

# **ACTS 1-12**

**by Christine Walton**

**Grades 1-2  
Year 1  
Quarter 4**



This quarter uses stories from the life of Peter and those close to him. Each lesson will consist of a Bible story and discussion and a craft, activity, or worksheet to reinforce what is being taught. Some lessons also include a life application story to give further understanding of the focus of study. Of course, God's Word must be central to each lesson, but feel free to adapt other parts to your individual situation. It goes without saying that prayer must be an integral part of Sunday School, both as the teacher and others pray for the individual students and class as a whole at home, and through prayer by the students in class itself. Even non-Christians (and almost certainly some in your class will not know Jesus Christ) are commanded to pray. At least a short time of prayer should be included in every lesson, even though this will not be indicated in the teacher's instructions. The following explains the elements included in each lesson:

### **Lesson Aim**

Main ideas taught in the Bible story that should be emphasized by the teacher.

### **Memory Verse**

Verse to be memorized by the student. It should be repeated several times during the lesson at different moments to help the child remember it (see Memory Games). This quarter the verses will be **Acts 2:32-40**.

### **Lesson Background**

Background ideas are given to help the teacher in telling the story.

*Knowledge Objectives* - Facts with which the student should be familiar by the end of class.

*Behavioral Objectives* - Character qualities, attitudes, and actions related to the Bible story that the child should be encouraged to practice. Only God can change the sinful child's heart, but we can present God's standards so that the unbeliever may see his need of Christ and the Christian may grow in grace.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **BIBLE STORY**

In most cases, the first and second grader should be able to understand the story when read straight from the Bible if a modern translation such as the New International Version is used. Because of this a Bible story, as such, is not usually given. It is recommended that in most cases the teacher first give an introduction. Then she should read expressively the passage from the Bible, making appropriate comments to aid understanding. Good readers, using the same version of the Bible as the teacher, may be encouraged to follow along in their Bibles. In most cases, however, the children's reading ability is such that this is a hindrance to understanding rather than a help, since it requires so much effort for them to figure out the words that they lose the continuity of the story. After the Scripture is read the teacher should paraphrase the story in her own words and ask factual and discussion-type questions to facilitate the students' understanding.

### **STORY**

A modern-day story reinforcing concepts taught in the Bible story.

### **SONGS**

Songs are suggested that may be sung sometime during the lesson or in an opening session if desired. It is not necessary to sing all the songs listed. Many hymns may be difficult for beginning readers, so it may be good to concentrate on two or three hymns and a few choruses per quarter. Hymns listed for several lessons would be good choices.

## **Take Home Activity**

### **WORKSHEET**

Some lessons include worksheets to reinforce concepts taught.

### **CRAFT AND/OR ACTIVITY**

To reinforce lessons taught. Materials needed are underlined. The availability of pencils and crayons is assumed and the word "cut" will be underlined if scissors are needed.

## **Home Helps**

A paper to be sent home with lesson summary and suggested activities to reinforce the lesson at home.

**NOTE:** Any writing done by the teacher for activities or memory work should be neatly printed for easier reading by your beginning readers. Do not use all capitals or cursive writing.

**Grades 1-2**  
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**Additional Resources**

The following may be a helpful supplement to the lessons in the fourth quarter of Year I.

**Lesson 11** - *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards, Baker, 1981.



**Grades 1-2  
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**Songs**

<u>LESSON</u>	<u>SONG</u>	<u>TRINITY HYMNAL</u>
1	A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing	289
1	Golden Harps Are Sounding	293
1,13	Now Unto the King Eternal (I Timothy 1:17)	
1,13	King of Kings and Lord of Lords	
1,4	All Hail the Power	296
1,9,11	Jesus Shall Reign	441
1	Rejoice, the Lord is King	309
1	Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates	198
1	Look Ye Saints	299
1	Lo He Comes	318
2	The Kingdom of God is Not Meat or Drink	
2	Spirit of the Living God	726
3	Except the Lord Builds the House (Psalm 127:1)	
3	The Church's One Foundation	347
3	Christ is Made the Sure Foundation	342
3	Jesus With Thy Church Abide	348
3,7	For All the Saints	358
4	Silver and Gold Have I None (Acts 3:6)	
4,6	Jesus, Name Above All Names	
4	Ye Servants of God	165
5	Jesus Christ is the Way	
5	Thou Art the Way	154
5,8	A Mighty Fortress	92
6,9	Obey My Voice	
7	Let Our Choir New Anthems Raise	357
7	Faith of Our Fathers	570
8,12	Seek Ye First	
8	Not By Might	
8	Not What My Hands Have Done	461
9,11	The Ends of All the Earth	368
9	Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart (Psalm 119:11)	136
9	Psalm 19:7-11	
10	This is My Commandment	
10	Fountain of Good	583
11	Jesus Loves the Little Children	
11	Micah 6:8	
12	I Thessalonians 5:16-18	
13	To God Be the Glory	55
13	Immortal, Invisible	38
13	O That I Had a Thousand Voices	22
13	Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah	110
13	Praise Ye, Praise Ye the Lord	112





**Grades 1-2**  
**Year 1**  
**Quarter 4**

**Bible Baseball**

**Singles (Easy)**

Whom did the disciples see hidden by a cloud?

Name one thing done by the early church. (Acts 2:42)

Whom did God use to heal a lame man? (Peter)

For what did the lame man ask Peter before he was healed? (alms; money)

Name the man or his wife who lied to God. (Ananias; Sapphira)

How did Stephen die? (he was stoned)

What was the name of the sorcerer who wished to buy the gift of God? (Simon)

Philip talked to a man from what country who was riding in a chariot? (Ethiopia)

What did the court official wish to do when he believed in Jesus? (be baptized)

Name a woman who was raised from the dead. (Tabitha [Dorcas])

Who appeared to Cornelius? (an angel)

What vision did God give Peter?

Why didn't Peter want to go to Cornelius' house? (Cornelius was a Gentile)

What amazing thing happened to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house?

What king put Peter in prison? (Herod)

Who helped Peter escape from prison? (an angel)

What was Peter doing when the angel appeared to him? (sleeping)

**Doubles (Average)**

Where were the disciples told they would be witnesses? (Name one.)

Name one thing the disciples heard on Pentecost.

Who preached to a large crowd on Pentecost? (Peter)

Name two things done by the early church. (Acts 2:42)

Whom did God use to heal a lame man and who was with him? (Peter and John)

Name one person who was on trial before the ruling body of the Jews. (Peter and John)

What was the ruling body of the Jews called? (Sanhedrin)

## Bible Baseball

### Doubles (continued)

- Name the man and his wife who lied to God. (Ananias and Sapphira)
- What gift did the sorcerer in Acts 8 wish to buy? (the Holy Spirit)
- Who rebuked the sorcerer in Acts 8? (Peter)
- Where did an angel tell Philip to go? (the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza)
- Name a woman who was raised from the dead; give both of her names. (Tabitha; Dorcas)
- Whom did God use to raise Dorcas?
- Name another person God used Peter to heal. (Aeneas)
- What was Cornelius' job? (centurion)
- Where was Peter when God gave him a vision? (On a rooftop.)
- What king put Peter in prison? (Herod Agrippa I)
- What other apostle did Herod arrest, and what happened to this apostle? (James)
- What was the name of the servant girl who was surprised to see Peter? (Rhoda)
- Whom did the Christians think was at the door instead of Peter? (his angel)
- What did the people shout at Herod when he spoke to them?
- How did Herod die?

### Triples (Difficult)

- Where were the disciples told they would be witnesses? (Name two.)
- Who asked the disciples why they gazed at the sky? (two men in white)
- Name two things the disciples heard on Pentecost. (wind; tongues)
- Name one tongue spoken at Pentecost.
- Name one Old Testament person quoted at Pentecost. (David; Joel)
- Name three things done by the early church. (Acts 2:42)
- Name two people who appeared before the ruling body of the Jews. (Peter and John)
- Who told the man and his wife who lied to the church that they would die?
- Name one deacon of the early church.
- What two groups had an argument in the early church resulting in the first deacons? (Greeks and Jews)
- What was the argument about?
- As he was dying, who saw Jesus at the right hand of God? (Stephen)
- What two apostles came from Jerusalem to the region where a sorcerer had been astounding the people? (Peter and John)

## Bible Baseball

### Triples (continued)

Name a woman who was raised from the dead. (Give both of her names and their meaning.)

At what “address” was Peter when God gave him a vision? (Simon the tanner’s house.)

To whose house did Peter go after he escaped from prison? (Mary, John Mark’s mother)

### Home Run (Super Tough)

To whom is the book of Acts addressed? (Theophilus)

Who wrote the book of Acts? (Luke.)

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to remain in Jerusalem?

Where were the disciples told they would be witnesses? (Name three.)

Name two tongues spoken at Pentecost.

Name two Old Testament people quoted at Pentecost. (David and Joel)

How many people were added to the church at Pentecost? (3000)

Name four things done by the early church. (Acts 2:42)

Name two deacons of the early church.

Where did Philip do many miraculous signs? (Samaria)

From what book was the court official reading in Acts 8? (Isaiah)

The court official held what position in the court of Candace? (treasurer)

Where was a paralyzed man healed? (Lydda)

Where was a woman raised from the dead? (Joppa)

Where did Cornelius live? (Caesarea)

In what city was Peter when God gave him a vision? (Joppa)

By how many guards was Peter guarded? (16)

Whom did Peter say to tell about his escape? (James and the brothers)

With what people did Herod have a quarrel? (citizens of Tyre and Sidon)

What servant of Herod helped the people with whom Herod had an argument? (Blastus)



# **THE ASCENSION**

## **Acts 1:1-11**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help your students worship Jesus, the King who will come again, and to be a witness for Him.

### **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:32** - “God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”

### **Lesson Background**

The early church, which we will begin to study this quarter (Paul will be studied in Year II, Quarter 3), drew its vibrant life from the presence of the Holy Spirit and an absolute conviction that Jesus was alive and reigning over this world. Luke begins his letter to Theophilus (meaning “lover of God” and probably an actual person) with the joyous news of this gospel, and so sets the stage for the rest of the book by giving the motivation for all that would follow. Acts 1:1-11 focuses on Jesus’ present reign, our missionary task, and His soon return.

Jesus is the King over all (Psalm 103:19) forever (Exodus 15:18), and before Him every knee should bow (Philippians 2:10). The concept of the kingdom of God, a major emphasis in the Lord’s ministry (Luke 4:43), was frequently misunderstood by the disciples, who desired the immediate political overthrow of the Roman government (possibly still in Acts 1:6). They needed to realize that Jesus was now to be seated at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1), but that someday He would return (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4) to destroy His enemies and establish a perfectly righteous kingdom (Hebrews 10:13; Psalm 2). Meanwhile, the men in white (presumably angels) told Jesus’ followers that they were not to stand around gazing at the sky - there was a mission to be accomplished. First, they must wait for the promise of the Father, but then the disciples were to spread the good news of Christ’s resurrection and reign

throughout the world beginning first at Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth (this has been seen by many as a pattern for our own witness, telling those closest to us first the truths about God). May we, like they, obey our Lord and King and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, spread the news of His resurrection and coming again.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that Jesus rose from the dead, reigns in heaven, and will someday return to earth in the same way as He went into heaven.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace to worship and obey Jesus and tell others about Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## Lesson Procedure

### BIBLE STORY

**Read Acts 1:1-11** and discuss, using background material and focusing on Christ's present reign, His coming again, and our consequent missionary task. If possible, also read the parallel account in **Luke 24:36-53** and discuss, showing how it relates to the Acts passage.

### ACTIVITY

**Discussion** - This activity should help your children gain a better understanding of what it means for Jesus to be King. Ask your children what a king is. In your discussion, draw out from them different qualities usually associated with monarchy such as absolute power and consequent obedience by one's subjects, judgment of wrongdoers, wealth, dignity, and inspiring awe. Ask them how Jesus demonstrates these qualities. Have your students write a story (individually or as a class) about a powerful king.

### SONGS

"A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #289); "Golden Harps Are Sounding" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #293); "Now Unto the King Eternal"; "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"; "All Hail the Power" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #296); "Jesus Shall Reign" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441); "Rejoice the Lord is King" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #309); "Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #198); "Look Ye Saints" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #299); "Lo! He Comes" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #318).

## Take Home Activity

**Cross and Crown Banner** - The cross and crown have long been a Christian symbol of our reigning Lord. Have your students make a banner by cutting a cross and a crown from felt or other non-raveling cloth and sewing or gluing them to another piece of material. The cross should be set at an angle and the bottom part of it should pass through the crown. The words "Jesus is King" may be placed above the cross in cut felt letters, with liquid embroidery, or felt tip pen, if desired. You may have your students cut a cross and crown from a piece of construction paper and glue it on another paper if you prefer. Print "Jesus is King" above the picture. An aluminum pie plate may be used as a frame for this by placing a circular background paper in the bottom of the pie plate.

### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 1:1-11** - We should worship and obey Jesus, the King who will come again, and be witnesses for Him.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:32** - "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Read some of the Scripture under "Suggested Parental Reading" with your child and discuss Christ's Kingship and coming again.
2. Read a story or watch a television program with your child in which a king is portrayed in a serious manner and discuss what it means for Jesus to be King. How should this fact affect our lives?
3. Acts 1:8 says that Christians are to be Christ's witnesses. Encourage those in your family who know the Lord to tell others about Him sometime this week.
4. Read together and discuss the events that occurred between the Ascension and Pentecost as related in Acts 1:12-26.
5. Sing songs about Jesus' Ascension and reign such as: "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #289); "Golden Harps Are Sounding" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #293); "Now Unto the King Eternal"; "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"; "All Hail the Power" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #296); "Jesus Shall Reign" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441); "Rejoice the Lord is King" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #309); "Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #198); "Look Ye Saints" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #299); "Lo! He Comes" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #318).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Luke 24:36-53; I Peter 3:21,22; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 1; Exodus 15:18; Psalm 103:19; Psalm 2.

**Scripture about Christ's return:** Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4.





# **PENTECOST**

**Acts 2:1-41**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students learn about the Holy Spirit and the events of Pentecost.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:33** - “Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

## **Lesson Background**

Jesus gave the apostles a command and a promise - “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5). In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon prophets, priests, and kings for specific tasks, but now the Third Person of the Trinity would actually permanently indwell all believers (Romans 8:9).

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival, also called the Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated fifty days after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26). On this day “suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:2-4). What an amazing demonstration of the power and love of God! The Holy Spirit came to the disciples in ways that have always been symbolic of His presence, “like a wind” (cf. John 3:8, Ezekiel 37:9-14) and with “tongues of fire” (cf. Matthew 3:11, Exodus 3:2-6).

There is no reason to assume that the tongues spoken here are basically different from those referred to by the same Greek word in other portions of Scripture (Acts 10:46; 19:6; I Corinthians 12-14). Their purpose was to ascribe glory to God (Acts 2:11; I Corinthians 14:2-4), and although they indicated the universal extent of the gospel (Acts 2:39), possibly a symbolic reversal of Babel, they were not used as a sort of missionary gift (or, e.g., why didn't Paul, who spoke in tongues [I Corinthians 14:18] use this gift to avoid the difficulties caused by unknown languages in Acts 14:11-14?). Few Jews resident among the people named in Acts 2:9-11 would be unable to understand Greek or Aramaic, and when Peter desired to communicate the Gospel (Acts 2:14-40) he did so in a language readily understandable to all.

Peter saw the events of that day as a partial fulfillment of what Joel prophesied would occur in the last days (Joel 2:28-32). The complete fulfillment will occur before Christ returns on the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31), but Pentecost was certainly the beginning of the last days. Peter regarded the events of Pentecost as a manifestation of the Lordship of Christ, maintaining that the disciples' joyous exulting in God was not drunkenness (for in any culture who would be drunk at 9:00 in the morning, and Jews rarely drank wine until evening), but the fulfillment of Scripture. God's Word held a pivotal place in Peter's reasoning as he sought step by step to explain to his listeners that Jesus is indeed Messiah and Lord. He showed that Psalm 16 cannot merely concern David, for David died and was buried and his tomb was there in Jerusalem for all to see, but referred to the Messiah who would rise from the dead. Therefore Jesus, who had died but was now alive, must be the Messiah. The gospel of Christ's death and resurrection permeates Peter's whole sermon. He concluded with a portion of Psalm 110 and a plea for his hearers to repent, that they too might receive the forgiveness of sins and the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, which was for all nations and kinds of people (Galatians 3:14, 28; I Corinthians 12:12-13). Let us thank God for His gracious gift to us. Like Peter and the disciples, may we be filled with God's Spirit and tell others the good news of Christ's death and resurrection.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that on Pentecost, in fulfillment of prophecy, God filled the disciples with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak in other tongues, and that Peter told the people who came to see what was happening about Christ's death and resurrection.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace, to believe in Jesus Christ, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and tell others the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

## **Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction** - Discuss who the Holy Spirit is.

### **BIBLE STORY**

Read **Acts 2:1-41** and discuss. Be sure your students understand that the Holy Spirit only indwells those who have been saved by Jesus Christ. Use Peter's sermon to review the Gospel with them. Show them how Peter uses Scripture in his message.

## STORY

### INNER STRENGTH

The egg-throwing never bothered Jeff much before he was a Christian. He knew the neighborhood kids should not throw stuff at houses and cars, but what could he do? Besides, what harm was there in it; just a little mess (at least Jeff thought it was little until they were caught once and he had to help clean it up). But now Jeff knew Jesus and he realized something had to be done. "Please, God," Jeff prayed, "strengthen me with your Spirit and help me talk with my friends."

The next day Ken, the leader of the group, said, "Let's hit Mrs. O'Malley's house tonight. She got so mad the last time her face turned red. Hey, let's throw tomatoes; then the color will match her face."

It was now or never, thought Jeff. "Count me out," he told the gang.

"What's the matter - you scared? someone taunted.

"No, it's just that God doesn't want people to do things like that. Anyway, it's no fun really. I'm going to the boys' club at church tonight. We learn about Jesus, play games, and are making some neat stuff out of wood."

"Hey, can I come?" asked Joe.

"Me too?" chimed in Ed.

"Sure, that would be great. The meeting starts at seven." Jeff smiled and quietly said, "Thanks, Lord."

#### **Questions:**

- What did Jeff's friends want to do? Did Jeff want to do this?
- Did his friends' behavior bother Jeff before he was a Christian?
- Was Jeff afraid to talk with his friends? Why?
- What did Jeff do to solve his problem?
- How did God help him? (He gave him courage and wisdom; He gave the boys receptive attitudes to Jeff's suggestions.)
- Will God give us courage to stand up against evil and witness for Him? Have you ever had God help you in this way?
- How else does the Holy Spirit help Christians?

## SONGS

"The Kingdom of God is Not Meat or Drink" (Romans 14:17); "Spirit of the Living God" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #726).

## Take Home Activity

Do one or both of the following:

**Worksheet** - Do individually or as a class. Three symbols of the Holy Spirit are wind (show trees and flag blowing), fire, and a dove.

**Newspaper Story** - Have your students write a "newspaper story" of the events that occurred on Pentecost as if they were reporters in the crowd giving an eyewitness account. This may be done in groups or individually.

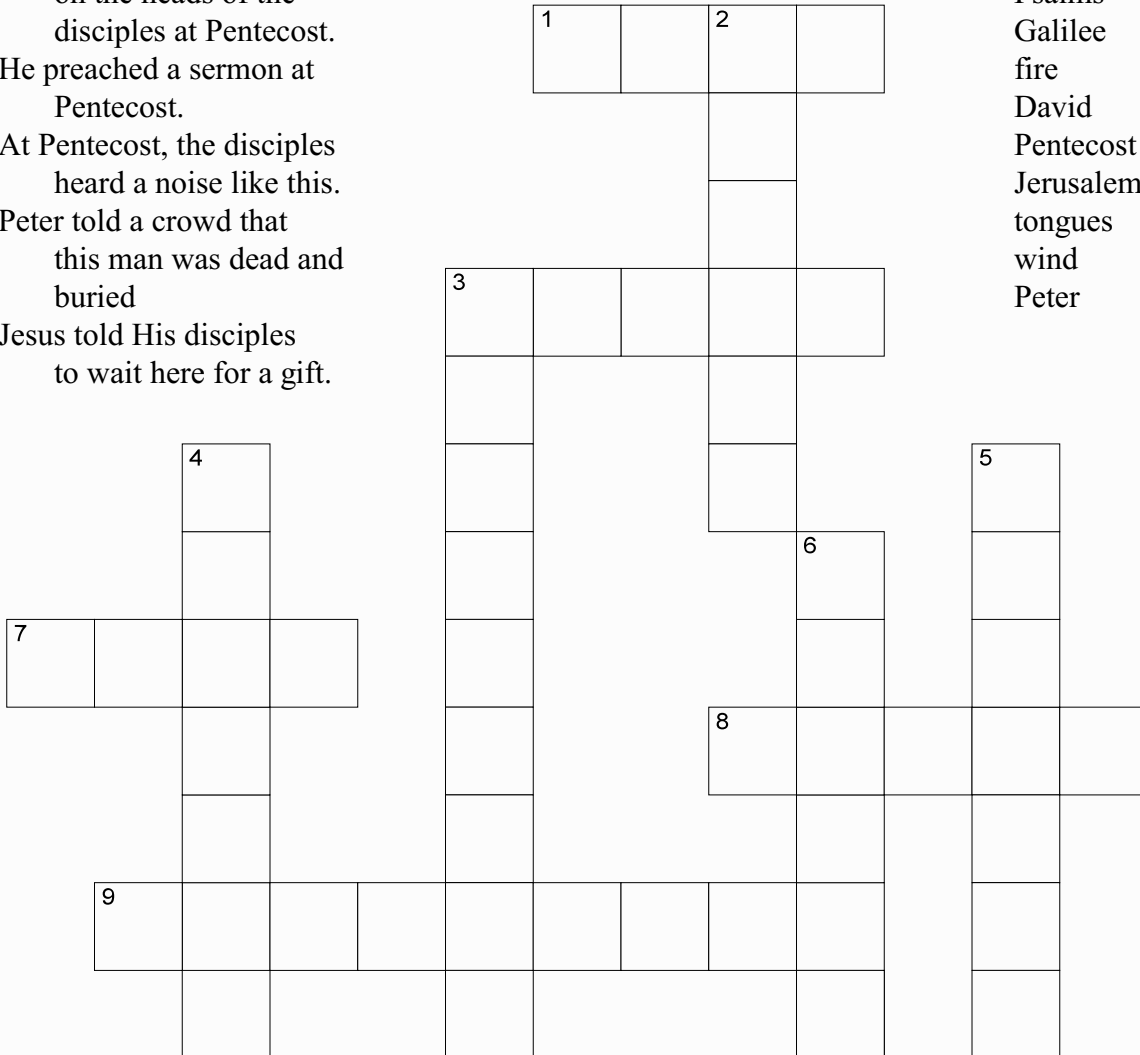


## Class Work

## Pentecost

### Across:

1. Tongues of \_\_\_\_\_ rested on the heads of the disciples at Pentecost.
3. He preached a sermon at Pentecost.
7. At Pentecost, the disciples heard a noise like this.
8. Peter told a crowd that this man was dead and buried
9. Jesus told His disciples to wait here for a gift.



### Word Bank:

repent  
Psalms  
Galilee  
fire  
David  
Pentecost  
Jerusalem  
tongues  
wind  
Peter

### Down:

2. To turn from sin to God; Peter told the people in the crowd to do this.
3. A harvest festival day when the Holy Spirit filled Christ's disciples.
4. At Pentecost, the disciples spoke in different \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Many disciples came from this region of Israel.
6. A book of the Bible quoted by Peter twice in his sermon on Pentecost.

**Draw three symbols of the Holy Spirit.**



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 2:1-41** - Pentecost.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:33** - “Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Reread Acts 2:1-41 and discuss with your child the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection as related in Peter’s sermon, and what it means for a Christian to be indwelt and filled by the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will work in your child’s heart and make these things meaningful to him.
2. Have your child complete the Worksheet if it was not finished in class.
3. If not done in class, have your child write a “newspaper story” about the events that occurred on Pentecost as if he were a reporter in the crowd giving an eyewitness account.
4. Using a concordance, learn more about the Holy Spirit from other Scriptures, and about instances in the Old and New Testaments when people were filled by Him.
5. On a map, find the regions referred to in Acts 2:8-11.
6. Sing songs about the Holy Spirit such as: “The Kingdom of God is Not Meat or Drink” (Romans 14:17); “Spirit of the Living God” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #726).





# **THE EARLY CHURCH**

## **Acts 2:40-48**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help students learn about the basic functions of the church.

### **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:34-35** - “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’”

### **Lesson Background**

Acts 2:40-47 presents a clear picture of life in the early church, and we can learn much from these first believers. First of all, the members of the church were true Christians, those who had been saved by Jesus Christ. They had repented from their sins, turned to God, and been baptized (Acts 2:38, 41). On the other hand, those who had come to know Christ were immediately considered part of His body; there was apparently no such thing as an isolated Christian.

Four activities were prominent in the early church and should be a focus of our meetings as well - the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. The breaking of bread refers to the Lord’s Supper, which was usually partaken of as part of a larger fellowship meal called the *agape* feast. Prayers were both public and private.

The early church was characterized by joy and a special sense of God’s presence. The apostles performed miraculous signs (the word is the same as in Acts 2:22, which refers to those Jesus did) and the believers met together daily in the Temple and in homes. They also held all their goods in common. The

imperfect tense of the verb may indicate that later goods were given to the church only as needs arose (as in Acts 4:36-5:11), but, in any case, the disciples showed a generosity and willingness to share that we would do well to emulate. Like the early believers, may we worship Jesus Christ and honor Him in all we do.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that early Christians met together in the Temple and in homes for teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer; that God enabled the apostles to do miraculous signs; and that believers willingly shared their possessions with each other.

