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DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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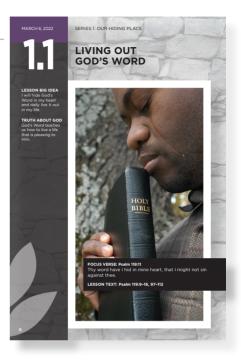
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GETTING STARTED

The first page of each week's material will help you to become familiar with the Lesson Big Idea, Truth about God, Lesson Text, and Focus Verse to be used in your Sunday school class or small group setting.



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 119:9-16, 97-112

Palm 119, the longest of the psalms, is one of several acrostics found in the Psalter, or the Book of Psalms. (See also Psalms 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112.) The form of the acrostic here is that the psalm is shaped into twenty-two sections, each section containing eight verses, with each verse within a section beginning with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the first section, Psalm 119:1-6, each verse begins with the second eight one. Psalm 119:1-6, each verse begins with the second eight of the psalm 119:1-6, each verse begins with the second eight of the second section. Psalm 119:1-6 or Toria kitter of the spalms of the second section in the second section. Psalm 119:1-6 or Toria kitter of the spalms in the Psalter Each of these psalms is followed by one or more messianic psalms in keeping with an ancient tradition of interpretation by attachment.

By one piece of literature being attached to another, the pieces served to provide meaning to one another. The Hebrew word for this was samule, or the server of literature leaned against another or supported another. This structure is seen in three significant places in the Pasiler, Psalms 1-2, Psalms 19-21, and Psalms 19-31.4. in each case, the first pasin in the group extoit be Word of God, and the attached psalms extol the Messiah. This emphasis teacher that mediatation on the Word leads to fath in the Messiah.

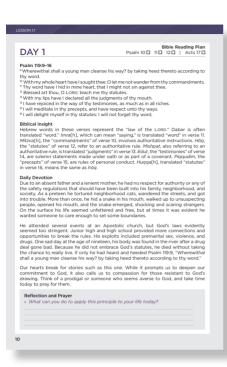
In Psalm 119.1, 3, the phrase "in the way" connects thematically with the first of the Torah psalms and the first psalm in the Psalter. (See Psalm 11.6, 1) The phrase "the law of the Lobb" is also found in Psalm 12, and it should not be taken as a reference only to the law of Moses. The essential idea of Torah is instruction." In its context in the Book of Psalms, Torah refers to the Psalter itself unless the immediate context defines the word in connection with Sinal.

In Psalm 119:9-16, each verse begins with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet, beth. In Psalm 119:97-104, each verse begins with the thirteenth letter, mem. Psalm 119:105-112 has the fourteenth letter, nun, as the leading letter in each verse.

PSALM 119, THE LONGEST OF THE PSALMS, IS ONE OF SEVERAL ACROSTICS FOUND IN THE PSALTER, OR THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Page 2 will give you a "high level" Biblical Overview of the Lesson Text. The content will explore the text, its background, and any other pertinent information to help you better understand the setting, purpose, and message of the text.

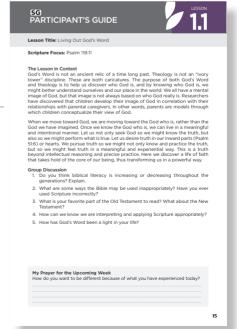


DAILY DEVOTION

Pages 3-7 will guide you through your week of personal devotion and study. You will be encouraged to complete the Bible Reading plan for each day, and explore a portion of the text with the help of a section of Biblical Insight on that part of the text. Next is a Daily Devotion to read and a prompt to reflect and pray about the principles presented.

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Page 8 provides a Small Group (SG) Participant's Guide that is designed to be used for those who meet in small groups. The SG Participant's Guide corresponds to the SG Teaching Outline forms in the Adult Lesson Guide.



DIGITAL PLANNER

Make plans, set goals, develop spiritual habits, and evaluate vour daily, monthly, and yearly progress, all in the context of God's Word for Life. This annual digital planner helps adults organize their lives around God's Word, engage with specific portions of the God's Word for Life materials, and pursue the goals, dreams, and desires God has placed in their hearts.



PODCAST



The God's Word for Life Podcast presents portions of Scripture with fresh insight and urges adults to think deeply about how the Bible impacts their lives. Each weekly episode will encourage listeners to engage with God's Word through reflection and prayer, further develop their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and live out God's Word in their lives.

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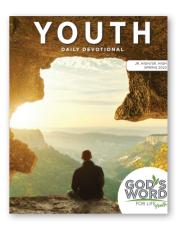


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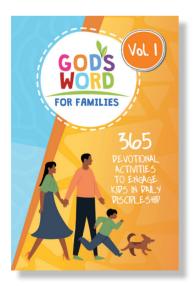
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YOUTH DAILY DEVOTIONAL

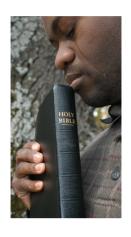
God's Word for Life equips every age level of the church to study Scripture daily. This resource for youth (ages 12-18) provides a daily Bible passage connected to the week's lesson and a corresponding devotion. Each day ends with a final challenge to apply the message of God's Word with both junior high and senior high options.



GOD'S WORD FOR FAMILIES



God's Word for Families is not your average devotional. With 365 ten-minute devotional activities designed around a variety of learning styles, each week's devotions will reinforce what your family is learning at church. This wholly Apostolic discipleship tool will help you engage your family members in God's Word every day of the week.



SERIES 1: OUR HIDING PLACE

This series, "Our Hiding Place," will present four different psalms highlighting the importance of hiding God's Word in our hearts (Psalm 119:11), the opportunity we have to find refuge under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1), the call to enter His courts with thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 100:4), and the privilege we have of finding a hiding place of refuge in His presence (Psalm 27:4-5). This series will encourage students to find a place of refuge in God's Word and in God's presence.



SERIES 2: GOD IS WITH US

This series, "God Is with Us," will walk through four significant stages in Joseph's life. First, we will be introduced to Joseph, the dreamer, and then follow him as he is carried from the pit to the house of Potiphar. As the narrative twists and turns, we will watch as Joseph finds himself seemingly forgotten in prison and then ultimately elevated to serving as second-in-command to Pharaoh. This series highlights the thread that runs throughout the entire story of Joseph: the Lord was with Joseph and the Lord promises to be with us.



SERIES 3: YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

This series, "You Must Be Born Again," will look closely at the New Testament plan of salvation. These four lessons will highlight the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for our sins, along with the necessity of repentance, water baptism in Jesus' name, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. This series will present foundational truths with fresh fervor, believing God will stir those who have not yet responded to the gospel.

BIBLE READING PLAN FOR THIS QUARTER

Week 27	Week 31	Week 35
Day 1 - Psalm 10-12; Acts 17	Day 1 – Psalm 75–77; Rom. 6	Day 1 – Psalm 136–138; I Cor. 9
Day 2 - Psalm 13-16; Acts 18	Day 2 – Psalm 78; Rom. 7	Day 2 – Psalm 139–141; I Cor. 10
Day 3 - Psalm 17-18; Acts 19	Day 3 – Psalm 79–81; Rom. 8	Day 3 – Psalm 142–147
Day 4 - Psalm 19-24	Day 4 – Psalm 82–87	Day 4 – Psalm 148–150; I Cor. 11
Day 5 - Psalm 25-27; Acts 20	Day 5 -Psalm 88-89; Rom. 9	Day 5 - Proverbs 1-2; I Cor. 12
Week 28	Week 32	Week 36
Day 1 - Psalm 28-30; Acts 21	Day 1 – Psalm 90–92; Rom. 10	Day 1 – Proverbs 3–4; I Cor. 13
Day 2 - Psalm 31-35	Day 2 – Psalm 93–95; Rom. 11	Day 2 - Proverbs 5-6; I Cor. 14
Day 3 - Psalm 36-37; Acts 22	Day 3 – Psalm 96–98; Rom. 12	Day 3 – Proverbs 7–10
Day 4 - Psalm 38-40; Acts 23	Day 4 – Psalm 99–102; Rom. 13	Day 4 – Proverbs 11–12; I Cor. 15
Day 5 - Psalm 41-43; Acts 24	Day 5 - Psalm 103-104; Rom. 14	Day 5 - Proverbs 13-14; I Cor. 16
Week 29	Week 33	Week 37
Day 1 - Psalm 44-46; Acts 25	Day 1 – Psalm 105–106; Rom. 15	Day 1 – Proverbs 15–16; II Cor. 1
Day 2 - Psalm 47-49; Acts 26	Day 2 – Psalm 107–111; Rom. 16	Day 2 – Proverbs 17–18; II Cor. 2
Day 3 - Psalm 50-52; Acts 27	Day 3 – Psalm 112–115; I Cor. 1	Day 3 – Proverbs 19–20; II Cor. 3
Day 4 - Psalm 53-58	Day 4 – Psalm 116–118; I Cor. 2	Day 4 – Proverbs 21–22; II Cor. 4
Day 5 - Psalm 59-61; Acts 28	Day 5 - Psalm 119:1-48; I Cor. 3	Day 5 - Proverbs 23-24; II Cor. 5
Week 30	Week 34	Week 38
Day 1 - Psalm 62-64; Rom. 1	Day 1 – Psalm 119:49–104; I Cor. 4	Day 1 – Proverbs 25–27; II Cor. 6
Day 2 - Psalm 65-67; Rom. 2	Day 2 – Psalm 119:105–176;	Day 2 - Proverbs 28-29; II Cor. 7
Day 3 - Psalm 68-69; Rom. 3	I Cor. 5	Day 3 – Proverbs 30–31; II Cor. 8
Day 4 - Psalm 70-72; Rom. 4	Day 3 – Psalm 120–125; I Cor. 6	Day 4 – Ecc. 1–4; II Cor. 9
Day 5 - Psalm 73-74; Rom. 5	Day 4 – Psalm 126–131; I Cor. 7	Day 5 - Ecc. 5-8; II Cor. 10
	Day 5 - Psalm 132-135; I Cor. 8	Week 39
This Bible Reading Plan, if follows		Day 1 – Ecc. 9–12; II Cor. 11
the entire Bible in a one year :	span.	Day 2 – Song of Solomon 1–3; II Cor. 12
		Day 3 – Song of Solomon 4–5; Il Cor. 13
		Day 4 – Song of Solomon 6–8; I Gal. 1
		Day 5 – Isaiah 1–4; I Gal. 2

1.1

LIVING OUT GOD'S WORD

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will hide God's Word in my heart and daily live it out in my life.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's Word teaches us how to live a life that is pleasing to Him.



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 119:9-16, 97-112

Psalm 119, the longest of the psalms, is one of several acrostics found in the Psalter, or the Book of Psalms. (See also Psalms 9–10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112.) The form of the acrostic here is that the psalm is shaped into twenty-two sections, each section containing eight verses, with each verse within a section beginning with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the first section, Psalm 119:1–8, each verse begins with the first letter of the alphabet, aleph. In the second section, Psalm 119:9–16, each verse begins with the second letter, beth. This pattern continues in alphabetical order throughout the psalm. The psalm is one of three Torah ("law" or "instruction") psalms in the Psalter. Each of these psalms is followed by one or more messianic psalms in keeping with an ancient tradition of interpretation by attachment.

By one piece of literature being attached to another, the pieces served to provide meaning to one another. The Hebrew word for this was *samuk*, which means "to lean, lay, rest, or support." The idea was that one piece of literature leaned against another or supported another. This structure is seen in three significant places in the Psalter: Psalms 1–2, Psalms 19–21, and Psalms 119–134. In each case, the first psalm in the group extols the Word of God, and the attached psalms extol the Messiah. This emphasis teaches that meditation on the Word leads to faith in the Messiah.

In Psalm 119:1, 3, the phrase "in the way" connects thematically with the first of the Torah psalms and the first psalm in the Psalter. (See Psalm 1:1, 6.) The phrase "the law of the LORD" is also found in Psalm 1:2, and it should not be taken as a reference only to the law of Moses. The essential idea of *Torah* is "instruction." In its context in the Book of Psalms, Torah refers to the Psalter itself unless the immediate context defines the word in connection with Sinai.

In Psalm 119:9-16, each verse begins with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet, *beth*. In Psalm 119:97-104, each verse begins with the thirteenth letter, *mem*. Psalm 119:105-112 has the fourteenth letter, *nun*, as the leading letter in each verse.

PSALM 119, THE LONGEST OF THE PSALMS, IS ONE OF SEVERAL ACROSTICS FOUND IN THE PSALTER, OR THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

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	В	Bible	Rea	ding	Plan
Psalm 10 □	11 🗆	12 🗆		Acts	: 17 □

Psalm 119:9-16

- ⁹ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.
- ¹⁰ With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
- ¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
- ¹² Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.
- ¹³ With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.
- ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵ I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
- ¹⁶ I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Biblical Insight

Hebrew words in these verses represent the "law of the LORD." Dabar is often translated "word." Imra[h], which can mean "saying," is translated "word" in verse 11. Mitzva[h], the "commandments" of verse 10, involves authoritative instructions. $H\bar{o}q$, the "statutes" of verse 12, refer to an authoritative rule. Mishpat, also referring to an authoritative rule, is translated "judgments" in verse 13. Edut, the "testimonies" of verse 14, are solemn statements made under oath or as part of a covenant. Piqqudim, the "precepts" of verse 15, are rules of personal conduct. Huqqa[h], translated "statutes" in verse 16, means the same as $h\bar{o}q$.

Daily Devotion

Due to an absent father and a lenient mother, he had no respect for authority or any of the safety regulations that should have been built into his family, neighborhood, and society. As a preteen he tortured neighborhood cats, wandered the streets, and got into trouble. More than once, he hid a snake in his mouth, walked up to unsuspecting people, opened his mouth, and the snake emerged, shocking and scaring strangers. On the surface his life seemed unfettered and free, but at times it was evident he wanted someone to care enough to set some boundaries.

He attended several events at an Apostolic church, but God's laws evidently seemed too stringent. Junior high and high school provided more connections and opportunities to break the rules. His exploits included premarital sex, violence, and drugs. One sad day at the age of nineteen, his body was found in the river after a drug deal gone bad. Because he did not embrace God's statutes, he died without taking the chance to really live. If only he had heard and heeded Psalm 119:9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Our hearts break for stories such as this one. While it prompts us to deepen our commitment to God, it also calls us to compassion for those resistant to God's drawing. Think of a prodigal or someone who seems averse to God, and take time today to pray for them.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY 2

		Е	Bible Ro	eading Plan
Psalm 13 🗆	14 🗆	15 🗆	16 🗆	Acts 18 □

Psalm 119:97-104

- ⁹⁷ O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.
- ⁹⁸ Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.
- ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.
- ¹⁰¹ I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.
- 102 I have not departed from thy judgments; for thou hast taught me.
- ¹⁰³ How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Biblical Insight

The words in the Hebrew text of Psalm 119:9-16 are found in Psalm 119:98-104, but another word, *torah*, is translated "law" in verse 97. Torah appears 221 times in 214 verses in the Old Testament. It has a range of meanings, but the essential meaning of *torah* is "instruction." Torah often refers to the law of Moses, but it has an even wider range. Context determines how we are to understand it. Torah can refer to human instruction or to the first five books of the Bible. In Psalm 1:2, torah refers to the psalms themselves as sources for meditation. The repetition and references to both general instruction and Scripture point toward our need today for ongoing teaching and study of God's Word.

Daily Devotion

Even before Monique was a teenager, she experienced what many of her friends had not. She pressed her forehead against the side window as she took in the magnificent sights below. She was in awe at the beauty and perspective 3,000 feet provided. Her father flew small airplanes, so they sometimes enjoyed flights over Eastern Montana where they beheld the expansive plains, rolling foothills, and majestic Rocky Mountains.

Many evenings Monique's father sat for hours reading airplane magazines. The more he learned about flying, the better pilot he became. As he read more stories about pilots who successfully navigated storms and mechanical failures, he learned better how to keep himself and his passengers safe. The laws of aerodynamics and the mechanical workings of the planes he flew allowed him to go places and see things he wouldn't have been able to enjoy any other way.

Understanding and cooperating with God's laws bring wholeness, joy, and peace in the same way the principles of aerodynamics give great advantages to the studious aviator. Each law believers study and embrace enhances their lives. With every step of obedience, believers and others around them prosper. Choose a Bible passage to study this week to enrich your life.

Reflection and Prayer	
> What can you do to apply this principle to your	life today?

DAY	3
-----	---

	Bible I	Reading	Plan
Psalm 17 🗆	18 🗆	Acts	19 🗆

Psalm 119:105-112

- ¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.
- ¹⁰⁷ I am afflicted very much: quicken me. O LORD, according unto thy word.
- ¹⁰⁸ Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.
- ¹⁰⁹ My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.
- ¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.
- ¹¹¹ Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.
- 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

Biblical Insight

Once again, the same Hebrew words used in Psalm 119:9-16 and Psalm 119:98-104 appear in the *Nun* section of this psalm. In addition, torah is also present, as in Psalm 119:97. The variety of words used in Psalm 119 help us recognize that the "law of the LORD" (Psalm 119:1) to which this psalm refers is richly multifaceted. It is not merely a narrow set of rules. Although there are some differences of opinion about this interpretation, only four or five verses in Psalm 119 do not refer directly to the law of the Lord. These are verses 84, 90, 121, 122, and 132. All of God's Word is important (II Timothy 3:16).

Daily Devotion

The soldiers moved cautiously in the blackness of night across the open field through the chest-high grass. With the miracle of infrared goggles, they saw what others could not see. Yet in spite of this advantage, they navigated slowly and deliberately. Leading the skilled team of warriors was a man of slight build with something that looked like a metal detector. He scanned the ground all around him as he cleared a path for his comrades. Everyone knew that their enemy had placed mines throughout the region, and only the wise troops who were careful to move using the hard-earned knowledge of survival would make it to their next destination.

Believers have been given God's Word and its guiding principles. Their paths are directed and illuminated by God's Word and His Spirit. His Word and Spirit give Spirit-filled believers all the advantages as they make their way through the minefield of life. When we pursue God and yield to the gifts of the Spirit, God's soldiers can be confident their God-directed missions will succeed. What is God calling you to do today?

Reflection an	•			
» What can y	ou do to apply t	his principle to y	our life today?	

			В	ible R	eading	, Plan
DAY 4	Psalm 19 □	20 🗆	21 🗆	22 🗆	23 🗆	24 🗆
DAIT		20 🗆				

Psalm 119:11, 97, 105

¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

⁹⁷ O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Biblical Insight

With its 176 verses, Psalm 119 is sometimes said to be the longest chapter in the Bible. But the psalms are not actually chapters; they are individual psalms (i.e., songs) that entered the canon of Scripture as they are now. However, some psalms were originally longer but have now been divided into two, like Psalms 9–10. Elsewhere in Scripture, chapter and verse divisions were made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Psalm 119 includes verses that have become the favorites of many people, like verses 11, 97, and 105.

