



ECHOES

Adult Teacher's
Commentary

June, July, August 2022



Partners in a
New Creation
Studies in Isaiah, John, Revelation

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Studies in Isaiah, John, Revelation

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*This lesson is designed to help you evangelize unsaved students (see also page 114).

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



**Patricia
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**Roslyn
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**David
McAfee**

As a grandmother, I get to hear a five-year-old little boy and a two-year-old little girl call me “granny.” It’s one of my greatest thrills in life. Recently, my daughter and her husband decided to do an overnight. For the first time, they left me with my granddaughter, Chloe. I knew she’d be okay when I put her to bed that night. She’s used to me giving her a bath, then hearing me sing the Jesus songs over her until she falls asleep. But I didn’t know how she’d be in the morning. She’d wake up and see Granny, not mamma, not daddy—something new.

Sure enough, when Chloe opened her eyes that following day and saw Granny, not her parents, she had that panicked look. I just pulled her close, rocked her gently, and whispered, “Mamma and Daddy, will be back soon.” Thankfully, she just went back to sleep. Thank You, Lord, no crying, whining, and having to call her parents to return early.

This quarter’s lessons describe several biblical characters who had to adjust to something new. They woke up to an unfamiliar season, unlike anything they had previously experienced. The exiles returning from Babylon had to build a new community and temple. Jesus came on the scene with a new message. God opened John’s eyes to a new heaven and new earth prepared for him and his Father’s children.

For those of us in our later years, new is not always easy, nor exciting, to us. We like things to stay old, familiar, and routine. Back in 2020, when the COVID pandemic hit, many of us had to traffic in an up-side-down world. But like Chloe, God knows all about the panicky look on our faces and the fear in our hearts. He knows all about our hesitations to step into something new. So many times, I feel the Father pulling me close, rocking me gently, and whispering His words of assurance: “I love you, I got you, everything is going to be okay.” He sings over me, like I sing over Chloe.

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17, KJV).

In Christ,

Victoria McAfee
Contributing Editor

Your Teaching Materials

adult curriculum publications

These quarterly resources enable you to coordinate a complete learning experience for your students.



Adult Teacher's Commentary: step-by-step instructions to help you prepare for and teach each lesson with Bible background material and activities relating Bible truths to your students' lives.



Adult Teacher's Resource Kit: a packet containing an *Adult Teacher's Commentary* and teaching aids including full-color Bible background posters, worksheets, and other discussion starters to be used with the teacher's commentary.



Comprehensive Bible Study: an adult-level student booklet providing students with information about and application of a portion of Scripture. **In Regular or Large Print.**



Lesson Leaflet: a condensed version of *Comprehensive Bible Study* to give to visitors or use as an outreach tool.



The Quiet Hour: daily devotionals coordinated with the Daily Bible Readings listed in *Comprehensive Bible Study*.



Power for Living: an adult take-home paper profiling dynamic Christians, along with other helpful articles.



Real Life Downloaded: combines current news stories with your weekly Bible lessons. See more on p. 8. Take a test drive today and download your free copy at: Reallifedownloaded.com

Basic Classroom Supplies

You may need the following supplies for this quarter's lessons:

- Bibles—several versions (or online access)
- Paper/pencils/colored markers
- Thumbtacks
- Pointer
- Whiteboard, overhead, or newsprint, and markers
- Media player
- Cellophane tape
- Masking tape
- Index cards
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Hymnals or chorus books

FREE!



Online Is
Where It's @!



Step-by-Step through the Lesson

As Easy as 1, 2, 3, 4!

1

Step 1: Life Need

Most adults show up on Sunday focused more on where the mortgage money will come from and how they can recapture their relationship with their teen than on learning something new from the Bible. This step will help adults focus on today's challenge. Don't skip this step! It's not fluff or foolishness. It's the step that gets adults ready to discover why this Bible study is important to them. At the end of these few minutes, they are ready to participate—and today's lesson just might contain the answers to life questions they brought with them to class.

2

Step 2: Bible Learning

Lively Bible study! That's what happens here. As adults study the Bible and discuss what they found, they gain a growing understanding of how to move forward on their discipleship journey.

Spend lots of time preparing Step 2. In class, you can discuss the passage, read the Scriptures, and conduct both deductive and inductive Bible study. Adults should never think the Bible section is the duller part of the lesson. Bring it alive with your expression, actions, and most of all, your own attitude! Each week, you'll challenge adults to prepare for next week's lesson. Their preparation isn't long or difficult, but it does encourage participation. When adults have invested something of themselves in the lesson, they will get more out of it.

3

Step 3: Bible Application

Practice time—a time to turn the classroom into a laboratory. You'll discover how deeply your adults are personally involved with what the Bible teaches. This guide will give you three choices every week. Use all three. Or, if you have a small class, pick one. Activities will be different each week: a role-play, creative activity, discussion, case study, interviews—lots of adult-level interaction.

4

Step 4: Life Response

Okay! You helped your adults become focused on the topic (Step 1). Then you guided them into the Bible study (Step 2). They practiced what they learned (Step 3). Now students will decide what they will actually do with what they've learned. This part of the lesson is not safe! Living the Christian life can be challenging, but it is always exciting.

Each adult will decide for himself or herself how to live for Jesus this week. You can encourage people, but ultimately they need to personally own their decisions. They are living for Jesus because they choose to, not because of outside pressure you put on them.

Don't have a single doubt about it! The biggest part of your Sunday school lesson doesn't happen in your classroom. It happens on Monday and Tuesday—and through the week—when instead of following their own desires or the crowd, they dare to say, "No, I will follow Jesus."

Natural Learning Cycle

You've just been around the Natural Learning Cycle. It's fun! It's simple! It's how we all learn—adults, teens, and children. First, we get interested in the subject (Step 1). Then we learn the facts from the Bible (Step 2). Next, we practice what we've learned (Step 3). Then, and most importantly, we use what we have learned during the week (Step 4). Then we come back to class next week and share how we lived the Christian life ([Link to Last Week](#)).

Highlights in Black History



Alice Coachman

The Girl with Gold Medal Dreams

by Victoria McAfee

“I said to God, ‘If it’s His will, let it be done.’”

—Alice Coachman

Alice Coachman won 10 consecutive U.S. national championships in the 1930s and 40s and was the first Black woman to win a gold medal in the Olympics.

Coachman made her entrance into the world on November 9, 1923. She was the fifth child of Fred and Evelyn Coachman’s 10 children. She grew up in Albany, Georgia, in a time of Jim Crow segregation.

Initially, she aspired to become an actress like Shirley Temple or a saxophone player like Coleman Hawkins. But then she watched a boy’s track meet. High jumping became her dream. Alice and her friends fixed lots of things to jump over—rags tied together, string, sticks, or ropes. Pretty soon, she vaulted much higher than everyone in her neighborhood.

Coachman said, “I was so tomboyish, I wanted competition, so I jumped with the boys.” The guys let her play all kinds of sports with them, but her parents disapproved, wanting her to be more ladylike. She got a lot of whippings for hopping over her backyard fence to play sports. But it didn’t stop her.

Coachman’s parents also feared for her safety. Back then, an African-American female involved in sports

could prove dangerous. But Alice had two allies who saw her potential and her talent—her fifth-grade teacher and her aunt. They convinced her parents to allow Alice to go after her athletic dreams.

Because of the racial inequality in her area, she was forbidden to go into public places to train. Alice had to resort to unconventional ways to get into shape. She ran in her bare feet on dirt roads and climbed what hills she could find around Albany.

Coachman attended Madison High School in 1938. By then, she already had a reputation as a track star. One of the coaches at her high school encouraged her talent. After her first year, the coaches at Tuskegee observed her track skills and asked her parents to let her attend Tuskegee on a five-year plan, three years of high school and two years of college.

Alice advanced in her sport quickly and easily won the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) national championships. She then set a number of high school and college records, winning several national championships between 1939 to 1948 for the high jump, 50- and 100-meter dashes, and the 400-meter relay team, plus being named to five All-American track and field teams.

Despite her accomplishments, Coachman’s mother reminded her to show Christian humility. “She always was able to keep the peace and keep God in our family. From the very first gold medal I won in 1939, my mama used to stress being humble. ‘You’re no better than anyone else,’ she said. ‘The people you pass as you climb up the ladder of success will be the same people you’ll pass when you come back down.’”

Still, one of the keys to her achievements was her faith in herself to succeed and the power of God to guide her along the way. “I’ve always believed that I could do whatever I set my mind to do,” she told *Essence* magazine in 1984. “I’ve had that strong will, that oneness of purpose, all my life. ... I just called upon myself and the Lord to let the best come through.”

Alice also played on the women’s basketball team,

along with several other sports for recreation. She somehow managed to squeeze in singing in the school choir and performing with the drill team. Despite her active sports life, Alice obtained her degree in dressmaking and a B.A. in Home Economics from Albany (Georgia) State University.



Sadly, World War II broke out, eliminating the Olympics for four years (1940–1944). This canceled season of the Olympic games would have been prime time for Alice to compete and no doubt win several medals. But she refused to give up her dreams, and in 1948, at the age of 25 (considered old for an Olympian), she tried out. Alice almost didn't make it because she had a medical issue and surgery. The doctors advised her not to compete. But she was determined.

During the opening Olympic tryouts, Alice broke records. Her event, the high jump, was scheduled as the last contest during the actual games. The other women on her team had only come in third, with no gold medals. The coach fussed and cursed at Alice because she refused to work out right before the high jump.

Alice knew her body. She just sucked on her lemon and prayed. "I said to God, 'If it's His will, let it be done.' He will give me the strength and the courage to go on and do my best, and that is what I did." Alice jumped her highest that day and won the gold. "I had my lemons along with God's will. That's all I needed."

Those in London praised her achievements. King George VI personally placed the medal around her neck. President Harry Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Count Basie met and congratulated her on her victory.

But when she returned to her hometown of Albany, Georgia, it was a different story. The mayor of her hometown refused to shake her hand, and she had to enter the auditorium, where a crowd waited

to recognize her, through a side door reserved for people of color. Well-wishers sent flowers and gifts but refused to sign their names. They didn't want the public to be aware of their support of an African American.

Coachman retired after her success, though in 1952 she was the first Black woman to endorse an

international product when Coca-Cola signed her as a spokesperson. She married and had two children, settling down as a schoolteacher and a coach. For many years, no one spoke publicly of her accomplishments. However, she set up the Alice Coachman Track and Field Foundation to help down-and-out former athletes and she pioneered the way for several U. S. Olympic stars who followed—Wilma Rudolph, Wyomia Tyus, Evelyn Ashford, and Florence Griffith Joyner.

Almost 20 years after winning the gold, Coachman began to gain recognition. Her time out of the lime-light did not bother her because her mother always told her to be modest. Author Kimberly Nash said Coachman was "just a little girl with a big dream who now finds herself recognized as one of the greatest athletes in track and field history." In 1975, Alice was inducted into the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame, and in 2004 into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame. In 1996, she was honored at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta as one of the top 100 Olympic athletes of all time.

Alice died at the age of 90 in Albany, Georgia, of heart complications. She was a trailblazer for other women in sports. "I made a difference among the Blacks, being one of the leaders," she said in a *New York Times* interview in 1996. "If I had gone to the games and failed, there wouldn't be anyone to follow in my footsteps. It encouraged the rest of the women to work harder and fight harder."

Resources for Deeper Bible Study

When you want to know more about the Scriptures

Beyond your **Adult Teacher's Commentary** are a wealth of resources to give you the in-depth Bible study you want and need to help you and your students understand Scripture as fully as you can.

• For even more depth, **The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New and Old Testaments**, by Dallas Theological Seminary professors John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, answers such questions as:

- What does this verse mean?
- What is the significance of this word or phrase in Hebrew?
- How can this alleged contradiction be explained?

The commentaries include for each Bible book an introduction (discussion of the author, historical background, purpose, features), outline, commentary, and bibliography, as well as easy-to-understand interpretations of the Scripture verses.



• Each week, **Real Life Downloaded** combines current news stories with your weekly Bible lessons. Online you will find a news story for Step 1 and discussion questions. Also online are links to music videos that relate to the focus of the lesson, and to videos of Bible places you will be studying in your lesson. **Real Life Downloaded** is available before you teach, so you will be able to plan your lessons ahead and set up any audio-visual equipment you need. **Check it out today at Reallifedownloaded.com**

• For every lesson, you will also find more commentary in the two-volume **Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments**. You can study the Bible verse by verse with one of America's most beloved pastors, Dr. Warren Wiersbe, the former pastor of The Moody Church in Chicago and for 10 years the general director and Bible teacher for the *Back to the Bible* radio broadcast. Whether you are a pastor, teacher, or layperson, these commentaries allow you to study the Bible in easy-to-follow sections that emphasize personal application as well as biblical meaning. Developed from Dr. Wiersbe's best-selling *Be* series of Bible study books, these commentaries unpack all of God's Word in accessible, easy-to-read language. Each volume offers you Dr. Wiersbe's trustworthy insights on the Scriptures, introductions and outlines for each Bible book, and text that is free of academic jargon.

The Word of God admonishes us to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). This is the resource to help you do just that.



This selection from *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* can be used for background on Lesson 5 for July 3.

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth?” asked Solomon as he dedicated the temple (1 Kings 8:27, KJV). A good question, indeed! God’s glory had dwelt in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34), and in the temple (1 Kings 8:10–11), but that glory would depart from disobedient Israel (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22–23). Then a marvelous thing happened: the glory of God came to His people again, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. The writers of the four Gospels have given us “snapshots” of our Lord’s life on earth, for no complete biography could ever be written (John 21:25). Matthew wrote with his fellow Jews in mind and emphasized that Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Mark wrote for the busy Romans. Whereas Matthew emphasized the King, Mark presented the Servant, ministering to needy people. Luke wrote his Gospel for the Greeks and introduced them to the sympathetic Son of Man.

But it was given to John, the beloved disciple, to write a book for both Jews and Gentiles, presenting Jesus as the Son of God. We know that John had Gentiles in mind as well as Jews, because he often “interpreted” Jewish words or customs for his readers (John 1:38, 41–42; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13, 17; 20:16). His emphasis to the Jews was that Jesus not only fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, but He also fulfilled the types. Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and the Ladder from heaven to earth (John 1:51; and see Gen. 28). He is the new temple (John 2:19–21), and He gives a new birth (John 3:4ff.). He is the serpent lifted up (John 3:14) and the Bread of God that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff.).

While the first three Gospels major on describing events in the life of Christ, John emphasized the meaning of these events. For example, all four Gospels record the feeding of the five thousand, but only John records Jesus’ sermon on “The Bread of Life,” which followed that miracle when He interpreted it for the people. But there is one major theme that runs throughout John’s Gospel: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and if you commit yourself to Him, He will give you eternal life (John 20:31). In the first chapter alone, John recorded seven names and titles of Jesus that identify Him as eternal God.

The Word (1:1–3, 14)

Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus Christ is God’s “Word” to reveal His heart and mind to us. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). A word is composed of letters, and Jesus Christ is “Alpha and Omega” (Rev. 1:11), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. According to Hebrews 1:1–3, Jesus Christ is God’s last Word to mankind, for He is the climax of divine revelation. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word (vss. 1–2).

He existed in the beginning, not because He had a beginning as a creature, but because He is eternal. He is God and He was with God. “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Jesus Christ is the creative Word (vs. 3).

There is certainly a parallel between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1, the “new creation” and the “old creation.” God created the worlds through His word: “And God said, ‘Let there be ...’” “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9). God created all things through Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16), which means that Jesus is not a created being. He is eternal God. The verb “was made” (John 1:3) is perfect tense in the Greek, which means a “completed act.” Creation is finished. It is not a process still going on, even though God is certainly at work in His creation (John 5:17). Creation is not a process; it is a finished product.

Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word (vs. 14).

He was not a phantom or a spirit when He ministered on earth, nor was His body a mere illusion. John and the other disciples each had a personal experience that convinced them of the reality of the body of Jesus (1 John 1:1–2). Even though John’s emphasis is the deity of Christ, he makes it clear that the Son of God came in the flesh and was subject to the sinless infirmities of human nature.

In his Gospel, John points out that Jesus was weary (John 4:6) and thirsty (John 4:7), He groaned within (John 11:33) and openly wept (John 11:35). On the cross, He thirsted (John 19:28), died (John 19:30), and bled (John 19:34). After His resurrection, He proved to Thomas and the other disciples that He still had a real body (John 20:24–29), howbeit, a glorified body.

How was the “Word made flesh”? By the miracle of the Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). He took on Himself sinless human nature and identified with us in every aspect of life from birth to death. “The Word” was not an abstract concept of philosophy, but a real Person who could be seen, touched, and heard. The fullness of God was revealed in a man—Jesus!

The revelation of God’s glory is an important theme in the Gospel. Jesus revealed God’s glory in His person, His works, and His words. John recorded seven wonderful signs (miracles) that openly declared the glory of God (John 2:11). The glory of the old covenant of law was a fading glory, but the glory of the new covenant in Christ is an increasing glory (see 2 Cor. 3). The law could reveal sin, but it could never remove sin. Jesus Christ came with fullness of grace and truth, and this fullness is available to all who will trust Him (John 1:16).

Lesson Overview

Week of June 5

Suggested Materials for As Your Students Arrive:

■ Plain pieces of paper cut into simple, random geometric shapes (e.g., rectangles, triangles)

1 Life Need:

1 Discuss what it means for trust to be broken.

2 Bible Learning:

2 Study examples of misplaced trust.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—Isaiah: God Delivers and Restores

3 Bible Application:

3 Identify how and why we can trust more deeply in God.

Suggested Material:

■ Lyrics and music video (optional) for the hymn 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus'

4 Life Response:

4 Commit to trusting more deeply in God.

Church/Home Theme: We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Closely examine who or what you trust most deeply.

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 47:10-15

God Foretells Destruction

Isaiah, God's messenger, predicted the fall of Babylon. The prophet's word came true in around 539 B.C. when the Medes and the Persians suddenly surrounded and captured Babylon. Overnight the Babylonians lost everything, like a widow who unexpectedly lost her mate.

Trusting in the Wrong Thing—This Babylonian nation placed its trust in the wrong god and worldly philosophies. Isaiah pointed out several reasons for their destruction. The Babylonians cruelly oppressed the Jewish nation (Isa. 47:6). They looked down on other territories bragging that they could never be brought low (47:7). The pagan country relied on their false beliefs, religious rituals rooted in demonic activity. Babylon became known for its sorcery and magic. When the Babylonian kings made significant decisions, they called in the so-called wise men, well versed in divination. The nation prided itself in sorcerers supposedly with the ability to tell the future. But the authorities before the monarch proved to be less reliable than the weatherman, ignorant about the future.

No Trust in God—The Lord's prophet attempted to tell Babylon only the heavenly Father knows about upcoming events. Even if the so-called wise men reported the approaching calamity correctly, they were helpless to keep it from happening.

Isaiah prophesied, in sarcasm, challenging the Babylonians to call on their false belief system to save them when the Medes and Persians surrounded the city. Call on them now, Isaiah taunted. But history records the truth; the nation was conquered. No one withstood God's judgment.

Trust in God Today—Sadly, the Babylonians do not stand alone in their proud, self-centered thinking. Today, countless people read their horoscope daily, call psychic hotlines, go to fortune-tellers, and use other such methods to govern their decisions. They refuse to believe the Bible, ignore Christ, and mix unbiblical truths with Christianity. Like the pagan nations, there is a day of reckoning for these kinds of actions. The outcome is not going to be good. The Scriptures plainly state, those who ignore God and His instructions, looking to human-made, demonic philosophies, will pay the price. As believers, the question always needs to be in the forefront: Who and what we are trusting?

As Your Students Arrive

Invite students to select half a dozen pieces of paper you have precut into a puzzle shape. Tell them their task is to reassemble

the whole piece, similar to solving a jigsaw puzzle. As time allows, briefly discuss the challenge of fitting the pieces together once they have been cut and relate their experience to the concept of broken trust.

Link to Last Week

Ask a few of your students how they saw the fruit of the Spirit in their lives this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss what it means for trust to be broken.

Comprehensive Bible Study Student Book Reduction

Lesson 1 • June 5 • Page 5

God Foretells Destruction

“Won’t you join us, Yolanda?” asked Sherise. Sherise, who had been at the company for only a few months, was circulating a petition in support of Kendrick Miller, a marketing manager, who was reportedly headed to the employment “guillotine.” He had been on administrative leave for one week.

Mr. Miller, after years of managerial abuse, performance mediocracy, and financial mismanagement, had arrived at an irrevocable dead end. Unbeknownst to Mr. Miller, he had been mistreating a staff member who had close ties with a top executive. The staff member’s complaint led to inquiries, which led to realizations that Yolanda and many other long-timers knew all along.

“They’re just trying to bring the poor man down,” said Sherise.

Yolanda found Mr. Miller to be charming at first. Upon closer inspection, she discovered him to be a bully, dishonest, and inept. He hid his flaws with false charm, and when that didn’t work, with mean aggression. He talked of God and goodness, but it seemed to serve only as a prop when interacting with certain audiences and to gain access as needed. Yolanda could not trust him; his professions rang hollow, especially the more she knew him.

“Do you wish him harm?” Sherise asked, visibly upset.

“I do not,” Yolanda replied. “I have my reasons for not signing the petition, and I cannot stop the repercussions that he will face.”

1. Describe a time when your trust in someone or something has been broken or shattered. How did you react?

2. What factors or circumstances contribute to broken trust in relationships?

3. Why is it often difficult to rebuild trust once it has been broken?

LESSON FOCUS: Closely examine who or what you trust most deeply.

Read the anecdote in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then form small groups for discussion and responses to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, ask students to discuss situations in which trust might be broken. Encourage them to consider multiple contexts, for example, business, church, friendships, and family relationships. Broken trust has greater impact when the other person is someone we trusted deeply.

Question 2 invites students to think about how we experience and/or contribute to a lack of trust. Trust may be broken when another person doesn’t keep promises, betrays us in some way, or says or does things that are inconsistent with what we think and believe about that person.

That leads into the important point brought up in Question 3. Once trust has been broken, it is not easily rebuilt. The relationship’s foundation is no longer solid. New actions and experiences must be put in place to build trust all over again. Once trust has been broken, we do not have the same belief or confidence in how that person might speak or behave in the future.

2 Bible Learning

Study examples of misplaced trust.



Before class starts, put up the poster from the Resource Kit and make copies of the handout that goes with it. You will use these this week and for the next four weeks. Read the first two paragraphs, then

note the photos of a Babylonian incantation bowl and the ruins of Babylon today.

Trusting in Wickedness

Read Isaiah 47:10-11 and highlight these key points from the text:

- God's prophets spoke to other nations besides Israel, but most often they did not heed God's warnings.
- Isaiah accused the Babylonians of trusting in their wickedness.
- They did not consider themselves accountable to anyone, and they believed their sorcerers could make their enemies helpless against the power of Babylon.
- Isaiah warned the Babylonians a disaster was coming that their magicians

would not stop.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

They were trusting in themselves, namely in their own knowledge and wisdom that came out of occult practices.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Unpredictable disasters would come upon them, horrible things that they wouldn't be able

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Trusting in Wickedness

Isaiah 47:10-11

10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

Isaiah 47:10-11

¹⁰"You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.'

Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.'

¹¹Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom—a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you."

Most of the time, God's words of warning to foreign nations fell on deaf ears. This was the case of Isaiah's prophecies to Babylon. Like all superpowers throughout history, the Babylonians had long perceived themselves as invincible. Their military forces were intimidating and relentless. So when Isaiah accused the Babylonians of trusting in their wickedness, he was pointing out their ill-placed security in the ways they were abusing their power. As far as they were concerned, no one had more power than they did, so it didn't matter who saw what they did—they had become a law unto themselves. The notion of divine accountability did not even show up on their radar. In their minds, the Babylonians believed that their gods fully approved of what they were doing.

In response to their haughtiness, Isaiah reminds them that disaster was just around the corner. At some point

BIBLE EXTRA

The Stargazers of Babylon

One of the keys to Babylonian astrology was to associate certain constellations with particular gods. Thus by observing these constellations, one might be able to anticipate the actions of a particular god. Of course, there was an element of predictability to these movements, which the astrologers tapped into to give the illusion of predicting the future—which they exploited to their advantage.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on p. 1187 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

to anticipate. Eventually they were conquered by Persia.

The Stargazers

Read Isaiah 47:12-13 and then discuss the following important points:

- The powers of darkness enabled Babylonian sorcerers to practice dark arts, and their predictions sometimes came true.
- The people believed in the magic and had all their lives.
- Moses forbade the practice of these dark arts

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down the road, the old tricks would no longer work for them. They had become quite dependent on the illusion that their sorcerers and conjurers could manipulate their enemies into positions of helplessness. Their success up to that point had only fed that delusion. But one day, the powers of darkness who energized their magical arts would no longer be given permission by God to keep on going. In 539 B.C., the Persians would end the Babylonian Empire, and when the Persians did conquer the Babylonians, they simply took what they wanted—which ended up being everything. The demise of the Babylonians was the one event their mediums would miss in their predictions—they could not see it coming and they could not “conjure it away” (vs. 11).

4. *In what were the Babylonians trusting?*

5. *What would be the consequence for putting their security in anything but God?*

The Stargazers

Isaiah 47:12-13

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

Isaiah 47:12-13

¹²“Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. ¹³All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you.”

for the Israelites.

- But the Babylonian magicians’ successes and predictions would become just empty words.
- The spells did not keep the Persians from conquering the Babylonians in 539 B.C.

BIBLE EXTRA

Babylonian Magic

Isaiah’s rebuke in Chapter 47 of his book is directed toward the Babylonians, especially in regard to their dependence upon the pagan practices of astrology and dark magic. Today’s horoscopes find their roots in the ancient astrological practices of the Babylonians and Persians. These ancient astrologers interpreted the movement of the stars (and constellations) as supernaturally-directed and prophetic. Their patterns and movements were considered to be messages from the gods, which, when properly interpreted, could predict the future.

Babylonian magic was also deeply connected with the worship of their gods such as Molech, Baal, and Ishtar. The worship of these false gods required human sacrifice—even that of children. The magic arts were seen as a way of tapping into a god’s power (unlike the offerings which were meant to appease them). They gave those who practiced these dark arts a way to imitate the deity’s power, and thus created a sense of dependency upon them. As Bible commentator Dr. Geoffrey Grogan says, the Babylonians became complacent “because the people relied on their magicians to predict the coming of the enemy and to defeat him. In Babylonia the intellectual and the magical were intertwined, the wise man being instructed in all the arts of the supernatural.” Of course, these practices were energized by the powers of darkness, who often succeeded in the creating the illusion that their puppet sorcerers could tell everyone what was going to happen next.

Isaiah, however, took exception to this false belief. For anyone to put any trust in the creation instead of the Creator was an act of futility.

- However, Isaiah’s prophetic words gave hope to God’s people because He reigned sovereign over all nations, including Israel’s oppressors.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

They were masters at magic spells and sorceries.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

All of their predictions, spells, and sorceries would be worth nothing because those would not save the Babylonian kingdom from falling to the Persians.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Persian Ordeal by Fire

The Persians developed fire temples where an eternal flame burned to ward off the evil forces of darkness. The guardians of the fire temple also had something they called an ordeal by fire, which would determine the guilt or innocence of an accused defendant. That person would be made to walk through a large fire. If he made it through alive, he was considered innocent. Of course, most did not make it, resulting in a verdict of guilty.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Destruction of Babylon

One day, in 539 B.C., the Persians would come and lay siege to Babylon. The ancient Greek writer Xenophon said, “The inhabitants of Babylon could not but have laughed at the siege of [the Persian king] Cyrus, knowing that they had provisions for more than twenty years; and they treated his siege with mockery.” Babylon’s walls were famous for their size and strength, and they seemed unbreakable—but the walls also had openings to let water flow in from the nearby Euphrates River. On the night of a city-wide feast, Cyrus’s men redirected the mighty river current so the Persian army could simply walk in through the wall opening. In just one night, they conquered the unconquerable Babylonian capital (see Dan. 5:30-31).

Weak Fire

Read Isaiah 47:14-15 and review the following important ideas:

- Associating with the powers of darkness is as reckless as playing with fire.
- The Babylonian sorcerers gave people false hope that they would be protected because of the sorcerers’ spells.
- Because the Persians worshiped a fire god, fire was perhaps an appropriate metaphor for Isaiah to use to prophesy the Babylonians’ fall to Persia.
- What they had depended on would now turn against them and destroy them.
- Isaiah’s lesson is that we should not trust in anyone or anything other than God.

The Babylonians were masters at magic and experts at reading the stars. This is because the powers of darkness energized these sorcerers and mediums. The law of Moses forbid the practice of dark arts among the Israelites; they are simply too seductive (see Deut. 18:9-13).

Of course, Isaiah, as God’s spokesman, was not intimidated by the Babylonian astrologers. He knew that any success the magicians and astrologers had would end. The spells would become empty words with no power. The Babylonians had developed a dependence on their magicians and astrologers, but according to Isaiah, all their predictions would not “save” (vs. 13) the country.

While the Babylonians might have ignored Isaiah’s words, his message would have given hope to God’s people. Isaiah reminds us that God is sovereign over all nations. No dark art is more powerful than He.

6. What were some of the occult practices that had been a part of their lives from childhood?

7. What would become of the predictions made by the Babylonian astrologers?

Weak Fire

Isaiah 47:14-15

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Isaiah 47:14-15

¹⁴Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame. These are not coals for warmth; this is not a fire to sit by.

¹⁵That is all they are to you—these you have dealt with and labored with since childhood. All of them go on in their error; there is not one that can save you.

- All else makes empty promises and dishonors God as sovereign Lord of all.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

They were not like a coal fire that brings some light and heat, but more like a consuming forest fire.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

The sorcerers' predictions and magic spells would not save the people from conquest by the Persians. The people who played with fire would be consumed by the fire.

If the wind catches the smallest smoldering ember from a campfire and carries the spark into a dry forest, the resulting wildfire can consume hundreds of thousands of acres of trees, sometimes taking months before it can be stopped. Isaiah uses this type of analogy to describe the dangers of those who play with fire—namely the flames associated with the power of darkness, and the magic arts that the Babylonians had come to depend upon. There's never anything safe about being spiritually reckless.

The Persians, who eventually fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of Babylon's demise, were known for their fire temples, and the central role that fire played in their pagan religion. One of the Persian gods was named Atar, who was nothing more than a consuming flame. Many Persians households kept their hearths on fire, 24 hours a day, every day of the year, as an expression of worship and dependence upon their fire god. This could be one reason Isaiah focused on the fire metaphor when warning the Babylonians of their coming end. What they had depended upon would now turn on them and consume them.

We see many similar manifestations of the occult today—in horoscopes, tarot card readings that purport to predict the future, seances that claim to make connections with the dead, and popular boards that claim to pass on messages from the dead.

Granted, many of these practitioners are simply con men who use sleight-of-hand and other magician's tricks to give the illusion of supernatural power. And then, there are some who really are energized by the same power of darkness that drove the Babylonians to their demise. Isaiah makes it clear: do not trust in anything or anyone besides God, no matter what empty promises are presented.

8. *To what type of fire did Isaiah liken the Babylonian sorcerers?*

9. *Why would trusting in the sorcerers prove to be futile?*

BIBLE EXTRA

The Contests of the Gods

At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, most people, including the Babylonians and the Persians, believed that the gods of each nation were in competition with one another. If one nation won a battle, it meant that their god was stronger than the other. If a magician or prophet gave good advice, it meant his or her god was wiser than the others. Eventually, both the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:47; 3:28-29; 4:28-37) and the Persian king Darius (Dan 6:26) would acknowledge the Lord's power over all other gods, though they did not decide to turn from those gods and serve Him.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

He is Worthy of Our Trust

Our lesson focus reminds us to closely examine who or what we trust most deeply. What do we trust to save us from financial ruin, physical hardship, or an attack on our business, security, or integrity? Anything not based in God and His truth is empty, vain, and cannot save us from anything.

To trust is to have confidence that someone or something is reliable. We trust that which gives us a feeling of safety and security without fear. We trust when we believe in a person's honesty and integrity. A person with integrity is not only honest and upright, but is completely whole and of sound character. This perfectly describes God, and shows how He is worthy of our deepest trust.

3 Bible Application

Identify how and why we can trust more deeply in God.

This lesson step encourages class members to examine where we place our trust and to consider what it means to trust in God. Ask class members to participate in one of these activities. If possible, photocopy this page, cut out the boxes, and give instructions to each group. Provide chart paper and markers for the group completing the chart activity. Provide lyrics and music video

(optional) for the hymn “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” for the music activity.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read “Misplaced Trust” from the student book and respond to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. People often place trust in other people, positions, or possessions for security and hope for the future. When we trust in anything or anyone other than God, we shift our attention away from Him and no longer acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior. Things of this world offer only futile, empty promises. Whether or not we choose to trust Him, God remains the One True God who is omnipotent and sovereign over all.

What Do We Trust?

On chart paper, draw lines to make two columns. Add several arrows between the columns pointing from the left column to the right column. Label the left column “World” and the right column “God.” Discuss who or what people place their trust in that could be replaced with (moved to) trust in God.

‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus’

With a group or the whole class, discuss the lyrics to the hymn “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” and how they apply to today’s lesson. Consider these questions: Why can we trust Jesus? What do we set aside to fully trust Him? What do we receive when we trust Jesus?

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Misplaced Trust

There are so many people and places saying, “You can trust me; I have your best interests at heart.” The Babylonians trusted in their own knowledge and wisdom. Does this sound familiar? Often, we fall into the trap of placing our trust in someone or something other than God. When we do this, we don’t see the danger of straying from God’s way until it’s too late, and we must face and live with the consequences. Isaiah’s analogy of playing with fire vividly describes what can happen when people look to anything other than God alone for salvation.

The Babylonian magicians believed they could tap into a god’s power, and they became dependent on their worship of false gods for a sense of security. Today many seek power in fame, politics, controlling other people, or wealth. This leads to a false sense of security in which people do not see a need for God and independence is considered a virtue.

How easy it is for people to trust in their own knowledge and ability. From an early age, children claim, “I can do it myself.” This self-centered thinking follows us through life, resulting in a false sense of self-sufficiency. Not only will the world let us down, we are more than capable of letting ourselves down.

The Babylonians understood human frailty, so they looked to the sky for wisdom and guidance for the future. While we are in awe of the majesty of God’s creation, we’ll want to be careful to direct our worship to God alone, for only He knows the future.

