

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

by Laura Sweet

**Grades 3-4
Year 2
Quarter 2**

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INTRODUCTION -

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

This quarter we will be looking at the qualities and attributes that should mark the life of a believer, most notably the “fruit of the Spirit” described in Galatians 5:22-23. We will try to define what we mean when we talk about goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, etc., and we will give examples from the Bible of people who lived out these virtues. We will also discuss the role of the Holy Spirit as He works in the lives of Christians to produce this fruit.

Our memory verse passages for the quarter will be Galatians 5:22-23 and Matthew 7:15-23. Please note that the New International Version (NIV) translates the fruit of the Spirit a little bit differently than the King James Version, which is probably a more well-known listing. We will be studying the fruit of the Spirit as described in the NIV.

A word about the journals - the material this quarter demands personal application; our students need to examine their own lives to see where such fruit is present and where it is lacking. Therefore, this quarter we will be assembling “journals” instead of the usual worksheets they complete in class. Each week they will be given a journal worksheet (photocopied from the lesson) to take home and fill in during their week. The next Sunday after the lesson you will be discussing the past week’s journal entries with those who wish to share their thoughts. Encourage your students to keep their journal worksheets with their Bibles so they don’t forget to bring them to class. Each journal worksheet will then be assembled together to form a journal.

Please don’t be discouraged if it takes several weeks for your students to remember to do their worksheets at home or to remember to bring them back. If students forget the first few weeks, you may still discuss the questions in class. Our main purpose in this, however, is to get students to realize that Sunday School lessons are not just for Sunday, but apply to our daily lives in a real way. You may wish to send a note home to your students’ parents at the beginning of the quarter to let them know these journal worksheets are coming home and need to be returned weekly to class.

We hope this quarter will be a truly “fruitful” one for you and your students as you study “The Marks of a Christian.”

BEARING FRUIT

Matthew 7:16-21; Luke 13:6-9; Galatians 5:22-23

Lesson Aim

To show students that every life will bear “fruit,” and what the fruit of a Christian’s life ought to be.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:22 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness . . .”

Lesson Background

This week’s lesson is basically an introduction to this new quarter, “The Marks of a Christian.” Most of your students have probably never thought of themselves as “trees” before, so we want them to start thinking about this comparison that Jesus makes between people and trees. What do we mean when we say that every life “bears fruit”? What is good fruit and what is bad fruit? What kinds of fruit should be seen in a Christian’s life? These questions and others will be answered in this lesson and in the lessons to come.

“Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right” (Proverbs 20:11). Those among your students who have made professions of faith should begin to see evidence of the Spirit’s work in their lives by the fruit they bear. Those who have not yet come to Christ for salvation need the solemn warning of this lesson, that “every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:19). Encourage all of your students this quarter to examine their own lives to see what kind of “trees” they are and what kind of “trees” they would like to be.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week by asking your students, “How many of you have ever visited an orchard (or a grove, depending on where you are located)?” Ask students what different kinds of fruit they have seen growing and what kinds of products could be made from the fruit (for example, an apple orchard will produce apples, but also apple cider, applesauce, cider doughnuts, etc.). Ask your students what they think the farmer would do to a fruit tree in his orchard that produced no fruit year after year after year. “You have probably never thought of yourself as a tree before, but that’s exactly what Jesus says people are like. And people aren’t like just any old trees - they are like fruit trees. Now why would Jesus say that? That’s what we’re going to talk about in today’s lesson.”

1. Every Tree Bears Fruit (Matthew 7:16-21)

Have your students turn to Matthew 7:16-21. Remind them that while Jesus was on earth He often taught the people using parables. These parables were stories that would show people a heavenly truth. Then read verses 16-21 aloud in class.

“In this story we can see two trees - a good tree and a bad tree. A good tree, like the fig tree that Jesus mentions, will bear good fruit - figs. But a thornbush will only produce bad fruit - prickly thorns! You won’t find thorns on the fig tree, and you won’t find figs on the thornbush. You recognize the trees by the fruits they produce. In the same way, Jesus says, you can recognize a true believer, not just by what he says, but by what he does. Those who do God’s will are going to be able to enter heaven - they are the ‘good trees.’ Now let’s turn to another parable to find out what happens to the ‘bad trees.’”

2. Trees That Bear Bad Fruit Are Cut Down (Luke 13:6-9)

In this parable, a fig tree does not bear fruit and may be cut down if it doesn’t produce fruit within the next year. Explain that this parable is a warning - Jesus expects “fruit” from His people. Make sure your students understand that bearing bad fruit (from the last passage) is the same as bearing no fruit here. After all, thorns are hardly worth calling “fruit” at all, are they?

“Jesus expects His people to live a certain way. He expects to see certain things in their lives. If we really belong to Him, we will show these things - we will be trees with good fruit. What kinds of things does Jesus want to see in His children? One more passage will show us the kind of fruit we need to bear.”

3. The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

Read Galatians 5:22-23 aloud in class. Point out that the “Spirit” referred to here is the Holy Spirit, and these qualities are the things that Jesus wants to see in the lives of His people. If we have these things in our lives, we are trees that bear “good fruit.” If we don’t have these things in our lives, or if we are known as being hateful, angry, disobedient, and difficult, then our fruit is not good, but bad.

“Most of us would say that we would want these things in our lives. Love, joy, and peace - everyone wants those. And most of us want to be good and kind. But are these things we can get on our own? No, only the Holy Spirit can help us grow this kind of fruit. And sometimes it takes years and years and years of the Spirit’s work to make us the kind of people He wants us to be. But if we’re Christians, then we’ll see these things in our lives more and more. That’s how we become more like Jesus - by showing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the things that marked Jesus’ life, and He wants them to mark our lives as well.”

Explain to your students that we will be taking a closer look at each of these fruits, and we’ll be keeping journals throughout the quarter to see these things in our daily lives, both in ourselves and in others. Explain that no Christian will ever demonstrate all of these qualities perfectly without sin, but that as we walk with Christ, these things will be seen more and more regularly in us.

Project

This week we’ll make covers for our “Fruit of the Spirit” journals. Use an 8½" by 11" piece of construction paper for each child and have several supplies handy to encourage your students’ creativity as they illustrate their covers. You may suggest that students illustrate their covers with pictures of trees bearing fruit, but don’t insist on this if a student has a different idea. Some supplies that might be helpful include:

- Little circular punch-outs of construction paper of different colors that can be glued onto the picture of a tree to represent fruit.
- Small pieces of different colors of tissue paper, wadded up into little balls for a three-dimensional fruit tree.
- Scented fruit stickers (available in teaching supply stores) or scented markers for a fruit tree with a realistic smell!

The more things you bring in - paper, glue, string, sequins, etc. - the more your students will surprise you with their imagination! Note that there should be some time at the end of next week’s lesson for students to finish these covers if they do not finish this week.

Related Music

“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is”; “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”; “Take My Life and Let It Be” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #585).

LOVE

John 13:34-35; I Samuel 20; I John 3:16-20

Lesson Aim

To show that a Christian should primarily be known by his love for others, especially other Christians.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:22 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness . . .”

Lesson Background

In his book, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, George W. Bethune writes, “Paul holds forth to us a rich cluster of graces, but he names first the stem from which the rest hang. . . . So it is from love the other graces proceed, and through love are ripened unto perfection.” Love is to be the hallmark of the Christian life, the one definitive element that shows the disciple is becoming like his Master. Over and over again we are reminded in the New Testament that trying to live the Christian life without love in our hearts is futile and worthless (I Corinthians 13 and I John 3 are just two of the best-known passages). Christ Himself said that His children would be known by their love for one another (John 13:35) - a powerful statement that all church members must take seriously.

Jonathan is an Old Testament example of the kind of selfless love that we ought to have for each other. As the son of King Saul and the likely heir to the throne of Israel, he had at least as much reason to fear David and his popularity as his father did, as his father was quick to point out to him (I Samuel 20:31). But Jonathan loved David; he swore eternal friendship with David and with David's descendants forever. At their last meeting together, as David hid from the murderous intentions of King Saul, Jonathan conceded that the kingdom belonged to David. "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you" (I Samuel 23:17). Jonathan's love for David was so great that he was willing to give up the kingdom and take a subordinate role to him without bitterness or jealousy.

