



Grades 6-9

TEEN

Teacher's Manual

Life in Focus

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Teen Teacher's Manual

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Word Aflame curriculum is committed to the ministry of providing quality Apostolic resources to serve the church. As part of our ongoing quest to improve our resources, we have recently expanded the Word Aflame team to include a full-time student editor.

With the release of our all-digital curriculum, Link247, nearly two years ago, we have received an incredible amount of feedback regarding its layout and ease of use both in the classroom, as well as in a variety of other settings. This overwhelming response, partnered with continual requests for more adaptable material has prompted us here at the Division of Publications to try something similar with our printed World Aflame Curriculum.

Your first lesson of this quarter, entitled Vintage Truth, is our personal invitation to you to utilize this new content and style of format that was neatly adapted from our Link247 curriculum. If you used last quarter's material, you know that this is the second time we have included such a preview lesson. We hope that its inclusion provides you with adequate use of the new format as well as an opportunity to test out all the new features in order to provide better feedback for us here at the Pentecostal Publishing House. With a balanced mix of outlined material and exposition, we hope this new curriculum will not only be more versatile for you and your students, but also allow for your more diverse and creative teaching styles to really shine through. The remaining lessons will of course follow the normal theme of this quarter. Please visit www.pentecostalpublishing.com/studentpreview to access a training video about the preview lesson and to provide feedback in a survey. We are eager to hear from you. And again, thank you so much for being a part of this exciting launch.

from the Editor

"Turn your shoulders towards that wall," the photographer instructs as he points to my right. "No, not your whole body, just your shoulders."

Turning to face him, I attempted to make the top half of my body sit at a 90 degree angle to my lower half. It's not working out.

"No, no. Turn your body slightly to the right, but the top half of your body should be more squared with the wall," he helpfully explains.

Now I'm really confused.

He patiently walks to where I am and shows me what he's talking about, I confidently strike the pose. Looking directly at the wall.

With a sigh I know he didn't mean for me to hear, he slowly and ever so gently says, "Now turn your head to face me. Not that far!"

I gratefully stretch out my neck that I just attempted to swivel half off my shoulders and attempt the position again.

"Good!" He sounds relieved. "Now tilt your head slightly to the side and look natural."

Look natural? Look natural? He's just led me through short, but ambitious photo-yoga session and he wants me to look natural. Natural is sitting in recliner in my pajamas, drinking hot chocolate and eating slightly stale Peeps, pal. Not attempting contortions.

But I go along with it and sneak in my "skinny face." You know the one. You crane your head forward titling your chin down, eliminating one or two of your chins. You look like a nitwit from the side, but straight on, Viola! You practically have a jawline.

By this point I'm silently praying the photo shoot—I'm starting to understand the choice of the word shoot—will end with only a neck strain instead of the compound fracture I can feel building up.

"Okay," he smiles at me sympathetically. "We're all done. That's going to look great!"

Why does he sound so uncertain about that? Why do I feel so uncertain about that?

The fact is, he can lead me through any routine he wants in order to take the photo, but there is only so much a filter, a pose, and Photoshop can do. He's still only able to work with what I have. (Poor guy!)

Not much different when it comes to a spiritual photo shoot really. We can try to pose in all the right ways. We can make our outward appearance look just so and try all the tricks to make us look like we've shed the weight of sin, but, really, what are we giving God to work with?

This quarter we are will be working to help our students bring some important people and concepts into greater focus. We'll all be learning about the development that we must allow God to perform in our lives in order for us to be clear pictures of His love and grace.

It is my prayer that this quarter will give us all an unfiltered, un-retouched, and accurate rendering of our spiritual lives. Then, and only then, can we allow the Great Photographer to snap us perfect (whole and mature) in His strength and love.

Smile! You're directly in His shot.

Downloadable Resources

1. Visit www.pentecostalpublishing.com to access the download site.
2. If you are an existing customer, click the *Sign In* icon to log in to your account. If you are a new user, click the *Create an Account* icon to open an account for the site.
3. Enter in the Search bar to find the appropriate download.
4. Click on the item to access the product detail page.
5. Click the *Add to Cart* button.
6. In the checkout process on the Order Summary page, enter in the Coupon box and click *Update Cart* to apply the coupon.
7. Complete the order process to access the download options. These downloads will be available until December 1, 2016.

8. Once the order is complete, you will see a screen with the item listed and a button with the name of the resource. Click on this button to download the resource.
9. You may also access the download from the *My Account* button and look under the *My History* section to see your orders and find the appropriate download button there to obtain the resource.

Teacher's Resource Packet

Downloadable Resources

To access the reproducible items from the resource packet (TRP), see the resource packet instruction sheet. If you have not purchased a packet, you can do so by going to www.pentecostalpublishing.com or calling 866-819-7667.



LESSON 1



VINTAGE TRUTH

MARCH 6, 2016

EMBARK

A. Option 1 — Absolute Truth Discussion

1. Instruct teens to complete the Embark section of their student handbooks in preparation for this discussion.
2. Many people say it is a waste of time to worry about truth. They say people should believe whatever makes them happy, and that what is true for you may not necessarily be what is true for me.
3. Often, however, it is not that people do not understand there is absolute truth; they just do not want to accept the absolute truth and moral principles of the Bible.
4. Imagine there is no such thing as absolute truth. How would that play into the following scenarios?
 - a. A drunk driver kills a child in a hit-and-run incident.
 - b. A student insists that a teacher cannot give her a failing grade on her pre-algebra final. After all, she does not believe the same mathematical principles the teacher does.
 - c. A few days after a president wins an election, it is discovered that he orchestrated multiple underhanded tactics to win votes.

B. Option 2 — Counterfeit Detectors Discussion

1. Show teens a counterfeit bill detector pen. You can find these for as low as three dollars online or wherever office supplies are sold.
2. Hold up the pen. Ask if anyone knows what kind of pen it is and how it works.
3. The U.S. Treasury does not print money on regular paper. Though some clever counterfeiters create fake bills printed on the high-quality paper the U.S.
 - a. Treasury uses, most counterfeiters print bills on cheaper paper.
 - b. When you mark a fake bill with a counterfeit detector pen, the solution in the ink reacts with the lower-quality paper to make a dark stain. If you mark a genuine bill, a much lighter mark appears.
4. Demonstrate by marking a standard piece of paper and then a dollar bill with the counterfeit detector pen.
5. Counterfeit detector pens only expose the quality of the paper a bill is printed on. These pens do not expose counterfeit bills that are printed on genuine U.S. Treasury paper.

BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Psalm 51:1-6; Proverbs 23:23; Hosea 4:1, 6;
John 5:24; 14:6, 15; I Timothy 6:20-21

BIBLE POINT

Buy the truth and sell it not.

SUPPLIES

Counterfeit money detector pen, dollar bill,
standard white paper, prayer music (optional)

Legend:



PowerPoint Slide



Student Handbook

- a. Have you ever seen counterfeit money?
 - b. Would you be able to identify a fake bill?
 - c. The U.S. government does not train treasury agents by having them study counterfeit currency.
 - d. Treasury agents train by spending hours studying the real thing.
6. Just as there is counterfeit money, there is counterfeit truth.
- a. Why do you think people in our society are so willing to accept counterfeit truth?
 - b. Today we are going to take some time to study the real thing: We are going to look at truth.

EXPLORE

A. The Definition of Truth

1. The purpose of this series is to explore God’s truth.
2. What is truth? There is one source of absolute truth, and that is the Bible. (See John 17:17.) 
 - a. Truth is clearly outlined in the Bible: It can be defined and defended.
3. We live in a culture that has a variety of ideas about truth.
4. As a result, there are a lot of counterfeit truths making their rounds.
5. It is said that when counterfeiters make currency, they do not try to make an exact copy of a bill.
 - a. Not only would that be almost impossible, it would take an inconvenient amount of time, money, and effort.
6. Counterfeiters just want to create passable copies.
 - a. They want to create something just close enough to the original so that at a passing glance consumers don’t notice anything amiss.
7. Those who believe and promote counterfeit truth are much the same.
 - a. Their ideas about truth often sound good; they often look genuine at a passing glance.
 - b. A close inspection reveals that what they have presented is not truth at all.

What are some ideas our culture has about truth?

How do you define truth? 

B. The Controversy

1. Let us look at a sobering message in the Bible regarding truth.
2. Read Hosea 4:1. 
 - a. Hosea called for Israel’s attention.
 - b. He gave them the bad news: God was bringing charges against them; He had a controversy with them.
 - c. Why? What would stir the anger of God?

3. **God had a quarrel with the Israelites because there was no truth in the land.** 

- a. There was no faithfulness or reliability.
- b. There was no stance of absolutes among the people.

C. Destroyed

1. *Read Hosea 4:6.* 

a. There was no truth among the people, and then no mercy, which led to no knowledge of God.

2. **Because the people carelessly neglected the law of God, God rejected them.**



a. Sadly, their children would also suffer for their lack of reverence.

3. The people were destroyed because they let go of truth.

4. Truth no longer mattered to them, and they no longer understood or knew God.

Does this scenario sound familiar to anyone?

How does it relate to our culture today? 

D. Absolute Truth?

1. A Barna Group survey about American beliefs asked, “Is there absolute truth?”

- a. Sixty-six percent of adults responded they believe that there is no such thing as absolute truth.
- b. These people affirmed that people could define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct.
- c. Seventy-two percent of young adults aged eighteen to twenty-five agreed.

2. In a series of more than twenty interviews conducted at a large university, people were asked if there was any such thing as absolute truth. All but one respondent answered along these lines:

- a. Truth is whatever you believe.
- b. There is no absolute truth.
- c. If there were such a thing as absolute truth, how could we know what it is?
- d. People who believe in absolute truth are dangerous.

Do you think this research reflects the world we live in today? 

If there really is no such thing as absolutes when it comes to morality, then who can say that murder, or running a stop sign, or cheating on your spouse is wrong?

How can we say there are laws of science and math and nature if there is no absolute truth? 

- Allow teens to complete the Explore section of their student handbooks.

E. God’s Desire for Truth

1. David, who the Bible calls a man after God’s own heart, made a terrible mistake.
2. After the prophet Nathan confronted David with his sin, David repented.

3. Read Psalm 51:1-5. 

a. After confessing and turning from his sin, David received a powerful revelation.

4. Read Psalm 51:6. 

a. David realized there is something God is looking for in us; there is something God takes delight in.

5. God wants us to have truth rooted and grounded deeply in the soil of our hearts.  

F. The Necessity of Truth

1. Truth is not just a nice thing to have. Truth is vital to our spiritual wellness.
2. A story is told of a man who, resisting the cost of oats, began to make substitutions in his mule's diet.
 - a. Gradually, he exchanged the mule's oats for sawdust.
 - b. This worked fine for a while, but just about the time the mule had transitioned to a full diet of sawdust, he died.
3. We are sometimes like the mule.
 - a. Gradually, we allow ourselves to be fed lies in place of truth.
 - b. The transition from truth to error may happen slowly.
 - c. Sometimes we happily ingest the lies society tells us, never knowing the difference—never recognizing truth from its substitute.
 - d. If we do not seek after God, spiritual death happens before we realize our grave error.

G. One Truth

1. Read John 14:6. 

- a. This scripture does not say “I am one of the ways, one of the truths, and one of the paths of life: You can come to the Father any way you want; it does not have to be by me.”
2. Many people, even those who claim to profess Christianity, believe there is no absolute truth.
3. The Bible is clear: Truth is absolute!

H. Guarding Truth

1. Read I Timothy 6:20-21. 

- a. Paul warned Timothy to keep watch over truth—to guard it.
- b. He charged Timothy to avoid lies and ideas that would pervert truth.
- c. He was clear that Timothy should stay away from “false science”—lies presented as intelligence.
2. Truth must be guarded.
 - a. Defending truth is not just about winning an argument.

b. Truth rescues souls from hell.  

I. Believing the Truth

1. Read John 5:24. 

- a. We must believe the Word of God for our own sakes.
- b. Truth pulls us from roadways that lead to death and sets us on the path that leads to life.
- c. Truth draws us from spiritual darkness into God's light.

How do you think people in our culture feel about the truthfulness of the Bible?

As Christians, how should we view the Bible?  

J. Obeying the Truth

1. Read John 14:15. 

2. It is good to know what the Word of God says; it is good to be knowledgeable about it. But possessing knowledge of the Word of God is not enough.
3. We must obey truth.
4. **Our love for God is defined by our willingness to obey truth.**  
5. Without obedience, there is no love.

K. Buying the Truth

1. Read Proverbs 23:23. 

2. Place immeasurable value on truth. Never let it go.
3. Let us make the commitment today to buy the truth, to love it, and to never substitute it with something counterfeit.

EXPAND

A. Option 1 — Selling the Truth Discussion

1. Allow teens a moment to fill out the Expand section of their student handbooks.
2. The day will come, if it has not already, when you will have an opportunity to sell the truth for other things.
 - a. What kinds of things do teens often trade the truth for?
 - b. What can you do now to prepare yourself for times when you might be tempted to fall for counterfeit truth?
3. Conclude with a time of individual prayer and commitment.

B. Option 2 — Prayer

1. Allow teens a moment to fill out the Expand section of their student handbooks.
2. As a class, take turns praying for each teen individually. Ask teens to gather around the student who is being prayed for.
3. Pray that teens will be firmly convinced of the truth; pray against spirits of delusion and deception.
4. Allow teens a chance to pray individually. Consider playing prayer music in the background.

Notes:

There are many Scripture readings throughout the lessons. If any students do not bring Bibles to class, you can provide Bibles for them or print the readings from an online source such as biblegateway.com

Theme Development

Life in Focus

There are so many distractions in day to day life that we must be ever vigilant to avoid that which will sidetrack. Teens face this dilemma every day. Developing a real passion for a healthy spiritual relationship with God is the key to fighting these distractions. The lessons this quarter are designed to provide guidance and instructions on how to keep your students' minds and hearts uncluttered from the dangerous diversions of life. When a life is focused and centered on God, choices tend to become clearer. A life with Christ as the focal point is truly a life in focus.

Dear Teacher,

As I read over this quarter and see each lesson's aim, I felt a real urgency to reexamine my own life and priorities. Never before has it been so clear to me that as Christians we must be focused on the right things.

All too often I will meet up with an old friend and within a few minutes of conversation I will know that her relationship with God is not what it once was. Tragic tales like these remind me of how precious my personal relationship with God is. Most who lose out with God do so gradually. I have never met a backslider who can pinpoint the moment he decided to change his life's focus. It happens little by little. It is as if carnality sneaks up on us. This teaches me that my commitment to God must remain the most important thing in my life and, therefore, my life's focus.

There are so many distractions in day to day life that we must be ever vigilant to avoid that which will sidetrack. Our students, like us, face this dilemma every day. They have distractions and pressures that many are ill equipped to handle. This makes it our job to provide guidance and instructions on how to keep their minds and hearts uncluttered with those distractions. When our life is focused and centered on God, choices tend to become clearer.

So, fellow teacher, we must develop a real passion for our personal relationship with God. That passion will be a key in teaching. Realizing that you and I can be in serious spiritual trouble in a moment's time should keep us tuned in to what God is telling us and how He is directing us. Because we are a vital part of His training for our students, we *cannot* afford to be sidetracked even a little. We must understand the importance of Christ and Him crucified to our daily life. When we impart this to our students, we can show them, not just tell them, how to keep Him as our focal point. Then we will truly have a life in focus.

In God's Service,
A Fellow Teacher

Room Décor:

A fun way to create the right setting for this quarter's theme is to collect as many cameras as possible. Place them *everywhere* in the room. Those with straps, hang from the ceiling. Others can be placed on top of cabinets or in cubby holes. Use them as bookends. Connect them to your curtains or window hangings. Cameras can usually be found at thrift stores or garage sale. You will not want to display expensive cameras unless your classroom can be locked when it is not in use.

Rolls of film can be used to decorate wall space. Unroll the film and fasten its loops to the wall. This will add texture to your classroom. Unrolled film strips can also hang from the ceiling or curtains. Consider making larger-than-life photo slides by copying pictures onto overhead transparencies. Use thicker paper (such as cardstock) to create the frame for the overhead. Attach a frame on all sides of the overhead and hang them from the ceiling. They also can be put on any window, allowing the light to shine through them.

Another option is to create larger-than-life rolls of film by painting oatmeal containers black and using rolled overhead transparencies as the film itself.

Hanging portraits (both modern and antique) of families, individuals, and scenery will surround the student with the idea of photography. Be sure to use the bulletin boards to emphasize the spiritual applications of the theme, but the wall space can be very colorful and three-dimensional with a variety of artifacts.

For the ambitious teacher:

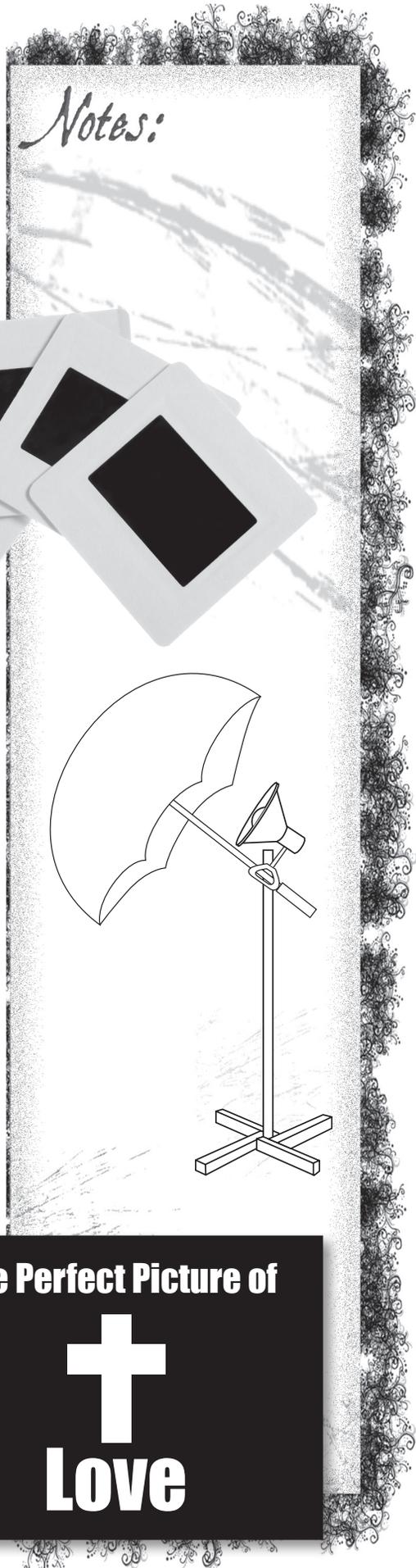
Think photography studio. Use all of your space to incorporate the theme. In one corner, you could set up a mirror with a vanity or shelf in front of it. It is here that students can "prepare" for their photo shoot. Next to the mirror, set up a changing area (complete with a screen to create the illusion) and have costumes hung there. It would be fun to incorporate clothing common to the biblical era, as well as clothing from different decades in the past two centuries.

Another corner can contain different fabrics or backdrops hung or arranged. This is where the photos will be taken. Set up lights on stands with umbrellas connected to them to create professional looking photography lights.

Finally have a camera on a tripod, always ready for anyone willing to pose. Be sure to take lots of pictures as photos taken can be used to add to the room décor as you go. Allow the students to pose for pictures each week. Be sure to take candid shots as well. Print those pictures (perhaps weekly) and hang them around the room. In a few years' time, you and your *former* students will appreciate having so many pictures and memories.

Bulletin Board 1: The Perfect Picture of Love

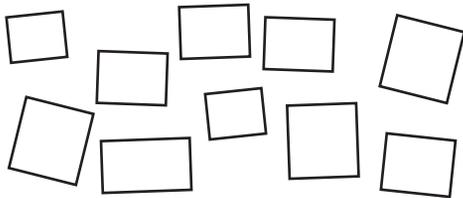
This board is very simple. It can work for any size board. Cover the board with a dark backdrop (preferably black) and use a complementary solid colored border. The reason for the simplicity is so we can allow the words to make the statement. Across the top of the board hang the words "The Perfect Picture of" and then place a cross in the middle of the board. Below



Notes:

the cross hang the word "Love" (you may use a bigger font or even a different colored paper). The letters and border can be the same color to keep the cross and the simple message as the focus. The cross can be made out of brown construction paper or faux wood contact paper. If you wish to add texture, use real wood to create the cross.

Gallery of God's Goodness



Bulletin Board 2: Gallery of God's Goodness

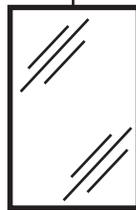
This board is an interactive board. It serves as a testimonial to God's goodness in the present. Use a plain colored background and place the words "Gallery of God's Goodness" across the top of the board. Next to the board place various shaped and colored papers and markers so students can write down testimonials and attach them to the board. Encourage your students to pay attention throughout the week and then report via testimony post what God accomplished. Throughout the quarter direct your students' attention to the board to remind them that God's goodness is just one more reason for them to keep Him as their focus. You may periodically read the testimonials and lead the class in openly thanking God for His favor. (This can serve as a reminder to be always looking for God in everything we experience.)

My Perspective

1. I feel alone in the world.
2. I can't do anything right.
3. I am not worth much.
4. I am a sinner.

God's Perspective

1. You are never alone; I am with you always.
2. You can do ALL things through Christ.
3. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.
4. You are redeemed.



Bulletin Board 3: My Perspective/God's Perspective

This board can be elaborate or simple depending on your personal taste. The message is wordy, but direct. Use an attractive background color and complementary border. Across the top of the board put the words (in large font) "My Perspective" and "God's Perspective." You may want to place a small line of separation between the two phrases or simply space them apart. Under those words, in the middle of the board affix a mirror.

Under the words "My Perspective," hang a list of thoughts that would represent what we think about ourselves (i.e. the person in the mirror). These thoughts will all have arrows pointing to the mirror. On the other side of the board, under "God's Perspective," we can contrast our own thoughts with what God thinks about us. These also will have arrows pointing to the mirror. The two sides clearly display the difference in opinion between how we view ourselves and how God views us.

Thoughts such as "I feel alone in the world" will be contrasted with "You are never alone; I am always with you." The thought "I can't do anything right" can be contrasted with "You can do ALL things through Christ." Or "I am not worth much" can be contrasted with "You are fearfully and wonderfully made." Finally, the idea "I am a sinner" is contrasted with "You are redeemed."

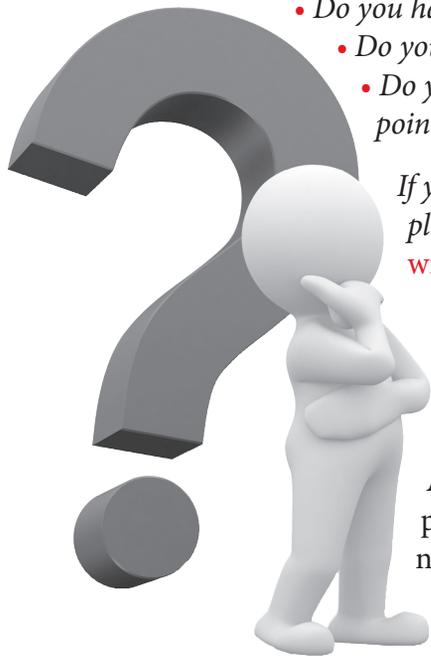
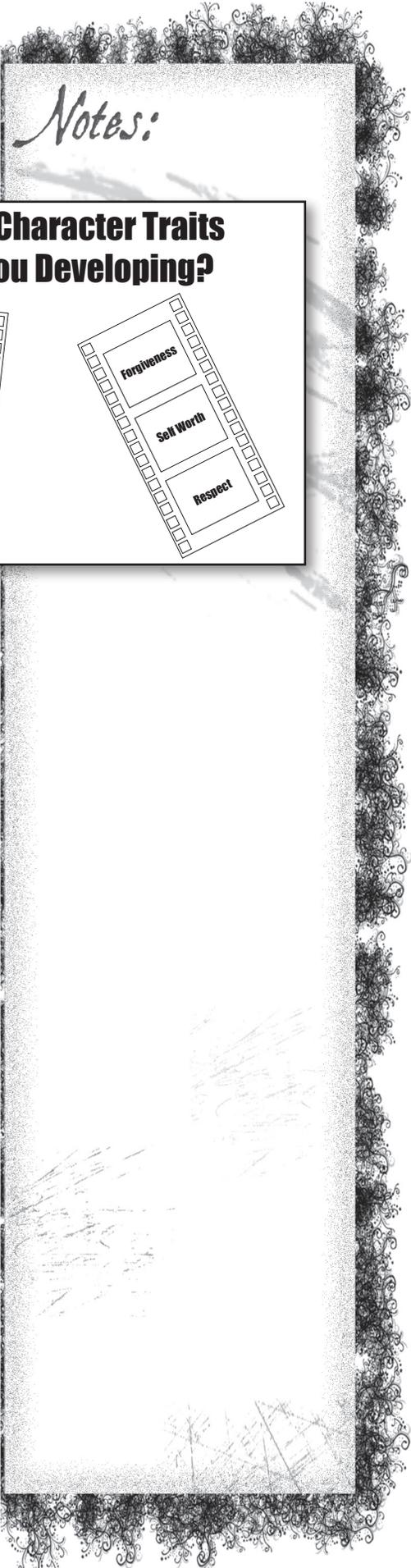
Add to the list any other contrasts you determine to be relevant to your students. During the quarter, take some time to talk to your students about the principle taught with this board. Be sure to explain that every negative thing we might think about ourselves, God has a positive response to it. Once again direct the focus to the fact that God is the deciding factor. He is strong when we are weak.

This will be an encouraging reminder to your students when they fully understand the principle being taught.

Bulletin Board 4: What Character Traits Are You Developing?

This board is good for promoting personal responsibility. Good character is consistently taught to this age bracket and there is a reason for that. This is the age when character is most vulnerable. The students must *determine* to allow God to develop character in their lives. This board can help stress the importance and the practicality of having good character.

Use a white background and affix the sentence "What Character Traits Are You Developing?" across the top. The letter color and border color should complement each other, but do not necessarily have to be the same. Under the words, place oversized replicas of film. On the film (or next to it) have different character traits listed (*honesty, forgiveness, integrity, self worth, respect, compassion, perseverance, equity, stewardship, etc.*). To create the film, use overhead transparencies with thick paper (such as cardstock) creating a frame for the slide.



- *Do you have Teen questions that need answered?*
- *Do you have ideas to share with other Teen teachers?*
- *Do you need clarification on some of our teaching points?*

If you do . . .

please write or email me!

write: Word Aflame Curriculum

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email: ezenobia@upci.org

And, if you would like to receive a personal phone call from me, please include your number in your letter or email. This will remain private.

2

Week of
March 13, 2016**Lesson Objective:**

To show teens the Savior's human reaction to Calvary.

Key Verse: "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Lesson Text:

Matthew 26:36-68; 27:11-50

Scripture Setting:

Matthew 26, 27; Mark 14; John 18, 19

The Focal Point of Redemption

Teacher's Tip: Today's average North American teen has probably heard the story of Jesus' crucifixion many times. Movies have been made concerning crucifixions complete with gruesome images of torture and bloodshed as is typical of modern Hollywood offerings. Because the entertainment world has made these horrific images so commonplace and the concept of self-sacrifice so trite, it will take God's anointing to help your students comprehend what Jesus went through for them. Prepare for this lesson as if their lives depended on it because ultimately they do.