10. *What things do people today commonly place their trust in other than God?*

11. *How does seeking power or security in the wrong things affect our relationship with God?*

12. *What does it mean to trust in God as the One who has our best interests at heart?*

4 Life Response

Commit to trusting more deeply in God.

Your class has studied how people misplace their trust in people or things that do not have their best interests at heart. Only God is worthy of our deep trust for security in this life. It's important to pause and examine where we place our trust and renew our commitment to rely fully on Jesus for salvation.

Encourage students to read "Choosing to Trust Him" and reflect on the questions like these before they write their prayer of trust: What things or

people have you held close in times of trouble? What do you trust to keep you safe and secure? What aspects of your life would you like to more fully entrust to God? Remind them the act of writing our thoughts in a prayer can help reinforce our commitment to God.

Close in prayer, asking God to help your students keep the commitment they have made to trust Him more deeply with their lives.

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Choosing to Trust Him

This lesson challenges us to closely examine who or what we trust most deeply. The Babylonians trusted in their wickedness and the false promises of the powers of darkness for their future. Only God is worthy of our trust for salvation and a future with Him.

► Consider who or what you have been trusting other than Jesus, then write a prayer to Him, expressing your confidence in His ability to keep His promises.

KEY VERSE

Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee. —Isaiah 47:15, KJV

That is all they are to you—these you have dealt with and labored with since childhood. All of them go on in their error; there is not one that can save you. —Isaiah 47:15, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSONS

Week of June 6 through June 12

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Corinthians 1:18-25—God's Redemption Defies Human Wisdom.
- Tue.** 1 Corinthians 1:26-31—Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.
- Wed.** Psalm 111—God Sent Redemption to His People.
- Thu.** Hebrews 9:11-14—Christ Brings Eternal Redemption.
- Fri.** Psalm 25:1-11—Pardon My Guilt, O Lord.
- Sat.** Psalm 25:12-22—Redeem Israel, O God.
- Sun.** Isaiah 49:1-17—The Lord Will Have Compassion.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Isaiah 49:1-13. Ask your students to think about how many different kinds of lights there are. Bring some examples to class such as a small lamp and a flashlight as well as some pictures of other lights such as a car's headlight, the moon's light, and starlight.

God Foretells of Redemption

Lesson Overview

Week of June 12

Suggested Materials for As Your Students Arrive:

- Photos or examples of different kinds of lights (a lamp, flashlight, car's headlights)

1 Life Need:

Discuss characteristics of light.

2 Bible Learning:

Examine details of Isaiah's description of God's Servant Messiah.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—Isaiah: God Delivers and Restores

3 Bible Application:

Identify what it means to shine God's light in the world.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible handout—The Messiah Sent by God

4 Life Response:

Commit to spreading the light of the Gospel to others.

Church/Home Theme: We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Take heart! God sent His servant as a light for all people.

Lesson Scripture:

Isaiah 49:1-13

The Book of Isaiah is filled with predictions about the coming of Christ. God sent Jesus to be His instrument, giving direction to anyone willing to walk in His light.

Savior—Isaiah's prophecy pointed to the Savior, Jesus, being born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). God sent Him to fulfill His plans and purposes. Jesus was already given the name Immanuel—Savior, Redeemer of all humanity.

Truth—The Father delivered His message through Christ. Isaiah described Jesus' mouth as a sharp two-edged sword and a weapon used to discern and pierce the hearts of men. The Father protected the Son as He spoke the truth and exposed the inner motivations of men.

Trust—For 30 years, Jesus stayed out of the limelight, but at a specific, appointed time, He came forth and announced Himself as the Son of God. Isaiah compared the Savior's ministry to a polished, well-oiled arrow. An arrow is swift, decisive; it travels far with a specific target in view. Similarly, Messiah came ready to address the world's needs, just at the right time.

Redemption—One of God's main objectives in sending His Son was to bring His wayward people back to Himself. Initially, Jesus ministered almost exclusively to the Jews. God used the nation as His instrument to bring forth Jesus and also spread the Gospel, but many Jews rejected Him. At the end, when Jesus returns to Earth, every knee will bow, and all will acknowledge Him as God's chosen.

Light—In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with the Jewish nation. When Jesus arrived, He fulfilled all things concerning Him. Jesus went about His Father's business, setting the enslaved free from sickness, oppression, demonic forces, legalism, and sin. God doesn't forget anyone. He wants to gather the lost from every corner of the world. If your way seems dark right now, be encouraged. God has sent Jesus, the Messiah, to light your way.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class starts, have examples and pictures of different kinds of lights such as a small lamp and a flashlight as well as some pictures of other lights such as a car's headlight, the moon's light, and starlight. Talk briefly about the functions of and circumstances in which we use each one and why we need them.

Link to Last Week

Encourage a few of your students to share how they trusted Jesus in some way this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss characteristics of light.

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God Foretells of Redemption

This is an elaborate undertaking, Sebastian," said Douglas, as the two men walked around scaffolding. "Couldn't you just hold a prayer meeting in a room somewhere?"

Sebastian gave his guest a patient smile. He was giving Douglas a tour of the facility in hopes of him taking over for one of the crew managers who had to leave the project suddenly because of illness in his family.

Sebastian was building the facility headquarters that would house "Boundless Love for All Humanity." It was a ministry to the homeless in the city of Philadelphia. Its mission was to bring God's light to a dark place through sharing the Gospel; offering education, job skills, and career opportunities; and assisting with financial independence.

Sebastian had prayed, planned, and prepared for this ministry for the past 15 years. Monies had come from grants and financial backers. The momentum and means had come from like-minded supporters, but the mission had come from God.

"I am excited to be part of this undertaking—which is the Lord's," Sebastian said to his guest. "He wants to show the light of His love and support to those who many seem to have forgotten or have forsaken."

"If you will excuse me," Sebastian said, looking at his cell phone, "It's almost time for our lunch and devotion."

"Could I stay?" Douglas asked.

"I'd be so happy if you did," Sebastian said, his smile growing wider. "Right this way."

1. What benefits does light provide?
2. What things can prevent light from serving its intended purpose?
3. How does God's light affect our lives?

LESSON FOCUS: Take heart! God sent His servant as a light for all people.

Have your students read the story in the student book, then form small groups to discuss the answers to Questions 1, 2, and 3.

For Questions 1 and 2, invite students to discuss the benefits of and obstacles to light and its intended purposes. Light helps us see, complete tasks, or follow a way marked before us. Obstacles in the path of light prevent it from making objects visible. What we cannot see still exists, but our brain doesn't receive vision signals to process information about those objects.

Question 3 brings up an important point, that God's light affects our lives in important ways. It enables us to perceive and experience the world around us. When it shines in the darkness, it allows us to see things as they are.

2 Bible Learning

Examine details of Isaiah's description of God's Servant Messiah.



On the poster hand-out, read the third paragraph, then note the photo of a temple relief of group of Egyptian soldiers and Nubian mercenaries holding axes, bows, and quivers of arrows.

would refuse to acknowledge He has come from God.

- The Servant trusted that God would reward Him for His atoning work even if many rejected Him.
- God called His Servant from the womb by name and gave Him everything He would need.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

The Lord called the Servant, even from the

Called from the Womb

Read Isaiah 49:1-4 and highlight these key points:

- While the New Testament writers revealed the servant in Isaiah 53 is Jesus, the Messiah, the traditional Jewish interpretation of these verses is that Israel is the servant.
- The Messiah calls out to all nations, not only Israel.
- Similarly, God ordained Jesus' ministry of reconciliation and atonement to all.
- Messiah's words would be a sharp sword that revealed the inner hearts of His listeners.
- God hides the Servant in the shadow of His hand.
- The Servant wonders why anyone

BIBLE EXTRA

Quiver

The Servant is described as a polished arrow, as One concealed in a quiver. The quiver was usually a cylinder (with a sewn-on bottom) made out of leather. This weapon accessory was usually suspended from a strap on the shoulder and hidden behind the back. The delivery of arrows from the quiver to the bow could usually be accomplished by a skilled archer in one sweeping movement—which also allowed multiple arrows to be unleashed in rapid succession.

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Called from the Womb

Isaiah 49:1-4, KJV

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

Isaiah 49:1-4, NIV

¹Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

²He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

³He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."

⁴But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

Jews typically interpret Isaiah's Servant Songs (in Isa. 42, 49, 50, and 53) as the servant represents the nation of Israel. However, when the songs are quoted in the New Testament, the writers interpret the Servant as the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who calls to all nations.

The mouth of the Messiah would be like a sharpened sword, delivering teaching that could cut to the core of His listeners' hearts, and reveal their innermost secrets. He is using this sword to appeal to the nations to acknowledge God's sovereignty over them. There is also this hint of hiddenness to the Messiah, in that He represented a mystery to be revealed at a later time. Now, God hides



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 1188-1189 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

womb, providing Him with everything He would need to be successful.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Even though he might face discouragement, the Servant was confident that the Lord would reward Him in the end.

A Light to the Gentiles

Read Isaiah 49:5-7 and then discuss the following important points with your students:

- The Messiah came to bring the people of Israel

back to God.

- God’s Servant would show compassion and bring salvation also to Gentiles all over the world.
- God’s intention was for Messiah to be a light to the Gentiles.
- Jews were to shine God’s light for Gentiles to notice and follow to find God’s kingdom.
- After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter saw a vision showing the Gospel message was for both Jews and Gentiles.
- Paul took the message of God’s kingdom to the Gentiles.
- God’s goal has always been to

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Him in the shadow of His hand, and conceals Him as an arrow in a quiver. The Servant wonders, out loud, about the refusal of someone to acknowledge that He has come from God. Centuries later, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem because the Messiah had remained hidden from them (Luke 19:41-44).

Even so, the Messiah was confident that the Lord would reward Him for His work, even if many rejected it.

4. *Who called and equipped the Servant to His ministry?*

5. *What did the Servant expect from God?*

A Light to the Gentiles

Isaiah 49:5-7, KJV

5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall

Isaiah 49:5-7, NIV

⁵And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—

⁶he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

⁷This is what the LORD says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel— to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation,

BIBLE EXTRA

The Servant Songs

The four Servant Songs of Isaiah describe a messianic figure who will one day deliver Israel from its spiritual enemies. Many Jewish scholars interpret Isaiah’s servant as an anthropomorphism of the nation of Israel. However, this could not be the prophet’s intent because he describes God’s rebellious people as anything but messianic in their behavior. These songs include Isaiah 42:1-9; Isaiah 49:1-13; Isaiah 50:4-11; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

BIBLE EXTRA

Bring Jacob Back

One of the jobs of the Servant was to bring Israel back to serving the Lord (vs. 5). Ancient Middle Eastern kings saw themselves not only as rulers but as benefactors to their people. For example, the Assyrian king Sennacherib called himself “the guardian of the right [and] lover of justice, who lends support, who comes to the aid of the needy, who turns to pious deeds.” Hammurabi, the ancient Babylonian king, saw one of his tasks as “gather[ing] the scattered people of the lands of Sumer and Akad [and] provid[ing] them with pastures and watering places.”

redeem all people through the light of His Servant.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

This was God's redemptive goal from the beginning—that His people would be a light to the nations, a type of spiritual beacon that would draw all people back to God.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

They would eventually see that God's blessing was upon Him, and then they

would acknowledge that He clearly was from God.

The Restoration

Read Isaiah 49:8-13 and highlight these key ideas with your class:

- Jesus, the Messiah, is God's new covenant with His people.
- He will bring the hearts of people back to God.
- God delivers from spiritual darkness, hunger, and thirst those who turn back to Him.
- The Messiah came to compassionately guide those who are like sheep without a shepherd.
- God's Spirit draws Jews and Gentiles from all over the world to Himself.
- Jesus' love and compassion shines forth in a

BIBLE EXTRA

Reaching the Gentiles

Jesus cultivated this idea of reaching the Gentiles in the hearts of His Jewish apostles. In seeing a vision of the unclean animals in a blanket, Peter came to realize that the Gospel was for all nationalities—not just the Jewish few. The apostle Paul, however, was the primary conduit of God's grace to the Gentiles throughout Asia Minor and then eventually into Europe. Even then, Paul's first stop on all of his missionary journeys was at the local synagogues to see if there were any Jews or God-fearing Gentiles who might respond to God's offer of grace and forgiveness through Christ.

BIBLE EXTRA

Aswan or Sinim?

The Servant would rescue oppressed prisoners from every point on the compass, even from "Aswan" (vs. 12, NIV) or "Sinim" (KJV). Aswan is a city located on the east bank of the Nile River about 550 miles south of Cairo. At the time of Isaiah, it was the southern frontier town of Egypt, lying near the border of Egypt and ancient Cush (now Sudan). A Jewish colony existed there as early as the 6th century B.C.

Other scholars believe the word, which is translated as "Sinim" in the Hebrew, is not Aswan but refers to ancient China. Whatever the meaning, the place is symbolic of the distant places from which God will bring back His people to His promised land.

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see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

to the servant of rulers:
"Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

The Messiah's first order of business was to bring the people of Israel back to God. The return from exile would be a symbolic manifestation of God's people turning their hearts to Him, and trusting in His Messiah.

Jesus' outreach to the Gentiles is reflected in the instructions to the Servant. Not only would He restore the heart of Jacob's tribes to God, but He would also extend His hand of compassion and salvation to non-Jews—all over the world—and the rulers of other nations would honor the One who His own people rejected.

6. *Why would the Servant's realm extend beyond Israel to the nations?*

7. *Why would the Servant have credibility in the eyes of the world's leaders?*

The Restoration

Isaiah 49:8-13, KJV

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall

Isaiah 49:8-13, NIV

⁸This is what the LORD says:
"In a time of my favor I will answer you;
in a day of salvation I will help you;
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people,
to restore the land,
and to reassign its desolate inheritances,
⁹saying to the captives, 'Come out,'
to those who are in darkness,
'Be free!'

dark world of empty promises.

- The afflicted find comfort, hope, and healing in the Messiah.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

They would be rescued from spiritual darkness. Rather than symbolically being lost in a desolate land, God would lead them to springs of water and to pastures with food.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

Everyone would sing at finally being rescued by the Servant of the Lord, and the return of their hearts to God.

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feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

¹⁰ They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

¹² Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

¹³ Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

“They shall feed beside the roads on find pasture on every barren hill.

¹⁰ They will neither hunger nor thirst,

nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.

He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.

¹¹ I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up.

¹² See, they will come from afar—some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan.”

¹³ Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.”

In God’s perfect timing, the Lord would not only make a new covenant with His people, but the Messiah Himself would be that covenant. The Messiah’s driving force would be to guide those who are like sheep without a shepherd, who are “in [spiritual] darkness” (vs. 9). This section ends with a celebration for the ways people are returning to God. Drawn by His Spirit, they come from all points of the compass, Jew and non-Jew alike. They are all drawn by the love and compassion of the Messiah. Those who have been afflicted find comfort, hope, and healing in His hands.

8. From what would the Lord rescue His people?

9. What would be the cause for great celebration?

BIBLE EXTRA

Delivered

The return of the exiles from Persia (who had first been captured by Assyria and Babylonia) serves as a metaphor for the return of devotion to God for those who are called by His name. While it was true that those returning from exile would once again enjoy the “milk and honey” of the promised land, they would also be delivered from spiritual darkness, hunger, and thirst.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Servants Who Shared the Light

Scripture introduces us to many people who served God and shared the light of the Gospel with others. Priscilla and Aquila were a Jewish couple who had been ordered by the emperor Claudius to leave Rome. They met Paul in Corinth and invited him to stay with them. During that time, Paul preached to the Jews, who rejected him, and then to the Gentiles (Acts 18:3, 6). Priscilla and Aquila later hosted a church in their home in Ephesus (Acts 18:26; 1 Cor. 16:19), then in their house in Rome (Rom. 16:3).

Priscilla and Aquila stayed strong in their faith and service to God. In this they provide an example for us when we are faced with circumstances beyond our control. They served Paul in his ministry by opening their home to him and worked alongside him to shine the light of the Gospel as they shared the love of Jesus. According to Paul’s letter to those in Rome, Priscilla and Aquila physically risked their lives in some way for the ministry. They also spread the light of the Gospel to the Gentiles as referenced in Paul’s comment, “not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them” (Rom. 16:3-4).

3 Bible Application

Identify what it means to shine God's light in the world.

This lesson step helps students identify characteristics and insights about God's Servant Messiah and make connections between how God brought light into the world through Jesus and how we in turn can help spread this light as His followers. Ask class members to participate in one of these activities. If possible, photocopy this page, cut out the boxes, and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it, and provide them with a concordance, along with different Bible translations (optional).

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Shining the Light" from the student book and respond to **Questions 10, 11, 12, and 13**. As a Servant, Jesus willingly fulfilled God's purpose in His life, to be the Light that shows all people who God is and the way back to God. This light that shines in the darkness is the truth that God loves Jews and Gentiles alike and wants to redeem them and restore them to Himself. Jesus offers love and compassion to those in spiritual darkness, along with His sacrificial gift of salvation and reconciliation to God. God's Word acts as a light by showing us what God is like and the path He wants us to walk. When we share His Word with others, we give them a gift of God's light to dispel the darkness of the world.

God's Servant

Create an acrostic by writing the letters in the word "SERVANT" down a board or sheet of paper. Write words and phrases that begin with each letter to describe Messiah's role as God's Servant or how we can be God's servants to spread His light—for example, S is "sharing," E is "evangelizing," etc.



Handout:

'The Messiah Sent by God'

With your group, read the lesson Scripture passage in more than one translation. Underline, highlight, or copy phrases that sound familiar from your previous Bible reading. Use a concordance as needed to find these ideas in

Scripture. Complete the chart on the handout and share your findings with the class.

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Shining the Light

God sent His Servant as the Light for Jews and Gentiles alike. These verses in Isaiah provide insight on Jesus and His ministry. This additional understanding of Jesus as Messiah encourages us to help spread His light today.

Called from the womb by name, God ordained Jesus to have a ministry of reconciliation and atonement. Messiah's words reveal the inner hearts of people, with the purpose of bringing the people of Israel back to God.

As the Jewish people embraced God and His Servant, they could then fulfill their God-given purpose of bringing light to the Gentiles. God's Servant came not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. He shows compassion and offers salvation to all people, shining the light of God's love into all the corners of the earth. In this way, Jesus is our example, that we also are called by God to show compassion and shine the light of the Gospel for others so they, too, may see the salvation and reconciliation God offers through His Messiah. God's goal has always been to redeem all people through the light of His Servant.

We rejoice and take heart in the gift of God's new covenant with us through Jesus. When we turn to Him, He delivers us from spiritual darkness, hunger, and thirst. Jesus' love and compassion shines forth in a dark world of empty promises, in part through His people. We experience healing and restoration to God through Jesus, and this hope is the light we need to help spread around the world as His followers. In these ways, we partner with God's Servant to serve as a light to all people.

- 10.** *What is the significance of Jesus' role as Servant?*
- 11.** *What was God's purpose in sending His Messiah into the world?*
- 12.** *How would you describe the light of the Gospel?*
- 13.** *How might we serve others with a gift of God's light?*

4 Life Response

Commit to spreading the light of the Gospel to others.

Your class has studied Isaiah’s description of God’s Servant Messiah, who came to bring God’s light into the world. In the previous step, your students identified characteristics of Jesus as God’s Servant and then extended that insight to consider ways we can spread the light of the Gospel to others.

Ask students to read “Take His Light to the World” in *Comprehensive Bible Study*. Encourage them to take the action step and complete the

sample sentences as a commitment to spread God’s light to people.

End the lesson with a closing prayer, something like this: “Thank You, Lord, for sending Jesus as Your Servant Messiah to bring Your light into the world. Thank You for offering us atonement, salvation, and reconciliation through Him. Please show us tangible ways we can show Your light to those around us. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

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Take His Light to the World

This passage in Isaiah portrays a wonderful description of God’s Servant sent to redeem His people. Just as Messiah’s purpose was to bring light into the world, now God’s intention for His followers is to serve as a light to the nations.

- ▶ Reflect on what you have learned in this lesson to complete these sentences:
- ▶ I am encouraged by the truth that _____.
- ▶ Jesus brought light into the world when He _____.
- ▶ One way I can help spread the light of the Gospel to others is by _____.

KEY VERSE

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; —Isaiah 49:8, KJV

This is what the LORD says: “In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances.” —Isaiah 49:8, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of June 13 through June 19

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 75—God Puts Down and Lifts Up.
- Tue.** Leviticus 26:3-13—God Protects a Restored, Holy People.
- Wed.** Luke 6:20-26—Blessings upon God’s People.
- Thu.** Psalm 30—God Has Turned Mourning into Dancing.
- Fri.** James 1:13-18—God Gives Good Gifts.
- Sat.** Deuteronomy 28:9-14—Blessings for Obedience.
- Sun.** Isaiah 49:18-23—Wait for the Lord.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before next week, read Isaiah 49:18-23. Ask your students to think about how they would finish the phrase, “When in doubt....”



Lesson Overview

Week of June 19

1 Life Need:

Note ways God has worked unexpectedly.

2 Bible Learning:

Learn what God planned to accomplish through Israel.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—Isaiah: God Delivers and Restores

3 Bible Application:

Talk about ways to respond to circumstances where the outcome is unknown.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—When You Can't See the Forest

■ Four sheets of newsprint, two sets of marking pens, adhesive tape

4 Life Response:

Trust that God is always at work.

Suggested Material:

■ Index cards, pens or pencils

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Trust that God is working behind the scenes.

Lesson Scripture:

Isaiah 49:18-23

God's Restored People Shall Prosper

Gather—The later chapters in Isaiah aroused a significant difference of opinion among interpreters. In this particular chapter, Isaiah called for several gatherings: first, to see the Babylonian exiles return and rebuild the ruined city of Jerusalem; second, to observe the Gentiles becoming believers; and finally, to take note of the kings and princes honoring and referencing the true God.

Rebuild—The exiles returning from Babylon come home to ruins, a land the Babylonian military had destroyed. But Isaiah offered hope; one day, the city and temple will flourish, and it did. The people eventually rebuilt their communities and the temple. But some scholars believe the author is also referring to the end times because so many are coming to know the true God and a vast multitude of believers is returning to Israel.

Enjoy—Throughout history, God has invited the Gentile nations to enjoy His blessings and be a part of the true religion (Isa. 11:11). The picture is of God's acceptance of the Gentiles and waving a high flag to Israel to come over here and bring your children. God is beckoning to people in distant nations and the Jewish believers alike to come to the true and living God. Together they come, establish friendships, and worship the true God.

Rest—Although this chapter is complicated, Isaiah wants to convey an important message from the Father. When the heavens appear quiet, and the Father God seems inattentive, do not be discouraged. The Father hears all cries. He has stationed an active but unseen army of angels all around. His activities may not always be understood by us, but His invisible hand is always moving with great power, bringing to pass His plans and purposes.

As Your Students Arrive

Write the phrase, "When in doubt, _____" on a board or sheet of newsprint. Ask students how they would complete this. Write their responses on the board or newsprint. Their answers may include "read the directions," "get more information," or "try something else." Then write, "trust or pout," in the blank space. Ask students what the significance of this is. They may note that when in doubt about something that they could put their trust in others or in God to resolve their concerns. But they also may end up sulking or letting feelings of discouragement overwhelm them.

Link to Last Week

Let some of your students share how they saw Jesus' light shining in their world this past week.

1 Life Need

Note ways God has worked unexpectedly.

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God's Restored People Shall Prosper

"I got the house?" asked Erin, looking at her realtor in confusion.

"I'm totally stunned, too," said Barbara. "There were four offers on the house, and ours was the least. The highest bid was \$50,000 more than ours and the lowest offer was \$15,000 more. And the husband and wife were in agreement," Barbara added.

The house was valued at \$250,000, but the Millers were asking \$200,000. The house seemed like a mansion to Erin, who lived in a modest, medium-sized apartment with her two children. After finally completing her bachelor's degree in education, Erin had been working the last four years as a family engagement specialist with a Head Start program. She prayed and dreamed of owning a home.

When Erin began her house hunting venture, she told Barbara that she could afford a \$180,000 home. Her credit was good, and she had been saving on a down payment. When Barbara talked Erin into looking at "another lovely home," Erin fell in love with it, and the Millers seemed to genuinely like Erin.

"The Millers said God told them to sell the house to you. I've never had this happen to me before," Barbara said. "I couldn't have worked a better deal."

"Praise God," Erin said. "I know God loves me, and He is always working on my behalf."

1. What are some examples of God bringing about something good from unexpected, disappointing, or difficult circumstances?

2. What is required as one waits for God to work? Why?

3. What can be a source of encouragement in the meantime?

Read the opening story, then have the class form small groups to discuss their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

Examples for Question 1 include Jesus' horrible crucifixion that brought His resurrection and our eternal salvation; Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery, which put him in a position to help them and others during a famine; personal examples of how students' desire for something was not met but how what subsequently happened was an unexpected blessing.

For Question 2, waiting for God to work requires patience, as what God is accomplishing behind the scenes often takes time to be clearly seen. It requires endurance, as sometimes we may have to put up with something undesirable as we wait for God's plans to unfold. It requires faith that trusting in God is better than giving into feelings of discouragement or giving up hope, and it requires not giving into the temptation to circumvent what God is doing by taking matters into our own hands.

Regarding Question 3, it helps to remember that God is sovereign and that He is in control even when things don't seem that way, that He has a good track record, and that He promises that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28).

LESSON FOCUS: Trust that God is working behind the scenes.

2 Bible Learning

Learn what God planned to accomplish through Israel.



The Israelites were going to be exiled because of their continued rebellion against God. But He reassured them in the midst of some of their worst times that He still had good things in store for them.

On the poster handout, read the fourth paragraph, then point out on the poster the photo of King Jehu of Israel bowing before Assyrian king Shalmaneser III.

An Inconceivable Event

Read Isaiah 49:18-21 and highlight these points:

BIBLE EXTRA

Behind the Scenes

The phrase, “Sometimes you can’t see the forest for the trees,” describes how we sometimes respond to disappointing circumstances. Sometimes we get so caught up in the details of the difficulties we are facing that we don’t see the bigger picture. The bigger picture includes what God is doing behind the scenes to accomplish something good in the midst of unexpected or challenging situations.

God told the Israelites that they had some tough days ahead. They were going to be taken from their land, their cities were going to be destroyed, and they would wonder at times if God had abandoned them. But God reassured them that He still had good things in store for them. They would return to their land. And He was then going to accomplish something through them that was beyond their imagination. Trusting in this would make it easier to weather the years they would be held captive in lands far away from their home.

- The Israelites were going to be sent into exile due to their continued rebellion against God and their worship of idols.
- God promised that they would one day be restored however. This promise had both historical and spiritual relevance.
- The nation would be physically restored following its destruction by the Babylonians as well as by the Romans centuries later.
- Neither of these events fits the description of

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An Inconceivable Event

Isaiah 49:18-21, KJV

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

Isaiah 49:18-21, NIV

¹⁸Lift up your eyes and look around; all your children gather and come to you. As surely as I live,” declares the LORD, “you will wear them all as ornaments; you will put them on, like a bride.

¹⁹“Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste, now you will be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away.

²⁰The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, “This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.”

²¹Then you will say in your heart, “Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where have they come from?”

Today’s passage describes something that was to happen that could be described as nothing short of a



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on p. 1189 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

the land subsequently being filled with so many that it could not hold all those dwelling there.

- This prophecy most likely refers to a future time when Israel realizes the number of spiritual children born to her during her time of bereavement.
- These children may be those who have come to Jesus in fulfillment of God’s promise to bless the entire world through the descendants of Abraham.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

Israel is a wasteland; it is in ruin; it is desolate;

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miracle—the restoration of Israel from both its physical and spiritual ruin.

Isaiah’s prophetic ministry began more than 150 years before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and continued until about 150 years before the beginning of the nation’s restoration. What God said was going to happen from that time forward was humanly impossible. It was just as far-fetched as a widowed (“bereaved”) and infertile (“barren”) woman being found with child (vs. 21). Yet the land would be restored and have multitudes of people.

These promises would have both historical and symbolic fulfillment. The city and its temple were eventually rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah, and others, beginning in 536 B.C., but the land was not filled afterward with so many that the land seemed “too small” to hold them (vs. 20). Since then, millions have returned to Israel, but it still isn’t too small to hold all those who wish to dwell there. Therefore, the “too small” prophecy about the land may refer to a future time, perhaps when many millions have come into a saving relationship with Jesus.

These spiritual children of Israel will embellish the land like jewels adorning a bride. But the barren woman (Israel) will not understand where all these children have “come from” (vs. 21). She thought she was deserted and no longer of value to God. When the final events of this prophecy unfold, she realizes He never abandoned her. God was working behind the scenes to give her a countless number of spiritual offspring.

4. *What is the condition of Israel prior to the fulfillment of this prophecy?*
5. *What takes place in spite of this?*
6. *How does Israel (the “barren woman”) respond to this?*
7. *What are some hints that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled?*

it is not unlike a barren and widowed woman who has no hope of ever having

BIBLE EXTRA

A Bereaved Nation

The period of bereavement verses 20 and 21 refer to was both real and metaphoric. When the foundation of the new temple was laid by those who returned to Israel in 536 B.C., some who had seen the original temple wept knowing perhaps that the second temple would never match the glory of the first (Ezra 3:10-13). Jeremiah prophesied about a time when some in Israel would weep over the loss of their children (Jer. 31:15), a prophecy fulfilled when Herod ordered all male children two years old and under in Bethlehem to be killed following the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:16-18). Jesus wept in response to the unbelief of the people He came to save and His knowledge of the tragedies that lay in their future (Luke 19:41-44). The Jews will someday weep when they finally realize their mistake in rejecting their Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14). The Jews would have cause to weep about many things over the years including the loss of their kingdom, their continued persecution, and separation from those dispersed among the nations.

BIBLE EXTRA

A Bride Adorned

A similar prophecy that compares Israel to a bride adorned with precious jewels is found in Isaiah 54:11-12: “Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.” John described the Holy City of Jerusalem coming from heaven, “prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:2), “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9), whose “brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal” (21:11).

children again, a woman rejected and abandoned by others.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

The barren woman, who represents Israel, bears children in spite of her inability to do so. So many children return to the land that it seems too small for them.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

She is amazed; knowing her past and that she was barren, exiled, rejected,

and incapable of bearing children, she wonders how she could have produced so many. She asks, “Where have they come from?”

Suggested Answer to Question 7

The land of Israel, either in the past or present, has never been so full that it could no longer hold all those who wished to live there. It is more likely that this prophecy refers to a future time, perhaps when Israel knows how many spiritual children she has because of what God accomplished in the land.

A Worldwide Impact

Read Isaiah 49:22-23, then note these key points:

BIBLE EXTRA

The Banner

One picture that comes to mind when thinking about a standard or banner (vs. 22) are the ones each tribe of Israel raised to designate where families were to set up their tents when pausing and camping during their journey to the promised land (Num. 2:2). But the Hebrew word translated standard or banner in this and similar verses is *degel*, a word used to describe a flag signaling a place to gather or meet. The Hebrew word translated standard or banner in verse 22 in today's passage is *nissi*, a word that has a different meaning. It's only other occurrence in Scripture is used to describe the altar Moses built following the Israelites' defeat of the Amalekites, an altar Moses called, “The LORD is my Banner (my *nissi*)” (Exod. 17:15), due to God's intervention on the Israelites' behalf. A similar word derived from the same root, *nes*, is also frequently translated as standard or banner. *Nes* was used for example to describe the pole (or *nes*) a bronze snake was placed on that the Israelites were to look toward to be saved from venomous snakes that God afflicted them with after they complained about the hardship of their journey (Num. 21:4-9).

Jesus referred to this latter passage when He said that He would be lifted up, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness ... that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-15).

Based on this, it seems that the banner or *nissi* God was referring to in Isaiah 49:22 was Jesus.

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A Worldwide Impact

Isaiah 49:22-23, KJV

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Isaiah 49:22-23, NIV

²²This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“See, I will beckon to the nations,
I will lift up my banner to the peoples;
they will bring your sons in their arms
and carry your daughters on their hips.

²³Kings will be your foster fathers,
and their queens your nursing mothers.

They will bow down before you
with their faces to the ground;
they will lick the dust at your feet.

Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who hope in me will not be disappointed.”

God promised Israel that she would one day be honored by others—that kings and queens would eventually bow down before her with “faces to the ground” (vs. 23). Like the promises in the previous verses, this one had both historical and spiritual implications.

When the first group of exiles migrated back to Jerusalem, Cyrus, the Persian king, gave back to them the implements taken by the Babylonians from the temple (Ezra 1:7-11). Then King Darius ordered the local governor to pay for some of the costs of rebuilding the temple (6:3-12), and Artaxerxes provided Nehemiah with protection and letters guaranteeing financial support for rebuilding

- Other nations would play a part in Israel's future. What God accomplished through Israel would in turn affect those nations.
- Israel would become a banner to others. This most likely refers to the redemptive purpose God planned to accomplish in and through the nation.
- Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee would be the areas where the Gospel was first preached and accepted.
- Jews would be the first who believed in the Gospel. They would also be the first evangelists.
- The Israelites will eventually be amazed at what God accomplished through them. This will result in them knowing that the Lord God is truly

Lord of all people of the world.

- As they waited, they needed to have faith that God was at work to bring about something good.
- If they trusted in this, they would not be disappointed.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Other nations would lend a hand in Israel's restoration and historically did so to a certain extent. But someday kings will honor Israel, perhaps by paying homage to the part the nation played in God's plans to redeem the world.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

Israel would become a banner that says, "This is the place to gather." This most likely refers to the ways God was going to work through the nation and its people to bring the Gospel message to others. Others would flock to Israel because of this, not referring to the physical land itself but flocking instead to the message of salvation that originated there.

Suggested Answer to Question 10

They would learn that God is truly Lord of all and that their trust in Him had not been misplaced.

Suggested Answer to Question 11

He wanted them to trust in Him, even during times of barrenness and desolation, knowing that He often works behind the scenes to bring about good in the midst of difficult, disappointing, or unexpected circumstances.

Jerusalem's walls (Neh. 2:7-9). During recent migrations to Israel, many nations have offered support to Jews desiring to return to the land. However, it's also possible that this prophecy is referring to a more distant time, one perhaps when kings will honor the role Israel played in the salvation of the world.

A "banner" (vs. 22) was a flag placed on a pole that signified the place where soldiers were to gather prior to a battle or people were to meet prior to a great event. Israel was to play an important role in God's future plans and others would flock to her when those plans were fulfilled.

