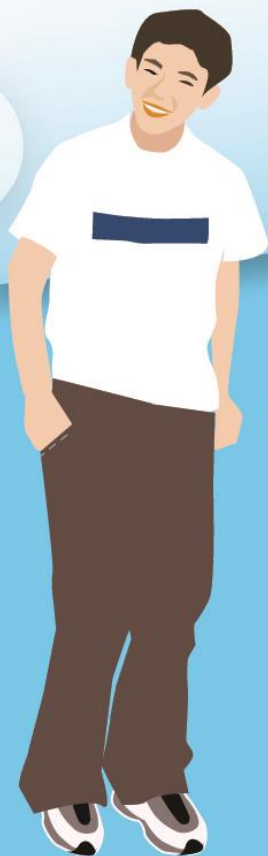


THE SEEDS OF GROWTH



4th Grade

Chicago CBF



Core Bible Studies

The Seeds of Growth: Core Bible Studies for 4th Grade
Chicago Children's Bible Fellowship 2018
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A Note on using these materials

I would personally like to thank you for your decision to guide young children to know Christ. As you look through these materials, you will find a teacher page that breaks down the 3 main points of the lesson. You will also find copies of the lessons which are numbered and include: An Introduction, Questions, and room for the children to write a small reflection on how they put God's word to practice. There are 46 lessons in this book which covers an entire year's worth of Bible study among the Gospels and Epistles. Ultimately, it is to your superb judgment on how the lessons are paced throughout the year. Feel free to make copies or ask questions about the materials that have been prepared for you. And as always, stay blessed, be prayerful, and have fun serving God!

GOOD NEWS! THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR! CHANGE AND BELIEVE

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:1-20
Key Verse: 1:15

What is the **best news** you ever heard? How did it make you **feel**? How long did the feeling **last**? How many people did **you tell**?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. What is the book of Mark about?

Read verses 4-7. Who was John the Baptist? Read verse 9. Why was Jesus baptized by John?

Read verses 10-11. What happened after Jesus was baptized by John? Who is Jesus?

Read verse 15. What did Jesus mean by "the kingdom of God has come near"? What 2 things do we need to do because it is near? Why is the kingdom of God good news? **Do you feel Jesus is near to you?**

Read verses 16-17. How did Jesus spread the good news? **Why is it important to tell others the good news?**

Application: Who can you tell the good news to this week?

GOOD NEWS! THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR! CHANGE AND BELIEVE

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Key Verse: 1:15

Teachers Sheet

- ❖ This lesson will be the first gospel lesson that the children will have as 1-3 covered the Old Testament. You want to keep the lesson simple and clearly on Jesus and who he is without assuming they know many things about him already. Ask them what they know about Jesus, who he is to them and why we should learn about him. Read Mark 1:1, 15:39, 10:45 to get an overview of who Jesus is. John baptizing Jesus is in many ways like a transition from the Old Testament or Mosaic Covenant to the New Testament and New Covenant. John represents the law of Moses with one word "repent" and do what the law says. However, repenting is not enough, because honestly no one can keep the old covenant. Therefore, a new and better way had to come to provide the salvation that could not come by keeping the law.
- ❖ When we look at John 3:31-34, John was specifically given the task of baptizing by God. The purpose of his baptizing was two-fold. One was so that people could repent and prepare their hearts for Jesus, the other John says in John 3 was so that the Messiah could be revealed. John's baptism therefore is not the same as Christian baptism, it was something specifically given to John. The point of John's baptism is a baptism of repentance (Acts 19:3-4) which then prepares our hearts to accept Jesus.

JESUS' TEACHING HAS AUTHORITY

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Mark 1:21-28

Key Verse: 1:22

Have you ever been given **authority**? **Put in charge** of something or someone? Did others **respect** you? What kind of **leaders/authorities** do you like to follow?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 21. Where did Jesus begin teaching the Bible? Read verse 22. Why were people amazed?

Read verse 22 again. Where does authority come from? ***What is the goal of Bible study? What should be our attitude in Bible study toward God? Toward God's word? What will God give us also when we have a good attitude about him and his word?***

Read the last part of 22. Why didn't the teachers of the law have the same influence as Jesus? Read verse 23. Were the teachers able to help others with their shallow Bible study? Read verses 24-28. How did Jesus use his authority?

Do you think sometimes demons come into your classmates (or you)? How can you have authority to really help others?

Application: How can you really bless and help those around you this week?

JESUS' TEACHING HAS AUTHORITY

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Mark 1:21-28

Key Verse: 1:22

Teachers Sheet

- ❖ One of the biggest problems in Bible study is that people learn the facts and the stories but they don't practice it. This was the problem of the religious leaders of Jesus' day. If I say "I know how to play tennis," it doesn't mean I read the manual, it means I've been on the court and can play. But often people say "I know that passage" or "I know the Bible;" yet, all they mean is they remember the information, they can recite the facts or maybe they've even memorized the verses. However, if they haven't put the passage into practice, or found how it applies to their real life, they don't know the first thing about it, they don't "know" that passage. In the Jewish understanding, to "know" means you practice it or you can do it—like knowing how to whistle, not knowing the theory.
- ❖ The goal of Bible study then is not to learn information—there won't be a Bible knowledge exam when we get to heaven—but to change the way we live, not to know about it, but to live it. When we do this, we have authority. 1. Because we actually know what we're talking about, we have insight and experience, we can share personally how to practice this teaching and share our own struggle and victory and really encourage others that they can do it also. 2. When we are not hypocritically telling others to do something we are not doing, we have confidence. When we try to tell others to keep a teaching that we cannot keep, we feel guilty and condemned. 3. God gives us authority to teach his word. To those who seek him earnestly, he gives more insight and understanding. In the moment God gives us words to speak and people sense that God is speaking through our teaching.
- ❖ When our kids really believe in God and believe in the power of his word, they also have authority from God. What is most important is not knowing many things and being an expert but really having faith and practicing even one word.
- ❖ So, we must have a right attitude about the Bible. It is God's word (2 Ti 3:16) and it has authority. When we tell others what the Bible says believing in it, it has great power. Even one Bible verse can change someone's life, drive out a demon, lead someone to salvation, give them hope, send them as a missionary, help them repent and many more things. Because the teachers of the Law only believed the Bible was rules written by people they had no authority. Their Bible study was boring and burdensome. Attitude and faith are everything, so let's have a good attitude as we study God's word this year.

JESUS HAS POWER TO FORGIVE OUR SINS

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:5

Have you ever **prayed for a friend**? What happened? Did you ever **invite a friend** to church? What was their reaction? Did you ever want to **help someone** but didn't know how?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 1-2. How did the people of Capernaum react to Jesus' coming? Why? (Review 1:21-38)

Read verses 3-4. Why couldn't the men carrying their paralyzed friend get him to Jesus? What did they decide to do? ***Why weren't they afraid to interrupt Jesus' message or break a roof or cut in front of the line?***

Read verse 5. What did Jesus see in them? ***How does faith help us do the impossible?*** What did he say to the man?

Read verses 6-7. What did the teachers of the law think about Jesus? Read verses 8-12. How did Jesus prove he has authority to forgive sins?

Application: Do you have friends who have problems? What do you need to do for them? (look at v4-5) Do you have faith to bring your friends to Jesus?

JESUS HAS POWER TO FORGIVE OUR SINS

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

Teachers Sheet

Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:5

- ❖ Attitude of “friends” who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus
- ❖ Sin is the real problem of every person
- ❖ Jesus is the only one who can heal and restore people through forgiveness

FOLLOW ME

“As he walked along he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.”

Mark 2:13-17

Key Verse: 2:14

Was there ever a time you felt like an **outsider? lonely? excluded?** Was there someone who **reached out** to you? How did it make you **feel?** Did you ever **reach out** to a lonely kid?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 14. Who is Levi? What did he have to do in his job?

Why didn’t anyone like him? How did he feel? Do you know anyone who feels like Levi at your school? Do you ever feel like him?

Read verse 14 again. What did Jesus invite him to do? **What does ‘follow me’ mean?**

Read verse 15. How did Levi feel when he followed Jesus? What did he do?

Read verses 16-17. What kind of people followed Jesus? What kind did not? **Do you want to follow Jesus? How can you?**

Application: Do you know anyone like Levi who needs to be invited to follow, can you invite them?

FOLLOW ME

"As he walked along he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him."

Teachers Sheet
Mark 2:13-17
Key Verse: 2:14

What to Focus On:

- ✓ Who Levi was before Jesus called him
- ✓ Why Jesus' calling to Levi was a blessing, why Levi accepted Jesus' invitation
- ✓ The blessing of accepting Jesus' invitation

JESUS CAME TO HEAL HIS PEOPLE

“He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”

Mark 3:1-6

Key Verses: 3:5

What things that others do really **bother** you? How do you treat others who **break the rules** or what do you think about them? Do you in your mind separate kids as **good** kids or **bad** kids? How do you **treat** them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 1 and 2. Where was Jesus and why? What are “the synagogue” and “the Sabbath”? Who else was there? **What do you think life was like for the man with the shriveled hand?**

Read verse 2 again. How were the Pharisees hoping to trap Jesus? Read verses 3 and 4. **As Christians is it more important to keep rules or to love others?**

Read verse 4-5. What does the Pharisee’s silence and stubbornness tell us about them? **Are there times when you look down on others because they do “bad” things? Is that how we are supposed to treat others as Christians?**

Read verse 5. What did Jesus do for this man? Read verse 6. What was the cost of doing this miracle? **What are some ways you could love others this week?**

Application: How can you practice compassion and overcome legalism this week?

JESUS CAME TO HEAL HIS PEOPLE

"He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored."

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
What changes should I personally make in my life?*

PRAYER TOPICS:

JESUS CAME TO HEAL HIS PEOPLE

“He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”

Teacher Sheet
Mark 3:1-12
Key Verses: 3:6

- ❖ Rules are good, but raising kids to be rule keepers can make them become cold to those that don't keep the rules. We need to teach them to keep the rules and do what is good—obviously—we need to help them to stay away from bad influences, some “bad” kids are just too powerful for them. But at the same time they can't become so legalistic that they think they are better than others or they become just like the Pharisees, who thought they were better than everyone and didn't care about anybody. If our kids are like this, they may act very perfect but they will never be an influence upon anyone.
- ❖ Christianity is not about rules, rights and wrongs, it is about our relationship with Jesus who loves us. Keeping rules gives us a false sense of righteousness and we think we are better than others but the beginning point of a relationship with Jesus is realizing that I can never be good enough and no matter how good I am, I am the same as any other sinner.
- ❖ For sinners like us, Jesus is willing to give his life because he loves us. He calls us to also love others like he does. We should not point fingers but ask “why does that person act that way?” “How can I love them and be a good influence?” It is more important to Jesus that we learn to love others rather than just keeping the rules.

OPEN YOUR HEART TO GOD'S WORD

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Mark 4:1-20
Key Verse 4:20

Do you like to **garden**? Did you ever **grow** anything? Did it bear **fruit**? Do you think **gardening** is easy or hard work? Would you ever want to be a **farmer**?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 2. What is a parable? Read verses 3 and 14. Who does the farmer represent? The seed? The soils?

Read verses 4 and 15. What is a path-like heart? What happens to the word that falls there? **How can we stop our heart from becoming hard?**

Read verses 5-6 and 16-17. What is a rocky soil heart? Why does the word eventually die there? **How can we drive down deep roots?**

Read verses 7 and 18-19. Why is a thorny heart both good and bad? Why doesn't the seed bear fruit there even though the plant seems very good? **What things are choking you?**

Read verses 8 and 20. What will happen if you clear out your heart and allow God's word to grow?

Application: What can you do to make your heart soft and free of junk so that God's word can grow?

OPEN YOUR HEART TO GOD'S WORD

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Teacher Sheet

Mark 4:1-20

Key Verse 4:20

- ❖ Hard hearted people in the Bible are always those who need to repent, either because they are unbelievers or because they are self-righteous. Path-like people need to study the ten commandments and Jesus cross until they can shed tears and see themselves as sinners.
- ❖ Rocky soil people need to stop believing based on their shifting emotions and instead get into the Bible and drive down real roots. Emotions are good but they are undependable, they don't have a firm foundation in the word or a realistic view of life to make it through the tough times.
- ❖ Thorny soil people receive the word, they grow really well, and they look like great Christians who will do great things. But for some reason they never grow, they never change (ie bear fruit) they seem always stuck. It is because they love something else secretly more than God and it chokes them. While the first two soils are those who fall away, this soil is a believer. Therefore, any person with thorny soil can easily become good if only they will mercilessly pull out what is stopping them from growing.
- ❖ Any person who allows the word of God to take root in their heart will grow exponentially. They will have the power to outwardly bear fruit in the ministry and also inwardly overcome their bad habits and become like Jesus. The secret to living a Christian life is our attitude towards God's word.

JESUS TEACHES US FAITH THAT OVERCOMES STORMS

“He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”

Mark 4:35-41

Key Verse 4:40

What makes you really **freak out/stress out**? Tests? Big projects? Friends’ gossip? Bullies? How do you **deal** with your **stress**? What relaxes you and makes you **happy** when you’re **upset**?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 35. What did Jesus invite his disciples to do after a long teaching session? How do you think they felt about this?

Read verse 37. What ruined the disciples little vacation? How bad was the storm?

Read verse 38. What was Jesus doing? ***How is his peace and calm related to last weeks’ passage (look at 4:20)? Do you think the Disciples learned the point of Jesus’ teaching? What should they have known?***

Read verse 39. How did Jesus easily overcome the storm? Read verse 40. How can we overcome? ***What are the storms you encounter daily? How can we overcome them rather than freaking out?***

Application: What storm do you need to overcome with faith in Jesus?

