

Christian Education Lessons
for Teens & Youth



TEACHER BOOK

CLICK

CONNECTING

with Christ and his Word

Includes:

52
LESSONS

for the whole year, resources for teaching each lesson
for teens 12 to 17 and youth from 18 to 23 years old.

Click - Connecting With Christ and His Word, #3

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Presentation

P

We continue the beautiful work of serving the Lord by educating adolescents and young people. It's not a simple task, but it's a great challenge for the teacher. Teaching produces changes, both in the life of the teacher and in the life of the person receiving the teaching, which is why the effective educational process is measured by the impact it achieves on the lives of adolescents and young people.

The time we have to teach a class is generally short. However, the information we want to share is a lot. Hurrying to not leave anything important out causes us develop classes that consist, for the most part, of a monologue on our part. With rare exceptions, students limit their participation to taking notes or listening to the presentation.

Students are better educated when they become an active part of teaching process. With this in mind, we have worked on each lesson so that they achieve the indicated effect on all participants. We have prepared different sections so that you can teach the class in a dynamic and participatory way. In each lesson, you'll find the following sections:

- The **Objective** that will guide you throughout the lesson.
- **Memory Verse** - An important part of learning is memorization. For this reason, we suggest that you memorize and have your students memorize the biblical texts of each lesson. On page 6 we present a series of aids to make this activity varied and effective.
- At the beginning of the lesson, you'll see the **Alert** window. This will help you remember to start your class by asking about the previous week's challenge. Much of the success of an activity is in the follow-up we give to it.
- The **Connect** section is the introduction to the topic where activities are suggested for each age.
- The **Navigate** section is where the development and presentation of the lesson takes place.
- The **Review/Application** section is where you'll find practical activities to do with the group. Many young people learn by doing, so by using practical activities we hope to establish the fundamental principles of each topic in the minds and hearts of the participants.
- Lastly, the **Challenge** section helps the students put what they learned into action for the coming week.

We hope that this book is inspiring and helps in your ministry, and that through it, you can work with adolescents and young people on topics such as: Facing the giants, the Lord's Prayer, the missionary church, the miracles of Jesus, the beliefs that unite us, fashions and pastimes, and the Christian's armor. Additionally, we're including a unit with lessons to be taught on "Special Dates" such as Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, Christmas and New Year's Day.

Go ahead! Begin with the challenge of forming new generations through the Word of God.

Patricia Picavea
Editor in Chief

Aids

A

for the teacher

Paul said to Timothy: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15). These words should be a challenge for every teacher who has in their hands the possibility of teaching the Word of God to adolescents and young people. Paul tells Timothy to remain faithful in what he had learned. I want to stay with the word “learned.” If we want to form people who are “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” we must teach them and train them to live in the way that pleases God, according to what they have “learned.” But if we don’t teach them, how will they remember what they learned? The Word must reach each of the adolescents and young people in a practical way, first, through our testimony, and in knowledge through teaching.

For this reason, once again we’re facilitating the work of teaching through “Click”, a book that will help guide adolescents and young people to a direct approach with the Lord.

Below we offer you some tips to keep in mind when teaching and to make your educational experience an enriching time for the lives of your students.

Where are the students?

To teach, it’s not enough to know your material; it’s important that you know the people you’re going to teach (their talents, their previous experiences and their needs). Otherwise, how can you be sure of what they already know and what they still need to learn? If you want to guide someone somewhere, it’s important that you know where that person is before you can help them find their destination. It may sound obvious, but as teachers, sometimes we start guiding students on the teaching journey and forget to ask them, “where are you? What knowledge and experiences do you have about the topic at hand?”

Remember, if you want to reach the hearts of your students, and for them to reach the right goal, start by knowing where they are.

Students need a safe and comfortable environment

When teachers create a safe and comfortable environment, it makes it easier for students to exchange ideas, express themselves, ask questions, and do what is asked of them. Sometimes, students have to recognize that they don’t know how to take risks and rethink what they thought they knew. This can become uncomfortable – even scary – for some people. It’s important that the classroom facilitates feeling comfortable; for this you can have armchairs and pillows on the floor in a corner of the classroom or perhaps decorate the walls with the work that the students do, because “it’s their space.” The result will be a learning environment that’s emotionally, intellectually and psychologically safe.

Making the student feel comfortable (sharing soda or candy) may seem very simple, but it sends a very important message. Students should know and feel that they can trust their teacher; fear of embarrassment or ridicule shouldn’t be created.

Remember, creating a pleasant space and time will help you gain the attention of your students.



Good communication is the key to good teaching

One of the main qualities of a great teacher is their ability to break down complex ideas and make them understandable. The essence of teaching, and learning, is in communication. The main challenge that a teacher must face is to help the students understand him or her. When you use words like regeneration, justification, prevenient grace, among others, you must be sure that all the people in the class are clear about these concepts. Otherwise, the message will arrive halfway and won't achieve the desired effect, and in many cases it may even achieve a contrary message. That's why good communication is so important in teaching.

Teaching isn't about you, it's about them

There are teachers who see themselves as experts in the subject and feel that it's their duty to impart their knowledge to students who are like empty vessels. Rather, the teacher should be seen as a guide who shares his or her knowledge aimed at the needs of the students. The preparation of the person who teaches is important, however. Before teaching a class, you should ask yourself: How will this affect my students? Don't forget that your success as a teacher will occur to the extent that your students learn.

Teaching isn't simply about transferring information

Teaching is also about teaching people to think. Teaching isn't standing in front of the class and telling them what to do or what to believe or giving them the answers you want to hear. Teaching is listening and being interested in the reflections of the students to know how they look at the world, how they interpret information, and how they solve problems. In this way, it will help them learn how to think on their own, instead of telling them what they have to think.

You must form a group of people who know what the Bible teaches, but at the same time, feel free to make for themselves the judgments and decisions that their daily lives require.

Don't be afraid to be vulnerable

For some, being a teacher means presenting yourself as the person who has all the answers. Any sign of vulnerability or ignorance can mean weakness. Those types of people won't be good teachers.

Sometimes the best answer a teacher can give is, "I don't know." Instead of losing credibility, you'll gain the trust of your students, and that trust is the foundation of a productive relationship. That answer will show your students that you're equal to them, so they'll be able to ask and give their opinion with confidence.

We all know that perfection isn't real, which is why we distrust people who present themselves as know-it-alls. These types of people don't seem honest with us. The people with whom we achieve a lot of trust are those who recognize their limitations in front of us. Acknowledging what you don't know shows that you're still learning ... that the teacher is, in fact, still a student.

Don't stop studying, researching and learning every day. While it's reasonable for the teacher not to know some things, the student also expects the person they're learning from to have most of the answers. You can't let people wonder, "Why is this person teaching us?"

Teach from the heart

The best teaching doesn't come from formulas; it's personal, creative and comes from the heart. The act of teaching biblical truths requires a genuine, daily experience with the Lord. If you don't have it, you won't be able to reach your students and infect them with a full spiritual life. One must try different teaching techniques until they discover their own way of being a teacher, but there is something that should never be missing, "a life consecrated to God that reflects Christ."

Don't hesitate to repeat what you want your students to learn.

If you want your students to remember an important lesson, you need to say it more than once. Don't hesitate to say the teaching once so they hear it, once so they understand it, and once more so they learn it. The teacher has the challenge of repeating things without boring them. The best teachers keep their message fresh by using new ways of making the same points. Be creative and say the same teaching in a different way, and above all, live what you teach; it's the repetition that works the most.



Good teachers ask good questions

An effective teacher knows that when we explore the unknown, we learn, and that such exploration begins when we ask the right questions. In order for us to obtain the answers, we want to create an environment of reflection. Therefore, we shouldn't ask questions that imply the answer. For example, "Isn't God good?" Also, we shouldn't ask questions whose answers are yes or no: "Do we want to go to heaven?" Nor do we want to use true or false questions: "Do you believe that we'll all eventually go to heaven?" None of these challenge the students to reflect. It's about asking questions that open the doors to deep questioning. "How does this work?" "What does that mean?" "Why?", etc.

When we're teaching the class, we can help students defend their beliefs by assuming the role of "devil's advocate" and asking: "What would happen if we did the opposite of what you say?" The idea isn't to weaken a belief but to strengthen it through a careful examination of the options, even the most absurd ones.

You may not memorize everything you just read, but try to review these points frequently and put them into practice in your class. Then examine what results they're giving. Don't doubt that this will bring a change, both in you and in your students.

Lesson Preparation:

Understanding that what you're venturing into is a ministry focused on adolescents and young people, ask God to give you grace to come into their lives. Pray that through each lesson, you'll reach the hearts of your students and make God's message clear to them. Here's a guide to preparing the lesson:

1. Find a place and time where, with this book and your Bible, you can read and reflect on the lesson.
2. It's advisable to have different versions of the Bible and a Bible dictionary. They are resources that will be of great help to you in the teaching ministry.
3. Start by reading the lesson objective carefully so that throughout the lesson, you know where you want to go.
4. Memorize the verse from the "Memory Verse" section. This will help you use it in the lesson and motivate students to memorize it as well.
5. Read the section "Navigate" as many times as necessary to get to know the subject in depth. This will give you more security when teaching the lesson.
6. Look in the Bible and read each Bible verse that's indicated. Practice reading, especially those passages that have words that are difficult to pronounce.
7. Make sure you understand exactly what the passage is adding to the lesson. If you're in doubt about anything, check with your pastor before using it.
8. Although the book contains the development of the lesson, it's good that you make your own summary to guide you in class. Write on a piece of paper the name of the lesson, the main points, and develop a summary as you study the lesson. Highlight the Bible quotes that you'll read in class. All this will give you more security when teaching the lesson.
9. The book is designed for two age groups: Adolescents or Teens 12-17 and Youth 18-23. Therefore, read the introductory dynamic in the "Connect" section for the group you're in charge of. Practice to make sure you understand it and can do it. Check if you need to bring any additional materials to class.
10. Do all the activities in the "Review/Application". This will help you know the activity well so you can help your students carry it out. We provide the answers to the activities.
11. For the "Challenge" section, remember that this is a practice assignment for the week. It's the challenge that you want them to go away with. Don't forget to ask them at the start of the next class (Alert) how this activity went. This will help you get to know your students better and help them in their spiritual growth.



Lesson Presentation:

1. Be the first to class and set up the space creatively. From time to time, try to change the location of the chairs, the desk, the white/blackboard and the decorations. Find a way to create a conducive and pleasant environment. And start on time.
2. Welcome your students personally. This will help you create a pleasant study environment. Get to know each other's names, find ways to remember new people's names, etc.
3. Begin the class with prayer, asking for the Lord's guidance and direction.
4. Start with the introductory Dynamics; this will help them get into the subject.
5. Write the title of point 1 and start explaining it. Continue like this with the following points. This is very helpful for your students to follow you in the development of the topic.
6. Use the board as a teaching resource to write down conclusions, important words, biblical quotes, make diagrams, etc.
7. As the lesson progresses, lead the class through the activities in the "Review/Application" section.
8. Encourage all the students to participate in the class with their opinions, questions and suggestions. Don't criticize, but on the contrary, be attentive and always guide them to answers in the Word of God.
9. Explain the challenge for the week and encourage everyone to follow through on it.
10. Encourage the class to invite their friends who don't know the Lord to attend the next class.
11. End the class with prayer; you can ask a student to pray.

Other suggestions

1. You can offer a simple prize for those who:
 - Memorize the memory verses.
 - Are punctual and faithful in their attendance.
2. At the end of the book, we're including a unit called Special Dates. These lessons are counted as part of the 52 lessons of the year. You should share them on the appropriate dates. The lessons are:
 - Palm Sunday.
 - Easter Sunday.
 - Day of Pentecost (50 days after Easter Sunday).
 - Christmas
 - The New Year.
3. Don't stop using the introductory dynamics which will help you:
 - Capture the students' attention.
 - Get the group involved.
 - Get the class to relate to the topic of the day.
 - Motivate them to arrive early to participate in them.
 - Make the class more dynamic.
4. Decorate the classroom according to the age of the students. If you don't know what they like, ask the class for suggestions and decorate it together.

5. Take time to teach the memory verse. Include the text in the lesson so that the students understand its meaning; this will help their memorization. To facilitate memorization, you can do some of the following activities:

- a. Divide the group into equal teams. Provide each team with general interest magazines, no matter how old or new. Each group must cut out words to form the verse and paste them on a sheet of paper. After about five minutes, remove the magazines. Have everyone finish and stick the sheets on the classroom wall. Looking up the words will help them memorize it.
- b. Ask them to sit in a circle. Everyone should choose a different fruit (e.g. apple, grape, banana, etc.). Start reciting the verse, and part way through, mention the name of any fruit, for example, apple, and the one who chose that fruit continues the verse until they finish or until you mention another fruit, for example, banana. Then the one who has chosen that fruit must continue saying the text where the previous one ended. Doing it several times will help the group memorize it.
- c. Divide the class into two or three groups of three or four people each. Write the biblical text on pieces of paper. Each word must go on a different piece of paper. Make as many verse sets as groups formed. Put the words of the verse in a bag and place the bags (1 per team) at the far end of the room. Then ask the students (one from each group) one by one to walk to the bag corresponding to their group and take out a piece of paper with a word from the text and place it in the order that it should go according to the text. Then another will pass and so on until they put together the complete text.

The groups must do this simultaneously. The group that finishes first and says the text from memory without reading it wins. If someone finishes first and they don't all know it by heart, give the second-place group a chance.

- d. Have the group sit in a circle. Give a small ball or a lemon to one of the young people. Then play a song or sing yourself. The idea is that the young people will pass the lemon or the ball while the song is playing. When it stops, whoever has the ball or the lemon must repeat the text from memory. Doing it several times will help the group memorize it.
- e. Divide the class into two or three groups. Give each group a lemon or an orange or a tangerine. The group must peel the fruit and distribute it to their group, and before eating their portion, each one must say the text. At the end, all group members must say the memoria verse at the same time. Repeating it and listening to it several times will help them memorize it.

Strong in Christ

Lesson

1

David Gonzalez • Mexico

Objective: That every day, the students will recognize and apply the spiritual strength that they have as children of God.

Memory verse: “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.” Psalm 16:1



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: thread and scissors
- Instructions: Ask a volunteer to sit on a chair. The challenge will be to see how strong he or she is. Wrap the thread around the volunteer three times, then ask them to break the thread. The first time, it should be easy to break the thread. Allow the student to brag about how easy it was to break the thread. Now, wrap the volunteer with thread more times. And repeat the exercise until he or she cannot break the thread.

Then, ask another student to use the scissors to cut a few lines of the thread at a time, until the volunteer can break the thread by himself.

Conclusion: Say, In our spiritual life we have strength with which we can face and overcome the obstacles of life. However, we don't use it on many occasions.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Instructions: Ask the youngest students to sit down and form a circle by holding hands. Ask a volunteer to sit in the middle. Be sure there is enough space between each one in the circle so that a young person can squeeze through. Ask the volunteer to try to get through the spaces between the students by crawling or wiggling (but not jumping), without using his or her hands. Without moving their feet or letting go of their hands, the circle will try to stop the escape. It might take a little while, but eventually the volunteer will escape.

Now, tell the ones in the circle to lock their elbows and sit closer together, with no space between them. Repeat the challenge, reminding the volunteer to not use his or her hands or too much force. When the volunteer tries to escape the circle, ask, “Why is it harder this time?”

Conclusion: Say, In life, we have challenges and temptations that can bring us down; however, God gives us the strength and tools to protect ourselves.

Connect

Navigate

The big question “Who am I?” is one of the most common questions everyone asks, especially young people. If we ask a teenager “Who are you?”, the normal answer would be a name, perhaps age or where she or he lives. If you ask for a more in-depth answer, sometimes, teenagers don't have a response.

This is normal, because it's in adolescence that people develop a sense of identity. The process can often be confusing.

1. Strengthened with God's love

We are all born with gifts given by God. These capabilities are part of our identity, and over time, we develop them. We call these abilities our “strengths.”

Likewise, when we're born spiritually, we receive strength. This strength is accessible to all, without exception, and it's linked to our decision for Christ. We receive this spiritual strength as a gift when we accept Jesus as our Savior and take his name, “Christian.”

Certainly, this strength can increase if our relationship with God deepens or becomes more intimate (Colossians 3:14).

In the Christian life, we'll face many difficulties and trials. Most of them will cause us to be afraid. However, we trust in God (1 John 4:18). The love that was born in our heart when we were saved supports us and pushes us forward. This love isn't something that we can create by ourselves. Perfect love comes only from God (John 3:16). God's love that we experience every day is what produces our love for him and for other people. The way to live and enjoy the Christian life, regardless of the circumstances, is to remember Jesus' sacrifice and how it gives us strength.

2. Strengthened with the right team

The Bible teaches us that it's the Spirit of God who relates to us. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, we read that we're the temple of the Spirit of God, both as the church (the community of Jesus' disciples), and also individually. It's the Spirit of God who comes to live in us when we recognize Jesus as our Savior. The Spirit helps us to enjoy the presence of God and to show that presence to others.

It's the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength to face any situation and who also puts at our disposal the tools we need to live according to God's will. In 1 Samuel 17:20-37, we read the story of David who faced the giant Goliath. This giant had impressive armor; however, David's armor was more powerful. It wasn't physical armor, which is why many doubted David's success. It was a spiritual armor, God's presence in David's life.

Likewise, it's total obedience to the Holy Spirit that gives us victory. In this life of obedience, we discover tools such as prayer, fasting, evangelism, service, faith, reading the Bible, communion with other believers, and so on. As we walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit, we see that he produces a fruit in our life that moves us forward confidently. This fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. It's a list of the characteristics of a person who lives by the Spirit and for the Spirit. With this fruit in our hearts, we won't only be ready to make it through bad days, but also enjoy the good days and be grateful to God.

3. Strengthened and guided by the Word of God

Psalms 119:105 says that the Bible is a lamp that lights our way. If you have ever walked in the dark, you know what it means to have a light on the path so that you can safely move forward. Through the Word (the Bible), we can better know God, know who he is, what he has done for us, why he loves us, what his plan is for us, and more. But also, we can know who we are, what we have been called to do, what we can become in Christ, and where we're going to spend eternity.

This Word of God's guidance is real in every part of our lives, whether in our relationship with him, with our family, friends, spouses, colleagues or anyone else. That is why it's essential that we dedicate time to reading the Bible. Our spiritual health depends on how important the Bible is in our lives.

However, simply reading and memorizing the Bible doesn't do much for us if we don't obey it. It's only when we obey the will of God that the Word transforms us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, which makes the Word come to life in every circumstance.

Review/Application:

Ask the students these questions, and allow time for them to think of their answers. Help them with the activity so that they answer seriously. Help them by sharing some examples of your own experience with God.

Before reflecting on 2 Corinthians 12:9, share the story of David and Goliath and point out that although David appeared weak compared to Goliath, God strengthened him and allowed him to defeat the giant. Ask some volunteers to dramatize the story. In this passage, we find an expression of humility. Paul recognized his limitations, but at the same time, he recognized that it was at this point that he was strongest, because the power of God converted his weaknesses into strength.

In less than 10 words answer the question, "Who am I?"

Now, when you complete the following sentences, imagine looking at yourself in a special mirror that shows the true you. Think about your strengths and spiritual gifts. Be honest with yourself.

1. The thing I love most about the Christian life is ...
2. Whenever I face a challenge in my spiritual life, I know that God helps me. One example of this is when ...
3. Whenever I face a challenge, the first thing I try to do is ...
4. I notice that when I disobeyed God, it was because I neglected ...
5. To be stronger in my spiritual life, I know I need to invest more time and passion in ...

Write 2 Corinthians 12:9 in your own words.

Challenge:

What are the gigantic things you face in your spiritual life?

We looked at the weapons David used to defeat Goliath (a slingshot and stones); what weapons does God give you to face the giants in your life?

This week, meditate on these two questions and ask God to help you be spiritually strong. Remember that the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and your obedience to him will make this possible.



The Last Word

Lesson

2

Yeri Nieto • Mexico

Objective: That the students will recognize that rejection, whether internal or external, can be transformed by God who has the last word.

Memory Verse: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” (2 Corinthians 12:9a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Blank paper, pencils, crayons, markers, erasers.
- Instructions: Ask the students to draw themselves in an abstract or artistic way. That is, the drawing doesn't have to be their face or physical appearance. They are free to draw anything in any form that describes them as an individual.

Allow time for them to share their drawings with the class and explain.

At the end, offer some positive words about anyone who didn't see themselves in a positive light.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blank paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Give each student a blank sheet and a pencil. Ask them to write their name at the top of the page. Then, ask everyone to pass the sheet to their classmate on the right so that everyone has a new page. Ask them to write something positive about their classmate on the sheet. After 30 seconds, have each student pass the paper to the next person to their right. After each paper has gone all the way around the circle, collect all the papers and return them to the students. Each student will now have a list of positive aspects about themselves. Ask them to share with the class if they are comfortable.

Say, In life, we're molded by what others say about us. How does it feel to read these positive words about yourself? Allow time for discussion.

Connect

Navigate

It's common to hear people talk about family resemblances. "He has his uncle's personality", or "She has her grandmother's nose." Young people often dress the same way or have similar haircuts. No one lives completely isolated from other people.

We are part of a society, and that's part of God's plan. Like most things in life, society's influence can be used in good ways and bad ways. Too many times, we grow up believing everything that others tell us about ourselves, even if it isn't true. Even our families don't always see the truth about us.

It's a sad reality that many people don't have supportive families. Maybe your father ignores you when you need encouragement. Or, maybe your mother calls you lazy or "good for nothing" when she is angry.

However, a teacher at school (seeing that we tried hard in their class) may help us believe that we could become something more in life. Often, we must reject one way of thinking and embracing another. It's too easy to simply accept rejection. Instead, we need to know that whatever our situation, God has a word for us.

1. Daily Bible reading

One day, God appeared to Moses and told him that he would be God's instrument to free the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt (Exodus 4:10-17). Instead of listening and obeying, Moses listed all his limitations, including an important characteristic for a leader: he didn't speak well. God told Moses that he would have his brother Aaron, who spoke well (v. 14), help him deliver the message.

Moses thought his weakness made him unfit to do something. He refused to see himself as God saw him. He couldn't see his own virtue.

How many limitations did Moses have? Probably more than one, even more than he knew! But how many abilities could he develop in the hand of God?

How many times do we see each other the same way Moses saw himself? God calls us, but we object. We believe what people say about us. We grow up with all sorts of insecurities. Maybe we think that, because of some tragic experience in our past, we no longer deserve to do something good for God. Or, maybe we think we cannot do something perfectly, so we cannot do anything. Often, we don't see the good qualities we have ... we only see the negative.

2. Rejection based on our condition

When Mephibosheth was a child, his grandfather (King Saul) and his father (Jonathan) died in the same battle: the king and the future king. For Mephibosheth, this meant that his life was in danger. When his nurse heard the news, she took Mephibosheth and fled. Trying to protect the young prince from danger, he slipped from her hand and fell to the ground; this paralyzed him (2 Samuel 4:4). From that moment on, he became a person who depended on others to live.

During that time, Israel was governed by someone else. Mephibosheth was forgotten by people, but not by God. The leader of the people was David who was a good friend of Jonathan (the father of Mephibosheth). David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1). And that's how he heard about Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was lame.

So, the king sent for Mephibosheth. When he saw king David, he bowed down, and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" (2 Samuel 9:8). Obviously, he had a very poor opinion of himself: He thought he was worth less than a dog, even a dead dog. Mephibosheth may have been a beggar who spent the night outside on the outskirts of the city.

Standing in front of him was the King ... the one that replaced his father and grandfather ... a very powerful man. His old life as a prince in the palace had given him everything he needed. But he lost all of that when he was no longer a prince. Even the hope of living. But God was about to have the last word. The king disregarded Mephibosheth words of rejection. He gave him back all his lands, a place at the table of the palace, servants, and even a family.

3. Rejection transformed by God

God saw Moses, but he didn't see the physical limitations that made Moses think so poorly of himself; God saw a heart that he could touch and use. So, Moses became a great leader and judge who established the moral and religious framework of Israel.

God put it in David's heart to approach Mephibosheth. David treated him differently than everyone else did ... not with pity and disgust, but with God's love so that Mephibosheth could reclaim his dignity.

God's love isn't theoretical or some sort of illusion. It remains focused on us, and it comes down to our level. God's love doesn't listen to us when we say we're worthless or helpless. He was the one who created us; we're made by his hands. He knew us before our parents ever planned us. He's our maker and he confirms our worth.

So, why do we think we're not worth much? Today's memory verse (2 Corinthians 12:9) teaches a wonderful lesson that we should learn. It's surprising to read "My power is made perfect in weakness."

How could that be possible, since weakness is the opposite of power!

A defect, a lack of skill, a disability, thinking we're worthless are all "weaknesses," but they're not the last word! When people, even family, talk bad about us and mistreat us, we feel weak. But, those people too don't have the last word! It's God who has the last word. The one who created Moses, David, and Mephibosheth is the same God who created us.

What people say about us can hurt us. No one likes to be rejected or ridiculed. However, what we think of ourselves or what other people think of us doesn't determine our lives. The one who determines who we are is God, who made Moses a great leader and restored Mephibosheth.

Review/Application:

Ask these questions and give the students time to think about their answers.

1. How much do you identify with Moses or Mephibosheth? Explain.
2. Have people in my life helped strengthen my self-esteem? Have they made me feel rejected? Explain.
3. What does God think of you? How can you hear his voice telling you about what you are or should become?

Challenge:

This week, read Psalm 138 every day. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Pray before you read. Ask God to help you understand his Word.
2. Read the Psalm in a different version of the Bible if you have access to one.
3. Think about the reality and the promises God has for you.
4. Think about today's lesson and what you read in the Bible. Write your impressions on a sheet of paper; write how you think your life might be in the hands of this God who is the great transformer.
5. For next week, try to answer the following question (according to Psalm 138:8): "What is the plan that I think God has for me?"

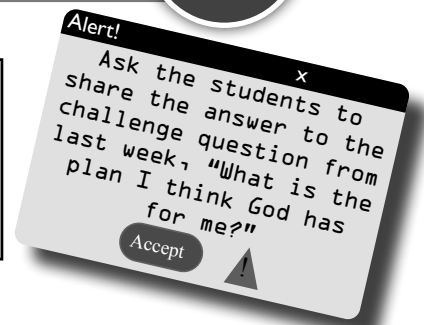
Giants in our lives: The giant of failure

Lesson 3

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students will be confident that God is powerful enough to help and guide in the midst of failure and problems.

Memory Verse: "The LORD answered, 'I will be with you, and you'll strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.'" (Judges 6:16)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Write out the following stories on separate sheets of paper:
 - Story A: "A five-year-old boy learns how to ride a bike, falls on the cement pavement and hurts his knees. Frustrated, he decides never to ride a bicycle again."
 - Story B: "A five-year-old boy learns how to ride a bike, falls on the concrete pavement and hurts his knees. Thanks to the encouragement of his friends, he decided to try again."
- Instructions: Form two groups and give each group a story. Allow them time to read the story and talk about it. Ask them to imagine happens next. How does this event change the child and his friendships.
Allow one person from each group to share their stories. Then, ask, How did the child's attitude affect what happened? What was the role of his friends?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Paper and markers.
- Instructions: Ask the students to write short descriptions of common situations that discourage people their age. For example: (1) I got a poor grade in an exam, and I will have to repeat this course. (2) I watched a video that I shouldn't have. (3) I followed my friends when they did something wrong. (4) I almost lost my job. (5) I have a bad relationship with my parents, friends.

After they have time to write a few situations, ask them to describe how they would react to each circumstance. Give the students enough time to reflect and participate in the discussion.

Tell them that today they'll learn about failure from God's perspective.

Connect

Navigate

1. Israel's failure

Failure means that something didn't succeed or that it didn't end well.

We have all experienced situations in our lives that we would describe as failures. That is, we tried without a good result. However, God has a different way of seeing and evaluating our situations. From our human point of view, many situations seem to end badly. However, if we give our life to God, and ask him to transform our attitude and our efforts, the Almighty can turn our failures into victories.

The people of Israel had a promise that they would become a great nation, but, Judges 6:1-6 tells of a problem they had. Verse 1 explains that the Israelites sinned against God, which is why He turned them over to an enemy, the Midianites, for seven years (verse 1).

The people of Midian and other enemies were relentless against Israel. After the Israelites had worked hard to farm land and tend the animals, the Midianites destroyed all of it. They destroyed the crops of the Israelites and stole their sheep, oxen, and donkeys. At that time, crops and cattle were the primary way of staying alive, and the people of Israel were dying. If ever there was a story of failure, this was it!

The Bible says the Israelites “cried out to the Lord for help” (verse 6).

Sometimes in our lives, we can face enormous enemies such as the people of Midian. Maybe not war, but we have negative experiences in our homes, streets, and schools. Sometimes people can be cruel to us. Thieves take our property. We know that these situations can produce fear, anger, or frustration. These situations can steal our peace, joy, and hope.

Sometimes, we’re the cause of the failure (failing in school, failures in our Christian life, disobedience to parents), but sometimes failures happen that we cannot control (divorce of parents, economic crises, accident, illness, death).

These situations—these failures—can be very difficult and painful. Whatever the cause, if we seek God, the end result will be in his hands. God even uses negative situations in our favor.

2. Israel's hope

When we’re faced with failure, one of the most important aspects is our attitude about the situation. I want you to think about how you have reacted when you have faced situations in which you have failed. Do you think your attitude helped you recover or did it further discourage you? Do you think your attitude is closer to how God views the situation, or does it move you further from his power or presence?

In Judges 6:7, we read that the people of Israel, in the difficult situation they were facing, “cried out to God.” This is the attitude we should have: In the midst of a great failure—complete with feelings of guilt, frustration, and fear—we must always go to God and beg him to save us.

The first key is to have an attitude of humility and recognize that without God, everything is more difficult. God doesn’t promise to give us lives without problems or difficult situations. What God promises us is victory in the situation or problem. When we allow God to be the master of our lives, he can transform our situations of failure into victory.

The second key is to recognize that, although situations seem impossible, there is nothing impossible for God (Luke 1:37). God’s power over the impossible should inspire us to trust in him with all our heart. God’s answer to the people of Israel came in the form of a message of hope: God had already helped them by taking them out of Egypt and delivering them from their enemies (Judges 6:8-9). It was a reminder of the power of God over failure.

3. Israel's victory

In Judges 6:11, God told Gideon about his plan to save Israel and how he wanted Gideon to help him. When the angel of God appeared to Gideon and spoke to him, he exposed Gideon’s doubts about whether God would be with the people of Israel (verse 13). Like us, Gideon was in a difficult situation, faced with certain failure. The temptation was to strive harder or give up hope.

It’s natural to wonder and ask why God allows certain painful situations. No, we shouldn’t feel guilty about talking to God about our feelings, but yes, we must make sure that doubts don’t weaken our faith.

When God heard Gideon’s doubts, what did God do? He came near to Gideon. God spoke to him; he encouraged and strengthened him (verse 14). In situations of failure, we may be tempted to think that God doesn’t listen to our prayers. However, God listens to and pays attention to every prayer.

God not only listened to the prayers of the people, but he sent Gideon to save them (verse 14). God not only listened to their prayers, he participated directly in the plan (verse 16).

Our greatest failures can’t withstand the power of God.

The Israelites defeated the Midianites. It was a victory that lasted for forty years (Judges 8:28).

Review/Application:

Ask the students to fill in the table by writing what comes to their mind when they think about their situations of failure. They should write at least two messages in each category. (We give one example in each category.)

What I can say to others	
<i>The support words</i>	<i>Words of discouragement</i>
You can try again!	Just give up!
What I can tell myself	
<i>The support words</i>	<i>Words of discouragement</i>
I can do it better, and next time, it will work out better.	I'm a loser; I won't achieve anything good!

Challenge:

During the week, think of a failure that you have experienced. Does it seem you still haven't turned this situation into a true victory story? Tell your worries and sorrows to God in prayer. Remember that God can help and guide you because he is all-powerful, sovereign, and loving. With God, nothing is impossible.

Giants in our lives: The giant of death

Lesson

4

Leticia Cano • Guatemala

Objective: That the students will discover God's sovereignty over death.

Memory Verse: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. (Psalm 23:4a)"



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Ask the students to put their chairs into a circle and sit down. Tell the students to stand up whenever they hear the word "GIANT" and to sit down when they hear "DWARF". If someone does it wrong, they're out of the game. Then say, "giant!" or "dwarf!", mixing it up with pauses and some fake words like "ant" or "Ralph."

After the exercise, explain that death is a "giant" that none of us wants to face.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Prepare slips of paper with different emotions written on them: sadness, anger, joy, amazement, doubt, and so on. Prepare enough slips of paper for each member of the class.
- Instructions: Distribute a piece of paper to each student. Then say, Chico is dead. Ask the class members to tell something about "Chico" but to express it with the emotion written on their paper.

Explain that people react in different ways to the death of a loved one.

Connect

Navigate

Adolescence and youth is a wonderful time. Who thinks of the death at this age? We generally think that death only happens to the elderly, but people of all ages die, including young people.

1. God is sovereign over life and death

As sovereign, God exercises supreme authority over the whole universe (Psalm 24:1). He is sovereign over life and death (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

The beginning and end of life

The Book of Psalms tells us that God is the author of life (Psalm 139:13, 15, 16). The beginning of life is determined by him (Jeremiah 1:5). In 2 Kings 20:1-6, God made it known to King Hezekiah that he was going to die. But Hezekiah didn't want to die! So, he prayed to God that God would remember his good behavior. God had mercy and granted him another 15 years. God has the power to give life, to prolong it, and to take it away.

Life is an expression of God's mercy

Every day, God has a plan for us. Life isn't a right but a gift (Jeremiah 31:3); it's the expression of his mercy.

God granted Hezekiah another 15 years. During that time, he was visited by the emissaries of the King of Babylon, to whom he showed all the treasures of his kingdom. Hezekiah was warned that this was reckless, and the Babylonians later invaded and plundered the nation (2 Kings 20:12-18). Hezekiah acted recklessly.

We must take advantage of every day, living in his will. And, we should make good use of the mercy given by God.

Dying before time?

God's will for most people is that they should have a long and good life (Psalm 91:16). However, many people cut short God's perfect purpose for life. Sometimes, this happens when people choose a destructive path in life that ends up destroying them: crime, drugs, and violence (Ecclesiastes 7:17). So, while it's true that there is an established time at which everyone will die, it's also true that by doing evil or by acting recklessly, we may die before our time.

2. Sometimes "Yes" and sometimes "No," why?

Sometimes, parents may give one child permission to go out with friends, but they don't allow another child to do the same. While it may be easy for the child to think the parents don't love them or prefer their sibling, there might be other reasons. Perhaps one child has homework and the other has finished.

On a boat going to Rome, the apostle Paul was in a shipwreck, but the Lord revealed to him that no one on board would die (Acts 27:22). They were able to finish the journey. The Lord saved Paul's life to give witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the city of Rome, and by his witness and life, many people were saved. God always has a purpose.

Like Paul, Stephen was a faithful Christian. Because he was such a good person, he was elected to serve as a deacon (church leader) (Acts 6:5). He also knew the Scriptures and was a good preacher (Acts 7:1-53). One day, he was wrongly accused of blasphemy. He was punished and died (Acts 7:54-60). Why did God allow him to be killed if he was a faithful Christian?

The same is true of John the Baptist. He was a servant of God, but Herod cut off his head (Matthew 14:1-12). Why did he get killed?

We need to remember that God is sovereign. Even if we cannot comprehend it, God has power over our life and over our death. When physical separation comes, we experience deep and inexplicable pain, and this is where the Lord offers us his love and consolation.

3. The meaning of life and death

Death is a giant no one wants to meet, but it's inevitable. In a beautiful poetic way, Job describes it in Job 9:26.

It's very difficult to accept death as the manifestation of God's will. Can you remember a moment when a loved one died? (Allow time for the students to respond.) Perhaps this hasn't happened to you. Maybe you consider death some very distant possibility, but no one is exempt from death.

The meaning of life

According to the Apostle Paul, our life and death must be for the Lord (Romans 14:8; Philippians 1:21). That is a way of saying that we have a responsibility to always do what pleases God. The Bible tells us to be wise and make good use of time (Ephesians 5:16).

The meaning of death

The apostle Paul regarded death as a gain (Philippians 1:21) because in the Lord's service he suffered persecution, pain, and imprisonment, and—although he endured it with joy—he understood that death would free him from suffering, to cause him to enjoy eternally the presence of God.

As Christians, we don't fear death because we have the hope of seeing Jesus (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 48:14). But if anyone is in disobedience to God at the time of death, he won't have life but eternal death (Hebrews 10:27).

Holding the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can face the giant of death.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to follow these instructions.

1. Write down three things you plan to do in the next 10 years.
2. If a doctor told you that you only have one week of life left, what would you do each day you have left to live? Make a list beside each day:

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday:
- Saturday:
- Sunday:

Challenge:

During the week, think of biblical passages that bring you peace when you think of death. Write them down and share them with the class next week.

Giants in our lives: The giant of shame

Lesson 5

Eudo Prado • Venezuela

Objective: That the students will recognize that shame has its origin in the sinful condition of humans.

Memory Verse: “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Very large sheets of paper, thick markers and highlighters of different colors.
- Instructions: Ask students, how do you think a shameful person feels? What is the most common facial expression of someone who is ashamed?

After listening to their comments, divide the students into small groups of three or four members and invite them to “draw a face of shame.” Tell them to try to draw the face so that anyone who looks at it will immediately know the person is ashamed.

Hopefully, this will be fun for the students; something that might make them laugh.

Finally, discuss how a person feels when ashamed.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Very large sheets of paper, thick markers.
- Instructions: Explain: Shame can be caused by different situations and can cause a lot of problems, both for the person themselves, as well as for those with whom they relate.

Form small groups of three or four members. Give each group a sheet of paper and ask them to divide it into two columns. Over one column they'll write the title “Situations that result in shame” (for example: telling a friend's secret), and the other column they'll write “The effects of shame” (for example: Hiding from the offended person). Each group must develop its own list of no more than five items in each column.

Finally, the groups will share with the class and you can make a summary on the board.

Connect

Navigate

Some scholars have said that shame is one of the ten fundamental emotions (joy, interest, excitement, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame and guilt). It's also said to be one of the emotions with a major physiological expression, because when we feel shame, a lot of physical reactions happen in our body. Generally we feel very bad. But shame also triggers negative thoughts. Often this leads us to disapprove of ourselves, seriously affecting our self-esteem, and therefore our behavior towards others.

In the Bible, we're taught that the origin of this problem is spiritual: the product of man's sinful condition. And also it teaches us that this can be solved through the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit.

1. The origin of shame

In Genesis 3, we find the story of the original disobedience of mankind. And in verses 7-13 of the same chapter, we read the story of shame in the first couple.

The shame of Adam and Eve arose because sin had changed their way of thinking about the Creator. It seems that “nudity here is the expression of a simple life, without the feeling of guilt and in perfect harmony with oneself and with one's neighbor. Then, as a result of sin, shame happened” (Marginal Note of Genesis 2:25 in the Queen Valera Bible 1995, study version, SBU). The sinful condition of the human being is at the origin of any negative feeling. But, it's wonderful to know that God has given us the Holy Spirit, the one who purifies our heart, while allowing his love to be shown in our life.

2. The effects of shame

The feeling of shame is a real inner giant, ferocious and threatening. Not only does it affect the person, but also many people with whom that person relates.

Shame often becomes a paralyzing condition. Generally, it scares us to face the consequences of our inappropriate actions. Like Adam and Eve, we don't want to "face" those we've hurt or offended.

It's also possible that we feel inappropriate and unable to carry out a mission or responsibility. For this reason, sometimes a situation or condition that we're ashamed about can lead us to take refuge in solitude, and thus prevent us from being with others.

Let's read Luke 22:54-62. How would you describe the Apostle Peter's actions? What made Peter feel ashamed in connection with his friendship with Jesus? How do you think Peter felt about how Jesus looked at him when he betrayed him?

Probably, this situation was traumatic for Peter. The darkest part of shame is guilt, and this invaded him immediately. That's why he hid from the others and wept bitterly. But God, in his great mercy, even when we fail, always gives us new opportunities, as he did with the Apostle Peter.

3. Overcoming shame

The Bible teaches that a personal, intimate and profound relationship with the Holy Spirit makes a great difference to our responsibility. Peter was freed from the feeling of shame on the day of Pentecost. Previously, he felt ashamed of Jesus in front of a small group of people, but after receiving the Holy Spirit, he witnessed to a large crowd of people with courage (Acts 2:14-24, 36-42). It was the presence of the Holy Spirit that gave him the courage to testify about his faith in Jesus. Read verses 36-40. Describe the details of Peter's testimony to the Jews and its result.

Whatever the reason for a feeling of shame, the Holy Spirit is able to help us overcome it. Whether it is negative thoughts about ourselves, mistakes we have made in the past, or attitudes of blame that others have towards us, God knows our lives perfectly and wants to help us. The path to victory over the inner giant of shame begins when you place all of your confidence in God's transforming power. The blessing of a personality infused by the presence of the Lord is accessible through prayer, reading the Bible, obedience, faith, and communion with the church. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in us (Galatians 5:22-23).

I invite you to join me in a prayer of confession and approach to the Lord. This is a good opportunity to ask God to carry out a profound work of inner renewal in you through the Holy Spirit.

Review/Application:

Give the students time to answer the questions in their own words (we have provided possible answers):

1. In what sense can shame negatively affect our self-esteem? (*Because shame comes from a sense of guilt that leads us to hide.*)
2. Who were the first biblical characters to feel shame and why? (*Adam and Eve, for disobeying God.*)
3. Why is it said that shame is seen as a crippling condition? (*Because shame leads us to loneliness, preventing us from freely interacting with others.*)
4. What was Peter's actions and attitude toward Jesus in Luke 22:54-62, and what motivated him? (*Peter denied Jesus three times because he felt ashamed to identify himself as one of his disciples.*)
5. What was Peter's attitude toward Jesus in Acts 2:14-42, 36-42? (*Peter testified about Jesus without fear or shame.*)
6. How can a transformation be made in our personality to overcome shame or any other negative feelings? (*Through an intimate and deep relationship with the Holy Spirit.*)

Challenge:

This week, identify a person who shows some kind of shame. Try to approach him or her cautiously to offer them a gesture of kindness, a word of encouragement, or simply a candy or something small. In your personal prayer, ask the Lord to help this person overcome shame and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Peace in the Storm

Lesson

6

Myriam Pozzi • Argentina

Objective: That the students will understand that we need to trust in Jesus and ask him for his help when problems frighten and overwhelm us.

