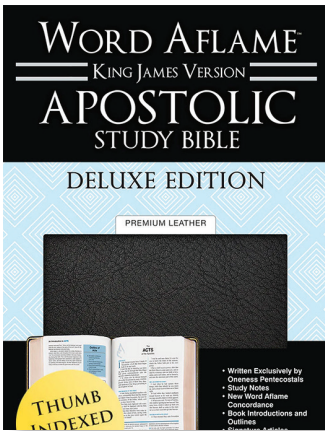
YOUTH DAILY DEVOTIONAL

God's Word for Life equips every age level of the church to study Scripture daily. This resource for youth (ages 12-18) provides a daily Bible passage connected to the week's lesson and a corresponding devotion. Each day ends with a final challenge to apply the message of God's Word with both junior high and senior high options.



APOSTOLIC STUDY BIBLE

The Deluxe Edition of the Apostolic Study Bible features a premium genuine leather cover and study notes written exclusively by Oneness Pentecostal scholars, special emphasis given to passages of Scripture that are important to the Apostolic message, book introductions and outlines that call attention to key Apostolic insights as well as theme, authorship, date, and other significant information.



CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@GodsWordforLife



@GodsWordforLife



@GWFLife

pentecostalpublishing.com



SERIES 1: JOHN

The John series highlights key passages in the Gospel of John as we see the Word made flesh, fields ripe for harvest, a blind man see for the first time, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and the selfless love of our God for the whole world.



SERIES 2: WORSHIPPING OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

The sovereignty of God can be seen in His transfiguration, which Peter saw as a testimony to Jesus' majesty; in His calming the storm, which is linked to three psalms; in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and in Revelation with its singular throne in Heaven occupied by one who is both Lord and God.



SERIES 3: ELIJAH AND ELISHA

God used Elijah to work a miracle for a widow, and then He used Elijah to call down fire from Heaven. After Elijah anointed Elisha to follow him, God used Elisha to work a miracle for a Syrian soldier. Like Elijah, let us be courageous and stand for God. Like Elisha, let us hear and follow God's call in our lives.

LISTENING IS THE NEW READING

[Access a growing library of books by searching
"Pentecostal Publishing House" on Audible.com]



1.1

THE WORD MADE FLESH

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God became flesh to save us.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will know Jesus—
God manifested in
flesh.

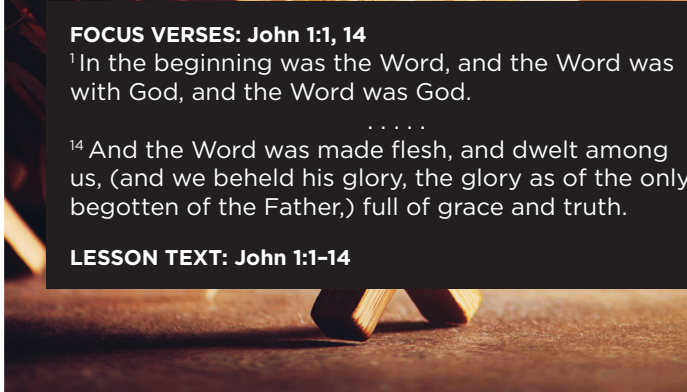


FOCUS VERSES: John 1:1, 14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

.....
¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

LESSON TEXT: John 1:1-14



**Lesson Title:** The Word Made Flesh

Icebreaker: What first comes to your mind when you think of Christianity?

I. IN THE BEGINNING

A. The Logos

B. Creator and Giver of Life

» *In what ways do Jesus' words bring life besides physical healing?*

C. The Light

D. I Will Use My Words to Speak Life

» *Who has spoken life to you? How can you speak life to others?*

II. WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

» *How is God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ in your life?*

A. The World Received Him Not

» *Have you ever faced rejection for the sake of the gospel? How did you respond?*

B. Power to Become the Sons of God

C. The Word Made Flesh Brought Grace and Truth

D. I Will Show Others Grace as I Have Received Grace

» *How can you show God's grace in your present circumstances?*

Prayer Focus

- To speak life to others
- To show grace to others

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 1:1-14

John's Prologue (which encompasses John 1:1-18) sets the stage and introduces major themes for the remainder of the fourth Gospel. These eighteen verses stand as one of the most powerful expositions on Christ's superiority of being, singularity of existence, supremacy of glory and power, and centrality of focus. John was enraptured with the essence, nature, and work of Christ, whom he identified clearly as God, the Creator and self-existent one by whom all things exist and are held together.

"In the beginning," the opening phrase of John's Gospel, corresponds directly to the opening words of Genesis. The readers and hearers of the Book of John would have instantly had their memories pulled to the Hebrew Bible, the opening scene in which the Creator spoke everything into existence.

The language of beginning insinuates a start of something unprecedented. Just as the opening words of Genesis chronicled the story of Creation, John is chronicling new creation in poetic literary fashion. These two creations are not separate; they are intimately connected. In both instances, the "Word" (Greek: *logos*) is the agent of creation. Moreover, the *logos* is not a separate entity—the *logos* is God Himself!

The Word's life and light are so powerful that darkness could not "comprehend" what was happening. This Greek word (*kateleben*) is difficult to translate. Other versions render the meaning "overcome" (ESV, HCSB, NIV), "grasp" (NASB), "mastered" (NET), "extinguish" (NLT), and "understood" (Mounce). Possibly all these meanings can be seen when the incomparable power of God's light is juxtaposed against the pitiful inferiority of darkness. Similar to the way darkness in a room automatically disappears when lights are switched on, the light of Christ destroys the darkness of sin and death even more quickly and efficiently.

The Word refused to stay separate from His people. He chose to come in flesh (which He created) and dwell among His people. The word *dwelt* can also be rendered "tabernacled" and evokes imagery of the ancient Israelite Tabernacle which centrally existed in the camp, the central focus of all Israel (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 1:14). John's Prologue and Gospel is an exposé of a God who not only exists in supremacy above all creation and in preeminence before all creation, but loved His creation enough to dwell constantly among them.

"IN THE BEGINNING," THE OPENING
PHRASE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL,
CORRESPONDS DIRECTLY TO
THE OPENING WORDS OF GENESIS.

DAY 1

John 1:1-2

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

Biblical Insight

The introduction of the Word (Greek: *logos*) in John's Gospel is a grand, poetic opening that progressively reveals His identity. The Word existed, first and foremost. That much is undeniable. The Word was "with God", carrying the connotation of being in intimate relationship with God. Essentially, the Word is close enough to God to render the two indistinguishable and inseparable. No distinction is possible or necessary; God is the Word, and the Word is God.

Daily Devotion

"Thick as thieves" is a phrase you might hear someone's grandmother say if you listen long enough. The words are meant to denote closeness, kinship, walking together, sharing secrets, being "in cahoots"—to reference something else a grandmother might say. The phrase carries the same meaning as the term "peas in a pod" which conjures up images of two round green shapes which look exactly the same and dwell together in a tiny, confined space.

This is the concept we seek to wrap imagery around, whether you have reached senior status or not. God and His Word are "thick as thieves." God and His Word are "in cahoots." God and His Word are "two peas in a pod." If you see one, you have seen the other, for they are one and the same.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 1:3-4

made.

³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

⁴ In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

Biblical Insight

The phrase “by him” (KJV) is also translated more commonly “through him” (ESV, NASB, NIV). Likely both meanings are in play, as neither English preposition fully encapsulates the Greek meaning. The Word is both the process by which Creation appeared, and the purpose and process *through* which Creation occurred. Regardless of the English word chosen, the Word is presented as the life force by which humanity exists and is sustained. Throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus is consistently portrayed as the only one through whom life is possible (e.g., John 3:36; 5:26, 40; 6:33; 14:6). Paul repeated these themes in Colossians 1:15–20).

Daily Devotion

It gives life to plants, cleans up our houses, and fills up the bathtubs that entertain toddlers and their rubber ducks for hours. It carries ships across oceans, boils in our kettles, and houses fish of all kinds. It comprises 60 percent of our bodies, yet we need to drink it constantly. We cannot survive more than three days without it, yet only 2.5 percent of the earth’s supply of it is actually drinkable. You’ve already guessed it: water. Humanity can mix up some interesting concoctions, but when it comes down to it, only one liquid works to sustain life.

Similarly, we can string together series of sentences filled with eloquent words in elegant prose or poetry, but at the end of the day, only one Word works to bring life to the masses. We exist and are sustained through the Word of God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 1:5-9

⁵ And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

⁹ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Biblical Insight

John the Baptist's role in the fourth Gospel is nuanced slightly. While the other three Gospels highlight his role as the forerunner of the Messiah, John's Gospel portrays him as simply the faithful witness who testified of the Messiah's nature and superiority (1:6-7, 19-36; 3:27-36) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 1:6-9).

Here John's Gospel also introduced the theme of Christ as the Light (Greek: phōs) who stands in opposition to the darkness (Greek: skotia), a theme that would continue throughout John's Gospel (3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46) and his other writings (1 John 1:7; 2:8-10; Revelation 21:23-25; 22:5).

Daily Devotion

Thomas Edison attempted to create a light bulb over one thousand times. Finally, through much trial and error at Menlo Park in January 1879, he successfully created his first high resistance, incandescent light. Still, it only burned for a few hours. He conducted several thousand experiments to discover the best conductor of the electricity to provide the most extensive amount of sustained illumination. He tested over six thousand vegetable growths in his search for success.

Jesus in and of Himself is Light, the very thing that caused Thomas Edison "the greatest amount of study and required the most elaborate experiments" ("Edison's Lightbulb," The Franklin Institute). Jesus shines forth in the darkness of a sinful world, sustaining all, saving all, illuminating all. He is light that darkness cannot withstand or comprehend, outlasting any man-made invention or modern convenience. Without question or contest, Jesus is the light of the world.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 1:10-13

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Biblical Insight

The irony of the Incarnation is that the Creator, the *logos*, was not recognized by the very creation that existed solely because of Him. Even God's own chosen people, the Israelites, rejected Him. However, anyone who did receive Christ was born as family. (See John 1:12.) This language foreshadows the new birth Jesus would explain to Nicodemus in John 3:3-7. In this context, the term born connotes the moment of becoming God's children and submission to God's role as parent as He enacts the parental duties of raising, loving, and disciplining.

Daily Devotion

In 1975 a young woman was fired from her position as fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar*. She had been working there a mere nine months. We're not sure of the grounds for her firing. Maybe she didn't fit in at the office, or perhaps her ideas didn't align with the magazine she was meant to be promoting. Those ideas clearly aligned with some sphere of the fashion world ultimately because her name is Anna Wintour, and she went on to become the editor in chief of *Vogue*.

We are not always accepted by those who should welcome us. When our Creator was not recognized by His creation, He continued on in purpose, completing the work for which He was sent. Because of His redeeming work, all who do respond rightly to Him and His gospel inherit eternal life to this day.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 1:14

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Biblical Insight

The term *only begotten* can also be translated “one and only” (NET, NIV, NLT). The specific implication of this phrase is the Word’s uniqueness and one-of-a-kind nature. The Word exists solitarily, with none alongside or comparable to Him. The word as, which can also be translated “like,” is also important for Oneness theology. John was not saying the Word was God’s only Son, but the Word’s glory could be likened to that which is bestowed upon a unique, only son by his father. If anything, associating the Word with supreme glory only further identifies Him as the Jehovah of the Old Testament. (See Exodus 40:34–38; Isaiah 6:3.)

Daily Devotion

According to the locals, if you stand in a Chinese airport attempting to purchase a ticket to Paris, the attendant at the counter may ask you, “Which one?” They ask because China boasts the town of “Little Paris,” with its own replicas of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, and the fountain from the garden of the Palace of Versailles.

Our world also boasts replicas of relics and buildings such as the Titanic and the Taj Mahal. When the Word of God refers to the “only begotten of the Father,” we can rest assured God’s Word means one and only. There’s none beside Him, none before Him, none like Him. He is 100 percent original, without duplication. No matter which Paris you might encounter Him in, Jesus Christ is the one and only.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

1.2

THE UNSEEN HARVEST

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus calls us to be workers in the harvest.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

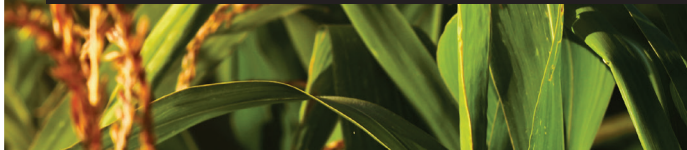
I will be a worker in the harvest.



FOCUS VERSE: John 4:36

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

LESSON TEXT: John 4:31-38



Lesson Title: The Unseen Harvest

Icebreaker: What is the most surprising conversation you see Jesus have in the Gospels?

- I. PERCEIVED NEEDS VERSUS REAL NEEDS
 - A. A Unique Scene
 - » *How are meeting temporal physical needs and spiritual needs different? How are they alike?*
 - B. The Need for Physical Food and Spiritual Food
 - » *If you were one of the twelve disciples, how would you have responded to Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well?*
 - C. I Will Pursue Balance for My Physical and Spiritual Needs
 - » *As you reflect on your efforts, which part—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—is out of balance for you?*
- II. LOOKING TO THE HARVEST
 - A. The Reality of the Harvest
 - B. The Need for All Workers in the Harvest
 - » *How long after you were born again did you begin to see your value in the body of Christ?*
 - C. I Will Be a Worker in the Harvest
 - » *What do you feel specifically God has sent you to do?*

Prayer Focus

- For us to see people as souls needing to be fed
- For God to use us to feed those hungry souls

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 4:31–38

In this passage, the disciples had just returned from buying provisions in Sychar, a city in Samaria (John 4:4–5, 8, 27). While they were in the city, Jesus rested at Jacob’s well just outside the city and had a long conversation with a woman of Samaria who was an outcast among Samaritan society. In this interaction, Jesus provided one of the greatest revelations of His identity as Messiah to this socially scarred Samaritan woman.

The geography of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman is important to help understand Jesus’ words in verses 34–38; the woman came to the well, almost undoubtedly from Sychar, and then returned into the city to witness about what she had experienced. When she first came to the well from Sychar, the disciples left the well and went to Sychar. When they returned to the well, the woman was returning to the city.

The disciples undoubtedly passed by this woman, broken and alone on her journey to the well. Sadly, these disciples—twelve preachers in training—neglected to notice or speak to this woman. They were so focused on finding a place for lunch that they neglected the spiritual meat of doing God’s will. (See John 4:34.) Jesus had been ministering to the hurting and lonely, thereby partaking of spiritual meat, which was far more satisfying than physical meat could ever be. Jesus’ admonition in John 4:35 to “lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” served as a subtle rebuke toward the disciples. If their eyes had been open and watching, they would have seen the abundant spiritual crop ready to be harvested in Sychar.

Not only did the disciples miss the Samaritan woman as they walked into Sychar, they neglected to bring anyone back with them when they returned to Jesus. In contrast, the Samaritan woman returned to Jesus with an untold but presumably large number of citizens of Sychar. Many of the Samaritans believed on Jesus and compelled Him to stay and minister to them for two days, receiving for themselves a revelation of Jesus as “the Savior of the world.”

WHILE THEY WERE IN THE CITY, JESUS RESTED AT JACOB’S WELL JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY AND HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN OF SAMARIA WHO WAS AN OUTCAST AMONG SAMARITAN SOCIETY.

DAY 1

John 4:31-33

³¹ In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

³² But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

³³ Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

Biblical Insight

The disciples had purchased food for their traveling party, so naturally they offered food to Jesus; that was the entire purpose of their trip. However, Jesus was spiritually satisfied by the previous conversation with the Samaritan woman, and He seized upon the opportunity to expound. The disciples' response to Jesus' words paralleled that of the Samaritan woman. Just like the Samaritan woman initially misunderstood Jesus' words about water, the disciples initially misunderstood Jesus' words about food.

Daily Devotion

Comedic duo Abbott and Costello began what is arguably their most famous skit like this:

Costello: Then tell me the guys' names.

Abbott: I say, Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third and then you . . .