This banner does not represent the literal land of Israel, however, but what God intended to accomplish through it. God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through him and his descendants (Gen. 12:3). This promise was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead. Jews were the first believers and the first evangelists. Through the Jews, Jesus and the Gospel message became "a light for the Gentiles" (Isa. 49:6).

God promised the Jews their land would someday be restored. But more importantly, God promised that they would be blessed in a way they could not imagine. Through them, God was going to save the world from its sin. When the Israelites finally understood this, they would realize that God was indeed Lord of all and that He would not "disappoint" (vs. 23) them—their trust in Him had not been misplaced. God was going to work behind the scenes to bring something good out of a bad situation. This was a promise they could count on in the difficult days that lay ahead.

- 8.** *What part would other nations have in Israel's future?*
- 9.** *What part would Israel have in theirs?*
- 10.** *What would the Israelites learn when they saw this?*
- 11.** *How did God want them to respond in anticipation of their restoration?*

3 Bible Application

Talk about ways to respond to circumstances where the outcome is unknown.

You may want to photocopy this page so that each group has its own set of instructions. Give two sheets of newsprint, a set of marking pens, and tape to the groups doing the listings. Also, make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout: 'When You Can't See the Forest'

Read the sheet and respond to the questions.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "What I Thought Was a Problem," in the student book and respond to **Questions 12, 13, and 14**. In the midst of challenging or unexpected circumstances, it's easy to forget that God is working on our behalf even if we don't immediately see the results. What He asks is for us to trust that He is at work behind the scenes and to be patient as we wait for that work to bear fruit.

Not-So-Good and Better Listings

Think about difficult, unexpected, or challenging circumstances that could easily lead to doubts that God is working behind the scenes on your behalf. On a sheet of newsprint, list some not-so-good ways to respond to these. On a second sheet, list some better ways to respond. Discuss in what situations you need to keep this in mind and what is the best way to respond to them.

Reasons and Promises Listings

On a sheet of newsprint, list some reasons we sometimes harbor doubts that God is at work when facing circumstances that are disappointing or unexpected. On a second sheet, list some insights or promises that can be of help as you consider this. Discuss how this can be of help as you respond to situations you currently find challenging.

What I Thought Was a Problem

I remember a time when the conditions at my work place were so bad that I couldn't wait to move on to better surroundings. But no matter how hard I tried, it seemed I couldn't find another job that was a good fit.

What happened then revealed that God had a hand in blocking my path to what I thought were greener pastures. Many of the jobs I applied for that seemed perfect at the time eventually disappeared due to various economic forces. And the management of the company I worked with eventually changed for the better. Years later, I was able to retire with good memories and a substantial pension, something that would not have happened had I decided to move on.

Remembering incidents like that makes it easier to trust that God is at work even when I don't think He is. Yet I still sometimes wonder what He is up to when I don't know what I will find at the end of one of life's tunnels.

Early in the days of the pandemic, I was scrambling to find ways to safely connect with those I ministered to. We were unable to meet in person, and some feared that our group might not survive the restrictions imposed on it. But one year into the pandemic I realized that God was using the crisis to redefine what it meant to connect. Although we could not all be together in the same room, many found ways to meet with video or with distancing. I found that people were actually connecting more frequently than they had in pre-COVID days. They were just doing it differently. What I thought was a problem turned out to be a blessing.

12. *How have you seen God working behind the scenes to bring about something good in difficult or disappointing circumstances?*

13. *What did you learn from this?*

14. *How can this be of help as you respond to unexpected or challenging situations today?*

4 Life Response

Trust that God is always at work.

Trust, don't pout; believe, don't doubt. That's easy to say but often difficult to do when facing challenging circumstances. But God never rests. He is always at work even when we don't immediately see the results. It's therefore better for our sake as well as His to trust in Him rather than to give into our doubts or to sulk when things aren't going our way.

Give each student an index card and a pen or pencil. Read "He Is Lord of All" in the student

book and ask students to write out their responses to the exercise at the end. Then let students return to the groups they formed in Step 1 and encourage them to share their answers with the rest of their group. They may note that they need to avoid giving into doubts and trust that God is at work even when difficult to do so. They may also note that they have to resist taking matters into their own hands when God's answers seem to be delayed. Encourage students to take their cards home as a reminder of what they've learned from today's Scripture.

Close the class in prayer. Thank God that He cares for us and that He never gives up on us. Pray that students will not lose confidence that God is always at work on their behalf even when they don't know what He's up to.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Read Isaiah 51:1-8. Ask your students to think about what contributes to a person being a poor listener.

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He Is Lord of All

God is often at work behind the scenes to bring about something good in even the most challenging of times even though the results may not be easily or quickly seen. He reassures us that He has our best interests in mind and that He is always at work even when we don't know what He's up to. What He asks us to do is to trust in Him. He is after all Lord of all. And He will do what He's promised.

► *Think about an unexpected, difficult, or disappointing circumstance where you need to trust that God is at work behind the scenes to bring about something good. Then write out your response to the following:*

► *I need to respond to this situation by _____ instead of by _____.*

KEY VERSE

And thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me. —Isaiah 49:23c, KJV

"Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed." —Isaiah 49:23c, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of June 20 through June 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 50:4-9—God Will Vindicate God's Servant.
- Tue.** Isaiah 51:9-16—Remember God's Mighty Deeds.
- Wed.** Isaiah 51:17-23—God Defends Israel's Cause.
- Thu.** 2 Corinthians 1:7-14—God Rescues Us from Peril.
- Fri.** 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10—Jesus Rescues Us from Wrath.
- Sat.** Psalm 3—Deliverance Belongs to the Lord.
- Sun.** Isaiah 51:1-8—God's Deliverance Is Coming.



Lesson Overview

Week of June 26

1 Life Need:

Discuss how we sometimes respond when God speaks.

2 Bible Learning:

Learn what message God had for the Israelites.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—Isaiah: God Delivers and Restores

3 Bible Application:

Discern what God may be saying right now.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible Sheet—It Pays to Listen to God
- A sheet of newsprint, marking pens, tape
- Sheets of copy or notebook paper, pens or pencils

4 Life Response:

Always listen to God.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Listen to the Lord! He is righteous and brings deliverance.

Lesson Scripture:

Isaiah 51:1-8

God Offers Deliverance

The Plea—Isaiah makes an impassioned plea for all people to heed the words of God and turn to Him. He recounts the miracles performed by God in days gone by, and he encourages all to surrender their will to the Lord. Today, the followers of Jesus should take great comfort in knowing that the Lord God is always with them and that those who are mocked for their Christian beliefs need not wander from their belief in God, for God will use His believers to help advance His teachings and His Kingdom.

Recall—The Lord asked to be heard as He addressed the remnant who decided to return to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon. The Lord said, “Listen! Recall your history from the time of Abraham and Sarah.” Isaiah reminded them of God’s faithfulness. Abraham grew up in a family of pagans—but God called him out. He allowed his lineage to increase in great numbers. The almighty God can bring a healing balm; He can take a desert place and fill it with His delight. This is what the Lord accomplished in Sarah. Her physical body could no longer produce children, but God performed a miracle. He gave life to a dead place, and she gave birth to Isaac.

Be Encouraged—Factual accounts like Abraham and Sarah should have encouraged the remnant returning from Babylon. The ultimate promise is in the hands of a life-giving God. Isaiah was also sending a message to those living in the future. God will regather His nation and bring them home to Israel, even though it seems like an impossible task. Believers can rest in His saving grace and depend on Him for their deliverance from this evil, corrupt world.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask students to share what contributes to a person being a poor listener. Write their responses on a board or sheet of newsprint. Their answers may include poor hearing, not caring about the topic, getting distracted by other concerns, believing they don’t need to hear what is being said, or fatigue. Then ask what could help someone be a better listener. Their answers could include getting hearing aids, caring about the topic, respecting the speaker, or knowing that what’s being communicated is beneficial.

Link to Last Week

Ask volunteers to share how they responded differently last week to a difficult or disappointing circumstance knowing that God is working to bring something good from it.

1 Life Need

Discuss how we sometimes respond when God speaks.

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God Offers Deliverance

There was the windup, the pitch—and then Cameron was hit right between the eyes!

When Pastor Mitchell began his sermon, Cameron felt like the Lord had custom-tailored a message for him. Cameron had been in a spiritual state of paralysis. He had been visiting Lighthouse Church off and on for the past two months. On his mother's side of the family were a few devout Jehovah's Witnesses. On his dad's side of the family were several members who staunchly held Muslim beliefs. It was after his experience with Simone, a Christian friend in college, that Cameron accepted Christ.

But without any routine Bible teaching, Cameron had begun to mix some Muslim and Jehovah's Witness beliefs with his Christianity.

"You're listening to too many voices," Simone had said.

Cameron did feel like he had found real truth, forgiveness, and salvation in the Lord. Only now, years later, he seemed to be in the wilderness.

"You have to take the first step that God is telling you to," Simone had said.

Coming to church this morning had been Cameron's first step. He looked over at his friend Simone and smiled timidly.

"Is there anyone this morning who would like to join Lighthouse Church?" asked Pastor Mitchell. "Please, listen to the voice of God, and get up and come."

And that is what Cameron did.

1. What are some means through which the Lord speaks to us?

2. What are some ways we sometimes respond to what we hear from Him?

3. What would make us better listeners?

Read the opening story. Then divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss their responses to **Question 1, 2, and 3.**

Regarding Question 1, God speaks to us through His Word. But He also speaks through the written or spoken words of others, through His creative works, and through what we learn from life experiences. God may speak to us quietly in our hearts as well but occasionally may do so through a loud voice that is difficult to ignore.

In answering Question 2, we sometimes listen to God and place our trust in what He's telling us knowing that He is trustworthy and that the outcome of listening to Him will be rewarding. But sometimes we resist placing our trust in what we are hearing from Him, perhaps because we don't actually believe Him, or perhaps because doing so requires giving up something we value.

For Question 3, we would be better listeners if having faith in God was a higher priority than trusting in ourselves or in others, if we were more familiar with how God spoke to others in the past and how He speaks to people today, if we had more understanding of and trust in God's character, or if we were confident that trusting in Him and His Word is always better than not doing so.

LESSON FOCUS: Listen to the Lord! He is righteous and brings deliverance.

2 Bible Learning

Learn what message God had for the Israelites.



The Israelites living in exile would sometimes doubt that they would ever return home. God reassured them that their land would once again flourish and their cities would be rebuilt. He also

promised that a day would come when His righteousness reigned and when their enemies would be devoured.

Finish reading the handout, and on the poster, note the painting of a Jewish bride by Eugene Delacroix.

BIBLE EXTRA

Zion

“Zion” (vs. 3) sometimes refers to the literal city of Jerusalem or portions of it. It is first found in Scripture when David defeated the Jebusites and captured “the fortress of Zion,” a city which subsequently became known as “the City of David” (2 Sam. 5:6-7). It sometimes refers only to the hill upon which Solomon’s temple was built however (Ps. 6; 48:2). And Isaiah used it to refer to the entire nation (Is. 1:27).

The most common usage of “Zion” seems to be in the context of what God was going to accomplish either at this location or through the Israelites themselves. God said that He would “lay a stone in Zion” and that “one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic” (Isa. 28:16), an image Jesus undoubtedly had in mind when He identified Himself as “a stone the builders rejected” (Matt. 21:42). In the end times, God said that Zion will one day be filled with justice (Is. 33:5) and that the children of her oppressors will bow before her (Isa. 60:14). It is also the place where the Lamb will return and stand in the last days (Rev. 14:1).

Your Land Will Be Restored

Read Isaiah 51:1-3 and highlight these important points with your class:

- This passage begins with, “Listen to me,” an urgent call from God to pay close attention to what He has to say.
- Among those who needed to pay attention to God were the Israelites who would end up living in exile and would wonder if God was going to deliver them.

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Your Land Will Be Restored

Isaiah 51:1-3, KJV

1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Isaiah 51:1-3, NIV

¹“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD:

Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn;

²look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many.

³The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.

Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

“Listen to me” (vs. 1) indicates that what follows is an urgent call from God to pay attention to what He has to say. Those who need to listen are those committed to doing what is right in God’s eyes—those who want His righteousness to reign in their lives as well as in the world—but who harbor doubts that God is going to make that happen. It includes the Israelites scattered among the nations by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. as well as those exiled in Babylon in 586 B.C. who would long to return home.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on p. 1190 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

- God promised that their land would be restored and would once again thrive, just like the Garden of Eden; joy and thanksgiving would return to the land.

- If they had any doubts about this, they were to remember Abraham, the rock from which they were cut, and how God fulfilled His promises to him.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

God was addressing those who want to do what is right in His eyes. More specifically, it was those

who would live in exile following the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians and Babylonians and who longed to return home.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

God was promising that their land, though ruined, would be restored, and that it would thrive once again and be just like the Garden of Eden. Joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and singing would return to the land as well.

God reassured both groups that He was going to give them the “comfort” they desired (vs. 3). Their land, though desolate, would once again become like the Garden of Eden; joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and singing would be found in it as well. If they doubted this, they needed to remember the “rock” (vs. 1) from which they were cut—Abraham. He was one man, yet God promised that out of him would come many who could trace their heritage to him. If God could work like this through one man, He would surely do the same for Abraham’s children.

4. *Who was God addressing in this passage?*

5. *What was He promising?*

6. *What did the Israelites need to remember if they had doubts about this?*

My Justice Will Reign

Isaiah 51:4-6, KJV

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish

Isaiah 51:4-6, NIV

⁴“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation:

Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.

⁵My righteousness draws near speedily,

my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.

⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment

BIBLE EXTRA

Listen, Heed, Harken

The Hebrew words translated “listen” or “hear” in the NIV and “hearken” in the KJV suggest a depth of meaning that their English translations don’t clearly reflect. *Shama*, the Hebrew word found in verses 1 and 7, is frequently used in the context of one person reassuring another that something is going to happen in spite of that person’s doubts about it. It was used, for example, when God urged Abraham to listen to Sarah rather than harbor doubts about the future of Ishmael, a son born through Hagar his maid (Gen. 21:12). Moses also used this word when he urged the Israelites to listen to God’s instructions if they wanted to be blessed when they entered the promised land (Deut. 12:28), although the NIV translates *shama* as “obey” in this instance.

Qashab, the Hebrew translated “listen” in verse 4 in the NIV, followed by *azan*, which is translated “hear,” suggests that the speaker (God) is trying to counter resistance to what He is saying and wants his listeners to act differently in response to it. God used *qashab* when He urged Israel to pay close attention to His warning of what would happen if they continued to worship idols (Isa. 42:18). Moses used *azan* when he told the Israelites to be careful to follow God and His commands if they wanted to be protected from the diseases God brought upon the Egyptians (Exod. 15:26).

Suggested Answer to Question 6

They were children of Abraham. This was the rock from which they were cut. Just as God fulfilled His promise that out of Abraham would come many, so would He fulfill His promise that He would restore their land and return them to it.

BIBLE EXTRA

Longing to Be Home

We long for many things in this life—to be loved, to have fulfilling careers, to have financial stability, and to see God working in this world for the right and good. The Israelites longed for some of these things as well, but they also longed for something more—to return home.

God promised the Israelites that their ruined cities would be rebuilt, that their desolate land would flourish, and that joy and singing would once again be heard in it. He also promised a world characterized by righteousness and justice. These weren't going to happen overnight, however.

Waiting for God to fulfill His promises would require patience. It would also require endurance. For those pursuing what is right in God's eyes would experience reproach. They would suffer. But waiting for what happens in the end would be worthwhile because God delivers on His promises.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Servant and the Israelites

God's Servant (Isaiah 50:4-11) listened to the instructions of God (vs. 4), did not rebel or turn away from God's direction (vs. 5), offered His back to those who beat Him, and endured His enemies mocking and spitting (vs. 6). He knew in the end that He would not be disgraced and set His face like flint toward His calling (vs. 7). He had confidence that He would ultimately be vindicated (vs. 8) and that His enemies would be destroyed, just like moths eating a garment (vs. 9).

In their own days of darkness (vs. 10), Israel was to respond to their afflictions like the Servant did to His. Rather than walking by the light of their own torches (vs. 11), they were to trust in the name of the Lord and let Him light their way.

My Justice Will Reign

Read Isaiah 51:4-6, then note these key points:

- The Israelites would not just long for physical deliverance—they would hunger as well for the reign of God's righteousness and justice.
- God promised that both of these events would take place, and that both would occur speedily, at least in His time frame.
- Partial fulfillment of this promise would occur as a result of Jesus' death and resurrection. But final fulfillment will not come until the end times.
- As they waited, they were to remember that His promise of salvation is more viable than the continued existence of the world.

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away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

and its inhabitants die like flies.
But my salvation will last forever,
my righteousness will never fail.

The exiles would not just long for their physical deliverance. They would also hunger for a day when God's righteousness would rule the world. God promised this would happen, beginning again with the call, "Listen to me!"

When God said, "The islands will look to me" (vs. 5), He was most likely referring to the Israelites that would end up living far away—especially the inhabitants of the islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean. What they would be waiting for is for God's justice to reign.

God promised that this would happen speedily, at least in His time frame. But it would not happen completely in the lifetime of those exiled. It would occur in part through Jesus when He and the Gospel became a light to the world (John 8:12).

God said that the salvation He provided would "last forever" and that it would "never fail," unlike the heavens and earth below which would "wear out like a garment" (Isa. 51:6). The viability of His promises was more certain than the continuing existence of the world.

7. *What would the Israelites long for?*

8. *When will what they long for be realized?*

9. *How certain was this?*

Your Enemies Will Be Devoured

Isaiah 51:7-8, KJV

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart

Isaiah 51:7-8, NIV

7 "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken

Suggested Answer to Question 7

They would long for the day when God's righteousness and justice ruled the world.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Although God said that this would happen speedily, it would not happen in the lifetime of those living in exile. The complete fulfillment would be partially fulfilled when Jesus became a light to the nations and through His death and resurrection provided a means to be right with God. The Lord's "salvation" is beyond the limits of time and space. Final fulfillment will not happen until the end of this age.

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is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

my instruction to heart:
Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals
or be terrified by their insults.
8For the moth will eat them up like a garment;
the worm will devour them like wool.
But my righteousness will last forever,
my salvation through all generations."

The final portion of today's passage begins with, "Hear me" (vs. 7), another urgent call by God. Those waiting for God's righteousness to be fully established would experience "reproach" (vs. 7); they would be insulted and terrified. But they were not to "fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults" knowing that God's righteousness, once established, would last "forever" (vs. 8). They were also to recognize the temporary nature of their afflictions. Those who opposed them would eventually be devoured, just like a garment eaten by moths or worms. Some of this would be fulfilled when the Israelites' real-life enemies were defeated by others, but its final fulfillment will not take place until the last days.

When the Israelites were living in exile, they would long to return home. They would also long for a world ruled by God's righteousness. God reassured them that these would take place but it would take time. As the Israelites waited for this to take place, they needed to listen to God and not give into their doubts and fears. He is righteous—and He will deliver.

10. What would the Israelites experience as they waited to be delivered?

11. What was going to happen to their enemies?

12. How did God want His people to respond to this?

Suggested Answer to Question 9

It was more viable than the continued existence of the heavens and earth. Although these could disappear, His salvation would endure and last forever.

Your Enemies Will Be Devoured

Read Isaiah 51:7-8, then highlight the following summary of the text:

- As the Israelites waited for God to deliver them, they would experience reproach. They would be insulted. They would be terrified at times.
- God reassured them that their enemies would eventually be devoured, just like moths or worms eating a garment.
- Their afflictions would also be temporary. In contrast, God's righteousness and salvation would last forever.

Suggested Answer to Question 10

They would experience reproach; they would be insulted; their natural reaction would be to feel terrified.

Suggested Answer to Question 11

Their enemies would eventually be devoured much like what moths and worms do to a garment.

Suggested Answer to Question 12

They were not to be fearful of their enemies or be terrified of their insults knowing that their afflictions were temporary and that God's salvation, once established, would last forever.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Desiring What Is Most Important

Among the things people long for are adequate food, clothing, and shelter. Jesus acknowledged that these are legitimate desires (Matt. 6:25-34). But He also warned that being concerned too much about these can result in needless worry. What's better is to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," knowing that, "all these things will be given to you as well" (vs. 33).

3 Bible Application

Discern what God may be saying right now.

This step will give students an opportunity to discuss ways God may be speaking to them right now and how He wants them to respond. You may want to photocopy this page so that each group has its own set of instructions. Give a sheet of newsprint, a set of marking pens, and tape to the group doing the summary. Give notebook or copy paper and some pens or pencils to the group doing the personal reflections.



Handout:

'It Pays to Listen to God'

Read the handout and respond to the questions.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Are You Talking to Me?" in the student book and discuss your answers to **Questions 13, 14, and 15**. Ignoring what God is telling us often leads to undesirable results. Listening to Him will always prove to be beneficial however. It is therefore best to pay attention to Him and what He has to say. For God is trustworthy, and He will deliver.

Why It Pays to Listen to God

On a board or sheet of newsprint, write the phrase, "It pays to listen to God because ____." Discuss why it's a good idea to listen to God, then discuss in what areas of your life you need to pay more careful attention to what God is telling you and what can happen if you ignore what He is saying.

Personal Reflection

On a sheet of paper, write out some ways you believe God is speaking to you right now. Note areas He may be addressing and some insights or instructions He may be trying to pass along to you. Below this write how you think He wants you to respond. Share what you wrote with the rest of your group.

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Week of June 26 • Page 31

Are You Talking to Me?

"He can't be talking to me?" That's how I often respond to what I hear from the Lord, whether from the mouth of a kind friend, from a pastor, from the words of an inspiring author, or from the Word of God itself. It seems that I'm often resistant to what God is telling me even if I know deep in my heart that He is talking to me.

Once I was going down a path I was convinced was right but I knew God did not think so. I initially resisted His instruction even though others counseled me that way too. However, I was convinced that what I was doing was best and didn't listen to them or to God. It wasn't until I experienced the pain that comes from failure that I realized I was following my own heart and not God's way. It would have been better if I'd listened to Him in the first place.

I remember another time when I harbored doubts that God was going to deliver me from a difficult situation. I thought there was no way out except to grin and bear it. I was miserable and doubted that deliverance would ever come. My circumstances did eventually change for the better, however, and I did end up thanking God when they did. But looking back, I know I caused my family and myself a lot of heartache by failing to trust in God during those challenging days.

What I've learned from these and similar experiences is when what's ahead seems uncertain or I'm encountering difficult times, it pays to listen to God and trust in His promise of deliverance.

13. *What are some ways God has spoken to you in the past? How did you respond?*

14. *Have there been times when you failed to listen to God or trust what He had to say? If so, what was the result?*

15. *What have you learned from this?*

4 Life Response

Always listen to God.

Sometimes all it takes to hear what God has to say are open ears and a willing heart. But sometimes it takes a bit more. Sometimes it requires spending more time in His Word, in listening intently to others, or in setting aside a significant time of quiet so we can hear His voice. Perhaps more important, it requires having a strong commitment to respond affirmatively to what we are hearing from Him.

Read “Listen to God” in the student book,

then encourage your group to listen to God right now and ask how they will respond. Their answers may include following God’s advice or the counsel of others as they respond to difficulties in a relationship, trusting in God’s overall plans for them instead of being anxious about their future, or being patient as they trust in God to deliver them from a challenging situation.

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Listen to God

Some are convinced that God is never silent and that He is always speaking to us in one way or another. If this is true, then God is saying something to you right now. And what He is trying to tell you is important.

It is crucial that we open our minds and hearts so that we can hear what God has to say to us. For who knows what blessing may come our way simply by listening to the Lord and trusting in His righteousness and His promise of deliverance.

► *What is something God may be saying to you right now? How will you respond?*

KEY VERSE

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. —Isaiah 51:1, KJV

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn.” —Isaiah 51:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of June 27 through July 3

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 8:22-31—God Created the World through Wisdom.
- Tue.** Colossians 1:13-17—In Christ All Things Hold Together.
- Wed.** Colossians 1:18-22—Christ, the Head of All Things.
- Thu.** Psalm 104:1-15—God’s Well-Ordered Creation.
- Fri.** Psalm 104:24-35—Praise God for Creation.
- Sat.** Hebrews 1:1-4—The Son Reflects God’s Glory.
- Sun.** John 1:1-14—The Word Became Flesh.

Close the class in a final prayer. Acknowledge how difficult it can be to listen to God or to trust in what He is saying. Pray that students will become better listeners and that they will trust what He has to say.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Next week we’ll begin studying lessons from the Book of John. Read John 1:1-14 and ask students to think about the brightest light they have ever seen.

The Creating Word Becomes Flesh

Lesson Overview

Week of July 3

1 Life Need:

Identify the effects of light on those who experience it.

2 Bible Learning:

Study how Jesus is light and how John the Baptist bore witness to that.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Poster and reproducible handout—John: The Power of the Word

3 Bible Application:

Explore what it means to “bear witness” to Jesus as the Light today.

4 Life Response:

Let Jesus' light shine through your life.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:
Bear witness to the Light of life.

Lesson Scripture:
John 1:1-14

Jesus is the light of the world. Without Him, the entire universe would be lifeless, lost, and utterly dark (Colossian 1:15-17).

The Word—When John penned his Gospel, he did not begin with Jesus in the manger. No, he started before time began. John introduced his Gospel message by identifying Jesus as the “Word.” He declared that Jesus was with God at the very onset of time. When the Jewish people read this reference to Jesus, they knew exactly what John implied. The “Word” (logos) meant God Himself.

Life—The Scriptures specifically identify Jesus as the source of life. John explained the meaning of life in two ways. First, physically, Jesus keeps everything in the world breathing and existing. Second, Jesus is the foundation of all spirituality. When an individual opens his or her heart to Jesus, trusting Him, and understanding His sacrifice on Calvary, that person is given a new life as the foundation of their salvation. Jesus becomes their light, living inside their heart through the person of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Is the True Light—When love, goodness, or any other positive things happen in the world, we remember Jesus is the wellspring of all good and perfect gifts. Sadly, humanity is fallen, sinful, and rejects the Creator. But for those who say they believe in God's message, the Gospel, and His messenger, Jesus Christ, these are the ones the Father gives the right to bear His name. Human beings are born once of an earthly mother. But God offers a second birth, a spiritual birth.

For the Christian, the Lord becomes Father, and He nurtures His children to behave like the Son. This transaction is spiritual. Man cannot work hard enough to get into God's family, nor do enough good deeds. Only by accepting Jesus as Savior can a man enter the kingdom of God. God put flesh on His creative Word, and the Word pitched a tent and lived right alongside humanity, just like the tabernacle traveled with the Hebrew children in the middle of their camp. The Lord's presence in the tabernacle was their floodlight directing them to the promised land.

John paints the same picture of Jesus. He illuminated God's truth for us. He is now the floodlight for Christians to make it to their heavenly home.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask your students to describe the brightest light they have ever seen. Perhaps it was a bolt of lightning that lit up the sky or a sunrise that filled the eastern horizon. Draw students'

attention to how Jesus is described as light: dazzling, outstanding, leading the way, giving joy, giving life. That's why He came.

Link to Last Week

Encourage some of your students to share something they heard God saying to them this past week and how they responded.

1 Life Need

Identify the effects of light on those who experience it.

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Lesson 5 • July 3 • Page 33

The Creating Word Becomes Flesh

It was a bittersweet day for Kanita. It was her last day at the events and marketing firm. She was headed home to Oklahoma City to take care of her mom, whose health was failing.

Kanita had worked at the Chicago company for more than five years and was one of the few, if any, Christians on staff. The company had afforded her opportunities to be creative and grow professionally. The staff was also welcoming and friendly.

It had been a place where Kanita had shared her Christian principles and perspectives as a matter of response and clarification. She was never rude or overbearing, but she did engage her coworkers when appropriate. Several times she had been sought out by coworkers, who were in the midst of personal conflict and despair. While she was not widely popular or in demand for social hour, Kanita was respected among her coworkers for being "kind, honest and genuine."

"I hate to see you leave, Kanita," her executive director said, taking a seat in the empty chair across from her desk. "You have been a great worker, and you are a good person. When you leave, it's like a light will be going out in this office."

"It doesn't have to," Kanita said, turning around. "Christ is available for anyone. All you or anyone has to do is to reach out to Him."

1. In what ways can a bright light be helpful?
2. What feelings do people generally have when the dark of early morning fades and the sun begins to rise?
3. What are the effects of knowing Christ for those who continually move toward the light that Christ is and provides?

LESSON FOCUS: Bear witness to the Light of life.

Begin your lesson reading the opening anecdote, then forming small groups to answer **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

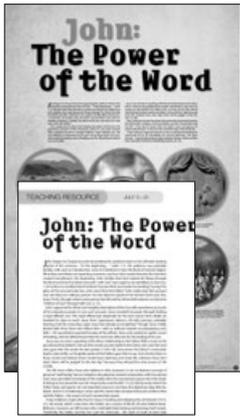
For Question 1, bright lights can, for example, help us see a path in the dark, find something lost in a dark corner, light a highway for us to drive on at night, and protect our property at night.

Question 2 allows students to see the idea of light as a hopeful, joyful event—night turning into day, darkness dispelled so everything can be seen. Knowing Jesus can daily create that hopeful, joyful anticipation of the day just as the sunrise can. We have a guide in Jesus.

That leads to Question 3, in which students consider the positive changes in feelings, intentions, and behavior that can occur as we live as friends with Jesus here on Earth. You might emphasize how light helps us see things as they really are and respond well when we have previously been in darkness and uncertainty.

2 Bible Learning

Study how Jesus is light and how John the Baptist bore witness to that.



Before you teach this step, put up the poster from the Resource Kit, “John: The Power of the Word,” and make copies of the handout that goes with it. You will be using these for the next four lessons. On the handout, read the first two

paragraphs, then note on the poster the photos of the tabernacle reconstruction in the Israeli desert and a first-century oil lamp.

BIBLE EXTRA

A Tale of Two Johns

The apostle John and John the Baptist likely knew each other before they knew Jesus. After Jesus’ baptism, “The next day John [the Baptist] was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus” (John 1:35-37). One of those disciples was Andrew, Peter’s brother. As Andrew and Peter worked closely with the sons of Zebedee, John and James, it is believed that the other disciple is John himself, writing in the third person as he often did (see, for example, John 13:23; 19:26).

From here, the two Johns’ storylines diverge dramatically. As one who proclaimed Jesus as Messiah prior to his beheading (Mark 6:21-29), John the Baptist could arguably be considered the first Christian martyr. The apostle John, on the other hand, would be the only one of Jesus’ disciples to die a natural death, albeit after much persecution, and would help guide the church at Ephesus later in life.

The Word, and the Witness

Read John 1:1-9 and highlight these key points:

- The apostle John began his Gospel by saying Jesus, the Word, was present with God in the beginning.
- John specifically stated that Jesus was not only with God, but Jesus is God.
- In fact, everything in the universe was created through Jesus as co-creator with God.
- Jesus’ life serves as an unquenchable shining

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The Word, and the Witness

John 1:1-9, KJV

- ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- ²The same was in the beginning with God.
- ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- ⁵And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- ⁷The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
- ⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
- ⁹That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 1:1-9, NIV

- ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- ⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

To begin his Gospel, John went all the way back, to the time of creation. And “in the beginning” (vss. 1-2; see also Gen. 1:1), Jesus, the Word, was already there. He “was with God, and . . . was God. . . . Through him all things were made” (vss. 1, 3). While John spent much of his Gospel detailing the fullness of Jesus’ humanity, he began with an even more important fact: Jesus was, and is, fully God, with authority over all things. And while John’s usage of “the Word” (*logos*) to describe Jesus was unique



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 228-229 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

light to those who receive Him.

• John the Baptist pointed the way to Jesus as the true light of the world.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

John began his Gospel like Genesis 1: “In the beginning,” at the time of creation. Jesus, the Word, was already there in the beginning. He “was with God, and . . . was God. . . . Through him all things were made” (vss. 1, 3). John declared that Jesus was, and is, fully God, and that He had authority over all things.

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to the Gospels, it was a term his readers would have easily recognized. The Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures, which existed in Jesus’ time, used *logos* to represent the divine word.

John spoke of Jesus’ character and purpose: “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (vs. 4). As one both present at and intimately involved with creation, Jesus is the source of both physical and spiritual life. And this light/life is eternal and all-encompassing: it “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

It is also interesting to note that the King James, among others, translates “overcome” as “comprehended.” Jesus’ ways are higher than man’s ways (Isa. 55:9)—let alone Satan’s. Those who do not know Jesus and remain in darkness “cannot understand [those ways] because they are discerned only through the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Verse 6 then introduced another man that God sent—Jesus’ earthly cousin, John the Baptist. It is likely that he introduced the apostle John to Jesus. John the Baptist “came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe” (vs. 7). And yet, as great a figure as the Baptist was, he “was not the light” but rather was just “a witness to the light” (vs. 8). As he would later say about himself, “He [Jesus] must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

The Baptist would have his own ministry of repentance and baptism, but even more important was his witness to the fact that “[Jesus] the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world” (vs. 9).

4. How did John describe Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel?

5. How did John describe Jesus’ character and purpose?

6. Who else did John introduce in this passage? What did he say about him?

Suggested Answer to Question 5

In Jesus, we find “life” because His “life was the light of all mankind” (vs. 4). As one both present at and intimately involved with creation, Jesus was, and is, the source of all physical and spiritual

BIBLE EXTRA

The Word Has Come

The Gospel of John was likely the last of the Gospels written (probably between A.D. 85–95), and John had the benefit of being a firsthand witness to the events he wrote about. As one of Jesus’ disciples, John beheld “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched . . . concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1, written around the same time as John’s Gospel).

In presenting Jesus as “the Word” (John 1:1, *logos*), John not only appealed to his Greek-speaking readers, who were throughout the Roman Empire by this time, but hearkened back to the Jewish Scriptures themselves. From the beginning of his Gospel, John made it clear that the divine Word—this creative and explanatory force who upholds the world, this fully human and fully spiritual Being—lived and walked among us.

To the Greeks, *logos* was a philosophical term that referred to reason and explanation—specifically, to the reason and explanation that upheld the material world. Hellenized Jews (Jews who had learned the Greek language and adopted parts of the Greek culture) would have used this term to refer to the divine Word of the Lord.