Memory Verse: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A large bottle with its cap, water, salt, detergent, blue dye and a piece of wood or other floating material.
- Instructions: Fill the bottle with water (just over half), add two spoons of salt, a drop of detergent and two drops of blue dye. Place the piece of wood inside. Tape the bottle and shake it until the mixture reacts like a storm. Tell the students this looks like a storm and the piece of wood represents a boat. Ask them how they would feel if they were in this boat in the middle of the night away from the coast and in a storm surge that would threaten to drown them.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask students if they had seen the movie “Titanic”. For those who say yes, ask them to remember the scene in which the ship is sinking and the orchestra is still playing. How did they interpret this sequence?
- This is a metaphor for the peace we must have as Christians when we’re in the midst of trial or tribulation. Ask that some of them share a personal experience of crisis where they felt the peace of God and they could still sing or play an instrument in the midst of fear and pain.

Connect

Navigate

We can define fear as an unpleasant emotion when we see danger, real or imagined. Fear is necessary for our survival because it tells us when danger is near. The most common fears are: Fear of abandonment, rejection, criticism, failure, the unknown, death, the future, among many others. All of these fears are manifestations of insecurity and helplessness because we understand that we cannot control the situation.

Fear causes anxiety, anxiety causes us to lose our security and calmness and alters our behavior, it produces physical reactions, alters sleep, and even can make us sick. To free us from our fears, it's necessary to know the root from which they come, face them, and cling to the Word of God which assures us that God is our salvation and will give us victory.

Read Mark 4:35-41 with all the emotion you can to express the critical moment.

1. A terrible storm

After teaching all day, Jesus told his disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee. They separated from the crowd and began the voyage in the boat, which they had probably used on other occasions (Mark 3:9; 4:1).

The Sea of Galilee in reality is a large lake where violent storms arise from time to time because of its geographical location. For the Israelites, the sea was a source of danger. This is the place where enemies arrived, where they thought sea monsters lived, and where shipwrecks took place. In this context, storms were symbols of extreme fear.

Even though at least four of Jesus' disciples were fishermen, the danger of that night still produced a mortal fear.

2. A desperate question

Things seemed very difficult, chaos and fear reigned, but Jesus slept so deeply that the storm didn't awaken him. Therefore he had to be awakened with cries of fear from the disciples (v. 38).

The disciples regarded Jesus' sleep as a neglect to save them from a terrible death. They wanted Jesus, as their leader, to share their concern. The shipwreck seemed inevitable. Not only was the sea very aggressive, but the disciples also behaved that way towards Jesus. The question they put to him at first may have the connotation of an accusation of irresponsibility for the lives of his disciples. We must always be careful not to accuse God of such a thing. If he takes care of the birds, how much more of us! (Matthew 6:26)

"Instead of communicating our panic, we should let him communicate his calm to us."

3. An Incredible Miracle

"Storm" means rushing wind: "hurricane". Everyone's lives were in danger! Jesus "awoke" and with two orders He imposed silence (Mark 4:39). All at once, the wind stopped howling and the water became perfectly calm. The great storm was replaced by great tranquility.

Sometimes we feel that our lives are experiencing a storm and we're afraid. At that time, it's important to know that God controls our lives, even when he seems to be inactive. We must know that, despite the torment, our life in Christ will never pass away.

Jesus addressed the wind and the lake. In response to his voice, the storm stopped, and the same can happen in our lives when we come to Him in times of "storms."

This miracle represents an advance in the knowledge that the disciples had of Jesus; they had seen him cast out demons and heal the sick, but on this occasion Jesus showed them his sovereignty over the forces of nature.

It's interesting that while they were afraid, he didn't rebuke them. When everything calmed down, that's when he told them that their fear had come because of their lack of faith (v. 40). Faith is essential here. Faith is more than just believing in his words, it's trust in the person of Christ ... the one who goes with us in the same boat. This faith isn't the faith for staying on the secure shore, but the faith to navigate through storms. It's a faith that leads us to action.

4. Fear won over faith

The disciples had heard the teachings of Jesus and had seen His miracles, but at that moment, fear won over faith. You would think that the disciples would rejoice when they saw Jesus calm the storm; on the contrary, "they were terrified" (Mark 4:41).

The storm caused panic among the disciples because of their lack of faith and understanding. Now this fear had come to be even greater than the fear of the storm! This is why they asked, "Who is this?"

The disciples' true problem wasn't the storm, but their lack of faith. And that's also our major problem. The question, "Do you still have no faith?" (v. 40) also belongs to us.

Mature faith produces peace in the midst of the storm. Yes, fear is a normal reaction. But this is precisely where faith should be placed in Jesus Christ.

Communion with Jesus doesn't hide us from danger. We live in the midst of problems and storms, some of which shoot us down and leave us breathless to continue. But in any case, believers, we know that Jesus is with us. The majority of fears will disappear when trust in God's faithfulness and power increases.

Review/Application:

The big question of the passage studied is this one. How do other passages of Scripture respond to this topic? Have the students individually or in groups look up the verses and comment on what they say about God's power and actions.

1. Jeremiah 10:10 (*"But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King."*)
2. Jeremiah 10:13 (*"When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses."*)
3. Psalm 65:7 (*"who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations."*)
4. Psalm 89:9 (*"You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them."*)
5. Psalm 107:24-29 (*"They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed."*)

Challenge:

In today's world so full of fear and uncertainty, what is my attitude ... one of faith that sustains or one of fear that paralyzes?

Have I ever been in the midst of a "storm" in which Jesus seemed absent and fear overwhelmed me? What happened?

Write out the memory verse and place it in different places such as the refrigerator door, your computer screen, your bedroom wall, bathroom mirror, etc. to keep in mind throughout the week.

Why Anxiety?

Lesson

7

Gabriela López • Mexico

Objective: That the students will understand what anxiety is and how Christians cope with it.

Memory Verse: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: One newspaper per participant (if possible), sheets of paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Each student will take a sheet of paper, a pencil and the newspaper, and they'll write on the paper five titles that seem important to them or that they're attracted to. Next to the headline they'll place one of the following symbols:

L = An event that I like

C = An event that concerns me

Afterwards, discuss with the whole group why they chose what they did.

With this dynamic, students will analyze the news and events according to the impact they cause in their lives, and this will serve to introduce the topic to the class by thinking about what gives them pleasure and what worries them.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Paper, marker, container and chair.
- Instructions: Bring the name of each student written on paper, fold them and place them in a container. Ask a volunteer to remove a piece of paper and read it. The named student will sit on the chair in front of the classroom and answer the following questions: What causes you anxiety? What do you do when you're anxious? How do you control anxiety?

After some people have answered, form small groups and discuss their peers' responses. Let them come to some conclusions.

This dynamic will allow reflection and sharing about what causes anxiety and how it's expressed.

Connect

Navigate

We as people must always face various types of situations, from happy fulfilling events to suffering and pain. But in reality, what happens to mark people's lives is the way they react to situations; that's where we enter the realm of emotions.

Anxiety is an emotion ... it's a form of human response to what's happening. It's important to know that emotions have two faces; on the one hand, they're responsible for highly praised actions, and on the other hand, tragedies and terrible suffering.

1. What is anxiety?

For psychiatry, anxiety is an automatic response that occurs in our brain when it recognizes the existence of danger. We can call it a defense mechanism, a natural reaction of the mind to dangerous situations. Therefore, a certain degree of anxiety is healthy because it helps to form a person's character; but it can also become paralyzing and cause great damage.

Anxiety can occur when you think about events in the past or future, about things that you cannot control. It can also occur when remembering past mistakes that end up tormenting you or wanting to foresee any setback that could come. Human beings will always fear what they don't know and therefore don't control.

Life is full of situations that are out of our hands, and it's normal for our reaction to this to be worry. It would be absurd to ask for indifference or a frivolous attitude, nor is it healthy for that to happen. To a degree, worry is healthy since it causes us to react to critical situations, shows maturity and responsibility, as long as worry is also accompanied by action. But when worry is excessive and becomes terrifying, we are prisoners of anxiety, which is a disturbing worry that is very different from showing a deep interest in solving a situation.

Professionals on the subject conclude that anxiety is one of the most harmful human emotions because it attacks the entire person. When anxiety is excessive, it wears down the mind and body, affects the person's ability to judge, diminishes their decision-making power and makes them progressively more incapable of dealing with daily life. Furthermore, the anxious person affects those who are around them.

2. Why stay anxious?

What is really absurd is that even knowing that there are things that are out of their control, people continue to worry; it's like looking for an answer to a question that hasn't yet been asked.

Let's now think about the situations that make most adolescents and young people anxious. Changes are the main source of great anxiety at this stage: changes in school, place of residence, friends, etc. Other factors include exams, sports competitions, etc. It's normal to be anxious about what's new because it creates fear because it's unknown.

God never abandons us, and history proves it. We find one example of anxiety in King Saul. In 1 Samuel 13:8-15, we're told the story where Saul had no patience for waiting for the priest Samuel to offer the sacrifice, so he went ahead and did it himself. The fear that people would desert and leave him alone before the threat of the Philistines made him disobey God. Obviously, there were pressure factors causing great fear and despair, but Saul was supposed to wait.

The act of offering the sacrifice ahead of time wasn't in itself a sin, but not trusting God and disobeying Him was his sin, and the consequence was to know that his kingdom wouldn't continue. The same goes for all anxious people who rush ahead and make bad decisions, almost always incorrectly.

3. Rest in God

Given the evidence of the great harm that is caused by prolonged anxiety, the question is, can we avoid anxiety? Many people in an anxiety state believe that they can find the solution with sedatives, calming injections or other compulsive addictions, such as alcohol or drugs. But the only effective solution for anxiety was, is, and will continue to be, God.

The biblical passage that speaks clearly to us about what to do with anxiety is Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus exhorted his disciples not to worry. Speaking about birds, lilies and God's generosity towards them, Jesus touched a basic principle: "Trust." He condemned anxiety because God promised to provide for our needs; he takes care of all areas of our life.

The passage ends with a warning not to worry about the future because we shouldn't be focused on the problems of every day, for God will give strength. What appears in Christ's exhortation is a mandate not to be worried about the future.

In this passage, Jesus teaches some principles:

1. God has given us life, therefore we can trust that He can give us what we need (v. 25).
2. Don't worry about a future that's not seen, nor accumulate wealth for this future that's uncertain (v. 26).
3. Concern is unnecessary (v. 27).
4. God is very generous to humanity (vv. 28-30)
5. Anxiety is essentially a lack of trust in God; the Christian cannot worry because he should trust in the love of God (v. 32).

6. To destroy anxiety, we must focus on the search for the kingdom of God. When God dominates our life, all anxiety disappears (v. 33).
7. Anxiety can be overcome by learning to live one day at a time, accomplishing each task at the time when one has to do it (v. 34).

It's important to recall 1 Peter 5:7. We are told what we should do and why we should do it; the word "cast" means renouncing our responsibility and depositing it in God, truly resting in Him.

Review/Application:

Read the case study to the class and then discuss with the class: Tomorrow, I have a presentation in front of my class. I have really studied and prepared the topic for two weeks, but I'm afraid to speak in front of the class because I think I may make a mistake and everyone will make fun of me. Always when speaking in front of an audience, my legs shake and I can't sleep, but when I'm in front, the nervousness goes away little by little.

1. What are the symptoms of anxiety? (*Nervousness, shaking legs, can't sleep and negative thoughts.*)
2. What is he afraid of? (*To make mistakes and have people make fun of him.*)
3. Is this a normal case of anxiety? Why? (*Yes, because he's anxious until a certain time as he finally faces the situation, and when he does, the fear that he has (being in front of people) starts to go away.*)
4. What biblical advice would you give? (*I would tell him to just attend to each day's activities and not worry too much beforehand. I would encourage him to trust that if he prepares well, everything will work out. I would also congratulate him for preparing ahead of time.*)

Challenge:

During the week, practice what you have learned in class. First identify when you're anxious, then note how many times you feel anxious, how many days in the week and how many times a day you find yourself in this state. Then make a list of the things that worry you. When you have identified all this, in your prayer times (if you don't have one each day, it's a good time to begin) put all these concerns in the hands of God and read 1 Peter 5:7.

Anxiety is normal, but you shouldn't be anxious constantly; only God gives peace.

Attitude towards prayer

Lesson

Juan Estrada • Mexico



Objective: That the students recognize that their attitude towards personal prayer directly affects its purpose.

Memory Verse: “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Paper, a bag and pencils.
 - Instructions: Ask each student to write on a piece of paper the following: 1) Their favorite food, 2) Their favorite dessert, 3) A favorite Bible character and 4) Their favorite kind of film (drama, action, romantic, etc.).
- Once everyone is finished, they'll put their papers in a bag and a volunteer will take them out one by one and read them aloud and the class should try to identify who wrote it.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Table, chalk/white board and markers.
- Instructions: Select two or three students to each write on the board three things they have done and three things they've never done.

Once their lists are complete, each of the students will answer about 10 questions that their classmates ask about the activities they wrote to figure out which activities they've done and which they haven't.

The objective of this activity is to show that it's difficult to deceive your friends. Discuss the importance of always being honest. We see how much our friends know us ... God knows us even better.

Connect

Navigate

Praying in your bedroom, in the deepest intimacy, will allow you to calmly express your gratitude to God or elevate your requests to the throne of His grace where He will know how to communicate to you what He thinks about your needs. Talking daily with God should be a vital necessity in your life. But prayer must be accompanied by an attitude pleasing to God, an attitude of humility before the Father. What is the place you use most often to pray? Have you used the internet to communicate with God and express your requests? How was that experience?

Ask three volunteers to read one of the following passages: Jeremiah 29:11-13; Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 6:5-8 and when they finish reading, ask the class, What is the main theme of these verses?

The main theme in these passages is the attitude we should take in prayer. The passages also answer several other questions such as: What kind of words should we not use in prayer? Why pray? Why do we sometimes not receive from God what we ask for?

1. Heart to Heart

In the first verses of Matthew 6 in the famous Sermon on the Mount, our Lord addressed three themes of piety practiced by the Jews: 1) Help for the needy, 2) prayer, and 3) fasting. And precisely in Matthew 6:5, he told the crowd that when they prayed, they must not be like the hypocrites who loved to be heard by those around them.

When we pray, we speak to God and not to those around us. It's important that our hearts and minds be united to the heart of our good God in this special moment. The privilege of speaking with God was given to us by his great love; this isn't our moment, this is his moment in us.

When it's commonly said "I want to speak to you heart to heart," it's intended to convince the listener that he is going to speak with all sincerity, and as others say, "with his heart in his hand." There is no other way to speak with God that isn't heart to heart. When we speak to God (when we pray), our desire should be only to be heard by Him. When our prayer is to be heard by the congregation, it's understood that it's out loud and we become spokespersons for each of the participants. Prayer must move away from the display of words. We must be aware that God not only hears the request, but also the intention of prayer. Do you experience confidence and security when praying?

Trust and security are important aspects in our prayer. When we pray, God listens beyond our words, He listens to our hearts. Therefore, it's important that there be rest (trust) in God and certainty (security) from God. Every time we pray, we inevitably show or do not show our trust in God. When we pray, when we present to God the problems and difficult situations that come into our lives, instead of worrying and trying to solve them ourselves, we are saying that our trust is placed in God. As the psalmist says in Psalm 52:8 "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever."

2. Let's leave behind the vain repetitions

How many times have we heard that God knows everything, that he is omniscient. By omniscience, we mean "the perfect knowledge that God has of himself and of all things" (Introduction to Christian Theology. Wyley, H. Orton and Culbertson.CNP, USA:1976, p.112). Therefore, if God is omniscient, then we will understand that he knows about our joys, sorrows, needs, etc. But we must also know that God likes us to come into His presence and express our love, admiration, and constant need for Him. God expects our communication to be direct and daily, so He is always waiting for us to communicate with Him.

Praying is simply talking to God; it is having a conversation like we have with anyone. But what a prayer should not have are "vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7) because they are not accepted by our Lord. When we seek God's favor, our attitude must be one of humility, knowing that we don't deserve anything because of our merits, but simply because of the love that our good Father has for us.

Many people get nervous when they are asked to pray in public, but to the extent that they put into practice talking with their heavenly Father in the privacy of their room or in any place where they have chosen to pray, then the nervousness will pass. After a while, they will be praying to God and not even paying attention to the people who are around. Tell me about your experiences of praying in public.

3. Intimate and personal relationship with God

When the people of Israel were held captive in Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, and it seemed like God had forgotten them in the midst of their oppression, the Lord spoke to them through Jeremiah and said to them: "... Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." (Jeremiah 29:12, 13).

Through the ages, God has been and continues to be attentive to his people, and willing to listen to them. And according to the Scriptures, not only does He listen to us, but He also knows what we need even before we ask (Matthew 6:8). What a great privilege! Our God knows what we need, He also knows what we want, but He really wants to give us what we need. Our father wants us to look to him and he will listen to us. Because of this, he says, "Call to me and I will answer you ... (Jeremiah 33:3a). If once we worship our Father in prayer, we must call out to him, we must ask what our heart desires. But it isn't necessary to repeat and repeat, for God knows it in advance. God knows our needs even before we say it; this is something we must consider when we speak with our good God.

When a child insists that his mother gives him something he wants, in many cases his mother listens to him the first time and it isn't necessary for her to hear him again. However, the child insists again and again. A prudent mother waits for the right time and when that time comes, she gives her son what he has asked for. Maybe the child asked for one thing to satisfy his hunger, but his mother in her wisdom gave the best and right food.

God wants us to be good sons and daughters. He wants to listen to us; He wants us to seek Him through His Word. He wants us to have confidence in Him because He listens to us and will give us according to His riches in glory. Did you ask God for something once and He didn't give it to you? Why do you think he didn't? How can an intimate and personal relationship with God be realized?

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions. At the end, ask that some share their comments, and then after the sharing, clarify any doubts or mistakes they have mentioned (We include possible answers).

1. What do you understand by praying in secret? (*Praying alone without the company of others.*)
2. Do you think it's a bad thing to pray in public? Why or why not?
3. What did Jesus refer to when He said, "vain petitions?" (*He referred to insistence and continued repetition of requests.*)
4. What attitude should be adopted when praying in secret as well as in public? (*Lead us to God with a sincere heart.*)

Challenge:

This week, take time to discuss with some of the people from the church how they learned to pray. Was it difficult? Did anyone teach you? Then ask your parents what they think about how one should pray? Comment in class next Sunday what you found out and what you have learned during the week.

Bless the Lord

Lesson 9

Danilo Aguilar • USA

9

Objective: That the students will discover worship in his or her personal prayer time.

Memory Verse: “Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.” (Psalm 103:1)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Today, they'll all be detectives. Ask them to look at every detail in the classroom lounge or wherever you choose and take notes. For example, they may even describe the ant on the floor or the color of the chair where they sit. Finally, they'll give the report to the class.

At the end, ask them if they had noticed these details earlier. This is how we must take time and recognize God for the blessings He has given us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Colored paper and brown color markers.
- Instructions: Divide the class into groups of three or four and ask them to write a definition of the words “worship” and “pray.” The definition could include synonyms or stories they can act. Encourage them to dramatize their presentations.

Then ask if we can worship and pray at the same time. In this lesson, we'll find ways to worship during our personal prayer time.

Connect

Navigate

Imagine someone walking in a public place and all of a sudden, he looks at the sky and starts pointing at the clouds and smiling at the objects that are formed by the clouds, and after which he shouts, “Thank you Father for your creation!”

What would everyone think? It's strange to take the time to look at where we are. Usually we don't take the time to feel the meaning of the text of a book, or take time to smell a flower, or think about what we have around us, or even less to recognize the Father who created all things. Often we focus on our daily lives without thinking that there is a holy God who sustains us every day by his mercy.

1. Worshiping God in Prayer

It's nice to recognize someone when they do something good, right? Prayer is talking to God in person, and how it pleases him when we tell him that we admire his creation and what he does for us. That is part of worship, and that is what we need to do when we have our time of prayer.

In the first part of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus began the prayer by expressing adoration: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9).

In Psalm 103, the psalmist expressed a prayer in which he worshiped God for so many things he had done in his life, such as his forgiveness (vv. 3a, 9, 10), compassion and mercy (vv. 4b, 8, 11b), sovereignty (vv. 14, 17a, 19) and righteousness (v. 17b).

We're going to take some time to worship God in prayer right now. Close your eyes and think about your favorite place and what God has done in your life. Thank God for those things. Take time to think about what God has done in creation and in your own lives, and reflect on God's blessings in this moment. Appreciate the wonderful way God created you and then thank the Lord for all that He has put around you.

Thank God, we are alive! The believer in God the Father learns that everything he perceives and feels comes from Him because He is a gracious God who gives us life out of pure love. It is only by His loving grace that we can enjoy life. And we have to recognize it with our minds and say it with our mouths in our prayer times.

With this in mind, we can do this prayer exercise whenever we can. Every time we notice something new around us, let's thank God for creating it. For example, if you hear a bird singing or feel a fresh drop of rain, say, "Thank you Father for your creation!" Next, identify the emotion you feel in your heart. If it's pleasant and there is peace, say: "I worship you God, I bless you Father, for what I feel." Worship must be from the heart.

What we learn from reading the psalms is that the wonderful things that happen to us in life cause one to feel grateful towards God, and we have to tell him this during prayer. "I am grateful to you, Father!" According to the psalmist, our souls are to glorify God for his sovereignty, his creation, and his holiness.

Prayer is a way of worshiping God, but we can also worship Him through a drawing, a painting, or writing poetry.

2. We worship God because he is our Father

Why do we say that God is our Father? (Allow several people to give their opinion.) If you want, appoint a volunteer to write down the reasons the students are giving.

The word "Father" that our Lord Jesus used it very often in his prayers, in his preaching, and in his teachings. In writing this gospel, Matthew wrote the word "Father" 44 times, and John in writing his gospel mentioned the same word 115 times. The number of times the disciples recorded the word Father makes us think that this word, this concept of father, was really important to Jesus' disciples. It wasn't an accidental thing, but something of profound significance.

First, we know that God is our Father because the Lord Jesus taught it, "Our Father... (Matthew 6:9). In John 1:12-13, he says, "But to all who have received him, to all who believe in his name, he has given them the power to become children of God." This means that we who are born again are children of God.

In Romans 8:14-16, it's said that We who are guided by the Spirit of God, we are children of God, and we're not slaves but children and we can cry, Abba Father! Being children of God is an action of God's love for us. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (1 John 3:1). This is one more reason to worship him.

3. We worship God because He is sovereign

When we speak of God as sovereign, we refer to God's right to govern all that exists. God our Father is in heaven, this is his throne "But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne" (Matthew 5:34).

Yahweh has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom has dominion over all things (Psalm 103:19). God is sovereign! "Obviously the general concept of divine sovereignty is basic in all theism" (Psalm 115:3). (Belief in a One and Sovereign God). "First, it's essential in monotheism, God isn't only divine; He is the one deity... (Exodus 20:3). Being the only God, he alone is responsible for determining the ages and purposes of the universe and the creatures that inhabit it. Second, the concept of divine sovereignty is vital because God is clearly the creator of the universe... (Beacon Theological Dictionary. Taylor, Grider and Taylor. 1995, p. 655).

Even so, we his children here on earth can communicate with him; we can pray and say special things to him. "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if only you would hear his voice" (Psalm 95:1-7).

Our Father has sovereignty over all things and that's why He is worthy of worship. Personal prayer that's done in the room in secret, as Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:6, is the perfect time to recognize the wonders of God in our own lives and in the universe.

4. We worship God because He is holy

In the beginning of the prayer known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us that we must worship the Holy Name of the Father: "hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). One's name among the Hebrew people wasn't only a form of calling someone, the name expressed the nature, character, and personality of a person (Mark 3:16-17).

When we begin our prayer with praise to the Father by declaring that his name is holy, we're declaring that the nature, character and personality of God is holy. On the other hand, we begin prayer by humbling ourselves and worshipping the Father for who He is: pure God, without spot, without darkness, without blemish, holy. When we say that his name is hallowed (v. 9), in reality we're saying, Father you have been holy, you are holy, and you'll continue to be holy for all eternity.

God's holiness also means that God is pure. For example, the Israelite priests had to be sinless to enter the most holy place. If they were to be unclean, they died in the presence of God. God doesn't tolerate evil. And that's why Jehovah said to the Israelites and to us today: "You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Leviticus 20:26).

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to write down their testimonies in a few words and highlight the reasons they have for worshipping God for what He has done in their lives.

Challenge:

We're all really stressed out. The teacher is stressed with their students and the students are stressed with the homework. Adults with work and children with their activities. This week when you find yourself thinking about all the evil things, will you walk around and think about the verse of this lesson: "Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." (Psalm 103:1). Look around you and thank the Lord for the trees, for the buildings, for your feet, for everything that goes through your head. Come back next Sunday to share this experience with your class.

Correct Decision

Lesson 10

Marcelo Fretes • Ecuador

Objective: That the students will understand what Jesus taught about prayer: that we can seek and allow the will of God to be realized in our lives.

Memory Verse: “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:17)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Large handkerchiefs, chairs (if the room is too narrow, you can do the dynamic in another wide place).
- Instructions: Form several groups and blindfold one representative per group. Have them spread out their chairs randomly.

Each group must guide its representative from one end of the room to the other (without touching the chairs or bumping into each other) using only their voices. Every time the group representative touches a chair or collide with another person, 10 points will be added. In the end, the group with the fewest points will be the winner.

Discuss what it felt like to be guided by others on a path with obstacles.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Instructions: Form a very large circle and choose a person to be the “walker”. Place this person in the center of the circle. Then ask them to start walking without opening their eyes. Tell the group members that they’re responsible for taking care of the walker’s safety and always direct them towards the center of the circle. After a few minutes, choose a new walker. For variety, select two or more walkers, tell them to walk at the same time. Tell others that they should prevent the walkers from colliding (or running into those who form the circle). Then ask them to comment on what this experience taught them about trust.

Connect

Navigate

Will is the “ability to decide and order one’s behavior. Free will or self-determination” (Real Spanish Academy online). This definition shows us that human beings have the capacity to make their own decisions and to do their own will.

This concept changes when we refer to the will of the Christian. Christians are to rest in what God has prepared for them in their daily life and to accomplish God’s will. Of course, many times, knowing God’s will seems uncertain and difficult, but if we depend on Him and seek His will, we can clearly know what God expects from us.

To have the security of what the Lord wants for our life, we must have a close relationship with Him through various spiritual exercises (prayer, meditation on His Word, fasting, etc.). He knows that if we live in God’s will depends only on the intimate relationship we have with Him. The problems come in when we’re guided by our feelings or our way of thinking (Jeremiah 17:9).

In Matthew 6:10, Jesus began his prayer by recognizing God’s authority: “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus knew that God had everything under his control and under the dominion of his sovereignty. In this prayer, Jesus gave God all of the control of his will. That is the key that reveals how to do the will of God without reservations ... allowing God to take control of all of our decisions makes it possible for his will to be fulfilled without obstacles in our life.

1. God's will isn't always what we would choose

We have the best example of this in Jesus. In Gethsemane, Jesus was living the most difficult situation of his life. Although he knew that what was going to happen wasn't what he would have preferred, he accepted the will of the Father (Luke 22:42). If we read this same account in Matthew 26:36-46, we'll see that Jesus repeated this prayer three times before accepting his Father's will. What does this teach us? To do God's will is to **want** to do what God wants us to do, no matter the price.

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane also teaches us that if we want to do God's will, we must have a close relationship with God. Jesus knew that there would come difficulties in his life that would allow the will of God the Father to be fulfilled and that would be a blessing for humanity. If we do the same as Jesus and seek the presence of God, we'll be guided to do His will and we'll have the peace and joy that come only from Him. Knowing that the decision we take has God's approval and support will guarantee us satisfactory consequences.

2. When we don't do his will, we'll suffer consequences

Jonah was a prophet whom God called to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2). The mission that God gave Jonah was to call the Ninivites to repentance (Jonah 3:4). This situation produced discontent in Jonah's heart because he wanted Nineveh to be punished by God (Jonah 4:2). Thus he decided to flee from God's presence (Jonah 1:3). He took a boat that took him to Tarshish, in the opposite direction of Nineveh. But in the midst of the sea there arose a great storm, and the sailors discovered that Jonah was the culprit (Jonah 1:4-7). They tried taking the ship to land, but they couldn't (Jonah 1:13). Finally, they threw Jonah into the sea and a fish that God Himself prepared swallowed him. Jonah then survived three days and three nights in its belly (Jonah 1:17).

When we want to do our will and resist doing what God wants us to do, we'll face negative consequences because of our disobedience (Hebrews 2:2). That is why we must always do his will so that everything around us develops and continues its course.

3. Doing the will of God will bring blessing to our lives

An example of this is the story of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 1). From an early age, he had to live through different and difficult situations such as exile, captivity, separation from home and slavery.

Ask the class to read chapter 1 of Daniel's book individually and find out what was key for this young man to do the will of God.

In verse 8 of chapter 1, we find the key to his life. This young man decided to do the will of God. Daniel could have justified himself by saying, "If God brought us here, we'll eat all that's given to us," but no. He decided to do God's will without considering what the consequences would be.

How many times do we allow ourselves to be influenced by others? To do the will of God is to do what pleases Him and not what pleases us. It's important to understand that there will always be opportunities to resist doing God's will. Therefore, having a close relationship with God will allow us to make the right decisions in our daily lives.

If Daniel had followed the rest of the young men, God wouldn't have used him to do all the miracles that the Bible tells us. Daniel made the best decision, and in the rest of the book that bears his name we can see God's support for his life and influence until old age (Daniel 12:13).

4. Doing God's will makes us part of his family

Jesus said, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:35). What does this mean? With this teaching, Jesus revealed very clearly that we who do the will of the Father belong to the family of God.

That is why we must maintain a close relationship with God, with the church (God's family), with brothers and sisters who have mature faith. In this way, we'll have a lot of help and advice as to whether we're doing God's will or not.

Let's imitate our Lord Jesus who, despite being God-man, did not stop seeking the Father, setting aside time alone to pray and seek guidance from him (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12).

God has called us to a better life; he brought us out of darkness into his light, how can we not submit our lives to his will? Who more than He wants to make our lives have meaning and reason?

God has a purpose for our lives; let's discover that purpose by doing his will every day.

Review/Application:

Ask to students to choose True or False for each of the following statements:

1. Our feelings and thoughts are the correct means to know the will of God. (F)
2. Only by knowing God can we know his will. (T)
3. The will of God will always be pleasant and perfect. (T)
4. In Gethsemane, Jesus did his own will. (F)
5. The prophet Daniel did the will of God by deciding not to contaminate himself. (T)

Ask them to write in one sentence what they learned from the lesson.

Challenge:

What is your relationship with God? What is his will for your life? This week, focus on improving your relationship with God, let your prayers be honoring to Him, try to deepen your intimacy every day and seek His direction. You can take a day to fast, pray and meditate on His Word.

Provision

Lesson 11

Roland Calvo • Costa Rica

Objective: That the students will see God as provider.

Memory Verse: “Give us today our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: They can be items or illustrations: A sleeping bag, a sweater, a pack of granola bars, shoes, a bottle of water, a cell phone, a portable game, a credit card, cash, a compass and a shovel.
- Instructions: Form groups of four people. Put the items in front of the class and ask them to solve this case: “A friend is lost in the desert; the authorities have found him but, due to the weather conditions, they cannot save him for two days. Rescuers can provide him with help from the air to help him survive those days, but they can only send him four items.”

Allow each group to select the four items and then defend their choice. This dynamic will help them understand the value of things essential to life. When it comes to survival, our priorities change, and what was valuable in a “necessary” moment now is no longer so important.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Two photographs of families, the first of a 19th century or older family and another photograph of a contemporary family. If you can’t get the photos, write on the board “Family in 1800” and “Family in 2000”.
- Instructions: Divide the class into small groups and ask them to define the differences between the current family and the family of the nineteenth century, their form of living, how they survived, possible values, their beliefs, their family savings and any other difference that characterizes them. Then analyze the positive and negative changes in society and church in this period of time.

This dynamic will help to raise awareness among young people about the impact of changes in society and how these have permeated the church and its members, based on economic philosophies.

Connect

Navigate

If we could go back in time 100 years, we would see our great-grandparents living without cell phones, without digital music players, without designer clothes, possibly they wouldn’t have a watch, their measurement of time would be the sun and the telegraph as a means of communication.

We might think that it would be impossible to live like that, and some might think that it makes no sense to live without all those things, but they did it. What is the difference? Societies changes. From a subsistence economy (buy to live), we have moved to a market economy (live to buy) where we believe that our life depends on the amount of technology and new and expensive items we have. But divine principles remain forever; what Jesus taught was as equally valid for our great-grandparents as it is for us today.

1. Human needs

When the apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He prayed and included the following request: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Verse 11 is the only reference to something material in the entire prayer that we know as the Lord’s Prayer and does not deviate from the model of Christ.

This material request makes mention of substance or existence itself, so a possible paraphrase would be “Give us today the bread that today’s needs require” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary on the Bible, volume II The New Testament, p.38, CBP, USA: 1994, digital version).

1. Why do you think Jesus didn’t ask for something more?
2. What is the concept behind this prayer model?
3. Can God bless us financially?
4. Are there examples of God’s blessings that brought riches to people throughout biblical history?
5. Were Jesus and his followers rich?

Jesus asked only for the needs of the day. Jesus taught that life should be simple (Matthew 6:19-21), but social pressure is so strong that many give in to it. Through mass media and social media, today we are bombarded with advertising to make us buy more things since the economic system consists of manufacturing, selling, and manufacturing more to sell more, an endless cycle of consumption. So the values of society have changed and honesty and integrity have been left aside and replaced by opportunism, selfishness and individualism. Today, the standards by which a person’s success is measured are the things they own, the year and make of the car they drive, their clothes, and the type of credit cards they have. From this perspective, what’s important is everything that’s outside the person, giving less or no value to their character and attributes; the person themselves isn’t important.

A teacher of the law told Jesus that he was going to follow him wherever he went, and the Lord responded, “...the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). The Kingdom that Jesus taught on earth is not a kingdom of consumption, nor of display or ostentation of wealth. His Kingdom is one of humility, and service, a Kingdom of love.

2. God Meets Our Needs

I remember when I was a child, I recited the Lord’s Prayer, and perhaps many times I said it automatically. But one day when I heard myself say, “Give us today our daily bread,” I thought, well, I already have today’s bread, and my mother already bought what we need at home this week. So, thinking about it, I prayed: “Please give us this month’s food and cereal with a little surprise.” When I prayed for the cereal, I thought I had made a great discovery, but as a child, I hadn’t really understood the meaning of this passage.

The need for food is a basic need, but in today’s world, there are scales of needs that speak of other levels of human needs, such as security and self-realization. In the Lord, we start from primary needs such as food. God wants us to ask him for what is necessary, and our dependence upon God’s providence must be daily. And the rest of the needs? God doesn’t forget them, God created us and knows what things we need (Matthew 6:8).

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus told us not to worry. Nowadays, people worry about having, saving and accumulating. It doesn’t mean that saving is bad; The problem is the meaning and power we give to savings. For many, what has been accumulated means tranquility and peace. Their life is defined by what they have (Luke 12:18-21).

Read Proverbs 30:8-9. What do you think of this principle? Could you make this proverb your daily prayer?

3. Self-confidence

In matters of health, it’s said that one of the greatest evils of our time is stress. We do everything quickly. We fill every moment with something, and the word “instant” is a very important word today. When we talk to people who are stressed, we see that they are stressed about achieving goals, paying debts, climbing positions at work, having more money, and they don’t feel they have sufficient time and cannot stop doing. Many of us have fallen into this dangerous game that risks our physical and spiritual health ... and even our family.

The dictionary says that “toil” is “excessive, solicitous and distressing work, fatigue, hardship and haste” (Royal Spanish Academy. “Diccionario de la Lengua Española”, Twenty-second edition). Any of these definitions are a long ways from God’s will for his children. He doesn’t want to see us fatigued or suffering excessive pain and work for what this world offers; rather He asks us to come to Him and learn from Him (Matthew 11:29).

Read Philippians 4:6. What should we worry about? What should we do instead of worrying? Paul leads us to confront our Christian reality. Do you believe in God and his providence? Then don’t worry. Replace your anxiety by placing your requests before the Lord. Give thanks to God in the midst of the situation presented and give thanks for God’s response. Don’t worry + Ask + Give thanks = Peace. Philippians 4:7 reminds us, if we do that in faith, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts in Christ Jesus.

Review/Application:

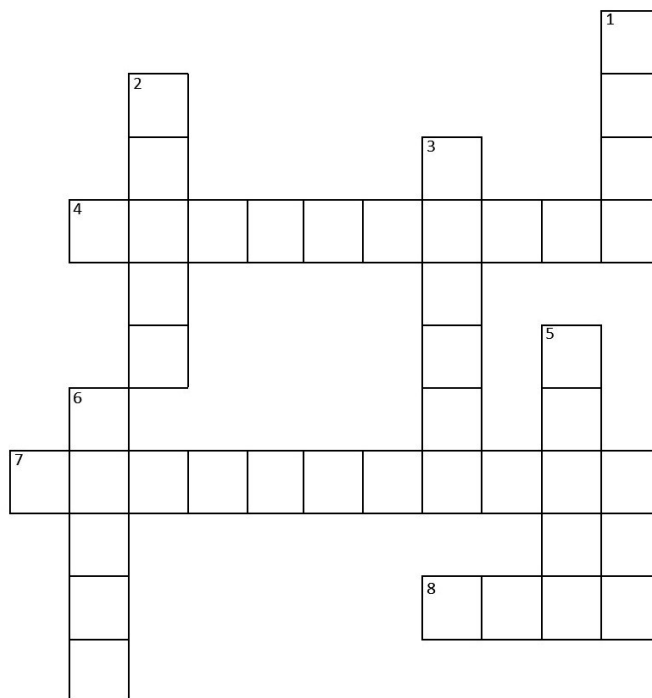
Give the students time to complete the following crossword puzzle. Answers in parenthesis after the clue.

Horizontal:

4. Everyday food: (*DAILYBREAD*)
7. Current lifestyle: (*CONSUMERISM*)
8. The birds possess it - Matthew 8:20: (*NEST*)

Vertical

1. God promises to satisfy this: (*NEED*)
2. Where your treasure is, there will also be your: (*HEART*)
3. Means of presenting needs to God: (*PRAYER*)
5. The most important person in our life: (*JESUS*)
6. Contrary to the action of trust: (*WORRY*)



Challenge:

During the week, visit an orphan’s home as a class and help out. Think about the real needs that people have and compare them with what you have and think about how you can share.

Giving and receiving

Lesson 12

Viviana Pérez • Ecuador

Objective: That the students will understand that God's forgiveness and our forgiveness of others have a liberating effect.

Memory Verse: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- Supplies: Five or six small stones for each student.
- Instructions: Ask the class to respond: Did you commit any sins during the week? Were you disrespectful or disobedient to your parents? Have you offended anyone with your words or your attitudes? (You can add more questions). Every time a student responds positively, they have to put a rock in their shoes. After they have done this, ask them to do a very short sprint. When they finish, ask them: How did it feel when running with a rock in your shoes? How are these annoyances similar to the unconfessed sin we carry in our lives? If someone ran without stones, how did they feel?

Read Matthew 6:12 together. In the spiritual sense, how can we get rid of the pebbles, according to this passage? How does God's forgiveness set us free? Ask them to leave the pebbles in their shoes until the end of class.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Large rocks or large books.
- Instructions: Ask volunteers to hold the books or stones with their arms extended at shoulder height for as long as they can while reading Matthew 6:12; Luke 6:37. Then ask those holding the weight: How did you feel when the books or stones started to seem heavier and heavier? How is this similar to the way you feel when you have done something wrong against someone else or against God, but you have not asked for forgiveness for your actions? How did you feel when you were able to put down the books? How is this similar to how you feel when you have been forgiven for something you did to someone or to God? (Dynamic Ideas for youth meetings. Loveland, USA: 1996, Action p.66).

Connect

Navigate

Before class: ask a group of students to prepare a short dramatization of Matthew 18:23-35 to be presented during the lesson in point 2.

Many of today's illnesses are caused by unforgiveness. Doctors say that anger, resentment, and frustration produce nervous stimuli that make the body act in self-defense, without realizing that by repressing it, it destroys itself. For example, gastritis, constipation, strokes, skin diseases, stress, psychosomatic illnesses, among others, in many cases are the product of carrying the weight of unforgiveness.

How wise Jesus was when in the "Lord's Prayer" he revealed the secret to being free (Matthew 6:12). "And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." God's forgiveness of us, and our forgiveness of others, have a liberating effect.

1. God, the champion of forgiveness

Ask the students to read these passages aloud and discover the teaching they have in common: Mark 2:7-11; Luke 24:45-47; Acts 2:38, 5:30-31, 10:43, 13:37-38, 26:18; Colossians 1:12-14.

Forgiveness is a divine attribute. The passages read contain a single concept, and that is that God has so much love for us that he provides us forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and gives us not only a second chance, but all those that are necessary.

We have all forgiven someone at some point in our lives, but if in some way the wound hurts again, we remind them again of what they did to us. This means that we haven't really forgiven them. Once God forgives us, he no longer reminds us of our sins (Isaiah 43:25; Micah 7:19). Confession of sin and true repentance are sufficient to obtain God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). The key is to confess. Sometimes we just say in our prayers "God forgive me because I have sinned, amen", but the Bible teaches us that there must be confession. This is recognizing before God what exactly we did wrong and repenting from our heart.

God teaches us that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have free access before his throne. When we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, we must believe that we receive it. God is the champion of forgiveness because he decided to forgive us even before we recognized our faults. You can hear Jesus justifying us in the midst of his pain and crucifixion saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). In 1 John 4:10 he says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

2. Forgive to be forgiven

Ask the class to read the following passages and discover what they have in common: Matthew 6:12; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37 and Ephesians 4:32.

Matthew 6:12 doesn't end with, "Forgive us our debts" but continues, "just as we forgive our debtors." These passages teach us that it is essential that before asking for forgiveness from God, we have forgiven those who have offended us. Our forgiveness will never compare to God's forgiveness because He sacrificed more than any of us have ever been able to sacrifice. We won't be forgiven because we forgave someone else, because that would be buying grace. Grace and forgiveness have already been given to us as a gift through faith. But it does become a moral debt, both for the one who offends and for the one who must forgive. If our heart has resentment against someone, our prayers will be ineffective (Matthew 5:23-24).

Approaching the presence of God with a burden of resentment and pain, without the desire to be stripped of it, is like going for water from a delicious spring and then leaving without drinking from it. It's important to throw off that weight so that we can feel true freedom. How or with what arguments could we use to not forgive someone if Jesus forgave us everything without reproach?

At this time you can present the dramatization of Matthew 18:23-35. Then ask the class their impressions of what they saw and how they would apply it to their lives.

