

Jesus is Calling . . .

Vacation Church School Curriculum written and compiled by Debra L. Norman
Church of Jesus Christ, Oak Grove Restoration Branch, 2018

Monday: Jesus is calling you to trade your sins for His righteousness.

“O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness?” (2 Nephi 3:56)
Repentance, the forgiveness of God, our righteousness is filthy rags, the sacrifice of Christ

Tuesday: Jesus is calling you to trade your fears for the security and comfort of His love.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).
How fear cripples us. Understanding God’s love for us. Trusting in God—no matter what. Letting go and letting God have control.

Wednesday: Jesus is calling you to trade your anger and hurts for His peace and forgiveness.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:3)
How anger and bitterness hurts us. God forgives us as we forgive one another. How we can choose NOT to be offended by others.

Thursday: Jesus is calling you to trade your doubt and confusion for faith in His eternal truths.

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:21).
The power of the Word of God. God never changes. Basic truths of the Scriptures that we can count on. God is not the author of confusion.

Friday: Jesus is calling you to SHINE for Him (Trading your weaknesses for His strength!)

Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:18)

Candle, glow stick, solar flashlight object lesson. Joy in the presence of Christ. Share the treasure of Christ and the Gospel.

Monday: Jesus is calling you to trade your sins for His righteousness.

Theme scripture: *“O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness?”* (2 Nephi 3:56)

Objectives: As teachers, our goal this day is to lead the children to understand that none of us can ever be good enough on our own to be with God or have eternal life with Him. As hard as we try to be “good” and do what is right, we fail and our righteousness is as filthy rags before God’s perfect holiness. It is ONLY through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and being covered with His righteousness that we can come into the presence of God. To claim this gift of Christ’s righteousness as our own, we must repent of our sins and commit our lives to Christ. There is no other way to be saved in the Kingdom of God. This is the foundation of our beliefs and it is critical for the children to understand this basic truth.

Additional Scriptures:

Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

Isaiah 64:6 *“But we have sinned; we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”*

Ephesians 2:8 *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; but it is the gift of God.”*

2 Nephi 11:44 *“For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”*

2 Nephi 7:41-42 *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; And remember after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.”*

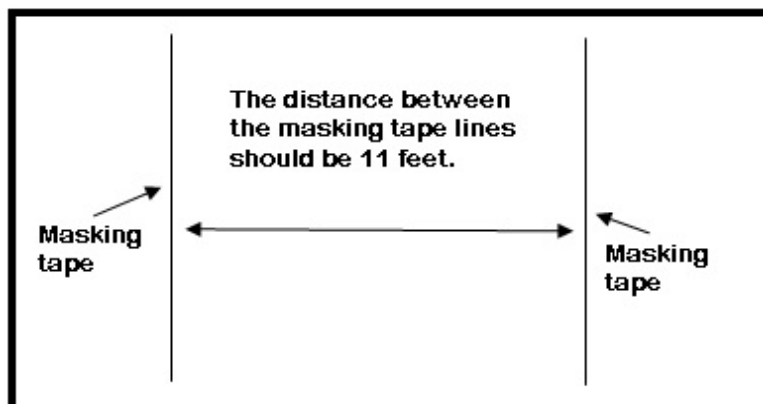
Mosiah 1:116 *“And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given, nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. . . . For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever.”*

Bad News, Good News (For All Ages)

(Genesis 2:18-22)

Lesson Preparation:

- Use flannel graph and/or pictures to tell the story of Adam and Eve.
- To prepare for the object lesson, put masking tape on the floor to divide the room into three sections: one large middle section, and two small sections on each end of the room. See the diagram below:



Tuesday: Jesus is calling you to trade your fears for the security and comfort of His love.

Theme scripture: *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).*

Objectives: The students should understand that the spirit of fear is not from God, but it is a tool the devil uses to try to stop us from enjoying God’s love and from doing what God calls us to do. They should understand that it is not wrong when fear comes to us—having emotions is part of being human—BUT it is wrong if we let fear stay and allow it to grow. When we let fear stay inside us, it is a form of unbelief. We have continuing fear because we don’t really believe what God says. Instead, we need to cast out fear using the tools God has given us (His Word, prayer, hymns, fellowship with other believers, etc.). Opening our hearts to God’s love will also quench fear. When our hearts are full of the love of God, there is no room for fear. Handling fear in this way will help us be free of the wrong kind of fear (from the devil) and have the right kind of fear—the fear (respect) of the Lord. The lesson today is for all of us, not just the students, as we all struggle with fear in different areas of our lives!