JESUS TEACHES US FAITH THAT OVERCOMES STORMS

“He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”

Mark 4:35-41

Key Verse 4:40

- ❖ James says that seeing problems as pure joy, grows us in perseverance, which grows us to Christian maturity lacking nothing. So our view and reaction to storms is crucial. The Biblical viewpoint is to see them as trials which are from God, or that God allows so that we may grow stronger. What they are not is random chaos or “God hates me”. In fact when God tests you it is because he loves you and respects you, believing you can take it and it will be for your good, as Zechariah says, he is refining you like pure gold.
- ❖ In the same way, the disciples should have known “God love me. Jesus is with me. No matter what happens it is God’s best plan.” That gives us peace beyond all human understanding. As 1 John says, it is faith in Jesus that overcomes the world. However, while Jesus, filled with God’s word, was like a tree planted in the good soil he had just taught about, was totally at peace, his disciples were like the thorny soil overwhelmed by the worries of this life. Had they learned the lessons Jesus taught they would have had peace. Like the Moravians that so impressed John Wesley as they sang on in the midst of a life-threatening storm, none of them afraid to die.
- ❖ Storms are unavoidable and we will have many, so we have to learn to deal with them. The more we have, the more opportunity we have to learn to trust God and have faith in the midst of them.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

“Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’”

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse 5:9

What is the first thing you did on the first day of school? Why is necessary to know teacher/friend’s **name**? Does your name have any **meaning**? Do you know why you were given the **name** you have now?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. Where did Jesus and his disciples land after the storm?

Read verse 3-5. Describe the man who met them. How did the evil spirit affect this man? **Physically?** **Spiritually?** **Emotionally?** **Socially?**

Read verse 9. Why did Jesus ask his name? What was his response? (A “legion” is a group of about 5000 plus Roman soldiers) **How can you see God’s love for the man?**

Read verse 15. What happened to the man possessed by many demons? **Physically?** **Spiritually?** **Emotionally?** **Socially?**

Application: How would you answer Jesus question “what is your name”? How can you practically live as a child of God this week and have a clear identity?

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

"Then Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'My name is Legion,' he replied, 'for we are many.'"

Teacher's Sheet

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse 5:9

- ❖ After Jesus had calmed a furious squall with one word of command, Jesus and his disciples reached the other side, the region of the Gerasenes. They were on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in an area known as the Decapolis, the ten cities. It was largely a Gentile area, influenced by Greek and Roman culture more than the law of God.
- ❖ The 'before' and 'after' descriptions of the demoniac reveal that he was a totally different person under demonic influence.

	Before Meeting Jesus	After Meeting Jesus
Physically	Super Human Strength; uncontrollable Torment & Self-destruction (v5)	Normal
Spiritually	Instantly he recognized the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God (v7) but feared him	Wanted to follow Jesus, full of thanksgiving
Socially	Anti-Social (no clothes)	Social (right mind, dressed)
Emotionally	Lonely	Be an influence (v20)

- ❖ **Main Point:** Why did Jesus ask the man what his name was?
- ❖ First, Jesus wanted to make a personal relationship with this man Second, Jesus wanted to restore the true identity and personality of this man. In the Bible a name is not just a label, but the representation of one's being, his identity and personality (Gen 17:5; Mk 3:16,17).

DON'T BE AFRAID, JUST BELIEVE!

"Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler. 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'"

Mark 5:21-43

Key Verse 5:36

Do you believe in **the impossible**? Have you ever experienced/witnessed something that at first seemed impossible? What happened? How did it make you feel?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 22.-23. Who was Jairus? What did he believe about Jesus? What problem did he have?

Read 25-29 Who is the woman who hid in the crowd? What sickness did she have? What did she believe about Jesus? What did she do? What happened?

Read 35-36. What did the men tell Jairus? How did Jesus encourage Jairus? ***In what way can we practice "just believing faith?"***

Read 38-42. What did Jesus do when he came to Jairus' house? What can we learn about Jesus?

Application: What are you asking God to do that He has not answered yet?

Let's fill out a prayer journal for needy friends and family, to pray for them and then let's see how God answers our prayers and witness the hand God in our lives today.

DON'T BE AFRAID, JUST BELIEVE!

"Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler. 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'"

Teachers Sheet

Mark 5:21-43

Key Verse 5:36

- ❖ Jairus was probably a highly respected as a ruler of the synagogue; however, Jairus loved his daughter so much that he risked his respect, political and religious position, fame and wealth in order to go to Jesus for help. Yet, on the way his daughter's condition became worse and she died. When fear came and ruled his heart, Jesus challenged him to have "just believing" faith.
- ❖ "Just believe" means don't look at the situation, the evidence or facts. Don't think what is possible or what is impossible. Don't listen to what people say or their discouraging words but just believe. To do this we must shut out everything else and just fix our eyes on Jesus and trust him. Like the servants coming to Jairus, Satan will do his best to keep us from doing this and make us fix our eyes on the impossibility of the problem but we must just keep trusting Jesus no matter what.
- ❖ One woman, who was subject to bleeding for twelve years, had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had yet instead of getting better she grew worse. She had "just touch Jesus' clothes" faith but Jesus didn't allow her to receive blessing and healing secretly, he helped her to confess to the public. In that way, Jesus healed her physical, social and emotional problem.
- ❖ In this passage there are two people who were sick and we are shown two different ways of healing. They both got well through "just believing" faith.

THE DISCIPLES HAVE FAITH AND ARE USED TO HELP OTHERS

"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits."

Mark 6:1-13

Key Verse 6:7

Who is easier to impress; a stranger or a friend or relative? Why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Where did Jesus grow up (Look at Matthew 2:23)? Read verse 3. When he went back home, why didn't the people there have faith in him? Read verses 4-6a. **Why was Jesus amazed?**

Read verse 6b. What was Jesus response to spiritual conflict? Read verses 7-11. What did Jesus send them out with? **What might Jesus have been trying to teach them?**

Read verses 12-13. When the disciples had faith in God, how did Jesus blessed them and used them? How were the disciples able to help others? What were some of the things they did?

Read verse 12. **What can we learn from the disciples about how to REALLY help people?**

Application: Is there someone in mind you think needs help? How can you really help them? How can you practice faith in God in your daily life?

THE DISCIPLES HAVE FAITH AND ARE USED TO HELP OTHERS

"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits."

Teachers Sheet

Mark 6:1-13

Key Verse 6:7

- ❖ **Matthew 2:23 New International Version (NIV)**
23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.
- ❖ Jesus left the vicinity of Capernaum and went to his hometown of Nazareth, about 20 miles to the southwest. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.
- ❖ Jesus' message had power and authority. When people heard him, they were amazed at his teaching first but instead obeying his teaching, they asked, "Where did this man get these things?" They called him "the carpenter," despising him as a common laborer. They called him "Mary's son," referring to the circumstances of his birth: It must have been well known that Mary was pregnant before marriage.
- ❖ How did Jesus respond in spiritual conflict? Jesus initiated an evangelistic campaign that was greater than anything he had done until that time. (Verse 6b)
- ❖ Jesus' instructions
 - First, depend on God alone. (verses 8-9)
 - Second, stay in one place. (verse 10)
 - Third, shake the dust off your feet. (verse 11)
- ❖ The disciples preached the same message that Jesus and John the Baptist had been preaching: that people should repent. It was not easy to deliver this message. John had been beheaded for this. How could the disciples, who had been so full of fear do this? They were inspired by Jesus' courageous faith. God loves us and has reached out to us in Christ. God wants to forgive our sins and change us in the inner being to be holy children of God. When we simply turn to God for help, he will give us grace to live a new life. The disciples' simple message of repentance and forgiveness was accompanied by God's power. Demons ran away from them and many sick people were healed. There was a great work of God throughout that region.

WHY WE MUST BE THANKFUL

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In today's passage, St. Paul encourages Christians in Thessalonica to “Give thanks.” However, in our world today, people usually don't give thanks to anyone, even if they are given something for free! However, giving thanks is the secret to real happiness and joy. Most of all, it is the way to having a great relationship with God and with others. Do you want to be grumpy all the time? Don't thank God. If you want to be happy with God and with others, give thanks to God at all times.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 16. How can we always be “joyful?” What kinds of joy are there in the world? What kind of joy was Paul talking about here?

Read verse 17. What does it mean to “pray continually?” What kind of prayer is this? What happens when we do so?

Read verse 18. Why should we give thanks in ALL circumstances (All the time no matter what)? What happens when we do not thank God?

What if something bad happens to us, can we be thankful? How were the Pilgrims thankful? What were they thankful for?

Why is it important to thank God? What are you thankful for this thanksgiving?

GIVING THANKS IS THE SECRET TO REAL HAPPINESS AND JOY

WHY WE MUST BE THANKFUL

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

10 THINGS I AM THANKFUL FOR

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ | 9. _____ |
| | 10. _____ | |

GIVING THANKS IS THE SECRET TO REAL HAPPINESS AND JOY

WHY WE MUST BE THANKFUL

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

What to Focus On:

- ✓ Why should we be “joyful” always? (What is Joy [as opposed to happy feelings] and what do we always have to be Joyful about?)
- ✓ Why should we always “pray?” (Pray for what? And why non-stop?)
- ✓ How can we “give thanks” always? (Good times and Bad regardless of our circumstances)

GOOD GUYS (IN JESUS) WIN IN THE END

"For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.""

Mark 6:14-29

Key Verse 6:18

Have you ever suffered for doing good? What happened? How did you feel?
Did it discourage you from doing good again?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At this time, what did people think about Jesus? Why were King Herod and his officials afraid?

What did Herod think of John? (20) Why did he have John arrested? Who is Herodias?

How did she get Herod to do her evil deed?

Even though John died, how can we say that he was a winner in life (From God's point of view)?

How can Christians win, when it looks like we are losing in the world? How do we lose in the world?

Have you ever lost (spiritually speaking)? What are some spiritual challenges you face in life?

How can you be a winner (spiritually and in the world) in your life?

Application: How can you be a winner this week?

GOOD GUYS (IN JESUS) WIN IN THE END

"For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.""

Teachers Sheet

Mark 6:14-29

Key Verse 6:18

- ❖ What John the Baptist's life was like. Evilness of Herod
- ❖ Why John was a "winner" in Jesus, and in the life of faith
- ❖ How we can also be "winners" in Jesus, and in our lives of faith

BE OPENED

"He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!")"

Mark 7:24-37
Key Verse 7:34

Let's talk about things that open. Do you have some ideas? (i.e. Flower, door)
LHave you ever experienced that you missed a chance to learn or receive something new and regretted it later? What hinder/blocked you from opening your heart/ear/eyes?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 26. How did this woman approach Jesus? What did she beg of Jesus?

Read verse 27. How did Jesus test her faith and seek to plant faith in her? Why?

Read verses 28. What can we learn from this woman?

Read verse 32. Think about this man. Why is it so terrible to be a deaf-mute?

What does it mean to be spiritually deaf?

Application: How can we Worship/Praise God this week use our body?

BE OPENED

"He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!")"

Teachers Notes

Mark 7:24-37

Key Verse 7:34

- ❖ A flower opens and when it does we can see its full beauty. An opened flower releases seeds, and causes other flowers to grow. A gate opens so we can go in or out of the yard. A door opens so we can go in or out of the house.
- ❖ In today's passage there was a Syrophenician woman who opened her heart to hear Jesus' word and put her faith in his word to save her daughter. When she has faith in Jesus' love and grace upon people, Jesus' challenging word didn't hinder her faith. When she opened her heart, she could see and meet Messiah/healer for all man kind.
- ❖ There was a man who was deaf and could hardly talk who was healed by Jesus. This man, who was brought by some people, could not hear and had trouble speaking but when Jesus touched the deaf man's ears and his tongue and said, "Be opened!" (7:34) Jesus' word immediately the man's ears were opened and he was able to speak plainly. As people who are born deaf never have a chance to hear how words sound so they are often unable to pronounce words correctly, we, who can hear, must keep our ears open to God's word. As we listen to stories and lessons about God, we are given the ability to speak more clearly about God's love. Then love of God in us allows us to bloom and help others grow.

HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND

“Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”

Mark 8:22-26

Key Verse 8:25

What does it mean to be a good friend? Have you ever take time to help someone? Why? Why Not? Or did you ever receive help from a stranger/friend? How did you feel?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read Verse 22. What happened when Jesus came to Bethsaida? Read verse 22 again. What did “Some People” do? Why?

Read Verse 23. What did Jesus do and say to the blind man? Read verse 24. Why didn’t he see when Jesus put his hands on him the first time?

Read verse 25. ***How is the healing of the blind man similar to the healing of a sinner? What does this show about the importance of having faith in Jesus? What does this show about Jesus?***

What can you learn from “some people in this passage?”

Application: How can you be a good friend to others? Got someone in mind?

HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND

“Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”

Teachers Sheet

Mark 8:22-26

Key Verse 8:25

- ❖ In this passage, we will learn how to be a good friend. What does it mean to be a good friend? From “some people” we learn that good friends are those who help others without judging them. In this world, there are not many good friends. Some Christians even fight with other Christians! But when “some people” took care of a blind man and brought him to Jesus, Jesus healed him and gave him God’s hope in his kingdom. God blessed the good friends and the once blind man. Know a person who needs Jesus’ healing? Let’s learn how to really be a good friend.
- ❖ Why didn’t he see when Jesus put his hands on him the first time? It teaches us we need faith in Jesus to see/heal. In this passage Jesus teaches us how is the healing of the blind man is similar to the healing of a sinner. A sinner is considered ‘blind’ before being converted. When being converted he sees or understands partially. However, when we accept Jesus as our savior, healer, counselor, almighty God he will shed with light on us and we can see clearly.
- ❖ Also this passage reminds us of God’s promise to Jacob. Gen 28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Jesus could easily have said to the blind man that he can not see well because of his lack of faith but he didn’t give up on him but bought complete healing and restored his sight completely.

GOD'S BEST GIFT TO US

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

In this verse, Isaiah talks about the birth of Jesus. He shows how much God loves us, and how he gave us his son. He talks about how important Jesus is to the world, and Jesus is to our lives. How important is Jesus to you? Why is he the BEST gift that anyone could ever give to a person? How is Jesus YOUR best gift? Let's think about these questions as we study this passage. May Jesus come into your hearts this Christmas time!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does it mean that Jesus was "born" or "given" to us? How was Jesus born? How does Jesus' birth show God's love for all people? How does Jesus' birth show God's love for YOU?

What is a "government?" What does it mean that the government will be on his shoulders? (Mt 2:2) What does this show about him?

What does the word "counselor" mean? (Jn 4) Why is Jesus the wonderful counselor? Why do people need a counselor? Do you?