3. You must forgive yes or yes!

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'" (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus' response to Peter is forceful: The disciple must always forgive. Saying 70 times seven means that we must forgive as many times as necessary, in the same way that God forgives us. Forgiveness is his command that we must fulfill. When we think that we cannot forgive someone, all we have to do is look in the mirror and reflect on how finite, imperfect and fallible we are. When we fail God, we would do anything to be forgiven. So when we understand that we also hurt, fail and even sin, we can look at our neighbor with the same mercy with which God sees us, and we will be able to forgive (Colossians 3:13-14). A practical way to help us do the right thing is to ask ourselves, "what would Jesus do in my place?"

There are wounds and very serious offenses that are very difficult to heal, but when we spend time with God, our hearts and thoughts become more like His, which gives us the ability to forgive. On the contrary, if we don't invest time in his presence, we will act on our own impulses and it won't be easy to forgive, but rather we'll try to defend our position.

In Ephesians 4:26, we're told that we shouldn't let too much time pass before settling accounts and forgiving. Carrying resentment is like carrying a rotten weight that only makes us tired and unwell. When we forgive, we lighten our baggage and we can move towards our goal, which is eternal life. If we think about the mercy that God had for us, we cannot offer our neighbors anything less than mercy as well. If you find it difficult to forgive, think on the fact that we are all human and therefore we all fail or make mistakes. We should give the same consideration that we expect others to have for us.

Lastly, and very importantly, we must forgive ourselves. Self-forgiveness is possibly one of the greatest struggles of human beings. Many people live with very heavy burdens for not forgiving themselves.

The next time you pray, saying "forgive us as we forgive..." make sure you have forgiven yourself before asking for forgiveness.

Review/Application:

At the end, hand out paper and a pencil to each person and ask them to make two lists, one with things that are easy to forgive and the other with things that are difficult to forgive. Discuss if people are comfortable doing so. Finally ask them to complete the Key Verse: "And forgive us our debts, as we *(also have forgiven our debtors.)*" *Matthew 6:12*)

Challenge:

I challenge you this week to forgive those who have offended you. If you can't, put a potato in a plastic bag (as a symbol that you haven't forgiven) and take it everywhere you go. At the end of the week, see what it's like and share with your class how you felt carrying the bag with the potato everywhere.

Don't fall asleep!

Lesson 13

Leandro Massacesi • Argentina

Objective: That the students will be able to identify temptation and how to use spiritual tools to confront it.

Memory Verse: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial." (James 1:12a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- **Supplies:** Chalkboard and chalk or markers. A riddle or puzzle of logic, mathematics or general knowledge. A simple prize.
- **Instructions:** Write the riddle or puzzle on the board and at the bottom of the board, place an incorrect answer in smaller print but written from back to front.
- Ask students to solve the puzzle. Whoever gives the correct answer will win the prize and whoever uses the false answer already written will win a punishment. You can see examples of puzzles at: <https://www.rd.com/list/brain-teasers/>.

1. What is it that hasn't yet been, that must be, but when it is, it will no longer be? (*Correct answer: Tomorrow. Incorrect answer: the future.*)
2. Alicia has two and a half blouses. She wants to improve her wardrobe and buys another blouse and a half, what does this mean? (*Correct answer: Three blouses and a pair of socks. Incorrect answer: Four blouses.*)

Just as we're all tempted to read the answers to riddles instead of thinking for ourselves, in the same way we're tempted to do wrong in any area of our life. Just as the answer was wrong in the game, giving in to temptation will never be a good response to God's love.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- **Supplies:** Two large pieces of paper of distinct color. Markers of different colors. Lookup words.
- **Instructions:** Ask students to divide into two groups. Each group should create a definition of the word "crossroads" and then make a drawing referring to that word.

When finished, have each team report. Read the correct definition of "crossroads" from a dictionary.

Just as a crossroads on the road forces us to choose the path to follow, the same is true of temptation when it comes into our life ... it forces us to make a decision: Either we do good or we do evil. We choose.

Connect

Navigate

1. Temptation - trial or sin?

Temptation is the instigation or stimulus that induces one to do something. In the Christian life, we use it to define the moment or circumstance that seduces us or incites us to do something contrary to the will of God. At that moment, we remain faithful to the Lord ... or we fall. We lie, insult, hit, look at or touch what we shouldn't... in short, we sin!

Adam and Eve in front of the tree, King David on the terrace watching Bathsheba, Joseph with Potiphar's wife and Jesus in the desert ... all were tempted, but not all sinned. "Temptation becomes a sin only when the suggestion of sin is accepted and one falls into it" (Bible Dictionary. Editorial Certeza, Argentina: 1991, p.1339). But, attention! James makes an important clarification.

Have two students read James 1:12-15 using the King James Version and the NIV. Ask the class to explain in their own words what they understand from the passage.

Ask: Is blaming others a modern invention? The habit of blaming others for our mistakes comes from Adam (Genesis 3:12).

Under no circumstances should we believe or think that God wants to make us fall. He will never be the one to seduce us to do evil or break his commandments. This is what the tempter does (Matthew 4:3). In verse 12, James uses two words to explain his message: Temptation and trial. For most of us, talking about "trials" is referring to a time of difficulty (illness, loss of job, etc.) and that's not wrong. It's just that the word "temptation" in the original biblical language also includes the idea of "test". This is why James uses both terms and calls us "blessed" or happy if we endure the time of temptation, if we resist that which seduces us (Exodus 20:20).

2. Beware of overconfidence!

Ask students to express what sins they think they would never commit. Then read I Corinthians 10:12. Nothing offers a better opportunity for temptation than overconfidence. We must remain vigilant in our weakest and strongest points. Although it may seem strange, temptation sometimes comes from our strengths. If there's something about which we're in the habit of saying: "I would never do that", be careful! Popular wisdom warns us: "Never say: I will not drink that water!" To be attentive we can distinguish at least three targets that every temptation has. According to the Bible, both Eve in Eden and Jesus in the desert were tempted (put to the test) in three specific areas. The apostle John sums it up very well. Let's make a parallel between the three passages.

Genesis 3:3-6

She saw that the tree was good to eat.

She saw that it was pleasant to the eyes.

She saw that it was useful in attaining wisdom and being like God.

I John 2:16

The desires of the flesh (sex, alcohol, etc.).

The desires of the eyes (Money, compulsive consumption, etc.)

The vain glory of life (power, authority, fanatic).

Matthew 4:1-11

"Command that these stones become loaves" (v. 3)

Throw yourself down (from the highest point of the temple v. 5-6).

I will give you all these things if you bow down and worship me (v. 8-9).

The apostle Peter in I Peter 5:8 gives us another warning. Beware of the lion! Peter relates Satan to a roaring lion that seeks to devour us.

The lionesses go out hunting to feed the pride and they know how to do it, they always attack the neck of their victims. Lions look for food when they're without a pride, and when they attack their prey, they tear them apart before killing them. Peter speaks about this reality; he compares our enemy to a lion because he is hungry, and if we prove to be easy prey, our end will also be very sad. Our minds, hearts and even our bodies will be fiercely hurt (HIV, anorexia, bulimia, drugs, etc.).

3. Get on your knees ... and fight like a man!

Young people from several churches painted graffiti with this phrase, along with a drawing of a young man with boxing gloves praying at the foot of a cross. Yeah! Regardless of gender, this is the best way to face temptations. We need to be strong, attentive and very aware, because temptation is going to come.

Very soon something is going to test your integrity. We need to know what we are talking about, seeking strength where it is (1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:10).

God makes a commitment to us to enable us to resist temptation. His grace and power will act upon us. We'll never have triumph over temptation if we don't take temptation and God seriously. It's important to call sin by its name and avoid any situation that exposes us to it.

We aren't alone in this fight against temptation. Besides the Lord, we also have the church that walks with us. Share your burdens and weaknesses with the right people within your church. Also your friends and brothers and sisters in Christ there in your community of faith (church) are part of the help and strength that God promises us.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to circle the correct answer (answers in italics).

- The Bible says we're tempted:
From God / By people / *By our own greed*
- Joseph's temptation was from:
Niece of Pharaoh / *Potifar's Wife* / Daughter of Pharaoh
- When David was tempted, he was:
At work / In war / *Not doing anything*
- Jesus was transported to the desert by:
The Spirit / By the Devil / By the Disciples
- Temptation is:
Sin / A moment of testing / A game.

Challenge:

This week keep a record on paper, on your mobile phone, or on the computer of the victories you win over the temptations that present themselves to you, and don't forget to thank the Lord for giving you his strength.

You can propose to your friends to make this idea a common practice for the blessing and help of all!

Prayer that praises God

Lesson 14

Alma Espinoza • Mexico

Objective: That the student will express in prayer true praise to God.

Memory Verse: “To him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 1:6b)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Six pieces of paper with different passages referring to praise. For example: Deuteronomy 10:21: “He is the one you praise”; Psalm 9:14: “I may declare your praises”; Habakkuk 3:3: “his praise filled the earth”.
- Instructions: Form two groups and ask each to choose three participants. Each of the six chosen by their respective teams will choose a piece of paper with a verse that refers to praise and will have to express what it says only with actions. The teams should discover the verses in a minute. The team that does the best will be the winner.

Finally, ask them to express the importance of the chosen passages and what they think of praise to God.

Introduction activity (18 - 23 years).

- Supplies: Several newspapers, magazines, newsletters, etc. Cardboard, scissors, white glue, colored pencils.
- Instructions: Ask the class to form three teams and give each the same amount of magazines, scissors, glue, pencils and paper. Ask them to place on the cardboard cutouts that express the praises that people give to different things (music, movies, clothing, etc.). Ask them to use the Bible to find passages that speak about what God says about situations they showed on their cardboard creations.

Every day we see the praise that people give to vain things instead of giving the respective praises to God, who is the giver of life and the Creator of all things.

Connect

Navigate

We live in a time when praise is everywhere, except where it should be. What I intend to say is that nowadays we find praise for the body, praise for talent, praise for government, praise for science, praise for aesthetics, praise for sports, praise for education, among others. This has happened with the help of the media, social networks and parameters that the same society imposes.

But we know that there is one being who is worthy to receive all the supreme praise.

What is the praise that the Bible mentions? Praise in the Bible is the aspect of worship in which honor is given to God. This praise is expressed on different occasions. Sometimes we praise God because he helped us achieve something we desired. For example in the Bible, we find praise when the people of Israel finished building God's house and they were very pleased (2 Chronicles 7:3). Praise is also given as thanksgiving (Psalm 9:1, 100:4). Praise is sometimes expressed with hymns and music (2 Chronicles 7:6; Psalm 28:7, 40:3, 95:1-2, 149:1-3, 150). Praise as an exaltation to God is part of the model prayer, (Matthew 6:13b).

The Lord's Prayer reminds us that communication with God isn't just asking and asking. While it's important to trust and lay our petitions before Him (Hebrews 4:16), so is our gratitude to God Almighty for His mercy, His exploits, and His goodness ... that which we praise Him for.

Here are three powerful reasons to praise God in our daily prayers:

1. Because God is King

There was always a difference between the pagan kings and those of Israel. Some kingdoms such as Egypt, for example, regarded their king as an incarnation of their deity. However, among the people of Israel, their king was regarded as an intermediary of Jehovah; he was regarded as His anointed (1 Samuel 24:6).

At present, even if the majority of the governments of nations don't claim to be a theocracy, the Word of God tells us that the authorities are under the power of God. Without knowing it, they're under the sovereignty of God (Romans 13:1) and Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5).

Getting closer to God, through the Savior Jesus Christ, is getting closer to the King of kings and Lord of lords who deserves all our recognition and service. Despite all the evil seen in the world, the hatred, the suffering, despite the tremendous power of evil, the Christian knows that God reigns, that He directs the course of history, and that His kingdom always advances. He is not a defeated king; he hasn't abandoned the world, nor has he given up his purpose to win the hearts of all people and restore justice.

When we're saved, God becomes the king of our lives, and we must give him all honor. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus concluded by stating that the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to God. Therefore as king, he must be exalted (Psalm 10:16; 24:9-10).

2. Because God is power and glory

Hebrew poetry celebrates the power of God with a singular sentiment, which is why there are so many psalms that exalt this theme. The reason for this is because true power or the ability to exercise true authority belongs only to God (Psalm 62:11). God's power is shown in creation, which he created, sustained, and placed under the dominion of mankind (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:5-9).

The power of God is given to the humans consecrated to Him through his Spirit. "Power, in Christian theology, is also related in an important way to a capacity or ability – especially to witness – given to believers when they receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit... (Acts 1:8)" (Beacon Theological Dictionary. CNP, USA:1995, p.533).

We can also see the power of God actively working on many occasions in the affairs of his people (Psalm 145:4; Luke 1:49).

The glory of God is the expression of the excellence of the character and the perfection of the attributes of God, made manifest in all creation (Psalm 19:1; Habakkuk 3:3). This glory is also revealed in Christ (Hebrews 1:2-3), and is revealed to humanity (John 1:14).

In the Bible, we who are God's people are encouraged to give glory to His name (Psalm 29:2; 115:1). God is the only one who deserves glory eternally (Philippians 4:20; Revelation 7:12). As children of God, our lives must be lived for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31). At the end of our lives, we will be called to participate in the glory of God as something far better than what we experience now (Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 4:13).

We can find the glory of God in the terrible force of the atom and in the vast expanse of the universe, without a doubt, but even closer to us is the cross of Christ that reveals to us the glory of his love, and that love is revealed to every person who searches for him from the heart.

3. Because God is eternal

Our lives are brief and fade quickly, but the God to whom we pray has always been. He wasn't created nor does he depend on anything to exist. While we're brief passengers and die, He remains for the ages.

When God calls himself the Alpha and the Omega (first and last letter of the Greek alphabet), he doesn't mean that his existence is longer but rather that he is above time. Eternity is a different dimension, different in quality from time, without past or future; that is, it's an eternal present. This explains the name with which God revealed himself to Moses: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58). God is who he is from eternity.

With God, a thousand years is the same as one day (2 Peter 3:8). His existence is not measured by finite time; He is King for the ages (1 Timothy 1:17).

Prayer is a wonderful moment when our finitude merges with the eternity of God. How good it is to pray, knowing that we have left our requests in the hands of the one who has moved history through the ages.

Are you worried about the future? Does the memory of the past hurt you? Do you feel insecure about the present? Let's pray to the eternal God who will have an answer for each of us.

Let's praise God because He has been, is, and will be forever.

The Lord's Prayer helps us remember things that are being forgotten in our time. Today the king of the human being is the human being him or herself. The power is given to money; the glory is being claimed by science and technology; eternity is something that matters little because we live in the present and people don't believe that there is eternal life.

It's up to us, the children of God, to take hold of these eternal truths that the world doesn't want to recognize. We must say them and live them with the security that they give us. Let's live and pray every day recognizing that the kingdom, the power and the glory belong to God for eternity..

Review/Application:

Ask them to write a prayer to God in where they express what it means that God is:

- King Of Kings
- The God of all power and glory:
- The Eternal God

Then ask them to share what they have written with the person sitting to their right. Then, in prayer at the end of the class, ask everyone to read what they wrote to God.

Challenge:

Schedule a prayer meeting with the class where the community prayers to be delivered to God are those written by the group. May they be prayers that maintain the element of praise and exaltation to God, even when writing requests for illness, direction, help, consolation, among others. May God be greatly exalted among his people!

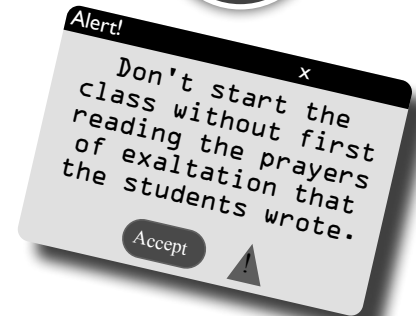
God calls you today!

Lesson 15

Maria Eugenia Rodriguez • Mexico

Objective: That the students will know what God is doing today in mission, and strive to actively participate in it.

Memory Verse: "...for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Supplies: A toy bear or other furry animal.
- Instructions: Tell a story, for example: "Yesterday afternoon I met a friend. He was sad and lonely. He doesn't have any friends, nor anyone who loves him. I showed him affection and invited him to go with me to Sunday school, and I told him that in the classroom he would find friends who would love him." Next, introduce the bear. "This is George. Let's show him our love." Ask them to pass the bear from hand to hand so that each of them shows it love through a phrase or a concrete gesture. In closing, say, "Well, George is happy because all of you showed him love, but now we have to show him that we love each other sincerely. So, everything you said and did to George, you're going to do the same to the person on your right and left."

If you're able to awaken feelings of affection and love in the hearts of your teens, you'll be able to see how they demonstrate practical forms of affection through hugs, greetings, kisses and words. Explain that sometimes many people in the world want to feel God's love and we can be His instruments for them to do so.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Supplies: Piece of paper and a pencil.
- Instructions: Provide each member of the class with a piece of paper. Each student will silently choose (in his thoughts) another student and write on his paper what he wants his classmate to do. He must add his name. Example: "I Andrea want Paul to stand in the middle of the classroom and act like a little dog."

After each student has written his/her wish, he/she will fold the paper and hand it to the teacher. Then take all the pieces of paper and explain the name of the game - "Love your neighbor as yourself" or "Do to others what you want others to do to you." Then, read the papers and ask the young person who wrote it to do what they wrote on the paper. We are a squad and everyone needs to participate.

This dynamic will help them to build trust among themselves in the classroom, and above all will give them a good lesson on the importance of sharing the gospel with others as others have shared it with them.

Connect

Navigate

From the beginning, God wanted to have a good relationship with his entire creation. Throughout history, we see how sin separated human beings from God, causing enmity. However, God called, and continues to call people to reconcile themselves with Him. Today, the message of salvation is spreading to more and more places that are difficult to enter due to their ideology, culture and beliefs. We are part of the generation that God is calling and preparing to fulfill his will. We may ask ourselves, "Is he calling me? But, I haven't heard anything!" It's important to be attentive to the voice of God.

1. We need to promote missions

For the Philippians, the beginning of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ was after the apostle Paul left Macedonia. They were very grateful, so much so that at the time Paul wrote the letter, he mentioned that no other church had participated with him, in terms of giving and receiving, only them, the Philippians (Philippians 4:14-18).

Paul had peace in his heart regarding his personal needs during his missionary journeys, simply because God had promised to supply them all! Not wanting to miss the opportunity, Paul thanked the Philippians for their gifts and assured them that the spiritual meaning of their offerings were much more important to him than the gifts themselves (v.18).

What a blessing it is to know that our offerings are seen as spiritual sacrifices to the Lord, gladdening His heart! Paul believed in divine providence, that God was in control of events and that he was capable of meeting his every need. Ask: Do you know what the church is doing today to support missionaries?

2. As we move forward to today

There was an advertisement on Mexican television that showed images of how arduous it was for the electricity company workers to travel thousands of kilometers between mountains and rivers, in the midst of storms and intense heat of up to 50°C, all so that every Mexican, with a simple movement, could enjoy electricity at home. Their slogan was, "It sounds easy, but it requires great effort."

This makes me think of Paul's hard work during his missionary journeys. Paul and Barnabas, attempting to visit their converts during the first missionary journey, had a personal disagreement (Acts 15:36-39). Paul felt that Mark was irresponsible and the work was too great to be done by such a person. The result of this dispute was the separation of old friends, which must have caused them much distress; however, despite the differences between the servants of God, the work didn't stop. Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas and they left for Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:40-41). Among the cities they visited, Paul and Silas met Timothy, a young man of good testimony who was saved during Paul's first missionary journey, who witnessed Paul's sufferings in Lystra (2 Timothy 3:10-11). This young man proved himself worthy of the service of God.

Everything seemed to be going very well, but while they were traveling with joy sharing the message and encouraging the brothers and sisters in the different cities, suddenly the Holy Spirit prohibited them from speaking the word in Asia (Acts 16:6). Then they tried to go to Bithynia, and again the Spirit didn't allow them! (Acts 17:7). Any of us would have said, "What is this about Lord?" Silas could have told Paul, "If we can't go where you planned, let's go back." Paul surely wondered why the Spirit forbade him to go to the left (Asia, v.6) or to the right (Bithynia, v.7). However, he kept looking ahead and suddenly a large door opened showing him an immense harvest in Europe (Acts 16:8-10). God closed the smaller doors because he had a greater task for the apostle.

Throughout the history of the church, we know of many missionaries who traveled thousands of kilometers, traveling by different means to get from one place to another. Many have given their lives and those of their families in the midst of cultures different from their own to bring the message of salvation to others. Some of those missionaries and their families came to this country and suffered from illness, persecution, contempt, death and many other things that they had to face and overcome. Maybe at some point they were on the verge of becoming discouraged, but they stood firm knowing that there were many people who needed to hear that there was hope for their condition or problem.

3. Knowing what's still missing

There are around 195 countries in the world and the Church of the Nazarene is present in 164 of them. Nowadays there are countries where it is forbidden to talk about Jesus. Ask: Have you heard of the 10/40 window? This window is made up of 61 countries. It extends from West Africa to East Asia and is the least evangelized area in the world. 4 billion people live there, which is 2/3 of the planet's inhabitants.

Let's look at what Paul says in Romans 10:13-15. Read the passage out loud. Think and give an answer about your city or country. Who will be saved? How will they call on God if they have not believed? And how will they believe if they have not heard? How are they going to hear if there is no one to share with them? How are they going to preach if there is no one to send them?

What are we doing as a church to keep missionary work going? Do we actively participate in it? You are part of a new generation that must continue to carry high the burning torch of the gospel, some praying, others giving, and others responding to His call. God wants to use us! What will we do??

Review/Application:

Divide the class up into groups of two. They are to draw up a list that has at least five aspects for which we can pray for a missionary and his or her family when they're on an intercultural mission (outside their country), and five problems that they may face. Let the groups share a few of them with the group. Here are a few examples:

Prayer requests

1. Strength in their Spiritual Life
2. Health
3. Adaptation to culture
4. Protection in their ministry
5. May they have the grace of God

Problems in the mission field

1. Rejection of the church
2. Disagreements among leaders
3. Disease
4. Kidnapping
5. Children having troubles

Challenge:

You already know that God has called you to be a light in this world that's going from bad to worse. What are you going to say? "Wait a little, Lord"? Or, 'If you come with me, I will go'? Take a minute to pray and do it every day until the Lord shows you the next step you need to take. But start now by actively involving yourself in your church and outside of it.

The great missionary

Lesson 16

Otto Hung • Canada

Objective: That the students will see Jesus' missionary work as a model to be imitated in their own context.

Memory Verse: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Supplies: A box that may resemble an artifact and sheets of paper with keys.
- Instructions: Choose two people and tell them that they'll receive a special and difficult assignment (if you know their abilities, choose one with planning ability and another to execute). Say, "Your mission is: In five minutes, you need to deactivate a deadly artifact. Using clues hidden in this place (specify the area), you'll find the keys to deactivate it."

Establish three sites or people, where the keys are hidden, for example: "Sit down and I'll tell you something important" (hide a key in a seat), "do you like my red stockings" (a person with red socks wears another key). On the keys write the following sentences without the answers. 1. Genesis 41:2-7, Pharaoh's dream has the first number [Answer: SEVEN]. 2. Deuteronomy 6:4, has the second number [Answer: ONE]. 3. Mark 3:14, The Number of His Disciples [Answer: TWELVE]. (The code that disables the artifact is: 7-1-12.)

Once they find the keys, they should read them and then give the correct answer.

Missions are always a special duty and we need to look for the key to help us accomplish it. The greatest mission we have been given is to share the gospel to save people's lives.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Choose three pairs. The rest of the group will be the court. Tell them: "Your mission: in three minutes, you are to develop an evangelization plan for a group of people who haven't heard of Jesus." They will do it in pairs so that they can take care of and encourage each other, as Jesus sent his disciples (Luke 10:1).
- To score, give one point for each requirement they complete. Don't cite the requirements until the end of the activity.

Requirements:

1. Any mention of prayer, the invocation of the name of Jesus, or the presence of the Holy Spirit, to begin with or before beginning the mission.
2. Any mention of the "state" of the people they'll evangelize: their heart, their attitudes, their environment, etc.
3. Any mention of easily measurable goals or objectives.
4. Any strategy or plan that includes specific activities or resources (Time, Bibles, brochures, etc.).
5. Any mention that salvation is in God's hands and depends only on Him.

Monitor the group's plan and comments. This material is valuable for the lesson. Remember that since evangelization is the work of the Spirit, it also requires human will and effort.

In the Bible we find several exciting and real stories about people who, having received a mission entrusted to them by God, mobilized personal and material resources to finish what had been assigned to them. These people listened to God, understood what God said, went through crises of faith, and followed through. There are great spiritual lessons for us in each case.

1. The best missionary

The dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines “mission” as: “Action of sending. Power, the power given to someone to perform some task. Commission (assignment). Temporary commission given by a government to a diplomat or special agent for a certain purpose.”

Ask the class to name biblical characters who have impacted their lives because of the courage with which they fulfilled their mission. Then ask: What was the mission that person had to fulfill? Who assigned that mission? How could he/she fulfill it? Would you have done it the same way? Do you know a current story that is similar to the biblical story?

When we look at the lives of biblical characters, we find strong characteristics, both good and bad, in each of them such as: Moses, who hesitated before accepting his mission; Samson, who had a weakness for women; Jacob, who deceived his father; Solomon, who had wealth and wisdom; Nehemiah, who built not only walls, but a city; Jeremiah the weeping prophet, Daniel a faithful man; or people like those we find in Acts, where all of them were assigned the task of bringing the gospel to the world. Of all of them, the apostle Paul is the best example of what it means to be a missionary.

While Paul was great, don't we have the greatest example of being a missionary with us day after day? Think about this carefully: When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came to earth, didn't He come with a specific mission? Didn't he develop a strategy? Didn't He face difficulties that he resolved in extraordinary ways? Was it not, perhaps, the most victorious mission known to humanity?

2. Jesus' wonderful example

Jesus' strategy began before he was incarnated, and developed when he came to this world and died on the cross for our sins.

1. Being God, he didn't mind becoming a man to fulfill his mission (Philippians 2: 5-7).
2. When Jesus came to earth, he was perfectly God and perfectly man, and was tempted in every way (Hebrews 4: 15). He felt the way we feel, he faced difficulties that we face daily and he overcame.
3. Being God and man, he obeyed, assumed and perfectly and voluntarily fulfilled the mission assigned to him by the Father to the point of dying crucified (Philippians 2: 8).

That was his mission, and it's difficult to imagine everything he had to undergo to fulfill it. Let's think for a moment about the characteristics of a person who had to fulfill the mission of sacrificing himself in a radical and perfect way to save humanity. What could have motivated him to pay a death price for our mistakes and sins? A perfect love. Only the Son of God could fulfill such a mission because He is love.

Matthew 9: 35-38 shows us quite clearly the way in which Jesus developed his mission. The passage says that he visited cities and villages, taught and healed miraculously, giving evidence of God's power and the goodness of the Kingdom of heaven. He exposed himself intentionally, in obedience, to everything that the Father said, bearing witness to holiness and with a clear goal in his heart: to present himself as a perfect offering for sacrifice.

To carry out his mission, he chose 12 ordinary men (Luke 6: 12-16) ... in fact, men that no one would have bet on to accompany him on a mission of such magnitude. But this choice was intentional. His selection of people without special training or skills, with little education, impulsive and not very brave (no doubt like most of us), shows that God is a God of grace and mercy who honors faith and humility, and who can do wonders throughout our lives.

The only way these men were later able to continue the mission Jesus left them and transform the world with the message of salvation was with God's help (Acts 2:1-13) through the presence of His Holy Spirit with and in them according to the promise given by Jesus (John 14:16-17). In the same way, God desires that we, filled with God's Spirit, fulfill the mission at this time.

3. Jesus' mission

Jesus became a man and came to this world to save humanity. What a mission! (John 1:1-4). In the history of humanity, we find that different characters have taken the title of "savior." Hollywood also through its productions presents us with adventures in which a handful of brave people save the world, but this is not even a pale reflection of what Jesus did for humanity!

Jesus came to rescue and reconcile to God a world fallen by sin (2 Corinthians 5:19). There is not, nor was, nor will there be anyone holy enough who can pay the ransom price for those killed by sin (Romans 6:23). Only Jesus, the only son of God, a spotless lamb, met the requirements to redeem humanity. His blood is enough.

So why is there so much evil in the world? Well, the blood of Jesus is sufficient to forgive and free all people, but it is only efficient for those who, by faith, receive him, those who believe in his name. For this reason, we must encourage others to seek the Lord and become children of God.

Are you a child of God? If you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, and you repent of your sins, then you are in God's family! You are the fruit of Jesus' mission on earth (Romans 10:9).

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions. We put possible answers as a guide for the teacher.

1. How would you define "mission"? (*A specific assignment.*)
2. How would you define "missionary"? (*Someone who is sent to do something (a mission) specific.*)
3. Do you believe that God can call you to missionary service?
4. Explain the reason for your previous answer.
5. What is your mission as a Christian at this time? (*Share the gospel with as many people as possible.*)

Challenge:

This week, think about your mission where you are. It's important to begin your mission by sharing the gospel with your loved ones and then your friends and acquaintances. You can also continue your mission by participating in a ministry within the church. If you're already part of a ministry, think about how to develop it further, and if you aren't involved yet, do so.

Nothing less than missional

Lesson 17

José Samuel Mérida • Guatemala

Objective: That the students will understand that the church has been involved in mission since its beginning, and that she or he is an agent of this mission every day.

Memory Verse: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you’ll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A ball of yarn, cards with names of some of the least evangelized countries (10/40 window - Bahrain, Bhutan, Nepal, North Korea, Laos, Libbie, Mali, Maldives, Marroque, Iran, Qatar, India, Algeria, Saudi Arabia) and adhesive to stick the cards to your students' shirts.
- Instructions: Ask each teen to choose the country they want to personify and attach the card with the corresponding name. Then ask them to form a circle and throw the yarn ball to each other, without letting go of the thread, saying “I am (the country that they represent)”. Before throwing the ball, he/she must repeat the names of the countries that the participants mentioned before. A network will be formed. At the end, pray together that we can reach more people with the gospel in these countries.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Several recent newspapers, scissors and Bibles.
- Instructions: Form three groups. Distribute the newspapers and ask them to describe the current global situation by selecting local, national and international news (assign one per group). Then, ask them to associate Bible verses having to do with this situation and present the synthesis of the situation and verse to the whole class. When finished, ask each of the three groups to introduce their situation(s) and what they think, and the Bible says, the church should do in each of these situations.

Connect

Navigate

1. What does “missionary church” mean?

The church is a missionary church when it fulfills God's mandate and serves him beyond its walls ... when it embodies Christ's love for people where it is. Being “missionary” is an essential characteristic of the church; it is missionary or it is not a church. The problem is that sometimes we think that “missionary” has to do specifically with traveling, living and organizing congregations in other countries, and we conclude that this is very complicated and isn't something we can do.

The church was organized with a clearly defined mission: Jesus commanded his disciples to bear witness to the world and thereby make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Through that command, the Lord assured them ... and us, that while they did it, His presence would be with them.

That mission would begin when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and would go from their place of origin, little by little, to the whole world (Acts 1:8). Ask: What had the disciples experienced during those three years with Jesus? What were they going to share?

They had lived next to the Lord, and through Him, they saw the example of God's love towards people, attending to their physical and spiritual needs wherever they were. And that was exactly what the disciples obediently set out to do after Pentecost (Acts 2:40-46).

2. The mission to your loved ones

Surely you'll remember how someone in the church positively influenced you to make or renew your decision for Christ. The mission of the church toward others begins in each person's particular environment. Ask: How many people do you frequently interact with in some way (at school, in the neighborhood, at work, or on the Internet)? There are many people with whom we relate, and probably several of those people have not experienced the love and forgiveness of God in their lives, and we are the instrument that God wants to use to make his love more understandable to those people. That is what Philip did when he saw Nathanael (John 1:45).

The church is a missional church, and that mission begins when we as disciples decide to interact on a personal level with our acquaintances and friends, revealing with our attitude, actions and conversation the work that God is completing in our lives.

3. The mission in our neighborhood and country

As we said, the church must go further from its building. This means serving people who don't necessarily attend services and aren't necessarily believers. When we see the needs of the people in our neighborhood, it's necessary to organize the efforts of the congregation to meet those needs. The Lord has put many abilities into his church with this purpose. They're very useful for serving one's neighbor and helping them to understand God's love. All of these abilities must be concentrated to bear witness to the power of God to the people around the local congregation. As a church, we must organize and carry out education, health and evangelization initiatives, among others, that open the arms of the local congregation to the neighbors of the church.

Let's recall how the Apostle Peter organized himself with the members of the first church to carry out the first campaign of evangelization in the community where they were gathered (Acts 2:38-42). We can see that the congregation of the first church was organized to achieve the spiritual and physical needs of the neighbors; it wasn't a solitary effort of Peter. This is the challenge of the church, organizing to meet the integral needs of people where they are.

In addition to our knowledge and our neighbors, the mission of the church embraces all the inhabitants of our country. Of course, these are greater efforts, which require coordination and teamwork. Remember that the church is the community of believers, not a lonely believer.

4. The mission to the world

Christ Died for All. When we join the family of God, we learn to see and feel how God sees and feels, and we're moved together to help the needy. When we have knowledge of need or of a tragedy, we must do our part to bring Christ's hope to those hearts.

There are basically three ways to get involved in the mission around the world.

1. **Pray** for people who are going through difficult situations. We can pray for the needs that exist in any country or individuals in the world, even if we don't know them.
2. **Give.** An offering can make a difference for families thousands of miles away when they need help. You can support a Christian community development project in other parts of the world (education, health, etc.).
3. **"GO"**

Ask: What is the most encouraging: receiving a call or receiving a hug?

In Acts we also see how the church of Antioch was organized to assist the needs of the church of Judea (Acts 11:27-30). The mission of the church is to be the hands and feet of Christ in this suffering world.

When will we have the opportunity to make Christlike disciples among our neighbors, countries and to the ends of the earth? When we let his Holy Spirit take control of our lives, we'll be perfected, trained, and empowered to do what we once thought impossible (Acts 1:8). We are all the church and the church is nothing less than a missionary church.

Review/Application:

Allow time to answer the following questions. (We include possible answers in italics).

1. What is a “missionary church” like? (*It’s the church that permanently participates in the mission of giving witness to God’s love in every place.*)
2. Meditate for a moment and make a list of the needs you have seen in your neighborhood.
3. Choose one of the above needs and propose a solution.
4. What does it mean to “embody the love of Christ” and what does it have to do with the mission of the Church? (*To embody Christ’s love is to live in the flesh the characteristics of Christ’s love for others; in this way, they’ll be able to experience God’s love and come to know his plan for their life and we’ll fulfill the mission as a church.*)

Finally, share the answers and opinions.

Challenge:

With your classmates, bring non-perishable groceries next week and create a basic pantry. Then identify needy people (elderly, single mothers, orphans, etc.) from the church or neighborhood, and accompanied by the Sunday school teacher and a few parents, visit and personally deliver the pantry, and hug and pray for the beneficiaries.

Mandate or suggestion?

Lesson 18

Oscar Pérez • Dominican Republic

Objective: That the students will understand the mandate to fulfill the mission and bravely make a commitment to the Lord.

Memory Verse: “Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’” (Acts 4:19-20)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Supplies: Six dresses (you can use colored sheets instead), handkerchiefs for the head. (The idea is to imitate the clothing of the priests, Peter and John.) A small table and a chair (to give the idea of a courtroom).
- Instructions: Choose six actors ahead of time and assign them the role of each character (Ana, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, Peter, John and an narrator) and ask them to read Acts 4:1-22 to familiarize themselves with the event. If possible, perform a pre-class practice to prepare the drama. Ask them to focus on the intervention of Peter and John when they rejected the intimidation (vv. 19 - 20)

Let's understand the importance of not ceasing to be witnesses of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Supplies: chalkboard/whiteboard
- Instructions: Write down the following definitions of each vocabulary word and ask the class to complete a comparison and point out the differences.

Mandate: “An order or precept that the superior gives to his disciples”.

Suggestion: “Insinuation, inspiration, idea that's suggested.”

Mission: “Sent into action. Power and authority given to someone to go and fulfill an objective.”

Then compare the definitions with 1 Peter 2:9-10 and Matthew 28:19-20. Ask a student to write down the conclusions of the comments on the board.

They must come to the conclusion that the mission is God's mandate, not a suggestion, therefore we must become decisively involved in it.

Connect

Navigate

1. Obedience to the Missionary Mandate

The Beacon theological dictionary helps us understand terminology: Mission: “This is the broadest theological term. It includes all the saving activities of the Trinity and the church for the extension of the kingdom of God on earth. It includes sharing the personal witness of the Christian faith of each child of God.” Missions: “It refers to the world missionary work.” Missiology: “It's the academic discipline that studies and describes the complete field of the mission and missions”. (Beacon Theological Commentary. MNP, USA: 1995, pp. 437-438). Missionary: “The Christian called by God and who devotes him or herself to missions outside their culture of origin.”

Each one of us is obliged to carry out the mission to bear witness to the Christian faith to all the people within our reach. And if God wills, he can call us and send us to intercultural missions or involve us in the theological work of the mission, becoming missionaries who serve in another culture different from ours.



The mission isn't a suggestion but a mandate from God given by His Son Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). The biblical text teaches us Jesus' source of authority, the precise command to make disciples in his image, the missionary strategy which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine, and the blessing of his presence in the life of the disciple that is obedient to his mandate.

2. Models of missionary obedience

Philip, obedient to the missionary mandate

Philip was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, a good testimony, and wisdom (Acts 6:3-5; 8:4-40). He traveled to Samaria and what happened was surprising (Acts 8:12). On this occasion, Simon also believed. He was a person dedicated to the magic of his time; even if he was wrong in his spiritual interpretation, he was respond in repentance (vv. 13-24).

Then Philip was sent down to Gaza and there he met a ranking official. He was an official of the Queen of Ethiopia; it seems that he was "Minister of Economy," a eunuch, and a trusted official of the Queen. He had good intentions of worshipping God, and it was for this reason that he travelled to Jerusalem. After Philip's personal gospel preaching, the Ethiopian believed with all his heart in Jesus Christ and asked to be baptized.

The life close to God, like Philip's testimony and obedience, leads to missionary actions, and this should inspire us to imitate it.

Peter, convinced of the mission entrusted to him

Peter's mission was to present the redeeming message to Cornelius, and in this way eliminate the religious barrier between Jews and Samaritans (Acts 10:1-48).

Cornelius was a Samaritan, working in Caesarea, the main port of Palestine, where he was an official and the leader of 100 soldiers. He was also a pious man, fearing God, generous and a man of prayer (vv. 1-2). Corneille had a vision (vv. 3-6) which led him to seek out Peter; for this he sent his servants under the guidance of the angels.

While in Joppa, Peter had a vision in which God sent him Cornelius in Caesarea (vv.9-33). He saw the Spirit descend and fill the hearts of those present, gifts were manifested, they were baptized and the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was eliminated by the love of God who is no respecter of persons (vv.34-48).

Paul, missionary and pastor

His name was Saul and he considered himself to be a law-keeper (Acts 9:1-19). He was a persecutor of Christians and a witness to the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58). In his pursuits as a persecutor, he traveled to Damascus, and on the way, Christ revealed himself to him. From that moment on, his life changed. Upon reaching his destination, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and chosen to fulfill a mission (Acts 9:15). Paul made three missionary trips, he planted churches in Asia Minor and Europe, and he wrote 13 New Testament letters. He carried out his mission, convinced of his calling and commitment to his Lord. He has inspired Christians throughout the centuries to imitate his life and his missionary work.

3. Our Missionary Commitment

What Peter wrote to the churches of the dispersion challenges us to obedience in order to share the message of salvation with every human being (1 Peter 2:9-10). How to translate Peter's example before the council into missionary actions? (Acts 4:19-20). Bearing witness of our faith in Christ to everyone who is by our side, in the power of the Spirit and in any scenario, because Christ is with us (Matthew 28:20).

We have nothing left but to make the decision today to live in Christ, obey him, fulfill my missionary responsibility by testifying to my neighbor the salvation that I have received from God by grace and I will be attentive in case God calls me to other nations. The fact of making a personal commitment by joining the mission will produce in us, and therefore in our local church, a sense of duty and missional obedience that God will approve and use for his glory.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to answer true or false for the following statements:

1. Peter and John defined their mission before the Jewish Council with courage. (T)
2. Obeying the mission is a suggestion. (F)
3. The term “mission” includes all activities that the church carries out. (T)
4. Philip carried out part of the church’s mission in Samaria. (T)
5. Peter evangelized Cornelius in Caesarea. (T)
6. Paul wrote six letters. (F)
7. Philip, Peter, and Paul fulfilled their mission filled with the Holy Spirit. (T)
8. The mission is only for church leaders. (F)
9. The mission includes the proclamation of the virtues of Jesus Christ. (T)
10. It’s better to obey God than people. (T)

Challenge:

During the week, think about and answer the following questions:

1. What is your mission work at school, college, university or your workplace?
2. Have you helped a friend accept Christ as his or her Savior?
3. Do you consider yourself to be following the mission’s mandate or do you need to make some corrections in your life?

Share the message

Lesson 19

Robin Radi • Argentina

Objective: That the students will know that God still calls people to be missionaries.

Memory Verse: “They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’” (John 4:42)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Three circles of red, blue and green paper for each student.
- Instructions: Explain that each participant will answer a series of questions, using the red, yellow or green circle. The answers will mean the following:
 - ◇ Red: I'm not like that / I don't do that.
 - ◇ Yellow: Sometimes I'm like that / sometimes I do that.
 - ◇ Green: Very often I am like that / Very often I do that.

Here are some questions that you can use, or you can invent others:

- ◇ I like to get up early.
- ◇ I tell good jokes.
- ◇ I sigh a lot.
- ◇ I like to write.
- ◇ I look at myself in the mirror a lot.
- ◇ I sing in the shower.

We're all different, and few people know who we are inside. For God, what we are inside is no surprise. He knows us intimately.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Paper and pencil for each participant.
- Instructions: Ask each student to write a letter giving as much detail about themselves. No physical or clothing data can appear in that letter; but rather personal data must be offered, such as character, tastes or hobbies.
- Once the letters are written, collect them and read them to the entire group, who must guess who each one belongs to. It's recommended that the teacher also participates in the activity as one of them. The activity is richer and more effective in its objective if personal (non-superficial) data is shared among group members.
- Each person is different. We all have internal aspects that no one or few know. Only God knows our interior. He knows us intimately.

