



SPIRITUAL LIFE
AND MINISTRY

Term Six
Oral Bible Study Curriculum

Second Edition



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

71.	Worship.....	4
72.	Bible Study.....	10
73.	Prayer	16
74.	Spiritual Disciplines.....	22
75.	Caring for Your Family	28
76.	Caring for Your Neighbors	34
77.	Caring for the Church	40
78.	Church Unity.....	43
79.	Praying for Healing.....	51
80.	Witnessing.....	55
81.	Evangelism.....	60
82.	The Call of God	67
83.	Suffering for the Gospel.....	74
84.	Cross-Cultural Missions.....	83

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71. Worship

John 4:4-26

John 4

⁴Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." ¹¹"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." ¹⁷"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

¹⁹"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Study Questions: Worship

John 4:4-26

Introduction:

Worship is often confused with singing songs and praising the Lord. However, worship is much more; worship is a lifestyle. It includes praising God with our voices, but it includes all other aspects of our relationship with the Lord as well. Our interaction with others and the way we live our daily lives are also part of worship. Worship is the dedication of everything in our lives to the Lord. It means bringing honor and glory to God in everything we do! (John 17:4)

When Jesus was in Samaria, he began talking with a woman who had come out to the well to get water. He began to talk with her about the gift of God, living water, her personal life as well as the topic of worship. This Samaritan woman's life changed from worshipping what she did not know to worshipping Jesus, the Messiah.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that worship is a lifestyle. It is a life lived for the Lord's glory.
- To recognize the importance of worshipping in spirit and in truth; connecting both the emotional response and the truth of God's Word.

Attitude

- To have the deep joy that comes from the overflowing living water of a relationship with Jesus.

Actions

- To allow the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives.
- To "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."

Memory Verses:

Colossians 3:15-17 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Psalm 150; John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42-48; 16:13-33; Ephesians 5:19-22; Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:19-25

Questions about the Story:

1. How did Jesus live intentionally by going through Samaria? What does that have to do with worship? (John 4:4. Worship is intentionally glorifying the Lord in everything we do. Jesus could have taken other paths to travel to Jerusalem, but he intentionally chose this path.)
2. How does Jesus' state of being tired affect his ability to live for His Father? (John 4:6-7. As a man, Jesus had physical limits to what He could do, but he still took this opportunity to point a woman to the Lord.)
3. What were some of the cultural taboos that Jesus was breaking by talking to the Samaritan woman? (John 4:9, 27. Jesus, as a man, was talking to a woman and as a Jew, He was talking to a Samaritan. The Jews did not associate with the Samaritans.)
4. How does Jesus choose to relate with someone from a very different background? (John 4:7-14. Jesus chooses to relate to the Samaritan woman by using water, a very normal and common thing, to express the truths of God and the kingdom of heaven.)
5. What does He offer to the Samaritan woman? (John 4:10, 14. Jesus explains to the woman that He is able to offer her living water that would spring up to eternal life.)
6. What perceived barriers does the woman have in regard to receiving this living water? (John 4:11. The woman only sees things from a physical point of view such as the deep well and nothing to draw it with. She even compares Jesus with Jacob's greatness.)
7. How does Jesus cause the woman to think about eternal things rather than just getting water? (John 4:13-15. Jesus causes her to think about living water; something that would be refreshing forever. Something that would give eternal life.)
8. How is the woman's request for the living water selfishly motivated? (John 4:15. She wants to quench her physical thirst and avoid the effort involved of going to draw water.)
9. Why does Jesus tell the woman to call her husband? (John 4:16-18. Jesus reveals her past and present sin and the fact that she has not been satisfied or content. He shows her need of the forgiveness and new life that He has to offer.)

10. What is the woman's last excuse or barrier that she presents to Jesus? (John 4:19-20. She points to the differences between the Samaritans and the Jews and their perceptions of worship or the religious aspects of worship.)
11. What does Jesus tell the woman regarding worship? (John 4:21-25. Worship is not about a place or a religion. Worship is a response to what the Lord has done to bring salvation and the truth of God's Word. Jesus also said that true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth in contrast to religious duty or obligation.)
12. Summarize some challenges that this text describes to living intentionally for the Lord? (John 4:6-22. Some of the challenges include: physical exhaustion, social barriers, mental barriers, selfish thoughts, artificial boundaries and a lack of knowledge.)
13. What is significant in Jesus statement that He is the Messiah? (John 4:25-26. He has the authority to "explain everything" to her, He knows what true worship is and she doesn't need to wait any longer.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is worship? [To praise, adore, honor, and respect God in our words and actions. Romans 12:1 describes it as being "a living sacrifice which is your spiritual act of worship."]
2. How do the paths we choose affect how our life is lived for the Lord? (John 4:4) [We can choose paths that bring us into ministry situations or we can avoid them. We can choose to worship or we can avoid it.]
3. When we are tired, does that affect how we interact with people? (John 4:6-7)
4. What social barriers do we face in sharing the gospel? (John 4:8) [There are people in our society that are considered outcasts and there are others that we choose not to associate with.]
5. Who is worship to include? Should there be any distinctions or discriminations? (John 4:9) [Worship is something that should include men, women, and children from every race or background, because in Christ we are all part of one body.]
6. How can we reach across social barriers to point people to Jesus? (John 4:10) [There are many simple things that can bridge the gap between people that can be a bridge to the gospel.]

7. How does living water relate to worship? (John 4:10)
[Worship is a response that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus. It is renewing and refreshing.]
8. What false barriers or distractions do we have in regard to worship? (John 4:11) [We can have many mental barriers to seeking and worshipping God, as well as things that distract us from living completely for the Lord. Satan, ourselves and other gods are all distractions to true worship. Exodus 20:3-6; Matthew 4:8-10]
9. What types of selfish motivations get in the way of our worship to the Lord? (John 4:15) [We can have an attitude that worship is about what we receive or how we feel rather than about what we give or how we can please God.]
10. What reasons do we have to worship the Lord God? (John 4:13-19) [We have many reasons to worship and praise the Lord God, primarily for our salvation, but also for His character. He is all knowing, all powerful and everywhere present.]
11. Does it matter where we meet for worship? Why? (John 4:21)
[The place does not matter as God is Spirit and is not confined by temples made by human hands. He is everywhere and so He may be praised and worshiped everywhere.]
12. Why must we as the worshipers of God worship in spirit and in truth? (John 4:23-24. We must worship in spirit and in truth for God is Spirit and Truth. Worship is a response of emotion as well as knowledge.)
13. What reason does Jesus give us in this passage of why we should praise and adore Him? (John 4:26) [As Jesus plainly stated that He was the Messiah who was to come, we can worship and adore Him as the One who has come to save us from our sins.]

72. Bible Study

The Scattered Church & The Road to Emmaus

Acts 11:19-26 & Luke 24:13-32

Acts 11

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. ²⁰Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²²News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Luke 24

¹³Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²²In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they

had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

²⁵He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³²They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Study Questions: Bible Study

Acts 11:19-26 & Luke 24:13-32

Introduction:

The first thing that the large numbers of new Christians needed in Antioch was to be taught. Paul and Barnabas took a year to do so. After Jesus was raised from the dead, the first thing that his disciples needed was Scripture explained to them. Jesus did that. The Word of God, which we have been entrusted with for our spiritual growth is essential for our daily relationship with Jesus. It is in the Word that we know Him in a living way because He is the living Word of God. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” (John 1:14)

Unfortunately, it is easy to be distracted and occupy our time with many other things besides God’s Word. We attempt to rely on our own wisdom and counsel instead of looking in the Bible. The Bible is the very words of God. His Word is unchanging, accurate and applicable through all of time. It is essential to study the Word of God and allow it to be a “lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105).

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that the Word is a mirror, curb, and guide for our lives. It shows us our need for God, keeps us on the right path, and leads us to a relationship with Jesus.
- To realize our need to study God’s Word daily in order to stay in a close relationship with Him.

Attitude

- To hunger for God’s Word as daily bread.

Actions

- To set aside time daily to read God’s Word.
- To meditate on His Word and His will for our lives.

Memory Verses:

Psalm 119:9-11 “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Matthew 4:4 “Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Scriptures for Further Study:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 42:1; 119:9-11; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12

Questions about the Story:

1. Who was the message going out to? (Acts 11:19-21. They were telling the good news about Jesus Christ first to the Jews, but then also to the Greeks. Great numbers believed and turned to the Lord. It was an enormous cultural shift to bring the message to the Greeks.)
2. What was the result of God's Word going out into the world? (Acts 11:21-23. "Great numbers of people believed and turned to the Lord." People were being saved and their lives displayed "the evidence of the grace of God." The living Word was changing lives.)
3. How is Barnabas' described? (Acts 11:24. Barnabas is described as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. These attributes come from the work of God in his life. His life also displayed the fruit of God; "great numbers of people were brought to the Lord.")
4. Why did Barnabas go to look for Saul? (Acts 11:25-26. He looked for Saul in order to bring him back to Antioch and help with the ministry. Barnabas needed Saul because he was unique; he was from both the Jewish and the Roman cultures and could teach well.)
5. What is significant about Barnabas and Saul teaching for a whole year? (Acts 11:26. It is the Word of God that changes lives and it is the Word of God that strengthened those new believers. It is the foundation of faith. Romans 10:17 says, "faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.")
6. What is significant about Jesus joining the two disciples as they walked along? (Luke 24:13-16. Jesus was the topic that they were discussing. He walked along with them, yet they did not recognize Him and He taught them about Himself through the Scriptures.)
7. Why is it surprising that their faces were downcast in light of everything they knew? (Luke 24:17-24. It was not what they expected. They knew that Jesus was "a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people." They knew that the women had seen the empty tomb and vision of angels who said He was alive. They also knew that some of the other companions had also seen the empty tomb.)
8. Why does Jesus say, "How foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken?" (Luke 24:25. They knew the prophets but had not understood that Jesus was

this One that they pointed to. He was walking and talking with them, but still they did not understand.)

9. What do Moses and the prophets say about Jesus? (Luke 24:27. They describe Jesus from the beginning to the end with more and more detail as time passed.)
10. Why did Jesus “open the Scriptures” for them? (Luke 24:27, 32. So they could understand God’s plan and believe in the risen Messiah.)
11. What is significant about Jesus taking the bread, giving thanks, breaking it and giving it to them? (Luke 24:30. He had broken the bread at the Last Supper and during the feeding of the 5000.)
12. What did they realize as their eyes were opened and they recognized him? (Luke 24:32. They realized that their hearts had been burning within them as Jesus had talked with them and opened the Scriptures.)