Costello: You the manager?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: You know the guys' names?

Abbott: I'm telling you their names!

Costello: Well who's on first?

Abbott: Yeah.

Costello: Go ahead and tell me.

Abbott: Who.

They continue to talk around and around the names of baseball players on a team, both speaking very plainly but neither one being understood, for the entire duration of the conversation.

Words are not enough; communication must happen. Both the Samaritan woman and the disciples experienced similar confusion, hearing the words of Jesus but not initially grasping His full meaning. We must continually seek not to merely hear His words, but to comprehend His heart.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 4:34

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Biblical Insight

Jesus found sustenance and satisfaction simply in the act of carrying out the mission to which He was called (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 4:34). When Jesus' actions with the Samaritan woman are compared to Luke 4:18-19 (sometimes referred to as Jesus' "mission statement"), the reader can clearly see that Jesus was fulfilling His entire mission. In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus proclaimed good news (of redemption) to the (spiritually and monetarily) poor, proclaimed and set at liberty one who was held captive and oppressed (by shame and guilt), restored sight to the blind (by opening her eyes to see who He was), and proclaimed God's favor (by lifting up a woman who had been discarded by society).

Daily Devotion

Extrinsic motivation is defined as doing something because of factors outside of yourself. Your actions are motivated extrinsically when you desire someone's approval, win an award, receive a reward, and so on.

Intrinsic motivation means a person chooses a behavior simply because of interest or enjoyment. You are motivated intrinsically when the act you are completing is a reward to you. One researcher defined intrinsic motivation in terms of what people are willing to do without external inducement.

Jesus found pleasure and enjoyment simply doing what He was called to do. He did not need measurable results, He did not require a multitude of followers, He desired no reward or adulation. He acted as we ought, doing what He was called to do, knowing that doing so was fulfilling in itself. May God show us and help us to do the same.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 4:35

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Biblical Insight

If the disciples had been spiritually aware, they would have noticed that the harvest was ready and waiting to be harvested. Seeds had already been sown and crops had already been cultivated. The Samaritans, whose spiritual heritage was conjoined with the Israelites, were open and ready to receive the promised Messiah. This was evidenced by the many citizens of Sychar who so readily received Jesus (John 4:39–42). If the disciples had their spiritual eyes open as they bought meat in Sychar, they would have seen the harvest all around them, just waiting to be harvested.

Daily Devotion

Potatoes are ready to be harvested when they are roughly the size of a hen's egg. Fruiting vegetables, like peppers and tomatoes, tend to be ready for harvest when they are the same even color across their entire surface. Tree fruits like apples and pears are ready to be harvested when they come away from the branch they are growing on easily, with a mere twist of the hand.

Farmers (and backyard entrepreneurs) must be aware of the signs fruits and vegetables show when ready for harvest, just as disciples of Jesus must be spiritually aware of the signs souls in our fields show when they are ready for spiritual harvest. Learning the signs of spiritual readiness ensures you never miss an opportunity to glean a soul for Jesus Christ.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 4:36-37

³⁶ And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

³⁷ And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

Biblical Insight

Both the one who sows and the one who reaps have an opportunity to rejoice when a harvest is collected. By this analogy, the sower might be seen either as God, who is constantly drawing all humanity to Him, or perhaps as previous generations of faithful women and men sowing the seed of God's Word. Humanity participates in reaping along with God, the ultimate harvester. The Lord, the proclaimers of the good news, and even the angels rejoice when the harvest of souls is collected.

Daily Devotion

Wilbur and Orville Wright completed the first successful human flight on December 17, 1903. Although their initial attempt out of Kitty Hawk lasted only twelve seconds and covered a distance of only one-hundred-and-eighty feet, it still changed the course of history when it revealed that air travel was possible.

Research, articles, and history consistently fail to show who did what to prepare for the first flight. No overwhelming account exists that chronicles which screws Orville fastened as opposed to which bolts Wilbur loosened. They worked together for years before changing the course of travel forever. It would be impossible to say who "planted" and who "watered," just that working together created the finished product of flight.

So it is when working for the Lord. Do what you can in service to the Lord, as He adds your efforts with those of your brothers and sisters in Christ. And Jesus, as only Jesus can do, gives the ultimate increase.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 4:37-38

³⁷ And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

³⁸ I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Biblical Insight

Jesus' promise to His disciples concerning harvesting that for which they did not labor is reminiscent of how God fulfilled His promises to the children of Israel by bringing them out of Egypt into the Promised Land: "And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat" (Joshua 24:13). Similarly, Christ was calling His disciples to enter into a new "Promised Land," one with an eternally satisfying harvest.

Daily Devotion

According to Wikipedia, planet Earth boasts a birth rate of 259 babies per minute. Long before a baby's arrival, parents read books, decorate nurseries, purchase supplies, and rally the troops. The pantry is stocked, the closet is full, and currently pristine diaper pails are waiting to be sullied, thanks to the family's newest and smallest member.

Babies are born into their new environment and carried into homes they did not purchase or prepare. Everything they own is given to them. They sleep in beds they did not make and eat food they did not earn. Every need is supplied through the simple act of inheritance. When we are born again, we enter a new family and home as a child of God, born of water and Spirit, inheriting all the good gifts God freely gives.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

1.3

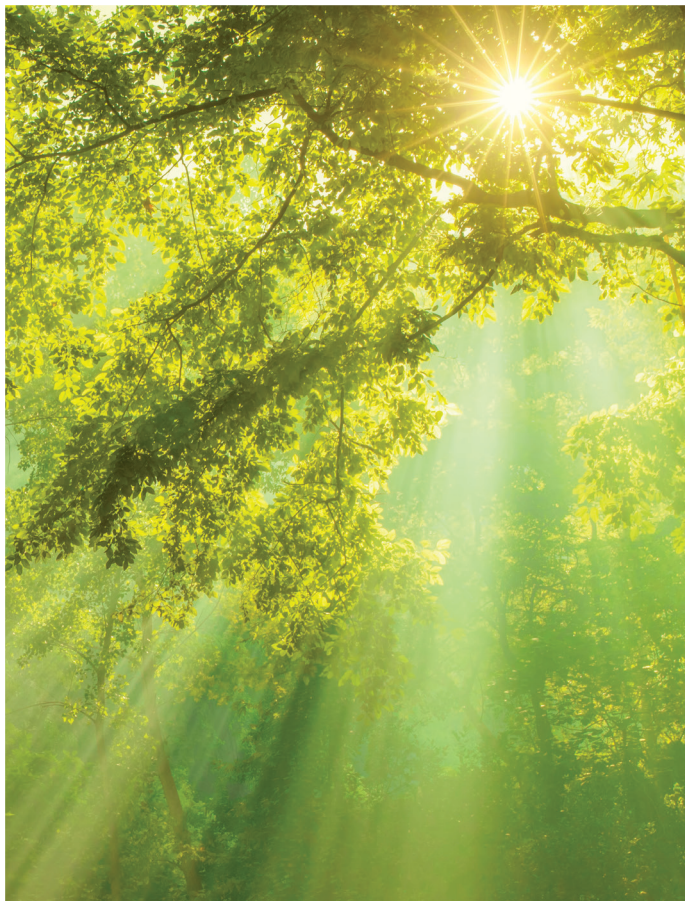
WHEN THE LIGHT SHINES

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's miracles
reveal His glory.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will submit my life
for the glory of God.



FOCUS VERSE: John 9:39

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

LESSON TEXT: John 9:24-41



Lesson Title: When the Light Shines

Icebreaker: What is your favorite work of art?

I. JESUS SAW A NEED

A. Why Needs Arise

» *How do you respond when someone asks you a question like the disciples asked Jesus?*

B. I Will Trust God, Especially When I Face a Need

II. RESPONDING TO THE MIRACULOUS

A. Jesus Healed, But Some Did Not Believe

» *Why didn't people believe the man who saw was the same as the one born blind?*

» *What do you think of the man's boldness toward the religious leaders?*

B. Personal Experience with Jesus Brought Illumination

C. Jesus Revealed His Identity and the Identity of Believers

» *See yourself in the story. Which character are you: the disciples, the neighbors, the parents, the Pharisees, or the believers?*

D. I Will Submit My Life for the Glory of God

» *How will you submit your life for the glory of God?*

Prayer Focus

- To look for the glory of God to be displayed
- To submit our lives to be used for God's glory

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 9:24–41

Jesus' healing of the blind man in John 9 reflects many themes present throughout the body of John's writing. The religious elite and their conventional wisdom were befuddled by the testimony of the simple and unlearned. Jesus' light overcomes darkness. Moreover, Jesus is positioned as the supreme, central agent of change in the world. Despite Pharisaical charges and doubts, Jesus demonstrated His power as not only a miracle worker (vv. 32–33), but also as the only worthy recipient of belief and worship (v. 38).

Much discussion occurs in John 9 about what is “known” versus what is “not known.” The healed man's parents knew he was their son, that he had been blind and now saw, but they did not know how the transformation happened. The healed man did not know if Jesus was a sinner, but the man knew with certainty that he had been healed. By contrast, the Pharisees claimed to “know” that Jesus had to be a “sinner” and “not of God” because He performed miracles on the Sabbath (v. 16, 24). The Pharisees also knew that God spoke to Moses, but they did not know where Jesus came from, just like the healed man didn't know where Jesus currently was. This theme climaxes when the healed man challenged all that the Pharisees knew and did not know in verses 31–33. They asserted what they “knew:” God does not listen to willful sinners, but does listen to the righteous. (See Psalm 34:15–16.) Since the man's eyes were opened—an objectively good act—the Healer must be righteous and good.

The theme of light and darkness is also present in this passage. The healed man was formerly in literal darkness being blind, but now lived in the light. Even more, the healed man now existed in spiritual light through relationship with Jesus Christ. However, the Pharisees remained in darkness because they could not see the truth of who Jesus was.

Many themes from this healing story have their introduction in John's Prologue (John 1:1–18). According to John 1:11, Jesus came to the Jews, of whom the Pharisees were religious elite, and they received Him not. Despite the objections from the darkness and blindness of the Pharisees, they could not overcome the light Jesus offered. The healed man entered into the light and came to believe in Jesus. Despite the miracle, the Pharisees were obsessed with Moses and the Law, and they could not see the grace and truth Jesus offered.

DESPITE PHARISAICAL CHARGES AND DOUBTS, JESUS DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER AS NOT ONLY A MIRACLE WORKER, BUT ALSO AS THE ONLY WORTHY RECIPIENT OF BELIEF AND WORSHIP.

DAY 1

John 9:24–25

²⁴ Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

²⁵ He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Biblical Insight

The healed man's response to the Pharisees was surprisingly resilient given the fact that many in those days feared and revered the Jewish religious elite, including his own parents. The healed man refused to cave to the Pharisees' pressure; rather, he stated the facts of what he did and did not know. He could neither confirm nor deny that the One who healed him was a sinner, but he did know his blindness had been healed (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 9:25). The healed man demonstrated simple faith and refused to complicate his healing with theological speculation.

Daily Devotion

Any teacher at an elementary level could wax eloquent on the importance of this basic activity: ask simple questions and state simple facts. This is one of the first activities a child in school learns to do. When questioned, we learn to respond without embellishment, stating the unadulterated answer.

The healed man put this strategy into practice during the Pharisees' interrogation. Without pomp, circumstance, drama, embellishment, or fear, he stated the simple facts. He did not know much about the One who had healed him, nor could he speak to His level of purity or spirituality. He did not know how Jesus did what He did, but he did know he had been healed. Simple fact: he was blind earlier, but he was seeing now.

Let's follow his example because, more often than not, the simple truth speaks for itself. I once was (we can all fill in the blank), but thanks be to God, I'm not anymore.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 9:26-29

²⁶ Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

²⁷ He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

²⁸ Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

²⁹ We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

Biblical Insight

The healed man asked the Pharisees, “Will ye also be his disciples?” We can read his question as sincere questioning because of the Pharisees’ insistence or as playful taunting knowing that he now had the upper hand in this interchange. Unfortunately, the healed man’s tone when asking this question is not recorded. By invoking their adherence to Moses, the Pharisees tried to appeal to their spiritual heritage and downplay the status of Jesus. However, their appeal to Moses was a distraction and a weak argument against the main point; the Pharisees still could not explain how the man born blind was miraculously seeing.

Daily Devotion

In II Samuel 12 the prophet Nathan appeared before King David, offering a fictional scenario. A man with several sheep of his own took the only sheep another man possessed. David was outraged, saying that the man who did this must surely pay. Nathan responded with his famous words: “Thou art the man” (II Samuel 12:7).

Nathan provided irrefutable evidence that David had done far worse than the man in the fictional scenario, forgetting all the Lord had done for him and taking the only wife of one of his men. The whole affair culminated in David committing murder to cover up his crime. When faced with hard evidence, David was forced to deal with what he’d done.

Hard evidence is difficult to argue with. It redirects our thinking, demands to be dealt with, and forces us to change whether change suits us or not. Facts are facts. They were for David. They were for the Pharisees. They are for us.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 9:30-34

³⁰ The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

³¹ Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

³² Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

³³ If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

³⁴ They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Biblical Insight

Even though the Pharisees tried to portray the healed man as an uneducated sinner, his final challenge to the Pharisees demonstrated the foolishness of their criticisms. The Pharisees could not explain who Jesus was, despite the fact He healed blind eyes. The Pharisees had accused Jesus of being a sinner, but the healed man proclaimed that no sinner could do such a positive, miraculous work. Interestingly, this proclamation by the healed man reflected the same conclusion some of the Pharisees had already reached: "Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" (John 9:16).

Daily Devotion

An old English adage goes like this: "The proof is in the pudding." The *Oxford Dictionary* explains the whole phrase is actually "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." It means the real value of something can be judged only from practical experience or results, not from appearance or theory. How good pudding is cannot be judged from how it looks or how we might guess it would taste.

In order to know how good something tastes, we have to actually taste it. The taste test is the true test. The Pharisees were attempting to judge Jesus on looks and theories alone, something we must never do. Let us heed the psalmist's wise words: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 9:35–38

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

³⁶ He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

³⁷ And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

³⁸ And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Biblical Insight

Jesus, being all-knowing, surely knew about the healed man's resilience in the face of the Pharisees' questioning. Jesus provided not only an opportunity for healing, but also an opportunity for relationship. This interaction demonstrates an important example for modern believers in Christ to follow; just because the formerly blind man had received a miracle didn't mean he was in right relationship with God. The response of the publicly healed man in John 9 exists in stark contrast to the publicly healed man in John 5:1–16, who neither believed in nor worshiped Jesus (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on John 9:37–38).

Daily Devotion

Suppose you married the love of your life. The date was set, the wedding planned, the vows exchanged, commemorative pictures taken, and marriage license signed. What if, after this, your spouse looked you in the eye and said, "All right. You are now on my insurance and have access to our joint bank account. I'll see you next Sunday at church."

That would be a disaster of a marriage. Marriage is so much more than a business transaction. It is companionship, experiences shared, time spent together. The life of a marriage is so much more than the surface benefits you receive.

Our journey with Jesus is like that. It's so much more than a soul saved and sins forgiven; it's companionship, help, and comfort of the Holy Spirit for the rest of our days. It's being in right relationship with the One who died for us so we could live.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 9:39–41

³⁹ And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

⁴⁰ And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

⁴¹ Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Biblical Insight

At the end of the passage, the theme of blindness shifted from the healed man to the Pharisees, who were still spiritually blind. Jesus desires to open the eyes of those who sincerely seek Him. The only ones who remain spiritually blind are they who have chosen blindness by deceiving themselves into thinking they can see. Jesus had come into the world “for judgment”; therefore, His presence has caused some to choose blindness, making it clear who has accepted Him and who has not.

Daily Devotion

During a Sunday school object lesson, Kole was chosen as a volunteer. His task was to walk from one side of the room to another, blindfolded. He would navigate the treacherous terrain of desks, chairs, and other students by listening to his teacher’s voice.