Special Needs: Students with special needs can sometimes relate to the abandonment Jesus must have felt better than others. Be prepared to stop and allow these students to verbalize their feelings about what they think Jesus was feeling and thinking while He was being actively rejected. This is not to make them objects of pity but to help you and your other students better understand the experiences of those with special needs.

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- Pen/pencils
- TeenZines
- Dry erase marker
- Lesson 2 PowerPoint download
- Seven opaque containers with several small holes in the lids with one of the following items inside: black olives, green olives, chunks of fresh cut wood, plant leaves, vinegar, dirt, if possible blood (dried or wet) from meat.
- Picture of Calvary poster from the resource packet
- Sound of Calvary poster from the resource packet

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: Seven containers, TeenZines, pens/pencils

As students come in instruct them to smell each of the containers and write their guesses of what they think is in the container in the **What's That Smell? activity** in their TeenZines. Do not allow the students to discuss their answers. You will cover them later in the lesson.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: Lesson 2 PowerPoint download; Picture of Calvary poster, Sound of Calvary poster, TeenZines, pens/pencils, dry erase marker

Perhaps you have heard the words *focal point* when talking about photography. The focal point is what draws the eye of the viewer to a photo. Why is the focal point important? (Allow students time to answer.) It is the central point of interest or the reason the image was taken (slide 3).

When a person looks at an image, there needs to be a resting place or something of interest to hold the eye. Without it, people will just glance at a photo and move on. A photographer can use position to enhance the focal point by placing

the object he wants you to notice in a prominent position (**slide 4**). The photographer can also purposely blur the parts of the photo on which he does not want the viewer to focus. The picture should also not be so cluttered that the viewer becomes overwhelmed with too many things to see, thus losing the focal point.

What do think were some of the things you would have seen had you been there from the time Jesus was arrested to the time He was executed (**slide 5**)? (Allow students plenty of time to answer. Try to get them to think about the less obvious things: frightened children, confused faces of His disciples, the anguish on His mom's face, vendors hawking snacks to the crowds.)

Manual Focus

Direct the students to the **What's That Smell? activity** in their *TeenZines*. Ask them what they thought the containers held. Open the containers and let them grade their answers.

In addition to things you would have seen, there were smells too (**slide 6**). These smells that you discovered were probably some of the smells that Jesus experienced the last several hours of His life here on earth.

In the Garden of Gethsemane He smelled plants and leaves, olives (both ripe and green), dirt as He fell to pray, and even His own body odor as He sweated in agony. No doubt He smelled blood as well.

The Bible states that Jesus' sweat fell as drops of blood. This is a description of hematuria, which is a very rare condition in which a person sweats blood. This usually occurs when a person is suffering extreme levels of stress which causes the blood vessels under the skin to constrict and then dilate pushing blood into the sweat glands (Holoubek, J.E. and A.B. Holoubek. "Blood, sweat, and fear: A classification of hematuria." *Journal of Medicine*, 27, 115-133, 1996).

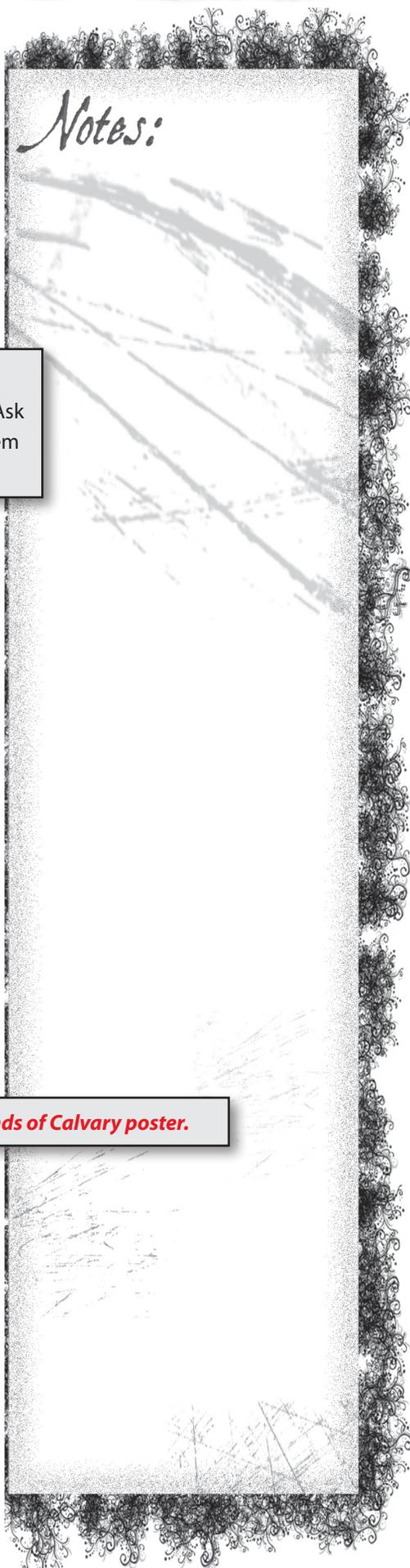
At the arrest Jesus would have smelled smoke and oil from the torches the mob carried. As He carried His own cross, He would smell its wood as well as animal urine and manure on the pathway. On the cross He would have smelled something like vinegar when they offered Him a drink. Finally, He would have smelled again His own blood as it poured from his wounds.

We have talked about the probable smells of Calvary, what do you think might have been heard at Calvary (**slide 7**)? (Write students' answers on the board with a dry erase marker.)

What is the focal point of Calvary? (Allow students time to answer. Most likely someone will say the cross.)

Calvary was something that was experienced through all of the senses, but there was only one real focus. When people think of Calvary, there seems to be a focus on the cross itself, but it is who was hung on the cross that must be the focal point. The focal point of Calvary was and must remain Jesus.

Why must Jesus be the focal point? (Allow students time to answer. The ultimate answer is because Calvary without the miraculous, sinless sacrifice is simply a gruesome death.)



Teacher: Draw attention to the *Sounds of Calvary poster*.

Teacher: Display the *Picture of Calvary poster*.

Notes:

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Lesson 2 PowerPoint download*; *TeenZines*;

Bibles; pens/pencils

What do you think was Jesus' human reaction to Calvary? (Allow students time to answer.)

From His earliest years, He knew He would die and He knew He would be raised from the dead. He was God, but He was also human and it was as the human that He would die. In one short week Jesus went from being ushered into Jerusalem by adoring throngs to being turned upon by many who were in that crowd as well as some of His closest friends. At Jesus' trial, no one stood with Him. He went from having adoring multitudes surrounding Him to standing alone in just a matter of days!

Let us examine Jesus' reaction to His upcoming trial and death in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus invited three disciples (Peter, James, and John) to come along with Him. Why do you think He invited those three? (Allow students to answer.) The answer may be as simple as He was human so He wanted the company and support of friends at this difficult time.

Teacher: Read Mark 14:32-42 and Matthew 26:36-46. (slides 8-13).

When Jesus told them to watch, could He have been telling them to do exactly

that—be on the lookout. Perhaps He wanted them to witness what would happen so they could tell everyone where He had gone. Perhaps He just did not want them to be startled by a group of soldiers suddenly coming to arrest Him.

After Jesus had prayed a second time, He went back to check on the three men and found them asleep. He had to wake them up. Jesus was in agony about what He knew was coming, so it is doubtful that He awoke the sleeping disciples with a gentle nudge. No doubt there was desperation in His tone as He shook them awake! His prayer showed that He wanted to avoid something. He was actually begging His Father to make it possible for Him not to "drink from the cup."

The question we have to ask is (slide 14), "What was in the cup?" It could not have been death because He knew He would conquer death and through His victory mankind could have salvation. He was not afraid of the people because the Bible tells us over and over that He was filled with love and compassion for them. What was in this figurative cup? What do you think He was wanting to avoid? What was He dreading more than anything? (Allow the students plenty of time to discuss their answers.)

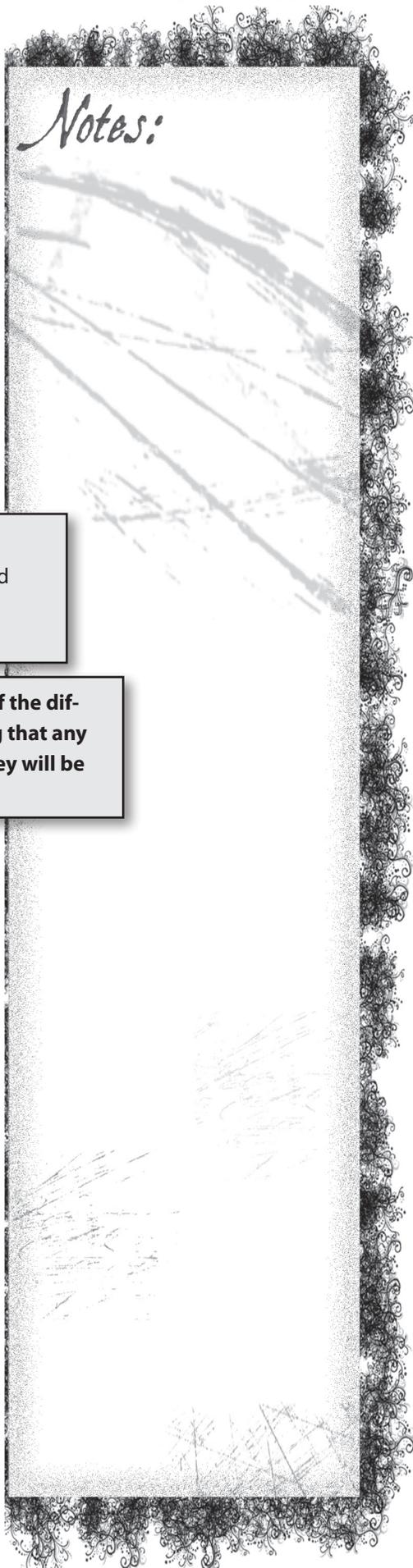
The thing Jesus could have been dreading was sin (slide 15). Jesus knew He had to taste sin for the first time. He was going to have to feel the horror, hopelessness, guilt, pain, and shame of sin. He would have to feel what we feel when we are far from God. Think of how you feel when you have sinned. Can you imagine the sin of the entire world on your shoulders? The thought of actually experiencing sin caused Jesus' anguish and horror. Think of the most horrendous sin you can think of and then think of the fact that Jesus became that sin (II Corinthians 5:21).

After His third time praying, Jesus was ready. He said, "Not what I want, Father, but what you want." The sinless man Christ Jesus would not only give up His life, but He would experience the guilt and shame of sin so He could not just save us but also understand what sin did to us.

When the mob finally came to the Garden to arrest Jesus, His reaction to Judas' turning Him over to the authorities was very different from what most people's reaction would have been. Jesus called Judas, His betrayer, "friend." When Peter got so angry he grabbed a sword and swung it at the first person he could reach, cutting off the ear of Malchus, one of the men there to arrest Jesus, Jesus put the ear back on and healed Malchus completely. Jesus even told Peter to stop the violence because everything was going to be OK.

Jesus went with the arresting soldiers willingly as all His disciples ran away. Can you understand what Jesus felt when all of His friends had deserted Him?

Jesus' reaction to His accusers shows a different attitude than we would expect from someone who is being falsely accused. He stood silently while person after person stood at his trial and told lies condemning Him. When Jesus was pronounced guilty, He faced it with quiet acceptance. He knew that this had to happen for salvation to come. Our salvation hinged on His death, burial, and resurrection.



Mannual Focus

Turn in your *TeenZines* to the **Jesus' Calvary activity**. Take your time and think through some of the things that Jesus, as a human being, could have thought and felt (**slide 16**).

Teacher: When your students are finished, lead them in a thorough discussion of the difficulty of Calvary. It is important that they understand that Jesus felt everything that any other human being who underwent such a cruel experience would have felt. They will be blessed to understand what their salvation really cost!

Jesus would have no doubt felt dread for what was coming (experiencing the guilt of sin), shame at the ugliness of it (in front of everyone, Jesus was beaten to a pulp and then hung on the cross in shame), and pain because of His friends' betrayals. Through all of this, He was concerned about His disciples. Would they be able to stand and proclaim what He had been teaching them? He also expressed concern for His mother's well-being *while He was hanging on the cross!*

Strangely enough, He felt compassion and concern for those who were executing Him. He even asked God to forgive them for what they were doing because they could not see their role in this plan. But during all of this, Jesus felt the most important emotions: love for mankind, commitment to the gospel of salvation, and hope in the redemption that occurred because of His death!

The experience of the cross had to be very difficult for Jesus. Human beings will do almost anything to stop the pain when they are suffering. At one point His tormentors actually offered Him something to deaden His pain, but He refused! Jesus even denied Himself that basic human instinct. He wanted to experience everything and keep His mind sharp so He could help those around Him (His mother, the thief on the cross, those who were crucifying Him) right up until He died! He had to refrain from using His miraculous power to leave the cross and end His suffering. He refrained because He loved us so much!

Christ and His sacrifice is the focal point of Calvary and it is the focal point of our salvation. We must learn to focus on His sacrifice so we will remain aware of how much our sin cost and how much we owe Him!

Notes:

Hand Focus:**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes**Necessary Resources:** (Optional) Sound recording of *Oh How He Loves You and Me* or another song about Christ's sacrifice for us

What should our reaction to Calvary be? Let us examine our reaction to His death. Sometimes we are so wrapped up in the cross that we forget what it signified. The cross was used for capital punishment. If this were a modern-day story an electric chair or gas chamber might be used. Some people might have pictures of electric chairs (or some other form of modern capital punishment) hanging on their walls or miniature electric chairs hanging on a chain for a necklace!

Crucifixion was a horrible, ugly, torturous way to die. A man was tied or nailed to a cross and suspended by his arms. He was hung in such a way that he could use his feet to push himself up to breathe. Eventually, he would become too weak to pull himself up to take a breath so he would suffocate. If a criminal was taking too long to die, the soldiers would beat his legs until they were broken, preventing him from lifting himself up to breathe. It was a slow way to die! Oddly enough, the blood and water that flowed from the wound in Jesus' side showed that Jesus most likely did not die of suffocation, but of heart failure. (David, C. *A Physician Testifies About the Crucifixion*. Retrieved from www.konnections.com/Kcundick/crucifix.html.) Jesus loved us so much that it destroyed His heart!

Christ's love was the only beautiful thing about the process of His death. Because of His love we do not have to die literally to be freed from sin, but we must symbolically crucify our flesh. We cannot allow our fleshly desires to rule us. When we are living a holy life, sin will be distasteful to us. The Bible reminds us to hunger and thirst after righteousness. That leaves no appetite for evil. There is some pleasure involved in sin, but it is only for a short time. There is always a painful price to pay: the death of hope, the death of peace, and the death of our relationship with Christ is the true price of unconfessed sin. This sad story ends with an eternity in hell! Thank God that we have a way out of this death!

That way out is through our identification with His death by repenting, with His burial and resurrection through baptism in Jesus' name, and being filled with the Holy Spirit to ensure the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will also raise us up in the Rapture.

After our salvation experience, we must strive to make Christ the focal point of our life. We do this by making sure He has the most important position in our priorities. He must be so much a part of our lives that when others look at us, they see Him. We also must make sure that our focus is always on Him rather than the things around us that can steal our attention. We must be careful that our lives do not become too cluttered, thus taking our own focus away from Jesus.

We should never forget that we were His focal point when He was dying on the cross. Think about the worst sin you have ever committed. Jesus stepped into your place and took your sin to the cross Himself (**slide 17**). It does not matter when or what sin you committed because Jesus looked down in time and saw you at that second and stepped into your place and took that sin into Himself. For over thirty-three years Jesus had never experienced the filthiness of sin, but that all changed at

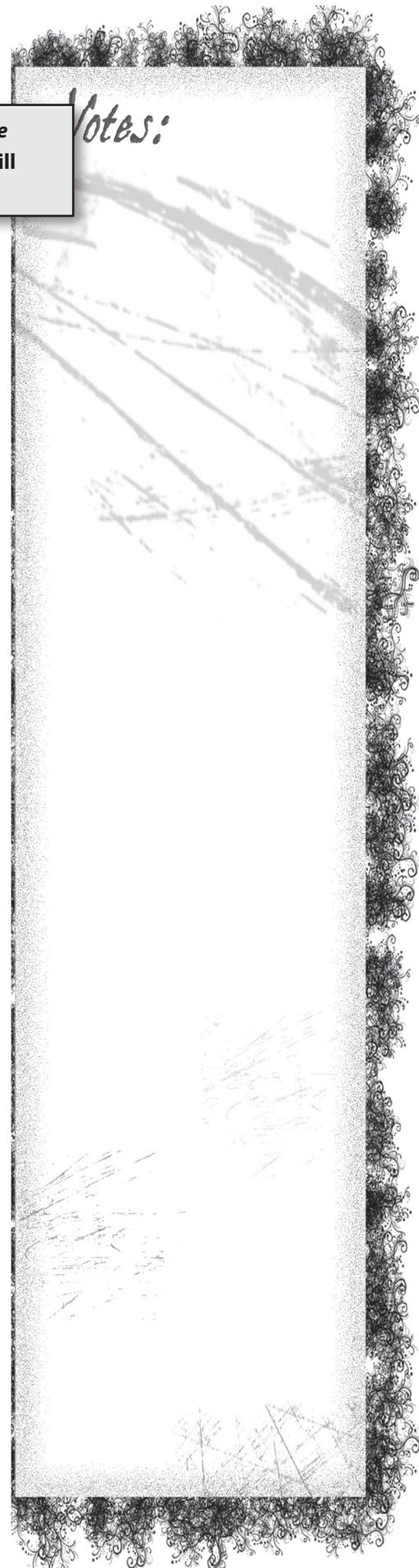
the Crucifixion. At that time, He experienced *our* sin. Think of how much Jesus endured because He loves us!

Teacher: At this point you may want to lead your students in a chorus of *Oh How He Loves You and Me* or perhaps play a sound recording of a worshipful chorus that will help to create an atmosphere of worship.

Final Focus:

Jesus, help me to be ever mindful that it was not the cross itself that made the difference in my life; it was You and Your death on that cross. When I see the symbol of the cross, help me have a new awareness of how much You loved me. I want to be willing to give my life to You and show my love and thankfulness for all You have done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead: You and your students are going to take a closer look and listen at the story of Calvary. There will be several items needed to bring the lesson alive, but, fortunately, those items can be found in the average household. Come prepared to experience the sacrifice of Christ in a fresh new way. And come prepared to be changed because of it!



3

Week of
March 20, 2016**Lesson Objective:**

To reveal to teens the emotions Christ's trial and execution brought in the lives of those involved.

Key Verse: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Lesson Text:

Matthew 27:1-54

Scripture Setting:

Matthew 27; Mark 14, 15; Luke 22, 23; John 18, 19

A Montage of Emotions

Teacher's Tip: This lesson will employ many mediums of art. Students will draw, record, write, and interact in a way that will make the lesson come alive to them. Remember to use the words printed here as a guideline. If you feel your creative juices stirring beyond what is provided here, then go for it! Whatever it takes to bring to life for our students the sacrifice of Christ is what we must do.

Special Needs: The Autism Research Institute tells us that some non-verbal teens cannot process visual and auditory input simultaneously. This means they cannot make sense of what they see and hear at the same time. They will learn in your classroom if they are allowed to see the task you have for them or if they hear instructions regarding the task before they are shown the objects that will be used. Work at not overloading their senses. This is helpful in dealing with typical students as well!

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 3 PowerPoint download
- Emoti-cards from the resource packet
- Recording equipment to record sounds
- Several bowls of water, each large enough for students to wash hands
- Hand towels
- Picture of Calvary from the resource packet (also used in Lesson 1)
- Paper and drawing utensils
- Scotch tape
- Digital camera or cell phone camera
- Printer

(continued on page 19)

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 3 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Emoti-cards* from the resource packet

Allow each student to draw at least one of the *Emoti-cards* from a pile. Ask the students to avoid showing their cards to each other. Instruct them that when you say "Go!" they should use their facial expressions and body language to display the emotion written on their cards. At the same time, they must look for another student who is displaying the opposite emotion (*happy/sad, excited/bored, bravery/cowardice*). They have one minute to find each other. At no time during the game should any sounds be made.

Our lesson covers the emotions of some of the people involved in the story of Calvary. While some of the people discussed will have specific emotions attributed to them by the Word of God, other people will show only through their behavior what their true emotions were. During this lesson, think about your emotional response to Calvary and the sacrifice He made.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 7 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bible; *Lesson 3 PowerPoint download*; recording equipment; several bowls of water; hand towels

Jesus is the picture of our redemption. Sacrificing His life at Calvary meant that everyone had a chance of living eternally with Him. Yet not everyone

reacted to Christ's crucifixion with gratitude, just as there are those today who do not accept Jesus' offer of redemption from sin. There were a variety of reactions to the Crucifixion then, just as there are today.

A *montage*, according to dictionary.com (**slide 3**), is "a combination of several photographs joined together for artistic effect or to show more of the subject than can be shown in a single photograph" The process results in a composite photograph of a number of other photographs, and the final image can be made to look seamless (**slide 4**). The entire picture of Calvary includes the reactions of many people, and those reactions can be put together to show an accurate montage of what took place. While we cannot identify with His sinless perfection and sacrifice, there were many others at the event whose reactions probably sound more like something we would do.

Let us start with Pilate (**slide 5**). According to JewishEncyclopedia.com (retrieved October 1, 2011), Pontius Pilate was the "fifth Roman procurator [governor] of Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea" whose administration was known for "corruption, violence, robberies, ill treatment of the people, and continuous executions without even the form of a trial." At this time, the Roman official had to approve any death sentence, so the Jewish leaders who wished Jesus to be put to death had to get Pilate's permission.

To his credit, Pilate just could not seem to understand why the Jews wanted Jesus killed, and three times Pilate declared that he felt Jesus was not guilty. Because it was customary that a prisoner be freed during the celebration of the Feast of the Passover, Pilate asked the crowd, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas [a political insurgent and murderer] or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17). It seems that Pilate purposefully chose a public outcast he did not think anyone would want on the streets. Unfortunately, he underestimated the crowd's hatred of Jesus and all for which He stood. The crowd chose a horrible, dangerous criminal to be pardoned and released from his sentence rather than Jesus. Pilate's pride and cowardice yielded to political pressure. Pilate gave in to their demands, but first he "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matthew 27:24). He then released Jesus to the Jews for them to murder.

Mannual Focus

Distribute the bowls of water to selected students. Ask them to wash their hands while you record the sounds.

We often condemn Pilate for his cowardly actions, but are we sometimes guilty of acting as he did (**slide 6**)? Do we give in to the crowd mentality instead of living as we know He wants us to live? If the crowd is bullying someone in our youth group or a classmate, we do not have the option of saying, "I'm staying out of it." Washing our hands of a situation does not make us less guilty if the situation is something that requires us to react. In fact, we can be sure that guilt will follow us!

Many Jews could not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but rather thought He was an imposter who was disrespecting God by saying that He was God. Some were persuaded to lie about Jesus so that He looked guilty enough to be put to death. Their

(continued from page 18)

Before Class: Take a picture of each student and teacher at the beginning of class and print them out so they can be used in the Hand Focus section. Make them small enough that they can all be placed around the **Picture of Calvary poster** from the resource packet.

Notes:

disbelief that He was the Messiah caused them to reject Him in the most public and cruel way possible. When Pilate asked what they wanted to be done, the crowd asked that Jesus be crucified. They were so sure that what they were doing was for the best that they even said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). In other words, they were willing to take full responsibility for His death and if there would be any fallout they would gladly accept it.

Again, we often condemn the Jews for their actions against Jesus, but are we any better if we do not allow Him into our hearts? When we willfully do wrong things, are we not crucifying Jesus afresh? He was crucified for our sin! What if every sin we commit is a fresh blow to the nails in His hands and feet? Not only does our sin hurt us; it also hurts Him! If we do not repent, are we willing to accept the consequences of His death?

Teacher: Ask the students to be the crowd. Record them as they yell, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Barabbas lived a life that was certainly worthy of death (slide 7). He had been imprisoned as a revolutionary (someone who was trying to overthrow law and order) and a murderer, and John calls him a robber (John 18:40). Apparently, he did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Yet he was spared from his death sentence when an angry crowd chose to commute his sentence over Christ's. Are you like Barabbas or the crowd (slide 8)? Do you choose others and other ideas and lifestyles over Christ and His commands? Do you put sin ahead of Him?

Teacher: Record the students as they demand, "Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas!"

We are not told of Barabbas's actions after his release, but what do you think Barabbas thought about being freed instead of Jesus? (Allow students time to answer.) What do you think about the fact that Jesus died for sins that *you* committed? You and I are the guilty ones, but He died so we would not have to.

What about the soldiers? They were following orders as they beat Jesus. They then stripped Him and put a robe and a crown on Him like a king would wear. The problem was they did not have a crown handy so they made one with thorns. The crowd made fun of Him, spit on Him, and hit Him on the head with a stick (Matthew 27:27-37).

Teacher: Record the students as they mockingly say, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Do you abuse God and His holiness by the way you live your life (slide 9)? Do you say you are a Christ-follower, but then bring shame on Him by how you live your life? Do you make fun of holiness? Do you laugh at those who try to do right? How are you different from the soldiers and crowd who abused Him? Do you just follow what society tells you is right or do you follow Him?

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; *Lesson 3 PowerPoint download*; *Picture of Calvary poster*; paper and drawing utensils, tape

Peter had been at the Garden of Gethsemane and knew what Jesus had gone through up to this point. Peter was a very close friend of Jesus, but Jesus still

warned Peter that he would deny that he even knew Jesus three different times before the rooster would crow to announce sunrise the next morning (Matthew 26:34). Peter laughed at the idea, convinced he would gladly bear the ridicule that might come because he was a friend of Jesus. However, after Jesus' arrest, Peter was terrified that he would also be executed because of his close association with Jesus. Three times that night Peter lied to people and said he did not know Jesus. When Peter heard the rooster crowing in the morning, he remembered the words of Jesus.

Teacher: Ask the students to crow like roosters as you record their sounds. Then display the *Picture of Calvary poster*.

Peter was horrified at his betrayal of his Savior, and in his agony repented. Because of Peter's repentant heart, Christ's forgiveness was so complete that Peter was allowed to receive the Holy Spirit in the Acts 2 outpouring. He also got to preach the message of salvation at Pentecost. Peter was blessed because of his association with Jesus.

Have you ever denied knowing Jesus (**slide 10**)? Perhaps not by words, but by your actions? Are you guilty of pretending you are not a Christian when you are with certain people? Some of you may still feel the guilt and shame of living a life that is a lie (**slide 11**). If so, remember that Peter also denied Christ, yet Peter was forgiven when he repented. *You* too can be forgiven if you ask and then turn away from your sin.

Teacher: Direct your students to the *Kool I. Diaz activity* in their *TeenZines*. When they are finished allow them to share their responses and discuss the importance of knowing that God can bring something good out of something bad when we hand the situation over to Him.