Discussion Questions:

1. In what situations should we be in the Word of God and sharing it with other people? (Acts 11:19-20; Luke 24:27) [Anytime can be a time to be in the Word of God and sharing it with others. Whether you are walking down the road or in an unfamiliar land, the Word of God applies in all circumstances, but we cannot teach others what we have not learned.]
2. How can we use hardships to the glory of God? (Acts 11:19-21) [We can use the hardships to point people to Jesus Christ and the love of God as we seek His face and place our trust in Him.]
3. Who is the message of the Lord supposed to be sent out to? (Acts 11:19-21) [The message of the Lord is for all people, Jews and Greek. Whatever your background is, you need to know Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him.]
4. Whose power enables us to go out? (Acts 11:21) [We need to go out in the power of the Lord and His Word.]
5. What should be observable by others of the persons who have experienced a turning point in their life by accepting Christ? (Acts 11:22, 26) [The change should be evident to those around them so they are called Christians (Christ-like) by their actions rather than by their professions.]
6. Can people tell that you have been changed and that God has turned you around? What do they see in your life?

7. In what ways can we remain true to the Lord with all of our heart? (Acts 11:23) [We remain true to the Lord by being in His Word and talking with Him every day.]
8. What does it mean to be full of the Holy Spirit? [That the Holy Spirit is living inside of you and working through you for the sake of His glory.]
9. What is essential to have alongside us in the ministry as we go forward? (Acts 11:25-26) [It is essential to have someone who is working with you in the ministry to encourage you along the way and in the task ahead.]
10. When can we be learning from others and whom can we be teaching the Word of God to? (Acts 11:26) [There are Christians that can teach us the Word of God as it has applies to our lives. There are also many people that need to know the Word of God that we can teach.]
11. How does Jesus walk through life with us? (Luke 24:15) [He is right beside us as we carry His Word and go to Him in prayer.]
12. When are our lives unnecessarily downcast? (Luke 24:17) [Whenever we think that we are facing the challenges of life without Jesus or anytime we fail to look to Him.]
13. Do you have eyes to see Jesus working around you in your life? How do we come to recognize Jesus more and more? (Luke 24:32) [We come to recognize Jesus more and more by being in the Word of God and coming to know the nature of Christ.]
14. How does Scripture, both the Old and New Testament, point to Jesus? (Luke 24:27) [The Scriptures point to Jesus; both the Old Testament pointing forward and the New Testament pointing backward.]
15. When has your heart burned as the Scriptures were opened to you? (Luke 24:32)

73. Prayer

The Lord's Prayer & David's Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15 & Psalm 54

Matthew 6

⁵"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:

" Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one. ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Psalm 54

¹ Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.

² Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.

³ Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life—men without regard for God. Selah

⁴ Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.

⁵ Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.

⁶ I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.

⁷ For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

Study Questions: Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15 & Psalm 54

Introduction:

Prayer is an essential part of the believer's life. It serves as our communication link with God. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray and told them to address God as their Father. He wanted the disciples to understand the relationship that could exist between them and their Heavenly Father. Jesus invited them to pour out their hearts to God, even the small details. In Psalm 54, David cries out to the Lord for help. He lets the Lord know how desperate he felt and yet confident at the same time because the Lord had been with him in the past as well. Like David, we can call on the Lord at any time, place, or circumstance and know that He hears us.

Even though prayer is simply talking with God, we seem to forget to open our hearts and be honest with Him. Big words sound important, but the Lord is not looking for a show or for many convincing words. He just wants us to talk with Him as a son or daughter would talk to their father. Jesus gives us an example of this in the Lord's Prayer. In it He invites us to call His Father, our Father and He Himself is the one that makes that relationship possible.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand our need for prayer and relationship with God.
- To realize that we can come to God at any time and in any place to thank Him and bring our needs before Him!
- To recognize that God is both our Father as well as holy, that prayer is about His kingdom and His will and also our needs, our debts and our temptations.

Attitude

- To have faith that the Lord hears our prayers and will answer them according to His perfect will.
- To believe that God is able to do exceedingly more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Actions

- To daily meet Jesus in prayer and open our hearts to Him.
- To keep His name holy, confess our sins and seek His kingdom as much as we make requests of the Lord.

Memory Verses:

Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Scriptures for Further Study:

2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7-11; 21:20-22; Luke 18:1-5; Ephesians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:1-3; 1 John 5:14-22

Questions about the Story:

1. What type of attitude is needed regarding prayer? (Mathew 6:5-8. We are not to be like the hypocrites praying for show, nor are we to be like the pagans, babbling with many words. We are to be humble, personal and trusting in our prayers, because God is our Father and He knows what we need.)
2. Why are we to go into our rooms and close the door as we pray? (Mathew 6:6-8. Because our Father, who is unseen, knows what we need. He will reward us according to His will and He desires a sincere relationship with His children.)
3. What is the difference between the two rewards described? (Mathew 6:5-6. The hypocrites receive their reward by being seen by everyone. The unseen prayer will receive his reward from his heavenly Father.)
4. What are the main topics covered in the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus gives as an outline and guide for His disciples? (Mathew 6:9-13. The main topics are: hallowing the name of God, acknowledging His kingdom and will to be superior, our daily needs, forgiveness, and protection by the Lord for our lives.)
5. Why did Jesus teach His disciples to pray to God as Father? (Mathew 6:9. Through Jesus they were given the right to become children of God. It is Jesus’ invitation that makes it possible.)
6. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to hallow God’s name? (Mathew 6:9. To hallow God’s name is to respect it and His whole being. To be holy means set apart and without sin. God’s name and His whole character are holy, but this prayer the disciples personally acknowledge His name as holy.)
7. What does it mean that God’s kingdom should come and His will be done? (Mathew 6:10. God’s kingdom is wherever God is king. He is in charge of the whole world, but people still

- resist His will in their lives. To pray “Thy will be done” is to give Him control and trust His will.)
8. Why did Jesus teach them to say give us our daily bread? (Mathew 6:11. God is the provider of daily food and they were dependent on Him for it. He is also the one that supplies their every need. They were learning that everything is a gift from God.)
 9. What did the disciples need to learn about the forgiveness of sin? (Mathew 6:12. They needed to remember that every sin is a sin against God. If He were to keep a record, the debt would be impossible to pay. In this prayer they ask God for His forgiveness and remember to do the same for anything that anyone else might have done against them.)
 10. Why would they need to ask the Lord not to lead them into temptation? (Mathew 6:13. The Lord does not tempt anyone, but they acknowledge that they are tempted and they need the Lord’s protection from Satan, the world and their own sinful nature. See also James 1:13. Jesus faced every temptation and defeated Satan at the cross and that is the only place to stand.)
 11. Why did Jesus give the warning about forgiving others? (Mathew 6:14-15. If they couldn’t forgive others how could they expect the Lord to forgive them? Since every sin is against the Lord, the sins that others would commit against the disciples do not compare with their sins against the Lord.)
 12. What are the different petitions that David makes to God? (Psalm 54:1-2. David asks the Lord to save him, to be vindicated, to hear him and listen to him.)
 13. By what does David acknowledge that he is saved? (Psalm 54:1. David acknowledges that he is saved by the name of the Lord.)
 14. How does David characterize the Lord? (Psalm 54:1, 4-7. David acknowledges that the Lord is strong, faithful and good. He is David’s helper, sustainer and deliverer.)
 15. What situation is David in when he is calling out to the Lord? (Psalm 54:3. Ruthless men are attacking David and seeking to take his life.)
 16. What does David tell the Lord he will do? (Psalm 54:6. David prays to the Lord telling Him that he will praise the name of the Lord and sacrifice an offering to Him.)

Discussion Questions:

1. To whom do you look for strength and protection? Do you look to the Lord, or to those around you?
2. Do you take time to call upon the Lord in all circumstances, or just when you are having troubles?
3. What precaution do we need to take when we pray? (Matthew 6:5-8) [We need to be careful that when we are praying to God we are humble, not looking to draw attention to ourselves by the way we are praying. Rather we are to pray earnestly and come before God in reverence.]
4. With whom should we pray? (Matthew 6:6, Acts 12:5) [We should spend time in prayer both alone with the Lord and with fellow believers.]
5. When is your personal prayer time?
6. What does it mean that God is our Father? (Matthew 6:9) [He knows our needs, He listens to our prayers and He answers us when we seek Him.]
7. How can we keep the Lord's name Holy? (Matthew 6:9) [When we pray with humble respect. The way we speak to others about the Lord or how we use His name. If we are known as a Christian, how we live and what we say either honors or profanes the name of Jesus.]
8. How can we give our lives to the Lord's kingdom and trust His will? (Matthew 6:10) [We give our lives to the Lord and His kingdom when we ask Jesus into our lives. In the same way we give Him control of our future.]
9. How do acknowledge the Lord as provider of everything? (Matthew 6:11) [We acknowledge Him when we thank Him in prayer and when we are thankful for what He gives us.]
10. How do we see the Lord allowing us to bring our needs and requests before Him? (Matthew 6:11) [We see His love because He invites us to pray and desires to hear us. He provides for our every provision.]
11. What are the temptations that we face? (Matthew 6:13) [We all face the same temptations that are common to man. 1 John 2:16 says that they are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.]
12. Why is so important for us to daily forgive people who have sinned against us? (Matthew 6:14-15) [Because sin is a barrier that will break down our relationship with God and with others. We are not judges, but the Lord is and He will judge everyone with justice.]

13. What situations are impossible for God to answer in prayer? Why? (Acts 12:6-12) [No situation is too difficult for the Lord. He is all-powerful. He created the universe and every living thing.]
14. What is your response when you see God answering prayer in your life?
15. What should be our response when God answers our prayers? (Acts 12:17) [When we see God answering our prayers, we should respond in praise for God's goodness and mercy. We should also tell others how God has answered our prayers.]
16. In prayer, what should we do besides ask the Lord for things? (Psalm 54) [We can thank and praise Him for His faithfulness, for the things that we have seen Him do in our lives and just for who He is.]

74. Spiritual Disciplines

Daniel in Babylon

Daniel 1:1-20

Daniel 1

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility- ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

Study Questions: Spiritual Disciplines

Daniel 1:1-20

Introduction:

Spiritual disciplines are the training ground for a life that is surrendered to the Lord alone. It is a process of dying to our sinful nature and living in the Spirit. Spiritual disciplines are difficult. They include pain, sacrifice, and self-control; not compromising on Biblical principles even when there is great pressure to conform.

Daniel was taken as a captive to Babylon, which could have made him bitter. He was then separated for training in the king's service, which could have made him proud. Then he was given royal food from the king's table, which could have made him gluttonous. In all of these things, "Daniel resolved not to defile himself."

Daniel and his friends decided that instead of eating the royal food sacrificed to idols, they would trust in the Lord and eat vegetables instead. They put aside the temptations of their flesh to live holy lives to honor the Lord. Daniel's temptations are a picture of when Jesus defeated Satan's temptations in the wilderness.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that God is the One who gives us a spirit of self-control and we need His strength for the battles.
- To realize when we stand for the Lord, we may stand with the Lord alone, which is still the majority.

Attitude

- To desire nothing in life more than Jesus.
- To love the disciplines which deepen our relationship with the Lord.