*Behavioral Objectives* - To some extent at least, to participate in the life of the church - to listen to the teaching, fellowship with believers, observe (or participate in if a believer) the Lord's Supper, pray, and share with others.

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Ask your students what the church is and discuss briefly. Help them to see that, biblically speaking, the church is the body of Christ, not a building.

### BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 2:40-47** and ask your students to tell you from the passage things done by the early church. Make a list of these on a chalkboard or large piece of paper, discuss what these things involved, and have your children compare them with the activities of your church. Ask your students who belongs to the church and point out from Acts 2:38, 41 that only those saved by Jesus Christ, those who have repented of their sins and been baptized, are considered members of the church. (**Note:** Baptism is not necessary for salvation; also, even though non-Christians cannot participate fully in the life of a local church, they should still be encouraged to come and hear the Gospel.)

### STORY

#### A SILLY QUESTION

"Oh, I can't wait until Saturday!" Jessica told her father excitedly. "It's Lauren's birthday and her mom's taking us to a pizza place where they've got clowns and games and all kinds of things!"

"That's nice," replied Jessica's father. "I hope you have a good time. By the way, why do you want to go to the party?"

"Huh? What do you mean why do I want to go to the party?" Jessica questioned. "I just told you. There's pizza and clowns and games and, of course, birthday cake and all the other kids are going. Besides, Lauren's one of my best friends. Why wouldn't I want to go?"

"I guess I was just teasing you a bit because you were in such a flutter. I've never seen you that enthusiastic about going to church."

"Oh, Daddy. I like church," said Jessica, "But we go every week and I hardly ever get to go to a birthday party. Besides, I get excited about going to church in a different, more quiet way. I can't explain it."

"I know what you mean. But have you ever had anyone ask you why you wanted to go to church? In a way, that's a stranger question than asking why you want to go to a birthday party."

"I guess you're right," Jessica said. "God says we should go to church, so we've got to go, but we should want to, too, if we love Him. Before I became a Christian I didn't like church too much, especially because the sermons seemed so long and boring, but now I do. Even the pastors' sermons seem more interesting."

“Your mother and I are so pleased and thankful for what God has done in your life, Jessica. So, why do you want to go to church? Why don’t we just stay home next Lord’s day?” Her father’s eyes twinkled, but he was serious, too.

“Well,” Jessica considered, “we go to listen to the pastors explain God’s Word to us and there’s communion every month. Church is where my really good friends are, too, kids and grown-ups.”

“I think you mentioned some very important things. Let’s not forget prayer and worshiping God with our Christian brothers and sisters. The church should also help people in need. Anyway, I’m glad you know some important reasons why believers meet together. And I’m happy to see you know why you like birthday parties.” Jessica’s father kidded her once more. “Save me a piece of birthday cake.”

“Oh, Daddy,” said Jessica, “you’re silly sometimes, but I love you.”

### **Questions:**

- What strange question did Jessica’s father ask her?
- What else did he ask her, and what was her answer?
- Did Jessica like to go to church? If you do not like going to church, what might the reason be?
- How do the reasons why it is important to meet with other believers discussed by Jessica and her father compare to the activities of the early church?

### **SONGS**

“Unless the Lord Build the House”; “The Church’s One Foundation” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #347); “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #342); “Jesus With Thy Church Abide” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #348); “For All the Saints” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #358).

### **Take Home Activity**

Have your children draw pictures of the activities of the early church (and the church today) listed in Acts 2:40-47 - teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer, as well as sharing with those believers who had needs. Give a snack you have brought in to the children, reminding them that the early church shared what they had with other believers and we should be willing to share what we have, too. You may wish to give the snack to some of the children and ask them to share it with the others. If desired, you may also ask the children to make a toy or give one of their toys to the church nursery, give some money that they have earned to church, help on a church work day, or in some other way help out the body of Christ. They should not ask their parents to buy a toy or send money for an offering, which would only defeat the purpose of having them give something of themselves.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 2:40-47** - Functions of the church.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:34-35** - “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. The people of the early church studied God’s Word, celebrated the Lord’s Supper, prayed, had fellowship with believers, and helped those in need. Help your child see how your church does these things. (Of course, your child should not partake of the Lord’s Supper unless he has truly come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.)
2. Help your child do something practical for the church - give money he has earned, give a toy for the nursery, help at a church work day, or the like.
3. Share a meal with a Christian family this week.
4. Pray together for specific people in your church.
5. Sing songs about the church such as: “Unless the Lord Build the House”; “The Church’s One Foundation” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #347); “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #342); “Jesus With Thy Church Abide” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #348); “For All the Saints” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #358).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Books:** Read a book on ecclesiology; read a book of church history and see how the early church life of Acts 2:40-47 relates to the church through the centuries.



# **THE LAME MAN AT THE TEMPLE**

## **Acts 3:1-10**

### **Lesson Aim**

To praise the mighty God who always gives what is best, as He did when the lame man was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

### **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:34-35** - “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”””

### **Lesson Background**

“Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy” (Isaiah 35:6). This verse may not be completely fulfilled until Christ returns to reign in power, but Peter and John knew that Jesus was alive and had given his disciples power to do wondrous things in His name.

The miracle (which was readily verifiable since the man had been lame from birth and was well known to many) occurred in the course of their ordinary lives as Peter and John went up to the Temple at 3:00 PM for evening prayers. The Beautiful Gate was probably the Nicanor Gate, a gate of Corinthian bronze that, according to Josephus, “far exceeded in value those gates that were plated with silver and set in gold.” Beggars regarded the Temple gates as desirable locations for their activities, for almsgiving was considered a meritorious act by pious Jews.

Like all sinners, the lame man was in a pitiable condition, but he was aware of his need and accepted, not the money he thought he needed, but the healing that was freely offered him in Jesus’ name. Peter had

no silver or gold, but something better; God does not always give Christians what they ask for, but He always gives what is best. Even though Peter and John did not, at this point, help the lame man financially, the passage does not imply that we should neglect our duty to others in this area. Other passages of Scripture show that the church did give material aid to believers. However, charity should not be mechanical; Peter and John took a personal interest in the lame man.

Peter spoke to the lame man in Jesus' name and stressed in his explanation to the crowd (Acts 3:11-26) that it was the authority of Christ, not Peter's own power or godliness, that enabled the lame man to walk. Peter gave glory to Christ and used this incident as an opportunity to preach the Gospel. The lame man also glorified God for all He had done and immediately associated himself with Christ's followers. He was so filled with gratitude that, not caring what others thought (cf. David in II Samuel 6), he went into the Temple courts walking and jumping and praising God. May we too be filled with praise and glorify God for all He has done for us.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that at the time of evening prayer (3:00 PM), Peter and John went up to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple where a lame man asked them for alms; Peter told him, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk," and the man was healed, and walked and jumped and praised God.

*Behavioral Objectives* - To praise the mighty, healing God who always does what is best.

## **Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction** - Ask your students, "What can money buy?" Lead them in a brief discussion, pointing out that although we can purchase material things, money cannot buy health, happiness, love, or a relationship with God. Tell them that today's Bible story is about a man who asked for money but was given something better. This man had been lame since birth. Ask your students to imagine what this would have been like.

## **BIBLE STORY**

Read **Acts 3:1-10**, interspersing background material deemed helpful as you read, and discuss the passage.

## **STORY**

### **THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

Billy Martin wanted a new bike. In fact, Billy told himself he needed a new bike. His knees bumped the handlebars on his old bicycle and one wheel was wobbly. All summer and fall Billy had longed for the gleaming two-wheeler in McCulligan's shop window; now his dream was about to become a reality. In three weeks it would be Christmas and Billy felt sure, from the way his father grinned at him when he mentioned his old bike, that there would be a shiny new machine awaiting him under the tree on Christmas morning.

But dreams do not always work out as one plans. Two days later Billy heard a screech of brakes and a scream coming from the street in front of his house. He dashed out and found Karen, his little sister, lying by the curb surrounded by a gathering crowd of anxious neighbors. Karen had run into the street for a ball and the approaching car had been unable to stop in time.



The next few weeks were worrying and lonely ones for Billy. Neighbors watched him and his aunt stayed for a while so his parents could spend as much time as possible with Karen. Karen's legs were hurt in such a way that the doctors did not know if she would ever walk again.

"Billy," said his father one evening, "I know you were counting on getting a bicycle for Christmas, but with the hospital and doctor bills I don't see how we can manage it. That operation your sister is going to have tomorrow will cost even more money. I'm sorry."

"That's O.K., Dad," said Billy glumly, but inside he said, "That dumb sister of mine! Why did she have to walk out in the street? If she hadn't, I would be riding a new bike in just a few days!"

Christmas came, and once again Billy's aunt had come to stay while his parents went to the hospital. Billy had opened his presents: a game, two books, and some cookies, but the cookies tasted stale, he couldn't get interested in the books, and what good was a game with no one to play with?

Just then the doorbell rang and Billy ran to open the door. There were Billy's parents, and between them on crutches stood Karen. Falteringly, she took a few steps toward her brother, a grin splitting her face.

"We wanted to surprise you," said Billy's father.

"Oh, thank you," said Billy to his dad. "Thank you, God," he added. "This is my best Christmas present ever!"

### Questions:

- What did Billy Martin want for Christmas?
- Why did he not get the bike? How did Bill feel about this disappointment? (Angry, jealous, thinking of himself.)
- What was his "best Christmas present ever?" How did it make him happy?
- What did the lame man in Acts 3 want? What did God give him?

**Lesson** - God does not always give us what we want, but rather what is best. Praise God for the blessings He gives.

### SONGS

"Silver and Gold Have I None"; "Jesus, Name Above All Names"; "All Hail the Power" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #296); "Ye Servants of God" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #165).

### Take Home Activity

**Leaping Man** - Have your children draw and cut out from construction paper a man with extremely long legs. Fold the legs accordion fashion (back and forth a little bit at a time), and make him jump, praising God.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 3:1-10** - Peter and John glorify God as He enables them to heal a lame man at the Temple gate.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:34-35** - “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. As a family, dramatize and discuss Acts 3:1-10.
2. Read and discuss Acts 3:11-26. Peter used the healing of the lame man at the Temple as an opportunity to glorify God and tell others about Him. Do we honor the Lord before others when He does great things in our lives, or do we silently take credit ourselves?
3. God did not give the lame man what he asked for, but what was best. Have family members share experiences when God blessed even though He did not specifically grant the person’s request.
4. Using a concordance, find and read about other times in the Bible when God healed people.
5. Sing songs such as: “Silver and Gold Have I None”; “Jesus, Name Above All Names”; “All Hail the Power” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #296); “Ye Servants of God” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #165).



# **ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA**

**Acts 5:1-11**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students realize that God judges sin such as lying.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-35.**

## **Lesson Background**

Sin is a serious matter. This the early church discovered, as related in this week's Bible story. God quickly judged what may have been the first major turning from Him in the church since Pentecost, and awestruck believers became aware of the holiness and power of their God.

“From time to time those [members of the early church] who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35). Ananias (meaning “Jehovah has graciously given”) and his wife Sapphira (“beautiful”) sold a piece of property, kept part of the money for themselves, and brought the rest to the apostles to be distributed to needy believers. Being willing to share what they had with others was admirable, and there was nothing wrong in deciding to keep some of the money obtained from the sale for themselves, but in trying to look more generous than they actually were, Ananias and Sapphira lied about the purchase price of the property. By attempting to deceive the believers, particularly the church leaders who were God's representatives, Ananias and Sapphira lied to God, who is the head of the Church. Note, the Holy Spirit is called God here (Acts 5:3-4); He is a member of the Trinity, not an impersonal force. The passage is also the first place to refer to believers as the *church*, the term used in the Septuagint to refer to an assembly of God's chosen people. God's judgment may seem harsh here as in the similar Old Testament

story about Achan's deception (Joshua 7), but this is because we fail to appreciate the gravity of sin and underestimate the magnitude of God's mercy (Psalm 130:3).

God is the standard of truth, and any deviation from it is an affront to His name. We must tell the whole truth. If a person asks for information that he has no right to know, we may refuse to tell him what he desires, but we should not mislead him. Exaggerations, misrepresentations, and "white lies," for whatever reason, are all condemned by God as a breaking of the Ninth Commandment. Ananias and Sapphira lied because they wished others to praise them. Is the approval of man a major factor motivating our actions, even if we do not lie to obtain it? We should live our lives to please God, not to achieve honor from men. Other reasons for lying include fear (but cannot God protect us?), a desire to protect others (do we know better than God what is good for that person?), and attempts to further righteous causes (does God desire to be "helped" by sin?) as well as evil and selfish ones. Lying destroys relationships because it destroys trust. Lying denies the image of God in our neighbor, for it implies that he does not have the responsibility to use the information we possess wisely, or deliberately uses him to further our own ends. Therefore, let us "put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbor, for we are all members of one body" (Ephesians 4:25).

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that Ananias and Sapphira each lied to the church, telling the apostles that they had given all the money from the sale of a certain property to the church when they had kept back some for themselves; that Peter confronted them with their sin; and that according to God's judgment, they died.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace, to tell the truth and live to please Him rather than for praise from other people.