Daily Devotion

The story has been told of a famous hotel magnate who was being interviewed years ago. The interviewer asked, "You have made millions and successfully expanded your hotel chain. What is the most important thing you can tell everyone in this vast audience?" He replied, "Keep the shower curtain inside the tub." The crowd was expecting some great secret. Instead, he gave them a simple action everyone can do—one that makes everyone's life a little easier.

Sometimes the seemingly "little actions" make the biggest difference. We often seek for direction from God, hoping He will predict the future or tell us the next two specific actions we should take, but His Word has already given us the most important concepts like be kind, do unto others, forgive, seek first the Kingdom, lay aside every weight, and so on. When we pray and meditate on those big ideas and on God's goodness, the specifics of our lives will work together for good.

Think deeply about how God's statutes are playing out in your life. Talk to Him about those concepts, and He will fill your heart and mind with your next steps.

Reflection and Prayer		
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today	?	

DAY!	5
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Bible	Doa	dina	Dlan
Dible	Rea	anng	Pidii

Psalm 25 □ 26 □ 27 □ | Acts 20 □

Psalm 119:15, 97

¹⁵ I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

⁹⁷ O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Biblical Insight

In Psalm 119, verses 15 and 97 refer to meditation. This practice is often commended in the Psalms. It is useful to read a verse, to think on it, and to read it again. Repeated and prayerful reading of Scripture will often result in the text unfolding continuing depths of meaning. The Word of God should be read slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. Reading should not be rushed. Memorization is a helpful aid to exploring levels of meaning that may be present in the text.

Daily Devotion

Many people who do not have the privilege of knowing God attempt to navigate life by maximizing their human potential. Some of them also venture into the spirit realm by disciplining and exercising their minds and spirits. Yoga gurus recommend their students spend at least forty-five minutes a day meditating. Monks may spend days or weeks in silence and stillness. Satanists will clear their schedule, fast, and spend hours seeking to yield to their cruel master. These desperate people groups are seeking peace or power and recognize that only slow, careful thought alignment of body and soul can overcome our nearly indomitable human will.

If unbelievers are that wise and diligent, certainly Spirit-filled Christians should meditate, think deeply, and be thoughtful in the presence of the God who has promised to direct their paths. He invites us to unlimited access to Him. Daily prayer will make all the difference in yielding and aligning with the Almighty.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Living Out God's Word

Scripture Focus: Psalm 119:11

The Lesson in Context

God's Word is not an ancient relic of a time long past. Theology is not an "ivory tower" discipline. These are both caricatures. The purpose of both God's Word and theology is to help us discover who God is, and by knowing who God is, we might better understand ourselves and our place in the world. We all have a mental image of God, but that image is not always based on who God really is. Researchers have discovered that children develop their image of God in correlation with their relationships with parental caregivers. In other words, parents are models through which children conceptualize their view of God.

When we move toward God, we are moving toward the God who is, rather than the God we have imagined. Once we know the God who is, we can live in a meaningful and intentional manner. Let us not only seek God so we might know the truth, but also so we might perform what is true. Let us desire truth in our inward parts (Psalm 51:6) or hearts. We pursue truth so we might not only know and practice the truth, but so we might feel truth in a meaningful and experiential way. This is a truth beyond intellectual reasoning and precise practice. Here we discover a life of faith that takes hold of the core of our being, thus transforming us in a powerful way.

Group Discussion

- 1. Do you think biblical literacy is increasing or decreasing throughout the generations? Explain.
- 2. What are some ways the Bible may be used inappropriately? Have you ever used Scripture incorrectly?
- 3. What is your favorite part of the Old Testament to read? What about the New Testament?
- 4. How can we know we are interpreting and applying Scripture appropriately?
- 5. How has God's Word been a light in your life?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

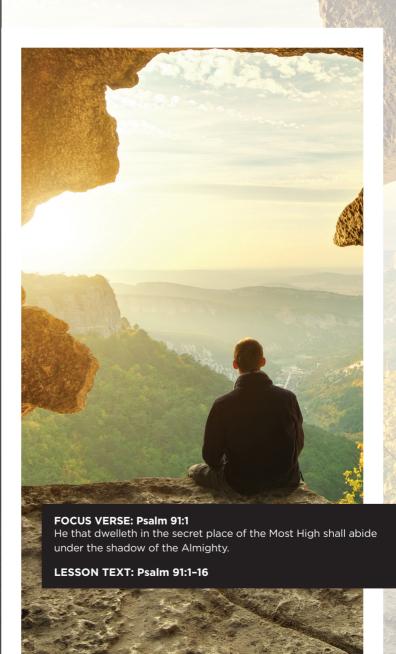
1.2

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will daily seek refuge in the Lord.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod is our refuge
and can be trus<u>ted.</u>

THE REFUGE OF THE SECRET PLACE



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 91:1-16

Psalm 91 declares God's provision and is a great comfort to believers. Yet Satan employed two verses from it in an attempt to convince Jesus to test God's promise. (Compare Psalm 91:11-12 with Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11.) Lest we think Satan was wrong to use this psalm as a reference to the Messiah, we should note the way Psalm 91:13 reflects the messianic promise of Genesis 3:15. In His words to the serpent, the Lord God said of the seed of the woman, "It shall bruise thy head." The word *it* can also be translated *he*. Psalm 91:13 reflects and expands on this statement: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." The *adder* is a serpent, and *dragon* is also a symbol of Satan (Revelation 20:2), as is *lion* (I Peter 5:8). Satan's error was not to think this text was about the Messiah; it was to think God's hand can be forced.

It is helpful to note the meaning behind some of the terms used in this passage. A *fowler* is a trapper or one who lays bait (Psalm 91:3). The word translated *shield* refers to a large shield; a *buckler* is a small shield (Psalm 91:4). Angels are ministering spirits for those who are saved (Psalm 91:11). (See Hebrews 1:14.)

Numbers like those mentioned in verse 7 (e.g., thousand and ten thousand) are not meant to be taken precisely. They are metaphors representing the reality of victory for those who trust God. In other words, this verse does not mean that one cannot expect victory over 1,001 or 10,002, nor does it mean that those who fall will not fall at one's left hand. When we read poetry, we can expect to find figures of speech.

The law of Moses promised long life in the land for perfect obedience (Psalm 91:16). (See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 30:20; Proverbs 3:2.) But the New Covenant's focus is on eternal life (John 3:16). Some first-century believers, like Stephen, died in their youth (Acts 7:59-60). We can be encouraged that God is a provider, and His ultimate provision is life everlasting with Him.

PSALM 91 DECLARES GOD'S PROVISION AND IS A GREAT COMFORT TO BELIEVERS.

DAY 1

Bible	Reading	Plan

Psalm 28 □ 29 □ 30 □ | Acts 21 □

Psalm 91:1-3

- ¹ IHe that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- ²I will say of the LORD. He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust.
- ³ Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

Biblical Insight

Because of the use of Psalm 91:11-12 in the New Testament, we must keep a messianic focus in mind when reading this psalm. Jesus refused to try to force God's hand by leaping from the temple's pinnacle, but He did not deny the messianic significance of these words. This psalm is a promise of safety for all who trust God. It is a messianic promise, but it includes all who trust the Lord in the most intimate of spiritual relationships. As we reflect on Jesus' response to Satan's temptation, however, we must never yield to the temptation to test God's promises.

Daily Devotion

It was a fortress of sorts, that big yellow bus that transported Antonio to the Career Center his last two years of high school. As the only Apostolic in a school of three thousand students, he sometimes felt alone. Peer pressure and pressure from unbelieving teachers were his noisome pestilence in those days. Each day as he sat waiting for other students to board, he would watch them smoke cigarettes and pot, pass drugs, and make out. They seemed to be breaking all God's rules and getting away with it.

Thankfully, because of godly parents and a great church, Antonio knew he could find the shadow of the Almighty right there on the bus. With his eyes open, he prayed under his breath, and God met him there. It actually became something Antonio looked forward to. From the fortress God provided, Antonio could look on his peers with compassion, knowing they needed God's safety he so freely received . Right there he prayed that they too would come to know Antonio's Deliverer.

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What can	ou do to a	pply this pr	inciple to yo	ur life today?	

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	В	sible R	eading	Plan
Psalm 31 □	32 □	33 □	34 □	35 □

Psalm 91:4-6

- ⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.
- ⁵ Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
- ⁶ Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

Biblical Insight

The reference to the *wings* and *feathers* of the Lord calls to mind the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. The cherubim hovered above the Mercy Seat, which represented God's throne on earth (Exodus 25:22; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 7:89). The idea here is that God's protection is for those who dwell in His presence. The "secret place of the most High" (verse 1) describes the Mercy Seat, where only the high priest could go once each year. Psalm 91:5-6 promise protection whether the dangers come during the night or day. God's ability to guard His people has no limitation.

Daily Devotion

Climate-controlled, cleaned weekly, comfortable furniture, private recreational space, guaranteed security, groceries and water delivered daily—all at no charge. It was the perfect home. Yet, in spite of all the care, safety, and love he was provided, one day he disappeared. He had no idea how dangerous the outside world was. Neighboring residents searched the area over the next few days, but to no avail. Knowing he was young and vulnerable, those close to the situation feared they may never see him again.

Then one day his caretaker was lying on the living room floor as movement caught his eye beneath the couch. There, tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the home, was the escapee: the missing hamster surrounded by a stash of food. Evidently he had been planning his escape for quite a good while. Thankfully for him he was returned to his cage, and his cage was altered to prevent him from making the same mistake in the future.

God's Word provides believers with all the protection and provision needed to live in our dangerous world. It would be crazy to "escape" God's care.

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What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	>

DAY:	3
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 36 □ 37 □ | Acts 22 □

Psalm 91:7-8

⁷ A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

⁸ Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Biblical Insight

The wicked will fear the night's terror and pestilence as well as the arrow and destruction of the day. These dangers are not imaginary. The wicked will fall, but these frightening enemies will not come near those who trust God. Those dwelling in God's secret place will only see what happens to the wicked; they will not experience their destruction. The terrible things experienced by the wicked are their "reward" for refusing to trust God.

Daily Devotion

Debris lay scattered on the high school property. A vehicle mangled beyond recognition lay on its side with dark stains on the sidewalk beneath it. Broken glass, personal belongings, and school books were strewn among the wreckage. As students stepped off their buses, they caught their breath and immediately began to investigate. What a tragedy! Who were the victims? How did this happen? How could it have been avoided?

To everyone's relief they soon discovered that the scene had been staged by a student organization that wanted to help students visualize the potential dangers of drinking and driving. The organization felt it was important for students to see "the reward of the wicked." Though sobering, such scenes—whether real or staged—may have a redemptive effect. Whenever believers feel pulled toward disobedience or "freedom from God's laws," they would do well to look around them at the reward of the wicked. Notice the domestic disasters, destructive addictions, and mental disorders that come out of ungodly living. These outcomes put everything in perspective and make one want to stay ever close to the Savior.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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		Pipie i	Reading	Plan
Psalm 38 □	39 □	40 □	Acts	23 🗆

Psalm 91:9-13

- ⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;
- ¹⁰ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
- ¹¹ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
- ¹² They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- ¹³ Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Biblical Insight

There is a reason people are promised divine protection. It is because the Lord, the Most High, is their "habitation" or dwelling. Because of this, no evil will befall them and plagues will avoid their homes. Angels will guard them, and they will share in the messianic promise of Genesis 3:15. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

Daily Devotion

In 2013, authorities were notified of two men acting strangely in a forest located in the Tây Trà district of Quảng Ngãi. When they were apprehended, the men explained that they had been living alone in the forest for forty-one years. They told the incredible story of how they made loincloths from tree bark and foraged for rats, fruit, and cassava (a plant native to the region). Most recently their habitation was a timber hut fifteen feet above ground. Ho Van Lang and his father, then forty-four and eighty-five respectively, fled their home during the Vietnam War. When Ho Van Lang's wife and two of his sons were killed by a mine explosion, he fled to the jungle with his two-year-old son.

Spiritually speaking, the world can seem just as dangerous at times, but believers have a shelter we can run into. God is our refuge, and His angels watch over us. Taking refuge is very intentional and takes a great deal of effort, but the refuge is real. From time to time the world will recognize that true believers are surviving in a hostile world. By the grace of God, we can be safe. Invest time today in praise to God for His protection.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plar
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Psalm 41 □ 42 □ 43 □ | Acts 24 □

Psalm 91:14-16

¹⁴ Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

¹⁵ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Biblical Insight

The final three verses of Psalm 91 are the Lord's words confirming the promises given in the previous verses. The word *because* appears twice in verse 14, referring to the reasons for these promises. Because people love God and know His name, they can call upon Him and receive an answer. These are the reasons God will be with people in trouble and will deliver and honor them. These are the reasons God will give long life—ultimately, eternal life—and salvation.

Daily Devotion

If you research the word *symbiotic* online, you will soon begin to see the surprising pictures of small fish swimming happily beneath sharks or even attaching themselves to sharks many times larger than themselves. These sharks could swallow them in one small gulp, but the fish provide a symbiotic service to the sharks that the sharks appreciate. The remora fish clean parasites off the shark's body and eat meat scraps left over from the shark's meals. In return they hitch rides and enjoy protection provided by their grateful giants. The smaller, weaker fish are blessed because they are in relationship with the larger, stronger sea creatures.

There is a reason some people are blessed; they have been humble enough to accept God's love and graceful enough to love God back. This relationship is two sided: God loves and His people love back. That love relationship is built on trust. Because those who are loved by God call on His name, He responds by delivering them and blessing their lives. In the New Living Translation, Psalm 91:14 reads, "The LORD says, 'I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust my name." Find a place in your home to mount this verse this week so you can meditate on it often.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this pr	nciple to your	life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Refuge of the Secret Place

Scripture Focus: Psalm 91:1

The Lesson in Context

We need a time of rest to be restored by the Lord and by the community of faith. The institution of the Sabbath is rooted in the very beginning, before the Fall. God found it necessary to rest on the seventh day of Creation and extended this rest to all creation. If God felt human beings needed a Sabbath day before the Fall, how much more essential, then, is a time of Sabbath after the Fall? Therefore, we must seek refuge in the Lord. We must be honest about our limitations and learn at what point our reach begins to exceed our grasp. We must seek a daily time to connect with God, who is our source of life, strength, and hope. Seeking refuge in prayer should not be the parachute we use in an emergency because prayer changes our view of the world.

As we continue to pray, what we thought was most important may become less important. Likewise, what we believed was insignificant may become a great burden. Ultimately, prayer brings about the same resolve in us that was expressed by John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). As our consciousness of God improves through prayer, how we see the world will shift radically. When this happens we can take heart that we have begun to see the world not as we would have it but rather as God perceives it. With this new vision of the world, we are adequately prepared to engage the world as followers of Jesus.

Group Discussion

- Since reading the Scripture requires knowledge and skill, like reading poetry, what are small practical things we all can do to grow in knowledge and increase our skills?
- 2. God referred to Himself as a hen gathering her chicks. Is it challenging to think about God having feminine expression and functioning in a maternal role?
- 3. What are some signs of authentic Christian faith?
- 4. What are some physical and spiritual places of refuge in your life? How can you make new places or rediscover old places of refuge?
- 5. What are some practical spiritual disciplines we can begin that would help facilitate consistent spiritual growth while also creating a place of refuge?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced tod	ay?

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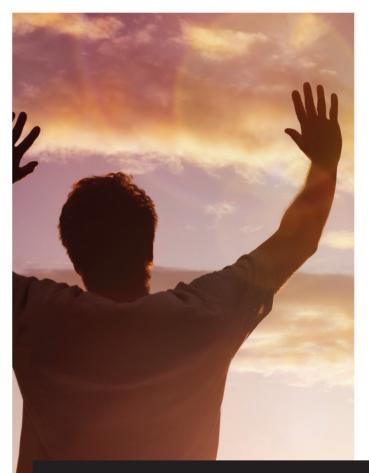
LESSON BIG IDEA

I will praise and bless the name of the Lord.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is worthy to be worshiped and praised.

GREATLY TO BE PRAISED



FOCUS VERSE: Psalm 100:4

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 96:1-13; 100:1-5



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 96:1-13; 100:1-5

Psalm 96 is a near duplicate of I Chronicles 16:23–33. It celebrates the universal reign of the Lord (verses 1, 3, 5, 10, 13), acknowledging Him as Creator in contrast to the "gods of the nations," which are "nonentities" ('eliyI, translated "idols").

The statement "the glory due unto his name" is in keeping with Scripture's theology of name (Psalm 96:8). Phrases like this identify God with His name. "His name" is a reference to God Himself. To give glory to "his name" is to give glory to Him.

The glory "due unto his name" is the glory that is due Him because of His character, identity, and works. Contextually, this has to do with His authority over all creation. The command to "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" means to "worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness." The Septuagint translates this verse: "Bring to the LORD glory, due to his name; worship the LORD in his holy court." It may seem strange to think that a phrase translated "beauty of holiness" from the Hebrew text would be translated "holy court" from the Greek text. But an examination of other texts where this terminology is used suggests the accuracy of the Septuagint as a dynamic equivalence. First Chronicles 16:29 is similar to verse 8: "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." This is in the context of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the tent David prepared for it in Jerusalem (I Chronicles 16:1). To worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness is connected with worshiping the Lord in the proximity of the Ark, Psalm 96:7-9 connects the "beauty of holiness" clearly with worshiping in the courts of the Temple. The phrase "beauty of holiness" is a poetic description of the courtyard of the Temple of the Lord.

Similarly, the call to praise and service in Psalm 100:1-3 identifies God (Elohim) as Jehovah (LORD), the Creator. Also, as in Psalm 96:2, the phrase "bless his name" (Psalm 100:4) underscores the theology of name. To be thankful unto the Lord is to bless His name. (See also Psalm 99:6.)

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Bible Reading Plan

Psalm 44 □ 45 □ 46 □ | Acts 25 □

Psalm 96:1-3

- ¹O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
- ² Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

Biblical Insight

The three references to singing in Psalm 96:1-2 are imperatives, not suggestions. Although it is good to sing *about* the Lord, these are commands to sing to the Lord. Such singing blesses His name, shows forth the salvation He provides, and declares His glory. This is not merely done in private; it is to be done among all people, Gentiles as well as Jews. This Old Testament passage reminds us of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, where psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are to be sung to the Lord. Singing in this manner has the effect of teaching and admonishing one another.

Daily Devotion

For two decades, Floridian Jerry Stevens has been scribbling in the sky. In 2018 he gained the attention of the *Naples Daily News* when he wrote "Love God" above their city using a retrofitted crop-dusting plane. Stevens said he was standing in church one Sunday when God told him to put his flying talents to good use. Now he writes messages seven miles long and three-quarters of a mile high, declaring the love of God to millions of people in Florida.

You may have heard the sad story of a father who never said "I love you" to his children, or you may have heard someone who lost a loved one lament that they hadn't expressed their love enough when their loved one was alive. Life is too short not to say some things out loud. We need to say some things expressively and lavishly. Saying it out loud does something that takes the sentiments of the speaker and the hearer to new dimensions.