Actions

- To live a Spirit-controlled and self-disciplined life even when it would be easier to follow others or our own flesh.
- To "endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children." Hebrews 12:7

Memory Verse:

Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Genesis 39:1-12; Proverbs 25:28; Matthew 6:16-18; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; 9:24-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 2:2, 6, 11-14; Hebrews 11:24-26; James 1:2-4

Questions about the Story:

1. Why did the Lord send His people into captivity? (Daniel 1:1-2. The Israelites had turned away from the Lord to other gods. They had rebelled against His commands and they had rejected the prophets that the Lord had sent.)
2. What kind of people were taken captive and brought to Babylonia as captives? (Daniel 1:3-4. The captives were young men from the royal family and nobility who were without physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.)
3. What do the qualities of these young men and their ability to learn the language say about them? (Daniel 1:3-4. The Lord gave them sharp minds. They were ready for the task and they had already developed some mental self-discipline.)
4. What is the next set of tests that they had to face? (Daniel 1:4-6. They had to face the mental brainwashing of the Babylonian language and literature, the physical temptations of the king's food and their new identity with Babylonian names.)
5. Why did Daniel "resolve not to defile himself with the royal food and drink?" (Daniel 1:8. Because they had been offered as sacrifices to the Babylonian gods and it would have been an offense against the Lord.)
6. How did Daniel show respect and self-control in his dealings with those over him? (Daniel 1:8,12. He asked permission, referred to himself as a servant and he offered an alternative option as a test.)
7. What challenges did Daniel and his friends face in this test? (Daniel 1:12-14. Their faith and their God were both being tested. Their resolve not to eat the choice food. The short window of time to see a change. The comparison to other young men. The peer pressure to conform.)
8. How does the Lord meet them in the test that they were facing? (Daniel 1:9, 15, 17. Although these four men stepped out in faith, the Lord is the One that gave them success. The Lord caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel. He caused them to look healthier and

better nourished than any of the other young men. God gave these four men knowledge and understanding of all kinds.)

9. How did this test or spiritual discipline bring glory to God? (Daniel 1:8-20. The chief official, the guard and the other young men all watched as Daniel and his friends showed self control, honored God and looked better than the others after only 10 days.)
10. Is there a connection between the test of food and the knowledge that the Lord gave the four men? (Daniel 1:17. The text does not say that Lord gave them the knowledge because they didn't eat the food. The Lord gave them the gifts of knowledge because they were willing to allow the Lord to use them for His glory before the king and the whole kingdom.)
11. How was the Lord glorified before the king and the kingdom? (Daniel 1:18-20. In just 3 years, there were none equal to these four. They were able to answer any questions that they were asked and were 10 times better than those from within the kingdom. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all.")

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does the Lord allow bad things to happen in our lives? (Daniel 1:1-2) [The Lord allows bad or hard things to happen so we will turn to Him, depend on Him and bring glory to Him.]
2. Can we be safe and secure by just having the things of God around us? (Daniel 1:1-2) [It is not having the things of God around us, (such as Jehoiakim had the articles in the temple of the Lord), but it is our relationship with the Lord Himself.]
3. How do we respond when the pleasures of this world are offered to us? (Daniel 1:5) [We are tested like Daniel with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These are opportunities to seek the Lord and glorify God.]
4. How can **spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, meditation and solitude** help us in our walk with the Lord? (Daniel 1:8-12) [These disciplines help us put to death the desires of the flesh and seek first the kingdom of God. They reveal what is truly controlling our hearts, as we grow deeper and closer to the Lord. See also 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 for physical discipline; Matthew 6:16-18 for fasting and 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 for sexual discipline.]

5. How can we resist temptation? (Daniel 1:12) [1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”]
6. Where is God in the midst of the things that happen to us? (Daniel 1:9, 17) [God is right with us, working in and through the situations that we are going through and giving us wisdom and understanding to know how to respond at the right time. See also Hebrews 4:15]
7. Are you willing to stick up for something that you know to be true and right?
8. What part do spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, meditation and solitude have in preparing us for being used by God? [Growing close to the Lord and listening to Him through these disciplines teaches us the Lord’s will and removes the distractions of our flesh, the world and the devil.]
9. How can our lives bring glory to God even if the world doesn’t recognize Him? (Daniel 1:12) [We can shine the love of God to the world around us. He will shine through our respect, dignity, compassion and self-control. People can see the difference that Jesus makes in our lives.]
10. What specific ways can God use us like He did Daniel? (Daniel 1:8-20) [He can use us when our lifestyle is different than the world and when we trust the Lord through tests of our faith. He can use humble and respectful people that respond with the wisdom the Lord gives us. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”]
11. How have you seen God show His faithfulness to you in your day-to-day life?
12. How do others see you when they look at your life? Do they see God at work in your life?

75. Caring for Your Family

Jesus on the Cross and The Prodigal Son

John 19:25-27 & Luke 15:11-32

John 19

²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," ²⁷and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Luke 15

¹¹Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²²"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Study Questions: Caring for Your Family

John 19:25-27 & Luke 15:11-32

Introduction:

As Jesus hung dying on the cross, His concern was the care for His mother more than Himself. As Jesus spoke to John and Mary, He was caring for her earthly needs by entrusting her to John's care and He was caring for her eternal needs by dying on the cross. That type of love is unconditional, it does not matter what the other person has done. It is giving love that is not concerned with what is received in return.

Unconditional love is also described in the text from Luke 15 of the two lost sons. Both of the two boys had conditional love. They were selfish and self-centered and it was the father that had to go to them and bring them back into the family.

God has also given each of us a family to care for. We carry responsibilities for our parents, spouses and children. The first responsibility is to love them as Christ loved the Church; which was even unto death. His ultimate unconditional love is what makes it possible for us to selflessly love our own families.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand the unconditional love that God has for us that we would be called His children.
- To recognize that God is our Heavenly Father and we, in Christ, are apart of His family.
- To remember our God-given responsibilities to our families and their need to be loved.

Attitude

- To praise the Lord for the immediate family members that He has given us.
- To love all of our brothers and sisters in the Lord who make up the body of Christ, "the family of God."

Actions

- To serve, provide for, respect, and love those who are a part of our immediate family.
- To forgive, offer grace and sacrifice for them as well.

Memory Verses:

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Mark 3:35 "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Mark 3:31-35, 10:29-30; Luke 9:57-62; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:17-21; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:8

Questions about the Story:

1. What do those at the cross say with just their presence? (John 19:25-26. They loved Jesus, they believed in Him and they were grieving together.)
2. Why did Jesus direct His mother to John and John to His mother? (John 19:26-27. Jesus gave John the responsibility of her care; which would have been the first born son's role. Jesus also entrusted John into His mother's care because he also needed her.)
3. What does John's response show? (John 19:27. John was faithful to his responsibility and Mary also cared for John.)
4. What does it mean when the younger son asks the father for his estate? (Luke 15:12-13. The younger son is saying that he ultimately cares more about money than the family. By asking for the inheritance, which is given at a person's death, he also says that he wanted the inheritance of his father's death.)
5. By giving the son the inheritance, what does the father communicate? (Luke 15:12. He loved the son, but could not force his son to love him in return.)
6. What did the son learn after squandering his wealth? (Luke 15:13-16. He learned that riches don't last, that he needed help and that he needed his family. He also learned that you cannot buy love or happiness.)
7. What did his hunger, disgrace and emptiness show him? (Luke 15:14-19. It showed him that he had it great back home, that he had sinned, that he needed his father's forgiveness and that he didn't deserve anything.)
8. How were the problems that he had faced a blessing to him? (Luke 15:17-19. The son came to his senses with a repentant heart. He saw that he was unworthy of anything.)
9. What does the son's speech say? (Luke 15:18-19. His sin was against God and it showed his heart. He expected to be treated like a hired hand or a servant.)
10. What is unusual about the father's response? Why? (Luke 15:20-24. The father had been watching for him. He was filled with compassion, ran to the son, called his servants to bring a robe, a ring, and sandals, to kill the fatted calf, and to call a

celebration feast. The son was “dead” and was alive again, he was lost and had been found. The father showed undeserved extravagant love and mercy for the younger son.)

11. What does the older son’s response say? Why? (Luke 15:25. The older son was angry and bitter. He was holding a grudge against his brother. He was also proud and self-centered.)
12. Why did the father go out to meet the older son and ask him to come in? (Luke 15:28-32. The Father loved him as well. The father desired the family to be together, not separated.)

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we support our family in their trials? (John 19:25) [Going through trials with them often says more than words.]
2. What responsibilities do we have for our families? (John 19:26-27) [Care for our parents, spouse and children is a high priority. As we love them, we love the Lord.]
3. Is your love for your family like Christ’s love for the church? [Jesus’ love for the church is both sacrificial and unconditional. That type of love lived out in the family establishes boundaries that must be obeyed but they are enforced within an unconditional relationship.]
4. Should we only love our family when we are in a situation that makes it easy to love them? [No, we see that Jesus showed love for His family when He was hanging on the cross and ready to die. The father welcomed the prodigal son home even after the son had left him and wasted his money.]
5. How do we waste the riches that our Father in heaven has given to us? (Luke 15:12-13) [We, like the older son, try to hoard God’s resources for ourselves. We care more about ourselves than we do about God or His family. We try to buy happiness and love and we waste His gifts.]
6. What trials does the Lord allow into our lives to show us our need of Him? (Luke 15:14-16) [He allows pain to come in many forms when we run away from Him. Emotional and physical pain can serve as reminders to cause us to come to our senses.]
7. What is your memory of your father?
8. How is the Lord like the prodigal’s father? (Luke 15:20) [The Heavenly Father is looking for and longing for His children to come to Him. He is filled with compassion and undeserved love.]
9. What prepared speeches have we tried to give to the Lord like the prodigal son did to his father?

10. When does the Lord see us in our need? (Luke 15:20) [Even while we are far off.]
11. What is the Father's response to us when we come to Him in need? (Luke 15:32) [He runs out to meet us, wraps His arms around us and welcomes us into His family.]
12. When we see God's undeserved grace on someone else's life, what is our response? (Luke 15:27-28)
13. How are we often like the older son? (Luke 15:28-30) [We can complain or hold grudges because things are not fair.]
14. How is your relationship with your parents, spouse or children? [Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:4]
15. How can you show sacrificial and unconditional love to your spouse and your children? [Talk, work, pray and eat together. Put their needs before your own.]
16. How do you provide for your family? [1 Timothy 5:8]
17. What would your Heavenly Father say to you right now?

76. Caring for Your Neighbors

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

Luke 10

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."
Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Study Questions: Caring for Your Neighbors

Luke 10:25-37

Introduction:

The expert in the Law could mentally understand and even agree with the need to love God and to love others, but the extent to which Jesus described love was beyond what seemed reasonable. To love a dying stranger or to use a Samaritan as the example of love went too far. Loving some neighbors may be easy because of the friendship we have or the benefits we receive. The love that Jesus suggests is caring for people we don't know, those who could never pay us back and even for our enemies. It is in this extravagant love that Jesus is revealed. This is the type of love that He demonstrated to us. Jesus is the one that carried us, healed us and paid a debt that we could not repay. To love our neighbors is just showing them what we have first received. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that our love for others comes from the wellspring of love that the Lord has lavished on us.
- To realize that showing love is a daily choice and opportunity.