What does "Mighty God" mean? (Jn 1:1-3) Everlasting Father? (Heb 13:8) Why is Jesus both? How important is this to you?

Why is Jesus called "Prince of peace?" Why do people need peace (most of all) in their lives? How do people not have peace? Do you have peace?

GOD'S BEST GIFT TO US

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

- ❖ Why God sent Jesus to us
- ❖ Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace
- ❖ Why is Jesus the best gift to us?

A DECISION THAT PLEASURES GOD

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Daniel 1:8

What are some tough decisions you had to make this year? What made them difficult? How did you decide?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 1-4. Why did God allow Judah to be conquered and taken as slaves? What did the king of Babylon select some young men of Judah for?

Read verses 5-7. Why did he give them food from his table? Why did the king change their names? ***In what ways has the world tried to tempt you and change your name?***

Read verses 8-16. What did Daniel decide to do? Why would it be hard for Daniel to keep this decision? Why did Daniel's decision please God? ***Why is it important to make decisions that please God in our lives? Did you make good decisions this year, or bad ones?***

Read Verses 17-21. How did God help these four men? ***What will happen when we decide to please God with our lives?***

Application: How can you start small and make small decisions to please God this new year?

A DECISION THAT PLEASURES GOD

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Teachers Sheet
Daniel 1:8

- ❖ What does being faithful mean?
- ❖ What does it mean to make a decision?
- ❖ Why did Daniel's decision please God? What is your decision to God this year?

WHY DID JESUS COME?

“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.”

Mark 8:31-38

Key Verse 8:31

Did you ever scarifies/lose something for others? What is it? Why did you do it? What did you earn/gain? Did you ever lie or deny who you are or what you did? What did you earn and lose from the lie/denial?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read 31. After the disciples’ confession of Christ, what did Jesus teach his disciples about himself?

Why must Jesus suffer, die, and rise again? Why was this necessary for Jesus to do?

Read verse 32. How did Peter respond to Jesus’ word? Read verses 32-33. Why did Jesus rebuke him so harshly?

Read verse 34. What must one who would follow Jesus do? What does it mean to take up your cross? Deny yourself? Follow Jesus?

Read Verse 35-38. **From Jesus’ example, what must we value most and what should we be doing everyday?**

Application: How can you “Deny [yourself] and take up [your] cross and follow” Jesus this year? What will happen when you do?

WHY DID JESUS COME?

“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ”

Teachers Sheet
Mark 8:31-38
Key Verse 8:31

- ❖ Why did Jesus come to earth? Many of us know this answer: To die for our sins and after three days, rise to Eternal Life. But when we really understand and accept what this means, God blesses us and changes our lives for his good purpose. Let's think about the meaning of this passage, and accept God's word with an open mind and open heart. May God bless this study and help us to appreciate what Jesus did for us.
- ❖ Jesus had been performing even more miracles! The disciples now knew that He was the Messiah. The Messiah is the one who was sent from God to save His people. But the disciples of Jesus had different meaning of “to be saved” from God's will.
- ❖ Therefore Jesus has something very important to teach them about God's plan for the Messiah. When Jesus told them exactly what was going to happen to Him. This is not what the disciples expected to hear about Jesus! They believed He was the Messiah and that He was sent to earth in order to save them from their sins, but they thought He would be more like a king and rule over everyone right away. Jesus is the Messiah, the one sent by God to save us! But instead of a kingly Messiah, Jesus will first be the servant Messiah; He will suffer and die for our sins. When Peter heard about God's plan, he can not accept it and even rebuke Jesus.
- ❖ Peter was completely focused on who he thought Jesus should be instead of God's plan. This is why Jesus said to him, “You are not thinking of the things of God, but of the things of man!” God wants us to change our way of thinking. Instead of thinking about ourselves all of the time and about what we think what is right should be, God wants us to think as He thinks. How can we transform our minds to think how God thinks?
- ❖ Following Jesus is not easy. It means obeying Him when we do not feel like it. It means not giving into our sin but living like Jesus lived. It means doing what God wants us to do even when it is hard. It means not thinking about ourselves but thinking about others. It is hard, just like carrying a cross. Jesus carried His cross and gave His life for us. Jesus wants us to give our whole lives to Him, to live for Him and not ourselves, no matter how hard it is for us to do.
- ❖ This passage also teaches us right spiritual value (God-man-others) system; live as a Christine life in the earth that is live life that glorifies God. When we have clear goal, we are willing do anything to achieved the goal even if it means to scarifies many things. In order for us to live God's right and perfect will upon our lives, we will have clear spiritual value system that help us to deny ourselves and take up his cross and follow Jesus.

JESUS SHOWS HIS TRUE SELF

"His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."

Mark 9:1-13

Key Verse: 9:3

Have you ever planted seeds at home or school? What picture do you see on the package of seeds? Why do people need to see full grown image of the plant from the seed?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 2-3. Who did Jesus take with him up the mountain? What happened there? What does "transfigured" mean? What did he look like?

What does the transfiguration teach us about Jesus? (Rev 4:11) Why might they (and we) need to see this vision of Jesus?

Read verse 4. Who did Jesus meet? Why Moses and Elijah?

Why did Jesus have to suffer? Why was this so difficult for him? Why was it necessary?

Read verses 5-6. What did Peter say? What was he thinking? Why can't we stay on the mountain forever?

Read verses 7-8. What was God's testimony about Jesus? Why did he say, "Listen to him?"

Application: *What did you learn about Jesus today and how can we listen to Jesus this week?*

JESUS SHOWS HIS TRUE SELF

"His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."

Teachers Sheet

Mark 9:1-13

Key Verse: 9:3

Sometimes it is easy to think of Jesus as our buddy, just one of the guys and a good teacher. However, this is not at all who Jesus is, it was just the way he chose to appear so that he could help us and be with us. We must never forget who Jesus really is. Jesus is God. In this passage Jesus gives his disciples a brief look at his true heavenly form so they may truly know him. May God help us to know and honor Jesus as God.

- ❖ We must see Jesus who is one with the Most High God, we cannot let his being human diminish our respect, fear, and awe of him. We need a vision of Jesus, high, exalted and majestic in our heart, so we may follow him as Lord.
- ❖ Jesus needed strength for the task ahead of him and found encouragement from the counsel of suffering servants. We must see the great struggle of Jesus to suffer for our sins, his decision and his love.
- ❖ We must listen to Jesus. Jesus says that life is not about our own comfort or even our own “spiritual fulfillment” but denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following him: mission.

Jesus’ true image – kingdom of God itself (Rev 21:4) in his true image Jesus wanted us to have resurrection faith to overcome the world. May God help us to have ear to hear Jesus’ word that life in it.

Rev 21:4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death^[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ – Jesus wipe every tear from me, in the times of trouble find the comfort in him

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

"'If you can'? said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for him who believes.'"

Mark 9:14-29

Key Verse: 9:23

If someone asks you do something difficult what do you do? Why? Do you like challenges or try to avoid them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 14-15. Where had Jesus and the three disciples been? What was going on at the foot of the mountain?

Read verses 16-18. What was the problem? What was wrong with the man's son?

Read verse 19. What did Jesus see as the root problem? How did the disciples, the teachers of the law and the boy's father each reveal their unbelief?

Read verses 21b-24. Why did Jesus rebuke the father? What must we believe when we come to Jesus for help? How can we overcome unbelief? (24)

Read verses 28-29. Why had the disciples failed to cast out the evil spirit? What can we learn through this lesson about prayer and faith? About unbelief?

Application: What have you been having a hard time to pray about and overcome how can you challenge this thing this week?

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

"If you can"? said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for him who believes.'"

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

“If you can’t? said Jesus. ‘Everything is possible for him who believes.’”

Teachers Sheet

Mark 9:14-29

Key Verse: 9:23

People like to be logical. People always like to try to figure out everything and decide what can and can't be done. Especially, we like to tell others what they cannot do because we can't do it. Once a 4 minute mile was thought to be a crazy unattainable goal, but once someone did it, many people started running 4 minute miles. Faith is like this. Everything looks impossible if we only look at what seems logical to me but when we learn to see God who is limitless we begin to see everything is possible.

What to Focus On:

- ✓ Jesus laments over unbelief. Unbelief is at the root of worry, fear, strife and hopelessness, it is the belief that God is not in control and my life is random and chaotic.
- ✓ We must switch our view from pessimistic to optimistic or more specifically, from unbelief to belief. Christians cannot be pessimists but must believe God is in control and everything is part of his good plan for our life “everything is possible” (Rom 8:28, Jer 29:11)
- ✓ Satan’s work is to bring death, hopelessness and unbelief we must pray to overcome his work.

Mark Chapter 9 is the message of Hope. Jesus teaches us how to deal with unbelieving generation. Even though Jesus saw Jesus’ time as an unbelieving generation, he put faith in one man; boy’s father. One seems nothing to cover whole world but he put faith into one man at a time.

Also this passage helps us to see what is our root problem is. Our root problem is the lack of Faith in God. In order to heal boy’s condition, Jesus plant faith into the father’s heart. Beginning of healing starts when the father took his responsibility for his son’s sickness and asked Jesus to overcome his unbelief, through this passage we may also overcome our unbelief and pray for healing into our family, students, ministry and the whole nation.

ONE WHO CAUSES OTHERS TO SIN

*"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?
Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."*

Mark 9:30-50

Key Verse: 9:50

If you put a drop of black ink to a pure water bottle, what will happen to the water bottle? Can you consider the water with black ink as pure water? Why or Why not?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 34. What had the disciples been arguing about on the road? Read verse 35. What did Jesus teach about the way to be truly great? Why is Jesus the greatest?

Read verses 36-37. What does Jesus teach about welcoming a child in his name? Read verses 38-41. What does Jesus teach about accepting other Christians from other churches?

Read verse 42. How serious is it to cause another to sin? What do we need to do to the things that are causing us to sin?

Read verse 50. What does it mean to be a salty Christian? What are some things we can do to be salty?

Read verses 42-48. What are the things that make us lose our saltiness? Why must we be salty, and also encourage others to be salty? (Mt 5:13) Read verse 50. How should we deal with our Christian Brothers and Sisters?

Application: What has your influence been like and how can you be a good influence this week?

ONE WHO CAUSES OTHERS TO SIN

*"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?
Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."*

Teachers Sheet
Mark 9:30-50
Key Verse: 9:50

What to Focus On:

- ✓ Greatness is how God made us. Being mediocre is burying our talent (Mt 25:24-25). But we should be great by living before God not people's praises.
- ✓ We must have a merciless attitude toward the things that cause us to sin. We must take a radical approach to overcoming temptation: anything that is a problem for us must be removed, destroyed, cut off from our life forever and we cannot look back.
- ✓ Salt has a profound effect on everything around it, it is not hidden. We must have a huge effect on others around us, people should be amazed by our life and wonder and ask us what is the reason for the way we live (1 Pe 3:15)

In this passage, Jesus teaches his disciples to be "salty" believers. He doesn't mean they should become like French fries but he means they should have a strong influence. In the world today, many are like undercover Christians or chameleon Christians, they want to blend in because people don't like the absolute message of the gospel. But in this world we are the salt, people taste Jesus through us. If we don't show Jesus' love, Jesus' forgiveness, Jesus' lifestyle, Jesus' value system and Jesus' word to others, they may never find the way to heaven. Let's decide to be salty.

Children At the time of Jesus' life on earth, children had no power, status or rights. They were the property of their parents, and not considered "full persons" until they were grown. To be a child was to be small and insignificant. No one would have used a child as an example of what we should be like. However, Jesus welcomed the children and gave them value. When compared to the majesty of God, we are all small and insignificant. We have value because He made us and gives us value. Just like children, we have value because God gives it to us. As we have full life in Christ, God wants us to shine like star in the darkness and be salty that brought taste to the food.

How should we deal with our Christian brothers and sister, according to verse 50, Jesus wants us to preserve ourselves from moral decay and corruption of the world by cultivating personal holiness before God and same time we are to preserve the unity of the church by having spiritual fellowship in Christ and a spirit of acceptance of fellow Christians.

JESUS SERVED YOU AND ME

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:32-45

Key Verse 10:45

Where do you serve? (ie crossing guard, take attendance for your teacher, class president, choir, helping Mom with the dishes) Why do you do it? How does it make you feel? Have you ever been recognized for your service?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 32. Where was Jesus and his disciples going? Why were they astonished and afraid? Read verses 33-34. What did Jesus tell the twelve disciples? Why?

Read verses 35-36. Even though Jesus was thinking about his death and resurrection, what were James and John thinking about? What they ask Jesus for? Read verses 37-40. How did Jesus respond to their request? ***Was this a good thing to ask for?***

Read verses 41-45. What did Jesus teach his disciples about how to be great? What does it mean to be great? ***How do worldly people try to be great? Is it right for us to be like them?***

How does Jesus' example motivate us to serve others? Why is a servant leader actually the greatest?

Application: How can you serve others in your school, and those around you? Why must you?

JESUS SERVED YOU AND ME

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Teachers Sheet
Mark 10:32-45
Key Verse 10:45

JESUS IS LORD OF ALL CREATION

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Mark 11:1-19

Key Verse 11:9-10

Have you ever been the leader of anything? What was it like trying to get people to obey you? Did you feel you were a good leader? Was it fun or burdensome?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read v. 1-7. How did Jesus teach the disciples he is Lord over all things? **What does "the Lord needs it" mean to us (see Col 1:16)?**

Though he is king, why did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a humble colt? **What does this teach us about the kind of king Jesus is?**

What did the people do and shout when Jesus entered Jerusalem? What did it mean for them to welcome him like this?

How did Jesus show he is Lord over one fig tree? How did Jesus show he is Lord of the temple? **Why did he do these things?**

Application: What other things are trying to be king of my heart? How can Jesus alone rule?