After Kole successfully navigated all the obstacles by listening, he was given the opportunity to cross the room without his blindfold, to see how much easier it was. To his teacher’s surprise, Kole began stumbling and tripping over absolutely everything. Even though the blindfold was removed, Kole was still navigating the room without vision; he still had his eyes shut.

How often do we continue to navigate life in blindness, shutting our spiritual eyes willfully, when Jesus has already given us His vision? Follow the command of the writer of Hebrews: “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

1.4

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus gave His life for us.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

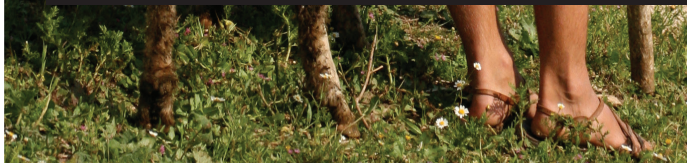
I will know the Good Shepherd's voice and follow Him alone.



FOCUS VERSE: John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

LESSON TEXT: John 10:7-18



Lesson Title: The Good Shepherd

Icebreaker: If you could have had any job in the Bible, what would you have done?

- I. JESUS TAUGHT ON THE ROLE OF THE SHEPHERD
 - A. False versus True Shepherds
 - B. I Will Know the Shepherd's Voice
 - » *What does it mean to know God's voice? How do we know His voice?*
 - » *Recall a time when your thoughts and feelings aligned with God's Word. What about a time they did not?*
- II. JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD
 - A. Lays Down His Life for the Sheep
 - B. Knows the Sheep
 - » *How do you feel knowing God knows all about you and loves you anyway?*
 - C. Speaks to the Sheep
 - » *In addition to your daily Bible reading, what is your favorite way of taking in more of God's Word?*
 - D. I Will Follow the Shepherd Alone
 - » *What other voices and influences will you need to reject or stop following to truly follow Jesus?*

Prayer Focus

- To hear and follow the good shepherd's voice
- To silence other voices and influences trying to lead us astray

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 10:7-18

The statements “I am the door” and “I am the good shepherd” are two of seven “I AM” (Greek: *egō eimi*) statements of Jesus seen throughout John’s Gospel. These statements directly link Jesus to Jehovah’s declaration to Moses in Exodus 3:14: “I AM THAT I AM.” This self-identification by Christ as the Creator God from the Hebrew Scriptures angered many of the Jewish religious elite who interpreted His declarations as blasphemy.

In this passage, Jesus identified Himself as both the shepherd and the sheepgate. At the same time He is the only passageway to safety and the One who guides us and protects us as we journey. This analogy is especially powerful when considering the role of shepherds and sheepgates in Jesus’ day.

The safety and well-being of the sheep were ultimately the shepherd’s responsibility and depended on the flock’s ability to recognize the shepherd’s voice. Consistent relationship between sheep and a shepherd was vital so the sheep could recognize the voice of their guide. Hired hands could come and go. Seasons and conditions could change. The one consistency for the sheep was the shepherd’s voice. Good shepherds spent countless days and hours with their sheep, studying their condition and planning for their future. Perhaps this brings additional meaning to Jesus’ statement in John 10:11 that “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Not only would a good shepherd die for his flock, but a good shepherd would also give up the rest of his life, with all of its conveniences and comforts, for the sake of the sheep he loved.

When the sheep were in a location where they could be brought to pasture and water daily, then after feeding in the fields and drinking by the riverbanks, the sheep were returned to the safety of the sheepfold. Sheepfolds came in all shapes and sizes, mostly dependent on the needs of the shepherd. Many ancient sheepfolds consisted of stone walls, and almost all had a single entrance—the sheepgate. The single entrance served as another measure of safety for the sheep. The singular gate made it more difficult for thieves and predators to enter the pen and wreak havoc or steal away sheep en masse.

The revelation of hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd cannot be separated from the revelation of knowing Jesus as the door. He is the only way to salvation, and He is constantly calling out to us, leading us closer to Him. We access the door by hearing and being led by His voice. That is how the ancient sheep were led, and that is how we will be led. Our daily prayer should be to daily recognize the Shepherd’s voice, and then daily walk through the open door through which He calls us.

THE STATEMENTS “I AM THE DOOR” AND
“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD” ARE TWO OF
SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS.

DAY 1

John 10:7-9

⁷ Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

⁸ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

⁹ I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Biblical Insight

Jesus presents Himself as the “door” (ESV, KJV, NASB) or “gate” (Mounce, NET, NIV). Therefore, He is the only authorized passageway for salvation. Thieves and robbers can be easily identified because they do not enter in by way of the singular sheepgate. In addition, their voice is strange, so the sheep do not recognize it. Interestingly, Jesus notes that all who trust in Him will be able to go “in and out.” Going “in” the sheepfold represented finding security; going “out” of the sheepfold represented finding sustenance in the pasture. As the Door, Jesus is the only passageway to both safety and provision.

Daily Devotion

There were two kinds of sheepfolds during the time of Christ. One was a more public sheepfold in a central location that housed multiple flocks. The other was a circle of rocks in more pleasing, countryside pastures. This type of sheepfold often did not have a gate because it was makeshift in nature. There was a simple opening for the sheep to enter and exit through.

During the night the shepherd laid down across this opening, literally becoming the gate. When Jesus said, “I am the door,” He meant it quite literally. Just like no sheep (or any other animal, including predators) would make it in or out of the fold without going through the gate, none of us make it in or out of eternity without going through Jesus Christ. He is, quite literally, the only way.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 10:10-11

¹⁰ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Biblical Insight

Jesus' condemnation of thieves in this passage is reminiscent of Ezekiel's similar condemnation of selfish shepherds who stole from, killed, and neglected their sheep (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Jesus demonstrated He was the exact opposite of those thieves, being a life-giver rather than a life-taker. Jesus' status as life-giver has multiple meanings. First, Jesus gives abundant life to the sheep. Second, while the thieves took life from the sheep, Jesus was willing to lay down His life for His sheep. This revelation of Christ was ultimately fulfilled when He died on the cross for the sins of humanity so we might have abundant and eternal life.

Daily Devotion

A band of burglars stole seven computers from an office in San Bernadino, California. Hours later, the computers were back where they came from when the thieves realized they were property of a non-profit crisis center.

They wrote (in less than perfect grammar), "We had no idea what we were taking. Here your stuff back we hope that you guys can continue to make a difference in peoples lives. God Bless."

Thieves typically don't give, but this time, they gave back. Jesus contrasted Himself as the Good Shepherd against the thieves who stole from the flock or abandoned the flock in danger. Jesus proved His promise true when He laid down His own life for us because Jesus was, is, and will always be the Good Shepherd.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 10:12-13

¹² But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

¹³ The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

Biblical Insight

Hireling can also be translated “hired hand” (ESV, NET, NIV). Employees of a shepherd would be less concerned for the sheep and more concerned about self-preservation, but ancient shepherds had invested their entire livelihoods in their sheep. The reference to scattered sheep reminds the modern reader of Jesus’ compassion on the crowds who followed Him, seeing they were “weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NKJV).

Daily Devotion

Every creative knows what it is like to help someone with a project. Maybe you have been asked to edit something someone else has written. Hopefully, the task is taken seriously, and you turn full attention to making sure the text is the absolute best it can be. It is different, however, when you are interacting with material of your own. Words carry more weight, the process is given more attention, and you are more concerned with how the work is received. It is not just something you assisted with or participated in; you made it yourself and your level of investment is much more intense.

Hired hands may be attentive to sheep, but they don’t have as much “skin in the game.” It is different when you are a shepherd and the sheep belong to you. Jesus invested everything into redeeming us. While others may come and go, Jesus will be forever faithful.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 10:14-16

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Biblical Insight

The relationship between sheep and a shepherd must be mutual. It is not enough for the Good Shepherd to know His sheep; we as His sheep must also know Him. Jesus' reference to sheep "not of this fold" foreshadowed the Gentiles who would ultimately become part of His fold in addition to the Jews. (See Acts 10.) The reference to "one fold" and "one shepherd" possibly served as inspiration for Paul's encouragement that the church exists as one body under one Lord (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Daily Devotion

Have you ever been to an awkward wedding? Maybe the couple hadn't known each other long, or perhaps you knew of not-so-secret family drama attached to the ceremony. Weddings can get uncomfortable if there are underlying problems in the relationship.

Now imagine if a couple did not have to exchange vows in the ceremony. What would it be like if the wedding was simply a time for a minister to announce, "By the way, these two are now married. Okay, let's have some cake." No vows, no promises, no commitment. If marriage was a one-way street with no commitment, weddings would be shorter, but marriages would be tougher.

Interestingly, one way Jesus relates to us is through the metaphor of bride and bridegroom. Each wedding must have both. And the minister invests time to ask the bride and bridegroom to make their vows to God and to each other because a solid, lasting relationship is built on commitment.

It's wonderful that Jesus knows us as His sheep, but it's even more wonderful to realize we can know Jesus as our Shepherd. He has promised to care for us, and He invites us to trust Him. Today, spend some time talking with your Shepherd, and then spend some time listening to His voice. He wants to hear from us, and we have the holy invitation to hear from Him.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 10:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Biblical Insight

It was necessary that Jesus' sacrifice be voluntary and not of compulsion. In the Old Testament, the sheep and bulls were led to altars of sacrifice by no choice of their own. Undoubtedly self-preservation instincts kicked in for many sheep and goats who did not want to be sacrificed. In contrast, Jesus provided an ultimate and singular sacrifice "once for all when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27; 10:1-18). He was a perfect, willing sacrifice. Now He calls us as His followers to follow His example and sacrifice ourselves voluntarily. (See Romans 12:1.)

Daily Devotion

Were you aware there is a difference between kidnapping and false imprisonment? Kidnapping is legally defined as taking someone somewhere without their consent, whereas false imprisonment is defined as keeping someone somewhere without their consent. Both situations involve forcing someone into something against their will.

Our Savior was not kidnapped or falsely imprisoned. When He was arrested just before His death and held for His trial, He—unlike any other man in that same position—possessed the ability to walk away at any moment. He could have changed His entire destiny, but thank God He chose to change ours by willingly submitting Himself to death on the cross. He became a sacrifice by sacrificing Himself, a choice we benefit from every day and will benefit from for all eternity. Take some time today to thank Him for Calvary.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

ES

THIS GLORIOUS GOSPEL

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God loved us so much that He gave Himself for us.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will receive Jesus' gift of salvation for me.



FOCUS VERSES: John 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

LESSON TEXT: John 3:16-17



Lesson Title: This Glorious Gospel

Icebreaker: What is your favorite Easter tradition?

I. JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS

A. Jesus' Example of Love

» *If you had the chance to ask God why He loves us, what do you think His response would be?*

B. Jesus Foreshadowed His Death

C. I Will Believe in Jesus' Love for Me

» *What does unconditional love look like to you?*

II. JESUS' DEATH AND BURIAL

A. Jesus Was Crucified

» *Can you share an experience where you were accused falsely?*

B. Jesus Was Buried

C. I Will Praise Jesus for His Sacrifice

» *What do you think when you realize we don't have anything to offer Jesus to repay Him? What do you feel when you realize He doesn't ask us to repay Him?*

III. JESUS' RESURRECTION

A. Jesus Resurrected from the Grave

B. I Will Respond to This Glorious Gospel

» *Others saw Jesus after His resurrection, but they did not recognize Him either. Why?*

Prayer Focus

- For God to help us rightly respond to this glorious gospel
- For God to help us share this glorious gospel with others

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 3:16-17

John 3:16 is one of the most widely recognized verses in the entire Bible. This verse focuses on God's love for humanity and Christ's mission to save anyone who believes in Him. However, the context of the verse is often neglected. Prior to this verse, Jesus expounded to the Pharisee Nicodemus on the necessity of new birth by water and Spirit (John 3:5), which had its ultimate fulfillment beginning on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. There believers were baptized by water in Jesus' name and were also filled with the Holy Spirit with the supernatural sign of speaking in other tongues. The belief Jesus mentioned in John 3:16 encompasses far more than mental assent; belief must also include the action of obeying the command of Jesus to experience new birth by water and Spirit.

Several themes in Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus connect directly to John's Prologue. The theme of birth in verses 5-8 recalls John 1:13. The reference to Moses and His comparison to Christ in verses 14-15 recalls a similar comparison between Moses and Christ made in John 1:17. The word *world* (Greek: *kósmos*) found in verses 16-19 recall John 1:9-10. The theme of light and darkness in verses 19-21 recall John 1:4-9. Finally, immediately after this conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus interacted with John the Baptist (John 3:22-30) the faithful witness introduced in John 1:6-8, 15.

THE BELIEF JESUS MENTIONED IN JOHN 3:16 ENCOMPASSES FAR MORE THAN MENTAL ASSENT; BELIEF MUST ALSO INCLUDE THE ACTION OF OBEYING THE COMMAND OF JESUS TO EXPERIENCE NEW BIRTH BY WATER AND SPIRIT.

DAY 1

John 3:16a

For God so loved the world

Biblical Insight

Love motivates God's actions. John reiterated this theme several times throughout his writings, famously noting: "God is love" (I John 4:8). John referred to himself five times as the disciple Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). John believed humanity's ability and commission to love others directly emanates from God's love for us. (See John 13:34; I John 3:11, 16.)

Daily Devotion

Cars, trains, and planes need fuel to keep moving. Bodies need food, water, and oxygen to keep living. Fire needs wood to keep burning. Anything active needs fuel.

Love fuels God. Love motivates God to move in our lives. Love is one of the main reasons God made us and saves us. Love is the central heartbeat of this way we walk in. His love for us should fuel our love for others. Love is the fire that keeps us living as He desires, and His love for us is the fuel for that flame. The same John who wrote John 3:16 also wrote I John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 3:16b

... that he gave his only begotten Son

Biblical Insight

The term “only begotten” can also be translated “one and only.” The phrase indicates uniqueness, with none comparable or existent alongside Him. As with many themes throughout John’s Gospel, this phrase originates in the Prologue of his work. The phrase “only begotten Son” immediately recalls John 1:14: “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” With this recollection, the first century readers of John would have immediately associated “only begotten” with supreme glory.

Daily Devotion

A famous piece of jade jewelry is known to have been sold in a Sotheby’s auction in 2014. The selling price was a cool \$27.4 million dollars. This former possession of American socialite and heiress Barbara Hutton was intricately made of twenty-seven graduated jadeite beads, with a clasp made of rubies and diamonds. It is known as the Hutton-Mdivani necklace and is a one-of-a-kind piece now belonging to the Cartier Collection.

One-of-a-kind items tend to be unmatched in value. The term only begotten means there is only one. Our “one-of-a-kind” Jesus is more spectacularly glorious than any earthly gemstone could ever be and far more priceless in merit and value. The One who hung on the cross was infinitely more precious than any gem hung around someone’s neck. Do we treat Him with the reverence His infinite value deserves?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 3:16c

. . .that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Biblical Insight

Birth and death exist on opposite sides of a human's life. In Nicodemus's midnight encounter with Jesus, the Pharisee confused physical birth with spiritual new birth, wondering how he could be reborn since he was already old. With physical birth, physical death is inevitable; however, the spiritual new birth offered by Christ resulted in everlasting, or eternal, life. This statement quickly demonstrated the superiority and necessity of spiritual new birth.

Daily Devotion

In essence, we are all born dying. One million cells in our body die every single second. This means within the span of a day approximately 1.2 kilograms of bodily cells will be gone. The moment we are born into this world naturally, we begin dying.

Spiritual new birth is comparable to natural birth in many ways. Yet, with spiritual new birth, the old passes away, and we are made completely new in Christ. We are supernaturally born into an invaluable inheritance of eternal life with Him. We are naturally born unto inevitable death. Yet, when we are born spiritually, we are born unto eternal life. Natural birth marks the ticking of a clock that ultimately counts down toward death, but spiritual counts the sands slipping through an hourglass leading toward everlasting life.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 3:17a

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world . . .