In addition, the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures—which existed in Jesus’ and John’s time—used *logos* to represent the divine Word, including in Psalm 33:6: “By the word (*logos*) of the LORD the heavens were made.” Thus, John was not inventing a new term—he was simultaneously using a common term and directing his readers to its true meaning, as he described the eternal and omnipotent Lord and Savior.

life. This light/life “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (vs. 5). Jesus came not only to save people, but to conquer the darkness enslaving them.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

John introduced another man that God sent—John the Baptist. The Baptist was a witness to Jesus and His light “so that through him all might believe” (vs. 7). Yet, as influential a figure as the Baptist was, he “was not the light” but rather just “a witness to the light” (vs. 8)—Jesus—who now “was coming into the world” (vs. 9).

Rejected and Received

Read John 1:10-14 and present these key ideas:

- Even though Jesus made everything that was made in the universe, people of the world and even His own people

BIBLE EXTRA

‘Born of God’

In one of the Bible’s most famous passages, Jesus explained further what it meant to be “born of God.” During a nighttime encounter with the Pharisee Nicodemus, who recognized that Jesus “ha[d] come from God” (John 3:2) but still struggled to believe, Jesus clarified: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (vss. 6-8).

After His death, Jesus Himself sent that Spirit (John 15:26) to give all believers His life: “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” (John 3:16).

As he later defended Jesus before the Pharisees (John 7:50-51), then helped bury Him (John 19:39), we can assume with some confidence that Nicodemus, too, was finally “born of God.”

didn’t want to recognize that He was God.

- Jesus empowered those who trusted that He was who He said He was to become children of God.

- Jesus became human, yet full of grace and truth.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

Even though “the world was made through [Jesus], the world did not recognize him” (1:10). The darkness John mentioned in verse 5 had so blinded the world that even when Jesus had come to Earth, He still was not recognized as the Messiah, let alone as God. As John sadly remarked, “He came to that which was his own [the people

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Rejected and Received

John 1:10-14, KJV

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:10-14, NIV

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Continuing his introduction, John now presented a 30,000 foot view of Jesus’ ministry on Earth. Even though He had come to Earth—and in fact made the world—“the world did not recognize him” (vs. 10). The darkness of verse 5 had so blinded the world that even when Jesus came to Earth, He still was not recognized as the promised Messiah, let alone as God—even by those who had been given the fullness of God’s Word (i.e., the Old Testament) up to that time. Thus, John remarked sadly, “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (vs. 11).

Yet there was, even in John’s time, a small but rapidly growing remnant who did recognize and receive Jesus,

of Israel], but his own did not receive him” (vs. 11).

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Jesus gave everyone who received Him and believed in His name “the right to become children of God” (vs. 12). John clarified that these children of God were “not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (vs. 13). Salvation came from God, through Jesus, not by human effort.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (vs. 14). Jesus had come in the flesh, and later sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in all who

received Him. As one who personally saw and experienced all of this, John triumphantly proclaimed, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (vs. 14).

and “to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (vs. 12). John then clarified what constituted a child of God: he or she was “born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (vs. 13). Salvation came from God, not from human effort; it required a belief that only God Himself could produce. Later in his Gospel, John would detail a conversation where Jesus further explained what it meant to be born of God, or “born again” (John 3:1-21).

John then summarized Jesus’ earthly ministry, from the perspective of one who did, like John, receive Him: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (vs. 14). This was a critical statement at this time in the history of the early church, as there were already those who insisted that Jesus had *only appeared* to have come in the flesh. As one who walked alongside Jesus for roughly three years, communed with Him after His resurrection, and would once more encounter Him as risen King as described in the Book of Revelation, John was eminently qualified to proclaim, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

7. How did John describe the response to Jesus when He came to Earth?



A bedouin tent in the Syrian desert. John said that Jesus came and “made his dwelling [pitched his tent] among us” (John 1:14).

Photo: yeowatzup

8. How did John describe those who did believe in Jesus?

9. How did John summarize Jesus’ ministry, and his own experience of it?

WINDOW ON THE WORD

The Light

The word “light” appears six times in today’s passage, most notably that Jesus is the “true light that gives light to everyone” (vs. 9). Although the image and idea of Jesus as light is beautiful, what might that really mean?

Dallas Willard in his Fuller Seminary class often said that in Scripture the word “light” usually represents love, truth, power, or a combination thereof. Think of a favorite Scripture verse with the word “light” in it such as “The LORD is my light and my salvation” (Ps. 27:1). The Lord is love, is truth, is power.

Light as love: Agape love is about doing what is the very best for someone to benefit them. The Lord is the source and provider of such love for people. Hatred and even indifference create darkness in life.

Light as truth: Truth provides light in helping us grasp the reality about who Christ is—one with God. God’s light helps us see the reality of God’s purposes in the universe and so to find meaning in life. God’s light helps us face the reality of others’ wrongdoing yet still love them (want and do what is best for them). Not knowing what is true leaves us in the dark.

Light as power: Light energy (or solar power) keeps things moving! God as light empowers the running of the universe; He empowers us to become disciples who love Him, become like Him, and bless others. Without God’s powerful light, we are left in the darkness of our own making.

3 Bible Application

Explore what it means to “bear witness” to Jesus as the Light today.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read “Bearing Witness Here and Now” and respond to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. If they need prodding, be ready to tell about a positive experience you’ve had of listening to someone talk about their experience of Jesus or life in Christ.

Storytelling

Think of someone who has “borne witness” to you that Jesus is the light, and they did so in a winsome, attractive way (full of both grace and truth). This may be someone who talked to you about Jesus or someone whose life changed either slowly or dramatically and you were impressed by that. What they said may not have been more than a sentence or two.

Take turns sharing these stories. Be sure to include the manner and attitude of the person who “bore witness.” Describe also your feelings about this person’s manner and attitude.

After everyone speaks who wishes to, notice the similarities and differences in your experiences. Comment on what this means for how Christians “bear witness.”

Peter’s Monologue

As a group, put together an informal monologue the apostle Peter might have improvised for telling people around a campfire about his experiences with Jesus. Have Peter emphasize Jesus as “light” in his life, but keep Peter true to life—not too perfect. Be sure to include experiences that Peter may have found funny or puzzling (such as John 18:10-11). Select a group member (or a tag team of three) to present the monologue to the class. If you wish, the rest of the group may ask questions of Peter’s experiences.

This step will help your students think more concretely about what it means to “bear witness” to the light that is Christ. You can help them do this by first reading together the paragraphs under each heading, then have students choose which of the activities they would like to participate in.

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Bearing Witness Here and Now

Courtroom dramas have attorneys, a judge, a jury, and witnesses. A witness has only one function: he or she simply tells what they have seen and heard. Such observations can change minds. They can determine the course of the defendant’s life.

Just as John the Baptist gave a witness to the “light” (vs. 8), people telling their story about their experience with Christ is a powerful witness to the light of Christ. They say what they have read, seen, heard, and experienced in Christ. They don’t try to coerce or convince or “win” in any way. In such simplicity and innocence, we are much like the once-blind man who unwittingly thwarted the religious leaders because his testimony was so uncomplicated: He insisted he didn’t know anything about their politics or their theology. “One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25).

Bearing witness of the light, then, is a version of storytelling, which can be very influential in listeners’ lives. In a way, John was called to tell the story of Jesus.

Bearing witness can also occur when people demonstrate in their lives what they have seen and heard in Jesus. That may be by their winsome generosity or inexplicable peacefulness in the midst of chaos or their willingness to speak the truth with love and gentleness instead of disdain and harshness. In other words, they reflect the light of grace and truth. Any of this, of course, is led and empowered by Jesus who is the light of the world.

10. *Who have you heard talk about their experience with Jesus and you found it helpful? (Change the name of the person if you wish.)*

11. *When you hear such stories, what most impresses you about what is said or how it is said?*

12. *What is best to avoid in order to let Jesus shine as the true light, full of grace and truth?*

4 Life Response

Let Jesus' light shine through your life.

Your class has studied light and how Jesus truly is light in people's lives. Ask your class to read "How the Light Has Shone on You" in the student book, answer the question there, and pray about their response. If any of your students seem discouraged that little progress seems to have occurred, encourage them to focus on asking Jesus for help in noticing some progress, and also to ask for help in taking a next small step. Regret doesn't lead to transformation, but hope does. Above all,

God as light is the source of power. We're never on our own.

Close in prayer, asking God to show your students how much His light has infused their lives, perhaps without their notice. Express joy and gratitude that Jesus loves to bring light into our world and into our personal lives.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read John 4:46-54. Prepare your students by asking them this week to think about how Jesus shows us His glory when we believe in Him.

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How the Light Has Shone on You

Jesus as the True Light eagerly comes alongside us to change us on the inside, resulting in outward behavior that is a step closer to being full of grace and truth. He helps us become more patient, more straightforward, more aware of others. The capacity to bear witness and to be a witness of Christ's light of grace and truth progresses slowly—that seems to be the reality. But with God's help, we move closer to being a person exemplifying His grace and truth!

► *How has God moved you closer to being a person who lives in and shows grace—God acting through you in ways you cannot act yourself? Ask God to help this overflow from you to bear witness to others of the light of Christ in a natural, yet supernatural way.*

KEY VERSE

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. —John 1:3, KJV

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. —John 1:3, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 4 through July 10

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** John 2:1-11—Jesus Reveals His Glory.
- Tue.** Psalm 6—O Lord, Heal Me!
- Wed.** Matthew 8:5-13—Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant.
- Thu.** John 5:1-9—Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man.
- Fri.** John 9:1-7—Jesus Heals a Blind Man.
- Sat.** Psalm 41—God Heals Their infirmities.
- Sun.** John 4:46-54—Jesus Heals a Royal Official's Son.



Lesson Overview

Week of July 10

1 Life Need:

Identify areas of life where the results seem to be unknown.

2 Bible Learning:

Observe the royal official's journey toward believing without seeing evidence.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Poster and reproducible handout—John: The Power of the Word

3 Bible Application:

Identify biblical truths to trust God about.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible sheet—Truths to Trust

4 Life Response:

Thank God for promises and ask for help to trust Him more.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:
Can you believe without seeing?

Lesson Scripture:
John 4:46-54

The Word Heals

F **faith for Healing**—On this one occasion, Jesus tested a father's faith, a nobleman, with a terminally ill son. The father had to put his confidence in Jesus' words alone without seeing the results unfold in front of him. The nobleman must have seen or heard about Jesus and His supernatural acts. No doubt the family had consulted physicians in their area concerning the son's illness. The father was desperate and made a 15-20 mile journey from the north shore of the Sea of Galilee to Cana to find Jesus. The father requested his son's healing, but Jesus didn't answer him right away. Instead, the Master responded by rebuking the father and the crowd around Him, charging them with following Him because of the signs and wonders He was doing. Jesus knew this father had not come for a spiritual conversion but a miracle for his son.

Healed—The nobleman continued to plead for the life of his son. Jesus told the father to go home. His son was healed. The nobleman placed his confidence in Jesus' words and passed the faith test. He headed home believing he'd embrace a healed son once he reached his front door.

Before the nobleman reached his house, a servant met him and reported his son was healed. When the father asked what time it happened, he discovered it was the same hour Jesus said his son would live. This miracle caused the nobleman and his entire household to place their faith in Christ. This is a perfect illustration of John's purpose in writing this Gospel: "These [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Faith for Salvation—The question for those today who have not witnessed divine acts is this: "Will you still trust Christ for your salvation, convinced He is from God, the Messiah, without seeing signs and wonders? Will you bow in humility before the Master without God rescuing you from a crisis or answering a gigantic prayer request?" Jesus desires worship because He is Lord, not because He grants our every wish and whim.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class, write the following unfinished sentences on a board:

Seeing is believing only when _____

Seeing is believing but not when _____

Engage the earlier arrivers in finishing the sentence of their choice. At first, they may pick commonplace events of life.

Thank them for all of their suggestions. Suggest they finish the sentences in regard to how they relate to God in their real life. Tie this into this week's lesson by saying that Jesus brings up this idea when asked to heal a young man in today's passage.

Link to Last Week

Ask some students how they lived in and showed grace this past week.

1 Life Need

Identify areas of life where the results seem to be unknown.

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Lesson 6 • July 10 • Page 40

The Word Heals

Maurice turned around from the full-length mirror when he heard the low whistle. It was his younger sister, Karen.

"Hey handsome, where are you going?"

"I have the graphic arts designer job interview today," smiled Maurice, turning back to finger the knot of his tie.

"Really?" said Karen, easing down in the oversized chair in his bedroom.

Maurice had learned of the position at the local community college from a job app. Maurice had recently completed his bachelor's in marketing and had done graphic arts work in the athletic department of his alma mater as a student intern. His initial response was feelings of inadequacy. Maurice received encouragement from friends and the Word of God. People wouldn't know it to look at the 6' 2" tall man, but he had long wrestled with feelings of shortcomings. It was an issue he had been praying about and working through.

While Maurice questioned it, he had hoped that he could be made whole in his emotions. It was one of his mentors, Winston, who had helped him grab hold of his reality in Christ Jesus.

"You are whole," Winston had said. "It's part of the work that Christ finished on the Cross. Whether you feel it or not, the Lord has made you whole in Him. All you have to do is to walk in it ... by faith."

1. *In what life circumstances is it important to believe that good things will occur in the future even when you don't see that immediately?*

2. *How easy or difficult is to believe in a God you can't see?*

3. *How easy or difficult is it to trust God when you ask Him to answer your prayer or forgive you of your sins?*

Begin your class by reading the opening anecdote and then having the students form small groups to consider their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, encourage students to start with simple real-life situations so they can move into those feelings of doubt and trust. For example, they could say when you start making gravy, when you start exercising, or when you start remodeling your kitchen you expect good things to happen. Would they believe good things would happen if they began a new volunteer position at church, or asked God to guide them through a difficult problem?

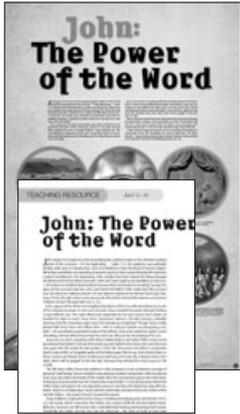
Question 2 nudges them to think about a God they can't see. Even though they can't see Him, they might believe in Him because of circumstances they have seen or prayers that were answered.

Question 3 will take them a step further in thinking about these issues. They could be distrustful of God's forgiveness because they haven't forgiven themselves, or they may easily trust in Him because of all they believe He has done for them. Belief comes with trust.

LESSON FOCUS: Can you believe without seeing?

2 Bible Learning

Observe the royal official's journey toward believing without seeing any evidence.



On the poster hand-out, read the third paragraph, then point out on the poster the photo of a relief of a Roman official.

The Savior's Response to a Royal Official

Read John 4:46-50 and note these highlights in summarizing the

Scripture:

- As Jesus approached the town of Cana of Galilee (where He had transformed water into wine at a wedding), a royal official begged Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son, who was deathly ill with a fever.
- Jesus remarked that the people there seemed to believe in Him only if they saw signs and wonders.
- When the royal official repeated his plea, Jesus didn't go with him, but He said the man's son would live.
- The royal official believed what Jesus said and started toward home.

BIBLE EXTRA

Capernaum, Jesus' Galilean Headquarters

"Capernaum" (John 4:46) was the hometown of some of Jesus' disciples. It also served as the Savior's headquarters during a substantial portion of His public ministry.

Capernaum was a fishing village built on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum hosted a Roman garrison that maintained peace in the region. Major highways crisscrossed at Capernaum, making it militarily strategic. Because of its fishing and trading industries, the city was something of a melting pot of Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

Jesus met an unnamed "nobleman" (John 4:46, KJV). This administrative official's young son had fallen ill at their home in Capernaum. Up until this point, the child's health had not improved, but deteriorated.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Upon hearing the news of Jesus' arrival, the father did not waste any time. He traveled about

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The Savior's Response to a Royal Official

John 4:46-50, KJV

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

John 4:46-50, NIV

⁴⁶Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

⁴⁸"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

⁴⁹The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

⁵⁰"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

John 4:46 briefly mentions the episode recorded in 2:1-11, where Jesus miraculously changed water into wine at Cana in Galilee. Prior to Jesus returning to the town of Cana in Galilee, He spent several days in Samaria (John 4:1-42). Once He reentered Galilee, the residents welcomed Him. It did not take long for the news of His presence to reach Capernaum and an unnamed "nobleman" (KJV). He might have been a government administrator who served in the court of Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39 (Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14, 22). It's



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 242-243 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

20 miles to Cana to implore Jesus to come with him back to Capernaum and heal his young son, “who was close to death” (vs. 47).

Suggested Answer to Question 6

At first, Jesus gave a blunt response, directed to the Galileans in general (“you people” is plural), not just to the official. Jesus noted that the Galileans were demanding Him to perform miracles. Unless He did so, there was a tendency for them to remain unbelieving (John 4:48).

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uncertain whether the official was a Jew or a Gentile and whether he was a soldier.

Nonetheless, it is clear that his young “son” (John 4:46) was bedridden with a life-threatening sickness in their home at Capernaum. The official, upon learning about Jesus’ presence, promptly went to Him and began repeatedly imploring Jesus to travel back to Capernaum and heal the father’s child, who was about to die (vs. 47).

Jesus responded that “you people” (vs. 48), all the residents in Galilee, demanded He do miracles for them, not just the official. Possibly, the official’s plea was similar to the demands other Galileans made on Jesus to perform “signs and wonders” (vs. 48). Sadly, Jesus perceived that, in general, the Galileans’ acceptance of Jesus was preconditioned on what spectacular deeds He carried out as a wonder-worker to improve their lot in life (see 2:23-25).

The administrator was neither put off nor deterred by Jesus’ blunt statement. Instead, he respectfully addressed Jesus as “Sir” (literally, “Lord,” 4:49). Then, in a genuine display of faith, the official once more pleaded with Jesus to travel to Capernaum before the boy succumbed to his illness. The underlying assumption is that Jesus needed to be in the child’s physical presence for him to be healed.

Perhaps after a momentary pause, Jesus told the official to leave at once. Then, before the distraught father had a chance to respond, Jesus declared that the young child would “live” (vs. 50, NIV). In turn, the official “believed” (KJV) the powerful declaration he heard and promptly returned with his entourage to his home in Capernaum.

4. *What situation did Jesus encounter upon His arrival in Cana?*

5. *How did the father respond when he learned about Jesus’ presence in Galilee?*

6. *What was Jesus’ initial response to the official’s request?*

7. *In what way did the official display persistence?*

Suggested Answer to Question 7

The official was neither put off nor deterred by the direct manner in which Jesus responded. The father displayed persistence by addressing Jesus as “Sir.” Then, once more, the official implored Jesus to heal his critically ill child.

BIBLE EXTRA

The First People Who Met Jesus

The Evangelist’s purpose in writing the fourth Gospel was to elicit his readers’ trust in the risen Lord (20:30-31). To achieve this outcome, the Evangelist selected several distinctly different individuals to testify to Jesus as the Messiah. First, John the Baptizer (chap. 1) was introduced, and second, Nicodemus was spotlighted (chap. 3).

The third person presented was a woman from Samaria, whom Jesus met at Jacob’s well (4:1-42). That encounter, which precedes the episode recounted in this week’s lesson, would have raised eyebrows in Jesus’ time because no respectable rabbi ever conversed with a woman in public. Also, no religious leader would ever have allowed himself to associate with a Samaritan. Moreover, no self-respecting Jewish male would have consciously permitted himself to be anywhere near a woman of questionable morals.

Jesus recognized that the Samaritan woman coming to draw water at noon was shunned by the other housewives in the nearby village due to her lifestyle. Jesus, because of growing up in a middle eastern town, knew that local women formed a tight-knit sisterhood and always came for water in the cool of the early morning and evening to visit each other.

Despite the above, Jesus deliberately chose to reveal to a disreputable person that He was the promised Messiah. Jesus used the metaphor of water to assure the Samaritan woman that, through faith in the Messiah, she could have her eternal thirst quenched. The woman’s response was to rush back to the village and invite everyone she could find to meet Jesus, who alone could satisfy their deepest spiritual needs.

The Royal Official's Belief in the Son

Read John 4:51-54 and briefly summarize with these points:

- Before the official arrived home, his servants met him to say that his boy

BIBLE EXTRA

Jesus Turning Water into Wine

John 4:46 briefly mentions the episode recorded in 2:1-11 where Jesus turned water into wine at Cana in Galilee. The incident should be understood in terms of what the Old Testament said about the coming Redeemer. In the messianic age, the Lord would host a great feast complete with the best food and overflowing wine, symbolizing boundless joy (Isa. 25:6; Joel 2:19, 24; 3:18; Amos 9:13-15). Wine, however, could also symbolize suffering, since its color suggested blood, and drinking its dregs was a sign of punishment (Pss. 60:3; 75:8; Jer. 25:15-16). Jesus symbolically linked wine with His blood at the Last Supper, which He celebrated when His hour had indeed come (John 2:4; 13:1; 18:11).

BIBLE EXTRA

The Concept of Belief in the Fourth Gospel

The concept of belief dominates the fourth Gospel (compare 4:48 and 53). In fact, it contains the New Testament's most probing treatment of the experience of faith. A range of meanings and nuances are implied, from mere assent to complete dependence. Moreover, these form the biblical basis for acquiring eternal life, knowing the truth, receiving the Son, obeying His teachings, encountering the Father, and averting judgment.

It would be incorrect to assume that the concept of faith, as found in the fourth Gospel, is static or passive. Instead, saving faith is dynamic and active. Moreover, God's Spirit empowers this vibrant belief to appropriate the object of faith, namely, the Redeemer. Likewise, this kind of faith is much more than a mental comprehension of what one believes. Biblical faith makes a whole-hearted commitment to the divine, incarnate Son of God.

was indeed living.

- When the official asked about the time the boy revived, he saw that it was when Jesus said he would live.

- As a result, the official and his entire household believed in Jesus.

- This healing was the second sign or miracle Jesus performed in Galilee.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Prior to meeting his "servants" (John 4:51), the administrator likely felt despondent over the prospect of his son dying. Yet, then, when he met up with an entourage of his subordinates, they greeted him with the "news" that his son was going to

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The Royal Official's Belief in the Son

John 4:51-54, KJV

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

John 4:51-54, NIV

⁵¹While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵²When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

⁵³Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

⁵⁴This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

"Going down" (vs. 51, KJV) reflects the fact that Capernaum was lower in elevation than the hilly plateau of Cana. Most likely, the approximately 20-mile trip would have taken longer than a day to make, traveling east through the hills of Galilee and then descending to the Sea of Galilee (which is nearly 700 feet below sea level).

Perhaps the official, having received Jesus' statement by faith, headed as quickly as possible with his subordinates to Capernaum. Yet, before the administrator could arrive at his home, some of his "servants" intercepted him and told the official that his son was going to live. The child's intense "fever" (vs. 52) had broken and he was now recovering. When the father asked when his little boy suddenly began to feel better, the servants reported that the "exact time" (vs. 53, NIV) was one o'clock in the "afternoon"

live. Undoubtedly, this wonderful turn of events filled the father with joy and gratitude.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

First, the administrator questioned his servants when his son's "fever" (John 4:52) broke. Second, based on this information, the father recalled the precise moment when Jesus had declared that the child would "live" (vs. 53). Third, both the official and his entire "household" put their faith in the Messiah.

(literally, "at the seventh hour" from dawn) of the preceding day.

The servants' response triggered the official's memory—he quickly deduced that the moment when his child's condition began to improve matched the time when Jesus asserted that the boy would "live." There was not a second to waste as the administrator hurried back to his home in Capernaum to reunite with his son and the rest of his "household" (vs. 53).

Once everyone was assembled (perhaps in a spacious courtyard of the home), the relieved father would have told them about Jesus, the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth and the miraculous way in which the beloved little boy was healed with a word—not even a touch. All the members of the household (both family members and servants) were not only surprised and grateful, but they, like the official, then put their trust in the Messiah.

In verse 54, John noted that Jesus' healing the official's son was the "second sign" recorded in the fourth Gospel (with the first being the turning of water into wine; 2:11).

The miracle convincingly demonstrated Jesus' supreme power as the Messiah. All those who put their faith in the Messiah became "God's children" (John 1:12), as well as beloved members of His eternal, spiritual family.

8. What impact did the news the official received have on him?

9. What resulted from the news about the miracle Jesus performed?



A map of Galilee at the time of Jesus showing Cana and Capernaum.

Photo: © whitemay/Getty Images

BIBLE EXTRA

The Purpose of the Miracle Accounts in the Fourth Gospel

From the beginning verses of his Gospel, John—a devoted follower of Jesus and an eyewitness of His miracles—emphasized as one of his major themes the Savior's mastery over all creation. John's primary means of doing so was to describe in detail seven signs, or attesting miracles, that Jesus performed (4:54).

Jesus' turning water into wine revealed Him as the source of life (2:1-12). The healing of the royal official's son showed Jesus to be master over distance (4:46-54). The healing of the invalid at the pool of Bethesda revealed Jesus as the master over time (5:1-17). The feeding of over 5,000 showed Jesus to be the Bread of Life (6:1-14).

Jesus' walking on water and stilling the storm revealed Him as master over nature (6:15-21). The healing of the man blind from birth showed Jesus to be the Light of the World (9:1-41). And the restoration of Lazarus to life revealed that Jesus has power over death (11:17-45).

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Seeking Jesus or Seeking Signs?

Bible commentator N.T. Wright, in his book John for Everyone (Westminster Press, 2004), sees John's Gospel as a kind of treasure hunt, with careful and sometimes cryptic clues laid out for us to follow. The first clue—or "sign" as John calls it—is the transformation of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:11). John is setting up a series of signposts to take us through his story. The signs are all moments when heaven is opened and the transforming power of God's love bursts into the present world!

In the story of the healing of the official's son, it's almost as though, while the treasure hunt is in progress, several of the competitors become more interested in the clues instead of discovering the treasure. And so the treasure hunt stalls as people stop to admire the "clues." In the same way, folks in Jesus' day were fascinated by the signs and wonders, instead of the treasure Himself—Jesus.

3 Bible Application

Identify biblical truths to trust God about.

This step will help your students consider the great truths God imparts to humans who want to follow Him. Ask class members to participate in one of the following activities. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give copies to the group using it.



Handout: 'Truths to Trust'

Follow the instructions on the handout.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "God's Invitations" and respond to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. You may think of promises such as Joshua 1:5, John 3:16, John 11:25-26, or Revelation 21:4. Memorization is an excellent way to remember God's promises, and verses set to music can help us do that. Throughout our lives, we have seen Jesus save people, work miracles, and give us peace. Those are things to think about when the hard times come.

One Word at a Time

As a group, choose a Bible verse about trust to learn by heart—for example, Matthew 28:20; John 15:15; Romans 8:1; 2 Timothy 1:7. Make a game of memorizing it by saying the verse together a few times. Then move around your circle with each participant saying one word and then move on to the next participant and so on. Do this a few times, then close your Bibles and move around the circle saying the verse, looking only as needed. How does knowing the verse lift your spirits and encourage your trust in the Lord?

Not Seeing Is Believing

Look up John 20:26-29, 1 Peter 1:8-9, and 1 John 4:20. How can we be "blessed" if we have not seen God? Can we have faith in things we do not see? How does loving our brothers and sisters, whom we see, help us love God, whom we have not seen?

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God's Invitations

Everything seemed to change for the royal official when Jesus said, "Go, your son will live" (John 4:50). He stopped insisting that Jesus accompany him to his son's bedside. We can imagine the looks these two men exchanged before the official turned to go home with some certainty that what Jesus said was true.

Such exchanges can occur between God and ourselves in moments of praying, reading Scripture, listening to teaching, or even taking a walk. The words of Jesus come to us, and we go forward in certainty that we have been spoken to and these words are true. Like the royal official, we take Jesus at His word. These are God's invitations to us to trust Him more deeply, to nourish our relationship with Him.

In these moments, a further amount of trust in Jesus is then planted in us. Then when the assurance we read or heard or experienced from God comes to pass—although maybe not in exactly the manner we would have predicted it—even more trust develops. Our faith in God increases. A trusting relationship with God flourishes.

The apostle Peter wrote his first letter to new believers in what is now Turkey. They had not seen Jesus, but they had faith in Him, so Peter wrote to them, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:8-9).

10. *What are some of the promises of God, or assurances of Jesus, that people most often recall?*

11. *What helps you remember His promises—learning verses by heart? Putting phrases to music?*

12. *What life experiences have helped you trust in God even more?*

4 Life Response

Thank God for promises and ask for help to trust Him more.

Now that your students have reviewed the many assurances and promises God offers us when we choose to trust (with or without much evidence), encourage them to respond directly to God about this.

Ask your class to read “God’s Willingness” in the student book and write a short note of response. Encourage them to be as honest as possible (doubts are normal), but also as hopeful as possible. It might be that they have hesitation and

so need reassurance, or they may be excited and need guidance, or they may feel great gratitude they need to express to Him. God helps us have faith; He empowers us to move forward. This is not our work alone. For those who don’t like to write things down, explain that just a few words will do, even if only, “Please help me!”

End the class session with a final prayer. As you pray, thank God for how He provides strength and power and even supplies us with faith to help us. Ask God to give your students confidence that with God all things are possible—as we trust Him.

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God’s Willingness

God loves us and works with us in moving toward a life that is immersed in God’s goodness and advancement of His kingdom here on Earth. God reaches out to us as friends and partners, which is evident from the promises offered to us. We respond with loving gratitude to a God who has given us so much.

► Write a short note to God, expressing your desire to Him to move forward with Him in whatever He asks you to do, trusting Him no matter what.

KEY VERSE

So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. —John 4:53, KJV

Then the father realized that his was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed. —John 4:53, NIV



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before teaching next week, read John 12:44-50. Ask your students this week to think of some of the things from which we need Jesus to save us—for example, sin and death.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of July 11 through July 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** John 3:1-8—You Must Be Born from Above.
- Tue.** John 3:9-17—Jesus Brings Eternal Life.
- Wed.** 2 Samuel 22:2-7—My Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer.
- Thu.** Psalm 62—Salvation Comes from God.
- Fri.** Hebrews 2:1-9—Don’t Neglect God’s Message of Salvation.
- Sat.** John 12:27-36—Father, Glorify Your Name!
- Sun.** John 12:44-50—Jesus, the Light of the World.



Lesson Overview

Week of July 17

1 Life Need:

Discuss the difficulties and blessings of being obedient to God.

2 Bible Learning:

Study Jesus' statements regarding who He is.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Poster and reproducible handout—John: The Power of the Word

3 Bible Application:

Explore what it means to have Jesus as your Savior.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible sheet—Jesus, My Savior!

4 Life Response:

Trust Jesus' words for eternal life.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:
Believe Jesus' words and follow Him to eternal life.

Lesson Scripture:
John 12:44-50

The Word Saves

Eternal Life—This is one of the last messages Jesus gave to the people in His public ministry. These words were solemn and significant for Jesus' hearers. Those who respond to Jesus are responding to God. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God and inherit eternal life. Jesus strongly encouraged the multitude to see Him as Savior. He earnestly prayed and pleaded for hard hearts to soften when they heard His word. When believers commit to becoming Christ-followers, they will spend eternity in heaven.

John described the tone of Jesus' message that day as one who shouted with persistence. Usually, Christ spoke gently, but He felt the desperation of the late hour. He once again emphasized His oneness with the Father. He is who He says He is—God in the flesh, the Messiah.

Light—Thoughts of light and darkness are a reoccurring theme in John's Gospel, and Jesus speaks of Himself as "light." Jesus reminds His hearers that there is a continuing conflict between darkness and light, and He is offering them a way out of the darkness. To shut one's eyes to the light (in Jesus) is a sure and certain way to remain in the darkness.

Judgment—Jesus makes it clear that He did not come to judge people. However, people may bring judgment on themselves in refusing to believe Jesus' words. His word will be the judge on the last great day. Those who despise Him will have no excuse. Jesus' teaching was not purely of human origin. His teaching originated with God the Father.

Come Home—Since the beginning of time, individuals have been curious about God. Where is He? How can I get to know Him, know what He is like? What's He thinking, saying? Are there expectations God has of humanity? Jesus came to answer those questions to allow each individual to know the Father. God loves humanity and He desires all to know Him—His love. Encourage those in your class whom you are not certain of their salvation to consider Christ. By doing so, you might lead people to the Father and His everlasting home.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class, write the acrostic word "SAVE" on a board or a large sheet of paper. As students enter the classroom, ask them to provide words that identify those things from which we need Jesus to save us. The first letter of the word must begin with one of the letters in the word save. Some answers might include

sin for S; abyss for A; vanity for V; and evil for E. Then tell students that this week's lesson is a better comprehension of their salvation in Christ Jesus.

Link to Last Week

Encourage a few students to share about how they trusted Jesus this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss the difficulties and blessings of being obedient to God.

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The Word Saves

I must admit to feeling a bit culpable that I still remember this commercial jingle from 1974: "Hold the pickles, hold the lettuce—special orders don't upset us. All we ask is that you let us have it your way." That was the basis of a fast-food franchise's advertising campaign that lasted years and helped put that restaurant chain on the map. Analysts say the campaign worked partially because it tapped into a self-centered cultural trend to do your own thing, to be number one, to think only of yourself, to have it your way.

The problem is that we can too easily carry that catchy jingle beyond our bacon double-cheeseburgers and into the means by which we gain salvation. Rather than putting our trust in Jesus and committing to following Him, we try to earn salvation on our own. Or we decide to have Jesus solely on our own terms, to have Him our way, to have a special-order Jesus: "I'd like a super-size order of grace, and go heavy on the mercy, but please hold any demands on my lifestyle. Did you get that? No life-changes, please."

Thus, you have for yourself your own idea of Jesus—not His way, but your way. It's as though you pray the Lord's Prayer, "My kingdom come, my will be done on earth—and, while you're at it, up there in heaven, too!" It's as though you sing the old hymn, "Have mine own way, Lord. Have mine own way. I am the potter, You are my clay."

- 1. In what ways does having it your way conflict with being obedient to God's will for your life?**
- 2. How does believing Jesus' words help you be submissive to God's will?**
- 3. What blessings do you receive when you are obedient to Jesus' teachings?**

LESSON FOCUS: Believe Jesus' words and follow Him to eternal life.

Form small groups to discuss **Questions 1, 2, and 3** in the student book.