Mannual Focus

Divide the class into five small groups. Assign each group to draw a picture that depicts one of the following in the reaction to the Crucifixion of Jesus (*if you have fewer students, assign several of the following to each set of students or to each student*):

- **Pilate** — example: washing his hands
- **Jewish people** — example: mocking, hitting Jesus
- **Soldiers** — example: mockingly worshiping Him as king
- **Barabbas** — example: prisoner
- **Peter** — example: denying Christ

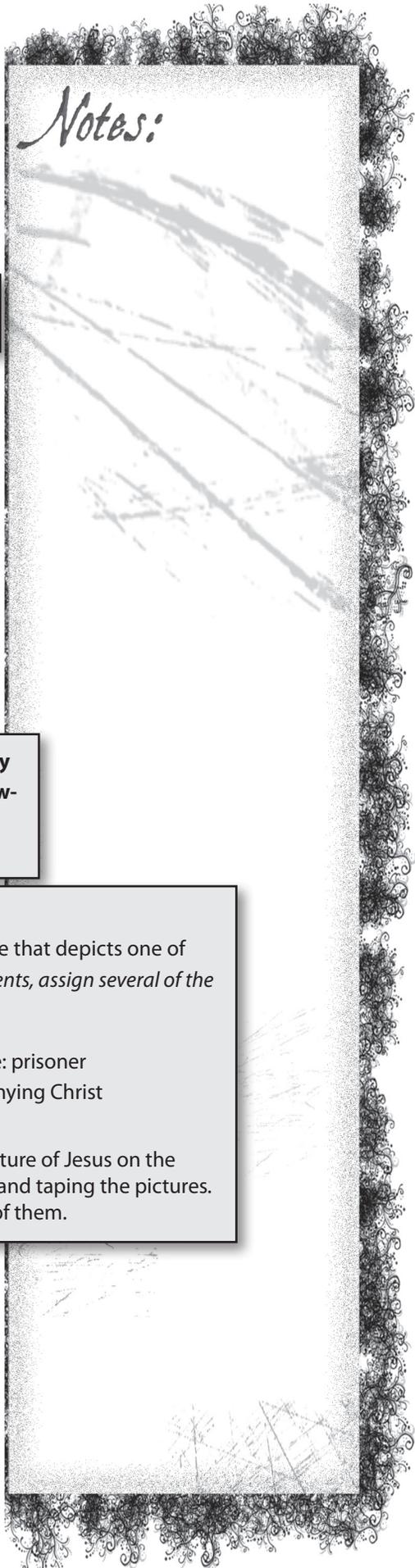
Upon completion of the drawings, students will tape the pictures to surround the picture of Jesus on the cross to make a montage. Discuss each person/group's reaction as students are drawing and taping the pictures. Ask the students to think about these responses and see if they have been guilty of any of them.

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; *Lesson 3 PowerPoint download*; *Picture of Calvary poster*; pictures of the students; tape

Have you ever wondered why some of the people at the Crucifixion reacted the way they did? What if you were given the chance to talk to some of them? What would you ask? Turn in your *TeenZines* to the *What I Wanna Know Is . . . activity*.



Notes:

When you are finished with this activity, look at the questions. Are any of them questions you need to ask of yourself? For instance, if you asked Barabbas, "How did it feel to know an innocent man was going to die, but you, a guilty man, were going to be set free?" Maybe you should ask that question of yourself. How does it feel knowing He took your punishment for sin?

Where do we fit into the modern-day montage of reactions to the Crucifixion of Jesus? All of us know what Christ has done for us. Do we still deny we know Him? Do we pretend that He does not matter to us? That His Word is just a history book to be enjoyed but not followed? What are some ways we could deny Him (**slide 12 a-d**)?

Teacher: Lead your students in an in-depth discussion. This is vital to this lesson. Draw them out by gently asking questions. You may wish to provide examples in your own life when you have made mistakes and denied Christ in your life.

There are many ways that we can deny Him. For instance, are our actions ever contrary to His teachings? Do we refuse to dress modestly or act appropriately? Do we sin knowing full well what we are doing is wrong?

Have we ever denied His existence or His power? What a foolish thing to think! Even the devil believes in God! Have we ever heard of something that God has done in someone's life and said, "I don't believe that for a second." Maybe you know someone who was an awful person, but after she came to Jesus she started behaving differently. Did you think that she was lying about God's touch or that her change was only temporary?

What about refusing to show others that we know Him by our lifestyle? Let us look at Philippians 4:8 (**slide 14**). (*Lead the class in reading this verse.*) Do we make sure our thoughts, actions, and words reflect goodness and holiness? Do you laugh at or tell jokes that glorify things or activities that are directly against what we know God wants?

It is possible that because we choose to make good choices or follow Christ rather than what our peers or the world says, others may laugh at us. However, do you think that His blessings for us will make it worthwhile? Besides, everyone, no matter who he is, will be mocked for some reason or another at some point in his life. Why not be laughed at for something that is eternal? We may be mocked or made fun of because we want to live holy, but by living a godly life, we will please God. God's rules for holiness are to protect us, not to punish us. What are blessings that come through association with Him as His child? (*Allow students time to answer.*)

There are so many blessings! God gives us peace, joy, happiness, shelter through trouble, unconditional love, and provision for all our needs (not necessarily our wants). Yes, being a child of the King is a privilege, and it is one that is offered to all through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Mannual Focus

Display the **poster of Jesus on the cross**. Give each student his picture you have printed. Ask students to tape their pictures around the picture of Jesus and think about their reaction to Calvary. Take a moment to pray over them, asking God to remind them they can always have Him at the center of their lives.

As a review, play the sounds recorded by the students during the lesson (**slide 15**).

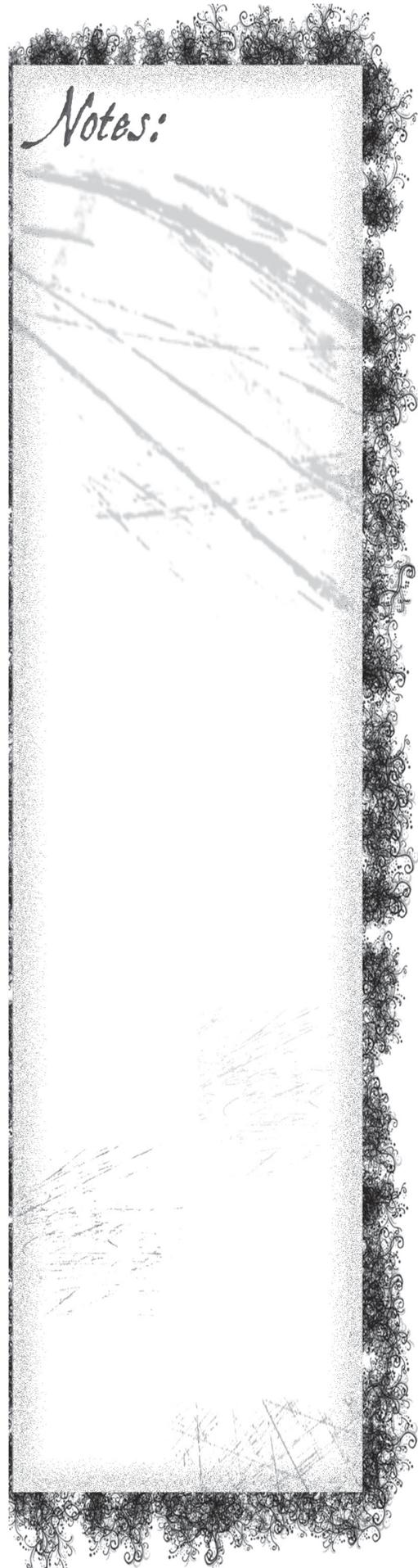
Which reaction of those who were at Jesus' crucifixion most closely describes your own reaction to Calvary? Are you a Pilate who is swayed by the crowd into thinking you can wash your hands of any responsibility for your sin? Are you a member of the crowd who does not believe Jesus is God or at least refuses to treat Him as such? Are you a Barabbas or maybe a soldier who can see what He has done, but either denies it is for you or denies it is important? Or perhaps you are more like Peter? You follow Christ and try to do what is right, but the minute it gets tough, you pretend you never knew what was right?

But there is a group of people we have not discussed yet. What about those who were with Jesus the whole time and even stood at the foot of the cross? We know John was there as were several women who were mentioned. We forget that there were people at His crucifixion who believed in Him and stood by Him. What about the thief who hung on a cross beside Him that day? He asked Jesus to forgive him and Jesus did. The man was dying for his horrible lifestyle, yet before it was over, God forgave him! Remember, your reaction to Calvary decides your eternal destination.

Final Focus:

You may wish to play soft music so students can spend some private time thanking Jesus for His personal sacrifice for them. End with thanksgiving to Him for His gift of life and salvation.

A **Look Ahead:** Hope. What a beautiful word! The hope we have in Christ will be covered in our next lesson. The good news of salvation is important to share and you will have that privilege the next time your class meets. With the exception of a box fan and colored pencils, everything else needed for the lesson can be found either in the teacher's resource packet or in your classroom.



4

Week of
March 27, 2016

Lesson Objective:

To guide teens through the message of salvation and encourage them to accept and promote the gospel.

Key Verse: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Lesson Text:

I Corinthians 15

Scripture Setting:

John 3; Acts 2

The Gospel in Focus

Teacher's Tip: The *Gospel Race activity* within the lesson requires the full gamut of the Word Aflame teen curriculum, relying heavily on art in the *TeenZine* and pieces from the resource packet. Once you have all of the resource packet pieces posted in your classroom in the appropriate places (see *Before the Lesson* on the *Gospel Race instruction sheet* from the resource packet), go through the race personally to see what questions might arise. Students will be coming to you for answers, so you will want to be prepared!

Special Needs: The *Gospel Race* can be a bit complicated for the student whose mind works at a slower pace than does the typical teen's mind. Make sure that any student who may have difficulty with the Race will be teamed up with at least one student who is compassionate and caring. This will help each teen feel involved and will help them all finish the race successfully.

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- *TeenZines*
- Pens/pencils
- Colored pencils/marks
- Lesson 4 PowerPoint download
- Gospel Race instructions from the resource packet
- Gospel Race handout from the resource packet
- First Clue from the resource packet in one envelope per team
- Giraffe poster from the resource packet
- Box fan
- Door banner, ceiling strip, and fan strip from the resource packet
- Checkered flag picture from the resource packet

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; colored pencils/markers

As students enter class, ask them to complete the *Design a Can activity* in the *TeenZine*. Instructions read as follows:

In the spirit of energy drinks, a soft-drink manufacturer has invented a new type of beverage: *when you drink it, your soul actually gets closer to God*. They believe it will be a smash hit in Spirit-filled churches, but only if marketed correctly. They have hired you to name the new product, create a catchy slogan, and design the can. Draw up your design to present to the company.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Lesson 4 PowerPoint download*; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils, Bibles

Teacher: Open class by allowing students to share the names, slogans, and designs of their soft drinks.

Of course, such a soul-lifting product does not exist. The only way to bring your soul closer to God is to actually seek Him. But if such a product did exist, people would probably buy it by the truckload. After all, these days, energy drinks and other

mental stimulants are all the rage, even if they might cause elevated heart rates, hypertension, anxiety, headaches, interrupted sleep patterns, and other side effects (Manny Alvarez, "Opinion: Energy Drinks Don't Energize, They Stimulize—and Can Kill You," posted February 16, 2011 *FoxNews.com*).

Why do people consume energy drinks? Not just to enhance physical energy, but also to increase mental focus.

Focus? What is so important about having focus (**slide 3a**)? (Allow students time to answer.)

Having focus allows a person to pay close or narrow attention to something (**slide 3b**). For many, coffee is the energy drink of choice. The focus-enhancing effects of coffee were first discovered in Ethiopia, but you will never guess who some believe were the reason coffee was spread around the world, especially to North America.

Monks! Yes, monks discovered that when they brewed these bitter beans in water, their prayer times had more sizzle and they could read the Word of God for prolonged periods without needing a break. Monasteries were filled with coffee addicts eager to tell you the benefits of focus.

How important is focus? Have you ever seen a picture like this one, which is supposedly Bigfoot (**slide 4**)? Why is it hard to believe this is Bigfoot? (Answer: Because it is out of focus.)

When an individual focuses upon something, it becomes the center of attention or activity and it becomes clearer.

The Vdara Hotel in Las Vegas demonstrated being the focus is not always a good thing (**slide 5**). The Vdara had high expectations when it opened on December 1, 2009, but the architects overlooked one small problem: focus.

Guests soon learned that the mirrored windows of the hotel formed a concave lens, and at a certain time in the afternoon, all of the sun's rays were focused on the pool deck! Some people referred to it as the "Vdara Death Ray." Like ants under a magnifying glass, guests at the Vdara's swimming pool learned the unpleasant consequences of focus. Some of them actually had their hair singed and various items melted! ("Death ray' at Vegas hotel pool heats up guests," *nbcnews.com*).

In life, focusing on the right things is so important. Everyone's life has something on which they focus. We choose upon what we narrow our attention, and we do not like when others point that our focus may be on the wrong things.

Mannual Focus

Direct students to complete the **Bull's-eye! activity** in the *TeenZine*. Students will assess the focus of their life: relationship, school, popularity, family, possessions, money, entertainment, or Jesus. Once completed, allow them to trade handbooks with somebody who knows them well, asking that person to assess their list. Have they been honest in their self-evaluation? How many have Jesus as their greatest area of focus?

What should be the bull's-eye of every Christian's focus? Obviously Jesus. Most if not all of you probably put "Jesus" in the bull's-eye, but is that really true in your life? Is Jesus still the center of your life?

When someone makes Jesus his Savior, his entire life suddenly refocuses on living for Jesus. He reads his Bible. He talks to God every day. He is thrilled to be

Notes:

Notes:

Verse in Acts	Focus
3:20	Jesus Christ
4:2	Resurrection through Jesus
5:42	Jesus Christ
8:4	The Word
8:5	Christ
8:12	The things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus.
8:25a	The Word of the Lord
8:25b	The gospel
8:35	Jesus
8:40	Uncertain
9:20	Christ, that He is the Son of God
9:27	Uncertain, possibly the name of Jesus
10:36	Peace by Jesus Christ
10:42	Jesus was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.
11:19	The Word
11:20	The Lord Jesus
13:5	The Word of God
13:38	Forgiveness of sins
13:42	The sermon just preached regarding Jesus
14:7	The gospel
14:15	Repentance
14:21	The gospel
14:25	The Word
15:35	The Word of the Lord
15:36	The Word of the Lord
16:6	The Word
16:10	The gospel
17:3	Jesus
17:13	The Word of God
17:18	Jesus and the Resurrection
19:13	Jesus
20:7	Uncertain
20:9	Uncertain
20:25	The kingdom of God
28:31	The kingdom of God

spending time with God. To others who have their focus on things in the world, sometimes the true Christians can seem crazy! They cannot imagine why a Christian would want to live to please someone other than himself.

But over time, if he is not careful, a Christian's focus can get blurry. As a result, the Christian witness starts looking like that Bigfoot picture. If our focus has slipped, today's lesson seeks to get our eyes focused back on Jesus Christ.

When the apostles preached, what was their focus? **The Apostle's Focus activity** in your *TeenZine* lists all thirty-four mentions of preaching as it pertains to the apostles in the Book of Acts. Look up the verses and write the focus of the apostles' sermons. If you are not sure what the focus is write "uncertain." (*Answers are in the margin of the teacher's manual.*)

Teacher: To speed up the previous section, assign several verses to each student.

When it came to preaching, what was the apostles' focus? (*Answers: Jesus, the gospel, the Word of God.*) Since we claim to be apostolic, meaning like the apostles, what should be our focus? (*Answer: The same.*)

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Necessary Resources: **Gospel Race instructions; Gospel Race hand-out; one sealed envelope per team containing first clue; Giraffe poster; door banner; ceiling strip; fan strip; checkered flag picture; TeenZines, pens/pencils; Lesson 4 PowerPoint download**

Teacher: To complete the Gospel Race, you will need the Gospel Race Instructions and other items from the resource packet and at least one TeenZine per team. If you have not ordered these items, it is not too late to do so now and postpone the teaching of this lesson until you receive them.

So what is this *gospel* the apostles preached everywhere they went? The apostles must have done a good job, because amazingly, nearly everyone in the world—Christians, non-Christians, and even atheists—reveals some knowledge of the gospel message. They may not know they know, but if you start asking questions, most people can tell you the basic elements—Jesus was born the Son of God, lived without sin, died for our sins, and was resurrected. The challenge is not *knowing* the gospel, but *believing* it!

But there is a part of the gospel message that significantly fewer people have heard—how to properly respond to belief, which results in salvation. To lay out the pieces making up the proper response, we are going to conduct a **Gospel Race**.

Teacher: At this point, refer to the Gospel Race instruction sheet. (Note: One of the clues will ask them to compliment the most wonderful person in the room. That will be you!).

Mannual Focus

When the students have finished their race, go over the outline with teams, stating the correct answers and adding pertinent information as you go. The information in italics is to be shared as you discuss the answers. This is the most important part of the lesson so take your time and allow students to ask questions. (The following outline is strongly informed by David K. Bernard's book, *The New Birth*.)

What is the new birth? (slide 7)

1. Repentance (slide 7a)

- A. (RECOGNITION) of sin (**slide 7b**). *The first step of repentance is to recognize sin in one's life.*
- B. (CONFESSION) of sin (**slide 7c**). *To whom does one confess? To God Himself through heartfelt prayer.*
- C. (CONTRITION) for sin (**slide 7d**). *Merriam-Webster defines contrite as "feeling or showing sorrow and remorse for a sin or shortcoming." Contrition is a condition of the heart, and not just a statement of the lips.*
- D. (DECISION TO FORSAKE) sin (**slide 7e**). *Walk away from what you are doing wrong and ask God to help you avoid doing it again.*
- E. What happens at repentance? (WE TURN OUR FOCUS UPON GOD.) (**slide 7f**) *To experience the new birth, one must decide to abandon sinful ways and turn one's eyes upon Jesus.*

2. Water Baptism (slide 8a)

- A. Baptismal mode—(IMMERSION IN WATER) (**slide 8b**) *The Bible describes baptism as an act of complete submersion in water, not sprinkling.*
- B. (WASHING) of sin (**slide 8c**). *Through the physical act of water baptism in Jesus' name, our sins are cleansed from our lives by the blood of Christ.*
- C. (BURIED) with Christ (**slide 8d**). *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Through baptism (being completely covered with water), we show our belief in the coming resurrection.*
- D. Baptism formula—(ACTS 2:38) (**slide 8e**)
- E. Spiritual (CIRCUMCISION) (**slide 9a**) *Through baptism, the heart is altered. See Romans 2:29. Sin is cut off from our hearts and lives.*
- F. More than a (PUBLIC CONFESSION—the code is the next letter after the one given. For instance O=P, T=U, etc.) (**slide 9b**) *Many falsely believe baptism is only a physical symbol of belief, but something spiritual happens when someone is baptized in the name of Jesus. He becomes the possession/child of God. God is now his Father.*
- G. (FAITH) is necessary in baptism (**slide 9c**). *Whose faith counts in baptism? The baptizing minister cannot believe for the person being baptized, which is why no accounts of infant baptism exist in the Bible. The person being baptized must have faith in and fully believe that Jesus Christ will clean away his sin.*

Notes:

3. **Baptism of the Holy Ghost (slide 10a).** *This is the reward of proper focus. After one has believed, repented, and been baptized, the promise of the Father will come!*
 - A. Prophesied in the Old Testament—(JOEL 2) (slide 10b) *“Receiving the Holy Ghost” was not something invented by the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Old Testament prophets spoke of it, like in Joel 2:28-29, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” As Peter explained in Acts 2:16, “This is that!”*
 - B. (SPEAKING IN TONGUES) (slide 10c) *The Book of Acts demonstrates how people who receive the Holy Ghost will speak in a heavenly language (Acts 2, 10, 19).*
 - C. Is it necessary for eternal life? (slide 10d) (YES.) *Christ IN you is the hope of glory.*

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: [Lesson 4 PowerPoint download](#)

Merriam Webster defines *gospel* as “the message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation” (slide 11). So what is this gospel message? What must we do to be saved?

The answer is surprisingly simple: believe that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ allows us to live in relationship with a holy God. We show Him our faith when we obey the outline as laid out in the Gospel Race. Once we receive the Holy Ghost, we should focus our lives on following Jesus.

Teacher: Some of your students may wrestle with one or more of the following doubts. Be ready to field questions, discuss openly, and schedule Bible studies. Also, if your class is predominately unchurched, practice explaining the plan of salvation as if you were speaking to a very small child. That will help you be prepared to help explain the concept of salvation in a clearer way to those who do not yet know about Jesus.

Many if not most people know the basic story of Jesus, but several factors still cause trouble for many (slide 12):

They do not believe the story the Bible tells (slide 12a). They believe history has warped His story, turning Jesus into something He was not. Many religions believe in the same basic ethical teachings of Jesus, but do not believe He was God.

They do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead (slide 12b). By denying He rose from the dead, they deny the possibility of their own resurrection (I Corinthians 15:12-19). Believing in Jesus without the resurrection would make us most miserable indeed!

They do not believe the story has anything to do with them and their life (slide 12c). While understanding Jesus as a historical figure, they do not understand how His death applies to their own life in the present day.

They do not believe they must do any more than believe on Jesus (slide 12d). While “accepting Jesus as their personal Savior,” they discount water baptism

in Jesus' name as an unnecessary physical work. But the apostles provided a pattern for the new birth experience, and it included baptism in both water and Spirit. (See John 3).

Whether they believe there is a God or not, they simply do not want to change (slide 12e). People who choose this route usually have little understanding of its eternal consequences (Revelation 20:11-21:8). They either do not believe in hell or they do not believe their sin will put them there.

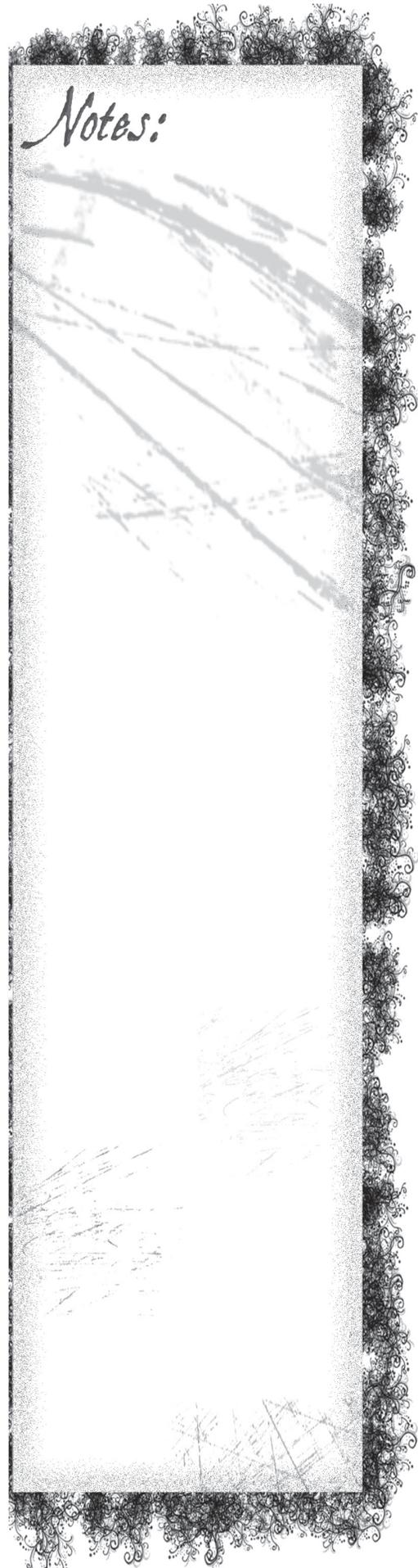
As we learned earlier, the challenge is not *knowing* the gospel, but rather *believing* and *obeying* it. Many people make "knowing God" seem so difficult, but God provided a means of salvation so easy a child can understand it. The gospel is not hidden; it is in plain sight. Salvation is not complicated. Believing it works for me is what can sometimes be complicated!

So what is your focus? Is your life focused on Jesus? Without focusing on the gospel, we will not live for God. We may *say* we live for God, we may even *think* we live for God, but in order to do that, we must be focused on Him and show others how to focus on Him as well.

Final Focus:

Lord, are our lives in focus? Or are there factors making our witness for You fuzzy? Bring to mind the things of which we need to repent. Help us feel Your holy fire within us. Lord, we repent of our sins. Cover us with Your blood. Our focus is wholly on You. Show us the faces of those who need to hear Your message. We love You, we praise You, and we live to serve and worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead: The next lesson will require a few things that you should be able to gather quite easily. The content is what will take you time to prepare. It is a simple lesson of facing fear and allowing God to use you, but in dealing with young teens, that is easier said than done. Ask God to grant you the words to express to your class how important they are to God and how much He believes in them when they walk with Him. At the same time, remember that you are also more than a conqueror through Christ!



5

Week of
April 3, 2016**Lesson Objective:**

To remind students failure does not have to be the final outcome for a child of God.

Key Verse: “And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him” (Judges 16:20).

Lesson Text:

Judges 16:6-30

Scripture Setting:

Judges 13-16

A Close-up of Failure—Samson

Teacher's Tip: Like our last lesson, today's theme gives a special opportunity for teachers to pursue outside-of-class connection moments. At several points, this lesson will stress the need for accountability. We can use these points to offer ourselves as accountability partners—seeking ways to help our students grow in their spiritual maturity. Should a student ask you to help with this, work with him to develop questions you can ask weekly by email, text, or in person to help the student establish guardrails for various areas of his life with the express consent of his or her parents. It is important that the student know he is safe with you so he never feels the need to lie about any of the questions asked.

Special Needs: The importance of a routine cannot be stressed enough for students with special needs. Structure can erase anxiety. There is a certain comfort level when students can anticipate a clear pattern. While creativity and spontaneity can be fun, maintaining a routine for the common weekly activities is important.

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 5 PowerPoint download
- Magnifying glasses: one for every two to three students
- 2-3 rolls of masking tape
- Junk (such as wadded up pieces of paper, empty cans, old boxes, and empty toilet paper tubes)
- “Shackled By” paper bracelet from the resource packet

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; TeenZines; pens/pencils; magnifying glasses

As students arrive to class, instruct them to complete the *A Close Up activity* in their TeenZines. Pass out magnifying glasses and group students two or three to a glass. During this activity, students will use magnifying glasses to find words as indicated by the instructions (which they will then arrange to discover the key verse). When students are done and you are ready to begin class, ask a volunteer to read the verse.

This is our key verse today. As you can tell, we are going to take a look at Samson—a close look.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 1 minute

Necessary Resources: Lesson 5 PowerPoint download

Did you notice in our Opening Focus activity that the magnifying glass helped you see things in detail you could not see just by looking with your natural eye? The magnifying glass does not change the image, but it allows us to zoom in so we can see it more closely. When we can see something up close, the real nature of the object becomes visible (**slide 3**).

Think of a close-up photography shot. All of the details of the subject come into focus. If there are good features, we see those clearly. And if there are flaws, we see those clearly. Using a zoom lens, the photographer is able to capture the subject in the tiniest detail (**slide 4**). Every flaw and imperfection is visible.

Today we will closely examine Samson. Unfortunately his close-up seems to reveal failure!

Heart

Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; **Lesson 5 Power-Point download**

Samson's story begins well. His mother had not had a child even though she desperately wanted one. After years of prayer, an angel appeared and promised she would have a child who would deliver the nation of Israel from the Philistines (a nation whose army had taken over the country). Samson's mother vowed that Samson would be special—he would be a Nazarite all of his life. In the Bible, the Nazarite vow was one a man took that set him apart from everyone else. Usually the vow was for a specific amount of time. He would never cut his hair, he would never drink wine, and he would never touch anything dead (**slide 5**). Samson was to be a Nazarite forever. What a vow Samson's mother made, but what a special promise she had for a special son!