JESUS IS LORD OF ALL CREATION

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Teacher Sheet
Mark 11:1-19
Key Verse 11:9-10

- ❖ For once, the disciples obeyed Jesus with an absolute attitude. They did not argue, but did exactly as he told them to. When they said "the Lord needs it", no one hindered them. When we have an absolute attitude towards Jesus' lordship we can influence others to accept his lordship as well.
- ❖ The people welcomed Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Savior King, but they may have had their own idea about what that meant. They may have expected free health care, free Fish-Macs, and decisive action against the Romans. Still, they welcomed Him as King, and we need to do the same. Jesus is not the worldly king they expected, but a humble and gentle king who is very approachable, even to children. Help our children to welcome him.
- ❖ The fig tree represented the fruitless church; God's people who bore no fruit. Jesus wants to find fruit in our lives, not many leaves of superficial testimonies. Jesus expected to find the fruit of obedience and love of God in God's people. But, instead they were self-centered, preoccupied, and indifferent. They used the temple to make money and to sell convenience offerings. Jesus said they had made it a "den of robbers". There are many ways to rob God. We can rob him of devotion by making someone else king of our hearts. We can self-righteously huffy-puff about the handling of the offering, and, in our greed, deprive a needy person of support.
- ❖ We must also clean out the temple of our hearts. We must learn from Jesus that this is not a friendly gentle scrubbing but we must mercilessly whip, flip and scatter all that does not belong in our heart that God may truly be able to rule. We must open every door of our heart and reveal the hidden contents of every room, pulling out every skeleton in the closet.

TRUE SACRIFICE

"They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Mark 12:41-13:2

Key Verse: 12:44

Did it ever hurt to give a big gift? Do you like to give very generously? What about giving a big offering?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 41. How were offerings given in Jesus' time? Notice that Jesus was watching as they gave the offering. (41a) Why do you think he was interested in it? (Matthew 6:21)

What were the rich people putting into the temple treasury? (41b) How do you think they acted when they gave their big offering? (Matthew 6:2)

Read verse 42. What did one poor widow give? How do you think she might have felt giving two coins compared to the bags of gold of the rich? What might the disciples have thought about her?

Read verses 43-44. What did Jesus teach his disciples? (43-44) What can we learn about what Jesus values? What kind of offering does God want?

Read 13:1-2. What did the disciples say while leaving the temple? (1) Did they learn the lesson? What did Jesus teach them? (2)

Application: *What do you think about how you give offering, are you really giving with your whole heart till it hurts, how can you apply this to your giving this week?*

TRUE SACRIFICE

"They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Teacher Sheet

Mark 12:41-13:2

Key Verse: 12:44

- ❖ Is it ok to spend \$25 on a gift for your friend's birthday and give your leftover 25cents in the offering? Is it ok to just give your ordinary offering when God answered your prayer and gave you an 'A' on your test? Can we just ask Mom for a \$1 every week, habitually, and drop it in the basket without even thinking? Is it ok to not participate in relief offering at Christmas? These are the questions that are practically at the center of this study. Jesus teaches that the offering that is pleasing to God comes from the heart.
- ❖ Because God does not actually need the money, just giving out of duty is useless, rather it is the heart that he seeks. As Cain's habitual offering was displeasing and Abel's heartfelt offering was acceptable, so giving habitually, without actually thinking about it is a waste of time—and our money!
- ❖ In the Old Testament, their offering was called a sacrifice and it was very costly and difficult to give. Offering that does not require some sacrifice is no real offering at all. It is important that children find a way that they can offer out of what is theirs and not just what they get from their parents that costs them nothing.
- ❖ Children cannot, perhaps, give money but they can give of themselves and their time—then they must ask themselves am I giving like the widow or do I give only a small percentage of my talent and effort for God?

JESUS WAS TRIED IN OUR PLACE

“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.””

Mark 14:53-15:15

Key Verses: 14:61,62

Were you ever accused of anything and had to prove your innocence, defend yourself? What did it feel like? What were the consequences? Did you succeed?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read 14:53-65. Where was Jesus tried first? What evidence did they find? How did Jesus respond to the false charges? Which charges did he answer?

Read verses 66-72. In contrast to Jesus, how did Peter respond to questioning? Why did he deny being with Jesus? When Peter remembered Jesus' words, what did he do? Why?

Read 15:1-15. Where did Jesus' second trial take place? What was the charge here? How did Jesus answer? What amazed Pilate? How did Pilate try to release Jesus? Why did he not simply dismiss the charges and set Jesus free? What was Pilate's final decision in the matter?

Application: What does Jesus' trial mean to you?

JESUS WAS TRIED IN OUR PLACE

“But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.””

Teacher Sheet
Mark 14:53-15:15
Key Verses: 14:61,62

- ❖ The Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish ruling counsel, could not find any evidence, that warranted the death penalty, other than what Jesus provided himself. Jesus didn't answer any of the false charges, but he affirmed his identity as the Son of God, even though it would cost him his life.
- ❖ Peter was identified as one of Jesus' disciples by a servant girl with keen night vision. Although he had claimed at one point that he was ready to die for Jesus, Peter was not ready to risk his life, and denied Jesus three times. When he remembered Jesus' words he broke down and wept, because he realized that he was not the ultra-brave, super disciple he had imagined himself to be. He was a weak and sinful man who was all bark and no bite. He saw himself as who he really was before Jesus—a sinner in need of repentance, grace, and forgiveness. Help our children to see themselves before Jesus, as who they really are, so they can accept Jesus' grace.
- ❖ In front of Pilate, the charges changed from religious into political. Jesus, as King of the Jews, was charged as an insurrectionist. Pilate was amazed that Jesus remained silent throughout the trial, except when asked about his identity. We on the other hand, have plenty to say when accused of something, even when the charges are true. Yet, when asked about our identity as a Christian we are not so forth coming. Help our children to have clear identity in Christ and not to compromise. Pilate knew that Jesus posed no threat for the Roman government, so he should have dismissed the case, but he did not want to pin himself against the Jewish authorities, so he tried to compromise. In the end he released Barrabas, who was everything that they accused Jesus of being, and he had Jesus crucified.
- ❖ Jesus was tried in our place, he did not defend himself because we really have nothing to say. The charges of blasphemy: true— we all act like we are God: “I'm in charge, I don't have to listen to anyone, I can do whatever I want...”
The charges of insurrection: ditto – We are all little insurrectionists who want to rule our own little kingdoms and queendoms without having to accept anyone else's authority. Praise Jesus who accepted the charges and died in our place so we may live!

JESUS WAS FORSAKEN IN OUR PLACES

"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")."

Mark 15:16-47
Key Verse: 15:34

Have you ever been abandoned by your friends? What did it feel like? Have you ever been lonely or had no friends in a new place? What did you do?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 16-27. How did the Roman soldiers mock Jesus? Describe the crucifixion. Why did Jesus refuse the pain killer? What was the written charge on the cross? What does this mean? Why was he crucified between two robbers?

Read verses 29-32. How did they taunt him? Why didn't Jesus save himself? (Mt 26:53) How did all the others (Pilate, disciples, religious leaders) try to save themselves?

Read verses 33-39. What happened at the sixth hour? Why? What happened at the ninth hour? What does Jesus' cry mean? (Ps 22) Do you ever feel forsaken? Why was Jesus forsaken? Or was he? What is the significance of the torn curtain? What was the Centurion's testimony?

Read verses 40-47. Who were these women? Why did they not run away in fear? (1 Jn 4:18) Who buried Jesus? How do we know that Jesus was really dead? Why is that important?

Application: What does it mean to you that Jesus was forsaken in your place?

JESUS WAS FORSAKEN IN OUR PLACES

"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")."

Teachers Sheet

Mark 15:16-47

Key Verse: 15:34

- ❖ The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus as the King of the Jews, which was also the written charge on the cross. To the Romans this meant that he was some ridiculous insurrectionist wannabe. To the Jews this title was reserved for the Messiah. Jesus did not take the pain killer because he still had some more to say from the cross and needed a clear mind. He was crucified between two robbers to appear as the chief of sinners, so as to be shamed to the utmost degree.

- ❖ Jesus did not save himself because his mission was to save us. Pilate tried to save himself by compromising. The disciples ran away to save themselves. The religious leader conspired to kill Jesus so as to save their positions. We try to save ourselves in many ways (face lifts and Botox, through white lies, eating health food etc.)

- ❖ At the sixth hour the whole land became dark to show the spiritual darkness. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is a quote from Psalm 22 which the Jews would have recognized. Although Psalm 22 begins like this, it ends in victory. Jesus was forsaken in our places. God can not be around sinful human beings. When Jesus carried all the sins of the world, he felt like a sinner without God. This may have been more painful to him than the physical pain he was in. However, God did not leave him indefinitely but would come to receive his spirit. The torn curtain signifies that the way to God is open.

- ❖ The women did not run away because they loved Jesus more than themselves. True love conquers fear. Pilate called the centurion to inquire if Jesus had already died. The centurion's testimony is important because death is the prerequisite of the resurrection.

THE GOOD NEWS FOR ALL CREATION

"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Mark 16:1-20
Key Verse 16:15

What is the best news you ever got or the most exciting thing you ever heard? How many people did you tell? How did it feel to tell others? Why do we like sharing good news?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 1-6. When the Sabbath was over, what did the women do? How could they buy spices at that time? Surely the market was closed? What problem did they anticipate? Whom did they meet in the tomb? What good news did he give them? What does this mean to us?

Read verses 7-8. What mission did the women receive? Think about the words, "Just as he told you." How important is it to remember Jesus' words? Why didn't they tell anyone? Are you sometimes afraid to share the gospel?

Read verses 9-14. Who finally delivered the message? What was the response? Why? (14)

Read verses 15-20. Who did Jesus give the world mission command to? Why didn't he wait until they overcame their doubts? Who will be saved, who will not be saved? Is there any middle ground? How would Jesus help his disciples to carry out their mission? What did the disciples do?

Application: What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you personally?

THE GOOD NEWS FOR ALL CREATION

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Teachers Sheet

Mark 16:1-20

Key Verse 16:15

- ❖ The women really loved Jesus, so they went right after the Sabbath was over and knocked at the spice merchant’s door, who was probably very annoyed to have to get up so early.
- ❖ They anticipated the problem of the large stone blocking the entrance, but when they got there it was removed. Sometimes we make problems where there are none.
- ❖ The good news “He has risen” means that our sins are truly forgiven, for God confirmed Jesus’ words by raising him from the dead. It also means that we have a living hope in the kingdom of God, for the resurrection gives us assurance of eternal life.
- ❖ Sometimes we are like the disciples: we have selective hearing=only hear what we want to hear. We need to listen to Jesus’ word and remember it.
- ❖ Mary Magdalene was faced with unbelief when she delivered the message. The disciples probably wrote her off as an emotional nutcase. Their problem was unbelief. Unbelief often blocks the work of God.
- ❖ It is amazing that Jesus gave the world mission command to these weak and doubting disciples. He did not wait until they had it all together. He called them where they were at. In the same way Jesus does not have to wait until our children are all grown up. He can call them right here and now. Prepare them to hear the call and answer it!

INTRO TO JAMES

"...so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Book of James

Key Verses: 1) James 1:4b 2) James 1:2-4. 3) James 1:26.
4) James 2:8. 5) James 3:17. 6) James 5:7, 8,11,16.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read James 1:4b. What does it mean to be "mature?" What does it mean to be "immature?" Why do we need to be mature Christians? How can we become mature Christians?

Read James 1:2-4. How should we see bad things that happen? How is this a way of being mature?

Read verse 1:26. Why is controlling what we say in public and private important to becoming mature Christians?

Read verse 2:8. How should mature Christians treat each other?

Read verse 3:17. Why is being a peacemaker an important part of a mature Christian?

Read verses 5:7, 8,11,16. Why is being patient, prayerful, and persevering a reflection of maturity?

Application: How can you become a more mature Christian?

INTRO TO JAMES

"...so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Teachers Sheet

Book of James

Key Verses: 1) James 1:4b 2) James 1:2-4. 3) James 1:26.
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HAVING THE RIGHT VIEW OF PROBLEMS

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds"

James 1:2-4

Key Verse: 1:2

What is the biggest problem you ever had? How did you feel at the time? Did you solve it or did someone help you? What happened after?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 2. What kind of problems do kids have at school? At home? With friends? How does a mature Christian see problems?

Read verse 2b-3. Why does James call them "trials" and not problems? How do problems test our faith? Who should we go to when we have a problem?

Read verse 4. How can problems actually be a good thing? What can we learn from our problems? How do they make us more patient? How do they grow our relationship with Jesus?

How does God use problems to grow us to maturity? How can seeing problems as pure joy help us solve them?

Application: *What are the problems you have now that you need to consider pure joy?*

HAVING THE RIGHT VIEW OF PROBLEMS

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds"

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

HAVING THE RIGHT VIEW OF PROBLEMS

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds"

Teachers Sheet

James 1:2-4

Key Verse: 1:2

- ❖ Problems happen all the time in all shapes and sizes. They seem to always come at the time when we are least prepared for them and least want them. They are painful, inconvenient and we want them to be over as quickly as possible. But what if problems are God's way of refining us into who he wants us to be.
- ❖ There is a beautiful video by the Skit Guys called "God's Chisel" where a man prays for God to make him into his original masterpiece and God suddenly appears and begins to chisel him. It is uncomfortable and painful and the man doesn't want to have many of those things chiseled away, but that is how God makes us into his masterpiece. There's a great scene in "Evan Almighty" where the Mom is in a diner and God comes to her disguised as a waiter and he tells her, "do you think if someone prays for patience, God gives them patience or give them opportunities to be patient? Do you think if someone prays for courage, does God give them courage or give them opportunities to be courageous? If someone prays for their family to be closer, does God zap them with warm fuzzy feelings or give them opportunities to love each other?" This is why no one can understand our specific problems because they are the way that God is training me.
- ❖ Too often we just want to get through problems and be done. There is a story of a man in a village where, when they came of age, they were put in a mine and had to stay there for a week and then they would be considered a man. The man decided to endure it and as he was put in the dark cave, he could see nothing and touching the walls he cut himself because they were full of sharp glass. He decided to just sit there and bear it till the time was over. After a week they took him out and as he looked back, to his shock he had been the entire time in a diamond mine. The lesson: When we are in times of trial try to grab a few gems.
- ❖ Problems grow me to maturity. They help me to be patient, to pray, to grow closer to God—we don't get very close to God when everything is going well... Like a good teacher, they are God's tests to keep me sharp and point out where I need more study. When I fail at one of these tests I can repent and try to do better next time and then I grow. So a mature Christians "considers" them as pure joy. Notice it doesn't say "they are" pure joy but "consider" them as pure joy. It is a decision on how we want to see them. Surprisingly, when we see them as pure joy, they are a lot easier to solve and not as bad as we thought.
- ❖ The best part is that when we have gone through problems we can help others go through as well, we can be a good shepherd.