Attitude

- To have Jesus' love for people, no matter their age, race, appearance, or background.
- To consider others better than ourselves.

Actions

- To look for those who need Christ's love and compassion.
- To give others the selfless sacrificial love that Christ gave us.

Memory Verses:

1 John 4:7-9 "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Matthew 25:35-40; John 13:34-35; Romans 5:6-8;

1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 John 4:7-19

Questions about the Story:

1. How did the expert of the Law's test backfire on him? (Luke 10:25, 37. He wanted to justify himself or prove that he was right. Instead, Jesus' story pointed out how wrong he was.)
2. What does the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" assume? (Luke 10:25. It assumes that if we do enough or if we do the right things, then we will inherit eternal life.)
3. Why did the man ask the question about how to inherit eternal life if he knew the answer? (Luke 10:26-27. He knew that it was difficult to follow the law perfectly. Jesus made sure that he knew that it was impossible to keep the law.)
4. How could the man show his love for an unseen God? (Luke 10:27. He could show a sincere love for God by loving those created in God's image.)
5. What is the difference between the robbers, the priest and the Levite? (Luke 10:30-32. The robbers were physically violent toward the man from their evil nature. The priest and Levite uncaring and unconcerned toward the man which also came from their evil nature.)
6. Why did the priest and Levite pass by on the other side of the man? (Luke 10:31-32. They were religious men with high prominence in society. To come across a dead man meant that they would be unclean. They cared more about their religious cleanliness more than the person made in God's image.)
7. How did the Samaritan show love when he saw the injured man? (Luke 10:33-34. He took pity on him, treated and bandaged his wounds. The Samaritan also put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him.)
8. Why did the Samaritan give the innkeeper payment and promise to give him more? (Luke 10:35. The Samaritan was more concerned about the man than about himself.)
9. What does the Samaritan's response reveal? (Luke 10:33-35. It showed the genuine love that the man had in his heart. It revealed that the priest and the Levite were not showing love. He demonstrated the extent to which God has loved us.)
10. Why did Jesus ask the expert in The Law "who do you think was a neighbor?" (Luke 10:37. It revealed his lack of love for people and his hard heart toward God. The man couldn't even say the word Samaritan because of his hard heart.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Similar to the expert of the law, how do we desire to "do things" in order to inherit eternal life in our lives?

2. Where do we need to find our love? (Luke 10:26) [Our love comes from Jesus. He loved us extravagantly. He is the one that carried us, healed us and paid a debt that we could not repay. To love our neighbors is showing them what we have first received. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love them because He first loved us.”]
3. How can we practically love God and love people? (Luke 10:27.) [When we stop and see people’s needs, meet those needs, share their burden and give of ourselves.]
4. Why are we to “love our neighbor” and why is it difficult? (Luke 10:27, 37) [We are to love them because the Lord commanded us and because God is love. It is difficult because it is against our nature to love others. It is only Jesus love in us that is anything besides selfish.]
5. What are some ways that we act like the robbers, the priest or the Levite? (Luke 10:30-32) [We take advantage of people without being concerned about them. We walk by people without thinking about their needs, their hurts, or how we could help them. Our schedule is more important than another’s needs.]
6. How do we reflect the love of God when we show others love? (Luke 10:33-35) [We reflect God’s love when we care about people regardless of whom they are and regardless of any thought about ourselves.]
7. How does our “position” affect who we choose to help? [We can feel it would degrade us to stoop down and help someone. We can think of ourselves more highly than we ought.]
8. What does it mean to love your neighbor? (Matthew 7:12 says, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.”)
9. What should be our response to this parable? (Luke 10:33) [Asking the Lord’s forgiveness for hurting and walking by people and asking Him to give us His love for the neighbors that I pass everyday.]

77. Caring for the Church

The Early Church

Acts 2:42-47 & Acts 18:1-11

Acts 2

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 18

¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

⁷Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Study Questions: Caring for the Church

Acts 2:42-47 & Acts 18:1-11

Introduction:

Acts chapter 2 describes the kind of church that everyone wants to be a part of. The people are growing in the Word of God, miracles are happening, people are sharing, everyone is glad and new believers are joining the church. Acts chapter 18 describes a different picture. The people in Corinth are abusive, the synagogue splits, a Christian church starts meeting next door and the synagogue leader joins that new church. Even Paul needed to be reminded to keep preaching and not to be afraid.

As members of a church, we are part of the body of Christ. While we are sinners, the one hope for the Church is that Christ is the head of the body. When we, as members of that body, submit to Him, then the whole body works together, but when we resist the Lord, then the body struggles. These two texts can encourage us and teach us how to care for the Church so that it does look like the bride of Christ that it was intended to be.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To see the Church as our family and God as our Heavenly Father.
- To remember that the Church is Christ's body and He is the head. It is His kingdom on earth.

Attitude

- To delight in the fellowship in the local church and communion with believers around the world.

Actions

- To worship and share Jesus as a community of believers.
- To support the physical and spiritual needs of those in our fellowship as well as the larger body of Christ.
- To seek fellowship with other Christians centered on the Word of God.

Memory Verses:

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

1 John 3:17-18 "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has not pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

Scriptures for Further Study:

John 13:34-35; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Hebrews 10:23-25;
1 John 3:11-20; 4:7-21

Questions about the Story:

1. How does the **Word of God** play a part in the early Church? (Acts 2:42; Acts 18:5, 11. In Acts 2, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” In Corinth, Paul dedicated himself exclusively to preaching and he stayed for a year and a half teaching them the Word of God.)
2. What role did **fellowship** have in the early Church? (Acts 2:42-46; 18:7, 8. They devoted themselves to fellowship, all the believers were together, they had everything in common and every day they continued to meet in the temple courts. Even in Corinth, they met together weekly.)
3. Where does **worship** show up in the early Church? (Acts 2:42, 47; 18:7. They were breaking bread in remembrance of Jesus, praying, praising and are even described as worshipers of God.)
4. How do these texts show that **reaching out** was a part of who they were? (Acts 2:45, 47; 18:4, 8. They had an open attitude regarding anyone who had needs. Their concern for reaching out was also seen by the favor that they had with all of the people. In Corinth, Paul was trying to persuade the Jews and enlighten the Greeks; many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized.)
5. How was **the Lord revealed** through these growing believers? (Acts 2:43, 47; 18:5, 8-10. The Lord was revealed through the “many wonders and miraculous signs” as well as the number of believers that were being added daily. In Corinth, Paul was preaching that Jesus was the Christ. Many who heard him believed and were baptized.)
6. How did the early Church get to the point where everyone was equal and that there were no needs among the believers? (Acts 2:45. The believers sold their possessions and goods in order to provide for fellow believers.)
7. What was the **attitude** of the members as they broke bread and ate together? (Acts 2:46. The believers came together and shared their food with glad and sincere hearts, praising God, and enjoying the favor of all people.)

8. How did the Church show that they were **meeting** real practical **needs**? (Acts 2:45; 18:3, 7. In Jerusalem, they gave to anyone as they had need. In Corinth, Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla and Titius Justus used his home as a meeting place for the new group.)
9. Why did the church in Corinth have struggles and a split? (Acts 18:6. The Jews, in Corinth, opposed Paul and became abusive to him. So, Paul shook out his clothes in protest and left. The people refused to believe in the Lord or to follow Him. Conflict comes from refusal to submit to the Lord and stubbornness to think that we are right.)
10. How does the Lord's message encourage Paul? (Acts 18:9. The Lord's message encouraged Paul, because He promised to be with him and protect him.)

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the **Word of God** change our lives? (Acts 2:42; Acts 18:5, 11) [The Word of God changes us by teaching us about God, giving us a reason to worship. It changes us by showing us who we are and pointing us to the needs of people around us.]
2. How would someone describe the **fellowship** at our churches? (Acts 2:42-46; 18:7, 8) [At times it might be full of "glad hearts" and at other times abusive because fellowship is made up of sinful people. Yet, when we submit to the Lord and His will, He makes our fellowship sweet.]
3. How can **worship** be a simple beautiful response to the Lord rather than an entertainment show? (Acts 2:42, 47; 18:7) [The Early Church had a very simple form of worship. It focused on teaching the Word of God, remembering Jesus sacrifice, baptisms, prayer and praising God.]
4. How can we **reach** the world around us? (Acts 2:45, 47; 18:4, 8) [We can be reaching out by meeting people's needs and sharing what Jesus has done in our lives.]
5. What would a welcoming open **attitude** look like in our churches? (Acts 2:44-47) [Acts 2 describes good fellowship, teaching and worship. It describes people that are filled with awe they are united and they are sharing. An open attitude is one where the people are glad, they are sincere and people are joining them.]
6. How can people see **the Lord revealed** in our churches? (Acts 2:43, 47; 18:5, 8-10) [Through the faithful preaching of God's Word and sincere worship, resulting in people being saved.]

7. What happens when the Word of God is no longer the center of the fellowship we share as the Church? [We become a social club that meets for gatherings and fellowship.]
8. How can we show love to those who are directly involved in our local church? The church abroad? (Romans 12:6-8)
9. Why is attending a church needed for the believer? [It is essential for the life of a believer to receive the fellowship, encouragement, and accountability from being together as a body. Hebrews 10:23-25 says, “Do not give up meeting together.”]
10. How can you assist your local church body?
11. What should be some of the natural results of the body of Christ coming together for fellowship around the Word of God? (Acts 2:46-47) [Glad and sincere hearts, a desire to praise and worship God, and the respect of all the people.]
12. How can the Lord direct our churches and empower us to go forward in ministry? (Acts 2:47; Acts 18:10) [We should keep Him in the center of everything we do through His Word and His Spirit. We need his guidance and protection.]
13. How can you help and support those who are involved in the ministry?
14. Why is ministry and caring for the church difficult? (Acts 18:6) [Caring for the church can be a struggle because there are those who directly oppose ministry, even to the point of abuse. Satan will also try to ruin attempts to promote God’s will in the congregation.]
15. Do you need encouragement from the Lord regarding your ministry? (Acts 18:9-10) [Like the Lord told Paul, “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you.”]

78. Church Unity

Divisions in the Church

1 Corinthians 3:1-11 & Acts 15:1-12

1 Corinthians 3

¹Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Acts 15

¹Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ²This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. ⁴When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses."

⁶The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might

hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

¹²The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

Study Questions: Church Unity

1 Corinthians 3:1-11 & Acts 15:1-12

Introduction:

The church in Corinth struggled with many of the same things that we struggle with in our churches today. There were various opinions about Apollos' leadership versus Paul's authority and there was jealousy and quarreling because the church had lost their foundation on Jesus. The same type of struggle showed up in Antioch over circumcision. When they brought the matter to the church in Jerusalem the topic had the potential of splitting the Early Church. After the apostles and elders discussed the issue, they found the solution was to bring it right back to Jesus and His grace.