As Samson grew up, it became clear he was truly exceptional. His strength and agility were second to none. Early on, he killed a lion with his bare hands. He also killed thirty of the enemy Philistines singlehandedly. Another time he corralled three hundred foxes, tied torches to their tails, and sent them running through the Philistine's fields to destroy them. It worked!

This is just one example of some of the incredible (and sometimes strange) feats Samson accomplished through the strength of God. He also beat to death one thousand Philistines with just the jawbone of a donkey. All of this made Samson a feared warrior. He was also a political leader in Israel for twenty years (Judges 15:20). He was quite the hero!

But sadly we know Samson's story does not end there.

Delilah began trying to get Samson to tell her the source of his strength. Samson knew it was his Nazarite vow to God that gave him strength. His uncut hair was a sign of submission to Jehovah and if it were cut off, he would lose his favor and strength with God. However, Samson was not about to tell his girlfriend that! Apparently, he already knew he could not trust her.

First he told Delilah if he were tied with seven bowstrings (or strings that you put on a bow to shoot an arrow) he would have no power. So he allowed Delilah to tie him up with them. Then she yelled, "The Philistines are here to get you!" Samson snapped the bowstrings easily, jumping up as if ready for a fight. He had been teasing her! Unfortunately, it never dawned on Samson that she really was out to get him. The Philistines had offered her a huge sum of money if she helped them capture him, but Samson was in the dark about that deal.

Delilah cried because Samson had lied to her and she begged him again to explain his strength. So he said if he were tied up with new ropes that had never

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Teacher: Ask a student to volunteer read Judges 16:4-5 (slide 6).

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been used, he would have no power. Again Delilah tied him up and called out that the Philistines were there to get him. Again Samson easily broke the ropes!

Delilah pouted some more, but when she asked him again to tell her the source of his strength, Samson said something a little closer to the truth—he said if the braids of his hair were woven into a loom he would lose power. A dumb story, but Delilah tried it anyway while Samson was sleeping. She yelled that the Philistines were there and woke him up. It scared him badly enough that he tore his head and hair loose from the loom and fabric she had used. Again, Samson was at full strength.

Delilah realized that she was not going to get the huge reward for turning Samson over to the Philistines if she did not try harder, so she just kept pouting and nagging. Finally, one day he got sick of listening to her whine so he told her his secret: if his head was shaved, he would lose all his strength.

Teacher: Ask a student to volunteer read Judges 16:18-21 (slide 7).

This is the story we think of when we think of Samson, and it is a sad

close-up of failure. It is important that we understand why. It is sometimes easy to just blame Delilah and leave it at that, but we need to look at the responsibility on Samson's part.

Manual Focus

Divide the class into three groups. Ask each student to turn to the *TeenZine* section called **Zoomed in on Samson**. Assign each group one of the three topics in the *TeenZine*: Lust, Pride, or Reckless Behavior. Give groups four minutes to figure out how Samson displayed that quality and how they think that quality made Samson go from being an incredible warrior and leader to a prisoner. After they are finished, ask one spokesperson from each group to stand and explain that group's answer.

Lust was an obvious source of Samson's downfall. Throughout chapters 14, 15, and 16 of Judges, Samson is continually seeking out relationships with women who were dangerous and not in keeping with God's plan for Samson's life. Is it any wonder that even when he knew Delilah was trying to trick him, he still could not leave her? His lust had bound him to her, and in so doing, it bound him to his death sentence.

Pride was also a factor for Samson. His incredible strength, which should have been his greatest blessing, became a downfall because he grew proud and overconfident.

Teacher: Ask a student to read Romans 12:3 (slide 8).

Perhaps Samson began to depend on his strength as his own, forgetting that his strength was a gift from God. As he did more and more exploits and became a powerful leader in Israel, is it possible he became prideful? Would not that be an easy thing to do because of our human nature? It takes a spiritually mature person to handle God's gifts without thinking he is big stuff!

Maybe it was Samson's pride that led to his reckless behavior. With such strength he may have thought he could handle anything. But his reckless behavior got him in trouble. It was irresponsible to continue associating with Philistines, knowing they were the enemy of God's people. And despite his lust, he should have had enough wisdom at some point to get away from Delilah. Three times he saw that she tried to trap him, and still he stayed in a vulnerable situation. That was reckless and foolish.

Most importantly, it was reckless of Samson to lose connection with God. Let us all read the key verse together (**slide 9**).

Samson's recklessness and pride cost him his consecration and connection with God and he did not know it until it was too late. The Philistines captured and blinded him and threw him in prison.

Fortunately God is merciful, and this was not the end of Samson. One day the Philistines were having a big festival. They brought Samson out from the prison and began to mock him and celebrate capturing him.

Teacher: Ask students to take turns reading the verses of Judges 16:26-30 (slides 10-11).

Despite all that had happened to Samson and all his wrong choices and bad habits, God still fulfilled His promise to use Samson to destroy the enemy of Israel.

Many things happened to Samson in the time between when he was captured and when God answered his prayer and worked such a great miracle.

First Samson was humbled. Though he may have taken great pride in his strength and felt invincible before, as a prisoner of the Philistines he lost everything. But Samson made the journey back from failure. After being humbled, he made the decision to do something that changed his story: he called out to God. God heard Samson's prayer and answered him.

Though Samson's portrait looks like one of failure, failure was not the final outcome. He defeated his enemies because he used his failure to bring God glory (**slide 12**). He destroyed more of the enemy in his death than he did in his life. Failure does not have to be final!

Like Samson, all of us fight to keep garbage out of our lives. Because of our human nature, we may fight many of the things Samson did, plus more. So how do we get the junk out of our lives that threatens to destroy us? (*Allow time for students to answer.*)

We simply must have God in our lives to overcome the temptations of our flesh and the things that would keep us from living a righteous life. When He removes garbage from our lives, He can take up residence and empower us to live for Him.

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 24 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; pens/pencils; **Lesson 5 PowerPoint download**; **"Shackled By" paper bracelet**; tape; junk

So how do we avoid these dangerous pitfalls? First, we fight pride and recklessness by submitting to God and to our elders.

As we continually humble ourselves before God in prayer, He gives us grace to continue serving Him in a right spirit. He *will* use us to glorify Him. Imagine how good it feels to be used to make God look good!

This text also emphasizes the importance of submitting to elders. Repeatedly there is a biblical pattern of God honoring those who submit to elders. And in this act of submitting to elders and those in authority, God uses their wisdom to protect us from dangerous decisions. There is no biblical evidence that Samson had anyone

Teacher: Ask a student to read I Peter 5:5-6 (slide 13).

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in his life to whom he was submitted—leaving him unprotected from himself. We *must* learn submission to God and our elders to protect us from reckless behavior and the kind of choices that can destroy us. We can be our own worst enemy. We are able to lie to ourselves. We can deceive ourselves into thinking that we have the right attitude, spirit, and motive. Only God can help us see ourselves for what we really are and what we really can be.

Accountability can also help us avoid the pitfall of lust. If we will seek out a trusted elder to talk to about our struggles or answer questions, we can set guardrails to protect ourselves. We must remember that we can lust for glory, approval, or possessions. It is not always our feelings for a guy or a girl that can get us into trouble. Having godly people who speak wisdom into our lives can help protect us.

What are other modern-day pitfalls we face that, like Samson, could destroy us if left unchecked? And what do we do to protect ourselves from these? (*Allow plenty of time to discuss.*)

Now let us go beyond general things that various people struggle with and make it personal. With what specific things do *you* struggle? What would your life look like if we took a close-up look like we did with Samson? Most importantly, what do you think your life looks like to God?

Manual Focus

Give each student a *"Shackled By" paper bracelet*. Instruct students to write in whatever holds them back and threatens their walk with God. Then give students tape to fasten the shackle around their wrists (with the writing facing their skin so others cannot see what they have written).

The same God who gave Samson the strength to snap all of those ropes effortlessly still has the power to free you. He can deliver you from anything that binds you so your future does not have to be threatened.

Teacher: Pray over the students as they pray silently. Ask God to help them give Him the authority in their life to break what keeps them from serving Him the way they should. When you feel a freedom in the Spirit, move on in the lesson.

I am going to count to three, and then we are going to say "in Jesus' name" together and snap off these shackles!

Teacher: Be sensitive here. This may be an opportunity to move into worship and let God touch students who are struggling.

So even after we give God the junk in our lives, there are still sometimes human weaknesses that we may have to deal with since we are not perfect and will not be able to live from now on without ever having a weakness again. But if we are willing to give our human frailties to God each and every time we face them, we never have to be bound. And those frailties can be used to glorify God.

How? When a weakness in your life results in your being disciplined and you accept that in the right spirit, you glorify God and grow as a Christian so you can be stronger in the future. When you react to failure by not giving up, you bear witness that serving God is worth staying faithful.

The ultimate message from Samson's story is that failure does not have to be final. Even when you have made mistakes, and even in the midst of your weaknesses, God can take your life and use it for His glory.

Teacher: Ask a student to read Micah 7:8 (slide 14).

Notes:

Mannual Focus

Divide the class into groups of three or four students depending on class size. In a central place in the room, place a few rolls of tape and a box of old junk (such as empty cans, boxes, and empty toilet paper tubes).

In this activity, we will have a contest to see who can make the most creative work of art using these materials.

Give students three to five minutes to complete their creation. Then invite each group to show off their work of art.

Who would have believed the garbage we started with could be turned into something so creative? The creations may look a little funny, but they are works of art. In a much better way, God can take all of the stuff in our life and turn it into something special—a beautiful work of art.

Final Focus:

Today, God, we thank You for Your mercy. We thank You that You look on us with love and see so much potential in our lives. And we are especially thankful that You do not give up on us. I pray that You will help all of us to remember that our failures are never final. When we make mistakes, help us to give those things to You and know that You will take them and create beauty out of the ashes. Help us, Lord, to stay covered in prayer and submitted to You and the authority figures You have placed in our lives so we can glorify You. In Jesus' name, amen!

A Look Ahead: Though your students are not very old, some of them may still be living the life of a prodigal. The next lesson will cover the grace and mercy of God. Begin gathering the materials needed for the lesson now and ask prayer partners to cover you this week as you prepare for this vital lesson.

6

Week of
April 10, 2016**Lesson Objective:**

To encourage teens that no matter how far people have strayed from God, they are always welcomed home.

Key Verse: "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

Lesson Text:

Luke 15:11-32

Scripture Setting:

Psalm 86:5; Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 5:8; I John 1:9; Jude 2

A Family Photo— The Prodigal Son

Teacher's Tip: For many teens their world is all about drama. The story of the prodigal son when viewed in society's dramatic light would possibly demonize the elder brother, idolize the younger, and dismiss the father. In the church world, some may see the elder son as the hypocrite, the younger son as a victimized backslider, and ignore God's role as negligible. During this lesson we must make sure we let the teens know the villain was not the elder brother. No, the villain was both boys' carnality. The hero of the story was the father. He did not just have a small part in the story—he was the star, just as our loving God has the leading role in the matter of restoration for our lives.

Special Needs: Sometimes it is easy to overlook students with special needs when asking for, or choosing, a volunteer to help teach the lesson. On the other hand, we must be careful to avoid the "sympathy selection" (choosing students with special needs simply because they have special needs). The best way to fully include all students is to ask God to help us be equitable with our attention and love in the classroom. Treating all of our students the same makes us more like Christ!

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 6 PowerPoint download
- Prodigal Son script from the resource packet
- Money (several large bills, if you can get some)
- Several "Temptations"
 - CD with words "warning: explicit lyrics" printed on the front
 - soda can labeled "beer"
 - DVD with words "adult video" printed on the front
 - an envelope or empty pill bottle labeled "drugs."

(continued on page 27)

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: Several envelopes each containing a different photograph

As students enter give some, but not all, of them an envelope containing a photograph. The students with the envelopes are not to let anyone else see their photo, but are to try to describe the photo to their classmates without saying any part of the actual name(s) or subject(s). (For instance, a photo of the California Redwood Forest could not be described using the words "tree," "red," or "forest." A family photo could not be described using the words "family," "mom," "dad," or "parents")

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 2 minutes

Necessary Resources: photos from Opening Focus; Party poster

Today's lesson is about a (hold up poster of party decorations and hesitate for someone to call out the word "party"). Yes, but there are parties and then there are parties!

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. This refers to the idea that a complex idea can be conveyed with just a single still image. A picture makes it possible to absorb a large amount of data quickly.

Teacher: Ask your students to display their photos from the Opening Focus.

Is this how you envisioned the photos as they were being described? There were things you could not understand about the photo because you had not seen the pictures before. You could imagine some of it because you understood the language being used, but if you had seen the photos in advance and then heard the description, you would be better able to see it with your mind.

Jesus used parables to give people pictures of spiritual things. He used stories about things that were familiar. He wanted to tell them in a way that they could really see what He was saying, so He used recognizable things and situations.

The people of Jesus' time knew God through the eyes of the religious leaders. The religious leaders portrayed God as a God of severe judgment and without mercy, because they themselves were cruel and unforgiving. But Jesus came as a manifestation of God's love and forgiveness. The parable of the prodigal son is a picture of that love and forgiveness.

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Prodigal Son script*; money; Temptations; Party poster; Lesson 6 PowerPoint download

Does anyone know what the word prodigal means? (Allow students to answer.) Most of us know how to use the word, but we do not really know the true meaning. *Prodigal* actually means "recklessly and foolishly wasteful" (slide 3).

Two brothers lived with a father who loved them. They had everything they needed. In fact, it sounds like they were fairly wealthy.

The younger of the two sons felt restricted. He wanted his freedom. Maybe he was tired of living in his brother's shadow. Maybe he was sick of his parents' rules. Maybe he just wanted to taste what the world had to offer. Whatever the reason, he asked his father if he could have his inheritance early (before his dad had died and willed it to him). The father decided to give in to his son's request and, in order to be fair, gave both of his sons their inheritance. The older son, who was apparently OK with the way things were in his father's house, continued to live under his father's rule. He did not use his inheritance and continued to help his father build his fortune. However . . .

Teacher: Ask one volunteer to help you perform the *Prodigal Son skit*. Give the student a script to follow.

The outcome of the younger son's decision to leave home was that he had plenty of friends—at first. He enjoyed being out from under his father's rules. But when he ran out of money, he ran out of friends. And when he ran out of friends, he realized that he was no longer special. As he sat starving and lonely with only pigs for company and only their food to eat, the Bible tells us that "he came to himself." In other words he realized what a wreck he had made of his life.

He recognized all he had lost when he left his home and how good it had been there. Even his father's servants had it better than he did right then! He knew he

(continued from page 36)

- **Random photographs** (family portrait, scenery, landmark, object) or magazine pictures in envelopes
- **"Party" poster** from the resource packet

had been wrong. He decided to go home and tell his father he was sorry and ask to be taken in as a servant. The younger son's attitude was one of humility. He had learned the hard way. He headed for home starving, dirty, and smelly (**slide 4**).

As he drew near, his father saw him coming up the road. The boy smelled like pigs, was covered in everything that would normally be in a pig pen, and was clearly broken.

How would you expect to be greeted if you had been this boy? How would you receive someone if he had done what the prodigal had done or smelled like the prodigal smelled? How do you think his father received him? (*Allow answers for all of the questions.*)

The father's love for his son was so great that he ignored the dirt and the smell. The father ran towards his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The rebellious son began to tell his dad how sorry he was and that he did not have the right to be called son. He began to say that he would just be a servant, but before he could finish the sentence his father called for the servants to clean up his son and dress him in the clothes appropriate for a son of a wealthy gentleman. The servants were also told prepare for a huge celebration. The son's return was reason enough for a party!

Teacher: Display the *Party poster*.

As the party preparations were underway, the older son came in from the field and asked what the celebration was about. When he heard that it was a party because his younger brother had come home, he refused to go in.

The father came out to beg the older son to come in, but the older son was angry.

"I've been here working all along. I've never one time caused you any problems, but when your son who has done nothing but waste your money living in sin arrives, you give him a huge celebration."

The older son's attitude was one of jealousy and anger. Was his pride in being righteous as bad as his brother's initial betrayal? How would you feel if you had been the older son? (*Allow students time to answer.*)

The father reminded the older son that everything belonged to the older son and had all along; all he had to do was take advantage of it. Why could he not rejoice because his brother had come home to make their family complete again? The younger son was full of shame and had the scars of his lifestyle, but the elder son was still living his life of privilege. Jealousy did not make sense.

The father's response to both his sons' attitudes was of love and mercy. The father was ready to welcome the younger son home long before the boy had a change of heart because he had been watching for his wayward son. When his older son displayed a bitter attitude, the father did not become angry with him. He simply reminded the older son of the unconditional love and acceptance that he had always been privileged to have. The father's house was complete again and it was a time for celebration.

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 23 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZine*; pens/pencils; **Lesson 6 PowerPoint download**

We have a Father who loves us no matter what. He provides everything we need. We are saved from our sins because of Him. We can feed our souls and

help our minds by reading His Word. And we can be safe in His protection. In other words, there is nothing we need outside of Him. We are safe with Him. We are loved by Him. We are in the best place possible when we are in His family (slide 5).

Even so, some make the decision of the younger son. They say, "I will take my talents and gifts from God and use them as I choose."

They may feel they are in bondage to God's laws and commandments. They think, "I want to do things my way and taste what the world has to offer." Just as the father of the prodigal sons allowed his sons to make their own decisions, God will never force you to serve Him. If you want to be foolish, God will give you every reason not to, but He will not force you to do what is right.

Teacher: Direct your students to the *Consequences activity* in their *TeenZines*. They will be given various scenarios where their actions can cause them and/or someone else pain and leave scars. When they are finished with the activity, allow volunteers to read what they have written. Spend as much time here as the students are willing to listen. They must understand that, although the prodigal came home and was restored, he could still remember the pain he had caused and the suffering he had endured.

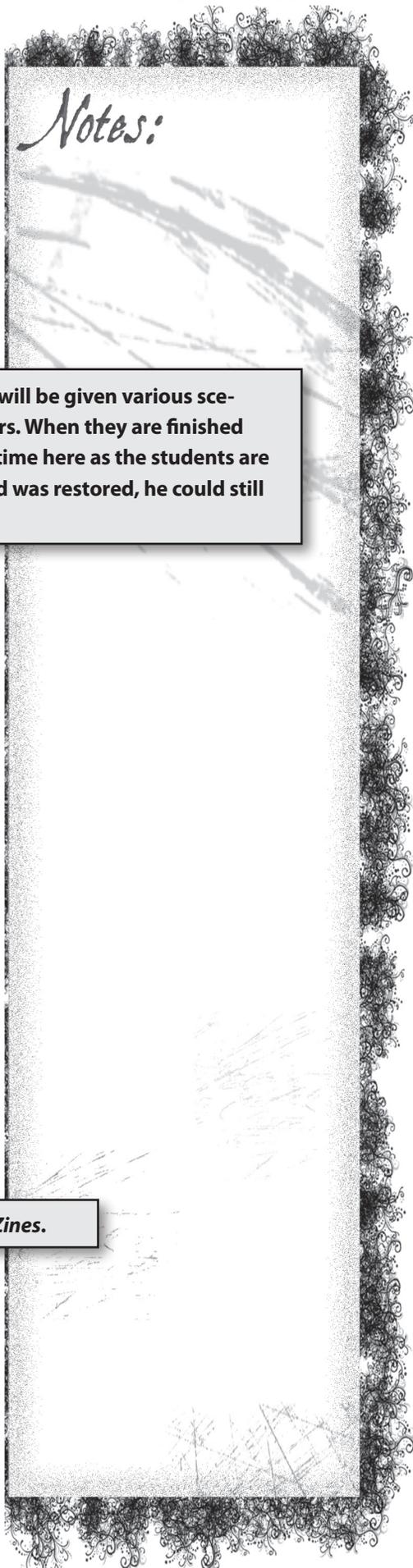
There is an outcome to our decisions. At first there will be pleasure, but in the end we will be just like everyone else: lost, miserable, and out of focus. We will miss God's house and His favor. The sad part is that even though the sin can be forgiven and forgotten by God, we will not forget what we have done. There will always be scars. But when the one who strays comes home, he is always welcomed back and he can be content and live life abundantly. Think of the father's overwhelming love as he embraced his filthy and stinking son. Sin makes us filthy and as undesirable as the young prodigal, but God reaches out eagerly to us when we turn back to Him.

Some follow the decision of the older son. They will never leave God's house because they made a lifelong commitment, and so they are blessed with God's continued blessings. However, they have the older son's reaction towards those who return. Do we fit into the elder brother's attitude? Are we angry because everyone is so happy that the backslider prayed back through? Are we jealous that we do not have a fabulous testimony of God's deliverance?

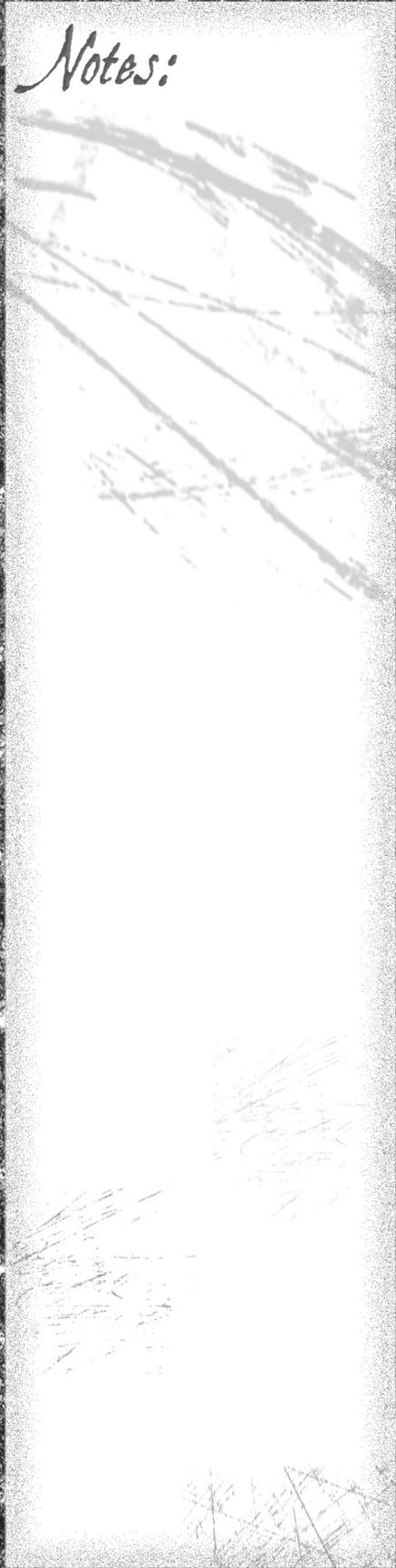
Just as the father reached out to his older son, God reaches out to us. He tells us to remember that we have a fabulous testimony of God's preservation (slide 6a). We were blessed and living in peace while our brother was struggling in his sin (slide 6b). Our reputation and testimony are intact (slide 6c). And then when we are all home, the work is easier because it is shared (slide 6d).

Teacher: Direct your students to complete the *Which Brother activity* in their *TeenZines*.

Too often we think there was only one prodigal son, the younger son. However, there may have been two. In the parable both sons needed to repent. The younger boy's issues were obvious; he wasted his inheritance on the world and its pleasures. The elder son did not share his father's compassion; in fact he became angry at his father's willingness to receive his brother as his son. He even developed a bitter spirit because of his father's gracious generosity. Today we can be guilty of the same things. Of course, we easily recognize that we can rebel and backslide to follow in the steps of the wasteful prodigal younger son. However, do we recognize how we can imitate the prodigal elder? We can think we are better than those who come



Notes:



broken to Christ. This reveals that we do not share our Father's heart, an attitude of which we need to repent.

The father was loving towards both boys, just as God is toward all today. God is ready to receive any of us back into the family when we come to Him in repentance. When a backslider returns, God can then provide a celebration of joy for the whole church to enjoy.

Final Focus:

Lord, help us to see You, our Loving Father, ready to accept us when we repent. Help us to understand that no matter how far anyone strays, You are always standing with open arms, eager to receive any who repent. You are eager to welcome all who want to come home, and You are wholeheartedly willing to restore them. Help me avoid being the one in need of restoration because I have chosen to always stay in Your house of blessing. Help me to have the right attitude toward my brothers and sisters in the Lord. I thank You for Your love and mercy towards me. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead: The next lesson will discuss how sin distorts lives. The most complicated thing you will need is access to a computer tablet or device with the Photo Booth program (such as an iPad or Mac Computer) or something similar. You are going to work with your students to distort images. Teens are growing up in a distorted world. They must know that the only way to see themselves and their world the right way is to see them through God's eyes. This truth is as old as time.

A Distorted Life— Man of Gadara

7

Week of
April 17, 2016

Teacher's Tip: The enemy uses all kinds of devices to distort our lives and our view of God. Perhaps the devil is not as obvious with his plan of distortion as with the man of Gadara, but he still uses deadly and destructive devices (noticeable and not so noticeable) to pull us away from God. This lesson requires prayer. Prayer for us and for our students will ensure that we will all have the mind, eyes, and ears of Christ so we will recognize the enemy's battle tactics.

Special Needs: More so than many people, teens with special needs struggle with a distorted view of self and God. They find it hard to see themselves as "normal" people who can be a dynamic force for the kingdom of God. Fortunately, you can show them that we all do not have to be "normal" to sit at Jesus' feet—we just have to be willing!

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Distorted photos*; *scotch tape*; *TeenZines*; pencils/pens

Tape the *distorted pictures* from the resource packet on the wall or display them on a table.

Can you guess what these everyday objects are? Take a few minutes to see how many of the ten items you can figure out. Write what you think they are in your *TeenZines* in the *What on Earth? activity*.

Place the regular photo by the distorted photo.

How many items did you guess correctly?

You may consider giving a small prize or candy to the person or persons who guessed the most correct answers.

When objects are distorted, their true identity and features are hidden from the viewer. So also is a person's true identity hidden from others, including himself, when his life is distorted by sin. Today we are going to discover that when someone focuses on Jesus, the things that make our lives feel and look so out of focus fade away and we can see ourselves as He sees us.

Head

Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: Computer tablet or device with the Photo Booth program; *Lesson 7 PowerPoint download*

Lesson Objective:

To help teens see that no force of Hell is strong enough to withstand the power of Jesus.

Key Verse: Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark 5:19).

Lesson Text:

Mark 5:1-20

Scripture Setting:

Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-40

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- *TeenZines*
- Pens/pencils
- *Lesson 7 PowerPoint download*
- *Regular/Distorted photos, numbered 1-10* from the resource packet
- *Scotch Tape*
- *Computer tablet or device* with the Photo Booth program (such as an iPad or Mac Computer)
- *The Crazy Man in the Cemetery script* from the resource packet
- *Magnifying glasses* (from a discount or dollar store) for each student

Notes:

In photography (**slide 3**), distortion is a warping or transformation of an object that is due to how the photo is taken or viewed. Let us explore how to make some distorted pictures. We can distort the colors, the background, and the viewing window. We might not even be able to determine what the original object is!

Manual Focus

Use an iPad, a tablet program, a Mac computer, or another similar device that contains a program like Photo Booth. If you do not have one, ask a friend or member of your church to either loan you theirs or come and make a short, fun presentation for your class. If you are not familiar with the program there are many tutorials online. Just Google "Photo Booth app."