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Ask your children if they are familiar with the story of *Pinocchio* and have them briefly relate the highlights to you. Ask what happened when Pinocchio told a lie (his nose grew). Point out that this is a pretend story, but that in this week's Scripture passage, they will learn about two real people who were punished for lying.

## BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 5:1-11** and discuss, using background material as needed. Emphasize the seriousness of sin and discuss lying in general, including various forms of dishonesty such as cheating, misrepresentation, "white lies" (they really do hurt people besides, of course, breaking God's command) and exaggerating (unless the parties involved realize that something is being exaggerated, such as in a tall tale). Ask your students to relate situations in which they might be tempted to lie. Also point out Ananias and Sapphira's motive for dishonesty and how easy it is for us to succumb to this attitude, which can also be seen in the story below.

## STORY

### A LITTLE LIE

"He's what?" Paul gulped, looking anxiously at his mother.

"Kyle's going to Camp Twin Pines with you this summer. Isn't that exciting? We've prayed so long that my brother and his family would come to know Christ, but until now they've been antagonistic to the things of the Lord. Their letting Kyle go to a Christian camp is a real opportunity. Is something the matter?"

his mother said, noticing the expression on Paul's face. "I thought you would like Kyle to go with you. You two play well together when we have family reunions. You've even been writing to him lately, haven't you?"

"Uh, yes I have. Nothing's the matter. I just want to go up to my room for a while, okay?"

"Well, sure. Are you feeling all right?"

"It's nothing, mom. See you later." But something was the matter, and it had to do with those letters.

Kyle was an all-star athlete. Baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis . . . there was nothing at which he did not excel. Paul, although he was a year older than his cousin, couldn't throw, hit, dribble, or kick a ball to save his life. Last year, he had joined a baseball team but had spent the whole time either on the bench or way out in right field where few balls ever came (and he fumbled those that did). Sports, Paul had decided, were not for him. But Paul did admire kids who were good athletes. It was hard at family reunions to listen to his uncles go on and on about what a terrific athlete Kyle was: "You should have seen his last game; there was one ball that was hit so far. . ." or "What a serve that boy has. . ." Kyle didn't brag a lot himself, but Paul could tell he didn't think much of a person who couldn't even get a basketball through the hoop.

It was when Paul was writing Kyle a letter after the last family get-together (when he had even lost at croquet) that he had his brainstorm. Why not pretend to be good in at least one sport? "Dear Kyle," Paul had written, "You'll never guess, but I've decided to join the swimming team. It's going to be hard work, but the coach says he thinks I'll do well." Later, Paul wrote letters about the different competitions his team supposedly had, how much faster he was swimming, and the medals he had won. Paul's conscience bothered him about what he was doing, but he pushed disquieting thoughts away by telling himself that he wasn't hurting anyone and that it was just like writing a pretend story for English class. After all, Paul's teacher had always praised his imaginative compositions.

Now Paul's mother's words echoed in his mind: "Kyle's going to Camp Twin Pines with you this summer. Isn't that exciting?" Exciting? It would be horrible, Paul thought. Camp Twin Pines: hiking, campfire, Bible studies, crafts, and the lake. That was the problem - the lake. Last year the week at camp had been the best of the summer. This year Kyle was coming and the terrible truth would be discovered - Paul Thomas couldn't swim a stroke.

### Questions:

- How did Paul Thomas lie to his cousin?
- Why did he lie?
- Was he wrong in doing this? Why?
- Paul said his lie wouldn't hurt anyone. Did it? What might have been the consequences of his dishonesty? (Hurt Paul's relationship with God; Kyle and others who heard of it wouldn't trust him anymore; it would bring dishonor to God; Kyle and his family would regard Christians as hypocrites.)
- Paul compared his lie to Kyle with writing a fictional story for school. How were they the same and how were they different?

### SONGS

"Jesus Christ is the Way"; "Thou Art the Way" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #154); "A Mighty Fortress" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #92).

## Take Home Activity

**“Stained Glass” Window** - Do one of the following. The first two suggestions look better, but can be messy (using permanent markers, glue, and tissue paper from which the dye may come off), so you may wish to have the children wear smocks if they are used.

**A. Plastic wrap window** - Make a cardboard frame with a one inch border and a black construction paper frame of the same size. This should be done by the teacher for each child unless you have a small, mature class and a large amount of time available. Have each child tape a piece of plastic wrap over the cardboard frame. Your students should then divide the back of the plastic into geometric shapes and color them with permanent ink felt tip markers as in a stained glass window. On the front of the window, they should then print in black permanent ink marker: “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). Actually, it looks better to write the verse backwards on the back of the plastic, but this is difficult for children (they could write it correctly on the front in non-permanent markers and then trace it on the back backwards in permanent marker). Finally, your students should glue the construction paper frame over the plastic on top of the cardboard frame.

**B. Tissue paper window** - Make a cardboard frame and black construction paper frame as above, but glue a piece of thin white typing paper across the frame instead of plastic wrap. Students should cut pieces of colored tissue paper in different shapes and glue them to the white typing paper by first soaking them briefly in a mixture of white glue and water. Glue the construction paper frame over the tissue paper. When the project has dried, gently write “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) in black marker across the “window.”

**C. Crayon window** - Using colored pencils or crayons, lightly color geometric shapes on a piece of typing paper and print “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) across the paper. Color a border (frame) if desired.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 5:1-11** - God judges sin such as lying, as He did with Ananias and Sapphira.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-35.**

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Discuss this week's Bible story and have your child dramatize it with puppets or toy figures.
2. Notice how often characters on television programs seen and books read this week lie. What are the consequences of their actions? Often, T.V. heroes will lie for "good" motives. Does that make the lie justifiable? What might be the consequences of such a lie?
3. Discuss different types of dishonesty. Write a story or act out a situation in which a person lies or is tempted to lie.
4. When are you and your family members tempted to lie? (when afraid? when wanting others to praise you? when trying to gain something that doesn't belong to you? when wanting to protect someone?) Pray for each other that you may have courage to tell the truth.
5. Sing songs about truth such as: "Jesus Christ is the Way"; "Thou Art the Way" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #154); "A Mighty Fortress" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #92).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:14-32; Colossians 3:5-14; James 5:20; Psalm 130:3; Joshua 7; Joshua 2.



# **DISCIPLES IN JAIL**

**Acts 5:12-42**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students know that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Timothy 3:12), but we should obey God, who will take care of His people.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:36** - “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

## **Lesson Background**

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Timothy 3:12), yet God is able to take care of His people and will not allow them to endure more than is necessary (Romans 8:28, 35-39; I Corinthians 10:13). This was certainly true of the early disciples. The Lord had added more and more people to His church and allowed the apostles to perform miraculous signs and wonders. As a result, the jealous Sadducees had the apostles arrested. God sent an angel to release His servants, who bravely went to the Temple to “tell the people the full message of this new life” (Acts 5:20) as they had been ordered by the angel. We would do well to follow their example of great courage in obeying God and preaching the Gospel in spite of opposition.

We can also learn much from the apostles’ attitude toward authority. When rearrested, they went along peacefully with the Temple guard, even though their resistance would have been supported by the crowd (Acts 5:26). However, when they were questioned, Peter and the apostles boldly replied, “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Christians are to obey those placed in authority over them except when they are told to do something that is contrary to the commands of God. Peter did not attempt to mollify

the members of the Sanhedrin, but turned the tables on his accusers by focusing on their own sin and using the trial as an opportunity to magnify Jesus. He testified to the veracity of his statements by calling in two witnesses (Acts 5:32) as required in the Old Testament. Peter's reference to "tree" is not the usual word for cross, but harks back to Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (cf. Galatians 3:13; I Peter 2:24).

Gamaliel, a Pharisee who was Paul's teacher, advised the Sanhedrin to exercise restraint in dealing with the disciples of Christ. After all, he reasoned, unless a movement has God's support, it will shortly die out of its own accord. We know nothing about the Theudas to whom Gamaliel refers (it could hardly have been the Theudas referred to by Josephus, who led a rebellion in A.D. 44-46). Judas was a Galilean who led a rebellion in 6 A.D., when Archelaus was deposed by the Romans, Judea reduced to the state of a Roman province, and a census taken to determine the amount of tribute to be paid.

Gamaliel's caution prevailed and the apostles were released with a warning to discontinue their activities. The flogging they received was no trifling matter, but probably "forty lashes less one," which were given by order of the Sanhedrin for offenses against the Jewish law. People sometimes died from such punishment, but "the apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). May we joyfully obey the Lord, and trust Him, too, as we suffer for the Name that is above all names, Jesus.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that God sent an angel to release the apostles from jail after they were arrested for preaching the Gospel, that they continued to testify to Christ, obeying God rather than men when they were rearrested, and that when they were flogged, they rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's Name.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace, to obey God joyfully and boldly tell others about Him in spite of opposition.

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Introduce the Bible story approximately as follows: "We have been learning about life in the early church. Who can tell me some of the things that we have read about in the early chapters of Acts?" (Allow the children to respond; be sure to mention the large number of people turning to Christ, the miracles, and God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira.) "The Jewish leaders became jealous of what God was doing and the Sanhedrin decided to do something about the Christians' activity. The Sanhedrin, made up of Sadducees and Pharisees, was the Jewish ruling body that could make laws, although some decisions could only be made by the Roman government."

## BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 5:12-42** and discuss, using pertinent background material.

## STORY

**Note:** Much changed in the 1990s in formerly communist lands (where the following story obviously takes place), but various levels of persecution still exist there and throughout the world (even in the United States; note the severe restriction of Christian activity in American public schools). Basic principles still apply.

## THE WITNESS

“Mikhael!” The sudden command startled Mikhael, who jumped up, knocking his bowl and splattering soup in all directions.

“What is the meaning of this? How many times have I told you we do not allow this foolish custom of bowing your head before meals?”

“I am sorry to disobey your rules, sir. I am so used to praying I forget sometimes you do not want others to see me praying in school.”

Mikhael lived in a country far away where most of the people did not believe in God. Many Christians suffered here for living the way God wanted them to.

“That is no excuse,” shouted Mikhael’s teacher. “You must leave this school and never return!”

“Please give me another chance,” begged Mikhael. “I will try to obey your rules as well as I am able.”

“No, you must leave. I am sorry it must be this way,” said the man, softening a bit, “for you are a good student in many ways, but we cannot tolerate this prayer business in school. Your parents should be punished for teaching you such foolishness. How can you hope to grow up to be an intelligent, productive citizen of our country if you persist in this nonsense?”

“Sir, the Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

“Enough! Be gone now!”

Mikhael grabbed his books and ran out the door sobbing.

At home, Mikhael explained what had happened to his parents. “Mama, I’m so sorry. I tried to do what they said at school without disobeying God, but it was hard and I kept getting into trouble. Are you ashamed of me?”

“Oh, no Mikhael. How could we be? You are trying to live for Jesus and that makes us very, very happy.”

“But Mama, what if they try to take me away from you because you teach me about God?”

“Oh, my son, how I love you! No, I don’t think they will do that, but whatever happens we must trust God, for He will take care of us.”

Just then, a knock sounded at the door and Mikhael went to answer it. It was Ivan, one of Mikhael’s classmates. Mikhael asked him to come in.

“Mikhael,” Ivan said, “Our teacher was very mean to you today, and yet you were so brave and didn’t get angry at him either. I have watched you at other times, too. You are different from the other boys. Perhaps it is because of this God you believe in. If that is the reason, I want to become a Christian, too, even if I must suffer as you have.”

“Come in and have supper with us,” said Mikhael. “My family and I will be happy to tell you about the God who is alive and lives in us.”

### **Questions:**

- Why was Mikhael’s teacher angry with him?
- How was Mikhael punished?
- Did God bring any good from Mikhael’s suffering?
- How and why did the disciples in our Bible story suffer?
- What good did God bring out of their punishment?
- Do people in our country ever suffer for believing in Jesus? How? (Discuss examples.)
- Have you or your family ever suffered in even a small way for belief in Jesus? (“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” - II Timothy 3:12)

## SONGS

“Jesus, Name Above All Names”; “Obey My Voice.”

## Take Home Activity

Dramatize the Bible story with paper figures.

**A.** Draw and cut out characters from today’s Bible story from lightweight paper. Glue or tape a paper clip or put a staple through each. Draw a scene including the jail, Temple, and building for the Sanhedrin on a piece of paper. Use a magnet behind the scenery to move the paper figures and tell the Bible story.

**B.** Draw and cut out stand-up paper characters from today’s Bible story as in previous lessons (e.g., Quarter 1, Lesson 5). Construct a jail by folding a piece of construction paper in half from the top down and cutting a door in one part of the paper. Cut one side and the top of the door only so it may open and close. Cut out a window in the door and tape or glue toothpicks behind the window for bars. Act out the Bible story with the figures.

### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 5:12-42** - “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Timothy 3:12) as were the disciples, but we should obey God, who will take care of His people.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:36** - “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Discuss the Bible story and dramatize it with each family member playing a character, or using the paper characters made in class.
2. Find out where people in other parts of the world are suffering for Christ and what you can do to help them. Many are taunted, lose possessions, educational and job opportunities, family members and even their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Help those who are being persecuted for the faith: pray for them, write letters to those in prison or those who are suffering in other ways and their families, write to authorities asking them to stop the persecution of believers, help meet the material needs of families where there are women whose husbands have lost jobs, are in prison, or who have died for Christ.
3. Peter and the apostles said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). How does this Scripture relate to Romans 13? Are there times when we should disobey the government or other authority? Discuss?
4. As a family, read a book about people who suffer for Christ’s sake. Several good ones are available on a child’s level about those who have been persecuted in Communist lands, e.g., the Ivan series by Myrna Grant, published by Tyndale (*Ivan and the Secret of the Suitcase* [1975]; *Ivan and the Informer*; *Ivan and the Hidden Bible*; *Ivan and the Daring Escape*; *Ivan and the Star of David* [1977]) or the Alexi series by Anita Deyneka, published by David C. Cook (*Alexi’s Secret Mission* [1975]; *Tanya and the Border Guard*). Although events of the 1990s have rendered these somewhat outdated, your children will still enjoy them, and basic principles are still applicable.
5. Sing songs such as “Jesus, Name Above All Names”; “Obey My Voice.”

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Books:** Read a book about people who have suffered imprisonment or have been persecuted in other ways for Christ.

**Scripture:** I Peter 2:11-25; 3:8-18; 4:12-19; Romans 13:1-7; John 15:18-16:4.





# **STEPHEN**

**Acts 6; 7:54-60**

## **Lesson Aim**

To teach students that, like Stephen, we should “love [our] enemies and pray for those who persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44).

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:37** - “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

## **Lesson Background**

As the early church began to grow, it was plagued by inward dissension and outward persecution. “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:1). The apostles wisely realized they should not “neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables” (verse 2), so they willingly shared the responsibility with seven men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (verse 3). Mundane tasks should still be performed in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. Note also that the men given authority here all had names of Greek derivation, and these men were probably picked from the very group that had complained, yet the whole congregation agreed to their selection and God brought harmony to His church. One of the seven chosen was Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”

“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen. . .” (Acts 6:8-9). Freedmen were Roman prisoners or descendants of such prisoners who had been granted freedom. Because

some members were from Cilicia, some have supposed Paul belonged to this synagogue (cf. Acts 21:39). Like Christ (Matthew 26:59-66), Stephen was accused of blasphemy by false witnesses. Stephen may have reported Jesus' comments about the Temple (John 2:19-22), or spoken negatively about certain customs of the Jews that they regarded as law, but would not have said anything against God or His Law. In his defense before the council, Stephen turned the witness of Moses against his accusers, showing that the Jews had persecuted God's messengers throughout the history of Israel. And all the while they saw that Stephen's face was like the face of an angel (cf. Exodus 34:29-35).

Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God and rejoiced in his risen Savior. Jesus was more real to Stephen than the presence of his enemies (may He be such a part of our lives), but his jubilant outcry at seeing the Lord was regarded by the Sanhedrin as the height of blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:62-64). They rushed to seize Stephen and bring him outside the city to kill him. God and Jewish law prescribed regulations for stoning, but Stephen's death seems to have been more a matter of mob rule rather than a legislative execution. The Sanhedrin had no power to put people to death (John 18:31), and that his execution was by special permission of the Roman governor or after Pilate's recall in 36 A.D. seems unlikely.

Stephen imitated Christ as we also should (Ephesians 5:1; I Corinthians 11:1; I Peter 2:21). He committed himself to Jesus as Jesus had committed Himself to God (Luke 23:46). Although Stephen denounced sin before the Sanhedrin, he asked forgiveness for his enemies. His powerful witness may have been a turning point in Paul's life. Like Stephen, may we forgive our enemies as we follow our risen Savior.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that the apostles chose seven Spirit-filled men to oversee the congregation's material needs, including Stephen, who did miracles and spoke boldly for Christ; that members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen accused Stephen of blasphemy and brought him to trial before the Sanhedrin; that Stephen used Israelite history to condemn his accusers as rebels against God; that Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God; that the people stoned Stephen, but he asked God to forgive them.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace, to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44).

## Lesson Procedure

### STORY

"Because of Christ" is written to be performed as a puppet show. Since there are three characters, you will need the help of another adult or a child who is an expressive reader. A table turned on its side can be used as the puppet stage. If you would rather not dramatize the play, you may tell it as a story by interspersing narrative portions where needed (e.g., "One cold winter day a boy was playing in front of his house when he heard a pair of boots crunching up the walk. 'Hey, Harry,' said his friend Oscar, 'What's happening?'"). Discuss the play and tell your children that in today's Bible story they will learn about someone who suffered because of his witness for Christ but who, like Tim, showed love to his enemies.

### BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 6; 7:54-60** and discuss using appropriate background material. After reading chapter 6 tell your class that Stephen spoke to the Sanhedrin about who Jesus is and their rebellion against Him, but that since his speech is long you would prefer to have them read it (Acts 7:1-53) at home sometime this week rather than taking time for it in class.

## SONGS

These songs are about those who have been martyrs for Christ: “Let the Choir New Anthems Raise” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #357); “Faith of Our Fathers” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #570); “For All the Saints” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #358).

## Take Home Activity

**“Love Your Enemies” Plaque** - Make a plaque reminding people to “Love Your Enemies” (Matthew 5:44). An easy way to do this is to have your students print this phrase with felt-tipped pen on an index card. Make a fancy border around the card by punching holes with a hole punch approximately every half inch around the outside of the card and threading brightly-colored yarn through the holes with an overcast stitch. The yarn will be easier to thread if the end is wrapped in tape or dipped in glue that is then allowed to dry.



**BECAUSE OF CHRIST**

**Characters: Tim, Harry, Oscar**

**Oscar:** “Hey, Harry, what’s happening?”

**Harry:** “Hi, Oscar, how are you?”

**Oscar:** “Okay, I guess. I do like this cold weather.”

**Harry:** “Wanna build a snowman?”

**Oscar:** “Nah, not now. Let’s go sledding. I went the other day; there’s this one huge bump in the middle of the hill. Go over that and wow, do you go flying! Go get your sled and come on. I’ll show you what I mean.”

**Harry:** “Here comes Tim. Do you want to ask him to go with us?”

**Oscar:** “No way. He might start telling us that stuff about God like he did the other day.”

**Harry:** “Tim’s a nice guy.”

**Oscar:** “Yeah, but don’t let him get going with that Jesus stuff. Drives me crazy. He’s coming this way. Let’s throw snowballs at him when he gets here.”

**Tim:** “Hi, Harry, Oscar. What are you doing? Sledding looks real good on the hill. Want to go over?”

**Oscar:** “Yeah, but not with you.”

[Harry and Oscar throw snowballs and leave.]

**Tim:** “Oh, why did they do that? I tried to be their friend. Jesus would want me to love them anyway, but it’s hard when they act like that. Maybe they will play with me later. I’m going sledding anyway. If I see them there maybe I’ll even share some of the cookies Mom baked for me to bring.”

**Questions:**

- How did Oscar feel about Tim? What did Oscar do to him?
- Why did Oscar throw the snowballs at Tim?
- Did Harry consider Tim his friend? Why, then, did he throw snowballs at him?
- How did Tim act toward his persecutors?
- How is Tim like Stephen? How is he different?
- Can you think of a situation where someone you know was persecuted because of his Christian convictions? How did he treat those who tried to hurt him?
- How do you react when people hurt you?



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 6; 7:54-60** - Like Stephen, we should “love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us” (Matthew 5:44).

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:37** - “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Think of a specific person you might consider an enemy. Pray daily for this person this week. Talk to him about any disagreement you might have (Matthew 5:23-24). Do at least one practical thing to benefit him this week.
2. Read Matthew 5. Does loving our enemies mean that we should not fight sin? Discuss.
3. Write a story, play, or puppet show (and perform the latter two) about a child dealing with his enemies.
4. Continue reading books begun last week about Christians who are persecuted. How have they shown love to their enemies?
5. Read and discuss Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-53). You may wish to do this a section at a time and read the Old Testament stories to which he refers.
6. Stephen and the other six men acted as the first deacons. What are the qualifications for church office? (I Timothy 3)
7. Sing songs about those who have died for Christ: “Let the Choir New Anthems Raise” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #357); “Faith of Our Fathers” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #570); “For All the Saints” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #358).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Acts 7:1-53; Matthew 5; I Timothy 3.

**Books:** Read a book about those who have died for Christ, e.g., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (John Foxe, reprinted by Baker, 1981); *Through Gates of Splendor* (Elizabeth Elliot, Pyramid, 1970); *Jungle Pilot* (Russell Hitt, Zondervan, 1973).





# **SIMON THE SORCERER**

**Acts 8:9-25**

## **Lesson Aim**

That, unlike Simon, your students may realize that we cannot purchase the gifts and favor of God.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-37.**

## **Lesson Background**

Today's Scripture passage offers a few difficulties but presents a clear message - we cannot purchase the gifts and favor of God. Salvation cannot be earned; the things of God are far too precious to be obtained by any earthly expenditure (Isaiah 55:1-9; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Simon was a Samaritan sorcerer who proudly claimed to be someone great because of his demonic powers. Like many, it seems he felt he had secret access to God because of the things he did. How different was his attitude from that of the humble Christians who gave glory to God when they performed miracles! God had allowed his servant Philip (Philip the deacon [Acts 6], not Philip the apostle) to do "great signs and miracles" at which Simon was astounded (Acts 8:13). Further impressed by the ministry of Peter and John, he offered to buy the ability to impart the Holy Spirit, a proposal that met with a stinging rebuke by Peter. Why the Lord did not bestow the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans without the instrumentality of His apostles is uncertain. Some commentators suggest that Peter and John went to Samaria to welcome the new Gentile believers as fully part of the church.

Simon is himself a perplexing character. The Scriptures say he believed, a verb used to refer to genuine faith, and he was baptized, indicating that Philip was convinced of his sincerity. Simon's entreaty

in verse 24 may signify true repentance. On the other hand, Peter condemns Simon in extremely strong terms (Acts 8:20). He charges him to turn to God, so that perhaps his wicked thoughts may be forgiven. Tradition asserts that Simon did not repent, but went on to become the father of Gnostic heresies and cause great trouble for Christians, although this may have been a different Simon. We derive the term “simony” (the buying and selling of ecclesiastical office) from his name. Simon was proud and desired spiritual power for the wrong reasons. Do we want to teach Sunday School or to obtain the blessings of God for selfish reasons, to have power over others or to impress people and have them like us? May we seek God for His glory and by His means.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that when God, using Philip, blessed the people of Samaria and allowed many people to believe in Him, Peter and John laid their hands on believers in Samaria and the Holy Spirit came upon them; that Simon desired to buy the ability to do this, and Peter strongly condemned him for thinking that he could purchase the gift of God.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God’s grace, to serve the Lord in humble obedience rather than trying to earn His favor.

## **Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction** - Tell your students how that, in spite of opposition, the Gospel had begun to spread throughout the world. God not only used Stephen, but another deacon named Philip to spread His Word. Philip went to Samaria, and many believed as they heard the Good News and saw the miracles God allowed Philip to perform. One Samaritan who listened with great interest was a sorcerer named Simon.

### **BIBLE STORY**

Read **Acts 8:9-25** and discuss, emphasizing that we cannot earn God’s favor, but should desire to serve Him for His glory.

### **STORY**

“What Money Can’t Buy.” This may be done effectively as a two-character play if you prefer. Before you begin or after the story, give your students some background about Roman Catholicism, Martin Luther, the Reformation, and life in general in the sixteenth century. Such information may be found by consulting a good biography of Luther such as Roland Bainton’s *Here I Stand*.

### **SONGS**

“Seek Ye First” (including Matthew 4:4 to this tune); “Not By Might”; “Not What My Hands Have Done” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #461); “A Mighty Fortress” (Martin Luther, *Trinity Hymnal*, #92).

## Take Home Activity

**“What Money Can’t Buy” Picture** - Divide a piece of paper in half. On the top of the left half print “Money Can Buy.” On top of the right half print “Money Cannot Buy.” On the left half glue pictures cut from magazines and/or draw pictures of things money can buy. You may also wish to tape a penny to this side. On the right side, glue pictures cut from magazines and/or draw pictures of things money cannot buy. This is more difficult since these things are intangible, but you may, for example, have your students draw a cross for faith or two smiling people for friendship.



**WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY**

“Hans, Hans, I’ve got the money!” Frederick called.

“What money?” asked Hans.

“Haven’t you heard? Johann Tetzel is coming to town. I am going to put money in his box so my dead grandmother can go to heaven,” said Frederick. “‘When money in the monk’s box lies another soul to heaven flies,’ or something like that.”

“That monk, Martin Luther, says we can’t buy our way into heaven with money,” countered Hans. “Besides, I think those priests just steal that money so they can buy fancy clothes and jewels and stuff for themselves.”

