

# Mar Thoma Sunday Schools

Diocese of North America & Europe



## Curriculum

### **BEING GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S WORLD**

#### **Grade Eight**

(Samajam Curriculum – Intermediate Vol. II)

Published By  
Mar Thoma Sunday School Diocesan Council  
2006



## **MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE**

**Diocesan Bishop  
Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos**

### **Foreword**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

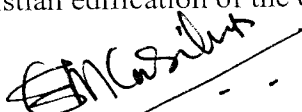
A new curriculum for our Sunday School has been a felt need in this Diocese. I am glad that the new curriculum is ready to be introduced in 2006. Here we are in the process of a transition from Cokesbury to the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam Curriculum. While retaining the essential elements and the frame work of the Samajam Curriculum, the lessons and stories are made more conducive to our situations and challenges. The overall theme is “Being God’s People in God’s World”

**Summary of Work in Three Years:** The work for the curriculum started in 2002 soon after the publication of the revised edition of the book, “The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision (CSS Publication, 2001) and the special issue of Messenger in January 2002 which explained the development of Sunday Schools in North America. The Diocesan Sunday School Council in 2002 entrusted the task of the new curriculum with Dr. T. M. Thomas, who had been active for the growth of the Sunday schools even from the beginning of the Diocese. (He was the first convener of the Sunday school committee formed at the Zonal Assembly of 1982, Philadelphia, presided by our late Suffragan Bishop Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius). Preliminary discussions were held at the Family Conference of Dallas, 2002. A plan of action and the Curriculum Format were approved by the Council at a special meeting of Sunday school teachers and officers at Regional and Diocesan levels at the Family Conference in Florida, 2003. Five lessons of all twelve classes were completed by the time of the Family Conference in New York 2004. These five lessons (Part III) were taught in the Spring of 2005. Necessary modifications were made and the new curriculum was released in the Summer of 2005. It is now being used in all Sunday schools of North America (nearly fifty) Sept. 2005 to June 2006 academic year. While teaching these lessons improvements are being made and a new CD will be distributed by the summer 2006. The target date for the completion of printing as a book is summer 2007. Though there are thirty lessons in each class we select 25 for each year. In addition to it, there are five lessons from the book, “Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision” for each class.

**Unique Features of the New Curriculum:** The manuscripts for the new curriculum were written by committees formed in all nine centers of our Diocese. All writers were expected to follow the same Format (Revised Format of 2004). Different from several other books, our curriculum includes a few values to be taught in each lesson. Today in most nations we can listen to the cry for values education, both secular and religious schools. Also, our curriculum includes two new items, one Bible Application (Bible Lesson for Our Times) and the other Life Response (Words for My Life). Here we can make the lesson appropriate for our times and relevant to the learner. Along with it there are the regular or usual items found in most lesson plans (aim, Bible reading, main ideas, memory verse etc.) There is a total of 14 items in all lessons.

I gratefully appreciate the hard work of the general convener of the New Curriculum, Dr. T. M. Thomas, Diocesan Sunday School secretaries, Mr. Thomas Koshy (2002-2005) and Mr. M. C. Varghese (2005-2008), Sunday School Council members, twelve committees each in charge of one book and others who helped for the creation of the new curriculum. Their names are mentioned in each book. Now it is our task to maximize the effectiveness of this curriculum. All Sunday School Superintendents and teachers are requested to follow the instructions of the convener in this regard.

In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit , I commend this new curriculum for the Christian edification of the children in the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe.



Rt.Rev.Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos  
Diocesan Bishop

July 4, 2006



## **MAR THOMA SUNDAY SCHOOL DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE**

We remember with immense joy the great advancements we have made for The Mar Thoma Sunday School over the past three decades. The Indian immigrant community remained diligent in passing on the Christian faith and sustaining the spiritual growth for the second generation. In August 2000, Sunday School published “Order of Worship with Prayers & Hymns” with transliterated and translated versions of our traditional liturgy to bring our children to a deeper understanding. In June of 2001, our Sunday School published a Book “The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision” to share the faith and practices of our church to the young generation. After experimenting with several American Sunday School Curriculums for our needs, the Sunday School Teachers and the office bearers prayerfully made a leap of faith to develop a North American Mar Thoma Sunday School Curriculum with allegiance to the Sunday School Samajam Curriculum.

The collective product of the Mar Thoma heritage and the American Educational system was a Sunday School Student Book for every school grade at the appropriate vocabulary level and clearly articulated lesson with Values for Life, Words for Bible Times, Words for Our Times, Words for My Life, and Bible Learning Strategies and Activities. The first edition was released along with the Sunday School Centenary Celebrations by the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam President, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, at the 2005 Mar Thoma Family Conference. The year of our Lord 2005 will be remembered for ever in the history of the North American Sunday School for developing the curriculum. The leadership of Dr. T. M. Thomas for our Sunday School remains available from the time our activities began in this country. Dr. Thomas served as an inspiring leader, traveling the full length and width of this continent to organize the curriculum committees and to structure the final version. We are greatly indebted to him for the full time ministry that we receive from him to make all our publications a grand success. Moreover, the curriculum committee members, the clergy, staff and the office bearers deserve great appreciation for persevering to produce the first version and the revision of the full curriculum in a couple of years.

We have crossed a major milestone in the production of the curriculum. The next phase should be to bring excellence in teaching. We, teachers, should cultivate a habit of continuous learning so that we can serve in this ministry better more effectively and efficiently in these changing times. Please read the “Notes to Teachers on Teaching”. It is unique for each stage as we have divided twelve classes into five units. They are: 1. Preschool classes (Nursery and KG), 2. Primary (Grades 1, 2 &3), 3. Upper Primary (Gr.4, 5&6), 4. Junior High (Gr. 7, 8&9), and 5. Senior High (Grades 10, 11 & 12). A teacher in one grade of a stage is expected to read the “Notes” in other classes also because it deals with different stages of growth. A group effort, in the regional level, is encouraged for conducting teacher development workshops with expert assistance from professionals in the region. If there are geographical limitations as parish level workshop

would be adequate. The “Teacher Manual” prepared by Samajam as booklet, was sent to all Sunday Schools last year. It is suitable for such workshops and seminars.

We, as secretaries of the current and the previous term, are greatly privileged and blessed to serve in Sunday School. It is a great joy to be the instruments of His Grace to participate in this blessed organization that continues to exhilarate techniques and technology to bring every child to Jesus. May the Lord Almighty continue to bless the challenges that we undertake in His Mighty Name.

*Thomas Koshy*  
**Secretary (2002-2005)**

*M.C.Varghese*  
**Secretary (2005-2008)**

July 5, 2006

**Mar Thoma Sunday School**  
**Diocese of North America & Europe**

### **Notes to Teachers on Teaching in Junior High School classes, Grades 7, 8 & 9**

When children complete 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 12 years, they move to Junior high school classes as an adolescent or teenager (pre-adolescent stage). Three classes are included here, Grades 7, 8 and 9. It is the intermediate stage between elementary and high school.

#### **Characteristic Features of this Age Group and the Learning Process:**

Children move from childhood to the next stage starting with pre-adolescence. There are remarkable changes taking place one after another, covering various aspects of personality. The body changes are spectacular or noticeable. Physiological growth is different in boys and girls who grow faster. Puberty or attaining sexual maturity brings emotional disturbance. Also, there are secondary sexual characteristics appearing now. It takes time to cope with the changes taking place for the body and the emotional conflicts. Along with physical growth, there are several other changes taking place in the young person. Among them, we select intellectual development and identity formation.

**Piaget and Cognition:** Among 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologists, Piaget of Switzerland is known in many countries for his studies on cognition or intellectual development. Piaget discussed it by using his concept “formal operations.” The capacity for abstract scientific thinking begins around age 11 or 12. Hence schools encourage discovery learning and exploration. Adolescents needed intellectually challenging questions and discussions on issues. Since reasoning capacity grows, students do not accept everything as told by teachers and others; rather they take their own stand and formulate their own belief systems. Youngsters stand on the side of their peers or friends, rather than their teachers and parents from whom they try to keep a distance. They are self-conscious and cautious in the presence of adults.

In response to the growing capacity for abstract reasoning or scientific thinking, teachers must find out new methods of teaching suitable to this age group. Let me suggest one: use more higher-order questions. In all classes teachers use a large number of factual questions from which we obtain information. Usually such questions begin with “what.” Different from this “lower level” questions, teachers of adolescents shall use higher-order questions beginning with “why” and “how”. If so, students are expected or encouraged to think and give their reasons and their stand or views on issues. Thus there is a shift from memorization to thinking and discovery. Teachers are expected to follow inquiry method and research for learning. Creativity in children is enhanced in this child-centered approach. While multiple choice and other objective types of questions test a student’s memory, essays and short-answer questions open up room for promoting creativity.

**Identity Crisis:** While Piaget concentrated on cognitive or intellectual development, Erikson continued his studies on his psych-social dimension and introduced the concept “Identity Crisis”. The young person reformulates his/her sense of identity by drawing together various elements that have made up the life so far. New answers are found for the question, “who are you?” This question “who am I?” is not

limited to adolescents, but it is a human quest covering all people everywhere and at all times. We can summarize the teaching of Socrates, the great Greek philosopher and teacher, in two words and they are “Know Thyself.” The uniqueness of this question to adolescents is that it encourages new answers for their personal life, not just the answer of someone else. Of course, teen-agers have their own heroes or models whom they admire or follow.

The Christian answer to this question of identity is “I am a child of God.” Psychological studies on identity, in general, assumed the modern virtue of independence or self-assertion. Different from it, the idea, “child of God,” takes for granted human dependence or the need for the other. Traditional cultures, including that of India, accepted the virtue of dependence or care of the neighbor. I would argue that we should have a balance between these two virtues, independence and dependence, and move toward the recognition of interdependence. I present this issue as a possible seminar topic for teachers when they gather for their retreat. Teachers need the time to study and reflect on issues we face in our society.

**Acknowledgement:** I would like to conclude this NOTES by expressing our gratitude to God Almighty, for His guidance and say “thank you” to all those who worked closely with me. They include: first, our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, who entrusted a great responsibility on me and gave necessary guidance; second, the two secretaries, Mr. Thomas Koshy (2002-2005) and Mr. M.C. Varghese (2005-2008) and other Diocesan Sunday School Council Members for their whole hearted support; third, the Curriculum Committee Members who actually wrote the lessons in 12 classes following my directions (their names are listed at the end of each book) and last, but not least, all teachers and students for making use of this curriculum.

Dr. T.M. Thomas, General Convener  
Diocesan Curriculum Committee

**Lesson Format (Revised)**

1. **Class:** There are 12 classes ( Nursery, K .G, Grades 1-10 )
2. **Title:** Refers to the title of the chapter or lesson.
3. **Lesson Topic:** Same as Title. It is used in the “ Table of contents” of each class.
4. **Lesson Theme:** Each lesson comes under one theme which is the same in all classes on any specific Sunday. ( So introduce the theme at the Assembly.)
5. **Aim:** Purpose Of the lesson shall guide teachers for the lesson planning and presentation
6. **Bible Reading:** Each lesson is based on a specific Bible passage. Use New International Version, NIV.
7. **Values for Life:** A few values are taught through each lesson.
8. **Preparation:** Other terms are used: Introduction and Motivation.
9. **Bible Learning:  
Main Ideas:** This is the body of the lesson. A few ideas are presented, one in each paragraph.
10. **Bible Learning:  
Strategies &  
activities:** The ‘how’ of teaching is covered here. The methods of teaching differ for each grade or age group.
11. **Bible Application  
or Bible Words  
for Our Times:** Lessons are related to the realities of our contemporary world.
12. **Life Response or  
Words for My Life:** The lesson leads to personal commitment or life decisions.
13. **Memory Verse:** NIV is used for most lessons.
14. **Prayer:** Conclude the class with prayers given at the end of each lesson or extempore prayer.

Dr.T.M.Thomas

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## PART I

### GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD

#### Lesson 1 Magnificence of God's Creation

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	God's Creation
<b>Aim:</b>	To help children understand man's responsibility towards God's creation.
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Psalms 104

#### Values for Life:

1. Appreciate the fact that God used great precision in creating all movables and immovables beautifully and precisely.
2. The balance among the living things and the interdependency between them must be maintained.
3. Man should not destroy the natural beauty of the environment by irresponsible use of nature.

#### **Preparation:**

Where did you go for a picnic or vacation lately? Grand Canyon, Yellow Stone National Park, New York, Washington D C, Houston, Florida, Disney Land? Niagara Falls? What did you enjoy seeing there? (Let the students share) The answers may include nature's beauty, museum, skyscrapers, space centers, breath-taking water falls etc. The beauty of nature catches everyone's attention. Every one likes scenes from nature like snow covered landscape, trees in autumn colors, and the unforgettable sights as you go hiking on the mountains.

#### **Bible Learning: Main Ideas**

All of these declare the magnificence of our Creator, the God of the Universe. The biblical account of creation in Genesis tells us that each day of creation God assessed his work and found that it was good. Man's responsibility was to manage nature well. Ignorance about divine purpose and irresponsible handling of nature played a vital role for some catastrophic events to occur in nature. Some animals and plant forms are becoming extinct for the same reason. Can you name some extinct species? (Their answers may include American elk, Golden Eagle, Passenger pigeons, and *Thysania americana*).

### ***Abode for Creation***

Together we can review our responsibility towards Gods creation. In Psalm 104 the majesty, care and mercy of God are revealed through nature. God gave each creation a suitable habitat. You know the birds have their nests in the bushes, on the ground, and on the banks of rivers (104:12). The high hills serve as a habitat for wild goats, the cliffs make a home for the rock-badgers (18). The birds singing praise for God sitting on trees, reminds man, the crown of creation, to praise God.

### ***Glory to God***

The psalmist glorifies God for four things in verses 19 through 30: (1) For day and night (2) For the Ocean and its countless creatures (3) For God's care for all creatures (4) For God's dominance over all creatures. The sun declares the glory of God daytime and the moon at night. When dark falls, the wild animals set out for their food. These animals return to their dens at dawn when people go out for their day's work (20-23). The wisdom of God made them all and put an internal device for knowing time called biological clock.

### ***God's Care***

God created the large oceans and set a boundary that they can never pass. The basic purpose of the ocean is to provide homes for millions of creatures of different sizes to live in and the ships to sail on. God made everything in His creation with a specific purpose. For example, the sun, the moon and the other heavenly bodies were made for giving day and night and add to the beauty of the universe. The smallest item in creation is under the care of God and the creatures depend on God for food (27). When you think about it, you will be amazed how meticulously God planned and provided the food for man and other creatures of various shapes and sizes. He has given the green leaves the chemical mechanism for converting energy from the sun light into food energy. Energy is transferred from these primary producers to all the other levels of life as you look at food chain (14). Man living under the grace of God has a great responsibility to live a proper relationship not only with the fellow beings but also to other creatures. First he must glorify God.

### ***Our responsibility***

Genesis 1 & 2 shows the interrelationships between living things. The God-intended balance in relationship between man, animals and the plants must be maintained. The news media tells us every day how this is disrupted when man overuses fossil fuel, overkills wild life or burns the tropical rain forest. Imagine what will happen if the planets off their fixed orbits in the solar system. The order will be serious upset and our future becomes dangerous. Man's behavior in overusing natural resources and destroying the balance in nature similarly will affect our very existence. Already we are aware of how mans wrong approach to the delicate order in creation can cause more flood, draught, and famine. God has assigned man with the responsibility of keeping up with balance between creations to ensure continued existence and maintain the beauty of the universe. This is a great responsibility.

### ***Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities***

1. In Psalm 104, what does the Psalmist glorify?
2. What is man's responsibility towards God's creation?

3. Study the pictures of natural disasters (earthquake in Bhuj, India; tsunamis disaster in Asia) and figures of animals, which have become extinct. Share what you know about these events.
4. Is the Tsunami caused by underwater earthquake recently in Indonesia caused by Human beings?
5. What can you do to reduce air pollution?

***Bible Application:***

God created the world, which he found good. He has a purpose for his creation. He wants human beings to be stewards or caretakers of the earth. But with industrialization of the Modern Age, the earth is being destroyed. In this situation, we have the responsibility for sustaining life on earth.

***Life Response***

1. Plan for growing vegetables next year in the yard
2. Do not harm small animals or plants found in our property for “fun” – they are part of the food web too.
3. Put the newspapers and magazines in the recycle bin rather than in the regular dumpster.
4. Turn off the lights and water taps when not in use.

***Memory Verse: Psalm 104: 24***

*How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*

***Prayer***

God, we thank you and praise you for the beauty of your universe. Help us not to affect its beauty by our actions. Help us to be humble and thankful to you. Amen

Grade 8

## Lesson 2 Treasures of the Land

**Lesson Theme:** God's Earth

**Aim:** To help the children understand that God provides enough food through Nature

**Bible Reading:** *Exodus 16: 1-31*

### Values for Life:

1. God has provided food for man in nature
2. Understand that animals depend on plants for their food
3. God provided food for Israelites miraculously in the desert
4. We must make wise use of land, favorable climate, and technology to increase food production

### Preparation:

Have you ever fasted or experienced being hungry? (Answers will vary). Every one knows how you feel like when you are hungry! Do you remember seeing someone holding a cardboard sign that reads, "hungry, will work for food" at one of the intersections? According to The World Health Organization, one-third of the world population is starving. They estimate that 30 people die of starvation every minute. Our basic need is food. Certainly we obtain food from several sources but we all know that food doesn't grow in the grocery stores or food places. Where does the food come from? Primarily, from the nature God has created.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Where do the animals get their food? Plants of course. Animals cannot produce their food. Plants produce food by trapping energy from the sunlight and converting it into carbohydrate using only water and carbon dioxide. You have studied the process of photosynthesis. In this process they make not only their own food but also the carbohydrate they store in their root, stem, and seed. It is the source of energy for animals as well. We depend largely on the plants like rice, wheat, sugar cane, barley, and many fruit trees for the delicious food we enjoy.

God has been providing every generation with food through nature. It is true of those who mainly live in the forests. They live mainly on roots and fruits. During the Afghan conflict the Western world could not believe that people were eating grass and living on it for days. The major channels showed pictures of villagers who had to do it for survival. But God intends us to increase the production by growing food in more areas using the skills and technology we possess. If all the plants are wiped out from the planet earth of course, all forms of life will become extinct. So it becomes a major responsibility of ours to protect and preserve plant life.

### *Food in the Desert*

Today's scripture tells how God fed the Israelites with Manna and Quails for meat in the desert. When people came to wilderness of Sin started to complain to Moses and Aaron about food. God took it as a complaint against Him. We see in this scripture the kindness and compassion of God towards a complaining people. Moses explained to them that their complaint was not against him or Aaron but against God (8b). He also promised them that God would give them sufficient food. God blessed them with food expecting that they might realize now that the Lord was the one who brought them out of Egypt (6). But it took an appearance of the Lord in dazzling light in the cloud before the people would stop their complaint. God's special intervention also helped Moses and Aaron to gain more respect from the people.

The episode of getting Manna is explained in verses 13 through 21. The Israelites saw the small white seed like substance what fell along with the snow, they asked a question: Manna or what is it? Moses instructed them to gather as needed. They gathered enough for each day but on the sixth day they had to gather double so that they will have enough for the Sabbath day as well. Those few who tried to gather more than enough found their Manna spoiled for the next day. Likewise, those who went out to gather Manna on the Sabbath day were disappointed for Manna didn't fall on Sabbath (27). People who hoard food items beyond their needs should learn a lesson from the experience of Israelites. When God instructed them to gather enough for the day, He was testing the people for obedience (4). Israelites received Manna and Quails regularly for forty years. That was the time period the people journeyed through the desert. No one can raise questions if God cares for his people. And no one should doubt the power of God to help us in difficult circumstances. God provided them food miraculously. Some people gathered more than they should. But they ended up having just enough. Some others didn't have enough. But they found out that there was no real shortage. It is another wonder. It is a simple reminder that we should be contending with what God gives us. Just be glad and grateful.

### *Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities*

#### **Discussion:**

1. How can we solve the problem of wasting food while so many others do not have enough to eat?
2. Discuss photosynthesis as a "miracle of the green leaves"
3. How can man negatively impact the food chain?
4. Discuss miraculous provisions of food found in the Bible. How did God feed the Israelites in the desert?

#### **Bible Application:**

God provides food items for every one's use. Overstocking it for future is not necessary. We need not be anxious for food either. Jesus taught us this simple principle in Mathew 6:25,26: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not

much valuable than they?" We trust God for his ability to provide for us. Then it is expected of us to share from what God has given us.

**Life Response:**

1. What are your insights about God's feeding of the Israelites with Manna and Quails?
2. Say grace with a thankful heart before eating any meal
3. Participate in "food for the hungry" or similar sharing programs in the community
4. Consult your science textbook and construct a food pyramid showing man at the top and the weight of plants and animals that will take for keeping one man alive.

**Memory Verse: Mathew 6:26-**

Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

**Prayer:**

Our heavenly Father, thank you for the delicious food items you have given us to enjoy. Teach us to appreciate your care for us. Father, also help us to have compassion for others and share food with the less fortunate

Grade 8

## Lesson – 3 Animals: God’s Creation

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	God’s Creatures
<b>Aim:</b>	To understand that animals are God’s creation and they are designed to play a role in maintaining balance in nature
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Genesis 1: 24-25; Jer.27: 5

### Values for Life:

1. God created clean and unclean animals for specific purposes.
2. God’s takes care of all the animals.
3. Cruelty towards animals is displeasing to God.
4. All creatures are important in maintaining the balance in nature.