It was not to be; Jonathan was killed in the same battle as his father and David was crowned king of Israel. David eulogized his dear friend, saying, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love to me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (II Samuel 1:26). As we look at Jonathan this week and at the New Testament's call to love one another, let us examine our own hearts and lives for this mark of the Christian.

Lesson Procedure

Begin this week's lesson by asking your students to name the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in this week's (and last week's) memory verse. "Love is the first thing mentioned, isn't it? But what kind of love, and for whom? We use the word 'love' in many ways, don't we? We may say we love rollerblading or we love pizza. Silly teenagers say they love one person this week, and then next week they'll say they love someone else! Do you think that's the kind of love this verse is talking about?"

Have your students look up John 13:34-35 and read these verses aloud in class. "Jesus wants His children to be known by their love - not just their love for Him, but their love for one another. And He doesn't want us just to love each other a little bit; He wants us to love each other the way He loves us. Jesus loves us so much He died for us - that's a lot of love! He wants us to love each other by thinking of each other first, taking care of each other, and putting others' needs before our own. We are to love each other in an unselfish way."

1. Jonathan - An Example of Unselfish Love (I Samuel 20)

Explain to your students that we will be looking at an Old Testament example of the kind of love we should have for each other. Then turn to I Samuel 20. Introduce this account by telling your students that Jonathan was the son of King Saul and the best friend of David. David was a mighty warrior in King Saul's army, but King Saul was jealous of him because he believed the people loved David the best. Saul planned to have David killed, and David knew this.

I Samuel 20 is a very straightforward, narrative account, and may simply be read aloud in class. Be sure to bring out the following points:

- The promise of friendship made between David and Jonathan (verses 12-17). We are told that Jonathan loved David "as he loved himself" (verse 17). This is, of course, how we are commanded to love one another (Luke 10:27).

- Jonathan’s willingness to intercede for David (verses 28-33). His intercession almost ends up killing him as his father hurls his spear at him.
- The sign between David and Jonathan as to David’s safety (verses 18-22 and 35-39). During what seems to be ordinary target practice, Jonathan sends a message to David that it is not safe to return to the king’s court.
- The sorrow David and Jonathan share at David’s parting (verses 41-42).

“Jonathan is a good example of how we should love one another. He loved David as much as he loved himself. He kept his promises to him. He risked his life for him. He was even willing for David to take the throne of Israel in his place if that was the Lord’s will (I Samuel 23:17). Now let’s turn to the New Testament to see some other ways we may love each other.”

2. How We Should Love One Another (I John 3:16-20)

Read I John 3:16-20 aloud. Point out that, while we are called to love all people (Luke 10:27), we are especially called to love other Christians - members of the family of God. Ask your students to point out some of the practical ways these verses tell us to show our love for one another. Help your students see that love is more than just “lip service”; it involves active participation in the lives and welfare of others, even to the laying down of our own lives (verse 16).

“Do you have people in your life who love you like this? And how about you - do you always think of yourself first or are you learning to put others first? At home, do you ever allow someone else to get the last piece of pie without complaining? At school, do you remember that others need to have their turns? At church, do you remember that the people sitting around you are trying to listen and concentrate on the sermon? There are many ways to show love to the people around us; these are just a few. I hope each of you will see love in the way others treat you, and I hope you’ll treat the people around you with love.”

Journal

Have students finish the covers on their journals and take the last few minutes to explain how they are to use their worksheets at home, and then bring them to class next Sunday. Encourage students to keep their worksheets inside their Bibles so they will remember to bring them the following week.

Related Music

“They Will Know We Are Christians (By Our Love)”; “This is My Commandment”; “Jesus Loves Me” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #189).

Journal Entry #1

“The fruit of the Spirit is love . . .” (Galatians 5:22)

1. Can you think of some people who love you? How do they show their love?

2. Is there someone in your life who is difficult to love (Yes or No)? Can you think of some ways to show this person love this week?

JOY

Ecclesiastes 2:4-11; Romans 12:12; 14:17-18; 15:13

Lesson Aim

To show that joy is not dependent on outward circumstances, but comes from God as we serve Christ.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:23 - "... gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (This should be combined with last week's verse when recited in class.)

Lesson Background

The world's idea of joy and the Christian's idea of joy are very different. Most people would say that they feel "joyful" when things are going right for them. In other words, their joy is dependent on their outward circumstances. But for the Christian, joy is tied very closely with hope and peace. It is given to us by God as a result of having our sins forgiven and a right relationship with Him restored. Therefore, it can exist even when outward circumstances are grim. That's why we read verses like, "the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). In other places we read, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2), and, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12). Clearly, this fruit of the Spirit is one we can experience during even the most difficult of times.

Our lesson aim this week is to help our students think about joy in this way. That's why we'll look at Solomon, the king who had everything he could possibly desire or imagine, but discovered no joy in all he possessed. Then we'll look at the true source of joy as seen in some selected verses in Romans.

Lesson Procedure

Begin this week's lesson by asking the question, "Can you think of anyone in the world who wouldn't like to have joy in his life?" Hopefully, all of your students will realize from this question that joy is something that is universally sought after. "I think just about everyone would agree that joy is something they would like to possess, and most people spend their lives searching for joy. But how many people actually possess it? Not very many, I'm afraid. That's because too often we look for joy in the wrong things. The Bible gives us an example of someone who searched for joy, but without success."

1. Solomon's Search for Joy (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11)

Rather than have your students struggle to find Ecclesiastes 2, you can turn there and have them listen while you read verses 4-11. Explain before you read that King Solomon was the ruler of Israel when it was at the height of its power. He was wealthy beyond description and respected by all the rulers around him. There was nothing he couldn't have and nothing he couldn't do - his every wish was capable of being fulfilled. Yet for all these things, he writes, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done . . . everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind . . ." (verse 11).

"Most people think that happiness is just around the corner - if they could just get some more money, or have more power, or if they were just allowed to do what ever they wanted to do. But Solomon's life proves this isn't true; real joy doesn't come from the things we possess or from the things we do. Eventually, those things are going to leave us feeling empty inside.

"You know what this is like, too. Maybe you wanted one specific toy for Christmas, and you thought if you could just get that one thing your life would be perfect. You wouldn't want anything else ever again. And then you get the toy you dreamed about, and for awhile you do feel happy. But does it last forever? No; eventually you find yourself getting bored with the fabulous toy you had wanted so badly and wanting something else instead."

"Is there, then, such a thing as true, lasting joy? Yes, there is, but it doesn't have anything to do with the things we possess. It has nothing to do with whether good things or bad things happen to us. It has nothing to do with whether we're healthy or sick. True joy is something a Christian can have within himself; it is a gift from the Holy Spirit, and it's something He wants each of us to have."

2. True Joy Comes From God

Have your students look up the following verses in Romans and read the verses aloud in class. Be certain to point out the following facts:

- Romans 14:17-18 - These verses emphasize that joy (along with righteousness and peace) is a gift from the Holy Spirit. It doesn't come from external things, such as eating and drinking, but as a result of our service to Christ.
- Romans 12:12 - Here we see that joy comes from the hope we have within us. Christians are joyful because we know that God is within us, He hears us when we pray, and He promises to work "all things . . . for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). Ultimately our great hope is to be with Him in heaven, for Christ has promised that someday we will be with Him where He is (John 14:3).
- Romans 15:13 - Again we see that the "God of all hope" gives us joy and peace as we trust in Him. Without Christ we are without hope; with Him we have all hope, joy, and peace.

Conclusion

The Christian's joy, then, is not dependent on what his present circumstances may be. He may be rich or poor, healthy or sick, happy or sad. But whatever is happening in his life, he can still know true, lasting joy if he trusts in God and remembers the hope that he has in Him. That's why Paul and Silas could sing praise to God in jail even though they were chained and had been beaten (Acts 16).

Perhaps you have a personal story about a time of difficulty in your life through which you still experienced true joy. This would be a good time to share it with your students. Encourage any students who are experiencing difficulties in their lives to look beyond the problems of the day and to remember that God promises never to leave or forsake those who are His children (Hebrews 13:5).