Like a family, the Church family can also have problems because its members are sinners. It is essential that we bring problems back to the one foundation, Jesus, and work through the problems. Church unity is not the absence of problems, but the decision to work through the problems. We must not run from the conflicts, but rather look to Jesus for a way to solve them. Romans 15:5 says, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus."

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that if Christ is the head of the body, then there is only one body.
- To realize that we are servants of the Lord and our only purpose is to bring Him glory.

Attitude

- To appreciate the differences that God has made in each member of His body.

Actions

- To listen and understand other people's perspectives.
- To encourage fellow brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.
- To unite as a body reaching the world for Christ.

Memory Verse:

1 Peter 3:8 "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Psalm 133; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:5-8, 12; Ephesians 4:1-7; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 3:8-11; 1 John 3:11-20; 4:7-21

Questions about the Story:

1. How does Paul view the Corinthian church? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4. He told them that he viewed them as infants in Christ, worldly, jealous, quarrelsome and mere men.)
2. How are Paul and Apollos' character described? (1 Corinthians 3:5-9. They have a servant attitude and are working at their assigned task. They recognize that the work they do is nothing because only God can make it grow. They are working for one purpose, the Lord's glory.)
3. What is the problem with focusing on two different leaders? (1 Corinthians 3:3-4. Following two leaders will always lead down two separate paths. If we are following Jesus, then there is only one leader and one foundation.)
4. How does a leader help the church? (1 Corinthians 3:5-9. They must serve the church, plant the seeds of faith in people, water that faith with the Word of God and watch the Lord grow people for use in His kingdom.)
5. How do leaders hurt the church? (1 Corinthians 3:3-4. They allow jealousy, quarreling and immature attitudes to develop. Any amount of personal pride destroys the focus on what the Lord has done.)
6. What is the leader's role versus God's? (1 Corinthians 3:5-11. The leader can only do the task they have been assigned. Even that work is the grace of God. The Lord is the one that causes people to believe and He is the one that makes them to grow. The very foundation is Jesus alone.)
7. How does the Lord receive glory? (1 Corinthians 3:9-11. When the Church works together, people are saved, the Word of God is taught and the living temple of God is constructed.)
8. Why does Paul give a caution about how to build on the foundation of Christ? (1 Corinthians 3:10. Because there is no other foundation other than Jesus Christ.)
9. Why was the topic of circumcision so important? (Acts 15:1. It was a matter of salvation. It was a physical sign of membership in the Jewish community. It was a huge cultural jump for the Jews to accept that Gentiles could be saved. It was even a greater jump to set aside the circumcision that God had established with Abraham.)
10. How was the teaching that the men brought from Judea to Antioch harmful? (Acts 15:1. It brought doubt about how people are saved. It caused questions and doubt about the two

founding teachers in Antioch. It forced the issue to be brought to Jerusalem.)

11. How did the church in Antioch respond to the debate that came up in their church? (Acts 15:2-3. The church appointed Paul and Barnabas, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question about circumcision for Gentile believers.)
12. How does Paul and Barnabas' testimony encourage church unity? (Acts 15:3-4. Paul and Barnabas reported everything that God had done through them and how the Gentiles had been converted. It was a focus on the Lord's work that brought about unity.)
13. How did the apostles and elders respond to believers who belonged to the Pharisees? (Acts 15:6-11. They met to consider and discuss the question. Then Peter explained that God had accepted the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit and had made no distinction between them and the Jews. Peter pointed out that it is **only through the grace of the Lord Jesus that there is salvation.**)

Discussion Questions:

1. What appearance does the Church give to the outside world when we fight, quarrel, and argue? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4) [The world thinks of it as the same as itself, if not worse because of the hypocritical lifestyle of promoting love and peace but living in anger and dissension.]
2. How should we respond when arguments and debates come up in church? (1 Corinthians 3:5; Acts 15:2, 8, 11) [We should take the attitude of servants and humble ourselves before God. Then we should take the issue to leadership and seek the Lord. Finally, the decision must come as the whole Church is united in God's Word.]
3. What is the problem when we follow the leadership of man rather than Jesus? (1 Corinthians 3:3-4) [We begin to compare ourselves with others. In the process envy, jealousy, and quarrels develop.]
4. How should we view our position in the ministry of God? (1 Corinthians 3:5-6) [We should view ourselves as mere servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, appointed to do that which He would have us to do.]
5. What are some ways that you can be serving your church body?

6. How do we help or hurt the church? (1 Corinthians 3:3-9) [We help the Church when we focus on Jesus and help the people grow. We hurt the church anytime that our pride gets involved. Every fruit that is produced comes because the Lord has created it and not ourselves.]
7. How can we stay united in ministry? (Acts 15:3-4, 11-12) [We must focus on our salvation through Jesus and the work that the Lord is doing.]
8. What are some ways that you have seen the Lord actively working in your congregation?
9. Why does all of the honor and praise need to go to the Lord if anything good comes out of our ministry? (1 Corinthians 3:7) [God alone must receive the glory because He causes fruit and growth in the ministry.]
10. What are we to do in the church when we don't know or understand what our ministry is? (1 Corinthians 3:5-8) [We should seek God, as He ultimately is the one who appoints and determines the work that we are to be about and is the one who works through us. Other Christians may assist us in seeing how God has blessed us or is leading us.]
11. What foundation should our ministries be built on? (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Acts 15:11) [Our lives and ministries must be built on the foundation of Christ. It is only through the grace of God that are we saved. He is a solid rock any other foundation is sinking sand.]

Scriptures on False Prophets:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 Jeremiah 23:16-18

What is the work of a false prophet?

Matthew 7:15-23 2 Peter 2:1-3

What will be in the last days?

2 Timothy 4:2-4 2 Timothy 3:1-5
 Matthew 24:23-24 Revelation 13:11-18
 Revelation 19:20 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15

79. Praying for Healing

Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant and the Son from Nain

Luke 7:1-22

Luke 7

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people."

¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. ¹⁸John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, ¹⁹he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" ²⁰When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" "

²¹At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²²So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Study Questions: Praying for Healing

Luke 7:1-22

Introduction:

We live in a hurting world where we encounter sickness and death. Sin has affected every aspect of creation including our health. However, God works in the realm of the supernatural and is able to supersede that which we are able to do on this earth. We benefit not only in having a God who is all-powerful but one who is also personal; who deeply desires for us to know Him and call out to Him. Thus, we are able to call out to God in prayer and ask for that which in our own minds may seem impossible knowing that with Him they are not.

In this text, a Roman centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus heals the servant and honors the centurion's great faith. Then Jesus raises the dead son of a widow without even being requested to do so. Jesus demonstrated power over sickness and death and He invites us to "ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14:14)

Goals:

Knowledge

- To realize that Jesus has power over sin, sickness and death.
- To understand that when we pray, God doesn't always give us the answer we want, but we can always trust His answer.

Attitude

- To have compassion for those around us who are sick and hurting and bring them before the Lord in prayer.
- To trust the Lord fully and thank Him for the answers He gives.

Actions

- To pray in faith for the many needs around us and have confidence that the Lord is able to do more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Memory Verses:

James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

1 John 5:14-15 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Exodus 15:26; 1 Kings 17:7-24; Matthew 15:22-28; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 18:1-5; Acts 28:27-28; Hebrews 11:6; James 5:14-20; 1 John 5:14-15

Questions about the Story:

1. What does the text say about the servant? (Luke 7:1-2. He was the servant of a centurion. He was highly valued, but he was sick and about to die.)
2. What do we know about the centurion? (Luke 7:3-9. He had heard of Jesus. He was respected by the elders of the Jews. He was humble and respected the cultural boundaries. He understood authority because he himself was in charge of 100 soldiers. He knew that Jesus could command this illness and that he had great faith.)
3. Why did the elders plead with Jesus? (Luke 7:4. They felt like they owed the centurion something because he had built the synagogue and that he loved the nation.)
4. What is unusual about the centurion's message to Jesus? (Luke 7:6-8. A Roman officer would not normally give respect to a traveling Jewish prophet. He was humble, which is also an unusual response. His job was to control the visible world, but he understood that Jesus was in control of the unseen world of illness.)
5. How did the centurion demonstrate his faith in the power of Jesus? (Luke 7:7. The centurion showed faith by believing that if Jesus merely said the word his servant would be healed.)
6. Why was Jesus surprised at the centurion's response? (Luke 7:9. He as a Roman had more faith than the Israelites. He understood the power that Jesus had over this illness when so many others did not. He did not consider himself worthy to have Jesus even come to his house.)
7. What does the healing say about Jesus? (Luke 7:10. Jesus has power over illness; His power is not based on His physical presence and He is looking for people of faith.)
8. What was the situation of the woman whose son had died? (Luke 7:11-12. She was a widow and the one who died was her only son. This also meant that she didn't have anyone left to care for her and her grief was very great.)
9. When it says that a dead person was being carried out, what does that mean? (Luke 7:12. He had no pulse and no breath.)

- The coffin and funeral procession meant they had no hope of life. Death was final; they had no reason to expect otherwise.)
10. What does Jesus' response to the mother show? (Luke 7:13. He understood her pain and He cared about her personally.)
 11. What does Jesus' power over death with just a word reveal? (Luke 7:14. It reveals that He is God and that we don't have to fear death or any other problem before us.)
 12. What was the result of this miraculous resurrection? (Luke 7:16. The people in the crowd praised God, saying, "God has come to help His people.")
 13. Why did John ask Jesus if He was the one? (Luke 7:19. From prison, John couldn't see all that was going on. In prison he needed the encouragement of the promised Messiah.)
 14. How is Jesus' simple answer so strong? (Luke 7:22. Instead of answering with words, Jesus pointed to the physical realities that were happening. The testimonies of the lives that had been changed and the proclamation of the Good News was stronger than anything He could have said.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the problems in your life that you need to bring to Jesus?
2. What does the centurion's request show us about prayer? (Luke 7:6-7) [Who we are does not make us more deserving of God's attention. It is faith in Jesus alone that makes us worthy or able to request anything of God. Even though we are unworthy, we can trust the Lord's power and desire to heal.]
3. Did the centurion's "good works" cause Jesus to heal the servant? (Luke 7:4-7) [No. It is our faith in Jesus that allows us to receive anything. Jesus did not commend the centurion for his good works, but for his faith.]
4. Since faith is what allows us to believe that the Lord can heal, can the Lord work in spite of our lack of faith? (Luke 7:13-15) [Yes. Faith is a gift from God and He is able to bring a person back to life and create faith where there was none. Apart from Christ in our hearts, we are spiritually dead. There is nothing that we can do to become alive, but Jesus says to us like he said to the young man, "I say to you, get up!"]
5. If Jesus has the ability to heal, why is there still sickness and death? [Matthew 13:54-58 says that Jesus did not do many miracles in His hometown because of their lack of faith. Many times people do not even turn to Jesus for healing. They will try every other thing, but will not ask the Lord.]