“How can you say such a thing!” exclaimed Frederick. “How else could we be sure of going to heaven? Do you mean God will let us into heaven if we do good things like going to church or helping people?”

“No,” replied Hans. “Brother Luther says God’s love is a free gift. A person can get to heaven only by having faith in God, trusting that Christ died for him and turning from sin to God. Of course, if God is ruling in a man’s life, he will go to church and do good things.”

“Really?” said Frederick. “Maybe I won’t give Johann Tetzel my money. What else does this Martin Luther say?”

**Questions:**

- Although Hans and Frederick are made-up characters, Tetzel and Luther really lived more than 400 years ago. How did Tetzel say a person could get to heaven? What did Luther say about how a person could go to heaven? What does the Bible say?
- Although we do not have to pay to know God, someone did pay a price to enable Christians to know God - who? Explain.
- Who in this story is like someone in the Bible story? How are they alike?



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 8:9-25** - We cannot earn the gifts and favor of God as Simon the sorcerer tried to do.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-37.**

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Since we cannot earn salvation, discuss how a person can come to know God and why we should obey Him. Consider why you desire spiritual blessings. Is it for selfish reasons, or for God's glory and to benefit others?
2. Read what occurred between last week's lesson and this week's lesson (Acts 8:1-8). The Philip spoken of here and in next week's lesson was one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6, not Philip the apostle.
3. Today's life application story told about a boy in the sixteenth century who thought people could buy their way into heaven and learned differently from the teachings of a monk named Martin Luther. Learn more about Martin Luther and his conflict with Johann Tetzel and the Roman Catholic Church (see, for example, *Here I Stand* by Roland Bainton).
4. Sing songs such as: "Seek Ye First" (including Matthew 4:4 to this tune); "Not By Might"; "Not What My Hands Have Done" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #461); "A Mighty Fortress" (Martin Luther, *Trinity Hymnal*, #92).





# **PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN**

**Acts 8:26-40**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help your students boldly obey God and tell others about Him using the Scriptures.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:38** - “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

## **Lesson Background**

The early church was persecuted, but grew mightily as God blessed the proclamation of the Word by His obedient servants. The faithfulness of one such individual resulted in the entrance of the Gospel into the country of Ethiopia (actually the upper Nile region rather than present-day Ethiopia).

Sometimes God’s commandments seem strange, and well they might have to Philip. Why should he leave a successful ministry in Samaria to travel to Gaza on a desert road? But Philip immediately obeyed the angel (had he waited and argued, the opportunity might have been lost) and through his witness, from what we can tell historically, a whole nation was introduced to the truths of God.

The Ethiopian eunuch was an important official in the court of Queen Candace (verse 27). Candace was an hereditary title (like “Pharaoh” in Egypt or “Caesar” in Rome) and does not refer to a specific person. Eunuchs often served in influential positions in royal households (you need not tell your children what a eunuch is, but merely refer to him as an Ethiopian official).

Philip was willing to speak with a foreigner from another culture in spite of the fierce Jewish/Gentile animosity of the time (though the fact that the eunuch was traveling from Jerusalem and reading the Jewish Scriptures probably indicates that he was a proselyte, or convert to Judaism, or at least a God-fearer - a Gentile who worshiped in the synagogue and honored the true God, but was not circumcised). Strangers would often attach themselves to a caravan, so the Spirit's command in verse 29 would not seem odd to Philip. He heard what the Ethiopian was reading because reading aloud was the common practice in ancient times. He presented the Gospel to the Ethiopian by beginning with the official's concerns and focusing his attention on the Scriptures. What a lesson for us! Could we begin at any point in the Bible and explain to a person his need of Christ?

The early church regarded baptism as an integral accompaniment to salvation, and the new believer commonly declared his unity with Christ in this way immediately after conversion. Apparently Philip had related this to the Ethiopian, for the latter asked to be baptized as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Verse 37, a common baptismal formula, is probably a later addition to the text.

Philip, obedient to God and following the leading of His Spirit, used the Scriptures to point a stranger to Jesus; may we do likewise.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that Philip obeyed God, leaving a place of blessing to go to a desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza, where he met an Ethiopian court official to whom he explained the Gospel using the Scriptures, and that God saved the Ethiopian, who was then baptized by Philip.

*Behavioral Objectives* - That your students, by God's grace, may boldly obey God and tell others about Him using the Scriptures.

## **Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction** - "Can you imagine leaving a stream that was stocked full of trout to go fishing in a puddle? Would you expect to catch anything? Something similar to this happened to Philip. God had been blessing Philip's ministry in Samaria and many people were coming to know God. One day, an angel appeared to Philip and told him to leave this place where God was working to walk in the desert. Do you think Philip might have thought this was a crazy idea? Let's see if he did what God said."

## **BIBLE STORY**

Read **Acts 8:26-40** and discuss, pointing out the lessons mentioned in the background material but concentrating on Philip's obedience and use of the Scriptures.

## STORY

### THE ENCOUNTER

Jason tried to steady the book as the bus bumped down the street. Usually he read the Bible before he left for school, but today he had overslept and was suffering the consequences. He felt slightly carsick and other passengers' conversations made it difficult to concentrate.

A voice so soft that at first he hardly heard it broke through the general noise, and Jason looked up to see a boy about his own age with large dark eyes and strange clothes speaking to him.

"I sit beside you please? The other seats - they are not empty."

"Oh no," thought Jason, "just what I need! How can I read with someone sitting next to me?" But he said, "Yeah, I guess so," and to be polite added, "My name's Jason Matheson."

"I am called Abdul Mohammed Khaliq. It is my pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"Glad to meet you, too," Jason replied, smiling, and turned back to his Bible reading. He'd read only a few verses when Abdul interrupted him again.

"I like to study science. Someday maybe I will make great discoveries and help many people. What do you like to learn about in school?"

"Oh no," Jason thought, "a talkative kid! But at least he seems pretty nice. I might as well give up on having devotions, though."

"Well, I'm pretty good at math," Jason said, trying not to sound boastful, "so I suppose that's my favorite subject."

"The book, it is good?" Abdul asked. "I am sorry to trouble you, but I am new in this country and wish to learn all things American, what you eat, what clothes you put on, how you live, and what you read. So tell me, please, what do you read?"

Jason hesitated. He didn't feel like talking to this strange kid about the Scriptures. He was obviously a foreigner and probably had his own religion. But the boy had asked a simple question and he had to answer it. "Uh, it's a Bible."

"Oh," said Abdul, "a Bible is your holy book, is it not? In my country we, too, have a holy book. It is called the Qur'an."

Jason wanted to change the subject, but somehow he could not. How could he let Abdul think that God's Word was like this Qur'an of his, just another special book? "Tell Abdul about Me," God seemed to be convicting Jason.

"Abdul, the Bible isn't just an American book. It's not like any book in the world. It tells about God's Son, Jesus."

"That is not true," Abdul argued. "God cannot have a Son. There is only one God and Mohammed is his prophet."

"There is only one God, but He has three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Jason replied. "Jesus came to earth to die so sinners could live with Him in heaven. Look, it says so right here," he continued, pointing to his Bible. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

"I have not before heard anything like this. I do not understand. The bus stops. I must go. Will you be on the bus tomorrow? I want to talk again."

"Sure, I'd like that. Hey Abdul," Jason called, thrusting his Bible at him. "Take this with you. You can return it to me tomorrow."

"Thank you, friend," said Abdul, "I will read it."

**Questions:**

- What was Jason reading on the bus and what interrupted his reading?
- Did Jason want to tell Abdul about Christ? Why might we not want to share God’s Word? (Fear, we don’t want to bother, we don’t know Christ ourselves, etc.)
- Did Jason do what God wanted even though he didn’t feel like it?
- Can you use the Bible to tell someone about Christ?

**SONGS**

Sing songs about obedience, e.g., “Obey My Voice”; evangelism, e.g., “Jesus Shall Reign” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441), “The Ends of All the Earth” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #368); and God’s Word, e.g., “Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart” [Psalm 119:11] (*Trinity Hymnal*, #136); Psalm 19.

**Take Home Activity**

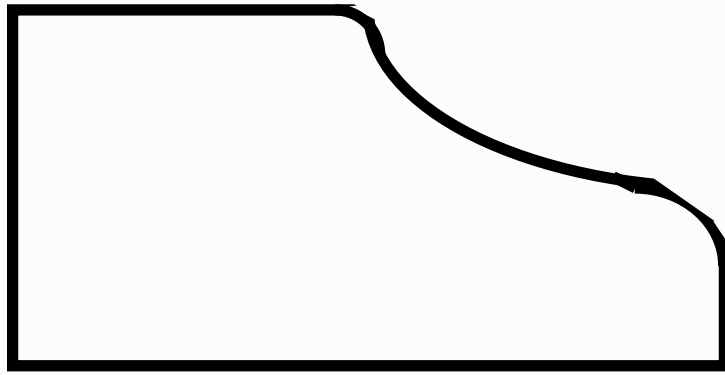
**Worksheet** - The first part of this is probably best done together as a class. First discuss how a person can come to faith in Christ. Then have your students look up each of the different Bible verses and draw lines to match them to the appropriate statements on the left. The “Who Am I?” section can be done individually or as a class.

**Key for “Who Am I?”**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I desired money more than God.<br>Ananias, Sapphira   | I told others about Jesus.<br>Philip, Peter, Stephen, John |
| God healed me.<br>Lame Man  | I was on trial before the Sanhedrin.<br>Peter, Stephen     |
| I thought I could buy God’s gifts.<br>Simon   | I obeyed God.<br>Philip, Peter, Stephen, John              |
| God enabled me to do miracles.<br>Philip, Peter, Stephen  | I was baptized.<br>Ethiopian, Simon, probably others       |
| I lied to the church.<br>Ananias and Sapphira   |  |
| God saved me.<br>definitely Philip, Ethiopian, Peter, Stephen, John;<br>possibly Ananias, Sapphira, Simon, Lame Man |  |

**Paper Figures** - If desired, paper figures of the Bible story characters can be made as described in other lessons. The chariot pattern below should be transferred to cardboard. Milk bottle or other bottle caps or juice concentrate lids attached to the chariot with brass fasteners can serve as wheels.

## Chariot Pattern





## Class Work

## Philip and the Ethiopian

**Match the Bible verse with what it means.**

**(Some have more than one answer.)**

All people are sinners.

Romans 3:23

John 14:6

Romans 6:23

We all deserve God's judgment.

John 3:36

Romans 5:8

Jesus died in place of Christians  
so they could be forgiven and live  
forever with Him.

John 3:16-18

Romans 10:9,10

Acts 3:19

Romans 1:18

God says we should repent of our  
sins and turn to Him.

Romans 3:10

**WHO AM I?**

Write my name next to the right sentence.  
Several answers are possible.

I desired money more than God. \_\_\_\_\_

God healed me. \_\_\_\_\_

I thought I could buy God's gifts. \_\_\_\_\_

God enabled me to do miracles. \_\_\_\_\_

I lied to the church. \_\_\_\_\_

God saved me. \_\_\_\_\_

I told others about Jesus. \_\_\_\_\_

I was on trial before the Sanhedrin. \_\_\_\_\_

I obeyed God. \_\_\_\_\_

I was baptized. \_\_\_\_\_

**Word Bank**

**Philip**

**Sapphira**

**Peter**

**Ananias**

**John**

**Ethiopian**

**Simon**

**Lame Man**

**Stephen**



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 8:26-40** - We should obey God and boldly tell others about Him using the Scriptures, as Philip did with the Ethiopian.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:38** - "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. If God has redeemed people in your family, pray that He will give them opportunities to tell others about Christ.
2. Study the Scriptures as a family and make a list of verses that would be helpful in proclaiming the Gospel. The Worksheet should get you started. Memorize some of these verses.
3. If God gives you the opportunity (trust that He will do so), share God's truth with an unbeliever this week.
4. Discuss the significance of baptism and read pertinent Scripture passages (e.g., Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 6:1-4; Matthew 28:19-20). Attend a baptismal service, if possible. Does anyone in your family need to obey God in this matter? Great caution must be exercised in the baptizing of children that evidence of Christ's redeeming work in their lives has been quite apparent before this important step is taken. On the other hand, if God has truly saved them, they should be allowed to declare their faith in this way, for New Testament believers were baptized immediately upon their conversion.
5. Sing songs about obedience, e.g., "Obey My Voice"; evangelism, e.g., "Jesus Shall Reign" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441), "The Ends of All the Earth" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #368); and God's Word, e.g., "Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart" [Psalm 119:11] (*Trinity Hymnal*, #136); Psalm 19.

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** The verses on your child's Worksheet; Isaiah 53.

**Books:** Books about cross-cultural evangelism such as these by Don Richardson: *Peace Child* (Gospel Light, 1974.); *Lords of the Earth* (Gospel Light, 1977.); *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Gospel Light).

*Operation World* by Jason Mandryk (Intervarsity Press, 2010) - a guide to praying for the world with thousands of statistics about geography, people groups, language groups, Bible translations, and religions for more than two hundred geographical areas.