We will use a computer device to take a picture of an object (or person) in the classroom. By using a certain program, we can distort the picture. We can make it bulge, dent, swirl, squeeze, mirror, tunnel, fish eye, stretch, change colors, glow, or x-ray. Let's have some fun!

Teacher: Take your time on this exercise and let your students relax and have fun. This will be a great icebreaker for anyone visiting your class.

Even though we distorted the photos, we did not change what the object or person really was. Only the surroundings and circumstances made it seem that way.

Our lesson is about a man whose life was distorted by evil. The man's life appeared distorted beyond repair to the people looking in on his life because they could only see destruction, nakedness, sin, and confusion. The picture of the man from Gadara shows us what a horrible distortion a life without God is.

Teacher: Take a few moments and describe the man from the Bible's perspective. Make sure your students understand that this man seemed more animal than human.

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *The Crazy Man in the Cemetery script*

Manual Focus

Choose several students to help with the *Crazy Man skit*. You can use at least four students for the skit: the possessed man, Jesus, the townspeople (can use more than one student), and the pigs (can use more than one student). The teacher (or a mature student) can be the narrator. Remember, let the students have fun and act a little crazy—they will remember the story much better if they really get into their roles!

Why would Jesus tell this man to stay home while He tells others to follow

Him? (*Allow students time to answer.*) Could it be because of the extreme change in the man's life, Jesus knew he would be a greater witness in his own hometown where people had seen his formerly distorted life? Anywhere else, he would just be a regular guy, but at home . . . what a difference!

Teacher: Show the photo of the distorted man (slide 4**) and then show the man after applying Jesus (**slide 5**).**

If you have lived or are living a life distorted by family troubles, sickness, immorality, harmful behavior, or something else, your greatest witness may be to those who knew you before Christ healed your wounded heart and life. And that witness can be just simply living life abundantly according to God's plan for you. Do you know any examples of this? (*Allow students to tell stories of lives they know have been changed.*)

Hand

Focus:

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Necessary Resources: **magnifying glass(es); TeenZines; pens/pencils; Lesson 7 PowerPoint download**

Think about what a camera looks like and how it functions (**slide 6**). Many of them have an autofocus feature (meaning that you do not have to do anything to focus on the object in view—you just point and shoot). However, there are some cameras that have a lens attached. When you take a picture, you have to focus the camera on the object by manually adjusting the lens setting.

Circumstances around us or in our lives can make our lives seem distorted. In reality, distortion can be fixed by focusing our life differently—on Jesus and His Word. When we see ourselves through God's eyes and with God's hand on our surroundings, the distortion disappears and our life and purpose can be made clear. We can see that the things that seemed to bend us out of shape are easier to handle when God is carrying the weight (**slide 7**).

Teacher: Ask students to look at the *Where's Your Focus?* activity in their *TeenZines*.

What does this picture mean to you? What are some things that can come into our life and cause God and His Word to be out of focus to us? (*Allow students time to write some distortions and then relate them.*)

The man from Gadara was considered dangerous and crazy. His life was so distorted by the demons that had taken control of his body and his mind—so much so that people were afraid even to go where he lived at the risk of losing their lives! But the demons did not have even a fraction of the power of Jesus. When the man saw Jesus, despite all the evil powers that bound him, he was still able to run and fall down at Jesus' feet and worship.

Satan is a distorter of our life and its purpose. His desire is that our lives be so full of turmoil and doubt that God's Word is not in focus. However, no matter what is going on in the background of our lives, if we submit to God's Word and trust Him, we will find that His Word, will, and way stay in focus and that helps our lives stay in focus. We will be able to see our lives as *He* sees them. And no matter how strong the enemy seems, he is never strong enough to keep us from Jesus! Satan is not strong enough to make us sin. Hell is not powerful enough to make us go there. We can decide the object of our focus: God or sin. We decide what our eternity will bring. If we want a life in right focus, we have to decide to look like Him (**slide 8, watch closely!**)

Manual Focus

Give each student a magnifying glass. Instruct students to look at the words written on the margin on this lesson's page in the *TeenZine*. Let each student experiment with their magnifying glass for a few minutes.



Notes:

Look very closely at your words. Do you notice anything when you get very close to them? What happens when you move farther from the words?

Teacher: As the students get farther from the words, the words will become out of focus and then they will invert within the magnifying glass. When they get closer to the words, they can see that within the words are other words.

When we magnify God in our lives (or get closer to Him so He is bigger to us), we see things very clearly, and we can also see many good things that are not always immediately apparent. However, when we move away from the things of God, they become blurry and distorted. When we are close to God and focus on Him, what is important will come into focus.

Manual Focus

Direct your students to the **Bringing it All into Focus activity** in their *TeenZines*. Lead them in a discussion about what could become of the people depicted if the distortions are made clear with God's help. Example answers for the situations: (a) homeless, dirty girl—a clean, beautiful girl feeding a roomful of other homeless people, feeding their stomachs and their spirits; (b) a young boy crying at a graveside—a young man feeling empathetic to other hurting people. He can put his arm around someone and share his pain, just like Jesus shares our pain and cries when we cry; (c) a man in prison—a man sharing his testimony of how God forgave him and saved him, despite what he had done in the past.

No matter what is going on in the background of our lives, if we focus on Jesus and His Word, our lives will not be distorted by the enemy and we will be able to help others see the clear picture of God's grace and mercy.

Many teens have allowed evil to distort their view of themselves, their lives, and God. For instance, some teenage girls feel fat or ugly or unwanted. This distortion causes them to have eating disorders, behave and dress immodestly, or allow others to take advantage of them in hopes that they will be wanted. That distortion is an old and obvious trick of the devil. You are beautiful when you are holy. That is what God asks of you. That is not an excuse to not care about your appearance, but it does show you whom you should always seek to please—God!

Some young men feel like they are not cool if they have not tried drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or sex. The fact is you are not cool even if you do try them. You are simply a sinner. If you want others to respect you, stand up and be strong for what is right, good, and virtuous. Then you will be respected not only by those around you, but also by God.

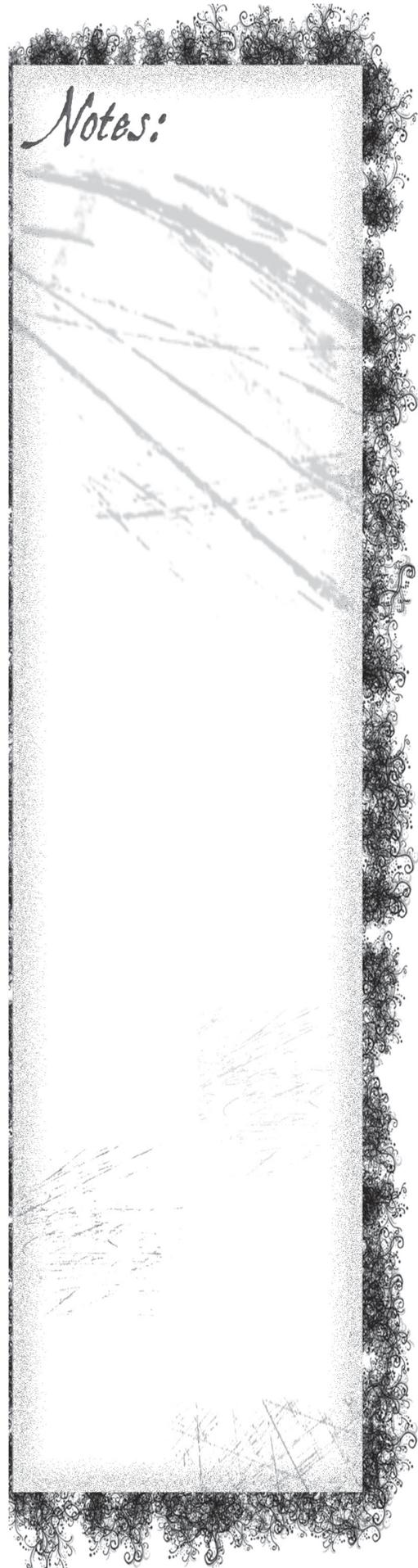
Something that we all have to keep in mind is that not all distortions of our lives look hideous. Some see their lives as successful, fun, or maybe simply adequate, but in reality their lives are full of junk that will destroy them. They do not realize that their distorted view of themselves is keeping them from seeing what they could be.

If people know we are focused on Jesus, despite everything going on in our lives, then we are "going to our own people, and telling them what great things God has done in our lives, and how he showed mercy to us." We are following the commandment Jesus gave the man from Gadara in Mark 5:19!

Final Focus:

Jesus, thank You for giving us a clear view in the Bible of how to live our lives. So many things distract and distort, but we are thankful You are not the author of confusion but of peace. No matter what is going on in our lives, we believe You are greater than all of those circumstances. You have given us the power within to see ourselves as You see us—in Your image. We all have our struggles, but we trust and believe You can help us be overcomers like the man from Gadara. Sin's distortions will not confuse us when we are focused on You. Thank You for Your love. In Jesus' name, amen!

A **Look Ahead:** Once again, we are going to take a close look at a failure. Peter's life is a panorama of ups and downs. At his lowest low, he was denying Christ. At his highest high, he was preaching the message of salvation at Pentecost. What must be stressed is that Peter's highest high came *after* his lowest low. God can, does, and will use failures! The needs for the lesson are numerous, but easy to find. You might want to begin collecting for it now.



8

Week of
April 24, 2016A Panorama of
Flaws—Peter**Lesson Objective:**

To remind teens that even though we are flawed, God can still use us for mighty things.

Key Verse: “Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Matthew 26:35).

Lesson Text:

Matthew 26

Scripture Setting:

Matthew 16; John 13; Acts 2, 10; Galatians 2

Teacher’s Tip: As educators in the church, we have such a crucial job. Yet there is the continual challenge to keep our motivation and our students’ enthusiasm at a peak class after class. The structure of the curriculum with new units beginning every few weeks allows for a shift of room décor and student focus. In addition, perhaps there is something we as teachers can do personally to demonstrate visibly various aspects of the lesson. Whether it is wearing a costume, bringing props, or adding music, taking an extra step with the lesson can show students how enthusiastic we are about the opportunity to share God’s Word with them.

Special Needs: Our students come from a variety of backgrounds and home lives. While it is always good to be in contact with any student’s parent, it is especially important to maintain communication with the parent of a student with special needs. Any changes at home can cause extra frustration for a student who already struggles to cope with stress. If it is possible to build a relationship with the student’s parent, do so to know how to best care for the student. In addition, this may create an evangelistic opportunity if the family is not already connected to the church.

Teacher’s
Preparation**For this lesson you will need:**

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 8 PowerPoint download
- 2 tennis balls or baseballs
- 2 teaspoons
- 2 large serving spoons/ladles
- 2 cups large enough to place the balls inside
- Safety pins
- Construction paper
- Scissors

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: Two tennis balls or baseballs; two teaspoons; two large serving spoons/ladles; two cups

For this activity, consider taking students outside or to an area of the church where they can have plenty of room. Direct two volunteers to stand approximately fifteen to twenty yards apart to represent the start and finish lines (or use markers of some kind). Ask for two more volunteers and give them each a teaspoon. Place a tennis ball or baseball in each student’s spoon. Announce that they must balance the ball without touching it and walk/run to the finish line. If the ball falls off the spoon or if they touch it, they must go back to the starting line and begin the race again. Repeat the race, but allow them to use the large serving spoons to carry the balls. Finally, direct them to run the race one last time with the tennis balls placed in the cups.

Teacher: Consider a relay race depending on class size; also consider music to heighten the excitement.

Was it difficult to make it to the finish line with the ball? It looked like it was especially tough when the ball was balanced on the teaspoon. If we had completely disqualified anyone who dropped the ball, it would have been really tough. But when you were allowed to pick up what you had dropped and start over, everyone was able to make it across the finish line. And did you see how much faster you could go when you had the right tools? If you would have given up the first time the ball wobbled on the spoon, it would not have worked. But because you kept trying and did your best with the teaspoon, you were able to move up to a better tool and run the race more easily.

There is a connection with this game to our lesson objective this week. Do you know that the people who have done mighty things for God in our Christian race were not perfect? In fact, if God only used perfect people, no one would ever qualify. But God loves to qualify imperfect people by helping them to overcome their flaws and be used anyway. As you stay faithful to God, even when you fail or do not feel perfect, God helps you grow and become more equipped for the mighty things He wants to do in your life.

Head

Focus:

Estimated Time: 1 minute

Necessary Resources: [Lesson 8 PowerPoint download](#)

Have you ever seen a panoramic photograph ([slide 3](#))? It is a wide-angle view of a physical space, such as a scenic outlook of a beautiful beach or mountainside. Sometimes the panorama is created by an assembly of photographs put together to create one complete view ([slide 4](#)). However the panorama is created, the end result is a complete or entire view of one scene.

When we look at people's lives, it is important to see it as a panorama. Looking at any one life in just snapshots does not create a clear picture of an individual. But viewing a life as a panorama allows you to see the sum total of that person: his background, upbringing, education, and life experiences.

Viewing Peter's life in a panorama creates a fascinating portrait of a very flawed but mighty man of God. We will discover today how his life creates hope for everyone. The panorama of it shows that God can take an extremely flawed individual and still change the world.

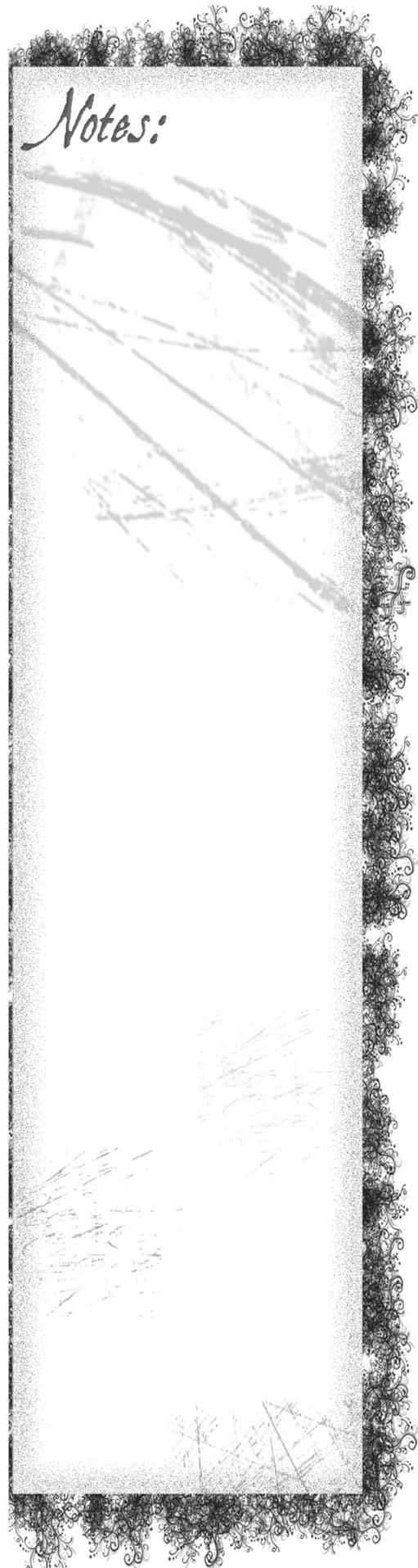
Heart

Focus:

Estimated Time: 29 minutes

Necessary Resources: Pens/pencils; Bibles; [TeenZines](#); [Lesson 8 PowerPoint download](#); safety pins; construction paper; scissors

Let us take a closer look at Peter and see all the aspects of his life. At first glance, it seems he was just a church kid from a working class family. He would have been raised with religious instruction because his family would have been aware of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. We know from the Gospels that he grew up as a fisherman in the family business with his brother Andrew and he was married. He was apparently poor because he had to go fishing to get enough money to pay taxes. So from those snapshots, we have just a normal guy—nothing that may stand out to us as being that unusual. But Peter's life changed one day. Jesus called Peter while he was at work, and the Bible says Peter immediately left everything to follow Jesus and become a fisher of men (Matthew 4:18-20).



Notes:

Do you remember the moment when Jesus called you (**slide 5**)?

If you have lived or are living a life that is distorted by family troubles, sickness, immorality, harmful behavior, or something else, your greatest witness may be to those who knew you before Christ healed your wounded heart and life. And that witness can be just simply living life abundantly according to God's plan for you. Do you know any examples of this? (*Allow students to tell stories of lives that they know have been changed.*)

Teacher: Pause here and ask for a few volunteers to share stories about when they came to God and/or received the Holy Ghost. This is a side point in the lesson that can be an evangelistic moment for newcomers to the class who may be moved by someone's testimony.

After Peter's encounter with Jesus, he became close friends with the Lord and recognized Him as the Messiah. It led to incredible moments in His relationship with God.

Teacher: Ask volunteers to take turns reading Matthew 16:13-19 (slides 6-7).

Jesus told Peter that he would be given the keys to Heaven. What did it mean when Jesus told Peter that?

Teacher: Allow students to answer, but ensure that the answers lead to the understanding that the keys meant Peter would know what salvation was.

This moment where Peter stepped up and became the spokesmen for the disciples, taking a stand and proclaiming who Jesus was, must have been an incredible high point in his life. Yet while we see from the panorama that Peter had all of these wonderful experiences with the Lord, the panorama also shows us that Peter was not even close to being perfect. First of all, Peter was very reckless and tended to be a mouthy hothead.

Teacher: Can anybody think of any examples from the Bible of Peter being a little too pushy? (Allow students to think through Bible stories and then direct them to the stories in the lesson.)

There are several examples of Peter's quarrelsome personality. When Jesus talked of His coming death, Peter became exasperated and condescending toward Jesus. Peter told Jesus to stop talking like He was going to die, and Peter scolded Him for being so negative. But Jesus harshly rebuked Satan and told Peter that he did not know what he was talking about. That no doubt hurt Peter's feelings, but he still stayed faithful (Matthew 16:21-23).

Another time Jesus wanted to wash Peter's feet. In that day, it was customary to have servants available who would wash the dirt and grime off of the feet of those who had traveled to visit. Peter adamantly refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet, but he finally gave up after Jesus corrected him (John 13:1-9). Can you imagine telling Jesus "No!"? Even though Peter thought he was saying and doing the right things, he often was not. Peter could be rude at times; he would do it impulsively and have to be corrected by the Lord frequently.

Another problem Peter had to overcome was his prejudices. We do not like to think about our Bible heroes being bigots, but Peter had to fight this trait in his life. When God called Peter and asked him to take the gospel to the Gentile people, God had to send him a dream to convince Peter that the gospel was for the Gentiles and not just the Jews (Acts 10).

Teacher: You may need to explain the difference between Jews (those who were of the lineage of Abraham) and Gentiles (everyone else) to any newcomers.

As a result, Peter was able to fight off cultural prejudices and preach to Cornelius, an Italian non-Jew, and even visit his home. But later Paul had to publicly rebuke Peter because he was involved in segregation between the Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 2). So apparently this prejudice was something Peter had to continually work on overcoming in his life. He did not just overcome his prejudices miraculously, but through God's help he learned to grow, continually work on his faults, and become a vessel of great service in the Kingdom.

Mannual Focus

Direct your students to the ***A Panorama of Peter's Ministry activity*** in the *TeenZine*. They will use Bibles to find the answers.

While we see a lot of amazing experiences in Peter's life, the most defining time for him must have been his personal witness of the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. Imagine this time period—it was right before Jesus was crucified, and He was trying to prepare the disciples. The story begins with the Lord's final meal together with the disciples, which we call the Last Supper. This is the same time when Jesus predicted Judas would betray Him. After that incident, Peter passionately promised His loyalty to Jesus.

Peter pledged he would never leave Jesus and would

Teacher: Ask a volunteer to read John 13:36-38 (slide 8).

die for Him. But following this, Jesus asked Peter to help Him pray in the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before the Roman soldiers captured Him. Despite Peter's promise of being faithful, he fell asleep several times even though Jesus asked him to be a prayer partner. Then when the soldiers showed up to arrest Jesus, Peter went into a rage. Suddenly he was ready to defend Jesus and, in his anger, he cut off a bystander's ear with his sword. Though the bystander's ear was probably not what Peter was aiming at, this episode shows Peter's struggle with his temper and with violence.

And then in the final moments of Jesus' life, we see the lowest point in Peter's life. So soon after Peter promised he would never deny the Lord, he did just that. The soldiers had Jesus in custody, and Peter was looking on from the sidelines.

Teacher: Ask student volunteers to take turns reading Matthew 26:69-75 (slides 9-10).

Peter denied he was friends with or even knew Jesus three times, just as Jesus had told Peter he would do. Can you imagine how it would feel to realize you had denied knowing Jesus?

Yes, Peter failed spectacularly, but Jesus never gave up on him.

Teacher: Pause here to let students internalize Peter's feelings.

Though it may have been a hopeless three days after the Crucifixion, when two of Jesus' friends showed up at His tomb the day of the Resurrection, an angel had a very special message of hope.

Can you imagine how Peter must have felt when he heard that

Teacher: Ask a student to read Mark 16:6-7 (slide 11).

message? The Lord had specifically included Him! Peter must have been so relieved and grateful to know that though he had denied Jesus, Jesus still loved him and forgave him! It is encouraging to know Jesus does not give up on us!

Notes:

A Panorama of Peter's Ministry

Answer Key:

1. Peter walks on water.
2. Jesus tells Peter "Get behind me, Satan" because Peter did not want Jesus to talk about his death.
3. Peter heals a lame man.
4. Peter says Jesus is the Christ.
5. Peter cuts off the ear of a man trying to take Jesus.
6. People are healed when Peter's shadow passes by.
7. Peter denies he knows Jesus three times.
8. Peter prays for Tabitha and she is raised from the dead.

Notes:

In fact, in the days that followed, Jesus appeared to the disciples at various times and showed that Peter was still welcome in His presence. Jesus appeared on the shore where the disciples were fishing. No one recognized Him at first, but Peter did and jumped into the water to swim to Him. It was a special moment that shows us the love Peter had for the Lord even though sometimes he had trouble showing it!

Peter failed in big ways and frequently, but his love for Jesus was genuine. Despite his struggles, Peter did not give up. He kept a desire to be close to Jesus, and in the end, Peter was the one to preach the sermon at Pentecost. He also was used to perform miracles throughout his ministry as we have seen from the panorama. As one of the key church leaders, Peter shows how imperfect but repentant people can be greatly used by God.

We can look at Peter's life and see many very wonderful traits: his passion for God, his faith, his understanding of who Jesus was, and so much more. But could Peter see that in himself? Many times we can see good things in other people easily, but we struggle to find the good in ourselves. Today we are going to take a moment to realize what others see in us.

Manual Focus

Give each student a piece of construction paper, a pen/pencil, and a pair of scissors. Direct them to draw an outline of their own hand on the paper and then cut it out. Instruct them to get a friend to help them pin it to their backs. Instruct the class to go around the room and take turns writing a one-word positive description of each classmate's "hand." After everyone has had a chance to go around the room, ask students to unpin their "hands." Allow students to read what was written on their "hands"—aloud or to themselves, depending on class size and available time. If you have a very small class, you may direct the students to brainstorm and write on their own hands what they feel are their best qualities.

The words that your classmates used to describe you could be seen as a word panorama of your life as a teen. No matter what you may think of yourself—good or bad—you have qualities and talents God can use. We do not have to be perfect; we just have to be willing. Look again at the words your friends used to describe you. Can you see how those traits can be used for both good and bad? Determine now that you will give yourself and all that you are over to God and His will. He can use you and your talents, qualities, and imperfections for His glory and for an eternal purpose.

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: [Lesson 8 PowerPoint download](#)

Does the panorama of Peter's life look like our lives? It may have been a different time and a different culture, but most of us can relate to Peter's struggles to overcome his personal flaws. The truth is that we are all flawed, and each of us has no doubt failed. Have you ever felt like you denied Jesus in your life? What are ways that modern-day Christians can deny Jesus? (*Allow time to answer.*)

If we are not careful, we can deny Jesus. We can deny Him with our words if we refuse to tell others about Him. Additionally we can deny Him in our lifestyle. Do we claim to be a Christian but act and talk like someone who has never encoun-

tered Jesus? What about our appearance? Do we look like someone who knows the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost? Do we dress in a way that shows we are in a relationship with God?

Jesus has asked us to talk and walk with Him, but do we abandon Him? It is possible our flaws are not as obvious as Peter's, but look at what God accomplished with someone who was repentant and had a willing heart. We too can be used if we are repentant and keep our hearts sensitive and available to God. How do we keep our hearts open to God? (*Answers should include prayer, study of the Word, and fasting.*)

We have talked today about the panorama of Peter's life—the wide-angle view pieced together from the many different personality traits and experiences of his life. We have even seen the various qualities in our lives that others have identified that make us such special people. It is also important to look at the church family as a whole in panoramic view. As a church we are made up of different people who have different personalities and different gifts. The combined picture of each unique individual makes the church body complete.

Mannual Focus

Direct students to complete the *Panorama of My Church activity* in their *TeenZines*. It gives students an opportunity to identify special people in the church. When students are done, ask for volunteers to share.

None of these people are perfect. Each one probably has his own set of flaws to cope with each day. But through the overcoming power of the Holy Ghost, the people you named live an overcoming life and make up an important piece of the panoramic view of the church.

Teacher: Encourage students to share what they write with the people they have identified as special members of the church family, or ask their permission so that you might share it.

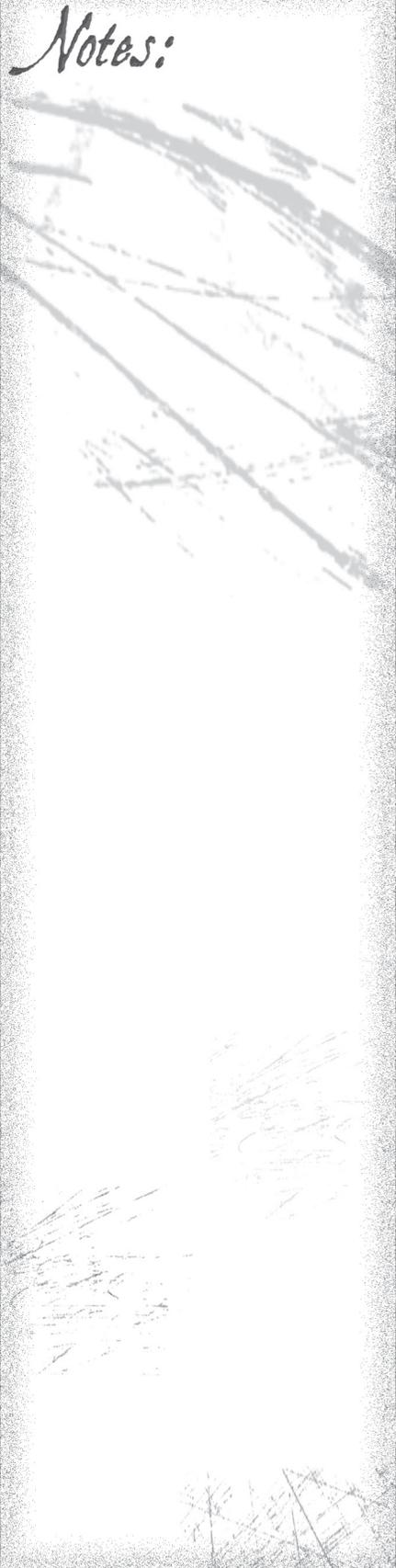
Make it your goal to be invaluable to the panorama of your home church and the Kingdom at large. You can be used by God and you can make a difference (**slide 12**)!