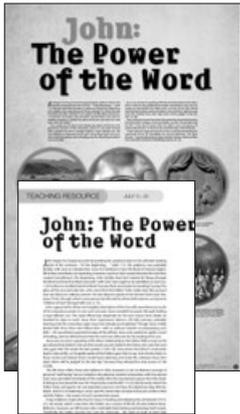
Question 1 provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their struggles with being submissive to God's will. Examples of some of the areas of struggle might include: in our treatment of others, particularly those who are vulnerable; in our reaction to worldly temptations such as ambition, pleasure, and avarice; and in our spiritual devotion to God with regard to prayer, worship, and study of Scripture.

Question 2 asks students to discuss how Jesus' words uplift our spirits and inspire us to be more faithful to God. Jesus promised that no matter how bleak our situation might be, our heavenly Father will always care for us and ultimately rescue us. Jesus also promised that God has a special place reserved for us in heaven. Such promises, therefore, endows us with the hope and the strength to bind our will to God's will.

Finally, Question 3 encourages class members to recall how God has blessed them when they have been faithful to the teachings of Jesus. Students may mention, for example, how they gained wisdom from a difficult experience which they dealt with in a godly way.

2 Bible Learning

Study Jesus' statements regarding who He is.



Villagers and farmers, merchants and teachers, a wide spectrum of people composed the Jewish crowds who flocked to listen to Jesus' pronouncements, and they must have wondered by what authority did this carpenter from

Nazareth speak. Jesus neither concealed His identity nor His mission. The Lord God had sent Him to convey His words, and God would wondrously bless all who placed their belief and trust in Jesus' words.

On the poster handout, read the fourth paragraph and note the photo of a menorah carving from Capernaum.

Looking to Jesus with the Eyes of Faith

Read John 12:44-46, and highlight

BIBLE EXTRA

Jesus, the Light at the Feast

Jesus' statement in John 12:46 about coming "into the world as a light" (NIV) recalls His earlier declaration during the Festival of Tabernacles (7:2, 10). As recorded in 8:12, Jesus announced to all within earshot that He was the "light of the world."

During the evening of the festival, attendees observed a ceremony known as the illumination of the temple. The liturgy included the lighting of four large, branched lamps (called candelabra). According to Jewish tradition, not only was the surrounding darkness dispelled, but also every courtyard in Jerusalem was lit up. Also, the nation's most holy religious leaders, while in the presence of a crowd of observers, danced in front of a fire and sang psalms. Regrettably, such earnestness was not given to the Son, the true "light" (1:5) who shined in the "darkness."

these key points as you discuss the Scripture:

- Toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Lord approached Jerusalem with crowds of people celebrating His presence and venerating Him with palm leaves and shouts of praise (John 12:12-13).
- Subsequently, Jesus told His listeners that those who believe in Him also believe in the Lord God, who sent Him.
- Moreover, He noted that whoever sees Him also sees almighty God.

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Looking to Jesus with the Eyes of Faith

John 12:44-46, KJV

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

John 12:44-46, NIV

⁴⁴Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me."
⁴⁵The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.
⁴⁶I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

For three years, Jesus conducted His public ministry among His fellow Jews. Amazingly, despite all that Jesus taught and the numerous miracles He performed, the nation as a whole did not welcome Him as their Messiah (John 1:11). Yet, even as the Passover festival drew near (12:1) and Jesus' ministry on Earth ended, He remained ever vigilant to invite as many people as possible to turn to Him in faith (12:44).

A consistent teaching in the fourth Gospel is that the Father "sent" the Son into the world. Indeed, He was the Father's chosen representative to herald the truth of the Gospel. For instance, John the Baptist testified that Jesus is the "Son of God" (1:34, KJV). Later, in 7:16, Jesus declared that what He taught did not originate with Him, but with the Father, who dispatched the Son to the world.

Moreover, the Son did not operate on His own "authority", (7:28, NIV) but the authority of the Father, who was characterized by truth. So close was the relationship between the Father and His approved emissary that knowing the Son equated to knowing the Father (8:19).

Jesus explained that one of the reasons He came to Earth was to be a "light" (John 12:46). He noted that His aim was twofold. First, He wanted the lost to put their trust in Him. Second, He knew that in doing so, the lost would



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 825-827 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

• Indeed, Jesus declared that He entered the world as a light so that whoever believes in Him will not remain in darkness.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

In John 12:44-45, Jesus indicated that there is a clear and inseparable connection between faith in Him and faith in the Father. Readers of the fourth Gospel learn about the eternal importance of putting their faith in the Messiah. When they do so, they likewise are believing in the Father.

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no longer “abide in darkness (KJV).” Throughout John’s Gospel, the apostle often used the metaphor of “light” and “darkness” to contrast the ways of God with the ways of the world. The concept of light and darkness had great significance in Hebrew culture. In Scripture, the words “lamp,” “light,” and “life” are often used as synonyms. In Jesus’ teachings, being cast into “outer darkness” was symbolic of the coming judgment of the unrighteous (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

4. *What sort of connection is there between trusting in the Son and the Father?*

5. *What reason did Jesus give for coming to Earth from heaven?*

Heeding Jesus’ Words with a Believing Heart

John 12:47-50, KJV

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

John 12:47-50, NIV

⁴⁷“If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Jesus explicitly stated that through His incarnation, He came “into the world as a light” (John 12:46). By this statement, Jesus indicated that He alone is the source of all purity, truth, and virtue.

BIBLE EXTRA

Look Up for Salvation

As Jesus declared in John 12:45, because of His work at Calvary, people are saved when they look to Him in belief. In turn, since He is the “express image” (Heb. 1:3, KJV) of the Father’s “person,” believers are gazing upon Him with the eyes of faith. This statement hearkens back to John 3:15-16, where Jesus highlighted the episode recorded in Numbers 21:4-9 involving the Israelites deliverance from death by looking at the bronze snake Moses held up on a pole. The word translated “lifted up” (John 3:14) can mean both lift up (as on a cross) and exalt (as to heaven).

BIBLE EXTRA

The Words of Eternal Life

The disciples had already heard that only Jesus had the words of “eternal life” (vs. 50). Earlier, many of Jesus’ would-be followers, upon hearing His “hard teaching” (John 6:60), had found it to be unacceptable (vs. 61). They failed to appreciate that the words Jesus spoke originated from God’s life-giving “Spirit” (vs. 63). Consequently, they turned their backs on the Savior and discontinued following Him.

Then, when Jesus asked the Twelve how they would respond to what He taught, Peter offered a response as the spokesperson for the rest of the group. He stated unabashedly that there was no one else worth following. Next, Peter categorically affirmed that Jesus alone spoke “the words of eternal life” (vs. 68). Furthermore, Peter and his peers both believed and knew with assuredness that Jesus was the “Holy One” (vs. 69) who had come from “God.” It was appropriate, then, for the Twelve—and for us—to heed Jesus’ words with a believing heart.

Likewise, those who put their faith in the Son as the all-supreme Light would no longer dwell in the “darkness.”

Heeding Jesus’ Words with a Believing Heart

While reading John 12:47-50, note these important points in your class discussion:

- Subsequent to Jesus’ declaration of Himself as God’s light in a world of darkness, the Lord proclaimed His primary purpose in coming to this world; that is, as Savior rather than judge.
- Nevertheless, although Jesus did not come to judge the world, Jesus warned that in the last day almighty God will judge those who rejected Him and did not heed His words.
- Jesus emphasized His warning by

noting that God Himself had sent Him to convey precisely what to say.

- Moreover, God’s commandment, voiced by Jesus, leads to everlasting life; and, in fact, all that Jesus spoke is from the Lord God.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

John 12:47 equates Jesus’ teaching with His “words.” The overt expectation is that all who encountered what the Son declared would heed His pronouncements. To do otherwise would be an indication of a disbelieving, rebellious heart.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

Jesus was direct in declaring the outcome for

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The fourth Gospel presents Jesus of Nazareth as the eternal Word of God (1:1). What He proclaimed was both divinely inspired and supremely important. On at least one occasion, when Jesus taught the crowds, they were “amazed” (Mark 1:27, NIV) at what He revealed about the Father and humankind. Unlike the experts in the law, Jesus taught with genuine “authority.”

Jesus’ statement recorded in John 12:47 reflects this perspective. He declared that, at His first coming, He would not “judge” those who heard His teaching but failed to heed it. This did not mean they would escape God’s condemnation. Instead, divine judgment would come at another time. After all, as Jesus explained, the purpose of His first advent was to make salvation freely available to the lost. Nonetheless, a future time of reckoning awaited those who spurned the Son (Heb. 9:27).

John 12:48 personifies Jesus’ “words” as the source of the unbelievers’ judgment. These are individuals who, because they categorically refused to “accept” what the Messiah taught, treated Him with contempt. Therefore, “at the last day,” the “very words” Jesus spoke, would “condemn” His detractors.

Jesus was referring to a future period of judgment that would take place during His second advent. He may be referring to what is known as the “sheep and goats” judgment described in Matthew 25:31-46, when He will judge the nations and put the “sheep” on His right and the “goats” on His left (vs. 33). The righteous sheep, who lived in agreement with Jesus’ teaching, would be rewarded for their hospitality and concern for others. In contrast, the goats, who opposed Jesus’ teaching, would be eternally punished for their indifference.

In keeping with what Jesus stated in John 12:44, He asserted in verse 49 that whenever He spoke, it was not on His own initiative and authority. Rather, as the Father’s faithful representative, the Son repeated what the Father “commanded” the Son to declare.

In 12:50, Jesus disclosed that He knew, with absolute

BIBLE EXTRA

Entrenched in Unbelief

Jesus’ upcoming, sacrificial death at Calvary is comparable to an ominous shadow that looms over this week’s Scripture passage. For instance, John 12:1-8 spotlights Mary’s anointing of Jesus’ feet at a dinner given in His honor in Bethany. In response to a spurious objection raised by Judas Iscariot, Jesus said Mary’s action was in anticipation of the day of Jesus’ “burial” (vs. 7).

Meanwhile, the religious authorities in Jerusalem plotted how they might put to death both Jesus and Lazarus (whom Jesus had restored to life; vss. 9-11). Then, not long after Jesus’ triumphal entry (vss. 12-19), some Greeks tried to see Jesus. In turn, He drew attention to the fact that He would soon be lifted up on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of humankind (vss. 20-36).

John did not leave readers in doubt concerning why the religious leaders responded to Jesus with hostility. Despite all the miraculous signs He performed, the authorities remained entrenched in unbelief. Their spiritual blindness and hard-heartedness only intensified. Even so, a considerable number of Pharisees put their faith in Jesus, though not openly due to the fear of being expelled from the synagogue (vss. 37-43).

those who spurned Him and His “words” (John 12:48). Those who willfully refused to embrace Jesus’ teaching in turn would be condemned by His declarations “at the last day” (NIV). This refers to the time of judgment at the end of the age.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

After coming to Earth and beginning His public ministry, Jesus did not operate in an independent, unilateral manner. Rather, He was dispatched by the Father to declare words of life. Indeed, every statement Jesus made agreed with the will of the Father.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

Jesus equated God’s “command” (NIV) with

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certainty, that what the Father commanded the Son to proclaim resulted in “eternal life.” It is no wonder that the Father and the Son were in perfect agreement as to what He would say and do throughout the course of His public ministry on Earth, including His willingness to offer Himself in sacrificial death on the Cross. Jesus spoke to those who welcomed His teaching, put their trust in Him, and experienced the Father’s forgiveness.

Jesus concluded His public ministry with one last appeal to the people to put their trust in Him. Believing in Him would be the same as believing in God, who had sent Him. Indeed, to see God the Son is to see God the Father (12:44, 45). Not only is Jesus one with God, He is also the light that dispels the darkness. Everyone is condemned to spiritual darkness except for those who receive Jesus as the spiritual light. Jesus called the people to enter into His light and be delivered from the world’s darkness (vs. 46).

Jesus’ purpose for coming into this world was not to judge those who refused to listen and obey His teachings. In fact, they condemn themselves by rejecting Jesus and His words. Jesus’ purpose for coming was to save the world—that is, those who turn to Him as their Lord and Savior (vss. 47, 48). Jesus did nothing apart from His heavenly Father, who had sent Him into the world to deliver the message of eternal life. Jesus conveyed this message exactly as God desired. Jesus delivered the message using the exact words and methods His Father instructed.

6. What expectation did Jesus place on humankind concerning His teaching?

7. What consequence awaited those who rejected what Jesus’ taught?

8. On behalf of whom did Jesus “speak” (John 12:49)?

9. What was the outcome of God’s “commandment” (John 12:50, KJV)?

“eternal life.” In doing so, Jesus indicated that there was a fundamental link between the divine decree and being saved. Consequently, those who received by faith what Jesus said had His assurance that they were His redeemed children.

BIBLE EXTRA

What Is Eternal Life?

What did Jesus mean when He used the phrase “eternal life” (John 12:50)? Clarity can be found in the Son’s high priestly prayer recorded in John 17. Here Jesus revealed that He received “authority” (vs. 2) from the Father to give “eternal life” to everyone who believed in the Son.

Next, Jesus defined what He meant when He used the preceding phrase. He was not just talking about endless human existence. Jesus specifically defined “eternal life” as being intimately acquainted with the Father, whom Jesus referred to as the “only true God” (vs. 3). Likewise, Jesus had in mind that believers would come to know Him, the Messiah whom the Father “sent” to offer redemption to the lost.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

God as Judge According to Jesus

During the early years of the nation of Israel, God raised up many “judges” to deliver the Hebrews from their enemies and some of them arbitrated contending issues among the people as well. Deborah, Samson, and Gideon are three of the most famous.

In Jesus’ day, a Jewish court of law was known as a bet din, and God did not commission its judges to rely on His power to rescue the Jews. Instead, they ruled on religious, civil, and administrative matters. When Jesus spoke of God as judge, however, He went far beyond His listeners’ conception of a judge either from Israel’s past or in their present society but rather as a future judge who would determine the ultimate spiritual fate of every individual.

3 Bible Application

Explore what it means to have Jesus as your Savior.

This step provides students the opportunity either to ponder more deeply their salvation in Christ or to consider more thoughtfully why they need to receive Jesus as their Savior. Allow students to select the activity they would like to do. If possible, photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout:

'Jesus, My Savior!'

When you have answered the questions on the sheet, you may want to read the highlights of what you wrote to one another. Although nonbelievers will later have an opportunity to receive Jesus as their Savior, if someone wants to confess her or his faith in Christ before the group, that person certainly may do so. .

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Jesus' Startling Announcement" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12** in the student book. The Jews expected that the long-awaited Messiah would be kingly and reestablish the sovereignty of the nation of Israel, and what startled most Jews is that Jesus, this lowly carpenter from Nazareth, announced the arrival of God's kingdom in a spiritual sense and in Himself. The Gospel message has had centuries of attacks against it, and there currently are more diverse worldly distractions. It is always good for us to think about why we became Christians while sharing with nonbelievers their need for Jesus in their lives.

Salvation Mural

On a large sheet of paper with felt pens, work as a team to draw a picture of Jesus with outstretched arms in the center of the paper, and write the Key Verse somewhere on the paper. Also, each member of the group should somehow draw themselves receiving Jesus as their Savior. After you finish, display your drawing on the class wall.

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Jesus' Startling Announcement

If Jesus' statement in this week's lesson is to be believed, then His words demand both that His divine authority be acknowledged and that His beckoning call be obeyed. Moreover, submission to Jesus cannot be halfhearted or now and then; it must be deliberate and without reservation.

It is certainly true that there will be times in which our faith will waver or entertain doubts, but our trust in His words will always be a bedrock to our faith in Jesus, who will surely light our way through the darkness. And the first step in this journey with Jesus is complete submission to His Lordship. It is then that Christ becomes our Redeemer and our Savior.

If one is hesitant, however, in taking that first step, examine what is holding you back: What fears distress your thoughts? What skepticisms question your resolve? And what desires lure you away from His righteousness? The answers to these questions are not insignificant, and it is because they are significant that Jesus' compassion for us becomes truly evident when we look to Him to be rescued from our tragic estrangement from God.

Yes, believe in Jesus and His startling words, but also place your life in His hands. For when you do, He will guide you along the path of eternal salvation.

"Come to me," Jesus beckons, "all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

10. Why would Jesus' announcement regarding Himself be startling to His Jewish listeners?

11. Why is His announcement still startling today?

12. How did or do you respond to Jesus' announcement?

4 Life Response

Trust Jesus' words for eternal life.

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus spoke, crowds gathered to listen intently to His words. Why? Because His words answered the deepest questions in a person's soul. Today, Jesus' words still speak to people everywhere. What is of utmost importance to your class is that He is speaking to each of your students, either encouraging them to remain steadfast in their faith in Him or beckoning them to receive Him as Lord and Savior.

For this step, have students read "Abide in

Jesus" in *Comprehensive Bible Study* and then write their letters. They may want to return to the small groups they had in the first step, share what they wrote (if they desire), and pray for each other in the group. Let it be known that anyone who has not accepted Jesus as Savior can talk with you about salvation. Some suggestions for helping people are on page 114 of this teacher's guide. You may want to end with students volunteering to pray, giving thanks to God for their salvation in Christ or expressing their desire to come to truly know Him.

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Abide in Jesus

When Jesus told the Jews that God had sent Him and that He was conveying God's message to them, His listeners were astonished. Subsequently, some believed His words and followed Him—even unto death. Others dismissed His words and turned away. Jesus' words will always be relevant. Our decision to follow them—to follow Him—is crucial as to whether we have eternal life with Him or not.

► *Take a few minutes to write a prayer letter to God. If you already have a saving relationship in Christ Jesus, promise to abide in His Lordship and follow only Him. If you want to initially surrender yourself to Jesus and find eternal life with Him, commit your life to Him in this letter.*

KEY VERSE

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. —John 12:46, KJV

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. —John 12:46, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 18 through July 24

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 26:12-19—Awake, O Dead, and Sing!
- Tue.** 1 Corinthians 15:12-19—The Dead Shall Be Raised.
- Wed.** 1 Corinthians 15:20-28—In Christ All Are Made Alive.
- Thu.** Daniel 12:1-4—Wake Up!
- Fri.** John 5:25-29—The Dead Will Hear Christ's Voice.
- Sat.** John 11:1, 3-16—Jesus Travels to Lazarus.
- Sun.** John 11:20-27, 38-44—The Raising of Lazarus.

For a closing prayer, thank our heavenly Father for sending His Son to convey His message of salvation to us. Praise Him for the salvation that we have in Christ Jesus. Pray for those who received Jesus as their Savior during this lesson that their faith in Him will deepen throughout their lives and pray for those in the class who are still seeking redemption in Jesus.

 PowerforLiving

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read John 11:17-27, 38-44. Have students think about something that gets glorified, and bring to class at least five pictures of objects that people glorify—for example, a radiant sunset, a towering mountain, or a fabulous artwork.



Lesson Overview

Week of July 24

Suggested Material for As Your Students Arrive:

- Five pictures of objects that people glorify

1 Life Need:

Discuss how the glory of God can be seen.

2 Bible Learning:

Study Jesus' teaching and miracle in Bethany.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible handout—John: The Power of the Word

3 Bible Application:

Comprehend how dynamic God's glory is.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—The Stories of Lily and Al

4 Life Response:

See the glory of Jesus as you serve Him.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:
God shows us His glory when we believe.

Lesson Scripture:
John 11:17-27, 38-44

The Word Resurrects the Dead

Questions—Lazarus, a close friend of Jesus, became seriously ill. His sisters, with whom he lived, sent a message to Jesus, but Jesus, away on a trip, delayed coming. When the Savior arrived, Lazarus was dead. But Jesus desired to use this incident to deploy God's glory for those who believe. By the time Jesus approached the Lazarus house, a big crowd of mourners had surrounded the family. Mary, one of the sisters, sat at home, consumed with grief. But Martha ran out to Jesus and expressed her disappointment in His delayed response. She wanted Jesus to heal her brother. Already she knew of Jesus' power, that God would give Jesus whatever He asked, although she probably had no idea Jesus planned to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Answers—Jesus assured the grieving sister of her brother's rising again. Martha understood He was referring to all the righteous rising on the last day, but Jesus seized the moment and made one of the greatest declarations in this Gospel: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He boldly stated He could raise dead sinners from spiritual death and dead bodies from the grave. Jesus raising Lazarus is a picture of Him raising the bodies of believers when He comes again.

Actions—Jesus must have startled Martha and everyone when He said to take the stone away that closed Lazarus's tomb. Martha had to prove her active faith in Jesus and cooperate with Him before He could raise Lazarus. Jesus did not ask her to move every stone in Israel, only one, to see the glory of God. To see His glory means to gain insight into His reputation, character, and attributes. Our faith is reinforced and our joy is restored.

God's Radiance—The men obeyed Jesus and removed the stone. Jesus thanked the Father for hearing His prayer, then commanded with a loud voice of authority for Lazarus to come out. Lazarus had to walk out of that grave at the sound of the Redeemer's voice.

As with Martha, our faith allows us to see God at work in hopeless situations. If we believe Jesus' words, we are bound to see the character and faithfulness of God. That is God's glory!

As Your Students Arrive

Prior to class, collect at least five pictures of objects that people glorify. Examples might include a radiant sunset, a towering mountain, a fabulous artwork, a colorful flower or butterfly, or a renowned person. As students enter the classroom, ask them to briefly explain why some people glorify the subject of the picture. Introduce the lesson by letting the class know that this

week's lesson focuses on what truly deserves praise—God's glory.

Link to Last Week

If someone in your class accepted Christ for the first time last week, invite that person to share about it, if he or she feels comfortable to do so.

1 Life Need

Discuss how the glory of God can be seen.

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The Word Resurrects the Dead

Makayla, do you want to take a break?" asked Traci, who had been watching her coworker closely. Makayla had begun to move a little slower.

The medical lab technicians were three hours away from the end of their shifts, and Traci was concerned for Makayla, who never complained, even in light of her illness.

Makayla shared that she had breast cancer, but only her doctors knew what stage and how much longer she would be able to work.

"I want to help get medical results to patients," was Makayla's response for her continuing to work.

Makayla's concern for patients was admirable, but her unflinching bravery in the face of her own diagnosis was a bit puzzling.

Traci would like to be confident about an afterlife, but how persuaded could one be?

"Yes, Traci," Makayla said. "Let's both take a break."

The women went to the hospital cafeteria for a snack. It was there at a table in the back that Makayla talked frankly. She mentioned her family and their love and concern, but Makayla spoke mostly about the Lord. While Makayla was anxious about the unknown and death, she was not scared. She said Traci could even see God's glory in what was happening to Makayla. Christ had taken away the sting of death for her. She knew without a doubt that she would be with the Lord forever and ever in heaven. Could Traci say the same thing?

1. Why are people who do not believe in God unable to see His glory?

2. Why is it not enough to attend church and observe Christian holy days to be able to see God's glory?

3. How has God shown you His glory?

LESSON FOCUS: God shows us His glory when we believe.

Ask your students to read the story in the study book and form small groups to discuss **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

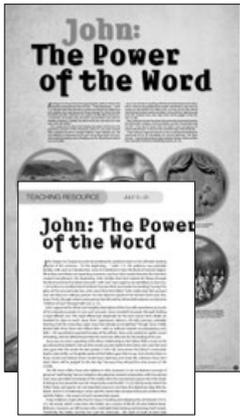
Question 1 clearly implies that people who refuse to believe and therefore submit to God cannot possibly be a witness to the glory of almighty God. Such people have chosen to be spiritually blind, and, therefore, they turn away from seeing God and His glory.

The answer to Question 2 is that not all church attenders and people who claim to be Christians believe in God enough to place their full trust in Christ and fully surrender their lives to His lordship. Of course, the faith of every Christian wavers now and then, but authentic Christians are sincere in their belief in Him and sacrificial in their service to Him. Those are the ones who truly see the glory of God.

Question 3 provides students the opportunity to recall special moments when they saw the glory of God. Some may say it was when they received Jesus as their Lord and Savior; others may note that it was when they experienced God's miraculous intervention in their lives; and still others may relate a time when the Lord bestowed a life-changing revelation to them.

2 Bible Learning

Study Jesus' teaching and miracle in Bethany.



For a long time, Jesus had wanted to visit His dear friends, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, but the timing had to be perfect before He could call upon this family in Bethany. God's plan was for His Son to perform a miracle that

would demonstrate His glory so that Jesus' fame would spread throughout Judea, even unto Jerusalem, where the Jewish authorities would then plot for His execution. Meanwhile, more and more Jews would continue to see God's glory by believing in Christ.

On the poster handout, read the fifth

BIBLE EXTRA

The Friends of Jesus

Likely Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus were among Jesus' most devoted followers. Along with the episode in John 11, Mary and Martha are mentioned in Luke 10:38-42. When Jesus and His disciples came to the village of Bethany, near Jerusalem, the sisters welcomed the group into their home. Mary sat down in front of Jesus to hear what He said. Martha, however, busied herself preparing a meal for her guests. She also complained to Jesus that Mary was not offering any help and insisted that Jesus order Mary to help ready the dinner.

Jesus calmly noted that Martha was preoccupied and distressed by many concerns. Yet, in her anxiety, Martha neglected the most important priority, namely, Jesus and His teachings. In contrast, Mary had not allowed daily worries to distract her from spending time with Jesus. Mary realized that listening to Jesus was an extraordinary opportunity, one that exceeded all other matters. For this reason, Mary would not let her relationship to Jesus take second place.

paragraph, then point out the photo of the traditional tomb of Lazarus in the present-day village of Bethany.

Jesus Arrives in Bethany

Read John 11:17-19 and highlight these key points as you discuss the Scripture:

- By the time Jesus had come to Martha and Mary's home, their brother, Lazarus, had already passed away and was in his tomb for four days.

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Jesus Arrives in Bethany

John 11:17-19, KJV

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

John 11:17-19, NIV

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

Somehow Lazarus became ill, and his condition worsened to the point that his sisters Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus for help (John 11:3). The sisters undoubtedly had seen Jesus perform miracles and were convinced of Jesus' ability to help.

But when Jesus and His group arrived in Bethany, they learned that four days earlier the body of Lazarus had been placed in a tomb (vs. 17). Since a dead body decayed quickly in the hot middle eastern climate, the family would have had his body anointed, wrapped, and laid in the family tomb soon after he passed. Since Jerusalem was less than two miles from Bethany (John 11:18), a number of Jews from the city paid their respects to Martha and Mary.

4. What event created the need for Mary and Martha to be consoled?

Jesus Talks with Martha

John 11:20-27, KJV

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

John 11:20-27, NIV

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 825-827 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

- The home of this family was in Bethany, which was less than two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus' actual destination.

- Meanwhile, relatives and friends had gathered there to mourn Lazarus's death and bring solace to his sisters.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

The sisters had experienced the loss of their beloved brother (John 11:17). He had been dead for four days. By then, many of their Jewish friends and relatives visited to "comfort" (vs. 19) the

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22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

died. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatsoever you ask."

²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

When the sisters of Lazarus heard that Jesus was approaching their village, Martha went out to greet Him, while Mary remained in the house. On the surface, Martha's first words to Jesus appear to be a veiled rebuke (vs. 21), but it was more likely an expression of regret that Jesus could not be present. Martha then expressed her faith in Jesus, for she was certain that God granted Jesus whatever request He asked.

Jesus declared to Martha that her brother would rise from the dead. Martha agreed since the Jews believed that would happen to all people at the last day (see Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:7-8).

But Jesus' response to Martha is incredible. He could have said that He would resurrect Lazarus. Instead, Jesus asserted, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Jesus, in fact, is the life of the age to come, and all who put their trust in Him will experience the resurrected life.

When Jesus asked Martha whether she believed what He was saying, Jesus was actually asking Martha whether she

BIBLE EXTRA

Important Truths about Christ

The truth about the resurrection is just one of many revealed in John's Gospel. Even more strongly than the other three Gospels, the fourth one makes a compelling case for the deity of Christ. Readers learn that Jesus, the Word, is God (1:1) who came to Earth as a man (vs. 14).

The fourth Gospel also expresses the uniqueness of the Son's relationship with the Father. The Son existed in eternity past with the Father, was sent by the Father into the world, and returned to the Father after the crucifixion and resurrection events. The statements and miracles recorded in John's Gospel convincingly show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He is worthy of trust and worship (20:30-31).

This last point suggests that John had both an evangelistic and apologetic purpose in writing his Gospel. The author used contrasting ideas (such as life and death, light and darkness, love and hate, and being from below and from above) to convey important truths about the person and work of Christ. The Evangelist also sought to stress the necessity of believing in the Son for eternal life.

sisters over the death of Lazarus.

Jesus Talks with Martha

While reading John 11:20-27, note these important points in your class discussion:

- When Martha and Mary heard that Jesus was approaching their home, Martha rushed out to meet Him while Mary remained indoors.

- Mary's countenance, however, did not reflect a welcoming greeting, but, instead, a subtle disappointment in His seeming tardiness.

- In fact, Martha verbalized her bitterness by noting that had Jesus arrived sooner, her brother might still be alive, for Jesus was widely known as a

remarkable healer.

- Nevertheless, Martha did not allow her discontent to overwhelm her faith in her Friend; instead, she confessed that the Lord God did perform miracles through Him.

- That is when Jesus promised that Lazarus shall rise again.

- Martha misunderstood Jesus, noting that God will resurrect Lazarus on the last day, but Jesus declared that He is the resurrection and the life and that whoever believes in Him will live forever even beyond death.

- Jesus then asked Martha whether she believed His words, which she did by proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God, who has come into the world.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Both of the sisters likely learned at the same time that Jesus was on His way to see them. On the one hand, Martha left the house to meet Jesus. On the other hand, Mary remained at home (John 11:20).

Suggested Answer to Question 6

Once Jesus had arrived, Martha

respectfully addressed Jesus as “Lord” (John 11:21). Next, Martha expressed some disappointment that Jesus could not have come sooner. Martha even went as far as saying that if Jesus had been on the scene much earlier, He could have prevented Lazarus from dying.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

Martha did not seem to fully grasp the implication of Jesus’ assertion. For instance, Martha did not make an immediate connection between Jesus’ statement and His ability to restore Lazarus to life. Instead, Martha only went as far as affirming Jesus’ messiahship, sonship, and presence among His ethnic Jewish peers (vs. 27).

believed in Him. He wanted Martha (and all other people) to begin experiencing right now the joys of eternal life.

Martha not only replied positively, but was also clear about what she believed—that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s only divine Son. Furthermore, she affirmed that Jesus left heaven and entered the world by becoming a human being.

5. *How did Martha and Mary’s responses to Jesus’ arrival contrast?*

6. *What did Martha say to Jesus when the two saw each other?*

7. *How did Martha respond to Jesus’ declaration to be the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)?*

Jesus Restores Lazarus to Life

John 11:38-44, KJV

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of

John 11:38-44, NIV

³⁸Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹“Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

⁴⁰Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people

BIBLE EXTRA

First-Century Jewish Beliefs about Death

In the first century A.D., there was a Jewish belief that a person’s soul hovered over the deceased’s body for the first three days. Supposedly, during this time, the soul waited for an opportunity to reenter the corpse. Yet, by the fourth day, once irreversible decomposition had set in, the soul departed.

The preceding view might have originated from situations in which people who allegedly had died were really in a coma. So, waiting a few days before burying a loved one would clarify whether that individual had truly died or was just in a temporary state of rest. In the case of Lazarus, it was presumed that once he had been dead for four days, all hope for his revival was gone (John 11:38-39).

Jesus Restores Lazarus to Life

Finally, read John 11:38-44 and discuss these ideas:

- When Jesus arrived at the tomb where the body of Lazarus lay, Jesus was visibly shaken by His friend's death.
- Jesus then ordered that the huge stone be moved away from the tomb's entrance.
- At this point, Martha, as well as everyone else who was present, still did not grasp Jesus' intention, for she stated that a stench would come from the tomb since Lazarus had died four days earlier.
- In response, Jesus reminded Martha that He had the power to display the glory of God.
- After they removed the stone, Jesus gazed upward and thanked His heavenly Father for

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the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

One can only imagine the emotions Jesus felt as He approached the tomb of Lazarus and ordered the stone to be removed. Martha did not understand why—after four days the stench from the decomposing corpse would be terrible. But Jesus stated once again that if Martha had faith, she would witness the glory of God (Jesus' restoring Lazarus to life).

Jesus' prayer is not so much a petition as it is an expression of thanksgiving to the Father. The Son knew in advance that the Father would grant the request, and so the Redeemer gave thanks for this. Jesus declared in the hearing of the onlookers that the Father always answered His Son's requests. It was His desire that in seeing the miracle, the onlookers would believe His claim to be the Messiah. In restoring Lazarus to life, Jesus would prove that He is the master of death and preview His power that would be fully displayed in the final resurrection when all who have died hear His voice and live (5:25, 28-29).

After His prayer, Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb. He did, still wrapped in his grave clothes. To prove Lazarus was truly alive, Jesus told the people to "loose him, and let him go" (vs. 44, KJV).

8. How did Martha respond when Jesus ordered the stone to be removed?

9. What happened when Jesus commanded that Lazarus come out of the tomb?

always listening to Him and for the miracle He was about to perform that would show the onlookers that He had surely sent Him.

- After Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb, the dead man obeyed though still wrapped in burial garments.

- The Lord then told the mourners to remove the linen strips from Lazarus's hands, feet, and head and let him go.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Martha's statement seems to be filled with surprise. She was fixated on the fact that Lazarus had been dead for four days and that there would be a stench from his decomposing corpse. Martha did not yet understand that Jesus was about to restore Lazarus to life.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

Once Jesus issued the command, the unthinkable took place. Lazarus's body was restored to life. Indeed, he was so revitalized that he was able to stand up and exit the burial chamber, even though his "hands and feet" (vs. 44, NIV) were bound by "strips of linen."

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Bethany

During Jesus' day, the former village of Bethany was located in the West Bank and on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives less than two miles from Jerusalem. Biblical scholars are not in agreement as to the meaning of the word, Bethany. Some contend that it means "house of welcome." Others assert that it means "house of figs." Still others define it to mean "house of affliction."

There are several reasons why Bethany is notable in Jesus' public career. Not only did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (see John 11:38-44), but in the house of Simon the leper, a woman anointed Jesus with oil (see Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9). Most notably, in the vicinity of Bethany, Jesus ascended into heaven (see Luke 24:50-51).

3 Bible Application

Comprehend how dynamic God's glory is.