No one deserves our outspoken adoration like the Creator who became our Savior. Declaring His glory will change you, others, and the spirit world. Take time today to declare His greatness.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Psalm 47 □ 48 □ 49 □ | Acts 26 □

Psalm 96:4-8

- ⁴ For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- ⁷ Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
- ⁸ Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Biblical Insight

The Lord is to be feared, for He is the Creator. All other "gods" are merely lifeless idols. Because the Lord is the Creator, all people, regardless of ethnic origins, are to give Him glory and strength. It may be difficult to imagine how humans could give strength to God. The word translated *give* is an imperative, but how can we do this? Words have a range of meaning, and this word can mean "ascribe." Only the Lord is glorious and strong, so we can attribute those qualities to Him. Since idols are "nothings," they have no glory nor strength.

Daily Devotion

Baal was declared to be the God of fertility, lightning, and rain. Backslidden Israel was led by Jezebel and Ahab, who foolishly ascribed those powers to this imaginary god. As a result, God withheld rain for three years. Then Elijah called them out on their shameful propaganda and proved that Jehovah was the God of fire and of rain. For one historic day, God sent fire from Heaven and then sent rain to end a drought. The people who witnessed these wonders gave God the glory He deserved as the prophets of Baal and Asherah were put to death.

God was and has always been the only true God, but His people failed to ascribe to Him those characteristics that make Him God. He was God, but He was not their God. Humanity cannot give God glory and strength, but we ascribe glory and strength to Him by acknowledging who He is and what He has done. When we acknowledge who God is in our lives, we release Him to be our God.

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Bible	Reading	Plar
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Psalm 50 □ 51 □ 52 □ | Acts 27 □

Psalm 96:9-13

⁹ O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

¹⁰ Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.

 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

¹³ Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Biblical Insight

The worship offered to the Lord through songs is a testimony to Gentiles that only the Lord is the true God. Creation worships Him, and everyone should know He will come to judge all people. Texts like this look forward to the Scriptures that conclude the Canon, like Revelation 19–20. The "new song" of Psalm 96:1 anticipates the "new song" of Revelation 14:3.

Daily Devotion

Some sources report George Washington's contemporaries begged the president to serve a third term, but he refused. His refusal was indicative of why they were so eager to have him continue as their president. He was a benevolent ruler. The colonists were so tired of being ruled by unaccountable sovereigns that they were delighted to follow a leader who did not lord it over them.

The Message paraphrase renders Proverbs 29:2, "When good people run things, everyone is glad, but when the ruler is bad, everyone groans." When God is allowed to run things, everyone is blessed. When earthly rulers, bosses, ministers, and parents operate on godly principles, everyone wins. That means each of us has the potential of bringing goodness and rejoicing to others. We simply need to let God flow through us to people we lead through love, forgiveness, kindness, and righteousness. We are the portals through which Heaven flows to touch earth. When we let God reign in all we do, even the heathen will rejoice.

Reflection an	•			
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		В	ible Re	ading	Plan
Psalm 53 □	54 □	55 □	56 □	57 □	58 □

Psalm 100:1-2

¹Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

Biblical Insight

The opening verses of Psalm 100 mirror those of Psalm 96. Here, singing is again associated within worship and entrance into the presence of the Lord. As in Psalm 96, singing is not just a private, isolated act. The people of all lands, which would include Gentiles, are to engage in making "a joyful noise." Joy. Gladness. These are the right attitudes for coming into the presence of God.

Daily Devotion

Sarah sat nervously in the break room on her first day on the job as her manager explained the company mission and job expectations. Those in the room were training to be cashiers, but she was surprised at the considerable length of time spent talking about their attitude. Why would a multi-billion-dollar company care if their lowest paid employees were smiling or exchanging pleasantries? But the managers and owners were keenly aware of why this was important. A pleasant atmosphere and cheerful employees make all the difference. Advice like, "Smile at the customer and say, 'Have a nice day,'" not only makes for a better work environment, but it makes for higher company profits.

If we can be cheerful for an employer, let us be cheerful as we serve the Lord? If a cashier can choose to overlook grouchy customers and create a pleasant atmosphere, believers can choose to overlook offenses to focus on the many wonderful blessings God has given. Joyful noises, gladness, and singing make everyone's life better and give great honor to our deserving King. Sing your favorite worship song to make a joyful noise to God.

Reflection and Prayer			
What can you do to	apply this principle to yo	our life today?	
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² Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

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Bible	Reading	Plan

Psalm 59 □ 60 □ 61 □ | Acts 28 □

Psalm 100:3-5

³ Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Biblical Insight

In addition to joy and gladness, we should enter the presence of the Lord with thanksgiving and praise. We are to "bless his name." The sense of the word translated bless is that we are to "speak words of excellence" about His name (Logos Bible Software). It will not be difficult to find such words, for the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His faithfulness is eternal.

Daily Devotion

It was a beautiful and memorable celebration. A great host of people assembled from around the world to memorialize the life of a worthy leader. Speakers told of a long life of selflessness and ministry. The speeches and songs brought tears and laughter. As friends and loved ones reminisced, they told the back stories of his heroics and humanity. The ceremony left everyone feeling blessed for having known the deceased, even though his life included pain and shortcomings. That funeral was a beautiful celebration of life—the life of someone who was no longer with us.

We have an even greater life to celebrate. We have a name to celebrate that is above all others. Our celebration of God will not only bless us, but it will allow His greatness to be passed on to the next generation. Our celebration will trigger celebration in others and set the tone for our family gatherings and church events. We can celebrate Him, knowing that He is without fault and without equal. That is how we can create beautiful and memorable times of worship.

Reflection and Prayer		
What can you do to ap	oly this principle to your	life today?

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Greatly to Be Praised

Scripture Focus: Psalm 100:4

The Lesson in Context

Think for a moment about how important it is that the Lord is good. God is all powerful. Imagine if He were evil instead of good? What if God were cruel or capricious, like the false gods of many nations in history? Who would survive? What would our lives look like? But instead, over and over the Bible assures us the Lord is good. He gives goods gifts to His children. He sends rain—a symbol of blessing—on the just and the unjust. He makes the sun to shine on both, because He wants all people to know He loves them: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Every good thing in life comes from the Lord.

"Praise the Lord" is a common greeting among church people, but perhaps we have become so familiar with the words that we have forgotten the reason behind them. Take some time today to count your blessings. Think about the times God has been good to you and brought you through. Let us praise Him because God is good.

Group Discussion

- 1. Can you think of a time when you worshiped God despite a bad situation? How did you manage to do so? How did it turn out?
- 2. What is your favorite way to worship God and why?
- 3. What is your favorite reason to praise and worship God?
- 4. How does this concept of holiness—living according to God's original intentions for our lives—help us live right and bring glory to Him?
- 5. What is one thing you can praise the Lord for today?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today	y?

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SEEK TO HIDE

LESSON BIG IDEA I will seek the Lord and find refuge in His presence.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod is our protector.



FOCUS VERSE: Psalm 27:4-5

⁴One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.

⁵ For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 27:1-14; 84:1-4

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 27:1-14; 84:1-4

Psalm 27 continues the theme established in Psalm 23 concerning the Lord's return to His temple. (Compare Psalm 27:4-6 with Psalm 23:6; 24:3, 7-9; 25:4; 26:6, 8.)

Compare Psalm 27:11 with Psalm 25:4. These verses link this section of Psalms with the millennial prophecy concerning the house of the Lord in Isaiah 2:3. The psalms of David were written before Isaiah, of course, but they were placed in the Psalter to develop the theme of the Messiah's return to the temple of the Lord from where He will rule. A description of the millennial temple may be seen in Ezekiel 40-47:12. The significance of the connection between this section of Psalms and the Messiah's entry into the millennial temple is seen by comparing Psalm 24:7-10 with Ezekiel 43:1-2. 4. 7: 44:1-2. As the relevant texts in Psalms are compared with the relevant texts in Ezekiel, the significance of the cry "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors" may be seen. The glory of the God of Israel enters the Temple by the eastern gate. The Temple is the place of His throne and where He will dwell. After He enters the eastern gate, it is shut so that no one else can enter by it. Further connections may be seen by comparing Psalm 24:3 with Ezekiel 43:12. The architectural details of the millennial temple that Ezekiel described differed significantly from the Tabernacle of Moses and from Solomon's Temple. The service itself differed. Although there were similarities, Ezekiel took great pains to distinguish the millennial temple from previous forms of the house of the Lord. One reason for this may have been to indicate clearly that the building of a temple for the millennial era will not signal a return to the law of Moses. The Millennium is about the New Covenant: it is not a revival of the Old Covenant. (See. for example, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:1-10.)

A few final notes about Psalm 27 are hopeful. In the messianic context of the Psalter, it is significant that faith prevented David from losing heart (Psalm 27:13). For a development of the theme of waiting on the Lord, compare Psalm 27:14 with Psalm 25:3, 21.

This week's study also includes Psalm 84, one of eleven psalms associated with the sons of Korah, a family who ministered in music during the days of David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. (See I Chronicles 6:33; 15:16–17, 19; 16:41–42; 25:1–7; II Chronicles 5:11–14; 20:19; 29:14–19; 35:15–18.) Gittith refers to a musical instrument of uncertain identity; it appears in the superscriptions of Psalm 8, 81, and 84. Psalm 84 is a pilgrimage psalm expressing the delight of those on their way to a festival at the Tabernacle of the Lord.

"LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O YE GATES; AND BE YE LIFT UP, YE EVERLASTING DOORS"

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	Bible	Reading	g Plar
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Psalm 62 □ 63 □ 64 □ | Romans 1 □

Psalm 27:1-3

- ¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- ² When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.
- ³ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 27 begins with recognition of the reality of enemies. There is no need, however, to fear darkness, for the Lord is the light. There is no need to fear defeat, for the Lord is salvation (deliverance). There is no need to fear weakness, for the Lord is strength. David's reference to the stumbling of his enemies could include the theme of Absalom's rebellion in Psalms 3–7. Many believers experience darkness, fear, and weakness. We have enemies. We struggle to maintain confidence in the face of war. But the next three verses give us good reason not to yield to negative emotions.

Daily Devotion

His eyes were closed tightly, and his fingers were pressed firmly in his ears. As far as he was concerned, if he did not see it and could not hear his mother nagging, he would not have to get into the tub for his dreaded bath. Personal hygiene seemed like such a bother, so he kept hoping his mother would finally give up and let him off the hook. Fortunately for those around him, his mother won the war of wills. He would later admit to himself that it felt good to be squeaky clean. If only there were some way to live clean without the torture of a bath.

We smile at the thought processes of little boys who fight to avoid the bathtub, but we often close our own eyes to the mess of life as we wish for a world with no pain or injustice. We plug our ears to a God who bids us take up our cross as we hope for an easy path to Heaven. Although we eventually learn that the world is full of troubles, God has provided a way through it all. We can be confident that life will not be easy, but our journey will be successful if we allow our God to be our salvation.

eflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 65 □ 66 □ 67 □ | Romans 2 □

Psalm 27:4-6

⁴ One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

⁵ For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

⁶ And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Biblical Insight

Rather than giving way to fear, David focused on his desire to dwell in the house of the Lord permanently, to behold the Lord's beauty (delightfulness), and to inquire of Him in His Temple. The nature of this inquiry is seen in Psalms 25–26. The consequence of being hidden by the Lord in His house is victory over one's enemies. For David, this victory resulted in offering a New Covenant kind of sacrifice: shouts of joy and songs of praise. (Compare with Hebrews 13:15.)

Daily Devotion

Two men sat side by side in the somewhat cramped economy section of the Airbus A380. Eric had only spoken a few words to Jerome, who had been huddled in the window seat for two hours. However, Jerome's nervousness and shortness of breath prompted Eric to finally ask how his seatmate was doing. He discovered they were both headed to Paris for the first time in their lives. Four hundred fifty other travelers were also making the transatlantic flight, but few seemed as worried as Jerome.

Jerome reassured Eric that he was physically okay, but he had a fear of flying, although no one he knew had ever been in a flying accident. Still he could not seem to calm his own nerves. Eric explained that he conquered his fear by making a choice to experience everything that came his way in life (good or bad) rather than fear what he might experience in life. Paris awaited them both. One was on an adventure, but the other was only enduring a journey. Their quality of life was primarily determined by their mindsets. Take a moment to evaluate your outlook and ask God to give you joy and fresh perspective for your journey.

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Psalm 68 □ 69 □ | Romans 3 □

Psalm 27:7-10

⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. ⁸ When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

⁹ Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

¹⁰ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 27:7 is a plea for answered prayer; specifically, it is a cry for mercy. This thread of thought connects with Psalms 23:6; 25:6-7, 10, 16. When the Lord called David to seek His face, David's response shows that he was a man after God's own heart. (See I Samuel 13:14.) Psalm 27:9 contains the words of a specific prayer, a plea not to be forsaken by God. The Lord will not forsake those who seek His face.

Daily Devotion

The Civil War was an extremely trying time for the United States. The then hated, now beloved, Abraham Lincoln stood at America's helm. American presidents are entrusted with a great deal of authority. Another Abraham, Abraham Lower, was a sergeant in the 72nd Regiment of Pennsylvania who understood that power. With the help of a friend, he appealed to the president's mercy, and it changed his life.

In 2015, a letter to Mr. Lower dated August 4, 1863 (written in the hand of Secretary John Hay and signed by President Abraham Lincoln) was appraised at \$15,000. It later sold in a private auction. It was Mr. Lincoln's graceful response to a letter from Lower, who was incarcerated in Pennsylvania for desertion. Lower had explained he deserted because his family was destitute. Being a big-hearted man and weary of all the killing, President Lincoln granted a pardon, and his grace was forever captured in the letter mentioned above.

In Psalm 27 the psalmist understood God's grace and made a similar plea for help. When asking God, there is no risk, just the likely possibility that God will be lavish with His love.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 70 □ 71 □ 72 □ | Romans 4 □

Psalm 27:11-14

¹¹ Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. ¹² Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

¹³ I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

 $^{\rm 14}$ Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Biblical Insight

In addition to the connection between Psalm 27:11 and Psalm 25:4, there is a connection between Psalm 27:11 and Psalm 26:12. The words *even* in Psalm 26:12 and *plain* in Psalm 27:11 are both translated from the Hebrew *miyshor*. The kind of path David prayed to be led in according to Psalm 27:11 was the kind of place he confessed to stand in according to Psalm 26:12. The words of David offer encouragement to all who read the psalms to "wait on the LORD." Contextually, this means to wait in faith (Psalm 27:13). Waiting in faith will result in "good courage" and strength of heart.

Daily Devotion

Tyrone shifted his weight on the hard, rocky ground and grumbled, "I doubt it will show up."

"Oh, it'll be here alright," his girlfriend retorted. "People have been seeing it since two hundred years before Christ, and it shows up about every seventy-five years. My science teacher showed me the charts. As long as the sky is clear, we will see Halley's Comet tonight."

Minutes later they were in awe at the magnificent light show. Periodic comets like Halley are not as predictable and reliable as the seasons or the sunrise, but we wait patiently for them because they have proven to be faithful. We have years of evidence. Millions of people have witnessed their appearances. People wait for them with great expectation.

God is even more trustworthy. He has been vetted longer and by more people than any natural phenomenon. His Word and His character have been tested and scrutinized for centuries. At times believers may grow weary waiting to see the hand of God in their lives, but He is more real and more reliable than anything or anyone else in the universe. We can choose to wait in worry or in faith.

eflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Psalm 73 □ 74 □ | Romans 5 □

Psalm 84:1-4

- ¹How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!
- ²My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
- ³ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.
- ⁴ Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Biblical Insight

The sons of Korah were responsible for the music ministry associated with the Temple built by Solomon. This psalm exalts the place where the Lord dwells: His tabernacle, His courts, His altars, and His house. There is a place here for one's soul, heart, and flesh. There is even a place for the sparrow and the swallow. Those who dwell in the house of the Lord will instinctively live a life of praise. We should keep in mind that this is a psalm (song) for the sons of Korah. Songs that honor and glorify the Lord are irreplaceable components for a life of spiritual victory.

Daily Devotion

Perhaps as he sat near the Tent of Meeting searching for inspiration, he noticed the swallows coming and going. They had likely found an overhang or a place on the altar suitable for their nest. Together, the pair of birds would use more than one thousand mud pellets to build their nest. It would take them a couple of weeks to prepare the refuge in which they would raise their young. Seeing the bird's nest at the Tabernacle of God triggered a thought in the heart of the psalmist. He too wanted to dwell in the house of God where his soul found safety.

When a church is healthy, there is no place better to dwell. How inspiring it is to worship and pray in a place where God's Spirit is evident. There is no better environment in which to raise children than in a church where God is obeyed and people truly love one another. The pure in heart look forward to their time in the house of God. Those who labor to maintain a place of worship provide a refuge—a safe place to bask in His presence.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Seek to Hide

Scripture Focus: Psalm 27:4-5

The Lesson in Context

Sometimes we as Christians act a bit like the security guards at the Sistine Chapel. As hundreds of visitors crane their necks to look up for the first time at the majesty and beauty painted on the walls and ceiling, these guards seem oblivious to it. They keep their eyes on the crowd and any time they think they see a camera, they bark, "No photo! No photo!" They have become so accustomed to the beauty that they do not even notice it anymore. They ignore the glory in favor of simply enforcing the rules. God help us not to take His beauty for granted. Think of all the people in the world who do not know God. They do not know what it is like to stand, raise their hands, worship, and feel the beautiful Spirit of God flood through them. They do not know the peace Jesus can pour into their souls.

Besides that, the awareness of God's beauty is a source of protection in and of itself. Most of the trouble in our lives comes from sin, and most sin is a result of thinking what the devil and the world have to offer is more attractive than what God has to offer. But if we truly stay close to God and aware of His beauty, everything else will fade into the background. As the old hymn says, "The things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Nothing else can turn our heads as long as we are focused on Jesus' beauty.

Group Discussion

- 1. How can we recapture our passion for the presence and beauty of God?
- 2. Why do we often focus on the struggles around us more than we focus on God?
- 3. What are some of the struggles in your life that have caused you fear? How did you respond to that fear?
- 4. Describe a time when you focused on God rather than your struggles.
- 5. What does it look like when the things of this world grow "strangely dim" in the light of God's glory and grace?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

2.1

BELIEVING WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will believe what God says to me is true even when others do not believe.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod has plans for us that we sometimes do not understand.



FOCUS VERSES: Genesis 37:5, 9-11

⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

⁹ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

¹⁰ And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

¹¹ And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 37:2-35

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 37:2-35

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. He was sold by his brothers into slavery at the age of seventeen and exalted to senior leadership in Egypt at the age of thirty. Joseph had the faith of Abraham, the gentleness of Isaac, and the courage of Jacob (Genesis 37:2).

The dysfunctional relationships between Jacob and his sons and among his sons are often traced only to the fact that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children (Genesis 37:3). It is helpful, however, to note that before this statement appears, we read, "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report" (Genesis 37:2). This sounds as if Joseph told his father about something his brothers said or did. Recent translations more accurately render this phrase as something like "Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing" (NLT). We don't know what these things were, but this statement sets up the entire story of his brothers' hatred for Joseph. It's no surprise they treated him so cruelly.