Journal

Have students share their journal entries from the past week as you review last week's lesson on Love and hand out the journal worksheet for this week. [NOTE: Don't be discouraged if many "forgot" to fill out their worksheets - remember, we're just beginning. Encourage those students who may have forgotten to fill out as much as they can while they are in class.] Add the Love worksheet to the journal cover as page one.

Related Music

"Rejoice in the Lord Always"; "This is the Day"; "Rejoice, the Lord is King" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #309).

PEACE

Mark 4:35-41

Lesson Aim

To show students that they can have a “peace which transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) when they put their hope and trust in Christ.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:15 - “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Lesson Background

Peace - the very sound of the word reminds us of a gentle, refreshing breeze. Like joy, peace is a quality that nearly everyone seeks and very few possess. George Bethune defines peace as “sweet composure, tranquil contentment, and appearance of safety.” For purposes of this lesson, I would define peace as the quietness of spirit we possess because we have confidence in God and security in His love.

The Bible story we will use in this lesson, the account in Mark of Jesus stilling the storm, is one that will be familiar to most of your students who have grown up in Sunday School. But this is a story that preachers, scholars and hymn-writers have always seen as being a metaphor of the Christian life. Songs

ranging from the children's "With Jesus in the Boat, You Can Smile at the Storm" to the lofty "Be Still, My Soul" remind us that this is a story about life, and about the peace we can have even when we're experiencing pain and trouble. In fact, real peace can only be experienced when we can sing with the hymn-writer, in the midst of a rocking, apparently sinking boat, "Be still my soul/ The winds and waves still know/ His voice who ruled them/ While He dwelt below."

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson with the following illustration: "How many of you enjoy being snug in your bed when there is a big thunderstorm (or a snowstorm, if you're from the north) outside? Quite often you can hear the claps of thunder and the rain pounding on the roof, but it doesn't matter because you're warm and dry and safe inside. Maybe you like to cuddle up in your blankets and quilts and listen to the storm.

"But what if you're outside and you get caught in the very same storm? That's another thing altogether. Then you'd be cold and wet and miserable. If there's lightning, it would even be dangerous. Or if you're in a car, then you might be concerned that the roads are slippery and that it's difficult to see. I don't think you'd enjoy the storm very much then, do you?"

"The third fruit of the Spirit - the one that we'll look at today - is peace. God wants us to have peace within our souls. He wants us to trust Him and to feel secure and safe in His love - kind of like the security we feel when we're warm and safe and cuddled in a quilt. But is it possible to feel that way even when times are bad and things are not going our way? Yes, even then we can have peace and confidence in God, as our Bible story will show."

1. The Story (Mark 4:35-41)

Have your students turn to Mark 4:35-41 and read this passage aloud in class. Point out that in this situation the disciples are anything but peaceful; they are worried, and then fearful that the storm will destroy the boat and they will all drown (verses 38 and 40). Jesus, on the other hand, is the perfect picture of peace; He is so unconcerned that He is able to sleep right through the storm!

"Do you think the disciples should have been afraid in this storm? Don't forget, several of these men, like Peter, Andrew, James and John, were fishermen. They were used to boats and they had been in storms before. If they were frightened, this must have been quite a storm! But Jesus seems disappointed that they were afraid of this storm (see verse 40). The disciples had already seen Him perform many miracles; they should have known that they would be safe with Him. Even in the midst of this terrible storm, the disciples should have had peace for two very good reasons."

A. Jesus Was With Them

There, right in the boat with them, was the Lord Jesus. If the disciples really had known who Jesus was at this point, they would not have been afraid of this storm. After all, Jesus is the one who created the seas! However, while the disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles, they still were unclear as to who He really was. We see this in verse 41: "They were terrified, and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the winds and the waves

obey him!” Jesus was using this incident and others to show them exactly who He was - the Son of God!

“We can also have peace during difficult times because Jesus is with us, too. Did you know that He has promised to be with us always (Matthew 28:20)? In every situation, we can know He is with us and will hear us when we call upon Him.”

B. Jesus Was In Control

All it took was a rebuke from Jesus, and the wind immediately died down and the water became completely calm. Jesus is the Lord of the universe; even the elements obey Him. His power and authority are unquestionable, and He works for the good of His people always (Romans 8:28). Knowing this can give us peace in any situation.

2. Application

God wants His children to have peace - a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). We can have that peace when we remember that Jesus is with us and He is control, working all things together for our good. Realizing this gives us confidence in God and security in His love.

Remind your students, however, that this peace is available only to those who are saved. For those who are not yet Christians, they first need to make peace with God. This is only possible through the shed blood of Christ. Jesus is our peace, and we can only know peace when we come to Him for forgiveness of sins and acknowledge Him as Lord of our lives. Encourage any students with questions about their own salvation to stay after class to speak with you later.

Journal

Have students share their journal entries on Joy and put the worksheets in their journals. Pass out the Peace worksheets.

Related Music

“With Jesus in the Boat (You Can Smile At the Storm)”; “I’ve Got Peace Like a River”; “From Every Stormy Wind That Blows” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #631).

PATIENCE

Job 1-2:10; 42:12-17

Lesson Aim

To help students understand that God desires His children to increase in patience and that He rewards those who wait on Him.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:16 - “By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?”

Lesson Background

If it is true that most Christians want to grow in patience, it is probably equally true that most of us hate the process. Patience is a wonderful fruit of the Spirit, but one that requires regular “pruning” to cultivate. James puts it this way: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). James says that patience is required for our faith to be mature and complete and insists that, because it is so important, we should rejoice when problems come! While it may be difficult for many of us to rejoice over present suffering, most of us have experienced the joy of coming through difficulties and realizing the blessing of God that has come

through them. As we grow in grace and faith, may we obtain a better attitude toward suffering and that fruit it produces.

This week we're going to take a look at Job's suffering, his patience, and his reward as he struggles through the catastrophes that God allows in his life. While we cannot cover the whole book in one lesson, we will see how Job's story begins and ends, which gives us an example of patience rewarded by God.

Lesson Procedure

Begin this week's lesson with the question, "Have you ever had to wait very long time for something you wanted?" Most of your students will have some experience to share about waiting, whether it's waiting for Christmas or a special vacation, waiting for a brother or sister to be born, or waiting for school to finish for the summer.

"Sometimes waiting is really difficult. Everybody knows it's hard for kids to wait, but it's also hard for adults. But one of the fruits of the Spirit that God wants us to have is patience; He wants us to be willing to wait on Him and trust Him to do what He promises. Sometimes that means waiting for Him to answer a prayer. Sometimes that means being patient when we are feeling sick or things aren't going well for us. In fact, one of the ways that God helps us become more patient is by sending us trouble so we *have* to look to Him and wait for Him to help. Our Bible story today is about a man who had more than his share of trouble, but he was rewarded in the end for his patience."

1. Job's Sorrows (Job 1:1-19)

Help your students locate the book of Job, and read Job 1:1-19 aloud in class. Be certain to emphasize that Job is a good, God-fearing man, and God does not allow Satan to test him because He is angry with Job. God has other reasons for allowing this suffering, some of which are known only to Him. But certainly we see throughout this book that God intends to bless Job through this suffering and to increase Job's understanding and awareness of his Maker.

As you read through the various losses that Job experiences all in one day, stop and list each one on a chalkboard or piece of poster paper as you come to it. The list should include:

- loss of oxen, donkeys, and servants
- loss of sheep and servants
- loss of camels and servants
- loss of the lives of all his children

"Job woke up one morning a rich man, with many possessions and servants and seven sons and three daughters, and he lost them all in one day! Imagine the grief he must have felt; it must have seemed as if his life was coming to an end. Satan certainly knew how to make Job suffer!"

2. Job's Response (Job 1:20-2:10)

In Job 1:20-22 we have Job's response to this first test; his words acknowledge that all he ever had came from the Lord and the Lord has the right to give or take as He sees fit. He does not charge God with wrongdoing or call Him unfair. He is patient in the midst of suffering.