Connect

Navigate

Jesus left Jerusalem and traveled north, crossing the territory of Samaria. Most Jews avoided passing through Samaria because the Jews continued to maintain their racial purity, while the Samaritans (a people who were formerly part of Israel) had mixed racially with Gentiles. The Samaritans were the example of unfaithful Jews, and that's why pure Jews didn't associate with them. There was very intense racial hatred between the two peoples (John 4:9). So much so that the Jews took the longest route to avoid going through Samaria. They preferred to go through Gentile towns rather than go through Samaria.

Surely, Jesus was driven by a need to reach the lost, even outside of his own people and his own comfort. As we read this passage, we notice an urgency on the part of Jesus. Here, both in his dealings with the Samaritan woman and in his dialogue with his disciples, we clearly see the evangelizing mission that occupied Jesus' mind. We see his longing, passion and deep desire to impart to the disciples this urgency to evangelize, taking advantage of every moment to reach lives with the message of living water.

1. God knows us

Start by reading John 4:7-18. We don't know the name of the Samaritan woman, and we don't know much about her. But apparently, Jesus knew her very well. Jesus knew that she came to the well during the time when most people were having lunch (v.6,8) because she was marginalized, rejected, and frowned upon. Upon seeing her, he immediately recognized her need and asked her for water (v.7), but he knew she needed an inexhaustible source that only He could give her. She was amazed that a Jew wanted to talk to her (v.9), because a Samaritan woman at that time was the lowest thing there was for a Jew. And even more so, a woman with a bad life who visited the well at noon.

Jesus got right to the point of her need. He identified himself as the one who could give her eternal life (vv.13-14). Without condemning her, Jesus confronted her with her inappropriate behavior (v.18). He knew of the most shameful aspects of her life. She tried to avoid the conversation (v.17). Jesus didn't refute her statement, he only showed that He already knew how she had lived up to that moment. Jesus spoke of the importance of heartfelt worship and devalued religious and meaningless acts. In this passage (vv.23-24), He showed that it isn't acts of worship that bring us closer to God, but our submission to the Spirit. The spiritual life of the Samaritan woman didn't depend on the place where she worshiped, but on the condition of her heart before God.

When we apply this encounter to our own lives, we realize that God knows our need. He knows where we failed and where we are. Still, he encourages us to trust in Him as a source of living water, and urges us to be worshipers in spirit and truth, to leave our religious concepts and follow Him.

The Samaritan woman was so impacted by Jesus Christ that she left her water jar to run and tell all the people that she had met the Messiah. Christ knew her completely, and instead of bringing her shame and humiliation, he brought her freedom!

2. God calls us to see the needs of others

Read John 4:31-38 with the class. When the disciples arrived, they urged Jesus to eat, but He taught them some important lessons. Jesus told them that the greatest satisfaction a Christian can have in life is doing the will of God (v.34). He challenged his disciples to focus on God's will to satisfy the deepest needs of their soul. Jesus proclaimed that the need was so great that people were ready to accept Jesus as the Messiah (v.35).

While Jesus was talking to his disciples, the townspeople who had heard about him from the Samaritan woman began to approach. Then Jesus compared this human harvest to an element that the disciples knew well, the fertile field. The people were ready to hear from Jesus, and the disciples didn't have to do anything other than respond to the great need (v.38).

Lastly, Jesus highlighted the rejoicing after the harvest (v.36).

Jesus also calls us to the harvest. The need is everywhere. We all have friends, classmates, relatives and family members who don't know Christ. We also live in a world full of needs: hunger, work, honesty, love. Let's not ignore these needs. Let's be part of the solution.

3. God uses our witness to reach others

In this last part of the story (John 4:28-30,39-42), we see how many people came to believe in Jesus. All of Sychar, with a past full of idolatry, evil and spiritual confusion, was revolutionized by the arrival of the Messiah. The testimony of a sinful woman transformed an entire town (v.39). The fact that Jesus knew her as she was didn't prevent her from being useful to the Kingdom. What's more, the change that Jesus produced in her was the reason for so much astonishment in others.

The people, knowing a little more about Jesus, wanted to spend time with him (v.40). A passing trip ended up being a missionary trip where Jesus stayed in Sychar for two days, speaking about the kingdom of God. People began to experience and know Jesus personally (v.42).

Our testimony can lead others to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus.

Review/Application:

Draw a map of your neighborhood.

Once you have drawn the map of your neighborhood, make a chart and put the names (or a reference) of the families of your block (remember who are not Christians). And then every day of this week, pray for them, one by one, even if you only know them by sight or name, and keep record of it your chart

Challenge:

Maybe the Lord is calling you to be a missionary, or maybe he's calling you to be a pastor, or maybe he's calling you to be a professional. But today, he calls you to look up at the field that's ready for harvest. Jesus is the source of living water for each person. Start praying for those around you. Surely as you pray for them, the Lord will show you their needs and begin to open spaces for you to share with them.

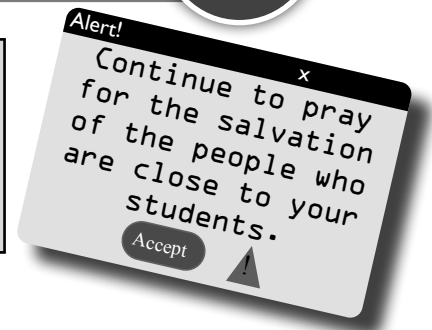
Here I am - Lord!

Lesson 20

Hilda Navarro • Mexico

Objective: Let the students know that God has been calling people to missions since the times of the Old Testament.

Memory Verse: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (Isaiah 6:8a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A large sheet of white paper and markers to draw.
- Instructions: Ask the class to think about the reality of today's world, both good and bad, violence, catastrophes, technological advances, etc. Then put the paper in the center of the room and ask them to draw one of the concepts they thought of, giving clues to help the others discover the concept.

You may notice that they'll make more drawings of bad concepts than good ones. The reason may be because right now the reality of the world is like this. At the end, on the same paper, make a drawing of a church.

While it's true that in our world there's violence, death and many terrible things, there's also the church, the people of God, us, with the legacy of Jesus Christ.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: A recent newspaper (preferably of the day), phone or music player with contemporary music (if possible with the songs that are on the popularity lists), white sheets of paper and pens.
- Instructions: Ask your class, while listening to fragments of some popular songs and reading the most important news of the day, to write what they think about the reality that surrounds them. Then ask them to share the notes they have written.

It was the same in Old Testament times, but there were always people who weren't part of that reality and lived according to God's commands and encouraged others to do so. We're going to look at that today.

Connect

Navigate

Christians today find it comfortable to organize events to evangelize and wait for people who haven't decided to follow Christ to attend those events. The sad thing about this is that on countless occasions, people barely agree to attend an "evangelical church." But have we stopped to think how different it would be if instead of waiting for non-believers, we went looking for them?

That's missions! ... the call to missions that God has always done and continues to do to this day.

Let's look at two missionary calls that God made in the Old Testament. And, from this perspective, let's listen to God's voice to respond.

1. A call that confronts us

If we read Isaiah from chapter 1, the prophet was already preaching words of judgment against Jerusalem, pointing out the sins that the people had committed, mentioning that a great and terrible day of the Lord was coming, passing sentence on the kingdoms. But when he reached chapter 6, God appeared to him in an amazing and glorious vision (Isaiah 6:5). How was it possible that Isaiah was called to a life of obedience to God, when he himself had not realized that he was an unclean person?

Isaiah was a man who loved the Lord and wanted the people to do the same. God saw his heart and therefore removed his guilt and cleansed his sin (v.7) so that he could continue fulfilling the mission.

If we look outside the church today, we'll find a chaotic world, but recognizing that we're also impure and need God's grace, we'll be able to understand what God wants to do in this world.

The wonderful thing about God is that he took away Isaiah's sin (Isaiah 6:6-7), and when God asked "Whom will I send and who will go for us?" (v.8), Isaiah responded in such a way that God commissioned him. If we recognize our impurity before the glory of God, without a doubt He will cleanse us, and if we answer yes to God's question, without a doubt He'll commission us.

Can we say to Him today, "Here I am, Lord, send me"? God didn't call Isaiah, but it was a question that arose from the Lord himself. When Isaiah realized that God needed someone to fulfill his saving purpose, he responded. Do we need to wait for God to speak specifically to us, or could we respond to Him today?

2. An uncomfortable call

Let's imagine that instead of God sending a consuming fire, he suddenly calls one of us to share the gospel with evil people. Ask: Would any of us go? Would you go visit a perverse person in prison? Would you go to the person who murdered or raped a member of your family?

That's just what happened to Jonah. God called him to preach at Nineveh (Jonah 1:2), the capital of the powerful and wicked empire of Assyria, whom Israel feared because they were their enemies. Jonah didn't want to go because deep in his heart, he wanted Nineveh to be destroyed. How was it possible for him to preach salvation to Israel's enemies? The Bible tells us that Jonah ran in the opposite direction, wanting to flee from the presence of God (Jonah 1:3). But God dealt with Jonah (Jonah 1:4-17), and Jonah repented and accepted his mission. Here we see the grace of God giving a second chance (Jonah 2:1-3:2).

In Jonah 3:3, we see that Jonah walked the streets of the great city Nineveh and gave the people the message of salvation (Jonah 3:4-9).

Let's understand the prophet a little. It was logical that he would expect with all his heart that a punishment would come directly from God's wrath. Since Jonah was a patriot, he had no love for Israel's enemy, and he also didn't understand how God could love such people. Jonah hoped in his heart for a punishment from God, but thanks to the Ninevites' repentance, there was freedom and life instead (Jonah 3:10).

God forgave the people of Nineveh, but Jonah was angry (Jonah 4:2). On many occasions, this is the prayer we Christians make to God while we're angry at His redeeming grace.

But God responded to Jonah (Jonah 4:11): "And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?" ("Cannot tell their right hand from their left" is a reference to spiritual immaturity.)

In the missionary call, God wants us to carry a message of repentance. And that's not comfortable. It's difficult for us to think that murderers, rapists, swindlers, usurers, abusers, etc. can be saved. God's missional call is scandalous because anyone and everyone can be redeemed by Jesus Christ! All!

It's important to recognize that God loves all people and wants to forgive and save them (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).

3. And God keeps calling...

In light of Isaiah's vision, let's recognize that all the people who live outside the church are no worse than us who are inside (Romans 3:9-20). The only difference is that one day we received forgiveness and mercy from God. In light of Jonah's call, let's recognize that God continues to seek out wicked people to redeem them, regardless of the degree of evil in their hearts and actions (Romans 5:20).

We can be the instruments of his radical grace and absolute mercy in this world and at this moment. Let's recognize that God provides integral salvation to humanity and thinks of your generation as the spiritually immature of our increasingly perverse world who don't really know any better and are in need of hope and forgiveness.

Review the notes of the introductory dynamic: How much evil is there in the world today? Can you imagine how much there will be tomorrow? Don't you think it's fair that, like Isaiah and Jonah, we can make God's missionary call our own?

Review/Application:

Make a list of 10 people who are harming society or yourself, along with the harm those people are doing. Then pray for them every day this week, asking God for their salvation.

Challenge:

God can reach all people ... even the most perverse in this world; and he can work his mercy the way He wants and in the ways He wants, but He would love to use people like you. Pray this week that God will reach others through your life.

Special Day

Lesson 21

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students understand Jesus' desire regarding the function of the church and the function of our life as a temple of God.

Memory Verse: "'It's written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you're making it a 'den of robbers.'" Matthew 21:13



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Large paper and pencil for the groups you form.
- Instructions: Divide the class into two or more groups and give each group a paper with the word "purification" written on it. Then ask them to prepare and explain the concept in a didactic way (for example a small theatrical performance, a scientific experiment, a song, a painting or drawing, etc.).

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard, marker or chalk.
- Instructions: On the board write the word "PURIFICATION" in large letters. Divide the class into two groups and ask the students to write a definition that describes the concept of "purification" well, and which is written in the way that it could be found in a dictionary.

Connect

Navigate

Bible study experts estimate that Jesus began his public ministry around the age of 30 and that his ministry lasted approximately three years. The event we'll study happened after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and took place during the last week of his life on earth, just before his crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-17; see also Mark 11: 15-19, Luke 19:45-48 and John 2:13-22).

1. The situation of the temple

In the first part of the passage from Matthew 21:1-11, at the beginning of the week of the Passover celebration, we read of the people's joy when they saw Jesus enter Jerusalem. However, verse 12 changes the scene of the story and the evangelist narrates that as usual on days of religious celebrations, Jesus approached the temple and saw something that suddenly changed the festive atmosphere: Buyers, sellers and money changers.

To better understand the role that these people played in the temple, we must go back to Old Testament times when God instituted, through Moses, the system of animal sacrifices so that the people of Israel could ask for forgiveness for their sins and could approach God. . Moses let the people know (from God) that they should recognize their evil deeds and that each person could be reconciled to God by bringing an animal to be sacrificed in the temple. Said animal had to meet certain requirements: Be a healthy animal without defect. These characteristics symbolized the desire to present the best to God. First in the tabernacle, and centuries later in the temple, the animal represented the person who offered it and "carried" his sin. After certain rites of presentation before the altar, the animal finally died as it received the punishment for the sin of its offerer (Romans 6:23). This sacrificial system was an imperfect representation of the perfect sacrifice that Jesus would make for all humanity on the cross of Calvary, dying and receiving punishment for our sins.

The sacrificial system described above remained in effect for the Jews until the time Jesus came. The ritual system required the presentation of different animals according to the economic condition of the person and according to the sin (Leviticus 5:5-7, 14-19), which is why sellers and buyers had developed a market in the temple courts. This market was designed to facilitate the purchase of animals for Jews who came to Jerusalem from afar and had money to buy the necessary animal. Likewise, the money changers had developed a business to provide money exchange (to those who came from other places) for the offerings that had to be deposited inside the temple. The situation had reached such a point that the temple moneychangers, buyers, and sellers had changed the purpose of helping the Jews to be reconciled to God, to that of making dishonest profits from temple business (Matthew 21:13). And in the middle of that, Jesus arrived at the temple.

2. Jesus' response

Matthew 21:12-13 recounts Jesus' response to the problem of corruption that was occurring in the temple. The evangelist describes Jesus' actions with the verb "overturned," an action that denotes intensity of emotion and action. It's interesting to imagine what the place must have looked like after Jesus had that reaction. Without a doubt, it was an event that brought commotion and confusion into the temple.

At first glance, Jesus' actions seem to come from a feeling of anger. However, we see that Jesus' indignation came from the injustice and disrespect that existed towards his Father's house (John 2:17). The intensity of Jesus' actions teaches us that He wasn't making a suggestion or a simple recommendation to the temple merchants. Jesus made it clear that it was of utmost importance and urgency to have respect for the place where God's presence was.

Just as Jesus didn't want to wait a single moment to change the negative situation that was taking place in the temple, in the same way we can be sure that Jesus has the same urgency and intense desire to change our hearts.

By applying the story of the temple purification to our lives, we can know that Jesus' death was planned in advance so that we too can accept Jesus' lordship in our lives and enjoy purified lives. Just as Jesus (the son of God) had every right to clean and organize his Father's house (that is, the temple), we must understand that when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives, we're giving Christ those same rights over our hearts. When we give ourselves to God our King and Lord, we give access to our hearts to organize anything that's not right. When we give Him our lives, we give Him every right to move the things in our hearts as He believes is best.

3. People's reaction

In the following verses of the study passage, the people who witnessed Jesus' cleansing of the temple reacted in two different ways.

A group of people came to Jesus (Matthew 21:14). It's interesting to recognize that these people didn't distance themselves from Jesus because of the fear that Jesus' actions might have caused, but on the contrary, people of humble condition approached Him. The wonderful thing about this scene is that when they approached Jesus, those in need received help and healing. Jesus didn't leave them discouraged or disappointed, but he was able to give them what they needed most. The fruit of this great blessing and miracles of healing were the thanksgiving in the form of praise that flowed from the mouths of those who were healed: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matthew 21:15). People who came to Jesus and accepted his work in their lives experienced great joy and gladness.

There was another group of people who reacted in a very different way (Matthew 21:15-16). The commentary of the religious leaders of the time demonstrated an attitude of anger and lack of acceptance of the person of Jesus as the son of God. The leaders complained to Jesus because the people were putting him in a very high place with their praise: They shouted "hosanna" or "praise God" and also recognized him as the son of the ancient King David. A lack of wisdom and discernment led those religious leaders to become blinded by jealousy upon hearing the praise and attention that Jesus received for the miracles he performed.

As Christians in the 21st century, we must choose whether we will object to Jesus' teachings for lack of understanding, or whether we will surrender to Him and His purification plans for our lives.

Review/Application:

Order of events. Below you'll find a list of story events from today's lesson. Ask the class to put them in chronological order. To indicate the correct order, they must place a number "1" in front of the first event, a number "2" in front of the second, etc.

1. (2) Jesus drove out those who sold and bought.
2. (6) The religious leaders questioned Jesus.
3. (4) The blind and lame were healed by Jesus.
4. (1) Jesus entered the temple.
5. (7) Jesus went to Bethany.
6. (5) The boys praised Jesus.
7. (3) Jesus overturned the money changers' tables.

Challenge:

What is your perspective on Jesus' actions in the temple? Where is your life in the purification process? You can always count on the fact that God loves you more than anyone else on this planet and that's why he has the best and most wonderful plans for your life. Meditate on this during the week.

He Lives!

Lesson 22

Hilda Navarro • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand that the resurrection of Jesus is the culminating event of God's redemptive plan.

Memory Verse: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Ask the class to sit in a circle and discuss legends or myths known in their region or around the world about the resurrection of people. They don't necessarily have to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If they haven't heard any legends, tell them the following:

"It's told of a rich man who was known for the abundance of his possessions and for the kindness with which he treated his employees. He loved his wife and three young children very much.

One day, people in the area where the ranch was located became infected with a dangerous disease and many died. The landowner helped the few doctors and nurses there were. After several weeks, the epidemic was controlled but the landowner became infected, fell ill and died. In the midst of everyone's sorrow, a little old man with worn clothes and a gray beard arrived at the property. He told them that he knew the good reputation of the landowner and the problem they were all in. He told them that in exchange for a sum of money, he could bring the landowner back from the dead. Between the pain and despair, that small light of hope convinced the family and they agreed to the old man's request.

The man locked himself in a room with the deceased and after a few moments, he left the room and said that his work was done. He took the money from them and left without a trace.

The landowner's wife and employees entered the room and saw the landowner in his bed. He had a pale face, but he was alive. It was never known exactly what happened. Some say that the landowner never died, that he was unconscious and that the old man took advantage of the situation. Others say it was a true miracle. The truth is that the landowner recovered and returned to direct his estate

with the same kindness and justice as before."

When finished, ask the students what they think: Is it a myth or do they think it really happened? Once they have discussed their opinions, ask them if they have heard the story of Jesus' resurrection. If they already know the story, ask them what they think about it: Truth or myth? Let them express themselves freely and don't make corrections.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Instructions: Ask students what medical or scientific facts are necessary for a person to be resurrected. Ask them if they believe it would be possible for someone to be resurrected and why. If you want to motivate young people to talk, tell them about author Mary Shelley's story, "Frankenstein's Monster." Or if someone knows it, ask if they want to share it.

In a nutshell, the story is about a young medical student named Victor Frankenstein who created a body with parts from several corpses. The body was given life with electricity generated by lightning that was transmitted to the heart of the body, through instruments invented by young Frankenstein himself.

If feasible, you can show the first 10 minutes of the movie "Frankenstein." Then ask the following:

- ◇ Do you think the story could be true? Why?
- ◇ What events in the story stand out to you?
- ◇ Have you heard the story of Jesus' resurrection?

Then read John 20:11-18 with them and ask them what stands out to them.

This activity aims to help young people reflect on the resurrection itself in a current era that questions Christian beliefs.

A myth is a narrative outside of historical time and starring characters of a divine or heroic character. A legend is a list of events that are more traditional or wonderful than historical or true. A historical fact reveals an event that really happened. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact and very important for Christians. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-20 together.

The resurrection of Jesus is a real and unique event in the history of humanity (Romans 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Of course, this fact throughout history has generated various versions, some of which insist on categorically denying it. Matthew 28:11-15 says that since the authorities realized that Jesus wasn't in the tomb, they bribed the soldiers to say that the followers of the teacher from Galilee had stolen the body during the night.

Read John 20:11-18 together. It's recommended to have several versions of the study passage.

1. Crying and pain

The custom of the Middle East was (and still is in many places) to express grief openly (Psalm 119:136a; Jeremiah 9:1). Other customs included beating the chest (Luke 23:48) and wearing silicon bags and tearing clothes (2 Samuel 3:31). "When a person died, a cry was heard that announced to the neighborhood what had happened. This was a signal for the relatives to begin to show their sadness" (Uses and customs of the biblical lands. Fred H. Wight. Spokesman, USA: 1981, p.155).

Thus, we find Mary crying outside the tomb. She had gone to anoint the body of the Lord (Luke 23:55-24:1). Still crying, she bent down to look into the tomb, but instead of finding Jesus' body, what she saw was two angels, one at the head and the other at the foot of where Jesus should have been (v.11). When they saw her crying, they asked her why she was crying. Mary was heartbroken because not only had Jesus died, but she also now didn't know where they had taken his body.

In our Western (and especially evangelical) culture, when we see people crying over the death of their loved ones, we tend to tell them, "Don't cry." However, crying is a natural human response. We cry with joy when faced with good news, and with pain when faced with sad news. In his book "The Sorrows of December," Harold Ivan Smith comments that Christians tend to avoid the grieving process. Not only do we not give ourselves time to grieve, but sometimes we don't even let people have time to grieve.

Mary was going through the emotional shock of having lost Jesus. Ask: What would you say to Mary if you were there?

2. "Mary!"

Immediately Mary turned around and saw Jesus, but she didn't recognize him (John 20: 14-16). He asked her why she was crying and who she was looking for. It wasn't that Jesus, or the angels, were unaware of the cause of crying. It was, rather, a reflective question. To ask "why are you crying?" is to ask what the deepest cause of her pain was.

She still didn't recognize Jesus and asked him, (thinking that he was the one tending the garden), if he had taken the body. It was then that He called her by her name and she looked at Him and recognized the Master.

"The Hebrew "rab" means great, and over the years it came to be used to describe a person who held a respected position. Rabbi, for its part, means "my great one" and was used to address someone in a reverential manner. But raboni (rhabbouni) is an even higher form of rabbi. Mary was philologically saying: My Master. It was a full recognition of the identity and authority of Jesus" (Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico Certeza, Certeza Unida publishing house, Colombia: 2003, p.1131).

3. Share the good news

Once Mary recognized him, she fell at his feet, but Jesus told her not to hold him (“don’t hold on to me” in NIV). He instructed her to go to his brothers (the disciples) and share the news. Jesus would ascend to the Father (John 20:17-18). For some scholars, the translation should be, “Do not hold me back any longer.” The assumption is that when Mary recognized Jesus, she fell to the ground and embraced Jesus’ feet, something common in Middle Eastern customs. This glorified Jesus couldn’t be held by the feet, as there was an important task to be done.

Sharing the news of Jesus’ resurrection is everyone’s task. But sometimes the church gets too comfortable ministering to those who attend regularly that it forgets to reach out to those outside. In a way, the church has been “holding back” Jesus, forgetting that they should go and share the message.

It isn’t surprising that the world is confused with theories and hypotheses that deny the resurrection of Jesus if those of us who do know the story don’t share it. Ask: Have you shared the story of Jesus’ resurrection with anyone?

Review/Application:

Allow time for your class to respond to the following questions. When they share their answers, let the students express themselves freely. Intervene if you see that someone is offended by another’s comment. Promote an environment of respect and knowledge. If you think it’s necessary, invite the pastor to clarify any theological doubts that may arise.

1. Why do you think there are people who insist on denying the resurrection of Jesus?
2. Do you think it’s impossible for God to raise someone from the dead? Why?
3. Why was it important that Mary not “hold onto” Jesus and instead go and tell the disciples about him?
4. If you know Jesus as your Savior, are you holding him back or sharing his story with others?

Challenge:

Would you dare to share the message of Jesus’ resurrection with a friend? Make a list of the people you think need to know the good news of the resurrection and make a plan to share this message of hope with them. Ask your pastor or youth leader for a practical and effective way to share this message and no longer “hold back” Jesus.

Do you think Christ will return?

Lesson 23

Myrna Riley • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand the importance of Christ's ascension and the promise that he will return for those who are faithful to him.

Memory Verse: "'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard/whiteboard, chalk or markers, sheet of white paper and pencils/pens.
- Instructions: Write the following question on the board: "What did it feel like to lose a loved one (it could be through death, abandonment, or losing a friend)?" Each student will write their feelings on their paper and share them with the group.

Relate this to the feeling the disciples experienced when they lost their teacher.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard, chalk, markers and individual chairs.
- Instructions: Ask the students to organize themselves in pairs and comment on the question: What would happen if Christ came back today? Each pair will express their expectations in a few words to the group.

Explain the importance of being prepared for his second coming.

Connect

Navigate

After Jesus Christ was resurrected, he dedicated 40 days to living with his disciples, talking, eating and remembering with them many things that he had taught them. In that way, he tried to make sure that they not only saw him, but that they were sure that he had risen. The biblical passage that we'll study is that of the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts 1:6-11.

Teaching suggestion: Organize the class into three teams and distribute the three parts of the passage for reading and analysis through questions. Allow time to read the passage and answer the reflection questions, and then share your answers with the group. You will only moderate the discussion and guide students to a conclusion.

1. The disciples were still waiting for an earthly kingdom

Discussion Questions (Acts 1:6-7):

- In the disciples' question to Jesus (v.6), what kingdom were they referring to?
- What kind of reign did they expect from Jesus since he had been resurrected?
- What do you understand about the answer that Jesus gave to his disciples about the kingdom?

Although his disciples had seen all the events that proved that Jesus Christ was the son of God and the Messiah awaited by the people of Israel, and had enjoyed the experiences and teachings with their teacher, they still had a lot of doubts. It seems that the disciples hoped that Jesus would stay with them and free them from the oppressive yoke of the Romans. They weren't thinking at all that Christ would return to heaven and leave them alone. They didn't understand that He wasn't a political leader, but a spiritual one; that his kingdom wasn't earthly, but spiritual.

“They expected a material kingdom because the Spirit had not been poured out upon them to give them a more enlightened understanding of the matter” (Beacon Bible Commentary. Volume 7. CNP, USA: 1983, p.268).

2. Jesus Christ reminded them of the promise of the Holy Spirit

Discussion Questions (Acts 1:8):

- Why was it so important to Jesus that his first disciples receive the Holy Spirit?
- What would that power be used for in the first members of the Christian church?
- Do you think Christians today need to receive that same power? Why?

In the dialogue with his disciples, Jesus led them to reflect on something more important than an earthly kingdom. He led them to remember the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, promised since the time of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) and confirmed by Himself (John 14:16,26), introducing a new perspective on the importance of this event. “You will receive power” (v.8).

The Holy Spirit would come to comfort their hearts so that the disciples wouldn’t feel alone, nor lose hope that Jesus was truly the son of God and Savior of the world, and one day he would return for them.

To start his church on earth, it was essential that his followers receive a special power from the Holy Spirit; this power would enable them to be witnesses and thus they could carry out the work of evangelism.

This power was conceived with a universal saving purpose. He expanded the perspective of the Kingdom of heaven; it wasn’t only for the Jews, but for all the inhabitants of the earth.

3. Jesus Christ ascended and a hope arose

Discussion Questions (Acts 1:9-11):

- What feelings do you think the disciples experienced when they saw Jesus leave for heaven?
- What is the importance of the message they received from the angels?
- How important is the message of the angels for our Christian life today?

In Luke 24: 50-52, the narrative of Acts is enhanced: They went to Bethany, Jesus blessed them and while He slowly ascended, they stayed for a long time contemplating his departure and worshiped him.

I imagine that their emotions were mixed. Jesus was proving that what he had said was true, he was the son of God and was returning to his Father; but they were left alone, they would no longer have a leader to guide them.

The angels brought them back to reality. Perhaps the disciples were afraid and the angels were in charge of giving them words of hope (Acts 1:11).

“The two figures in white clothing, in a manner that occurred in the scene of the resurrection (cf. Luke 24:4), announced to the apostles that Jesus would reappear again in the same way that they saw him disappear, only in reverse. Just now he disappeared going up, and later he will reappear coming down. It is an allusion to the glorious return of Jesus in the parousia, which from that moment constitutes the supreme expectation of the first Christian generation, and whose hope encouraged and sustained them in their work” (Annotated Bible, Library of Christian Authors. Volume VI. Lorenzo Turrado. Católica S.A., Madrid: 1975, p.31).

4. The early church continued forward

Have students read and discuss some other passages that address the topic: Acts 3:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 2 Peter 3:8-14.

In its beginnings, the church suffered persecution, not only from Judaism's own religious leaders, but also from the Roman Empire. This caused the dispersion of the church throughout the empire. The first leaders of the church were concerned with fulfilling the Great Commission to the letter: Preach the message of salvation, confirm Christians in their faith, baptize them, and maintain hope in the Second Coming of Christ. This hope was real, expected by all, and preached from the beginning of the church (Acts 3:19-20).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, Paul gave hope to Christians who were experiencing persecution and sometimes martyrdom because of their faith. His description of the Second Coming is truly exciting. Paul presents us with a victorious Christ who shows his power and magnificence and will come as King to establish a heavenly Kingdom.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9, Paul warned of the danger of setting probable dates; he clarified that no one will know the day or the hour. Jesus' coming will be sudden, unexpected, without warning. This expectation must permeate our mind and heart so as not to lose sight of heaven.

In 2 Peter 3:8-14, Peter says that the coming of the Lord had not happened yet because God wants more people to know the gospel and be saved. As the day of the Lord approaches, we must be prepared (v.11).

Challenge students to be prepared by remaining faithful, serving God, and sharing the message of salvation.

Review/Application:

Give the students time to answer each question.

- What did you learn or were reminded of from this class for your life?
- Will this lesson affect your daily life at all?
- Do you think you should change anything from now on?
- Write what changes you'll make as a commitment before God.

Challenge:

At your age, sometimes it's difficult to believe that Christ will return. This is a matter of faith since God is a Spirit and we cannot see him. It's important that today you make a decision regarding the future of your spiritual life. Remember that the coming of Christ is true and is the hope of every Christian to enjoy eternal life. Write down what practical actions you'll take this week to wait for his Second Coming:

A great story

Lesson 24

Tabita & David González • USA

Objective: That the students understand that the birth of Jesus was an event that changed the course of human history and our own lives.

Memory Verse: “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.” (Luke 1:31)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: 2 containers, a tennis ball, 2 pieces of paper and a pen/pencil for each student.
- Instructions: Give two pieces of paper to each student and ask them to write a place on one piece and an action on the other, and then place them in a container.

Ask the group to sit in a circle, and after shuffling the papers in the containers, draw one action and one place from the containers and use those to start telling a story. At one point, stop your story and throw the ball to someone in the circle. Whoever receives it will draw an action and place and using those, continue with the story, and so forth until the rest of the class has contributed to the story. If the person whose turn it is doesn't continue with the story within five seconds, they'll be eliminated.

Through this dynamic, teens will recognize that stories are attractive, especially if there's an exciting, surprising, supernatural event and of course, if we're involved in it in some way.

At Christmas time in particular, we remember the most exciting story that could exist: The story of the birth of Jesus.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Cards that contain a word, (for example, alien, moon, truck, arrow, etc.).
- Instructions: Form two groups and ask each group to choose a “story teller” who will stand, facing each other. Give each person a card, hiding it from the other person. Start telling a story, as fun as possible. After 30 seconds, ask one of the “tellers” to continue the story for 30 seconds. When time is up, the other continues the story. During the 30 seconds they must use the word that appears on their card three times, making sure that the “teller” of the other team doesn't guess it. When finished, ask each person to say the word they think the other person had on their card. The team that gets it right will accumulate a point. Repeat the dynamic several times with different people.

We are all part of a story that's much bigger than we imagine. Quickly, tell me what you think are the five most important events in the history of mankind.

Connect

Navigate

We are surrounded by stories. Life itself is a series of stories. We could say that our life is like a book. We have things to do and events that will happen and will be part of our story. Another important detail is that our story is related to other people's stories.

What we do every day continues to write the story that others began to write long before us and that will be continued by others who will come after us.

1. The story of God

There are significant events that mark our lives, and in some cases, alter the direction of our lives in such a profound way that we'll remember them for a lifetime. At any age we can identify several of these events: Starting school, moving to another city, the first date, the wedding, the first job, etc.

The history of humanity has experienced its own significant events: The invention of electricity or the printing press, the discovery of America, the French Revolution, the first man on the moon, etc. But there is one event that stands out above all of these. The paradoxical moment in which the history of God was inserted into the history of humanity with the birth of Jesus, the promised Messiah. A historical event that separated the times of humanity. The birth of Jesus marked the beginning of the new Covenant, through which we can draw closer to God.

2. The story of a common family

When reading Matthew 1:1-17, we see the family tree of Jesus, and that's where the closest information about his family on earth appears. Ask: Have you ever read this list of names?

For Jewish culture, knowing a person's family was very important. Matthew's purpose with this list was to show the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, a descendant of David and Abraham, two important figures in the history of Israel. Matthew not only wanted to show that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and David, but he also wanted to show that Jesus came from a large family full of joys, adventures, tragedies and pain. As human as the rest of us!

Skipping over some names with interesting history, we come to Joseph and Mary. She was a young woman who had to suffer the shame of being pregnant before her marriage (Matthew 1:18). She could have died at the hands of her family or as an act of justice between her neighbors since she had "stained" the honor of her parents. For Joseph, the most fair thing was to reject the woman who had shamed her name (v.19). Before this happened, God himself intervened so that she wouldn't be stoned as required by the law (v.20).

Joseph and Mary were ordinary people, but the divine touch, and their response to the voice of God, made them special people. The story of Mary and Joseph was radically transformed when they decided to obey and enter God's story. It seemed like they didn't have much to offer, but they did. They offered their future, their integrity and their trust; they gave themselves to be instruments in God's plans (Matthew 1:24-25; Luke 1:38).

3. God's intervention transformed history

It was God's intervention that made a miracle possible through the imperfection of all the people mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. The situation of ordinary people, who accept divine intervention, makes possible the transformation of the total being. God's perfection is inserted into man's imperfection (Emmanuel "God with us", Matthew 1:23b). God, holy, eternal and powerful, came to us, through Jesus, to live with us, to free us from sin and give us abundant life (John 10:10), which He designed from the beginning of time.

Jesus, the son of God, God himself made man, lived among us, decided to live with our failures, suffer our tragedies and our shame. God decided to be born into a family that represented human reality.

Christmas is the celebration of God's personal intervention in the history of humanity, and particularly in our lives. Just as it happened 2000 years ago, this Christmas is a good time to allow Jesus to continue intervening in our lives, but also in the lives of other people who live without hope, homes where their dreams have been broken, where tragedies are the bread of every day, where their possibilities of improvement practically don't exist, where salvation and a full life are just "dreams."

Thanks to God's intervention in our lives, the celebration of Christmas should be different for us. When we approach the baby of Bethlehem, we find that he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and that he isn't lying in a manger, but is sitting on the throne of grace where we can find mercy, timely help and eternal life.

This should remind us that God continues looking for the person, just as he or she is, with all of their history and imperfections, to intervene in their life, give them hope and do a miracle in their heart.

Review/Application:

Ask the following questions (we include a possible answer in italics).

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase God's story? (*The events in which God is involved. As God is eternal, so is his story.*)
- Which of the characters mentioned in Matthew 1:1-17 do you know? Mention two and write what teaching they left in your life.
- What do you think would have happened to Joseph or Mary if they rejected the invitation to be part of God's story?

Challenge:

How will you respond to God's love? When Mary received the news from the angel, she decided to obey God. The shepherds did the same, as did the wise men of the east. Write a list of everything you thank God for and keep it in your Bible. Take a special time to thank God for Jesus and worship Him with all your being.



What will the new year be like?

Lesson

25

Loysbel Pérez • Cuba

Objective: That the students understand what God demands of the church in his Word for the new year.

Memory Verse: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don’t be afraid; don’t be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A handkerchief and materials that serve as obstacles.
- Instructions: Prepare a path with obstacles. After blindfolding a student, ask him or her to reach the other end of the class blindfolded, passing through obstacles without tripping over any. Another person will guide them so that they don’t collide with any obstacles. The guidance will be verbal and the blindfolded person will have to trust it.

After the dynamic, ask them how they felt and what they learned about the new year.

In this new year, we’ll all have to travel an unknown path that may have difficulties, but we’ll have to trust in God’s voice of guidance.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Pen, sheets of paper.
- Instructions: Give paper to all students and ask them to write down what they would like to do in this new year (in their life, family, ministry, etc.). It will be a good time to ask the class to set goals in which God is central.

Connect

Navigate

The year has many holidays, but only some of them have international connotations. One of them is December 31 in which one year is said goodbye to and another is welcomed. Most people in the world celebrate this day because it has been a privilege to be able to end one year and start another. But since human beings have always liked to know about the future, they begin to ask themselves questions, and the most common of that day is, What will the new year bring us?

1. I will be with you

When Joshua was going to enter the promised land, God told him, “No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life; As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). In this new year, we, like Joshua, are called by God to take on different challenges. We don’t know what will happen to us, but we’re sure of one thing, God is and will be with us! God’s promise to Joshua remains unchanged for us today.

The mere fact of having the deep conviction that the great God who created the heavens and the earth will be by our side gives us courage to face what we have to experience in the next year. The Bible is clear for those who have decided to love God: God will work through everything that happens to you this year for good (Romans 8:28).

God didn’t deceive Joshua: He was with him and didn’t forsake him. God helped Moses part the Red Sea, and did the same miracle with Joshua by opening the Jordan River to teach the people that as he had been with Moses, he was now with Joshua.

The promise of God's permanent company at the side of the leader and his people began with Moses before leaving Egypt, and God truly fulfilled what was promised. However, that didn't exempt the people from experiencing difficult situations.

Although God is with us, he won't exempt us from problems, but the promise of his presence with us will still stand. Let's hold on to it! (In this part of the class, discuss the presence of God and comment on some experience where they felt God next to them.)

2. Try hard and be brave

God also told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous" (v.6). God gave Joshua a promise, but he put a great task in his hands that must be accomplished. The land that the Israelites were to possess wasn't empty; there were towns in them that had to be removed. Joshua, as the top leader, had to guide the people to conquer that land and subsequently distribute it. That required two qualities: *Effort*, which is: "Energetic use of physical force against some impulse or resistance. Energetic use of vigor or activity of mind to achieve something by overcoming difficulties. Vigor, verve" (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy online). And it also required *courage*, which means: "Effort, encouragement, vigor. Heroic act or feat executed with bravery" (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy online).

Like Joshua, in this new year we'll experience difficult tasks, hard problems and complicated circumstances, but God asks for those same two qualities in us: Effort and courage. We must not be afraid of problems, but face them with courage and be strong in the midst of them.

Ask: What fears do you have as you begin this new year? I want you to remember a difficult situation you faced in the past year in which you were strong and faced it with courage. This will help you to reinforce your strengths and encourage others.

We have no doubt that God will be with us in this new year, but there are rules that we have to obey. God wants:

- a. that we live according to his Word,
- b. that we have the courage and firmness as Christians to live in holiness within the society in which we find ourselves, and
- c. that we don't give in to the pressure of the groups that want to distort our faith and destroy our relationship with God.

Let's live for Christ in this new year! Let's strive and be brave!

3. Everything will work out for you

Ask: Do you think the following statement is true or false? "Everything turns out well for a Christian."

This phrase is pleasant to our ears, but we rarely believe it. We don't have the necessary conviction to trust that everything will really turn out well for us in the new year. We see it as something impossible to achieve even when we know that God will be with us.

The promise given to Joshua was conditional. For the promise to be a reality, this leader had to fulfill the condition that God demanded of him (Joshua 1:8).

In the New International Version, Joshua 1:8 says, "Then you will be prosperous and successful" Two words frequently mentioned today: Success and prosperity, what many long for, but which God only gives to those who live in full relationship with Him. We must understand that success and prosperity will be according to God, and not according to us.

Not everything that happened to Joshua was good. God told him that everything would turn out well for him if Joshua had a good relationship with Him. In the case of Ai, a town that according to the spies sent by Joshua was easy to defeat, it was the opposite. Israel was defeated because God's presence wasn't with them.

Not so on the second occasion when Ai was destroyed and the land occupied by the Israelites.

Today we can ask: Where was the fulfillment of the promise from God that: "...everything would work out for him..."? But we observe in the biblical text that the reasons for that first defeat were that the people had sinned (Joshua 7:11). Therefore, they were to sanctify themselves and put away sin (Joshua 7:13).

When we experience apparent defeats in life, we must examine ourselves to know if we're acting according to God's will and if there's any sin that hinders God's purposes, and if so, we must repent. There is no ultimate defeat for the Christian who lives for God, because He always leads us in triumph in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:14). Yes, we will face difficulties, but God even uses difficult situations to help us grow.

After having analyzed what God tells us in his Word for this new year, we only have to live for Him and trust in the promises that have been given to us.

Review/Application:

Link the following words as appropriate.

1. Joshua
 2. I will be with you.
 3. He didn't forsake him.
 4. Joshua 1:8
 5. If we walk with God
-
- (3) God
 - (1) Leader
 - (4) Prosperity and Success
 - (2) Promise
 - (5) Happy New Year

With this lesson in mind, write God's promise for this new year.

For example: *"If I am faithful to his Word, and make an effort and trust in the Lord, I will be able to fulfill his will."*

Challenge:

During the week, pray to the Lord to help you be strong and brave and to face the new year ahead of you together.

The dry hand

Lesson 26

Albina Antonio • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand that for Jesus, it's important to show mercy and satisfy people's needs, regardless of what others think.

Memory Verse: "How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings." (Psalm 36:7)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Little pieces of paper where the miracles of Jesus Christ are written (Peter's mother-in-law, a man with an unclean spirit, the miraculous catch, a leper, a paralytic, the withered hand, calmed the storm, the demon-possessed man of Gadarene, Jairus' daughter, feeding of the five thousand, etc.) and a container.
- Instructions: Ask the group to divide into several teams if it's large or if it's small, form pairs. Place the papers with miracles written on them in the container.

Then ask a representative of each team to come forward and take a piece of paper (with the name of a miracle of Jesus) and by only answering "yes" or "no" to questions they are asked, have their team or their partner discover the miracle that's written on the paper. Your team may ask: Is it a man? Is it illness?, etc. It will be forbidden to make gestures or signs, and you'll have one minute to help your team or partner discover the miracle.

If the instructions are not followed to the letter, the participant will lose their opportunity and will move on to the next team. If the team or couple manages to discover the miracle, they'll be given 2 points and it will then go to the opposing team.

Whoever can guess the most miracles will be the winner.