Joseph's famous "coat of many colours" was a quilted tunic. It was a long overcoat with sleeves and hem reaching to the wrists and ankles. It was worn by nobility to show rank. The use of the various pieces means it was multicolored. Jacob may have given it to Joseph to identify him as the primary heir (Genesis 37:3).

Having been the victim of a divided family due to competition for parental love (Genesis 25:28), Jacob should have known better than to allow himself to love Joseph more than the rest of his children. He especially should have known better than to demonstrate his favoritism in front of his other sons (Genesis 37:4).

Upon hearing Joseph's second dream, Jacob interpreted it and asked, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Genesis 37:10). Since Joseph's mother, Rachel, was already dead by this time, Jacob must have meant Leah when he said "thy mother" (Genesis 37:10).

Reuben, as the firstborn son of Jacob, had the most to lose by Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph, but he demonstrated his righteousness by talking the brothers out of harming Joseph. When Reuben returned to the cistern to rescue Joseph and found him missing, he assumed Joseph had been killed (Genesis 37:28–30).

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Psalm 75 □ 76 □ 77 □ | Romans 6 □

Genesis 37:2-4

²These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

⁴ And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Biblical Insight

The stories of favoritism in the families of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Old Testament figures offer a morality play to correct such dysfunction in the era of the New Covenant. Secular first-century house codes are revised in the New Testament in such a way as to assure healthy family relationships that will glorify God. These include relationships between husbands and their wives and parents and their children. (See Ephesians 5:21–33; 6:1–4; Titus 2:2–6.)

Daily Devotion

Wall Street Journal author Sue Shellenbarger wrote: "The families that have produced U.S. presidents aren't always great role models. In fact, they show a striking tendency to be deeply flawed. The childhoods of past presidents have been marked to an unusual degree by absent fathers, mothers so overinvolved that they could easily have been the original helicopter parents, and in some cases outright dysfunction." This is historical proof that our families do not doom us to a life of failure.

Scripture testifies that God is able to work with families in spite of jealousy, hatred, and favoritism. Many famous Bible characters came from dysfunctional families. But God's love is like water—it will flow into every available crack and crevice. Knowing this, believers can shower even the most unlovable or alienated people in their lives with unconditional love. As with Joseph's family, twenty years from now everything may be a different story in your family.

Live by God's principles and trust God as He allows people to make their choices and life to unfold. You may be pleasantly surprised.

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What can	ou do to a	pply this pr	inciple to yo	ur life today?	



Bible Reading PlanPsalm 78 □ | Romans 7 □

Genesis 37:5-8

- ⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.
- ⁶ And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:
- ⁷ For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.
- ⁸ And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

Biblical Insight

Many dreams mentioned in Scripture served prophetic functions. Joseph's dream of his brothers' obeisance triggered their hatred, but his dream was fulfilled. (See Genesis 42:6, 9; 43:26; 44:14.) In addition to Spirit-induced prophecy and visions, the Pentecostal experience of Holy Spirit baptism enables old men to dream dreams (Acts 2:17). Although dreams can be simply a natural phenomenon, they should not be quickly dismissed as insignificant, especially by those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, when the dreams seem to provide visionary or prophetic insight. A God-given dream will prove itself true without human effort to force fulfillment.

Daily Devotion

Pastor Arroyo stared at the wall. He was sure he had been hearing from God, but nothing he did seemed to work. God's grand promises seemed to be empty. But since it was impossible for God to fail, the pastor thought he must have failed. He bowed his head and grieved, longing for the promised move of God. "The word of the LORD tried him" (Psalm 105:19).

As heaviness settled in, he picked up his Bible and began to read about the life of Joseph. Joseph was given prophecies, but his life seemed to go from bad to worse. There was nothing Joseph could do to make his promises come to pass except remain faithful. Flesh seemed to prevail at every turn. His best behavior was rewarded with loss and regression. Then suddenly everything changed. In God's time all things came to pass.

It dawned on Pastor Arroyo that this is what the path of faith feels like: God promises, believers embrace the promises and obey God's promptings, and God does the miraculous. With an adjusted perspective, he was suddenly aware that a great load had lifted from his shoulders. He could now feel fresh expectation rise in his heart.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

Bible	Reading	Plar

Psalm 79 □ 80 □ 81 □ | Romans 8 □

Genesis 37:9-11

⁹ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

¹⁰ And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

¹¹ And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Biblical Insight

Joseph's second dream surpassed the first. It involved not merely sheaves, but the sun, the moon, and eleven stars making obeisance to him. Jacob rebuked Joseph. Did this mean his entire family would bow before Joseph? But, at the same time, Jacob realized the prophetic nature of this dream. The phrase "his father observed the saying" means Jacob could not get this out of his mind (Logos Bible Software). He sensed that if this dream was from God, it would be fulfilled. Jacob knew what it meant to have a divinely-given dream (Genesis 28:10-19).

Daily Devotion

One man intended to build a twenty-five-story office building on the Waldorf-Astoria site in downtown New York, but he defaulted on his loan. In 1929 a group of investors who snatched up the property in hopes of building a fifty-story building announced they were planning an eighty-story build. A series of zoning issues coupled with a contest to build the tallest building in New York City eventually prompted the investors to "go for the gold" and build a building 102 stories tall. They named it after their company and called it the Empire State Building.

Completed in 1931, the Empire State Building was 1,454 feet tall and remained the tallest building in the world for thirty-nine years. It all started with someone dreaming and, despite criticism and jealousy, sharing and living out the dream. Some have criticized Joseph for sharing his dream, but if he had not shared his dream, his brothers would have never sold him to Egypt. God was in control when Joseph shared his dream and when his dream became reality.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Psalm 82 □	83 🗆	84 🗆	85 🗆	86 🗆	87 🗆

Genesis 37:18-22

- ¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.
- ¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.
- ²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

Biblical Insight

God-given dreams cannot be short-circuited by killing the dreamer. Neither hatred nor conspiracy can overcome God's plans. God had a purpose for Joseph's life that would be fulfilled regardless of the efforts of his brothers, Potiphar's wife, or any others who would intrude upon his destiny. Many Bible readers think of Joseph as a type of Christ. What similarities can you think of between the two?

Daily Devotion

His name was Denman. He was bold and brash and often referred to as "The Tank." On March 14, 2008, he made history as sports commentator Richard Holes exclaimed, "Denman, driven out, relentless, remorseless, has pounded Kauto Star into submission. The answer is Denman! Denman has won the Gold Cup." This hard-galloping horse went on to win first in twenty-four races, second in fourteen, and third in five. His total prize earnings were over \$1.5 million. People loved to watch this horse run because nothing could stop him.

People of God know nothing can stop God from accomplishing His purposes. He can part seas, stop storms, raise the dead, and turn water into wine. He can change the hearts of kings, use wicked men to do His will, speak through donkeys, and make the devil tremble. When believers keep all that in mind, it is easier to maintain hope, even when friends or foes seem to have the upper hand. Nothing can stop God from accomplishing His purpose. Only the unwise would try to live outside of His purpose. Those living according to His purpose can be confident.

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What can you o	•	this princip	le to your lif	e today?	

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Bible Reading Plan

Psalm 88 □ 89 □ | Romans 9 □

Genesis 37:23-27

²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

Biblical Insight

When Joseph's brothers' initial plan to kill Joseph was redirected by Rueben's counsel, they sold Joseph to passing Ishmaelites, who in turn sold him to an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, Potiphar.

As it has been said, God writes long stories. Before Joseph's story was finished, he had the opportunity to say to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Daily Devotion

Booker T. Washington said, "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome." Washington was born in slavery but eventually became an influential educator and civil rights leader. Along the way he learned a great deal about small-minded people, bigotry, and adversity.

The president whose Emancipation Proclamation freed Booker T. Washington's family from slavery was also familiar with adversity. One man tried to stab him. Another mailed him clothing infected with smallpox and yellow fever. One hater tried to blow up his house, and two others tried to shoot him. On one occasion he heard a gunshot, and then he lost his hat. He later found that same hat with a bullet hole in it. Finally in 1865 Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. But Lincoln had already changed the world.

Everyone experiences adversity, but those who are doing the will of God may face even more than others. Both history and the Bible remind us that God's dreamers and world changers have more than their share of trouble because Satan and his world system are arrayed against them. Nevertheless, just like God did for Joseph, God helps His people leverage adversity for good.

Reflection an » What can y	-	ly this to you	r life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Believing without Understanding

Scripture Focus: Genesis 37:5, 9-11

The Lesson in Context

Of all the characters mentioned in the patriarchal history (Genesis 12–50), nothing negative was ever recorded about Joseph. He is the only "perfect" character in the entire book, surpassing even Abraham. Joseph is also, perhaps, the most traumatized character in the book. The tenacity of Joseph's faith in the face of betrayal and false imprisonment is an inspiring lesson for us today. He still held on to the dream he had been given, even when everyone around him rejected it. Likewise, we should hold on to our God-given dreams, letting His Word define us and not the hurt and betrayal we have experienced.

Joseph's story calls each of us to look deeply and honestly at our most painful memories and to reaffirm, in the face of all those negative feelings, our faith in the reality and goodness of God's plan for our lives. Because of the reality of grace, we are free to "own the truth" of our imperfect past, recognizing that God's grace is able to lift us up to heights we've seen only in our dreams. It was not until after his father's death in Egypt that Joseph finally and fully recognized the intricacy of God's divine plan (Genesis 50:20).

Group Discussion

- 1. If you have a sibling, were there ever difficult times in your relationship marked by sibling rivalry? Has your relationship improved over the years? If so, how?
- 2. Should Joseph have shared his dreams with his family? What do you think Joseph's motivations were?
- 3. The brothers' action against Joseph was really the culmination of generations of favoritism. What are some other dysfunctional patterns that can be repeated across family generations? How should one go about breaking those destructive cycles?
- 4. What would you say are the most important ways to discover God's dream for your life?
- 5. How do you think Joseph was able to keep his faith during his up-and-down existence in Egypt? What can we learn from Joseph's faith and trust in God?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

2.2

THE LORD IS WITH YOU

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will remember God is with me at all times.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is with us through every one of life's ups and downs.



FOCUS VERSE: Genesis 39:2, 21

² And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

²¹But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 37:36; 39:1-23; 40:1-23

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 37:36; 39:1-23; 40:1-23

Depending on the translation, Potiphar may have served as the head of the executioners or as chief of the cooks. In either case, someone or something would be slaughtered. If Potiphar was the commander of Pharaoh's royal executioners, he would also be the commander of the prison where those awaiting execution were kept (Genesis 37:36).

In Genesis 39:14, notice the careful wording of Potiphar's wife in order to provoke jealousy and prejudice and assure the household staff was on her side. This is the second use of the term *Hebrew* in the Bible. (See also Genesis 14:13.)

The parallel wording in Genesis 39:4-6 emphasizes God's faithfulness no matter the apparent circumstances (Genesis 39:22). Once Joseph was in prison, God connected Joseph to others for a unique purpose. The chief butler was responsible for the wine and beer stores of the Pharaoh and acted as his chief cupbearer. Both the chief butler and chief baker had important positions because of the ease with which they could introduce poison into Pharaoh's food or drink. Both of their titles are found in ancient Egyptian texts (Genesis 40:2). The chief baker was looking for comforting words. Joseph was not a charlatan who told people what they wanted to hear, but an instrument of God who told them the truth (Genesis 40:16).

In Genesis 40:3 we see that Joseph had been imprisoned in the dungeons located in Potiphar's house. The title "captain of the guard" is the title Potiphar held according to Genesis 37:36. The "keeper of the prison" in Genesis 39:22 was a superintendent of the dungeons under the command of the captain. Thus, Potiphar is the one who placed the butler and baker in Joseph's care (Genesis 40:3-4).

The Bible never recorded Joseph interpreting a dream before this time. The two dreams he had while at home were interpreted by his brothers and his father. However, Joseph was not afraid he would fail because "interpretations belong to God" (Genesis 40:8). So it is concerning the gifts of the Spirit: "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (I Corinthians 12:6).

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Bible	Reading	Plar

Psalm 90 □ 91 □ 92 □ | Romans 10 □

Genesis 39:1-5

- ¹ And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.
- 2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
- ³ And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.
- ⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.
- ⁵ And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

Biblical Insight

Twice in these verses, Joseph was associated with the idea of prosperity. He was "a prosperous man" because "the LORD made all that he did to prosper." Some translations use the word *successful* or *success* to capture this idea. The sense of the Hebrew word is "to make steady, favorable progress or succeed" (Logos Bible Software). This is remarkable because Joseph was essentially a slave Potiphar bought from the Ishmaelites. The Lord blessed Potiphar's house "for Joseph's sake." Everything in Joseph's life, as painful as his experiences were, happened because "God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20, NKJV).

Daily Devotion

You can't keep a good man down because good people "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). The patriarchs, prophets, and disciples all modeled this principle. Joseph was an Old Testament shadow of Jesus, who is our supreme example. A great cloud of witnesses has proven that persecution, hatred, slavery, and injustice are no match for the people of God. Goodness prospers in every situation.

A church planter in New England tells the story of a time when God used an angry, foul-mouthed landowner. The landowner felt cheated by the city, so he sold his property to a church because he knew they would not pay taxes to the city. The congregation built a church building and has been a significant influence in the region. The angry man did not set out to do a work for God, but God used him in spite of himself. That gives hope that one's "success" is not dependent on good fortune nor on the goodness of other people. God can use anyone. If God can make Joseph—a slave and prisoner—to prosper, He can certainly prosper you.

Reflection an » What can y	nd Prayer You do to appl	ly this to you	r life today?		

DAY 2	2
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		Bible	Reading Plan
Psalm 93 □	94 🗆	95 □	Romans 11 🗆

Genesis 39:6-9

⁶ And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

⁷ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

⁸ But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

⁹ There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Biblical Insight

Potiphar trusted Joseph completely. Potiphar concerned himself with nothing except the food set before him. He even trusted Joseph to be alone in his house with his wife. Potiphar thought his wife was as trustworthy as Joseph. But Joseph was a handsome man, and Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him. Joseph refused her advances, pointing out that Potiphar trusted him with all he had. This meant Potiphar trusted Joseph to treat his wife honorably. Besides that, Joseph could not bring himself to sin against God. To yield to this temptation would be great wickedness. There are always temptations to sin, but people of faith find strength to resist through prayer. Jesus taught us to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

Daily Devotion

Sarah set her phone down with a groan. Her co-worker had just informed her that she did not want to continue with their Bible study because Sarah's religion seemed like it required more commitment than she felt she could give. This was not the first time Sarah had felt the pain and sorrow of rejection. She collapsed to her knees and cried out to God, asking God to forgive her for failing again.

When her emotions were spent and she was able to sit quietly in God's presence, she heard God whisper this verse: "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me" (I Samuel 8:7, NIV). Immediately she thought of the many people who would not receive Jesus despite His goodness and perfection. She thought of Judas, Herod, Pilate, and the Jewish religious leaders who worked against Jesus. It occurred to her that she had not failed God. Besides, she was in good company. If men like Joseph and Jesus had let rejection stop them, millions of willing hearts would have been doomed. She purposed to ignore rejection and opposition and find another heart's door on which to knock.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to app	aly this to your life t	rodav?	
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 96 □ 97 □ 98 □ | Romans 12 □

Genesis 39:10-16

- ¹⁰ And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.
- ¹¹ And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.
- ¹² And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.
- 13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth.
- ¹⁴ That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:
- ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.
- ¹⁶ And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

Biblical Insight

Potiphar's wife did not give up on her attempt to seduce Joseph. Each day she renewed her effort. She finally attempted to force him physically, but he fled, leaving his garment behind. She lied about what had happened, telling the men of the house and her husband that Joseph had attempted to force her. To lie and misrepresent those who resist temptation is common for those thwarted in their efforts to lead others astray. As Solomon warned, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Proverbs 1:10).

Daily Devotion

As a young minister with a growing family in Central Texas, it almost seemed like a no-brainer. Maybe it was even a blessing from God. He was an accountant for a growing company and recognized he had a ground-floor opportunity. He was being provided housing and could potentially be a CFO at a young age. There was just one slight problem: his employer's business was family planning, and they had recently made the decision to start offering abortions. This was before abortion became a hot topic, and the company downplayed that part of their business.

He made the difficult decision to leave the company. The company grew to become the biggest provider of abortions in the United States and has made billions of dollars taking the lives of the unborn. Its executives have milked the government, lied to the public, and lived lavishly. The minister spent the rest of his career as a bi-vocational pastor. But he kept his integrity. There is no way he could have pastored a church if he had not had the fortitude to let go of that position. Some things are more valuable than money.

Reflection an » What can y	-	ly this to you	r life today?	

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			Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 99 □ 100 □ 101 □ 102 □ | Romans 13 □

Genesis 39:17-23

¹⁷ And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

¹⁸ And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

¹⁹ And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. ²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

Biblical Insight

When Potiphar's wife reiterated to him the lie she had already told the men of the house, Potiphar put Joseph in prison. Again, "the LORD was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2). The Lord made everything Joseph did succeed (Genesis 39:3). Whether in Potiphar's house or in prison, Joseph was elevated to a place of trust, preparing him for the time he would be next in authority to Pharaoh. (See Genesis 41:37–45.) An important biblical principle was at work: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

Daily Devotion

Committing a crime and being punished is bad. Committing a crime and being inordinately punished is even worse. In both cases, those being punished can understand that their actions demanded a response. But being incarcerated based on a false accusation has to be one of the worst punishments because it is unwarranted and unjust. Yet it happens. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, 2,500 people have been exonerated in the United States since 1989. The average time served by those falsely accused people was eight years and nine months.

It is likely the most difficult part of Joseph's journey was not the incarceration but the feelings of betrayal and helplessness. Few things are more painful than being misunderstood or misrepresented. But Joseph was a magnificent example of character, trust in God, and integrity. His accuser's evil intent caused him to shine as one of the brightest stars in Scripture. Potiphar's wife's wicked intentions forged the kind of character in Joseph that one day made him a great ruler. Had he given in to temptation or bitterness, the history of God's people would have been dramatically changed.

Reflection and Pray » What can you do	er to apply this to you	r life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 103 □ 104 □ | Romans 14 □

Genesis 40:5-8

- ⁵ And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.
- ⁶ And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.
- ⁷ And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?
- ⁸ And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

Biblical Insight

The imprisonment of Pharaoh's butler and baker led Joseph to utter a keen bit of New Testament insight. Both the butler and the baker dreamed, but neither knew the meaning of their dreams. Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you." When brought before Pharaoh concerning Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Genesis 41:16). After hearing the dreams, Joseph said, "God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do" (Genesis 41:25). This led to Pharaoh's observation that the Spirit of God was in Joseph (Genesis 41:38). One of the results of Holy Spirit baptism is that "old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). One of the spiritual gifts is the "interpretation of tongues" (I Corinthians 12:10). The same Spirit that empowered Joseph empowers us.