This step reminds students how their faith in Jesus enhances their perception of God's glory. Photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Give paper and pencils to the group making the cartoons. Make copies of the hand-out from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout:

'The Stories of Lily and Al'

Read the two stories in this handout, then discuss your answers to the questions. Do you relate more to Lily or Al in these case studies? Our experiences in beholding God's astounding intervention in our lives can be quite different from one another, but they all reflect the same wondrous glory of God.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Behold, the Glory of God!" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12** in the student book. Some might view stepping where Jesus walked in the same way as Armstrong did, others might consider the fabulous uniqueness of walking on the moon, and still others might regard both experiences as incomparably significant. It is always worth looking at the intimacy of our relationship with Jesus and how that relationship impacts our lives. We also need to think not only of God's existence but of His majesty as well, something we probably rarely do.

Three-Panel Cartoons

Individually, draw a three-panel cartoon in which each panel illustrates Jesus' illuminating exchange with Martha, Jesus' intense sadness before the tomb of Lazarus, and Jesus' astounding resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. After you finish, discuss how the drawing may help you see God's glory in a different way.

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Behold, the Glory of God!

Neil Armstrong was the first person to walk on the moon. More than being an astronaut, however, Armstrong was a devout Christian. In fact, while he walked on the ancient steps where Jesus went to and from the temple in Jerusalem, Armstrong stated to his friend Meir Ben-Dov, "I have to tell you, I am more excited stepping on these stones than when I was stepping on the moon."

When Armstrong stood on the surface of the moon and gazed at the heavenly bodies in space, he must have sensed the glory of God. Nevertheless, he would not have seen God's glory had he not believed so ardently in Jesus and had devoted his life to Him. Such faith in the Lord empowered Armstrong to truly see the glory of God.

We may not ever look at the stars from the moon, or gaze upon Victoria Falls in Zambia, or stare at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, or observe the Aurora Borealis from northern Norway, or even see at all. But if we believe in Jesus, we will see God's glory in the precious moments of our experiences when we trust Him with our lives.

The privilege of seeing the glory of God is not only a blessing (like a gift or reward), but it is also a power source for enabling us to be more faithful in our devotion to Christ Jesus. Just as "believing" is meant to be active and not merely an acceptance of an idea, the glory of God not only reflects the Creator's divine attributes but also compels us to act according to His holy will.

Therefore, let us "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Ps. 96:3).

10. *Would you be more excited to step on the surface of the moon or to walk where Jesus walked? Explain your answer.*

11. *What does it mean to you to believe in Jesus?*

12. *Why is it important to you to be able to see God's glory?*

4 Life Response

See the glory of Jesus as you serve Him.

We must always remember that the source of God's glory is God Himself. Therefore, our praise and gratitude must always be given to God, and our belief in Jesus must always be anchored on who He is as God's beloved Son. With such belief, the glory of God will be visible and His majesty will be known.

Ask students to read "Believe and See" in *Comprehensive Bible Study* and fill in the sentences there. Your students may have seen God's glory in

a recent healing, or in His expressions of mercy and love to them. This week, they may have the opportunity to show mercy, grace, and love to others and so reflect His glory in their witness.

End the lesson with a closing prayer. Express the gratitude of the entire class for those special moments when they have individually seen His glory and how it touched their lives in powerful and lasting ways. Ask Him to continue to deepen their faith in Jesus and help them believe in Him with both their minds and their hearts. Finally, extol His glory with praise and reverence.

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Believe and See

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He asked Martha whether she believed in Him enough to trust that He had power over life and death. He then raised her brother, Lazarus, from his tomb, thus demonstrating not only His divine qualities but also the glory of God. Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and we see His glory as He shows us the mercy, grace, and love He showed to Mary and Martha.

► *Finish these two sentences:*

I saw God's glory when He _____
_____.

I reflect God's glory when I _____
_____.

KEY VERSE

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeest thou this? —John 11:25-26, KJV

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" —John 11:25-26, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSONS

Week of July 25 through July 31

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 34:4-14—Seek Peace and Pursue It.
- Tue.** Matthew 11:25-30—Rest for the Weary.
- Wed.** John 16:23-27, 32-33—Jesus Has Conquered the World.
- Thu.** Psalm 119:161-176—Peace for the Upright.
- Fri.** Isaiah 54:6-10—God's Unmovable Covenant of Peace.
- Sat.** John 14:1-14—Don't Let Your Hearts Be Troubled.
- Sun.** John 14:15-29—Peace to the Disciples.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read John 14:15-29. Ask your students to think about times they feel the Holy Spirit in their lives. Also, bring a sports cap and slips of paper with you to class.



Lesson Overview

Week of July 31

Suggested Material for As Your Students Arrive:

- A sports cap, slips of paper, pencils or pens

1 Life Need:

Discuss your awareness of the Holy Spirit.

2 Bible Learning:

Study Jesus' comforting promise to His followers.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—A New Heaven and Earth

3 Bible Application:

Explore the Holy Spirit's role in your life.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—Fruit of the Spirit

4 Life Response:

Pray for the Spirit's comfort, protection, and direction.

Suggested Material:

- Words of the chorus 'Spirit of the Living God, Fall Fresh on Me'

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Jesus has not left us alone—we have the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Scripture:

John 14:15-29

The Word Gives Peace

Departing—Jesus' conversations with His disciples about leaving the Earth and returning Heaven caused them great sadness. He attempted to assure them of His continued presence with them through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Reassuring—How could these men show their love to Christ after so many demonstrations of His affection toward them? Jesus answered their thoughts by saying the one who truly loves Him will demonstrate it by obedience and following Jesus' example. But with Jesus returning to heaven, how would that be possible? Jesus told His disciples not to worry. God never leaves His children to wander around as parentless kids without protection and guidance. God expects believers to obey Him, but He didn't ask them to do it independently, only on their own human abilities. The Holy Spirit walks alongside believers to empower them. In a world filled with deceitfulness and lies, the Holy Spirit brings truth about the world and about ourselves.

Promising—Jesus promises the Counselor, the Person of the Holy Spirit will be with believers. The Holy Spirit is a person, not an "it." He has the same character and mind as Jesus, and He comes to live "in" the believer. The believer is never as alone as he or she feels. Jesus is here! With the help of the Spirit, those who truly love God demonstrate it by obedience. The Holy Spirit will also teach and remind believers of Christ's teachings.

Presence—Jesus had no material riches to leave to His disciples, but He offered them His presence through the Holy Spirit—a true help despite the stormy days ahead. Peace does not mean an absence of trouble or challenges, but it does mean when the world is crumbling around, inexplicably you find yourself not toiling or spinning. In this world, Christians will encounter trouble, but God's children are never alone.

As Your Students Arrive

Bring a sports cap and slips of paper to your classroom. As students enter, hand each a slip of paper and ask them to write on the paper when they most feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. Answers might include when they are praying, worshipping, sharing the Gospel, and needing help. Next, have them place their paper in the cap, and then pick a few to read aloud. Introduce the lesson by letting the class know that this week's lesson focuses on the different ways they depend on the Holy Spirit.

Link to Last Week

Ask some students to share how they saw God's glory this week through the mercy, grace, and love He showed or that they showed someone else.

1 Life Need

Discuss your awareness of the Holy Spirit.

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The Word Gives Peace

Wesley put aside his Bible reading and went to check on his meatloaf. In the kitchen, the older man went about preparing his dinner with the routine and ease that the past 13 years had brought.

He dished up mashed potatoes, corn, and green beans on his plate, along with the meatloaf, and took a seat at the table, neatly set for one. Then Wesley bowed his head for grace. When he took his first forkful of meatloaf, he realized how hungry he was. The meatloaf was good. Still, it wasn't as good as Flora's, he remembered.

Wesley thought of his wife every day since her death 13 years ago. Losing Flora had been the hardest thing that he had ever experienced. The Holy Spirit had always been Wesley's comforter, but he had felt a deeper communion since Flora's passing.

Wesley's daughter wanted him to move to Florida to be with her and her family. "We have room, Daddy," Kala said. "It's not good for you to live alone."

Wesley might consider moving to Florida at some point, but he had his church and some family and friends in Kansas City, Missouri. He would stay here for now.

"I'm not alone, baby girl," Wesley had told his daughter. "The Holy Spirit is always with me, and He will never leave me alone."

1. When do you not feel the presence of the Holy Spirit? Explain why.

2. How does God assure you that His Spirit abides in you when you feel otherwise?

3. In what ways is God's Spirit more than your babysitter?

Form small groups to discuss Questions 1, 2, and 3 in the study book.

Question 1 invites students to reflect on times when they do not feel the Holy Spirit is with them. Of course, the most common answer is when they are in sin. Other answers may include when they are in a deep depression, when their faith in Christ is weak and faltering, when they are overly obsessed with pleasing someone, and when an overwhelming fear grips them deep inside.

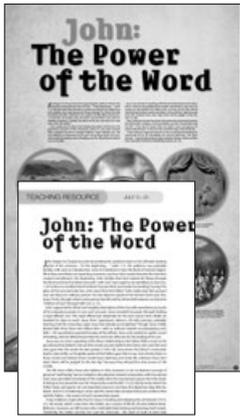
For Question 2, students may note that they are aware of the presence of people when those people speak to them. Likewise, we know that the Holy Spirit is present when He speaks to us. We do not hear with our physical ears, but the words of God's Spirit are audible to our spirits, and the Holy Spirit especially wants to be heard when we least sense His presence.

Question 3 reminds students that God's Spirit is like a nurturing mother and not like a paid babysitter. Indeed, the Holy Spirit deeply cares for our physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare in such ways as our direction in life, our behavior toward other people, and our becoming more like the character of Christ, for we are truly precious to God's Spirit.

LESSON FOCUS: Jesus has not left us alone—we have the Holy Spirit.

2 Bible Learning

Study Jesus' comforting promise to His followers.



The “beloved” apostle, John, devoted much attention in his gospel account to what is known as “The Last Supper,” when Jesus shared His final meal with His twelve chosen disciples. Among Jesus’ many teaching moments, He made

a momentous promise to them—and to us as well. Jesus stated that once He returns to His heavenly Father, He will send the Holy Spirit to

abide within us to guide and comfort us.

On the poster handout, read the final paragraph and point out the photo of the painting of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost.

The Promise of the Spirit

Read John 14:15-17, and highlight these key points as you discuss the Scripture:

- After Jesus told the apostles that He is “the way and the truth and the life” and that “no one comes

BIBLE EXTRA

The Peace of Jesus

In John 14:27, Jesus promised that He would leave His “peace” with His disciples. Doing so was entirely in keeping with the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 9:6 that the Messiah would be known as the “Prince of Peace.”

The prophecy concerned the announcement of the birth of a great person who would one day rule as the King of kings. Isaiah envisioned this person’s birth as having been already accomplished: “A child is born . . . a son is given.” Indeed, God’s promises about the Messiah would be fulfilled no matter how far-fetched they might seem.

The prophecy pointed to the Lord Jesus’ incarnation. When the Savior reigned on the throne of David, He would provide for and watch over His people. Not one of their temporal and eternal needs would be overlooked or neglected by the Messiah.

Referring to Jesus as the “Prince of Peace” indicates more than the absence of war and hardship. The Messiah would bring peace in the fullest sense of the word—peace between God and people, as well as between person and person. Also, during the future reign of the Lord Jesus, spiritual healing and wholeness would prevail throughout society.

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The Promise of the Spirit

John 14:15-17, KJV

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

John 14:15-17, NIV

¹⁵“If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

During the Last Supper (John 13–14), Jesus said that if His disciples truly loved Him, they would obey His teachings (John 14:15). He did not demand their obedience to prove their love for Him. Rather, obedience would be a natural result of loving Him.

Jesus promised that His disciples would have the indwelling of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit would come and make His home in believers so their love could be clearly defined and their obedience could be carefully directed.

The Spirit would come to the believers’ aid to help them meet every challenge to their faith. As the “Spirit of truth” (vs. 17), He reveals the truth about God, shows what is true, and leads believers into all truth. In these ways, the Spirit remains ever present to help believers understand, accept, and apply what Jesus commands.

4. What did Jesus promise He would give to His disciples?

The Abiding Presence of the Son

John 14:18-24, KJV

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

19 Yet a little while, and the

John 14:18-24, NIV

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

¹⁹Before long, the world will



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 825-827 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

to the Father except through” Him (John 14:6), Jesus charged them to obey His commands if they truly loved Him.

- Knowing that He would be leaving His dear friends to return to His heavenly kingdom, Jesus said that at that time He would ask His Father in heaven to send them the Spirit of truth to always be with them and help them throughout their lives.
- Jesus also noted that worldly people in their ignorance will reject the Spirit because of their spiritual blindness but that His followers will know the Spirit because He will forever abide within them.

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world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

²²Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

Jesus assured His disciples that He would not abandon them as “orphans” (vs. 18). In fact, after His death and resurrection, He appeared to them several times before His ascension. These appearances were only for believers, to strengthen their faith and persuade them that Jesus would never leave them alone in this world.

Once again, Jesus emphasized that it is not enough for believers simply to have affection for Him in their hearts. True love for Him is demonstrated when they keep His

Suggested Answer to Question 4

Jesus was about to die on the Cross. Against that sobering backdrop, He promised to give His followers the Holy Spirit. Jesus referred to the Spirit as the “Comforter” (KJV) or “Advocate” (NIV).

BIBLE EXTRA

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit is referred to by many names in Scripture—Advocate, Counselor, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Eternal Spirit, to name a few. The Spirit’s names reveal aspects of His character and work in the lives of believers. Although mentioned frequently in the Old Testament, the Spirit’s direct personal ministry began in the early days of the Church, specifically on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

Among the ministries that the Spirit performs in the lives of believers are the following: regenerating their spirit and reassuring them that they are spiritually reborn (John 3:5-6; Rom. 8:16); teaching them (John 14:26); testifying to them about the Son (John 15:26); convicting them of sin and setting them apart for salvation (John 16:8-11; 1 Pet. 1:1-2); guiding them (John 16:13-14); praying on their behalf (Rom. 8:26-27); and equipping them for ministry (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

The Abiding Presence of the Son

Now read John 14:18-24, and assess these following statements:

- Still, during the Last Supper, Jesus promised the apostles that He would not abandon them but that He would come to them (after His Resurrection and before His Ascension).
- Although the world would no longer see Jesus, the apostles would see Him.
- Moreover, Jesus further promised that they would live because He lives, inferring the resurrection from the dead for both Himself and His followers.

• Witnessing the resurrected Lord, they would fully realize that Jesus is in the heavenly Father, and, furthermore, that Jesus is in His disciples and they are in Him.

• Therefore, Jesus' followers are to show their love for Him by obeying His commands, and, thereby, God the Father and Jesus His Son would love them, thus, revealing Himself to them.

• Judas (not the disciple named Judas Iscariot) wondered aloud why Jesus was showing Himself to them and not the world.

• Instead of answering Judas's question directly, Jesus repeated His statement that loving Him means obeying Him and that the heavenly Father would love them and make His home with them.

• Conversely, those who do not obey Him actually do not love Him.

• Jesus was conveying to His disciples the words of His heavenly Father.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Jesus was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of His disciples. He reassured them that He would not abandon them as "orphans." Instead, after He rose from the dead, He would reappear to them on more than one occasion.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Other Disciple Named Judas

Little is known about the other disciple named "Judas" (John 14:22). The Gospel writers listed him as one of Jesus' 12 apostles. He was probably the one whom Matthew and Mark called "Thad-daeus" (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). Luke twice mentioned him as the "Judas of James" (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), which could mean that he was the son of James (as the NIV translates it) or perhaps the brother of "James the lesser" (Mark 15:40). John is the only Gospel writer who made Judas' presence known through a specific action or dialogue (John 14:22). Early church tradition simply notes that he founded a congregation at Edessa in Syria.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

In John 14:21, Jesus indicated that love for Him was not some sort of mushy, directionless feeling. Rather, those who claimed to "love" the Savior demonstrated it by their life of obedience. Specifically, they heeded His "commands," as reflected in His teaching.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

The Son declared to His followers that the Father would "love" (John 14:23) them. Likewise, both the Father and the Son would remain with His disciples. This included the Father and the Son taking up residence within believers.

teachings in their daily lives. When believers show this kind of love for Jesus, they enjoy three specific blessings: the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and a deeper knowledge of Jesus.

The Messiah's statements puzzled one of His disciples. His first name was "Judas" (vs. 22), though he was not "Iscariot," the betraying disciple who had left earlier (13:30). The faithful disciple Judas asked Jesus why He would show Himself to them but not to everyone else in the world.

Jesus did not answer Judas's question directly, for the disciples would learn soon enough the ultimate purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry. He was more concerned about their relationship with Him. So, once again, He stated that if they loved Him, they would obey His teachings.

In addition, both the Father and the Son would come to believers and make their home with them. In contrast, those who did not obey Jesus' teaching showed that they really did not love Him and had rejected the Father. To accept the Son is to accept the Father, and to reject the Son is to reject the Father.

5. *In what sense would Jesus come back to His followers?*

6. *What connection did Jesus make between love and obedience?*

7. *What pledge did Jesus make concerning the Father?*

The Son's Return to the Father

John 14:25-29, KJV

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 14:25-29, NIV

²⁵All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you;

The Son's Return to the Father

While reading John 14:25-29, note these important points in your class discussion:

- Noting that He had imparted truths to the apostles while living with them and inferring that His departure from them was imminent, Jesus once again promised that the heavenly Father would send His Spirit to them in His name.
- The Holy Spirit—that is, the Advocate or Comforter—would be their teacher who will remind them of all Jesus has taught them.
- Moreover, Jesus would impart His peace to all His followers, a peace unlike any peace that the world can give.
- Therefore, those who place their trust in Jesus

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27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”

Jesus covered a wide range of issues, which verse 25 refers to as “all this.” Just as the Father had sent His Son into the world, He would also send the Spirit to dwell permanently within Jesus’ followers. This “Advocate” (vs. 26) would instruct believers by helping them recall all that Jesus taught. The Spirit, having been sent in Jesus’ name, would officially represent Him on His behalf.

As Jesus was about to depart from His disciples, He bestowed on them His “peace” (vs. 27)—not the absence of conflict and adversity, but the assurance of God’s grace, regardless of the situations His followers experienced. His presence through the Spirit would strengthen their hearts.

Jesus reminded the Eleven that while He was “going away” (vs. 28) from them, He also promised to return. Because His disciples genuinely “loved” (vs. 28) the Son, they would come to rejoice that He was going to the Father in heaven. The Son would voluntarily submit Himself to the Father’s redemptive plan through His death at Calvary.

8. What would enable Jesus’ followers to continue to grow in their faith?

9. What did Jesus want His “peace” (John 14:27) to do for His disciples?

need not be in distress or fearful.

- Once more, Jesus related to His disciples that He will be going away from them for a short time before He returns to them in a little while.

- Thereafter, Jesus will go to almighty God, who is greater than Him, and since they love Him, they should be elated over His reunion with His heavenly Father.

- Finally, Jesus stated that He was informing them of what is to occur so that they will believe when it does happen.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

For three years, the Savior’s disciples had learned eternal truths directly from Him. His upcoming departure meant they needed Someone else to help them continue to grow in their faith. That person is the “Holy Spirit” (John 14:26).

Suggested Answer to Question 9

The Savior realized that His followers felt “troubled” and “afraid” over the news of His departure. Therefore, Jesus stated that He was leaving them with His “peace.” Its abiding presence would relieve their hearts and embolden their faith in Him.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

‘Peace’ in Scripture

The Hebrew word for “peace” is *shalom* (*shaw-lome*). In its verbal form, *shalom* means to make amends, to make whole, or to make complete. *Shalom* was the result of an Israelite’s faithful devotion to his or her covenant with the Lord (see Num. 25:12; Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26).

John used the Greek word *eirene* for peace. In the context of John 14:27, peace is that special and unique aspect in the relationship between Jesus and His followers. It is a gift that Jesus bestows upon those who place their trust in Him (see John 20:19, 21, 26).

3 Bible Application

Explore the Holy Spirit's role in your life.

Although the person of Jesus resides in His heavenly kingdom, God's Spirit is with us to help us remain faithful to our heavenly Father. Allow students to select the activity they would like to do. If possible, photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout: 'Fruit of the Spirit'

Jesus embodies all the characteristics listed in Galatians 5:22-23, and since we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:18), it is the Holy Spirit who is cultivating these characteristics as part of our nature (see 2 Thess. 2:13).

Share answers in your group and see if someone can recite Galatians 5:22-23 from memory.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Filled with the Holy Spirit!" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12** in the student book. Words ranging from astounding to wonderful to even rapturous come to mind when thinking about the Holy Spirit in you. "Filled with the Spirit" can mean different things to different Christians, but the same Spirit will fill those who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. As Christians, life without God is entirely meaningless but the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is evidence that God is with us.

Skit: The Presence of God's Spirit

Write a script that depicts how the Holy Spirit abides in Christians in a modern setting. The situation may involve a group of interacting Christians or one or two Christians among non-Christians. The Holy Spirit is evident in how He either dwells in Christians or empowers them to act in a specific way. Next, either read the script or perform it before the class. Discuss how the message of the skit conveys this week's Lesson Focus.

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Filled with the Holy Spirit!

How absolutely astounding is the image of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters while the almighty Creator brought the universe into existence (see Gen. 1:2)! What is equally amazing is that this same Spirit resides in us at this very moment! To truly comprehend this reality is breathtaking to behold!

Nevertheless, how often do we neglect or forget the fact that God's Spirit dwells in us? How often do we neglect the Holy Spirit when we encounter worldly temptations? How often do we forget the Holy Spirit when we endure grievous hardships? How often do we neglect the Holy Spirit when we study Scripture? How often do we forget the Holy Spirit when we seek God's guidance?

Moreover, as Christians, most of us tend to exalt heroes such as Moses, Elijah, and Peter, who parted the Red Sea (see Exodus 13:17-22), caused fire to burn the sacrifices on Mount Carmel (see 1 Kings 18:16-46), and raised Tabitha from the dead (see Acts 9:32-43)? As righteous as Moses, Elijah, and Peter were, they were still the servants of God, whose Spirit brought these miracles to pass. Without the Holy Spirit, none of these events would have occurred.

So, too, in our own lives, without the Holy Spirit, we would be spiritually lost and powerless. Praise God! The Holy Spirit is with us to comfort us, to guide us, and to help us overcome any ordeal or challenge. Therefore, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

10. What one word describes how you feel about the Holy Spirit abiding in you? Explain why you chose this word.

11. What does it mean to "be filled with the Spirit"?

12. How can the Holy Spirit deliver Christians from feelings of despair?

4 Life Response

Pray for the Spirit's comfort, protection, and direction.

To neglect the Holy Spirit when we make life decisions or while we behave in any situation is to place ourselves in spiritual peril. Who better than God's Spirit to guide and shield us as we experience hardships, indecisions, adversaries, or even momentary happiness? We are not alone! Because of Jesus' love for us, the Holy Spirit is truly here for us.

Have students read "Following the Spirit" in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then pray in groups of

two or three for the Holy Spirit's comfort, protection, and direction this coming week. They may want to end their prayers by thanking their heavenly Father for sending His Spirit to them. You may want to end the class singing the chorus "Spirit of the Living God, Fall Fresh on Me" as you close.

Alternatively, end the lesson with a closing prayer. Thank our Lord Jesus for caring for us so much that He understands our needs and for asking God to send the Holy Spirit to be with us so that we won't have to struggle in this world alone. Ask God to help students always be mindful of the Holy Spirit in their lives and praise Him for the many ways His Spirit is here for them.

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Following the Spirit

During the Last Supper, Jesus promised the apostles that He would ask His heavenly Father to send the Spirit of truth to be with them after His departure from this world. God's Spirit would not only be an Advocate on their behalf but also a Comforter during times of hardship. And so, too, the Holy Spirit is with us as He was with them.

► *Pray today and the rest of this week for the Holy Spirit to comfort and protect you. Also, look for where He is guiding you to new opportunities of service and people who need to find Jesus.*

 PowerforLiving

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

KEY VERSE

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. —John 14:16, KJV

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever." —John 14:16, NIV

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Revelation 21:1-9. Ask your students to think what things the Lord is always making new.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 1 through August 7

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 90:1-12—The Lord, Our Dwelling Place.
- Tue.** 1 John 2:12-17—To Love God Is to Know God.
- Wed.** 1 John 5:1-5—Faith Is the Victory.
- Thu.** Isaiah 43:14-21—God Will Do a New Thing.
- Fri.** Isaiah 55:1-5—Come, You Who Thirst.
- Sat.** Romans 8:31-39—More Than Conquerors.
- Sun.** Revelation 21:1-9—God Will Dwell with His People.



Lesson Overview

Week of August 7

1 Life Need:

Discuss why we need encouragement in our world today.

2 Bible Learning:

Learn how God will make all things new.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—A New Heaven and Earth

3 Bible Application:

Identify ways we can be encouraged by God's future for us.

4 Life Response:

Trust God to make all things new in His time.

Suggested Material:

■ Words (and video) to the song "In His Time"

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Be encouraged! God will make all things new.

Lesson Scripture:

Revelation 21:1-9

A New Home

A New Heaven and Earth—The Book of Revelation, written by the apostle John, covers a portion of what God has in His plans for His children. These verses are to keep the Christians' heads up and a smile across one's face. Many things of the world are cruel, out of control, unfair, and overwhelming. But be encouraged; God plans to make everything new. John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. Old Jerusalem was where the temple was and where Jesus died and rose again. Jesus will be in the New Jerusalem in person; He will wipe away all tears, death, and sorrow. Pain, regret, loneliness, injustice will be gone! Can you imagine seeing Jesus and having an audible conversation with Him?

All Things Made New—God Himself said, "I will make all things new." That means new bodies, new thinking, new music, new relationships with each other, and a new love for God. Everything will be perfect and last forever. Mark God's words; He never goes back on a promise.

'It's Done!'—Only three times in the Bible does God say that His work is completed—at Creation, on the Cross, and now, with the new heaven and earth. What God begins He can and will complete! There are no loose ends, no unfinished business, nothing random. God describes His people as those who have come to Him and believed, and He lists those who are excluded from the joy of the new Jerusalem, beginning with the cowardly and the unbelieving. All those who prefer sin to Jesus Christ are assured of the second death. The word *new* is the byword of the Book of Revelation. As believers, our hearts should fill with joy at the sound of God preparing all things fresh, brand spanking new.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask students to tell you things that God is making new every day, and list those things on a board or sheet of newsprint. For example, every day God creates new animals, new people, and a whole new day and night. What we see in our study of Revelation the next four weeks is that God will make everything new on earth and in heaven.

Link to Last Week

Some of your students may want to share how the Holy Spirit comforted, protected, or directed them this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss why we need encouragement in our world today.

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A New Home

Brianna's forlorn thoughts were interrupted with someone's irritated, "Hey, aren't you next?"

She focused on the open door in front of her, then turned to nod at the other three women standing in line with towels. "Sorry," Brianna murmured, as she shuffled into the open door of the tiny bathroom that had just been vacated.

She had been in a Christian-run safe house and shelter for almost a week, and it was the last place she wanted to be. She hadn't foreseen the events that had brought her to this point, though now she should have predicted it. She should have been smarter. Done more. Tried to get away from her husband Raynard sooner when he refused to get help for his problems.

Later that day, she sat in the large living room as other women assembled for the evening Bible study and prayer time. Joanne was the group leader for the night. The woman had experienced drug use and homelessness, among other things. So, when she began talking about real hope that was in Christ, Brianna didn't tune her out immediately.

"How can we have hope in our situation?" scoffed one woman.

"If you are in Christ, you can indeed have hope," Joanne gently offered. "Life can be extremely unfair, hurtful, and hard. But believers have a promise that outshines anything this world can offer. One day, we will know no sorrow. We will be with the Lord, where all things will be new."

1. What are some things that discourage us in this life?
2. When you're discouraged, how does faith in God's gift of eternal life change your perspective?
3. How does God's promise to one day make all things new encourage you to keep moving forward?

LESSON FOCUS: Be encouraged! God will make all things new.

Read the anecdote in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then form small discussion groups to respond to **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

Question 1 directs your students to reflect on situations that lead us to discouragement. They may be general issues like inflation, politics, etc. or personal issues that bring discouragement like long term sickness, loss of job, family conflict, etc.

Question 2 encourages your students to redirect their discouragement to God's promises that there will be a better future. Guide your students to look beyond what we see now into God's promise of eternal life and making everything new.

Question 3 allows your students to personally think about how God's promises make a difference in their lives. Or are they just something generally accepted but not personalized in their own lives. In Revelation, God actually revealed to John how He will make all things new for those that believe in Him.

2 Bible Learning

Learn how God will make all things new.



Before you teach this step, put up the poster “A New Heaven and Earth” from the Resource Kit and make copies of the

handout that goes with

it. You will use these the rest of this quarter. Read the first two paragraphs on the handout, then note the drawing of the letters Alpha and Omega, the painting of the new Jerusalem, and the photo of the island of Patmos, where John had his vision recorded in Revelation.

BIBLE EXTRA

John and His Vision

Our lesson’s Scripture gives great hope for the future. No matter how one interprets Revelation, it is clear that its prophecies speak of grave judgment upon the lost and glorious hope for God’s saints. Having been exiled to Patmos for his faithful testimony for Christ, John was blessed to receive such glorious revelation from the Lord. Jesus gave the outline of this book of prophecy when He told John to “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (Rev. 1:19).

Many commentators see the reference to what “you have seen” as the vision of the glorified Christ in chapter 1, “what is now” as the current state of the churches in chapters 2 and 3, and “what will take place later” as the rest of the prophetic revelation. Because there are so many approaches to interpreting the Book of Revelation, many people are afraid even to attempt reading and understanding it. But such fear is to their detriment, for “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (vs. 3, KJV).

A Blessed Home

Read Revelation 21:1-3 and note these important truths in your class discussion:

- John saw in his vision of the future that the present earth and heaven will pass away.
- The new earth will have no sea, whereas the present earth’s surface is three-fourths water.
- The New Jerusalem will be as beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband.

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A Blessed Home

Revelation 21:1-3, KJV

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Revelation 21:1-3, NIV

¹Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Having just described God’s righteous judgment on the Earth, culminating in the “great white throne” judgment at the end of the ages (Rev. 20:11-15), John turned his attention to our great hope, our new home with Christ. John saw a new heaven and new earth because the first heaven and first earth had passed away in the judgment of God.

Included in John’s vision of the new heaven and earth was an interesting observation, namely, there was no sea upon the face of the new earth. Whereas the oceans and seas of the current earth cover some three-fourths of the surface, such will not be the case on the new earth. From the beginning, massive amounts of water were associated with death and God’s judgment. From that time until the final judgment when John saw that the “sea gave up the dead that were in it” (Rev. 20:13), the vast waters of the deep have and will claim an untold number of lives. This will not be so on the new earth.

After these observations of the new heaven and earth,



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 825-827 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

- In the new earth and heaven, God will dwell with His people.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

After seeing a vision of the final judgment, John then saw a new heaven and a new earth, which was necessary because the first heaven and earth had passed away in fiery judgment.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

After seeing the new heaven and new earth, John witnessed the New Jerusalem coming down from

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John saw God's holy city, the New Jerusalem, descending from heaven. He specifically noted that it was beautifully adorned as a bride for her husband. The imagery of a bride and her husband reminds us that the Lord's people are referred to as His bride (see Eph. 5:25-27). And one day, His bride will rejoice during her marriage to the Lamb (see Rev. 19:7-8).

Because the description of a bride and her husband is used for the new Jerusalem, many commentators see it as the home of the resurrected, glorified Church after the heavenly wedding. This is right in line with what the voice from heaven said as the New Jerusalem descended from heaven. God's dwelling place has come down, and His people will reside with Him there. Such is the great hope of the saints of God.

4. *What new things did the apostle John see?*
5. *Then what did John see descending from God in heaven?*
6. *Who will reside there?*

A Blessed Hope

Revelation 21:4-6, KJV

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I

Revelation 21:4-6, NIV

⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death⁷ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.⁸

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."⁹

⁶He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

BIBLE EXTRA

Growing Old Is a Pain

The very process of growing old is itself a source of pain and sorrow. It has been rightly said that aging is not for the faint of heart. Solomon painted a very effective word picture in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes regarding the aches and pains of growing old. Our latter years can be quite challenging, including diminished eyesight and hearing, waning strength and ability to walk steadily, loss of teeth, difficulty sleeping, fear of things that did not bother us earlier in life, lack of appetite for the good things in life, and ultimately returning to the dust from which we came (Eccl. 12:1-7). This and so much more give great cause for people to weep throughout their lifetimes.

BIBLE EXTRA

He's No Liar

When God promises that He will "make everything new" (vs. 5), He will do so. He keeps His promises. Though we still look forward to the glorious time of no more tears, pain, and death, even now we who have that hope have every reason to rejoice in the Lord and His goodness in this life, as well. Yes, there is death today; the mortality rate of humanity is 100%. But because God promised that we will be with Him in our new home for eternity, we do not mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). Though the night may bring sorrow and tears, in the Lord joy still comes with the rising sun (Ps. 30:5). As David rejoiced and proclaimed of the Lord, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever" (vss. 11-12, KJV). Likewise, we can take heart knowing that no matter how dire the situation is, it too will pass, and we will see that the Lord has been with us all along.

God in heaven. He observed that it was beautifully attired as a bride prepares for her husband.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

The New Jerusalem will be God's dwelling place with His people. This is the great hope of a new home that His people will one day have with Him.

A Blessed Hope

Read Revelation 21:4-6 with your class and note these key ideas:

- In his vision of the future, John saw the new heaven and earth, where there will be no pain, death, or reasons to cry.
- We can be confident that God will make everything "new" on earth and in heaven.
- In the new heaven and earth, Jesus,

BIBLE EXTRA

The Seven Last Plagues

The angel who came to John to show him the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9) was one of those who in John's vision from the Lord released one of the seven last plagues upon the earth. The Lord's series of judgments upon the earth that John saw began with the seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1-6), continued with the seven trumpets (8:7-9:21; 11:15-19), and culminated with the seven vial or bowl judgments (16:1-21). The first bowl judgment brought grievous, festering sores upon those who took the mark of the beast and worshiped his image (vs. 2). The second bowl brought death to all that lived in the sea, while the third turned the fresh waters to blood (vss. 3-4).

The fourth bowl caused the sun to scorch the people, and the fifth plunged the beast's kingdom into abject darkness (vss. 8-10). The sixth bowl opened the way for an invasion by the kings of the east, and the seventh brought devastating earthquakes and huge hailstones upon the earth (vss. 12-21). It is instructive to us that the one who was part of such devastation also introduced the glorious bride of the Lamb. It gives us great hope knowing that the God of such awful judgment is also the God of such amazing grace.

the Beginning and the End, will satisfy our spiritual thirst from the spring of the water of life.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

For those who dwell with Him in the new Jerusalem, God will wipe away all their tears. And the tears will be gone forever because there will be no more sorrow from death and no more crying in pain. There will never be reason to weep again.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

Unlike people who may be unwilling or unable to keep their promises, God is both willing and able. He who gave the promises is faithful and true to keep them. And He who is all powerful is more

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will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."