Mentioning the different miracles will help the teacher guide the group to generate comments about God's mercy, goodness, and love for people.

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What is the first thing we say or feel when we look at a beggar, someone who is sick or in serious trouble? Pity! or poor guy! and we think that that's having mercy. But really, the meaning of this word in the dictionary is: "compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone." This word isn't widely used in our daily lives, much less is there a good understanding of what it involves in action. Mercy put into action through a miracle was something Jesus Christ did repeatedly.

1. The need for the "man with the dry hand"

The biblical narrative began when Jesus entered the synagogue (Matthew 12:9-10,14) where the Pharisees were trying to trick him regarding the fulfillment of the Law, which in this case was about keeping the Sabbath day. . The scandalous thing about the Pharisees' attitude was that they didn't care about the need of their "brother," much less about healing, but rather their attention was the fact that the Law was broken.

The only thing we know about the man spoken of in the passage is that he was in the synagogue, which was a public place where the poor, needy and sick gathered. They couldn't enter, but they could be seen in order to get people to have pity on them and thus ask for alms from those who entered or passed by. Having a flaw or infirmity in Jewish culture was a huge burden since these people were singled out and marginalized. In addition to their material misery, people considered them impure. It was believed that if they were sick, it was because they had committed a sin and God had punished them. That's why no one approached them, nor did they let them approach them.

Jesus had a special love for people in need, and he said so publicly in the synagogue (Luke 4:18-19).

Despite his condition, this man was used as bait by the Pharisees, who didn't care about his need. They were looking for an opportunity to bring down the Lord.

This man's condition represents our needs as human beings and shows God's mercy by doing extraordinary things.

2. Jesus' attitude

We'll find many quotes and stories in the Bible that speak of God's great love expressed through miracles. Also Jesus in his human condition constantly showed his goodness.

Jesus' behavior was one of boundless love. Even knowing the intention of the Pharisees and the unfavorable consequences they could have on his ministry, he decided to take an attitude of mercy, because he knew the benefits and opportunities that this man would have when he was healed.

The Pharisees asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (v.10). Jesus knew the intention of that question and that it was a trap to hurt him, but his love and desire to satisfy the need of that man was stronger. He began by arguing why he would do that miracle, not to ask permission, but to teach them to be gently, to show them how much he loves his creation (Matthew 12:11-12).

The comparison of the value of a person's life with that of a sheep is just one more parable to explain what he would do. Perhaps the crude example of rescuing the sheep and being confronted with the following question, "will you not take hold of it and lift it out?" (Matthew 12:11 NIV) pushed them to respond to the question, "are you trying to help the one you love? When you see that he or she is suffering, is the only thing that comes to mind saving or mitigating their illness, leaving in the background what day it is or what law you're not keeping?" Jesus' attitude was the sum of love, kindness, power and justice that resulted in a miracle.

Review/Application:

During the lesson, we have reflected on what the Pharisees thought, the situation of the sick at that time and in that Jewish culture, and who Jesus is. Let's read the quote where the miracle is found in the lesson (Matthew 12:1-21.) After they have read it, have them answer the following questions (answers in italics):

1. What were the following characters going to do before their meeting?
 - Jesus: *Jesus was teaching about the Sabbath.*
 - The man with the paralyzed hand: *I was going to ask for alms.*
 - Pharisees: *They were looking for an opportunity to accuse Jesus.*
2. What do you think was the thought of the following characters after their meeting?
 - Jesus: *Satisfaction.*
 - The man with the paralyzed hand: *Joy and gratitude.*
 - Pharisees: *Frustration and more hatred towards Jesus.*
3. Do you think this situation can occur in your context? Think of an example and share it with the class

Challenge:

Think about how many times you have turned down the opportunity to do an act of mercy for someone. This week, ask God to help you to be sensitive and see needs where you can be a blessing to others, regardless of the circumstances. Share next Sunday with the class how you put what you learned into action.

Faith in Action

Lesson 27

David Bonilla • Costa Rica

Objective: That the students identify some characteristics that led to the manifestation of a miracle in the life of the centurion's servant.

Memory Verse: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." (Psalm 40:1-2)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Form two teams and ask them to sit in a row and hold hands crosswise, that is, with their left hand hold the hand of the person on their right and with their right hand hold the hand of the person on their left. Have them sit back to back with the opposing team.

When you indicate it, the first player in line from each team must shake his partner's hand and so on, all the players will pass the wave shaking each other's hands. As soon as the last player receives the handshake, he must run to the beginning of his line and sit in the place of the player who started the signal, and that player and everyone in the line scoots down a chair, and they start the wave again. This will continue until whoever was first in line has gone all the way through the line and is back to first place in line again.

No player should shake his partner's hand if he hasn't had his hand shaken first. You should have an observer to make sure no one is cheating. A false contact means starting over. The team that manages to pass completely through first will be the winner.

The dynamic aims to highlight the quality of trust, in the sense of trusting and depending on other people to achieve goals in the same way that the centurion trusted the Jewish elders to cry out to Jesus for the servant.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Shoe laces, ropes or strips of fabric to tie.
- Instructions: Tie each pair of people by one foot with a cord, rope or strip of cloth. When you have the pairs tied up, tell them that each couple has to complete a mission tied by one foot. The mission can be walking from one place to another or a race against another couple or carrying one or more objects from one place to another. The pair who achieves their mission first will win.

Then, ask the pairs how they felt when they were joined. Ask them to tell about the difficulties and advantages they encountered when being tied together, what strategies they used to achieve success, or what situations caused them to not achieve success.

One of the qualities of the human being (of everyone, in every culture, ethnicity, time, gender) is the need to live and coexist in community. The church as such is the community of believers who need each other in the same way that the centurion needed the Jewish elders to cry out to Jesus for his servant.

Connect

Navigate

In the variety of groups that exist among human beings, there are differences (religious, cultural, social, etc.), but there are also similarities that are typical of human beings, regardless of those differences.

One of those similarities is the ability to believe and the need to do so. All people build for themselves (influenced by their context and culture) a system of beliefs through which they establish their meaning in life. Even those who say they don't believe in God or any divinity meet that need with other things in which they place their belief and project their life: Call it science, philosophy, humanism, etc. In the case of Christianity, faith is fundamental, to the point that the Bible declares that without it, it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).



1. Some historical notes

These events occurred in Capernaum, the city where Jesus lived (Matthew 4:13), in which he had the support and necessary support of the people to carry out his ministry, contrary to his hometown, Nazareth (Luke 4:16). ,29-30).

We don't know the name of the main character of this story (Luke 7: 1-10), but the text says that he was a centurion (v.2). This was a military position that had one hundred soldiers under its command, that is, a military unit called a centuria. Within the Jewish context, a centurion represented the strength of the Roman empire that had subjugated and taxed them, reasons why the Romans weren't loved.

The Jews despised non-Jews (Gentiles), and the Romans hated the Jews, considering them to be a superstitious and discriminatory race. However, many Gentiles accepted Judaism as their only God and their austere ethics. We are then faced with an exceptional story of friendship between Jews and a Gentile (Roman).

On the other hand, laws and customs prevented a Jew from having a relationship with a Gentile, or even entering his house. If he did so, he became defiled and unclean. For these reasons, the centurion didn't personally go to speak with Jesus, and later, preferred to tell him not to go to his house (Luke 7: 3,6). This denotes that despite not being Jewish, he was respectful of the laws and customs of the people and preferred that Jesus not fall into "impurity" by arriving at his house. We are then faced with a story in which a Gentile was respectful of the laws and customs of the Jewish people and in turn, the people respected the centurion and considered him "worthy" (Luke 7:4).

2. Teamwork

The miracle was received by the servant, but the request was made by the centurion. The request was brought first by some leaders of the Jews, and then by some friends of the centurion, to Jesus. If the term used, "elders" or "leaders", is taken as a reference, it means that there were at least two. If you do the math, you'll notice that there are at least five people who moved and acted for the benefit of a person who socially "did not deserve" such a favor.

Thinking about it in terms of a team, a minimum of five individuals started from an idea, organized themselves, made an effort and came with the same feeling before Jesus who could do what they wanted: Heal the servant.

All of Jesus' miracles occurred in different circumstances. This one in particular shows teamwork that fostered a context in which Jesus showed his power.

3. The located mind

The centurion had heard about Jesus' teachings and miracles and immediately thought He could provide a solution (Luke 7:3). Although the centurion could have used military force to bring Jesus, he knew it would be of no use because he understood who the man was.

The centurion himself acknowledged being under authority, and also confessed that he knew what it meant to have people under his authority. In fact, he had at least 100 soldiers, in addition to the people of Capernaum, who, given their military position, obeyed his orders and commands (Luke 7:7-8). However, the centurion knew that it wasn't about him, nor about his own authority. It wasn't about what he could do, but about Jesus' authority, to whom he was turning, who with "a single word" could give healing to his servant, something no one else could do.

This Roman leader had the clarity of mind that, due to Jewish customs and culture, he couldn't approach the Master in a "worthy" manner and that he wasn't "worthy" to receive him in his house either. The centurion was clear about who he was, but more importantly, it was clear in his mind who Jesus was, which is why he turned to Him, because he knew that a single word out of his mouth was enough.

4. The decision to believe

The centurion sent the Jewish leaders and they said to Jesus that he was worthy of help for two reasons:

- a. Because of his feelings: "...because he loves our nation..." (7:5).
- b. By his actions: "...he built us a synagogue" (7:5).

Although those were valid reasons since the Master went with them, it wasn't until Jesus heard the words of the centurion that he said "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (v.9) The centurion decided to believe, to put his faith in Jesus and that had the expected result. If we look carefully, what amazed Jesus wasn't what the Roman felt or what the soldier had done (v.5), it was the centurion's faith that caught his attention and amazed and motivated the Healer's action (v. .9).

Review/Application:

Ask the students to answer the following questions and then participate in the discussion around each of them.

1. What does it mean to believe or put trust in something or someone?
2. Who do your neighborhood friends or fellow students place their trust in?
3. What does it mean to put our trust in God?

Challenge:

Think of a person you love very much and who has a sufficiently important need (some family member, friend or colleague who is sick, on drugs, alcoholic or in extreme need). Clearly define your request. Then find some people you trust who can share your burden and ask them to help you ask Jesus for that special person. Write the name of the person, their request and who will help you pray:

Do you need a doctor?

Lesson 28

Eva Velásquez • Guatemala

Objective: That the students discover that Jesus' ability to heal isn't limited by time, place, or what others think.

Memory Verse: "Jesus answered them, 'It isn't the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.'" (Luke 5:31)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Supplies: Sheets of paper, pencils and markers, adhesive tape and a drawing of the human body separated or marked into its three basic parts: Head, trunk and limbs.
- Instructions: Form three groups. Ask each group to choose a basic part of the human body. The figure of the human body, drawn or taped on the wall or blackboard, must be visible to everyone. Give them five minutes to make a written list of all the diseases they know of that affect the part of the body they chose. At the end of the time, ask them to come and stick their piece of paper near the selected body shape. Read them aloud and ask if they know anyone who has had that illness. They can comment or add information about medical treatments or feelings experienced in the midst of these illnesses.

At the end, invite them to consider the painful, uncomfortable or limiting situations that they experience in times of illness, and how these affect us and the people around us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Supplies: Newspaper clippings with news about diseases and/or sick people or recommendations to prevent certain diseases.
- Instructions: Have the newspaper clippings ready and give each person a piece of news as they arrive. Tell them that you'll give them a short time to read them and that they'll comment on them later. When you think that everyone has read the news provided in the newspaper clipping, allow them to share and comment on what they read.

You can add some probing questions about their health or that of some of their family and friends. After that, encourage them to think about how many diseases there are, and the people who suffer from them, around us and how important it is to have good health at all times.

Connect

Navigate

On many occasions, sick people cannot go to the doctor and have to go to study or work feeling bad because the symptoms they have aren't enough reason to ask for leave and be absent. They may take advantage of a free day to go to the doctor and treat that illness that they haven't had time to attend to due to so many responsibilities. There are also people who postpone visiting the doctor because they don't have the money to pay for a consultation, much less the medicine. There are also some patients for whom medicine cannot yet provide the healing they need.

In Jesus' time, the same thing happened as today, and there were the same limitations to go to the doctor and be healed. But one Sabbath day, there was someone very sick ... and Jesus was there ... and something different happened.

1. Time doesn't limit Jesus' power

Have different students read: Mark 1:29-31; 3:1-6, Luke 13:10-17 and 14:1-6. Have them discover when the healing was performed by Jesus - on what day and at what time. Read with them again the passage from Luke 13:10-12. Let them see the situation of this woman with 18 years of suffering from this same disease and ask: How do you think she felt? Maybe she felt uncomfortable, embarrassed, sore and tired. Still, she was there, in the synagogue. It wasn't a coincidence. Perhaps every Sabbath day during those years that woman had gone to the synagogue.

At that time, they had made the Sabbath a day in which people were slaves to that day. Jesus rescued the true meaning (Matthew 12:8). He pointed out to the Jews that they had tried to make Sabbath observance more rigorous than God had commanded. It wasn't forbidden to do good.

What do you do on the Sabbath? Our schedules and days of the week are extremely busy. What would happen if we got sick that day? If we had a fever, we probably wouldn't go to church or participate in some spiritual growth activity. We might stop praying and we wouldn't read the Bible because we felt discouraged or tired. We use illness as an impediment to giving God our time. Perhaps we have come to think that it isn't the time to ask God or that our illness has been going on for so long that God cannot heal it.

Jesus performed a healing miracle on the Sabbath to demonstrate that time doesn't limit his power. Jesus healed and heals at any time because he has the power in his hands (Luke 4: 18-19 and 21). "Today" is the time.

2. There is no place that limits the power of Jesus

Continue reading the passage from Luke 13:12-14. For the Pharisees, not only was the day Jesus healed inappropriate, but so was the place. For them, it was a challenge to their authority and God's law that Jesus will heal this woman in the synagogue. The synagogue "served as a substitute for the temple. In the synagogue, there was no altar, prayer, and reading the Torah took the place of the sacrifice. Furthermore, the house of prayer fulfilled an important social function.... It was a meeting point and place for assemblies where the people could gather whenever it was necessary to consider important community issues. The synagogue was the cradle of a completely new type of social and religious life, and served as the basis for the formation of a religious community of universal scope. For the first time, Jewish monotheism was emancipated in religious practice from ties to a specifically designated place. Now God drew near to the people wherever they dwelt" (The History of the Jews in Ancient Times, The Jewish People, I, pp.78-152). "Currently the synagogue continues to be one of the dominant institutions of Judaism and the center of the religious life of the Jewish community" (New Bible Dictionary. Douglas, J. United Bible Societies: Miami, 2000, p.).

Jesus' enemies considered the synagogue to be a good place for free publicity to raise a good number of followers. Something like those political assemblies that move large groups of people for particular purposes. But Jesus wasn't there for those purposes. Unlike other healing miracles that occurred on the Sabbath, this woman didn't cry out for help, nor was she carried by friends. Jesus saw a woman in need and called her. What a beautiful gesture of compassionate love! Jesus needed to establish the fact that in that place (the synagogue), God could work mercy too. The place became something special because Jesus was there.

It may be that we're going through an illness or discomfort that we haven't told anyone about or very few know about. We can be calm and confident that Jesus does know. We cannot lock Him up like a doctor in his clinic or in a hospital. He is here now and he can display his power if that's his will, and that's what we can see in this miracle. The place didn't matter, what mattered was that Jesus was in that place; after 18 years, the woman was healed. That was surprisingly miraculous.

3. What others think doesn't limit Jesus' power.

In Luke 13:14-16, diverse reactions are observed. The ruler of the synagogue was angry (v.14). When Jesus heard it, he reacted (v.15-16). At Jesus' response, his adversaries were ashamed, but the people rejoiced (v.17).

For Jesus, the most important thing was to detect the need and meet it, thereby doing the will of God. He didn't take a single moment to consider what the ruler of the synagogue or the Pharisees would think. He already knew what they thought, yet he was willing to compromise his public image to help people.

Take time to end this lesson by praying for healing requests in the group. Encourage them to commit to God to begin or affirm the habit of praying for the requests and needs of others.

Review/Application:

In pairs, look at Luke 4:18-21 and think about practical, current activities that answer the questions below.

- How can you bring good news to someone who has spent all their money on medicine and is still sick?
- How can you show a person that Jesus loves them when they feel depressed because someone has rejected them romantically?
- What can you do for a friend who is starting a drug habit?
- What can you give to someone who has to work or study in a place they don't like?
- How can you share the Word with someone who is sick in bed?

At the end you can comment on the answers briefly.

Challenge:

Now that you have finished this lesson, connect with other young people your age and ask them if they have any needs that you can pray for. It would be great if during each day of your personal Bible study you would get into the habit of forming intercession groups for those needs. Let your imagination fly and propose to your class a prayer and intercession project in which they could get involved.

The best cure!

Lesson 29

Yaneth González • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand the value of leading their friends to Jesus.

Memory Verse: “‘But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ So he said to the paralyzed man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’” (Luke 5:24)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: White cardboard and markers.
- Instructions: On the cardboard draw a path and at the end a “goal” flag, but instead of that word write “Jesus.” Form teams as appropriate in your group (they can be up to 5) and ask them to name a leader for each team.

Then ask them to draw along the way the obstacles that prevent them from bringing their friends closer to Jesus. The team leader will be the one who has a marker and the only one who can draw. The other members, without speaking, will tell the leader through signs what should be drawn.

At the end, reflect on the importance of recognizing the obstacles that prevent us from bringing our friends closer to Jesus, in order to overcome them.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: A blindfold, some boxes or objects that serve as obstacles on the floor.
- Instructions: Ask for a volunteer and blindfold them, then place the objects (obstacles) on the floor at a considerable distance, and establish a route and a destination. Ask the group (without the volunteer listening) to divide into two groups, one for help and one for distraction. Put the volunteer at the beginning of the route and ask the help group to stand on the right side and give them instructions on how to clear the obstacles and ask the other group to stand on the left side and confuse them. At the end, the volunteer has to identify which of the two groups told him the truth and helped him.

Guide them to reach the conclusion that they must be very attentive to recognize the people who truly want to help them, and that in turn, they must be helpful to their friends to guide them along the right path.

Connect

Navigate

1. It takes faith to bring a paralytic to Jesus

We have all read or heard about the miracles of Jesus ... the gospels are full of them. When Jesus lived on earth, miracles were one way of demonstrating his love for humanity. Ask: What does it take for a miracle to happen? Have you witnessed any miracles?

Jesus said that to receive a miracle, all you need is faith. The Bible tells us that faith like a mustard seed can move mountains (Matthew 17:20). The Bible defines faith as: “...the assurance of things hoped for, the assurance of things not yet seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is complete trust in God, depending on Him without a moment’s doubt. Ask: Is it easy to have faith? Tell the following story and then ask them again if it’s easy to have faith.

They say that “a mountaineer prepared for several years to conquer Aconcagua. His desire to achieve the feat was such that, knowing all the risks, he began his journey alone. He began to climb and the day progressed. When night started to arrive, he didn’t prepare to camp for the night, but instead decided to continue climbing to reach the top that same day. Night fell heavily at the height of the

mountain and absolutely nothing could be seen. Everything was dark; the moon and stars were covered by clouds. Climbing a cliff about 100 meters from the top, he slipped and fell into the void. He fell at a dizzying speed. He continued to fall and in those distressing moments, all the pleasant and not so pleasant moments of his life passed through his mind. He thought he was going to die, but suddenly he felt a pull so strong that he thought it would break him in two. Like every experienced mountaineer, he had nailed safety stakes into the mountain and attached to them a very long rope that was tied around his waist.

In those moments of stillness, suspended in the air seeing absolutely nothing in the middle of the terrible darkness, he had no choice but to scream - "Help me, my God!"

Suddenly a deep and serious voice from the heavens answered him, "What do you want me to do?"

He answered, "save me, my God."

God asked him, "do you really think I can save you?"

"Of course, my God," he replied.

"Then cut the rope that holds you," said God.

A moment of silence and stillness followed. The man clung tighter to the rope and began to think about God's proposal...

The next day, the rescue team that arrived in search of him found him dead, frozen, clinging tightly to the rope, hanging just two meters from the ground. The mountaineer wasn't able to cut the rope and trust in God.

The passage from Luke 5:17-26 tells us the story of some men who brought a sick friend so that Jesus could heal him. We must recognize what quality of friends these were. Although the Bible doesn't tell us how far they had to walk and what things had to happen to bring their friend into Jesus' presence, the fact that they took him already tells us a lot (vv.17 -18). Perhaps one of these friends, upon seeing Jesus perform miracles or hearing about Him, thought that one of the people who could be healed by Jesus was that friend who couldn't walk. There's no doubt that only Jesus with that supernatural gaze could see their faith (v.20), an invisible, silent but active faith.

2. It takes courage to overcome obstacles

A race with obstacles is more difficult than the race without them; It takes more concentration, effort, agility and a different preparation to jump over obstacles. The passage we're studying tells us about certain difficulties that the friends of the paralytic had to go through (Matthew 5:19). The Bible says that the men brought their friend on his bed. It's uncomfortable walking while carrying a person on a bed. In addition to that, they had to lift him onto the roof of the house, and then they had to lower him to where Jesus was ... quite a feat!

Young people are recognized because they are daring; they have the strength and courage to achieve their goals and help or encourage their friends to achieve them. Many of these goals are for worldly things like a career, a job, a sport, etc. Those are things that for Christians are temporary, but even so, if they encounter obstacles along the way, they do everything possible to remove them and reach the goal that they want. So, how much more should they strive for things that are worth it, such as the salvation of those around them.

We must strive and do everything possible to remove every obstacle and help our friends come to Jesus. Ask: Will we strive to achieve this? What would be the obstacles that prevent us from bringing our friends to Jesus? Have a small discussion with your students about the things that may be obstacles to bringing their friends to Jesus.

3. The reward goes beyond physical healing

The problem they presented to Jesus was obvious: he was a person who couldn't walk and wanted to be healed. Perhaps the first thing that those present in that house thought was that Jesus would extend his hand and lift him up, or do something surprising. They were all waiting with their eyes fixed on this man, when the sweet voice of Jesus was heard saying, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20). Criticism was immediate. There were people who hindered Jesus' work (Luke 5:21). But Jesus showed that the man's real problem wasn't in his legs or his spine, that is, it wasn't physical. Jesus went straight to the paralyzed heart, treated it with love and gave it forgiveness (v.20). Perhaps the true healing of the paralytic was at that moment when Jesus forgave his sins and all the weight that this man had carried in his heart was removed. In those moments, the greatest and most wonderful miracle that a person can experience was taking place, although obviously no human eye could see it. If the story had ended there, perhaps this man would have been reassured that his sins had been forgiven, but Jesus completed his work by doing one more thing ... something that everyone could see, physical healing!

How many times have we asked Jesus for material things and even healing, but in this story, the Lord makes it clear to us that his power goes further. He can forgive us and make our lives completely different (Ephesians 3:20).

Let's not hesitate to draw closer to Jesus and bring others into his presence. Let's be sure that Jesus not only heals the body but also the soul, that the scope of his healing goes beyond curing cancer, AIDS or another disease, for his power reaches the soul and is capable of transforming our lives through faith.

Review/Application:

Give the students some time to answer the following questions:

1. Do you think you have friends like those in the story?
2. Do you consider yourself a friend like those in the story?
3. How much would you be willing to do to help a friend know Jesus?
4. How many friends have you introduced to Jesus? Do you understand that if they die not knowing Jesus, they'll go to hell?
5. Think of some of your friends who don't know Jesus. Write down their names, pray for them, and as soon as you can, introduce them to Jesus.

Challenge:

When someone you know gets sick, we recommend going to the doctor and taking the medications they prescribe since it's annoying to walk around with pain in your body. But when we suffer an illness within us, in our hearts, we feel sadness, unforgiveness and bitterness as some of the symptoms. This week, if you know someone who suffers from an illness of the body or soul, (like the friends of the paralytic), don't hesitate to bring them to Jesus, the divine doctor who can heal even the most difficult pain of the soul.

The grateful foreigner

Lesson 30

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students understand that God works miracles and expects an attitude of gratitude.

Memory Verse: “One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.” (Luke 17:15)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Supplies: Blackboard and chalk or marker.
- Instructions: On the board, write a list of negative situations that your students might face at a certain time in their lives: Losing a sports game, getting a low grade on a test, hearing parents argue, having relationship problems of friendship or dating, suffering the loss of a loved one, a disability or illness, etc. Then ask the “natural tendency” (in terms of attitudes and feelings) of a person when going through these situations, and write next to them what they express.

Then ask if these reactions would be the same if the person were a Christian. Make another list of the attitudes that a Christian should have in those situations.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Supplies: Blackboard and chalk or marker.
- Instructions: On the board write the following phrase in large letters: “Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond to what happens to you.” Ask your students to express their thoughts and opinions about the truth of this phrase. Ask them to share a real-life story in which a person’s attitude helped them overcome a situation that seemed impossible to cope with. (You can mention Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor who died in a Nazi concentration camp and wrote books that have changed the way of thinking of many many people.) Examples can be non-famous people that your students have seen in their own families or communities.

Connect

Navigate

Luke tells the story of ten people who were suffering from a very serious, painful and sad illness, and of the attitude those men had during their illness and after their healing.

1. The men's disease

The passage of Luke 17:11 begins by placing Jesus in a village between Samaria and Galilee, where “ten leper men” came out to meet him (Luke 17:12). Today, we quickly read this phrase without understanding the seriousness of a disease already eradicated in many countries. However, it’s important to consider the physical symptoms of leprosy:.. It is “A bacterial infection of the skin cells that can cause intense itching, burning and pain, numbness in the hands and feet, nodules on the body and nose to be congested” (Online Encyclopedia: www.salud.bioetica.org/lepra.htm). Now we can understand a little better the physical situation in which these men found themselves.

Furthermore, in those days, Judaism severely condemned people with leprosy, considering them “unclean” (Leviticus 13:8,15,25,27,30). The Law of God was intended to prevent the mass spread of leprosy to avoid an epidemic, but the people of Israel took the classification of uncleanness to an extreme. People who suffered from this disease couldn’t live within the city but had to be outside.

This meant that they stopped being in contact with their families, living a normal life of work, and community involvement. Similarly, healthy people avoided contact with a person with leprosy, and this led to people who suffered from leprosy being isolated and not spoken to or touched. Finally, people with leprosy were prohibited from entering the temple due to their condition, and were even considered to be people punished by God.

We see that these ten men who went out to meet Jesus had been limited to a life of loneliness, poverty, spiritual darkness, sadness and physical pain. And it's for that same reason that "they stood afar off and lifted up their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'" (Luke 17:12b-13). They had probably heard of Jesus' wonderful miracles and knew that He could change their lives completely.

2. Jesus' response

It's interesting to note the request of the ten men who suffered from leprosy. Clearly, they wanted to be delivered from their affliction, and perhaps had sought help from doctors or healers of the time, and maybe had even begged God Himself for help in prayer outside the temple. As we imagine the ten men standing, perhaps raising and waving their arms to make sure Jesus saw them, we realize that there was a renewed faith in them waiting in expectation to receive something good and wonderful from Jesus.

Consider Jesus' response to these needy men. "When he saw them, he said to them, Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, that they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14). Firstly, we notice Jesus' attitude towards these ten men. Luke made sure to let us know that "he saw them," meaning Jesus took time to notice the needs that were around Him and feel compassion for the people who sought Him. It's important to recognize Jesus' gesture, because it teaches us about how God feels about the needs of human beings.

Jesus gave a command to these ten men. He didn't say a word about their illness, but he gave them a command. "Jesus saw them and said to them: Go to the temple so that the priests may examine you and see if you're completely healthy" (Luke 17:14a). We see that although the ten men were still suffering from their illness, Jesus sent them to be examined by the priests in the hope that they would be declared clean and healthy. As we saw in Leviticus 13:8 and other verses of the same chapter, the priest was the one who examined the sores and symptoms of the skin to diagnose people.

At first glance, Jesus' command seems out of place since the 10 men had been declared sick by those same priests. It would have been possible that these 10 men would have doubted Jesus' command or been tempted not to obey, since when they received the command, they had not yet experienced any changes in their bodies. However, it's important to recognize the obedience of these men, which was guided by their faith. The gospel of Luke tells us that they obeyed and went (Luke 17:14), and that in the midst of their obedience, they received God's blessing (Luke 17:14).

When God gives a command to us, it's important to obey, even when God's will may seem confusing or difficult. If we obey Him, we put ourselves in a position to enable us to receive his blessing in our lives. God is very interested in displaying his wonderful power and mercy in us; our task is only to obey Him.

3. The foreigner's attitude

Luke 17:15-18 gives us information about the moments that followed the miracle of the healing of these 10 men. Luke 17:15-16a tells us that "one of them, seeing that he had been healed, returned, glorifying God with a loud voice, and fell face down at his feet, thanking him." We can deduce that, even before arriving at the temple to be examined by the priests, this man felt and saw the miracle of healing on his skin. We read that this man's emotions changed his trajectory and brought him back to Jesus, who had healed him. This phrase, "...he returned, glorifying God with a loud voice..." (15b), shows us the attitude of gratitude that filled the heart of this foreign man. He recognized that he had been healed by the power of God. We must recognize that the attitude of this Samaritan not only pleased Jesus, but was probably what allowed him to be inscribed in the gospel so that even 2 thousand years later, we could learn from his attitude of gratitude.

The wonderful thing about this man's attitude was that he showed his gratitude to Jesus immediately. He didn't wait to be examined by the priests, nor was he ashamed of what others might say about him, but he showed his joy and gratitude at that moment.

The gospel of Luke makes a point of noting that the man was a “Samaritan” (Luke 17:16). In those times, Samaritans were considered “second-class citizens” among Jews since they were children or grandchildren of Jews who had married people from other towns. However, frequently in God’s Word, we see that God Himself took care of those people. Luke comments that from the person who would least have expected something good or polite, a wonderful attitude of complete gratefulness to God emerged. God works in the hearts of all people.

Finally, we read Jesus’ comment in the form of a question in Luke 17:17-18. Jesus asked these questions in amazement and with the purpose of teaching his disciples the importance of having an attitude of gratitude. Jesus commented on the difference between the grateful “stranger” and the nine, also healed, but who didn’t express their gratitude to God.

As children of God, it’s very important that we recognize the mercies that the Lord showers on us. Gratitude is primarily a biblical principle (Psalm 9:1-20). In the same way, gratitude is a command from God because He knows that by having an attitude of gratitude, our entire being is filled with joy and hope; our life becomes a wonderful experience in which we can experience his presence and recognize his kind work. God calls for gratitude because he knows what good that attitude does our hearts.

Review/Application:

Give the students some time to write a list of the aspects of their life for which they should have an attitude of gratitude toward God. Tell them to try to write at least 10 things.

Ask the class to write a prayer to God, thanking Him for His blessings and asking Him for help in acquiring and maintaining an attitude of gratitude in all the circumstances of their lives. They may use rhyme, accompanying music, or any other creative literary form, such as a verse, acrostic, or poem.

Challenge:

This week think and evaluate: What attitude is the most common in your heart? Indifference, disagreement, gratitude? Do you think that this attitude is useful and encouraging, or that it causes discouragement and a bad mood in you? You can ask God to help you learn from the “grateful stranger” and that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the attitude of your heart will always be pleasing to God. God loves you and wants to see you happy!

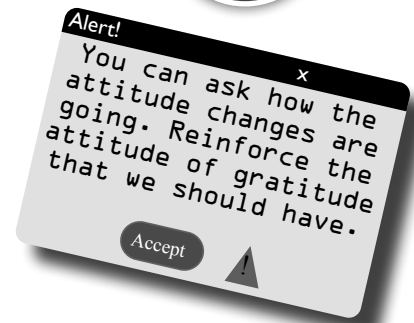
Simple and powerful faith

Lesson 31

Juan Carlos Fernández • Cuba

Objective: That the students understand that developing a powerful faith requires knowledge, conviction and devotion.

Memory Verse: “‘Have faith in God,’ Jesus answered.” (Mark 11:22)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Trust Fall - Ask the students to form two lines facing each other and squat down and then hold hands tightly with the person in the other line that they are facing. They must be placed in such a way that the person who falls on top of the arms of those who form the two rows doesn't reach the floor.

Another student will fall into the arms of the members of the group below. The participant who falls must have full confidence in his companions, knowing that they'll prevent him from hitting the floor, and they in turn must take extreme precautions so that nothing happens to him.

Ask: What made the person who fell on top of the rest not be afraid of falling to the floor? In the same way, we can throw ourselves into the arms of our Lord through faith, knowing that He won't abandon us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Large paper or whiteboard, pencil or markers.
- Instructions: Ask the class to imagine that they're on board an airplane, flying to London. It's night, you can't see anything through the windows. Ask them to write on the board the reasons why they believe they'll reach their destination safely.

In closing, compare the reasons mentioned with those we have for believing that God will always guide our lives to a safe destination, even though we cannot see any signs through the windows of the ship of life.

Connect

Navigate

The memorable episode of the transfiguration had already passed. The mountain where the glory of God had been manifested was left behind, giving way to the valley of misfortune. Jesus was returning with three of his disciples who had seen him in all his splendor, and now he met the other nine at the foot of the hill. They were somewhat frustrated since a father was crying out for the healing of his only son and they had not been able to help the young man to recover (Matthew 17: 14-21).

The crowd of curious onlookers gathered, while the dejected man explained how the young man frequently fell into a state of unconsciousness and rigidity while foam came out of his mouth and he convulsed. The danger increased when this condition occurred near water or fire.

1. Knowing the Savior through faith

We don't know precisely how the troubled father knew about Jesus. It's likely that someone told him about Him. Verse 14 narrates the moment of the encounter, the moment in which this father's faith was revealed. The crowd was enormous; however this wasn't an obstacle that prevented the patient and his companion from reaching the very presence of the Master.

Part of Jesus' mission on this earth was to heal the sick (Matthew 8:17). Conviction in Jesus precedes the action of faith. Although physical health was a priority in that case at that time, we must not forget that the spiritual need is what's most important for people. The act of believing in Jesus, repenting of our sins and accepting him as the one sent by God to reconcile the world to the Father, makes us his children (John 1:12). And if we must be very clear about something, it's that this is the greatest of Jesus' miracles. How often are we willing to share the good news of the gospel with others? There are many people who, without knowing it, are waiting, in need of the Savior. Are we willing to be the agents that God uses for the extension of his kingdom on this earth?

2. A miracle from God through faith

Regardless of what others said, the man knelt before Jesus (v.14) and explained his need, which was accompanied by a complaint against the disciples who had not been able to resolve his situation. In reality, nothing and no one had been able to cure the boy. A miracle was needed. Human inability to solve a given problem is the first condition for a miracle to occur.

After a well-deserved rebuke (v.17) (which was probably not only directed at his disciples, but also at all those who didn't believe in Him as the messenger of God), he rebuked the spirit that was tormenting him and the boy was released at that time (v.18).

Many people are amazed to think that Satan can control a person, forgetting that from Adam to date, He has spiritual control of the entire human race that hasn't received Jesus.

3. Faith is enough

No grandiose, monumental or extraordinary faith was required, only simple faith was required. The teacher compared faith to a mustard seed, which is one of the smallest, and said that it would be enough even to move mountains (Matthew 17:20). Today, some teachers and preachers have considerably distorted the concept of faith. An abstract faith is preached, a faith that cannot be well defined, and in the name of that faith the human being is promised the fulfillment of all the desires of their heart. A kind of "Empire of Faith" has been created, and people are indirectly being induced to "have faith in faith." Meanwhile, the words of the Lord "Have faith in God" resonate in our ears (Mark 11:22).

It's very beautiful to feel the presence of God. From its beginnings, the Church of the Nazarene has known how to experience the joy and presence of the Lord. E. A. Girving recorded this incident: "One day, as a certain group of tourists were preparing to leave Los Angeles and return to their homes in the east, they were talking about their experiences. One of them asked, 'Did you visit the Church of the Nazarene?' The other answered, 'No, we heard about it and we wanted to go, but we couldn't do it.' 'The first one said, 'Well, you should have gone. Nothing like this has ever been seen. The people there sing and clap and stand up, and say they have been sanctified. It's the most impressive thing you've ever seen.' (The Church of the Nazarene emerges. Redford, M.E. CNP, USA: 1988, p.54).

This is really wonderful. We wish that this spirit never dies, and that we never forget our roots. However, times come when we won't feel the presence of God. It's then when we must not forget that He is with us. It's time to strengthen ourselves in his promises and strengthen our conviction in Him (Matthew 28:20). We don't know what the father's attitude would have been if Jesus had not healed his son, but we must know what ours will be if things don't go as we would like.

Job's attitude demonstrates a strong conviction in God. "Then he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.'" (Job 1:21).

Like plants, our faith needs to be cultivated. We have received the gift of salvation, but under no circumstances should we neglect it (Hebrews 2:3). Spiritual disciplines constitute an excellent fertilizer for our faith. Prayer, reading and studying the Word of God, and meeting to worship with other people who love Him are essential elements in our daily walk. How is it possible to spend a whole day without praying? How can I say I know the Lord if I don't read and search His Word?

How will I find someone with whom to share my requests, my joys and sorrows if I don't meet with others who also love and know Him? How can I grow spiritually without congregating? Christianity is definitely not for loners.

We have traveled together back almost two thousand years ago. Today, Jesus is still willing to meet the needs of those who come to Him. Only one thing is necessary, having faith in Jesus, which means believing that he is who he said he is ... the son of God. When we know him, we're able to experience his love. His promises have never failed to be fulfilled. Our daily walk with the Lord nourishes and strengthens our faith.

Review/Application:

Give the students time to answer the following questions:

- Why couldn't the disciples perform the miracle? (*Because of their lack of faith.*)
- What is the first condition for a miracle to occur? What was the fundamental ingredient to receive a miracle? (*Faith*)
- Name three forms of devotion through which we can cultivate our faith. (*Prayer, meditation on the Word, fasting, praise, worship, etc.*)

Challenge:

Faith that only serves to get me out of trouble isn't "faith in God." True faith is one that, whether or not it gets me out of the problem I am experiencing, will continue to be there, believing that God is love. Examine your faith and if necessary, ask the Lord to strengthen it. Write down any events in your life that require you to act in faith. Stay attentive and write down your observations every night. Share your experience with the class the next time you meet.

I believe in God...

Lesson 32

Ana Zoila Díaz • Guatemala

Objective: That the students understand the revelation of God as Father, Son and Spirit.

Memory Verse: “‘I will be a Father to you, and you’ll be my sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:18)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Images of cartoon superheroes (Superman, Batman, etc.). If you don't get pictures, write the names on the board.
- Instructions: Show the images or names in writing and ask the students to mention the powers that each of the superheroes has. Then ask them to name the powers that God has.

Finally, explain to the class that the powers of superheroes don't compare to the power of God since the power of superheroes is fictional and the power of God is real. We can see it in our lives through God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask the young people to write a list of the qualities that in their opinion a father should have. Also ask them to write down what they admired most about their dad when they were children.

Saying that God is father has become so common in our daily lives that sometimes we really forget what it means for God to be our Father and we to be his children. God's fatherhood transcends from being a simple father to being an Almighty Father.

Connect

Navigate

The Apostles Creed is a brief summary of the fundamental beliefs of the early Christians. This is an effort made by the second century church to unify criteria of Christian beliefs. In its essential content, it belongs to the apostolic era. Although it isn't the work of the apostles, it contains the teachings transmitted by them. The first part of the creed indicates as its basis the words “I believe in God.”

1. We believe in God revealed as Father

The creed begins by saying: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” David was the first to call God Father (Psalm 68:5). But it's in the New Testament where the writings give greater attention to the fact that God is our Father.

Jesus gave special emphasis to the fatherhood of God. In the New Testament, he affirmed this 170 times. This revelation that Jesus referred to (Matthew 11:27) showed a unique relationship with his Father. Abba (Daddy) is a word that Jesus used to refer to God (Mark 14:36). In Jewish texts, we don't find this formula as an prayer to God. And the reason is that the term Abba belongs to the language of family life. It was exclusive to the children in a sense of intimacy and respect. For the Jews of Jesus' time, it was disrespectful to address God with such a familiar term. But Christ himself let us see that he wanted us to come to God with the confidence with which a child comes to talk to their father. We later find it used by Paul in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

By observing God's pattern of fatherhood, we better understand what our relationship with Him should be like. The Bible tells us to address Him as "Father," not just as God, sovereign King, Holy, or Judge (Matthew 6:9). God longs to communicate with his children. Matthew 6:6 tells us that He hears us and answers our prayers. He's the kind of Father we can talk to, and even though He may not give us everything we ask for, the Lord will respond by giving us what He knows is best for us (Matthew 7:7-11). The Bible assures us that our heavenly Father knows all our needs (Matthew 6:8) and that he will supply them (Philippians 4:19).

The Bible also teaches us that God as Father disciplines his children (Hebrews 12: 5-10). He doesn't punish us out of anger, but with loving correction for our good. This correction is evidence that we are, indeed, his children (v.7-8). Ask: Do you know God as your heavenly Father? If someone doesn't know Him that way, they should know that He is ready to adopt them as His child (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 3:26).

2. We believe in God revealed as Son-Savior

We cannot say that we're Christians if we don't confess of the deity of Christ (Matthew 1:23). This means that in the person of Christ, God became present in the life of human beings living among us. "I believe... in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead: he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead..." (Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2017-2021 citing "The Apostles' Creed. Paragraph 701").

Jesus Christ was God's revelation of himself to us (John 1:1,14,18). John presented Jesus as the "I am" seven times. This associates him with God, since this is how God was revealed to Moses in the old covenant, as the "I am" (Exodus 3:14). Each "I am" was absolute (John 6:35,8:12,10:7,11;11:25;14:6) and God was revealed in each of these statements. Every statement shows an aspect of God, while every "I am" was an expression of what the church was to be. The titles of Christ, "Son of God," which expresses the divine nature that he possessed, and "Son of Man," which expresses his human nature at birth like every human being, firmly establish his divinity and humanity. The title "Lord," which the Hebrews applied exclusively to God, clearly denotes his deity. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ was called Lord 367 times. Christ, conscious of his deity, referred to himself on many occasions as the Son of God and Lord (John 5:25,9:35-37).

The heavenly Father gave audible testimony that Christ was his Son on the occasion of his baptism in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:17) and on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of his apostles present (Matthew 17:5). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ was called the Son of God 110 times.

Men killed Jesus because he claimed to be equal to God (John 5:18). But, God resurrected him, vindicating him as the Son of God (Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:20-22). Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, they form the Trinity. Biblical evidence of Christ's deity is found in equality with the Father, miraculous details about his birth, his life, and the fulfillment of prophecies.

Personal experience, the triumph of the church, and the transformation of millions of people throughout history living victoriously over sin, are examples of Jesus' deity and the effectiveness of his sacrifice.