Daily Devotion

Desmond Doss inspired two movies: one was a documentary and the other a drama based on his heroics at the Battle of Hacksaw Ridge. The battle took place on the island of Okinawa in the spring of 1945. Doss is credited with saving the lives of seventy-five wounded soldiers by crawling to them, dragging them to the edge of a cliff, and lowering them to medics below.

Many who see the documentary do not know that Doss was a Seventh Day Adventist who joined the war as a conscientious objector. Because of his convictions, he never carried a weapon. As a result, his fellow soldiers and officer considered him a coward and a liability, but he turned out to be the kind of guy who put others first.

So it was with Joseph. Although he had troubles of his own, he let God minister to his fellow prisoners. He did so out of kindness, and God allowed Joseph to interpret the butler's dream and the baker's dream to connect Joseph to Pharoah, who would eventually bring him out of prison into a life of royalty. Whom can you help today?

Reflection and » What can you	-	to your life today	/?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Lord Is with You

Scripture Focus: Genesis 39:2, 21

The Lesson in Context

The story of Joseph in Potiphar's house and in prison shows us Joseph at his lowest points. He sunk lower . . . and lower yet again. In every sense that mattered, Joseph went beyond the "breaking point." The trauma and disappointment he experienced were more than enough to break even the most buoyant, optimistic spirit. Yet Joseph survived. How? What was his secret?

It turns out that the secret was not really his but God's. Joseph survived because God remained committed to His purpose for Joseph's life and, therefore, remained present even in worse-than-the-worst circumstances. More often than not, God's presence gets us through troubled times rather than out of them. As Joseph's life shows us, our troubles sweeten the sense of God's presence. The difficulty of life that threatens to break us ends up becoming our strength for the next challenge we face. Wherever you are and whatever you face, knowing that God is with you is all you need to overcome and become the person God has designed for you to be.

Group Discussion

- In what ways do our successes reflect God's faithfulness as they did for Joseph?
- 2. In his encounter with Potiphar's wife, Joseph was essentially offered a tempting shortcut to get ahead in his career. Why do you think people are always looking for shortcuts to success and prosperity? What is the flaw in that kind of thinking?
- 3. Is it right to say God "needs" us to be faithful in order to accomplish His will? Why or why not?
- 4. Do you believe God still speaks through dreams? Has God ever spoken to you in a dream? How do you determine whether a dream was sent by God?
- 5. What do you do in difficult times to remind yourself God is with you?

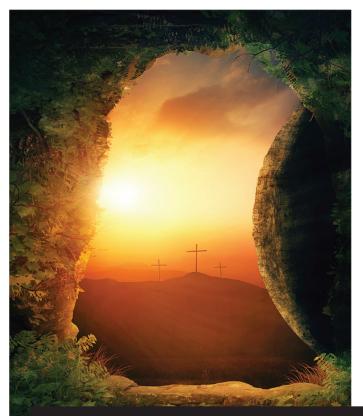
My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

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LESSON BIG IDEAI have hope because
Jesus rose from the
dead

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod raised Jesus
from the dead.

THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION



FOCUS VERSE: John 2:19-21; I Corinthians 15:52

¹⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
²⁰ Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?
²¹ But he spake of the temple of his body.

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 27:62-66; 28:1-8; John 2:18-22; Romans 8:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:52

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 27:62-66; 28:1-8; John 2:18-22; Romans 8:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:52

The promise of resurrection from death did not go unchallenged in the first century. The Sadducees denied the existence of angels or the possibility of resurrection, but the Pharisees disagreed, confessing both (Acts 23:6-9). Nevertheless, the Pharisees wanted Jesus' tomb secured to prevent His disciples from stealing His body and claiming He had risen (Matthew 27:62-66). Their rejection of Jesus convinced them He would not rise from the dead.

Some Jews demanded a sign from Jesus to authenticate His authority to cleanse the Temple. Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The Jews thought He was talking about Herod's Temple, but Jesus was speaking of His body. This affirmed the truth of the Resurrection (John 2:18–21). The Gospels rely on the witnesses at the tomb and others who saw Jesus after His resurrection (Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–14; Luke 24; John 20–21).

Romans 8:9 identifies those who are "in the Spirit" and "not in the flesh" as those within whom the Spirit of God dwells. Those who are "in the flesh" are those in whom the Spirit of Christ does not dwell, thus they do not belong to Him.

Paul equated the "Spirit of God" with the "Spirit of Christ." They are the same. There is only one Spirit. The presence of the indwelling Spirit marks a person as a Christian.

In Romans 8:10, Paul used the first-class condition to underscore the reality that Christ was indeed in the believers at Rome. In Romans 8:9-11, the interchangeable terms indicate it is the same thing to say the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ, for Christ Himself dwells within a person. There is no idea here of a distinction between these terms.

Those living at the coming of the Lord will be instantaneously "changed" from mortal to immortal. The "trumpet" is a well-known metaphor heralding the end of an age (I Corinthians 15:51–54). (See, for example, Matthew 24:31; I Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 8:2.) The resurrection of Christ anticipated the future resurrection of deceased believers (I Thessalonians 4:14; see also I Corinthians 15:42–57).

JESUS SAID, "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP" (JOHN 2:19).

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Psalm 105 □ 106 □ | Romans 15 □

Matthew 27:62-66

- ⁶² Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,
- ⁶³ Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.
- ⁶⁴ Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.
- 65 Pilate said unto them. Ye have a watch: 90 your way, make it as sure as ye can.
- ⁶⁶ So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Biblical Insight

Ironically, the Pharisees, who were Israel's staunchest defenders of the doctrine of resurrection, conspired to ensure the grave was unbreakable. Unwittingly, their plot actually worked to strengthen the Christian testimony of Christ's rising from the dead. By having a stone over the door, a Roman guard, and Pilate's seal to secure the tomb, the undisputedly empty tomb served as an eloquent testimony to the miraculous Resurrection.

Daily Devotion

A famous line associated with the *Titanic* is one that probably caused even the manliest of men to blush. There is a strong chance it even caused unbelievers to change their perception of the power of God after the *Titanic* sank. An employee boldly uttered the words, "Not even God Himself could sink this ship." While the *Titanic* cannot be adequately compared to the empty grave, and while God did not spitefully destroy a beautiful cruise liner, it is important to remember there is nothing too big or too permanent for God to move.

What man thinks is unbreakable, unsinkable, and immovable is just another opportunity for the Lord to show Himself strong and mighty. The Resurrection is such an example, and the Resurrection was no accident. The intentionality of the miracle that man said could not be done is a testimony to how God works. The Rock of all ages rolled away the rock that tried to hold Him back. Your miracle could be just a stone's roll away. Nothing is impossible for our Savior who still works in ways people say could never be done.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Psalm 107 □	108 🗆	109 🗆	110 🗆	111 🗆	Romans 16 🗆

Matthew 28:1-6

¹In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

- ² And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
- ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
- ⁴ And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
- ⁵ And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus. which was crucified.
- ⁶ He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Biblical Insight

The first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were women, and the first to hear the testimony of the angel of the Lord were women. Women were the first people to meet Jesus after His resurrection, and they were the first to proclaim His resurrection. The male disciples did not believe the women's report (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11). To reject the testimony and ministry of women because they are women is an error. From the birthday of the church onward, both men and women have been equipped by the Holy Spirit to function in a prophetic role (Acts 2:17-18).

Daily Devotion

One aspect of the feminist movement in society states women should be treated the same way as men. Many believe inequality is at play. Though that might be true in certain aspects, the reality is that women are not the same as men, and that is okay. Each gender was created with different strengths that equally benefit the church.

Although males and females are not equal in many areas, their differences balance out the kingdom of God. Both men and women are called to do the work of Christ, and each has essential roles that help make the church whole. Each gender is important to God, and He loves each of His children the same. Women, just like men, play an essential part in many areas of God's kingdom and should never feel inferior because of how God created them. The differences in our makeup should be seen as strengths, not weaknesses, and as opportunities, not misfortune.

We are all fearfully and wonderfully made. God saw that what He made was good in the Garden. He still treasures His creation equally and uses us in the Kingdom in spite of and because of our differences. How are you contributing to the kingdom of God?

Reflection and Prayer			
What can you do to	apply this principle to yo	our life today?	
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DAY	3
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Bible Reading F

Psalm 112 □ 113 □ 114 □ 115 □ | I Corinthians 1 □

John 2:18-22

- ¹⁸ Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?
- ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
- ²⁰ Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?
- ²¹ But he spake of the temple of his body.
- ²² When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Biblical Insight

Jesus declared that He would raise up the temple of His own body. Scripture also testifies to the fact that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24; Ephesians 1:17-20) and that He was raised from the dead by the Spirit (Romans 8:11). Attempts to fragment God into first, second, and third persons introduce notions and language not found in Scripture. Although mystery is involved in the Incarnation (I Timothy 3:16), it is mystery to be celebrated as miraculous, not to be explained away by human reason and in human terms.

Daily Devotion

At many funerals we hear moving eulogies of lives well lived and well loved. During these eulogies, the speakers often recite the titles and descriptions of the deceased. "John was a devoted father, son, grandfather, and doctor." "Susan was a patient mother, daughter, sister, and loving aunt." All of these labels describe who the person was, but they are not the person's legal and permanent name.

We are made up of many elements, but we each have our own name. The same concept goes for God. He has many appellations, but He has one name. He is the Father, He is the Son, and He is the Holy Ghost, and His name is Jesus. He sealed our salvation with His blood. We may say along with the apostle Paul, "Great is the mystery of godliness," and great is His name. Have you taken on the name of Jesus in baptism?

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Psalm 116 □ 117 □ 118 □ | I Corinthians 2 □

Romans 8:9-11

⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

¹⁰ And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Biblical Insight

The resurrection will destroy death, sin's final effect in the body of the believer (I Corinthians 15:54–57). The believer's mortal body will ultimately be resurrected to eternal life through the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit guarantees that believers will take part in the resurrection. (See Romans 8:23; I Corinthians 15:12–58; Philippians 3:20–21; I Thessalonians 4:13–18; I John 3:2.)

Daily Devotion

To many people theme parks are some of the most exciting places to visit. This is especially true for children, those who have children, or those who are children at heart. As exhilarating as theme parks may be, rare are the parks that allow guests inside without asking them to pay a price. Take Disney World or Six Flags for example. Imagine if you were to approach the gate with lunches packed, water bottles ready, all your kids' hair perfectly combed. Suppose you tried to walk past the attendant without a valid ticket or proof of purchase. You likely would be stopped, denied entry, and asked to leave the same way you came. Worse yet, you may be escorted out by security.

You must have the right ticket to enter. The same concept rings true for our salvation and entry into Heaven. Repentance, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and baptism in Jesus' name are all part of what we need to make sure we walk past the gate. Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross, but we still have to do our part. Jesus gave us the gospel; our response is our responsibility. Have you responded to the gospel?

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	u do to apply	this princip	ole to your lif	e today?	

DAY 5

Bible Reading Plan

Psalm 119:1-48 ☐ | I Corinthians 3 ☐

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Biblical Insight

In Paul's world, sleeping was a common euphemism and metaphor for physical death. The resurrection of Christ anticipated the future resurrection of deceased believers. The "word of the Lord" could indicate something Christ revealed personally to Paul, or it could point to what Jesus taught about Himself in the Olivet Discourse—namely, that He would return in the clouds of Heaven with angels and a loud trumpet call to gather His people unto Him (Matthew 24:29–31).

Daily Devotion

Released in 2002, the track "Arise My Love" performed by NewSong depicts the Resurrection in a beautiful and dramatic way. You may have heard it while you watched a sign language or dowel rod performance at an Easter service in the early 2000s. The song was popular and for good reason.

Toward the end of the song, the lyrics—like the Scripture—remind us that death does not have the final say. We have a promise of a resurrection in Christ. "Sin, where are your shackles? Death, where is your sting? Hell has been defeated. The grave could not hold the King." Just as the grave could not contain Jesus, we are promised that death will not have the last word for us or any who have given their lives to Christ and followed His plan of salvation. We have hope beyond the grave and a promise of eternity with Him when we live our lives according to His Word.

Reflection and I	Prayer			
» What can you	do to apply th	is principle to	your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Promise of Resurrection

Scripture Focus: John 2:19-21

The Lesson in Context

Even secular historians acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the central figure in human history. However, His resurrection is more than a history lesson; it has eternal consequences for all people. Jesus prophesied that He would rise from the dead. The disciples doubted initially and only understood after the fact. But once they saw the risen Christ and believed by faith, they were never the same. The Resurrection was not an event for them; it was a person. People in sin who doubt Christ's claims and ignore His love will find themselves eventually entering an eternity of suffering and pain. People in Christ, who through faith believe His claims and obey the gospel, will find abundant life now and a future filled with joy in His presence.

Jesus still wants to be known as the Resurrection to people today. Yes, it was an event, but it is also a person to be experienced in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Pentecostal message: everyone everywhere can experience resurrection life through "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25)—Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us respond to God's Word with faith and let God move on us through the Holy Spirit.

Group Discussion

- 1. Jesus prophesied about His death, yet Scripture indicates it still shocked the disciples. Why do you think this was so?
- 2. What implications are there for present-day disciples in the knowledge that Jesus willingly surrendered to the will of God?
- 3. Joseph of Arimathea was called a secret disciple, but the death of Jesus brought Joseph's affection to light. What do you think it was about Jesus' death that stirred Joseph to action?
- 4. How has the hope of Jesus' resurrection changed your life? When was the last time the hope of His resurrection ignited your faith?
- 5. When you think of the final resurrection of the church, what is the most exciting thing to you?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

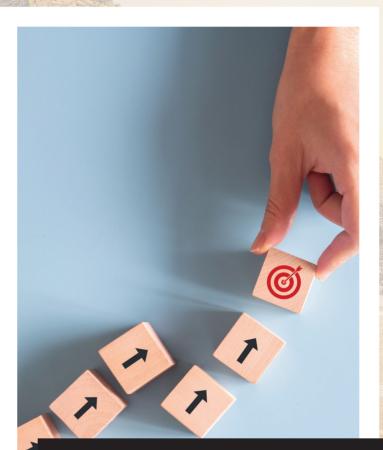
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GOD KNOWS THE WAY

LESSON BIG IDEA

I have hope because Jesus rose from the dead.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod orders the steps of the righteous.



FOCUS VERSES: Genesis 41:38-40

³⁸ And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

³⁹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

⁴⁰ Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 41:1-45; Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 16:9

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 41:1-45; Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 16:9

None of the trained magicians could make up an interpretation, even when told the details of Pharaoh's dreams. God must have been helping Pharaoh discern the truth so whatever fables they concocted would not satisfy him (Genesis 41:8). Joseph rightfully gave God the glory rather than taking it for himself (Genesis 41:16).

Although Joseph was not asked to offer advice, he was acting in the role of one of Pharaoh's spiritual advisors and therefore applied the interpretation of the dream with wise counsel (Genesis 41:33).

The three things Joseph received (signet ring, fine linen clothing, and a gold chain) are known to have been marks of high office in ancient Egypt. Pharaoh's signet ring from his own hand gave Joseph the power to act in place of Pharaoh in all decisions. Some have doubted that a Hebrew could be elevated to such a high position, but a group of Semitic peoples known as the Hyksos ruled Egypt near this time. It is possible Joseph served under one of their Pharaohs (Genesis 41:42).

The city of On was known to the Greeks as Heliopolis (The City of the Sun). Joseph's father-in-law was probably the high priest of Ra, the sun god. Joseph's marriage united him to the most powerful priestly family in Egypt (Genesis 41:45).

The placement of Psalm 1 makes it an introduction to the Psalter, or Book of Psalms. The verbal links between Psalms 1-2 indicate these psalms should be read together, making both introductory to the entire book. The themes found here are woven throughout the book. Psalm 1 begins by pronouncing a blessing on one who delights in the law. The word law comes from the Hebrew word transliterated torah, which means "instruction."

Although we may make plans and set goals, God directs our steps (Proverbs 16:9).

THE THREE THINGS JOSEPH RECEIVED ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN MARKS OF HIGH OFFICE IN ANCIENT EGYPT.

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Bible Reading Plan

Psalm 119:49-104 ☐ | I Corinthians 4 ☐

Genesis 41:1-4

- ¹ And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.
- ² And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.
- ³ And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.
- ⁴ And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

Biblical Insight

Dreams are often a means of divine communication in Scripture, both for believers and unbelievers. Often symbols are used to represent reality. For Pharaoh, seven cows ("kine") represented seven years—the fat cows stood for seven years of plenty and the lean cows for seven years of famine. Daniel interpreted dreams for Nebuchadnezzar, while Gabriel explained dreams for Daniel. Because of a dream Pilate's wife had, she warned him to have nothing to do with judging Jesus (Matthew 27:19). With the baptism of the Holy Spirit, old men dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

Daily Devotion

Dreams come in all shapes and sizes. Some occur because of the pizza you ate too late at night or from some adverse side effects from the antibiotics you took for your strep throat. Wild imaginations can take children all sorts of places when they drift off to sleep. The prophet Joel knew this to be true before interpreting dreams was in vogue. He wrote, "Your old men shall dream dreams" (Joel 2:28).

Although dreams can often be crazy, they can also be from God. We should be very careful to listen to what God is trying to say when He speaks through dreams. Have you ever felt like the Lord spoke to you through a dream, but you did not quite know how to interpret it? Many times the Lord gives us people who can help us understand what God is saying. The next time this happens, share your dream with someone like your pastor or another trusted, Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, wise man or woman in your life. Like Joseph of old, never underestimate the power of a God-given dream.

Reflection and	•	
» What can yo	ou do to apply this principle to your life today?	



Bible Reading Plan

Psalm 119:105-176 ☐ | I Corinthians 5 ☐

Genesis 41:37-41

- ³⁷ And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.
- ³⁸ And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?
- ³⁹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:
- 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.
- ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

Biblical Insight

The phrase "Spirit of God" is used in Genesis 41:38: "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" We may be tempted to dismiss this text as we build a biblical pneumatology (study of the Spirit) since Pharaoh is the one who referred to the Spirit of God. But Pharaoh's declaration follows Joseph's explanation to him that God enabled Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. (See Genesis 41:25, 28.) The God of whom Joseph spoke was the God to whom Pharaoh referred.

Daily Devotion

There are numerous important elements of good character such as how an individual **Reflection and Prayer** atching or how a person responds when a favorite football team is person, at the set may be suitable samplings, an even more telling test of character is how a person reacts when he or she or a loved one is treated poorly.

- Pharoah put Joseph through the ringer, and it would have been easy for Joseph to behave or react poorly in response. Sure, Joseph was later rewarded, but can you imagine what would have happened if he had decided to be bitter and angry during his prison sentence instead of faithfully following God?
- Even in the midst of adversity, Joseph chose to trust God and to serve Him. Joseph's godly-character spoke for itself, and that made all the difference. Pharoah experienced the Holy Spirit through Joseph's actions, which eventually led to greater good. When you are in the midst of what feels like a prison sentence, keep your focus on God and let your character exhibit His Holy Spirit. The way you carry yourself in seasons of hardship speaks louder than in any season of triumph. Allow God to be seen through you, and you could help change how a person sees God.