6. Is it always God's will to heal? [No. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 Paul was not healed from the thorn in his flesh. In 1 John 5:14-15 it says that He will give us what we ask if it is according to His will. In John 9:1-3, Jesus told His disciples that the man had been blind from birth so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. In John 11:4, Jesus said the Lazarus' death was also for the glory of God.]
7. How is our faith revealed? (Luke 7:9) [Our faith can be seen in prayer when we cry out to the Lord. It can be seen when trials come and we depend on the Lord for strength. It also shows when we tell people about the greatness of God.]
8. What situations have stretched your faith? What has caused your faith to grow?
9. What should we do when we face sickness? (Luke 7:4) [Plead earnestly with Jesus for His mercy. James 5:13-16 also reminds us to "call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" and "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."]
10. How can the Lord be glorified through illnesses and problems that we face? [Sometimes it is through miraculous events like these healings, other times it is through the testimony of what He has done. John was beheaded in prison and yet God was glorified through his life.]
11. What do we learn about the character of God when we look at Jesus' compassion for people while He lived on earth? (Luke 7:13) [Just as Jesus had compassion on the widow or the servant, He also cares for us.]
12. What kind of heart do you have for those who are hurting or in pain around you? What is your response to them?
13. When we see God doing miraculous work around us, what should be our response? (Luke 7:16) [Like the crowd, we can respond with praise to God for coming to help His people.]
14. Like John, we also have doubts. How can you battle those doubts? (Luke 7:19) [The Word of God and the testimony of what He has done defeats doubt.]
15. If Jesus was able to heal the blind, lame, lepers, deaf, and dead, what has He done in your life?

80. Witnessing

Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin

Acts 4:1-21

Acts 4

¹The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

⁵The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹He is

" 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. ¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

¹³When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶"What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than

God. ²⁰For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

²¹After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

Study Questions: Witnessing

Acts 4:1-21

Introduction:

Peter and John had gone up to the temple to pray and as they entered, they healed a man that had been crippled from birth. After using that opportunity to tell people about Jesus and the power in His name, they were put in jail for what they had said. However, jail just gave them an opportunity to tell the rulers, elders, teachers of the law and the high priest's family about Jesus.

Today, we can also face opposition for telling people about Jesus, yet it is the message that our world needs to hear. Whether it is through trials or times of praise, each and every circumstance can convey Jesus Christ's work in our lives. Our purpose on earth is not only to know Jesus, but also to tell those around us so they may know Him. Peter's message to the leaders is clear, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

Goals:

Knowledge

- To know that the Lord gives everyone who believes personal experiences of God that others need to hear.
- To understand that resisting or ignoring the work of God is opposing God.

Attitude

- To have kindness and courage as we testify about Jesus.

Actions

- To use every blessing and trial in life to tell people about the greatness of God.
- To obey God rather than men when people try to silence the Gospel of Christ.

Memory Verses:

Matthew 10:19-20 "But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

1 Peter 3:15-16 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

Scriptures for Further Study:

Matthew 10:19-20; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, 2:22-38; 14:1-7; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-6; 1 Peter 3:15-16

Questions about the Story:

1. What is strange about being arrested for healing someone and preaching about Jesus in the temple? (Acts 4:1. The temple is where people should come for healing, prayer, and talking about what God has done. It should be the most welcoming place.)
2. Why did the priests and the captain of the temple arrest Peter and John for **speaking about Jesus**? (Acts 4:1-2. These same leaders were the ones that had crucified Jesus. They were greatly disturbed because they were proclaiming Jesus' resurrection. To them, preaching that Jesus was the Messiah, seemed to go against everything in their religion.)
3. What type of **opposition** did Peter and John face? (Acts 4:3, 7, 18. The leaders of Jews put them in jail, had them face trial and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus.)
4. What was it about the **message** that caused such a response? (Acts 4:10-12. It was Jesus, whom they had crucified, denied and rejected that was raised from the dead. It was Jesus as the Messiah and the power in His name that they did not believe. It was the exclusive claim that salvation was found in no one else.)
5. What was the **response** from those in the crowd who had heard the message and proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ? (Acts 4:4. Many who had heard the message believed and added themselves to those who were already of the faith.)
6. How did the rulers, elders, teachers of the law and high priest's family **respond** to the message? (Acts 4:13-17. They were astonished at Peter and John and their confidence. They were left speechless by the fact that the man who had been healed was standing there. They were confused about what to do with them. They were unwilling to believe even though they recognized it as an outstanding miracle that they could not deny and they were defiant by commanding Peter and John to stop speaking in Jesus name.)
7. What types of **power** are being referred to? (Acts 4:7-19. The leaders are wondering where the healing power came from. Peter responds in the power of the Holy Spirit. The healing was done in the power of the name of Jesus. The leaders tried

to use their power to stop Peter and John, but God's power or authority was above all.)

8. Why did Peter direct the attention and glory for the healing to Jesus? (Acts 4:10. Since it was not Peter that healed the man, he could not take any credit for the healing. Since it was Jesus that healed the man, Peter should not have been credited for the good that was done.)
9. What was behind Peter and John's question of whether they should obey God rather than the religious leaders? (Acts 4:19-20. It was the responsibility of the priests and elders to be the intercessors between the people and God. Instead, they had become the roadblock. They were unwilling to acknowledge that this outstanding miracle was from God.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What strange things do we face in telling people about Jesus? (Acts 4:1) [We can find strong resistance in our homes or with our families. We can also find receptivity from some of the most unlikely people and the strangest of places.]
2. What is the **message** that we have to proclaim to the world around us? (Acts 4:2, 12) [The message of the good news of Jesus is needed in the whole world. It is in Jesus that we have forgiveness of our sins, the hope of resurrection, salvation, and healing.]
3. How can you share Jesus Christ with those around you?
4. What positive response have you received from those opportunities?
5. What type of **opposition** will we face as we share Jesus? (Acts 4:3, 7, 18) [Like Peter and John, many Christians face threats, jail, punishment and trials.]
6. What will be the **response** of the world around us when we share the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (Acts 4:1-4) [The response of the world will vary widely. Those whom the Holy Spirit has been working in will come to salvation and stand in awe at the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Those who are resisting the work of God will be disturbed by the Gospel and respond negatively.]
7. Why do we have no reason to fear when we are questioned for our faith? (Acts 4:8) [Because we have the **power** of the Holy Spirit living in us. We are serving the Almighty God who has all authority in the earth. Matthew 10:19-20 says He will give us the words to say at the right time.]

8. How can we be a witness for Jesus when we are questioned about our lives and what we are doing? (Acts 4:10-11) [We can serve as a witness for Jesus even when we are questioned and endure hardship by pointing people back to Jesus Christ and giving Him the glory from our lives. We must always be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have. 1 Peter 3:15-16]
9. Why does God use simple and ordinary men to show His glory? (Acts 4:13) [God uses simple men to do His work so that it is obvious that it is not by man but by the Lord Almighty.]
10. What should our response as Christians be when the Lord has told us to do something that the world opposes? (Acts 4:19-20) [As Christians, we should choose to listen to the Word of the Lord over the words of man as God ultimately is the One who has control not only of this present life, but also of the life to come.]
11. What are some of the things that the Lord has been telling you to do? What has been your response?

81. Evangelism

Paul before King Agrippa

Acts 26:1-29

Acts 26

¹Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense:
²"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴"The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. ⁷This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. ⁸Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

⁹"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

¹²"On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

¹⁵"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. ¹⁶Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

¹⁹"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. ²¹That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— ²³that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

²⁴At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

²⁵"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

²⁹Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Study Questions: Evangelism

Acts 26:1-29

Introduction:

Witnessing is telling what Jesus has done. Evangelism is taking the initiative to share Jesus, giving an invitation to respond and leaving the results up to God. Unfortunately, many Christians fail to take that initiative. Common reasons that believers don't share their faith include: fear of rejection, fear of persecution, or fear of not knowing what to say. It all comes down to some form of fear. While fears are real, it is important to remember, "the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

We can be bold and confidently share our faith like Paul does in this account from Acts. In this text, Paul is on trial for his faith in Jesus, but he uses the opportunity to give a clear message of Jesus for King Agrippa along with an invitation to repent and turn to Christ. In Romans 10:24, Paul says why he makes use of every opportunity, "How can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard?"

Goals:

Knowledge

- To know that God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.
- To understand that He desires to use us to share the gospel of Jesus with the world.

Attitude

- That our hearts would burn for those who are condemned to hell because they don't know Jesus.
- That we would rejoice over the salvation of every lost soul.

Actions

- To go into the world proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, the freedom from guilt, the power over addiction, the new life and the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ.
- To pray that the Lord of the harvest will send workers into His fields so that all might be saved.

Memory Verses:

Matthew 9:37-38 "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

Scriptures for Further Study:

Matthew 9:36-38; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 15:7; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:4; Philemon 1:6; 1 Peter 3:15-16; 1 John 4:4

Questions about the Story:

1. Why does Paul say that it is a privilege to stand before King Agrippa? (Acts 26:2-3. For Paul it was always a privilege to tell people about Jesus. It was a special privilege to tell the king because he was familiar with the Jewish customs.)
2. Why did Paul beg King Agrippa to listen patiently? (Acts 26:3. Because the things of God are foolishness to mind of man. To understand spiritual matters is to open ones heart to the Spirit of God and the Word of God.)
3. What is unique about Paul's background? (Acts 26:5-7. Paul grew up in his own country, Tarsus, as well as Jerusalem. He belonged to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, the Pharisees, who knew him well. He earnestly served God and looked for the coming Messiah. It was that very hope that he was trusting in.)
4. Why was it so incredible or difficult for King Agrippa or the others to believe in the resurrection from the dead? (Acts 26:8. No one had ever raised themselves from the dead. For the Jews to accept it meant that they had indeed killed the promised Messiah.)
5. What is Paul's point about his past opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth? (Acts 26:9-10. Paul understood the zeal of the Jews that were opposing him. He understood the role of authority and justice, obsession, punishment and persecution. He understood that the king's role was to judge correctly and Paul had tried to do the same. His personal background gave all the more validity to his argument.)
6. What caused Paul to change so drastically? (Acts 26:12-16. Paul's personal encounter with Jesus changed him from a persecutor of the Jews to a defender of Jesus. Paul's experience with Jesus was dramatic and life changing. Paul experienced the power of Jesus, the conviction of his sin, the grace of God and the Lord's calling for his life.)
7. What commission did Jesus give to Paul? (Acts 26:16-18. Jesus commissioned Paul to be a servant and a witness of what he had seen and what he would be shown. Paul was being sent to not only his own people (the Jews), but also to the Gentiles in order that their eyes might be opened and that they might

turn from darkness to light, receiving the forgiveness of sins and the sanctification by faith in Christ.)