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD DECISION

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

James 1:5-8

Key Verse: 1:5

What was the hardest decision you ever had to make? What did you do? Were you really worried or did you feel confident making your decision? How did it turn out?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 5. What should we do if we have trouble making decisions or if we make bad decisions? Why is going to God the solution to making a good decision? **Have you ever gone to God to help you solve a problem?**

Read verse 5 again. Why don't we always ask God for wisdom about every problem? How can we admit to God we need help? How can we ask him? How does God want to give to us?

Read verse 6. When we pray what must we do and not do? Read verse 8. Why is doubting God so serious (see Heb 11:6)? Read verse 7. What should such a person expect from prayer? **Why is so important to believe that God hears and answers my prayers (see also Mark 11:24)?**

Have you made some bad decisions in your life? Why did you do so? How can we start trusting God and asking him for wisdom?

Application: How can you grow in your prayers through this passage this week?

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD DECISION

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Teachers Sheet

James 1:5-8

Key Verse: 1:5

- ❖ Wisdom is very different from being book-smart. Being smart means you know information, but wisdom is having the real life experience to put what we know into practice. Wise people are always sought out for advice, because we have to make all sorts of decisions on a daily basis and we really worry we will make the wrong choice. As we learned last week, God often sends us problems because he is trying to grow us to maturity. Therefore, he is also trying to help us to become wise through our problems as well. So, as I go to God in prayer about my problems, he will use them to grow me in wisdom. Then I become a wise person who can also help others.
- ❖ However, our tendency is to want to do everything on our own. In the book of Joshua, we find that after destroying the first city Jericho, Joshua had to destroy a very small city called Ai. Jericho was a huge challenge, because it had an enormous wall around it and it was the very first challenge they had to overcome. Yet, God sent an angel to tell Joshua exactly what to do and they won the victory without hardly having to fight. After such a victory Joshua felt confident and since Ai was so small, he didn't pray but just sent up 2000 men to take the city on their own, expecting the same result. However, God was not with them and the men were all killed. This was such a huge defeat so early in the battle to take the land that it almost ruined everything and made the Israelites doubt they could take the land. But when he prayed, it turned out that one man Achan had stolen some stuff from Jericho against God's command and so God was against them, when the matter was solved, Joshua prayed and God told him exactly what to do and victory was easy. Later, some Gibeonites came to him disguised pretending to be from a far-away land and asked to make a peace-treaty and Joshua didn't pray and was tricked—they were from the next city he would conquer! So, they stayed in the land and led the Israelites into idol worship and all sorts of trouble. Kids want to do everything on their own without help and to some degree it is good, but we are not meant to be an island unto ourselves but to learn to ask for and receive help, and give help living in family and community. We must break down our pride through regular repentance and learn to humbly ask God for direction. When we stay centered on God through regular time in his word and stay focused on his love for us we will come to him naturally and make good decisions.
- ❖ People know all sorts of things in their head but often don't do what they know. Like we know God is the all-powerful Creator of the universe and that he loves me, but when it comes to prayer they doubt that God loves them and will answer their prayer. Such a person is double-minded, they should not expect God to answer their prayers, because the first requirement of prayer is that we must have faith. We hate it when people don't trust us but often treat God like he's not real. Such people who believe in God but don't believe in God, are just pretending or only believe in God in their head but don't practice it in their lives. They are not stable as Christians, they are like a wave going back and forth on everything, "I believe, I don't believe, I love God, I love the world, I'll obey God, I'll do what I want..." Believing in God doesn't mean that I believe he exists but that I am in a relationship with him this must be our first step in becoming a Christian, only then can I grow to maturity.

WHAT TO DO WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

James 1:12-18

Key Verse: 12

What is the lamest excuse you ever made when you were caught doing something? Why didn't you just admit what you did? How did you feel about it later? Did it make you say it differently next time?

DISCUSSION QUESTION

Read verse 12. What are all the kinds of “trials” that you face? Have you ever been tempted and thought “this is God allowing me to be tested”? ***How would it be different if you said to yourself, “I’m going to get an ‘A’ on this test! I’m ready, bring it on!”***

Read verse 13. What do we usually do when we are caught red handed doing something wrong? Read Genesis 3:8-13. Who did Adam blame for his sin? Who did Eve? Is it God's fault when we are tempted? ***Have you ever blamed others or God when you knew it was really your fault?***

Read verse 14. Who is the only one responsible for our temptation? Read verse 15. What does temptation lead to when we give in? Read verse 16. ***Why do we give in to this lie (“deception”)?***

Verse 18 means that when we hear the “word”—the Bible—and we believe, we become a new creation. How does this help us overcome temptation?

Application: How can you change your attitude about temptation this week?

WHAT TO DO WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED

"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
 What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
 What changes should I personally make in my life?*

PRAYER TOPICS:

LET'S BE HONEST AND ADMIT THAT TEMPTATION IS OUR OWN FAULT

WHAT TO DO WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

Teachers Sheet

James 1:12-18

Key Verse: 12

- ❖ The word translated trials and the word translated temptations in 13 are the same Greek word. The point is that temptations are not a bad thing—per say—but a test that God doesn’t send but allows. Kids understand this. They can’t just sit in school and listen to information with no responsibility. They are responsible for what they hear and eventually come tests. Some kids hate tests but other kids get excited. Those who haven’t been paying attention, or preparing, studying hate the time of testing because it reveals their weak study life. Those who prepare and love to study look forward to the chance to show how much they know and show their teacher who they are as a student. The teacher is joyful to see student drinking in what they give and students are happy to see their accomplishment and how they are growing. The funny thing is that the students who hate tests are missing the whole point of school. They think that it is something that they are being forced to do but actually it is such a tremendous blessing and privilege.
- ❖ In our huge pride, we always blame others for our obvious sin. Bible students say it’s God’s fault for putting the tree in the garden. Adam said it was God and Eve’s fault. Eve said it was the serpent’s fault. Kids blame their parents but all this is our extreme pride. In reality the only person we can blame is ourselves. When Eve at the fruit was it Satan’s fault? In some countries they like to eat boiled duck fetus and drink the amniotic fluid so if you put a bowl of them in front of such a person and tell them not to eat they are greatly tempted but most likely if you put them in front of us and said don’t eat, we’d say “Sure! No problem!” Temptation only works if we already want what is being offered. So the problem of temptation is not that God is tempting me, but that I want things that are wrong and sinful for me.
- ❖ Temptation is a really attractive, well-packaged lie. It really is fun and it really does provide some degree of satisfaction, happiness, and meaning—FOR A SHORT TIME! And then it leaves us empty and thirsty for more and it gives birth to sin, which causes death. Sin is like chocolate covered poison, it really is sweet for a time and then it kills us.
- ❖ The reason there is death in the world is because of sin. Every time that we sin, we are causing the problems of the world, we are the reason for everything that is wrong in the world not God. People want to continually blame God for all the world’s problems, but it is us that is the problem.
- ❖ However, just realizing that sin is a lie and temptation is our fault doesn’t change anything because our sinful flesh is too much for us to overcome. Verse 18 tells us that It was God’s pleasure to give us new birth through his word. We become a new creation when we believe in Christ, he says that our old self and life “it is finished!” We are dead through baptism and we are resurrected with Christ. We should put it up on our mirror “I am a New Creation” and then live according to that. That graceful message of what Christ has done and who I am in him is the greatest motivation for saying “no” to temptation.

LET’S BE HONEST AND ADMIT THAT TEMPTATION IS OUR OWN FAULT

DON'T JUST LISTEN TO THE BIBLE, DO IT!

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

James 1:19-27

Key verse 22

Do you ever like to talk big or exaggerate what you did? Or do you know someone who always brags but isn't really all that? Why do people do that? What do you think about it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 19-20. What example does James give of how we should live if we believe in Jesus? Read verse 21. What does Bible study do for those who will humbly receive it?

Read verse 22. What does it mean to only be a “listener” of the word? What does it mean to be a doer? Why are listeners deceived? What is the goal of Bible study? What are some things that you learned to do differently as a result of Bible study?

Read verses 23-24. Why is it foolish to keep studying the Bible and not changing how you act? Read verse 25. What are some qualities of a good Bible student? What is the reward of those who study the Bible like this?

Read verses 26-27. What two examples does James give of living out what we learned in Bible study? What are some more important examples you can think of? How can we be better Bible students?

Application: *What sin have you been saying you repent of for a long time but haven't actually done anything about, how can you challenge it this week?*

DON'T LISTEN TO THE BIBLE, DO IT!

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

Teachers Sheet

James 1:19-27

Key verse 22

- ❖ James is like Proverbs of the New Testament so it has a lot of random statements of wisdom for our life in Christ. So, it's not clear if verse 19-20 should be connected to 21. But James puts at the end of 21 that we should humbly accept the Bible. Therefore verses 19-20 are an example of how believers should and should not act. All sorts of filth from our old life needs to be cleaned out and the soap to accomplish it is the word of God. Therefore, Christians need to be in the Bible every day. But not just reading it, they must be accepting it with a humble heart. A Christian's attitude toward the Bible and Bible study will decide the level of his growth and the formation of his character. If a Christian doesn't have a humble, open attitude toward the Bible, then they are not a believer.
- ❖ James sets up two types of people here those who only listen and those who listen and do. Listeners deceive themselves because they think that just knowing about God will be enough to save them. But for such people, the Holy Spirit is not working in them to change them, because they are not saved. Their belief that knowing the Bible is enough (even having memorization trophies and medals and a pile of testimonies) is wrong and they will go to hell—it is a big deal. Those who do what the Bible says, show they are real believers who love God and his word that reveals him to them. It is not to say that we are saved by our works but that a real believer who is saved by faith in Jesus Christ will naturally show it in his life. Jesus said no bad tree bears good fruit nor does a good tree bear bad fruit, so you will recognize them by their fruit. This is the essence of this word.
- ❖ The goal of Bible study is not to accumulate head knowledge of the Bible but to do it. Otherwise, we become like a cartoon caricature with a big head and little legs that can't carry us. If every week kids write the same testimony “I repent of” And it never changes and they never do anything different, then they should stop using the word “repent” because it literally means to “turn away from”. What they really mean is “I feel bad that I...” or “I feel I'm supposed to write about...” There should be growth and things should be getting solved as they mature in their faith and begin living differently. This should be natural to a believer. A real Christian should have many stories of how they've changed and what they've overcome. We're on the winning side not the losers.
- ❖ A good Bible student then likes to hear the word often, he holds onto it and doesn't forget it but writes it down so he may remember and then keeps thinking about it, until he figures out how he can practice it and what he needs to repent of and then he does it and there is a visible change. A poor Bible student is like a fool who can't remember what he looks like after looking in a mirror. The problem is not his eyes or the mirror, but his attitude. It is like people who are self-centered when someone tells them their name, they immediately forget it because they didn't really care. The Bible is like a mirror that shows us who we really are and how much we need to repent. Those who have no love of God or desire to know him try to forget what they saw, because they don't like what it shows them and they immediately decide in their heart that they won't do it and ‘forget’.
- ❖ Let us be those who love Bible study and strive to practice what we learned.

TREAT EVERYONE THE SAME

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin”

James 2:1-13

Key verse: 8-9a

Did you ever experience that people treated you differently because of how you look? Because you were cute or well-dressed they were nice to you? Or they took one look at you and treated you badly?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. What does it mean to show favoritism? Read verses 2-4. Why is it evil to show favoritism? What happens if kids come into our church and we treat everyone differently based on how they look?

Do people judge others according to how they look (clothes, hairstyle, shoes, etc)? Do people judge others because of the family they come from? Do people judge others according to what age they are? Do people judge others according to what they get on their report cards? How about if they are rich or poor?

Read verses 6-7. Why was it foolish for them to favor the rich and dishonor the poor? Who is actually more open to the gospel poor or rich people? Perfect or sinful? Cool kids or lonely?

Read verses 8-9. Why is favoritism a sin, what law are we breaking? How should Christians treat all people (no matter how they look, what they like, where they come from, rich or poor, smart or dumb, cool or uncool)? Think about the person you treat the worst. How can you love them as yourself this week?

Application: How can you see an attitude of discriminating against others in yourself, how can you overcome it this week?

TREAT EVERYONE THE SAME

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin”

Teachers Sheet

James 2:1-13

Key verse: 8-9a

- ❖ The main focus of this section is that Christians must treat all people the same “love your neighbor as yourself.” This can be universally applied to a child’s whole life at school, at church, out in the world, but here specifically is about the way we should treat people while in church. It was apparently a problem in the early church, that they were treating the rich better than the poor. James has already made it clear in chapter 1:9-11 that the church is to be countercultural, that is our values must be totally backwards compared to the world. However, often we get our values as Christians from the culture: we like what they like, respect what they respect, honor what they honor. When kids come into the church they should feel that this place is totally different than any other place they’ve ever been, not exactly the same. They should feel they are loved for who they are and not judged, they should feel that this is the one place where they are special even though everyone else looks down on them.
- ❖ “Favoritism: unfairly favoring a person or group; the practice of giving special treatment or unfair advantages to a person or group” (Encarta Dictionary). When we show favoritism we are judging others, which Jesus told us not to do (Mt 7:1-5; Ro 14:4, 1 Co 5:12). We cannot see inside people and so we don’t really know if someone is better or worse based on the way they look. Being rich doesn’t necessarily mean that someone is hard-working and smart and being poor doesn’t necessarily mean they are lazy and foolish. Being good-looking doesn’t mean someone is kind or pure, wearing dark clothes, heavy makeup or weird hair doesn’t mean someone is mean and evil. When we make these judgments about people, we take God’s place which we are not qualified to take. What is more we make people feel bad and they think that God doesn’t love them because of something on the outside which is totally untrue, God looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). What is more we have an evil intention; which is, we only want people we like in our church, and not the people who God wants or the people who really believe. Everyone who comes into our church was invited by God and should know that God loves them just as they are.
- ❖ Kids naturally make all sorts of judgments. In some ways God has given this to them as a survival mechanism, they need to stay away from dangerous kids and kids who are a bad influence but being discerning and showing favoritism are two different things. Favoritism is treating people better because of something on the outside and treating others badly. Kids who are dangerous or a bad influence should just be avoided, kids don’t need to judge and treat them badly, gossip about them and give them dirty looks, that is evil. All people need Jesus and even if they are not kids we should hang out with, we can love all people in our heart and pray for them. Kids therefore do need to grow in discernment, we shouldn’t be foolish and innocent kids often get into trouble but we should not develop a judgmental mindset always looking down on others.
- ❖ In fact it is often the ugly looking people who are the most open to the gospel, the poor, the lonely, the rejected, the weird, the broken. It is the cool, rich, handsome, “perfect” kids who could care less and often are cruel (though I don’t want to make an unfair judgment). In their case the poor were open to their message and the rich were the ones taking them to court and killing them. The poor were the ones God wanted but they were being wicked and favoring the rich because they liked them better.
- ❖ All of God’s law can always be summarized in love God and love others. Love is the main characteristic that Christian should have (John 13:35) and it should be what the church is known for. If we don’t love we need to repent and we need to stop, we are dishonoring the name of Christ.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY BUT WHAT YOU DO

"You see that his faith and his actions were working together,
and his faith was made complete by what he did."