Final Focus:

Lord Jesus, I thank You today that You are a very merciful and patient God. I thank You that You have plans for us bigger than we could ever imagine for ourselves. In Your great mercy, You seem to delight in using people with problems. I am thankful that Peter's story reminds us that You can use imperfect vessels since You used a very flawed man to be the very person who delivered the message of Pentecost. I do not know the struggles and imperfections each person in this class faces, but I know that just as You helped Peter overcome his flaws and be a great and mighty minister, You can help each of us live an overcoming life and do great things for You. I pray right now in the name of Jesus that You would encourage each person in the room to seek You for strength in becoming more like You. I know that as we draw close to You and become more like You, we will shed some of those flaws that keep us from being all we can be for You. I pray You would

Notes:

Notes:



encourage each one here today to know that You have great things in store for our future. In Jesus' name, amen.

A **Look Ahead:** John Mark is a great coming-of-age story. In the next lesson your teens will discover that even biblical heroes had to undergo a maturation process. Growing pains may be painful, but they all mean the same thing: You are growing! For the lesson you will need photographs and negatives of those photos as well as stamped postcards. Ask around; maybe some folks in the church can help you out with these items.

Developing a Disciple —John Mark

9

Week of
May 1, 2016

Teacher's Tip: In this day of digital photography the concept of developing photos will be new to most of our students. They understand everything as “what you see is what you get” pictures. However, in order to get the point across in the Head Focus section of the lesson, the students will need to see the negatives and finished pictures. Stress that how they see themselves now is not a true picture, but they are in a development process. Slowly their colors will begin to show up and little by little we will finally become what God has designed us to be—a beautiful picture.

Special Needs: Students with special needs may sometimes feel that this type of lesson does not apply to them, after all, “with my limitations how can I do anything for God?” They need to understand that in areas where they are unable to work, they can be great prayer warriors and encouragers. We also can be those things to these special students. Sometimes they will require much attention, but it will be so rewarding. It is up to us to be the Barnabas in their lives and encourage them to grow in the ministry to which God has called them. That is what God has called us to do in His kingdom.

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 3 minutes

Necessary Resources: *Cyprus travel poster*; pens/pencils; postcard stamps; *postcards*

Have a *postcard* for each student. As they arrive, ask them to look at the *Cyprus poster* and pretend that they are there. Write a postcard describing something about the trip but ask them to not sign it. When they have written the postcard, they are to address it to themselves and hand the postcards back to you.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: Old negatives and photos; *film lab poster*; *Lesson 9 PowerPoint download*

Film development is a process by which film is turned into a photograph (*slide 3*). The processing makes the image permanent and insensitive to light. If the film is subjected to light before it has been developed, the picture will most likely be ruined (*slide 4*). If the picture is not developed, the image taken by the camera is lost forever.

Lesson Objective:

To encourage teens that with the help of godly mentors and a relationship with Christ, they can become effective ministers in the Kingdom.

Key Verse: “. . . Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (II Timothy 4:11).

Lesson Text:

Acts 15:37-39

Scripture Setting:

Acts 13; II Timothy 4

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- *TeenZines*
- Pens/pencils
- **Lesson 9 PowerPoint download**
- **Cyprus travel poster** from the resource packet
- **Postcards** from the resource packet. Extras can be printed from the downloadable resource site.
- **Old photo negatives and photographs**
- **Film lab poster** from the resource packet
- **Stamped postcards**

Notes:

Teacher: Draw attention to the *film lab poster* and explain the process of film development. If you are unfamiliar with the process, you may wish to print some information from the Internet. Show your students some photo negatives. Once the students have tried to describe what the photographs are, show them the actual photographs.

We go through processes very similar to this in our lives (**slide 5**). Everyone must undergo at least one developmental process in order to become a beautiful, mature Christian for God. The process may be long or short, pleasant or painful, but it is still necessary. If a person allows himself to be influenced and changed by God, he will mature and grow to be much less altered by peers, pressure, and the darkness of the world surrounding him. This process is helped by pastors and godly leaders, and by studying God's Word for yourself (**slide 6**).

If you do not allow yourself to go through the process God has set up for you, you will be only a photo negative, useless in helping others see Christ.

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 22 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZine*; pens/pencils; *Lesson 9 Power-Point download*; *postcards* from Opening Focus

John Mark's name appears very few times in the Bible, but he is mentioned enough to give us a pretty clear picture of him. Sometimes he is called John Mark, a few times John, but most often he is known simply as Mark. He lived in Jerusalem and his mother was obviously an important member of the church and apparently friends with Peter (**slide 7**).

Barnabas and Paul were in Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and were planning to leave on a missionary journey. They decided to take Mark with them. Their plan was that Mark could help them out and they would mentor and train him to be a missionary. Mark was a part of the gospel being preached and churches forming throughout the country. It was a very exciting trip for this young man!

One particular trip took him to Paphos (**slide 8**) with Paul and Barnabas where an important political leader named Sergius Paulus had called them. Barnabas and Paul had been called to explain their Christian beliefs. However, Sergius Paulus had a deputy named Elymus who happened to be a sorcerer (or witch). He spoke against everything Paul and Silas were preaching. Paul became angry and called Elymus, in so many words, a sneaky devil and a liar. Paul then told the sorcerer he was about to go blind for a while, and immediately he was struck blind. After seeing this, Sergius was convinced that Elymus was dead wrong and became a believer in Jesus. John Mark was in the middle of all of this excitement and more than likely could not wait to get home to tell everyone all the cool stuff he had seen and experienced.

Teacher: Give postcards back and instruct them to add another sentence about what they think John Mark might have said on a postcard to home and sign it "John Mark." Collect the *postcards* and mail them after church.

By now things had changed. Paul was the head of things. The missionary group was called "Paul and his company" (**slide 9**). This group got on a boat and headed

out. John Mark was probably homesick. It is also possible Mark did not think this trip was going to last this long. Whatever the reason, when the ship docked he simply walked away. He left the missionary team and went home to his mother. Paul and Barnabas had to continue the missionary trip without him.

A few years later Paul and Barnabas decided to go back to visit the churches they had started on their first missionary journey. They were going to see how the churches were doing and to encourage the believers. John Mark really wanted to be used of God so apparently at this point he was thinking about going back out to do another missions trip.

Barnabas wanted to allow John Mark to go with them, but Paul said absolutely not. John Mark had deserted them on their first trip, and Paul did not trust him not to do it again. Paul thought Mark was immature and unreliable, but Barnabas wanted to give him another chance. The disagreement was so strong between Paul and Barnabas that it split up this dynamic duo. They decided to go separate ways.

Paul took Silas with him back to the Pamphylia area and Barnabas gave Mark another chance by taking him back to Cyprus.

Mark could have become bitter over Paul's attitude towards him. Some have referred to Mark as a "momma's boy" because he left them and went back home to Jerusalem. If Mark had given in to the temptation to be bitter about everything that had happened, it is very likely we would have never heard from him again, but that is not how it ended.

In Colossians 4:14 another believer, named Demas, is mentioned as being a fellow saint in the church (**slide 10**). Then Demas is spoken of again in the same verse with John Mark (**slide 11**). He was obviously involved in the kingdom of God, but that is not how it ended.

When John Mark went home, it seems he worked on developing his reliability, maturity, and attitude. We know this because later it became obvious Paul felt he could trust him. Paul speaks of him as a fellow laborer or worker (**slide 12**) and just before Paul's murder for preaching the gospel, Paul tells Timothy to bring John Mark to visit him because John Mark will be a help (**slide 13**). This certainly sounds like a change of heart for both Paul and John Mark.

But what about Demas? He was mentioned as a fellow laborer too. There is also no proof that he was an unreliable worker in the kingdom. However, somewhere along the line something happened to change Demas. The Bible tells us that Demas deserted Paul just like John Mark had. But Paul said Demas left not because of homesickness but because he loved worldly things more than he loved working for God (**slide 14**). He went from being a valuable person in spreading God's love to being no help to God's kingdom.

There is no record that Demas ever allowed God to develop him into the man God wanted Him to be. But John Mark, though he had a rocky few years, was willing to be developed by God. In fact it is generally believed that John Mark is the author of the Gospel of Mark in the Bible.

Notes:

Mannual Focus

Direct the students to the **Demas vs. John Mark exercise** in their *TeenZines*. The students will use the information they have learned in this lesson and describe the two men and the outcome of their lives in the Kingdom. When the students are finished, lead them in a discussion concerning what they found out about the two men.

Notes:

As a young person John Mark did things without thinking them through. Some believe the young man written about in Mark 14:50-52 is the author himself. In this passage, Jesus had just been arrested and the disciples had found out about it. The verse talks about a young man who apparently had either been getting ready for bed or was already in bed because he was not dressed. He found out about the arrest and, instead of taking time to put on clothes, he threw a blanket around himself and ran out to find out what was going on. He was following along trying to get a better view of what was happening when he was captured by the authorities. When they grabbed him he yanked away from them, leaving his blanket behind, and now without any covering ran away trying to get home. Years later on a missionary journey with his uncle and Paul, he decided he was ready to go home and so he walked away from the men he was supposed to be helping. John Mark definitely seemed to act and react without much thought to the consequences.

But fortunately he was willing to allow God to change him. As he grew to be a man God could use, he was still a man of action. In the book of Mark he uses words such as “immediately” and “straightway” many times. He told of the actions of a powerful Savior. His writing is said to be a report of Peter’s account of Jesus’ life. He was very close to Peter, who calls John Mark his son in I Peter 5:13 (slide 15). Peter was also a man of impulsive actions and both Peter and John Mark found themselves in situations where they had to humbly ask for a second chance. But because of that humility and willingness to be changed, they allowed the Lord to develop their lives into pictures of God’s forgiveness and effective Christianity.

The 1988 edition of the Thomas Nelson, Inc. *King James Study Bible* describes John Mark as a Christian who was well versed in apostolic teaching and as someone who had extensive missionary experience with great teachers. It says that John Mark “learned firsthand that God gives penitent (or repentant) believers opportunity to recover from past failures.” Mark learned and accepted the lessons he was given, even the hard lessons. He was strengthened by Paul’s sternness and confirmed by the tenderness of Barnabas. Yes, John Mark not only heard about second chances, he experienced it!

Because John Mark went through a development process, he became an excellent picture of what God can do with someone who is willing to be taught and changed.

Hand Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pens/pencils

You are here in the house of God today so you are off to a good start, but where will you be in a year? Two years? Ten years? Will you be Demas or John Mark? Will you be described as someone who loved the present world more than God? Or will you be doing lasting things for the Kingdom?

Manual Focus

In their *TeenZines* your students will find an activity titled ***The Development Process***. Direct them to complete the list of things keeping them from developing into effective Christians and then write how they can overcome those things. Do not force them to share their lists with the class, but give them the opportunity to share and become prayer partners. The maturation process always requires help.

Have you tried to do something for God in the past and failed? Or maybe you have never tried because you are too afraid of the work that has to be done. Sometimes can it be that we are too immature and unreliable to be used? Are we too busy with our own so-called fun things? Do we have no confidence in ourselves? What about pressure by the attitude of peers? Did someone in authority hurt our feelings?

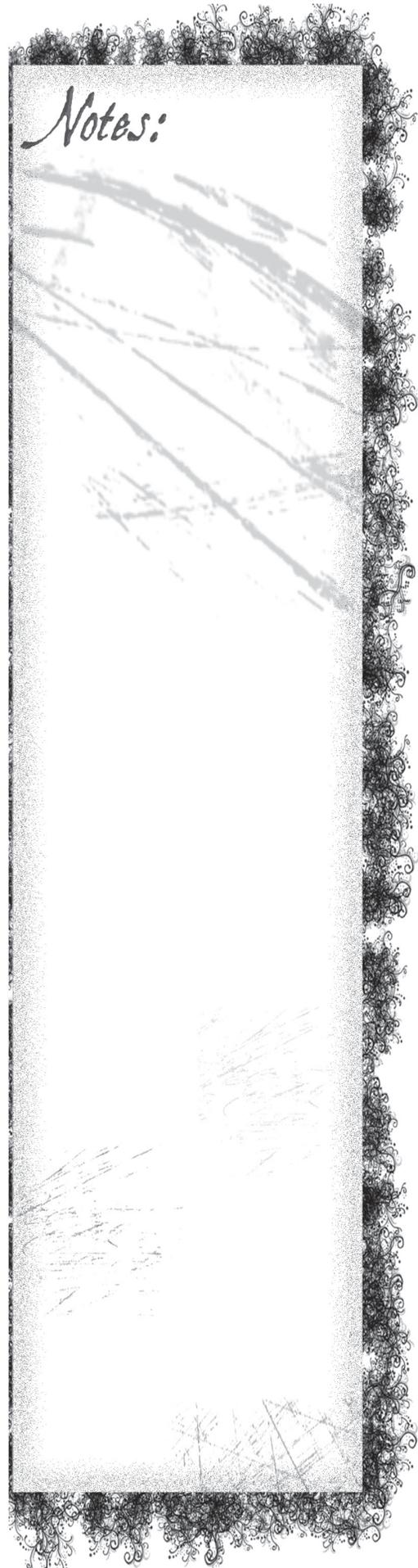
Regardless of what we are afraid of we must never give up, never become bitter, and never let disappointments and failures overcome us. We must allow God to develop us into effective workers. And it is very important to find godly people who will help us in the development process. Make sure you are looking up to good people, people who will point you in the right direction in your life.

This week when you have received your Cyprus postcard in the mail, place it in your Bible at II Timothy 4, so each time you see it, it encourages you to keep in touch with godly mentors so we can have help in making our life a picture worth showing: a picture of what God can do with a willing heart!

Final Focus:

Lord, we need to understand that You have a plan for us. Help us recognize that we need to want to do something for You. Mold us into what You need us to be. Help us to stand up and try again if we fail. Teach us not to be critical of others that fail, but show us how to encourage them, and help us to be encouraged by You and Your love for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead: These days we try so very hard to be health conscious in North America! Of course trying and accomplishing are not quite the same thing. However, stewardship is a biblical mandate and that stewardship must include all that God has given us, including our minds and bodies. This is a vital lesson for teens and one that will be covered next. You need Sticky Tac and note cards. Everything else required is in the teacher's resource packet.



10

Week of
May 8, 2016Cropping out
Carnality**Lesson Objective:**

To help teens see the value of good stewardship of not just their mind but also their body.

Key Verse: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20).

Lesson Text:

Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26; John 5:1-16; I Corinthians 6:19-20

Scripture Setting:

Proverbs 12:2; Matthew 12:33-37; I Corinthians 6; II Corinthians 6:6-18; Philippians 4:8-9

Teacher's Tip: Teens hear the word "stewardship" and immediately think of money. Sometimes they may think of time, but rarely do they think of taking care of their physical bodies as good stewardship. We hear of teens today abusing their bodies in all types of ways—piercings, tattoos, drugs, sex—but do we consider the ways Christian youth abuse their bodies? They eat the wrong kinds of foods in the wrong amounts and some hardly eat at all. They are also careless with their safety. This lesson is not about what the world considers keeping our bodies healthy, but it is about what God considers keeping our bodies healthy. God wants us to practice good stewardship in everything He has given us. Yes, our money and our time, but also our mind and our bodies.

Special Needs: During this lesson we must be very conscious of our students with physical impairments. We may want to conduct an in-depth discussion of John 9:1-3 with the class during the "Heart Focus." Jesus' disciples commented that the man or his parents must have sinned for him to be blind. Jesus replied to His disciples that the man was born blind so that God could be glorified. A physical disability is not always a sign of a person's poor stewardship of his body, but no matter what, a disability can always be used to glorify God.

Teacher's
Preparation**For this lesson you will need:**

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 10 PowerPoint download
- Rulers/straight edges
- Good Stewardship banner from the resource packet
- Sticky Tac
- Note cards (enough for each student to have several)
- Lovely/Unlovely banner from the resource packet
- Lovely/Unlovely cards from the resource packet

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: TeenZines; Good Stewardship banner; pens/pencils

As the students arrive draw their attention to the **banner**. Ask them to write in their TeenZines their definition of good stewardship. Then ask them to list things that they do to be good stewards.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: TeenZines; pens/pencils; Lesson 10 PowerPoint download; rulers/straight edges

Pictures are often cropped (**slide 3**). This refers to removing unwanted areas from the image. The unwanted areas can contain subjects or irrelevant details that clutter up the picture (**slide 4**). Cropping is also used to magnify the primary subject. Turn to the **Crop the Photo exercise** in your TeenZines. Look at the photo and decide how the picture should be cropped to make the photo show what you feel would bring out the best part and make it less cluttered. (Allow them a few moments to finish.)

What did you make as the focal point or most important and obvious part of the photo? Did you see the Bible in the picture? So many things seemed to get in the way of the Bible.

Now let us answer the question, "How am I cropping the picture of my life?" What do I consider unimportant or unnecessary? On what things do I choose to focus?

Teacher: During the Manual Focus exercise, you may wish to conduct a discussion so the students will understand the point and aim of the exercise.

Manual Focus

Direct your students to the *Photo of My Life activity* in their *TeenZines*. Ask them to think of the people, things, and activities present in their lives. In the first photo box, they should write in the center of the photo the names of the people, things, and activities on which they most focus. In the cropped area, the students should write in the names of the people, things, and activities which are present in their lives, but not treated as important. Encourage them to be honest with themselves. Then direct them to use the second photo frame and place the same names in the areas of the photo where they actually belong. Provide your students an opportunity to share and become prayer partners. The maturation process always requires help.

How well do the two photos match up? Are you focusing on the right things and marginalizing or cropping out the things that should be unimportant? We must seek God's help to crop out of our life what is not godly so we will magnify the primary subject of our life: Him!

Heart Focus:

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; TeenZines; Lesson 10 PowerPoint download; Lovely/Unlovely banner; Lovely/Unlovely cards; Sticky Tac; note cards; pens/pencils

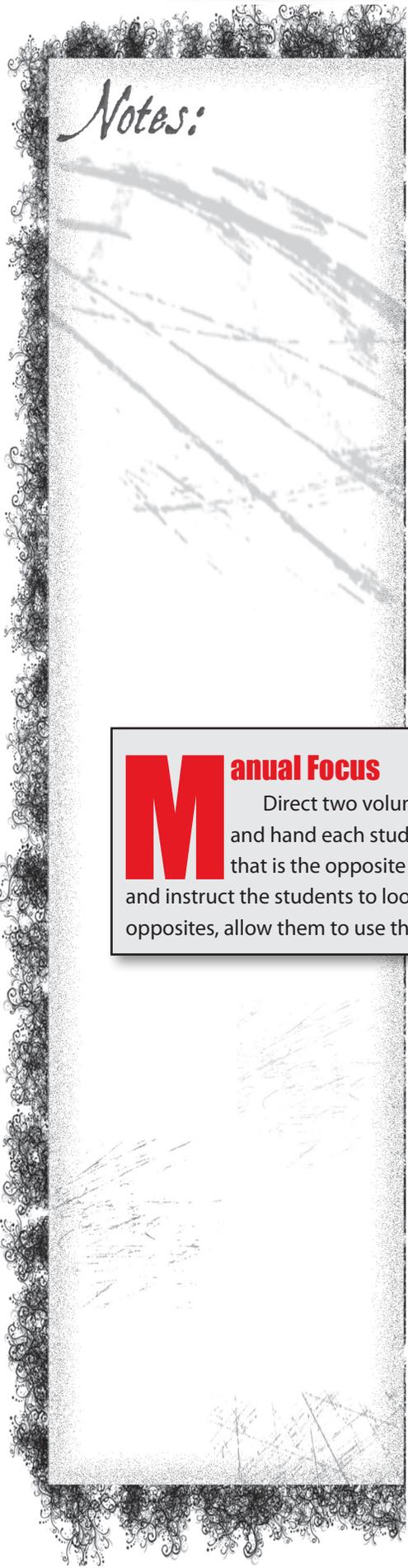
Open your *TeenZines* to the definitions you wrote at the beginning of class. How did you define good stewardship? (*Allow students time to answer.*)

Did anyone write of stewardship in terms of your mind? How you use your mind is a very important part of stewardship. On what kind of thoughts do you allow your mind to dwell? The Internet and other forms of visual media have opened a door for many people to mismanage the stewardship of their mind. Pornography is easily accessible and is definitely against God's desires for us. It places images in our mind that cannot be erased and causes long-term problems in our thought processes. Most would agree that pornography is poor stewardship of the mind, but that is an obvious misuse of the mind. How about the more subtle mind problems? What about the things your mind thinks that can cause you spiritual harm? What things can you think that can actually cause you harm? (*Allow students time to answer.*)

Teacher: You may need to explain some of the following terms to your students. Allow them a thorough discussion on the dangers of these thoughts. Be prepared to help them see the difference between feeling certain emotions and allowing those emotions to become sin.

What about angry or hateful thoughts? Jealous thoughts? Gluttonous thoughts? Covetous thoughts? To be a good steward of the mind we should consistently think on good things. Let us look at Philippians 4:8-9 (**slide 5**). This

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verse tells us exactly what kinds of thoughts we should think. You cannot exactly control thoughts that come into your mind, but you can absolutely control what thoughts stay there. It is your responsibility to keep your mind healthy and clean. The type of stewardship of the mind we practice today leads to the type of body stewardship we practice tomorrow. In other words, first you think it and then you do it.

For centuries, staying healthy was a means to an end. People worked to stay healthy for survival, to earn a living, to raise a family, or to meet a noble goal. Today, the quest for health seems to have become an end in itself. Society encourages us to create the perfect body using the perfect exercise routine, diet, or surgery. For many, health and body have become our modern gods. Billions are spent on healthcare, yet it seems many North Americans are far from healthy. The focus on health seems to be an expensive search that is never complete.

What are some marks of an unhealthy lifestyle? (*Allow students to answer.*) As hard as it is to believe, there are those who actually take pride in their unhealthy lifestyles. They brag about their love for food and joke that “eating is the only thing that isn’t a sin,” when in all actuality, eating in excess is just much against God’s commands as are gossip and lying. There is also the opposite end of that spectrum where some diet to the point of destroying their health. It seems some people have lost all balance in their lives. We are so often pulled toward the unlovely by being told that it is cool or stylish.

Manual Focus

Direct two volunteers to hang the **Lovely and Unlovely banner**. Mix up the **lovely and unlovely cards** and hand each student a card. Ask students to find the person who has the card with the word or image that is the opposite of what is on their card. If your class is small, you can hand out only the **unlovely cards** and instruct the students to look through the stack of **lovely cards** to find the match. When students have found their opposites, allow them to use the Sticky Tac to hang the opposite cards under the appropriate word on the banner.

All of the words or pictures on the cards seem obvious in regards to their being lovely or unlovely. But inwardly we are either lovely or unlovely as well.

Pass out the note cards and direct the students to work with their partner from the previous Manual Focus and come up with opposite inward traits. For instance, one student’s card can either say “anger” or have a drawing of an angry face, and the other student’s card can say “joyful” or have a drawing of a peaceful or happy face. When they are finished, allow them to fasten these cards to the proper place on the wall.

The things you allow your mind to dwell on will determine your words, actions, and outcome. In order to take care of our bodies, we must take care of our minds. And the opposite is true—taking care of our bodies helps our minds. For example, if we keep our minds made up about the dangers of drugs, it will keep us from destroying our bodies with drugs. If we do not use drugs, our minds will stay sharp. It is a cycle of health.

We might ask, “Does God really care about my physical health?” We seem to have lost sight of the fact that the Creator of our bodies is very concerned with our health. Biblical principles of health are important, reasonable, and very practical. In the Bible, the priests and Levites were responsible to provide basic health instruction and policy. Today, just as in biblical times, it is still considered the duty of the children of God to properly care for their minds and bodies.

There is a spiritual dimension to the stewardship of our bodies. Biblical principles of health are in direct contrast to the permissive “If it feels good do it” behavior. When biblical principles are followed, we develop behaviors that promote health and discourage disease.

In two of the healing miracles of Jesus, He linked the healing to sin—it appears that the person’s lifestyle was connected to the disabilities. Jesus was always willing to heal people as was the case of the man sick with palsy in Capernaum. (It is important to note that not all sickness is directly related to sin.) Palsy is a disease of involuntary movement (uncontrollable jerking) and paralysis. This man was so paralyzed that others had to carry him on his own bed to Jesus.

When they came to the house in Capernaum where Jesus was, the crowd was so large they could not get to Jesus through the door, so they tore off the roof. Then they let the man on the bed down through the ceiling to Jesus. This story is recorded in three of the four Gospels (Matthew 9:2, Mark 2:5, Luke 5:20), and in all three accounts Jesus’ first words to the man are noted (**slide 6**).

Since Jesus is recorded to have referred to him as “son” in two of the accounts, we can assume that the man was young. Because Jesus told him to be happy because his sins were forgiven, it would seem that Jesus was letting the young man know the blessedness of forgiveness. After forgiving his sin, Jesus then healed the man.

In John 5:1-16, Jesus healed a man at the pool of Bethesda. This time, unlike the man with palsy in Capernaum, this man had no one to help him. The man at Bethesda was obviously much older, because he said he had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus told him to go and (**slide 7**) “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee,” letting us know that the man’s sin was connected to the infirmity.

What are some illnesses and health problems that we can have today because of lifestyle choices? (*Allow students plenty of time to answer.*)

Jesus healed both men even though their lifestyles were sinful, and today Jesus can still heal those who through sinful lifestyles have been poor stewards of their bodies, but think of all the suffering and the time lost. It would have been better never to have indulged in the sinful things in which they were involved.