Job 2:1-10 then describes the second test that Job had to endure - the assault on his physical body. The boils that covered Job, painful festering sores over his entire body, caused him great physical suffering (see Job 30:16-17, 28-30). Yet in verses 9-10 we still see him patiently submitting to these trials.

Throughout the rest of the book of Job we do see Job complaining about the unjustness of his suffering and his bitterness toward life. Yet he never curses God Himself; at times, he even makes great statements of faith and trust in the midst of his suffering (see Job 12:13-16; 13:15; 19:25-27). Job was a man, after all, and yet he endured his suffering in a way that most of us would be hard-pressed to match in similar circumstances.

3. Job's Reward (Job 42:12-17)

So far as we know, God never explained to Job the reasons behind his suffering. He reminded Job of His power, wisdom, and sovereignty, but never explained why Job had to endure the loss of property, family, and health. But Job was rewarded for his faithfulness and patience in suffering. Read Job 42:12-17. Point out that the number of animals Job owned at the end was twice as many as he had in the beginning and his children numbered the same as before. The Lord did not abandon or forget Job, but blessed and rewarded him with even more than he had at the first.

Conclusion

Nobody likes to wait. Nobody likes to go through tough times. Nobody likes to pray the same prayers over and over again, waiting for God to answer. But God wants His children to be patient people and to show their love and trust in God by waiting on Him. And He's promised to reward such patience. Close your lesson this week by reading Isaiah 40:30-31 - "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength"

Journal

Have students share their journal entries on Peace and put the worksheets in their journals. Pass out the Patience worksheets.

KINDNESS

Luke 7:11-18

Lesson Aim

To inspire students to imitate Christ by being kind to others.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:17 - “Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”

Lesson Background

The fruits of the Spirit each represent a distinctive characteristic, and yet several of these “overlap” each other. Certainly love, patience, goodness, kindness and gentleness are all interconnected, for how can one truly love another person without expressing kindness, or how can one be good without being kind or gentle?

But unlike some of the other characteristics, such as joy or peace, which indicate more of an inner state or spirit or temper, kindness usually invokes the idea of action - an outward gesture of the inner spirit of the believer. Like faith without works, kindness without works is meaningless. As James writes, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (James 2:15-16).

Kindness is an outworking of some of the other fruits of the Spirit; if we *have* love, joy, peace and patience, we will *be* kind, and our kindness will be seen in the ways we relate to the people around us.

There are many great examples of kind people in Scripture - for example, David and Mephibosheth or the Good Samaritan or Dorcas; but the greatest example has to be our Lord Himself, “Who, being in very nature God . . . made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7). As we look at just one of Jesus’ many acts of kindness, let us encourage our students and ourselves to be imitators of Him.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson with the following discussion: “Suppose you had a friend or relative who said he really loved you, but every time you turned around he was doing mean things to you. He called you mean names, he played nasty tricks on you, he talked to others about you behind your back, and told them awful things about you. Would you really believe he loved you? How would you feel about him?”

From this discussion help your students to see that it isn’t enough to just “say” you love another person. If you truly love someone you will be kind to him. You will be considerate of his feelings and care about what he thinks and does. You will look for ways to be nice to him and you will be careful not to hurt him.

“Love was the first fruit of the Spirit we studied. Kindness is the fifth fruit of the Spirit, and goes along very closely with love. If we have love in our hearts, then that will be seen in our kindness towards other people. Jesus wants us to follow His example by treating other people kindly, in love.”

1. Jesus is Our Example of Kindness (Luke 7:11-17)

Have your students turn to Luke 7:11-17. This is the first of three instances of Jesus raising someone from the dead (He also raised Jairus’ daughter and Lazarus). As you read through this account, bring out the following points to your students:

- The widow described here was not just suffering the loss of her only son - a very difficult thing for any woman to endure. But back in Bible times, a woman was supported by her husband until he died, and then she was supported by her sons. This woman had already lost her husband, and now she had just lost her son as well. In other words, she had lost everything with the death of this child, including her sole means of support.
- Point out the phrases that describe our Lord’s compassion and kindness toward this woman. In verse 13, “When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and He said, ‘Don’t cry.’” In verse 15, “and Jesus gave him back to his mother.”
- The young man was probably carried in an open coffin (a coffin without a lid), which was the Jewish custom. This would account for why he was able to sit up when Jesus told him to do so.

“Jesus cared about this woman and her desperate situation. He cared about the grief in her heart. Because His heart went out to her, He responded with a great act of kindness - an act only He, the Son of God, could do! By raising this widow’s son from the dead, Jesus not only made the woman and the son happy, He also brought glory to God, as the people praised God for the miracle.”

2. We Are Called to Be Kind

Have students look up the following verses, or write the verses out on paper and pass them out for the students to read.

- Colossians 3:12 - This verse tells us to put on kindness (as well as compassion, humility, gentleness and patience) as we would put on clothes. “We make a conscious effort to get dressed every morning, don’t we? But while it takes effort, we would never leave our homes undressed! In the same way, we should remember to live as a Christian should, with kindness toward the people we meet.”
- I Thessalonians 5:15 - This verse tells us we are not to be kind only to the people who are kind to us; rather, we should also be kind and forgive those who wrong us.
- Ephesians 4:32 - This verse reminds us why we should be kind and forgiving - because “in Christ, God forgave you!”

“Kindness should be seen in every Christian’s life. It should be seen in the way he treats other Christians, and even in the way he treats his enemies. When we are kind we are imitating Jesus, because He did countless kind things for the people around Him, from feeding a hungry crowd to healing a blind man to raising this widow’s son from the dead.” Encourage your students to think of some ways that they can personally imitate Jesus by being kind to some person in their lives. Perhaps you can think of something you could do as a class, such as making cards for a shut-in or singing at a local nursing home. Perhaps the children will have some suggestions as well.

Journal

Read entries from last week’s lesson on Patience and place them in the journals. Pass out the worksheets on Kindness for next week.

Related Music

“This is My Commandment”; “Blest Be The Tie That Binds” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #359).

Journal Entry #5

“Be kind and compassionate to one another . . .” (Ephesians 4:32)

1. Can you think of some ways that you were kind to others this week? How about ways in which others were kind to you? List them below.

2. What other stories do you know from the Bible that tell us about kind people?

GOODNESS

Matthew 18:21-35

Lesson Aim

To show students that Jesus wants His people to treat others the way they themselves want to be treated.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:18 - “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.”

Lesson Background

Goodness is a “blanket” word in the English language - a word that covers a lot of different areas at once. For example, we find that the Bible says that “God is good” in many different places, but sometimes goodness refers to His righteousness (Matthew 19:17) and sometimes it refers to His generosity (Psalm 103:5). In other places, we see God described as being good because of His justice (Psalm 96:13) or because of His mercy (Psalm 145:8-9). All of these ideas make up our understanding of the concept of goodness, so it becomes difficult to grasp exactly what this attribute is, especially for young children.

But Jesus helps all of us out with what has become known as the Golden Rule - “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” This includes all of the ideas listed above, for we certainly want others to be fair, merciful, and generous with us, and this

is how we are called upon to treat others. In addition, if we live this way we will be acting righteously, for what are the commandments such as “do not steal,” “do not commit murder,” and “do not bear false witness” if they are not admonitions to do unto others as we would have them do to us? By showing our students that Jesus wants His people to treat others the way they themselves want to be treated, we will give them a simple and practical way to demonstrate the fruit of goodness in their own lives.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week with the following question: “In one of his sermons, Peter described Jesus by saying that ‘He went around doing good’ (Acts 10:38). Can you think of some good things Jesus did while He was here on earth?” Obviously there are many things that the children could mention, but make certain to talk about how Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, and taught the people about God.

1. The Principle (Matthew 7:12)

Next explain to your students that the sixth fruit of the Spirit is goodness, and tell them that Jesus wants His people to imitate Him by being good and doing good. Though He obviously does not expect us to do miracles, He has given us a simple but important way of remembering how He wants us to treat others. Look up Matthew 7:12 and read the verse aloud in class. Discuss what it means to treat others as we want to be treated, including both how we want others to treat us and how we *don't* want others to treat us.