Additional Scriptures:

1 John 4:18 *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”*

Mark 5:28 *“Be not afraid, only believe.”*

Deuteronomy 31:6 *“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*

Joshua 1:9 *“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”*

2 Timothy 1:7 *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

1 Nephi 7:48 *“And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded.”*

D&C 6:16a *“Therefore fear not, little flock, do good, let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my Rock, they can not prevail.”*

D&C 6:16b *“Behold, I do not condemn you, go your ways and sin no more: perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you; look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not.”*

D&C 50:8e *“Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world.”*

Romans 8:35, 37-39 *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

1 John 4:9 *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”*

Psalms 4:8 *“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”*

Proverb 29:25 *“The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.”*

Hebrews 13:5-6 *“for [the Lord] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, *“and lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world.”*

Deuteronomy 31:6 *“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*

Psalms 46:1-2 *“God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.”*

Psalms 27:1 *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”*

Philippians 4:6-7 *“Be afflicted for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 8:15-16 *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption; whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”*

Romans 8:35, 37-39 *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Elisha and God’s Invisible Army (A Scripture story for all ages)

2 Kings 6:8-23

Flannel graph pictures may be used to tell the story and are available in the resource room. Also needed for this lesson are a white board, erasable markers, and an eraser.

Introductory activity to lead into the story—Hide and Seek.

Choose one student to hide and choose several other to be the seekers. Send the seekers outside to the hallway to allow the chosen student to hide. After the student has hidden, chose one student go to the group in the hallway and whisper to them where the student is hiding. The group of seeks will come in and immediately finds the hiding student.

How were the seekers able to find the hidden student so quickly? Would this game be very fun if someone *always* told the people seeking where others were hiding? Why not? This is what is happening in our Bible story today.

This story is from the Old Testament of the Bible. We find it in 2 Kings, chapter six.

God’s people are called the people of Israel or Israelites. In this story, the king of Syria is trying to attack the Israelites. The Syrians were Israel’s enemies and they wanted to take over their country. The Syrian king called his army commanders together. Maybe he said something like this: “Here is our plan. We are going to secretly set up our camp in this area. *(Draw the “battle plans” on the white board.)* While we secretly camp out here we will attack Israel from this direction. This will give us a great victory over them.”

The commanders of the army thought the king's plans were good, so they sent their soldiers to set up their camp in the place their king told them to.

Meanwhile, back in Israel there is a man of God, a prophet. His name is Elisha. As a prophet of God, Elisha heard the Lord's voice. God talked to Elisha and then Elisha told the people what God told him to say.

One of God's character traits is a big word: Omniscient. Let's say that word together. Omniscient means all knowing. God knows everything. There are no secrets that can be kept from God. He knows every thing we think and hears every word we say no matter how quietly and privately we speak. So of course, God knew exactly what the armies of Syria were planning.

God told Elisha the Syrian king's secret plans to attack Israel and exactly where the Syrian army would be hiding. Elisha went to the king of Israel and said, "Be on guard, don't go near this particular area because the Syrians are coming there and are planning a surprise attack."

The king of Israel listened to Elisha's warning. He sent a spy out to the area, and sure enough, Elisha's message was true. The King of Israel told everyone to stay away from that area— so the Syrian army had no one to attack.

This is kind of like when we played our little game of hide and seek. The seekers were told exactly where the student was hidden, so they could find them right away.

God told Elisha where the Syrian army was hidden to the people of Israel could stay away from them and be safe.

Since that plan didn't work, the king of Syria came up with another secret plan. (*Erase the plans on the white board and draw new ones.*) He decided to attack the people of Israel in another area. He told his commanders the new place for his armies to take up their positions. The armies went and set up their camp and waited to surprise the people of Israel and attack them.

Again, the Lord told Elisha the Syrian king's secret. Again, Elisha went and warned the king of Israel of the Syrian's secret plans. So the people of Israel knew to stay away and they were safe.