3. We believe in God revealed as the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26) and the exalted Son (John 16:7; Acts 2:33; Galatians 4:6), being equal to them in essence. His name is found united with the Father and the Son in the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19) and in the blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Much of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be deduced from the names given in Scriptures: The Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), the Paraclete, Advocate and Comforter (John 14:16,26), the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14), the Spirit of the living God (2 Corinthians 3:3), the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6), the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:17), the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13), the glorious Spirit (1 Peter 4:14), the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29), and the Spirit of truth (John 15:26).

The first manifestation of the Spirit in the world is described in Genesis 1:2 and Job 26:13. He is the author of the Holy Scriptures, prompting, guiding, and giving divine breath to the writings (John 14:26; 16:12–15; Acts 1:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). The Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the promise of the Father and the Son (Luke 24:49; John 14:16,26; Acts 1:4,8; 2:33; Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, forming the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and will dwell it until it's brought to meet the bridegroom (Revelation 22:7–20).

The Holy Spirit is also the origin and exercise of spiritual gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12:11). The work of the Holy Spirit begins with us before we convert, seeking to bring us closer to God. In regeneration, we're "born of the Spirit." Then we're sanctified, filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and are guided by Him in our lives (Romans 8:9, 14–17).

"I believe in God" doesn't mean having a mental concept of the existence of a God. To believe in God is to know Him personally as Father, as Son Jesus Christ for salvation, and Holy Spirit for sanctification.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to make an acrostic of the words Father, Jesus and Spirit based on what they have heard and learned in class.

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Challenge:

Conduct a survey during the week with five people. Ask them what it means:

- To believe in God.
- Believe that God is their Father.
- Believe that Jesus is God.
- Believe that the Holy Spirit works in their life.

This will give you the opportunity to clarify their understanding of Believing in God, and even better will give you the opportunity to testify to them about what Believing in God has meant in your life.

What do you believe in?

Lesson 33

Abner García • USA

Objective: That the students identify and understand the biblical bases regarding our beliefs.

Memory Verse: “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:16)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Coins and bills, jewelry, cell phones (can be collected from participants). Magazine clippings of things that people today long to have such as cars, houses, etc. Paper and pencil.
- Instructions: Have everyone sit in a circle and in the center place the items and the clippings. Give each person paper and pencil and ask them to write down what they would like to have. Observe how each person reacts and how they interact as they exchange opinions about what they see. In the end, talk about what they like or don't like and why. Promote dialogue and take note of reactions. Reflect on how the way we value things helps us understand the world, and how this valuation helps us define our way of being, thinking, believing and defending what we believe.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: One high denomination money bill and two others, one medium and one low denomination. A framed diploma or a model of a diploma, a cutout of a modern car from a well-known brand, a magazine photo with a family, a photo of a famous musical group or an actor or actress, a whiteboard and a marker.
 - Instructions: Encourage the group to participate by thinking about the things that most attract their attention and why those things should or shouldn't be given importance. Allow some to explain what they chose and why.
- Finish by talking about the ways in which each person gives value or meaning to things, and how those values affect the way people are today.

Connect

Navigate

The good things that help us live life better and that are important are things we have learned as part of an inheritance or legacy, in other words, as a free gift from older members of our family, friends, pastors, brothers and sisters of the church etc. This inheritance makes us who we are, and everything we are and think will guide our actions, decisions, behavior and personality.

As Christians, our actions are determined by the way we understand, believe and accept the truths of the Bible. These truths guide our way of being, our behavior, and the way in which we respond to the questions that society asks and that are not in accordance with the values and commands of God. For this, an important part is knowing the creed that Christians have. What is a creed? "It's a set of doctrines common to a community or it's the prayer in which the main articles of faith taught by the apostles are contained" (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy online).

When we share about our faith, the church, and our Christian values, we're sharing part of our creed.

1. The church of Christ and the communion of saints

It's interesting that the Greek term ekklesia: "... is translated "church" in 112 of its 115 uses in the NT. The exceptions are Acts 19:32,38,41 - the account of the assembly of angry craftsmen called by

Demetrius at Ephesus... With these exceptions (Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 2:12, *ekklesia* is reserved exclusively in the NT for followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, seen collectively, either as a local body of believers or as the sum of believers everywhere” (Beacon Theological Dictionary. CNP, USA: 1995, p.345).

Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, stated that Jesus was “...the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), and a statement of such nature could only be expressed by someone who truly believed. Peter said something regarding the church that astonished others and caused Christ to say: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matthew 16:17-18). With this, Jesus was laying the foundations of the church. And the church would be founded on Peter’s wonderful statement that Jesus was “...the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

It’s important that we, like Peter, confidently affirm our creed that defines who God is for us, who Jesus is, what the church is, and what is our doctrinal basis.

The Apostles’ Creed affirms truths that were taken from the Bible and can be understood as absolute truths. “I believe in the church,” a church with biblical beliefs that identify us and keep us united (John 17:21). Being all “... one body, and one Spirit, as you were also called in the same hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

The basis of our values as a church is determined by our faith and convictions acquired through a relationship with God and his Word. And these convictions must be clear to be able to share them with other people. The church is a “holy nation, God’s own possession” (1 Peter 2:9) and its members are called “saints” (Acts 9:13, 1 Corinthians 6:1, 16:1), and Jesus Christ is Lord of the church and offers forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to the whole world.

We also believe in the communion of saints. What does the communion of saints mean? Communion is participating in something in common. It’s the sharing of those who respond to God’s invitation in faith and who have the same beliefs (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 John 1:3,6-7). Having been forgiven and reconciled to Christ, we forgive and are reconciled to one another. By fellowshiping with one another and sharing time, beliefs, and ministries together, we become the church and body of Christ and reveal the unity of that body.

2. The resurrection of the body and eternal life

Many religions that have become famous today mention eternity as a principle or value among their beliefs, but not one of their leaders in their groups, sects or religions has been resurrected or lives like Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The Apostles’ Creed, like other creeds of the Christian church, declares and repeats the teaching that the dead will rise. The apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church by reminding them that eventually the dead in Christ will be resurrected and those of us who are alive will be caught up to the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Only Christ rose from the dead and lives. The foundation of our Christian faith is in the historical fact of the resurrection of Christ. If we removed that foundation, the Christian faith wouldn’t exist (Romans 5:21). Resurrection is life beyond the grave and death towards the eternal (Romans 2:5-11). The Bible declares final victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:16-22) and the genuine promise of eternal life (Titus 1:2,3; 7; 1 John 2:25,5:11).

When we talk about eternal life, we talk about a life that has no end, that will never end. This eternity will be a wonderful thing for those who die in Christ because they’ll always be in his presence with eternal joy (Romans 6:22-23). On the contrary, those who die without Christ will have an eternity of pain and suffering (Matthew 25:46).

The Apostles’ Creed and its biblical basis

We believe in God (Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29) the Father Almighty (Genesis 17:1; Ruth 1:20; 2 Corinthians 6:18), Maker of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1; 14:19; Isaiah 43:15);

And in Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:21; John 1:1-3; Acts 2:38), his only Son (Mark 1:1, John 3:16; 17:3), our Lord (Acts 2:36 ; Romans 16: 20,24); who was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35), born of the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:27), suffered under Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:22-24; John 19:1-2); was crucified (Matthew 27:26,35; John 19:16-20), dead, and buried; He descended into hell (Luke 23:53); the third day he rose again from the dead; (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4) He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty (Mark 16:19); from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 25: 31-32; Acts 10:42).

We believe in the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30), the Holy (Ephesians 1:1; 5:25-27) Church of Jesus Christ (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:4-5) (Matthew 8:11), the communion of saints (Revelation 7:9), the forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9), the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:11), and the life everlasting (Revelation 22:5).

Review/Application:

Ask them to answer the following question:

- Why is it necessary to know and memorize the Apostles' Creed? (*Because it's the basis of our faith, and it will help us defend our beliefs.*)

Then have them write down the creed (or give them a copy) and memorize it.

“We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church of Jesus Christ, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”

Version taken from the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 2017-2021 (701)

Challenge:

Augustine said: “Understanding is the reward of faith. So, don’t seek to understand in order to believe, but you must believe in order to understand.” This week repeat the creed every day. You can do it before praying. This will help you affirm your faith and remember why you’re a Christian. If you can, share it with someone.

Baptism

Lesson 34

Hilda Navarro • Mexico

Objective: That the students know what the sacrament of baptism consists of and what it means for the believer.

Memory Verse: “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- Supplies: A doll, water in a medium container (where the doll can be submerged), towels or cloths.
- Instructions: Ask some volunteers to model with the doll the three known types of baptism, immersion, sprinkling and pouring, using the doll and the container with water. If the class doesn't know any of the forms, show it with the doll, explaining each one to them.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Material: Copies of the Church of the Nazarene Manual 2017-2021 section 701 for each student or written in a visible place. You can download a free copy at: <https://2017.manual.nazarene.org/paragraph/p701/>
- Instructions: Give them time to answer the following questions about baptism from the Manual

paragraph and then discuss them with the class. We include some examples of answers. What is sought is a time of reflection on the topic.

1. When asked in section 701 “Will you be baptized into this faith?”, what faith is this referring to? (*To the Christian faith that includes: Believing in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Universal Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and everlasting life.*)
2. If the person who is going to be baptized has already been asked if they want to do so in this faith, why are they asked if they acknowledge Jesus as their personal Savior? (*To make it clear that the person being baptized has accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and as a testimony to this, they're going to be baptized.*)
3. Section 702 talks about the baptism of babies or infants. What do you think about that?

Connect

Navigate

1. Origin of baptism

Have someone read: Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6, 11-17; Acts 2:37-41, in different versions if possible.

“Various rituals are spoken of as the origins of baptism. Among them are the Jewish ceremonial washings, the purification rites of the Quram, the baptism of proselytes and the baptism of John, the latter being the most probable origin” (Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico Certeza, Douglas, J. Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 2000, Miami, Compubiblia). Although this was in essence, and according to John the Baptist himself, a baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4), it served at the same time as preparation to receive Jesus, who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

In his first sermon, Peter told the crowd to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). The first converts were baptized (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 16:15, 33).

2. Modalities of baptism

Immersion. It's the best known form of baptism among evangelical Christians. This is immersing the entire body of the person to be baptized in a baptismal font or baptistery, or in the waters of a river or a pool. For the Church of the Nazarene this is one of the three ways in which you can be baptized. Some Christian churches only recognize baptism by immersion as valid.

Aspersión (Sprinkling). This form of baptism is performed by sprinkling water on the face or head of those to be baptized. It's believed that the early church practiced this type of baptism (Acts 2:41) when, after Peter's preaching, nearly 3,000 people were baptized, since, according to Olshausen, "there would hardly be time for baptism by immersion and there wouldn't be enough water either to do it" (Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary on the Bible, Volume II, CBP, Colombia: 1998 p.240).

Affusion (Pouring). Baptism by affusion is performed by pouring water on the person's head or body. The Roman Catholic Church commonly practices this type of baptism by pouring water three times over the head of the candidate.

Ask: Which type of baptism do you prefer, if any? Why?

3. Baptism as a sacrament and means of grace

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christians are baptized because we obey Jesus.

Tertullian used the word "sacrament" for baptism considering the Roman legal context of the term, since for him, it's a pact between God and the one who is baptized. "Theologically, the term means an external and visible sign of an internal and spiritual grace given to us, ordained by Christ" (Beacon Theological Dictionary. 1995, p.611).

In his 16th sermon on the means of grace, John Wesley says, "By the means of grace I understand the outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God, and designed for this purpose, to be the ordinary channels by which He can communicate to the person his prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace" (<http://new.gbgbm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/16/>). They are the acts of worship, instituted by Christ, that are celebrated by the Christian church.

4. What we Nazarenes believe

The Church of the Nazarene's XII Article of Faith says, "We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement and incorporation into the Body of Christ. Baptism is a means of grace proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. It's to be administered to believers indicating their full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness. As participants in the new covenant, young children and the morally innocent may be baptized upon request of parents or guardians. The church shall give assurance of Christian training. Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. (Matthew 3:1-7; 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-39; 10:44-48; 16:29-34; 19:1-6; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-22)" (Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 2017-2021, p.32).

Review/Application:

Give copies of the Manual section 701 to the students and give them time to answer the following questions.

1. List and answer one of the three questions that are asked of persons to be baptized in the baptism ritual of the Church of the Nazarene (701). (*Will you be baptized into this faith? Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and do you believe that He saves you now? As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, will you follow Him all the days of your life, growing in grace and the love of God and neighbor?*)
2. Do you think the question you just answered is important for those who are going to be baptized? Why?
3. According to Article of Faith XII that you saw in the lesson, what is baptism? (*It's a sacrament that signifies the acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ.*)
4. According to this Article of Faith, to whom should baptism be administered? (*To the believers.*)
5. In the same Article of Faith XII, why can young children be baptized and what must their parents or guardians and church promise? (*Because baptism is a symbol of the new covenant; parents/guardians/the church must promise the necessary Christian training.*)
6. What type of baptism does the Church of the Nazarene practice? (*Aspersión [sprinkling], affusion [pouring], or immersion, according to the candidate's preference.*)

Challenge:

Have you already been baptized? If you have already done so, make a list of reasons why you would encourage your friends to get baptized if they haven't already done so. If you haven't been baptized, would you like to do so? Discuss it with your Sunday School teacher or pastor during the week.

Come and celebrate

Lesson 35

Helen Andújar • Puerto Rico

Objective: That the students understand the biblical meaning of the sacrament of the Last Supper (Communion), and their responsibility when participating in it.

Memory Verse: “For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” (Luke 22:18)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Pencils and papers containing three columns with the corresponding questions.
- Instructions: Give each student a sheet of paper that contains the three columns and in each column a question: First, what I know about the Last Supper (Communion). And the second, what I don't know about the Last Supper. At the end of the class ask them to answer the third question, what I learned about the Last Supper.

THE LAST SUPPER

What I know	What I don't know	What I learned

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: A large sheet of paper and a marker.
- Instructions: In the center of the paper write the words, “Lord's Supper”. Ask the students to write what they know about the Lord's Supper around the words on the sheet of paper. (Who? What? Where started? How? With what? etc.)

Connect

Navigate

The Lord's Supper, also known as Communion, represents the reminder and proclamation of the liberation of believers from the yoke of sin through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The problem arises when we participate in it without being prepared or don't reverently appreciate its meaning.

Bread and wine were first mentioned in the Old Testament when Abram met Melchizedek in Salem. King Melchizedek brought bread and wine and declared a special blessing for Abram. “Then Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, brought out bread and wine; and blessed him, saying, Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, creator of the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 14:18-19).

As a priest of the Most High God, he blessed Abram. In this same way, believers are blessed by the resurrected Christ, who has all the power of the Father to bless us.

1. The concept of the Lord's Supper

The first Passover, one of the festivals instituted by God, was celebrated in Egypt during the last plague in which the Hebrew people were freed from their slavery. God protected them from the plague of death of the firstborn by commanding them to kill a lamb without blemish and place the blood on the doorposts of each house. In this way, the angel of Jehovah would pass by without killing the firstborn of the Hebrews. Then God ordered them to remember every year this event that represented their liberation from slavery. So every year, God's people celebrated this festival (Exodus 12:1-30).

Jesus' death took place at the end of the ancient Passover festival that remembered what happened in Egypt. Jesus became the last Passover Lamb. His blood shed on the cross frees the sinner from the bondage of sin. In this way, a new covenant was made that was sealed with the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. This new covenant offers the believer salvation and eternal life.

Jesus ate the traditional Passover meal with his disciples the night before he was betrayed (Matthew 26:26-29).

2. The meaning of bread and wine

The bread represents the body of Christ that was broken and crushed for our sins, so that we could obtain forgiveness, reconciliation with the Father and eternal life.

The blood represents a new covenant. Without bloodshed there could be no reconciliation between God and human beings. Christ paid the price by offering himself out of love as our Savior; he shed his blood and offered himself as a living sacrifice to redeem us before the heavenly Father. He did it for love and for all human beings.

After reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, ask the students to define "covenant" and its characteristics. "Covenant, in biblical language, is an agreement... This agreement or contract is initiated by God, the terms are also specified by Him. Each person becomes a participant in the agreement of his or her own free will. In the covenant God promises to fulfill certain aspects, promises, and blessings under specific moral conditions" (Beacon Theological Dictionary. CNP, USA: 1995, p.467). The blood of Christ sealed a new covenant. This covenant wasn't between two human persons, but between God and human beings. William Barclay comments that this covenant was: "A new relationship between God and humanity." (Commentary on the New Testament, Barclay, William. 1999, p.182).

In ancient times, man could only approach God through priests. They made the sacrifice for sinners. Today we can all, without exception, approach the throne of grace to speak with God through Jesus who intercedes for us before the Father. This is possible because Christ's death on the cross allows us to be participants in this new covenant.

3. The reminder of the Lord's Supper

By participating in the Lord's Supper, we announce his death and sacrifice until He comes again. Jesus himself said it in his Word that we should do it in memory of him. This means that every time we participate in it, we're grateful for his sacrifice, we remember what he did on the cross because of his love for us, and we announce his Second Coming (1 Corinthians 11:26).

However in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, the apostle Paul warned us about taking the Lord's Supper unworthily. The apostle says that taking the Holy Supper unworthily is taking it knowing that I have sin in my life for which I haven't repented. To avoid this, each one must test himself (v.28) and examine himself (v.31). Recommendations when participating in the Holy Supper:

1. We must go in reverence and an attitude of respect. It was the blood of Christ that was shed for us.
2. We must examine ourselves to know if we have committed any sin. Let's remember that He died for our sins and if we repent, He forgives us and there's nothing that prevents us from participating.
3. Those of us who have believe in Jesus and have received Him as a personal Savior should participate.

Always before communion, the opportunity should be given for repentance, remembering that Christ died for our sins.

4. We must wait for each other. Since we're one body united by faith, the Lord's Supper must be an act of unity.

We are all invited to this great banquet. Remember, we must all be there when the church announces the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We are the Lord's special guests.

Review/Application:

Give the students time to answer the following questions and then ask them to share their answers with the class.

- Who can participate in the Lord's Supper? *(All those who have been saved by Jesus Christ.)*
- What do the elements of the Lord's Supper mean? *(The bread symbolizes the body of Christ and the wine symbolizes his blood shed on the cross.)*
- What does the Lord's Supper remind us of? *(That Jesus died in our place for our sins and that he will return a second time.)*
- What attitude should one who participates in the Holy Supper have? *(Repentant attitude. There must be no sin in the person who participates in the Lord's Supper, but if there is, he must take time to confess it, repent and ask for forgiveness.)*

Challenge:

This week, reflect on all aspects of your life and examine yourself to see if you're prepared for the next celebration of the Lord's Supper in your church.

Protestant Reformation I

Lesson 36

Pedro Sensente • Guatemala

Objective: That the students understand how the Holy Spirit guides through knowledge of the Word of God to find the true path to God.

Memory Verse: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,” (1 Timothy 2:5)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Damaged objects and clothing (phones, toys, office supplies, appliances, clothing, watches, shoes, etc.).
- Instructions: Place the objects and clothing on a table. When students arrive in the classroom, ask them what they observe about the objects and clothing that are on the table. Ask them what would need to be done to repair them and/or give them better presentation or usability.

At the end, allow them to express why it's important to reform or transform what is deteriorated.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Supplies: A blackboard, marker or chalk.
- Instructions: Divide the board into two parts, making a straight line in the middle. On one side write the title “Reforms Needed in the Local Church” and on the other side “Why They Are Necessary.” Ask the class to think for a few moments on some reforms they consider necessary in the church and write them down on the board. Then ask them to express why the aforementioned reforms are important. Subsequently, refer to the importance of the church's self-assessment to carry out the relevant reforms.

Connect

Navigate

According to the Royal Spanish Academy, to reform is to modify something with the intention of improving it. This is precisely what Martin Luther sought when attempting to reform the doctrine and way of life of the Roman Catholic Church in 1517.

1. Background and historical context of the Reformation

Germany experienced one of the most critical periods in its history during the 16th century, especially due to the impositions of the Roman Catholic Church in doctrine, property administration, and legal matters. One of the critical points was the exclusivity that the Roman Catholic Church demanded over the apostolic succession, that is, they considered themselves the only religious authority over any existing church since they had the only ancestry of popes in a direct line with the apostle Peter. According to their own criteria, they claimed to be the only true authority to interpret and establish doctrine through the exclusive revelation of the Pope. No one could question his judgment and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures since he was infallible in his interpretation.

The church affirmed that priests were the only intermediaries between God and people. But the critical point was the sale of indulgences as a means of raising funds for the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Indulgences were a document through which the Catholic Church offered to free the buyer's soul from passing through purgatory (in Catholic doctrine, it's the state of those who, having died in the grace of God, still need to purify themselves to achieve glory) and reduce the penalty for the forgiveness of sins.

The apostle Peter recognized the existence of false prophets and false teachers, and warned the church against listening to them (2 Peter 2:1-2). He further stated that those false servants of God were slaves of corruption and would receive God's just punishment (2 Peter 2:19-22). Jesus himself acknowledged their existence (Matthew 7:15).

2. Luther's personal experience

God has always used pious people who were sensitive to his voice through passionate study of the Holy Scriptures, interested in knowing his will, and obeying it above human will and interpretation. The Word of God affirms that the Holy Spirit guides human beings into all truth (John 16:13), not popes or priests.

Martin Luther was a Catholic priest of the Augustinian religious order, who from a very young age, felt a passion for the study of the Word of God.

Luther was a faithful devotee of the Holy Scriptures and very soon became a biblical scholar. He received a university doctorate and was a professor at the University of Wittenberg. He devoted much of his time to the study of the medieval doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The foundation of his study was always the Word of God. Under the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, he soon discovered that the doctrines he had learned and treasured in the church had no support from the Holy Scriptures. It was then when he began to preach, question and reject the doctrines of the Catholic Church, especially the sale of indulgences.

On October 31, 1517, he sent a letter to the archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg protesting the sale of indulgences since he had verified through the Word of God that salvation is only obtained through Christ and not by the purchase of indulgences. It is claimed that on the same date that Luther sent this letter, he also hung a copy of his 95th theses on the doors of the Wittenberg Castle Church.

3. A proposal for dialogue from the Bible

From a very young age Luther felt the great need in his heart to find forgiveness, peace and the salvation of his soul. This desire led him to become an Augustinian monk in 1505. Throughout his stay in the monastery and at the university, he fervently sought God's forgiveness, but didn't find it despite being an exemplary monk in the fulfillment of his imposed religious tasks and practices for the church. Some of those practices were self-flagellation of his body, sleeping in the snow without a blanket, abandoning worldly comfort, abstaining from the pleasure of eating, etc. ... all as a means of suffering. Later, he became interested in studying theology and received his doctorate in 1512 from the University of Wittenberg. During his academic preparation, he studied the Word of God in its original languages with the hope of finding in them the forgiveness, peace and salvation that he had not yet found. It was then that he discovered that salvation was only based on faith in Christ and not in the Roman Catholic Church as he had been taught. Furthermore, he discovered that Scripture was the only authority for matters of Christian faith and life, and that salvation was only by the grace of God. It was at that moment that Luther experienced forgiveness, peace, and salvation. He understood that salvation was a gift from God and not an achievement resulting from human efforts or the acquisition of it through the purchase of indulgences from the Roman Catholic Church.

As a professor at the University of Wittenberg he felt challenged to share with his students the divine truths that had been revealed to him and which had brought peace to his heart and a true personal relationship with God.

It was then in 1517 that he decided to publish his 95 theses and nailed a copy of them to the door of the Wittenberg church, especially condemning the sale of indulgences to obtain forgiveness of sins through the church. His intention in publishing his thesis was to attempt to reform the church from its doctrinal foundations through the Word of God through dialogue and open discussion with all interested people, especially with the Roman Catholic authorities.

From the depths of his heart, Martin Luther longed to share his new faith with the confidence and courage with which the apostle Paul did (Romans 1: 16-17). Luther never confronted the doctrines and authorities of the church with the aim of dividing it, but rather to reform and transform it according to the heart of God.

When the authorities of church and state asked him at the Diet of Worms (1521) to recant everything he had said and written, he responded that he couldn't do so because everything he had written was based on the Scriptures and not on the human criteria of the church. For Luther, the Bible was his standard of faith and conduct, and that was what he tried to implement in the Roman Catholic church until his excommunication. From then on, all churches that followed the teachings of Martin Luther, contrary to those of the Roman Catholic Church, were called Protestant churches.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to answer the following questions and then discuss them (we suggest some answers).

- What does 2 Peter 2:1-2 say about false prophets and false teachers? *(The apostle Peter in his second letter recognized the existence of false prophets and false teachers and warned the church about the danger of listening to them.)*
- Do false prophets exist today?
- Do you know some?
- According to John 16:13, who alone guides men into all truth? *(The Word of God affirms that only the Holy Spirit can guide men into all truth.)*
- Who bore witness to Luther's spirit that he had been forgiven and saved according to Romans 8:16? *(The Holy Spirit.)*
- The fervent desire of Luther's heart wasn't to divide the church but to _____. *(reform it.)*
- Where did Martin Luther find the light that would guide his life and ministry? *(In the Bible.)*
- What does 1 Peter 3:15 say about our faith and hope in God? *(He urged us to be prepared in holiness to present a defense with the way of living to anyone who demands it.)*

Challenge:

Plan the following project with the class: Take a close look at the ministry or youth group of the church and see if any area of the ministry needs urgent reform. Talk to the pastor about it and, with his/her approval, begin working to carry out the reform.

Protestant Reformation II

Lesson 37

Ofelia Alvarez • Spain

Objective: That the students understand the importance of the Protestant Reformation in the three aspects to be discussed.

Memory Verse: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mark 13:31)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A map of Europe and something to mark with.
- Instructions: Divide the group into several teams and each one will choose a representative. After consulting the group, the representative will try to mark the nations in which the religious reform of the 16th century took place.

The Reformation began in Germany, but spread to the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands (Belgium and Holland).

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Already prepared poster and markers.
- Instructions: Make a poster with the following:

- ___ Departure from the Word of God. (x)
- ___ Problems of the prevailing government.
- ___ Charge for the forgiveness of sins. (x)
- ___ A great lack of culture.
- ___ Traditions contrary to the Bible. (x)
- ___ Great ignorance and superstition among believers.

Ask them to mark with an X the causes they believe gave rise to the Protestant Reformation.

Connect

Navigate

The Reformation was a movement in the 16th century that produced a radical change in believers' relationship with God. This started with a German monk of the Augustinian order named Martin Luther who felt a great restlessness in his soul for salvation. While teaching at Wittenberg and searching the Scriptures (which were in Latin), he discovered three fundamental teachings for the later development of Christianity. These teachings have remained to this day as the inheritance of the true church of Christ.

1. The truth of God is found only in Scripture

In medieval times, the church taught Christians that tradition and papal orders had the same value as the Scriptures, and even that the church had greater authority than them. This was repeating what God said to Israel (Isaiah 29:13).

Within the church they introduced a series of teachings without any biblical basis, and sometimes even in direct opposition to what the Bible taught. Let's read Deuteronomy 4:2. We can see that it's contrary to God's will to teach things that are not in His Word.

Already before Luther, some monks such as John Wycliff and John Huss (the monks were the only ones who had access to read the Bible) had expressed their disagreement with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. They preached that God's truth was found only in the Bible, the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and that it should be our only standard of faith, morals and conduct. But unfortunately, they were silenced, declared heretics, persecuted, banished, and many of them died at the stake.

Years later, for Luther the Word of God was the starting point and final authority of his theology. The key principle that Luther defended was that the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are the only source of revelation and standard of life.

Thank God that His Spirit has always put it in the hearts of men and women to search the Scriptures for the truth (Acts 17:11). We must also study the Bible so that no one deceives us and to discover the false teachers who have gone out into the world. We must learn to use the word of truth well (2 Timothy 2:15).

2. Salvation is obtained by faith alone

In Luther's time (16th century), the healthy teaching of the faith had been greatly distorted since believers were told that they should put their faith in the saints and virgins, as well as in the relics of the saints and many other superstitions. But Luther discovered that the essence of salvation by faith according to the gospel was absolute trust in God through Jesus Christ, who revealed the Father to us, and he redeemed us and saved us from sin and death by his sacrifice.

Luther discovered in the Bible that people can be saved and justified (made righteous) by faith and not by works, as the Roman Catholic Church taught (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's faith in the perfect atonement of Christ that's the only thing that people need to save their soul and be justified before God (Romans 5: 1-2). Paul stated it in Romans 1:17 "...But the righteous will live by faith."

Many people confuse faith with believing that God exists, but as James 2:19 teaches us, believing for the sake of believing isn't enough. The faith that saves is that which is expressed by trusting that what God has told us and promised us through his Son is the truth. Faith is having the assurance of being made righteous and adopted by the Father as his children.

Another important thing when starting to value faith is the willingness and determination to act in life in accordance with that professed faith, which, when tested by the circumstances that arise throughout life, will determine its firmness and credibility.

For example, we have the case of Abraham who had faith in God, and because of the faith he had, as James 2:23 teaches us "...Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness, and he was called a friend of God." In the previous verses we find the explanation of why he was called a friend of God. When the Lord asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, he had faith that the Lord knew what he was doing. He was determined to obey the commandment, trusting that somehow, if he was faithful and obedient to the Lord, the Lord would fulfill the promise he had made to him regarding that son, even if he had to raise him from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).

So, we can summarize that to be genuine and true, faith needs to have a solid foundation in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:6). It isn't enough to just believe in God's existence, but it's essential to believe in His Word and obey it, trusting that He is the sovereign of the universe, the Almighty, and that He will reward those who trust in Him.

3. Everything we receive is by grace

This doctrine of grace was unknown to the great reformer who was practically agonizing over the helplessness he felt at not being able to meet all the expectations that he had been told he should meet. When Luther discovered in the Bible that salvation was by grace, comfort, rest and gratitude came into his life. He was greatly relieved when he understood that we can do absolutely nothing to deserve God's gift of salvation since it's by grace. It's a favor and mercy that the Lord has toward us, showing his goodness (Ephesians 2:7).

God freely decided to make a pact with human beings, through the perfect sacrifice of his Son, to be united to Him and be his children, to protect them, help them, console them and justify them. This covenant is a gift; it's the grace of God acting in our lives even before we know Him.

Read 2 Timothy 1:9. God is like a father who loves his child so much that even before the child is born, the father makes it his goal to provide everything necessary so that his child can study and be a good person,

although the child still hasn't done anything to deserve that concern and attention from the father. In this way, God provided for our salvation even before we existed or cared about Him.

But in the Middle Ages (the time in which Luther and the reformers lived), the prevailing religion made the people understand through a series of rules that to receive something from God or to please Him, it was necessary to do something and fulfill promises, doing penance, works, etc. Through their own efforts, so to speak, they had to repay God for his mercy, for miracles, and above all, for the salvation of their soul, of which no one could be sure. To achieve salvation, it was necessary to have their sins absolved by the priest and pay money to receive indulgences. After that, when the person died, the family or the deceased beforehand had to pay for masses (church services) to be held in their name in order to be able to leave purgatory (a place where, according to the Catholic Church, believers go when they die to purge or pay for their sins) and go to the presence of the Lord. All these false teachings are still subtly present in people's beliefs even today.

Allow the students to share the new things they have learned and how they think the Protestant Reformation, and particularly these three legacies it bequeathed to us, affect our Christian lives today.

Review/Application:

Ask the class to divide into teams and answer the following questions. Then share the answers with the entire group and comment on what was written (*we include possible answers*).

1. Do you believe that the Scriptures should be studied carefully? (Yes) Why? (*So that no one deceives us.*)
2. According to Deuteronomy 4:2, was what they taught about the Bible in the Middle Ages lawful? (No) Why? (*Because it contradicted the Bible*)
3. What do you understand by having faith in God? (*Trust in God, in his Word and obey him.*)
4. Do you think it's enough to save yourself by believing in the existence of God? (No) Why? (*Because it's necessary to have faith in the things that God has said and promises.*)
5. What do we have to do to find grace in the eyes of God? (*Nothing*)
6. What does God show us through his grace? (*His love and kindness toward us in saving us and making us righteous.*)
7. What were three of the important points that Luther defended? (*Salvation only by His Word, faith and grace.*)

Challenge:

Plan with your class the possibility of obtaining the Luther film so that you can watch it together and discuss the things they discovered or understood better by watching the film.

Facing the crisis

Lesson 38

Nilda Calvo • Argentina

Objective: To help the students understand that if they're willing to do the will of God, they can be used to change the world in which they live.

Memory Verse: "In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered." (2 Chronicles 31:21)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Pictures, figures, or decorations.
- Instructions: Bring pictures, figures, or decorations to your class and place them incorrectly (upside down, on the floor, etc.) Ask the students to get up from their seats and walk around the room and observe carefully if there is anything that's out of place and what they can do to make it look right.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Current newspapers, cardboard or paper on which they can make posters, scissors, glue and marker.
- Instructions: Hand out several pages of newspapers, which you have previously chosen, which contain social, religious, political situations, etc., as well as information about mass media (literature, music, theater, movies). Ask them to make a poster that represents the current situation in the country.

Connect

Navigate

1. The person God uses

Just as the people and kings of Judah had a rich past under God's direction and commandments, they also had tragedies when they were left aside. Just as it happened with these three people, God can use us wherever we are, as long as we have the heart to do so.

A. King Asa

Have students read the story of King Asa (1 Kings 15:9-10 and 2 Chronicles 14:1-7, 15:10-19). Let them themselves give you the information that appears there and write it down on the board. Who is it talking about? What did he do? Asa's name means "Healer." Asa reigned during the years of 911-870 BC. He obeyed God the first 10 years of his reign and was able to carry out some reforms that influenced his people.

B. King Hezekiah

Have students read the story of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29:3-11) and write the facts on the board.

Hezekiah means "Jehovah is strength" and he reigned from approximately 715-687 BC. He was one of the greatest kings of Judah and the most consecrated spiritual leaders.

C. John Wesley

John Wesley was born in England in 1703. He studied at Oxford and was ordained a minister. He had a special experience with God in 1738. From 1739, he lived more than 50 years as a writer, preacher, organizer and leader of the Methodist movement, which was a movement of active social and educational work.

The first to respond to his preaching of the gospel were workers, peasants and miners. He preached more than 40,000 sermons and wrote more than 200 books.

His tireless efforts were felt in England, America, and continental Europe. He continued preaching up until a few days before his death, which took place in 1791. Among the last letters he wrote is the one he sent to William Wilberforce encouraging him to continue his fight against slavery.

2. The context of that time

The kingdom established under kings Saul, David and Solomon was divided into two: the Northern Kingdom or Israel, and the Southern Kingdom or Judah. They lasted just over two centuries, with many border conflicts.

None of the kings of the Northern Kingdom did the will of the Lord. In the southern kingdom of Judah, of the 19 kings and one queen who occupied the throne, only four were reformers.

A. King Asa

Have students read 1 Kings 15:12 and 2 Chronicles 14:3-5 and locate the problems. King Asa put an end to problems of idolatry and cultic prostitution in Judah.

B. King Hezekiah

Read 2 Kings 18:4 and 2 Chronicles 29:3-7 and locate the problems during Hezekiah's reign in Judah.

When Hezekiah came to reign, the temple had long been closed and covered in filth due to the neglect of that sacred place. The priests had not been supported during previous reigns. There were idols everywhere. The city was dirty and its walls destroyed.

The Southern Kingdom went from crisis to crisis, attacked by Assyria or Babylon, and they had to pay tribute (livestock, wine, war equipment, gold, silver) to the invading king.

C. John Wesley

In 1730, the crime statistics were alarming. The poor people lived in hovels. In every five houses, one was a canteen in which alcohol was sold. England had reached a national state of drunkenness. Every corner, every gate was a public bathroom. The streets were covered in garbage. Many children died before the age of five. The execution of criminals was a public spectacle. Children were still hanged for stealing fruit. England had a monopoly on the trade in African slaves, which were transported on ships where all kinds of horrible things were practiced.

Corruption reached politics and the church. Bribery and deception were common practices. Society seemed to be a huge casino. In popular literature, in songs, in daily conversations, in dramas, essays, poems and novels, rudeness, indecency and obscenities abounded.

3. The principles and effects that generated the reforms

A. King Asa

Have them read 1 Kings 15:11-15; 2 Chronicles 14:2-8 and 15:16-19. King Asa rooted out idolatry, the nation had 10 years of peace, the king fortified the cities and reaffirmed his covenant with God. He did what was right in the sight of God. His efforts to follow God's plans and rules yielded positive results.

B. King Hezekiah

Ask them to read 2 Chronicles 29:16-19, 31, 30:20-22, 31:1-6, 32:5-8, 27-30. Hezekiah ordered the priests to cleanse the temple and restore true worship of Jehovah; he reinstated the practice of tithing, removed the high places of idol worship, broke the idol images, and destroyed Moses' bronze serpent. He carried out important constructions, fortified several cities and made shields and swords and built the pipeline and the pool of Siloam. Hezekiah had a personal and growing relationship with God.

C. John Wesley

He wasted no time and attacked the evils during his preaching times. His powerful presentation of the gospel resulted in a complete transformation of the nation. He renewed the church and used the laity for ministry. Methodism's emphasis on holiness saved marriages, united families, and promoted social reform. His objectives were well marked and carefully planned before God. Laws regarding child labor were instituted and the abuses ended. Wesley so influenced Wilberforce that he brought about the end of slavery in the entire British Empire a few years later.

Asa, Hezekiah and Wesley were different and lived in different times, but they had faithful hearts and declared themselves followers of God. They did everything they could and trusted God with the results.

Conclude the class, applying this lesson to the daily lives of your students. Help them recognize if there's something in their life where a total commitment to God is lacking.

Review/Application:

How could you help your society by being a worthy witness of Christ? Ask them to choose some situations in society that urgently need to change, and to write how they can be participants in the change.

Then have them paraphrase the memory verse, putting their name in it, for example:

"In everything that (name) undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, (name) sought his/her God and worked wholeheartedly. And so (name) prospered." (Paraphrase 2 Chronicles 31:21).

Challenge:

During the week, pray to God that you can look around you and be that agent of change that He wants you to be. Write down the things you can help change in your surroundings and share it with the class next week.

The church is born

Lesson 39

Nilda Calvo • Argentina

Objective: That the students know the circumstances of the birth of the Church of the Nazarene and God's plan for the Nazarene people.

Memory Verse: "For it's written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:16)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Two posters: One with the biblical passages of Leviticus 11:45;19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16. Another one that says: "The Bible tells us that we can and must live in holiness in this world." A world map, a map of the United States of America; Try to get photos of Dr. Phineas Bresee and other leaders of our church from that time, (<https://nazarene.org/archives>), (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phineas_F._Bresee).

Get figures of clothing, traditional foods and means of transportation of that time and a Manual of the Church of the Nazarene.

- Instructions: In the classroom, place everything you have obtained and the posters as an exhibition. As the students arrive, invite them to look at the exhibition and once the tour is over ask: What do these things make you think about? What do you relate them to? All of these things are related to the birth of our church as a denomination.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Instructions: Ask the group the following questions:

- ◇ Where was the doctrine of holiness born? (*From God himself, who is holy, and who from the beginning of the formation of his people commanded them to be holy.*)
- ◇ In which country was our name born? (*United States of America*)
- ◇ In what year? (*It was established as a denomination in 1908.*)
- ◇ Who was the founder? (*Dr. Phineas F. Bresee*)
- ◇ What was the doctrine that stood out from the beginning of the church? (*The doctrine of holiness.*)

Through the answers you'll be able to get an idea of how much the young people know about the church and will introduce them to the topic.

Connect

Navigate

Let's look at the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Church of the Nazarene.

1. Before the rise of the church

The 18th-century holiness revival that emerged in England, led by John Wesley, spread far and wide and reached the United States with renewed interest in biblical holiness. The immigrants who arrived in the new land came confident in their faith and in the hope of achieving a better future. These people came with a deep longing to share the life of holiness with those who didn't yet enjoy it.

The holiness movement was born amidst great revivals. The people who brought the message of holiness hoped to make a strong impact on the religious faith of the inhabitants of the new land. Preachers went from place to place, calling sinners to change their lives through God's power.

2. A common characteristic of the groups that joined together

Have students read Leviticus 11:45; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16. What do you find common in these verses?

Israel was God's chosen people and was called to be a holy nation. After the death of Jesus, the church became the people of God.

The holiness that God demands (Leviticus 11:45) has to do with the whole being. It basically means to be set apart for God. We can only live the life of holiness when the Holy Spirit dwells in us (Galatians 5:22-23). What is in the heart of the Christian is manifested in everything he does and says. Hence true holiness is revealed in all spheres of daily life (Luke 6:45). The written Word of God is the surest rule for one who desires to live a life of holiness. God is the model of holiness (1 Peter 1:15a).

John Wesley stressed the importance of the life of holiness. Christians in the middle of the last century responded effectively to this message by using hands, feet, and lips to share holiness. They began meetings and camp meetings throughout the nation to promote holiness, and for four decades the topic of holiness was preached.

The witness to Christian holiness was vigorous and several holiness churches began to be founded from 1840 onwards.

In the 1890's, several independent holiness groups appeared. They were churches, rescue homes (where people in need were cared for) and evangelistic and missionary associations. The purpose of these groups was the same: To live and preach the holiness of life.

Some of the members of these organizations longed for a national holiness church.

In October 1895, the Rev. Phineas F. Bresee, Dr. Joseph Widney, and approximately 100 people organized the Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, California, United States. They maintained that Christians should follow Christ's example and preach the gospel to the poor. They considered themselves to have been called especially for this work. They believed that unnecessary ornamentation in houses of worship didn't represent the spirit of Christ, but the spirit of the world, and that their investment of time and money should be given to ministries for the salvation of people and the help of those in need. They organized the church according to these purposes. The Church of the Nazarene was born from the union of different holiness groups. The new church adopted general rules, wrote a statement of faith and a ritual contained in our church manual.

Share some Manuals with your students so that they appreciate these concepts.

First, the Church of the Nazarene spread throughout the United States of America. Dr. Bresee was a pastor, superintendent, editor, member of the university board of regents, and camp preacher, actively serving God for 38 years.

A few years later came the union of the holiness churches into a national body. By the time of the union convention in October 1908, Nazarenes were serving and witnessing in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, the Cape Verde Islands, India, Japan and South Africa, countries to which the different groups had sent missionaries before joining together.

3. The simple message produces extraordinary changes

The movement understood that there must be an internal change in the Christian. A total surrender to Christ, reflected in a total break with the old sinful life, together with the disciplined practice of piety, helps one grow in personal holiness. In the Word of God, we can see that God is asking for something special that's not impossible to achieve. When this experience comes into people's lives, they feel a desire to share what God has done in their lives. Hence, the beginnings of the church brought with it a strong sense of mission. The Church of the Nazarene began with this missionary emphasis.