### Preparation:

Which is your favorite animal in the Zoo? (Expect a variety of animal names). Did you ever hear the fascinating story of the Federal government buying one thousand reindeer from Siberia, Russia and letting them loose in Alaska. This happened a generation before us. The American government wanted to provide a new source of food for the Eskimos and Indians. Can you believe now there are over one million reindeers in Alaska? They provide the meat needed by the Alaskan natives. Animals are an important and major part of God’s creation. It is true animals are not given the efficiency and intellect of human beings. Nevertheless, God has a definite purpose for each of them. Not only God created the animals, he wants man to know about it. God commanded the prophet Jeremiah (27:5) to tell the kings that God, with His great power and strength, created the world, mankind, and all animals that live on the earth.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

#### *Many Species of Animals*

When you visited the zoo, perhaps you were impressed how carefully their habitats were constructed. The long-necked giraffe lives on grasslands while the hippos live in marshland. There are animals that live in seclusion others like elephants, camels, and horses that live in the open. We already know that some of them only eat the grass and herbs. What is name of this group from your science lessons? (Herbivores). And what do you call the meat-eating animals? (Carnivores). We realize man, the crown of creation, was created on the sixth day. It was on the sixth day God created cattle, creepers, and various other species of animals to fill the earth. Man has domesticated some of these long ago for carrying heavy loads or ploughing. From the beginning of civilization cow, goat, sheep, and like animals were sources of food like milk. There are

thousands of species of wild animals that do not have direct use for man yet useful in God's plan.

### ***Clean and Unclean Animals***

The scriptures in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 classify animals into clean and unclean based on some external features. Animals like sheep, goat, ox, cow etc. are considered to be clean. They have divided hoofs and they chew the cud. The meat from these animals is eatable for man. The unclean animals include two groups. The first group chew the cud but not have undivided hoofs. The second group has divided hoofs but do not chew cud. Man is instructed not to eat the meat of both these groups of unclean animals. Fish is generally eatable except for those species that lack fins and scales (Deut 14:10). In verses 11-18 there is a list of unclean birds that should not be eaten by man. In both past and present times, Jewish people traditionally maintain strict diets and only eat kosher food, which is food that is completely clean and defined within the Old Testament. We live in a country where the Jewish influence is remarkably strong.

### ***God's Purpose for Animals***

Clean and unclean animals alike are created to play a role in keeping the balance in nature. There are many animals and birds that work in keeping our environment clean. For example, the crow cleans up the waste and pigs eats up decaying materials in the dirt. Animals that feed on the flesh of other animals and birds of prey play a vital role in cleaning the nature. Also they enhance the beauty of nature.

Before the great flood during Noah's time God gave him specific instructions about taking into the ark both male and female animals of every kind of animals and birds. This demonstrates the need of animals in keeping the balance in nature as well as the continued existence of man. In the mind of God each kind of animals have definite purpose.

During the scourge of a severe famine in Samaria in Elijah's time (I Kings 18:3-6) King Ahab sent for Obadiah for he had special mission for him. Obadiah had such great faith in the Lord that he bravely hid one hundred prophets in the caves and provided them with food and water and at a time when Jezebel was killing the prophets. Ahab's mission for this prophet-protector was rather strange. The King commanded: "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. May be we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals." The prophet would search one-half of the land while the king himself would be directing the search in the other-half. Though wicked, Ahab had a concern for the animals of the land. Every responsible person should have that attitude. That includes the king and the keeper of the prophets.

God uses animals sometimes to do strange things to carry out His will. You may recall how used a donkey to open its mouth and talk in human language to an erring prophet Balaam to warn him about the angel standing in front of him with a drawn sword. No Christian can forget the scene of Jesus riding on a donkey as he triumphantly entered the hostile city of Jerusalem.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. Picture of dog, lamb, cow, horse, rain deer, elephant
2. Discuss the man's cruelty towards animals and birds

3. Discuss the response of people in a culture if a Christian missionary with a permit to hunt shoots down animals greatly respected by that culture
4. Discuss the learning behavior of some animals
5. Discuss how animals or birds were helpful in the life of some bible characters (Hint: dove, crow, fox (jackal), horse etc.)

**Bible Application:**

Having reviewed these facts, let us close with some final thoughts. Animals make up a very important part of God's creation. There is a specific role God intends for each kind of animal to play. It is man's responsibility to protect them, for otherwise it may affect the survival of human race. We frequently hear reports of showing cruelty to animals. The Indian newspapers frequently report of elephants trampling its trainer to death. The cause is cruel physical punishment given to the animal. There are incidents of domestic dogs attacking its masters who regularly abuse them. Christians who worship the living God who created the animals need to properly respect the right of the animals to live. We need to protect them.

**Life Response:**

1. Find out the name of an endangered species of animal or bird in your state, and prepare list using federal government information, Internet etc.
2. Write a public awareness article about the natural history (eating habits, breeding requirements, habitat specialties) of an endangered animal in your area and ask your local newspaper editor to publish it.
3. As a class prepares a list of insights man can use from the life of animals by studying how they adapt to tough life (hint: hare, wild goats, song birds, parrots etc.)
4. Make a list of things you can do to better protect your pet animals in harsh weather

**Memory Verse: Jeremiah 27:5**

With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please.

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, thank you for your creation. We thank you for creating all kind of fascinating animals. Teach us to be grateful to for the animals that help us. Help us not to be cruel to any animals. Amen

Grade 8

## Lesson 4 Differently Talented

**Lesson Theme:** Human Being – The Crown of Creation  
**Aim:** To make the children treat and approve the physically and mentally retarded as they would treat the perfect ones.  
**Bible Reading:** Mk. 2:1-12

### Values for Life:

1. Physically disabled are endowed with special gifts.
2. The disabled require our care and help and we are bound to give to them.
3. God accepts intercessory prayers and sends healing

### Preparation:

Did you know Fanny Crosby who wrote the song “Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine” became blind when she was just six weeks old? She wrote more than 8,000 gospel songs. Her hymns are still being sung more frequently than those of any other gospel hymn writer. It is amazing that a blind person could write on so many spiritual truths and experienced such success. Once a minister expressed his sympathy for her disability. But she responded quickly: “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?” Then she explained to the surprised clergyman: “When I get to Heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!”

Why are some people disabled? Jesus answered this vital question in John 9. The reason why that person was born blind is not anyone’s fault. It is for the glory of God. Jesus gave sight to this blind person and thus demonstrated the glory of God.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

#### *Jesus Heals the Paralyzed Man*

*Jesus visited a home in Capernaum.* People heard about his visit and rushed to the place to receive blessings from Jesus (Luke 5:17-26, Matt. 9:1-8). Four friends of a paralyzed man carried him on his bed. Once they saw the crowd around Jesus, they devised a plan to put their sick friend in front of Jesus. They carried the man to the top of the house using the stairway going to the terrace. Then they made a large hole on the roof right above the point where Jesus was teaching people. They lowered the man on his bed. Jesus saw the efforts of this sick man’s friends, showed compassion on the paralytic, and said: “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). The paralytic received strength. He picked up his bed and went home as Jesus instructed him. The reason Jesus used the word “forgiven: in the context is simple. It is not because the man became sick because of his

sin. The Jews believed that sickness and suffering were caused by sin. We should always remember the example of these four friends for their compassion, courage, and their faith in asking Jesus to heal this man. Jesus still heals. Sincere prayers of a righteous person are very effective (James 5:16). God uses intercessory prayers for healing persons who were born with afflictions. Perhaps, you may know someone who received healing when others prayed for it. God still heals but God does not heal every disabled or sick person out of his divine wisdom.

### ***God loves the Disabled***

God loves both the disabled and the healthy. The truth is that no one is fully perfect. Everyone has some infirmity. It may be physical or mental. Some may have learning difficulties while some others may be economically disadvantaged. What should we do when we find ourselves in adverse circumstances? We should not question God or blame others. God's will is that we face the difficult circumstances with the help of Jesus. The man in John 9 was blind so that God's power of healing a blind person could be demonstrated (John 9:3). The beloved apostle Paul discovered the reason for his own physical sickness. He said it was "to keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many wonderful things I saw, I was given a painful physical ailment" (2 Corinthians 12:7). He found total satisfaction when the risen Lord spoke to him and said: "My grace is all you need, for my power is strongest when you are weak." Paul did receive the strength of the Lord to carry on.

### ***Disabled Are Equipped with Different Talents***

Though disabled physically or mentally, disabled persons are created with talents in various areas. They must be helped to discover where their talents lie so they can develop it for the glory of God. We should not see disabilities as fate or misfortune. Our responsibility is to help them face their weaknesses and change the misery into a fortune.

The Mar Thoma Church has initiated a number of mission projects with this responsibility in mind. We have special learning centers such as Navajyothi School at Thelliyoor, Jyothis at Mavelikkara, Asha Bhavan at Pathanapuram, Mar Thoma Opportunity School at Bangalore, and Kasaragod Industrial Teaching Institute for the deaf.

### **Bible Learning Strategies and Activities:**

1. Picture of physically disabled, Pictures of those who became very successful in their lives despite serious disabilities (Helen Keller, Fanny Crosby, John Milton).
2. Discuss if our attitude to the disabled person the same as the attitude of Jesus? If not, how can we change it?
3. Research on one institution near you or in India for the disabled and make a 5-minute presentation next time.
4. Make a list of five persons who used their deformities as a channel to God's blessings.
5. What does apostle Paul say about his physical illness and what answer did he receive from Jesus?

### **Bible Application:**

There are several professions that can offer us opportunities to help the disabled such as nursing, special education teacher, speech therapist, sign language teacher,

counselor, psychologist, and psychiatrist, and medical doctor. Pray sincerely to the Lord that if it is His will that you choose one of these as a ministry and a vocation. He will let you know His plan for you (Jeremiah 29:11).

**Life Response:**

1. Select an institution for the disabled and gather information about its work, staff members, residents, and various needs including prayer needs.
2. Every member of the class start praying for the needs and for two or residents. After praying regularly for about 40 days send a card and perhaps a small gift as token of your Christian love for them.
3. Pray for those who are living a very stressful life in your community. Too much Stress can seriously affect their mental health. Some times you may be the only person praying for that person or family.

**Memory Verse: Luke 4:18**

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.

**Prayer:**

Our heavenly Father, please open up our minds to love and truly care for the physically and mentally disabled. Please help us to translate our love into meaningful actions. Amen.

## Lesson 5 Lord's Prayer – The Sum and Substance of Our Faith

**Lesson Theme:** Science and Faith

**Aim:** To know the meaning and essence of the Lord's Prayer

**Bible Reading:** Mathew 6: 7-15

### Values for Life:

1. Know that the Lord's prayer is a model prayer
2. We need to pray according to God's will.
3. Prayers must become a constant experience
4. God is sufficient to meet all our needs, material and spiritual

### Preparation:

At one of Dr. Wilbur Chapman's London meetings, the attendance was so poor that he received a note saying another American missionary was going to pray for God's blessing. He was known as Praying Hyde. Almost instantly the tide turned. The hall started to fill, and in the next meeting, fifty men accepted Christ as their Savior. As Chapman was leaving for America, he said, "Mr. Hyde, I want you to pray for me." Hyde came to Dr. Wilbur Chapman's room, dropped on his knees, and waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. Chapman, also on his knees, could hear his own heart beat. Hot tears started to run down Hyde's face. Now he turned his face upward. As the tears were streaming, he said, "O God." Then for five minutes he was silent again. And then, when he was sure that he was talking with God there came from the depths of his heart such petitions for Chapman. He had never heard petitions like that before. Chapman rose from his knees to know what real prayer was. Everyone of you is a praying person. But did you ever wonder if your prayers are really effective?

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Today our goal is to learn the meaning of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples and connect it to our faith life. Anyone can recite the Lord's Prayer without thinking about it. And lots of people do just that. We know it needs to be taken very seriously. It is a model prayer and Christians should repeat it at the end of their prayers.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Where is the Lord's Prayer recorded? (Mathew 6:9-13; Luke 11: 2-4). We know that in Mathew this prayer is part of the Sermon on the Mount. The circumstances in were different when the prayer was taught in Luke. Since it is a model prayer, we can assume that this might have been repeated at many occasions. The Lord gave it to the disciples in the gospel of Mathew after a warning that we should not pray like the hypocrites and pagans. In Luke, the prayer was taught in response to a disciple's request to teach them how to pray. The instruction "This is how you should pray," means that this model prayer is for us to recite quite often. There are six appeals in the prayer. The

first three describe God and His glory. The last three relate to our important needs. People who recite this prayer should have a proper relationship with God before they can meaningfully recite it. They have to be saved.

### ***Our Father in Heaven***

Did you notice how the prayer begins with a salutation “Our Father in heaven”? It implies that we are accepting and recognizing God as our father, our own. This expression indicates a warm, personal relationship with God. Jesus always addressed God as ‘Father’ as shown in scriptures (Mark 14:3, Romans 8:15, Gal. 4:6). Every member in a family has a personal relationship to each other. Similarly, each individual must have a personal relationship with God.

### ***May Your Holy Name Be Honored***

We are not worthy of saying this. In reciting this what we are really doing is asking God to help us to make us able to accept God and honor Him. What we imply when we ask God to equip us to worship Him as Almighty, Holy and Heavenly, is that it is God alone who can keep His name holy. We must attempt to glorify God with our words, thoughts and actions.

### ***May Your Kingdom Come***

The request here is that God’s Kingdom may come in the hearts of all men in the world. God’s reign is complete in those hearts. The scripture in Romans 14:17 explains that “God’s Kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of the righteousness, peace and joy which the Holy Spirit gives.” God’s Kingdom is not a geographical region but a moral state. It is not materialistic; it is fully spiritual. On the other hand, it is not just ideological; it is real. How do we know it is real? We experience the Kingdom of God in the transformed lives of individuals, society and families where God’s will is fulfilled.

### ***May Your Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven***

God’s will is never questioned in heaven. His will is accepted and obeyed by all in heaven. All believers pray that all on earth will obey God’s. As Christians, His will must be done in our lives. We must submit our plans to God and seek His will. Reciting this prayer is preparing us for doing God’s will.

### ***Give us Today the Food We Need***

The second set of three requests is related to human physical and spiritual needs. As a result of sin and rebellion to God, His will is not fully carried out here. So the physical and spiritual needs are yet to be met for the pagans as well as the believers. Then, believers are under obligation to pray for God’s grace and help in all the spheres of life.

Asking for food is certainly a prayer to meet the physical need. “Food’ here implies everything that we need for our physical life. It is with God’s help that we receive our food and other necessities. The Lord, in His wisdom, taught us to ask the food for each day. Notice, He did not teach us to put in a wholesome request for the

whole life. Each day is a gift from God and we need to relate to the Lord on a daily basis.

### ***Forgive Us the Wrongs We Have Done***

When we say, “As we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us,” it does not mean that we qualify for forgiveness as soon as we forgive other’s wrongs. Why? Because, forgiveness and redemption are the gifts of God. We receive these only through God’s grace or undeserving gift. But this segment of the prayer tells us that when we pray for the forgiveness God expects us to fulfill our duty to others in forgiving as well. As Christians, there is no place in our hearts for hatred and enmity towards others. We have to come to the presence of God with a clear heart and make this appeal.

### ***Do Not Bring us to Hard Testing***

You can easily see that the last appeal has two components “Do not bring us to hard testing and keep us safe from the Evil One.” Temptation simply means testing, but it is an unavoidable part of Christian living. The request here is our admission that we are very likely to become slaves of sin. For this reason, we are praying to keep us from tempting situations. We are acknowledging our helplessness and praying for God’s grace to strengthen us. All the Christians know that getting tempted is not sin. But it is disastrous to fail in testing. We know many heart-breaking stories of others who fell as victims of temptation.

### ***Yours is the Kingdom, Power and Glory***

Finally, we need to understand that all praise and glory needs to be given to God. One thing He will not share with any one is His glory. Through this segment of the prayer, we are declaring the great power and unique glory of the Almighty God. The kingdoms of the earth with their power and glory come and go. But God’s Kingdom, his power and glory lasts for every, all through eternity. The ‘Amen’ at the end of the prayer means ‘so let it be’.

### **Bible Learning and Strategies:**

1. Where is the Lord’s Prayer recorded in the Bible? In context did Jesus teach this prayer to His disciples?
2. What did Jesus say about forgiveness?
3. Ask ten committed Christians what they thought of the salutation “Our Father” compared to “Father God” and share that with the class next time
4. Using a bible dictionary discover the meaning of the word “Abba”
5. Call or e-mail a person who needs your forgiveness after you pray about it

### **Bible Application**

The modern world is much interested in discovering the importance of prayer. There is a new interest among skeptics and people of other faith to know how prayer impacts lives. Prayer has been the topic of scientific study at UCLA and the media carried the results showing miracles taking place when true Christians pray. They also commented that the medical scientists do now know what to do with the findings. As Christians we know what to do in this situation. And that is to pray frequently in faith as our Savior has taught us.

### Life Response

1. Do we recite the Lord's Prayer as a habit or with understanding and reverence?
2. What happens to our wrongs if we refuse to forgive others who repeat the same wrongs?
2. What are all the things we pray in the Lord's Prayer?
3. What are the characteristics of the kingdom of God?

### Memory Verse: Matt: 6:6

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for the model prayer you taught us. Help us to recite it with a real understanding of its depth and meaning from now on. Your name may be glorified in everything we think, say and do. Amen

## PART II

### GOD'S WONDERFUL PEOPLE

#### Lesson 6    A Family in Crisis

**Lesson Theme:**        Family

**Aim:**                      To understand that when we trust and depend on God, he will help us to solve the crisis in family.

**Bible Reading:**        Gen. 45:1-5

#### Values for Life

1. Parents should treat all children equally
2. God leads His children beyond the wisdom of man.
3. Behave kindly and affectionately to people those who don't even like us

**Preparation:**

Allow children to explain the concept of family in their own words. Let them share the family activities what they do together in their own family in a day. What is family? Family is the basic and the most important unit in a society. The basis and future of society depends on the family. When the family and the family values are strong, the social fabric and values are also strong. When the family ties and values disintegrate, the society also deteriorates and disintegrates. Today's lesson helps us to learn and understand how a crisis developed in a family and how God intervened and helped the members of the family to face the challenges and overcome them.

**Bible Learning: Main Ideas:**

**The Family of Jacob (Gene. 37)**

The family consisted of his wife, twelve sons (Gen. 35:23-26) and one daughter (Gen. 30:21). Benjamin was the youngest son and Joseph was the eleventh son. Jacob loved his son Joseph most than all other children. Joseph was born to Jacob when he was very old and was born to Rachel. Joseph brought to his father the report of the ill doings of his brothers (Gen. 37:2). This creates crisis in Jacob's family due to over affection and love to Joseph.

**The Crisis in Jacob's Family**

When Jacob loved Joseph more than all other children, the brothers started to hate Joseph (Gen. 37:4). They hated Joseph more when he told them about his dream (Gen. 37:18). They thought of killing Joseph. When Joseph came to the place where they were tending the flock, he was thrown in to a well and then sold him to a group of Ishmaelites.

Later they sold Joseph to Potiphar, who was the captain of the Guards of the King's palace. Joseph became the steward of his house. Soon Joseph was accused of misbehavior towards Potiphar's wife and put him in jail. Joseph overcame all these adversities because of his strong faith in God, his good conduct and the wisdom of interpreting the dreams of the king when his magicians and wise men failed to do so. Pharaoh was well pleased with Joseph and his ability to interpret the dreams and appointed him as the Governor of Egypt (Gen. 41:41). Joseph made all the arrangement to provide the food supply for the people during the time of famine. Joseph's brothers also came to collect the supplies except Benjamin, without knowing Joseph.

### **Reconciliation in the Family**

Though the brothers failed to recognize Joseph, Joseph recognized them (Gen. 42-45). To test them, Joseph treated them as spies and put them in prison for three days, and kept Simeon in prison until Benjamin was brought to Egypt. (Ask students to explain the story and the teacher completes the missing portion). Second time they came with Benjamin to collect the grain. Finally Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers- Gen.45. Joseph said, "It was really God who sent me ahead of you here to save the lives of people (Gen. 45:5). Joseph treated them so kind and affectionately. Here shows his firm faith and trust in God. Joseph helped his brothers in crisis without taking any revenge against them. Joseph was sincere and faithful to God, himself and to his fellow humans. The words of Joseph touched the heart of his brothers (Gen. 50:14-21).

Ask students about the nature and cause of crisis what Joseph's family had to face. (Jealous, partiality, cruelty, cheating and misbehavior). The faith in God and determination of Joseph helped the family to overcome the crisis.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. On an index card write down the basic qualities of Joseph.
2. How did Joseph overcome every crisis in his life?
3. Sharing: How did you face an important problem in your life with faith in Christ?

### **Bible Application:**

Through Joseph's faith in God, he was able to overcome the many obstacles that occurred in his life. His trust in the Lord enabled him to reconcile with his family and thus be able to settle the crisis. Through this quality, Joseph was able to forgive his brothers for their wrongs and Joseph was able to become one of the greatest leaders in history. Through God's grace, Joseph's family was restored and Joseph was able to become a great worker of the Lord's.

### **Life Response:**

1. What were the main reasons of crisis in Jacob's family?
2. Is the partiality of parents towards children justifiable?
3. What are the values to be followed in a family?

***Memory Verse: Gen. 50:20***

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

**Prayer:**

Father, please remove all our evil thoughts, jealousy hatred and selfishness from us. Help us to be the carriers of your love and kindness during crisis in our families and society.

Amen

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Grade 8

## Lesson - 7 A Prophetic Call for Unity

**Lesson Theme:** Humanity: One in Unity  
**Aim:** To discern the prophetic voice speaking about future unity of humanity.  
**Bible Reading:** Isaiah 2:1-4

### Values for Life

1. Unity of human beings—being divided on the basis of language and religion and country is not good.
2. Peace and happiness are possible only through a good relationship with others and through dependence on God.

### Preparation:

Do you know the peculiarities of India and its culture? We can see unity in diversity in our country. What is unity in diversity? India is a land of many languages, cultures, and states. Each state has its own culture and language. Among these diversities the underlying unity is very peculiar. But this peace and tranquility is sometimes shattered when people of two states fight one another with regional interest. We know the dispute between Karnadaka and Tamil Nadu over sharing the water of the Caveri. The bitterness between Israel and Arab countries is an example of a situation at the global level. One group cannot accept the other because of the diversity on the basis of religion and region. The humanity created by God is on the verge of hatred and division. Is God expecting this from his creation? What does the prophet Isaiah tell us through his vision given by God?