Hand

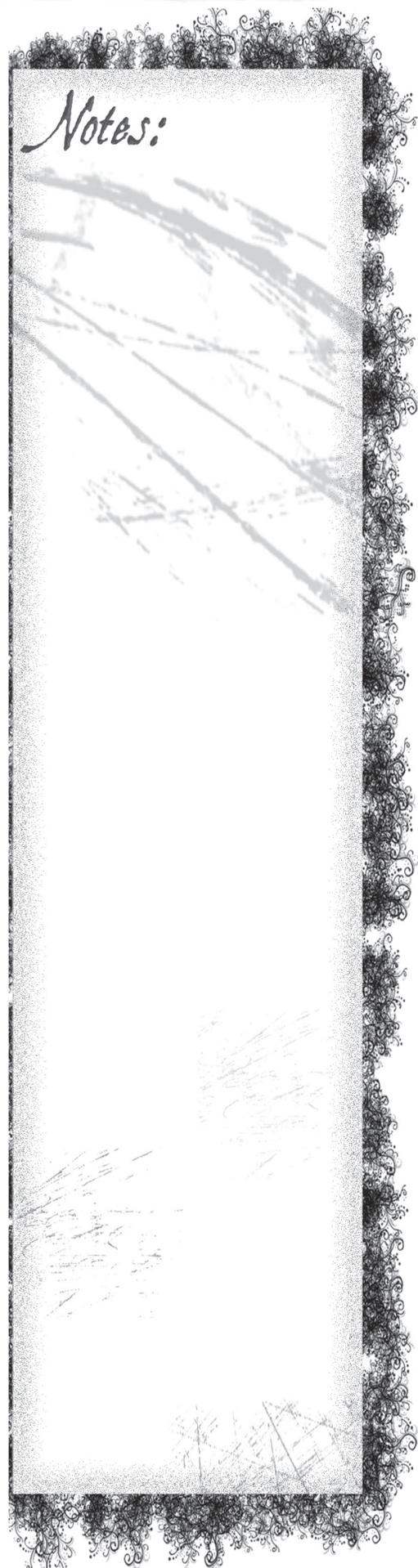
Focus:

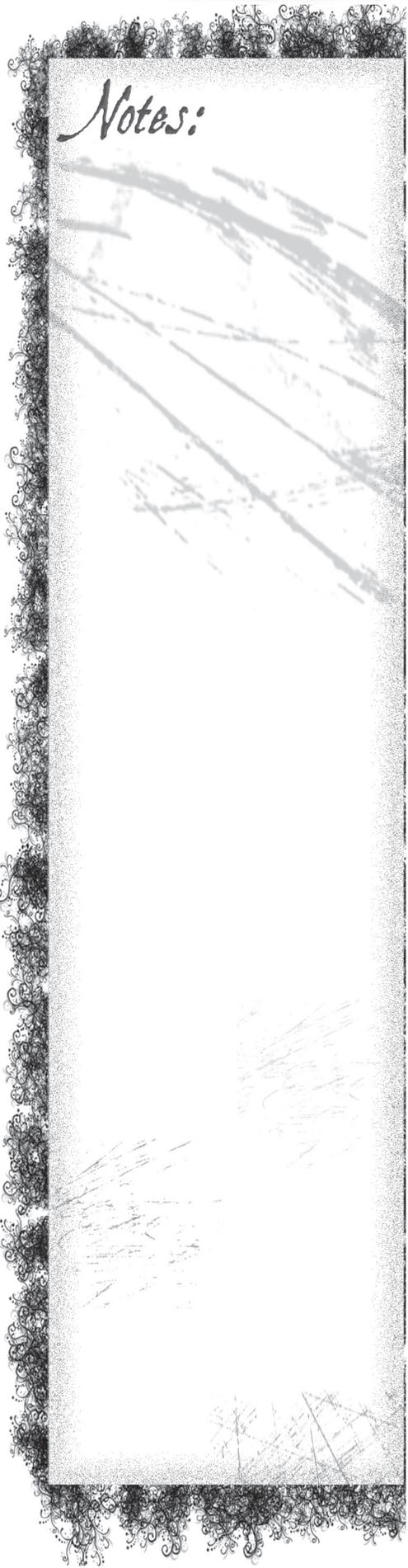
Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: TeenZines; pencils/pens; Lesson 10 PowerPoint download

We need to ask ourselves, “How can I be a good steward of my health?” First we must seek temperance and balance. There is nothing wrong with some chocolate or even a bowl of ice cream. The problem is when there is too much of it. Temperance in eating will help us be a good steward of our health.

Gluttony is a sin. (*Ask the students to define gluttony.*) Gluttony is an over-consumption of food, drink, or things (**slide 8**). In Sodom, a city that was destroyed by God, one of the sins of the city was gluttony (**slide 9**). Gluttony creates an unhealthy lifestyle and puts other things before God’s commandments. We must learn when to say “when.” Not being skinny is not a sin. It is a lack of temperance in regards to our health that is the problem. Some abuse their bodies by refusing to eat healthy foods and going on starvation diets. This type of behavior is just as wrong as eating too much.





Notes:

It is not just food that affects our health. Studies are showing a possible connection between eye health and frequency of gaming and other up-close electronic activities. What are some up-close electronic activities that you can think of? (*Allow students time to answer. Possible answers are texting and computer usage.*) Loud music (among other noisy things) damages hearing. Sitting for long periods of time with little exercise is damaging to health.

As we mature there are lots of things to think about. Proper skin care requires discipline and your skin is also a way to tell if you are eating properly. Proper bathing habits and hygiene will help keep us healthy.

Stewardship in your thinking, eating, sleeping, and living is important. In fact, good stewardship is a sign of a good Christian. Being lazy, wasteful, undisciplined, and careless only shows God (and others) that you do not care about what you have been given. Why would you jeopardize or throw away such an amazing blessing like health?

We are responsible for the discipline of our own minds and bodies. We need to create accountability practices. One of the biggest problems we have today is that many sit in front of the computer or gaming screen too long and too often. Our fingers get plenty of exercise, but the rest of our body does not. Perhaps we all need to find health accountability partners. This can be finding a friend who will play ball with us, jog with us, exercise with us, or just go for frequent walks. What are some other ways you can discipline your mind and body? (*Allow time to answer.*)

When we lack exercise, we lack energy, and because of that we may not be able to worship and praise God as we should or would like. Stop and ask yourself if this is true about you. Remember, being a good steward of our mind and body will be a way of assuring we can give Him our best. And God definitely deserves our best!

Final Focus:

Lord, we need You to show us where we are lacking in good stewardship. Please give us the strength to make the changes in our lives that need to be made. Help us not to discourage each other with our attitudes, but help us to know how to encourage each other to be better stewards. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead:

The next lesson will cover the sanctity of life. While specific types of death are covered, you may want to be prepared to answer questions regarding military service, capital punishment, and the withdrawing of life support. Be ready to give thoughtful, biblically supported answers to any questions your students may have. You may also wish to consult with your pastor at some point before the lesson to receive his guidance on the subjects. If you are presenting an opinion, be sure to express to your students that it is your opinion only and they will have to seek God to clarify their own beliefs concerning things that are not specific in His Word.

In the Image of Christ

11

Week of
May 15, 2016

Teacher's Tip: Many young people in our society today find it hard to relate to the image of a loving Creator. They question why He made them skinny, fat, tall, or short. Others recoil at the fact that they may represent their earthly father when he is absent or such a negative influence in their lives. Still others struggle with reminders that they resemble one of their parents. Each of us wants to be his or her own person.

Knowledge of and sensitivity to our students' backgrounds are essential in order for us to reach into their lives with the knowledge that the Lord is our loving Father, our Savior, and our Friend.

Special Needs: Students with special needs enjoy activities involved with the lesson; however, they may not be able to put their thoughts down on paper. Pair them with other teens who are willing and who enjoy ministering to them. Those teens can help the student with special needs articulate his thoughts.

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pens/pencils

Direct students to the **Chip off the Old Block** activity in their *TeenZines*. Students are directed to explain which parent they resemble (both in looks and character) and how they resemble them. If a student is adopted or in foster care, he can list traits he shares with his adoptive parents or guardian. If he does not feel he shares any traits whatsoever with his adoptive parent or guardian, the student may list how he resembles a sibling or another family member.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZine*; pens/pencils; **Lesson 11 PowerPoint download**

Pick one of the mirrors around the room and study the person at whom you are looking. What do you call the thing in the mirror? (*Expect some laughter and comments.*) Actually, it is your image (**slide 3**). An image is a likeness of someone or something. The image in the mirror shows you what you look like. Imagine a time when mirrors did not exist. How do you suppose individuals found out how they looked? (*Allow students to answer.*) Most of the images then would have likely

Lesson Objective:

To remind teens that life is a precious gift from God.

Key Verse: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).

Lesson Text:

Genesis 9:1-6

Scripture Setting:

Job 10:11-12; Psalm 139:13-16;
Ephesians 2:10

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- *TeenZines*
- Pens/pencils
- **Lesson 11 PowerPoint download**
- **Mirrors** (all shapes and sizes, two of which should be full-length)
- **One small mirror** per student, gift-wrapped
- **Plant and animal poster** from the resource packet
- **Two plumb lines**

Before Class:

Place the mirrors at various places around the room. On the two full-length mirrors tape a plumb line so that it hangs from the top of the mirror to near the bottom. Stand the mirror so that the plumb line is level. If you do not have access to plumb lines, make them yourself by tying a weighted object to the bottom of a five-foot string.

Notes:

been blurry or fuzzy. It is difficult to have a clear image without a good mirror. (*Ask students to return to their seats.*)

How are we a mirror or an image or likeness? Look at the **Me as a Mirror activity** in your *TeenZines*. Under each category given, explain how you can be a mirror of that person.

Teacher: Be aware of students who may be sensitive in the area of their biological parents. Do not pressure students to share their likenesses.

We are the image of our biological parents because of our DNA (**slide 4**). DNA is a nucleic acid that carries our genetic information and hereditary characteristics. Medical labs are able to trace genetic backgrounds through a series of tests to identify individuals. Each of us has a unique DNA that identifies us.

We are also mirrors of our parents through characteristics or traits such as distinguishing features (eye shape and color, nose shape, body shape). It is said that everyone in the world has a mirror image, another individual that has very similar physical features. Whether or not that is true, we definitely have certain features that resemble our parents or others in our family. Sometimes we are their image because of how we express ourselves in conversation, body movements, facial expressions, or choice of words. Have you ever been told that you act like someone else? Usually it will be a family member you resemble.

Each of us has a unique mix of traits that we naturally portray. In the same family, one may be very outgoing and another quiet and reserved. However, even with the differences, we will find similarities among family members.

Teacher: A study of the four personality types and their individual love languages provides opportunity to better understand your students and their particular personality. Two good resources on these topics are *Personality Plus* by Florence Littauer and *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers* by Gary Chapman.

According to the Bible we are also made in the image of God (**slide 5**). How is that possible? God is a spirit. How are we made in His image? (*Allow students time to answer.*) Each of us has different characteristics, personalities, and physical features. He chose our skin and hair color, our build, our individual personality, and the traits we would reveal throughout life, but how can we adequately portray an invisible God?

We are in His image because of the emotions we are capable of feeling. Love, happiness, compassion, even anger are all things we share with God. Fortunately for all of us, we can also be in the image of the man Christ Jesus (**slide 6**).

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, He expected them to learn who He was and to portray Him to the world around them. He expects the same from those who have experienced salvation and chosen to walk as He walked. He intends for us, His people, to portray His image. This happens primarily through our attitudes, actions, appearance, and associations. When we act like Him, we are His image to the world.

Focus:

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; *Lesson 11*

PowerPoint download; gift-wrapped mirrors; *Pant and Animal poster*

Teacher: Hand out the gifts and ask your students to open them.

What you are looking at now is a gift from God (*slide 7*). You are alive and created by Him. We were created in His image.

Our innermost being is created in God's image. The image inside is the real person that God made. We can see what we think are imperfections on the outside, but even if we like what we see on the outside, the inside is a much different story. Inside, we are a defective image because we are sinners (*slide 8*). God is extremely merciful because He is daily dealing with us to work out those imperfections on the inside. When we accept His salvation and allow Him to work on us and through us, one day, when our natural life is over, we will be made perfect like Him!

Human life is separate from the rest of creation. Even though plants

Teacher: Display the *Plant and Animal poster*.

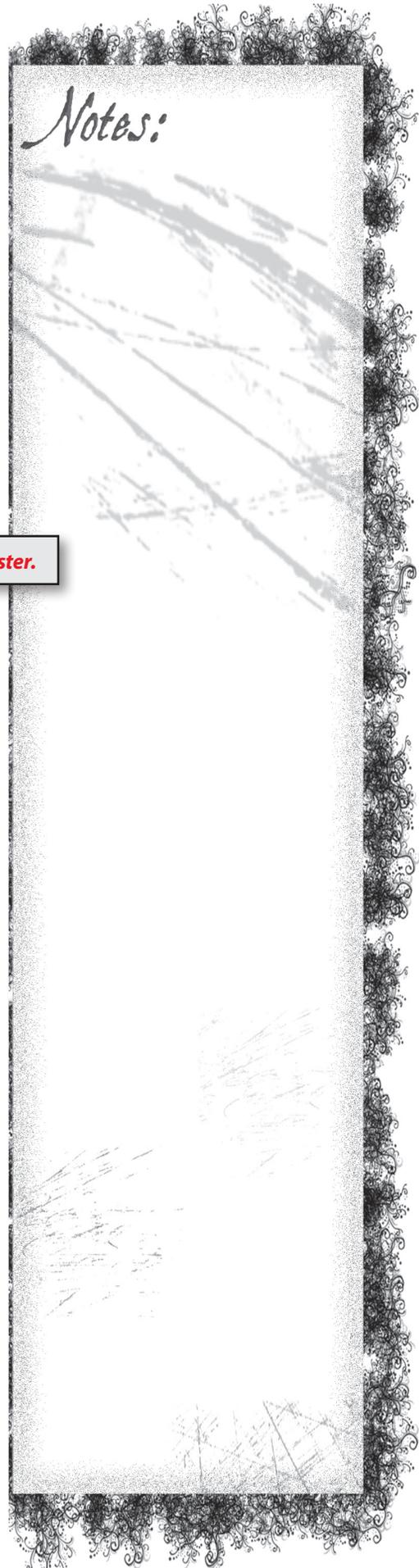
and animals both have life, they are distinguished from us by their inability to think rationally. Animals can behave and make decisions based on instinct. Man does not act on instinct alone, but is able to weigh out circumstances, surroundings, and consequences before making his decision.

God told Noah and his family that they could eat of all what God had created, which are plants and animals. God was very specific about the difference between plant and animal life and human life. Human life is sacred because it is the only life that is created in His likeness.

Human life must be treasured because it is a unique gift from God. There is something deep inside us that holds life as special and sacred. Few things bring us joy like the beginning of life and few things bring us grief like the ending of it. History shows us how civilizations crumble when people no longer value life. The Roman Empire is a great example of a strong empire that eventually fell to ruin in part because they made the taking of human life a sport (*slide 9*). God condemns murder in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere in His Word so it is pretty clear that nothing good will happen when an innocent life is taken.

In North America life is still considered sacred up to a point. Homicide, the taking of another's life, is punishable by life imprisonment or death. Homicide on a large scale against a certain group of people is called genocide (Hitler's Germany destroying millions of Jews, for instance).

Euthanasia is the practice of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain and suffering. In some countries, once a person has been ruled unable to care for himself or able to have a certain quality of life, he is allowed to die or is helped to die. This includes severely handicapped babies and elderly people who are too ill to be fully aware of what is going on. Does this make sense in a civilized country? (*Allow students to answer.*) Let us say a person has a horrible, painful disease for which there is no treatment or cure. They are unable to move or do anything for themselves. Should their life of pain be ended? Why would that be a bad thing? (*Allow students to answer.*)



Notes:

Teacher: Do not leave your students wondering. Remind them that God has commanded that we not murder and murder is when an innocent life is taken. God will judge and punish those who murder. Also, once a society starts ending lives that they deem without quality—and who decides that?—there is a danger that the definition of quality of life will continue to change. It is a slippery slope. Regardless of the quality of life, every life serves a purpose: to glorify God.

Suicide, the act of killing oneself, is definitely murder, regardless of the reason. No matter how terrible your life may seem, suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. When you take your needs and cares to Jesus, He will always help you to deal with them. If you feel like you cannot talk to Jesus and you feel that your life is not worth living, seek a godly adult you trust and talk with him about your feelings. He will help you see how much God loves you and how there is always hope in Him!

Another type of murder is abortion. Abortion is the killing of an unborn or partially born child. In recent years questions have arisen about when life begins. It begins at conception. Because God is the author of life, we should be committed to the sanctity of life.

Is there another way besides ending life in which life can be disrespected and disregarded?

Teacher: Direct your students to the *Am I Pro-Life?* activity in their *TeenZines*.

What about lifestyle? Under each category in the activity, write down some examples. We will discuss them when you are finished.

Teacher: Be ready, also, to discuss the healthy side of these areas.

Unhealthy eating and living includes eating junk food frequently. It also includes sitting in front of computers, televisions, or gaming systems without any thought for bodily exercise. Unhealthy recreation can include gambling, drinking, drugs, or extreme sports that you know frequently cause bodily harm. Destructive behavior can include cutting yourself, improper involvement with the opposite sex, or drugs and alcohol.

No matter how young we may be, we are ultimately personally responsible for our lifestyle. We are supposed to be representing Christ in our lifestyle. Do we do that? Are we living in His image?

God has a very interesting view of life and it is one we should embrace. God is the source of life! Life is only a temporary assignment. It is described in the Bible as mist, a breath, a shadow, and a wisp of smoke. The Bible compares life on this earth to living in a foreign country. We are not supposed to be here forever. Man is an eternal spiritual being with an average of seventy to eighty years of earthly experience. When Jesus came into the world, He brought a clearer view of life. What happens here matters (**slide 10**), but it matters more because of what we will receive at the end. What does that mean? (*Allow students to discuss.*) What you do with your life matters eternally!

Hand

Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pencils/pens; *Lesson 11 PowerPoint download*; two full-length mirrors; two plumb lines

Notes:

Manual Focus

Separate the young men from the young ladies. Direct each group to stand before one of the full-length mirrors. Ask volunteers to stand sideways in front of the mirror. Ask them to check their posture or have a friend check it for them. To be standing properly, the plumb line should run down the center of your ear lobe, shoulder bone, and hipbone in your image on the mirror. It should be less than one inch in front of the anklebone. Use discretion here; some students may be self-conscious or shy.

Did you pass? Are you standing properly as your normal posture would indicate? Good posture is a must for the well-groomed look. It is also a must for good health. Stooping or slouching could bring about permanent back pain or other problems. Poor posture also causes the internal organs to work harder due to the squeeze on them.

Now, turn to the *Spiritual Plumb Line Test* in your *TeenZines*. Use the image provided to decide if you are standing tall in the image of Christ.

You are unique. No one else on this earth is created exactly like you. There may be resem-

Teacher: When they have finished, continue teaching.

blances, but no two individuals are exactly alike. You are special and your life matters. As much as your physical life matters, your spiritual life matters even more. Does your stature measure up to Christ's image? Are you portraying a clear image of Jesus to the world around you (slide 11)?

Give yourself a break! Stand tall physically and spiritually; allow your whole system to work properly. You will find you feel good and are confident wherever you go representing the image of Jesus Christ, your Savior and Creator.

Final Focus:

Ask your students to find their own place to pray with their *TeenZines*. Each should write a letter of personal commitment to Jesus and what he/she would like to work on to help him/her portray Jesus. You may wish to play soft music to help them feel less self-conscious about talking to God. When they are finished, gather them in circles by gender and ask them to pray for one another's walk with the Lord.

Look Ahead: Unforgiveness is deadly. It is unhealthy, it is destructive, and it is sin. The next two lessons will cover the topic of forgiveness and you will no doubt need much prayer and preparation to do the subject the deserved justice. Seven sizable boxes with lids, digital cameras or cell phones, very old photographs, and random small- to medium-sized objects will be needed for the lesson. Look through the lesson now so you will see how each item is used.

12

Week of
May 22, 2016

A Flash of Forgiveness

Lesson Objective:

To educate teens about what forgiveness means and where it can be found.

Key Verse: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

Lesson Text:

Matthew 18:21-22; Romans 3:23

Scripture Setting:

Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-35

Teacher's Tip: To teach a lesson on forgiveness, we must make certain that we have forgiven others. We should be vulnerable before our students and share with them some practical advice of how we have overcome unforgiveness. If we have nothing to share, perhaps we should examine our lives more carefully for areas in which we need to forgive others.

Special Needs: When dealing with a lesson on forgiveness, sometimes it will bring up hurts and issues of major concern. We must be knowledgeable of what we can handle and what we cannot. It is important we do not feel insecure or intimidated to ask a more qualified person to help us in certain matters (molestation, abuse, suicidal ideations). Our students' emotional, physical, mental, and especially spiritual well-being must be our greatest concern.

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- TeenZines
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 12 PowerPoint download
- Seven boxes large enough to fit one of the FORGIVE letters on the bottom, face up. The boxes should be able to close.
- Digital cameras or cell phones with cameras (with flash)
- FORGIVE letters from your resource packet
- Very old photographs taken outdoors (candid pictures, not portraits)
- Random items (such as comb, quarter, rubber band, glue stick, and eraser)

(continued on page 769)

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: Cameras; prepared boxes (see Before the Lesson on page 70)

As students arrive, ask them to take their cell phone camera or a digital camera to each box. Making sure the flash is on, reach into the box, point the camera at the bottom of the box and take a picture. When they have taken a picture in all seven boxes, have them privately unscramble the letters to come up with the hidden word. You may want them to work in teams if there are several students and/or not enough digital devices.

Discuss with the students that without a flash on the camera, you would not have been able to take a clear picture of the letter in each box. It is important that we allow God's light into the darkness of our heart so we can see exactly what is there or what is missing.

Head Focus:

Estimated Time: 7 minutes

Necessary Resources: Photographs; Lesson 12 PowerPoint download

Teacher: Show the students the photographs and see if they can decide what they all have in common. There may be several types of guesses. If someone notices that they are all taken outside, ask if anyone knows why that would be.

Decades ago not many people had cameras, but when they did, most pictures they took were outside. Why? Because flash bulbs were rare on average cameras.

A photography flash or flash bulb is a device used in photography to help illuminate a dark scene (**slide 3**). General Electric invented the first modern flash bulb in 1927, but it took some time to become readily available to the regular consumer.

When the room is dark or dimly lit, a flash will help illuminate the area to be photographed. This bright flash will show things on the picture that would normally never appear because of the lack of light (**slide 4a-b**).

To have quality pictures you need to have quality lighting, but even more so, quality lighting is necessary to having a quality life. That light is the Word of God. How do you think the Word of God can help us have a quality life? (*Allow students plenty of time to answer.*) If we allow the Word of God to illuminate our life, it will dispel the darkness and allow us to really see what is going on in our hearts.

When we read, study, and listen to God's Word, there is a flash of God's knowledge that will help us see what is in the process of affecting us. It will also let us see the quality of our life now as opposed to what the quality of our life could be (**slide 5**). Could there be things that are hidden in the dark crevices of our heart that only a flash of light from the power of God's Word will reveal? We need to allow God to show us what is there and what we need to do about it.

In this lesson we will talk about the need for forgiveness. It is so easy for someone to have hurt, bitterness, or anger in a dark corners of his/her life. And frequently those emotions will seem justified. People can and do hurt us, treat us unfairly, or abuse us. However, we are going to find that the Word of God is very specific about the importance of our forgiving others. We all know from experience that if God tells us to do something, it is always for our good. God's Word will illuminate the area or areas holding unforgiveness and it will help us rid our heart of it. Forgiveness has a huge influence over the quality of our life.

Heart

Focus:

Estimated Time: 18 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; *Lesson 12 Power-Point download*

If forgiving is so important, we need to understand what it is.

Teacher: Direct your students to the *Forgiveness? What's That? activity* in their *TeenZines*. Allow your students to share what they have written.

According to *dictionary.com* (**slide 6**), *forgiveness* is the "act of forgiving or state of being forgiven". The main thing to notice is it is an act (**slide 7**). It is not just something we can passively do, but it requires action on our part. That action is the letting go of grudges, hurts, anger, and bitterness (**slide 8**). We can definitely ask God to help us forgive someone, but it is more than just asking for help. It is up to us to choose to let go of what has happened to us. We must refuse to continuously think about what others may have done to us, and we must direct our thoughts in a positive direction. God will help us!

(continued from page 68)

Before the Lesson:

Tape one letter of the word **FORGIVE** on the inside bottom of each box. Close the lid and cut a hole in the top large enough to allow a hand holding a camera or cell phone inside. The students should not be able to see the letter. If necessary, cover the opening to each box with a towel. Randomly place the seven boxes about the room.

Teacher: Direct the class to the *The Condition of My Heart activity* in their *TeenZines*. When they have finished, go through the questions. They are not being asked to share. This is just a rhetorical questioning that will cause them to think through their answers. Now would be a good time for you to share a personal testimony if you are comfortable. If a student expresses a desire to share, allow it on the grounds that no names are mentioned.

Questions from *The Condition of My Heart activity*

1. Have you ever been wronged?
How?
2. Have you ever wronged someone?
How?
3. Have you ever forgiven someone?
Who?
4. Has someone ever forgiven you?
Who?
5. Is there anyone you haven't forgiven? Who?
6. Why haven't you forgiven them?

The truth is everyone needs forgiveness. No one is perfect and we should not try to hold people up to that type of standard. We all have done things wrong before, we all have hurt people before, and we all have sinned and needed forgiveness. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (slide 9). We have all made mistakes and errors, especially against God. However, He is always ready and willing to forgive us. Should we not want to be like Him?

Teacher: Ask a student to read Colossians 3:13 (slide 10).

The Bible is teaching us to be patient with one another. No one is perfect, so be longsuffering with them and forgive them. If there is any type of dispute or rift between individuals, the Bible tells us to forgive. Why? Because Jesus forgave us, we need to follow His example of what He did for us. This is a conscious effort; we make up our mind to do this.

We cannot think of ourselves only in terms of logic and thinking. All of us have emotions and feelings. It is one thing to make a decision to forgive someone and utter that with our mouth, but it is entirely different to let the hurt go and really forgive in our heart. That is not something you can just flip a switch and make happen. However, without first making up our mind that we are going to forgive someone and let the healing process happen, we will *never* get over the hurt. As we do our part and consciously forgive, God will help us to begin to forgive emotionally also. We will no longer stay focused on the hurt, but will want to let it go. If we touch something hot, the first thing we must do is to stop touching it. There is no way for the healing process to begin until our finger is away from the heat. Once we pull our finger back, it may still hurt, but as time goes on and as we focus on other things, the pain will become faint and then go away. This goes for internal hurts as well.

Teacher: Ask a student to read Matthew 18:21-22 (slide 11).

Forgiveness is a tough thing to give because it is against our carnal human nature. We often think we have a right to feel this way; we have a right to be angry and bitter. None of that is beneficial to us spiritually, emotionally, socially, or even physically. Forgiveness is an act of obedience. In the Scripture we just read, Peter probably thought he was going above and beyond by asking if he should forgive someone seven times. Jesus quickly replied, "No, do it 70x7 times" (slide 12). Jesus was not focusing on a specific number; He was simply saying however many times you need to forgive, do it. Many times it is not a one-time choice, but has to be done again and again. The big question is "Why forgive?" If it is against human nature, if it is hard to do, if it will not immediately make you feel better, then why do it?

The first and most important reason is found in Matthew 6:14-15 (slide 13). The Word of God very plainly says that if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. Jesus declares that the only way for us to have our sins and mistakes forgiven is if we are willing to forgive those who hurt or make mistakes against us. Even if they have not asked for forgiveness, our mental, physical, and spiritual health depends on our forgiving.

Another reason to forgive is to remove the darkness that will remain in our heart if we do not. That darkness will hide bitterness, cynicism, anger, hurt, and all types of things that are not good for us.

Teacher: Pause here to define bitterness, cynicism, anger, and hurt. Make sure that the students understand and can identify these emotions.

When the Word of God flashes in our heart and we see things for what they really are, we do not want to keep those areas of darkness in us—we must forgive.

This is another Scripture telling us we must forgive so we can be

Teacher: Ask a student to read Mark 11:25 (slide 14).

forgiven and so our prayers are not hindered. If an individual wants God to hear and answer his prayers, he has to be willing to forgive those who did things against him. Why does he have to forgive first? Because unforgiveness is a sin!

A really neat part of forgiveness is how it can free us. Forgiveness is a choice, but because we are choosing to obey God's commands, forgiveness will become a blessing. How wonderful to be able to live a life without grudges, without anger, without bitterness, and without strife. A free life is a blessing, and that comes through forgiveness.