Because God's people will be with Him in our new home, it will be a place of great joy. All those tears we experienced in this sin-ravaged world will be wiped away forever. There will be no more death and mourning, no more pain, no hunger or diseases, and no more oppression of one person or people over another. Crime, warfare, and other forms of violence will be gone. All of this will pass away with the onset of the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem.

Of course, the promise of a glorious eternity bereft of death, suffering, and sorrow is only as good as the word of the one making the promise. For a promise to be kept, two conditions must be met: the promiser must have the intent to keep it, and he or she must have the ability to keep it.

Our Lord, however, does not suffer from any of these limitations. He who made heaven, Earth, and everything therein is more than able to keep every promise He ever made. Therefore, we can trust that every word spoken by Him who sits upon His eternal throne is faithful and true. For He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things. Our Lord is the first cause and our ultimate destination. He gives meaning to what would otherwise be a futile existence. Furthermore, He gives living water to all who thirst and desire to be with Him. What a blessed hope God's people have of a new home with Him!

7. *What will God wipe away in His holy city?*

8. *How can we trust this will be so?*

9. *What will the Lord give us freely from His fountain?*

A Blessed Heritage

Revelation 21:7-9, KJV

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Revelation 21:7-9, NIV

7 "Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they

than able to do so.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

The Lord, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, will give all who come to Him in thirst the water of life from His fountain. Our Lord is the source of all life, and He gives living water freely to all who come to Him in faith.

A Blessed Heritage

Read Revelation 21:7-9 and highlight these points with your class:

- Only those who live victoriously in Christ will inherit the new earth and heaven.
- People who reject Christ and live a life against

God will experience a second death after the death of their earthly body.

- The second death will be living eternally in a fiery lake of burning sulfur.
- John wasn't just told of these great truths—an angel took him to see it for himself.

Suggested Answer to Question 10

God's people, those who are victorious overcomers by faith in the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice for their sin, will inherit all the good things God has in store for them. Such is the great hope of the believer!

Suggested Answer to Question 11

Those who die in their lost, sinful state, choosing to practice depravity instead of receiving forgiveness by faith, will not dwell in God's holy city. Rather, their part will be the lake of fire, the second death.

Suggested Answer to Question 12

One of the angels who poured one of the bowls of God's wrath upon the earth summoned John to come see the glorious bride, the wife of the Lamb.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

will be my children. ⁸But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

The blessed heritage of the victorious overcomers in Christ is that they will inherit all the good things that God has in store for His children. However, those who reject the Lord and choose to continue their sinful ways have quite a different future. Cowardly unbelievers who continue in their abominable practices, from murder to all manner of immorality, face the final judgment and will be sentenced to the lake of fire, which is the second death. Death is not annihilation, but rather separation. Physical death is separation of the spirit from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the spirit from God. The first death is physical; the second death is spiritual. So those who reject God's forgiveness and continue in their sin will face spiritual separation from Him for eternity in the fiery lake of brimstone and sulfur.

Then, one of the angels who was involved in releasing the last seven plagues upon the earth came to John with a message of hope. John saw the glorious bride, the Lamb's wife, descend out of heaven. God's saints truly have a great hope and home to look forward to. May that hope keep us faithful to Him.

10. *Who shall inherit all things?*

11. *Who shall not dwell in God's holy city?*

12. *What did the angel summon John to come and see?*

BIBLE EXTRA

The Heavens Shall Pass Away

The apostle Peter also wrote of a new heaven and earth coming in direct reference to God's judgment: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10, KJV). Yet even with the promise of fiery judgment, God's people can look "forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells" (vs. 13b, NIV).

3 Bible Application

Identify ways we can be encouraged by God's future for us.

This lesson step provides your students an opportunity to identify ways we can be encouraged by what God has planned for us in eternity. Allow students to select the activity they would like to do. If possible, photocopy this page and give instructions to each group.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "A New Perspective" in the student book and respond to **Questions 13, 14, and 15**. Developing a new perspective on life's problems can change discouragement to encouragement. No matter how difficult life becomes, God is always in control of our lives. Not only is God presently in control, but He also promises to make all things new in the future.

Limited Eyesight

Read Psalm 73:12-28 and answer the following questions. You may then want to share your answers with the rest of the class:

- Why was the psalmist discouraged?
- What happened to change his discouragement to encouragement?
- What can you do when discouraged about what others have compared to what you have?

Quote Discussion

Discuss this quote from Dr. John Rice's book, *Bible Facts about Heaven*: "We preach that it is wonderful to be a Christian, that Heaven is to be gained and Hell shunned. Then when one of our loved ones dies, we act as if it were all a lie. Our actions say that this world is better than the next. . . . For the Christian, death is not a tragedy but a glorious promotion—not the sad end, but the glorious beginning."

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A New Perspective

Starting in 2019, the COVID pandemic consumed the world. People's hearts filled with discouragement. No one understood the virus or knew how to respond. The only certainty was its rapid growth and danger to the world. Life as "normal" ceased—no more traveling, large gatherings, or even dining in restaurants with loved ones.

Cynthia's mother died before the pandemic hit; six months later, COVID took her father's life. Jason had many problems in his life—the pandemic was the final straw. He ended his life. Debbie and Jerry woke in the middle of the night to the sound of their six-year-old daughter gasping as she took her last breath.

Throughout the world, people's perspective on life changed. Life no longer was about hustling and bustling to climb the ladder to success. It became about survival. Families struggled to eat and keep a roof over their heads.

Over time, people began to process and heal. Cynthia's loss of both parents in six months continued to hurt. But she experienced peace in knowing her parents were together for eternity. Jason's family wondered if they could have prevented his suicide, and they learned the importance of being open with one another. As Debbie and Jerry walked by their daughter's bedroom, their hearts cried out to hold her once again. Yet, their faith told them Jesus now held her forever.

Christians turned again to God's Word about life after physical death—life with no more pain, sorrow, or tears in eternity with Christ. God's promise of eternal life in His presence took on a new meaning as people realized once more that this life is not the end but just the beginning.

13. *What do you do when chaos fills your daily life?*

14. *How do God's promises of a new heaven and earth encourage you in the midst of chaos?*

15. *Do you take time to meditate on His promises when discouraged?*

4 Life Response

Trust God to make all things new
in His time.

Ask your students to read “In His Time” in the student book and answer the question. Remind your students that trusting God is demonstrated through our actions, not just head knowledge. We can say that we trust God’s promises, but our actions of living in despair, doing things our way and not spending time with God speaks louder than our words.

If you have the words (and/or the video) to the song “In His Time,” you may choose to end class

by first singing this chorus a few times together. Then, allow some of your students a few minutes to thank God for His promise to make all things new and to allow us to be a part of His new creation. You may also want to thank God that we can daily trust Him to fulfill His promises even when we can’t always see Him at work in our lives.



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In His Time

A chorus from several years ago proclaims that God “makes all things beautiful in His time.” We would like that time to be now, but God’s timing is not our timing. He doesn’t tell us the exact time when Jesus will return and all things will become new, but we can depend on God fulfilling His promises.

► *If you believe God’s promise to make all things new, how should this affect your actions when discouragement or trials come in your life?*

KEY VERSE

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

—Revelation 21:4, KJV

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

—Revelation 21:4, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 8 through August 14

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 66:6-14—You Shall Be Comforted in Jerusalem.
- Tue.** Isaiah 66:18-22—God’s Glory Revealed in Jerusalem.
- Wed.** Hebrews 12:18-29—City of the Living God.
- Thu.** Psalm 48—Jerusalem, Joy of All the Earth.
- Fri.** Zechariah 8:1-8—The Faithful City, the Holy Mountain.
- Sat.** 1 Timothy 6:11-16—God, Who Dwells in Unapproachable Light.
- Sun.** Revelation 21:10-21—The Holy City.

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before next week, read Revelation 21:10-21. Ask your students this week to think about what this saying means: “Too heavenly minded, no earthly good.”



Lesson Overview

Week of August 14

1 Life Need:

Discuss why looking forward in life is important.

2 Bible Learning:

Read what the new Jerusalem will look like.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—A New Heaven and Earth

3 Bible Application:

Discover ways to keep looking toward our heavenly home.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible handout—Faithfully Looking Forward

4 Life Response:

Thank God for our destination of eternal glory.

Suggested Material:

■ Blank notes (in a box or pack) that could be used as thank You cards

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:
Keep looking toward the city that shines with God's eternal glory.

Lesson Scripture:
Revelation 21:10-21

A New City

The New Jerusalem—An angel took John away and showed him the holy city of Jerusalem in the last days. Also, he saw the bride, the Church. This will be the gathering place for God's children. The New Jerusalem has a radiant light coming from it. John described a high wall, not for protection but to add to the city's beauty and definition. Also, there are 12 gates with the names of the tribes of Israel. The wall had 12 foundations representing the 12 apostles.

No More Tears—Hardship, injustice, viruses, and heartache are often our constant companions in our society. The future often looks full of gloom and doom. But God says that the eternal city and eternal future for believers exceed understanding or imagination. Believers will live in safety, not because there are walls and gates but because there is no evil present. No need to lock doors or have passwords or filter the water. Children will play safely in the streets, and older people will walk without fear.

A Spacious Place—John talks about the city's measurements, which are laid out in an enormous square. The height, length, and width are all equal, like the tabernacle. This represents the fact that the entire city is holy and encompasses the presence of God. Precious stones, like sapphire, jasper, and gold make up the city walls. The luxury jewels point not to the city's wealth but rather to the splendor and glory of God.

God's Heavenly City—The Book of Hebrews says the city architect and maker are God, so it should be beyond anyone's wildest image (Heb. 11:10). Its description is limited to our knowledge of beauty as it exists in our current world. How much greater will the city be as our eyes are made able to bear witness to God's New Jerusalem? This beautiful place is what the Father has prepared for His children, forever and ever more.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class, write on a poster board or whiteboard these sayings: "Too earthly minded, no heavenly good," and "Too heavenly minded, no earthly good." As your students arrive, ask them to reflect on these two sayings and what they mean. Discuss how as Christians we are to be looking forward to our heavenly home while at the same time serving God on Earth. The key is balance—daily seeking God for what we are to do here on Earth as we look forward to our eternal home in heaven.

This week's lesson encourages us to look forward to our

eternal home, the city that shines with God's eternal glory.

Link to Last Week

Let a few students share how remembering God's promises this past week helped them through a time of discouragement.

1 Life Need

Discuss why looking forward in life is important.

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A New City

I wouldn't have guessed you for one of those 'pie-in-the-sky' folk," said Danny. "Christianity wants to keep you focused on some future heaven, which isn't real. Instead, you should be fixated on the here and now, and all the injustice we have to fight."

Terrence was talking to Danny, the new barber. Terrence was in his barber Cecil's chair, getting his fade touched up. Terrence had been talking to Cecil about heaven being an actual place. While Terrence knew it wasn't the typical conversation for most barbershops, what he liked about Cecil's Barber Shop was that a wide range of black men—old, young, and varying economic and educational backgrounds—were clientele. Thus, the topics of conversation were equally wide ranging.

Danny was a 30-something-year-old man with a background of surviving the streets. He engaged young black men to do the same and to become responsible sons, fathers, and community leaders. Terrence respected that and knew Danny to be a good man, but Terrence also tried to sow seeds of the Gospel whenever possible.

"The Bible encourages us to do both and a lot more," Terrence replied, after Cecil had turned his chair enough to where he could look directly at Danny. "I'm concerned about social issues. Still, this world will not last forever. Only those who know the Lord will live forever in heaven, and it's that glorious and real place that I never lose sight of."

1. Are you a person who looks more ahead in life or lingers more in the past? Explain your answer.

2. How would you feel if this world is all you have to live for?

3. Describe how you feel when you think about having eternity ahead of you with God.

Read the anecdote in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then form small groups to discuss and respond to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, some people are almost always forward looking, wanting new directions and challenges. Others are almost trapped in the past because of their life circumstances and cannot see the future God has for them both now and in eternity.

Question 2 directs your students to reflect on what life would be like if all we had to hope for was our present world and all its troubles. We can become overcome with hopelessness and despair if there was no heavenly kingdom to look forward to.

Question 3 encourages your students to look beyond this temporary world that we live in and redirect their minds to the glory of living eternally in God's presence. There is great joy and assurance that comes with knowing that we have eternal life in Christ. Although we don't live on feelings, the assurance of eternal life leads to feelings of joy, peace and contentment.

LESSON FOCUS: Keep looking toward the city that shines with God's eternal glory.

2 Bible Learning

Read what the new Jerusalem will look like.



Read paragraph three on the handout, then note the photo of several precious stones together.

The City from God

Read Revelation 21:10-14 and note these important points in your class discussion.

- In another vision, John saw from a high mountain the heavenly city of Jerusalem.
- He compared the brightness of the new city to the brightness and clarity of

the precious stone jasper.

- The number 12 is very important to the New Jerusalem, which has 12 gates, 12 angels guarding the gates, and the names of the 12 tribes of ancient Israel written on the gates.
- In the Holy City, 12 is also significant to the New Testament because the names of the 12 apostles are on the city's 12 foundations.
- The vision seems to portray and emphasize the

BIBLE EXTRA

Jerusalem

The earthly city of Jerusalem is referred to in Scripture as the city of David because the youngest son of Jesse conquered it and made it both his dwelling place and the capital of Israel (1 Sam. 5:6-9). Later, David brought the ark of God's covenant into Jerusalem. And later still, Solomon built the temple to house the ark, as well as all the other furnishings and implements of worship and sacrifice (1 Kings 5-8). It is the temple that was the abode of God's glory upon the earth.

The heavenly city of Jerusalem, on the other hand, is the city of the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, unlike its earthly predecessor, the heavenly Jerusalem will have no need of a temple. As John observed, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Rev. 21:22-23). Whereas God's glory dwelt in the earthly Jerusalem, God Himself will dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem.

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The City from God

Revelation 21:10-14, KJV

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:10-14, NIV

¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹³There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Our last lesson ended with the angel telling John to "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:9b, KJV). And with that summons, the angel took him "in the Spirit" (NIV) to the mountain top, where John saw the New Jerusalem descending from our God in heaven. John described its brilliance like an exceedingly precious jewel, specifically jasper, with the clarity of pure crystal. A jasper stone is usually a mottled, opaque stone of the quartz family, so it would be a very rare, valuable stone. It is possible that John's focus was more on the dazzling splendor of the city than the specific gem in this



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 825-827 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

continuity between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament church.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

When the angel took John to the top of a high mountain, the apostle saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God in heaven. John saw it as a beautiful, priceless jewel that was pure, crystal clear, and truly magnificent.

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case, but there was something about it that reminded him of the beauty of a jasper stone. That it was clear speaks of the perfection and purity of the holy God who made it.

As John continued to observe the glorious city descend out of heaven, he noted that it had very high walls with 12 gates guarded by angels, three gates per each of the four walls. Each of the 12 gates had the name of one of the tribes of Israel written upon it. Israel represents the Old Testament law, and though keeping the laws that God gave Moses could not save a person from sin, they did point to the need of salvation. Now, it is through salvation in Christ that we will enter the gates of the city.

Whereas the 12 gates are named after the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 foundations are named after the 12 apostles of Christ. We can know with great certainty that the magnificent city is built on the firm foundations of the apostles and their doctrine—that is to say, it is built upon Christ Himself. As sure as the Lord Jesus and His Word are, so too will be the foundations of the New Jerusalem.

4. What did the angel show John descending from heaven?
5. What gates did John see?
6. What foundations did John see?

The City of Gold

Revelation 21:15-18, KJV

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16 And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

Revelation 21:15-18, NIV

¹⁵The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.

¹⁶The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷The angel measured

BIBLE EXTRA

Measuring up to God's Standard

The angel used a golden measuring rod to show John the dimension of the New Jerusalem, and we can be certain that the city was built to God's perfect standards and specifications. One of the tools used to help maintain precise building standards is a plumb line. It is a string or cord with a weight at the end that hangs straight down due to the pull of gravity. Builders will use a plumb line as a guide to help stay as true as possible to perfect vertical while building a wall or some other structure. Similarly, the prophet Amos gave this testimony: "The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, 'What do you see, Amos?' 'A plumb line,' I replied. Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer'" (Amos 7:7b-8).

God's people did not measure up to His standard; therefore, judgment would be coming upon them. We also do not measure up to His standard, especially when compared to the divine plumbline, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. We can never measure up to Him, but thankfully it is not necessary for us to do so. By faith in Christ, we now measure up, because He is the standard, and we are in Him.

BIBLE EXTRA

In the Spirit

"In the Spirit" (Rev. 21:10) indicates a vision from God and is mentioned in other places in Scripture. This happened to the prophet Ezekiel on several occasions. For instance, "He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood" (Ezek. 8:3). The apostle Paul referred to a vision of God that he thought may have been "out of the body" (2 Cor. 12:2).

Suggested Answer to Question 5

John saw 12 gates, three on each of the four walls. And on each of the gates, he saw written the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

Likewise, John saw 12 foundations at the base of the walls. Each foundation is named after one of Christ's apostles. Though not specifically stated, it would be reasonable to assume that as with the gates, each wall has three foundations.

The City of God

Read Revelation 21:15-18 and highlight these important points:

- The angel used a golden measuring rod to confirm the immensity of the city.
- The city was built to perfection; the length and width were equal, forming a city built foursquare.
- Beauty and purity radiated from the city as it was made from pure gold and jasper.

BIBLE EXTRA

Christ, Our Sure Foundation

As the New Jerusalem is built upon 12 rock-solid foundations decorated with a variety of precious stones, so too is our faith built upon the rock-solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is upon this sure foundation that God's people must build their lives. As the apostle Paul put it, "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is" (1 Cor. 3:10-13a). And as Edward Mote wrote in his great hymn of the faith, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness ... On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." When we build our lives on Christ, we will stand no matter what the storms of life bring.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

The angel who was speaking with John used the rod of gold to measure the dimensions of the city, its width, length, and height, as well as to measure the city gates and walls.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

The new Jerusalem will be incredibly massive, with the width, length, and height being 12,000 furlongs or stadia. Depending on the unit, this translates to roughly 1,400 to 1,500 miles in all three directions.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

The city walls were also massive, being 144

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17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick.¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

The angel next took a rod of gold and measured the city. Whether a cube, some other geometric shape such as a pyramid, the width, length, and height were the same. And depending upon which unit one uses to translate a furlong or stadia, the city measured from 1,400 to 1,500 miles in all three directions. Furthermore, the thickness of the walls is 144 cubits. With a cubit typically defined as 18 inches (1.5 feet), the walls' width would span 72 yards across.

John's description of the New Jerusalem details a truly awe-inspiring structure, not only in its incredible size, but also in its incomparable beauty. These massive walls were made of jasper, and the city within the walls is pure gold with the clarity of glass.

What John described coming down from God in heaven staggers the imagination! If the new Jerusalem were to come to rest in the current United States, it would roughly cover the distance from New York City to Dallas. And most of the city would reach above the major portion of the Earth's atmosphere into outer space.

7. What did the angel find with the rod of gold?

8. What were the dimensions of the New Jerusalem?

9. How did John describe the city's wall?

The City of Gems

Revelation 21:19-21, KJV

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious

Revelation 21:19-21, NIV

¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious

cubits thick, which translates to 216 feet or 72 yards across. The wall is made of jasper, and it surrounds a city of pure, clear gold.

The City of Gems

Read Revelation 21:19-21 and highlight these points in your discussion:

- Twelve precious gems decorated the foundation of the wall of the city.
- The gates which allows us to the source of life; Jesus, are made from pearls; a living organism.
- We will walk around the new city of Jerusalem on streets of gold.
- God has made everything perfect and beautiful for our eternal life in the new City.

stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.²¹The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

John next described how the foundations and the gates were decorated with precious gems. We would expect the foundations to be garnished with stones, since each foundation would be strong, solid rock to support such a massive city. So, garnishing solid rock with like materials—stones of great value and beauty—makes perfect sense.

On the other hand, the gates were each a single, giant pearl. Unlike stones, which have their origin within the earth, the pearl has as its source a living organism, namely the mollusk. This is also appropriate, since these gates of pearl allow passage to the very source of life within, specifically God Almighty and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22). When it comes to the New Jerusalem, there is nothing more valuable than the gates, which provide entry to the very presence of God. And, of course, as with the rest of the city structure, the great city street is made of the purest gold.

10. How are the foundations decorated?

11. Of what did God make the gates?

12. How can this glimpse of the new Jerusalem give God's people hope today?

Suggested Answer to Question 10

John saw that the foundations of the city were decorated with a variety of precious stones, which speak not only of incomparable beauty but also of the rock-solid nature of the foundations themselves.

Suggested Answer to Question 11

John saw that each gate was one giant pearl. Since pearls as we know them come from a living source, the mollusk, it helps us understand that the gates are the way to the very source of all life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Suggested Answer to Question 12

Knowing that we have such a glorious home awaiting us in the very presence of the Lord, we can know that everything we do in this life is not in vain but will be greatly rewarded one day (see 1 Cor. 15:58).

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Ezekiel and the New Jerusalem

Even the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc.) looked forward to the new city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel encouraged the Israelites while in exile that God will build a new Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 40-42, he describes his vision of what the New Jerusalem would look like. Ezekiel's vision included a man using a measuring rod similar to John's experience.

3 Bible Application

Discover ways to keep looking toward our heavenly home.

This lesson step provides your students an opportunity to consider ways that they can rejoice and have hope during trials. Allow students to select the activity they would like to do. If possible, photocopy this page, cut out the boxes, and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout:

'Faithfully Looking Forward'

Read the handout and follow the instructions. After you have completed the handout, share your answers with one another and then with the rest of the class.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Greener Pastures or Golden Streets" from the student book and respond to **Questions 13, 14, and 15**. We must be truthful concerning the difficulty of remembering to fix our eyes on eternity in the midst of our daily struggles and when we make decisions. What we see in front of us is what captures and keeps our attention. God's Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit can help redirect our attention to what is really important—following Christ.

Fixing Our Eyes on the Unseen

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18 and answer the following questions:

- Why shouldn't we lose hope in the midst of today's troubles?
- What does God promise us concerning eternity?
- What should we do as we go through struggles in this life?
- How can we fix our eyes on the unseen?

After your discussion of the questions, share your answers with the rest of the class.

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Greener Pastures or Golden Streets

Jeremy spent his life searching for one greener pasture after another. First, he earned as many degrees as possible, believing more knowledge meant more happiness. Then, Jeremy found the most beautiful woman and began a family. He believed a lovely family would lead to love and peace. He started his own business, because he thought being his own boss would be better than working for someone. Year after year, he looked for greener pastures, but often discovered the pasture wasn't greener on the other side—it was just different.

Dan lived his life in the present. He knew this life wasn't his final destiny. As a youth, he saw the importance of seeking God's direction in every step he took. When it was time to further his education, he sought God for which school to attend. Dan didn't rush to marry soon after graduation. He waited on God to bring him the person to be his wife.

One day, as Dan spent time with God reading His Word, the Holy Spirit led him to take a step of faith and begin his own business. Dan, his wife, and children prayed daily for the right timing for him to become an entrepreneur. His decision-making was grounded in his eternal destiny—not accumulating earthly possessions. Dan knew that loving and serving God on Earth determined whether or not he would hear God say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Both Jeremy and Dan furthered their education, married, and started their own businesses. But their motivations differed. Jeremy was driven by his desire to find greener pastures. Daniel was motivated by his desire to walk the "golden streets" with his Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity.

13. Why is it important to have the right motivation as we make decisions for the future?

14. How do God's Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit help us move forward in life?

15. What does having an eternal perspective mean to you personally?

4 Life Response

Thank God for our destination of eternal glory.

Your class has discussed and studied how God has not only prepared a new city for us, but how we are to look forward to living in that city. Living in expectation of this new city is something to be grateful for. Ask your students to read “Citizenship in Heaven,” then provide them with blank notes (they usually come 12 or so in a box or pack) that can be used as “thank You” cards. They may want to start their writing in the notes with the words, “Thank You, Lord, that my citizenship

is in heaven with You.”

After your students have completed the activity in the student book, remind them of the importance of knowing Jesus Christ personally in order to have citizenship in the new, eternal city. Encourage anyone who has never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior to stay behind so that you can share the Gospel message with him or her. Tell your class not to throw away their “thank You” cards, but to keep them as a reminder of what they have in Christ.

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Citizenship in Heaven

When thinking of our future home, it’s good to remember Paul’s words to the Philippians: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that we will be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21). Therefore, we should have a grateful heart to God, who will one day transform our bodies to become like His glorious body as we live eternally with Him.

► Write a “Thank You” card to Jesus. Thank Him for coming to saving us from sin and preparing a place for us after death. Express your gratitude to God our Father, Jesus our Savior, and the Holy Spirit. After writing this “thank You” card, keep it in your Bible as an encouragement whenever you are struggling. This world is not our home.

KEY VERSE

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. —Revelation 21:14, KJV

The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. —Revelation 21:14, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 15 through August 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cook* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon. Psalm 63—My Soul Thirsts for You.
- Tue. Zechariah 14:6-11—Living Waters Shall Flow from Jerusalem.
- Wed. John 4:4-14—Jesus Promises Living Water.
- Thu. John 4:15-26—Worship God in Spirit and Truth.
- Fri. John 7:37-40—Rivers of Living Water.
- Sat. Isaiah 44:1-8—Water on the Thirsty Land.
- Sun. Revelation 22:1-9—For the Healing of the Nations.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before next week, read Revelation 22:1-9. Ask your students to think this week of the basic things needed for life to exist.



Lesson Overview

Week of August 21

1 Life Need:

See how we associate darkness with the troubled times of our lives.

2 Bible Learning:

Read about heaven and the everlasting life and light there.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible handout—A New Heaven and Earth

3 Bible Application:

Understand how our long night of life will end in heaven.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible Handout—Created on the First Day

4 Life Response:

Shine Jesus' everlasting light and life now.

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

The night will end—look to the light that will last forever.

Lesson Scripture:

Revelation 22:1-7

The River of Life

The apostle John concludes his tour of the new heaven in the final chapters of Revelation. The darkness of earthly living has ended—now there is just God's eternal light.

Water—John described a river, unpolluted, abundantly flowing from the Father and the Son. Throughout Scripture, rivers have symbolized God's provision. In heaven, no one or nothing will ever go without. This particular waterway also represents peace and rest (Isa. 48:18; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:1-9). Water is a necessity for life. Our need for necessities never ends. In the new city, we will live in harmony with God and each other, the light (as compared with darkness) will make life beautiful, and food will make life healthy and productive. God doesn't give us something we don't need; He gives us more of what we do need.

Trees—The Tree of Life had its beginnings in Genesis. Now, in Paradise, the tree also stands. The tree or trees are lined along the river. Each of the trees is bearing fruit, and its leaves are for healing or health-giving.

Endless Time—What do we do in heaven with no time factors and for eternity? First, the effects of the curse are no more. No more working hard, pain, death, or tears. No more fraud, unemployment, greed, self-interest, corrupt courtrooms, taxes, and politics. Instead, there is the throne of God with the Lamb in the center of heaven that is the focus of our service to the Lord. Whatever we do will revolve around this throne.

Seeing God's Face—Moses longed to see God's face but was denied. But in heaven, the residents there will finally be able to behold the face of God. Also in heaven, everyone will proudly wear God's name. No more shame or doubt about knowing Him or Christians knowing Him.

Believing the Truth—The angel told John, everything you've seen is real. It will all come to pass for the believer. It will take place, not as humans interpret quickness, but all of a sudden, everything will start to unfold. Happy is the person who reads this Revelation given to John, trusts that it's true, and makes life adjustments accordingly.

As Your Students Arrive

As students enter, have them tell you what are the basic things needed for life to exist. They should say things such as light, air, food, and water. Ask them to think about these things as they read today what John saw in heaven.

Link to Last Week

Ask your students if they still have the thank You cards they wrote last week and if they looked at them this past week.

1 Life Need

See how we associate darkness with the troubled times of our lives.

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The River of Life

Natalie sat down on the side of her bed and closed her eyes. Her eight-year-old daughter, Jاليا's, temperature was down. The concern of taking her to urgent care or the emergency room was receding, thankfully. It was a cost that Natalie could ill afford.

Natalie was mentally exhausted from the recent events and circumstances that were present in her life. There was her upended relationship with her husband, who had moved out more than a year ago and was showing no signs of reconciliation. There was her job, which held an enormous workload that according to the last staff meeting was going to increase. Then there was what she felt was the unfair and biased nature of her working conditions that prevented her from thriving.

One of her best friends had been pulling away for years, and constant inquiries from Natalie were met with little or no communication. Recently, Natalie lost one of her closest cousins, when a drunk driver slammed into her car and killed her.

It had been a dark period of her life, and Natalie was hurting. She was grateful, however, for the prayers and support of her pastor's wife, Sister Scott.

"God will get you through this season of hardship," Sister Scott had said. "There are better days ahead. One day, all of our suffering will end. Grab hold of the hope and light that we have in Christ."

1. Why do we associate the words darkness and night with the problems of life?
2. What would you say is the darkest night in your life you have lived through?
3. Did that dark night end happily or not? Explain your answer.

LESSON FOCUS: The night will end—look to the light that will last forever.

Have the class form small groups to discuss their answers to Questions 1, 2, and 3.

For Question 1, darkness and night are metaphors for how we often see the world. When the skies are cloudy all day or the sky becomes dark before a storm, that symbolizes how we feel about the troubled times in our lives.

Question 2 will have individual answers. Students may talk about going through a time when they battled a disease like cancer when a spouse died, or a work or family crisis. Be sure not to force people to share if they would prefer not to discuss a very painful time in their lives.

Question 3 asks them to share how the dark time ended—hopefully happily, but it may even still be going on. Again, don't force anyone to share, but there may be some stories of hope your students can share when they saw that the darkness of the time did not last—just as the darkness of our lives here on Earth will be gone when we are in the light of heaven.

2 Bible Learning

Read about heaven and the everlasting life and light there.



On the poster
handout, read
the fourth
paragraph and
point to the
photo of the
stream with
a waterfall at
Banias, Israel.

be in the city, and God's servants will serve and praise Him eternally.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

The angel showed John "the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (vs. 1). This called back not only to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10), but to the beginning of John's revelation of heaven (Rev. 4:6), as well as to Jesus' ministry on Earth.

The River and Tree of Life

Read Revelation 22:1-3 with students and explore the following:

- In John's vision, he sees a pure river clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and the Lamb.
- This river flows down the middle of the great street of that glorious city.
- The Tree of Life that bears 12 crops of fruit monthly stands for everlasting life and healing.
- In heaven, the curse of evil is gone, the throne of God and of the Lamb will

BIBLE EXTRA

Important Parallels

As we have seen, the new heaven and new Earth will be different from creation as we currently know it. And yet in Revelation 21 the apostle John had already been presented with several parallels between the new heaven and earth and things that had come before—gold and precious stones, God dwelling again among His people, no pain or death.

And now, an even more marvelous parallel was revealed: the Tree of Life from the center of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:3) once again made its appearance (Rev. 22:2). But this time, the holy city would have no curse as there was in Eden (Gen. 3:14-19). The Bible had truly come full circle; in John's vision, God has made all things right in His creation at last. In the new heaven and new earth, Jesus has made everything new.

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The Water and Tree of Life

Revelation 22:1-3, KJV

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

Revelation 22:1-3, NIV

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

After showing John the New Jerusalem, the angel now showed him "the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal" (vs. 1). This hearkened back not only to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10), but to the beginning of John's revelation of heaven (Rev. 4:6)—as well as Jesus' ministry on Earth. These last two were echoed in verse 1, as this river flowed "from the throne of God and of the Lamb." These waters were not only physically pure but spiritually pure as well.

The vision then extended further—all the way back to the creation of man. As the river continued "down the middle of the great street of the city on each side . . . stood the tree of life"—the same Tree of Life Adam and Eve had been prevented from eating (Gen. 3:22-24). In addition, this tree was no longer in a separate location but planted throughout the city, on both the river's banks. Its fruit would be readily available for all who desired it.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on p. 1082 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

“On each side of the river stood the tree of life” (vs. 2)—the same tree Adam and Eve had been prevented from eating (Gen. 3:22-24). However, this tree was no longer in a separate location but on both the river’s banks, bearing “twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month” (vs. 2). There would be no more seasonal harvest, followed by seasons of barrenness; the harvest would be everlasting.

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Furthermore, the Tree(s) of Life would bear “twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month” (vs. 2). There would be no more seasonal harvest, followed by seasons of barrenness; there would always be an abundance of fruit all year round. Furthermore, “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (vs. 2). Thus, “No longer will there be any curse” (vs. 3). Both physical and spiritual death will have been banished.

Above all these human benefits, “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (vs. 3). No longer will the Father God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit seem elusive to us; we will live in their midst—and we will serve Him together, along with the angels and all His other servants. And because the curse will be removed and we will have been given eternal life that does not diminish, this service will not be difficult and/or drudgery; it will be joyous, worshipful, and God-focused.

4. What did the angel show John, in verse 1? How did this vision connect to previous sections of the Bible?

5. What stood on the banks of the river? What was significant about this?

6. What else was in this city, and how would God’s people respond to it?

The Eternal Light

Revelation 22:4-7, KJV

⁴ And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

⁵ And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever

Revelation 22:4-7, NIV

⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for

BIBLE EXTRA

The Tree of Life and ‘Healing’

Revelation 22:2 leaves us with a question: if “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations,” what healing will still be needed in the new Jerusalem? The short answer is: none. This is made clear in Revelation 21:4: “There will be no more death’ [see also Isa. 25:8] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” The Greek word used for “healing” here is *therapeian*, from which we get the word “therapeutic.” Thus, the word here is better understood as “health-giving.”

We must also bear in mind that the angel (and John) was speaking to humans still living in a fallen humanity, where sickness and disease are constants. The real message here is that those who partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life will remain forever healed.

BIBLE EXTRA

‘The River of the Water of Life’

The River of Life runs all through the Bible. For example, Ezekiel 47:1-12 speaks of a stream running from under the new temple in Jerusalem, teeming with sea life and watering “fruit trees of all kinds.... Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing” (vs. 12). Even before the new Jerusalem, the abundance and healing of the nations will have begun.