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

#### Prophet

When we hear the word prophet we think that he is a person who speaks about the future. But it is not so. A prophet speaks on behalf of God. A prophet is God's chosen, appointed by God to speak on His behalf. They reveal God's intentions and future plans. In olden days, prophets concentrated on bringing the people to the right path by raising their voice against injustice, violence, idol worship, and materialism. Prophets made changes in socio-political fields by revealing God's purposes through thrilling messages. Moreover, they pointed out God's redemptive acts and predicted the birth of Jesus Christ. In the book of Samuel, they were known as 'visionaries.' In the early Church, we can also see persons who carried out prophetic mission (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). In some contexts the term prophet is seen used to describe elders, deacons, and even lay members of the Church both male and female (Acts 15:32; 21:9-10).

## **The Prophet Isaiah**

Isaiah, the son of Amos, was a Hebrew prophet who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. His name means “Help from God” or “Jehovah helps.” Micah was the contemporary of Isaiah. Isaiah was very influential in the Court of King of Judah and he took a very prominent role in the foreign policies.

## **Vision of Isaiah**

In this part, the prophet envisions a future world in which there exists a unity among human beings that overcomes all diversities. He also indicates the Kingdom of God in which all creation is brought together with Christ as its head (Eph. 1:10). Isaiah explicates that God is the King on earth. All that happens is according to the will of God and through God. The course of history is also controlled by God (Is. 5:26; 7:17; 8:7; 10:5). All nations will have to undergo God’s judgment.

In this prophecy, Isaiah hopes that there shall be a day, when human beings shall live together and walk together in faith, righteousness, and brotherhood. Though human beings have made great advances in their style of living, the art of living together seems to be a distant possibility. Human beings cannot survive by continuing to fight with one another on the basis of religion and creed. The prophet also pictures a united world, a true league of nations made not by treaty but by common faith. Here the prophet highlights the idea that the people of all nations, languages, creeds, and cultures living together according to the will of God.

## **Unity of Human Beings—Means and Effects**

The prophet indicates the path for the realization of this new humanity. This new humanity, which the prophet visualizes, is possible only through walking in the paths God revealed through His son, Jesus Christ (Is. 2:3). When we enter the experience of the Kingdom of God, the nations will withdraw from the competition of arms accumulation that arises out of fear. There after they will act in a way, which will ensure the sustenance of life and promote peaceful co-existence. They will hammer their swords into plough shears and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will never again go to war, never prepare for battle again (Is. 2:4).

The High Priestly Prayer of Christ, also points out this order (Jn. 17:21). As a community of faith in the new order, which God plans through Christ, we shall try to maintain peaceful co-existence with others.

## **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**

1. Who is a prophet?
2. Describe Isaiah’s vision of unity?
3. What will be the result when all become unified?

## **Bible Application:**

In modern times, many wars and acts of destruction are being carried out all over the world especially in the rural regions of Africa and many parts of the Middle East. However, this continuous fighting is not what God intended for his creation. God wants all men and women to be united together despite their differences. This message was

spoken long ago by prophet Isaiah and should be applied during this time. From this lesson let us remember to always be united with another and never against each other.

**Life Response:**

1. Discuss ways to bring about more unity in your community?
2. How can we improve our prayers for unity among churches?
3. Consider and pray for all who belong to various faiths and culture.
4. Come up with three strategies for involving non-Christians in our programs.
- 5.

**Memory Verse: Isaiah 2:4**

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war  
anymore.”

**Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for the diversity that is found in the human race. Help us to accept one another, in the spirit of love. Amen.

## Grade 8

**Lesson – 8 Immanuel—God is With Us**

**Lesson Theme:** God Revealed in History  
**Aim:** To understand that God is always with us.  
**Bible Reading:** John 1:1-4; Matthew 1:18-25

**Values for Life**

1. God desires to stay with human beings
2. God sent his son Jesus to die on the cross for us for our salvation and we should prepare ourselves to be with God.
3. The people who will live with God lead a successful life with the firm belief that Immanuel is with us.

**Preparation:**

Once, a missionary and his wife were traveling in a ship. Immediately the sky became cloudy and the wind blew strongly. The passengers in the ship became anxious and screamed. The wife of the missionary who was outside became anxious to see her husband sitting calmly inside the room. She asked her husband if he was not conscious of the danger. He took a knife from his suitcase and waved it at his wife. But she stood without any fear. Then he asked, “Why did you stand without any fear?” She replied that the knife was in the hand of her husband. He said that he felt sure he was in the hands of Christ and Christ would take care of him.

**Bible Learning: Main Ideas****God Who Lives With Man**

God desires to abide with man who was created in His image. In Genesis we can see God entering into conversation with Adam and Eve. While analyzing the history of the Israelites, we can see that God lived in their midst and led them. In Exodus 13:21 we read that in their journey through the desert from Egypt to Canaan the Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud to give them shade during the day and in a pillar of fire to give them light during the night. This God is Immanuel. He is always with us. Let us try to understand the meaning of Immanuel.

**Immanuel—What does this Reveal? (God is with us)**

In Matthew 1:22, we read that “a virgin will become pregnant and have a son and he will be called Immanuel which means ‘God is with us.’” In the New Testament our Lord is called Immanuel only in this verse. But in the Old Testament this name is mentioned in the prophecies of Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8 where the birth of Jesus and His presence in this world are foretold. In Revelations 21:3, it reads, “Now God’s home is with mankind! He will live with them, and they shall be his people.”

### **Historical Background**

In this context, it is better to know the background of the prophecies of Isaiah. Ahaz, the King of Judah, entered into an alliance with the Assyrians when he heard that the King of Syria and the King of Israel planned a joint attack against him. God appointed Isaiah to remove fear from the minds of the people. Isaiah advised Ahaz not to be afraid of them and that Judah would win over the enemies. Moreover, Isaiah directed Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Lord. When Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, the Lord gave him this sign: “A young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him ‘Immanuel’” (Isa. 7:14). Isaiah also informed Ahaz that by the time the child is old enough to make his own decisions Judah would destroy those two kings who terrified it. He also predicted that Assyria would defeat Judah.

Before the teachings of the prophets there was no mention about the Messiah. In the teaching of Isaiah, the hope about the Messiah can be seen. The intellectuals were of the opinion that Isaiah’s vision was about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who would redeem the people from their sins. Because of their sins, the Israelites would be defeated by the Assyrians. After that, they would be redeemed. The coming Immanuel is the symbol of redemption to the people. He belongs to the dynasty of David. He will establish peace all over the world and an eternal kingdom at Zion (Isa. 9:6; 11:1; Mic. 4:1; 5:2). The people of Judah maintained their hope about the coming Messiah.

What did God do to live with us? Christ whom God sent into the world in the fullness of time through His death and resurrection did that which was needed for him to live with us. The holy God abides only there where there is purity. So we have to be free from sins for him to live with us and for us to live with Him. Jesus attained this through His death and resurrection. Because as it is said in John 1:14, the word became a human being, men were able to touch, see, hear, and talk to Jesus Christ, the word. God’s decision about man can be seen in Ephesians 1:4-9. “Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His, through our union with Christ so that we would be holy and without fault before Him. Because of his love, God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons—this was his pleasure and purpose” (Eph. 1:4, 5).

### **What We Should Do Because We Live With God**

The promise “I will make my home with my people and live among them, I will be their God and they shall be my people” (2Cor. 6:16) fills us with joy and peace. So what should we do because the holy God lives with us? We should separate ourselves from the world by purifying ourselves from everything that makes our bodies or souls unclean and by becoming completely holy and perfect and dedicated to Him. When God is with us, we will not go to places which He does not like; will not hear what we are not allowed to hear, will not think what we are prohibited to think; and will not do what we should not do. We will do only what He likes. This does not mean that God’s presence removes all sickness and problems. It means that the Holy Spirit will give the strength to face them. It is a means for purifying ourselves and to make sure that God (Immanuel) will be with us. We should lead holy lives, which are pleasing to Him and glorifying His name.

**Ahab and David**

Ahab and David were two Kings of Israel. God desired to live with both of them. But Ahab did not like to live with God (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 21). That led to the destruction of Ahab and his family. When David lived apart from God for some time, faults entered into his life. But he repented and purified himself to live with God.

Following are some of the people who lived very close to God:

1. Gen. 5:24 (Enoch)
2. Jer. 1:8, 19 (Jeremiah)
3. Gen. 6:9 (Noah)
4. Gen. 12:17, 18 (Abraham)
5. Psalms 25:14 (David)
6. Josh. 1:5, 9 (Joshua)

God desires to live with us. Let us purify ourselves and live with Him.

**Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**

1. What does the name 'Immanuel' mean?
2. What is God's plan about the redemption of mankind?
3. Share: What are the characteristics of a person who lives with God?
4. Write the names of four persons in the Old Testament who lived with God.

**Bible Application:**

Throughout the history of our forefathers, God showed his magnificent glory in many lives such as in Adam and Eve, Moses, and Joshua. God continues to work amidst us during the present time at all times. God sent his son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins so that we may be saved. Through this act, God showed his extreme love for his creation. Let us remember that God is always with us in any circumstance or situation as he was in past as shown in the Old Testament.

**Life Response:**

1. 'Immanuel.' Has this become our life experience?
2. Is it possible for man to live with God?
3. Let us try to make others aware about the presence of God through our lives.
4. Pray seriously seeking God's help to break all the evil habits such as selfishness, anger, revenge, etc, that stand as impediments for God to live with us.

**Memory Verse: Ephesians 1:4**

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to live with you always. Amen.

## Lesson – 9      Speak, Your Servant is Listening

**Lesson Theme:** Response to God’s Revelation  
**Aim:** To develop in children an understanding of how to respond to God’s call and submit to His Will  
**Bible Reading:** I Sam. 3:1-10

### Values for Life

1. God hears the prayers of Hannah and gave her a son.
2. Know why God called Samuel.
3. Sometimes God calls us in unfavorable circumstances. Yet we should be ready to hear His call.

### Preparation:

“What is the correct procedure when one is invited to the White House and has a previous engagement?” someone asked Emily Post. She answered, “An invitation to lunch or dine at the White House is a command, and automatically cancels any other engagement.” A call to serve God comes out of God’s mercy. It is a great privilege that God doesn’t even grant to the angels. When we receive the call, the correct response is to surrender before Him completely regardless of the age, gender, or the profession you are in. It is hard to resist God’s call!

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

#### Family of Elkanah

Samuel was born in a special family. His mother Hannah did not have children for several years and lived in disappointment. Sometimes she would even give up eating and spent her time in weeping for others despised her so bad. Her husband Elkanah had another wife Peninnah. Maybe he married her since Hannah would not bear children and also in those days polygamy was practiced in their culture. They lived in a town called Ramah in the hill-country of Ephraim. Elkanah was a member of the tribe of Ephraim, and the clan of Kohath (I Chron. 6:33-34). They would travel every year to Shiloh where they could offer sacrifices and worship the Lord. This time Hannah was in great agony as they arrived Shiloh.

#### *The Birth of Samuel*

She wanted to share her burden before the Lord. When she went to pray, the priest Eli was sitting in a chair by the doorpost of the temple. Since she was very bitter in her soul, she wept and prayed (verse 10). She also made a vow, “O Lord Almighty, if you

will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give here a son, the I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head" (verse 11). As she continued her prayer, Eli noticed her. She was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli who never saw someone praying like this thought she was drunk and rebuked. But she calmly explained, "I have been praying out of my great anguish and grief". We read in the scripture that her face was no longer downcast. She did not have her baby yet but when she finished saying her petition it cleared her burden and her face reflected her heart.

The family returned to Ramah. The Lord remembered her and opened her womb. In due course of time Hannah gave birth to a son. Do you know why she called him Samuel? Because she asked the Lord for him.

### Samuel at Shiloh

Baby Samuel weaned and his mother took him along with a three-year-old bull, ten kilograms of flour and a leather bag full of wine to sacrifice in the Temple at Shiloh on the occasion of his dedication. Hannah let him in the care of Eli, the Chief Priest at the Temple. Afterwards, the family returned to Ramah. Samuel served the Lord as directed by Eli. His mother of course missed him but her earnest prayers, faith, and model life influenced Samuel in growing up as a committed youth. Every year Hannah would make a robe and take it to her son at Shiloh. God honored her commitment and good deeds and blessed the entire family.

#### *God Calls Samuel*

The office of the prophet was very rare those days. The whole nation was filled with spiritual darkness. Even Eli's sons, who were also priests, did what was displeasing to God. They desecrated the sacred Temple of the Lord. It was in the unfavorable circumstances that God called Samuel to be His prophet. Of course he did not recognize the voice of the Lord at first but with Eli's help, Samuel responded properly. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" (3:10). This time Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

#### *Samuel- God's Prophet*

The first revelation God gave Samuel was about the punishment He was going to send on Eli's family. God told Samuel that Eli did not discipline his sons even though he knew they doing evil things. When Eli came in the morning and insisted that Samuel share with him what the Lord revealed to him even if it was bad, he told him everything (I Sam. 3:17,18). Samuel was very honest in his dealings with Israel and the people accepted him as Faithful Prophet of God. He provided the people with spiritual leadership and political leadership at the same time. Samuel was a great judge for all of the land of Israel. He was the last of the judges and first of the prophets (Acts 13:20). As the successor to Eli, he held the office of the priest and offered sacrifices (I Sam 13:13).

***Why did God Choose Samuel?***

1. Samuel was very faithful in serving Eli and carried out his duties in the Temple of the Lord with a sincere and humble heart. He understood the purpose of his life from his mother's instructions. He demonstrated this by keeping his distance from the sons of Eli. They could have easily influenced him.
2. God did not have prophets those days. He would send godly persons with His messages to the people. Other than that, there was no prophet for interpreting the scriptures, seeking the will of God and receiving the counsel of God. Perhaps God chose Samuel to bridge that gap and lead his people in a better light. The leadership of judges was not adequate.

**Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. Study pictures of a Jewish temple or church, Samuel, Eli, and Hannah and discuss.
2. As a class construct a mother's day card with insights from Samuel's story, personalize it, and give it to your mothers next time mother's day come around.
3. How do you know the general will of God? (Hint: Teachings of Jesus, end chapters of letters etc.)
4. How can junior high students help parents in nurturing and helping children better?

**Bible Application:**

Darkness seems to be setting in the horizon in our times. People are confused and need right direction as they hear about, natural disasters, corruption, cultural revolutions that include gay marriage, violence against children and women, secular influence in churches, and ridicule of Christians. We are placed in the midst of a confused and suffering humanity that needs light and direction. Jesus said there are too few laborers in his kingdom's work. While God expects the service of courageous persons to meet this need, He appreciates the little light we all can shed. God loves to hear from us: "Speak, your servant is listening."

**Life Response:**

1. Plan a quiet time daily in God's presence to seek His will for our daily activities
2. Spend one-to-one time with the parents and listen to their heart-aches and pray with that parent
3. Share the story of Samuel in your own words to your nominal Christian friends to encourage them to live a committed life

**Memory Verse: I Sam. 3:10**

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

**Prayer:**

Lord please grant us quiet moments and speak to us. Grant to us the grace that we may truly hear your still small voice in this noisy world. Also give us a receptive and humble mind to fully surrender before you. Thank you for our praying mothers and the blessings we enjoy through them. In the name of Jesus we pray,  
Amen

## Lesson 10 The Parable of the Two Sons

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	Be a True Disciple
<b>Aim:</b>	To learn that we can be spared from the judgment if we truly repent of our sins sincerely rather than trying to justify them.
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Matt. 21:28-32

### Values for Life

1. There are qualities to enter the Kingdom of God.
2. God expects us to do things, our deeds, for His glory.
3. We make mistakes and go wrong, but God forgives us if we repent.

### Introduction:

A jobless man badly needed some work. He applied for a job with a circus company manager the first day they moved in to town. But the manager told him very nicely “you know we don’t hire people without gymnastic skills.” Noticing his willingness and short, skinny body, added: “our tiger is very sick and if you don’t mind putting on a fur skin and playing a tiger on the stage for a few minutes, and stay in the cage until the show is over, I can hire you.” The man was ready to do any job. He agreed quickly. After a short, intensive training, the man started playing the tiger on the stage. The new tiger received loud cheers for his tricks on the stage. Then a few days later he saw a scary scene. Just after he put on the tiger skin, he noticed the lion in the huge cage pushing the door open and walking the man’s cage. The impostor realized he couldn’t cry using human voice or open his cage. Neither would be safe. The lion wouldn’t spare him. He tried to be a brave tiger but was so frightened at the sight of the approaching ferocious beast. In total desperation he yelled, “HELP!” Immediately the lion said in an undertone, “Shut up, fool! You’ll get us both fired!”

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

#### The Parable of the Two Sons

Playing fake or living, as a hypocrite is something Jesus never would approve. Do you remember the scene of Jesus cleansing the Temple of Jerusalem after he rode on the donkey and entered Jerusalem? He overturned the tables of the moneychangers. He disrupted those who sold pigeons in the temple and he also corrected them verbally. The Jewish leaders, including the Pharisees, teachers of the law, and priests all led double lives. They were not obeying the word of God, yet they acted as if they were. It is true

that tax collectors and prostitutes were living in sin, but they admitted their sins and repented of it. The parable in our lesson is connected to this context.

The father was disappointed with his two sons because of their selfishness and unwillingness to honor the father's request. All the father had asked was a normal chore of working in the vineyard. It is just like a modern father asking his sons to come out and help him clean the lawn. The first one answered something like this: "I don't want to go; it is too much work. Plus I am busy." Of course the first son changed his mind later and went out to the vineyard to help his father. Then the father made the same request to his younger son. He said very politely, "Yes Sir." But he simply did not go. The first son was the better of the two because he acted to obey the will of his father.

### **Basic Lessons from this Parable**

Jesus taught basically three principles using this parable. First, it reminds us of the two types of people. One group only teaches others the moral standards but does not practice it themselves. They are good in acting pious and quick to give instructions about truth, faithfulness, and love. But you cannot find these qualities in their own lives. The second group does not teach, offer advices, or issue warnings to others. They may appear to be materialistic, and heartless to the pious ones. But in reality, they are compassionate and honestly care for others in their practical needs. They may be criticized as people who neglect their religious duties for not always participating in certain rituals. The fact is that they live a life better acceptable to the Lord than the self-righteous group.

Secondly, the parable sheds light on the principle that good words cannot be substitutes for good deeds. The second son wanted to impress his father with a seemingly nice, and humble answer, "Yes Sir." He certainly acted nicely but he did not live up to his words. He has never gone to the vineyard. To have real faith and humility in our lives, there must be obedience. The first son, though he said he didn't want to go, he repented later and obeyed his father's will.

Thirdly, Jesus is sending out a strong warning to the hypocritical teachers of law and the self-righteous Pharisees. They refused to believe the preaching of John the Baptist as he preached the way of righteousness. The tax collectors and prostitutes, the people who were condemned by their society, repented of their sins and asked God's forgiveness. They changed their minds and altered the way they lived. But the teachers of the law and Pharisees who claimed to be religious did not repent. So Jesus had to warn them that the tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the Kingdom of God before the religious hypocrites.

### **Warning for Us**

The teaching of Jesus is relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. Even in our time, people mistakenly think true faith is participating liturgical worship, offering advices and maintaining the status in the community. In reality, they are simply trying to impress others with their self-righteous, and pretentious attitude. They want others to accept them as true believers. Their deeds do not attest their words. These are like the second son in the parable. They will be put to divine judgment.

Once a group of Christian ministers visited Mahatma Gandhi. They were curious about what he thought of conversion to Christ. Mahatma Gandhi knew about Christian faith through his stay in England, and South Africa where he even used to go to a church

for a while. His answer is worth pondering by every Christian: “I believe in Christian conversion if it is genuine. On the other hand, there is nothing worse than being something on the outside that you are not on the inside. If a man has found God through Jesus Christ, then he must show the world he is a follower of Jesus or else be a living lie!”

**Bible Learning Strategies and Activities:**

1. How do we understand the will of God through scriptures to obey it?
2. What are the truths learned from the parable of the two sons?
3. What did Jesus teach about relating words and actions?

**Bible Application:**

The pressing question we need to ask and answer ourselves is: “will I be identified as a genuine follower of Christ?” We need to examine if we are walking the talk rather than talking the talk. The grace God gives abundantly to the broken-hearted is sufficient in all our tough situations. His grace can fully strengthen us from falling into temptation in the present sensate culture that has lost its direction. Let us be truly repenting and trust on God to spare us from the final judgment. Then we will be there among the countless believers on that bright and glorious day when Jesus appears in the sky again in His heavenly glory. Jesus always meant what he said.

**Life Response:**

1. Make a list of dozen errands from your parents that you will do with a glad heart
2. As a class write the reasons why some teens ignore parents instructions
3. As a class, write a paragraph summarizing the truths you learned from this lesson. Each member will write a sentence connected to the previous sentence. You only get 30 seconds to write your sentence. Then have a student read the paragraph loud before closing.

**Memory Verse: Matt: 7: 21**

Not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord.” Will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to remind ourselves that we are not perfect. We humble ourselves before you. Please help us to repent of our sins when the Holy Spirit remind of those. Help us to have a clean conscience when we pray next time. Amen

## Part III

### God's Purpose For God's World

#### Lesson – 11 Journey Through The Wilderness

**Lesson Theme:** Nature of God

**Aim:** To make the children understand that the presence of God with His people in all situations of their life journey.

**Bible Reading:** Exodus 15: 22- 16-36

#### Values for Life

1. There will be problems in our Christian journey
2. God interferences in our difficulties as we trust on Him
3. Our God will not forsake us in our times of need

#### Preparation:

Do you all remember the story of Civil War? It was fought for the freedom of a people in bondage. The Northerners wanted to free the African slaves from slavery. Can you briefly tell the story of this unique war? To get started who was the president at that time?