This happened again and again. How could this happen? Every time, the people of Israel KNEW where his armies were going to be.

The king decided someone in his army must be a traitor. Someone in his army must be a spy for Israel and be telling them his plans. He asked them, "Which one of you is going to Israel and telling them our plans?"

One of the commanders of the army said, "None of us are doing that O king. It is Elisha, the prophet of Israel. He is the one who tells the king of Israel the very words that you have spoken privately."

"Is that right?" said the king of Syria. "Well then, we will just gather up an army and capture this Elisha! He will no longer be able to ruin our plans to attack Israel."

The king of Syria send spies to find Elisha. They came back and told the king: "We have learned that Elisha is in the city of Dothan, your majesty."

The King of Syria sent a very large army with horses and chariots. They arrived in Dothan at night and surrounded the entire city. They planned to capture Elisha and take him as a prisoner to their king.

The King of Syria must not have thought his plan out thoroughly because if God told Elisha where his armies were going to attack Israel, what made the king think that God wouldn't tell Elisha that the king of Syria was sending armies to capture him?

Elisha had a servant or helper. Early the next morning in Dothan, Elisha's servant got up and went to look out the window. He was startled by what he saw. He became very afraid. As far as his eyes could see there

were armies from Syria surrounding their town. He quickly went to Elisha and told him the news.

Elisha knew that God was in control of all things. He knew that God was all-powerful and was able to protect His people. We don't know if God had already told Elisha about the Syrian king's plan to capture him or not. Either way, Elisha was calm and peaceful when his servant was so afraid.

"Elisha, what shall we do?" cried his servant. "We are going to die! Look at all the soldiers and horses and chariots surrounding us?"

Elisha calmly said, "Don't be afraid. Those who are on our side of the battle are more in number than the armies that surround us."

You may have older students look up the exact verse in 2 Kings 6:16: "*Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*"

The servant looked at Elisha and then looked back outside. What was Elisha talking about? "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them?" There were only two of them and thousands of soldiers against them. What did Elisha mean?

Elisha had a deeper understanding of God and the unseen spiritual world. There are spiritual things around us all the time that we cannot see with our natural physical eyes.

Elisha knew this. He was looking with his spiritual eyes. Elisha prayed to the Lord for his servant. He said, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see."

God heard Elisha's prayer and the servant's spiritual eyes were opened. The servant looked out the window and saw the hills filled with a heavenly army. There were horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha.

Now Elisha's servant could now see that God was protecting them. He understood that they didn't need to be afraid of the human army surrounding the city.

The Syrian army started to move in to capture Elisha. So Elisha prayed to the Lord again. A few minutes earlier he was asking God to open the eyes of his servant. Now he prayed and asked the Lord to blind the eyes of the Syrian army. God answered Elisha's prayer and everyone in the Syrian army became blind. They began to stumble around and bump into each other. They must have been confused and frightened.

Elisha went to the blinded soldiers and said, "You are not going the right way. Let me take you to the city and help you find the man you are looking for."

The Syrian army followed Elisha. He led them many miles into the center of the city of Samaria, where the king of Israel was. Then Elisha prayed that God would give the Syrians back their sight. God opened their eyes and they saw that they were in the middle of their enemies' territory surrounded by Israelites. Imagine how embarrassed and frightened they must have been.

What do you think they thought their enemies the Israelites were going to do to them? (*Allow students to answer.*)

Before the King of Israel did anything, he asked Elisha a question. "Shall we kill these enemies?" But Elisha told him no. "You wouldn't kill those you captured on the battlefield. You must not kill these soldiers either."

Elisha was reminding the king that he hadn't captured this army—God had done it. God wanted the soldiers to live so they could go back to Syria and tell what Israel's God had done.

Elisha told the king what to do: "Give them food and water so they may eat and drink and then send them home to their own land."

The King obeyed Elisha's instructions and prepared a great feast for his enemies. When the soldiers were full, they were allowed to go back home to the Syria. The Syrian army didn't try to attack Israel again for a very long time.

What can we learn from this story?

God has great power. He knows everything!

Even when we are in a very scary situation (like Elisha was), we do not need to be afraid. We need to pray to God (like Elisha did). God hears our prayers—He hears YOUR prayers—and even when we cannot see anything with our physical eyes, God sends spiritual forces to protect us. Even though things may not go the way we want them to, God is there with us, and we do not need to fear.