Biblical Insight

Paul possibly recalled these words of John’s Gospel when Paul wrote: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Condemnation is different from conviction. John prophesied that the Holy Spirit would “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8, ESV). Conviction always draws us back to repentance which draws us closer to God. Condemnation pushes us away from God and toward Hell because condemnation works to convince us God won’t forgive us. An adulteress in John 8 discovered Jesus did not come to condemn sinners; He came to offer them a path forward out of their sin. But those who refuse to believe in Christ condemn themselves (John 3:18).

Daily Devotion

Conviction and condemnation both feel like guilt, but they are not the same. The condemned stop coming to church and walking with God, not necessarily because they don’t love God anymore but typically because they feel like God doesn’t love them anymore. The devil is vicious. He’ll tell you God won’t forgive you. The church won’t forgive you. Don’t bother to repent because God won’t bother to listen.

Yes, sin is hideous and abhorrent, but thanks be to God, sin can be forgiven. John wrote: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When we fall, let’s stay there just long enough to tell God we’re sorry and ask Him to forgive us. As soon as we ask, He forgives. Then, stand back up and keep walking.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 3:17b

. . . but that the world through him might be saved.

Biblical Insight

Jesus' purpose for His incarnation, death, and resurrection was the salvation of the entire world. Again, we see echoes of John's Prologue in this phrase. The Greek word for "world" is *kósmos*, which was used in John 1:9-10. Christ's hope for salvation and redemption was always directed toward the "world" as a whole, even for those He knew would reject Him. "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him" (John 1:10).

Daily Devotion

Making a guest list for a party or a wedding can be a treacherous task. For every one person you would like to invite, you can easily find five people less close, less pleasing, less necessary to the occasion who may be wildly offended if excluded. Many potential hostesses have turned away from having a party altogether, worrying they will hurt feelings and burn bridges. Sometimes there might simply not be enough food available for the growing guest list.

The doors of the kingdom of Heaven, however, are open to all who want to enter. No one needs to be excluded except by personal choice. Christ came to seek and save all who were lost, and His arrival heralded salvation and grace for the entire world. Those who would reject Him, those who love Him on sight, those who remain undecided—all are welcome. All are invited in. Have you responded to His invitation?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

2.1

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The transfiguration of Jesus indicates He is the express image of God.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will worship Jesus for who He is: my Lord, my God, and my Savior.



FOCUS VERSE: Matthew 17:2

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 17:1-13; II Peter 1:16-21



Lesson Title: The Transfiguration of Jesus

Icebreaker: Give an example of a time when you spoke before you thought.

» *How do you picture the Red Sea crossing? Do you think God used the weather and creation to part the sea and bury the Egyptians?*

- I. THE ROLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IN THE CONFIRMATION OF FAITH
 - A. Transfiguration Is Metamorphosis
 - B. The Kingdom of God Is the Kingdom of the Son of Man
 - C. I Will Worship Jesus as Almighty God in Flesh

» *When you think of Jesus, how do you picture Him?*
- II. THE TRANSFIGURATION WAS A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY
 - A. Peter's Second Letter Affirmed the Significance of the Transfiguration

» *What moments in your life have shown you the majesty and glory of God? How have those moments confirmed Scripture to you?*
 - B. Peter's Second Letter Affirmed the Deity of Jesus Christ

» *What difference does it make if we see Jesus as Almighty God or as one person in a triune Godhead?*
 - C. Jesus Is Our God, Lord, and Savior
 - D. Worshiping Jesus

» *How do we keep adding godly qualities to our faith?*

Prayer Focus

- For understanding to comprehend how the Hebrew Scriptures testify of Jesus
- For help sharing our understanding of Scripture with people we meet

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 17:1-13; II Peter 1:16-21

The Mount of Transfiguration is one of three instances in which a voice from Heaven provided divine confirmation of Jesus Christ's identity. The first instance was at Jesus' baptism by John, in which the voice from Heaven proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). The second was at the Mount of Transfiguration, during which the voice from Heaven spoke the same phrase with the added command: "hear Him" (Matthew 17:5, KJV). The third instance was at the conclusion of Jesus' prayer that God would "glorify thy name," to which the voice spoke to the gathered crowd and said: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28).

In all three instances, the voice from Heaven was directed toward those gathered around Jesus. Even on the third occasion, although the voice spoke at the conclusion of Jesus' prayer, Jesus confirmed, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes" (John 12:30). There is no compelling reason to view these instances as confirmation of separate persons in the Godhead because all three instances were given to the listeners present as affirmation of Jesus being the Messiah and to encourage heeding the words He spoke. Such an understanding is more consistent with Hebraic monotheism, which is the perspective from which all New Testament writers penned Scripture.

Interestingly, in all three synoptic Gospels the Mount of Transfiguration narrative is positioned immediately before the story of the disciples failing to cast demons out of a boy (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43). Despite the transfixing revelation of Jesus' divinity on the mountain, the disciples failed to do Jesus' work once they came down off the mountain. Jesus told them they failed to do the miracle because of their "unbelief" (Matthew 17:20), or "little faith" (ESV), and reminded them, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Personal, ongoing relationship with God based on faith and built by prayer and fasting ultimately renders more spiritual power than visions of Moses, Elijah, and a transfigured Christ.

THERE IS NO COMPELLING REASON TO VIEW THESE INSTANCES AS CONFIRMATION OF SEPARATE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD BECAUSE ALL THREE INSTANCES WERE GIVEN TO THE LISTENERS PRESENT AS AFFIRMATION OF JESUS BEING THE MESSIAH AND TO ENCOURAGE HEEDING THE WORDS HE SPOKE.

DAY 1

Matthew 17:1-4

¹ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Biblical Insight

On multiple occasions Jesus chose Peter, James, and John from among the Twelve, such as the healing of Jairus's daughter and to pray with Him separately in Gethsemane. These interactions gave the three disciples a unique and intimate insight into the person and work of Christ.

Peter's words in Matthew 17:4 demonstrated these men's confusion and bewilderment. Both Mark's and Luke's Gospel note that Peter only sputtered these words because he "did not know what to say" (Mark 9:6; Luke 9:33). Similarly, according to Mark 14:40, these three disciples were at a loss for words when Jesus questioned them in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Daily Devotion

When Azadeh discovered she had stage five colon cancer, she felt hopeless. Because of her Muslim faith, praying for healing was not an option. To ask Allah for healing was considered a grave sin.

One day, Azadeh met a former Muslim woman who encouraged her to ask Jesus for healing. According to Islamic teachings, Jesus healed people and would return at the end of time. The former Muslim argued that this meant that Jesus was still alive. Why not ask Him for healing?

Azadeh agreed and attended a prayer meeting at a small Pentecostal church plant. One month later, Azadeh reported that she was completely healed of cancer. She declared, "Allah did not heal me. I know it was Jesus."

Azadeh has been given a unique insight into Jesus that has begun unraveling decades of Islamic teaching. Upon reflection, what insights into Jesus' nature have you received through difficult seasons?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Matthew 17:5-8

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Biblical Insight

The words emanating from Heaven in this passage immediately remind us of Jesus’ baptism by John when similar words boomed from Heaven (Matthew 3:17). However, on this occasion the voice from Heaven added a command not recorded at Jesus’ baptism: “hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). This command was obviously directed at the three disciples, as no one else was present, and it implicitly demonstrated the superiority of Jesus’ ministry even more than that of Moses and Elijah, who symbolized the Hebrew Law and Prophets (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Matthew 17:8). Jesus is the One the disciples should listen to and prioritize.

Daily Devotion

The word *priority* means, “superiority in rank, position, or privilege” (merriam-webster.com) and comes from the Latin root meaning *first*. Before the 1900s the word *priorities* rarely appeared in print. Then around the 1940s, time management experts transformed the singular priority into multiple priorities.

Decades later, we now live in a world of countless priorities, or “firsts.” This is certainly true when it comes to the voices speaking into our lives. There are teachers, employers, significant others, politicians, celebrities, advertisers, influencers, spiritual leaders, and many other voices trying to influence our lives.

As noted in our Biblical Insight today, the voice from Heaven did not command Peter, James, and John to “hear ye them” but rather “hear ye him” (Matthew 3:17). Upon reflection, what voice or voices do you prioritize in your life? Is hearing God your main priority or sometimes just an afterthought?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Matthew 17:9-13

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

¹⁰ And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

¹² But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Biblical Insight

The prophecy the disciples referred to is found in Malachi 4:5-6. Obviously John the Baptist was not literally Elijah, but John was clearly identified as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Jesus identified John the Baptist as "Elijah who was to come." (See Matthew 11:14.) According to Luke 1, an angel told Elizabeth that John the Baptist would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." However, despite John's arrival to fulfill Malachi's prophecy, he was rejected and martyred, a foreshadowing of how Christ would ultimately be treated.

Daily Devotion

In his book, *Science Speaks*, Professor Peter W. Stoner, chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena State College, outlines the mathematical probability of a single person fulfilling biblical prophecies. According to Stoner, for any man to have ever lived to fulfill simply eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} . That is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. Stoner then calculated that the probability of one person fulfilling forty-eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{157} , yet Jesus fulfilled over three hundred prophecies. For this to occur without God is a mathematical impossibility.

With God, the fulfillment of over three hundred prophecies is further proof that He knows the beginning to the end. Take comfort in knowing that while you do not know what the future holds, God does.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

II Peter 1:16–18

¹⁶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Biblical Insight

Peter's recollection of the voice that spoke from Heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration is important for Oneness theology. Peter understood the voice from Heaven to be a "divine endorsement" of Jesus—a testament of His honor and glory—that was directed toward and given for the benefit of the disciples so that they may be witnesses of Christ's majesty. Peter did not view the instance as persons in a triune Godhead speaking to one another, of which no such biblical example exists (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Peter 1:17).

Daily Devotion

J. Warner Wallace, a cold-case homicide detective, was once an atheist. He was tired of being challenged by Christians, so Wallace began to read the Bible and realized that Christianity was like the cold cases he solved as a detective.

Within his book *Cold-Case Christianity*, Wallace utilizes his detective skills to demonstrate how he went from atheistic skeptic to devout Christian. For Wallace, the tipping point of his faith journey was his realization that each of the Gospels was a record of eyewitness accounts of the writers or of people interviewed. Plus the Gospels were written by known authors soon after Jesus' ascension.

The Gospels are not the only recorded eyewitness testimonies, as seen in II Peter 1. Eyewitness accounts are central to Christianity. As you are reading the New Testament, pay attention for details that only an eyewitness would notice.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

II Peter 1:19–21

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Biblical Insight

Second Peter 1:20–21 communicates several important truths about Scripture. First, Peter affirmed that all Scripture is divinely inspired, not originating solely from human mind and will. Second, Scripture should not be subjected to the private whimsical interpretation of any one individual. In this same epistle Peter rebuked false teachers who nefariously misinterpreted Scripture (II Peter 2:1–3), which is exactly the opposite of what the disciples did (II Peter 1:16). Third, the phrase “knowing this first” indicates the importance and primacy of embracing Scripture, not allowing it to slip from its rightful, principal place (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Peter 1:20–21).

Daily Devotion

During the fall and winter months of 1819 and 1820, 77-year-old Thomas Jefferson used a razor to cut passages from six copies of the New Testament. Then he rearranged and pasted together the selected verses. His goal was to remove any signs of the miraculous and supernatural from the Gospels.

Jefferson viewed the teachings of Jesus as precious as diamonds, but he saw the miraculous as “the dung of ancient political agendas” (“Diamonds and Dunghills,” *The Thomas Jefferson Hour*). To Thomas Jefferson, Jesus was not divine, but rather a moral teacher.

Until his death, Jefferson attended church faithfully and read the verses of Jesus’ teachings, but he did not receive the revelation of Jesus’ deity. Jefferson was too bound by his own understanding and interpretation of Scripture to know who Jesus was.

During personal times of Bible reading and study, don’t merely try to understand Scripture from your own human reasoning. Take time to surrender your understanding to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

2.2

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus is the Lord God who rules the raging sea.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

Since Jesus can sleep during a great tempest, I do not need to fear a storm.



FOCUS VERSE: Matthew 8:27

But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:23-25



Lesson Title: Jesus Calms the Storm

Icebreaker: If you could have one masterpiece painting hanging in your home, what would it be?

- I. THE PSALMS ANTICIPATE THE CALMING OF THE SEA
 - A. Psalms and Songs
 - B. God Is the One Who Calms the Seas and Waves
 - C. I Will Trust God to Calm the Storms in My Life
 - » *What storm has God stilled in your life?*
- II. THE OLD TESTAMENT MEETS THE NEW TESTAMENT
 - A. The Storm's Fury and the Disciples' Fear
 - » *Have you ever wondered if God cares about what you're going through? How does He show you He does?*
 - B. Jesus' Authority over Nature
 - » *When the disciples woke Jesus, what do you think they expected Jesus to do?*
 - C. I Will Trust Jesus with My Storms
- III. AFTER THE STORM
 - A. Jesus' Rebuke and the Disciples' Response
 - » *How would you have responded if you were one of the disciples?*
 - B. I Will Worship Jesus as Lord
 - » *What verse(s) gives you peace that Jesus is in control of all life's storms?*

Prayer Focus

- Expressing our thanks to God for His rescue from danger
- Praying that we will trust Jesus regardless of life's circumstances

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:23-25

The story of Jesus rising from sleep to calm the stormy sea demonstrated Jesus had all the power of the Old Testament Jehovah Himself. Psalm 65:7 describes God as one who “stilleth the noise of the seas [and] the noise of their waves,” and Psalm 104:6-7 describes God as one who could control the waters by a rebuke. In Job 38:8-11, God described Himself as the one able to set limits on and control the seas. The storm caused the disciples to be struck with both fear and wonder as they observed Jesus demonstrating power over even the most uncontrollable forces of nature.

This story exists in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). Small nuances exist between versions of the story. For example, in Matthew’s version the disciples called Jesus “Lord;” in Mark’s version they called Jesus “Teacher;” and in Luke’s version they called Jesus “Master” twice. Each appellation appropriately describes an element of Jesus’ actions in this story. Jesus was a teacher, instructing the disciples on important lessons about faith in God and His full identity. Jesus showed Himself as master through His control over the forces of nature. Jesus revealed Himself as Lord by demonstrating Himself as the all-powerful LORD of the Old Testament.

In each of these three Gospels, this story exists immediately before Jesus cast demons out of the man (or men) living in a graveyard in the region of the Gadarenes (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39). The story of Jesus calming the storm parallels that of the healing of the demoniac(s). In the first, the sea was in constant tempest until Jesus spoke; then there was peace. In the second miracle, the demoniacs were constantly tortured until Jesus spoke; then there was peace (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Mark 4:39-40). By these two instances, Jesus demonstrated supernatural power over all forces of evil that may come against humanity—external and internal, above and below, physical and spiritual.

THE STORM CAUSED THE DISCIPLES
TO BE STRUCK WITH BOTH FEAR AND
WONDER AS THEY OBSERVED JESUS
DEMONSTRATING POWER OVER EVEN
THE MOST UNCONTROLLABLE FORCES
OF NATURE.

DAY 1

Matthew 8:23-25

²³ And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

²⁴ And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

²⁵ And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Biblical Insight

Only in Matthew's version of this narrative do the disciples yell "save us" to Jesus. Mark and Luke's versions do not contain any request directed toward Jesus. It is unclear what the disciples intended by the request to be saved. They likely intended for Jesus to help steer the boat or bail water rather than sleep. Whatever they expected, the disciples obviously did not expect Jesus to miraculously stop the storm, because when that happened, the disciples "marvelled" (Matthew 8:27).

Daily Devotion

A seventeen-year-old girl was sitting in class when excruciating pain overwhelmed her body. Doctor visits, painful medical tests, and sleepless nights became her reality. Yet, through the pain, she kept going to church, going through prayer lines, and praying for healing.

As the days became years, the young lady began to realize that while God could heal her, He chose to answer her prayers in His way. He chose to help her find ways to better handle her pain. During a youth service six years later, the group laid hands on her, and she was made whole.