#### Bible Learning : Main Ideas

##### Israelites: Slaves in Egypt

God delivered Israel Egypt with His mighty works but it took forty long years for them to enter the Promised Land. They had to go through several hardships in the wilderness. When they won the freedom they were very happy. As difficulties arose in the journey, they began to murmur and complain against their leader and the God who delivered them from Egypt. The following are the major crises they faced.

1. Crossing the Red Sea.
2. Lack of drinking water for three days.
3. Biter water at Marah.
4. Lack of food in the wilderness.

We know that God has provided them solutions in each of these difficult situations. The solutions had the involvement of nature and man. God used Man's obedient actions to solve the problems.

### **Israelites and the slavery in Egypt (God's Chosen People)**

How the Israelites became the slaves in Egypt is a painful story. We know a bad famine struck Canaan, and the brothers of Joseph came down to Egypt to buy food. God had sent Joseph to Egypt in advance in his foreknowledge. As the rulers changed over centuries, Israelites became slaves in Egypt. They even thought Israelite population was exploding and it could be a major political threat. A new Pharaoh even ordered killing the newborn Jewish boys as soon as they entered into this world.

### **Deliverance From Slavery**

God sent Moses to demand the deliverance of his people from Pharaoh. Without any diplomatic niceties, he told Pharaoh to let his people go to worship their God in the wilderness (Exodus 5:3, 10:3). But the ruler refused and commented that he did not know the God of Moses. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. It took ten major disasters including the killing of the first borns before Pharaoh would change his mind. As all the first borns lay dead, Pharaoh said they could leave Egypt. By now the Israelites were in exile for 430 years. They started the journey in a hurry (Exodus 14:21). The disasters and impressed the minds of Israelites. They feared God and respected Moses. The estimated size of population size by now stood at six million.

### **Journey Through the Wilderness – From the Bible**

Israel had to travel through the Sinai Wilderness. The journey through any desert region is hard. As you enter the high way going through Arizona desert there are warnings about lack of places to get food, water, gasoline for hundreds of miles. It was quite natural that they experience some hardship in their journey. But in their crisis, they experienced the presence, providence and protection of God.

### **The Crisis that Israelites Met**

1. After crossing the Red Sea, they journeyed through the desert for 3 days without water. They murmured against Moses.
2. There was a shortage of food in the Sinai desert. Again they murmured against Moses.

### **God's Interference:**

The people quickly forgot the work of the Lord at the Red Sea. They started to murmur against Moses and God when they felt small discomforts such as shortage of water. There was water at Marah but it tasted bitter. Moses in his characteristic manner turned to God and pleaded for help. The Lord showed him a tree and instructed him to put the branches in the water of Marah. Moses obeyed the instruction of God and the bitterness was gone (Ex. 15:25). His special interference with people is very important to the Lord. There he made for them a statue and proclaimed a profound promise that applies to us today as well: "If you will obey me completely by doing what I consider right and by keeping my commands, I will not punish you with any of the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians" (Ex. 15:26).

While the problem in the desert of Shur was shortage of water, the big issue in Sinai was lack of food items. They complained again: "We wish that the Lord had killed us in Egypt. There we could at least sit down and eat meat and as much other

food as we wanted. But you have brought us out into the desert to starve us all to death” (Ex. 16:3). God’s people had flat forgotten their immediate past. The Lord continued to give them what they needed. He showered manna and quails from the sky for their food. God continued to bless them with all these hoping that they would be faithful to serve Him. Do we remember the blessings of the Lord in our lives? There are many if you count them one by one. Do we worship Him in truth and spirit or do we still have the rebellious spirit of the Israelites?

Despite the Israelites disobedience and unfaithfulness to God, He gave them plenty of food and water and led them with the pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. They experienced close presence of God.

God is eternally the same. His character does not change. People in general reject him and backslide when they face problems. But as Christians we should never forget that our Lord is always with us. We cannot run away from the Lord. He will never leave us in our troubles. In fact His presence is felt stronger during such moments of trials. When we walk with God we will always reach our destiny. God is never ashamed of being our God no matter what!

### **Bible Learning Strategies and activities:**

Quiz: Girls can ask questions 1 and 2 to boys

Boys can ask questions 3 and 4 to girls

1. What made the Israelites slaves in Egypt? Disobedience of man to God. The disobedience of man to God brings disaster and crisis in our lives.
2. Explain God’s way of deliverance of His people from exile.
3. What were the hardships that the Israelites experienced during their journey through the wilderness?
4. How did God meet their need?
5. Study the map of Israel’s journey through wilderness and make short list of materials for such a long journey at that time.

### **Bible Application**

God called Moses for this great difficult job. Moses was available. God’s calling depends on availability not on the ability. God will enable and empower the person to complete the task. Without God’s power Moses could have accomplished nothing. It was God Himself who delivered the Israelites from Egypt. They celebrated the victory and sang praises to God. Three days later they murmured against the Lord and their leader as the water in Marah turned out to be bitter. God asked Moses to put the branches of a tree in the water. He obedience produced quick result. The bitterness was gone from water. God still uses his instruments and His natural resources to perform miracles to meet the need of His people. Many of the well-known medicines including aspirin come from plants. When Jesus came on the scene the process continued. He turned plain water into good wine at the wedding of Cana.

### **Life Response:n**

1. What was Moses’ job when God called him?
2. Do you feel God has called you to do something for Him? What is it?
3. What are the leadership qualities of Moses?

4. How do you handle crisis situations in your life? Do you take it to God?
5. Sharing: Students and or teacher may share any experience of God's deliverance or His presence during the time of crisis and trials (five minutes).

**Memory Verse: Psalms 136: 24-26**

And freed us from our enemies. His love endures forever. And who gives food to every creature. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.

**Prayer**

Our heavenly Father, thank you for being with us in our times of troubles. Help us to be obedient and faithful servants of God like your servant Moses. Amen.

## Grade 8

## Lesson -12      Being At The Right Place

- Lesson Theme:** God is in fellowship with human beings.  
**Aim:** To help children understand their rightful place according to the will of God.  
**Bible Reading:** Luke 2:41-52

### Values for Life

1. As Jesus learnt from the Rabbis, we can learn from mature Christians and leaders.
2. Children need to grow up in accordance with the expectations of parents.
3. We need to plan our lives with focus on the rightful places God has planned for us.

### Preparation:

Did you ever hear the story of “The Run Away Bunny”? Once upon a time there was a little bunny living with his mother. One day he told his mother about his plan to runaway. “If you run away”, said his mother, “I will run after you. You are my little bunny.” She goes on to tell him that if he becomes fish in a stream, she will become a fisher woman and fish for him. If he becomes a little boy she will become a human mother and catch him in her arms and hug him. The mother said, “I will go with you wherever you go”. Similarly, God will never allow us to run away from Him. He wants to be with us all the time. But we need to be aware of his presence with us.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Our families go on vacation to crowded places. May be you have gone to places like Disney World, Yellow Stone National Park or some other place. Could you imagine how much the parents will panic if you got lost? God forbid it ever happen to any one. Children get lost in a religious crowd too.

Jesus was participating in the Passover festival in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. His parents left Jerusalem assuming Jesus was also in the crowd traveling back to Nazareth. After the parents walked in the caravan for one day, they suddenly discovered Jesus was missing. Where was Jesus? Of course sitting in the midst of Rabbis. He was asking them questions and learning more of the scriptures. How many teens will be noticed learning scriptures when the parents look for hem in their rooms? Rather they spend time e-mailing, talking to friends on telephone, or watching a show. What we do with our life and God given time each day is very important. Every one has to give God an account of every thing they do. Your choices have to be according to God’s will. No one ever got into trouble for meditating on the Word of God or praying.

### **Passover Festival**

Passover marks the great deliverance of Israelites from death as the Lord's angel of death struck the entire first born of Egypt. The Lord's angel passed over the homes of his people because they had marked their homes with the blood of the lamb. It was a type of the great deliverance wrought by Jesus for the inhabitants of the earth from the doom of death because of sin. The deliverance symbolizes breaking the bondage of sin itself, a much worse slavery than the Egyptian bondage (1 Cor. 5:7, John 1:29; 19: 32-36; 1 Pet. 1:19, Gal. 4: 4,5).

It was custom and law that every male Jew over 12 within 15 miles of Jerusalem must attend the Passover festival. The Passover was one of the three major festivals of the Jews. They celebrated it to remember the divine deliverance from Egypt. The celebrations have special relevance to Christians. The last Passover of Jesus celebrated, known as Last Supper, is celebrated today as the Holy Communion. He commanded that it should be observed so in remembrance of Him.

### **Jesus at the Passover:**

It was the custom that every Jewish male over 12 should participate in the celebration. When Jesus was 12 he went to Jerusalem with his parents. After the festival, Joseph and Mary started their journey back home. All the men traveled together and the women traveled in groups as well. Mary assumed that the boy was either with his friends or with his father. Joseph thought Jesus was with his mother or friends. They went on two days without realizing that Jesus was not with them. The parents became panicked and rushed back. They found Jesus with the Rabbis in the Temple. Jesus told his parents that he was in a place where he belonged. He referred to God as his father and continued to speak saying that he was in that place according to the will of God.

### **Live According to God's Will.**

Jesus was very clear about his relationship with God, his Father. Jesus knew God's will, and because of that, he was always in the right place. As serious Christians we should be at the center of God's will in all the days of our lives.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**

1. On a note card, list at least three major festivals of the Jewish people.
2. What are the festivals you celebrate in your family or community? Make a list and write its meaning or importance.
3. Write a script using modern phrases about the scene when they found Jesus at the Temple. (Hint: Jesus was the meekest of all the human beings. He never was rude to his parents)

### **Bible Application:**

We must understand that God is present at all times with every Christians. He knows what the wicked are doing but He does not live in them as he does in Christian individuals. For this reason we have to be in the right place with Jesus and walk only in the right path. Some individuals like to take advantage of God's mercy and forgiveness. A good Christian should never live grieving the Holy Spirit who took abode in us. We live in a culture where youth deliberately bring grief to their parents in the name of

freedom. They know parents will continue to love them despite all their hurtful actions. Parents love their children no matter what but there is difference in God's love. He is tough! But after all the mercy is over, the Lord who follows some Christians grieving will allow his wheel of justice to grind. It grinds exceedingly well. No one can grieve God forever! If you have truly committed to the Lord, your goal is to please Him always to keep up with that sweet relationship with Jesus. The scriptures and history are full of dire warnings to others who do their own will.

**Life Response:**

1. Have you thought about God's will and purpose in your life?
2. Have you asked God about his plan with your life?
3. What does it mean to be at the right place?
4. Explain God and his nature as seen through the boy Jesus.

**Memory Verse: Luke 2:49**

“ ‘Why were you searching for me?’ he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’ ”

**Prayer:**

O Lord! Help us to come near you everyday and listen to your voice and receive the light of your scriptures. Please continue to shed your light on our paths.  
Amen

## Lesson – 13 Departing In Time Of Need

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	Absolute Sacrifice
<b>Aim:</b>	To help children understand that God expects us to love and show concern for others without being selfish
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Ruth 1: 1 – 14

### Values for Life:

1. Like Ruth, we need to be willing to sacrifice our own wants for the needs of others.
2. A child of God must never be selfish.
3. We must use all situation and opportunities for the good of others as well as for the glory of the Lord.

### Preparation:

We all enjoy the great choices of delicious food in this country. I don't want to talk about juicy hamburgers, pizzas, spicy Kentucky fried chicken or barbeque or crispy seafood and make you feel hungry. But can you imagine this country had a great shortage of food? The year 1920 began as the golden age of prosperity. Radio, movies, and magazines marked the beginning of a great era. Economy was so strong that no one could believe when the stock market crashed in 1929. The economy was in shambles for about 10 years. Farm products sold at extreme low prices. People did not have jobs. They could not buy anything the corporations produced. Millions of people had a tough time to make ends meet. Many families just lived on potatoes.

Do you remember the story of a famine that struck the whole land of Canaan and Egypt? Who was the food minister of Egypt then? (Joseph). God had placed him there to save the people of Egypt and his own brothers and parents and other relatives from starving to death. Father Abraham and prophet Elijah had to face famine. In recent years the media showed pictures of children and adults suffering from famine in Sudan. Do you know of another country struck by famine? During the Old Testament times famine meant God's wrath on the stubborn and disobedient Israelites.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

There was a severe famine in the land of Judea. A man named Elimelech moved from Moab with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion to escape the hard times in Judea. They settled down in the new country. Soon Elimelech died. Naomi's two sons got married to Moabite girls, Orpah, and Ruth. After ten years Mahlon and Chilion passed away. Naomi was left with her two daughters-in law.

She heard that the Lord has visited Judea and blessed His people in giving them food. Naomi made plans to leave the foreign land and return to Bethlehem. Orpah decided to return to her people. Ruth decided to follow Naomi sacrificing her freedom and pleasure.

### **Naomi and Her Two Daughters-in-Law**

Naomi had lost her dear husband 10 years ago. Now she lost both of her beloved sons. Orpah and Ruth had lost their loving husbands. All three of them were grief stricken. They must have been suffering from depression. This is a very difficult situation to live in. But each one maintained a very good relationship with the other. Their love was such that Orpah and Ruth did not want to part Naomi. They wanted to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. Naomi loved her daughters-in-Law that she wanted them to return to their people and have a better life of their own. She counseled them to return to their families. Notice her love and affection for them in verse eight: “May the Lord be as good to you as you have been to me and to those who have died.” This created a dilemma for both Orpah and Ruth. Naomi was soft-spoken, kind and caring and her attitude won the love and respect of her daughters-in-Law. She is such a fine role model for a mother-in-law. Orpah, a Moabite, was inclined to her kinsmen and their religion she grew up with. It was but natural. Naomi was faithful to her God, the living God of Israel. But the differences in their culture, and faith did not stop Naomi from loving her. It is a challenge for us to be loving and caring when dealing with non-Christians. Regardless of the wonderful relationship they had for each other, the current circumstances forced Orpah to return her people. She kissed Naomi and said goodbye. She was still sighing as she walked back the narrow, mud filled footpath.

When we look at it closely, we too are like Orpah. Our circumstances draw us away from those who really need for love and care from us. The elderly, the homeless, orphans, mentally disturbed one all need and care from others. We all say “I need to set my priorities better”. Let us get started to better our priorities. Christians need to be more concerned about those unfortunate and comfort them with our presence, love and care.

### **The Example of Ruth**

The story of Ruth and Naomi is a story of great sacrifice. They went far beyond selfish interests, patriotism, and faith. We know very well that these are the main factors that wall out other humans from our hearts. This is so true in our time in the culture where we live. Naomi had warned the great difficulties lie ahead of them if they followed her to Bethlehem. When Orpah finally chose to return, Naomi encouraged Ruth to follow suit. Notice verse fifteen, which says: “Go back home with your sister-in-law” What did Ruth say? “Don’t ask me to leave you. Let me go with you. May the Lord’s worst punishment come upon me if I let anything but death separate me from you: (Ruth 1: 16, 17) It demonstrates how noble her heart was. Her response sheds light on six major choices that she could have taken at that critical moment:

1. She would accompany Naomi to Bethlehem.
2. She would stay with her.
3. She would sacrifice her interests (“Your people shall be my people”)
4. She would accept Naomi’s faith. (“Your God my God”)
5. She would die where Naomi died.
6. She would get buried along with Naomi.

Ruth would never depart from Naomi until the day of her death. Her determination was such that she would take any punishment God would send her. No one

can beat this attitude of sacrifice. She chose to suffer with her destitute mother-in-law after turning down all the love and happiness she could enjoy if she just returned to her parents. Can we make Ruth our model in living a life of sacrifice? That indeed is a great Christian attitude!

### **The Reward of Ruth**

Ruth knew very well how much Naomi needed the support and help of Elimelech, and the sons. However, they are all gone. That help is simply not there. She visualized old Naomi traveling all by herself with her travel items in a bundle over her back supported by a waling stick and all alone. Where would she spend the night? Who would feed her? Ruth made up her mind to be a good support to her in every possible way. Her character brings to our mind the great presence of the Lord in Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

#### **Boys Vs. Girls quiz**

1. How did the Israelites look upon famine?
2. Write down the names of the sons of Elimelech.
3. Why did the family of Elimelech seek refuge in Moab?
4. What were the decisions of Ruth?

#### **Discussion**

1. Do you think Orpah's decision was right?
2. What differences do you see between the character of Orpah and Ruth?
3. What will be our decision if confronted with such a dilemma?

#### **Bible Application:**

Ruth's sacrifice became well known in Bethlehem. She commanded their respect and love of the people as well. At the end, God rewarded her with a redeemer call Boaz. Then God blessed Boaz and Ruth with a wonderful child called Obed. St. Matthew has recorded the position of Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus Christ with special attention. Ruth, the ordinary, humble girl from the land of Moab was honored as the great grandmother of King David; and; therefore; of our Savior Jesus Christ as well.

#### **Life Response:**

1. Make a telephone call to grandparents in India? They are lonely and would greatly appreciate talking to you.
2. Send a birthday card or pastor appreciation card to your bishop signed by all the members of your class. Bishops spend hours in the presence of God praying for us. But, at times, a bishop can be very lonely.
3. Draw on art paper the parting scene of Orpah with suitable background and put it on display next Sunday. Setting in the background and put it up on the notice board next time
4. Find a lonely student in your Sunday school and be a listener and a very gentle motivator

5. Picture of Ruth, Orpah, Naomi and the crowd making haste to gather food grain. Pictures of famine stricken people (if available).

**Memory Verse: Ruth 1:16**

But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to understand loneliness is very hard for many people. When you were in this world, you kept apostles for fellowship. Please give us your help to be of some practical help to the elderly in my own family, community, and the society. Help us to remember the example of Ruth. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Grade 8

## Lesson -14 Reconciliation -A Virtue for God’s Servants

**Lesson Theme:** Reconciliation  
**Aim:** To make the children understand and develop in them the value of reconciliation in life  
**Bible Reading:** Acts 15:36-41

### Values for Life:

1. Paul reconciles with Mark and Barnabas.
2. Reconciliation with God as well as with one’s fellow beings is essential.
3. All people are equal in the eyes of God. Therefore we should never belittle or neglect others.

### Preparation:

Once Dr. Ironside, the famous bible teacher, was guest of a friend who raised sheep in Washington State. One morning he saw a strange looking lamb crossing the road behind an ewe. It appeared to have six legs and the last two seemed to hang helplessly, and the skin seemed partly torn from his body. One of the herders explained: “The lamb is really not the ewe’s! The ewe did have a lamb, but the lamb was bitten by a rattlesnake and died. The ewe seemed very sad, but it refused to accept a new lamb, which was an orphan and needed a mother. At first she sniffed at it and pushed it away, apparently saying: ‘That’s not our family odor!’ So the herders skinned the dead lamb and carefully drew the fleece over the living lamb – leaving hind legs hanging loose. The ewe smelled it again and was satisfied and adopted it as her own. In the same way God accepts us as his own children *through* Christ

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

#### Restore Broken Relationships in Human History

Many lives are lived in enmity with God. Those who disobey God’s commandments bring God’s enmity into their lives. The Bible says in Romans 5:10 “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Colossians 1:21 says the same thing: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.” God worked to restore that broken relationship with the disobedient humankind. God sent his prophets with His message of reconciliation. Jeremiah 35:15 says: “Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, “Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions, do not follow other gods or serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers.”

What does it take to restore a broken relationship? Man must turn away from wicked ways and start a new life. This is why our loving heavenly father sent His beloved Son to us. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins to pay the penalty to make reconciliation possible. Romans 5:10-11 makes it clear. However, true believers have a part in this process. It is really our ministry. Apostle Paul said, “He has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). We can help others around us to be reconciled with God so that they also can enjoy peace with God (Romans 8:1). Once reconciled with God, one cannot live in enmity with others. But reconciliation with God must take place first. Today’s bible reading teaches us a very important lesson on reconciliation with others.

### **Paul’s First Missionary Journey**

Saul, Barnabas, and other prophets and teachers were fasting and praying in the church of Antioch. The Holy Spirit told them to separate Saul and Barnabas for God’s missionary work (Acts 13:1-3). The Christians in Antioch, who were formerly Gentiles, had a burden to reach out to others who did not have a chance to hear the message of salvation through Jesus. They obeyed and sent Saul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey around AD 46. The Gentile name Paul for the Hebrew name Saul will be used from now on. Paul worked mostly among the Gentiles. Barnabas took John Mark, his nephew, with him and Paul. The three traveled preaching the gospel and starting churches in Selucia, Cyprus, Selamis, Paphos, Perga in Pamphylia, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 13-14)

### **Mark Leaves the Group**

As they continued their missionary work, Mark suddenly decided to go back and left them at Perga in Pamphylia. Why did he leave the team? May be after the initial excitement for traveling was over, he found it to be tiresome. Mark must have been missing his loving mother, cousins, uncles, and Jerusalem itself. You know how parents become homesick for India. Besides, the team had to travel through mountainous regions after Perga. The journey involved several dangers including attacks by robbers. We don’t know what went through his mind but he left the company.

Paul took Mark’s departure very seriously. In his mind Mark deserted them perhaps when his help was needed most. While making plans for the second missionary journey, Barnabas thought of taking Mark with them as a companion. Paul rejected the idea right away. They disagreed with each other. There was a very strong argument between the two. Finally, they split (Acts 15:38). Instead, Paul took Silas with him. Barnabas took Mark and sailed off for Cyprus to preach the gospel. In one sense it turned out to be good for them, because they could reach out to more people with the message of salvation working as two different teams.