This was the beginning of our church with a strong call to live in holiness, to evangelize the world, to be and make disciples, to compassionately care for those in need, and also to give special value to education.

We can also notice that in the beginnings of the church, a fresh anointing of the Spirit of God was acting in a very special way. The times, the events, the people and their experiences with God forged a movement of which we're direct heirs. Let's long for that Spirit to continue moving in our lives. Let's be grateful for the beginning of our church and expectantly look to the future as we fulfill our mission.

Review/Application:

Allow time to answer the following questions:

- Did you know the doctrine of holiness? Define it in your own words.
- Do you think this experience is real in your life?
- If your answer is no, what prevents it from being so?
- If your answer is yes, what are you going to do to not lose it and continue maturing in your faith?

Bring paper and colored pencils and invite the class to make a bookmark, or a sharing card, referring to the memory verse, and ask them to create a phrase that reflects God's plan for the Nazarene people.

Ask them to make a poster together that responds to the three points discussed in class, with a prayer from the students with the commitment they should have to God as Christians. This poster can be posted in a visible part of the church.

Challenge:

As a class, reflect on the birth of the Church of the Nazarene, and the circumstances that Christians experienced during those times. Think about the circumstances surrounding the birth of new Churches of the Nazarene in different parts of the world. Interview pastors so they can tell you about the birth and development of your local church. Finally, during the week, pray to God asking him to guide you in terms of your responsibilities as Christians and to fulfill the mission entrusted to each one.

Objective: That the students reflect on the relationship that exists between the exercise of the spirit and the exercise of the body.

Memory Verse: “Train yourself to be godly.” (1 Timothy 4:7b)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Divide the class into groups and give each group one or two questions.
 1. What physical and spiritual advantages does playing sports bring?
 2. What physical and spiritual disadvantages does playing sports bring?

Ask them to comment on personal stories or stories of friends and acquaintances whose sport has made them better people or worse people.

 3. Can sport in itself make us better people?
 4. What place do Christian values occupy when practicing a sport?
 5. What is the relationship between spiritual exercise and physical exercise?
 6. How can the spirit be exercised?

Give them time to share responses and open a time for discussion. Later in the course of the lesson the biblical position will be clarified.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask them to think of an athlete they know or admire. Then ask them:
 1. What do you admire about them?
 2. How much do you know about their lives?
 3. Do you think this athlete is a model in all areas of his/her life?
 4. Do you think a Christian can be a good athlete?
 5. Do you think the Bible has something to say about sports?

Allow them to respond and express their opinions regarding the topic. Later in the course of the lesson the biblical position will be clarified.

Connect

Navigate

The apostle Paul compared the Christian life to the races that athletes participated in within the ancient Greco-Roman stadiums. In the same way, the spiritual struggle waged by believers in Christ was equated with the sports that were carried out in Pauline times (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 Timothy 6:12). This reveals to us that there is a deep relationship between the spirit and the body.

1. Are sports good for the soul?

The idea that the practice of sport is beneficial for health is as old as the thought of the Greek philosopher Socrates (400 BC), who told his students, “Let everyone observe themselves and write down what food, drink, and exercises are best for you and how you should use them to maintain the most perfect health” (History of Sexuality-2, the use of pleasures. Foucault, Michel. 2001, p.101). That was part of the Socratic teaching about the knowledge of the good. For Socrates, having health was essential to understanding what good, or its synonym virtue, is. But it was Plato, a disciple of Socrates, who delved

into this idea and recommended that warriors be educated through gymnastics and music so that they would have a balanced soul.

Since then, the thought that sport forges the soul towards good has spread throughout the world and is reflected in the phrase “a healthy mind in a healthy body.” In fact, Baron Pierre de Coubertin himself, who in 1896 restored the modern Olympic Games, had the Socratic idea that sport was a matter of moral education. According to Coubertin, beyond the fun and entertainment that sport could give, it had, as a basic function, the task of serving to strengthen “the moral muscle of man.”

However, although these thinkers have linked sports with goodness, virtue and peace, the truth is that we don't see that sports actually has a strong influence on human peace. In fact, the Olympic Games themselves, which are taken as synonymous with world peace, have been surrounded by unrest and war. In 1920 and 1924, Germany didn't participate in the Olympics due to the First World War. In 1936, Adolf Hitler used the Olympics as an instrument to demonstrate the “greatness of the Nazi regime.” In 1948, Germany didn't participate either, being the loser of the Second World War. In Munich 1972, eleven Israeli athletes were kidnapped by an armed commando in the Olympic village itself, dying after the failed rescue operation. In Atlanta 1996, a bomb located outside the Olympic Stadium exploded, killing two people and injuring hundreds. While the 2008 Beijing games were taking place, Russia was bombing Georgia and there was a risk of conflict between Iran and the United States.

Ask: Is sports a good way to educate the soul? Why hasn't sports been able to influence world peace?

2. A body like a god

Despite helping to promote many good things, sport has limits when it comes to transforming the soul. Currently there is a practice of sport that doesn't even contribute to virtue, but instead encourages egocentrism, the cult of the figure and the adoration of one's own body. Going to the gym or practicing aerobics, lifting weights, and doing extreme sports, although they may be healthy or recreational practices, on many occasions and on an extended basis, have become ways of having a “social image,” “being sexually attractive,” or “being part of a circle of successful people.”

Once the ethical requirement is eliminated as part of sports training, the most logical explanation for the current taste for sports is the taste for individualistic success, which is undoubtedly exciting, but hedonistic. According to the sociologist Lipovetsky, “the formulas that linked sport with values (such as fair play, solidarity, teamwork, self-control, modesty, fair competition, etc.) have disappeared in the face of the massive appearance in our globalized society of egocentrism. Nowadays, sports is essentially an activity dominated by the search for pleasure... virtue is no longer what legitimizes sports; it's bodily emotion, pleasure, physical and psychological fitness” (The Twilight of Duty - the painless ethics of the new democratic times. Lipovetsky, Guilles. Anagrama, Compactos collection, 2005; p.112).

For Alejandro Brito, playing sports is “bringing your resume,” especially to increase social and erotic success, since physical perfection is part of selling yourself as a person. “...all the effort to enhance your figure, which in the past was directed at clothing, today is focused on the body. The clothes adapt to your demands. Hence the profusion of necklines, fitted dresses and pants, jeans, tights, lycra, etc. This is corroborated by Sergio C., businessman and bodybuilder: ‘...a good body makes you feel secure. With the development of your physique, you develop at the same time your personality, you improve it.’” (And in the middle of the two of us, my body like a god)(Brito, Alejandro, in La Jornada Semanal, Nueva Época, No. 187, supplement of the newspaper La Jornada, Mexico, 1/10/1993; p.22-23).

Ask: If personal confidence depends on having a good body, what happens when the body gets sick, ages, or has an accident?

3. The biblical perspective

Jesus highlighted this relationship between body and spirit very clearly. For example, he spoke of the spiritual role of the physical eye as a lamp of the body. When someone has the faith to see and reflect the

light of God, the body becomes all luminous; He is able to gain courage, strength, joy, meaning, and healing, even in the midst of darkness (Luke 11:33-36). This agrees with the promise to those who trust in God (Isaiah 40:28-31). On the contrary, the eye of a depressed, discouraged, anguished, angry person, trapped by their own evil or the evil that others exert on them, sees all dark things, emphasizing evil.

Many of the current failures of sports stem from having inverted this relationship. Nowadays it's common to claim that by exercising our body, going to the gym or playing sports, we achieve inner peace or self-confidence. While this can contribute to relaxing tensions or improving figure or health, it cannot replace the principle that it's the strength we receive from God in the spirit that sustains the body, as Jesus refers to it when responding to one of the greatest temptations set by the enemy (Luke 4:1-4).

In one of the most famous pieces of advice in the New Testament, the apostle Paul told Timothy that "...physical exercise is of little benefit" (1 Timothy 4:8a), which is why he recommended: "...exercise yourself for godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7b) since "godliness is profitable for all things, for it has promise of this present life and of the life to come" (Timothy 4:8b). Ask: What does godliness mean? It's the "virtue that inspires through love of God, tender devotion to holy things, and through love of neighbor, acts of love and compassion" (Royal Spanish Academy online). Ask: Does this mean that we shouldn't do sports to take care of our bodies? Not at all, since the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and one of the wonders that God has created (Psalm 139:13-18). The Pauline advice referred rather to the fact that it's much more important to exercise the spirit (immortal) than the body (mortal), for which, without a doubt, well-directed sport helps. But mercy, forgiveness, and love is the main exercise that God requires of us so that we may be witnesses of his presence in our lives.

Ask: Can self-centeredness be part of the "exercise of godliness"? How?

Review/Application:

Invite your students to also make sports a way to positively exercise their spirit. Ask them to respond:

1. How many of you practice some physical sport?
2. How many times a week do you practice it?
3. How many of you exercise spiritually?
4. How regularly do you do it?
5. Which of the sports disciplines or exercises do you like the most and what Christian values can be learned from each of them?
6. What did you learn from this lesson?
7. Develop a plan of spiritual exercises that helps you to grow.
8. Finally make a commitment to follow through with what you planned.

Challenge:

As a class, develop a physical exercise plan, together with the youth ministry of your church, in order to promote values such as: Fair play, solidarity, teamwork, self-control and fair competition. If your congregation doesn't have adequate facilities for this, find the nearest place (for example a park, sports facilities or some space that can be adapted) where young people can attend regularly and play sports together.

Food for your brain

Lesson 41

Yeri Nieto • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand the influence that visual media exert on behavior, and the need to be selective in what they're consuming.

Memory Verse: "If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light." (Matthew 6:22b)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A large complex puzzle.
- Instructions: Distribute the puzzle pieces and place the puzzle model in the center.

Show them the model and ask them to imagine where their pieces would go within the model. Give them a few seconds to think it over and have them stand up one by one and place the pieces on the model.

Warn them that they cannot move the pieces around. The idea is that they cannot put the puzzle together.

The same thing happens in life. Now you're very young and you cannot see everything that's coming in the future for you, but you're already "placing the pieces" of your own puzzle. Are the ways in which they're arranging them correct? Are you making good decisions in doing what you do? The Bible says we'll make better decisions if we take care of the way we feed our brain.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Pencil and white paper.
- Instructions: Ask the young people to write briefly (they can use general ideas) the steps they followed since they were little to get to the place they're at now (it could be in church, university or a job). Then ask them to read it to the class.

Help them notice that we're not always aware of the decisions we make every day (especially when we're little), but that each one of them meant and means a step for our life.

Use a good example from one that was read in class to talk about "how such a simple decision can make a huge difference."

To get to where we're at now, many decisions were necessary. The Bible says we'll make better decisions if we take care of the way we feed our brain.

Connect

Navigate

1. How does visual media influence?

We must talk about visual media, especially television and cinema, which are not only present in daily life, but have defined the lives of many people.

Since the end of the 20th century, newspaper reading has generally decreased, and the radio lost its dominance with radio soap operas, commercials, newscasts, etc. It was then television that exercised so much influence in the homes of millions and millions of families (including Christian families). All the furniture situated around the TV and it is the clock that defines the time to get up, eat, sleep, etc. Unfortunately, there are people who have no more references to everyday reality than through television. Today, many families may be without basic food, but not without a cable television system. The conclusion is obvious: For more and more people, television is a considered a necessity.

This audiovisual medium has implemented fashions. Ladies dress like the actresses of the current series and the men wear the same haircut as the best soccer player. TV has defined our way of communicating. People say the phrases that are “playing” on the most popular program. It has even shaped our character; unconsciously many people react with the same gestures as the villain of the most watched soap opera. However, we must clarify that TV is no longer the mass media par excellence. Now the hierarchy of consumption has been redistributed. What other media are preferred? Here are the answers:

1. 89% prefer to use the mobile phone.
2. 61.3% of these people, in addition to the mobile phone, use the Internet as a means of communication.

This means that people in our countries are increasingly consuming something personal in terms of mass communication, but the problem we face remains the same: What we consume via mobile phone, Internet or television.

2. What type of information should we select?

A good way for our brain to think good things is by reflecting on the foods we give it every day. Let's intentionally choose the information we're consuming!

Mass media in and of itself is not bad, but much of the content that many of them invite us to consume is bad in the short, medium or long term, from naive horoscope consultations, to sensuality and pornography, to the violence in which others suffer. Selecting what we consume in the audiovisual media of mass communication isn't impossible. We still have the freedom to decide what we download on our mobile phones. We still have the mouse in our hands, and the buttons on the television control still obey our decisions.

God asks us to account for not only what we do, but even for what our mind consumes. Let's close our eyes to evil, cheap sensuality, grotesque images and acts of violence. As Christians, we cannot follow the path of others, laugh at the rude or double meaning jokes that appear on open television, watch without shame the offensive videos that are sent to our mobile phones, or download images that, before God and even our family, are irreverent. Be careful with media that contaminates our mind.

3. Let's keep our minds renewed

Ask the class to read the following passages and ask what they teach us regarding the lesson topic.

- Proverbs 23:7 - Feed your brain well! Read the Bible, a good book, or magazines that deal with topics that help you grow as a person.
- Matthew 15:19 - Guard your heart! Be careful of what you see, because this fills your heart.
- Romans 12:1-21 - Take care of your spiritual life! Don't neglect your personal and congregational devotional life.
- Ephesians 4:23 - Examine yourself constantly! When listening to the Word we must constantly examine ourselves to grow in our spiritual life.

Let's consume the good through our eyes (and all the senses), and feed our brain well. Only then will we be the difference this world needs! The Bible teaches us to feed our brain better and thus make better decisions.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to personally answer the following questions, taking into account the level of “nutrition” they're having on a daily basis:

- What do I feed my brain every day while watching TV?
- How many hours do I spend watching television a day? A week?
- What do I feed my brain on the Internet every day?
- How many hours do I spend on the Internet each day? Each week?

- How many hours do I spend on my mobile phone? Could I go a day without it?
- How do these things help me?
- How many hours a day do I spend reading the Bible and communicating with the Lord?

After they respond, ask them to read the following statement and respond.

“As you’ve noted, we not only have to reflect on what we’re doing in our Christian life, we also need to stop taking in things that lead us to do or think something bad. And for that, we need to take care of our senses, especially our eyes, which are the windows open to the world that let in the values promoted by the world.”

- What do you promise to do (in front of the group) this week to **decrease** your eating of the world’s values?
- What do you promise to do (in front of the group) this week to **increase** your nourishment of the values of the Kingdom of God?

Challenge:

Make a list of the most popular T.V. programs and phone apps and analyze their contents. Then write a list of the values that these programs promote and that are contrary to the Christian life.

Then answer, is it worth continuing to consume such a thing? Present the results obtained for the next class.

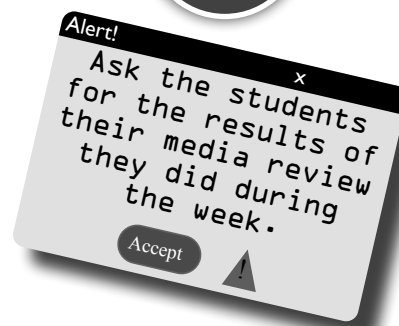
Good or Bad?

Lesson 42

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students understand that music is a means of expression that can reflect their condition.

Memory Verse: “‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.” (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard and chalk or marker. Write on the board at least five names of songs known to your students. Include two names of praise songs that you sing with the congregation and three names of secular songs popular today. If you can, bring the songs on your phone so they can hear a little of each one.
- Instructions: Ask the class to describe the messages that the lyrics of each song give them, and the feelings they experience when listening to them. Reflect on the difference in effects produced by Christian songs and secular songs.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard and chalk or marker.
- Instructions: Divide the board into two parts, and write on one side “Positive aspects of music” and on the opposite side “Negative aspects of music.” For this exercise, we’ll consider the concept of music in general, without distinguishing between Christian and secular. Next, write down each student’s responses and discuss them.

Connect

Navigate

Historians and archaeologists tell us that humans have been experimenting with sounds and rhythms since the beginning of history. Today, several million years later, we continue to practice and enjoy what we know as music. What have been the changes that music has experienced through the ages? Why have we chosen music to accompany us all this time? What does God think of music?

1. Background of music

Music has been a companion of human beings since the beginning of their existence. Nature itself teaches us about rhythms and melodic sounds with the singing of birds, communication between animals and the fall of rain. Likewise, human beings were endowed with vocal cords that allow us to make a variety of sounds.

In prehistoric writings, you can find symbols and information about rhythms and music that people used. Over time, the development of music has taken different forms, and even the instruments used have changed drastically. In prehistory, sounds could be made when two stones collided. Musical instruments advanced from flutes made from hollow branches or bones to classical pianos and electric guitars.

During the Middle Ages, music continued to advance until it was included in religious services, the best-known form being Gregorian chants. They were a cappella songs that were developed in Roman Catholic churches and the voices included different pitches and volume. Gregorian chants were used to teach biblical stories and doctrines since most people were illiterate.

During the Renaissance (1500-1600), music developed in an unprecedented way until reaching what we know today as classical music thanks to musicians such as Beethoven, Vivaldi, and Mozart, among others.

Today, modern instruments include keyboards, electric guitars, and electronically produced sounds. Likewise, modern music includes different vocal sounds and very varied rhythms, such as pop, jazz, rock, hip hop and alternative, among other styles.

It's interesting to see that despite the great changes that music has experienced throughout its history, it continues to move the human heart like very few other things can.

2. The influence of music

Who hasn't been moved by listening to a melancholic song or felt like moving when listening to a more intense rhythm? People tend to experience emotions in a much more intense way when they're accompanied by a matching melody and rhythm. That is, in part, why we like to listen to music. Psychologists who have studied the effect of music on human beings have discovered that music truly has the power to change our mood. We must recognize that not just any rhythm or intensity changes a person's mood, since not just any sound prompts us to feel or act in some way. However, there are combinations that can truly leave us very relaxed, energized, aggressive or depressed. An example is the violent fights that can arise at a rock concert and would probably never occur at a classical music concert.

People who are interested in studying the ethical aspect of music clarify that sounds and melodies in themselves don't have to be considered good or bad. However, it's important to recognize the influence that music can have on people, and the ability we have to use that influence in a responsible way. A simple example is the importance that the type of music heard when driving a car can have. That's to say, if I listen to loud or intense music, perhaps I will tend not to give way to others or not be patient with pedestrians who are crossing. However, if the music I'm listening to is a little more relaxed, I probably won't speed or break traffic laws so easily. Although this example may seem extreme, it's undeniable that music can influence us in both positive (Isaiah 51:3) and negative (2 Chronicles 2:22) ways.

Another important aspect of the influence of music is the lyrics of songs, since the repetition of song lyrics over and over again causes these lyrics and words to remain stored in our memory and become part of our thoughts (Philippians 4: 8) and sometimes we respond to some circumstance with the lyrics of a song.

Some teaching techniques that include learning through songs, such as a melody that accompanies the letter of the alphabet or multiplication tables, can help people memorize the alphabet or tables more effectively.

3. The function of music

After reflecting on the powerful influence of music on the human mind and heart, it's important to consider our responsibility for what we allow to influence us. Just as we know that it's important to take care of our body from anything that can make it sick and cause pain, it's also important to take care of our mind from any influence that can harm our inner being.

As Christians, we can always look to God's Word for help in knowing how God wants us to care for and use the body, mind, and heart He has given us.

Christians who lived in Corinth had to face situations that were sometimes very dangerous for their body and mind, since Corinth was one of the most modern cities and had a variety of people and customs. In Corinth, people saw negative examples of sexual immorality, use of addictive substances, aggression, violence, and lack of kindness and respect. For this reason, Paul advised his friends that although they were free to choose the activities they participated in, it was wiser and more beneficial to consider the consequences of each choice (1 Corinthians 10:23-24).

Psalms 47:1-7 teaches us that the function music should have is praise and worship of God. There the writer not only urges us to sing to God, but to do so with "intelligence" (v.7), that is, understanding what we sing.

Without hesitation, we can say that God not only gave us the ability to make and enjoy music for ourselves, but also use it as a means to express our feelings of love, devotion and praise to God in an unparalleled way (Psalm 66:2,69 :30; 75:9; 95:2; 149:1).

In Isaiah 6:1-3, the prophet recounted his vision of what was happening in God's presence: The creatures worshiped God constantly and intentionally. It's wonderful to recognize that God also gave us, as human beings, the ability to worship Him with our voices and music, just as the angels do in heaven. We must always remember that the central function of music, from the perspective of a Christian heart, must always be the sincere and humble worship of God. We cannot deny that He deserves it!

Review/Application:

Have your students compare secular songs and Christian songs. Then in the box below, make a list of the messages that young people receive when listening to different songs. Ask them to also think about the effect that these messages have on the lives of the young people who hear and learn from them.

Secular lyrics	Christian lyrics
Heavy Metal, Rap, Hip Hop, Rock, etc.	Christian Music
<i>Addictive Substance use Immoral conduct aggressive behavior</i>	<i>Use of Prayer Consecration to God Worship Hope in God</i>

Challenge:

What role does music play in your life? Have you ever felt conviction about certain songs you listen to that stick in your mind? This week meditate on some songs that are a blessing for your life. You can ask God to help you choose songs that help you feel closer to Him and know Him more. God loves you, and what he wants most is for you to be close to Him!

Do you please God?

Lesson 43

Jessica Nogales • Spain

Objective: That the students understand that we're the greatest work of art that God has created, with the purpose of reflecting his glory and knowledge.

Memory Verse: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." (Romans 12:1)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A white sheet of paper, colored pencils, colored papers and materials to decorate the drawings they make.
- Instructions: Ask your students to draw what they like and love most or to write the name of someone who means a lot to them and to paint and decorate it with all their love, thinking about that person. Then ask them for their creation. One by one, begin to distort them with another pencil, with the justification that in your opinion, they look better that way or that it's now fashionable to draw or paint in a different way. Ask them how they felt. Talk about it. Explain that in the same way, God is offended when he sees how we harm his creation, which is us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard, chalk or marker.
- Instructions: Put the word "tattoos" on the board. Then ask students what is the first thing that comes to mind when they see this word. Write down what they say around the main word so that they can see it. They will most likely name things like "rock" or "skull," but whatever they name will surely not be anything related to God. This will help you introduce the topic.

Connect

Navigate

Beauty and art have gone from being a way of highlighting God's creation to being a way of enslaving human beings to the fashions of the moment. There are no longer rules or parameters, nothing is filtered through the Word of God, everything is acceptable. Many young people accept tattoos and piercings as art and lifestyle, but what does God think?

1. God and his greatest work of art

God made the whole world; everything our eyes can see has been created by Him (Genesis 1 and 2; Psalm 8:3). Read Psalm 19:1 and ask: What does this verse mean? It's clear that the beauty of creation reflects its Maker and shows that pure art comes from God, and Exodus 31:3 confirms this.

God created human beings in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:27); He endowed people with minds, feelings and freedom to choose. In addition to this, he gave them bodies with which they reflect the great creativity, art and perfection of God. There is nothing as perfect as the human body. He made mankind his greatest work of art. God made us in order to reflect His glory and knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, he says that everything we do should give glory to God, and Ephesians 1:12 states that we are for his praise of glory.

Unfortunately, people sinned (Genesis 3), and from that moment on, they began to leave aside their Creator to live their way. History witnesses how people, in their search for satisfaction, have been degrading themselves. An example of this is the ways in which they have been expressing their thoughts and desires without taking God into account.

2. Tattoos, God, and his Word

Tattoos have their origins in ancient religions, slavery, witchcraft and pagan cultures. “The Moko Maori style of New Zealand, for example, was a tribal tattoo that identified each individual and his or her status within a group. It was the unique and unmistakable person. The more complicated the tattoo design, the greater the rise in social rank. They were tattooed from head to toe, starting at the age of eight, and it was a slow and painful process; Tattoos were embellished and renewed throughout life. The Maori thought they could trap cosmic energy in their tattooed spirals. If the deceased didn’t have protective tattoos, the sorceress would eat their eyeballs and the soul would be blind and couldn’t find the way to immortality. Therefore, if someone died without a tattoo, the Maori would tattoo the corpse” (<<http://www.elcuerpo.es/los-tatuajes-historia-simbologia-y-tradiciones-item16.php>>). In Chinese culture they used it to mark slaves or prisoners.

As we see, the origin of this practice is linked to superstition and idolatry. In Leviticus 19:28, God was giving laws of holiness to his people. At that time, it was customary to shave one’s head and mark one’s skin as a sign of mourning, but God prohibited all of this (Deuteronomy 14:1). It was an act of holiness to stay away from all such practices.

In the entire Bible, we don’t find any more passages that refer exactly to this issue. However, although the Bible doesn’t talk exactly about that, it does tell us that our way of life should reflect the glory and knowledge of God.

3. Reflecting His glory and knowledge

Form three groups and ask them to draw the main idea from each of the following Bible passages and apply it to their daily lives.

In Romans 12:1-2, there are two very important things: First, he demands holiness of body and soul. Second, he asks us to put aside all worldliness and seek the will of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, he tells us that our body is special; it’s the temple of God and we shouldn’t do anything that damages it. When someone gets a tattoo, they hurt themselves because it involves a painful process. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, God tells us that we should glorify him with our body because it’s from God.

So what is the purpose of getting a tattoo? Perhaps being fashionable, demonstrating manliness or being sexier, but do these purposes glorify God?

What does the word “conformity” mean? (Romans 12:1-2). It’s the “practice of someone who easily adapts to any circumstance of a public or private nature.” (Royal Spanish Academy) Verse 2 says that we must renew our minds to know the good will of God; That is, I must analyze my way of living to see if I am pleasing God.

Any decision in my life must be compared with biblical teaching, and I will see if the desire to get a tattoo comes from my communion with God or my communion with the world.

God says in his Word that what we are on the outside reflects what we are on the inside (Titus 1:15-16) and Philippians 4:8-9 is quite clear and a good guide for anyone who wants to please God “...If something is worthy of praise, think about this... and do this.” This should be our rule of life.

Review/Application:

Ask your class to together answer the following questions. (*We include possible answers in italics.*)

1. In whose image have we been created and what is our responsibility in this regard? (*We were created in God’s image. And our responsibility is to be a reflection of his glory and make it known to others through our lives.*)

2. Where do tattoos come from? *(From pagan religions and cultures, slavery and witchcraft.)*
3. Finish completing the Bible verse: “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. _____” (Leviticus 19:28) *(I am the Lord.)*
4. What things will God judge you on? *(About my decisions and actions.)*
5. If you had to make a decision, who would you consult first? *(God.)*
6. Does the life of holiness encompass only the spiritual or also the material? *(It includes both. If we’re children of God, we’re also the temple of the Spirit and we must be a testimony before the world.)*

Challenge:

In the next week, reflect on the things in your life that are different from those of the young people you know who are not Christians. Prepare your list and bring it to the next class to share with the group. (And if you’re a Christian and you have tattoos because you got them before knowing Christ, don’t worry, God knows your condition. The important thing is that from now on your life is set apart for Him and that you will always seek God’s direction for any decision you make.)

Who do you dance for?

Lesson 44

David González • USA

Objective: That the students understand that our entire being and what we do has the purpose of pleasing the Lord.

Memory Verse: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Chairs for all participants, music player or musical instrument.
- Instructions: Musical chairs - Place all the chairs in a circle with their backs facing inward. Place one chair less than the number of participants. Ask participants to stand in front of the chairs. Play music and ask participants to walk around the circle of chairs to the music. When the music stops, each person must try to sit in a chair; whoever is left without a chair is eliminated. Then remove a chair and repeat the game until you have one chair and two people left. The person sitting in the last chair wins. Use various rhythms to help the class realize how the body can express ideas, moods, etc., in combination with music.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: List of emotions (sad, tired, happy, excited, distressed, etc.).
- Instructions: Charades - Ask a participant to represent with gestures and/or movements some of the words that you included in the list (that you created in advance) and ask the rest of the group to try to discover what it is.
- You can choose a different volunteer for each word.
- Then comment that our body has the ability to communicate a message beyond the use of spoken or written words. Invite the volunteers who acted out the words to share how they felt when trying to communicate the message. Then share the introduction to the topic.

Connect

Navigate

The body is wonderful because God enabled it to do many things, and one of them is to communicate through movements. Our body communicates what we feel, want and are, especially through rhythm and movement. Ask: What do you think about dance?

Let's see what the Word of God tells us about our body and dancing. Only until we have considered what God's Word tells us can we be ready to make the best decisions.

1. Designed to please God

In Genesis 1:31 in the creation account, God himself declared that everything was very good, including human beings. If we analyze each part of our body, we can come to the conclusion that human beings are so perfect and that there is no doubt that God was the one who created them. Even the smallest part of our body has a particular composition and a perfect purpose. In a special way, our senses allow us to perceive what is around us, but they also allow us to express what is happening inside us. Through them we externalize our ideas, feelings, questions, emotions, etc. Sometimes we do it directly through the spoken word, but other times we do it through our gestures or movements.

This is the starting point to talk about dance as part of a way of expression of the human being. I would like to highlight the word “expression,” which implies communication. So instead of starting with the question, is it bad to dance?, I'm going to start with the question, is it bad to express ourselves?

This question is much easier to answer, so we should start with it. I think we all agree that it isn't bad to express ourselves, especially since we've already said that God designed us that way, with that ability through the spoken and written word or movement. However, what opinion would we have if our communication expressed a message that hurt others and damaged my identity as a being created in the image of God? Surely the answer to the question, Is it bad to express ourselves?, would change.

Communication is good or bad, depending on the message we transmit. In the same way, we could say that dancing in and of itself isn't a sin. However, we cannot settle for that answer; we have to ask ourselves other questions that help us identify the message and intentions of the one expressing themself. Ask: What are we communicating with our body through a dance? What are the real intentions behind those movements?

The Bible shows us that all this wonder of our body has a purpose: To please God. In Psalm 150:3-6, the writer recognizes this and invites every living being to praise God with different instruments.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul also reminds us that we were designed to please God (Ephesians 1:3-7). And this means that our body was also created to "praise the glory of his grace." So when evaluating any type of dance, it's important that we answer this question: Through my body, am I expressing my desire to please God?

2. Moderations with folklore

Based on the previous point, we can rule out any kind of sensual dancing as a way to please God. In light of Scripture, that wasn't the purpose for which we were created.

But what about folk dances? In the Old Testament, mention is made of the dances of the people of Israel to celebrate their triumphs, their joy over a good harvest, and even to celebrate their good relationship with God (Exodus 15:20; 1 Samuel 18:6-7; 2 Samuel 6:5,14,16). That's what we could define as an expression of the culture of the people of Israel. Bringing it to our days, we could say that it applies to the multiple folk dances that our people have practiced for years and that are part of the cultural identity of our countries. The difference is that the culture of the people of Israel was based on their identification as the people of God, something that's very different in the society in which we live and in which our ancestors lived. However, the important thing is to classify it as a cultural expression.

Now, even when we talk about folk dance, we won't make a distinction from sensual dance in terms of the criteria we'll use to evaluate whether it's morally good or bad. For this reason, we'll use similar questions, such as, is this folk dance a way to express something for which I am grateful to God in relation to the country or community where I was born? Do the movements, costumes and message in this dance detract from me as a person?

Our senses allow us to communicate so that the people who see the dances will be affected by what they see, positively or negatively. Of course, I can't do much about what goes on in other people's heads, but I can rest easy knowing that my commitment is to please God through my words, movements, and clothing, and making a positive impact on people. .

I'm sure that with what has been mentioned so far, we have a good basis for making decisions about participating in some folk dances or abstaining from them. There are many folk dances that show the cultural richness of the place they represent and express God's creation very well, using movements and costumes that respect the dignity of people. On the other hand, there are also some dances that, instead of showing the beauty of God's creation, show us the havoc that sin has caused in many cultures and societies.

The Bible tells us that whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we are to do it in the name of the Lord and giving thanks to Him (Colossians 3:17, 23). Allan Tozer in his book, "The Search for God," mentions that for one who has given his life to Christ, every word, action and thought becomes something sacred. That is, he does it to please God and with gratitude in his heart. So whether or not we participate in some folk dance, it's always important to remember that our commitment as Christians is to communicate our love to God, whom we want to please in everything, through everything we are and do.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to respond individually to the following questions:

- What do you think is the purpose for which God gave us a body?
- Read Psalm 150 carefully. How many times is the word “praise,” or other words related to praise, mentioned? (13)
- What is the invitation with which this psalm concludes? (*Everything that breathes praise the Lord.*)
- Write in your own words what Ephesians 1:3-7 says.
- Based on Colossians 3:17, what can you say about dancing? You can include some differences that you find between sensual dance and folk dance (if you think there are any).

Challenge:

During the week, listen to some folk songs and examine what they express, and share that next Sunday with the class.

Resist!

Lesson 45

Zeida Lynch • Paraguay

Objective: That the students see the need to resist the attacks of the devil to emerge victorious.

Memory Verse: “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: A small table or a place to rest two people's elbows while facing each other.
- Instructions: Arm Wrestling - Ask two participants to rest their elbows on the table and grip each other's right hand, and then using force, try to force their opponent's arm to the table.

While they're participating, ask, “What do you feel when you're “fighting” with your opponent. Is it the desire to win? Why do you want to win? At the same time ask, “Why do you want to resist? What does it mean to resist? How can you resist better?” Mention that if the elbow is supported firmly, then the hand will have more strength and can have more resistance. If the elbow slips or moves, it will be easier for the arm to bend.

Highlight the force they made so that their partner couldn't bend their arm. That's resistance, trying not to let yourself be defeated.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Candy wrappers covering some vegetables.
- Instructions: Carefully cut pieces of potato or carrot and cover them with chocolate wrappers. Do it in such a way that people don't notice the “trick.”

Then present them to the class and ask a few volunteers to pick one of the “candies.” Talk to those who took the “candy” about how they felt when they realized they weren't what they thought. Ask if any of them suspected it wasn't real.

The world presents many things as “fake candy” to deceive us and make us stray from our Christian faith. Resistance shows itself in not being impressed by what our senses like, but rather being prudent and seeking help from God.

Connect

Navigate

1. Peter's advice to young people

In 1 Peter 5:5-8, we find some advice for young people:

- a. Submit to the elders: It didn't refer to those of greater age, but to those with greater experience in the Christian life. It's important to subject ourselves to those with more experience because they have spent many years in their walk with Christ and have experiences that can help us.
- b. Be submissive to one another: “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.” Humility manifests itself when we recognize our weaknesses and limitations. Being humble will make us aware that we're vulnerable and that we need help from Christ first of all, and also from our brothers and sisters in the faith.
- c. Cast all your anxiety on Him: Anxieties can be problems, worries, needs, etc. These are things that can distract us from our trust in God.
- d. Be sober and watchful: “Be alert and of sober mind.” It's obvious that if we all knew where the dangers were, we would try to avoid them. But one of the characteristics of the lion is that he can approach his prey without it noticing. Likewise in the case of the devil's attacks, he comes in disguise. They are presented in the most subtle ways in order to deceive us and make us fall.

2. We are under attack and we must resist

The devil seeks to destroy those who trust in Christ. Jesus taught his disciples that they would be under attack and mentioned the need to resist temptation. He himself was an example of this. Luke 4:13 tells us that after Jesus resisted those temptations, Satan “departed for a while.”

Jesus also taught his disciples to pray before the attack (Matthew 6:13). We must ask God for help to be alert when temptation stalks us and help us to be delivered from it. We must be aware that the “darts of the enemy” are going to arrive at any moment. That’s why we always need to ask God for help in prayer.

Jesus told Peter that he was going to be “attacked” (Luke 22:31-34) and promised beforehand to help him (Luke 22:32). Peter didn’t take him too seriously because he was sure of himself.

Paul taught in Ephesians 6:12 who the struggle is against. Many times we can focus so much on a problem or conflict, even with people within the church, that we don’t realize that it’s a distraction that wants to take our gaze away from Christ.

3. Ways to deal with the attack

Peter commands the Christian to resist (1 Peter 5:9), and Paul says to put on the armor to resist (Ephesians 6:13). He also says that the way to resist is to remain firm in our faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, but never gave in to it (Hebrews 4: 14-15). For that reason, he can understand us, sympathize with our situation, and help us to be victorious.

It’s interesting to note that our responsibility is to ask God for help (Hebrews 4:16). Since Jesus conquered temptation, he is powerful to help us. We must have faith in Him.

One of the ways to resist temptation (Ephesians 6:13) is to know the Word of God. On the three occasions that Jesus was tempted, he responded, “it is written...” (Matthew 4: 4,7,10). Jesus conquered Satan and temptation by using the Scriptures. In the same way, if we want to be victorious, we have to base our faith on the Word of God. Our faith will increase as we know more about the Author of the Bible, and one of the ways to know him is through his Word.

Sometimes we want to distract the enemy’s attacks by getting involved in different activities and trying not to give them importance. That’s a danger! Let’s seek help in Christ and in his Word.

Another way to resist is to practice the means of grace (praying, praising, worshiping, fasting, etc.). These are different ways by which we can approach God with faith.

4. Results of resisting the attack

We children of God can resist the attacks of the enemy through Christ Jesus. Our part is to endure, trusting in Him, and He will do the rest (1 Peter 5:10-11). In 1 John 5:18, he tells us that when God keeps us, the evil one doesn’t touch us. If we’re born of God and don’t practice sin, we’ll have victory in Christ. But when we’re attacked, we need to resist (1 Peter 5:10-11).

- a. He will perfect us: As we grow spiritually, we realize that there are areas in our lives that need further development. Jesus wants to put each of these areas in perfect relationship and connection with Him.
- b. We will be affirmed: By truly realizing that the battle has already been won, we’ll have the courage to move forward and we’ll be able to encourage others when they go through similar situations.
- c. We will be strengthened. When we resist, our faith will be strengthened and will remain firm in the midst of storms, just like an ancient tree that doesn’t fall because it has deep roots and a strong trunk.
- d. We will be established: In Matthew 7:24-27, we read that the house that remained firm despite the bad weather was the one that was built on the rock. That’s the meaning of being established. It’s deeper than standing firm or being strong; it has a more lasting meaning.

Finish by leading your students in a time of prayer and leading them to promise themselves to strive to know more about God.

Review/Application:

Guide your students in answering the following questions as the lesson unfolds.

- Who taught us that we would be attacked by the enemy? (*Jesus*)
- Mention 3 times when Jesus taught that. (*1. With his own example. 2. In the Lord's Prayer. 3. Anticipating what would happen to Peter.*)
- Who is our fight against according to Ephesians 6:12? (*Against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of evil.*)
- Write 3 ways to deal with the attack. (*Strengthening our faith in Christ. Bible reading. Praying, fasting, etc.*)
- Which of them are the ones you practice the most?
- Which would you like to include in your life to face the attack?
- What will Christ do for us if we resist? (*He will perfect us. He will affirm us. He will strengthen us. He will establish us.*)

Challenge:

During a time of prayer, ask God to show you the areas of your life that are most vulnerable to temptation. Then this week look in your Bible for 10 promises that can help you strengthen your faith when you're tempted.

Put on the truth

Lesson 46

Joel Castro • Spain

Objective: That the students understand that the fight with the enemy must be faced on our terrain and with our weapons.

Memory Verse: “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.” (Ephesians 6:14a)



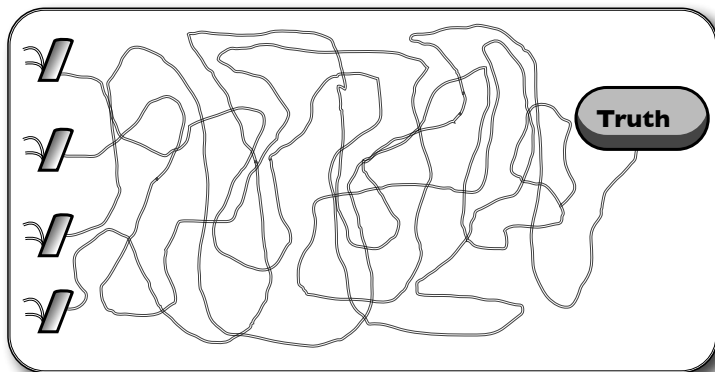
Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Photocopies of the following graph for each participant.
- Instructions: Give a copy to each student and allow time for them to follow each thread from the stake to find which stake is linked to the truth. (Make sure everyone starts from the stake and doesn't cheat.) Give them some time to express what meaning that dynamic can have in their Christian life.

It's important to know that there are many threads of ideologies that try to give us the truth; However, there is truly only one that's right.



Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Blank sheets of paper, pencils and a drawing of a landscape.
- Instructions: Show the drawing with a landscape and then put it away so that they don't see it and give everyone time to draw the landscape that you previously showed them.
- After 3 minutes, see how similar their drawings are to the original, and tell them that many try to bring the truth but that they're just mere conceptions. The truth is there is only one original drawing.

Connect

Navigate

1. The truth comes from Christ

The “truth,” according to the philosopher Plato, is the same as “revelation.” We would say that the truth is evident when we remove the veil from our eyes. Both teens and young people will hear many philosophies and ideologies during their secondary or higher studies that will shake their ways of thinking. That's why it's important to know that among the many understandings of life, the only one that brings real satisfaction is the one that comes through the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

The only authentic truth is that which comes through Jesus Christ. John was the only evangelist who had the purpose of helping us understand the source of all true wisdom (John 1:14, 17; 18:37). Jesus Christ is the revealed truth, and only through Him can we find the true path. If we want to find the truth of things, or the truth of life, we just have to look at Christ, see his example, see his message, and see his practical life.

Then we'll find the true revelation of the truth. No matter how right our thoughts, notions, or ideas of life may seem, if they're not guided by the revelation of Christ, they'll only lead us to death (Proverbs 16:25).

2. Clothing of truth

The clothing that the apostle Paul describes to us is an inner clothing, because your actions flow from your heart (Ephesians 6:14^a). Therefore, it's necessary that your interior be clothed with the garment of truth. But how can we put on truth?

A. Have Christ in our heart

Christ is the only truth. Therefore, the only way to have the truth as the inner garment is to have Him (John 8:32). If the truth is Christ, then when we're saved, we're also free from all the ignorance that condemned us to live in the midst of darkness. Only the truth of Christ will set us free (John 8:36).

Paul dedicated his youth to the exhaustive study of science and religion. However, when he learned the truth revealed on the road to Damascus, all that he had acquired from his youth was nothing compared to the truth of Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

If you don't have Christ in your life, I encourage you to take that step of faith. (Take a moment to give them the opportunity to repeat after you a prayer of salvation.) And if you already have him, I ask you to take into account the following commands.

B. Live in holiness

The truth revealed through our Lord can sanctify our lives. God wants us to live holy lives (John 17:17,19). Jesus' concern wasn't only that his disciples and followers would know the truth, but that they would live in it. The truth has sanctifying power. It cleanses us and takes us to a spiritual dimension where our actions resemble Christ.