If you feel as though God is not answering your prayers, take time to reflect upon whether you are only wanting God to respond in a certain way. Perhaps, God has been answering your prayers all along, but you are simply expecting Him to navigate the boat safely to shore instead of dealing with the root of the problem and calming the storm.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Matthew 8:26-27

²⁶ And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

²⁷ But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Biblical Insight

Matthew's version of this story is the only one in which Jesus chastised the disciples for having little faith before He calmed the storm. In Mark's and Luke's accounts, Jesus provided this comment after He calmed the storm. Like Luke, Matthew did not include the words that Jesus spoke to the storm but simply stated that Jesus rebuked the winds and sea.

Daily Devotion

Charles Kettering, the former head of research at General Motors, once said, "No one would ever have crossed the ocean if he could have gotten off the ship in the storm."

Early European exploration was heavily influenced by storms. According to the *Coastal Heritage Magazine*, "hurricanes have altered the course of history."

If not for hurricanes, perhaps South Carolinians would speak French today and the Puritans would have settled in the South instead of Massachusetts. Without storms, the Spaniards may have built forts in the Gulf of Mexico while the French Huguenots might have settled in Maryland.

Storms transformed the dreams of explorers, re-routed colonists to different locations, and became the source for progress. The same can be said of the storms of life.

If you are facing a storm, do not give up. See the storm as an opportunity for God to change your dreams, re-route your focus, and help you progress in your relationship with Him.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Mark 4:37-38

³⁷ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

³⁸ And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Biblical Insight

Mark's Gospel depicts Jesus as being slightly more comfortable in the boat than Matthew's and Luke's do, since Mark's account is the only one that records Jesus sleeping on a pillow. In Mark, the disciples' words to Jesus are also more confrontational: "carest thou not that we perish?" Unlike the other two versions, this charge accused Jesus of not only being unable to stop the storm, but even worse, uncaring about the danger the disciples were in.

Daily Devotion

For three years, sounds of hammering echoed throughout Belfast, Ireland, as the *RMS Titanic* was being built. Four days into her maiden voyage, the Titanic sank. Belfast became silent except for the sound of weeping. People in Belfast struggled with mourning, embarrassment, and guilt in the aftermath of the Titanic's demise.

One day at a church of which sixteen parishioners died on the Titanic, the pastor preached from Mark 4:35-41. In the sermon the pastor reminded not only his congregation, but also Belfast, that there was only one boat in the history of the world that was unsinkable, the boat occupied by the Savior. Then looking out at his congregation, the pastor reminded the troubled church that the only hearts that will weather the storms of life are the hearts with Jesus inside. Be encouraged—if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will weather the storm you are facing.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Mark 4:39-41

³⁹ And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

⁴⁰ And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Biblical Insight

Despite this narrative being inextricably linked with the famous phrase “Peace, be still,” Mark’s version is the only one that records Jesus saying these words. The disciples’ response is also nuanced; in Matthew the disciples simply “marvelled” (Greek: *thaumazó*). In Luke the disciples were “afraid” (*phobeó*) and “wondered” (*thaumazó*), but in Mark the disciples were “afraid” (*deloi*) and “feared” (*phobeó*). This description is fitting for Mark’s Gospel, since fear is one of the last emotions recorded in Mark’s Gospel. (See Mark 16:8.)

Daily Devotion

“Peace Be Still” was a hymn written in 1874 to teach Sunday school children about Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4. After a rise in popularity, it eventually fell into obscurity until James Cleveland revived it in the 1950s.

Cleveland was a songwriter, arranger, and pioneer of the modern choir recording movement. Just days before recording the hymn in 1963, the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing occurred in Birmingham, Alabama. When asked if the hymn was a protest to the bombing, Cleveland said no.

Years later when members of the choir were asked if they were scared when recording the hymn in the aftermath of the bombing, they declared, “We weren’t so disturbed that we couldn’t serve the Lord. We knew the Lord, and we were there to praise and lift up His name” (*The Journal of Gospel Music*).

No storm is so tempestuous that Jesus cannot calm it. May we have the same testimony as the church in Alabama: “We weren’t so disturbed that we couldn’t serve the Lord.”

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Luke 8:23-25

²³ But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

²⁴ And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

²⁵ And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

Biblical Insight

Luke's account of Jesus' question to the disciples after the calming of the storm insinuates that they completely lacked faith because Jesus asked, "Where is your faith?" Whereas Matthew's version charged the disciples as having "little faith," Mark and Luke's Gospels insinuated that the disciples had no faith at all. These accounts are not contradictory; they reflect the different emphases the Gospel writers were addressing. Each of the disciples would have their faith tested and stretched over the course of their journey of following Jesus, and He patiently led them in growing to become leaders of the early church.

Daily Devotion

Biosphere 2 is an artificial environment created as a research tool for scientists to study Earth's ecosystems including deserts, rain forests, and even an ocean. One of the largest discoveries within Biosphere 2 was that trees grew more rapidly there than they grew outside the dome, but they also fell over before reaching maturation. When examining the root systems and layers of bark, scientists discovered a deficiency of stress wood.

Stress wood is what strengthens a tree and prevents collapse. It can only be developed when trees experience winds and storms. Without the stress of storms, trees have no strength.

James 1:2-4 tells us to consider trials as pure joy because the testing of faith will lead to perseverance and ultimately spiritual maturity. If you are currently experiencing a trial, find time to praise God. Consider the trial as God's way of strengthening your faith.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

2.3

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of being the meek Messiah.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will praise Jesus with what I have.



FOCUS VERSES: Matthew 21:4-5, NKJV

⁴ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 21:1-11



Lesson Title: The Triumphal Entry

Icebreaker: If you could farm any animals, what would they be?

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT FULFILLED

- A. Zechariah and Matthew
- B. Zechariah and Genesis
 - » *What are other biblical examples of intertextuality?*
- C. I Will Believe God's Word

II. THE MEEK MESSIAH

- A. The Unbroken Colt and Makeshift Saddle
- B. Coats and Palm Branches
 - » *What does it feel like to arrive at a reception or party without a gift?*
- C. I Will Praise God with What I Have
 - » *What do you have to worship God with? Are you worshiping Him with what you have?*

III. THE PARADE

- A. Hosanna to the Son of David
 - » *What is your favorite word or phrase to use in worship?*
- B. The Religious Response
- C. I Will Have a Relationship with Jesus for Myself

Prayer Focus

- That we will understand how the Scriptures speak of Jesus
- To express our thanks to God for the salvation He provides in Jesus, the Son of David

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 21:1-11

Matthew 21 records Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. His entry set the stage for a week that would turn out to be an emotional roller coaster. Shortly after He entered into Jerusalem to the cheers and adoration of the crowds, He received criticism for driving moneychangers out of the Lord's House (vv. 12-16) and teaching in the Temple (vv. 23-27). Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers alike all tried to entrap Jesus by poking holes in His teaching (vv. 15-46). In Matthew 23, Jesus issued a fiery rebuke against the scribes and Pharisees. Shortly thereafter, these religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus as they conspired with Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. Eventually Judas betrayed Him and Jesus was arrested, tried in a "kangaroo court," and crucified. What began as a triumphal entry ended in crucifixion just a few days later.

The triumphal entry served several important purposes in the narrative timeline of Jesus' life and ministry. First, the entry fulfilled prophecies and made messianic connections in all three major sections of Hebrew Scripture: Law (Genesis 49:10-11), Writings (Poetry) (Psalm 118:25-26), and Prophets (Zechariah 9:9). Second, the entry provided a template for the proper positioning of Christ in our praise. Though humble, He is worthy of our worship with whatever we have available, even the clothes on our backs and palm branches from trees. We should receive Jesus into our lives gladly and with fervor and expectation.

However, a third purpose of the triumphal entry is found in the demonstration of how quickly praise and worship can turn to rejection when the coming Messiah does not meet our selfish and preconceived notions of the work He has come to perform. When Jesus began to drive out those who defiled the Lord's house and rebuke religious hypocrisy, the crowd's attitudes quickly changed. However, accepting Christ's triumphal entry into our lives includes accepting Christ's discipline and conviction as well as His blessings and miracles.

A THIRD PURPOSE OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY IS FOUND IN THE DEMONSTRATION OF HOW QUICKLY PRAISE AND WORSHIP CAN TURN TO REJECTION WHEN THE COMING MESSIAH DOES NOT MEET OUR SELFISH AND PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS OF THE WORK HE HAS COME TO PERFORM.

DAY 1

Matthew 21:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

³ And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

Biblical Insight

The original context of Genesis 49:10-11 is crucial to understanding Jesus’ command in Matthew 21:2-3. In Genesis, as Jacob spoke over Judah’s future, he prophesied that a royal Judahite king would be preparing for a celebration. Jesus, however, was preparing for an execution that would ultimately lead to celebration due to the salvation secured for humanity. In Genesis, the Judahite king dyed his garments a royal red using the “blood of grapes,” but Jesus’ garments would be stained using His own blood—a substance far more rare and precious (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Matthew 21:2-3).

Daily Devotion

The “granddaddy of all parades” began at Manhattan’s southern tip where the Staten Island Ferry gave a saluting whistle. More than two million New Yorkers jammed into lower Manhattan, cheering, throwing confetti, and chanting, “USA! USA! USA!”

The parade was not for Olympians or for war heroes; this 1981 parade was to celebrate the return of fifty-two American citizens who were held hostage for 444 days. New York threw one of the biggest celebrations in American history.

One of the celebrators, a housewife, stated, “I think people are cheering for more than just the hostages. Everybody is cheering for everybody. It’s a celebration of freedom” (“Two Million in Manhattan Cheer Hostages,” *The Washington Post*).

If physical freedom is worth celebrating, how much more should we celebrate spiritual freedom? Journal different ways you can become more intentional in praising God for salvation and freedom while celebrating what God is doing in other people’s lives.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Matthew 21:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

Biblical Insight

Matthew 21:5 is a quotation of Zechariah 9:9, omitting only one phrase: “he is just, and having salvation.” Although not quoted in Matthew 21:5, Jesus also fulfilled this prophecy by being a just (righteous) sacrifice and securing salvation for humanity through His death. The larger original context of Zechariah 9:9 provides even more messianic insight. Zechariah 9:1-8 prophesied the Lord would defeat Israel’s enemies, and Zechariah 9:11-17 described Israel as “prisoners” and prophesied their salvation. Jesus’ death conquered death and sin, enemies of God’s children; freed spiritual prisoners; and secured humanity’s salvation.

Daily Devotion

In February 1941, Maximilian Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo and transferred to the Auschwitz death camp as prisoner number 16670. A few months later, ten prisoners succeeded in escaping the death camp.

To deter other attempts, the Nazi guards picked ten prisoners to be starved in an underground bunker. Knowing that one of the men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, had a wife and children, Kolbe offered to take his place.

While in the dark, underground bunker, left to starve, Maximilian led the condemned men in prayer. After two weeks, Kolbe was the last of the men to die. Kolbe later became known as a “martyr of charity.”

Maximilian’s willingness to take someone else’s place saved one man’s life. Jesus’ willingness to take our place has saved countless souls. If you are grateful that Jesus paid the wage for your sins and took your place almost two thousand years ago, take time today and every day to thank Him.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Matthew 21:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.

Biblical Insight

The obedience of the disciples in this instance cannot be overstated. As good students of Hebrew Scripture, they likely recognized the connection to Genesis 49:10-11 and Zechariah 9:9. If not, their simple obedience still helped bring about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Then, before the crowds laid down their garments in front of the donkey and colt, the disciples led by example by placing their own garments on the beasts, making it clear the only person being exalted that day was the Christ.

Daily Devotion

Corrie ten Boom, Holocaust survivor and author, traveled the world as a public speaker. In each of the sixty countries she visited, she shared important messages of forgiveness, love, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

At one time ten Boom was asked if it was difficult for her to remain humble since her life was a myriad of speaking engagements and she had a public platform. Her reply began with recounting the story of Palm Sunday. Then she asked, "Do you think that for one moment it ever entered the head of the donkey that any of that was for him?" In her comparison, of course, she positioned herself as simply the donkey on which Jesus Christ could ride. We are all called to serve God's purpose, but what is our heart's posture? Are we trying to receive glory, or do we recognize that all glory goes to God alone?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Matthew 21:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”

Biblical Insight

Hosanna in Hebrew means “save indeed,” but in Jesus’ day the word had evolved into a simple greeting, similar to greeting a friend by saying “good morning” or “praise the Lord,” not stating a fact, but rather a wish (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Matthew 21:9). The phrases the crowds chanted originated from Psalm 118:25–26, which declared: “Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD,” and “blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD.” The original psalm revolved around God’s enduring and faithful mercies and steadfast love toward His people.

Daily Devotion

After the invention of Morse Code, different countries developed their own distress signals. CQD, which stood for “seeking, you, distress,” was widely used by the British; SOE was used by the Germans; and the Americans used NC.

On October 3, 1906, SOS was established as the International Distress Signal at the Berlin Radio Conference. The signal was formally introduced on July 1, 1908.

In Morse code, SOS, is signified by three dots, three dashes, and then three dots. The combination of letters was chosen because they are easily recognized and transmitted by telegraph. Since its adoption, the phrase SOS has become a well-known signal for distress. Outside of marine communication, SOS has been associated with “save our souls.”

The only One who can truly save our souls or save us indeed is Jesus. If you or your loved ones are in distress, do what the crowd did on the beginning of that Passion week: call out to Jesus.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Matthew 21:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”

¹¹ So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Biblical Insight

The crowds described Jesus as a prophet, which occurred several times throughout the Gospels. (See Matthew 21:46; Mark 6:15; Luke 7:16, 24:19; John 4:19, 6:14, 7:40, 9:17.) The crowds also noted Jesus was from Nazareth of Galilee. Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 9 that the Messiah was prophesied to be from Galilee. The Messiah was also prophesied to be a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23), which derives its origins from Isaiah 11:1, in which the coming Messiah was described as a “Branch,” using the unusual Hebrew word *nēšer*, the same root word from which the name “Nazareth” is derived (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Isaiah 11:1-9).

Daily Devotion

History is full of prophetic errors. In 1773, King George II said that the American colonies had little stomach for revolution. In 1906, composer John Philip Sousa warned that recorded music would destroy all musical ability. In the early nineteenth century, an English astronomy professor believed that air travel at high speed would be impossible because passengers would suffocate. Austrian-born psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, when writing about Communist revolutionaries in the Soviet Union declared, “The upheaval in Russia seems to promise a better future.”

While people have failed to predict the future, there are hundreds of fulfilled prophecies within Scripture. People can make educated guesses, but only God knows the future. One such promise that we can hold to is that the same King who entered Jerusalem on a donkey will one day return in glory and power. The fulfilled prophecies in Scripture serve as a reminder to us that God is not finished and that there are still prophecies He will fulfill in His time. Take a moment today to praise Him in faith for a promise you know He will fulfil.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

2.4

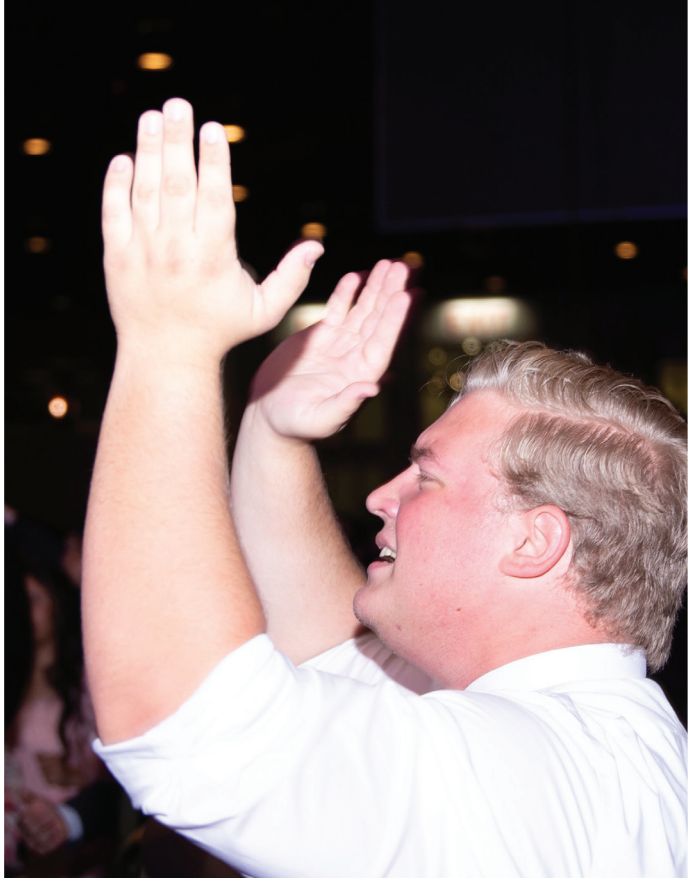
WORSHIPPING THE ONE WHO SITS ON HIS THRONE

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The Creator of all things, the only Lord God Almighty, occupies a single throne in Heaven.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

It is my privilege and responsibility to worship my Creator, the Lord God Almighty.