### **Paul Reconciles with Mark**

The disagreement doesn’t reflect any flaw in the characters of Paul or Barnabas. The Scripture says Barnabas “was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (Acts 11:24). In fact, he had sold all his property and had given all the money to the apostles in Jerusalem. (Acts 4:37). The difference of opinion arose due to certain convictions. The Book of Acts does not record anything about Barnabas after this incident. But Paul and

Barnabas did not live with bitterness about each other. Paul shows great respect and sympathy for Barnabas (Gal. 2:13). A warm relationship existed between them according to 1 Cor. 9:6 and Col. 4:10.

In fact, the letter to Colossians proves that Paul was quickly reconciled to Barnabas. In Col. 4:10, we find Paul's instructions to the Colossians to welcome Mark if he stops by there in his journey. Not only did he have affection for Mark, Paul greatly desired for his service. Christian workers should not allow differences to negatively impact the work of God. The mission is to reconcile man with God. Christian workers also should have the same attitude. The reconciling attitude and unity among Christian workers is a great factor for the enhancement of God's kingdom (John 17:21-23). Jesus emphasized: "I have them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one." He is challenging us to work for the unity among Christian groups. It can be brought about only when men become fully reconciled with God and obedient to the will of God.

### **Vision of Peter on Relating to Gentiles**

Peter, like any other Jew, had a negative attitude towards Gentiles. Once he saw a vision while he was praying on the top of a house in Joppa (Acts 10: 10-20). It was noon when he started to pray. But he was hungry and desired to eat. The meal was still under preparation. He fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It had all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. Included in the sheet were creatures Jews considered clean as well as unclean. He heard a voice "Get up Peter. Kill and eat." Peter responded: "Certainly not Lord! I have never eaten anything ritually unclean or declared unclean." Then he heard another voice, "What God has cleansed for you must not be called unclean". This happened three times. The object was taken up back to heaven. Traditionally Jews thought that God's favor extended to them only as they were the chosen people. They would not interact with Gentiles.

The vision enhanced Peter's understanding of Gentiles. He learned that it was God's will to accommodate Gentiles. He also realized human beings are equal in the sight of God. He has no difference between wise and the unwise, rich and poor, or master and servant. He loves them all the same way. We must have the same attitude toward others. That is God's expectation for us. If Christians accepted this fact, there would not have been a civil war in 1865. There were people who thought that the African slaves did not have souls! Racism and social classes should not exist anywhere, especially among Christians.

### **Jacob and Esau Finally Reconcile**

Examples are many even in the Old Testament dealing with reconciliation. Everyone knows Jacob's story (Gen. 33) of cheating Esau of his birthrights. To escape Esau's revenge, he had to run for shelter at his uncle Laban's place far away from his parents. He lived a very hard life there for many years before he decided to come back and face Esau. He saw a vision on the bank of the river Jabbok. In the vision, when he came dangerously close to God, Jacob saw Esau's face. He learned his need to reconcile with his brother. It is such a moving experience to read about Jacob falling at the feet of his betrayed brother for forgiving. Total reconciliation takes place only when the

relationship between God and men and that of between men are restored and strengthened. We must try to see God's presence in others. We need to accept them with respect. Also, we should take it as God's challenge for us to live in harmony with others.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**

#### **Short answer questions**

1. Explain how mankind broke the relationship with God
2. What did God do to restore the broken relationship?
3. What is our responsibility in the process of reconciliation with God?
4. Did Paul reconcile with John Mark? Explain your answer

#### **Essay question (250 words)**

Discuss reconciliation and provide three or four examples (250 words)

#### **Bible Application**

We should respect and love people of other religious faith as God's creation. This attitude will help us to be tolerant of others regardless of their faith, race or cultural heritage and live in peace and harmony with others. As true Christians we should be ready to reconcile with those who live in conflicts and arguments with us. We need to seize next opportunity to reconcile!

#### **Life Response:**

1. Why did Paul refuse to include Mark in the second journey?
2. How is reconciliation beneficial to Christian missionaries working in a different culture?
3. What did Peter learn from his vision?
4. View pictures showing Peter's vision, picture of Paul, Mark and Barnabas.  
Map showing Paul's first missionary journey

#### **Memory verse: 2 Cor 5:18**

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

#### **Prayer**

Lord please forgive us for not reconciling with others, as we should. Please help us to live in unity and harmony with others. Allow us to be your true witnesses. Please strengthen us by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Lesson -15      Dimensions of Gospel Mission

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	Eternal Purpose in Life
<b>Aim:</b>	To study the different aspects of God's mission as revealed by Jesus.
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	John 20: 19-23

### Values for Life:

1. A person should prepare while starting a mission
2. Every believer should participate in gospel ministry thinking that, "Woe to me, if I do not preach."

### Preparation:

What is the mission statement of your school? Have a mission statement available just in case students may not remember. Teachers can bring a school mission statement from a school catalogue or web page. Have a student read it. Most of the businesses have a goal. It would generally say: "Your satisfaction is our goal." Our church also has a specific goal. Do you remember the motto of the Mar Thoma Church? Show the logo printed in Mar Thoma Church publications, including the book they studied on the "The Mar Thoma Church" and have a student read it.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

What does "lighted to lighten" tell us? Our goal is to share with others the divine light (wisdom) of the gospel we experience helping others to come out of the darkness. Jesus has given his disciples this mission just before his ascension to heaven (Matt. 28:19-20). In these verses we see the answer to the question: What is the church or believers supposed to do until Jesus comes back? Our heavenly father has sent Jesus, his only son, to our world to redeem the lost souls. Now it is our turn to learn more about the purpose of our lives and the church as God has made it clear through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

### *Mission – Our Responsibility*

Can anyone tell the meaning of the word gospel (some students may know it)? It comes from the Greek word "Evangelion." Evangelion means good news. That is that God has shown us the way to salvation through Jesus Christ. The bible explains "Remember Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). In one word, gospel in Jesus. He reconciled man with God. If you remember from last Sunday, "He made us his friends through the death of his son" (Romans 5:10). We have discovered that God has given us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). We are the instruments by which God is continuing this ministry. There should be a compulsion in us to carry it out. Paul said, "for Christian love compels us" (2 Cor. 5:14). He had that feeling all along for 1 Cor. 9:16 says, "I can not boast, for I am

compelled to preach. Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel.” Should only apostles or a selected few carry this out? The Holy Bible tells it is the responsibility of every individual to be a part of God’s mission. God is still asking, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” We should be able to say like Isaiah: “Here I am Lord, send me” (Isaiah 6:8). No one can do it without being sent by God. After the resurrection Jesus declared, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

### ***The Empowering Presence of God***

God does not depend on human power and energy for this task. God’s work requires God’s energy. When Moses lacked courage to go forward in the wilderness, he wanted to know whom God would send with himself (Ex. 33:12). God promises “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex. 33:14). Moses was a shepherd but he performed great miracles because of God’s presence. Jesus gave the same promise to his disciples: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20). We too can claim that promise. The promise is also given in Matt. 1:22, John 1:14, and Heb 13:5. It is the vital task of Christian workers to demonstrate the presence of God to others as well as share the promise. It is a simple gospel truth that only those who primarily experience the presence of God can find victory over temptations. Those who experience His powerful, invisible, presence can explain this mystery to others particularly as they go through tough times. It is this experience of the individual presence of Christ that strengthened Paul to testify “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” (Philip. 4:15). The awareness of His presence gave extraordinary courage to Peter as he faced the hostile council of Jews in Jerusalem that included rulers, teachers, and high priests Annas and Caiaphas. Acts 4:15 says they were astonished at the courage of Peter. That is the power of His presence.

### ***The Method of Gospel Mission***

We have the master’s model to follow in fulfilling our roles as God’s servants. The gospels are full of accounts explaining the Lord’s compassion for people. He wrought miracles of healing because of his compassion for the sick. He didn’t stop with feeding the hungry, and healing the sick. Jesus reacted positively to their spiritual needs without insulting or belittling them for a moment. From the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus taught us to help the afflicted and needy. Through the washing of his disciple’s feet he demonstrated humility for service. That is what he meant in Matthew 20:28: “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus not only taught “The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give our lives for them” (John 15:13-15), he sacrificed his own life on the cross. People were astonished at the great authority of his teaching. The Pharisees and Scribes were afraid of him for he severely criticized their hypocrisy.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities**

1. As a class, prepare a table of major missionary organizations and their activities that are carried out by the Mar Thoma Church in India. (Teachers should bring a book containing information of our missionary activities)
2. Money is at the center of Christian mission. Write a few creative ways to fund the missions.

3. Write some strategies to help the Church become more serious about the mission?
4. What some of the present obstacles to presenting the Gospel? Write a paragraph explaining what can we do about it?

**Bible Application**

We continue in His footsteps when each of us serves in the society faithfully. As we serve, we need to remind ourselves that Jesus emptied himself taking the form of a servant. We should pay particular attention to those who are addicted to alcohol or to other drugs. They need our compassion and we need to provide fellowship and spiritual help to those who are freely giving into the many temptations of this world. They need to be enlightened about God and guided to spiritual fellowship to become heirs of salvation freely available because of what Christ did on the cross.

To accomplish this, we need to employ the service ministry as well as sharing the love of God. Needless to add that such ministries should be kept simple and unselfish to make it successful. Gospel mission is God's mission. Our part is to play our specific role as partners to God's work.

**Life Response**

1. Make a short presentation about the missionary activities of the Mar Thoma Church in your area (first group).
2. Present the details of a current missionary's life, family, and work (second group).
3. On separate blank maps of Kerala, and India, mark the locations where the mission centers or the fields are located. Color it appropriately and put it on display
4. Volunteer to pray regularly for specific missions and prepare a list showing the names and mission work each will pray for

**Memory Verse: John 20:21.**

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you ! As the Father has send me, I am sending you."

**Prayer:**

Our Heavenly Father, we pray for more workers in your kingdom. We commit ourselves to be your servants. According to your promise, please give us the power of your Holy Spirit to carry out our task. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

## Part IV God with God's World and God's People

### Lesson 16 Rehoboam

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	History of Religions
<b>Aim:</b>	To learn that immature advice leads to disaster
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	I Kings 12: 1-20

#### *Values for Life:*

1. Knowledge and efficiency are God's gifts
2. Don't ignore the opinions and advice of elders and mature people
3. You should seek the advice of God and take appropriate decisions at every stage of your life.

#### **Preparation:**

In Coventry, England, there was a person behind by 20 minutes of every one else in the world. In 1922, the clocks were advanced by twenty minutes. He never accepted this. Rather he said, "Nobody is going to take twenty minutes out of my life." So he kept his watch set for the old time. He was twenty minutes late for every appointment. As a result, the stubborn man has been fired from half a dozen jobs. "They won't beat me," he declared. "I'm going to die twenty minutes late to show them I was right." Today we will study consequences of stubbornness from a young ruler who acted like the person from England. Do you remember the name of the first king of Israel? Of course he was Saul.

#### **Bible Learning: Main Ideas:**

We know Rehoboam's father Solomon was the wisest of all men. The son, however, did not inherit that wisdom along with the kingdom. When he became the king at the age of 41, there was a crisis in the land. The northern tribes were strongly protesting the taxes for raising the money he needed to support his luxurious and autocratic life style. It should be fresh in your mind that taxation by the English was vehemently protested in the American colonies and led to the revolution. In northern Israel, more and more citizens had to become slaves for they were incapable of paying the taxes and saving enough money to care for their families. Moral standards were very low. These two situations can lead to serious consequences. The mighty Roman Empire collapsed due to five major reasons. Higher taxes and low moral life due to lack of religious faith were two major reasons for the fall of the great Roman Empire.

Rehoboam was first crowned the king in Jerusalem, which is the City of David. Now all the Israelites gathered in Shechem to enthrone him as the king of the northern kingdom also. It was the practice in Israel to anoint the northern rulers in Shechem. But there was a deception involved in the celebrations. The Israelites were possessed with Jeroboam as a peoples' leader rather than Rehoboam. Jeroboam was the servant of Solomon and the son of Nebat. Earlier he had been with Sisek, the Egyptian ruler until

Solomon died. Now he had come to Shechem taking up the leadership of Israel (I Kings 11: 26, 40; 12: 2,3). All the tribes of Israel gathered behind Jeroboam, and went to Rehoboam and asked for relief of heavy taxes levied on them by Solomon. It is interesting to note that they had no concern about Solomon moving away from God and worshipping idols. The people had no true concern for religion. The picture of the king we see here is a stern king who was stubborn and without any conciliation to the people who demanded that the hard toil and heavy yoke put on them by Solomon might be made light.

### ***The Attitude of Rehoboam***

*Rehoboam took time to discuss the problem with the wise and mature old men who were once Solomon's advisors. Their advise at this point was that he should make the people understand that the king is the servant of the people. He should lessen their burdens by looking at their problems leniently. They knew the real need of the hour was that the people needed to hear words of comfort that they would always be with the house of Solomon. To rule does not mean to act as a taskmaster but to serve the people. It was necessary that the king would become everything to everybody to accomplish that goal. That is how the great rulers won the heart of the people. The older folks counseled him to identify with the people and be sensitive to their needs. The king set aside the advice of the old people and sought the opinion of his peers who grew up with him. They advised him to teach Jeroboam and his people a lesson by rejecting them at this point. His youth friends asked him to issue a warning that he will give them a greater burden than Solomon.*

Rehoboam made a huge mistake in listening to his young advisors. They were of course youthful and smart enough to advise in the affairs of the government. But was a very unwise decision. The fourteenth verse tells us about Rehoboam's arrogant decision to deal harshly with the people as desired by his young friends.

### **The Consequences**

The Israelites were now convinced that the king was not going to approve their just demands, and they returned to their tents. Adoniram was assigned to mediate with the angry Israelites who returned to their tents. He was the person in charge of forced labor. The king could hardly believe that the Israelites totally refused to listen to the mediator. Not only that, they stoned him to death! (1 Kings 12: 18).

The young king made another blunder. The bible tells us that he engaged in an ongoing war with the ten tribes of Israel (12: 19). During the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Shishak, the king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem and plundered the treasury of the Temple as well as the capital. The glory of Solomon's days slowly disappeared. We know that the same fate comes to the individuals, families, and nation that forsake God.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. What was the crisis that king Rehoboam faced after the death of his father?
2. Discuss the differences in the advice that Rehoboam received from his mature old men and young men. Show the consequences of the advice.
3. Draw map of the two Kingdoms and color them with major places in it

**Bible Application:**

We should keep our cool when assessing the issues and we must act with complete trust in God. before deciding on the solutions. To be successful in life, we have to take mature decisions with a great degree of discernment. There are good friends who are able to help us. We also will have friends who pretend to be good friends but their motives are selfish. We must have a feeling for the people and it takes the help of the Holy Spirit to do so. God has guided so many leaders through very difficult circumstances. And we should never ignore the earnest advise of the experienced, mature and loving parents and elders. We should note that power and ego corrupt people and they make us blind. He just assumed he had the expertise and intelligence necessary for administration. Not only we endanger our and others' future by acting on the advice of immature and unworthy friends.

**Life Response:**

1. Each student will talk to three adults in the coming week and make a report of decisions they regret
2. Discover from the bible examples of misguided decisions and its consequences

**Memory Verse: Psalm 1:1-2:**

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

**Prayer:**

O Lord, give us the humility to listen and accept the good counsel's of our teachers, and well-wishers. Amen.

## Lesson – 17 God Our Strength

**Lesson Theme:** History of Salvation  
**Aim:** To understand that God always strengthens those who trust Him.  
**Bible Reading:** 2 Samuel 5: 17 - 25

### Values for Life:

1. We must know God's will always, particularly in times of crisis
2. Those who understand God's will and obey it will be successful in life
3. Being aware of God's constant presence with us helps us to be strong

### Preparation:

The capture of Israel or Palestine by the British in 1917 is an amazing story. The land was in the hand of Turks for over 600 years. In June, the British Prime Minister appointed General Edmund Allenby in command of the British armies in the Near East. As Allenby was leaving England, the Prime Minister told him that he wanted Jerusalem for a Christmas present for the British. This was impossible. Nothing happened until December 10. All of a sudden, the next day, General Allenby took Jerusalem from the Turks. He did not fire one single gunshot! What was the secret of this historic victory?

Later on Allenby revealed the secret in London during a party to honor him. As a little boy he used to pray after his mother: "And, O Lord, we would not forget Thine ancient people, Israel; hasten the day when Israel shall again be Thy people and shall be restored to Thy favor and to their land." He explained that God granted him the privilege of helping to answer his own childhood prayers!

### *Bible Learning: Main Ideas*

God raises up leaders to protect His people. One such leader was King David well known for trusting God from the early days of his life. He wrote in Psalm 18:1 "I love you, O Lord my strength." God was a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, and the horn of salvation in his childhood and adult experience (Verse 2). When he was a boy, God strengthened him to win over the giant Goliath. His confidence for fighting the giant grew out of his experience in dealing with a lion and a bear. David managed to kill them both. We should remember that David still was boy and was looking after his father's sheep when this happened. David knew God alone could strengthen him to fight these killers before they tore him up.

### ***The Enmity Between Israel And Philistines***

There was bitter enmity between the Philistines and the people of Israel from the time of Patriarchs. The children of Israel knew they were chosen by God for His plan of salvation. They believed that God would provide them special protection based on the covenant He made to their forefathers. It helps us to know more about the Philistines.

The Philistines lived in the southwest of Judea during Abraham's lifetime. Abimelech was their King (Gen. 21:32, 224; 26:1). Later they inhabited the tract of land that lay between Judea and Egypt (Ex. 13:17; 15: 14, 15; Josh. 13:3; 1 Sam 13: 19-22). This warrior tribe frequently attacked the Hebrews. There were times when they actually held the southern tribes of Israel in degrading slavery (Judges 15: 11; 1 Sam. 13: 19-22).

Joshua was the first Hebrew leader to fight the Philistines. Ironically, God used this powerful tribe to punish his own people when they sinned (Jud. 3:8; 12:31; 4:2; 6:1). Philistines and the Israelites thus continued to be enemies for centuries. In fact it was the Romans, who centuries later conquered them and totally subdued.

### ***David Defeats the Philistines***

Today's scripture portion tells us that there were two interesting wars between the Philistines and the Israelites in quick succession. The news of David being anointed the King of Israel reached the Philistines and they quickly came down to capture the new king of Israel (2 Sam 5: 17). David went inside the fort. Here is a great crisis. The power army of Philistines had spread out in the Valley of Rephaim (2 Sam. 5:18). His life and the future of the Israel are in danger. David did something unique. He poured his heart before the Lord and pleaded for His help. David was praying for specific answers: "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" God had quick answers for this king praying to Him in crisis: "Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you" (Verse 19). What happened when king David acted on the promise of God? He routed the mighty army of the Philistines at Baal Perazim. David gave glory to God saying that the Lord broke them out like breaking waters.

But David's troubles were not over. The Philistines reorganized themselves and came down to the valley again. What should do King David do? Again he prayed earnestly to God. This time the Lord answered with specific strategies to follow for a victory. The instruction was to "circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees." The Lord also gave him a sign for the exact time to start the campaign: "As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the top of balsam trees, move quickly." The sound would mean that the lord has gone ahead of David to strike the enemy (Verse 24).

God is intervening in Israel's history again in a miraculous manner. If we don't see the invisible presence of God in the shaping of history, we may feel pity for God's servants like David and ourselves. God knows where the enemies of his children and where they are moving. He also knows what it will take to repel them or destroy them. The rest of Psalm 18 and also Psalm 68 vividly describe God acting visibly for the protection of His chosen people. God had a plan for raising David up and anointing him as the king at the hand of Prophet Samuel. Remember Samuel, listening to the voice of the Lord, rejected all of David's older brothers. The scripture in 2 Samuel 3: 18 makes the Lord's reason very clear: "By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from

the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.” The Lord continually strengthened David to fulfill this difficult mission.

David knew his limitations well and realized he could not win over the mighty Philistines’ and other enemies without the power of God. You don’t have look far to see people failing in their efforts when they depend on their own intelligence and strength than God’s. Every time we trust God to us strength to the difficult tasks, we will complete them successfully. He has unlimited power and wisdom. Like David, we through prayers should be confident that “God has gone before us.” The principle applies to all the spheres of life including that include schoolwork, family or community situations. It certainly holds true for any spiritual activities. As Christians we should never forget that the Lord is with us by his Spirit. The Lord promised: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). The promise is for all those who truly connect to Jesus.

### ***Bible Learning: Strategies and activities***

1. Discuss the statement “A minority with God is stronger than majority without God.”
2. Write 3 incidents where God was David’s strength
3. Explain two events in David’s life when he faced a crisis? How did he respond?
4. What was the secret of David’s success over his enemies? Explain with specific examples.

### **Bible Application**

David recommended “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.” (Psalm 37:5). Write a response to this on an index card and read it to the class if it is not personal. Keep the card in your bible and read it frequently to remind yourself of your commitment. Remember the decision in your prayer and ask for God’s strength to fulfill it.

### ***Life Response***

1. Write down three insights you have learned from this lesson. Each student can read loud the insights to the class.
2. How do you respond when faced with problems? State an event when God helped you in the moment of crisis.

### **Memory Verse: Psalm 28: 7**

The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song

### **Prayer:**

O Lord, help us to member always that you are our strength. We live in a world full of selfishness, injustice, corruption and temptations. Please continue to give us your wisdom, guidance and strength to face successfully. Amen

## Lesson– 18    The Great High Priest

**Lesson Theme:**        The Fullness of Person in Jesus Christ  
**Aim:**                        To realize that Jesus fulfilled the duties of a High Priest  
**Bible Reading:**        Heb. 4: 14-16; 5:1-10

### Values for Life:

1. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary redeems the whole world from sin.
2. We should not only experience redemption but also demonstrate the Lord's attitude through our actions.

### Preparation

As Alexander the Great was marching his army against Jerusalem. Jaddus the high priest, quickly decided to go outside the City to meet the conqueror. Fully adorned with his priestly robes, an upper garment of purple embroidered with gold, and a golden plate on the forehead, wherein the Name of God was written, Jaddus stood outside the city waiting for the emperor. The sight was so grave and solemn, that Alexander the Great fell to the ground, as reverencing the Name that was thereon inscribed.