2. The Illustration (Matthew 18:21-35)

Explain to your students that you are going to look at a story that Jesus told that helps us understand what it means to treat others as we would have them treat us. Then look at Matthew 18:21-35 together and read the parable aloud as a class.

The unmerciful servant in this story owed his master ten thousand talents, which is a sum equivalent to millions of dollars in our day. His master was willing to have pity on his servant and forgave the debt. Then this very same servant refused to have pity on a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii - several thousand dollars - but attacked him and had him thrown into prison until he could pay back the debt.

Ask your students the following questions to make sure they have understood the basics of the story:

- Who was generous and good to the servant in the story?
- Did the servant treat his fellow servant the way he wanted to be treated?
- What happened to the unmerciful servant at the end?

Now show your students that God is like the master in this story. Even though we owe Him a debt we could never repay - our sin - He has been good and merciful to us by forgiving us through

the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He in turn expects us to be good and merciful to those who are around us, even those who have wronged us or used us. If we do not treat others as we would like to be treated, we are acting like the unmerciful servant, who forgot his master's kindness to him and dealt with others harshly and cruelly.

3. The Application

Draw a line on a chalkboard or a large piece of poster paper to divide it into two parts. On one side, have students list some of the ways they want to be treated by others - for example, they'll want others to be kind to them, to respect them, to be generous, etc. On the other side, list practical ways that we can show these same things to others. For example, we can be generous to others by sharing our toys, giving old toys or clothes to charity, etc. Give your students time to think about these things and give creative answers, not just the usual "pat" answers they learn to give in Sunday School. Encourage them to try to use some of these practical ideas this week at home, school, or church.

Journal

Go over last week's entries on Kindness and place in the students' journals. Pass out this week's worksheet on Goodness.

Related Music

"The Lord is Good"; "Jesus Bids Us Shine" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #592).

Journal Entry #6

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit . . .” (Matthew 7:18)

1. Write out in your own words what it means to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

2. Have you been able to put this rule into use this past week? If so, how?

FAITHFULNESS

Ruth 1

Lesson Aim

To help students understand what it means to be faithful, and to encourage them to be faithful in the various relationships they have with others.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:19 - "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Lesson Background

We live in a day when most people are very casual about keeping promises or doing what they've told others they will do. It isn't at all uncommon, even in Christian circles, to have someone tell you, "I'll give you a call this week," or "I'll be at the meeting Thursday night," but never follow through on what he or she has said. Because so many people don't act on what they say, we seem to regard such lapses in our integrity as a light thing. Yet Christians ought to be known for their faithfulness. When we say we will be somewhere or will do something, we should do our utmost to follow through on our promise. Our friends, families, neighbors, and acquaintances will soon learn that we are reliable and dependable - rare qualities today, and truly the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

As we look at faithfulness this week, we will try to define it for our third and fourth graders. We also want them to look at their own relationships and see how faithful they've been to others. "Even a child is known by his actions" (Proverbs 20:11), and it is never too early for children to work on this characteristic, which ties in so closely with honesty and integrity. Encourage your children this week to attempt to be faithful to Christ, to family, and to friends.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson this week by asking your students to "describe a faithful friend." Your students should have many ideas about this, and you may wish to write these ideas down on a chalkboard or a piece of poster paper. Some of the characteristics you'll want to stress include loyalty, reliability, honesty, and dependability; a faithful friend is someone you can count on to keep his promises and stick by you, no matter what.

"Of course, the best example of a faithful friend is Jesus. He's always with those who belong to Him, He always keeps His promises, and He is always honest and true. He wants His people to be that way, too; that's why faithfulness is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit. This week we're going to learn about a woman who was faithful to her mother-in-law, even in very difficult circumstances."

1. Naomi's Plight (Ruth 1:1-7)

Have students turn to the book of Ruth and read Ruth 1:1-7 aloud in class. Explain to your students that Naomi and her family had left their home in Bethlehem during a time of famine and had moved to the land of Moab, a pagan country where the people worshiped many gods. While there, Naomi's husband had passed away and Naomi was cared for by her two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, both of whom had taken wives from among the Moabite women. But, through causes unknown, both of Naomi's sons also died. Now she was not only grief-stricken, but she was also left without anyone to care for her or provide for her. All she had left in the world were her two daughters-in-law, both of whom were Moabites and of no blood relation to her. When Naomi heard that the famine was over in Israel, she decided to return to her homeland. Both of her daughters-in-law also planned to leave their own homes and families and return to Israel with her.

2. Ruth's Faithfulness to Naomi and to God (Ruth 1:8-22)

Now read Ruth 1:8-22 aloud in class. Naomi realized that her situation would be quite desperate, even after she returned to Israel. As a widow without sons, she would have to struggle to provide even a daily meal for herself. Although both daughters-in-law were willing to return with her, she realized that they would be better off going back to their own families, where they would be cared for and perhaps could marry again.

Both daughters-in-law resisted this idea at first, but Naomi was insistent, and finally Orpah agreed to return home. But Ruth continued to cling to Naomi; because of her love and concern for her mother-in-law, she swore that "nothing but death" would separate her from Naomi. To be faithful to Naomi, Ruth was willing to say goodbye forever to her people, her country, and her gods.

Point out to your students that Ruth stated in verse 16 that she would be a worshiper of the God of Israel. She swore by the Lord in verse 17 that she would not leave Naomi, showing that Jehovah was her God as well. Perhaps part of the reason that Ruth loved Naomi so much was that she had learned about the true God of the universe from her mother-in-law.

“Ruth was not about to let Naomi go back to Israel alone without someone to care for her. Although she did not know what the future would bring, it was almost certain to bring poverty and trouble. Nonetheless, Ruth was willing to stay by Naomi’s side no matter what came their way, even if it were death itself (verse 17). She is a picture of true faithfulness as she leaves everything behind to be with Naomi.”

3. God’s Faithfulness to Ruth and Naomi

While it is not possible to cover the entire book of Ruth in this lesson, it should be noted that God was faithful to Ruth and Naomi. He provided for their needs, first by bringing Ruth to the fields of Boaz, who provided food for her and Naomi, and then by providing a kinsman-redeemer (Boaz), who married Ruth and took Naomi in as well. You may wish to read Ruth 4:13-22, which tells how Ruth married Boaz, how Naomi was blessed with a grandson, and how Ruth’s son Obed was the grandfather of David, the great king of Israel (and also a part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ!). In Matthew 1:5, we see that Ruth is one of only five women honored by being included in Jesus’ “family tree.” Her faithfulness to Naomi, and her desire to have a part in Israel and to worship Israel’s God, set her apart as a woman of special note.

Conclusion

“How about you? Are you a faithful friend? Can your friends trust you to be there for them? Do they know that if you say something, you will do it? Can they trust you to tell the truth? Do you stick up for them when others are against them?”

“Are you faithful to your family? Do you do your share of the chores or do you try to get out of them every chance you get? Do you stick up for your brothers and sisters? Do you show respect for your parents when others are around?”

“Are you faithful to Jesus? Do you just call yourself a Christian, or do you try to live the way Jesus wants you to live? Is Jesus someone you think about during the day, or do you try to put Him out of your mind?” Encourage your students to assess their own faithfulness in these areas and to strive to be faithful in their daily lives.

Journal

Go over last week’s entries on Goodness and pass out this week’s sheets on Faithfulness.

Related Music

“Make Me a Servant”; “Great is Thy Faithfulness” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #32).

Journal Entry #7

“Well done, good and faithful servant . . .” (Matthew 25:23)

1. How would you describe a “faithful” friend?

2. Do you have a friend like that? (Yes or No)

3. How can you be more faithful to Jesus?

GENTLENESS

Luke 10:25-37

Lesson Aim

To remind our students to be considerate and thoughtful of others, especially those with special needs or problems.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:20 - "Thus, by their fruits you will recognize them."

Lesson Background

The word *gentleness* has two meanings in the English language, and, unfortunately, the older and primary meaning of the word has been somewhat lost. *Gentleness* originally meant being refined, polite, generous, and well-mannered - hence the term "gentleman." Today we generally use the word to describe a kind, patient, mild-mannered person.