It is even more important to note that the river carries “the water of life.” Remember Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman in John 4:10, as he offered her “living water.” Jesus was even more explicit in John 7:38-39: “‘Whoever believes in me,’ as Scripture has said, ‘rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this he meant the Spirit.” The living water of the Holy Spirit, “flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb,” (Rev. 22:1), will nourish us forever.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

Even more than constant abundance and the removal of the curse upon mankind, “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (vs. 3). We will live in the midst of Father God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, and joyfully and eternally serve Him together, along with the angels and all His other servants.

The Eternal Light

Finally, read Revelation 22:4-7 and discuss these important ideas:

- God’s people will have His name on their foreheads, and they will see His face.
- God will be the light, so there will be no night and no need for candles, lamps, or the sun.
- The angel speaking with John assured him that these were true words.
- The angel was sent by God to show things that are coming soon.
- Jesus is coming soon, and blessed is

BIBLE EXTRA

The Name on the Forehead

While the reference to the “name . . . on their foreheads” may be purely figurative, there are biblical examples that suggest that this could be a physical marking of God’s servants. In Exodus 28 God instructed Moses, “Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: HOLY TO THE LORD. . . . It will be on Aaron’s [i.e., the high priest’s] forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD” (vss. 36, 38). As Christians throughout New Testament times have been known as God’s priests (1 Pet. 2:9), the idea of a physical mark on the forehead cannot be totally discounted.

And of course this mark stands in stark contrast to a much more notorious mark on the forehead: the mark of the beast from earlier in Revelation (13:16-17). Whatever form it actually takes, those who have faithfully withstood Satan and his representatives will bear God’s mark for all eternity.

he who keeps and obeys the words of this book.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

Not only will God be in their midst, but “They will see his face.” As they once did in Eden, God’s people will be able to look upon Him in wonder and adoration—and live. They will see Him fully, and fully be known as His—so much so, John said, that God’s “name will be on their foreheads.” God’s people will be clearly identified as His.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

“They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.” This light will be both physical and

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and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

ever and ever.

“The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

Not only will all God’s people live with Him in their midst, but as John declared, “They will see his face” (vs. 4). Even one as great as Moses could not see God’s face and live (Ex. 33:20); but in the New Jerusalem all sin and death will be vanquished. God’s people will once again be able to look upon Him in wonder and live. They will see Him fully, and fully be known as His—so much so, John added, that God’s “name will be on their foreheads.” It is not entirely clear whether this mark is literal or poetic; what is clear is that God’s people will be clearly identified.

Furthermore, night will be a thing of the past: “They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light” (vs. 5). Thus, this light will be both physical and spiritual. And as opposed to the millennium, where the reign of God’s people still had a temporal aspect (Rev. 20:4), in the New Jerusalem “they will reign for ever and ever” (vs. 5) with Christ. At this point the description of the New Jerusalem ended, but there still would be some final words for John (and us).

The angel declared to John the veracity of the words he had heard and recorded in Revelation: “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord . . . sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place” (vs. 6)—again, bringing the message full circle as it echoed the opening words of Revelation (1:1).

spiritual, and because of it, night will be no more. Furthermore, in the New Jerusalem God's people "will reign for ever and ever" with Christ.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

First, the angel declared to John, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord . . . sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place" (vs. 6). Jesus Himself then declared in verse 7: "Look, I am coming soon!" He affirmed the angel's words, and then added His own word of exhortation: "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

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Note the closed quotes at the end of verse 6. It is generally believed that the speaker changed in verse 7—to Jesus Himself: "Look, I am coming soon!" The exact meaning and date of "soon" is not known, but it is certain that Jesus wanted His people to remain ready for His return (Matt. 24:35—25:11). He affirmed the words of His angel, and added a word of exhortation: "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll." Those who honored and obeyed God's words would be honored by God at the time of Jesus' return.



This drawing from what is called the *Apocalypse of Andrew of Caesarea*, dating to the 10th century A.D., shows the River of Life flowing from the throne of God, Christ on the throne, the apostles around Him, the Tree of Life by the river, and John (lower right corner) viewing the heavenly scene.

7. What will God's people see, according to verse 4? How will it be clear that they are God's people?

8. What else will God's people enjoy (vs. 5)?

9. Who spoke in verses 6-7, and what did each declare?

BIBLE EXTRA

Keeping the Sayings

How do we keep "the words of the prophecy" John recorded in Revelation? Warren Wiersbe suggests, "it means to guard, to watch over, to preserve intact. We must not add to the Word of God or take anything from it (see Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6). And this responsibility is especially great in light of Christ's return. The word 'shortly' (Rev. 22:6, KJV) means 'quickly come to pass.' The Church has expected Christ to return since the days of the apostles, and He has not yet come, but when John's prophesies begin to be fulfilled, they will happen very quickly. There will be no delay."

WINDOW ON THE WORD

A Description of Heaven

This quote from Puritan pastor Jonathan Edwards helps us understand our life in the light of heaven: "There, in heaven, this infinite fountain of love—this eternal Three in One—is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it, as it flows forever. There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory, in beams of love. And there this glorious fountain forever flows forth in streams, yea, in rivers of love and delight, and these rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of love, in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it were, be deluged with love!"

3 Bible Application

Understand how our long night of life will end in heaven.

Photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give it to the group using it. Give the colored markers or washable paint to the group making the mural.



Handout: 'Into the Light'

Read the instructions on the sheet, answer the questions, and share your answers with the class.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Music Is a Light" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. Some people have a glass half full view of life, while others see the glass as half empty. Those folks can more easily slip into a depression. When David played the harp, evil spirits surrounding King Saul vanished. Larry experienced a similar experience. The music on his saxophone freed him from his depression. Music can be like a light leading us out of a dark place. The knowledge that we are going to a place with eternal light and life can also show us that we are only here living life's troubles for a short time.

A Picture of Heaven

On a large sheet of newsprint, draw a giant mural of heaven that focuses on the light we will find there. You can draw, paint, or color your mural. You may also want to draw figures of yourselves (they can be stick figures) coming out of some darkness or dark clouds "below" heaven as you head toward heaven's light.

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Music Is a Light

Larry began to slip down the dark slope of depression after his oldest son died from asthma at the age of 12. Larry stayed in his bedroom and slept most of the time. He had little to no contact with his family, which included his wife Tracy and other son, 7-year-old Teddy. The depression caused him to lose his job of 23 years and jeopardize his marriage of 18 years to the love of his life. It was a dark time for everyone. Thankfully they are a family of believers. When Larry could not pray, Tracy covered him in prayer.

During that period of depression, Larry's routine included waking up to eat breakfast and going back to sleep for most of the day. This sometimes included days of not bathing or having communication with anyone for no longer than 20 minutes. He did not want any sunlight in the rooms he occupied. He did not want to leave the house. His words were few and far between.

Before the bout with depression, Larry was heavily involved with his church's music department. He is a saxophone player and he loved it. Everyone loved to hear Larry. He knew he was anointed and blessed God's people.

One day, Larry's wife came into the room and suggested for Larry to play his saxophone. Surprisingly, he agreed. When he played, 1 Samuel 16:23 came to life: "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (KJV). The depressive spirit on Larry lifted and he was well. Larry wrote a song in memory of his son Linden.

10. *How easy is it to fall into a depression when things go wrong?*

11. *How can knowing about heaven help someone who is in a dark place?*

12. *Finish this sentence "Music is one light out of a dark place because _____."*

4 Life Response

Shine Jesus' everlasting light and life now.

The everlasting light of Jesus shines in believers right now. When we shine His light in the world, it brings joy and hope like the River of Life that also flows in heaven.

Have students read "Water and Light Are Life" in their student books, and ask them to identify places where the water of life and the light of Jesus is needed. It may be a youth or elderly program. It may be to feed the hungry or clothe the homeless.

End the lesson with a closing prayer, thanking God for His light that shines in the dark places of life and that His light will shine on us forever in heaven.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

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Water and Light Are Life

Water represents life. Although colorless and odorless, it is one of the most important substances on the earth. It's symbolic of life because every living thing needs it to survive. The River of Life in heaven is like the everlasting light that is there as well. Both show that life there is the fullest it can be. But the water of life can also flow here and now into the dark places of people's lives when we share Jesus with them.

► *Think of where the world needs the River of Life to flow and how you can contribute. Where are the dry bones that need watering? Is there an issue with homelessness, crime, or lack of youth and elderly programs? Once you identify a need, try to fulfill it in your own special way.*

KEY VERSE

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

—Revelation 22:1, KJV

Then the angels showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

—Revelation 22:1, NIV

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Revelation 22:18-19. Ask your students to think about how they would feel if Jesus returned to the Earth this week.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 22 through August 28

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Luke 14:16-24—Invited to the Heavenly Banquet.
- Tue.** Exodus 19:9-15—Preparing for God to Appear.
- Wed.** Revelation 1:3-8—The Alpha and Omega.
- Thu.** Isaiah 46:8-13—The Ending Declared from the Beginning.
- Fri.** Isaiah 54:1-5—God Is Your Husband.
- Sat.** Lamentations 3:21-31—God's Steadfast Love Never Ceases.
- Sun.** Revelation 22:10-21—Come, Lord Jesus!



Lesson Overview

Week of August 28

1 Life Need:

Think about how much we think about Jesus' return.

2 Bible Learning:

Read about our heavenly rewards for faithfulness and curses for disobedience.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible hand-out—A New Heaven and Earth

3 Bible Application:

See how we can prepare for Jesus' return.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible handout—A Letter from the Bride

4 Life Response:

Live daily as if Christ is coming today.

Suggested Material:

■ Lyrics (and video) to the song 'Soon and Very Soon' or 'This World Is Not My Home'

Church/Home Theme:
We Are God's People

Lesson Focus:

Say with the Spirit and the Bride, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Lesson Scripture:

Revelation 22:10-21

Come and Enjoy

Jesus' Return—Revelation is an invitation to come to Christ while there is still time. John wanted people to understand that time is running out. When Jesus returns, it's all over. God is not playing a game, fooling around, or wishy-washy about what He's explained in this vision. Once all these events laid out in Revelation happen, there will be no opportunity for second chances. Jesus will suddenly appear, and everyone must be ready. Jesus passes out rewards according to the actions people have done on Earth. Christians don't work to get into heaven, but they delight in doing Christ's bidding once they are converted. This is what will be rewarded.

Jesus' Benefits—Happy and enjoying the benefits of heaven are those who listen to Jesus and delight in doing what He says. Those outside the heavenly gates will long to come inside, but they cannot. They have already made their decision against following Christ while on Earth.

Jesus' Names—Jesus' final words in Scripture announce again who He is—the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega. It's like He's writing His signature three times confirming His identity. Some may read Revelation like it's a fantasy, but Jesus is signing His name to it—it's all true. Along with Jesus' identity confirmation, He and the Church extend an invitation. To those who are spiritually thirsty, He's got plenty of water, the real water of life. For those who want Him, He has open arms. Even if you don't understand everything at first, come anyway. Little by little, God opens the mind and heart to the truth.

Longing for Jesus' Return—"Grace" (vs. 21) is the last thing the author of the book wants humankind to remember. God is so ready and willing to pour out His loving kindness. This is how the Father wants to deal with us. Prayerfully, this is the way we will respond to Him. He is coming suddenly. Please come, Lord Jesus. We are longing for Your return.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask students how they would feel if Jesus returned to the Earth today. List some of their responses on a board or sheet of newsprint. They might say "Ready," "Not ready," "Excited," "Anxious," "Afraid," "Overwhelmed," even "Sad." Let them share the reason for their responses if they want to do that.

Link to Last Week

Some students may want to tell if they saw an area where the river of life is needed and what they may have done about that.

1 Life Need

Think about how much we think about Jesus' return.

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Come and Enjoy

Yehonatan and Shira were married in a traditional Jewish ceremony overlooking the ancient city of Jericho. Shira knew her husband-to-be would be coming for her soon; so she waited for that moment by sitting outside the hall in a wooden swing surrounded by numerous women attendants. Inside the hall, Yehonatan and the rabbi sat at a makeshift table signing marriage documents as numerous men joyfully sang and danced around them, making final preparations for the moment when he would arise to go get his bride. Smiles and laughter abounded as Yehonatan arrived at Shira's swing. After singing, "You Had Me from Hello," he took Shira by the hand and led her to the wedding canopy. There she walked around him seven times to symbolically bring down any walls between them. And thus, their marriage had begun.

For years, Jim had fought off congestive heart failure and kidney disease. For years, his wife took care of him and drove him to doctor's appointments. Jim's once beloved mobility began diminishing every day. But he kept trying. He did what he could to keep up his strength. And he kept his faith. He still read his Bible and prayed every day. But that Sunday morning, he felt he had reached the end of his rope. He was ready to go. And so he prayed aloud in his wife's hearing, "Jesus, come get me." Early that afternoon, Jesus answered Jim's prayer.

A wedding and a death—but both a new beginning of a resplendent relationship.

1. Why is marriage a good picture of how our relationship should be with Jesus?
2. Has there been a time when you felt Jesus should have already returned? Explain your answer.
3. How often do you think about your readiness for Jesus' return?

LESSON FOCUS: Say with the Spirit and the Bride, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Have your students form small groups and discuss how they would answer Questions 1, 2, and 3.

For Question 1, students may say that as we get older or have a debilitating illness, we think more about heaven and a place with no aches and pains or other worldly sorrows. When we are busy and have it "good" here and now, we may not think that much about "going home" to be with Jesus.

Question 2 challenges students to think of a time when they longed for Jesus to return. Perhaps it was a dark time in their lives, or they saw events around them and in the world that seemed to say, "If He's coming back, this should be the time!" Many people over the centuries have said and felt that.

Finally, Question 3 reminds us if we belong to Christ, we should not only be ready to go to our eternal home but actually be longing to see Him and go there. Too often the comforts of this world occupy our time and thinking, and we stop saying, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" This world is not our home, and we should be thinking about our heavenly home and longing for Jesus' return to take us there, whenever that happens to be.

2 Bible Learning

Read about our heavenly rewards for faithfulness and curses for disobedience.



On the hand-out, read the final paragraph, and note the photo of the ancient Isaiah scroll.

The Final Warnings

Read Revelation 22:10-16 with your students and discuss the following ideas:

- The angel of the Lord told John not to close the book he was writing because the time is now.
- The angel continued, saying the ones who are doing wrong can continue to do wrong, and the ones who are righteous should continue in righteousness. Either

there will be belief or unbelief.

- Jesus proclaimed that He is coming soon to the Earth, and He has His rewards with Him. Each person will receive according to their deeds.
- Jesus is the First and the Last: He was at the beginning, and He is at the end.
- Blessed are those who have washed their garments so that they have a right to the Tree of Life and can walk through the heavenly gates.
- Outside the gate are the unrepentant unrighteous.

BIBLE EXTRA

'Continue to Do Wrong'?

The angel's words in verse 11 bear further explaining. Is he really telling people to keep sinning?

Given the rest of the Bible's instructions, we can safely assume this is not the case. Therefore, there must be another interpretation. Some commentators have suggested that since this is the end of the Bible and speaking of the end of time as we know it, this passage refers to life in the New Jerusalem, where the choice to be good or evil has now become permanent. A similar interpretation has a subtle but more urgent difference: Since Jesus' return will be sudden, there will be no time to change after that. The time to repent, or to remain faithful . . . is now. This idea is immediately reinforced by Jesus in the next verse: "Look, I am coming soon!"

In either case, the end result is the same: whatever we choose, we will live with our decision for all eternity.

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The Final Warnings

Revelation 22:10-16, KJV

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Revelation 22:10-16, NIV

¹⁰Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. ¹¹Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy."

¹²"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

¹⁵Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 1082-1083 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

• Jesus sent His angel to John so He would tell the churches these things.

Suggested Answer to Question 4

The angel instructed John not to hide this prophecy, “because the time is near” (vs. 10). He then declared, “Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong . . . let the one who does right continue to do right” (vs. 11). While the specific intent of these words is still debated, their ultimate message is clear: once judgment has arrived, there will no time left to repent.

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In his final words, the angel instructed John not to “seal up the words of the prophecy”—not to hide them away—“because the time is near” (vs. 10). Although everything recorded in Revelation has not been completed, it has begun. Therefore, “Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy” (vs. 11). There is some debate about the meaning, and timeframe, of these words, but it is clear that once judgment has arrived, there will be no time left to repent. John’s readers still had a choice.

Jesus once more warned in verse 12: “Look, I am coming soon!” To those who believe, “I will give to each person according to what they have done” (vs. 12). This does not refer to salvation but to the future rewards believers will receive for faithfully serving God. Jesus could deliver on this promise because He was “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (vs. 13). Those who remain faithful, “who wash their robes” and will “have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (vs. 14)—the New Jerusalem.

However, those who “continue to be vile”—“the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (vs. 15)—will be cast outside, into eternal separation from God (Rev. 20:15).

Jesus’ final words to John again affirmed His message: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches”—not just the churches cited at the beginning of Revelation (chapters 1–3) but His Church throughout all time, for whom His words remain imminent (Rev. 22:10). And once more Jesus affirmed His identity: “the Root and the Offspring of David,” the Messiah promised to the Jews; “and the bright Morning Star,” another messianic title dating back to the days of Moses (Num. 24:17; see also 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28). Jesus, the Morning Star, will soon overcome the darkness permanently.

BIBLE EXTRA

‘According to What They Have Done’

What are the rewards Jesus speaks of giving in verse 12, “according to what they have done”? Does that mean we are saved by our works?

The Bible is clear: “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Yet the Bible is also clear that 1) our faith is evident through our works (Jas. 2:17-20); and that 2) our good works will be rewarded. Other Bible passages speaking of rewards include Luke 6:35; 1 Corinthians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; and 2 Timothy 4:8.

Far more importantly, and as noted throughout this passage, we will be forever in the presence of Jesus, whose “reward is with me.” His glory and everlasting presence will be our ultimate reward, regardless of what other rewards we might receive.

BIBLE EXTRA

Adding and Subtracting

As anyone who has read it knows, Revelation is a tricky book to interpret. Nonetheless, many have tried, resulting not only in fierce debate but heresies and false prophecies about Jesus’ return. In light of this, how should we respond to John’s warning in verses 18-19?

In Matthew 24-25, Jesus warned about trying to determine “the sign of [His] coming and of the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3). He declared, “about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. . . . Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come” (Matt. 24:36, 42). Those who deliberately added to or subtracted from what God had disclosed, therefore openly defied God’s will and would not escape His judgment.

As God’s priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), we are to take God’s Word seriously, and be careful how we represent it. More importantly, we are to faithfully wait for Jesus’ return—at any time.

Suggested Answer to Question 5

Jesus proclaimed, “I am coming soon!” Those who believe in Him will be rewarded “according to what they have done” (vs. 12). The faithful will “wash their robes” and “have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (vs. 14)—the New Jerusalem. However, those who have rejected Jesus will be cast “outside” (vs. 15) and be eternally separated from God.

Suggested Answer to Question 6

First, Jesus affirmed His message: “I . . . have sent my angel to give you this testimony”—intended for every church from John’s day to the present. He then once more affirmed His identity: “the Root and the Offspring of David,” the Messiah promised to the Jews; “and the bright Morning Star,” another messianic title dating back to the days of Moses. Jesus, the Morning Star, will come soon, and overcome the darkness permanently.

The Final Call

Finally, read Revelation 22:17-21 and note these key points in the text:

- The Spirit and the bride, the Church, offer an open invitation for all to come to Jesus.
- If you are thirsty for righteousness, then come to Jesus and find the Water of Life.
- The Spirit warned that anyone who would add words to this prophecy would have the plagues in the book come upon him.
- Alternatively, anyone who would take words away from the book will be punished by God by being banned from the New Jerusalem and have his name taken out of the Book of Life.
- Jesus said, “I am coming soon,” and His rewards will be with Him.

Suggested Answer to Question 7

The Holy Spirit; the bride—His

Church; and all who heard this invitation proclaimed together, “Come!” (v. 17). Anyone who chose to heed this invitation would be with Jesus forever. John then invited the reader, “Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (vs. 17). One more time, the gift of eternal life was being freely offered.

Suggested Answer to Question 8

“If anyone adds anything to [this prophecy], God will add to that person the plagues described. . . . And if anyone takes words away . . . God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City” (vss. 18-19). Just as Jesus

4. What were the angel’s final instructions?
5. What did Jesus declare to John in verses 12-15?
6. What did Jesus affirm in His final words to John (vs. 16)?

The Final Call

Revelation 22:17-21, KJV

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Revelation 22:17-21, NIV

¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.

¹⁹And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

The Book of Revelation ends not on a note of condemnation but of invitation. The Holy Spirit, the bride, and all who

and His angel affirmed His words, John's readers were to do the same.

Suggested Answer to Question 9

He reiterated Jesus' promise, "I am coming soon," and responded, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (vs. 20). He then concluded with the benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen" (vs. 21). True to John's words, Jesus' grace has remained with His people to this day—and will always remain.

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heard this invitation proclaimed, "Come!" (vs. 17). Whether this invitation was to the reader or to Jesus Himself, every believer would enjoy Jesus' presence upon His return.

The next invitation certainly was for the reader: "Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life" (vs. 17). This echoed Jesus' words in John's Gospel: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me . . . rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37-38).

John made one final warning to his readers: "If anyone adds anything to [this prophecy], God will add to that person the plagues described. . . . And if anyone takes words away . . . God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City" (vss. 18-19). Just as Jesus and His angel affirmed His words, John's readers were to do the same, rather than twist them to make them fit their own viewpoints or desires. Those who chose to try to add or take away from the many judgments in Revelation would, instead, run straight into them.

Jesus' promise is then reiterated one final time: "Yes, I am coming soon" (vs. 20). Through John, the angel, and His own words, Jesus had testified to everything depicted through the Book of Revelation. His words were true, and would be fulfilled in their time. In response, John proclaimed, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (vs. 20). Here John used the familiar Aramaic word *maranatha*—declaring "come, Lord" in the common language of the people. Jesus' return will be for all believers, not just an elite few.

John concluded the book, and the Bible as a whole, with the benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen" (vs. 21). True to John's words, Jesus' grace has remained with His people to this day—and will remain forever.

7. What invitation was made in verse 17, and by whom?
8. What warnings did John give his readers?
9. How did John end the Book of Revelation—and therefore, the Bible itself?

BIBLE EXTRA

And in the End

In the final words of Jesus and His angel in Revelation—indeed, of the Bible itself—John's readers are given one final invitation to come and enjoy all He offers.

As it has been made clear throughout the Book of Revelation, every person will be held accountable for his or her choices, for good or for evil. Whether or not we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, He is trustworthy, and His justice will ultimately prevail. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

And yet, even here at the end, Jesus offered one more opportunity to choose His life, and that opportunity remains available to us today. His Spirit says "Come!" His bride—the Church—says "Come!" And everyone who hears Jesus' words and responds says "Come!" (Rev. 22:17). Eternal life is still available to those who seek it.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Bless the Wonderful Name of Jesus

Isaiah 9:6 gives us some of the names of Jesus: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (KJV). However, Scripture has other wonderful and descriptive titles for our Savior: the Alpha and Omega; Immanuel, God with Us; the King of kings and Lord of lords; the Light of the World; the Bright and Morning Star; the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world; Messiah; Teacher; the Way, the Truth and the Life; our Rock and Redeemer; the Good Shepherd; the Commander of the Armies of the Lord; and the Ancient of Days.

3 Bible Application

See how we can prepare for Jesus' return.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Come to Jesus" and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. Our mission now is to introduce as many folks to Jesus as we can so they will accept Him and be ready whenever He returns. Too often we may think of Jesus' return like a trip we purchased a ticket for years ago but are not anxious to take. The temptations and pleasures of this world can lure us into thinking, "It won't be today. I have nothing to worry about."

Jesus' Triumphant Return

Discuss these questions together: How much do you pray for Jesus to return? Are you too comfortable with your life now to even think about it? Do you want Jesus to return so He can punish all the "bad" people we are supposed to be praying for and leading to Him?

It's Final

Create a small information sheet about the return of Jesus Christ. It may include information from today's lesson such as Jesus will return with rewards; blessed are those who keep God's commandments; every person will receive according to their works (good and evil); the Water of Life is freely available to all; Jesus is coming soon, get ready, etc. How can this sheet help you in your own remembrance of His return?

Scripture Study

Read these Scriptures about the Church as the Bride of Christ and discuss the importance of seeing our relationship with God and His kingdom like a marriage: Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 7:34; Matthew 9:15; Matthew 25:1; Matthew 25:5; Mark 2:20; John 3:29. How excited are you to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb as part of the Bride of Christ?

Photocopy this page, and cut out the instructions, and give the instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give it to the group using it.

Handout:

'A Letter from the Bride to the Groom'

Follow the instructions on the handout sheet.



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Come to Jesus

The great gospel singer Mahalia Jackson wrote a song titled, "Come to Jesus," which many churches sang during the altar call portion of the church program:

"Come to Jesus just now, Just now come to Jesus."

Greg accepted Jesus as His Lord and Savior after dating a church girl named Cathy. He had desired a relationship with her, and she had desired for him to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. He went to church with her not expecting to give his life to Christ but to please the woman he wanted to date.

Greg remembers that day like it was yesterday. After the pastor had preached his sermon, he conducted an altar call, and the choir sang, "Come to Jesus:"

"He will save you, He will save you just now."

Before he knew it, this drug dealer and gang member, who knew little about Jesus, was weeping and coming to the altar to give his life to Christ. When he reached the altar, Pastor John prayed with him, and Greg felt set free from all the weight that sin brings. The young man who trusted no one was now trusting the unseen God of deliverance. Tears ran down his cheeks, and his hands were raised high—the same hands that distributed drugs, the hands that beat up young men as an initiation into his gang.

"He will cleanse you, He will cleanse you just now."

It was a glorious day. Greg went on to conduct soul-winning meetings in the neighborhood where he sold drugs. He eventually married Cathy, and they are ministers of the Gospel. Greg had come to Jesus, and Jesus had come to him.

10. Why is it important to come to Jesus as soon as possible?

11. Why do we need to emphasize that Jesus is coming for everyone?

12. What do you need to do to prepare for Jesus' arrival, whenever it is?

4 Life Response

Live daily as if Christ is coming today.

Living each day as if Christ is coming soon is a liberating experience. You are determined daily to keep your spiritual house clean from anything that will hinder your heavenly flight with Jesus. All weights of sins should be daily examined and done away with. Christ's final return is about each individual, and it can come at any time. We should long for His physical return sooner rather than later, but the truth is, He is coming whether we are ready for Him to come or not. He is coming for

each one of us one day or another.

Have your students read "Jesus Is Coming" and then make a list of things that would answer the questions. Perhaps they have bad habits they know they should stop now, or they need to forgive someone who has wronged them, or they need to study the Word more regularly, or they need to have that talk about Jesus with someone the Holy Spirit keeps putting on their mind.

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Jesus Is Coming

Truth cannot be changed because it is the truth. The truth is that Jesus will return, and that one day every life will be held accountable. Those of us who are Christians look forward to that day, whether He comes for all of us at once or individually, so we echo the words of the early Christians: "Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

► *Prepare for Jesus' coming as you would if you were to see Him this week. What things do you need to get in order in your life? What people do you need to forgive? What bad habits need to go? What people need to hear your testimony before you go?*

KEY VERSE

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

—Revelation 22:18-19, KJV

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

—Revelation 22:18-19, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 29 through September 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Hebrews 11:18-19—The Faith of Abraham.
- Tue.** Psalm 84—Blessed Are They Who Dwell in Your House!
- Wed.** Romans 4:1-12—God Reckons Righteousness.
- Thu.** Romans 4:13-25—A Promised Inheritance.
- Fri.** John 8:51-59—Abraham Rejoiced in the Day.
- Sat.** Genesis 11:27-32—First Steps of Faith.
- Sun.** Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-7—Called to Be a Blessing.

You may want to end the lesson by singing "Soon and Very Soon" or "This World Is Not My Home." Then, pray for the return of Jesus and that we are prepared for His glorious return.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-7. Ask your students to think of the last time they were called to do something and why.

E V A N G E L I S M

Leading Your Students to Christ

Did you know your Sunday school classroom can be a mission field?

Most or all of the people attending your class may already have a personal relationship with Jesus.

But others may not, and unbelievers may visit your class. If you sense that an unbeliever is ready to accept Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior, take the time to encourage this person and share the Gospel message. You may know the thrill of introducing someone to the kingdom of God.

Here are some guidelines to consider when speaking to someone about becoming a Christian.



• Present the Gospel clearly and simply.

Here are four points the unsaved adults in your class should know.

1 All of us have sinned and need forgiveness if we are to have eternal life with God (**Rom. 3:23**).

2 Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the Cross for our sins and rose again (**1 Cor. 15:3-4**). In His death, Christ paid for our sins (**1 Pet. 2:24**), and in His resurrection, He overcame the power of death (**Heb. 2:14-15**).

3 You need to acknowledge your sins and repent, believing that Christ died and rose again. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (**Rom. 10:9, KJV**).

4 You will be saved, forgiven, adopted into God’s family, and given heavenly riches (**Eph. 1:3-7**).

• **Explain how someone can respond to Christ’s invitation.** Tell the students that they can come to Christ through a sincere prayer of faith in Christ for eternal life.

• **Describe the adventure of discipleship.** If one of the adults in your class receives Christ as his or her personal Savior, make sure the new believer knows that conversion is just the beginning of life as a disciple of the Lord.

But God commendeth **His**
love toward us, in that,
while we were yet sinners,
Christ **died** for us.
—Romans 5:8, KJV

ADULT TEACHER'S COMMENTARY LESSON CYCLE FOR 2021—2023

SEPTEMBER

DECEMBER

MARCH

JUNE

2020/21

Love for One Another
(Studies in Genesis, 1 Samuel, Luke, John, Acts, Epistles)

Call in the New Testament
(Studies in Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews)

Prophets Faithful to God's Covenant
(Studies in Deuteronomy, Lamentations, 1&2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Prophets)

Confident Hope
(Studies in Leviticus, Gospels, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Hebrews, 1 John)

2021/22

Celebrating God
(Studies in Exodus, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Mark, Acts, Revelation)

Justice, Law, History
(Studies in Pentateuch, 2 Samuel, Ezra, Job, Isaiah, Nahum)

God Frees and Redeems
(Studies in Deuteronomy, Ezra, Matthew, John, Romans, Galatians)

Partners in a New Creation
(Studies in Isaiah, John, Revelation)

2022/23

Chosen, Not Choice: God's Exceptional Choice *
(Studies in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ephesians)

Chosen, Not Choice: Darkness to Light
(Studies in 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Joel, Luke, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, James, Peter)

Chosen, Not Choice: God Calls Us
(Studies in the Gospels, Acts)

God's Kingdom Come
(Studies in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Matthew, Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians)

Adult Teacher's Commentary lessons are organized according to the International Sunday School Lessons' thematic study of the Bible. In six years, this cycle will touch on the Bible's key themes and messages through studies of the books of both the Old and New Testaments.

* *Next quarter's study*

Coming Up Next Quarter

September, October, November 2022

'Chosen, Not Choice: God's Exceptional Choice'

This quarter traces the arc of salvation history from Abraham to Jesus and on to the early church.

The lessons in **Unit 1** are drawn from Genesis and chronicle the origin of Israel, the chosen people, from Abraham to Judah.

Unit 2 journeys through Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, and 1 Samuel showing the move to nationhood.

Finally, **Unit 3** explores the theme of chosenness through the perspective of the Book of Ephesians.

John: The Power of the Word

John began his Gospel account by pointing his audience back to the ultimate starting point of the universe—"In the beginning..." (John 1:1). John described the God who created everything in the beginning through His Word and that this Word—Jesus—was both "with God" and ought to be identified as God!

John supported his divine description of Jesus with eye-witness accounts of His miraculous power such as the healing of a royal official's son and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jesus said all who listened

to His words and believed them would leave darkness and enter life, whereas those who reject them will be judged at the last day because they refused the only source of life. He is the "resurrection and the life" (1:25). Thankfully, the Father and the Son sent the Advocate—the Spirit of truth to both help believers hear and obey God as well as comfort them eternally with God's indwelling presence. Therefore, we can have peace no matter what is happening in the world around us.



John said that Jesus "made his dwelling" or tabernacled (John 1:14) among us. This is a photo of the Tabernacle reconstruction in the Israeli desert. © iStock



This first-century oil lamp illustrates how Jesus is light that shines in the darkness (John 1:5). © iStock

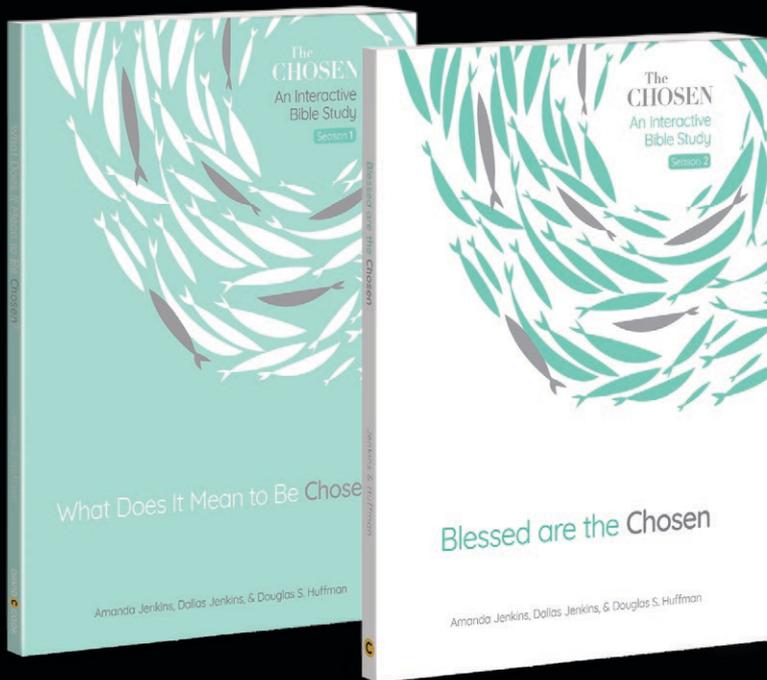


This is the traditional site of Lazarus's tomb in modern-day Bethany (John 11). © iStock



In this painting by El Greco, the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples at Pentecost. Jesus said He would send "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, [who] will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). © iStock/PhotoPublic Domain

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