### *Bible Learning: Main Ideas*

The high priest was divinely chosen. No other person could be a High Priest. Today we want to study about a unique high priest. He is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ himself. Jesus is a high priest for us.

### *Jesus – The High Priest*

In Hebrew 5:5, we read that though he was the Son of God, Jesus did not take the office of the high priest by himself. Then who ordained him? God Himself appointed him (Heb.5: 10; 6:20, Psa. 110:4). God chose him for this eternal priesthood for he is there eternally. In contrast to the other high priests, Jesus is capable of saving fully those who come to God through him. He is not only an eternally living high priest; he is interceding for forever as well (Heb. 7:24, 25). While the high priest appointed from among men is responsible to God and man, Jesus has a much greater responsibility (Heb. 7:22). The Hebrews mentions that Jesus is an apostle and high priest. His commitment to God was total.

### *The Uniqueness of Jesus as a High Priest*

In normal circumstances, a high priest offered sacrifices for his sins first and then for the people. Jesus did not have to offer sacrifices for himself. He presented himself as a sacrifice once and forever (Heb. 7:26-28; 9: 24-25). The sacrifice of Jesus made on the

cross is sufficient penalty for the sins of the whole humankind. Hebrews tells us the following uniqueness of the great high priest:

1. Jesus entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood (Heb.9:12)
2. He has been tempted in every way so he is able to sympathize with us (Heb. 4:15)
3. His priesthood is for ever because he is living eternally (Heb. 7:24)
4. He is able to save us fully (Heb. 7:25)
5. He is the high priest of all good things that are already here (Heb. 9:11)

In their weakness, there are Christians who say, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). If this is our frustration today, we need to take our high priest more seriously. Jesus is able to sympathize with us in our weakness. Our high priest is so full of love and he continually intercedes for us with the Father. Since he understands our weakness, he is not punishing us for our weakness. And therefore, we can go to the mercy seat of God and let Him know our needs and receive his help.

It is a greatly comforting thought to remember that he became like us in everything except sin. Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, and tiredness. He was tempted on every point that we are tempted on. It is very encouraging to know that he overcame all the temptations by taking his stand on scriptures and through constant prayers and dependence on God. So he knows exactly what we are going through in our individual lives as Heb. 2:18 implies. As we listen to the news, we hear tragic stories of people who could not handle their problems. We know teens are turning to drugs or sex for solutions. Jesus strengthens every one who goes to him with the problems of life no matter how difficult the situation may be.

### **We, The Royal Priesthood**

Peter in his first epistle (1:19) reminds us that Christians are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. What that means is that we are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” as he explains in chapter 2 verse 9. So it is our responsibility as well to be kind to weak and helpless. What a revolution it may be if people stop criticizing the weaknesses or inadequacies of others, and start interceding for them, touched by the love of God. But the human tendency is to point out weaknesses in others lives. How often do we hear even church-going teens using the words “slow,” “behind,” “ignorant,” on their peers? We conveniently forget the Lord's instruction that we must refrain from judging others. What every Christians need to remember is that we are co-workers with God. That is God's expectation about the members of his royal priesthood. Also, as we spend time in deep prayers interceding for others, we work with God. And that is one major way how to participate in God's mission in our time.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

1. Write “We Like Our High Priest Because” on a poster board and write several reasons below the title. Be creative and colorful. Put it up on the wall.
2. Take a sheet of paper and write the name of the bishop as the teacher shows you each bishop's picture

3. Start praying for that bishop in your private prayers and try to learn more about that bishop's life and work. With your teacher's permission and guidance send a birthday card or minister appreciation card to your bishop in appreciation of his dedicated life.
4. Explain the uniqueness of Jesus as a High Priest.
5. Discuss the term "we the Royal Priesthood" as used by Peter in his first epistle (1Peter 1:19) showing the role of laity in our church.

### **Bible Application**

After learning that Jesus is continually interceding for us, would you like to say a commitment prayer in the class asking God to give you a heart to intercede for others.

Jesus would love to hear that prayer!

Using map colors, write the verse that tells Jesus is able to help those who are tempted and make a picture on a white sheet of paper. Below the verse write, "So My Responsibility is" and write your response. Take it home and put it up in your study room or on the refrigerator.

### ***Life Response***

Using map colors, write the verse that tells Jesus is able to help those who are tempted and make a picture on a white sheet of paper. Below the verse write, "So My Responsibility is" and write your response. Take it home and put it up in your study room or on the refrigerator.

### ***Memory Verse: Heb. 4:14***

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, we thank you and praise you for interceding for us. Please protect us continually from the temptations that we face in our daily life in this difficult time period we are living in. Amen

## Lesson 19      The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

**Lesson Theme:**      The Work Of The Holy Spirit  
**Aim:**                      To understand why the Holy Spirit gives us different kinds of gifts  
**Bible Reading:**      1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:4-9

### Values for Life:

1. Many gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are in existence and available for our needs.
2. Spiritual gifts are available and are described through the teaching of St. Paul.
3. Though there are different gifts they originate from the same spirit.
4. God's gifts are meant to be used for the good of others and for the glory of God.

### Preparation:

An American was viewing the Niagara whirlpool with an English gentleman when he suddenly said: "Come, and I'll show you the greatest unused power in the world." And he took a few steps and pointed out to his friend at Niagara Falls commenting, "this is the greatest unused power in the world!" "Not my brother, not so, the greatest unused power in the world is the Holy Spirit of the living God" was the answer from the English man.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

#### The Gift of the Holy Spirit

God gives gifts to all believers for the growth of the Church. The text we read provides detailed information on the gifts. The gifts are special talents for enabling us to carry out the mission God has entrusted us. The gifts should not be confused with the fruit of the spirit like joy, love etc. listed in Gal. 5:22-23. God expects these qualities in a person who lives in the fullness of the spirit. As a tree is known by its fruits, a redeemed person is identified by his character.

We have different gifts from the Holy Spirit. We must recognize and use them as it pleases God. Christians with gifts are a blessing to the Church. As the individuals start using the gift for the glory of God, the church begins to be blessed. The scriptures teach us this in 1 Peter 4:10. The teaching and analysis of gifts is found in I Cor. 12:4-11. The verses 4 through 6 reads: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to everyone for their particular service." Paul reminds us that all these gifts are from God. The early church had believers who possessed gifts like healing, prophecy, diverse kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, faith, ministry, working of miracles, wisdom, discerning of spirits etc. Believers had different gifts like prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation,

ruling, mercy etc (Romans 12:6-8). As it often happens, the believers in Corinth suffered from a superiority complex. They started to view their gifts as superior to the gifts of others. This led to friction among the believers. Paul wrote this to the church correcting the situation. The following reasons underlie these exhortations from St. Paul.

1. There are differences in gifts but they all come from the same spirit. Each part of the body has its own special importance. Similarly, each gift has its own special place and importance in the Church. God placed apostles, prophets and teachers in the Church (Eph.4: 11; 1 Cor.1: 28). Each one of them had a different gift. There were believers who were given the gift of healing, speaking in tongues, and yet others were given the power to work miracles. Every one of these individuals played their parts in the overall growth of the Church to the glory of God.
2. It is pointless to consider one gift superior to the other. Understanding this will help us to avoid spiritual pride and infighting among believers. Based on the special circumstances in the Corinthian Church, St. Paul assigned more importance to the gift of prophecy over others. Any one gift may be regarded as more significant to other gifts depending on the local circumstances at a given time. A gift of prophecy or speaking in tongues cannot bring immediate solace to a sick person. Naturally he will consider the gift of healing as superior.
3. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts to each as He wills (1 Cor. 12:11). “Thus every man had his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that: (1 Cor. 7:7). Since God gives these gifts as he sees fit to each one, our duty is to use them in the most profitable way.
4. God expects us to use the gift of the spirit for common good (1 Cor. 12:7). They are given for the benefit of all other believers and to glorify God. How does it help grow in fellowship? As a believer shares his gift, it generates a new power strengthening the fellowship between each other. It is not God’s will that use of gifts lead to jealousy, friction and competition. When believers focus on self-interest and self-glory, we lose our power to witness for Christ. Paul reminded Timothy to use his gifts of exhortation teaching for the benefit of others.

#### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the purpose of these gifts?
3. What are the exhortations given to the church of Corinth by Apostle Paul?
4. Research the circumstances of seventy elders, Saul of the Old Testament, and Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul) receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Present your findings to the class. You may use artwork, posters, or other items as necessary to make your project look pretty.

#### **Bible Application:**

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are designed to prepare the believers to be better witnesses for Christ. As the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached and performed miracles in the name of Jesus, their only motive was to bring glory to His name. They did not dare to take God’s glory. It is a serious thing to try to steal God’s glory. As true

Christians, we must remember that even the Holy Spirit Himself takes no glory to Himself. He ascribes glory to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. If there are imperfect workers who try to take God's glory for themselves, we need to be aware of such people and pray for them and correct them. If we surrender ourselves totally in to the hands of God, these issues will not affect our witnessing for Christ.

**Life Response:**

- 1) Did you identify the gift God has given you?
- 2) What have you done to develop the gift?
- 3) Are you using your gift for the glory of God?

**Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:6-7**

There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

**Prayer:**

Oh God, we praise you for the various gifts given to us. Enable us to make the best use of these according to you will and for you own glorification. Amen.

Grade 8

## Lesson – 20 A Life Pleasing In The Sight Of God

**Lesson Theme:** Commitment to Jesus Christ  
**Aim:** To understand the need to lead a model life in accordance with God's will.  
**Bible Reading:** Colossians 1:9-14

### Values for Life:

1. The Son of God honors His Father's Will always.
2. The special features of the Church of Colossae worth to emulate.
3. Those who submit themselves completely to the will of God will be able to lead a life worthy of emulation.

### Preparation

Most of you have heard about the historically famous John Hopkins University in Maryland. Some years ago a professor there wanted his graduate students to conduct a research on 200 boys, ages 12-16, and carefully investigate their backgrounds. Then they had to predict what the boys' future would be.

The graduate students went to the slum area of the city and found 200 boys. At the close of the research they made the prediction that 90% of those slum boys would go to jail for crimes. About 25 years later, the university conducted a follow up study on the boys who were now in their thirties. The researchers managed to locate 180 of the original 200. But they were surprised to discover how wrong the original prediction was. Only four had ever been to jail! The curious researchers began to interview the 180 to find out what helped them to choose an honorable life. The researchers were getting the same answer from every body, "Well, there was this teacher..."

The team wanted to meet that influential teacher whom they found now living in a retirement home. They told her how influential she was in the lives of her former students. She really did not know how she influenced them. All she could think of was that "...she truly loved her students."

Her true love for her students influenced them to choose a life of honor even in the most difficult slum areas. All can think of a teacher who really cared and loved them. Committed and caring teachers still inspire the next generation to know and practice the values and live a productive life and contribute to the society.

Here we need to ask a very important question: Who is the greatest teacher who ever lived? It is Jesus Christ himself. The scriptures attest this fact in Mathew: 7:29, Mark: 1:22, Luke: 4: 32. The world famous Soviet writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky read the story of the prodigal son a hundred times while he was in jail. It influenced him so much that he

incorporated this lovely story in every short story or novel he wrote. The life style and teachings of Jesus are worthy of emulation and pleasing in the sight of God. Of the original twelve apostles, only John died a natural death. Others laid down their lives as martyrs for their faith in Jesus. Courageously. Thousands and thousands who emulate him would face persecution and or death courageously in hostile nations every year even in the twenty first century.

### **Bible Learning: Main Ideas :**

#### *A Life of Dedication*

True dedication is when an individual or thing is totally separated for God and his use. We must be very serious about the consequences of dedicating our lives to God? If the dedication is a total surrender, then Jesus Christ will acts upon it and starts his work as the Lord and savior of that person. It necessarily brings about a great transformation and the will of the individual is submitted to the will of God. It then becomes a life of complete obedience rather than questioning the wisdom of God’s will. As a result of this wonderful change, the person begins to enjoy doing the will of God always. The general will of God for Christians is detailed in chapters twelve through 15 of the Book of Romans.

#### *Christ, a Model*

We will find happiness and fulfillment in our lives when we accept God’s will as our own will. This is exemplified in the life of Christ. Jesus delighted in doing the will of His Father. (John 10:37, 14:31). He said that he couldn’t do anything by himself. Even the words he spoke were the words the Father gave him in his soul (John 12:49). Jesus knew he was going to sacrifice his life for others sake. This was in obedience to the will and plan of God as well. Scriptures tell us that Jesus always obeyed the will of God unto his death on the cross. Even in his agonizing situation in Gethsemane, he prayed: “O my father, if you will take this cup of suffering away from me.” Quickly he added: “Not my will however, but your will be done.” A totally surrendered life is next to impossible but with God’s grace, it is possible. Let us examine our souls and see the strength of our commitment to God.

#### **The Believers of Colossae and St. Paul**

In the first chapter of Colossians we read Paul’s thanksgiving to God for the good works done by the church members there. Paul would pray for them always so that they may enjoy their growth in Christ, and receive more strength for their ministry. Besides commending their spiritual growth and involvement in the ministry of the Lord, Paul instructed them to focus on five aspects of their spiritual lives.

##### 1. Live a life worthy of the disciples of Christ

It can never be overemphasized that we should dedicate ourselves to the will of God. How a believer lives the earthly life must be different from others. The truth is that we are actually called upon by God to be different from others. When the Israelites were still in the wilderness God instructed them that they should not follow the ways of the inhabitants of the land but rather live a different live based on His commandments.

Modern times in the western or eastern cultural context, the challenge is the same for Christians. We are to be his witnesses by the way we live.

2. Let us be filled with the wisdom of God's will

Wisdom is the ability to discern knowledge. That is the ability to tell between good and evil. We receive our wisdom from God. Jesus has become our wisdom and redemption from God. You may recall that King Solomon asked God for wisdom instead of wealth or honor (2 Chron. 1:10). The wisdom of God is available for Christians. James 3:17 says: "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

3. Bear the fruits in all good works

Every believer knows from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt: 5: 13-14) that we are to be the salt and light in this world. Our good works in this world will glorify our Father in Heaven. With the growing wisdom of Christ helping us to live a life pleasing to God good works will be the normal results.

4. Be strengthened to possess rare qualities like tolerance and enduring patience

It takes work to develop an attitude that will help us to have empathy for others and a spirit to forgive others for their mistakes. Jesus taught us to love our enemies and even to pray for them. On the cross he prayed for those who crucified him: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us constantly remind ourselves that we receive forgiveness from God as we forgive others.

5. Offer praise to the Heavenly Father from our hearts with over-flowing joy.

When we realize that God has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us to his kingdom we cannot help but praise Him for it. How can a person who never had that experience praise God for it? That is why it is important to personally experience God by connecting to Jesus. Other wise it is lot of criticisms, unnecessary confusion and questions that come out of that person's heart. The joyful and thankful attitude of a truly dedicated Christian is definitely contagious. The apostles and early Christians constantly demonstrated this and that eventually paved the way for the conversion of a well-governed pagan Roman Empire. Committed lives make a big difference in shaping history!

**Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

1. What is meant by a life of dedication? How is it achieved?
2. What was apostle Paul's prayer to the Colossians? What did he commend about them?
3. What did Paul want the Colossians to focus in their spiritual life?
4. What does James say about the wisdom that comes from heaven? Why is Jesus our role model?

5. Write a paragraph (7-8 sentences) about the most Christ-like person from the bible or from history. What was the most Christ-like attitude that person possessed?

**Bible Application**

Make a decision to be totally surrendered person if your dedication is still incomplete. If you are enjoying God's grace from your commitment, share that to your friends and encourage them to make such commitments.

***Life Response***

1. Who was the most influential teacher you ever had? Why?
2. Next time you see your favorite Sunday School teacher(s) privately what would you appreciate in his/her life.
3. Take a sheet of paper and write one quality you find in the life of Jesus and pass it on to the next classmate. When the class has finished this task discuss which one is most appealing to nonbelievers.

***Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:1***

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

***Prayer***

O God, forgive our wrong doings resulting from leading a life against your Will. Help us to reject the things, which are to be rejected and to lead model Christian lives. Amen.

Grade 8

## PART V GOD'S WORK AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

### Lesson – 21 Queen Vashti Being Dethroned

**Lesson Theme:** God's work in history  
**Aim:** To enable and equip the children to grow up in morality and strong value system.  
**Bible Reading:** Esther 1

#### Values for Life:

1. God works in history
2. Moral values must always be upheld regardless of the circumstances
3. Extravagance always leads to moral destruction.

#### Preparation:

God is very much involved in affairs of man. We need the details of God traveling with his redeemed during their journey to the Promised Land. He does not control the world from a remote point. Not only is he present in the world but also actively participates in the sufferings of human lives. God is there to protect, help, and comfort. He shapes history to bring it to a beautiful end. It is God's desire that we join him and his work for the same eternal purpose. Later events in the Persian kingdom will show how God was involved in history of the Persian Empire.

#### *Bible Learning: Main Ideas*

#### **Reign of Xerxes**

In today's scriptures we saw Xerxes was the King of Persia. It was a vast empire with 127 states spread out from India and Sudan in Africa. It is thought Xerxes was the son of Darius I. There were revolts in the empire in both in Egypt and Babylon for the first six months of Xerxes reign, which he had to put down. The display of wealth described in verses 4 and 5 was a part of victory celebration. The extended days of celebration gave the king time to regard his commanders for their service. It was a good opportunity to motivate them and plan for future military campaigns. The emerging display of wealth was to impress for friends and foes alike. The seven days of banquet was the climax of the celebration.

All the officials, administrators, noble men and governors were invited (verse 3). Wine was served in expensive golden cups. No two of the cups were alike! Xerxes bent the drinking rules so that any one could drink as much as they wished. Normally the guests can drink only when the king took the wine. It is estimated that 15,000 guests were served Persian wine. The unusual show of pomp and power had its negative side. The

treasury was supposed to be used for the welfare of the people. In addition to the misuse of the funds, too much drinking led to evil thoughts and immoral activities.

It is common knowledge that misuse of power, extravagance of money and use of wine all debase human character and corrupts the conscience. It makes the carnal nature of man come out. Man at that degraded level thinks with only evil and acts evil. Having lost sight of his values and noble principles, Xerxes became brutal. He then saw his wife, Queen Vashti as an object of entertainment for his guests. One cannot go any lower than that.

### **Queen Vashti: Who held up Morals and Values**

The king who was in “high spirits from wine” summoned the queen and sent 5 eunuchs to escort her to the Palace wearing her royal crown to display her beauty to the people and nobles (verse 10). The attendants delivered the king’s command but Queen Vashti simply refused to go. Why did she defy the king? There may be a number of reasons. Xerxes was the king but he was her husband. Perhaps she wanted her husband to discuss the matter with her and plan ahead. She has also known her husband and she anticipated strange demands from him while she was standing in front of the guests. One should keep in mind this is a king who was drinking beyond his limits and out of control with a huge crowd that is heavily drunk. It may just be that she did not like the prospect of being ogled by a heavily drunken crowd.

Queen Vashti had to face the consequences of her decisions. It is painful to note that the decision to dethrone Queen Vashti was not Xerxes’ idea. It was an advice that came from Memucan. The king and nobles just bought into it. Memucan’s logic was that husbands in the land would lose their control over their wives. They had no concern for the Queen’s feelings. No one wanted to hear an explanation for her decision. She believed in feminine dignity and took a stand for it. This is a good lesson for the 21<sup>st</sup> century man. There are at least some social leaders who treat their wives like the drunken Xerxes.

Though the roles are different, women are equal to men in the sight of God. A loving husband will never say or do things that humiliate his wife. Taking a strong stand against drinking and licentiousness is necessary for the very survival of women in some dysfunctional families. Women need to have the strength and support to patiently give the needed counsel of their husbands, and other family members including the parents who live an immoral life. It is nice to know the Indian parliament enacted a law against all forms of domestic abuse against women. They are not instrument for men to gain positions, and an object of display with wrong motives.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. What did the king ask queen Vashti through his personal servants?
2. Why do you think the queen refused to obey the king’s command?
3. What are the main family values we uphold?
4. What corrupts the conscience?
5. Why was queen Vasthi dethroned?
6. How does God work in history? Explain stating the example of Ester.

**Bible Application:**

Despite all evil that was going in Xerxes' empire, God did not stop working his plan out. He knew it would come to this turn. We know how Esther won the beauty competition and subsequently became the Queen. God raised her up in the house of her Uncle Mordecai for a reason. Haman, the proud prime minister of Xerxes hated Jews. He had tricked the king into signing an edict with his signet ring giving permission to anyone to exterminate the Jews in the empire. God thwarted that plan through the advice of Mordecai and Esther and her request for the king to spare her people, the Jews. Once again, God demonstrated that he is the God of history.

**Life Response:**

In the current news, there is the story of a nun being rejected from entering the bar association (for lawyers) thus prohibiting her from practicing law. She has fulfilled all requirements to be a lawyer. In the letter rejecting her application, the committee commented that she being a nun, she is not supposed to do any job at all. In groups of 4, construct a short defense for the nun in her decision to be a lawyer and explain your constitutional rights. Share the strongest three points each with the class.

**Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 6:19**

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not on your own”

**Prayer:**

O God, help us to keep the great family values and serve as the spokesman of justice and goodness. Amen.

## Lesson 22 Let us Come Close to the Father

**Lesson Theme:** Wider Fellowship  
**Aim:** To realize that Jesus Christ is the way to God  
**Bible Reading:** Ephesians 1:3-10, Hebrews 10:19-25

### Values for Life:

1. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross opened the way to God, the Father
2. It is the real responsibility of the believer to convince others that Jesus is the real way.
3. God desires the unity of the human race and all living and non-living things.