FOCUS VERSE: Revelation 4:8

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 4:1-11



Lesson Title: Worshiping the One Who Sits on His Throne

Icebreaker: Describe God using just one word.

I. THE REASON FOR REVELATION

A. The Unveiling of Jesus Christ

» *When you think of apocalypse, what do you think of? How has this understanding of Revelation changed your thinking?*

B. The Coming of Jesus Christ

C. I Will Be Ready for Jesus' Coming

» *How do you feel when you think about the coming of the Lord?*

II. THE OUTLINE OF REVELATION

A. The Throne

B. Around the Throne

» *How would we live differently if we understood how truly holy God is?*

C. I Will Worship Jesus Because He Is Holy

III. THE TESTIMONY OF TWO TESTAMENTS

A. Ezekiel's Vision

B. Symbols in Both Testaments

» *What symbol(s) in Revelation causes you the most confusion?*

C. I Will Fix My Eyes on Jesus

Prayer Focus

- For God to help us see Him as holy
- For God to help us worship Him as holy

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Revelation 4:1-11

The Book of Revelation is not the wild speculations of a single man alone on an island, nor is it simply mystical visions of a distant, dystopian future that we are tasked with interpreting in light of current political events. Rather, this book is a “Revelation of Jesus Christ,” focused and centered around Him. This book reveals His supremacy over all creation, His primacy for our worship and adoration, and control over even the most uncertain of futures. Revelation is not designed to scare its readers; rather, Revelation should invoke peace that Christ is in control no matter how scary the world around us becomes. Revelation has been misread if it causes the reader to focus on governments, countries, and political figures rather than focusing on Christ and the worship He deserves as sovereign ruler and Creator who is soon to return for His church.

Part of the praise offered to God by four mysterious creatures in Revelation 4:8 was the chant, “Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” This statement of worship demonstrated Christ’s supremacy and consistent lordship over all eternity—past, present, and future. Jesus is mighty over everything in our past (both personally and universally), everything actively happening in our lives and all around us, and everything in the future, no matter how uncertain.

This chant would have immediately reminded the first-century reader of Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah 6:3, in which six seraphim circled the throne crying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” In Isaiah’s vision, the praise focused on God’s lordship over all creation. In John’s vision, the praise focused on God’s lordship across eternity. In both visions, the praise is centered around God’s holiness. In this context, holiness refers to God’s separated, supreme nature that is higher, better, and unlike any other. This is the same holiness that separated God’s people in ancient Israel and empowered them to live holy (e.g., Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). This is the same holiness that empowered New Testament believers to live holy, overcoming lifestyles (e.g., 1 Peter 1:15-16). Finally, this is the same holiness that connects believers across time to our holy God and will cause Christ to reign supreme eternally.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION REVEALS HIS SUPREMACY OVER ALL CREATION, HIS PRIMACY FOR OUR WORSHIP AND ADORATION, AND CONTROL OVER EVEN THE MOST UNCERTAIN OF FUTURES.

DAY 1

Revelation 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

Biblical Insight

Throughout the Book of Revelation, loud trumpets, voices, noises, and sounds are mentioned a combined total of over fifty times. This is the second time John heard a voice speaking like a trumpet (Revelation 1:10). Trumpets are often associated with the triumphal return of the Lord when believers are reunited with Christ (e.g., Matthew 24:29–31; I Corinthians 15:51–52; I Thessalonians 4:16–17), although that is not necessarily the connection that is being made in Revelation 4:1. As many times as trumpets and voices are mentioned in this book, the revelator may have simply been describing the loud nature of the voice he heard (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Revelation 4:1).

Daily Devotion

Archaeologists have uncovered trumpets in Egyptian, Scandinavian, and Chinese graves predating 1500 BC. In ancient civilizations, trumpets were used to rouse soldiers to battle and issue battle commands. Over time the difficulty of playing the trumpet elevated its role in society.

Eventually the trumpet became associated with royalty. To symbolize this new association, new types of trumpets were created to distinguish them from battle trumpets. Not only did these “fanfare trumpets” look different, but they sounded different.

Whenever a fanfare trumpet was played, the everyday person knew to stop and listen. Either there was going to be a royal announcement or royalty was present.

One day those of us in Christ will hear a final trumpet sound, a royal announcement that our time of tears, pain, and struggle is over. That trumpet will also herald the arrival of the King of kings.

This is our hope.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Revelation 4:2

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

Biblical Insight

In this book, John the Revelator describes himself as being “in the Spirit” several times (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), which seemed to indicate empowerment to experience supernatural vision not possible outside of God’s Holy Spirit. Part of the revelation John received was of the One on the throne, clearly identified throughout this book as Jesus, God manifested in the flesh (e.g., Revelation 1:7–8, 11, 17–18; 4:8; 7:17; 22:3–4) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Revelation 4:2).

Daily Devotion

The most expensive throne in world history was the Peacock Throne. It was commissioned by the Mughal emperor Shah Johan who is famous for building the Taj Mahal. To build the Taj Mahal, it cost the Shah thirty-two million rupees. He spent double that amount to build the jewel-encrusted throne.

The Peacock Throne was a physical reminder of the power and wealth of the Mughal empire until 1747 when the throne was hacked to pieces during a military coup. Today all that remains of the throne is the Koh-I-Noor diamond and two of the throne’s legs preserved in museums. All earthly thrones are finite, but the throne in Heaven is not.

If we live our life surrendered to the King of kings, one day we will see Him sitting upon a throne more glorious than anything that man could make. Let us strive to live a life pleasing to King Jesus.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Revelation 4:3-5

³ And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

⁴ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Biblical Insight

The identity of the twenty-four elders is unclear. One possibility is that the twenty-four symbolized the twelve tribes of Israelites in the Old Testament and the twelve apostles in the New Testament, similar to the imagery seen in Revelation 21:12-14. Another possibility is the twenty-four elders represented those who already died in the faith and now acted as interpreters (Revelation 5:5; 7:13-17) and worshipers (e.g., Revelation 4:10-11; 5:8-10) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Revelation 4:4).

Daily Devotion

In Rome, Italy, located on the top of the Aventine Hill, at the Priory of the Knights of Malta, is a nondescript, old, black door with a keyhole in the middle.

When you peer through the Aventine Keyhole, you see a perfectly framed view of Saint Peter's Basilica. While the dome of the basilica is visible, the rest of the building cannot be seen. The keyhole only provides a glimpse of the renowned work of Renaissance architecture.

Just like looking through a keyhole, the Bible gives us glimpses of what Heaven looks like. The details God provides are just enough to give each of us something to anticipate with great joy. Just think: if the glimpses provided in Scripture are so wonderful, how much more glorious will Heaven be? While reflecting upon biblical descriptions of Heaven, what are you looking forward to the most?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Revelation 4:6-8

⁶ And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

⁷ And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Biblical Insight

The four beasts have features reminiscent of prophecies found in Ezekiel 1:5-11; 10:14; and Isaiah 6:2-3. These four creatures, having both earthly and heavenly characteristics, may be interpreted as being representative of all living creation who demonstrate how things will be at the end of all things: all creation praising and worshipping the Creator (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on Revelation 4:6).

Daily Devotion

Think back to the last time you were in nature. Maybe it was a hike through the woods, casting your fishing line into a bubbling brook, or sitting on a beach watching the sunset's reflection on the ocean waves. What sounds did you hear?

The study of the sounds in nature is called bioacoustics. Through bioacoustics scientists have discovered that a single hydrogen atom emits one hundred frequencies (more than a grand piano), Earthworms make faint staccato sounds, and meadowlarks have a range of three hundred notes. Even the electron shell of carbon atoms produces the same harmonic scale as the Gregorian chant, and dehydrated tomato plants sound different from hydrated tomato plants.

Every day we are surrounded by millions of ultrasonic songs. These are songs of praise from creation to its Creator. May we never go a day when atoms, birds, and trees praise God more than we do. Take some time now to write out a letter of praise to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Revelation 4:9-11

⁹ And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

¹⁰ The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Biblical Insight

Regardless of their identity, the role of the twenty-four elders as worshipers provided an exemplary model for Christ-focused adoration. Their golden crowns (Revelation 4:4) are “cast” down before the throne, symbolizing the removal of personal “glory and honor and power” and redirection toward the Creator on the throne. Even the golden metal in their crowns was fashioned by the Lord who created “all things,” indicating that even these symbols of royalty were created for God’s “pleasure.”

Daily Devotion

In ancient Roman culture, crowns were not reserved for the elites or the emperor. Instead, like military medals today, crowns had different meanings and ways they could be earned. The corona triumphalis was earned by a general winning a battle, the corona obsidionalis was earned through a heroic act, and the corona civica was reserved for soldiers who saved the life of a comrade during battle.

Throughout the Bible crowns are promised to believers. A few of these include the crown of salvation (Psalm 149:4), the crown of joy (Philippians 4:1), and the crown of life (James 1:12).

While these crowns are wonderful promises, the greatest rewards that await us are the privilege of seeing Jesus face-to-face and worshiping Him for eternity. Let’s begin the eternity of worship today by seeing worship as a privilege instead of a chore.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

3.1

THE FIRST LAST MEAL

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God rewards our sacrifice.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will obey God's call to sacrifice.



FOCUS VERSE: I Kings 17:14

For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

LESSON TEXT: I Kings 17:1-16



Lesson Title: The First Last Meal

Icebreaker: What is the hardest step of faith you have ever taken?

I. THE DROUGHT

» *Why do you think God sometimes has to resort to extreme measures?*

A. The Widow's Desperate Situation

B. The Prophet's Unusual Request

» *How should we respond when God's command doesn't seem to make sense?*

C. I Will Trust in God Even When I Don't See His Plan

» *What do you need the Lord to provide for you right now?*

II. GOD'S PROVISION AT ZAREPHATH

» *Why do you think God sometimes reaches outside the walls of the church to provide miracles?*

A. The Widow's Faith-Filled Response

B. God's Miraculous Provision

C. I Will Obey God's Call to Sacrifice

» *What do you need to step out by faith and do right now?*

Prayer Focus

- To trust God for miracles He wants to work
- To obey God even when we don't understand

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: I Kings 17:1-16

Elijah's introduction in Scripture was as enigmatic as the rest of his life. He is described as being from Tishbe, which is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture except in conjunction with Elijah's name. We know Tishbe was located somewhere in Gilead, a region east of the Jordan River, allotted to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 32; Deuteronomy 3:13).

Without any other backstory, Elijah simply appeared in Scripture and began to prophesy. Ahab, the king of Israel, had allied himself with Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and married his daughter Jezebel. The Old Testament is clear that Baal worship was rampant throughout Israel. Immediately the stage was set for a divine confrontation; Ahab aligned with Ethbaal—whose name means “with Baal,” versus Elijah—whose name means “God is Jehovah.”

Elijah's first two miracles further demonstrated his mysterious character. First, he called on God to stop rain and dew, thus causing a drought, after which he immediately went to a brook where God sustained him through ravens who fed him. Later he traveled to Phoenicia where a Gentile Zidonian widow fed him, and in return, God provided her meals miraculously. She even witnessed her son being raised from the dead. These miracles set the stage for what would prove to be an eventful and unique ministry in the life of “God is Jehovah.”

However, these first two miracles also provided a thematic introduction for Elijah's ministry. A drought came upon Israel because of their unfaithfulness to Jehovah and their unbridled worship of idols. However, God richly blessed a Gentile because of her faithfulness to Jehovah. Elijah's first two miracles demonstrated that rejection of Jehovah leads to death, but acceptance of Jehovah leads to life. Even God's chosen people, the Israelites, are not exempt from judgment, but neither are Gentiles exempt from God's grace. Elijah demonstrated throughout his ministry the importance, necessity, and priority of truly making sure that “Jehovah is my God.”

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS CLEAR THAT BAAL WORSHIP WAS RAMPANT THROUGHOUT ISRAEL. IMMEDIATELY THE STAGE WAS SET FOR A DIVINE CONFRONTATION; AHAB ALIGNED WITH ETHBAAL—WHOSE NAME MEANS “WITH BAAL,” VERSUS ELIJAH—WHOSE NAME MEANS “GOD IS JEHOVAH.”

DAY 1

I Kings 17:1-3

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

² And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

³ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

Biblical Insight

Elijah's statement "As the LORD God of Israel liveth" is unique since most prophecies began with the introductory "Thus saith the LORD." Elijah was stating the certainty of Jehovah's existence as opposed to the falsehood of Baal's. Ahab could be as confident in the drought's arrival as Elijah was of God's omnipotence. Furthermore, a drought would prove Baal's powerlessness because Baal worshipers believed Baal would provide rain and a bountiful crop (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on I Kings 17:1b and 1c).

Daily Devotion

Johnson Chowdary devoted himself to the worship of the South Indian god *Ayyappa*. Johnson fasted for forty days, bathed in freezing cold water, ate only one meal a day, and slept on the floor without a blanket to worship a pagan god. These rituals brought no peace, joy, or purpose.

On December 14, 2000, Chowdary was robbed and left for dead in the street. While dying, Chowdary began praying to Hindu gods. After realizing they were not answering his prayers, he remembered the words of a pastor he met five years earlier. He began praying to Jesus.

Immediately after praying, Jesus spoke to him, "Rise up! You cannot die!" Chowdary survived and shares the gospel to this day. What the enemy meant to destroy us, God uses to demonstrate His power and presence. In what ways has God revealed His power to you during the hardest seasons of your life?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

I Kings 17:4-7

⁴ And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

⁵ So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

⁷ And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Biblical Insight

God's provision for Elijah had multiple layers of significance. First, any bird feeding a human would be miraculous, but God sent a raven, famous for their scavenging and selfish nature. Furthermore, although Elijah was the prophet of God, he was still affected by the drought. Without a miracle, he would not have survived. Eventually the brook dried up, but that was not the end of God's provision; it was preparation for God's next miracle He would work in Zarephath.

Daily Devotion

According to Jewish law, ravens were considered unclean because they were scavengers. They would feast on roadkill and enjoy a buffet of dead animals. For many of us, the thought of being fed by dirty, scavenging birds is upsetting. Imagine being Elijah and hearing God was using ravens to Door Dash your dinner. As a faithful Jew, he stayed away from unclean animals all his life, but Elijah trusted God, and God provided for Elijah.

Throughout Scripture, we see God providing in unique ways from water out of rocks to manna to using a young boy's lunch. If you are praying for provision, remember that God will meet your needs, but perhaps not by the delivery system you think. Reflect upon unique ways God has provided for you in the past. Take time to thank God for each provision.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

I Kings 17:8-9

⁸ And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

⁹ Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

Biblical Insight

Zarephath was not located in Israel; it was a small town in Zidon, the capital city of Phoenicia. Jezebel was Zidonian (I Kings 16:31), and when she married Ahab, Baal worship increased in Israel. Ironically, the miracle God worked for the Gentile widow, her family, and for Elijah occurred outside of Israel, in an area devoted to Baal worship. Jesus would refer to this story later when He spoke of no prophet having honor in his own country, for Elijah was sent to Zarephath despite the many widows living in Israel during this era (Luke 4:24-27) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on I Kings 17:8-16).