James 2:14-26

Key verse: 22

Did you ever meet a person who talks really big about what they can do, who awesome they are but they really weren't? How do you feel about such people?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 14. Why is it pointless if someone says they believe but doesn't live like it? What if they say one thing, and do something else, is that faith? How can we know if we or someone has faith?

Read verses 15-16. What should a person who believes in Jesus do for someone in need? Read verse 17. How should our faith affect the way we act and the things we do?

Read verses 18-19. If a person says they believe in Jesus but doesn't do anything to show it, what does that say about them?

Read verses 20-22. What was the example of Abraham? Read verses 23-24. Why did Abraham go to heaven? What was the example of Rahab? Is it ok to believe in Jesus and not act like it?

Application: What do you need to do this week to live out your faith?

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY BUT WHAT YOU DO

“You see that his faith and his actions were working together,
and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

Teachers Sheet

James 2:14-26

Key verse: 22

- ❖ The focus of this lesson is not to say that we can be saved by good deeds, we have to be really clear that we are saved by faith alone, by grace alone, and not by works so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9). Rather, the passage is talking about how the faith of a real believer will produce good works. If a person has faith—which is meant to save us from sin and make us into the image of Jesus—and lives just the same as they always did, then either they weren't really saved and should examine their heart and repent or they must be in a constant state of conflict with the Spirit, because it is impossible for a Christian not to live differently. We need encouragement and direction sometimes to put our faith into action but we need to put it into action. Jesus said that the world would recognize his disciples not by their belief or words, but by their love—which doesn't refer to the inward emotion but the outward action (Jn 13:35).
- ❖ Jesus said that every good tree will bear good fruit and a bad tree will produce bad fruit and a good tree cannot produce bad fruit and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. And a tree that bears no fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. So you can recognize people by the inner fruit that always manifests itself in their outward actions. So, we always know people by the way they live and what they do. Sinful fakers want to believe they can say one thing and live a different way but it is impossible. So it is important not to let kids go down the path of hypocrisy. We must teach them from the beginning that Bible study is not about learning facts but about doing what God wants.
- ❖ We can see this especially in the way we treat others. The number one thing that Jesus emphasized is that we should love one another (Jn 13:34-35). If we are selfish and uncaring and see others in need and ignore them, then what is the point of being a Christian, which is based on love? Of course if we have genuinely experienced that Jesus loves me and forgives me and saves me, then I should realize that I must do this for others. Love can't be words. Love can't be an emotion. Love must be action done by faith.
- ❖ A person therefore who says they have faith and doesn't need to show it in actions, that they are a real believer but they don't need to show it, is clearly not a believer. Anyone who has truly read what Jesus did in his life, who experienced how much Jesus did for them, and how much God does for them everyday in millions of answered prayers and blessings they didn't ask for and can't lift one finger to help others is clearly a selfish, self-centered person still in their sin. They need to repent. For kids, they are most likely not that rebellious but we should be clear that faith is not just believing but a whole lifestyle of loving others—that is being like Jesus.
- ❖ Abraham is the famous and very important Old Testament example of Romans and Galatians that proves that we are saved only by faith and not by works of the Law, because Abraham was saved before the Law was introduced, when he believed in God's promises by faith and was credited as righteous. BUT it wasn't until he offered his only son Isaac, that he PROVED that he loved God more than anything and was given the sure promise. So, we are not saved by works,

but faith and works will always work together. By her actions that were prompted by faith even Rahab—who should have been God’s enemy—was saved. Had she only believed but did not actually help the spies, she would have been killed along with all of Jericho. But it was her actions that saved her and it is true for many people in the Bible and down through God’s history. We are saved by faith but it is what we do in our actions that proves we believe. “God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Romans 2:6-10)

DO NOT USE YOUR TONGUE FOR EVIL.

“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.
My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”

James 3:1-12

Key verse: 10

Can you remember a mean thing that someone said to you a long time ago? What is the furthest back you can remember? Why did it hurt so much? Why is it so hard to forget?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 3-5. What do the examples of a small bit, a small rudder and a small spark teach us about the tongue? Read verses 6 and 8. Why is the tongue so dangerous? Why should we control our tongue?

How can we hurt others with our words? How does saying bad things corrupt us? If we don't learn to control our tongue where will it lead us? What should we ask ourselves every time we're about to talk?

Read verses 9-10. Why is it wrong to both praise God with our mouth and then say cruel hurtful things to others? What are some examples of hurtful talking?

Read verses 11-12. How do you recognize an olive tree or a grapevine? So when a Christian gossips, curses, name-calls, insults, and stuff like that, what can everyone see about them? Read Luke 6:45.

What is the solution to controlling the tongue and being able to say only good things?

Application: What are the times you need to learn to control your tongue?

DO NOT USE YOUR TONGUE FOR EVIL.

“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.
My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”

Teachers Sheet
James 3:1-12
Key verse: 10

- ❖ This lesson deals with the evil of the tongue. The tongue never can be changed or tamed. For as long as we live our tongue always has the potential to do more harm than a venomous snake. By making the clear point that even the tongues of believers can easily be used by Satan to do so much harm, he teaches us that as Christians we have to be very careful with what we say, we have to think before we talk, we have to consider why we are saying something and if it is what God wants or if it will hurt others. We must learn to treat the tongue like a dangerous weapon that must be handled very carefully and taken out sparingly.
- ❖ In comparison to the great size of a horse the bit that goes in its mouth and is pulled by the reins is very small and the horse is a very powerful animal, but that one small bit completely controls everything the horse does. A ship is huge and strong winds fill its sails propelling it at great speed but just a small rudder can steer the whole ship. Even a tiny little spark is all that it takes to start a great forest fire. In the same way even though the tongue is not as big as our arms that swing a sword at someone or our legs that can karate kick through boards, it can do more damage than any part of our body. In nature the smallest spider not the biggest, the smallest frog, the smallest jellyfish are the most dangerous. In the same way, our tongue can kill a person on the inside so that they can never feel good about themselves for the rest of their life. If we just said everything we wanted to say to a person without thinking and everyone else did the same, that person would not want to even live anymore. Our brains are wired to remember pain so we forget 100 nice things someone did for us and remember the one mean thing they said 10 years ago. Because we are wired like this words can hurt a person more than poison.
- ❖ What is worse, when we continually give in to bad talking: insulting, teasing, complaining we become sick on the inside and think always in a mean and twisted way. Suddenly we see everyone’s bad points instead of their good, we are angry and we enjoy hurting others. The tongue corrupts our whole way of thinking and acting and we are led to an evil life that leads to hell.
- ❖ Psalm 141:3 says, “Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.” We need to learn to stop our words before they come out of our mouth and put them through a security checkpoint asking, “Will this hurt someone?” “Is this something I was supposed to keep secret?” “Am I saying this to help the other person or to make myself feel good?” “Is what I’m saying true?” “Is this what God wants me to say?” Then if it can’t pass security, it doesn’t go out. But even if it passes security say it carefully because sometimes things can be misunderstood.
- ❖ Christians who say all sorts of hurtful things to others should pay close attention to the contrasts that James makes. Can one mouth say praises and curses? Can one spring make salt and fresh water? Can one tree make 2 kinds of fruit. NO. You recognize a salt spring by salt water, you

recognize an olive tree by olives, you recognize an unbelievers mouth by the mean, ugly words that come out of it and a believers mouth by the good things. But we have to check ourselves here: even though this is true verse 2 says, we all stumble in many ways and if anyone could actually control their tongue all the time, they would be a perfect person who could control any part of their body. The difference is that a believer TRIES NOT TO SAY BAD THINGS and an unbeliever disguised as a believer ENJOYS SAYING BAD THINGS. Someone who doesn't want to change or repent and doesn't see what is wrong with their bad words is not really a Christian, they are lacking the love of God.

- ❖ Those who sit around gossiping, complaining, hating others don't have a tongue problem but a heart problem. Luke 6:45 says, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." So, when a person is full of evil speech it is because their heart is full of evil things. Then, if we want to change the way we speak we have to change what our heart is full of. Usually, the problem is filling our heart full of bad movies made for adults (and even adults shouldn't watch), bad Anime (that looks like it is for kids but is actually for adults), bad games (that are often on the internet that kids find out about from their friends and parents don't know about because they didn't buy it), bad books (that look they are made for kids but have adult themes and worldview), and bad conversations (with other kids who are sick in their heart as well). When we fill up on these things, then our heart becomes very sick, and only bad can come out. The solution is to stop putting bad things in and instead put in the Bible. A sick heart is very resistant to this and will moan and groan and throw a tantrum but there is no other solution. They must be made to see just how much damage they have done and how they have hurt others so they can see how sick they are and then want help.
- ❖ Matthew 7:17-20 says that a tree is recognized by its fruit and by their fruit you will recognize them. The tongue always reveals the heart, so that you cannot fake it.

MAKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

James 3:13-18

Key Verse: 3:18

Who was the hardest person you ever made friends with? or the hardest time you had making friends? What made it so challenging? Why is it hard to make friends when it should be very easy?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 13. Is a wise Christian one who knows many things or does good things? Then what can we say about a Christian who knows everything but acts bad?

Read verses 14-16. What happens when we are "unwise" to others? If we have bad relationships with others (or everyone) around us what do we need to do?

Read verse 17. What is the goal of the wisdom from heaven? How does being pure help us make relationships with others? Why is it wise to not anger (make fun) of others at any time?

Read verse 17 again. Why is being mindful of another person's feelings important to making relationships with others? Why is it important to be humble, not insisting on your way? To forgive? To treat everyone kindly?

Application: *How do you need to change the way you act toward others this week?*

MAKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

“Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

Teachers Sheet

James 3:13-18

Key Verse: 3:18

1. **Read verse 13. What does it mean to be “wise?” How is this kind of wisdom helpful to know how others feel when I say or do something? How can being wise help us live the right way, and encourage people when we are with them?**
 - To be wise means not to just have a lot of acquired information or knowledge, but practical insight and discernment on how and when to use this knowledge.
 - Wisdom is helpful because it helps to know not only what to say to others, but when to say it. Wisdom is like practical understanding of a situation. Wisdom helps you anticipate how a person will react to what you say. Also, timing is important. A person may not accept what you say if they are emotionally distraught, under stress or just angry.
 - The wise and understanding person will show it through his/her good life (how they live) and by good deeds done in humility. The wise person does not act impulsively, but intentionally considers the consequences of actions and words. This person knows the difference between right and wrong and applies this to his/her life. The wise person knows how to encourage others through respect & love.

2. **Read verses 14-16. What happens when we are “unwise” to others? What happens when people act foolishly and hurt others because they are “unwise?” If people do not like being with you, or have issues with having you around, how can you be wise instead of “unwise?”**
 - When we are unwise to others, we have bitter envy and selfish ambition. So instead of encouraging others, the unwise person is envious and selfish. This wisdom is not from heaven, but is earthly (ungodly), unspiritual and of the devil.
 - When people are unwise, they act foolishly with their actions and words, which can hurt others emotionally. The result of unwisely doing or saying something is disorder, which means God is not part of it because God is not a God of disorder but of peace.
 - In this case of others having issues with you, we can be wise by understanding how our words or actions may be negatively affecting others. For instance, maybe we’re always rebuking or yelling at others to do something. Maybe we’re rude or inconsiderate. It takes wisdom to know how to relate to people because everyone is different. Jesus helped different people in a variety of ways based on their problem and who they were.

3. **Read verse 17. What is the “wisdom” that comes from heaven, and makes great relationships with others? Why is being pure a way of being wise? How can you be? Why is it wise to not anger (make fun) of others at any time?**
 - Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. If you have this kind of wisdom of God, people would be drawn to you because you would know how to interact with and how best to help others. If you cause others to be at peace around you; then you are considerate of their feelings; you are merciful and have the fruit of the Spirit; you are impartial and sincere (genuine)—people would be drawn to you.
 - Being pure is a way of being wise because you do not have anything hidden agenda. You have a pure mind and heart toward others.
 - You can be pure through the working of the Spirit in you. The Spirit is from God. We cannot be pure through our power because of the sinful nature in us.
 - It is wise to not make fun of others because that does more harm than good. It could have lifetime consequences in some cases. Instead of making fun of someone, say something positive or complement the person on what they do well. Be an encourager instead of someone who tears down others.

4. **Read verse 17 again. Why is being mindful of another person's feelings important to making relationships with others? Why is encouraging others, instead of discouraging them, wise? Why is not pointing out another person's weakness or mistake a good way of making friends? Why is being honest about yourself and your weaknesses a good way of being humble and wise?**
- Being aware of another person's feelings is important in making relationships because everyone is different. Some people are very sensitive. Wisdom helps you know how to say something and when which could help build relationships.
 - Encouraging others is wise because it results in a peaceful relationship. Vs 18 says, 'Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.' Fighting with others does not please God. God is a God of peace and love.
 - This is obvious. Generally speaking, telling someone their weakness is not the best way to start a relationship or a way to make friends. The reason we want to make good relationships is to lead as many to Christ as possible.
 - Telling others honestly what you struggle with is a way of being humble and wise. Most people try to hide their weaknesses and emphasize their strengths to make themselves look good. Being open may prompt another person to also share their struggles. Then, you can figure out how to help and what to pray for them.
5. **Are you good at making relationships with others? If so, how can you improve today? If not, what is the first step you can take to making great relationships with others?**
- ****Application****

SUBMIT TO GOD

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

James 4:1-10

Key Verse: 4:1

Have you ever been a peace maker between two people? Why did you step in? How did it feel to help people resolve with each other? Did they thank you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 1-2. According to James, what is the cause of arguments? What kind of desires do we have? What is the main reason why our desires are not satisfied inside of us?