### Preparation:

Do you know what ecumenism means? It comes from *Oikos*, a Greek word that means house. In a wider sense ecumenism means the unity of churches as well as the human race. We read in Ephesians 1:10 about God's plan to bring all creation together. That includes everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as head.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

#### *Jesus Who Lives Forever*

We understand Jesus Christ is the way to God. We enjoy the total freedom to enter into the Most Holy Place by the death of Jesus. We find in the book of Hebrews that Jesus opened a new way for us. It is a living way made possible through the sacrifice of his own body, which is figuratively referred to as the curtain.

We read in Matthew 27:51 about the mysterious tearing away of the curtain in the Temple into two pieces starting from the top. It happened at the precise moment when Jesus died on the cross. His body was sacrificed and the way was suddenly opened for mankind to see God. Man had gone astray by his sins but now Jesus reconciled him by breaking down the curtain that stood between man and God. And that made it possible for us to enter into His presence. That is a clear expression of the love of Jesus for us. We should not forget that not only he opened the way, but *he is the way*. Why so? Because by the death of Christ we have been set free- our sins are blotted out (Ephesians 1:17). This is part of God's plan as explained in Ephesians 1:10 "This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and earth with Christ as head.

#### *Jesus Who Sanctifies*

Who can make things holy? Certainly no man has the power to do so. Jesus alone can make things holy. In the Old Testament times, the priest sanctified things by the sprinkling of animal blood. The corrupted hearts of men and women can be sanctified only by the blood of Jesus. This inner cleansing is a powerful action for it has to sanctify

one's desires, thoughts, and feelings. Only when we are sanctified we can develop an intimate relationship with the father.

We must remember the fact that our world is limited by factors of time and space. We are also in God's eternal world that has no limitation of time and space. And we often forget the eternal aspect of our lives when attracted by the luxuries and temptations of the world. The news media is full of news about how smart and popular teens are getting into trouble by visiting the wrong web pages and responding to instant messages. We must practice engaging in powerful prayer guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We have heard the common excuse "I've no time, there is so much homework, projects, and church work to do." Still, in the midst of a genuinely busy life, we must find time to pray earnestly. Prayerlessness brings disaster in Christians' lives.

The very foundation of Christian faith is total dependence on God. Fourteen year olds need to hold onto this faith more firmly than others. Why? You have entered the most difficult time period in your life. Emotionally it is like a roller coaster experience regardless of your family or cultural background. You may have already noticed that there are so many things that distract us from God such as movies, music, lengthy telephone talks, over sports, and too much other entertainment. What is happening all around you may seriously disturb your faith. There is no substitute for prayer that helps us to hold on to our faith. Some people may think a good Christian book, a Christian video, or listening to Christian music can help but nothing can take the place of prayer. It is direct, intimate communication with our heavenly Father who wants to guide us through this troubled world in this difficult time period. It is very good to participate in Holy Communion on Sundays but let us maintain a continuous communion with the Father daily through heart-felt prayers.

#### *The Greatness of Life*

No one needs to tell you how selfish are the world around you. Many people do things with a selfish motive. What would *I* get out of it is the reason behind their actions. But as the followers of Christ, we should be unselfish. Giving a helping hand to others is our duty. It is a fact of life that by focusing on self no one can save his/her life. Sadhu Sundar Singh was treading through snow in one of his risky journeys to Tibet. A person was walking in front of him. That person spotted a traveler who fell by the wayside because of harsh weather but refused to him any help. Sundar Singh could not go forward leaving that weak person in the snow miserably looking for help. He took the person on his shoulder and slowly continued his journey. After a few minutes they noticed the first traveler lying frozen by the wayside. Sundar Singh would have met with the same fate but the weight of the man he was carrying forced his internal mechanisms to raise the body temperature. Similarly, it is only through caring for others and serving others that we save our lives as well as others' lives. Many around us may forget their great privileges and responsibilities. No one may bring it to his or her attention. It is our part to remind them of these with a humble attitude. This is our opportunity for us to demonstrate Christ through our lives. Christ still shines through in the 21<sup>st</sup> century America!

#### *Attend the Worship Service*

The Book of Revelation declares "Our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory, honor and power. For you created all things, and by your will they were given existence and life" (Rev. 4:11). It is clear then that we have an obligation and duty to worship him together. Any one can find some excuses for not attending the services.

Some may be negative on the liturgy. Others will conveniently blame it on language – “I don’t understand what they say.” There are many faith communities in the United States that use liturgical worship – Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, and various Indian Orthodox churches. Every Sunday some 250 million people around the world worship the Lord using the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. St. James’ liturgy that we use is very similar to it. There are some who are indifferent to worship even when every part of the service is in English! Jesus went worship on Sabbath day. He had severe disagreement the way worship was conducted in some synagogues or temple. He still went. Christ who is our creator, keeper, and redeemer and is worthy of our glory and praise. So we praise him through out the worship. It is a beautiful worship when a priest clad in a colorful pink robe invokes God saying “Glory to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit” and the congregation responds “As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end? Amen.” A true Christian would always be there in the Church to worship the Lord.

**Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. Read a short article on ecumenical movement and briefly discuss
2. Write the names of three leaders of ecumenical movement
3. Invite a few Christian friends to attend VBS in your Sunday School
4. Visit an Orthodox Church and observe their worship and make a report to the class
5. How does Jesus reconcile us to God?
6. How can we develop an intimate relationship with God?

**Bible Application:**

Jesus made our entry into the presence of God possible through his sacrifice. Our Lord said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Jesus Christ who lives forever is the only way to God. Let us renew our commitment to the Lord and hold on to our faith. We can join the great mission of God in bringing all creations together, everything in heaven and earth with Christ as head.

**Life Response:**

1. Write a commercial on ecumenism for a 30 seconds T. V. advertisement
2. Discover what ecumenical activities are routinely done in your area
3. Send an appreciation card for a clergy in your community who help members of other churches.

**Memory Verse: Hebrews 10:22**

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

**Prayer:**

O Lord, we thank you for redeeming us from our sins. Help us to worship you in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Lesson 23

**Lesson Topic:** Sacrament - Baptism

**Lesson Theme:** Foundation of Faith

**Note:**

This Topic Baptism is studied in Grade 8 by using the book “Mar Thoma Church; Foundation and Vision”. Whatever you have studied in that lesson is sufficient . Hence we are not repeating the lesson here.

Editor.

Grade 8

## Lesson – 24 Natural Calamities

<b>Lesson Theme</b>	Hindrances to God's Work
<b>Aim:</b>	To understand that our primary responsibility in a disaster situation is to provide the best help we can to the victims.
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Genesis 6: 14-20; Matt. 24: 6-7, Mark 4:35-41

### Values for Life:

1. God has power over nature
2. Natural disasters may be a blessing in disguise.
3. We must respect and submit to the sovereignty of God.

### *Bible Learning: Main Ideas*

Do you still remember the Tsunami pictures the media showed us in Dec 2004? The earthquake only lasted for eight minutes but its giant waves swallowed the coastal regions of several countries in South East Asia and claimed 300,000 lives. The deadliest of all natural disasters was a circular storm that killed 1,000,000 in Bangladesh on November 12-13, 1970. A flood in Hwang-ho River, China in October 1887 took 900,000 lives. China lost another 830,000 lives in February 1556 due to massive earthquakes.

India also suffered earthquakes with great loss of lives and property in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Orissa in recent years. Earthquake wiped out the entire city of San Francisco a century ago. You may recall from your earth science lessons that earthquakes take place at plate boundaries. San Andrea fault in the Pacific is very famous. California experiences minor earthquakes frequently. You may also remember that volcanoes are found on the edges of the continents. Natural disasters of various sorts occur in our planet.

### **Natural disasters mentioned in the Bible**

The book of Genesis (6:14-20) narrates the great flood that came during Noah's time. The whole world was under the water. This particular flood was not just a natural disaster. God ordered it to happen as part of his judgment for an evil generation in Noah's time who thought evil things continually and lived wicked lives.

Most of you remember clearly the story of famine that visited the land of Canaan. Even Jacob and his household had to suffer through it. This forced Joseph's brothers to go to Egypt and obtain food grains. During the reign of the wicked King Ahab, God shut up the skies and blocked rain for three and half years causing a bad famine. We know some disasters happen as part of God's corrective measures for man. But there are others that we cannot easily explain. Allowing evil is part of God's way in dealing man. That

evil includes natural disasters. Bible in general tells us that God allows such painful natural events to take place whenever and forgets God and refuses to turn back. The consequences of disasters affect nature as well.

### **God Controls Nature**

Mark in his gospel (4: 35-41) has given us an incident that shows how Jesus dispelled a violent storm. In the account of the parting of the Red Sea, Exodus 15 tells us that God caused the East wind to blow for the whole night. This force was used to part the waters in the red sea. God used the wind for bringing the birds in the desert so that Israelites can eat meat. We may remember the story of Paul caught in a huge storm that caused the shipwreck badly from Acts chapter 27. In the midst of the storm the risen Lord appeared to Paul in a vision at night and promised him no one will be lost even though the ship will be totaled. The scriptures talk about God's control over nature very clearly. He carries out his purpose just as He plans. The scriptures talk about God's control over nature very clearly. He carries out his purposes just as He plans.

### **Our Responsibility**

The loss from disasters is often too much since many such violent events are not predictable. Meteorologists may predict an earthquake or even issue a warning for Tsunami but how about the huge floods, or unexpected cycles in Bangladesh or India? Even with warnings damages will be heavy due to the density of population. It is our responsibility as Christians to help the victims. During the recent Tsunami disaster the printed media published the story of two Muslim gentle men giving a burial to a Christian caught up in the tragedy and even putting a wooden cross on top of his burial place. As Christians we can do much more. Last time our diocese in North American did a very commendable job in raising money and sending to the Tsunami victims. The Mar Thoma Church did an excellent job in helping the victims of earthquake in Jabalpur and Gujarat. Local churches were commended by the church leaders and the local people of the region.

Besides getting involved in the relief work, we have more responsibilities. It is common to see mankind exploiting nature not only for their need but also for their greed. You may be concerned about the activities such as polluting the environment, destroying the forest, polluting the land, and the ocean, over-hunting wild animals, poaching endangered animals, destroying the habitat of living things and contributing to their extinction, and interfering with the cycles of nature. Even though some of these may be necessary for economic development, the necessary balance must be kept. God demands that we use the nature without exhausting its resources for selfish gains.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

1. Why should Christians be leaders in solving environmental problems based on the Bible?
2. Share with the class briefly your experience in helping victims of a natural disaster or your participation in an environmental care group or club.

3. Obtain a world map and mark the areas where earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, Tsunamis or major environmental pollution that took place in recent times.
4. Explain with reference at least three natural disasters mentioned in the Bible.
5. Explain at least three references in the Bible that God controls nature
6. What are our responsibilities in relation to nature and natural resources?

### **Bible Application**

Would you be the first one in your community to respond to a future disaster and organize a support group for helping the victims?

### **Life Response**

1. Prepare an outline for a short lesson for presenting in a prayer group on the topic of natural disasters
2. Do research on the topic and write an article to enhance the awareness of Christians about their responsibilities in relation to nature and natural disasters to be published in a Christian magazine like “Messenger” or “Tharaka”

### **Memory Verse: Matt 25:45**

“He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”

### ***Prayer***

Lord, you have given us the responsibility to be faithful stewards of nature. Please help us to do our part faithfully. Also renew our minds so that we will be always compassionate to the victims of natural disasters regardless of where it happens. Amen.

## Lesson 25 St. Augustine

**Lesson Theme:** Response to Hindrances in God's Work  
**Aim:** To understand that God will speak to us at any moment.  
**Bible Reading:** Luke 15:11-32

### Values for Life:

1. Earnest prayers of a mother will bring results as we find in the conversion of St. Augustine.
2. God accepts and transforms a troubled person
3. God waits patiently for the return of His children.

### Preparation:

Have you ever heard how the worst of all the prodigals returned to God? Aurelius Augustine, the most wanton of saints, turned to God because of his mother's fervent prayers for many years. Prayer and patience are extremely important for the return of sinners. No matter how bad our sins, God will cleanse us and make us white as snow. This is the promise of God. God's grace helps him become one of the most influential fathers of the early church. His influence still continues.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

Aurelius Augustine was born on Sunday, Nov 13, 354 to ordinary parents in the town of Thagaste, which is in modern Algeria. It was a pleasant town with high white walls, set among wooded fields. Besides the beautiful streams grew ilex and pines. Wild animals roamed in the forests. Rabbits, redwing, and quail were to be hunted a stone's throw from the city walls. The town had a theater, a forum, baths, and long colonnades of marble columns.

Patricius, his father, owned a farm and slaves. He was very unhappy about Augustine even as a child and he had good reasons for it. Augustine lied often; liked playing more than he doing his lessons, and stole from the kitchen, the cellar, and the table. He was paddled frequently at school and for playing dice and for being rude to his teachers.

He was sent to a school at Madaura when he was 12. For the first time, he became serious with studies. He studied very well, and received an increased allowance from his father. But he lost his father when he was 16. A gentleman man in the neighborhood named Romanian helped him to go to Carthage and study literature. Carthage was his dream palace. But it was also a pagan place. He became involved in the delights of the city. He acted like a pagan, found a mistress, and lived in sin. Later in his *Confessions* he would admit that his mother had warned of the very same sins that he was involved in while at Carthage. He had no peace in his mind.

But still, Augustine had great ambitions. He traveled to Rome despite Monica's objections. Knowing his mother's mind, he told her stories and took her to the seashore.

He said he had a friend on one of the boats and went to see him after promising his return to the shore in the morning. Monica spent the whole night in prayer but her son did not return in the morning. In Rome he was still troubled in his mind. He moved to Milan and became a professor of rhetoric or communications. While in Milan he called on Bishop Ambrose and later started to sit under his teachings but was still restless inside.

#### Praying Mother

Monica kept on praying for her son hoping against hope. A number of factors influence the development of a child's character. Foremost among them is the life style of parents and their prayers. Augustine's mother was a very pious woman. She was much concerned about his immoral life and would not stop praying for his soul. It was because she feared him becoming more immoral in Rome; she did not approve his journey. And that is precisely why she was on her knees all night of his departure. Even after he took off to Rome, Monica continued her laments for him believing that God would hear her.

#### Augustine's Conversion

Intercessory prayers play a great role in transforming the character of individuals. God heard the earnest and incessant prayers of Monica. One day Augustine got converted mysteriously. How did it happen? Augustine tells about his conversion in the most celebrated autobiography *Confessions*. He was visiting his friend Alypius in Milan. His heart was so distressed that he walked out of the living room and started walking in the garden. He wanted to cry. Why? Because he failed to live a life pleasing to God. In fact, he kept saying "how long? How long". He wanted an end to his miserable mental agony and start a new life. Suddenly he heard "Take up and read; take up and read." He quickly walked to the seat where his friend was sitting. There he had left a volume of Paul's writings. "I snatched it up and read silently the first passage my eyes fell upon." He began to read: "Let us behave decently, as in the day time, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desire of the sinful nature" (Romans 13: 13-14). "I neither wished or nor needed to read further. With the end of that sentence, as though the light of assurance had poured into my heart, all the shades of doubt were scattered. " God has spoken to Augustine from His word.

#### Teachings of St. Augustine

St. Augustine was one of the greatest early Church fathers. He honestly studied his own soul to understand the good and evil in man. He taught that disobedience of our forefathers was the root of all evil in man. The reason for the first disobedience is the loss of love. He called this the first sin and all the inherent evils as the sins of birth. Augustine explained that the original sin we inherit from our parents. The very existence of man is a struggle. St. Paul explained this situation: "I do not understand what I do for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate. it is the sin that lives in me" (Rom. 7:15-20). Paul's sorrow is reflected in St. Augustine's famous prayer: "O God, you have created us for you. We cannot be at ease until we come to you."

To be at ease, one must come to God. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). God wants the conversion and return of sinners. God has promised to cleanse us, no matter how wretched our sins are. Every sinner is a potential saint. Can we commit ourselves

into the hands of the Lord God Almighty? God sanctifies repenting sinners. Let us listen to His words with a new attitude and respond positively.

**Strategies and Activities:**

1. How do sinners become saints in our time like it happened to Augustine?
2. Discuss the influence of parents and their life-style on the personality development of children
3. How would you define conversion? Discuss the life of Augustine before and after conversion showing the influence of his mother in his life.
4. What are the teachings and contributions of St. Augustine?

**Bible Application:**

Augustine understood the depth of his sins and repented. He became a truly new creation. He experienced salvation, which is a gift of God. His old heart was replaced by a new one filled with joy and peace. With Alypius on his side he went into the house to tell the story to mother. One can imagine how overjoyed was Monica to know her son's return to the heavenly father. He gave up his long time mistress, and went back to Carthage and started helping people. They made him a priest and soon against his will he became the Bishop of Hippo. He was a very good bishop helping his flocks. Also God gave him the wisdom to write the most influential book in Christianity *City of God*, which is still studied widely. His *Confessions* is a very touching autobiography written to show his sinfulness and the grace of God in changing his life.

**Life Response:**

1. Prepare a script detailing the conversion scene of Augustine.
2. Two class members can role-play the role of Alypius and Augustine

**Memory Verse: Luke 15:10**

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

**Prayer:**

O Lord, we thank you for our parents. Thank you Lord for creating us in your image, for you. We regret we have gone away from you. We confess our shortcomings and failures. Make us worthy to be your children and help us to lead a holy life. Amen.

## PART VI OUR MISSION IN GOD'S WORLD

### Lesson – 26      Prayer-Life of Jesus

**Lesson Theme:**      **Personal Values**

**AIM:**                      Personal Values: To show that success of life rests in prayer.

**Bible Reading:**      Matt. 6:5-12, Luke 22:39-56

#### Values for Life:

1. The teachings of Jesus about prayer.
2. When we accept God's will and pray in faith, we receive answers.
3. Through prayer we receive the strength to face temptations and crises in our life.

#### **Preparation**

Heracles of Alexandria compiled a book of funny stories with a moral a lesson. In one story he talks about a man who made a crazy vow that he would never go into the water until he had first learned to swim! Of course, he never got anywhere!

Similarly it is foolish to postpone prayer until one has mastered how to pray with eloquence and beauty. Before you can be good at any thing you have to begin doing it. Prayer is no exception. At first your prayer may be stumbling and you may have a low level of confidence. But as you communicate with God He will help you to pray better. As Christians we have a blessed Savior who communicated with His Father continually.

#### **Bible Learning: Main Ideas**

##### **Life of Prayer – Jesus' Example**

Our Lord maintained a perfectly disciplined prayer life. In the eerie desert and on the mountains Jesus spent many hours in prayer. His disciples were very impressed by their master's prayer life. But they did not know how to pray like Jesus but they wanted to be like him. One day they came around and asked him to teach them how to pray (Lk. 11:1). He taught them what we call the "Lord's prayer." The Savior's life demonstrated how prayer helps us to face the problems of life with courage. Prayer is a gift of God.. Those who never experienced the comfort and power of spending time with God in prayer will raise smart questions about prayer. God will help them to pray also when they surrender before Him.

##### **Prayer – Jesus' Teachings**

Jesus taught several insights on prayer:

1. We should continue to pray until we receive God's blessings (Lk.11: 5-8).  
The parable of midnight mediator

2. God wants us to pray always (Lk. 18:1-8). The parable of the widow and the judge.
3. God hates self-glorification. Humility and forgiveness are basic for blessing (Lk.18: 10-14). The parable of the tax collector and Pharisee.
4. We receive forgiveness only when we forgive (Mat. 18:21-35). The parable of the unforgiving servant
5. Our prayers should be simple and direct (Mat. 6:5).
6. The prayers of the hypocrites will not be answered (Lk. 20:47)
7. When we pray in faith, it will be answered (Mat. 9:29; Jn. 11:40)

### **Prayer – Fellowship with God**

As we read the Gospel, we often see references to Jesus Christ spending time regularly in prayer particularly in crisis situations. Those are the precious moments Jesus would be in total communion with his Father. Jesus always committed himself in to the hands of God and waited patiently for his guidance. Jesus challenges his disciples to pray.

### **Prayer Strengthens**

In Pilgrim’s progress, Bunyan talks about Christian as a prisoner of Giant Despair in the gloom of Doubting Castle. It was a totally hopeless situation for the Christian until he was reminded of the key called prayer. He started to use the key and deliverance came quickly. It always does. We need to use the key.

God has given every Christian a mission to fulfill, and the strength needed to accomplish this task comes through prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. In the gospel account of His baptism, we read “while He (Jesus) was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form like a dove” (Lk. 3:21,22). Again we see Jesus praying the entire night on a hill before he chose the twelve disciples (Lk 6: 12, 13). On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus in heavenly form as He prayed. The prophets made a special appearance to show him the details of his death on the cross (Lk. 9:28-31). In all the situations of his life, Jesus received strength through prayer. Prayer is power!

### **Prayer – To Face Temptations**

The world we live in is full of temptation. This is true of any nation, any city Christians live in. Prayer is the tool God has given us to overcome temptation. In Gethsemane, Jesus instructed his disciples “Pray that you will not fall into temptation” (Lk.22: 40). As Jesus was experiencing the agony of death in the garden, he was tempted to pray “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours e done.” (Lk. 22: 42). Jesus being faithful, and totally dedicated, submitted to the will of God.

### **Prayer in Our Life**

Jesus taught his disciples that includes us the importance of prayer in personal, family, and public life.

1. Personal life: Jesus emphasized the importance of private prayer in personal life (Mt. 6: 5,6). He taught us not to pray like hypocrites who enjoyed praying long

prayers in the worship place and also in the street corners so that they receive a lot of attention.