Hand

Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

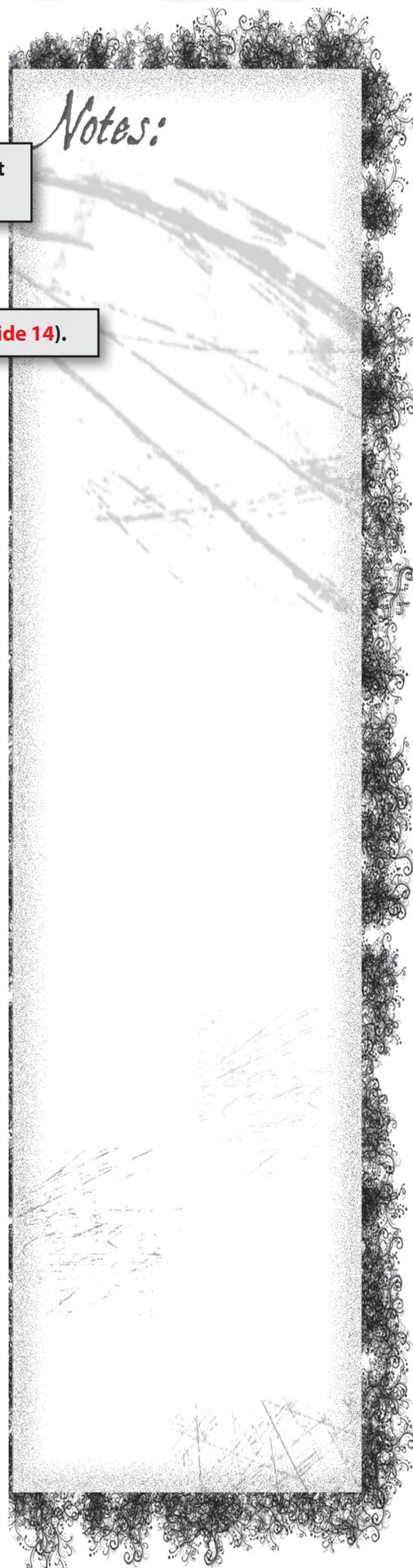
Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pencils/pens; *Lesson 12 PowerPoint download*; random items; boxes from the beginning of the lesson

Manual Focus

Open the boxes and line them up on their sides so the students can read the word "Forgive." Ask for two volunteers. Direct one student to sit in front of the boxes, far enough away that he can read the letters inside, and stare directly at the word "Forgive." He should not take his eyes off it. Ask the other volunteer to stand approximately ten feet to the side of the student, but still be in the seated student's peripheral view. The standing student will hold up the random items one at a time. Ask the seated student if he saw the person holding up random objects. Was he able to tell what any of those objects were? Lead the class in a discussion regarding how hard it was to see what the student was holding when the seated student was focusing on the word "Forgive."

If the seated student had been looking directly at his classmate, he would have known immediately what was being held. Focusing on something godly makes it harder to focus on things that are not.

Each of us has experienced things in our lives that make it difficult to look away from the hurt. Maybe our parents could not work to keep our family together. Maybe someone has abused us emotionally or physically. Perhaps someone you thought was your friend talked about you behind your back and wounded you with hateful and maybe even untruthful words. Of course these things hurt! We are



Notes:

human and we have emotions. However, we do not have to let these things steal our salvation.

Manual Focus

Direct your students to the *Taking Back What Was Taken from Me activity* from their *TeenZines*. When they are finished listing some things that they have allowed unforgiveness to steal, lead them in a heartfelt prayer, asking God to help them get back what they lost by forgiving others. Then hand them a sheet of paper. Ask them to write out a letter of forgiveness to someone who has wronged them. Make certain this remains very private. When they are finished, ask them to tear the paper up into small pieces and throw it away. Pray together after this, signifying that you are getting rid of the hurt and beginning the healing process by forgiving.

If you feel that the class is ready for a God moment, by all means, stop the lesson and let Him work. Nothing is more important to your students' Christian walk than a sovereign move of God!

While we live our life for Jesus, it is so important that we keep our focus on Him and also on the things of God. A great way to help us forgive is to stay focused on what He has done for us. He has forgiven us of so much and adopted us into His family. While we remain focused on Him, other stuff will become so dim, so out of focus, and so unimportant. Psalm 119:165 says (**slide 15**), "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them". What do you think this means? (*Allow students to answer.*) When we stay focused on the Lord and His Word, we are much harder to offend and we offend fewer people—which in turn means a lot less forgiving is required!

Final Focus:

Dear Jesus, You promised that You would not put on us so much that we would fail. So many times something hurts us so badly that it is very difficult, if not impossible, in ourselves to forgive. Give us the grace, give us Your ability, and give us Your power to forgive those who have hurt us. Help us to always remember that You willingly forgave us of our offenses. Thank you for that. In Jesus' name, amen.

A **Look Ahead:** Next lesson continues the theme of forgiveness. You will need different colors of cellophane paper or colored transparencies for the Opening Focus. A guest photographer (professional or amateur) who will come and bring his photography equipment would also be a great asset to your next lesson.

A Filter of Forgiveness —Forgiving Others and Myself

13

Week of
May 29, 2016

Teacher's Tip: During this lesson, we must allow the Holy Ghost to direct us. This can be a life-changing moment for a student and that moment can alter their entire course of life. Forgiveness is powerful and is mandated by Scripture. We must be certain God helps us clearly portray the importance of this subject.

Special Needs: When we open the floor to allow students to comment and answer questions, we must make certain we direct the discussion so the discussion does not become too overwhelming or threatening for some. There are some conversations and discussions that must be stopped and continued later in a more private setting; we must ask God to help us discern when that is.

Opening Focus

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Necessary Resources: Cellophane paper

Lay several squares of differently colored cellophane paper on the tables. Ask the student to begin looking at the room through them. Instruct them to put colors together, put different colors over each eye, or just be very creative with how they look through the paper. When they have spent some time laughing, sharing, and playing, give each student one piece of cellophane. Ask them to look at a designated object (the object should be white) and then ask, "What color is this _____?" You may get as many answers as you have colors of cellophane paper. Explain to them that no matter how they see the object, it is still white. Help them to understand that students' perspectives were different because they were looking through their own filters.

Head

Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; guest photographer;

Lesson 13 PowerPoint download

Teacher: If possible, invite a photographer to class. Ask the photographer to bring some equipment and explain to the students some of the tricks of photography—especially differing filters. When she is finished, lead a discussion on how even though the subject being photographed did not change, the filter can make the subject look different.

Lesson Objective:

To challenge teens to forgive others and themselves.

Key Verse: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Lesson Text:

Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60

Scripture Setting:

Luke 23; Acts 7

Teacher's Preparation

For this lesson you will need:

- Bibles
- *TeenZines*
- Pens/pencils
- Lesson 13 PowerPoint download
- Different colors of cellophane paper
- FORGIVE letters from your resource packet
- Guest photographer with photography gear
- Large rubber band (one for each student)



Notes:

A photographer would tell you there are many different tricks to taking good pictures. Before you were too long into a discussion, the photographer would begin mentioning photographic filters (**slide 3**). When a filter is placed over the camera lens, it changes the way the image is viewed. There are a number of types of filters used in photography. Some change or enhance the color of the picture, some give a different type of affect; for instance, hazy or blurry. Many photographs today can be produced partly because of a filter. When a photographer uses a filter, this allows that person to have more control over the images being produced. When you have a person, a building, or a landscape, there is not much to change on the actual subject. But by using a filter you can take several pictures of the same thing and have quite a range of photos. Depending on the actual filter used, you may have a subtle change or by simply switching out a filter you may be able to photograph something that would have otherwise been impossible to see.

In the same way a filter can change the look or appearance of something, the filter of forgiveness can change the way we see a situation. When something in life happens, it happens. We cannot back up time and have a do-over. Since we are unable to change the subject, it is vital that we change the filter so we see the subject differently. When we humble ourselves, get our feelings, pride, and stubbornness out of the way and forgive, God can then control what our life becomes. He does not have to work around bitterness, rage, or hurt; He can use a clean heart and right motives to direct my life. Even though something as small as a filter has such a huge impact on the outcome of a photograph, the same is true of forgiveness. It may appear like such a minor thing, but the results are major.

Manual Focus

Ask your students to turn to the **How to Properly Use a Filter activity** in their *Teen-Zines*. After they read each scenario to themselves, lead them in a discussion of how God can help them properly understand another person's actions.

1. Stacy just moved to town from across the country. Everything she says seems to be a comparison of how much better her old city, church, and school were compared to where she lives now. It is getting annoying and people are starting to avoid her. They think she is hateful, judgmental, and just plain unfriendly. What could be the problem and how can you help her? How can you help others see her in such a way that they are more compassionate towards her in spite of her actions?
2. Luke's dad just got the Holy Ghost after being in the world all of his life! Strangely enough, Luke does not seem too happy about that. Then you find out that much of Luke's childhood was spent hiding from his dad because he drank too much and beat Luke and his mother. Luke tells you, "I'm glad he got saved, but that does not change what he did to me and Mom. I'm not going to pretend it didn't happen just because he got the Holy Ghost." What can you say to Luke to help him? How can Luke forgive his dad?
3. Fiona and Alayna were best friends since first grade. They did everything together so it made sense that Fiona would confide in Alayna about her mom and dad's constant fighting. But one day, Fiona discovered that Alayna had been talking to other members of the teen class about the secret Fiona had shared with her. Fiona is embarrassed, angry, and hurt. How

can she ever trust Alayna again? How can you help Fiona? What can you do or say to help Fiona see that even though Alayna was wrong to tell her secret, some good can come of it?

4. Shane and Shawn's little brother, Sage, got sick last year. The doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong. Unfortunately, by the time the doctors came up with a diagnosis, it was too late and little Sage died. Shane and Shawn are devastated. How could God allow this? They had prayed and fasted. They had even had other people tell them that they were sure Sage would be healed. How can they trust a God who took their little brother?

Heart

Focus:

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Necessary Resources: Bibles; *TeenZines*; pens/pencils; *FORGIVE letters*; *Lesson 13 PowerPoint download*

Teacher: This is a review of the last lesson. You do not need to belabor the points already made, but it is vital that your students understand that the difficult but vital action of forgiveness can be the difference between eternal life and eternal death. Also, because this subject is being covered in two successive lessons, it is possible that the students have new questions that came to them through the week. Encourage them to be an active part of today's lesson by asking those questions.

What we are doing when we forgive is letting go of the grudges, the bitterness, the anger, the resentment, and the hurt. We are not allowing that to control us; we relinquish all of that to God.

No one likes getting hurt. When we fall down, stub our toe, or burn our finger it is not fun. It is not an experience we ever want to endure again. The same is true of emotional hurt. No one likes it. The name you were called, the rumor told about you, the game someone stole: these are all things that hurt and no one enjoys them.

Teacher: Ask the students if any of them have a scar they can either show (modestly) or describe. Ask the student to tell how they received that scar.

Scars in the physical are visible, but scars of the emotions are not. That does not mean they are any less real, and oftentimes, they are much more severe. When we are wronged, these hurts can leave us with lasting feelings of anger, bitterness, and even desire for vengeance. These are all things that are literally not healthy for the physical body, but they do unseen yet unbelievable damage to the mental state of their victim. The cure for this is forgiveness (**slide 4**).

When you choose to forgive, you choose to change the filter. Forgiveness will not go back

and change what happened to you (**slide 5**), but it will change how you look at the situation. Forgiveness can actually lead to feelings of understanding, empathy, and

Teacher: Display the *letters to FORGIVE* in a spot where they can be used as a reminder during the lesson.

Notes:

compassion for the one who hurt you. That sounds so backwards, but it certainly is the power of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean you deny the other person's responsibility for hurting you and it does not minimize or justify the wrong. It just means you are letting go of what is costing you your peace. You decide that instead of letting the one who hurt you continue to hurt you and hold you captive, you release those feelings and forgive. This is not easy to do, but it is always the right thing to do. Forgiveness is not only healthy for the mind, it is healthy for the body. It will relieve stress and frustration that often causes sickness and fatigue.

Teacher: Take a moment and allow the students to answer the following question, *What if I feel like I cannot forgive?* found in their *TeenZines*. When they are done, discuss their answers.

The truth of the matter is forgiveness is not human nature; it is God-nature. We definitely need God to help us. Some matters are so heavy that on our own it looks like an impossible task to forgive someone. We need to remember *with God* all things are possible (slide 6).

So does forgiveness guarantee everything will be fixed and go smoothly after that?

Teacher: Take a moment and allow the students to answer that question. Create a safe atmosphere for them to talk.

One crucial thing in life we must never forget is we cannot control other people. The only person we can control is ourselves. The moment we forgive someone and relinquish the so-called right to feel bad, angry, upset, vengeful, or whatever, we may not immediately feel completely better. We may even struggle in the days ahead with really releasing that to God. However, God will help us if we are committed to the process. *We will* change. Now, will it change the other person? Probably not, but it will help us view their actions differently. It is not our job to change another person's life; it is our job to make certain we do the right thing.

While forgiveness is where we deal with an issue, let it go and do not rehash it, denial is where we refuse to think about or face an issue at all. Denial can be very dangerous because at some point in life the hurt we are denying will come to the surface and be much bigger than when it originally happened. When we push something to the back so we can avoid the pain, it will continue to grow. We should not deny something happened or say that what transpired was no big deal (if we know it really was); we need to deal with it as soon as possible and forgive. We should never sweep hurt and anger under the rug, but instead we should sweep it out of the front door of our heart.

Teacher: Be very sensitive but ask your students if they have ever felt wronged by God. They may not want to describe it or even admit to it, but get their minds thinking of how someone could feel God hurt them. (Possible circumstances are someone was not healed, parent did not stay with the family, or someone needed a job and did not get one.)

It is important for us to understand God does no wrong. Now, it does not mean at times we cannot and do not feel wronged by Him. Just like when we do not understand decisions our parents make for us, we still have to trust that they have our best interest at heart. God absolutely knows what you need. He knows what is best

for you and for a situation. You can only see the present; He knows the future. If we fail to allow God to send us the things, both pleasant and unpleasant, that will help us as Christians, then we will never become all we can be. We can trust God! A wise person once said, God answers prayers in one of three ways (**slide 7**): yes, not yet, and I have something better in mind.

We have to change the filter of how we look at things and see what is really happening. The filter we must use is our knowledge of God's nature and His Word. We must realize the wrong being done is usually rooted in the sin around us. We are hurt by our sin, by people, and by Satan. Earth is not a perfect place, because people are not perfect. Someday we will be able to go to Heaven and it will be a place of perfection where no forgiveness is ever needed because no wrongs will be done. God will be the same in Heaven as He is now—He does only good for us and to us. When I "forgive God" it simply means that I trust Him and what He is doing in my life. It may not look correct on the surface, but His ways are far above my ways.

Let us set up this scenario. Here is Stephen, a man of God, who went

Teacher: Ask a student to read Acts 7:60 (slide 8).

around doing wonderful things for people and was just a great person. Some people got mad that Stephen was teaching that Jesus was the Son of God, and so they dragged him out of the city and threw stones at him until he was dead (in the Bible "fell asleep" is another way of saying a person died). They killed Stephen simply because they did not like what he was preaching. Their actions were wrong, unjustified, and evil. But what was Stephen's response to his own murder? As he was dying he said, "Lord, don't hold this against them." In other words, "I forgive them for this action. You, dear God, please forgive them also."

Does that reaction ring a bell? Do you remember what Jesus said after He had been beaten, spit on, mocked, and nailed to a cross? "Father, forgive them" (**slide 9**). Jesus, who has all power in His control, could have called angels to wipe out the entire city. Yet with great restraint, compassion, and love, He wanted them to be forgiven. God empowered Stephen to be able to forgive those who wronged Him too. Jesus is not asking us to do anything He has not already done Himself. God will give us the power to be able to forgive also.

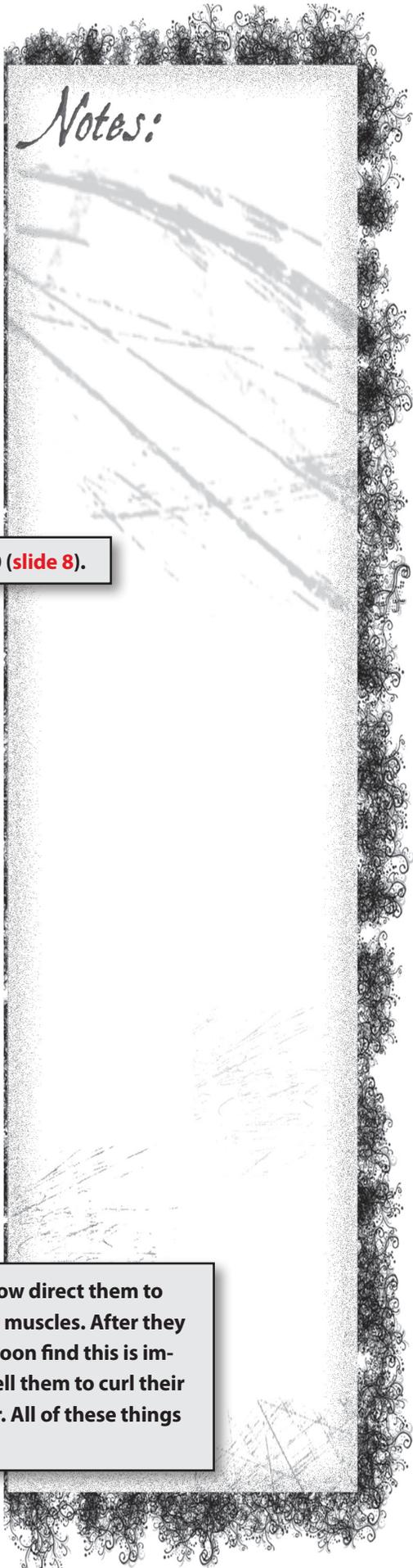
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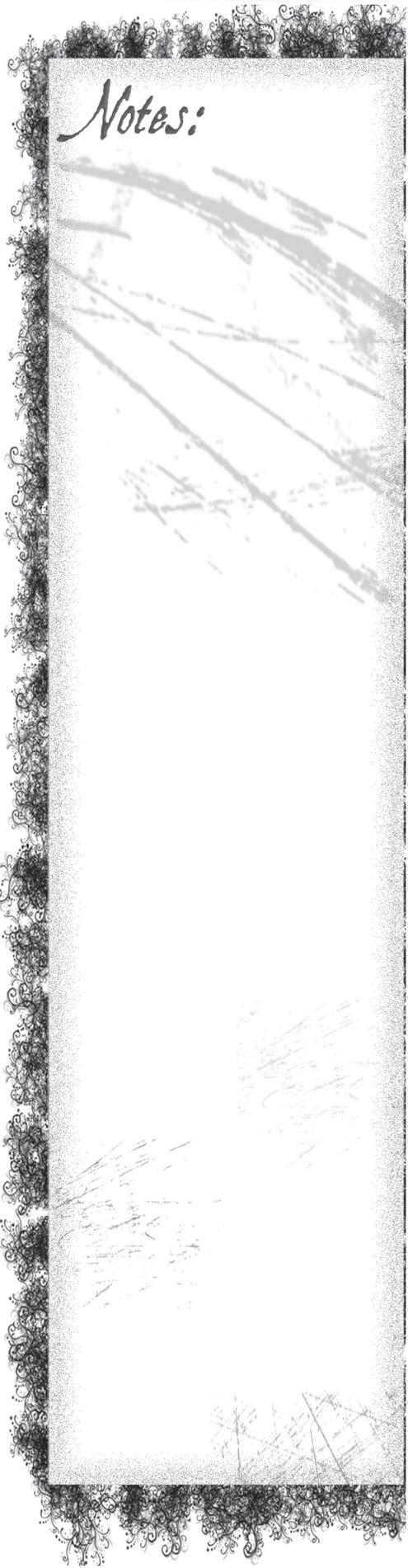
Focus:

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Necessary Resources: Large rubber bands; [Lesson 13 PowerPoint download](#)

Teacher: Ask the students to put a rubber band around their forehead. Now direct them to move the rubber band from their forehead to their neck only using facial muscles. After they have given up, ask the students to lick their elbow. Once again they will soon find this is impossible. Now have them lay their hand flat on a table or their own leg. Tell them to curl their middle finger under their palm. Now instruct them to lift their ring finger. All of these things are generally impossible for humans to do.





Notes:

God is not asking us to do something impossible when He asks us to forgive. It is difficult simply because it is against carnal human nature. The act of forgiveness takes faith. We forgive by faith that God is going to help us and heal us. We do not do it because our flesh wants to; we do it because God says we should.

A famous lady who helped victims in the holocaust, Corrie Ten Boom, said, "Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you" (slide 10). There is nothing more liberating than allowing someone who has hurt you to go free. This allows you to no longer be held captive by their act against you. Does this allow them a free pass for what they did to us? Yes, as far as we are concerned it does. However, our flesh is what wants justice. When we follow God, we allow God to carry out the consequences.

The flip side of the coin is, "what if I am the culprit? What if I did the wrong? What if I hurt someone?" First we need to apologize to that person if it is at all possible. Secondly, we need to ask God to forgive us for our wrongdoing against another person. Then finally, we must be willing to forgive ourselves. We cannot undo the wrong, but we cannot go through life beating ourselves up over it either. When we continually bring up our past wrongdoings and begin feeling guilty and shameful again, we are stealing from God. How are we stealing from God? (Allow students to answer.)

When we ask for forgiveness we are simply accepting the price God paid to take our sin. The sin belongs to Him and it belongs under His blood. If we pull sin out from under the blood, whether it is ours or someone else's, we are stealing from God!

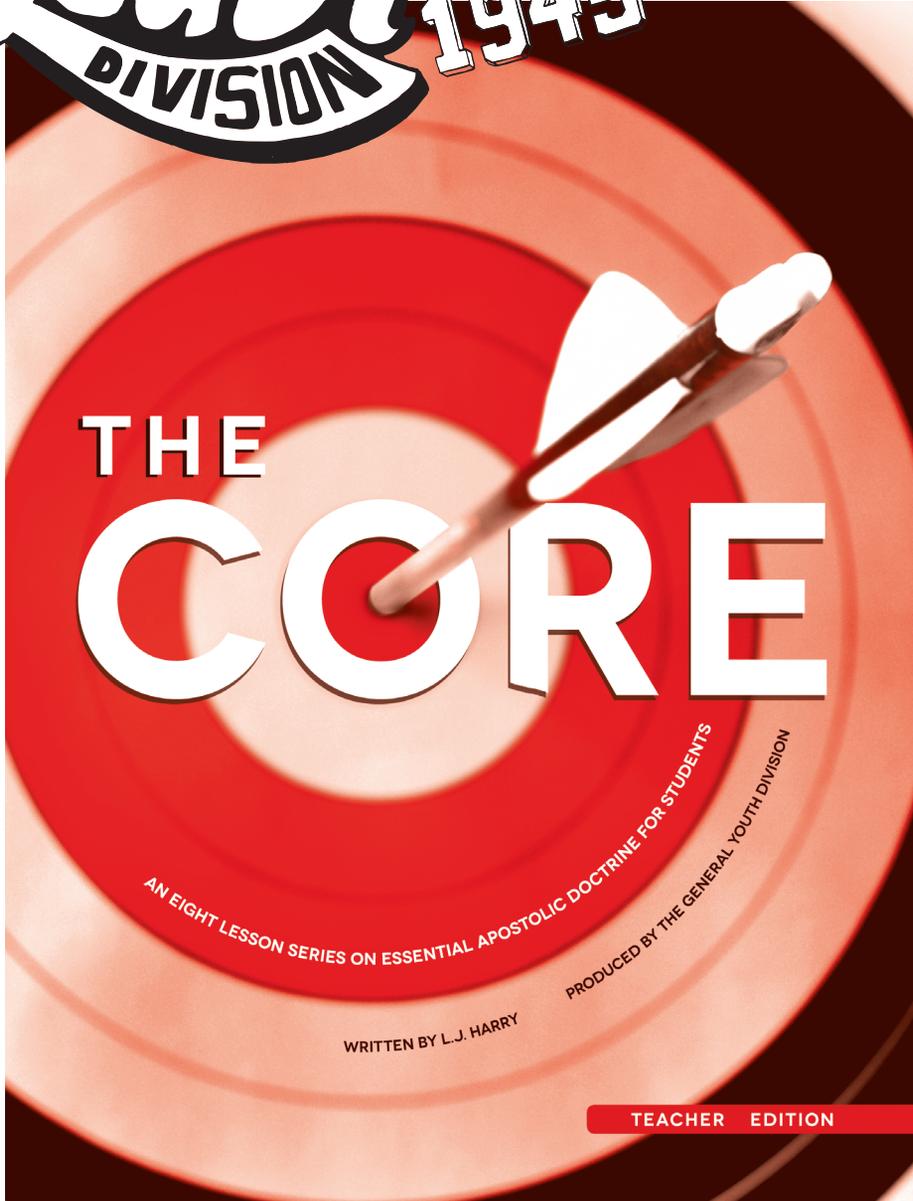
God has forgiven us when we repent, so we must now see ourselves as God sees us—forgiven. When we look at our lives through God's filter of forgiveness, this allows us to live life abundantly.

Final Focus:

Dear Jesus, You have not asked us to do something impossible by forgiving someone, but it is very difficult. Please give us Your strength, mercy, and love to do the right thing. Help us to forget what others have done to us and help us to forget the wrongs we have made right in You. We need You to help us have clean pure hearts and minds so we can move forward in our relationship with You. Thank You for Your example of forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Look Ahead: Next week begins our new quarter, and our first lesson will discuss knowing God's peace every day of our lives. You will need to collect a few items (a calming musical selection, masking tape, and a tape measure) in addition to several things from the teacher's resource packet. Prepare now to help your students in diagnosing their spiritual health.

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1 THE BIBLE
 WHY THE "GOOD BOOK" ISN'T JUST ANOTHER GOOD BOOK

OBJECTIVE
 In this lesson, we will look at the Bible and reliable history to confirm the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The following lesson will be based on the Bible, so this lesson will help us know we can trust the Bible.

We will also see how the Bible came from Bible heroes like Moses and David and ended up in our hands.

The Bible Claims to Be the Word of God
 It exactly 3:18 teaches, "All Scripture is given by _____ of God..."

1) inspiration 2) inspiration 3) inspiration

The Scripture Bible was inspired by God. What does that mean? God you asked. It literally means the Bible is "God-breathed." It is as if God breathed His life into the Bible, making the Bible you have in your hands the very Word of God.

Men may have written the Bible, but _____ authored the Bible.

1) God 2) just some guys 3) Adam and Eve

Teacher's Note: 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us how the Bible came to us. God inspired holy men to write, and they applied that pure message to write the Word of God. Some skeptics will argue the Bible was only written by men. Therefore we shouldn't believe it. It is true the Bible was written by men, but it was authored by God. God inspired holy men to write.

Prophecies are one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is not just another good book. All these prophecies were made and fulfilled in and by Jesus Christ.

Just to mention a few...

Jesus would be born of an virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).
 Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 2:1-6).
 Jesus would be called "The Holy One" (Isaiah 53:11; Matthew 26:63).
 Jesus would be crucified (Isaiah 53:7; John 19:16-18).
 Jesus would be buried in a tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:65).
 Jesus would be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:65).
 Jesus would rise from the grave (Psalm 16:10; Matthew 28:6).

Could these prophecies have just been good guesses? The probability of one man fulfilling just eight prophecies like the ones above is _____.

1) 1 in 100 2) 1 in 1,000 3) 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

The prophets weren't just guessing. They were inspired by God.



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