Read verses 2b-3. What should we do when we want something? Why does God sometimes not answer our prayers? Read verse 4. Can we be friends with God and the sinful things of the world at the same time?

Read verse 7. What does it mean to “submit to God”? Read verse 6 What is necessary first? Read verses 8-10. What are some ways that we need to submit to God?

Read verses 7-10 again. If we submit to God what power does he give us? How can we overcome the devil and defeat our sinful desires?

Application: *What are the areas in which you have been too friendly with the world and need to submit to God?*

DON'T ARGUE, MAKE PEACE

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

Teachers Sheet

James 4:1-10

Key Verse: 4:1

1. **Read verses 1-2. According to James, what is the cause of arguments? What kind of desires do we have? What does the word "conflict" mean? When your desire has a conflict with another person's desire, what happens?**
 - The cause of arguments is the sinful desires that battle within you. Internal conflicts within someone results in fights and quarrels. A Bible teacher once told me that if we have issues with someone, the problem usually starts with us. It's our problem, not someone else's problem.
 - We have sinful desires within us that cause us to try and please ourselves instead of God. This is what we desire and what we think will make us happy.
 - Conflict means disagreement, opposition, or incompatible ideas, people or interests.
 - When our desire conflicts with another person's desire, we will kill (hate), covet (envy), quarrel and fight. When the sinful desires of people clash, the results tend to be very bad. There is no peace and God is not pleased.

2. **Read verse 3. What is the main reason why our desires are not satisfied inside of us? Why is it good to pray when we have a desire for something? Why is it good to ask God instead of relying on ourselves to do something?**
 - The main reason our desires are not satisfied is because we do not ask God. This means we do not pray about it. Also, when we do ask God in prayer, we ask with wrong motives which are to get what pleases us. When we seek to please ourselves, the result is often fights and quarrels.
 - It is good to pray first when we have a desire for something. If God answers positively or in agreement, then we know the desire came from God. If God answers negatively, then we know the desire was from our sinful nature.
 - It is good to ask God for something instead of chasing after something on our own. Relying on ourselves will result in pleasing our sinful nature instead of God. Whenever we leave God out of the equation, trouble will soon follow.

3. **Read verses 6 and 10. Why is being "humble" the answer to all arguments? Why is being humble to God and to others the best way to solve an argument? How can being humble, give God an opportunity to change me?**
 - Being humble is the answer to all arguments is the best way to resolve conflicts. It is hard to stay angry at someone who apologizes, says I'm wrong/your right, or concedes in an argument. Arguments can go on for years if both people are proud and refuse to admit they are wrong/forgive.
 - When we are humble to God, he gives grace. God's grace is able to change us from causing fights into peacemakers. It is good to be humble before others so we may resolve arguments quickly and restore damaged relationships.
 - Being humble gives God an opportunity to change me from a proud, argumentative person into a peaceful, loving, caring and kind person. Vs 10

4. **Read verse 7-9. What does it mean to “Submit to God?” Why is it good to let God lead our life? How can we? Why do we need to watch out for Satan? Why should we grow closer to God? Why should we ask for forgiveness instead of expecting forgiveness from others?**
- To submit to God means to give in or obey the will of God. Submitting to God means to follow his way instead of following our sinful desire. We seek to please God.
 - It is good to let God lead our life because he knows what is best for us. People mistakenly think they know what is best for them (schools, marriage, friendships). People make a lot of mistakes trying to please themselves (make themselves feel good). Asking for God’s guidance is a wise decision.
 - We can let God lead our life by asking for it in prayer. Vs 8 says, ‘Come near to God and he will come near to you.’ Ask God to come into our heart and life.
 - We need to watch out for Satan who is trying to tempt us and draw us away from God into sin that separates us from God. Satan knows our weaknesses or vulnerabilities. His goal is our destruction.
 - If we grow closer to God, God will come near to us. God will be part of our life.
 - We should ask for forgiveness instead of expecting forgiveness for the sake of restoring relationships or friendships with others. When we are humble enough to ask for forgiveness, God will lift us up and give us his grace.
5. **Do you make peace or do you argue? How can you let God take control of your life today? How can God solve your inner desires, and help you not argue with other people? How can you be humble, and even ask for forgiveness?**
- ****APPLICATION****

GOD IS GOD, NOT YOU!

*“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.
But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

James 4:11-12
Key Verses: 4:12

Why do people like making fun of others? Why do they like to pick on weak kids or laugh when people make mistakes?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 11a. What does it mean to “slander” someone? Why is never acceptable to “gossip” about another person? Why should we not call others a name? Why should we be careful of how we joke around or treat others?

Read verse 11b. How is speaking against others actually breaking God’s law (read Leviticus 19:16-18)? How is it unloving?

Read verse 11c. When we judge others what do we show about ourselves? Why are people “blind” to their own sins, and like to point out another person’s mistakes?

Read verse 12. Who is the only one who can judge and say something about us? Why is God alone the only good judge? Are you worthy to judge others? Do you do it anyway? How can you break your habit of doing so?

Application: *How can you treat others better this week or is there someone you need to apologize to this week for speaking evil against?*

GOD IS GOD, NOT YOU!

*“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.
But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

HOW I PUT GOD’S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
What changes should I personally make in my life?*

PRAYER TOPICS:

GOD IS GOD, NOT YOU!

*“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.
But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

James 4:11-12
Key Verses: 4:12

1. To slander someone means to give a false statement to harm someone’s reputation. Here, it means to speak against a Christian brother or sister.
 - It is never acceptable to gossip about someone because that is could be considered slandering them. Also, it may mean to spread false rumors or share someone’s private information.
 - We should not call others a name because we as Christians are called to love and accept others like Christ. Calling names is a form of judging. It also causes emotional distress.
 - We should be careful of how we joke around and treat others because we may be acting like a non-Christian through our words and actions. We should build up and encourage others instead of tearing them apart with jokes.

2. Vs 11b says, ‘Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.’ Speaking against another person is un-Christian like because it is acting like a judge when we are not. We should love our neighbor as ourself, not judge them.
 - If we are judging, condemning or criticizing, then we are not sharing the love of God with someone.
 - Our judgments against others are not correct because it is like us speaking against the law of God and being above the law. When we judge, we act self-righteous and proud like we are better than another person. To God, everyone is a lawbreaker due to sin so we are all the same. No one is better than another person.

3. We have no right to judge others because we are not the judge, that would be God. When we judge, we are not keeping the law, but acting like we are above it.
 - We are guilty of doing wrong because we cannot keep the law perfectly. We are also subject to it.
 - People are blind to their own sins and like to point out others’ mistakes because each of us has a spiritual blind spot. Proud or self-righteous people may not see themselves that way. Selfish or greedy people miss it. Others can see our blind spot easily. Also, comparing ourselves to others makes us look and feel better about ourselves. This person says my sin is small compared to that person. To God though all sin is the same. Avoid of trap of comparison. Also, the correct standard to measure against is not another person but God’s standard of righteousness which is perfection.

4. Vs 12 says, ‘There is only 1 Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor.’ The second reason we have no right to judge is because there is only 1 judge, which is God. We cannot replace God.
 - Knowing that however we judge others, God will also judge us in the same way or even more harshly. This should help us judge less knowing God sees all of our judgments of others.
 - Knowing that God will take into account what I have done in my life should help us stop judging. God does not take sin lightly as he is a God of justice and righteousness. Knowing that God knows our sins should also make us not judge others.
 - If we remember God’s mercy and grace to save us from sin through Jesus’ sacrifice, then we should be less likely to judge. The last 3 things help us minimize or dramatically reduce our judgments of others. It is very hard to stop judging, comparing and criticizing because this is part of our sinful nature. We can pray for God’s help to remove our judgmental attitude.

HOW TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

James 4:13-17

Key Verse: 4:14-15

Did you ever carefully plan out something (like a surprise, present, activity for day off) that went really wrong? What happened? Why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verses 13, 14 and 16. Why is it important not to take time/life for granted? Why should we not put things off for tomorrow thinking that we have all the time in the world? Do we? Why should we know that things can happen at any time and that life is short?

Read verse 15. What is the mistake people make when they talk about plans for the present and future? What happens when we leave God out of our decisions? Why is it best to do things if it is "God's will" instead of my own? How can you do so?

Read verse 17. If we know what God wants us to do and we don't do it what is that called? Why don't we do the things we know we should do? How can we always know the best thing that we should do?

Application: *What good thing do you know you should be doing that you have been avoiding?*

HOW TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

Teachers Sheet
James 4:13-17
Key Verse: 4:14-15

HANDLING MONEY THE RIGHT WAY

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you."

James 5:1-6

Key Verse: 5:1

What is the nicest thing you ever bought or were gifted? How long was it before you forgot about it or it broke or became outdated? What do you really want to buy right now? Do you think it will really make you happy?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. Why is God upset with the rich people in this passage (read Exodus 20:4; Luke 6:21,24-26)? Does this mean that having lots of money is bad? How does God want us to use our money (read Luke 6:38)?

Read verse 2-3a. What will happen with all the things that we love so much in this world? Why is it wrong to love things of this world (see James 4:4)? Then how should we view our things?

Read verse 3. What does it mean to "hoard" something? Why is it not good to just gather wealth to keep it for ourself? What should we do with our money (read 2 Corinthians 9:5-7; Luke 16:9)?

Read verse 4. How did the rich people show their selfishness? Sometimes it seems that cruel rich people only get richer and the poor never get justice but what will happen to the rich? Why is it wrong to live in luxury ignoring the needs of those around us (read Luke 16:25)?

Read verse 6. How does the love of money lead us to do all sorts of evil (read 1 Timothy 6:9-11)? Then what is the solution to protect ourselves from the love of money?

Application: *In what way do you need to treat your material things differently in light of this passage?*

HANDLING MONEY THE RIGHT WAY

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you."

HOW I PUT GOD'S WORD INTO PRACTICE

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD IN THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

Handling Money the Right Way

Teachers Sheet

James 5:1-6

Key Verse: 5:1

- To hoard is to collect excessively or store up for future use. It means to accumulate excessively.
- It is not good to just gather wealth for the purpose of gathering it because it will not be used for a good purpose. This is selfish behavior to gather wealth without intending to use it for good. Many CEOs have accumulated more money than they could possibly spend, but because of their greed and competitive nature (wanting more than other CEOs), our recent financial crisis occurred.
- Saving is not bad. Actually, saving is being fiscally responsible so when there is a need for money, you have it.
- There should be a purpose for storing or keeping wealth. What is the wealth going to be used for...such as helping the poor or for the work of the church. The point is to not just gather wealth, but use it rightly.
- We should use our wealth for advancing God's kingdom on earth. Whatever way leads people to meet Jesus is a good use of money. Our church uses its offerings to build Bible houses and support missionaries around the world.
- Vs1-3...When we keep wealth for ourselves, it will be rotted and corroded. Selfish people will suffer because of their wealth.

WHY WE NEED TO BE PATIENT

“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.”

James 5:7-12

Key Verse: 5:7

What is the longest you ever waited for something? Were you patient? How hard was it to wait patiently? Did you ever do something really impatiently?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 7. What is patience? When do you need to be patient? How can you be patient when something unexpected happens, or when things don’t work out the way you want them to? How is the farmer, in this verse, patient? What do you think he did while he waited?

Read verse 8. Compared to the rich people in verses 1-6, how do you think the believers were living? Why should they be patient? What will happen to believers when Jesus comes again?

Read verse 9. What must we be careful not to do out of our impatience? Have you ever been impatient about something? What happened when you did something impatiently? How can you be patient in your life (Think about what the patient farmer did)?

Read verses 10-11a. Who does James give as examples of being patient while suffering? How did Job show his trust in God (read Job 2:9-10)? How can we persevere through tough times? Read 11b. What must we always believe about God?

Application: *What are the areas where you typically become impatient and need to learn to pray and wait on God?*

WHY WE NEED TO BE PATIENT

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What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
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PRAYER TOPICS:

WHY WE NEED TO BE PATIENT

“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.”

Teachers Sheet

James 5:7-12

Key Verse: 5:7

- ❖ Patience is the ability to wait or endure without complaint. It could also mean steadiness or endurance.
- ❖ Be patient until the Lord’s coming. We should always be patient while waiting on God.
- ❖ It’s better to be patient than over-react or do/say something emotionally when something unexpected happens.
- ❖ The farmer waits for the land to yield its crop. He is patient for the autumn and spring rains.
- ❖ We should be patient and stand firm in faith until the Lord returns.
- ❖ We should be patient because God is just and He hears the cries of the suffering. If you were taken advantage of, God will exact justice. We should not take revenge, but patiently wait on God.
- ❖ It is good to believe God is in control of everything (Sovereign) because God allows/disallows things according to his will. The best example is God sending Jesus to the cross. It wasn’t the religious leaders’ idea, but the will of God to allow it.
- ❖ We should remember that God will bless us if we are patient because God blesses/rewards those who earnestly seek and live for him. We should wait on God and not try to go ahead of God.
- ❖ We need to believe that God will work things out in our lives because sometimes we have difficulties or hardships, but works for those who put faith in him. We should trust God’s goodness, not complain.
- ❖ While waiting on God, the farmer continued working. He put his trust in the coming of the rains to produce the crop. He trusted God and did not complain that it was taking a long time.
- ❖ It’s important to expect that God will answer our prayers because it shows that God is listening. Sometimes, it seems like he is not answering because we want answers right away. God answers on his schedule, not ours. He also answers positively or negatively.
- ❖ It is important not to complain or grumble as we wait on God because we will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door means God is listening and will exact justice.
- ❖ We complain to God, family members or friends because we are impatient or want something. We are not patient and we doubt God sometimes. Complaining is a form of doubting God.
- ❖ We should be silent while waiting on God because God is full of compassion and mercy to those who persevered while suffering. God remembers his people and rewards them in full for their perseverance.
- ❖ We should believe God will answer our prayers (instead of doubting) because there are numerous examples of God answering prayers in the Bible.
- ❖ We can believe God will answer our prayers by putting our faith and trust in him and patiently waiting.