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What can you	i do to apply	this principle	e to your life	today?	

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DAY 3	Psalm 120 □	121 🗆	122 🗆	123 🗆	124 🗆	125 🗆	│ I Corinthians 6 □

Genesis 41:33-36

³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

³⁴Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

³⁵ And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

³⁶ And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

Biblical Insight

It is commonly noted that the Spirit of God enabled Joseph to exercise remarkable leadership in potentially disastrous circumstances, and that is true. But we should note also that the Spirit of God in Joseph brought order out of the pending chaos anticipated by the seven years of famine from Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh had sought an answer from his magicians, but what they could not do, the Spirit of God enabled Joseph to accomplish, much like the Spirit of God brought order from watery chaos (Genesis 1:2).

Daily Devotion

Back in the 1980s, famous magician David Copperfield preformed an act in which he made his audience believe the Statue of Liberty disappeared. This feat baffled many, but at the end of the day, the statue remained unmoved. The art of magic dates back long before renowned magicians like Houdini or Copperfield took the stage. No matter how intricately they plan for a trick or how much time it takes them, it will never be more than an illusion of reality.

During Joseph's lifetime, leaders also tried to exhibit power and attempt control, but that too was only an illusion. Without the Spirit of God, these leaders could not properly lead. Leadership is more than leading; it is planning and planning well. Joseph used His God-given insight to help the people of the land prepare for what could have been devastating. When you are directed by the Spirit of God, your steps are ordered and your future is secure, no matter the famine or the chaos.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

	Bible Reading Plan						
DAY 4	Psalm 126 □	127 🗆	128 🗆	129 🗆	130 🗆	131 🗆	│ I Corinthians 7 □

Psalm 1:1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 1 is an introduction to the Psalter. The first psalm begins by pronouncing a blessing on one who delights in the law. Psalm 2 ends by pronouncing blessing on all who put their trust in the Son. The idea is that meditation on Scripture leads to trust in the Messiah. The "counsel of the ungodly . . . the way of sinners . . . the seat of the scornful" is a series of terms further developed in Psalm 2:1–3.

Daily Devotion

Have you ever taken directions from a person who did not seem to know where to go? It may sound like, "Turn right at Walmart, left at the third stop sign, do a U-turn at the intersection where you see a man selling tacos out of the back of his truck, drive two more blocks, and you will arrive." You should probably stop taking directions from people who have never been where you are going.

These kinds of instructions may eventually get you where you need to go, but there is often a better route. Godly counsel will help direct you where you ought to go. It will keep you from making wrong turns, taking dangerous roads, and ending up in places you do not belong. The psalmist wrote that it matters from whom you take instruction and with whom you sit. When you allow God and His Word to lead you to the right counsel, you will arrive safely.

What can you do to apply	this principle	to your life toda	ay?	

DAY 5

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Psalm 132 □ 133 □ 134 □ 135 □ | I Corinthians 8 □

Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

Biblical Insight

Like Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah recognized, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). People are helpless, apart from the gracious influence of God, to turn themselves from evil: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God" (Jeremiah 31:18). Repentance—a change of mind, heart, and will—is nothing short of a gift of God (Acts 11:18; II Timothy 2:25).

Daily Devotion

With high hopes, a boy planned his trip to the moon in a homemade rocket ship constructed from some empty Amazon boxes and a pair of scissors. His intentions were as pure as his freckled face and curly hair. He really wanted to launch into space, but as much as he planned and prepared, that cardboard rocket ship was not going to send him into orbit. To take us where we want to go, the world often seems to push the concept to "follow your heart." This concept could not be further from biblical truth.

The human heart can be deceitful if not kept in check (Jeremiah 17:9). Our fleshly nature is to keep our focus selfishly based. Our hearts can plan our lives before our spirits and minds have time to pack their bags and follow. That is why it is so important to always allow the Lord to direct our paths and build our rocket ship. Let us put one foot in front of the other as we all walk home together. If we are sure to follow in the footsteps of our Father in every part of the journey, one day we will get off the ground safely.

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What can	you do to a	oply this prin	ciple to your	life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: God Knows the Way

Scripture Focus: Genesis 41:38-40

The Lesson in Context

In the midst of all our sorrow, frustration, and even despair, we have the precious promise that one day we will finally see, as Joseph did, the grand and glorious whole of our lives as part of the divine plan: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . . For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Corinthians 13:10, 12).

It is precisely this hope—this dream, if you will—that grants us the grace to continue forward in faithfulness even in the most trying circumstances. Joseph's greatest wisdom was his unfailing faithfulness. For this reason the writer of Hebrews, in his grand tour of the Bible's "Hall of Faith," chose to save for last that wing showcasing the heroes who were tortured, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, martyred, ostracized, persecuted, and tormented, but who, despite—or because of—all, "obtained a good report through faith" (Hebrews 11:39). May their stories, along with the story of Joseph, inspire us all to greater faith and faithfulness.

Group Discussion

- Have you ever had a dream that upset you? How did it impact you the next day?
- 2. What do you think would have happened if Joseph had decided to bargain with Pharaoh? Why do you think it was important for Joseph to show humility in that moment?
- 3. What are some of the most common reasons why people do not hear God speak to them? What changes can people make to better hear the voice of God?
- 4. Can you think of a certain time in your life when you may not have understood what was happening, but that moment ended up shaping who you are today?
- 5. Faith and faithfulness are words that get used a lot in the church. How would you define these concepts? How would you explain their relationship to one another?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today	ıy?

2.4

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will surrender my past to God and allow Him to make something beautiful out of my brokenness.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God knows how to take what is meant for evil and make something good out of it.

BEAUTY FROM THE BROKEN



FOCUS VERSES: Genesis 45:7-8; 50:20-21

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 45:1-28; 46:26-34; 47:27-31; 50:15-21

²⁰ But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

²¹ Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 45:1-28; 46:26-34; 47:27-31; 50:15-21

We often think of Joseph's comforting words to his brothers after Jacob's death: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20). These words also comfort us, for they provide assurance that God works in the painful circumstances of our lives to bring good things to pass.

But Joseph's words of assurance began before Jacob's death. When Joseph first made himself known to his brethren, he said, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Genesis 45:5, 7–8). Joseph called himself a father to Pharaoh, which may be related to his status as a prophet since prophets and leaders are often called father (Genesis 45:8; II Kings 2:12; 5:13; 6:21; 13:14).

Pharaoh was pleased to learn of the arrival of Joseph's brothers and commissioned transportation and food for their return to Jacob to bring him back to Egypt with them. When Jacob heard the good news that Joseph was still alive and was governor of Egypt, it was more than he could believe. But when he saw the generous provisions Pharaoh had sent, Jacob was convinced.

Egyptian society was based on a strict caste system according to occupation. As a result, Egyptians usually asked strangers their occupations. Perhaps Joseph wanted to establish the low caste of the Hebrews so they would not be eligible to intermarry and be absorbed into Egyptian culture. Joseph used the Egyptians' own prejudices to keep the people of God separated. Similarly, throughout the Babylonian captivity and the long diaspora (scattering of the Jews), anti-Semitic prejudice helped maintain the separate identity of Jews (Genesis 46:34; see also Genesis 43:32). No matter our vocation or how we make our living, our identity is found in being children of God.

BE NOT GRIEVED, NOR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES, THAT YE SOLD ME HITHER: FOR GOD DID SEND ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE.

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Bibl	e Re	adin	g Plan

Psalm 136 □ 137 □ 138 □ | I Corinthians 9 □

Genesis 45:1-5

- ¹Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.
- ² And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.
- ³ And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.
- ⁴ And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.
- ⁵ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

Biblical Insight

Have you ever considered the intensity of Joseph's encounter with his brothers? One scholar explains, "Joseph was overwhelmed by Judah's words.... Joseph then released more than twenty years of pent-up emotions, weeping so loudly that the Egyptians outside the room heard it. Joseph's revelation of his true identity—undoubtedly spoken in Hebrew, not Egyptian—so terrified his brothers that they could not answer his question about his father's well-being. Violating protocol, Joseph ordered the brothers to come near to him so he could speak to them more intimately, this time explicitly identifying himself" (Robert D. Bergen, *CSB Study Bible*).

Daily Devotion

Suppressed emotions always seem to compound and eventually come out—sometimes in strange ways and sometimes when we least expect them. Imagine for a moment how Joseph must have felt seeing his brothers for the first time in decades. They did not recognize him as they groveled in fear, begging for help. Sometimes siblings have some sort of rivalry or disdain toward each other, but in many cases, there is still a deep love for each other below the surface.

Joseph still loved his family and likely missed them greatly. His emotions he had kept inside for so long were about to surface. He revealed himself to his brothers, accompanied by many tears and soulful sentiment. Joseph chose to forgive what his brothers had done out of envy, trying to destroy him. What is God trying to surface in your life today? Take an inventory of your emotions and relationships; allow God to reveal who you really are to those around you. Then let them do the same for you.

Reflection a	•	
» What can	you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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			Bible Reading Plan
Dealm 170 \square	140 🗆	1/1	I I Corinthians 10 □

Psalm 139 □ 140 □ 141 □ | I Corinthians 10 □

Genesis 45:6-10

⁶ For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

⁹ Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

¹⁰ And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

Biblical Insight

"The name of Goshen is considered Semitic, not Egyptian. The presence of other 'Goshens' in the Old Testament confirm the term's use to describe places of rich soil (Joshua 10:41; 11:16; 15:51). While the exact location of Goshen is unknown, it can be approximately correlated with the eastern Nile delta" (John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible).

Daily Devotion

You have probably encountered a situation in which someone has hurt you or made you feel uncomfortable. Our gut instincts often tell us our best option is to flee. Parents often tell their children to run when they feel "stranger danger." Maybe you heard this term while you were growing up. Sometimes the best option is to run, such as in abusive relationships or jobs we have outgrown, but there is a different option we should consider. It is unorthodox, but we should consider it anyway. What if our healing is waiting at the place we ran away from?

Making peace with the past is a powerful way to move into the future. Prisoners have returned to jail cells they once inhabited, not because they committed another crime, but because they wanted to remember where they came from. Nostalgia is more than high school reunions and Easy Bake Ovens. The places that caused us hurt are often places we have to revisit in order to make peace and move forward. It would have been easy for Joseph's brothers to stay in Egypt, but they had to return home, say goodbye to their home, and move their family to the land Joseph had promised and prepared for them.

Is there anything or anywhere you need to revisit in your past in order to move forward into your future?

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	3
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				Bible	Reading	y Plan
Psalm 142 □	143 🗆	144 🗆	145 🗆	145 🗆	146 🗆	147 🗆

Genesis 45:11-15

¹¹ And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

¹² And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

¹³ And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

¹⁴ And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

¹⁵ Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Biblical Insight

"The brothers were reunited in an emotion-filled reunion. The brothers' previous hatred and jealousy of Joseph had now come to an end, thanks to Joseph's magnanimity. Among those who seek to participate in the covenant plan of God, there is no room for revenge. With a generous spirit of reconciliation, Joseph fully welcomed his brothers. Then he instructed them to hurry home to Jacob without delay and inform him of his son's power as ruler and master of all Egypt (Genesis 45:9-11)" (Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus*).

Daily Devotion

Joseph's dreams from many years earlier of his brothers bowing down to him were finally coming to pass. But he did not punctuate it with "I told you sos" or pointed fingers and laughter. He met his brothers with compassion and love. He forgave. He began to rebuild, and he hastened to take care of his family in need.

We are called to do the same—to reconcile when it is within our power to do so. Joseph did not seek revenge or plot to get back at his brothers for the wrong they had done. Instead, he loved them and, with deep emotion, welcomed them back in spite of the past. God rewarded Joseph's faithfulness through all the trials and loneliness. Eventually, Joseph's family was restored as they all benefitted from Joseph's faithfulness to God.

What is God trying to reconcile and restore in your life? Instead of seeking revenge, seek reconciliation and restoration.

eflection and P		
What can you	do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	4
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			Bible Reading Plan
Psalm 148 □	149 □	150 🗆	I Corinthians 11 □

Genesis 45:16-20

¹⁶ And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

¹⁷ And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

¹⁸ And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

¹⁹ Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

²⁰ Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

Biblical Insight

"Affirming the commands Joseph had given, Pharaoh told him to have his brothers load their animals with food, go on back to Jacob in Canaan, and then return with their families. New to the set of instructions was Pharaoh's provision of wagons from the land of Egypt to transport the weaker members of the clan down to Egypt, the promise that Joseph's family could live in the best of the land of Egypt, and that they would be permitted to eat from the richness ('the fat') of the land" (Robert D. Bergen, *CSB Study Bible*).

Daily Devotion

After years of deception, Jacob realized he had been selfish and manipulative. Almost too late he realized family was more important than success. When reunited with his brother, he discovered that people are not always wanting what we think they want and that sometimes we do get a second chance.

In April of 2009, Mike Pisciotta walked out of a Florida State Correctional facility a free man. He was getting a second chance. At twenty-eight he had completed a ten-year sentence for robbing two banks. In February 2016, Entrepreneur.com told his story in an article titled, "How This Ex-Con Started from Nothing to Build a 7-Figure Business." The article explained the mental and social obstacles that could have discouraged Pisciotta; they could have sentenced him to a life of never being anything but a loser. But with willpower, hard work, and a life-changing God experience, he was able to get his life in order and enter the free world, ready to make the most of his second chance at life.

God is famous for giving people second chances. He did it for King David, for Samson, and for Peter. He gives second chances and the power to overcome, but we must embrace those opportunities.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Proverbs 1 □ 2 □ | I Corinthians 12 □

Genesis 45:25-28

²⁵ And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

²⁶ And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

²⁷ And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Biblical Insight

"Jacob's response to the news of Joseph plays a key role in connecting these narratives to the message of the Pentateuch as a whole. Throughout the Pentateuch there is a focus on the response of God's people to the work of God. At important moments in the narrative the people's response to the work of God is interpreted as either one of 'faith' (Genesis 15:6; Exodus 4:31; 14:31; 19:9) or 'no faith' (Nu 14:11; 20:12). Jacob's response appears to play a part along with these other examples. Here, however, the writer gives a deeper insight into the nature of his faith" (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*).

Daily Devotion

Waiting can be tough and frustrating. We live in a microwave society—the faster the better. If the fast food is not fast enough, some people have the tendency to act less than Christlike until their chicken nuggets and milkshake reach their car window. A Thanksgiving prank started years ago encouraging adult children to text their mother to ask how long they were supposed to microwave the turkey. The mothers' responses ranged from "Are you crazy?" to "Ask your father."

All jokes aside, waiting for something we have anticipated for so long sometimes feels impossible. Can you imagine going decades believing your child was dead, only to discover he was alive and very well? Jacob did not believe Joseph was alive, and his doubt even sparked a bit of anger in him. When you are faced with the option to believe or not, try a little faith. The miracle you thought was dead could still be waiting with wagons ready.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Beauty from the Broken

Scripture Focus: Genesis 45:7-8; 50:20-21

The Lesson in Context

God's plans are greater than our plans. His ways are higher than our ways. But rest assured, God has a plan for your life. He is taking every pit you have been through, every mile you have walked in chains, every day of hard labor, every trial, every trouble, every false accusation, every day in prison, every year you have spent forgotten, and He is working it all together for good. What the devil intends to use to destroy you, God can reshape into something powerful and good. The devil sees an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or pornography tearing your life apart, but God sees deliverance, a testimony, and a chain-breaking ministry. But God sees an opportunity to give you more grace, to pick you up, to wrap His arms around you, and to carry you.

We all have brokenness in us. Brokenness is part of the human condition. It comes from our fallen nature, from the consequences of sin, and from our own imperfections. But brokenness is not the end. Brokenness gives God an opportunity to flow in our lives. He picks up the shattered pottery pieces, submerges us in His Spirit to soften us, and makes something beautiful out of our lives again.

Group Discussion

- 1. What do you think had brought the change of heart in Joseph's brothers?
- 2. Why do you think Joseph had to go through these tests in his life?
- 3. What keys to conflict resolution worked for Joseph? What keys have worked for you?
- 4. Share a time when God took something that was evil and turned it around for good?
- 5. How is it possible to have "Joseph-style" faith even in the middle of terrible situations?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what yo	ou have experienced today?

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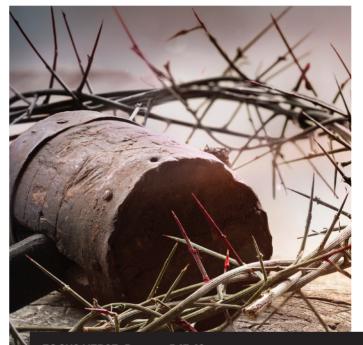
LESSON BIG IDEA

I will trust that the sacrifice Jesus made for me is sufficient for my sins.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God has provided a way for us to be free from the penalty of sin.

DEAD OR ALIVE



FOCUS VERSE: Romans 5:17-19

¹⁷ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

LESSON TEXT: Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 2:13-15

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 2:13-15

Genesis 3:1-7 is the account of what is commonly called the Fall. It is the first story of human rebellion against God, and its consequences reach throughout the rest of Scripture. It involved not only the first woman but also Adam, the first man. A serpent was also engaged, who turned out to be an instrument in the hands of Satan.

Paul worked out a closely worded explanation of the effect of the Fall and the solution brought about by Jesus Christ. In this explanation, the themes of "death by sin" and "the free gift" of "the grace of God" by Jesus Christ are introduced. Adam's sin resulted in condemnation upon all people; the righteous act of Jesus Christ made life-giving justification available to all (Romans 5:12-19).

Whereas the Fall resulted in spiritual death, grace results in salvation through faith. Salvation is God's gift through faith, not the result of something we can do nor of anything we can boast. In the beginning, we were created and blessed by God; by the grace of God, we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Genesis 1:28; Ephesians 2:1–10).

The death resulting from sin has been overcome by life since our sins have been nailed to Christ's cross. Through our burial with Christ in baptism, we are once again made alive with Him, and the principalities and powers against us have been disarmed. The Greek word translated principalities refers to "a supernatural power having some particular role in controlling the destiny and activities of human beings—'power, authority, lordship, ruler, wicked force'" (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

To summarize, all spiritually destructive consequences that occurred in Genesis 3 have been overwhelmed by the gospel, wherein "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

THE FALL RESULTED IN SPIRITUAL DEATH, GRACE RESULTS IN SALVATION THROUGH FAITH.

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Proverbs 3 □ 4 □ | I Corinthians 13 □

Genesis 3:1-5

- ¹Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
- 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:
- ³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
- ⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:
- ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Biblical Insight

The word *subtil* can be negatively used to express crafty or sly. The serpent could have been a highly intelligent creature, cleverer than any other animal. His words were the first recorded lie in the Bible, in direct conflict with God's statement (Genesis 2:16–17). It is possible Eve never directly heard God's command. Her misquote in Genesis 3:3 seems to support this interpretation. She was faced with believing what the serpent told her or what her husband told her. The serpent challenged God's benevolence by making it seem as though He was withholding some good thing from humanity out of jealousy for His position.