8. Why is Paul's response to the vision important? (Acts 26:19-20. He was obedient to the vision from God. He personally knew of the need for repentance, so he could call others to the same. Paul is indirectly giving the same invitation to King Agrippa.)
9. What does Paul say his message is based on? (Acts 26:22. Paul points back to the Word of God, specifically to Moses and the prophets, as the basis for his message. He points out that those same Scriptures are what pointed to Christ's death and resurrection.)
10. What response did Paul receive for his testimony of Jesus Christ? (Acts 26:24. Festus thought Paul was out of his mind and that he was insane, but Agrippa understood that Paul was trying to persuade him to believe.)
11. How did Paul respond to the criticism? (Acts 26:25. Paul doesn't return the attack, but rather responds with a very humble, yet certain defense.)
12. What did Paul know about King Agrippa and his understanding of what was being presented? (Acts 26:26-27. Paul was aware that King Agrippa was well acquainted with the Scriptures and that he believed in the prophets.)
13. What does Paul's final statement really say? (Acts 26:28-29. In that statement, we can see Paul's true heart and motive for the testimony that he gave. Paul desire, like God's, was for "all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4. See also Matthew 9:36-38)

Discussion Questions:

1. When can we consider it a privilege to share the Gospel? (Acts 26:2-3) [It is a privilege anytime, but the work of God is evident when people want to listen, when they see their need of Jesus, when they let go of their old life and when they receive new birth in Jesus.]
2. How do you respond when someone asks you to tell them what you believe?
3. How can we use our previous life as a testimony to relate and reach others for Jesus Christ? (Acts 26:5-11) [By explaining to people where we have been and telling them how Christ has changed us. The paths that we have walked can show them the power of Christ to transform someone a sinner into a follower of God.]

4. Who are some of those around you that you can be reaching for Jesus Christ?
5. How does Paul's transformation show us the potential of others changing their lives? (Acts 26:12-14) [We see that even though Paul was living a life opposed to Jesus Christ, the Lord revealed Himself to Paul in order to save him. Similarly, the Lord desires to reveal Himself to every one that does not believe, in order that they may be saved. The Lord is the One who has come to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).]
6. How have you seen the Lord's faithfulness in your life and how can you use that as a testimony to share with others?
7. Like Paul, what do we need to make sure that our message is based on? (Acts 26:22) [We need to make sure that when we share our testimony, it is based on the Word of God.]
8. What commission has Jesus given to us regarding the gospel? (Acts 26:16-18) [He has given us the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."]
9. How should we respond when people mock us and ridicule us because of what we believe? Why? (Acts 26:24-25) [We need to respond humbly yet confident and uncompromising in our reply. We should not have a contentious attitude, but seek to model Paul as he boldly and gladly shared about Jesus in spite of the adversity. This attitude will draw others to God.]
10. What attitude should we have for those who are lost and without Christ as the Lord of their lives? (Acts 26:28-29) [We need to love them as family in the kingdom of God and weep over seeing them as separated from God. If we are unconcerned about those that don't know Jesus, we need ask the Lord to change us first.]

82. The Call of God

Jeremiah's Call from God

Jeremiah 1:4-10 & Jonah 1-4

Jeremiah 1

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

⁶ "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

⁷ But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

Jonah 1

¹ The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

³ But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

⁴ Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. ⁶ The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" ⁹ He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) ¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" ¹² "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

¹³ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴ Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased." ¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. ¹⁶ At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

¹⁷ But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 2

¹ From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. ² He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

¹⁰ And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Jonah 3

¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. ⁴ On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 4

¹ But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

⁴ But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"

⁵ Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." ¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Study Questions: The Call of God

Jeremiah 1:4-10 & Jonah 1-4

Introduction:

At times the call of God is difficult to accept or understand. The tasks that the Lord asks us to do seem far beyond our ability. It is true that God's plans for us may seem impossible, but nothing is impossible for God. So, even our weaknesses and fears make the greatness of God that much more amazing. The Lord is able to use us for His glory, because He is the one doing the work.

As a young person Jeremiah received a call to do the Lord's work. It was more than he felt capable of doing, but Jeremiah had been created and called for the Lord's work and the Lord carried him to the end. The Lord also called Jonah to be His prophet, but Jonah refused. Instead, he tried to run away and had to face the consequences. For both Jeremiah and Jonah, the Lord kept his promises and He used them to proclaim His Word.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To know that God does have a plan for our lives, even though we can't see it, understand it or even feel capable for it.
- To understand that we cannot hide from God and the consequences are unpleasant.

Attitude

- To trust the Lord and His faithfulness. He can use us to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all we could ask or think.
- To be willing and humble servants.

Actions

- To patiently seek the Lord's direction for our lives.
- To obey the Lord's call without question.

Memory Verses:

Exodus 4:11-12 "The LORD said to him, 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.'"

Scriptures for Further Study:

Exodus 4:1-12; 1 Samuel 16:7-13; Isaiah 6:8; Mathew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 1:35-51; Luke 10:1-11, 17-21; Acts 26:12-18

Questions about the Story:

1. What is significant about Jeremiah's call? (Jeremiah 1:4-10. The Word of God came to him and told him that he had been created, set apart, appointed and directed for the Lord's work. The Lord told him what to say and do.)
2. Why is it important that the LORD predestined Jeremiah before he was born? (Jeremiah 1:5. The LORD had been planning his life and was directing him. Jeremiah could be confident in the Lord regardless of his age or his fears.)
3. What does Jeremiah's response about his ability and age say? (Jeremiah 1:6. Jeremiah didn't have any confidence in himself, so any work that was done would be clear evidence that the Lord was the one at work.)
4. What was God's perspective on Jeremiah's abilities or fears? (Jeremiah 1:7. God wasn't concerned about Jeremiah's abilities; only His willingness. The Lord promised His presence, His protection and His message. It only took one encounter with the Lord to make the task possible.)
5. What difference does the Lord's statement, "I have put my words in your mouth" make? (Jeremiah 1:9. Without the Lord's Word, Jeremiah has nothing to say and no authority with which to speak. It is God's Word alone that has authority over nations or kingdoms. It is His Word that destroys, builds and plants.)
6. What does the word "appoint" mean? (Jeremiah 1:5, 10. To "appoint" means to choose and select, which is what God did as He gave Jeremiah the role of Israel's prophet.)
7. What is significant about Jonah's call? (Jonah 1:1-3. The Word of the Lord also came to Jonah. It was a difficult call because Nineveh was a large city, the people were wicked and they were Israel's enemies. Even though Jonah tried to run away, the Lord pursued him. He sent a storm and a fish; which spit Jonah out on the dry land. Jonah obeyed the Lord the second time, but he never cared about the people.)
8. How did Jonah try to get away from the Lord and His call? (Jonah 1:3, 5, 12. He tried to run the opposite way, he tried to hide in the bottom of the ship, he tried to sleep and he told them to throw him overboard, but none of them worked.)
9. How does the Lord's grace and mercy shine in this story? (Jonah 1:2, 4, 17; 2:10; 3:1, 10; 4:6, 8. The Lord's grace and mercy are the theme of this story. It is in God's mercy that the 120,000 people of Nineveh repented. It is in God's grace that the Lord spoke to Jonah. His grace is also visible in the wind,

the great fish, the second call, the vine, the worm and the scorching east wind. Each of these actions by God was an opportunity for Jonah to repent and change his heart.)

10. How does the response of the sailors and, the pagan city, Nineveh compare to Jonah's? (Jonah 1:15-16; 3:5-6. When the sailors saw the power of God over the sea they worshiped Him. When the city heard the warning, they believed God, repented, declared a fast and put on sackcloth. Jonah did none of the above. His heart was hard and he didn't care about the people.)
11. Why did the sailors and the people of Nineveh worship and repent? (Jonah 1:15-16; 3:5-6. They feared the Lord, listened to the Word from Jonah, and believed in God.)
12. What was God's reaction to seeing the repentance of the Ninevites? (Jonah 3:10. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring destruction upon them.)
13. Is Jonah in danger because of his attitude? (Jonah 4:1, 4, 8-10. Jonah is in danger of the same judgment as the Ninevites because he is angry at the Lord's compassion.)
14. Why did the Lord provide the vine for Jonah? (Jonah 4:6. To point out Jonah's bad attitude toward the people. Jonah cared more about the vine than he did about the 120,000 people.)
15. How does Jonah describe God's character based on seeing His compassion for Nineveh? (Jonah 4:2. Jonah described God as gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.)
16. How does this story relate to Jesus? (In Matthew 12:39-41 Jesus says that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a call from God and how do you recognize it? (Jeremiah 1:4; Jonah 1:1-2) [The call of God is a request from Him to do His work. It must come from the Word of the Lord and not our own ideas. It is an emphasis on what the Lord is doing through a person rather than on the person.]
2. Do you sense the Lord's calling you in your life? (Romans 10:13-15)
3. Why can we have peace regarding the Lord's calling for us? (Jeremiah 1:5, 8) [We can have peace in knowing that the

- Lord already knows what will happen, promises to be with us, and will rescue us in whatever we encounter.]
4. What kind of people is God able to use? How should this encourage us? (Jeremiah 1:6-7) [God is able to use all people, young or old, great or small, which is encouraging because when we look at our lives, we feel inadequate for the work that God has set in front of us. The work has to do with the Lord rather than us.]
 5. What is our faith based on when we look at our weaknesses and our problems? (Jeremiah 1:6-7) [We are basing our faith on ourselves rather than on God. Our faith must trust in the Lord because He can do anything.]
 6. Does the Lord call us to do easy things? (Jonah 1:1-2) [No, the Lord at times calls us to do things that seem impossible and undesirable.]
 7. Can we ever run away from the Lord? Why or why not? (Jonah 1:3) [No, we cannot run away from the Lord, but we can resist or rebel against His call for our lives.]
 8. How is God's character essential for His calling? (Jonah 3:1) [We need his grace and compassion. We need His second chances because we are sinful. Even when we fail and go our own way, the Lord is patient with us and pursues us. Apart from His character we would be condemned like the Ninevites.]
 9. When has the Lord given you a second chance?
 10. How is the Lord able to use His Word when we are faithful preachers of it? (Jonah 3:4-5) [The Lord is able to use His Word to transform lives. Sometimes the most unlikely people will repentance and believe.]
 11. How have you seen the compassion of the Lord in your life?
 12. How has God shown His compassion to all mankind through Jesus Christ? (Romans 5:8) ["God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."]
 13. How can the Lord's gift of the vine encourage us when we are having the wrong attitude towards the ministry that God has called us? (Jonah 4:6) [In providing a vine for Jonah, we see God providing the shade and rest that Jonah needs. God demonstrates His compassion and faithfulness even when the task is hard. Thus, we can go forward in the ministry in confidence, knowing that the Lord will be with us.]

83. Suffering for the Gospel

Paul's Shipwreck

Acts 27:27-28:10

Acts 27

²⁷On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. ²⁸They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. ²⁹Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. ³¹Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away.

³³Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. ³⁴Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." ³⁵After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷Altogether there were 276 of us on board. ³⁸When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

³⁹When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. ⁴⁰Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. ⁴¹But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

⁴²The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. ⁴³But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.