Daily Devotion

Social psychologists John Darley and Daniel Batson asked sixty-seven seminary students to deliver a sermon on the Good Samaritan. Each student was assigned one of two conditions: hurried or unhurried. As each student walked alone to deliver the sermon, they encountered a man slumped in a doorway in distress. The researchers observed that only 10 percent of seminary students in the hurried condition stopped to help the man while 63 percent of the students in the unhurried condition stopped. Darley and Batson concluded that when people are pressed for time, they must choose between helping others or meeting their own goals.

In our fast-paced society, it can become easy to mistreat, ignore, and overlook people while trying to reach our goals. One of our primary goals must be caring for others. We should never let it be said of us that non-Christians show more hospitality, love, and grace than we do. Note someone you could reach out to this week to show love and care. Then, go and reach out to them.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

I Kings 17:10-12

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

¹¹ And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

¹² And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

Biblical Insight

The widow's expression to Elijah "as the LORD thy God liveth" parallels Elijah's statement to Ahab at the beginning of the chapter. Just as Elijah was stating to Ahab the certainty of the impending drought, the widow confessed her certainty that she would starve to death. However, the widow's statement also demonstrated recognition of Jehovah's existence and power. After experiencing the ravages of the drought, she clearly recognized Baal's weakness and Jehovah's supremacy. One might wonder how many in Israel would have made her confession since God had to send Elijah outside of Israel to Zidon in order to find someone who would recognize His lordship.

Daily Devotion

Droughts bring hardship, but in 2007, a drought yielded treasures and trash. Lake Okeechobee in Florida, the second-largest freshwater lake in the United States, dropped to its lowest level during the 2007 drought. With the lake's recession, spearheads, arrowheads, conch shell pendants, and other cultural objects were discovered, dating back to the early settlers of the Florida Everglades. It was a treasure trove for historians and archaeologists.

In addition, trash—such as high levels of arsenic, soda cans, and plastic bottles—was also uncovered. Conservationists removed the trash but left many of the treasures alone. In a similar way, spiritual droughts can reveal what is deep inside of us. If you are in a season in which God seems distant and you have not experienced a spiritual refreshing for a while, examine your heart.

Is this season revealing more trash or treasure? What are you allowing to remain in your heart?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

I Kings 17:13-16

¹³ And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

¹⁴ For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

¹⁵ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

¹⁶ And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

Biblical Insight

The widow's response demonstrated her trust in the prophet of God. Since she had witnessed Jehovah's power to bring about a drought, surely she could trust Jehovah's ability to provide miraculously. Her obedience to Jehovah's command by way of Elijah was also a denial of Baal, since Baal worship was supposed to provide bountiful provision as a storm god. By submitting to the one true God, the widow showed faith in Jehovah, believing that He was able and faithful to provide so much more than Baal ever could.

Daily Devotion

A *Peanuts* cartoon shows Charlie Brown and Linus sitting on a bench. The caption reads, "Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening; it just stops you from enjoying the good." Worrying is a destructive habit that impacts our body and our faith. Dr. Charles Mayo, one of the founders of the Mayo Clinic, said, "Worry affects circulation, the heart and the glands . . . I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt."

Each of us will face situations in which our first reaction is to worry or doubt. We may even find ourselves like the widow at Zarephath who was preparing to die. When you are struggling with worry and doubt, take time to praise God for the times He has shown His faithfulness in the past. Remind yourself that God was faithful yesterday. He is faithful today. He will be faithful tomorrow. Surrender your worry to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

3.2

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God demands exclusive loyalty and worship.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will only worship the one true God in my life.



FOCUS VERSE: I Kings 18:21

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

LESSON TEXT: I Kings 18:20-39



Lesson Title: Fire from Heaven

Icebreaker: How many other Apostolics work or go to school with you?

I. THE SHOWDOWN

» *Why do you think sinners often blame the people of God or the ministry for troubles caused by sin?*

A. Elijah Challenged Ahab

B. I Will Challenge Those Who Would Lead God's People Astray

» *When should we contend for the faith? When should we be silent?*

II. GOD'S PROVISION AT ZAREPHATH

» *Why do you think some people fail to make the obvious choice to serve God?*

A. Prophets Sacrificed to Baal

B. Elijah Sacrificed to Jehovah

C. I Will Stand for Jehovah Alone

» *In what way can you stand up for God and demonstrate your faithfulness?*

III. JEHOVAH DEFEATED BAAL

A. Jehovah Answered by Fire

B. The People Recommitted

C. I Will Only Worship the One True God in My Life

» *What do you need to restore to your life in order to be more faithful?*

Prayer Focus

- For courage to stand up for God
- For God to use us for His glory when we stand for Him

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: I Kings 18:20–39

Elijah's experience on Mount Carmel is possibly the most memorable miracle of Elijah's prophetic career. Leading up to this event, Ahab had accused Elijah of being a troubler of Israel (I Kings 18:17), to which Elijah stated that Ahab and his idolatrous ways had been the true troublers of Israel (v. 18). Elijah then boldly requested for all of Israel, including the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, to meet him on Carmel.

The dynamics of this meeting are incredibly unique. Ahab agreed to this probably out of fear of further hardship. The last time Ahab had met with Elijah, the prophet had initiated a drought that plagued all Israel. For the duration of the drought, the people witnessed Jehovah's ability to stop the rain and dew and Baal's inability to provide—despite being the god of bountiful crops. Even though this had been Israel's most recent and ongoing experience, not a single Israelite responded when Elijah challenged them to choose between God and Baal (I Kings 18:21). Their lack of response demonstrated the hardness of their hearts and how deeply they were entrenched in their wicked idolatry.

The challenge between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was clear and simple, and everyone present quickly agreed upon the terms. Elijah gladly gave every advantage to the worshipers of Baal. Obviously, no voice responded to the Baal worshipers' prayers, nor did any fire fall. However, fire fell immediately when Elijah prayed a simple prayer of faith.

The Israelites immediately bowed down and worshiped Jehovah. Then they slaughtered the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:39–40). It is interesting that the drought ended and rain returned only after the prophets of Baal were purged from Israel. The abundance and provision that God offers cannot coexist with idolatry because God will not share His glory with false gods who do nothing to provide.

THE CHALLENGE BETWEEN ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL WAS CLEAR AND SIMPLE, AND EVERYONE PRESENT QUICKLY AGREED UPON THE TERMS.

DAY 1

I Kings 18:20–24

²⁰ So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

²² Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

²³ Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

²⁴ And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

Biblical Insight

Elijah's command for the people of Israel to choose between Baal and Jehovah was reminiscent of Joshua challenging the Israelites to make a decision to choose whom they would serve (Joshua 24:15). However, Joshua's listeners responded positively; the silence of Elijah's audience demonstrated the level of apostasy to which Israel had fallen. Their silence fueled Elijah's belief that he was truly all alone in his mission. Elijah would repeat a version of his "I, even I only, remain" speech during his time in a cave on Mount Horeb (I Kings 19:10, 14), although under very different circumstances.

Daily Devotion

Martin Niemöller pastored an important Lutheran congregation in Germany. As the Nazi Party gained prominence, Niemöller initially appreciated their platform. His opinion changed in 1933 after Adolf Hitler rose to lead the Nazis. Niemöller condemned Hitler's meddling with churches. Deeming him a rebel, the Nazis placed the minister in a concentration camp from 1937–45. Niemöller decried the violations that occurred in prisons and concentration camps.

When World War II ended, Niemöller confessed that he and many of his fellow Germans had effectively aided and abetted the Nazi Party in imprisoning, persecuting, and slaughtering millions since they remained silent in the face of these extreme horrors. Wishing that he had spoken out sooner, Martin demonstrated that silence was not merely a passive act; it was essentially commiserating with the wicked.

The silence of Elijah's audience spoke volumes. Our silence as Christians speaks volumes. Now is not the time for Christians to be silent as the world follows false gods. Instead, we must speak up, share Jesus, and speak the truth in love.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

I Kings 18:25-29

²⁵ And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

²⁶ And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

²⁷ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

²⁸ And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

²⁹ And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Biblical Insight

Elijah suggested Baal might have been talking, deep in thought, on a trip, or even sleeping. One translation even suggests Elijah mocking Baal for relieving himself. These mocks insinuated the worshipers were unimportant in their deity's eyes; perhaps Baal did not think about them as much as they thought. The idea that Baal might be on a journey underscored that Baal was not omnipresent like Jehovah. Finally, since the prophets of Baal worshiped throughout the day, the suggestion that Baal was sleeping implied their lazy deity was wasting away daylight hours.

Daily Devotion

One day in India, a parade of celebrating Hindus tried to navigate a trailer-mounted, elephant-headed idol through a narrow alley. The parade of people encountered a low tree limb that blocked the ten-foot tall idol's progress. The crowd could not back out of the alley, so they tried in vain to sever the tree limb.

While watching the parade, a former Hindu commented, "This is the perfect picture of idol worship. People are expecting this god to remove obstacles in their lives, but it cannot even remove a tree limb." The former Hindu went on to explain how his own conversion to Christianity began when he realized that idols were powerless. This revelation opened His heart to Jesus.

Today millions of people in the world still worship physical idols. Pray that God will reveal himself to them and open their eyes to the emptiness of idol worship. Pray that we will not let idols of our own making receive our worship.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

I Kings 18:30–32

³⁰ And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

³² and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

Biblical Insight

The altar of the LORD was broken down and in need of repair, serving as another sign of Israel's backslidden condition. Who knows how long it had been since a sacrifice was performed on the altar of the LORD?

Elijah gathered twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel, reminding the onlookers of Israel's original state: twelve tribes, unified and formed by Jehovah. Despite their current division, they were originally one people, and despite their current idolatry, they were originally created and shaped by Jehovah.

Daily Devotion

During the firebombing of Dresden, Germany, in World War II, the 200-year-old Baroque-style Frauenkirche church was destroyed. After the war, rebuilding the church was impossible, so officials in East Germany left the rubble as a memorial to the fallen. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, people began to envision restoring the Frauenkirche church.

Together, Germans who were once divided by a physical wall and the wall of communism, raised money to restore the church. From 1993–2005, former enemies rebuilt the church, and today the church stands as a physical reminder of restoration and reunification.

It is not God's will for His children to be divided. We are a part of one body—His. Ask yourself, is there any division between you and a brother or sister in Christ? If so, pray and seek paths toward restoration.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

I Kings 18:33–35

³³ And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

³⁴ And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

³⁵ And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

Biblical Insight

Elijah was so confident in Jehovah's supremacy that Elijah seemingly gave the idol worshipers the upper hand in the contest. Elijah let his opponents go first. He gave them the entire day to worship. Perhaps the sun might have serendipitously lit a spark to the benefit of the Baalists, leaving Elijah to sacrifice at night. Furthermore, Elijah drenched the sacrifice, wood, and stone with water, forming a small moat around the altar. Some doubtless wondered why he wasted so much water during a drought. Elijah wanted there to be no question that Jehovah alone made the fire fall.

Daily Devotion

On January 13, 2011, in Nigeria's Plateau state, Alice watched as her husband was killed by their Fulani neighbors who were members of the Boko Haram terrorist organization. Taking shelter in a nearby village, a Christian family offered her an apartment. There she made a vow to God that she would live for Him.

A few days later, Alice saw the neighbor who had killed her husband. In that moment, God did the impossible: He filled her heart with love for the man's soul. Gathering what little food she had, Alice went and shared a meal with him. After that day, Alice made it her life's mission to extend love to the Fulani.

Our God specializes in making the impossible possible. For Elijah it was fire from Heaven consuming a wet altar and sacrifice. For Alice, God empowered her to love her husband's killer. Journal things in your life that you thought were impossible until God made them possible.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

I Kings 18:36–39

³⁶ And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.

Biblical Insight

In contrast to the prayers of the prophets of Baal, Elijah's prayer was simple and quiet. Elijah's desire for the fire to fall was not for his personal vindication but so Jehovah's power and glory would be demonstrated to every onlooker. The fire fell and consumed everything—even the twelve stones that represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Perhaps by consuming the twelve stones, Jehovah was demonstrating that even Israel was not exempt from being consumed if they did not turn away from Baal worship.

Daily Devotion

Six-year-old Shiloh used to have vivid nightmares. In the middle of the night, he could be heard yelling for help, and other times he would be begging for the wolves to go away. One morning Shiloh was busy getting ready for school. He was smiling, laughing, and in good spirits when he nonchalantly mentioned that he had a nightmare the previous night.

Then Shiloh said, "It's okay. I told Jesus about the nightmare and how I do not like being scared. I asked Him to take care of my fear, and He did! It was easy!" Sometimes we can overcomplicate prayer. We may get caught up in the appearance of prayer or feel self-conscious that our prayers may not be elaborate as others' prayers.

Prayer was never meant to be complicated. Just like Shiloh discovered, prayer is meant to be easy. Share your cares with Jesus, and then trust Him with childlike faith.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

3.3

SUCCESS IN SUCCESSION

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God desires each new generation to follow His calling.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will not be discouraged from pursuing God's call.



FOCUS VERSES: I Kings 19:19–20

19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

LESSON TEXT: I Kings 19:16–21; II Kings 2:1–11



Lesson Title: Success in Succession

Icebreaker: Whom would you like to shadow for a day?

- I. ELIJAH CHOSE ELISHA
 - » *What can we do to help a younger person grow in God?*
 - A. Elisha Accepted the Call
 - B. I Will Pursue God's Call
 - » *Aside from sins and weights, what else might we need to remove from our lives in order to fully embrace God's call?*
- II. THE MANTLE PASSED TO ELISHA
 - » *Why do you think God honors determination?*
 - A. Elisha Requested a Double Portion
 - » *What would you like God to do for you that goes beyond the ordinary and would be a great leap of faith?*
 - B. Elisha Took Up Elijah's Role
 - C. I Will Not Be Discouraged from Pursuing God's Call
 - » *What do you need to do to accept God's timing in your life?*

Prayer Focus

- To actively pursue the call of God
- To be disciplined by someone and to disciple someone

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: I Kings 19:16–21; II Kings 2:1–11

In Jesus' day, Elijah was heralded as one of the greatest figures of the entire Old Testament. Just as Moses represented the entire Old Testament Law, Elijah represented the entirety of Old Testament prophecy. His symbolic presence loomed so large that John the Baptist and Jesus were thought to be the reincarnated Elijah (Mark 6:15; 8:28; John 1:21). Elijah was so in tune with God and His will that at the end of his life he was caught up in a whirlwind, translated so that he did not see death.

As spiritually sensitive, powerfully prophetic, and mightily miraculous as Elijah was, even his ministry had to come to an end. God had a plan for this as well, for God appointed Elisha as a successor for Elijah. The two were quite a pair; Elijah's name meant "God is Jehovah," and Elisha's name meant "God is my salvation."

The transition from Elijah to Elisha provided a biblical template for the continuation of ministry throughout each generation. One cannot continue in ministry forever, as the natural lives of all will eventually end. Nor is it healthy to try and minister all alone. Before Elijah had Elisha, Elijah sat in despair under a juniper tree praying for death (I Kings 19:4). Elijah needed a successor just as much as Elisha needed a mentor.

The same spiritual power that was manifested in Elijah's ministry would be present throughout Elisha's. Immediately after Elijah's translation, Elisha struck the Jordan River, and the waters parted, just as God had done for Elijah (II Kings 2:8, 14). The same fiery chariots that appeared at Elijah's ascension (II Kings 2:11) apparently followed Elisha throughout his ministry. They were present when Elisha was surrounded by the Syrian army (II Kings 6:17). Elisha apparently was aware of them all along, for he prayed that his servant's eyes would be opened to see what Elisha could already see.

ELIJAH WAS SO IN TUNE WITH GOD AND HIS WILL THAT AT THE END OF HIS LIFE HE WAS CAUGHT UP IN A WHIRLWIND, TRANSLATED SO THAT HE DID NOT SEE DEATH.