However, the two definitions do come together when we realize that gentleness is a way of responding to others in consideration of their needs, frailties, weaknesses, problems, etc. Like kindness and goodness, it shows itself in our actions and in the way we behave. A gentle person demonstrates this trait by his treatment of those who are "weaker" than he - the very young, the elderly, the sick and hurting, the emotionally distressed, etc. Isaiah prophesied of our Lord's gentleness with people: "A bruised reed He will

not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out” (Isaiah 42:3). Jesus knows our frailties and weaknesses and always deals with us gently and patiently.

As we discuss gentleness with our students this week, we want to encourage them to practice being thoughtful and considerate of others. Putting ourselves in someone else’s “shoes” does not come naturally for any of us, but even children can learn thoughtfulness and gentleness when they remember to consider the feelings and problems of others.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson this week by asking your students if any of them has ever watched a mother bathe a very young baby. Describe how she is very careful not to leave the baby unattended, but holds the baby continually with one hand while she bathes and shampoos it with the other. She is also careful to be certain that the water is not too warm, because hot water could harm a very young baby. She will probably also use a special shampoo to wash the baby’s hair so as not to irritate the baby’s sensitive eyes.

“Babies are so small and delicate that people need to be extra gentle with them. We need to remember that they can get hurt easily and take special care of them. Babies are not the only ones who need gentle care. Other people also need us to consider their special needs so that we can treat them gently, too. Our fruit of the Spirit this week is gentleness, and our Bible story is about a man who treated another man in a kind and gentle way.”

1. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Have students turn to Luke 10:25-37, and read the parable aloud in class. After reading, discuss the following questions with your class:

- What were the “special needs” of the man from Jerusalem? Was he able to help himself?
- Were other people in a position to help this man? What did they do instead? Why do you think they did this (this will be just speculation on your students’ part, but they might suggest that the priest and the Levite may have been in a hurry, or perhaps they didn’t want to get involved)?
- How was the Samaritan gentle with the wounded man (he took care of his wounds, bandaged him, helped him on his donkey, and cared for him at the inn)? In what other ways did he show his concern for the man (he gave the innkeeper money to look after the man - enough to pay for a two-month stay at the inn!)?

“Remember when we discussed Jesus’ rule for treating other people? What was that rule (to treat others as we would have them treat us)? Do you think the Samaritan lived up to this rule? The priest and the Levite in this story were religious men; I’m sure they both considered themselves to be very ‘good’ men. But they certainly didn’t live up to Jesus’ rule, did they? The Jews looked down on the Samaritans as being inferior in their worship of the Lord, but this Samaritan was the only one who extended kindness and gentleness to the wounded man. I’m sure he thought about

what it must be like to be helpless and hurt and without hope. He knew how he would want someone to treat him in this situation, and so he responded with gentleness to this stranger. He went out of his way to help him because he ‘took pity on him’ (verse 33).”

2. Called to Be Considerate (Philippians 2:3-4)

Have students look up Philippians 2:3-4 and read these verses aloud in class. As Christians, we are called not only to look after our own interests and welfare, but also to look out for the interests of others. In fact, we are to put others’ interests ahead of our own. That takes practice; we need to try to think about how other people might think or feel in different situations and remember to consider their feelings, as we discussed in Lesson 7.

“But sometimes people have special needs, and these people need special consideration. Perhaps you know of someone in your school or neighborhood who gets ‘picked on’ because he is different. Maybe he is of a different race or looks different from you. Or maybe she is slower to understand what is being taught in school, or has some physical problems that make her different. Sometimes children make fun of others who are different, or they exclude them from the group because they don’t understand the differences. Maybe they are a little bit afraid of them because they are different.

“But these are the people with whom Jesus wants us to be especially considerate and gentle. We need to put ourselves in their place and realize how difficult it must be to be different. Like the Samaritan in our story, we need to take the time and effort to meet their needs, even when it might not be as easy as treating them the way everyone else does.”

Conclusion

Perhaps your church has a child or adult with special needs. You might discuss practical ways that your students could show consideration and gentleness to such a person. Perhaps one of your students is disabled, or has a disabled brother or sister. This could be a time to share the difficulties with which they are faced. Try to heighten your students’ awareness of the special needs that some have to be treated with kindness and consideration. Remind them of Jesus’ words in Matthew 25:40 - “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Journal

Have students read their entries on Faithfulness and pass out the worksheets on Gentleness. You might wish to explain the meaning of the word “disabled” on the worksheet, giving examples of different types of disabilities such as blindness, deafness, Downs syndrome, etc.

Related Music

“Gentle Shepherd”; “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #599).

Journal Entry #8

“Let your gentleness be evident to all . . .” (Philippians 4:5)

What are some of the “special needs” of the people listed below? How can we show gentleness to them?

Babies and Young Children:

Older people:

The Disabled:

SELF-CONTROL

Matthew 26:47-68

Lesson Aim

To encourage students to follow Christ's example of self-control, even when situations are unfair.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:21 - "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Lesson Background

We like things to be fair. Whether we're watching a sporting event or considering someone's promotion at work, it is very upsetting to us to learn that someone has cheated or been given preferential treatment. Children especially crave fairness; every parent has seen his or her children examine and compare a piece of pie or cake with almost scientific thoroughness just to be sure brother or sister didn't get a bigger piece. It's a difficult lesson to learn that life isn't always fair, and sometimes we just have to live with that unfairness.

It's easy to respond with anger and rage and revenge when we are treated unfairly, and our society generally accepts such responses. Recent court cases, for example, have justified beatings, mutilations and even murders because the accused claimed "mistreatment" or "abuse" at the hands of the victim, or society

in general. Christ, however, expects a higher standard of behavior from His people, and He Himself gave us the example of self-control, even in the most unfair of situations. As we explain self-control to our students, we will look at several areas in our lives where we need this kind of control. But we will especially concentrate on controlling our emotions, as this is something that directly touches third and fourth graders in their daily lives.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week by writing the word “self-control” on your chalkboard or on a piece of poster paper. Have your students point out the two words that make up this word. Then get some of their ideas as to what it means to have self-control. You may wish to write some of these down for the whole class to see.

“Sometimes we hear people say, ‘I didn’t mean to do it,’ or ‘I couldn’t help myself.’ What they’re really saying is they didn’t have self-control. Self-control happens when our minds and our consciences are in charge of our bodies. To have self-control, we have to think first and then act. We can’t just do the first thing we want to do.” Point out these different areas where Christians need to show self-control:

- Our tongues - Christians need to be careful about what they say because our tongues can hurt people, spread lies, or curse God.
- Our bodies - For example, we shouldn’t overeat or abuse our bodies with alcohol or drugs.
- Our emotions - Too many people have no control over their tempers in particular, but lash out against everyone who crosses them or makes them angry.

“Jesus wants His children to have self-control and He gave us the example to follow. I Peter 2:23 says, ‘When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.’ This week we’re going to look at Christ’s self-control, even when He was being treated unfairly.”

1. Christ’s Example at His Trial (Matthew 26:47-68)

Have students turn to Matthew 26:47-68 and read these verses aloud in class. Remind your students that these events took place after Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and just before He was put to death on the cross.

Pause at verses 53-54 and be sure to emphasize that Jesus could have stopped the events of this night any time He wanted to. He allowed these men to arrest Him, try Him and abuse Him to fulfill Scripture and to secure our salvation through His own death.

After reading the account, go back and discuss all the ways that Jesus was treated unfairly. He was:

- betrayed by a friend (verse 49)
- arrested as a rebel (verse 55)
- falsely accused by liars (verse 59)
- declared a blasphemer (verse 65)
- struck, spit upon, and insulted (verses 67-68)

“Jesus endured all of these things, even though He could have called down angels to protect and deliver Him, so that He could die for our sins. He knew that’s what the Father wanted Him to do. He showed incredible self-control throughout His trial and crucifixion, and He did so because He loved us and wanted to save us from our sins.” Remind your students that Jesus was completely sinless. He was totally innocent of any crime - the only totally innocent man who ever walked the earth. We should be both humbled and filled with gratitude as we contemplate this sacrifice for us.