When we're clothed with sanctifying truth, we live a life guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13a), who guides us in the truth. Therefore, consecration to the Lord is important, lest carnal actions cause the Holy Spirit to be grieved, and as a consequence we live a religious life far from the truth (Ephesians 4:30). Christ isn't religion, He is an abundant life experience.

C. Live in love

Love is the characteristic of a child of God, so the truth in our lives will depend on how much we love God and our neighbors (Ephesians 4:15a; 1 John 3:18). Truth never contradicts itself, therefore, we must not allow there to be a division between our words and our actions. The truth is the theory of what you say and the practice of your facts. Let's remember that in Christ we have the truth, in his Spirit we walk in the truth, and if we love we practice the truth.

3. Winning with the truth

Paul said "Therefore stand firm..." (Ephesians 6:14a). Metaphorically, this implies being well positioned. Ask: Have you seen soccer goalkeepers when they're guarding their goal so the other team doesn't score goals? Or men wrestling in a ring? They pay a lot of attention to their opponents. That's the idea of the verse. Spiritually, it implies that we must not allow ourselves to be dominated by anything that's contrary to the truth of Christ. From the biblical point of view, there are many situations where we must be strong in the face of temptations that lead us not to use the truth. For example: Lies (Proverbs 8:7); being a false witness (Proverbs 12:17); acting with double meaning is also avoiding the truth (Mark 12:14); living a purely religious life (1 John 1:6; 2:4).

We are called to be victorious in Christ. The truth is a necessary tool to emerge victorious against the devil's stalkings. Christ gave us the truth, so let's use it (2 Corinthians 13:8).

Just as God is the truth, the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). From the beginning of creation, he adulterated the truth by tempting our first parents. Now through Christ, the truth has been recovered. That's why Paul's call is to clothe ourselves with the truth so as not to be ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15).

Review/Application:

Form two or three groups and assign each group some of the following characters to solve the following task. Let them read the biblical passages and mark with an “L” the characters who changed the truth for a lie and put a “T” for those who told the truth. Have a discussion time after everyone is finished.

- Peter (Mark 14:26-31) (L)
- Amnon (2 Samuel 13:1-15) (L)
- Nathanael (John 1:43-51) (T)
- Delilah (Judges 16:4-22) (L)
- Paul (2 Timothy 4:5-8) (T)
- Jacob (Genesis 27:1-38) (L)
- Daniel (Daniel 6) (T)
- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) (L)
- Joseph (Genesis 39) (T)
- Cain (Genesis 4:1-12) (L)
- Job (Job 1:1) (T)

Challenge:

Do you want to clothe yourself completely in the truth? This is your chance. Start now to choose what is good and true despite what others say or do. God wants us to be light in the midst of darkness. During the week think about whether you still have something that you're hiding. We encourage you to dress in the truth.

Dressing ourselves in righteousness

Lesson 47

Lorena Noé • Chile

Objective: That the students understand that righteousness is an essential part of the transformation that God imparts to the believer and they must live it to their neighbor.

Memory Verse “with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (Ephesians 6:14b).



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Two pieces of paper with two hypothetical cases.
 - Instructions: Divide the class into two groups and give each one a sheet with a case. Then motivate the class to create two endings for the case in question in 5 minutes. One must be the fair ending and the other the unfair one according to their own assessments.
 - ◇ Case 1: A classmate is upset with me. He says I said bad things about him. A mutual friend told him what I said.
 - ◇ Case 2: I lent my music player to a friend. She listened to it during class and the teacher took it from her and won't give it back.
- Ask: How did it feel to make two endings for the same beginning? Which was easier, crafting the fair ending or the unfair one?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: A container containing the measurements marked in cc. (cubic centimeters), a quantity of some element that can be measured and weighed (flour, legumes, sugar, etc.), 3 glasses or containers.
 - Instructions: Before starting class, put the materials on a table so that everyone can see the activity. Ask the class to divide the item into the glasses, measuring 100 cc. in each one, without using the container that has the marked measurements.
- They will then proceed to verify if the distribution was indeed correct with the marked container.
- Ask: Was it difficult to make an equal division? Why? If we take this activity to real life, how difficult can it be to do the right thing? Have you ever been in a situation that was unfair? How did you feel?

Connect

Navigate

1. God is righteous

The word righteous means: “morally right or justifiable; virtuous.” (Merriam-Webster.com) That's to say, to be righteous is doing what is right and fair. It's as if we were distributing a cake and making sure that each piece was the same for everyone, because it's fair that it should be that way.

Paul urges us to put on “the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14b) because God loves righteousness; he loves it when people act righteously and justly (Psalm 11:7). In fact, if we do the righteous thing, the right thing, the just thing, the verse says we'll see the Lord's face.

God cannot be fair and then make bad or unfair decisions. God is just and his purposes are full of goodness. He desires to give each one the proper measure of what he or she needs. That's why he wants us to learn from Him so that we live the Christian life appropriate to His purposes and advice.

God wants to give us his righteousness when we ask for it (Luke 18:7). He acts justly, especially to the afflicted (Deuteronomy 10:18), and he expects us, his children, to do the same (Isaiah 1:17).

2. God's justice for human beings

There is a story in the Bible that demonstrates true justice practiced by a servant of God. Although King Saul made an attempt on David's life during his lifetime, David wanted to do what was right and just for one of Saul's descendants, his son Jonathan, out of love for Jonathan, who was his best friend (2 Samuel 9: 1-13). So, he set out to find someone who was from Saul's family (descended from royalty) to show mercy to.

David found Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who was crippled in his feet (2 Samuel 4:4), and rewarded him by giving him a portion of land to work and promised him that he would always sit at the king's table (vv.7- 10).

For a disabled person, life at that time was more difficult than it is now. There wasn't any place for people who suffered from any disability, and Mephibosheth was no exception. It's difficult to imagine how much frustration, bitterness and loneliness this man felt. Since he was little, he had to face the looks of those who didn't have disabilities and who weren't separated from society.

But David teaches us that God's justice is for everyone, and that each person should benefit from his mercy.

This is something that not only happened to Mephibosheth through David, but it should happen with our own lives.

We may not have any physical disabilities, but God saw us "...dead in sins" (Colossians 2:13a). That's to say, we were incapable of approaching and being part of God's family because sin distanced us from Him. We weren't righteous. But Christ provided his righteousness, paying for our sins so we could access the life we live now. And he assures us that one day we'll also sit at the table of the King of kings and will be with Him forever.

David performed a righteous action toward Mephibosheth despite his disability, and God through Christ performs a righteous action for us despite our sinful condition.

God, by doing justice, gives us back:

1. What we had lost because of our sin, i.e. joy, communion and relationship with God. Through Christ, we once again have access to his presence because we have been made righteous (Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:7).
2. The freedom for which we were created. We stop being slaves to sin and become children of God, what God has always wanted us to be (John 8:36; Galatians 5:1; 1 John 3:10).

When asked if God has ever done justice in your lives, you can clearly and strongly answer Yes! God made us righteous and restored us, through the death of Jesus, to be what we were created to be.

Now, Paul tells us about the armor of God, which will help us in our daily lives to "... stand firm against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11b). And he not only names offensive elements of attack against the enemy, but includes the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6: 14b) as part of the defensive weaponry in our spiritual battle. The armor that Paul referred to was linked to that worn by the Roman soldier in the first century. The breastplate was made of iron or steel, and surrounded the soldier's body, especially his shoulders and chest. It protected the vital organs and especially the heart.

The breastplate of righteousness that Paul invites us to wear helps protect our hearts from evil influences so that we can make right decisions, based not on our thoughts and prejudices, but on the justice that God imparts as a right over the lives of the Christians.

What a rest we can give ourselves! When we have to make decisions, we'll know that we have the righteousness of God to provide us with a true way out. When we're even afraid that our friends will leave us because they don't want to do what is right and expect the same from us, we'll understand that God guards our hearts from bitterness and discouragement when we feel that we are alone in doing what is right.

Doing God's will always brings us rewards, but remember that many times the rewards cannot be touched or seen because they're gains for the heart.

3. Righteousness, evidence of the new birth

Doing what is right is evidence that Christ dwells in us and that we have been born again (1 John 2:29). So the evidence that we have been born again is in our lives and is reflected in the things we do daily and how we relate to others. Micah 6:8 gives us the key.

To ensure that God's righteousness is latent in me, I must know and obey his Word. Only then will God be able to change my clothes and impart righteousness into my life, my heart, and my actions.

By obeying, we choose the life that God desires for us and we'll finally be able to distribute the "piece of cake" of our actions equitably without offending others, and even be a promoter of kindness and mercy, actions that we don't see much in our society anymore.

We follow in Jesus' footsteps (Matthew 11:29), and we must long to be like Him. It must become a daily necessity to be like Him. Jesus is our model; no one can compare to what He did, said, and showed through His sacrifice on the cross. And we need to be like Him to make the right decisions so that others can see the difference between being a Christian or not.

Christ showed us unparalleled strength. He had no flying cape or laser sight, but on a tree, He saved all humanity out of love. No superhero compares to his bravery, love for others and sacrifice for all. Jesus is a true hero. We should desire to be as righteous as Him!

Review/Application:

Divide the class into groups of three and ask them to write down three injustices that society commits today and what they think are the possible solutions for each of them.

Injustices:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Possible Solutions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Challenge:

The church, meaning us, has various opportunities to show mercy and justice to the most dispossessed people, and this is a duty that we must carry out. During the week, think together about a project in which you can help a group of people who suffer from some grievance or injustice. Develop it and try to carry it out in your youth group. Let God do justice through you!

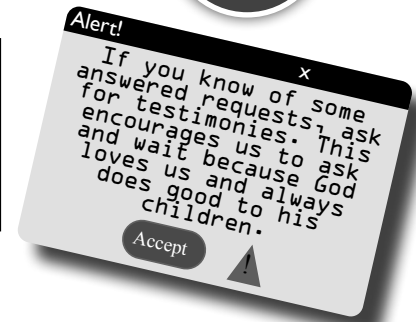
The right shoes

Lesson 48

Viviana Pérez • Ecuador

Objective: That the students anchor their lives in the gospel of peace and share it.

Memory Verse: “and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” (Ephesians 6:15)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Instructions: Ask the class to take off their shoes, place them together in a pile at one end of the room, and mix them up. Then have them meet at the opposite end of the room and form groups of three or more people. Ask each group to choose one person to be the “detective” and have another member of the group describe their shoes to the detective. Once the detective has the information, tell him to run to the pile to find the shoes and bring them to whoever they belong to. If the detective gets the wrong shoes, then he must ask for more information and go look for them again. If he got it right, the owner of the shoes must put them on and then he/she would become the detective. Have them repeat the game until each member of the group has their own shoes. The group that matches all the shoes with their owners will be the winner.

Sometimes it’s difficult to find the right shoes, but when we do, we feel good and comfortable. But if we put on the wrong shoes, we’re going to feel very uncomfortable. The Bible recommends for us to put on the shoes of peace.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: The song “Te pido la paz - I ask you for peace” by Jaime Murrell.
- Instructions: Allow time for the class to listen, sing or watch the music video “Te pido la paz - I ask you for peace” by Jaime Murrell; At the end of the song, reflect with the group on the following questions (If you can’t find the song, just ask the questions):
 - ◇ When you see other people around you in trouble, what do you do? Do you leave, help them, pray for them or talk to them about the gospel?
 - ◇ Have you asked God to help you look with his eyes and feel with his heart?
 - ◇ Have you thought that every time you take a step you have the responsibility to announce the gospel of peace?

Allow them to respond and then begin the lesson.

Connect

Navigate

All people long for peace, and sometimes pay to get it. Peace is “...calm and good correspondence between some people and others, especially in families, as opposed to dissension, quarrels and lawsuits... A virtue that puts tranquility and peace in the mind, as opposed to turmoil...” (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy. Twentieth online edition).

The New Testament mentions the word “peace” 100 times, and Paul mentions that peace comes from God through Jesus Christ. We cannot find this peace in the world (Philippians 4:7). We can only find true peace in God and it surpasses human understanding; it’s precious, inexplicable and the best news we can hear, receive, and pass on.

We can live in peace in the midst of war, but for that we must have the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. Jesus, model and means to achieve the gospel of peace

The Bible says in Ephesians 6:15 that we should shod or cover our feet “with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” This means that this message of peace is worn like shoes on your feet. We shouldn’t go anywhere without them because they guide us to share the message of the gospel.

The dictionary tells us that “preparation” means: “Disposition or preparation of what is necessary for something. Antonyms: delay, neglect” (<http://www.wordreference.com/definicion/apresto>).

Through this passage from Ephesians, the Bible is telling us that we must go with our feet to announce the gospel of peace, but not lazily, nor out of obligation, but with willingness, preparing in advance what we want to do.

One of the many times we see Jesus wearing the shoes of peace was when he recruited Judas the Zealot. This man was a member of a nationalist political movement. The purpose of this group was to fight for Judea to be independent from the Roman Empire through armed struggle. They were known as the most violent fraction of Judaism, and Jesus revolutionized his thinking by showing him that peace was achieved only with the weapons of love. In this way Jesus became our model of peace, showing Himself as a peacemaker and as someone who transmits the gospel of peace. In Romans 5:1, he says that we now live at peace with God because Jesus Christ made it possible. Matthew 5:9 narrates that Jesus preached, “Blessed are the peacemakers...” and John 14:27 says that Jesus is the giver of peace.

In each scenario, we see Jesus transmitting peace, giving hope, loving, calming the wars and storms of the human heart. “...He suffered in our place, and thanks to his wounds, we received peace and were healed” (Isaiah 53:5) Jesus reconciled the world to God. He tied the shoes of the gospel of peace with great willingness (readiness).

2. The gospel of peace leads us to reconciliation

Colossians 1:20 says that through Christ, God brought the entire universe back to peace with Him (Ephesians 2:16-18). Because of sin, every relationship ... the relationships between people, between people and nature, and between people and God, was broken. But Jesus Christ made it possible for those who accept him as their Savior to enjoy reconciliation in all its dimensions. Through Christ’s sacrifice, reconciliation with God was made possible, and he gave us the task of being ambassadors of said reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). That’s to say that when we wear the shoes of the preparation of the gospel, we not only transmit peace but also reconciliation.

A person who shares the good news of salvation and hope in Christ, and lives what they preach, will be like a beacon of light. Someone who practices what they teach will always be joyful, living a life of integrity, and maintaining good relationships with those around him. His life and example will make others desire to be reconciled to God.

Now, when we hear the message of the gospel of peace and accept it, God reconciles us to himself through Jesus Christ. God restores his image in us and helps us live according to his commands, making us bearers of this gospel of peace and reconciliation of the world with God.

3. The gospel of peace makes us bearers of good news

It isn’t only a matter of putting on the correct shoes, “those of the gospel of peace,” but it’s also about using them; you have to wear them ... jogging, walking, step by step, in mountains or through water, in cold or in heat. It’s always a good time and a good place to use them. Paul told Timothy to announce God’s message at all times (2 Timothy 4:2). In our days, we have become very considerate of people. We think that sharing the message of salvation with them may not be appropriate, or that it may not be the right time, or that it may make them uncomfortable. We even worry that they’ll reject us for doing so. But when we think about the time of the apostles, they announced the message at all times, in all places, and to every person and if that cost them their lives, they were willing to give it.

We have the message but we need to gather courage and share it. Jesus put on the shoes of preparation for the gospel of peace and walked through many villages and towns, announcing the message of God.

God can give us the courage we need to put on the right shoes and announce the gospel of peace.

Review/Application:

Ask the class to answer the questions during the class according to when they fit within the lesson:

1. How would you define the gospel of peace in your own words?
2. When you feel uneasy or have problems, what do you do?
3. Do you believe that Jesus was wearing the shoes of the gospel of peace? In what scenes of the Bible do you observe it?
4. Can you live in peace in the midst of war?

Challenge:

The challenge for this week is that each person shares the message of love, peace and hope that Jesus offers us to your friends, family and neighbors. After each experience, write it on a sheet of paper to share in the next class.

Powerful shield

Lesson 49

Myriam Pozzi • Argentina

Objective: That the students recognize their need for faith to resist the enemy, and take personal responsibility in making their faith stronger.

Memory Verse: “In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (Ephesians 6:16)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

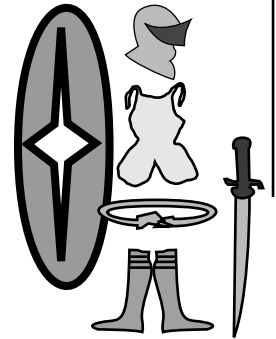
- Supplies: A 40 cm wooden rod, a piece of old white cloth, thin rope, alcohol, a match and a container with water.
- Instructions: Twist a piece of cloth soaked in alcohol over one of the ends of the rod and tie it with the rope to secure it and you'll have a dart. Bring a match to your dart and light it with caution. After the explanation, extinguish it by placing it in a container of water.

While the dart burns explain that one of the most dangerous weapons of war in the Roman Empire were fire darts. The shield the soldiers used to protect their body and head could catch fire from darts, so it was covered with a special wax that repelled fire. When Christians take the Christian life seriously, the devil will come to attack. But our shield, which is faith in God, will protect us against these attacks. That's why we have to grow our faith every day.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Supplies: Image of Roman armor or Roman soldier.
- Instructions: Show the image and ask if they know what each part of the armor was used for.

Then, explain that Roman soldiers used to wear a short tunic that ended in symmetrical folds and over it a breastplate for the trunk that covered the chest and back joined by leather strips over the shoulders. The legs were defended with special shoes and the head with helmets of various shapes. The shields were elongated and protected the soldier from his knees to his eyes. The shield was like a portable wall where the flaming darts thrown by the enemies crashed. Our faith is our shield against the darts of the evil one.



Connect

Navigate

1. Our shield: Faith

Read Ephesians 6:10-20 to show the full picture of the soldier of faith and stop at the shield.

The word “darts” or “arrows,” “belos” in Greek, means missile, javelin or arrow. In ancient times, this weapon was used to harm the opponent and burn his possessions. The shield protected the soldiers from darts and covered almost the entire body of the soldier.

Ephesians 6:12 says that the battle with Satan is spiritual, and therefore no material weapon can be used effectively against him and his demons. We're not given a list of tactics he'll use; however the passage states that when we faithfully follow all instructions, we'll be able to stand firm and gain victory, despite his attack (v.13).

The shield of faith (v.16) makes Satan's attack ineffective. Our faith is like a solid shield similar to that of warriors, by which we resist the enemy.

2. We get a good testimony through faith

Hebrews 11:1 gives a definition of what faith is. In essence, faith is “seeing what isn’t seen” and is the basis of our relationship with God (v.6). In the same passage, we find men and women who served God in a special way, and their testimonies can help us live a life of victory, even in the midst of adversity. By studying the practices they did in pursuit of spiritual ideals (obedience, faithfulness, and perseverance), we can be inspired to imitate them.

There are two words “by faith” that were used 18 times in chapter 11. After each example, the words “by faith” are followed by a noun or pronoun and a verb. This detail is important because a verb indicates an action (vv.4,7,8). Each hero and heroine in chapter 11 is an example of how you can “see the unseen” and encourages every Christian to put their faith into action.

In 1 Timothy 1:18-19a and 6:12a, Paul urged Timothy to be an example of faith in everything he professed. His example of faith was to be inspiring to others. Our faith should be the same way ... an exemplary faith, a growing faith as we know God more and more through a living experience and his Word.

3. Increase my faith ...

Without faith, or having little faith, we suffer various consequences, such as: We fail God, we don’t grow spiritually and thus we won’t experience his promises (Hebrews 11:6), we’re manipulated by Satan (Luke 8:12), and we don’t receive what we pray for (Matthew 17:20), etc.

We are called to live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). The disciples were concerned about their own faith. As they walked with Jesus, they realized the need they had for faith to face the enemy. The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith, as if this could be done instantly, but the Lord responded by explaining the promise to those who have faith (Luke 17:5-6).

Faith comes from knowing something or someone, and the more we know and the deeper the relationship there is, the more faith is strengthened. Faith implies action; when we have faith, we act according to what we believe.

According to Romans 10:17, we understand that faith is born from the Word of God, from what we read, what is preached to us, what we’re taught... We must know the Word of God (its promises, commandments, warnings, examples, etc.). Then we’ll acquire faith. When we know the Word of God and understand it, we walk by faith, we act as God teaches us, we don’t just say that we have or long for faith, but we live it.

Satan seeks to separate us from the knowledge of the Word, to distract us with busyness, to make us lose our objective. He knows that we’re strengthened through faith; our shield is powerful when we know and grow in the Word.

There are burning arrows that affect the Christian life such as gossip, bad thoughts, fights with others or family, unexpected problems at work, lack of money, etc. Some of the cruelest and most effective darts come from the people closest to us. But when we’re using the shield of faith, we know that God assures us of our final victory and helps us avoid Satan’s arrows (Ephesians 6:16). When we use the shield of faith, there is nothing that can touch us and we win the victory. The secret to succeeding in faith is Knowing the Word of God and believing in it despite difficulties, trusting in God’s goodness despite appearances, and obeying God’s guidance despite the consequences.

Review/Application:

Have the students connect the statement in column A with the corresponding verse in column B.

The Bible shows the importance of faith for Christians:

A

- We live for her. (10)
- Through it we receive the Lord and walk in Him. (3)
- Without faith it's impossible to please God. (4)
- By faith we're justified before God. (2)
- It's our shield against Satan. (7)
- By faith we know the grace of God and are saved. (8)
- By faith we serve God and do good works. (1)
- By faith we receive the promises of God. (5)
- By faith we overcome the world. (6)
- We're built up on faith. (9)

B

1. James 2:17
2. Romans 5:1
3. Colossians 2:5-7
4. Hebrews 11:6
5. Hebrews 11:33
6. 1 John 5:4
7. Ephesians 6:16
8. Ephesians 2:8
9. Jude 20
10. Habakkuk 2:4.

Challenge:

When we use the shield of faith, uniting with our brothers and church, we advance. Some suggestions to face the attacks we suffer this week (whether illness, problems, money, lack of work, family, etc.) are:

- Let's pray for each other.
- Let's share our requests.
- We believe, encouraging ourselves to speak what we don't yet see, but what will be seen by faith.
- Let's read the Bible every day.

The helmet

Lesson 50

Francisco Borrallés • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand the true value of salvation and the care that must be taken of it.

Memory Verse: “Take the helmet of salvation ...” (Ephesians 6:17a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

- Supplies: Blackboard and markers.
- Instructions: Ask the class members to each make a list of the three most valuable things they have in their life, and number them in order with number one as most valuable and number three as the least valuable. Give them a minute or two to make the list and then ask them to share what they wrote.

Make a list on the board with everyone's contributions. From the written list, have everyone select a list of three things that everyone considers the most valuable.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- Instructions: Invite students to think about something very valuable that they have had and then lost. Likewise, ask them to analyze the benefits that this provided them (why they considered it valuable and how they lost it). Then ask what they would be willing to do to get it back.

Connect

Navigate

Nowadays we live surrounded by so many and varied things that it's very easy to lose focus of our most valuable possession. For this reason, it's important that we make a true reconsideration of the place we're giving in our lives and in our hearts to God once we have been saved.

1. The value of salvation

On this occasion, we'll mention three reasons why we should consider that the most valuable thing in our life is salvation.

- a. Through salvation (Ephesians 2:8), we have received power to become children of God (1 John 3:1a).
- b. Without salvation, we would be incomplete. Jesus said, "... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). As Jesus' disciples, we depend at all times on our communion and relationship with Him.
- c. Without salvation, we would be condemned to the eternal fire of hell. If we don't remain in the presence of God, doing his will and depending on his grace, we'll have to pay the consequences (John 15:6). Neglecting our salvation is the same as not giving it maximum value in our lives; it means rejecting the presence of God in us (John 12:48).

2. By grace we're saved

If due to our action or carelessness, our best article of clothing or the new and sophisticated cell phone we recently acquired were destroyed, of course this would cause us great sadness, annoyance and regrets on our part. But at the end of the day, even if it's with a lot of effort and after some considerable

time, we could get back what we lost or even something better. But we must understand and be perfectly aware that there is no human effort that can give us spiritual salvation once we have been condemned. In the gospel of Matthew 16:26, it's made clear that no matter what we earn or possess, we don't have the ability to achieve the salvation of our soul by our own resources.

Salvation is the most precious and valuable gift we have received. It shows us how much love God has for us (Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18-20). Through that gift, God gives us eternal life and the privilege of coming into his presence (John 3:16, 6:40), something we couldn't achieve with our own efforts.

3. Working out our salvation with fear and trembling

Our priority should be to "stand firm in the liberty with which Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). Our commitment must be to not only remain in the spiritually saved condition, but we must also defend that condition. We don't have to allow our salvation to be at risk; so according to what the letter of Jude says, we must ardently contend for the faith that has been given to us (Jude 3). If we're willing to keep moving forward, we can be assured that victory will be on our side (Romans 8:37). So with this assurance, let's take up the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17).

It's good to know that in the armor for war, the helmet is the part used to protect the most important part of the human body, that is, the head. Its importance lies in the fact that it contains one of the most delicate and vital parts of the body, the brain, through which the mind, sight, hearing and mouth function. Therefore, the command to take up the helmet of salvation implies that in our daily spiritual struggle, we must pay special attention to:

- The mind: It's the field where the toughest battles for our spiritual life are fought. We must be sure that our thoughts are in accordance with the will of God (2 Corinthians 10:5), and not allow thoughts of discouragement, criticism or judgment towards God's work to remain in us. It's also necessary to submit to God all thoughts related to the desires of the flesh, such as sexual immorality, envy, selfishness, etc. We must be careful because, whether due to our training, our family environment or the context in which we live or move daily, we're always receiving different types of stimuli that can direct our mind towards what God doesn't like.
- Sight and hearing: It's necessary to take care of these senses because we currently live surrounded by countless sinful things that at first glance appear very attractive and can captivate and capture our attention (Matthew 6:22-23). We must not allow ourselves to be negatively affected by the bad things we can receive through our sense of sight or hearing. In the same way as we would reject a drink if we knew it was contaminated with a virus or other harmful thing, we must also reject images or stories from entering through our eyes and ears that will affect us morally and spiritually. Far from providing something beneficial for our lives, some movies, music, and jokes can direct and predispose us to sin (1 Corinthians 10:23).
- Mouth: People today have a way of expressing themselves that's far from being polite; rather it's definitely vulgar and rude. If we consider that we Christians live daily with people who express themselves in this way, we must take extra care how we express ourselves to make a genuine difference. We must not overlook that through our vocabulary and the topics we discuss in our conversations, we also reveal our spiritual condition (Luke 6:45).

Now at the same time that we accept it as our responsibility to put on the helmet of salvation day after day, we must also be aware that once we wear it, only the Holy Spirit will help us emerge victorious. As warriors in a spiritual battle, it's the great power of God that will help us emerge victorious in every fight.

When we find ourselves clothed in the helmet of salvation, that same power of God (Ephesians 1:19-23) will strengthen us and clothe us in the midst of battle and we won't be alone. We'll have the ability to make decisions to change any situation that endangers our spiritual life..

Review/Application:

Present the following to the students:

Knowing that the helmet of salvation protects:

- a) Your eyes (everything you see)
- b) Your brain (everything you think)
- c) Your vocabulary (all verbal expression)
- d) Your ears (everything you hear)

Ask them to analyze the following Bible passages and relate them to parts a, b, c or d and explain how they're related.

- James 3:1-2 (*c - It's related to the care we must take with everything we speak.*)
- Isaiah 50:4a (*c - God gives us wisdom to speak according to his will.*)
- Matthew 13:15-16 (*a and d - Tells us about the consequences of closing our ears and eyes to the Word of God, and the blessings of heeding it.*)
- Acts 8:22 (*b - We must repent of evil thoughts.*)
- Psalm 26:1-3 (*b - It shows that our thoughts are in close relationship with the intentions of our heart and must be placed under the examination of God.*)

If time, do this next activity as well:

Advise students to form work groups (they can be 4 or more members). Then give two minutes for each work team to prepare a one-minute representation (drama) of an everyday situation in which their salvation may be in danger due to something they witnessed (sight), or a conversation in which they participated (ear and mouth), or by some thought (brain).

Ask them to write down basically what it will be about and support their presentation with at least one Bible verse that relates to the situation represented. Then give them a minute to act it out. Don't overlook that our call is to always be more than conquerors.

Challenge:

During the week, consciously use the helmet of salvation and write down the situations in which your salvation was in danger (they could be situations in which you were at risk through sight, thought, hearing or vocabulary and that perhaps you wouldn't have perceived before), and how you emerged victorious through this protection. Remember to take every thought captive to obedience to Christ. Next week share with the class how you were more than a winner.

A powerful weapon

Lesson 51

Josué Barrera • Guatemala

Objective: That the students value the importance of the Word of God in their spiritual growth and as a tool for their defense.

Memory Verse: “and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:17b)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years) .

- Supplies: Paper swords, markers and masking tape.
- Examples of situations:
 - a. I like that girl, but she's not a Christian.
 - b. When I bought something they gave me extra in a change and I kept it.
 - c. They invited me to see a pornographic movie.
 - d. I didn't do a task and they told me to lie and say I was sick.
- Instructions: Form two or three groups and give each group five paper swords. In advance, write on the board two or three situations from which the groups will have to defend themselves based on a biblical text. For example, you write on the board “I like that girl, but she isn't a Christian.” They could write 2 Corinthians 6:14 on the sword. Then they must stick the sword under the corresponding case written on the board. They shouldn't repeat the texts in different situations. The group that glues the most swords with appropriate texts will be the winner. At the end, talk to your students about the importance of knowing the Word to use it as a good defense against the circumstances that arise daily.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years) .

- Supplies: A container and pieces of paper written with a word or phrases that define things that affect young people. For example: depression, alcohol, pressure from friends, drugs, vices, among others.
- Instructions: Place the slips of paper in a container and sit the class in a circle. Then have them pass the container with the papers around the circle, while you play an instrument or play music. When the sound or music stops, the person who has the container in their hands will take a piece of paper from the container and try to say a biblical text or give an answer on the topic based on the Bible. This person can receive help from others if he or she doesn't have answers.

At the end, comment on the importance of knowing the Word to use as a good defense against the circumstances that arise before us.

Connect

Navigate

One of the passages sometimes misinterpreted by youth is James 4:7. Many believe that resisting the devil is synonymous with passively enduring his attacks without doing anything, and that's not the case. The translation in today's language says: “Therefore, obey God. Stand up to the devil, and he will flee from you.” That's precisely what we must do with the enemy; confront him, attack him, of on the offensive. God, who is so loving, has provided us with a powerful weapon so that we can emerge victorious from all the battles we face. This weapon is the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit.

1. The nature of the Bible

Some think that the Bible is an ordinary book that contains good advice and stories that may be true, a book that's difficult to understand and of little relevance to their lives today. This is because they haven't experienced the power of the Word of God (2 Peter 1:21). Through it we can know God more, know his will, and have a sure guide for our lives. In the Bible, we can find the foundation for a victorious life here on earth, as well as how to have eternal life.

In 2 Timothy 3:12-17, we find Paul's words to young Timothy where he warned him that following God is a struggle (v.12). This is a reality that must be kept in mind, since many believe that by following Christ, their problems will end. But this is a false teaching that does a lot of harm.

Some people, when they begin to receive attacks from the enemy, go backwards in their faith. Paul gave Timothy the key to victory, encouraging him to persist in what he had learned from the Word of God as a child and which he was now deepening through his teachings (vv.14-15). Paul affirmed that Scripture is inspired by God, and then raised the usefulness it can have in life.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and then write the words *teach*, *rebuke*, *correct*, and *instruct* on the board and ask if the students know their meanings. Then briefly explain the meaning of each word:

- **Teach:** Instruct, instruct someone about something.
- **Reprimand:** Convince with an argument someone who does something wrong.
- **Correct:** Amend what is wrong.
- **Instruct:** Teach someone the state of something, give instructions about a job or activity.

2. The Bible as a weapon

The armor of the Greeks was called "the panoply," which meant full armor. This was the complete equipment used by heavy infantry.

They had two weapons, the shield, which was a defensive weapon, and the sword, which was an offensive weapon. The sword was double-edged, which made its attack lethal. Interestingly, the Bible is defined as the sword of the Spirit. Using the Word of God is a powerful thing (Hebrews 4:12). Understanding this changes our perspective of the importance of God's Word in our lives.

There are three important things we must do with our sword:

- **Know it:** In order for a soldier to be able to fulfill his duties, he must know his sword and train with it. If he doesn't do so, when the enemy attacks him, he won't be able to face him. Psalm 119:34 says, "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law." Asking for understanding isn't an irresponsible prayer expecting God to do everything, it's an action of asking for help to understand the Word of God. Joshua 1:8 gives practical ways we can know God's Word. Some ways are: Don't depart from it, meditate on it so you can keep it, and do everything it teaches.
- **Love it:** Psalm 119:97-98. By loving the Word of God, we'll know how to confront the enemies of our lives (the devil, the world, the flesh). To love the Word is to give it importance in our lives; it's to yearn for it, think about it, meditate on it, memorize it and study it. Having the Word in our minds and hearts will help us when facing temptations (Psalm 119:11). It will remind us of what is good and what doesn't please God.
- **Use it:** It isn't enough to listen to and memorize the Word, but we must put it into practice (James 1:21-22). It would be useless to have a sword ready for battle if we keep it in its sheath and when the enemy comes we don't use it to defend ourselves and attack. We must use the Word. We must apply it to our daily lives, evaluate our decisions in the light of what the Bible says, and face the dilemmas of our lives with the promises of the Word of God.

3. Let's learn from the Master

Jesus gave us a clear example of how to use our sword against the circumstances that want to destroy us and against our enemy.

Jesus had just received a very special public recognition. Nothing could be better. Heaven opened and God recognized that Jesus was His beloved Son. However, the Bible says that the devil appeared and tempted him (Matthew 4:1-11). This should teach us that no one is exempt from being tempted. On three occasions he was attacked by Satan, with insistence and strong arguments capable of subduing anyone. We could believe that Jesus didn't succumb to temptation because he was God made man. But he defeated Satan in his human condition. Jesus didn't flee, he didn't hide, but he faced him and resisted.

He faced the enemy using the weapon we've been talking about. To each attack launched by the enemy, he responded with the phrase "...It is written...". That was his weapon, and with his two-edged sword he was able to defeat the enemy. Jesus knew the message of the Word. The devil wanted to deceive him by using the same Word incorrectly. But knowing his weapon, Jesus gave him an appropriate response. However, many people are deceived by not knowing the Word.

Interestingly, Jesus didn't start looking for where it was written. He had it in mind and used it appropriately. He loved the Word and it showed in his care to memorize it. He didn't hesitate to use it, and he applied it correctly, not only to declare truths, but to fill himself with courage and hope. As a result, the devil left Him.

Review/Application:

Give the students time to mark next to each statement whether it's true (t) or false (f).

- We can defeat the enemy if we know the Word.
- Reading the Bible isn't a priority.
- Not all Bible stories are true.
- The Bible was inspired by God.
- Memorizing the Bible is a way of using the sword.
- The sword of the Spirit is prayer.
- The Bible is a book only for pastors.
- You can be victorious without knowing the Bible.

Allow time for the class to complete the chart by giving practical examples of what God's Word does for us, and then ask them to share what they have written.

What the Word does for us	Practical Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach• Reprimand• Correct• Instruct	

Challenge:

Make a point to memorize Bible verses. Choose three texts that can help you in difficulties and memorize them. If you memorize three texts per week, in one month you'll have memorized 12 texts, and in one year you'll have memorized 144 biblical texts. Can you imagine the difference that will make in your spiritual life? Start memorizing and next Sunday repeat the verses you memorized before starting class.

Objective: That the students understand the importance of prayer as part of the armor of God.

Memory Verse: “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” (Ephesians 6:18a)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years).

▪ Instructions:

Form prayer partners to pray for each other, for example: First A prays for B, then B prays for A.

This will allow you to introduce the class to the topic of prayer.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

▪ Instructions:

Form a circle and have everyone hold hands and ask two people to pray for each person present. Have one person pray for half of the group and the other pray for the other half.

This will allow you to introduce the class to the topic of prayer.

Connect

Navigate

When we refer to prayer, we find one requirement and two obstacles. The indispensable requirement in prayer is faith. We know that faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). We also know that, “without faith it’s impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). Speaking about faith and prayer, Jesus said we needed to believe in order to receive (Mark 11:24).

The first of the two obstacles is doubt (Mark 11:23). Doubt is the hesitation of the spirit; it’s having a thought divided between the possibility and the impossibility of our request being fulfilled. The second obstacle is lack of forgiveness (Mark 11:25-26). Forgiveness is to renounce, remit, cancel a situation or event that caused us pain or continues to cause wounds. The good news is that when we grow in our faith, the Holy Spirit enables us to forgive, and in this way we can go before God in prayer, following the recommendations that we find in the letter to the Ephesians.

1. Prayer as part of the armor

Our prayer must be comprehensive: “...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and being vigilant therewith with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...” (Ephesians 6:18-20). This means that: “Sustained Christian prayer is wonderfully all-encompassing. It has four constants, indicated by the fourfold use of the word ‘all’.” (The new humanity: The message of Ephesians. John R. W. Stott. Certainty, USA: 1987, p. 271). The apostle expressed that we must pray at all times (v.18) (regularly and constantly); with all prayer and supplication (with communication and with supplication); with all perseverance (like good attentive soldiers, never leaving the post or falling asleep) and for all the saints (because the unity of the new church, which has been the concern of this entire letter, must be reflected in their prayers).

A. Our prayer must be at all times and persevering

We shouldn’t pray only on some occasions, but we should pray “...at all times...” (Ephesians 6:18). How many times have we asked God for something once or twice in a prayer service and then abandoned the request due to lack of response? It’s likely that we have asked the Lord for something good (conversion

of a family member, growth in the youth group, etc.), but not seeing the answer, we soon gave up. This call to pray at all times is an opportunity to return to some requests considered lost; now may be God's time to respond to this request.

We must pray before the Lord whenever we remember the need, no matter where we are (Romans 12:12), and thanking God in advance for the answer that's to come, whether it's "yes", "no", or "wait a little more."

B. Our prayer must be vigilant

"Stay tuned! It was the general call to Christian vigilance, ...especially because of our tendency to sleep when we should be praying" (The New Humanity: The Message of Ephesians. John R. W. Stott. Certeza, USA: 1987, p.271). The recommendation to be vigilant is primarily because we shouldn't stop praying (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer should be something regular in our lives, like food and rest.

In 1 Peter 4:7, Peter also stated, "But the end of all things is at hand; Be sober, therefore, and be vigilant in prayer." The first order is to "be sober" and not neglect ourselves because "the end of all things is near," and we don't know when it will arrive. Sobriety is the opposite of drunkenness. The sober person is a temperate, moderate person who is alert to what may happen. We can say that there is a call to be balanced. The second order is "watch in prayer." The idea of the text is that in the midst of fears and uncertainty, the Christian must stay in contact with God.

C. Our prayer should be with supplications in the Spirit

We cannot lose sight of the importance of the third person of the Trinity in this matter since, "...the presence of the Spirit in our lives inspires us to pray, enables us to do so, and determines the character of our prayers" (Ephesians: The New People of God. Malcolm O. Tolbert. Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, USA: 1979, p.155).

When we say that "we must pray 'in the Spirit', this rather indicates our need for the Spirit of God to assist us to pray properly." (Ephesians: Human Church with Divine Purposes. Alfred Neufeld. Instituto Bíblico Asunción, Paraguay: 2006, p.178).

By supplication we understand that it's a request presented with humility and also with submission to something or someone. In our case the supplication is in the Spirit.

2. Priority when Praying

Let's analyze which requests should be a priority, since earlier we expressed that Christian prayer is comprehensive. "Don't forget to pray. And whenever you pray to God, do so under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert, and don't give up. Always pray, asking for all those who are part of God's people. And pray for me too; Ask God to give me the courage to announce the plan that he had kept secret. The Lord sent me to announce that plan, and that's why I am in prison. Ask God to give me the courage to announce the good news without fear" (Ephesians 6:18-20 NLT).

A. Pray for the saints

It's beautiful, but at the same time, a great responsibility, the way in which the apostle Paul referred to believers at "The saints." That was the title given by the apostle to each of those who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Well, God separated them from the world to be like Him in holiness, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

We need to pray for each other since "...The life of faith isn't a solitary life. Every Christian continually needs the support of their brothers and sisters. Paul's ideal for the church is seen in this united brotherhood in which love for others is expressed in continuous, serious, intercessory prayer" (The New Humanity: The Message of Ephesians. John R. W. Stott. Certainty, USA : 1987, p.156).

Added to the support and love that one expresses toward one's brothers and sisters, we must also say that "one way to cultivate interdependence and solidarity is prayer for one another" (Ephesians: Human

Church with Divine Purposes. Alfred Neufeld. Paraguay : 2006, p.179). By interdependence, we mean reciprocity and by solidarity, the adherence to the same cause or company.

B. For those who proclaim the gospel

Our second priority when praying should be for those people who are on the front lines; those who frequently fall into Satan's territory and are ready for light to prevail over darkness. They are the ones who proclaim the gospel.

We know that Paul was writing the letter to the Ephesians while he was in prison. But interestingly, rather than asking for himself, Paul's desire really was "that his mouth might be opened to bear witness, not that he should be set free, but that the gospel might spread freely and without hindrance" (The New Humanity: The message from Ephesians. John R. W. Stott. Certeza, USA: 1987, p.156).

Of course, like any prisoner, he was once waiting to have his freedom. But his primary prayer was for the gospel and its proclamation. That's why he requests the church of Ephesus to pray since the devil can do nothing against those prayers.

We conclude by saying that it's important to pray that those who carry God's message will have adequate words and can freely and joyfully proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Review/Application:

Allow time for your students to answer the following questions. They can then share the answers with the class.

- What are the characteristics of your prayers?
- If you were to summarize what we just studied, what aspects stand out to you about prayer?
- What benefits do we get from praying?

Confession time.

Choose a person you trust from the group (before class - prepare him or her with what you're going to ask them) and discuss the following questions with that person. Insist to the group that what the person says must be kept confidential.

1. Do you find it difficult to maintain your spiritual discipline of prayer?
2. What makes it most difficult for you to cultivate that discipline?
3. If you have stopped praying, how long has it been since you prayed?
4. How is prayer related to not falling into temptation?
5. Would you like to give permission to the person you're talking to now to be your mentor next week about your discipline in prayer?

Challenge:

This week pray seven days for a brother or sister. Also, write down three requests that you have given up on and return to them to pray insistently. When you get a response to your request, don't hesitate to give your public testimony about it.

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