Acts 28

¹Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta.

²The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and

welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. ³Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. ⁴When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." ⁵But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. ⁶The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

⁷There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. ⁸His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. ¹⁰They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

Study Questions: Suffering for the Gospel

Acts 27:27-28:10

Introduction:

In this text Paul is a prisoner on a ship that has been in a terrible storm for two weeks. He was being brought to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. Paul knew more than most what it meant to suffer for the Gospel. 2 Corinthians 11:24-26 says, “Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.”

Paul knew the burden of ministry, he knew the attacks of Satan and he knew persecution from people. yet he considered it to be worth all of the effort. In John 16:33, Jesus promised that in this world there would be trouble, but to take heart because He has overcome the world. If we have to suffer for a little while here on this earth, we can do it by fixing our eyes on Jesus. Who for the joy before him, endured the cross, scorned its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To remember that Jesus understands suffering.
- To understand that sometimes the Lord allows suffering to bring glory to His name.
- To realize that the pain we experience tests our faith, grows our dependence on Jesus and causes us to long for heaven.

Attitude

- To trust the Lord for the strength for each day.
- To rejoice in the fact that this world is not our home and that we are just passing through.

Actions

- To persevere and endure through whatever lies ahead knowing the Lord is the final judge.

Memory Verse:

1 Peter 4:16 “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

Scriptures for Further Study:

Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-20; 16:33; Acts 14:21-22; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 11:24-33; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-14, 16; James 1:2-3; Revelation 6:9-11

Questions about the Story:

1. With what **attitude** does Paul face this storm, the imprisonment and the trial ahead of him? (Acts 27:31, 33-35; 28:5, 8. Paul faced the storm with faith in the Lord; because of his confidence, he was able to give advice and leadership to those with him. He also showed a servant attitude as he healed the official's father.)
2. What **fears** did Paul face? (The fears of the storm, shipwreck, sailors abandoning ship, starvation, the unknown land, the soldiers who wanted to kill the prisoners, getting to shore, the snake and all of that before reaching Rome to face trial before treacherous Caesar.)
3. **Why** does Paul have to go through the imprisonment, storm, shipwreck, and snake bite? (There were many good things that came out of these trials. Those on the boat were introduced to Jesus. The sick islanders came to Paul and were cured and were introduced to the one true powerful God. The trip tested the faith of all of them.)
4. How many of the situations did Paul have **control** over? (Paul couldn't control any of the situations. He could only control himself and leave the rest up to the Lord. With the peace of God inside, Paul was able to lead the people to eat food and gain some strength.)
5. What were some of the **responses** listed in this story? (Fear, deceit, faith, anxiety, kindness and honor... All of these different responses came from the same circumstance.)
6. How did Paul show his **confidence** in God? (Acts 27:35. Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. He just shook the snake off into the fire and he prayed for the official's father.)
7. How does **the Lord** show himself in this text? (Acts 27:23-25. Just before the text chosen for this story, Paul refers to a vision from an angel that foretold everything that would happen. In this text it seems like there are only hardships until the healing of the official's father, but truly the Lord showed Himself by protecting them along the way.)
8. How does the Lord **protect** everyone during these trials? (Acts 28:1, 5. The Lord's protection can be seen in the safety of

everyone through the journey. He protected the prisoners from the guards and Paul from the snake. The islanders even showed unusual kindness and offered them supplies to continue the trip.)

9. How did Paul use the negative circumstance of being shipwrecked on an island to minister to the people there? (Acts 28:8-9. Paul prayed for the chief official's father to be healed, as well as other islanders who needed to be cured.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What have been some situations in your life that you have had to go through that have been hard and difficult because of the Gospel? What are some current difficulties?
2. Why do believers find themselves in hard and suffering situations? [There are many causes for the problems we face. Sometimes it is our own sin, some times natural circumstances and sometimes other people or Satan. God allows them into our lives in order to test and try our faith and draw us to Himself. He is not the cause of pain and suffering, but He does use the pain and suffering that we encounter.]
3. What different responses can we have to difficult situations in our lives? [We can either choose to respond in fear, losing heart and hope in the situation, or we can place our hope and our confidence in the Lord knowing that He over everything.]
4. Why can we be confident in the middle of trials? (Acts 27:27-29) [As the Lord was with Paul, He will be with us as well. It doesn't mean there won't be trials, but it does mean that He will be with us through them.]
5. In the middle of difficult trials, how can we give thanks? (Acts 27:35) [We can thank the Lord for food, strength, and safety. We can thank Him for salvation and the promise of heaven.]
6. In what ways can you be an example for others when you are faced with sufferings and hardships?
7. How can we see the Lord's help and protection in our lives? [He has given us His Word, His promises and His presence for this world and the hope for the life to come in heaven.]
8. What encouragement can we have knowing that the Lord guards us and protects us?
9. How we use negative circumstance to minister to people? (Acts 28:8-9) [In the same way, our trials can lead to divine appointments with people who need someone to care about them and share about Jesus.]

84. Cross-cultural Missions

Cornelius Believes

Acts 10:1-8, 17-48

Acts 10

¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" ⁴Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

¹⁷While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." ²¹Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

²²The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." ²³Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. ²⁴The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

²⁷Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. ²⁹So when I was

sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³²Send to Joppa for Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' ³³So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

³⁴Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. ³⁶You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Study Questions: Cross-cultural Missions

Acts 10:1-8, 17-48

Introduction:

We can get comfortable telling the message of the Gospel to those in our local congregation or our own culture, but the heart of God is to reach all people - from every nation, tribe, and tongue, so they will know and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. We need God's heart for people that are from all cultures. We need to bridge the gap to people from many different backgrounds.

Peter and Cornelius came from very different backgrounds. Cornelius was a Roman citizen and a centurion. Peter was a fisherman from Capernaum and was a Jew. The Jews would not even enter Roman homes. It was cross-cultural missions for Peter, a Jew, to share the Gospel with Cornelius, a Roman. It was also a cultural jump for Cornelius, a man of authority, to humble himself and ask Peter, a fisherman, to come and teach Him God's Word.

Goals:

Knowledge

- To understand that God desires people "from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne" in heaven.
- To realize the need to tell the whole world of the relationship they can have with the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Attitude

- To welcome everyone and share the love of God with them.

Actions

- To intentionally reach across racial, gender, age, and cultural differences to be together in the body of Christ.

Memory Verses:

Romans 10:12-14 "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Scriptures for Further Study:

Matthew 9:36-38; 28:18-20; Mark 7:19; 16:15-16; Acts 1:8; 8:26-40; Romans 10:8-17; Galatians 2:11-16; 1 Timothy 2:4

Questions about the Story:

1. What makes Cornelius both an unusual as well as a natural person to become a believer? (Acts 10:1-2. Cornelius was a Roman citizen and a centurion in the Italian Regiment, which are two reasons for a Jew not to tell him about the Lord. However, Cornelius and his family were also devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to the needy and prayed to God regularly, which are all good reasons that he would be a believer.)
2. Why did Cornelius and Peter both see visions from God? (Acts 10:3, 17. They saw the visions to be directed by God to come together. They never would have sought each other out except that the Lord brought them together. The Lord was expanding His kingdom to include the Gentiles.)
3. Was there an underlying motivation for Peter to go to Cornelius or for Cornelius to invite Peter? (Acts 10:4. There was nothing in themselves that would have caused them to seek the other. The Lord alone gave them the visions and the motivation to obey.)
4. What was Cornelius's reaction to the message from the angel? (Acts 10:7-8. He immediately sent servants to get Peter and he also prepared his family for their arrival. He excitedly anticipated whom Peter was and what he had to say.)
5. What is interesting about Peter's acceptance of the invitation? (Acts 10:21-22. Peter was use to listening to the voice of God, but the vision was strange. Peter was going on a two-day journey to a man's house that he did not know. He also didn't know why Cornelius wanted him or what message he was supposed to share, yet he went.)
6. What does Cornelius, the centurion, falling at Peter's feet and Peter telling him to get up mean? (Acts 10:25-26. Cornelius was showing respect to Peter as a man of God in authority over him, but Peter points out that we are all equal under the one authority of Jesus. It is amazing that these two opposite cultures could come together under Jesus.)
7. What did God reveal to Peter about the worth of any man? (Acts 10:28. Peter realized, by the Lord's grace, that he should not call any man impure or unclean.)
8. What cultural barriers did Peter and Cornelius have to bridge? (Acts 10. Attitudes toward one another as individuals, Italian verse Jewish backgrounds, understanding of who God was, religious practices such as circumcision, Passover or worship

practices. There were many cultural barriers to overcome; yet the Holy Spirit came and bridged those gaps.)

9. Why does God accept men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right? (Acts 10:34-35. God created all people from every nation. They are His and He created them all equal. He is interested in the condition of our hearts, whether we fear, love, and obey Him, not our nationality.)
10. Why did Cornelius gather a large crowd of people? (Acts 10:27, 33. So that they could hear, “everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.” It shows the attitude of expectancy, the moving of the Holy Spirit and the faith of this unlikely Gentile.)
11. What happened to the people who were listening to Peter as he was still speaking to them? (Acts 10:44. While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came on all of them who had heard the message.)
12. What brings a person to faith in Jesus Christ? (Acts 10:44. It is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that changes lives. The task of convincing people to believe is not our role. It is a work of God.)
13. Why did Peter order them to be baptized since they had received the Holy Spirit? (Acts 10:47-48. The baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit were one and the same event. It was a work of God in their lives. The old was gone and the new had come.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are unlikely candidates for the Gospel from another culture? (Acts 10:1-6) [We cannot be selective over who we think should come to the Lord in faith. It is a work that the Holy Spirit does in a person’s life. Our role is to be faithful with the message.]
2. Who do you have a difficult time showing Christ’s love to? How can you reach out to them and show Christ’s love?
3. What is our motivation for showing love to those who are perishing? (1 John 4:19) [We are to love everyone from everywhere as Christ has first loved us.]
4. How can we live in anticipation of who the Lord will call us to respond to? (Acts 10:19-20) [We can be watching the Holy Spirit’s work in people’s hearts. If they have an interest in spiritual things, it is evidence that the Spirit is at work.]
5. What should be our reaction when the Lord calls us to go somewhere or to do something for Him? (Acts 10:29)

[Whenever the Lord commands us to do something it is an opportunity to see the Lord at work. It is an invitation of the highest order.]

6. What has the Lord been calling you to do? What has your response been?
7. What does it mean that God is not a God who shows favoritism? (Acts 10:34-35) [That He isn't selecting a certain person over another based on any external differences or qualifications but that all persons are equal in the eyes of the Lord. What matters is where he placed his trust.]
8. Would you be willing to bridge a cultural gap or a language barrier in order to make known the mystery of the Gospel? How can you be reaching those for Christ who have never heard?
9. What is the simple message that we have to proclaim to all? (Acts 10:36-43) [The simple message that we have to proclaim is that Christ died for the remission of our sins, so that we might have eternal life in His name and through God's grace.]