2. Our Response to Unfair Situations

Ask your students if they have ever been treated unfairly by others. “Perhaps you were teased by someone at school, or maybe you were blamed for something you didn’t do, or maybe someone actually hit you or knocked you down for no reason. When we are treated like that, it’s natural to get angry. It’s natural to want to hurt the person who hurt you - to take revenge on them.

“But that’s not how Jesus responded. I Peter 2:23 says He did not ‘retaliate’ or take revenge when He was insulted. He didn’t threaten His enemies when they attacked Him. Instead, He trusted God to judge the situation justly. God says, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’ (Romans 12:19). He will see to those who hurt us and treat us unfairly.”

“But Jesus wants His people to be self-controlled. He doesn’t want them to lose their tempers, even when they are wronged. He wants them to think about the things they say - to have control over their tongues. And He wants us to have control over our bodies - how we use our bodies and what we put into them. Self-control is something that we all need to work on, but it can be a very difficult thing to do. But if we ask Jesus for help, He will give us the power to become more and more like Him in this way.” Encourage your students to think of areas in their own lives where they could show more self-control and to ask the Savior for His help in this.

Journal

Review last week’s journal entries on gentleness and pass out worksheets on Self-Control.

Related Music

“Make Me Like You”; “He Leadeth Me” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #600).

Journal Entry #9

**“Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love . . .”
(I Thessalonians 5:8)**

There are lots of areas where we need to use self-control; it can be especially hard to control our tongues. We must be careful what we say, for our tongues can lie, insult people, swear, or grumble and complain.

1. Do you sometimes have trouble controlling your tongue? In what ways?

2. What are some things you can do to help control your tongue?

OBEYING CHRIST

I John 5:1-3; Matthew 21:28-32

Lesson Aim

To show students that love and obedience to Christ go hand in hand and to encourage them to learn His commands.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:21 - “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Lesson Background

We have finished considering “the fruit of the Spirit” as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23. As we conclude this quarter on “The Marks of a Christian” we will look at three other distinctive characteristics that should mark the life of every believer. “Obeying Christ,” “Putting Christ First” (Lesson 12), and “Having the Holy Spirit” (Lesson 13) will draw together some of the points made in the other lessons and round out our picture of how a Christian ought to live.

Also, as we finish up this quarter, you might work with your students to bring all of the memory verses they have learned this quarter together so they can recite the entire passage as a whole. Learning such a long passage will give your students a good feeling of accomplishment. Perhaps, if enough of your students have memorized the verses, you might go as a group to recite them in the adult Sunday School class. Or you might ask the parents of your students to come just before the end of the last class to hear what their children

have learned. This will keep them informed as to what you are covering in Sunday School and remind them to work with their children on their memory verses.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson with the following illustration: “Suppose you met a man who told you he was a great patriot - someone who truly loved this country. Maybe he had flags all over his house and yard or other symbols of our nation. But after you got to know him a bit, you found out that this man never paid his taxes - not one dime of the money he owed to the government.”

“And suppose you found out that he broke other laws - traffic laws, property laws, parking laws, etc. And maybe he bad-mouthed the president, the governor and all the elected officials he had ever heard of. Finally, imagine that one day our country went to war, and this man was called to report to the army. But he never showed up. Instead, he packed his bags and left the country as fast as he could! Would you believe that a man like that truly loves his country?”

As your students respond to this story, help them see that it’s not enough just to say you love something or someone; your actions will show how you really feel in your heart.

1. Love and Obedience Go Hand in Hand (I John 5:1-3)

Have your students turn to I John 5:1-3 and read these verses aloud in class. These verses show that love and obedience go hand in hand. If we truly love God, we will obey His commands. We can’t say that we love God and then ignore what He wants us to do or refuse to live as He wants us to live. If we do, we are liars just like the man who claimed to be patriot, but couldn’t be bothered with his country’s laws or the responsibilities of being a citizen. “Jesus says if we love Him, we will keep His commands (John 14:15). He told a story once about this to show his listeners what it means to be obedient and serve Him.”

2. The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)

Read Matthew 21:28-32 aloud in class. This is a story about a common family experience to which most of your students will be able to relate. Evidently, the first son, who said he would not work in the vineyard, had a change of heart. He probably felt guilty for saying no and did what his father asked him to do. The other son agreed to work in the vineyard but never went. Perhaps he intended to help out but got distracted with other things. Perhaps he never intended to go at all and told his father “yes” to get him “off his back.” Whichever was the case, it is very clear which son ultimately did what his father wanted him to do.

“If you were talking about one of today’s families, how would you ‘modernize’ this story?” Perhaps a son or daughter would be asked to pick up a bedroom, help with dishes, or clean a garage. Maybe the second child was distracted by television or computer games. Get some suggestions from your class that will help make this story meaningful to them.

“Jesus is showing us that what we say and what we do are really two different things. The boy who said ‘no’ in this story ended up being the son who obeyed. The boy who said ‘yes’ was the disobedient one. We may say we love Jesus and He is our Savior, but if we don’t obey His commands we are liars. We don’t really love Him at all, because love and obedience go hand in hand.”

Conclusion

If we love Jesus, we will want to obey His commands. That means that we will also want to learn what His commands are in the first place. One of the reasons we attend church and Sunday School is to learn more about Jesus and to learn what He wants us to do. That’s why it’s important to pay attention in Sunday School. And that’s why it’s important to get to know our Bibles, because that’s where we’ll find Christ’s commands.

Ask your students if any of them have a daily time for Bible reading where they personally take God’s Word and spend time reading and praying. Encourage your students to make a personal Bible reading time part of their daily habit. They might begin with this week’s journal entry, which has some verses in Matthew listed for study. Remind your students of Jesus’ words in John 14:15 - “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

Journal

Review entries on Self-Control and pass out worksheets on Obeying Christ.

Related Music

“Trust and Obey” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); “Who Is On the Lord’s Side?” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #587).

Journal Entry #10

“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching . . .” (John 14:23)

It is important for us to know our Bibles so we can obey Christ’s commands. This week look up these verses in Matthew. What do they command? Write the commands in your own words.

Matthew 7:12

Matthew 19:14

Matthew 28: 19-20

PUTTING CHRIST FIRST

Matthew 19:16-30

Lesson Aim

To show students that Jesus wants to have first place in their lives, before everyone and everything else.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:22 - “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’”

Lesson Background

In his book, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?*, Walter Chantry writes this about the Rich Young Ruler:

Practical acknowledgment of Jesus' Lordship, yielding to His rule by following, is the very fibre of saving faith “Eternal life” and “treasures in heaven” which the youth sought were only part of the salvation Jesus came to bring. It was predicted, “He shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21); not from their destruction or their eternal poverty apart from this matter of sin. Jesus demanded that the ruler submit to Him as Lord. Then

he would be delivered from sin's power. Faith is not the nod of a head to a series of facts. It is following Christ.

The Rich Young Ruler refused to put Christ first, ahead of his riches, and "went away sad." We will compare his response to the response of the disciples, who left everything to follow Jesus. We will look at what each lost and what was promised to the disciples for their sacrifice. Let's be honest with our students about the Christian life; it is a life that meets with some hardships, difficulties, and sacrifices. But Christ has promised to reward "a hundred times as much" to those who follow Him.

Lesson Procedure

Pass out a small sheet of paper to each student and tell them you're going to take a poll of "favorites" in the class. Ask the following questions (or similar ones) and have your students write down their answers.

- What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?
- What's your favorite sport?
- What's your favorite book?
- What's your favorite color?
- What's your favorite subject in school?

Give students a chance to share their favorites, commenting on "unique" responses and pointing out where two or more students may share a favorite. "We know when we really like something. We know when we really love something. But do we always love what we ought to love as much as we ought to love it? In today's lesson, we learn about a young man whose heart wasn't in the right place, and because of that he was going to miss out on the only thing he didn't have."

1. The Rich Young Ruler and Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22)

Have students turn to Matthew 19 and read verses 16-22 aloud in class. Ask the following questions after you read:

- What did the young man have? (great riches)
- What did he want? (eternal life)

Point out that the young man wanted to do something "good" to get eternal life. He thought this was something he could earn. Jesus wanted to show him that, even though he followed most of the commandments, he was not good enough for heaven. What he really needed to do was follow Jesus.