Daily Devotion

Jealousy can drive people to do some pretty horrendous things. It can twist words and thoughts and cause someone to question everything they believe in and know is right. That is what the cunning serpent did to the first man and woman, and he still tries to do the same to people today. Satan's hunger for power caused him to deceive humanity into believing they could be like God, but they had to taste something else to be satisfied. Adam and Eve longed to belong, but the truth is, they already did.

We all have this deep, innate craving for home and completeness. We are all looking for a little bit of safety and security—like the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Sometimes the perfection you think you are looking at is simply just a sad, modified version of reality plastered with a lot of presets and filters. Eden had everything to offer, but the desire for something seemingly better made Adam and Eve taste what was tempting. Let your satisfaction be found in the Lord. He always has and always will give you all you need.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible Reading Plan

Proverbs 5 \square 6 \square | I Corinthians 14 \square

Genesis 3:6-7

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

⁷ And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Biblical Insight

The serpent's argument was sufficient to make the woman investigate the tree to determine if there was anything inherently wrong about it. Instead, she found the tree was apparently beneficial on several levels. Verse 6 parallels I John 2:16 and the temptations of Jesus (Luke 4:2-13). The words "with her" imply Adam had been present during this entire exchange without intervening. Adam's part in the Fall may have been motivated by direct rebellion, while Eve's could have resulted from mistaken belief (I Timothy 2:14).

Daily Devotion

Sometimes sin makes sense to our fleshly hearts. If it looks good, sounds good, feels good, tastes good, and seems good, it must be good, right? Eve believed if she ate the fruit, her eyes would be opened, she would be like God, and life would be even more glorious than her beautiful, lacking-nothing Garden life. She and Adam daily walked in Eden, free and unashamed, but temptation caused them to long for more. Adam should have encouraged his wife to put down the fruit before she took the first bite.

Adam could have stepped in and taken authority as the head of their household. However, Eve could have walked away and not touched the fruit at all. They were both responsible for their actions, just as we are. In his book *Love Does*, Author Bob Goff writes to his readers, "We get to be God's plan for the whole world by pointing people toward Him." We are all in this race together and should do whatever is in our power to help each other and make sure we all get to the finish line safely. Who can you encourage today in the journey of life?

eflection and P	rayer				
What can you	do to apply t	his principle	e to your life	today?	

DAY	3
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	Bible	e Rea	ding	Plan
Proverbs	7 🗆	8 🗆	9 🗆	10 🗆

Romans 5:19

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Biblical Insight

Through Adam's disobedience many (all humanity) were constituted as sinners. Through Christ's obedience many (all humanity who believe) will be constituted as righteous. Christ's obedience was specifically His death on the cross, but His death actually culminated a whole lifetime of obedience. Christ lived His entire life in our stead: throughout His time on earth, He served as our sin bearer, substitute, and propitiation.

Daily Devotion

Have you ever watched someone do something you knew was wrong, but you knew you could do nothing to stop them? Let's pull out the home videos of that fateful Garden day and watch together.

It is a beautiful morning in Eden. The animals are grazing, bees are buzzing, and a calmness settles in as the sun rises over the glistening lake. Enter the serpent as he slithers his way toward the tree. Eve is taking her morning walk and encounters his scaly self. The exchange begins. Soon Adam is beside her, and we watch with wide eyes as the first couple commits the first sin. Everything changes. Humanity will now feel the weight of their appetite for the rest of time.

The screen goes black as we assume it is all over. Then a second slide dances across the screen. Jesus, the second Adam, takes our place, bearing our sin, and blamelessly dies on a cross. We are made righteous through Him. Adam brought us sin; Jesus brought us salvation. Let's take a moment to express our gratitude to Jesus for rescuing us.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
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		Bible	Reading	Plan
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Proverbs 11 \square 12 \square | I Corinthians 15 \square

Ephesians 2:7-10

- ⁷ That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
- ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
- ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.
- ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Biblical Insight

God is not interested in impressing the audience of future ages with a display of raw power, but He desires instead to be known for His inherently selfless, giving, infinite grace. The reason we are not saved by works is because we are His work. In light of Paul's extensive teaching on the love of Christ in this letter, it is a sad irony that the apostle John would, while commending the Ephesians for their works, chastise them for leaving their "first love" (Revelation 2:2-4).

Daily Devotion

Perhaps you've heard the saying: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." While the quote has been attributed numerous sources, it is connected tightly to the renowned poet Maya Angelou. She stood for what she believed in, inspired many, and revolutionized lives. But she did not just wake up one day wanting to receive countless accolades for her work. She simply did what she knew to be right, and her life spoke louder than any award. She knew that how well loved a person was mattered more than accolades.

A solid marriage is not built on selfishness or simply performing tasks for acknowledgement. It should be built on genuine, selfless love for the other person. Even more than human relationships, we should strive to be selfless in loving and serving God. While what we do is important, it is futile if we are not completely sold out to the Savior. We ought not do what we do expecting tributes, recognition, or anything in return. Our first love should be Christ, and our primary focus should be loving Him wholeheartedly and completely, even if we never see our names in lights. Our desire should be for the world to see Jesus, not us.

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What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	>

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Bible Reading Plan	n
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Proverbs 13 □ 14 □ | I Corinthians 16 □

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

¹⁴ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

¹⁵ And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Biblical Insight

The Greek verb translated as "having forgiven" here is *charizomai*, which literally means "show grace." It seems to encompass all the work of forgiveness or remission, including both repentance and water baptism. (See Acts 2:38.) As in Colossians 2:11, the new birth includes both the removal of sins and the impartation of new life.

Daily Devotion

The Bible is full of stories of vagabonds, sinners, and people who really did not deserve a second, third, or hundredth chance, but God still gave them grace. David stole another man's wife and then had her husband killed. Rahab was a harlot. Jonah ran from God. Before his conversion, Paul, also known as Saul, literally killed Christians. Peter denied knowing Jesus. Moses disobeyed several times.

If you have ever made a mistake, you are in good company. Misfits still have a way of having ministries. There can be beauty in any broken story. Shards of colorful glass are pieced together to create stained-glass windows. Coal goes through the chipping and breaking process to reveal a diamond. When we give our lives to Jesus and repent of our sins, He does not stand over us with a condemning finger in our faces. He looks at us with great love and forgiveness and gives us a second, third, hundredth, or billionth chance. We may never understand grace, but that is okay. We don't have to understand it to need it or receive it.

Reflection a	nd Prayer				
What can	you do to ap	ply this princ	iple to your life t	oday?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Dead or Alive

Scripture Focus: Romans 5:17-19

The Lesson in Context

Beginning in Romans 1, Paul showed that all people fail to live up to the revelation of God they have received. Thus, all are sinners in need of a Savior. As he concluded his message of universal sinfulness, Paul wrote, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All have sinned (past tense) and come short (present tense) of the glory of God. Not only has every person sinned in the past, but all continually fall short of God's glorious revelation. This is why the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us from sin as we walk in the light with our faith in Jesus Christ (I John 1:7).

According to Paul, this is the gospel in its most succinct form: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; . . . he was buried, and . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3-4). To receive the benefit of this good news, it is essential to believe in Jesus (John 3:16). Once we believe, we will obey what Jesus has called us to be and do.

Group Discussion

- 1. God gave Adam and Eve choice in the Garden of Eden. Do you agree that the power of choice is the greatest power people possess?
- 2. If God did not want Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, why do you think He placed it in the Garden of Eden?
- 3. If death refers to separation, what do you think it means then to be dead to sin?
- 4. What does it mean to you to think of Jesus as your Savior?
- 5. What similarities and differences do you see between Adam and Jesus?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

3.2

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will repent of my sins.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God calls everyone to repent.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE



FOCUS VERSE: Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 3:1-11; Mark 1:1-5; Mark 2:1-17; Acts 17:30

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 3:1-11; Mark 1:1-5; Mark 2:1-17; Acts 17:30

The life and ministry of John the Baptist was unique. Consider these details:

- John the Baptist's location in Matthew 3 points to the biblical expectation that God's end-time work would begin in the desert (Exodus 40:33–38; Hosea 2:14–23).
- The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is a roundabout way of expressing "kingdom of God," marking the distinctive Palestinian Jewish-Christian character of Matthew.
- John's clothing strongly resembled the clothing of Elijah (II Kings 1:8).
- Deeds as "fruit" is a theme that runs throughout this Gospel (Matthew 7:16-20; 12:33; 21:43).
- Matthew's Gospel stresses the multinational nature of Abraham, who was the spiritual forefather of many nations—Jews and Gentiles.
- The phrase "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" governs the content of the Gospel of Mark. From Mark's perspective Jesus' gospel had continued long after Jesus' earthly life.

The epitome of John the Baptist's ministry was certainly when Jesus came to him to be baptized. Christ's first words in Matthew's Gospel occur in the context of baptism. Right-eousness is more than a state of mere sinlessness. Jesus submitted to baptism not because He had sinned, but for the sake of righteousness. In the New Testament, righteousness serves as a technical, theological term conveying the notion of God's approval. The voice that spoke from Heaven after Christ's baptism embodied this approval.

Baptism by the Holy Ghost and baptism by fire refer to two separate events. The former speaks of the saving power of the Spirit, while the latter corresponds to judgment. The fan winnows the chaff (a common symbol of judgment), and then the chaff is burned in "unquenchable fire."

Bib	le F	ea	din	a	Pla	n

Proverbs 15 □ 16 □ | II Corinthians 1 □

Matthew 3:1-5

- ¹In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
- 2 And saving. Repent ve: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- ³ For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- ⁴ And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.
- 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan.

Biblical Insight

John's first message was a call to repentance. The need for repentance was marked by the nearness of the kingdom of Heaven, known in the other Gospels as the kingdom of God. There is no distinction between the two. Although Matthew usually used the term "kingdom of heaven," even he saw the "kingdom of God" as its parallel (Matthew 19:23–24). As a Jewish author writing primarily to a Jewish audience, Matthew continued the Jewish practice of refraining to mention God's name. "Heaven" was a euphemism for "God." Some readers, failing to note this, have assumed two different kingdoms are in view.

Daily Devotion

John seemed to be an eclectic man because he had his own unique way of getting others to follow him. He wanted to lead people, but he did it in a manner that was neither fancy nor appetizing. Cue the locust lunches. If you have ever delivered a sermon of any kind that lasted any length of time, you likely remember it, whether it was flawless or a little less than flawless. The first time John preached was heavy, but it was needed. As the locals gathered around in their sandals after a hard day of work, they were probably a bit surprised at what they heard.

Repent? What did that mean? As the message continued, the people began to see the importance of repentance and the reality of the soon-coming Messiah. That message of repentance now—though usually not delivered by a locust-eating fellow in camel's hair—is still just as relevant for us as we await the Messiah a second time.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY 2

		Bible	Rea	di	ng	Plan

Proverbs 17 □ 18 □ | II Corinthians 2 □

Matthew 3:6-9

- ⁶ And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.
- ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:
- ⁹ And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Biblical Insight

From its first mention, baptism follows repentance. Repentance involves confession of sins but not confession alone. Genuine repentance produces "fruit" in one's life. As one translation renders the phrase, it is necessary to "prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God" (Matthew 3:8, NLT).

Daily Devotion

Gardening is an intricate process. If you have ever attempted to foster a garden, you understand it takes time, patience, and several steps after you plant the seeds. The same principle is true in our spiritual lives. What we water and take care of will grow; what we starve will die. We cannot hide our fruit, whether it's rotting or thriving. When one is rooted and grounded in the right soil and seeking a life of holiness, it will be evident.

Repentance plants the seed. Baptism initially waters it, and with daily care and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the fruit soon blooms and will continue to bloom as long as we give attention to it. Repentance is not pretty. It requires us to get our hands dirty and dig into the soil as we plant the seeds of salvation. If we plant an apple tree, we will get apples, not oranges, because our fruit will reflect what we are cultivating. When we have truly repented and turned away from sin, it will show in our daily life and character. If you have not had a time of repentance and renewal yet today, use this moment to repent afresh and ask God to renew you and refill you with His Spirit.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	3
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Bible	Re	adin	a Pla	n

Proverbs 19 \square 20 \square | II Corinthians 3 \square

Matthew 3:10-12

¹⁰ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

¹² Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Biblical Insight

Baptism with the Holy Ghost and baptism with fire are two different experiences. The only two Gospels to mention baptism with fire are Matthew and Luke. In both cases unrepentant people were in John's audience. (See Matthew 3:7-12; Luke 3:7-17.) Chaff is a consistent image of the ungodly who face God's judgment. (See Psalm 1:4-6.) When only the repentant were in John's audience, only baptism with the Holy Ghost was mentioned. (See Mark 1:5-8; John 1:33.) In reference to John's baptism, Jesus mentioned only baptism with the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5). As Peter recalled Jesus' words about John's baptism, he said nothing about baptism with fire (Acts 1:16). As it relates to the new birth and empowerment, we need to seek no other baptism except that of the Holy Spirit.

Daily Devotion

Imitation brands, although generally less expensive, are no real substitute for authentic merchandise. Any religion can offer some sort of water or Spirit baptism and even make it look appealing as they promote it as the genuine article in the salvation process. However, if it is not the genuine, biblical water and Spirit baptism we see in the New Testament church, it is not the genuine experience God planned for us. It is only a watered-down version of the truth that leaves us searching for the real thing.

With His own blood, Jesus bought remission of sins. We can respond to His sacrifice and receive freedom from sin through water baptism and the infilling of the Spirit through Holy Spirit baptism. It cost Him everything, but Jesus counted our souls worth the cost of His life. Being baptized in Jesus' name and with His Spirit ensures a better life here on earth and a promise of eternity with our Maker. No half-price, generic form will work when it comes to the kingdom of God. Get the product that is endorsed with the name you can trust, the only saving name—the name of Jesus.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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		Bible Reading Plan
Droverhs 21 □	22 □	I II Corinthians 4 □

Mark 2:13-17

¹³ And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

¹⁶ And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples. How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

 17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Biblical Insight

Like John, Jesus' teaching and practice emphasized the need for repentance. Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners. By definition, tax collectors were cheats and thieves, but Jesus socialized with them. When questioned by scribes and Pharisees, Jesus answered, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17).

Daily Devotion

Can you imagine seeing Jesus sitting fireside, roasting marshmallows with a bunch of men who had just stolen a family's livelihood through tax fraud? Or try to picture Jesus sitting at a restaurant, sharing boneless wings with the town drunk and his buddies. Jesus was a friend to sinners because all humanity has sinned, but Jesus never partook in their sinning.

Jesus was not afraid to meet people at their level, no matter how low, to minister to them. He knew—as we should—to be in the world but not of it. There is no hierarchy of humans in the kingdom of Heaven. If we always turn a blind, holier-than-thou eye toward those who may not follow what we believe and know is right, how will they hear the saving message of the gospel? Jesus died for everyone, but without willing people who are unafraid to go into the trenches to reach the wayward, how will they be saved? It is time for us to follow Jesus' lead and sit with other sinners so we can share what we have.

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life toda	/?

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Bible Reading Plan	n
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Proverbs 23 □ 24 □ | II Corinthians 5 □

Act 17:30-31

³⁰ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

³¹Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Biblical Insight

The call for repentance is consistent, whether from John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, or Paul. It was the right message in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and in Athens on Mars' Hill. Repentance is a universal command because universal judgment is coming. The resurrection of Jesus makes this certain.

Daily Devotion

It is not always easy to say we are sorry for something we have done. Many families and even countries have been divided because of a lack of remorse for something hurtful that took place. The lack of forgiveness or the unwillingness to forgive can drive a wedge between just about anyone. However, true repentance before God is essential to salvation. Jesus made that clear in Luke 13: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). This truth has not changed, and it never will. Coming before God in humility and truly repenting (turning away from sin) is part of the process to walk through the pearly gates.

God loves to see His children come to Him with repentant hearts. It not only signifies a turning away from sin, but it also denotes a turning nearer to Him and toward Heaven. That call is still just as strong today. Repentance is not a sign of weakness but an incredible showcase of strength.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Call to Repentance

Scripture Focus: Mark 2:17

The Lesson in Context

Whether Jew or Gentile, the message of repentance is introductory—after believing on Jesus—for entry into God's kingdom. Repentance refers to changing "one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness" (J. P. Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). In other words, sorrow for sins alone does not open the door to God's kingdom. Repentance is required, but it must be repentance that comes because of hearing and believing the gospel message, as seen in Acts 2:37–38. Repentance is not a suggestion; it is God's universal command.

When Paul visited Athens, noting the pervasive idolatry, he declared that God "commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). After announcing the universal nature of the command to repent, Paul informed those who heard him that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world" (Acts 17:31). And when we repent from a sincere and humble heart, the Lord promises to forgive and fill us with His Spirit. All around the world, the power of repentance is being experienced. And the Holy Ghost is being poured out upon all those who call on His name.

Group Discussion

- 1. How is repentance truly defined?
- 2. As you look back to your personal repentance, what specific changes do you recall in your life?
- 3. Jesus forgave a paralyzed man before He healed him. How can we be sure the paralyzed man had repented of his sins?
- 4. Were the Pharisees and scribes who did not believe on Jesus righteous?
- 5. Are there some people for whom repentance is impossible? Explain.

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced toda	y?

3.3

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will be baptized in water in the name of Jesus.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod requires all who will be saved to be baptized.

BORN OF WATER



FOCUS VERSES: John 3:3-5

- ³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
- ⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

LESSON TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 3:1-7; Acts 8:26-39

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 3:1-7; Acts 8:26-39

The words of Christ in Matthew 28:19 should not be construed as an oral baptismal formula. As this Gospel began with three titles ("Christ," "son of David," and "son of Abraham"), so it concludes with three titles ("Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit"). The initial titles (Matthew 1:1) profoundly captured the human nature of Jesus and the ways by which Jesus would fulfill Old Testament predictions. The titles "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," on the other hand, depict the divine nature and means through which Jesus will enact history's termination. Submission to baptism administered in the singular name of these titles (Jesus) clearly signified the baptismal candidate's desire to identify closely with Jesus and His mission for the world.

Matthew's account commenced with Emmanuel—"God with us" (Matthew 1:23)—and closed with the assurance that "God with us" will continue "with" us. The Gospel that was thus launched with three titles and recalled that the promised Messiah would be identified as "Emmanuel" likewise concludes with three titles and an unwavering promise that Jesus will remain as the church's Emmanuel "unto the end of the world."

Baptism is the natural consequence of true belief (Mark 16:16). Faith is the necessary condition for all virtue: it makes all other virtues and acts of obedience possible. (See also Hebrews 11:6.)

Jesus explained that the regenerational new-birth experience involved "water and . . . Spirit" (John 3:5). (See Ezekiel 36:25–27). The context supports the interpretation that water referred to literal water in baptism (John 1:26, 31, 33; 3:22–23) and Spirit to baptism in the Spirit (John 1:32–33; 3:8). (See also Acts 1:5; 2:38; 8:12–17; 10:44–48; 11:15–17; 19:2–6.)