2. Family life: God instituted family because he saw it was not good for man to be alone. So it follows that believers should spend time in intercessory prayers as families. What does family prayer really do to us? It helps us to live in the fear of the Lord and to love one another. It is a true statement that a family that prays together stays together. The children in a praying family will grow up with wisdom and gain favor with God and men as Jesus did (Lk. 2:52). It is in a praying family where the children receive their most important training to learn and obey the commandments of God (Deut. 6: 6,7; Eph. 6:4).
3. Public life: What Jesus taught on prayer applies in public places and worship Mt. 6:9-15). As we pray, we should never forget to glorify God and desire to get God's will done on earth. We all like a peaceful relationship with others and fair treatment from each other. We should intercede for others in public prayers as well. When we do that God blesses us along with those who we pray for (Job. 42:10; James 5:16)

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

- 1) What is prayer? Explain Jesus' teachings on prayer.
- 2) Share with the class any unique experience you may have in prayer
- 3) On an index card, write the name of three persons who won victory in life through prayers. On the back of the card write the victory they won with God's help

### **Bible Application**

Prepare a short lesson on prayer for your area prayer meeting

### **Life Response**

Search your soul and examine your personal life. Write down three ways you can improve your prayer life based on the insights you have received from this lesson

### **Memory Verse: Matt. 7:11**

"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?"

### **Prayer**

O Lord, you have taught us how to pray. Thank you for the great privilege of praying to the creator of the universe. Help us to always remember that there is power in the name of Jesus. Please give us more grace to believe nothing is too hard for you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## Lesson – 27 God’ Call to Ezekiel

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	Outreach
<b>Aim:</b>	To understand that we are called on by God to be useful instruments for the deliverance of His people
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Ezekiel 37:1-4

### Values for Life:

1. Learn the details of Ezekiel’s vision
2. Know the message of Ezekiel.
3. Understand that God gives hope and deliverance to desperate people.

### Preparation

We all remember how God used Moses to deliver the people from their bondage in Egypt. From time to time, he used his prophets for similar missions. Today, we are going to study about how God called and prepared Ezekiel for delivering his people from a foreign land.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas

We have read that Ezekiel received the call during the fifth year after King Jehoiachin had been taken to captivity in Babylon. Ezekiel was living a life of exile along with his Jewish people by the Babylonian River Kebar.

### God’s Call

Let us look at the background of Ezekiel first. He was born to the priest Buzi (Ezekiel 1:3.) Here Ezekiel also was a priest. He was a member of the Jewish community that went into exile and settled in Tel\_Abiz on the bank of River Kebar. The new exiles arrived there nine years after Daniel and his friends had come to Babylon (BC 597). As we already know, Daniel lived in the king’s palace. The scriptures tell us Ezekiel was a recognized leader of the community. The leaders frequently consulted with him (Daniel 8:1)

But God had a terrible job for Ezekiel. His people were hardened and obstinate “(3:7). No one was going to listen to his message. The Lord began to toughen his servant for hardheaded people. The result was he had to live a lonely life. It is hard to realize that when his wife, “the delight of his eyes passed away, Ezekiel was not allowed to weep (24:15-24). He had to be trained to live above normal human emotions to handle the extraordinary task God would give them.

In his early ministry people did not take him seriously. They thought he was telling stories (20:49). No one could believe that God would hand Jerusalem to Babylonians. In Chapter 33:21, we see Jerusalem fell into the hands of Babylonians.

And his prophetic work took a great turn as we saw in today's scripture reading. God took Ezekiel to a valley covered with dry bones. He was commanded by the Lord to speak to the dry bones. The bones were symbolic of the Jewish exiles. As soon as he obeyed the Lord, the bones were covered with muscles and signs of life came back to the dead bodies and they all stood up. God was giving the hopeless Israelites great hope (37:11) of deliverance from exile and a new life!

It would seem impossible to do such a ministry without the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel thoroughly convinced them that what he prophesied was straight from the Lord.

### **Message of Hope**

We can summarize the message Ezekiel gave to the Israel people who could not even imagine a new life from captivity: Here are the main points from his prophetic declarations:

1. He will be a watchman to God's people and so proclaim the word of God to them. The Word of God is sweet as honey.
2. Those that refuse to obey his commandments will be punished. There will be some people who will listen and change from their wicked ways.
3. God will judge everyone and even Noah, Daniel, and Job are not exempt. They cannot save anyone else's souls with their righteousness.
4. God will gather Israel from foreign lands and bring them back. He will change their stubborn hearts (36:26.)
5. God will give his Holy Spirit to the Israelites and make a strong army out of them. And God will ensure them victory over their enemies (37:10.)

### **Ezekiel's Example**

Israelites were people without hope and courage due to their long exile in Babylon. His obedience to the difficult task God had for Ezekiel was critically important for the subsequent blessing of a new life God granted for them. In every century, when God's servants accept God's call and work with Him, people will be delivered and transformed. No situation is beyond hope for God. Millions of people are living in the bondage of sin all around us. In fact, as we leave our places of worship on Sunday afternoons, we are entering mission fields. Let us pray earnestly that God may use us like He used Ezekiel. God can make the dry bones of 21<sup>st</sup> century come back to life and stand up! The question is, are we willing to stand up in response to his call? "Mortal man, stand up. I want to talk to you (2:2)"

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

1. Using map colors or crayons mark Jerusalem, River Kebar, and Babylon on a blank map of ancient Israel and Babylon.
2. Pretending you are Ezekiel, write a short note to Daniel about your call and asking for his prayers.
3. Describe Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. What was his message of hope to the Israelites?

**Bible Application**

Ezekiel had to live his life in Israel and in Babylon. Living in a foreign land has its challenges. But he was not a free man, a captive person living with other captives in Babylon. Because of tough, heavy responsibilities in future, his training period was much tougher compared to Isaiah or Elisha. God warned him about his beloved wife in exile but forbid him to spend any time weeping for her! He would be a prophet who can live above the usual emotions of human life. And God challenged him to speak to the dry bones, causing the dead bones becoming alive which was a rare experience. This way God uniquely prepared Ezekiel to deliver an effective message to his stubborn people. It took commitment and obedience on his part. Similarly, we have a tough job also. It is our responsibility to share the Gospel of Christ, even to those that refuse to hear it. They are the ones who really need it and a new life like the hopeless exiles of Ezekiel's time.

**Life Response**

1. How can we comfort and encourage a family who suffered serious losses recently?
2. Write a rough draft for an email you want to send your classmate who is sure he/she won't make it through high school.
3. Ask your parent to share the most hopeless situation they have overcome through prayers (for your own edification – not for class discussion)
4. If the spirit of God is touching anyone to consider a Christian vocation, please pray today and make your commitment.

**Memory Verse: Ezekiel 36:26**

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

**Prayer**

O Lord, help us to be messengers of hope, new life, and transformation. Take us and use us as your instruments. Amen.

## Lesson 28 A Jewish Family And Its Festivals

<b>Lesson Theme:</b>	Role of Family
<b>Aim:</b>	To understand how a Jewish family transmits faith by observing festivals
<b>Bible Reading:</b>	Deut. 16:1-17, Lev 23: 1-36

### Values for Life:

1. Education begins at home and hence parents and elders should be role models.
2. Family has an important role in the faith formation of children.

### Preparation:

God saw that it is not good for man to be alone. So, he created women, Eve, and established family. As the basic unit of society, God wants family to be strong. Basic spiritual development begins at home. The parent should clearly understand and practice God's commandments so that the tradition can be transmitted to the next generation (Deut. 6:6-7.) The habit of studying the Word of God and going to worship services should be developed in early childhood. When God instructed the Israelites to observe the Festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, and Harvest, he intended these as ways of passing on their faith and practices to their children.

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

The family is, in Jewish culture, is unique. Not only it includes parents and children, but also includes slaves and the capital Levites. (temple workers) in their neighborhood, strangers, orphans, and widows who lived among them. All of them enjoy celebrating these festivals. The purpose of celebrations was to remember with gratitude the blessings of God in the past as well as His daily blessings.

### Education Begins at Home

When faith is expressed through such celebrations, it is an excellent strategy of learning. Children enjoy learning through demonstrations and dramatic actions. For example, on the day of Passover, the sacrificed lamb or calf is slaughtered in the evening at a specific place. They eat the meat with bread prepared without using yeast. Naturally, the children are curious to know why the festival is observed in the evening and preparing bread without yeast. This is a highly teachable moment. The head of the family or an older member will explain the divine deliverance from Egypt under Moses. The

children understand how miraculously God dealt with them in the past. They take pride in their heritage and readily identify with the blessed community of people who crossed the Red Sea and who ate divine bread called manna.

### Relevance of Festivals in Jewish Family

1. Sabbath: God having completed his work of creation, rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day and the Israelites were to observe the same pattern in their service of God. God asked the Israelites to keep the Sabbath holy when He gave the laws to Moses on Mount Sinai.
2. Feast of Passover: It denotes the deliverance of the Israelites from the angel of death and from the Egyptian bondage. It is celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (Abib).
3. Feast of Unleavened Bread: It began with the Passover meal and continued for seven days. It was celebrated in the first month from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. For these seven days Israelites ate unleavened bread or bread made without yeast to remember that they left Egypt in haste.
4. Feast of The Harvest: It is also called the feast of weeks or the feast of Pentecost. It is held seven weeks after the feast of unleavened bread. In later Judaism it came to commemorate the giving of the law at Mount Sinai though there is no evidence of this in the Old Testament. In New Testament times, it is called the day of Pentecost which means fifty.
5. Feast Of Trumpets; It is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month. It is also known as Jewish New Year or Rosh-Hashanah.
6. Day of Atonement: It is celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. It a time of confession, contrition and celebration.
7. Feast of Tabernacles: It is also known as feast of Ingathering or Booths. It began on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month and lasted for seven days. This was celebrated as a reminder to the Israelites that they lived in temporary shelters when God brought them out of Egypt.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. How did the Jewish family transmit its faith?
2. What is the role of education in the family?
3. What are the seven Jewish festivals? Select anyone of the festivals and write 3 or 4 sentences about it.
4. Among seven Jewish festivals, select 3 or 4 and briefly explain how Jews observe them as a family. Show its significance.

### **Bible Application:**

Jewish festivals have influenced Christian traditions and practices. Find out its continuity and change in Christianity.

**Life Response:**

Any celebration can end up as a ritual or a routine observance. Hence we must make efforts to find its intention and recognize the meaning and significance. As Christians we shall keep this principle in mind.

**Memory Verse: Ex 20: 2**

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery.”

**Prayer:**

O God, Our heavenly Father, we thank you for our families. Help us to be concerned above every thing else with the Kingdom of God. Teach us, our Lord, to observe the festivals meaningfully and seriously. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Lesson 29 The Lifestyle of Jeremiah

**Lesson Theme:** Lifestyle: Self-emptying  
**Aim:** To make the life of Jeremiah our model.  
**Bible Reading:** Jeremiah 3 & 4: 1-4

### Values for Life:

1. Like Jeremiah, we will be strengthened to carry out God's mission.
2. Those who go astray from God's path will be punished.
3. We are bound to carry out the divine mission boldly even when faced with obstacles.

### Preparation:

There is the true story of two Mar Thomite college students who had to spend their Spring break in the basement of the college dean. It happened in the Midwest where it was still snowing. The day came for them to leave the dean's home and return to their dormitory. The learned dean had a question for them: "May I ask why you were singing in the evening and in the morning and reading some thing every day?" The youth explained it was their tradition to read the bible, sing hymns, and pray as a family in the evening and in the morning. Totally surprised at this statement, he asked them "would you mind singing one of the hymns you sung, and pray like you did in the basement. And would you pray for us too?" They complied with the request. On the way to the college, they answered several questions about the Christian tradition of Kerala, India.

You have been participating in the evening and morning family prayer regularly. This is a unique Christian tradition of Christians from Kerala. The non-Christians in the neighborhood enjoy listening to the hymns and many of them can sing a few stanzas. The Christian family prayer as we do is a witness of our faith and model for family worship. In fact such habits and traditions are essential for a Christian way of life based on the scriptures. It is good for every one to participate in the family prayer with a genuine enthusiasm. Do you enjoy it in your family? Jeremiah grew up in a well-disciplined environment. He had to follow certain laws and practices that controlled the way of his life. He never thought: "why do I have to do all this?"

### Bible Learning: Main Ideas:

Life of Jeremiah

He was born in a village called Anathoth to Hilkiah, a priest. His home was only 3 miles north of Jerusalem. Do you know what the word Jeremiah means? It means "God establishes."

When God called Jeremiah for a prophetic ministry during the reign of king Josiah (B.C. 626), he was but a boy. He tried to talk out of it pointing out to God his young age, and lack of power to communicate. Do you remember how God responded to his request? The Lord touched his mouth and strengthened him through words. Known as the Weeping Prophet for his heart-broken intercessory prayers and cries for his people, Jeremiah fulfilled God's mission in the most difficult circumstances. He ministered the people a hundred years after the Prophet Isaiah completed his work.

### **The Call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5-9)**

God saw Jeremiah in the womb of his mother and set him apart for His ministry. He committed himself into God's hands and remained obedient and faithful. There are the traits God looks for in his servants rather than intellectual ability and status in the society. Jeremiah decided to obey God's call whole-heartedly. Because God touched his mouth, now he had the strength and skill to communicate to God's people. He knew God's presence was required and was also helping his life. His own knowledge and ability were far inadequate for God's mission. God's presence was with Jeremiah.

### ***Jeremiah's Response To The Social Conditions***

1. The Israelites abandoned their first love and reference to God. They committed two sins. They had turned away from God, the spring of living; and had dug cisterns, cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all.
2. Prophets and priests did evil things. The people liked it. The whole lot were greedy for money.
3. Cursed is he who trusts in man and leaves God. Blessed is he who depends on God.
4. The house of Israel is in the hands of God just as the clay is in the hands of the potter. They will have to listen to the word of God and obey it knowing that God will do to them as He pleases.
5. God's punishment will be on Israel if they do not leave their wicked ways and improve their conduct and actions. They will have to serve their enemies.
6. King of Judah and the people will have to serve Babylon for seventy years. Depending on Egypt against Babylon will result in the ruin of the people and the land.
7. Finally Babylon will also fall by the judgment of God. Its great joy will disappear. All Their lands will be in eternal ruin. Though God may judge his people through other nations they also will have to face the judgment of God.

### **Jeremiah – the Weeping Prophet**

God revealed through Jeremiah his displeasure against the attitude of the leaders of Israel and the people hated him. They beat him and put him in chains (20:1,2). When he was freed, he spoke about God's judgment against the wickedness of the people. They caught him again and put him in a muddy well. God intervened on his behalf and set up individuals to help him come out of the well. The king allowed him to live in the courtyard of the guard. The leaders of Israel did not like his prophecy that those who would remain in Jerusalem would suffer ruin and those who chose to surrender to the

King of Babylon would be safe. The leaders wanted liberation with the help of Egypt. But Jeremiah ignored the hatred of his people and remained steadfast in carrying out God's mission.

**Bible Learning: Strategies and Activities:**

1. Who was Jeremiah and why did God call him? What was Jeremiah's response?
2. How did God strengthen him?
3. Why is Jeremiah known as weeping prophet?
4. Discuss the central idea of Jeremiah's message.
5. What strategies can be adopted to fulfill the gospel mission in the face of opposition?
6. Compare Jer.3: 1-5 and 18:1-4 and discuss the relationship between God and his people

**Bible Application:**

Jeremiah interacted with the Israelites and kept on praying for them. He asked God to forgive their sins. As they opposed him and gave him hard time, he still kept on praying and weeping for them. He did not want God's judgment falling upon them. The following words shed light into the inner agony Jeremiah went through: "I was like a trusting lamb taken but to be killed" (11:19). "Why did my mother bring me into this world I have to quarrel and argue with everyone in the land" (15:10). "Curse the day I was born" (20:14). Jeremiah is taken as a symbol for Jesus because of the unusual sufferings he had to endure.

**Life Response:**

1. Role play the most bitter experiences in Jeremiah's life guided by the teacher
2. Read about Anathoth and discuss your discovery in the class.

**Memory Verse: Jeremiah 1:4-5**

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

**Prayer:**

O God, we pray for our administrators and leaders of the church. Help them to act according to the will of God and to lead the people in the right path. Help them and us to fulfill our mission without being perturbed in the midst of crisis.

## LESSON – 30 MOTHER TERESA

**Lesson Theme:** Service  
**Aim:** To understand that serving the humble is serving the Lord.  
**Bible Reading:** Matt. 25:31-46

### *Values for Life*

1. Understand God has called Mother Teresa for a specific ministry.
2. Learn that Jesus Christ is the inspiration and strength of mission work.
3. We have to show our love for the suffering humanity by getting involved in the lives of those who live a miserable life.

### **Preparation**

There are only a very few people who are remembered all over the world for their distinguished services in serving people. In that way they showed the love of God. One such person is Mother Theresa.

### **Bible Learning: Main Ideas**

A five-year-old girl walked up to the microphone during the final moment of a closing VBS. The audience was marveled when she committed her life to be a missionary. Later she told Mother Teresa was her inspiration. People of all ages around the world love Mother Teresa. The world recognized her with a Nobel Prize for peace. Leaders of the world paid close attention to her words as she addressed the United Nations. She won the love and respect of the world. The secular government of India granted her state honors for her funeral in 1997. Representatives from fifty major nations of the world placed wreaths over her body. She never held any public office or made any discovery. Why did the world honor her and miss her so much as a result of her sad demise?

### **Missionaries of Charity**

Agnes was born in Albania on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910. When she graduated from high school, she felt God's call to go to India. Agnes accepted the name Teresa when she took her vow to become a nun. She chose to work in Kolkotha (Calcutta) because of the misery the poorer section of society went through. There she ministered to the poor and downtrodden. Teresa started, to comfort the helpless, help the sick, and care for the orphans in the streets of Kolkotha. This was the beginning of an Order of Nuns called "Missionaries of Clarity" in 1950 under the leadership of Mother Teresa. She had only 5 Indian rupees to invest in the work when starting this charity work. Besides the normal

vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, she made an additional commitment to serve the poorest of the poor freely and whole-heartedly. Mother found great satisfaction in sharing the love of Jesus Christ with the homeless and sick. In a short period of time, the work of the Missionaries of Charity spread to Sri Lanka, Australia, Rome, America and many other countries in the world. They opened several centers at places such as Mattencherry, Kozhikode, Poovar, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram. As the work grew, the Order of Nuns began to help the sick in 250 hospitals.

### **The Work and Experience in Calcutta**

The Kolkhotha Corporation provided an inn at the beginning. The Mother converted it into a center called Nirmal Hriday, which means pure heart. Those fainting on the streets due to hunger and other reasons approaching death were carried to the center. They received food and medical care there. The center happened to be close to the famous Kali Temple. The inhabitants there first looked at her Mother and her work with suspicion.

An interesting thing happened during this time. The Hindu priest of the Kali Temple was afflicted with cholera but no hospitals would treat him. Cholera is a terribly contagious sickness. In fact, no one wanted him. Mother had him brought to the center to treat him for his cholera. Soon he recovered and there was suddenly a remarkable change in the attitude of priests and neighbors. They ended the hostility and became admirers of Mother and her work.

In another incident, Mother noticed an old woman infected with ulcers on both her legs lying on the footpath. The location was just in front of a famous hospital. The hospital management would not accept her for treatment. The old woman's condition was so hopeless that ants had started eating her feet. Mother took her to the hospital and announced that she wouldn't leave the hospital admitting room until the sick lady was taken in. The officials had to accede to her demand.

Mother's heart always moved with great compassion as she came into contact with the helpless human beings who belonged to the streets of Kolkhotha. She could not stand still as she watched human beings competing with street dogs for food in the trash piles. Another horrible sight was one of the outcast lepers with frightening bodies and wasted minds. God's love flowed through several times that she saw Christ's in the eyes of these unfortunate lives. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for her services. Once the famous journalist Kushwant Singh interviewed her and asked her who among Gandhi, Nehru, Schweitzer, and of the like, influenced her most. Her reply with a firm voice was "Jesus Christ".

### **Jesus Christ – the Source of Inspiration for Work**

Jesus Christ truly was her inspiration and reason for her great success. She would say that at every opportunity. She knew the life of Jesus and had a firm faith in Him. Many individuals experienced the love of Jesus through her. Mother poured out peace, hope, and love to many through her deeds. She practiced the teaching of Jesus "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." She felt these words echoing in her ears. God used her as an instrument to transform the rejects of the society. Mother was continually inspired by the matchless love of Christ. When the late Prime Minister Nehru visited her Ashram, she received him with great respect and said

“Christ is the inspiration for all our work. The source of inspiration for all our works is the love of Christ” pointing to the crucifix in the chapel.

### **Mother Teresa – the Blessed**

Pope John Paul II declared Mother as “Blessed” at St. Peters Square as he addressed millions of people in October 2003. Moreover, the Pope’s address was telecasted in 77 countries. The Pontiff complimented her for taking the love of God to the poorest of the poor in the world. Thus, she was declared a Saint.

### **Bible Learning: Strategies and activities**

1. How did Missionaries of Charity begin? What are its goals?
2. Discuss the work and experience of Mother Theresa in Calcutta.
3. What is the source of inspiration for Mother Theresa’s work?

### **Bible Application**

The style of service Jesus demonstrated is a great model for us to follow. He washed the disciple’s feet. When we accept that servant hood mentality, our work for God will be very useful. Jesus said he revealed the Father. His ministry included loving the sinners, helping the sick, feeding the hungry, and the downtrodden of society. As Paul said when the love of Christ compels us we will be inspired to do the Jesus style of work. What we need to do is make a total surrender into His hands. And we should spiritually pray from the heart that His will be done rather than our. Then we can be sure that the prayer we recite every Sunday hoping the fulfillment of Matthew 25:34 (“Come you that are blessed by my father, Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world”) will truly be answered.

### **Life Response**

1. How much money did Mother Teresa have to invest in her mission work?
2. What are 3 main excuses people make for refusing God’s call to be a missionary?
3. What is your responsibility to the Indian people?
4. Did God ever impress in your mind to choose a mission-related vocation? (There are at least 40).

### **Memory Verse: Matt. 25:40**

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ ”

### **Prayer**

O God! Please help us to see that there are many around us who are ill, hungry, and without any amenities of life while we have food, health, and all needs of life. Prepare us to serve and help them and to provide fellowship to them. Amen.

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