DAY 1

I Kings 19:16-18

¹⁶ And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

¹⁸ Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Biblical Insight

Paul referenced the seven thousand Israelites God mentioned to Elijah (Romans 11:4). In that context, Paul demonstrated that God always has a remnant of people who are faithful to Him. In the original context, God was reminding Elijah he was not alone. In Paul's epistle, he encouraged the mainly Gentile audience to not think that all Jews had rejected Christ, despite the fact that the church was quickly becoming predominantly Gentile (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on I Kings 19:18 and Romans 11:5).

Daily Devotion

Within her autobiography, *Children of the Storm*, Natasha Vins shares what it was like living in the Soviet Union as a Christian during the 1960s and 1970s. Atheistic indoctrination was integrated into the school curriculum, and Christian children were openly mocked in classrooms. Christian parents' names were printed in local newspapers so employers would know whom to fire. Children were restricted from attending church, and teenagers were forced to join anti-religion groups. Christians were beaten and killed by neighbors while children were removed from Christian homes.

The persecution of Christians in the USSR was brutal but ineffective. When the Iron Curtain fell, the Soviet Union had more practicing Christians than it did before communism. According to Vanessa, Christianity flourished because communism promised isolation, while Christianity promised belonging.

If you are feeling alone or isolated, remember that you are part of the family of God. You are not serving God alone.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

I Kings 19:19–21

¹⁹ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

²⁰ And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

²¹ And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Biblical Insight

Elijah's casting of the mantle over Elisha prophetically foreshadowed when Elisha would take up his predecessor's mantle after Elijah was caught up into Heaven. The casting of the mantle symbolized the continuation of the first prophet's ministry by his successor; this would be confirmed when Elisha struck the water with the mantle just like his predecessor did (II Kings 2:8, 14). Elisha's decision to slaughter and sacrifice his work animals demonstrated a complete abandonment of his former lifestyle to follow the prophet.

Daily Devotion

During the 1941–42 Nazi siege of Leningrad, thousands of people died, including scientists Alexander Stchukin and Dmitry Ivanov. Both scientists were employees of the Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry where they had worked tirelessly for years to build up a huge collection of genetically modified plants and crop seeds that could endure extreme temperatures and resist pestilence.

Stchukin and Ivanov were tasked with preserving food crops, including nuts, a nutrient-dense food source, for future generations. During the 900-day siege, both men could have saved themselves, but they chose to starve rather than hurt future generations.

Today, generations later, farmers around the world, including the United States, grow crops that were developed from the genetically modified seeds of the Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry. Future generations fed themselves what a former generation preserved. It is important for each generation to preserve doctrine, evangelism, and holiness over fame, materialism, and self-centeredness. Our sacrifices today empower future generations to come.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

II Kings 2:1-2

¹ And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

² And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

Biblical Insight

Elisha's strong statement "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth" may remind the reader of Elijah's first recorded prophetic words when speaking to Ahab: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth" (I Kings 17:1). Elisha repeated this affirmation in verses 4 and 6 of II Kings 2. David also pledged this same oath to Jonathan (I Samuel 20:3), Abigail to David (I Samuel 25:26), and the Shunammite to Elisha (II Kings 4:30) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Kings 2:6).

Daily Devotion

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is famous for his striking claim, "God is dead!" Growing up, Nietzsche was not an atheist. He entered the University of Bonn in the hope of becoming a minister. Then one semester, Nietzsche stopped his theological studies and lost his faith.

Years later, Nietzsche attributed his loss of faith to David Strauss's book, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. Within the book, Strauss argues that Jesus was only a man history turned into a myth. For Nietzsche, his slide into atheism began when he stopped believing that Jesus was God, and he questioned the reality of the Resurrection. Overtime, Nietzsche began to resent Christian moral principles that undergird Western civilization such as equality, humility, and selflessness.

We must never lose sight of the fundamental truth that God is living and active in our lives today. Our unbelief cannot kill Him, but our unbelief can separate us from grace, mercy, love, hope, and an eternal future.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

II Kings 2:3-7

³ And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

⁴ And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

⁵ And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

⁶ And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

⁷ And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

Biblical Insight

The II Kings 2 narrative clearly demonstrates that everyone knew that Elijah was about to be taken away. The narrator knew (v. 1), Elijah knew (v. 9), Elisha knew (vv. 3, 5) and everyone in the School of the Prophets knew (vv. 3, 5, 7). The fact that so many knew about this event well before it happened may simply point to the spiritual significance of the event but might also provide evidence of heightened spiritual sensitivity among the prophets of Israel due to Elijah's influence.

Daily Devotion

One day in Sunday school, children were talking among themselves. One student declared confidently, "School is going to start soon. Do you know how I know?" Other students guessed a parent had announced it or school shopping had begun.

The student replied, "No. I know because it is getting cooler in the mornings, there is dew on the ground, and I keep running into spiderwebs." The young student was sensitive to seasonal transitions that preceded the beginning of school. Instead of paying attention to days or months, he noticed the signs.

In our lives, we will experience different spiritual seasons. It is important that we stay in prayer and in the Word of God so we can be sensitive to what God's purpose is for each season. By staying prayerful and attuned to God, we are better prepared to come into agreement with God's purpose.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

II Kings 2:8-11

⁸ And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

⁹ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

¹⁰ And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Biblical Insight

Elijah was only one of two people in the Bible to not experience physical death (besides Jesus). The other was Enoch, who was translated because “he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). Surely the same could be said of Elijah. Some have also speculated that Melchisedec (Genesis 4:17-24) did not experience physical death because the writer of Hebrews noted that Melchisedec had “neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3). However, in that context the writer is drawing an analogy to Christ’s supremacy by noting the absence of genealogy and records about Melchisedec; it is more than a historical statement about Melchisedec’s lifespan.

Daily Devotion

One Sunday, a pastor asked the congregation, “How many of you think God is really pleased with you?” Only two children raised their hands. Almost everyone in the congregation knew that God loved them, but they felt like God was not pleased with them. They equated God’s pleasure in them to how well they performed Christian works.

Elijah is an example of a man who made serious mistakes. The Lord gave him three direct commands of people to anoint (I Kings 19:15-16), but Elijah never carried out two of those commands. If we look at Elijah’s performance, we may think God would not be pleased with Elijah. Yet, Elijah was translated.

If you struggle with never feeling like you are enough for God, remember that you will never be perfect. Instead of trying to perform our way to perfection, we are to walk in faith, experience His grace, and extend His love.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

3.4

HEALING FOR THE OUTSIDER

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God honors obedience.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will obey even when God's commands are unusual.



FOCUS VERSES: II Kings 5:3, 14

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

.....

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

LESSON TEXT: II Kings 5:1-14



Lesson Title: Healing for the Outsider

Icebreaker: What's the best life advice you've ever received from an unlikely source?

I. THE FAITH OF NAAMAN'S MAID

» *How can we know God is calling on us to speak up and give our testimony?*

A. Syria's War with Israel**B. I Will Share God's Good News Even with Those Who Hurt Me**

» *How can we help hurting people receive healing for their wounds?*

II. NAAMAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH ELISHA**A. Naaman Sought for the Prophet**

» *How can we recognize when someone is not seeking an opportunity to do evil to us, but God is creating an opportunity for healing and salvation?*

B. Elisha's Unusual Instructions**C. God's Plans Often Challenge Our Expectations**

» *What happens when we make our expectations more important than God's plan?*

III. NAAMAN RECEIVED HIS HEALING**A. Naaman Listened to His Servants (Again)****B. Naaman Obeyed and Was Healed****C. I Will Obey Even When God's Commands Are Unusual**

» *What miracle have you heard about where God moved in a mysterious way?*

Prayer Focus

- To share God's Word even with people who have hurt us
- To obey God even when His commands are unconventional

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: II Kings 5:1-14

The healing of Naaman demonstrated several key truths about God's nature. One of these truths is that God's compassion extends to all humanity, not just to a certain group. Another truth is that God responds to any who seek Him with humility, submission, and obedience.

Although Ahab had been slain, Israel remained in sin. Israel was now ruled by Ahab's son Jehoram, another wicked king (II Kings 3:1-3). All of Israel continued to reject Jehovah's lordship and refused to repent of their idolatry. However, God's love and mercy were still present for anyone who would seek Him, even if that person was a Syrian warlord who had fought, killed, and enslaved Israelites.

When Naaman arrived in Israel, Jehoram tore his garments in despair, fearing another conflict with Syria like the one that resulted in his father's death. (See I Kings 22:34.) Jehoram never even thought to call Elisha or any other prophet. Incredibly, Naaman was more aware of the prophet of God than Jehoram was. Elisha said to Jehoram: "Let [Naaman] come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (II Kings 5:8). These words can be read as a rebuke of Jehoram's apostasy; Naaman would know there is a prophet in Israel even if Jehoram did not.

Naaman's healing was so significant that Jesus recalled it one day while teaching. When commenting on the fact that no prophet is accepted in his own country, Jesus said: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). Jesus' words served as further indictment upon Israel during Elisha's day. How many Israelite lepers could have been saved if they had demonstrated the same obedience as Naaman?

Not only was Naaman the lone leper healed during Elisha's ministry, but later Elisha's own servant Gehazi would be afflicted with leprosy after lying to Naaman and Elisha for selfish gain (II Kings 5:15-27). Gehazi's response to Jehovah sharply contrasts with Naaman's obedience. One chose humility and obedience and received healing; the other chose pride and selfishness and received affliction.

GOD'S COMPASSION EXTENDS TO ALL HUMANITY, NOT JUST TO A CERTAIN GROUP.

DAY 1

II Kings 5:1

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

Biblical Insight

Interestingly, Naaman rose to prominence by the LORD who provided deliverance to Syria. While this may seem strange, Ahab had to be judged for leading Israel into idolatry, so it was God's will that Syria bested Israel in battle. Jewish rabbinical tradition identified Naaman as the "certain man" whose arrow killed Ahab in battle, securing victory for the Syrians (I Kings 22:34). Such an act would explain why Naaman rose to military prominence (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on II Kings 5:1).

Daily Devotion

God can use anyone to fulfill His purpose. Throughout the Bible, God has used unbelievers to help His people. Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho who saved the lives of two Hebrew spies. Egyptians hosted Joseph's family during a worldwide famine. The Persian emperor Cyrus permitted captive Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple. God led the Magi from the east to bring gifts to Jesus.

Even today, God can use unbelievers to help us in our faith journey. Unbelievers may ask good questions that give us a fresh perspective on our salvation and faith. When we encounter those questions, we study more and invest time in learning to explain our faith in understandable terms. Unbelievers will also hold us accountable. They are watching us to see if we will practice what we preach.

Reflect on previous encounters with unbelievers. How has God used them to help deepen your faith?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

II Kings 5:2-4

² And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

³ And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

⁴ And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

Biblical Insight

Possibly the most unsung hero of this story is Naaman's Israelite child slave who had been kidnapped by Syrian raiders and forced into servitude. Far from her family, her homeland, and any semblance of comfort and convenience, she remained a faithful witness to the power of Jehovah and His prophet Elisha. Instead of looking upon her captors with anger and bitterness, she felt compassion and wished for Naaman's healing. Her response foreshadowed the necessary but unpopular teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:44: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Daily Devotion

Patrick was born into a Christian family in Britain in AD 387. At the age of sixteen, he was captured by a group of Irish pirates and sold into slavery. Six years later, Patrick escaped and returned home to Britain where God called him to return as a missionary to the people who enslaved him.

God reminded Patrick that while the Irish were physically free, they were spiritually bound. Patrick's heart was filled with a love for his former captors, and he devoted the rest of his life to sharing Jesus with them. If he had allowed bitterness, anger, and hatred to fester in his heart toward his captors, countless people would never have heard the gospel.

If there is a person who has harmed you, pray for them today. Pray for God to forgive them and heal you. Do not let bitterness or anger harden your own heart.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

II Kings 5:5-8

⁵ And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

⁷ And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

⁸ And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

Biblical Insight

The king of Syria valued his commander and was willing to do anything for his healing. He had reason to be confident sending Naaman into Israel. Syria had demonstrated their military superiority in recent history. However, as a gesture of good will, the king of Syria sent gifts to the king of Israel. Jehoram, the Israelite king, was only slightly less wicked than his father, Ahab (II Kings 3:1-3). The fact that Jehoram never thought to call for Elisha or any prophet of God demonstrated how spiritually out of touch he was.

Daily Devotion

On April 26, 1952, while traveling in the darkness 490 nautical miles southwest of St. John's, Newfoundland, new commanding officer of the USS Hobson, Lt. Commander William J. Tierney, began ordering a series of turns that caused concern among the deck crew. Tierney ignored his crew's worry and counsel until suddenly, the officer on deck yelled "Prepare for collision! Prepare for collision!"

At the Court of Inquiry, it was determined that Lt. Commander Tierney had "committed a grave error in judgment." This grave error resulted in the deaths of over 170 crew members. Throughout the Old Testament, we see examples of kings who ignored the wise counsel of godly men. In each case, the king's life ended in ruin.

Today, reflect on the wise counsel and warnings you have received from men or women of God. Take time to thank them for helping you in your walk with God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

II Kings 5:9-12

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

¹¹ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

Biblical Insight

Naaman's opinion of Israelite waters was consistent with Syrian attitudes about Israel in general; everything Israelite was inferior. This negative view would be fully subverted after Naaman was healed, when Naaman requested to bring bags of dirt back to Syria upon which to sacrifice to Jehovah. Naaman went from mocking Israelite water to begging for Israelite dirt. What a difference a miracle makes!

Daily Devotion

During World War II, Allied fighter planes were being hit by anti-aircraft guns. The Air Force turned to mathematician Abraham Wald to help them determine where to put additional armor. The officers believed that the anti-bullet shield should be placed on the tail since the tail portions of the planes had the greatest density of bullet holes.

Wald asserted that more protection was needed where the bullet holes were not as concentrated—around the plane's engine. His assessment revealed people's biases. Wald explained, "We are counting the planes that returned from a mission. Planes with lots of bullet holes in the engine did not return at all."

Uncovering our unconscious biases and assumptions has the potential to change the way we think about situations, people, and God. Reflect on different biases that have been uncovered in your life. How did recognizing them change the way you think?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

II Kings 5:13-14

¹³ And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

¹⁴ Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Biblical Insight

The comments by Naaman's servants were reflective of his military status. Naaman was used to performing grand and mighty feats; that was how he rose to military prominence. However, in God's economy, blessings do not come through lifting oneself up, but rather through demonstrating humility. God had provided divine assistance to elevate Naaman to his current status (II Kings 5:1), but Naaman was not aware of God's presence and power. Naaman only experienced God when he humbled himself in submission and obedience.

Daily Devotion

In Matthew 18, the disciples were once again concerned about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. In response, Jesus called over a little child and responded that the greatest in the kingdom are those who can be humble like a child (Matthew 18:3-4).

If you have ever been around children, you may wonder why Jesus would call a child humble. Children can be just as selfish and braggadocious as adults. However, there is a unique quality to most children; they are often oblivious to others' opinions of them.

They are not embarrassed to wear mismatched clothes in public or too afraid to play games that make them look ridiculous. They will sing loudly in restaurants and are not ashamed to talk about Jesus in front of others.

Think about your own heart. When you look at yourself and you look at how God sees you, are you humble like a child? If not, repent of any pride and ask God to help you be humble.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

SERIES 1: JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY

Jesus invites us to pray, and He even shares a prayer request of His own: pray for laborers. In His compassion, He invites those laborers to come unto Him and rest, and ultimately prays for all of us—even with our personality differences—to be one.

SERIES 2: JOHN - I AM SAYINGS

This series explores four of the seven “I am” statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. These sayings have been the focus of countless studies and for good reason. They reveal much about Christ, the human manifestation of the invisible God. These proclamations are important to Oneness believers, for they explicitly identify Jesus as the “I AM” of the Old Testament. Furthermore, they are vital for believers who desire to be Christlike. This series will teach us much about the Godhead but much more about what it means to be like Christ, the incarnation of the I AM.

SERIES 3: THE SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

The greatest gift we have received from God is His Holy Spirit. This series will take a close look at both blessings God gives (fruit and gifts) when He gives us His Spirit.

Order your Summer materials at www.pentecostalpublishing.com/curriculum.