HOW TO PRAY WHEN PROBLEMS COME

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise."

James 5:13-20

Key Verse: 5:13

What's the craziest thing you ever asked your parents for? What happened? Why weren't you afraid to ask them about it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 13. When are the times we should pray? Do you pray only you need something or in the good times too? When you feel bad or hurt, do you pray? Do you pray only in good times or tough times? Why is it important to pray all the time?

Read verse 14. What should you do when you are sick? Why should we share our struggles and ask other people's prayers?

Read verse 15. What can happen when we pray? Then what should we do when we hear someone is sick? What should we do when we see "bad kids" at school or hear about the bad things others did?

Read verse 16. Why should we confess our sins to each other in our testimonies? What are we tempted to do when we hear the bad things someone did? Read verse 19. When someone leaves the church or starts sinning a lot how can we best help them?

Application: *Have you realized that your prayer life is a little selfish or shallow? How can you improve your prayer life this week?*

HOW TO PRAY WHEN PROBLEMS COME

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise."

Teachers Sheet

James 5:13-20

Key Verse: 5:13

- We should pray at all times, but in this passage it mentions it times of trouble. During desperate times, the best course of action is to come to God in prayer. If anyone is sick, they should ask for prayer.
- Typically, when people are feeling bad or down, they feel sorry for themselves. Some people do turn to God during hard times.
- In good times, people generally do not pray. When everything is going well, we easily forget about God.
- It is important to pray at all times to maintain our relationship with God. Prayer is our source of strength in good and bad times.
- Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. We should pray with and ask for prayer support from elders. There are many prayer servants in our church who are great to pray with.
- Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. When we share our struggles and ask for prayer support, we are encouraged. It is good to pray together to build up one another in the church.
- This may be parents, a Bible teacher, brothers or sisters or friends.
- And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. The sick person is healed and the sinner is forgiven. This is difficult to share our sins, but it is powerful and effective.
- We need to confess our struggles and sin problems to be healed. Also, the other person may be struggling with a similar issue.
- The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective means that this person's prayer work. God answers the prayers of a righteous man.
- When our relationship with God is close, we feel comfortable praying and bringing our struggles before God. Also, God answers our earnest prayers.
- Asking God through prayer at all times is the best way to pray because in this way we are maintaining our relationship with God. A consistent prayer life keeps us on the right track.
- We need the right motives in prayer because if we do not then our prayers become selfish and self-centered, like a list of what we want. We should pray for God to reveal what he wants in our life.
- We must do our best to live a pure life because the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective.
- We need faith to believe God will hear our prayers. God doesn't always answer as we expect. We need to trust that God is right.
- Ways to improve prayer life...Application...

LIVING FOR JESUS

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Philippians 1:1-30

Key Verse: 1:21

What's the craziest thing you ever asked your parents for? What happened? Why weren't you afraid to ask them about it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you know about the church at Philippi? (Ac 16) Why was Paul so thankful and joyful about the Philippians? (5) What was Paul's hope? (6) Where was he while he wrote about how happy he was? (12) What were his prayer topics for them? (9-11)

Why was Paul happy in chains? (12-13) What good things were happening because of his being in prison? (14) What kind of people were preaching the gospel? (15-17) Why didn't Paul care about their motives? (18a)

How could Paul overcome sorrow and fear in his difficult situation? (19-20) How can we? What was the point of Paul's life? (21) What was his hope in death?

What does it mean to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"? (27-28a) How does a gospel centered life testify to unbelievers around us? (28b) What is the cost of living for Christ? (29)

Application: *Do you consider that the point of your life is to know and glorify Christ, how can you live more centered on him?*

LIVING FOR JESUS

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Teachers Sheet
Philippians 1: 1-30
Key Verse: 1:21

1. Paul saw the Philippians not as sheep but coworkers. He had so much hope and vision for them the way God does. His prayer topics:
 - 1) that their love may abound more and more in depth of insight.
 - As we know more, the more we should love Jesus and our reaction should be to love others. If we don't love others, we need to ask God to teach us more about Jesus.
 - 2) they may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless.
 - Not only do Christians teach others and read the Bible, but they must live morally higher lives. They must be able to know what is right and wrong and live better than the people around them, so that people will be moved by their sacrificial lives and mimic them.
 - 3) they may be filled with the fruit of righteousness.
 - Gal 5:23. In Jesus we bear fruit in our soul that changes our life.
2. Many were encouraged by his prison ministry and decided to be more bold in their preaching. Even many were preaching out of envy. Regardless of the reason why, the name of Christ was being preached everywhere and a great work of God was going on and he was doing nothing but being in prison.
3. To Paul the point of life and the meaning of everything was Christ. It means life, is following the example of Christ and learning about him and growing in him. The point of his life was not himself or his wants or desires. His desires had been crucified and to him living was living for Jesus 100%.
 - Each of us must make such a decision to live before Christ alone if we want to have a life of victory like this. We must ask ourselves: "are my decisions and actions based on what I want and what I desire, or is it for God? Am I living for myself or for his glory? What is the purpose of my life?"
4. We must not go back to living however we want. That is what emotional people do, but we must be evangelized: the old has gone the new has come.
 - People can disagree with everything we say, but they cannot disagree with our joy and peace and the fullness of grace that we know and display in our life. If we do not live a life full of joy and victory and mission we disgrace the name of Jesus who saved us for this very purpose.
 - To do this, we must be willing to suffer like Jesus and to bear a cross and deny ourselves for the sake of God's precious sheep.
 - Don't live an ordinary life like everyone else. Don't blend in. You have to live a great and victorious life and give everything to Jesus not holding back.

HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE AS JESUS

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Philippians 2:1-18

Key Verse: 2:5

Have you ever had a long grudge with anyone? Or someone wouldn't forgive you? How did you overcome it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. What does "united" mean? What are some things that we experience when we are united with Christ? How does being united with Christ give us encouragement and comfort?

Why should we think of others as better than ourselves? How can we think of others more than ourselves? (Verse 4)

Read verses 5-8. Who is Jesus Christ? What was his attitude? Why is his attitude great? Describe different attitudes that people could have. How and why did God bless Jesus? (Verses 9-11)

What does verse 12 mean? Why should we not complain? What makes you a star?

Application: What do you realize about how you need to improve your relationships, humble yourself and have the attitude of Christ?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE AS JESUS

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Teachers Sheet
Philippians 2:1-18
Key Verse: 2:5

1. United is to become one. When we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are united with him in his death and resurrection (Ro 6:5-8). John 15:5 describes this unity as a vine-branch relationship. As the branch receives nourishment through the vine so being united with Christ gives us encouragement and comfort.
2. Jesus is the greatest source of encouragement. His encouragement builds up our faith and gives us courage to overcome the world. When the devil tries to discourage us with lies like "you are no good", Jesus encourages us with the truth from Genesis 1:31, "it was very good". As we are encouraged we should encourage others. Read 2 Co 1:4-5 about the God of comfort.
3. We tend to accentuate others' faults, while minimizing our own weaknesses, but Paul tells us to be humble and consider others as better than ourselves. We should look to their interests. When we become involved in others' interests we might come to see their greatness.
4. Jesus is the Creator God, who holds all the power in the universe. Yet he became a man to save us. Jesus' attitude is humbleness. Jesus did not hold on to his honor and glory, but became a servant in obedience to God's will. In Contrast, people want to be recognized and honored. They don't usually volunteer to serve. People flip out when their pride is hurt even a little bit. They hold on to positions of authority and are often self-glory seeking. Jesus, on the other hand, gave up his position of authority and became obedient to death. Then God blessed him.
5. Verse 12 does not talk about salvation by works, but emphasizes that it is an ongoing process. We are saved by Jesus' act of obedience. While we are united with Christ, God is continuously working in us conforming us to the likeness of Christ (Ro 8:29) When we have Jesus' attitude of humble obedience we can grow in his image. Complaining is a state of mind. It is easy to join in the complaining fellowship, but Paul tells us not to. When god's people maintain joyful and obedient faith, holding out the word of life, they shine like stars in the night sky.

WANTING TO KNOW CHRIST

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

Philippians 3:1-23

Key Verse: 3:10-11

Have you ever tried hard to learn about something? What did you do to learn it? How did it feel to excel in it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. What does Paul encourage the Philippian Christians to do? Why?

Read verses 2-3. Who does Paul ask them to "Watch out" for? Why is it important to "Watch out" especially for bad influences around you?

Read verses 4-6. What kind of person was Paul before meeting Jesus? Even though he was zealous, why didn't he know God personally?

Read verses 7-9. Why was Paul not sorry about losing everything for Christ? What did he value more than anything in this world?

Read verses 10-11. What was Paul's heart's desire? What does it mean to know the power of Jesus' resurrection? Why did he want to share in Jesus' sufferings? Why did Paul want to be like him in his death?

Application: *What is your goal in life? What happens when you know the power of Jesus' resurrection? Do you want to know Christ?*

WANTING TO KNOW CHRIST

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

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PRAYER TOPICS:

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"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

Teachers Sheet
Philippians 3:1-23
Key Verse: 3:10-11

1. Paul repeats the words rejoice in the Lord in every chapter of Philippians (1:18; 2:17, 18; 3:1; 4:4; 4:10) As a Christian rejoicing should be a natural consequence of truly meeting Jesus. If one does not rejoice in the Lord it means they have not truly met Jesus. Mostly they probably don't see themselves as sinners and have no sense of grace. Or they have forgotten who they were and what Jesus did we must keep grace and forgiveness fresh in our hearts.
2. To circumcise is only a symbol and means nothing personally to a person. In a sense it was easier to be a Jew abiding the law, because it seemed to be on the outside; now however, Paul realized that truly he had to examine his heart and become a worshiper in his heart in spirit and truth. (Jn 4:24) We must watch out for those who influence us to be pretend Christians doing things on the outside but with no real identity or change or joy on the inside.
3. Paul was a perfect traditional Jew, circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church, and faultless in his legalistic righteousness. Yet all our righteousness is tainted with sin, we never do anything with a perfectly pure heart. Therefore, it is no basis for salvation. Our self-righteousness, in fact, blocks us from truly knowing God. It is only when we see how sinful we are and how holy God is we begin a right relationship with him
4. Paul in order to become an apostle lost all of his position as an up and coming Pharisee: wealth, honor, fame, and even became an enemy of his people in Jerusalem leading to his being arrested. He considered them rubbish. By losing all things he had gained the righteousness that is by faith in Christ Jesus. We cannot look longingly on what we gave up for Christ, or our heart will slide—the old is GONE the new has come.
5. The resurrection principle is essential to every persons life, because it is the power to give new birth to them: to die to the old, that we may be born to the new. This was the way Paul had chosen, to be persecuted with Christ, because he loved Jesus and wanted to share in the sufferings that Jesus undertook. As a Christian we must be crucified with Christ. This is the resurrection principle. The old life gave us misery and unhappiness, but the new is full of joy and peace. To the degree we can let go of our old self, we are happy. When we finally become the glorious person that Jesus intends for us to be, we are reborn.
6. When we stagnate we become a burden and set down all our crosses, the second we try to take it easy is the moment we stop knowing Christ. When we enter the kingdom of God we will be rewarded for running with perseverance and God will say "Well done good and faithful servant."

JOYFUL IN JESUS!

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:1-23

Key Verse: 4:4

Have you ever tried hard to learn about something? What did you do to learn it? How did it feel to excel in it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read verse 1. How did Paul feel about the Philippian Christians? What did he encourage them to do? Why?

Read verses 4-7. Why is it important for Christians to rejoice? What are some things that you "rejoice" about? What are some things that you don't rejoice about? How can we "rejoice" even when something bad happens to us?

Read verses 8-9. Why is it important to have the right "thoughts" in your mind? According to Paul, what are some "thoughts" that we must have as Christians? Why?

Read verses 11-13. What does it mean to be "content?" What is Paul's secret of being "content?" Are you content?

Application: How can you personally rejoice in your own life and through your own struggles? How can you put it to practice this week?

JOYFUL IN JESUS!

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Teachers Sheet
Philippians 4:1-23
Key Verse: 4:4

*this is like a continuation of his confession of faith in 3 and could be studied together because it was the secret of his victory in adversity; now he prays for them to stand firm in this way

1. He saw them as his joy and crown, dear friends, not as the cause of his suffering. He wasn't worried that they need him but he trusted in Jesus to help them; it was a good time for them to take root. There will always be conflict, this is natural but we need to agree in the Lord because we are family, we are one body.
2. Rejoicing is a decision not an emotion. Emotions are up and down depending on our situation. But if we are commanded to rejoice then it cannot be dependant on our situation it has to be a transcendent joy. Rejoicing, gentleness, peace, cannot be forced; we must have a disciplined inner thought world—this means disciplining what we think about. Especially we have to see from God's point of view, rooted in the word of God, not our own idea. We have to order our thought world through prayer. Rom8:5-6: The mind controlled by the sinful nature is death but the mind controlled by the spirit is life. Mt12:34b-35: out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.
3. Jesus says "If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." (Mt 6:22-23) What we take in, will determine our attitude. When we constantly take in the bad media of the world with zero discretion it is no surprise that our thought world is corrupted. When we spend our free time watching movies full of improper romance, lust, violence, vengeance, cruelty we become dark and we don't even know why. 3:1 says, safeguard your heart. So we need to look at what we're feeding our soul. We need to feed it the word of God more than popular media, we need to listen to good music, watch good movies, because these things have more effect on us than we know. We should participate in the good work of Jesus and live like a Christian.
4. Content means to be satisfied with what we have. Nothing in this world can bring total satisfaction. The black hole within us is never filled because it is a space that only Christ can fill. The secret of contentedness is to be in Christ. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. When we trust in the Love of God we know that in all things he will give us the strength we need to overcome.
5. Personal Application.