# **PETER, AENEAS, AND DORCAS**

**Acts 9:32-43**

## **Lesson Aim**

To teach your students that they should glorify God by helping other people.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:38** - “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

## **Lesson Background**

God continued to work in the early church doing miracles through His disciples and bringing many people to Himself. He used Peter to glorify His Name in the former Philistine cities of Lydda (Old Testament Lod), which was about twenty-five miles from Jerusalem toward the sea, and in Joppa (present-day Jaffa), ten miles from Lydda on the coast.

Miracles appear so commonplace in the New Testament that we sometimes forget the effect they must have had on people. Imagine a man walking who had been paralyzed for eight years! When word of this event reached the Christians in Joppa, they immediately sent for Peter. It would be interesting to know if they actually believed that he would bring Tabitha (Greek - Dorcas; both mean *gazelle*) to life. Whether or not the church anticipated this, they certainly had cause to rejoice when God did raise to life this woman who had done so much for others.

When miracles are mentioned in the Bible, we usually read of people turning to the Lord, and God saved many in Lydda and Joppa as a result of Peters ministry. Yet God also used the much less spectacular work of Dorcas to bless many lives. Verse 39 can mean that the widows showed the clothes on themselves.

Dorcas had personally touched each of their lives and all had benefitted from knowing her. May we follow her example of true servanthood. One final note about this passage: Tanning leather was a ceremonially unclean occupation. That Peter was willing to stay with Simon (verse 43) may indicate a weakening in his resistance to Gentile inclusion in the church, a position that would be shattered in Acts 10 by a dream and an encounter with a Roman centurion.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that God used Peter to heal Aeneas, a man who had been paralyzed for eight years in the city of Lydda, and in Joppa, to raise to life Dorcas (Tabitha), a woman who had served others and helped the poor, and that God used these miracles to bring many people to Himself.

*Behavioral Objectives* - That your students would glorify God by helping other people.

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Ask your children what a servant or a slave is and what he does. Point out that servants may not always like the jobs they must perform and are seldom thanked for doing them (Luke 17:7-10). Ask your students if they would like to be slaves. When they say “no,” explain that this is exactly what God tells us we should be, not by way of occupation, but that all Christians should serve God and other people. Read **Matthew 20:25-28** and talk about the attitude a servant should have. Ask your students to find who in today’s Bible story had a humble, helpful disposition.

## BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 9:32-43** and discuss, using background material and focusing on the concept of servanthood. As mentioned in the introduction, a servant helps others even when he does not feel like it and without expectation of reward. Ask your students how Peter and Dorcas fulfilled the role of a servant to God and other people and how they (your students) can be servants. Get specific here. Together list ways in which your children can minister to others in their families, church and community. Have them write down or draw a picture of one definite plan for serving others this week. First and second graders can be of real help to people in many ways; this activity should also help them recognize their own self-centered outlook on life and think of how they can use their time and energy for others. One warning - occasionally a child will take the concept of servanthood so to heart that he will become almost a literal slave to his brothers and sisters or friends, doing whatever they tell him, no matter how ridiculous. Your students need to see that submitting to a friend who is torturing them in this way is not helping him, but encouraging him in evil ways. Where to draw the line is sometimes difficult.

## SONGS

“This is My Commandment”; “Fountain of Good” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #583).

## **Take Home Activity**

**Service Project** - Have the children do an activity to serve to others. They may wish to imitate Dorcas in doing a simple sewing project (e.g., doll dresses, stuffed animals, cloth books, or bean bags for the church nursery, a hospital, or the poor), but any endeavor that will benefit others is fine. Your children can make gifts such as baked goods or a cassette tape with singing and Bible verses, for old people's homes, the poor or a hospital, or paint a mural for the church nursery. They might also perform a service such as picking up trash in the neighborhood.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 10** - We should glorify God by helping other people as Dorcas and Peter did.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:38** - “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Ultimately humble service to others comes about through the work of the Holy Spirit, but you can encourage even a non-Christian child in this area. First and second graders can offer valuable service to others if given the opportunity. Show them how they can do so, and although certain chores may be part of their regular responsibilities, they may be more willing to serve if sometimes their work for others is not forced or if it is a group project. They can help with household chores, cooking, baking, gardening, cleaning the house and car, picking up neighborhood litter, shoveling snow, sweeping walks, or watching young children (with additional adult supervision). Your children should help, but not be overburdened with such activities.
2. Jesus said that we are to be servants of others. Are there ever times when we should refuse to “walk the second mile” (Matthew 5:38-48)? Discuss this with your children.
3. Sing songs about serving others such as “This is My Commandment”; “Fountain of Good” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #583).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:25-28; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 5:38-48; Galatians 5:13; Romans 12:11; II Peter 2:16-17





# **PETER AND CORNELIUS**

## **Acts 10**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help your students show God's love to all kinds of people.

### **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:39** - "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."

### **Lesson Background**

God's ways are not our ways, and sometimes He must work with our stubborn hearts a long time before we see things even somewhat from His perspective. Such was the case with the early church's insular attitude regarding the spread of the Gospel. Patiently, God worked in the lives of Jewish Christians to dissolve their anti-Gentile prejudices. In today's story, the major barrier falls as Peter and his friends realize that it would be absurd to exclude from the church by denying water baptism those whom God had received as evidenced by their baptism with the Holy Spirit.

In the city of Caesarea, built by Herod the Great and the center of Roman government in Judea, there lived a God-fearing centurion. A centurion, who was normally in charge of about a hundred men, was something like a sergeant in a modern army. God was pleased with the centurion's prayers and offerings to the poor (does He approve of our lives in these areas?) and sent an angel with a message that Cornelius should send for a man named Peter in Joppa, thirty miles away. Note that the angel did not himself preach the Gospel to Cornelius; God has given this task to men.

Meanwhile, God was preparing Peter for his momentous encounter with Cornelius. The fact that Peter was staying in the house of a tanner (tanning was considered an unclean occupation) may indicate a lessening conscientiousness in his adherence to Jewish ceremonial law, but it took a vision from God to break down the barriers completely. Jewish meals were serious occasions begun with prayer, and while it might be possible on rare occasions to extend hospitality to a Gentile neighbor, to accept, in turn, an invitation to his house was almost unheard of, primarily because of the strictures of dietary law (see Leviticus 11). Peter rightly understood that the vision not only meant the elimination of restrictions about food, but that God would save all kinds of people. Peter obediently went to Cornelius' house, where God filled the Gentile believers with His Spirit as He had the Jews at Pentecost. God worked in Peter to break down his prejudices. May He work in our hearts as well.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that God sent an angel to the centurion, Cornelius, in Caesarea because of his prayers and gifts to the poor to tell him to send to Joppa for Peter, who was staying in Simon the tanner's house by the sea; that meanwhile God was working in Peter's life through a vision of unclean animals; that Peter went to Cornelius' house where he preached Christ to the assembled Gentiles, whom God then filled with His Spirit.

*Behavioral Objectives* - That, by God's grace, your students may show God's love to all kinds of people.

## **Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction** - Begin today's lesson by explaining Jewish/Gentile prejudice and Jewish dietary laws (see Leviticus 11). Tell your students that in today's Bible story they will learn how God dealt with Peter's attitude toward the Gentiles.

### **BIBLE STORY**

Read **Acts 10** and discuss. Ask your children if there are any people they feel uncomfortable playing with, laugh at, or in other ways treat unkindly because they are different. They may vehemently contend that they love everybody, but sensitive questioning may uncover areas of concern. Discuss with your students how they can show God's love to those others reject.

### **STORY**

"Friends and Enemies." If desired, you may give your students additional information about David Brainerd (see *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards, Baker, 1981).

### **FRIENDS AND ENEMIES**

**Characters:** Mrs. Frumpton  
Mrs. Overmarsh - both self-righteous, "proper" ladies

**Time:** The eighteenth century

\* \* \*

- Mrs. Frumpton : “My dear Mrs. Overmarsh! And how are you doing today?”
- Mrs. Overmarsh: “Not too well, I’m afraid, Mrs. Frumpton. I am quite irritated over this matter with young Mr. Brainerd. How he could refuse to become the minister of our congregation is more than I can understand!”
- Mrs. Frumpton : “I agree with you completely. It is not as if he decided to go with a church that had more money or influence than ours. That might be reasonable. But to preach to the heathen, those Indians! It’s ridiculous!”
- Mrs. Overmarsh: “Savages, that’s what they are! How could they possibly be as deserving of God’s grace as we are? Lazy drunkards! They’ve even hurt and killed some white people! Why David Brainerd would want to waste his life among them, and him being in the top of his college class at Yale ... You would think he would have more sense.”
- Mrs. Frumpton : “Well, he must be crazy. That is probably why they made him leave the college. We are better off without him.”
- Mrs. Overmarsh: “I think you are right. Thank you very much, Mrs. Frumpton. You have made me feel better about this whole situation.”

### Questions:

- Where was David Brainerd going?
- Did Mrs. Frumpton and Mrs. Overmarsh approve of what Brainerd was doing?
- Did Mrs. Overmarsh *deserve* God’s grace? (No, nor do the Indians, nor do we.)
- Was David Brainerd “crazy” to preach to the Indians?
- Was Peter crazy to preach to the Gentiles?
- How can we show God’s love to people different from ourselves?

### SONGS

Sing songs such as “Jesus Loves the Little Children” (Change the words to “all kinds of children in the world” for proper theology); “Micah 6:8”; “Jesus Shall Reign” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441); “The Ends of All the Earth” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #368).

### ACTIVITY

If possible, have your class visit a church or Sunday School with a different racial/ethnic mix than your own. Invite people from different cultures to visit and/or speak to your class. Learn about other cultures from books, magazines, and tapes, and by playing games, reading stories, learning words and eating foods from foreign countries. See *Missions Home Helps*, Year II, Quarter 3 for further ideas.

### Take Home Activity

**“God Loves All Kinds of People” Collage.** On the top of a large piece of paper, have your students print “God loves all kinds of people.” They should then cut out magazine pictures of a variety of people and glue them to the paper in an interesting way. This can be done individually or as a large mural by the whole class.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 10** - We should show God's love to all kinds of people, as Peter did to Cornelius.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:39** - "The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Ask God to break down your prejudices and give you a love for other people. Ask Him to help you not to be patronizing toward those who are different from you in educational background, culture, or material wealth.
2. Invite someone from another culture to eat with you. Share some different customs. Visit a church whose congregation is primarily of a different racial/ethnic group than your own.
3. Learn about different cultures and how people think about life and God so you can have greater understanding of them and be better able to communicate the Gospel to them. Eat some food, read some stories, sing songs, play a game, or learn a few words of the language and pray for those from a particular people group.
4. Sing songs such as: "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (Change the words to "all kinds of children in the world" for proper theology); "Micah 6:8"; "Jesus Shall Reign" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #441); "The Ends of All the Earth" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #368).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Acts 11; Ephesians 2:11-22; Galatians 2; James 2:1; Leviticus 11; Mark 7:14-23; Romans 14:14; Luke 24:46-47.

**Books:** Continue reading books on cross-cultural evangelism such as those by Don Richardson mentioned in Lesson 9 of this quarter. Read a biography of William Carey, who was reputedly told by a fellow minister that "if God wanted to save the heathen, He could do so without your help or mine." Read a biography of David Brainerd, who preached to the Indians, e.g., *The Life of David Brainerd* (Jonathan Edwards, Baker, 1981). Continue to pray for the peoples of the world with the help of Jason Mandryk's *Operation World*, also mentioned in Lesson 9.



# **PETER IS FREED FROM PRISON**

**Acts 12:1-17**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand the efficacy of prayer.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:40** - “With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’”

## **Lesson Background**

As the gospel spread to the Gentiles, the Jewish people became even more antagonistic to Christianity. Herod Agrippa I, possibly in an effort to conciliate them, “arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword” (Acts 12:2-3). “Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, ii, 9) preserves the tradition . . . telling how the officer who guarded James was so impressed by his demeanor that he confessed himself a Christian and was beheaded along with him” (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary, page 248). [The James in verse 17, by the way, is probably Jesus’ brother.] The Lord spared Peter, on the other hand, for further earthly service. God rescued Peter but not James, not for any reasons obvious to human eyes, but according to His providential designs (cf. John 21:18-23).

Of course, Peter’s deliverance from prison was in answer to earnest (literally, “in a stretched-out manner”) prayer. “The imperfect tenses in verse 5 make clear Peter’s imprisonment and the early church’s prayer lasted for several days” (I. Howard Marshall, *Tyndale Commentary on Acts*, page 208). God sent an angel to rescue Peter, who “had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision” (Acts 12:9). When Peter realized what had happened, he went to the house of Mary

(John Mark's mother) to inform the church of his release. Instead of a jubilant reception, however, Peter was forced to wait outside a closed door until the Christians realized that the visitor at the door was not his angel. The Bible speaks of people having angels (Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14), but the idea of having a guardian angel twin alike in voice and appearance may have been a Jewish superstition. It appears that after telling the church of his release, Peter went to hide from the authorities, and the Bible does not condemn him for doing so.