- What did Jesus command the young man to do? (sell his possessions)
- Which did the young man love the most, his possessions or Jesus? (his possessions, for he refused to part with them, even for eternal life)
- What did the young man lose? (unless he repented at a later time, he lost eternal life)

“Jesus was showing this young man that believers have to put Him first and follow Him. They must not love things or even other people more than they love Jesus. The young man wasn’t willing to do that, and that’s why he went away sad.”

2. The Disciples and Jesus (Matthew 19:23-30)

Now we will compare the Rich Young Ruler’s response to that of the disciples. Finish the account by reading verses 23-30 aloud in class. We want to emphasize that, unlike the Rich Young Ruler, the disciples were willing to leave everything and follow Jesus. Some, like Matthew the tax-collector, left a sinful way of living. Some, like fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John, left their jobs to follow Christ. All left their families and homes for extended periods of time. They did so in answer to Jesus’ call. They put Jesus first in their lives because they wanted to serve and follow Him.

“What did Jesus promise the disciples in return for their sacrifices?” Jesus tells them that the day is coming when He will be enthroned in glory and that they will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (the exception being Judas, who did not continue to follow). This is a special promise for the disciples alone. But other promises are made that are applicable for us as well; all who leave family and homes and fields (livelihoods) for Christ are promised “a hundred times as much” and eternal life in the life to come.

“Does this mean that every Christian has to leave his home and his family or quit his job to serve Christ? No, many times this sacrifice is not required. But we should all be willing to leave these things if He calls us to do so. If Jesus calls you to serve Him on the mission field someday, you must be willing to go. If obeying Jesus means your family and friends misunderstand you, and perhaps even hate you, you must still obey Christ. Sometimes it’s hard to follow Jesus; sometimes it may cost us friends or jobs. But remember, Jesus has promised to reward ‘a hundred times over’ all those who give up something for Him.”

Conclusion

Let’s look at our own attitudes as we close this week’s lesson. Would we be like the rich young man in this story or would we be more like the disciples? Would it be hard for us to let go of some of our possessions? Would it be difficult, for example, if our parents were called to the mission field and we had to leave our homes and our friends? Encourage your students that God gives special grace to those He calls to sacrifice if they lean on Him. Still, we should practice even now putting Him first and pray that He will help us to be true followers.

Journal

Review entries on Obeying Christ and pass out journal worksheets on Putting Christ First.

Related Music

“Fishers of Men”; “Seek Ye First (The Kingdom of God)”; “Lead On, O King Eternal” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #580).

Journal Entry #11

“But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me . . .’” (Matthew 8:22)

John writes in I John 2:15, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

1. Do you think this means we shouldn't enjoy the good things this world offers (like a beautiful day, good food, or our friends)? Why or why not?

2. What do you think we should love more than these things?

HAVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 8

Lesson Aim

To review the fruit of the Spirit and to see how the Holy Spirit helps believers.

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:23 - “Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Lesson Background

As we review all of the fruit of the Spirit, it is possible that even the most mature Christian might feel discouraged. How impossible it is for us to live out all of these things perfectly in our daily lives! That’s why we need to remember that we are not in this process alone; these are, after all, the fruit of the Spirit. We will take a look at how the Holy Spirit indwells believers and how He helps us develop this fruit in our lives.

You may wish to refer to Lesson 1 and other past lessons this quarter as you review the fruit of the Spirit with your class. Make sure you have reviewed so you can help them to do so! Also, this week your students may take their journals home. Help your students organize and bind them before they leave, even if it means taking their worksheets home.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your quarter review by reciting, as a class, our memory verse passage, Matthew 7:15-23. Be sure to acknowledge any student who has worked especially hard, and can say the entire passage from memory. Remind students that Jesus is comparing people to trees. Those who know Him are the "good" trees, and they will produce good fruit. Those who do not know Him are the bad trees, and they will eventually be cut down.

1. Review the “Fruit of the Spirit”

Now you are ready to review the specific fruits of the Spirit. This can be done in several ways; perhaps you could have a simple silhouette of a tree cut from construction paper taped to a wall in your classroom. As each fruit is named, the student who named it could tape a small, fruit-shaped piece of construction paper onto the tree until the entire tree is full. Or you might draw an outline of a tree on your chalkboard and have individual students come up and write the names of the fruits as you discuss them. Note that some of your students may be able to recite all of the fruits of the Spirit at once. But take them one at a time, giving each student a chance to contribute to the discussion and the tree. All of them should be able to think of at least one fruit (give your quieter students the first few chances). While your students are busy attaching fruit to the tree, you might remind them of some of the Bible stories we’ve learned this quarter that exemplify each individual fruit: for example, Jonathan’s love for David showed us how we should love one another, and Ruth’s devotion to her mother-in-law illustrated faithfulness. By the time all the fruit is on the tree, everyone’s memory should be refreshed.

“As we look at our tree filled with ‘fruit,’ I think we’d all agree that these are good things to have in our lives. But living this way isn’t always easy, is it? It’s not always easy to be joyful, or patient, or to have self-control. But the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of each believer to help him or her produce this kind of fruit. We’re going to take a look at a few verses that show us how He helps us have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.”

2. How the Holy Spirit Helps Us

Have students turn to Romans 8. This powerful and weighty chapter covers many aspects of the Spirit’s ministry among believers; we will look at just a few verses with our third and fourth graders to help them understand just how the Spirit helps us. With each verse or group of verses, have a student read the passage aloud. Then discuss the passage before going on to the next verses.

- Romans 8:9 - The Holy Spirit lives within believers. This verse tells us very bluntly that the Spirit of God lives within believers; if you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you do not belong to Christ. God’s Spirit lives in God’s people and He will not allow us to be controlled by sin.
- Romans 8:13-14 - The Holy Spirit helps us put sin to death. We all struggle with sin in our lives; perhaps we have a hard time telling the truth or obeying our parents or controlling our tempers. But we don’t have to just “live” with these sins. The Holy Spirit within us helps

us fight these sins so that we can eventually put them to death. He points out where we are sinning and gives us the strength and wisdom to say “no.”

- Romans 8:15-16 - The Holy Spirit reminds and reassures us that we are God’s children. We don’t have to live in fear or in slavery to sin. God is our Father (“Abba” means “Daddy”). The Holy Spirit within believers reminds them of this and comforts and reassures them that they belong to Him.
- Romans 8:26-27 - The Holy Spirit prays and intercedes for us. Explain to your students that “intercede” means “to go between.” It means to plead or beg for another. We don’t always know what to pray for; we don’t always know what is best for us. But the Holy Spirit always knows just what we need God to do in our lives, and in His infinite love and wisdom He prays for us.

“These are just a few of the things the Holy Spirit does for us as believers. He works within us until, slowly but surely, the fruit of the Spirit is formed in our lives. That’s why, if you are a believer, you will see Him at work in you. You may not be perfectly patient, but you will be growing in patience. You may not have perfect self-control, but you will see yourself becoming more controlled as time passes. You are a tree that the Holy Spirit is growing, and He’s going to make sure that you have good fruit - the kind of fruit Jesus wants from His children.”

Close your lesson by reading Philippians 1:6 together as a class: “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Worksheet

After your class has assembled their journals (they take them home this week), pass out the worksheet so they can work on the puzzle in class.

Related Music

“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is”; “He Who Began a Good Work in You”; “Take My Life and Let It Be” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #585).

Can you find the fruit of the Spirit in this word search puzzle? They are listed backward, forward, crosswise, and up and down. Turn to Galatians 5:22-23 if you need help remembering all the types of fruit.

R I S S E N D O O G A B Z
A F I V S S E T P E A C E
J Y O U F A C R S N Q M Y
N L S E L F C O N T R O L
G O Y T F A R J E L J D E
S S A W I P A T I E N C E
L O G A C M X T P N E F S
F A I T H F U L N E S S I
W U C J H O S S E R M O N
B C K I N D N E S S T A J

Now list the fruit of the Spirit in the verse below:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____, _____,
_____, and _____. Against such things there is no
law” (Galatians 5:22-23).