In an incident that illustrated the biblical model for baptism in Acts 8, Philip's preaching was convincing, producing faith in the heart of the eunuch. As soon as he saw water, the man was ready to be baptized. He confessed that he indeed believed that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36–37). In order to carry out the baptism, they went down into the water, illustrating baptism's proper mode: full immersion in water (Acts 8:38).

IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THE BAPTISM,
THEY WENT DOWN INTO THE WATER,
ILLUSTRATING BAPTISM'S PROPER MODE:
FULL IMMERSION IN WATER.

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Bibl	e Re	adin	g Plan

Proverbs 25 □ 26 □ 27 □ | II Corinthians 6 □

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Biblical Insight

Teaching and baptizing are essential components of the proclamation of the gospel. The disciples' obedience to this command is demonstrated in the Book of Acts as they consistently proclaimed Jesus to be the promised Messiah and baptized believers in His name. (See Acts 2:38, 41; 8:16, 36–38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 16:15, 30–33; 19:4–6; 22:16.) Although the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are noted in Matthew 28:19, a single name is in view. Baptismal practice in Acts shows this is the name of Jesus.

Daily Devotion

In Romeo and Juliet, one of William Shakespeare's most famous works, Juliet argued that the name of something or someone shouldn't matter that much: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." While Juliet's appeal was touching in light of the tragedy brought on by the feuding families, people are known by their names. Names define and give identity. Scripture advises, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1).

Your name is one of the most important identifying factors about you. Without your name, you cannot fly, legally drive, apply for a job, or do many other important tasks crucial to daily living. Without the name of Jesus, we are also very limited as to what we can and cannot do. In order be baptized in the New Testament way to make Heaven our home some day, we must take on the name of Jesus. He indeed is known by many attributes, but those attributes are not His name. His name is Jesus, and calling on His name in water baptism is essential to our salvation.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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		Bible	Reading	Plan

Proverbs 28 □ 29 □ | II Corinthians 7 □

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Biblical Insight

Like the conclusion of Matthew, Mark shows preaching the gospel and baptizing believers are standard elements of making disciples. Neither is optional. Salvation is connected to both believing in and receiving baptism. Refusal to believe results in condemnation. Apart from belief in the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:3-4)—baptism would be of no value. Expected signs will confirm the faith of believers, like speaking in languages they have never learned. (See Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

Daily Devotion

Holidays in which we give gifts can arguably be considered some of the best. Christmas, weddings, birthdays, baby showers, graduation parties, and other celebrations are often accompanied by gifts. Unless the gift is a birdhouse or something else you may not want, it is usually a happy occasion. There is a fundamental element to passing the gift from the giving party to the recipient—the transfer. You may see the gift in front of you, but until you believe it belongs to you, receive it, and open it, the gift is not much use. You must believe to receive. This is true of salvation.

There are numerous components to the process. We must believe in order to receive. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all titles that describe Jesus, but Jesus signed His name on the greatest present He made available to humanity. He gave us all a chance to freely believe and receive salvation. This gift of salvation is for you. Go ahead, accept it. Receive it. Open it up. Then share it with the world.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	3
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Proverbs 30 □ 31 □ | II Corinthians 8 □

John 3:3-7

- ³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
- ⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Biblical Insight

Some think Jesus' statement about being "born of water" refers simply to natural birth, leaving only the birth of the Spirit as a requirement to enter the kingdom of God. Because of the amniotic fluid in the mother's womb, they assert the natural birth could be called a birth of water. There was, however, no Jewish tradition of referring to the natural birth as a birth of water. Thus, Jesus' answer would not have been helpful in answering Nicodemus' question. To say "except a man be born of water" would have been redundant. Everyone is born of water if the birth of water refers to natural birth.

Daily Devotion

Childbirth is a beautiful, God-given process. Though it is accompanied with pain and suffering, the finished product brings forth a new child. It is not possible for this process to be done a second time for the same baby. When it comes to spiritual birth, there is a process for being reborn, and the good news is, there is no pain involved. When we repent of our sins and are baptized in water in the name of Jesus, the old self dies and our sins are buried.

When we are brought out of the water, we are a new creation in Christ. We no longer have to be the same as we were before. The things of the past are gone, and the future is ahead. The opportunity for being baptized in water is natural and available for everyone. Life really begins after we are reborn.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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				Bible Reading Plan
Ecclesiastes 1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □	I II Corinthians 9 □

John 3:3-7

- ³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
- ⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Biblical Insight

Some suggest that to be born of water and Spirit is one single experience, with the word water being a synonym for Spirit. The Greek text here, however, requires the two words to refer to distinct events, since they are connected by "and" (*kai*) and neither is preceded by the definite article. The contextual discussion of water baptism in connection with Jesus' ministry demonstrates that water baptism was not an unknown practice at that time (John 3:22–30; 4:1).

Daily Devotion

Sometimes the Bible is difficult to understand. There are hundreds of translations, and thousands of commentaries analyze the entire Bible. Some even expound for pages on one single verse. The beauty of this process is there is always something to learn. Many times we can read a verse for years, and then one day, we look at it in an entirely new way. The message of water baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit is near and dear to the Apostolic church. It is deeply profound but also incredibly simple.

If we were to put this into very elementary terms, the Holy Spirit and water baptism are best friends; they are inseparable. They enjoy being together and going everywhere jointly. People think it is strange when they see one without the other. Even more than peanut butter loves jelly, macaroni loves cheese, and cookies love milk, the Holy Spirit loves water baptism. When we read of being water baptized and filled with the Spirit, we see how important both of these God-given experiences are and how connected God designed them to be.

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What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Ecclesiastes 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ | II Corinthians 10 □

Acts 8:5, 12, 14-18

⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

¹² But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

- ¹⁴ Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:
- ¹⁵ Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:
- ¹⁶ (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
- ¹⁷ Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.
- ¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money.

Biblical Insight

It is possible to believe the gospel and to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus without receiving the Holy Spirit. Although this is an exception in the account recorded in the Book of Acts, it occurred in Samaria under Philip's ministry. This was not the conclusion of his ministry there, however. The Jerusalem apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria to remedy this situation. They prayed for the believers, laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Daily Devotion

We have all seen it. We have all heard it. A giant, obnoxiously loud garbage truck drives up to our house before we wake up, parks next to our window, empties the full garbage can, and drives away. It may be frustrating to hear, see, and yes, even smell, but rarely has anyone chased the truck down the road, begging for them to return the trash. It is taken away, never to be seen again, and your home is a little cleaner because of it. When we experience the new birth, all the junk in our lives is taken away. We are clean. We are made new.

Although it is necessary, thankfully, the process of water baptism is a lot less messy than taking out the trash. And when we become clean, we want to stay clean. This salvation experience of repentance, baptism, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit—evidenced by speaking in other tongues—are all part of how we take the garbage out of our lives and start afresh. Let's not pick up what the Lord wants us to get rid of. He wants to make us clean. He wants to make us new.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Born of Water

Scripture Focus: John 3:3-5

The Lesson in Context

Water baptism is never portrayed as an option in Scripture. It is anticipated in the Old Testament by three events that serve as types of this New Testament practice. First is the water of the Flood (I Peter 3:20-21). Second is God's command of circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12). The Greek text indicates that the "circumcision of Christ" occurs at the moment of our burial with Him in baptism. Third is Israel's experience at the Red Sea (I Corinthians 10:1-4). Israel's baptism "unto Moses" is seen as an analogy of Christian baptism.

The New Testament points to the necessity of water baptism. First, it is a command of Christ. (See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16.) Second, baptism is linked to repentance and remission of sins. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:47–48; 19:5; 22:16.) Third, baptism identifies us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. (See Romans 6:3–5; I Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 3:27.) The choice is yours. Will you obey the commands of Scripture and be baptized in water in Jesus' name? If so, you can be certain of the remission of your sins and of the promise of the Holy Spirit. You will be born again, and you will gain entrance into the kingdom of God.

Group Discussion

- 1. Have you already been water baptized and Spirit baptized?
- 2. Were you baptized in water before or after you were Spirit-filled?
- 3. The Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53, and Philip shared the gospel from there. How would you use this passage to share the gospel?
- 4. Has anyone ever asked you how to reconcile Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38? How do you do it?
- 5. How should receiving a new heart and a new spirit (spiritual rebirth) affect the way we live our lives?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced to	oday?

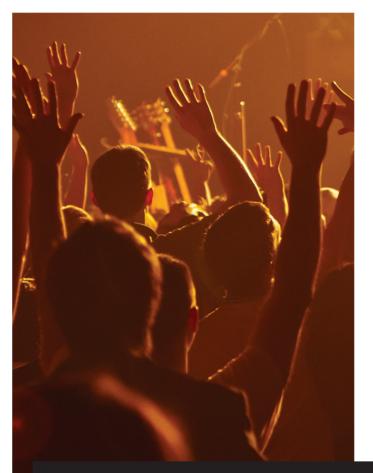
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THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will live my life under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD God is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.



FOCUS VERSE: Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

LESSON TEXT: Joel 2:28-29; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-39; Ephesians 5:15-18

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Joel 2:28-29; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-39; Ephesians 5:15-18

Peter quoted from Joel 2:28–29 in his message to the crowd who gathered on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17–21). He declared the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be a fulfillment of this prophecy. Not only was the Spirit promised in Acts 1:8, but Jesus revealed the intent of this gift to empower believers to become more effective witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues captured the attention of the crowds visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The believers were given the ability to speak other languages, and others recognized their speech and testified they were declaring the wonderful works of God in various languages (Acts 2:6, 11).

Peter became the disciples' recognized spokesperson. His authority was directly given by Jesus (Matthew 16:17-19). Peter was given the "keys of the kingdom" and used this authority as the spokesperson on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14), opening the door to the Samaritans (Acts 8), and extending the message of promise to Gentiles (Acts 10).

Peter quoted from the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16–21), identifying the events of Pentecost as a fulfillment of this prophecy. Peter acknowledged that those present were observing the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. He specifically included men and women, sons and daughters, and male and female servants.

In simple yet eloquent terms, Peter outlined the hope of the gospel message in response to faith and conviction of sin: "Repent" (turn from acts of sin and ask God's forgiveness); be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (be dipped, immersed in water, calling on the name of Jesus Christ); and receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. Repentance (from the Greek *metanoeō*) means "a change of mind, a regret for sins resulting in a change of conduct." Baptism (from the Greek *baptizō*) means "to dip, to plunge, or to fully immerse." (See Acts 2:38.)

PETER WAS GIVEN THE "KEYS OF THE KINGDOM" AND USED THIS AUTHORITY AS THE SPOKESPERSON ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

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Ecclesiastes 9 \square 10 \square 11 \square 12 \square | II Corinthians 11 \square

Joel 2:28-29

²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Biblical Insight

A rich benefit of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit has "poured out in our hearts" the love of God (Romans 5:5, NKJV). The words "poured out" remind us where Jesus "poured out" the Holy Spirit on the waiting believers (See Acts 2:33, NKJV.) This is the language of Joel 2:28–29, which Peter declared to be fulfilled in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–18).

Daily Devotion

Having the Holy Spirit poured out was something long awaited for the believers of that time. They had heard of it, but they still wondered when it would happen. When the Holy Spirit was poured out, it was not a small sprinkle or a toe dip in the shallow end. It was poured out in great measure and saturated their hearts. Much like an innocent bystander who lingers a little too close to the splash zone at a theme park, there was no denying they had been drenched.

They did not look the same as when they were dry. When the Holy Spirit is poured out in our hearts, we are never the same. An obvious, undeniable change takes place. When we are drenched in His love, we look different, act different, talk different, and are different. The outpouring (the splash zone) is always worth it.

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible Reading	Plan
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Song of Solomon $1 \square 2 \square 3 \square \mid II$ Corinthians $12 \square$

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Biblical Insight

From the beginning of the first-century church, the Spirit was associated with power. Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit is also associated with love. (See Romans 15:30; Galatians 5:22.) By implication and in contrast with the self-indulgence that comes from drunkenness, the Spirit is also associated with soundness of mind. (See Ephesians 5:18; Il Timothy 1:7.)

Daily Devotion

The infilling of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by many values that become evident in our daily lives if we are walking with the Lord and according to His Word. Once we are filled, we walk differently than we did before. Our outlook begins to change. Love becomes our language, and we understand that we are called to put others before ourselves. Power does not produce love; love produces power.

We are not called to control others or even control our own lives in detail. A surrendered life is a saved life. Let's let our minds, our hearts, our motives, and our focus be completely on Christ. He has given us all the tools we need. Trust Him. Surrender to Him. Live your life after Him. Follow Him and remember you have power in His name. Use it wisely.

Reflection and	-			
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Bible Re	eading	Plan
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Song of Solomon $4 \square 5 \square \mid II$ Corinthians $13 \square$

Acts 2:1-4

- ¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
- ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
- ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
- ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Biblical Insight

Jesus promised that those who believed on Him would be baptized with the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39; Acts 1:4–5). The fulfillment of this promise began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4) and continued throughout the history of the early church (Acts 8:15–17; 9:17; 10:44–48; 19:1–6). To be filled with the Holy Spirit was one of the characteristics of first-century believers.

The coming of the Spirit upon all kinds of people signifies the inauguration of the New Covenant.

Daily Devotion

Acts chapter 2 contains some interesting key words. "They were *all* with one accord in *one* place" (Acts 2:1, italics added for emphasis). They gathered as *one*, to cry out to the *One*, and they all were filled. Their harmony is part of what brought into reality the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit filled all the house and sat upon each of them. Though they were individuals, that day the Spirit of God indwelt the body of believers. They were all filled, all together.

Even if they would have been in separate places, they could have seen the same results if they were in one accord. The year 2020 was an interesting year of isolation. COVID-19 brought an onslaught of loneliness and solitude amidst the worldwide pandemic. Even in the middle of madness, the Holy Spirit was still poured out on all who believed (even on people watching online services) because we still belong to the one body of Christ. Unity produces amazing results.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Song of Solomon	6 □	7 🗆	8 🗆		Galatians	1 🗆

Acts 2:16-18

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

Biblical Insight

When Peter quoted Joel's prophecy on the Day of Pentecost, he reiterated the function of prophecy as a sign of the coming of the Spirit. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

Daily Devotion

Prophecy is interesting. It is like faith because it is believing something we do not see but believe we will. God's Word remains through the ages and will never change. In her book *I Live by His Word*, Nan Pamer wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and in the end, it will be the Word." Joel's prophecy was beginning to take place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and it is still happening today. In our humanity, it is easy to question things like faith and prophecy. God welcomes our questions. He wants us to know Him better and being filled with His Holy Spirit allows us that opportunity.

Knowing, according to Webster's Dictionary, is defined as "having practical understanding of something or thorough experience with it." It also means "to be subject to or to believe something to be true by recognizing something that was previously known." True knowledge comes with experience and is understood personally. The more we know God, the more we want to. We grow in our relationship with Him like in any other relationship: through time, effort, and love. Let's keep growing in our relationship with Him until we see Him.

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today	?

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Bible	Reading	Plan
DIDIC	Reading	rian

Isaiah 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ | Galatians 2□

Ephesians 5:15-18

- ¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
- ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
- ¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
- ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Biblical Insight

After His resurrection, Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). This could be translated, "Start receiving the Holy Spirit." This is certainly a look ahead to the Day of Pentecost, but it may also look even further to texts like Ephesians 5:18. The phrase translated "be filled with the Spirit" could be rendered "keep being filled with the Spirit," due to the present passive imperative form of the verb "fill" (plēroō).

Daily Devotion

There is no denying that the world can feel like a dangerous and scary place. The days are evil indeed, but we have no reason to fear. The Holy Spirit is just as real and relevant as it was when it was first poured out on the Day of Pentecost. But the infilling of the Spirit is not a one-time experience.

Keep being filled with the Holy Spirit and you will want for nothing. Find satisfaction in a life fully sold out and committed to the kingdom of God. Seek that first and the rest will be added to you (Matthew 6:33). Some seasons can feel overwhelming; there is no denying that. Maybe your life has been wrapped in pretty bows of perfection since the day you were born. Or maybe your life has been the opposite. Maybe you feel like you have been the poster child for dysfunction and chaos. Wherever you are on your journey with Christ, do not give up when things around you feel out of control. In all circumstances, continually seek His face and keep being filled.

Reflection and Pray	er	
What can you do	to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Power of the Holy Ghost

Scripture Focus: Ephesians 5:18

The Lesson in Context

Just as the prophets prophesied and Jesus promised, the Holy Ghost was poured out as recorded in Acts 2. Peter reached deep into his figurative pocket and pulled out the keys Jesus had given him, unlocked the door to the kingdom of Heaven, and flung it wide open. This Holy Ghost was a treasure too precious to be hoarded by a few. He told the people assembled there, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

Those words of Peter still echo down through the centuries to us today. "All that are afar off" did not just mean those physically distant from Jerusalem, but all those separated from that Day of Pentecost by time and space. God has not withdrawn this most wonderful of all gifts. God did not love Peter and John any more than He loves us today. Simply pray, "Come, Holy Spirit," and expect God to respond, and He will. If God gave this wonderful promise of His Spirit to the apostles and disciples in the early church, He will give it to you.

Group Discussion

- 1. Why do you think so many who heard Jesus tell them to wait in Jerusalem were not there when the Spirit finally came?
- 2. Why do you think that in the midst of such an incredible supernatural outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter refocused the listeners' attention on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?
- 3. Can you think of other religions that lay out a very difficult path to salvation? Explain.
- 4. If you have received the Holy Ghost, what is your personal testimony of that experience?
- 5. Share a time when the Holy Ghost empowered you to be an overcomer or a witness?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

A GLIMPSE AHEAD TO SUMMER

SERIES 1: LOVING THE UNLOVED

This series, "Loving the Unloved," will show the great love Jesus has for all people, whether they are overlooked and deemed unimportant, seen as outcasts in society, or even hated and marginalized by others. Just as Jesus loved those whom others refused to love, we are called to show and share His love without discrimination. This series helps to highlight the command of Jesus to love your neighbor as yourself.

SERIES 2: GOD IS OUR REFUGE

This series, "God Is Our Refuge," will show how the Lord will be our refuge and bring strength and healing to those who are hurting and overtaken with burdens. Four different psalms will be explored in this series: Psalm 22, Psalm 34, Psalm 46, and Psalm 55. No matter what we may face in this life, we can be confident God will be near and will help us carry the burdens we have been tasked to bear.

SERIES 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

This series, "The Importance of God's Word," will emphasize the necessity of hearing and obeying the Scriptures and will accentuate the promises and power that inherently accompany His written Word. From Jehoiakim's blatant disregard for God's Word to Josiah's humble submission to the Book of the Law, this series will show how important it is for individuals to heed God's Word and put it into practice in their lives.

Order your summer materials at www.GodsWordForLife.Faith.