We may laugh at these Christians' incredulousness that their prayers had been answered, but is our attitude any different from theirs? If we knew that one of our friends was securely held by the police, would we believe a report that he had been seen freely walking about? Would we have spent days pleading with God for his release, as these people did, in the first place? Do we expect God to answer our prayers? May He give us the faith to trust Him to do so.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that Herod Agrippa I had James the brother of John executed with a sword and had Peter arrested and guarded by four squads of four soldiers, but, in answer to the earnest prayers of the church, God sent an angel who delivered him from prison; that Peter then went to the house of Mary, John Mark's mother, where a servant girl, Rhoda, in her excitement, kept him waiting outside the house until the Christians, finally realizing that the visitor was not Peter's angel, welcomed him; and that Peter told them what happened and left for another place.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God's grace, to "Pray continually" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Ask your students, "Does God answer prayer?" and discuss briefly. Tell your students that you will talk about this further after today's Bible story.

### BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 12:1-17** and discuss using background material. Focus on the power of earnest prayer. Remind them, however, that God is not obligated to answer the prayers of those who do not know Him.

### STORY

Read a story about evident answers to prayer such as this case in the life of Sundar Singh (information from *The Story of Sadhu Sundar Singh* by Cyril J. Davey, Moody Press, 1963).

#### **TRAPPED IN A WELL**

(a true story)

If you traveled to India, you would see many unfamiliar things, one of which would be poor, often dirty men with straggly hair dressed in yellow robes who wander about speaking of spiritual matters. They are called "sadhu" or holy men and are greatly respected by the Indian people, but they are not really holy, for the gods they speak of are not the God of the Bible. Once, however, there was a sadhu who did tell others about the true and living God. His name was Sundar Singh.

From the time of his salvation when a teenager, Sundar Singh was fiercely persecuted for Christ's sake. He decided that he could honor God and preach the Gospel most effectively by wandering throughout



India and elsewhere as a sadhu, but whenever people discovered that this cleanly dressed young man did not speak of the usual Indian gods, he faced violent opposition. Some of his most difficult experiences came in his visits to hostile Tibet where the religious leaders, called lamas, wanted nothing to interfere with their control over the people.

One morning as Sundar was preaching about Christ, a guard came and dragged him away for a brief trial. He was sentenced to be thrown in a deep well and left there among the bodies of previous victims until he died. Sundar, who had earlier broken his arm, could not hope to climb up the steep sides of the well to freedom, and even if he had, there was a cover on the well and the Grand Lama had the only key to the lock that held it shut. Sundar prayed to God, but the prospect of deliverance must have seemed hopeless.

After three days and nights passed, suddenly Sundar heard a noise and then felt the end of a rope touch his body. He put his leg into the loop at the rope's end and, grasping the cord tightly, felt himself being slowly drawn upward. Sundar collapsed on the ground, gratefully drinking in the fresh air, but saw no sign of his deliverer.

The next morning, Sundar Singh returned to the marketplace to preach, but was again arrested and brought before the Grand Lama, who furiously demanded to know who had helped Sundar Singh to escape. Who had had the audacity to sneak in and steal the key from under the Lama's robes? There was only one key to the well and it should be right there on the Lama's key ring. The Lama drew a bunch of keys angrily from his waist but froze. "Take this man away, set him free, and never let him appear in this town again!" he commanded. There on the Grand Lama's key ring was the key to the well. How had Sundar escaped?

## ACTIVITY

Dramatize **Acts 12:1-17**. The story has enough characters that all your children should be able to participate, even if only as guards or the church prayer meeting (these can be ad-libbed as speaking parts).

## SONGS

"Seek Ye First" (including Matthew 7:7-8); "I Thessalonians 5:16-18" ("... for this is the will of God").

## Take Home Activity

**Peter Booklet** - If time remains, you may wish to review the events of Acts 12:1-17 or events in Peter's life and have each child make a booklet as a reminder of these. To make the booklet, place papers folded in half on top of one another and staple them together on the fold or punch two holes and tie them together with a loop of yarn. The Acts 12 booklet might have a cover that says, "God answers prayer" and include scenes of Peter preaching, Peter being put in prison, the church praying, the angel waking Peter and leading him out of prison, and Peter talking to Rhoda and the church. Events in Peter's life that might be included in the other booklet are Peter's call to be a fisher of men, his confession of Christ, the transfiguration, the Last Supper, his denial of Christ, his call to feed Christ's sheep, Pentecost, healing the lame man, his rebuke of Ananias and Sapphira, healing Aeneas and raising Dorcas, and his vision and visit with Cornelius, as well as today's story.



### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 12:1-17** - “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16), as it was when the church prayed and Peter was released from prison.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, Acts 2:40** - “With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’”

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Pray earnestly about specific requests. Write these requests down on a piece of paper, and next to them write how and when God answers the requests. Keep the paper to refer to in months ahead for times when it seems that God is not answering your prayers.
2. Read about men of faith who trusted God for their needs, e.g., Moses, George Muller, Rees Howells and many more.
3. God delivered Peter from prison, but He did not deliver James (cf. John 21:18-23). Discuss how God can answer prayers in different ways (e.g., “yes,” “no,” “wait”).
4. Dramatize today’s Bible story. You may do this informally or have family members write and memorize dialogue and present it as a more formal play.
5. Read other Bible stories about Peter (see Suggested Parental Reading).
6. Sing songs about prayer such as “Seek Ye First” (including Matthew 7:7-8) and “I Thessalonians 5:16-18” (“... for this is the will of God”).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** **About prayer** - James 5:13-18; Matthew 6:5-15; Matthew 7:7-11; John 17; I Thessalonians 5:17; I Timothy 2:8. **About Peter** - Luke 5:1-11; Luke 9:18-36; John 13; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-23; Acts 2-5, 10-11; I and II Peter.

**Books:** *George Muller - Man of Faith and Miracles* (Basil Miller; Zondervan, 1941; Bethany)  
*Rees Howells, Intercessor* (Norman Grubb; Christian Literature Crusade, 1980)



# **HEROD'S DEATH**

**Acts 12:18-24**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students know that we should glorify God and thank Him for all the gifts He has given.

## **Memory Verse**

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-40.**

## **Lesson Background**

The Scriptural maxim “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18) is readily evident in the life of Herod Agrippa I. This grandson of Herod the Great (the Herod in Luke 2) and Mariamne was born in 11 B.C. and brought up in Rome after the execution of his father, Aristobulus, in 7 B.C. Here he lived extravagantly and became fast friends with wicked Gaius Caligula who, when he succeeded Tiberius as emperor in A.D. 37, bestowed the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanius, and in A.D. 39 Galilee and Perea, on Herod. After Caligula’s assassination in A.D. 41, the emperor Claudius also gave Judea to Herod.

One of the more popular members of the Herod dynasty, Agrippa nonetheless shared at least some of their propensity for cruelty. As we saw in last week’s lesson, he had James executed and, following the Roman law (which he was not bound by in Israel) whereby guards were liable to the same punishment as the prisoners they let escape, had Peter’s guards executed. But perhaps Herod’s greatest sin was his pride, and even pagan authorities attribute this as the cause of his death.

Herod had agreed to meet on a certain day to settle a dispute with representatives of Tyre and Sidon, free self-governing cities that were economically dependent on Judea for food. The appointed day was

probably a festival in honor of the emperor, possibly his birthday (August 1) or a celebration of the founding of the city (March 5, but in this case the Passover spoken of would have been the year previous, which seems unlikely). Josephus gives an account of what happened as the people tried to appease Herod through flattery and Herod refused to give proper glory to God. “On the second day of the shows, Agrippa put on a robe made of silver throughout, of altogether wonderful weaving, and entered the theatre at the break of day. Then the silver shone and glittered wonderfully as the sun’s first rays fell on it. . . . Immediately his flatterers called out . . . ‘We acknowledge thee to be of more than mortal nature.’ He did not rebuke them, nor did he repudiate their impious flattery” (*Antiquities*, xix 8.2). So God judged Herod, who was struck down by an angel of the Lord, eaten by worms, and died (Acts 12:23) at fifty-four years of age in the seventh year of his reign. The territory Herod ruled reverted to government by procurators. Three of Herod’s children, Drusilla, Agrippa II, and Bernice, are also mentioned in Scripture.

God punished a proud king in Old Testament times, too, and rather than have a fictional story this week, you should tell your students what happened to this man when he refused to humble himself before God. His name was Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar ruled neo-Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C., and it was not without reason that he proudly surveyed his realm (Daniel 4:29-30) with its world-famous Hanging Gardens (one of the Seven Wonders of the World), its irrigation system, and its strong defenses. His armies had invaded Israel three times (605, 597, and 586 B.C.) and among the captives was Daniel, who later rose to prominence in the realm. Nebuchadnezzar was so proud, he even built a huge statue of himself to which everyone had to bow down. God shares His glory with no man, however, and Nebuchadnezzar became insane, eating grass like a beast.

Earthly tyrants come and go, but the word of God abides forever (Acts 12:24; I Peter 1:23,25). May we refuse pride and give God the glory for all the blessings He has given.

*Knowledge Objectives* - To know that God struck proud Herod Agrippa I down in the midst of a speech to the people of Tyre and Sidon because he did not give glory to God, and that likewise King Nebuchadnezzar became insane and ate grass like a beast because of his pride and refusal to acknowledge the Lord.

*Behavioral Objectives* - By God’s grace, to glorify and thank Him for all the abilities and gifts He has bestowed on us, and not be proud.

## Lesson Procedure

**Introduction** - Ask your students if anyone remembers what ruler put Peter in jail in last week’s Bible story. Briefly review last week’s story and introduce today’s story with some background material about Herod Agrippa I. Be sure your children realize that the Bible speaks about different Herods.

### BIBLE STORY

Read **Acts 12:18-24** and discuss how God punished Herod because he did not glorify Him.

Read **Daniel 4:28-37** and discuss the effects of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride. Discuss things about which your children might be proud (e.g., athletic prowess, good grades in school, popularity, material wealth, beauty, mechanical ability or intelligence). Do they think or act as if they *are* better than others merely because they *have* things or *can do* things the other people cannot? Ask your children where their abilities come from. Unlike Herod and Nebuchadnezzar, they should glorify God for what He has given them. Have your children think about what their strong points are, areas in which they might be tempted to pride. Avoid

false humility; if a child is the smartest kid in his class or the best hitter on the ball team, pretending he isn't won't solve anything. Perhaps it would help if he had a broader picture and realized that there might be hundreds of children in the state who are smarter and better ball players than he, but primarily he must truly acknowledge that all abilities and possessions come from God.

## SONGS

“Now Unto the King Eternal” (I Timothy 1:17); “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”; “To God Be the Glory” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #55); “Immortal, Invisible” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #38); “O That I Had A Thousand Voices” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #22); “Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #110); “Praise Ye, Praise Ye the Lord” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #112).

## Take Home Activity

**Picture** - Have each child print Proverbs 16:18 or other appropriate Scripture verse across the top of a piece of paper and then divide the paper in half. On the left half draw a picture of Herod proudly speaking to the crowd at Caesarea. You may have them glue silver-colored glitter to Herod's robe, if desired. On the right half, each child should draw a picture of himself showing something he might be tempted to be proud of (e.g., kicking a soccer ball, studying, wearing a beautiful dress; each child's picture will be different). Above this picture, have the child draw a “thought bubble” (as in a comic strip). In this thought bubble, have the child draw a small picture of himself kneeling in prayer.





### BIBLE PASSAGE - LESSON FOCUS

**Acts 12:18-24** - Unlike Herod Agrippa I, we should glorify God and thank Him for all the gifts He has given us instead of being proud.

### MEMORY VERSE

**This quarter, Acts 2:32-40; this week, review Acts 2:32-40.**

### SUGGESTED PROJECTS

1. Pray that God will work humility in your life and in the lives of those in your family, and that He will help you glorify Him in all things.
2. In a loving way, help family members recognize tendencies to pride in their lives. Have your children think about what their strong points are, areas in which they might be tempted to pride. Avoid false humility; if a child is the smartest kid in his class or the best hitter on the ball team, pretending he isn't won't solve anything. Perhaps it would help if he had a broader picture and realized that there might be hundreds of children in the state who are smarter and better ball players than he, but primarily he must truly acknowledge that all abilities and possessions come from God.
3. Praise is usually beneficial in a person's life, but it can make him proud; discuss this.
4. Discuss how humility might be manifested in a person's life, e.g., by letting others have positions of prominence or by taking a servant's role.
5. Examine characters in books read and television shows watched this week to see if they exhibit pride or humility in their lives. Do any consciously try to glorify God in what they do?
6. Praise God by singing such songs as: "Now Unto the King Eternal" (I Timothy 1:17); "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"; "To God Be the Glory" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #55); "Immortal, Invisible" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #38); "O That I Had A Thousand Voices" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #22); "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #110); "Praise Ye, Praise Ye the Lord" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #112).

### SUGGESTED PARENTAL READING

**Scripture:** Proverbs 16:18; 8:13; 14:3; 29:23; 11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:19; Isaiah 2:12; Psalm 138:6; 10:2.