God tells us many times in His Word, “Fear not! Don't be afraid!” Can we believe God's Word? Yes!

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Sometimes it's hard to believe in things we cannot see. This is called FAITH. Faith is believing what God says is true, even though we cannot see the proof of it with our physical eyes. God tells us in the Bible, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Did Elisha have faith that took away his fear? Yes!

Fear Not! Do not Waver! (An object lesson for all ages)

You will need the following items for this lesson:

- *A candle and candle holder*
- *Matches or a lighter (to light the candle)*
- *A gallon ziplock plastic bag*
- *A paper fan*

Set the candle in a secure place, such as the middle of the table. Tell the students to observe the flame. Point out how it is standing nice and straight and tall.

Tell the students that this flame represents them.

What do we fear?

The dark

The unknown

Monsters

What others will think about us

Being in a car accident

Getting cancer

School shootings

Robbers

Being attacked by terrorists

Dying

You may have the students write down (anonymously) some things they are afraid of and then you may read them out loud to the class. Or you may just name some things they might be afraid of. You may write down some of the things they are afraid of on the paper fan.

Tell the students that the paper fan represents the things we are afraid of. Take the paper fan and waved it gently toward the flame. The breeze from the fan will make the flame wobble back and forth and up and down. When we are afraid, we wobble all around like this flame. We are not standing secure.

Next, hold up a plastic zip-lock bag. Since this bag is transparent, it is difficult to see. This plastic bag represents the spiritual help God sends to us when we pray. We can't always SEE any difference when we pray, but prayers make a big difference. Elisha prayed to God when he was in a scary situation, didn't he?

Hold the plastic bag between the candle and the fan. Wave the fan back and forth like you did before. Of course this time the flame will NOT flicker, because the bag is blocking the breeze.

Although God may not away take the scary situation we are in when we pray, we can trust that God will be our shield—like the plastic bag. We can trust that God will give us peace so we can stand tall and unwavering. He will give us peace, just like He gave Elisha peace. God promises to never leave us alone, especially when we are going through something scary. We may not be able to see the spiritual help God sends us, but it is very real.

“for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5)

A Story for the Scriptures about Fear and Faith

Mark 4:28-33

“And the same day, when the even was come, he said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him, even as he was, in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat over into the ship; and he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow; and they awoke him, and said unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace; be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

*And he said unto them, **Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?***

And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

We don't need to be afraid because Jesus is “in our boat.” He is with us.

Is there such a thing as a good fear, a healthy fear?

Psalm 111:10 *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth forever.”*

Fearing God means respecting Him and giving Him reverence. It is realizing how BIG and POWERFUL He is (and how tiny and weak we are). A healthy fear of God includes the fear of the consequences of disobedience.

Learn the “Fear of the Dark Stopper” (An activity for younger students)

2 Samuel 22:29 *“For thou art my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord will lighten my darkness.”*

A very common fear among young people and grownups alike is fear of the dark. Being careful in the dark is wise, as you could trip or bump into hidden obstacles. However, being cautious in the dark is different from being afraid of the dark.

When we are afraid of the dark, we are usually letting our imagination get carried away. The more we continue to focus on what might be in the dark, the worse the fear gets. If we can focus instead on the great power of God and His deep love for us, our fear will lessen.

Let’s learn the three-part “Fear of the Dark Stopper.”

Wrap your arms across your chest and say, “God is with me.”

Then hold your hands up to your eyes, pretending your hands are binoculars that you are looking through. Say, “God knows what is in the darkness!”

Finish by saying “God will protect me!” as you make fists with both hands and gently fist bump them together.

Love Messages from God: Perfect Love Casts Out Fear (An activity for all ages)

Teacher preparation:

Collect the needed items—a brick, a ring, a broken vase, boy and girl play figures, a cross, a shield or umbrella, three paper bags.

Punch a hole in each love message paper and tie it with yarn or string to the appropriate object. Put all of the objects in a paper bag. Put the shield or umbrella in a second separate paper bag.

To prepare the personalized love message cards:

For younger students, use the squares with animals holding hearts. For older students, use the heart squares. Cut out the squares with the heart patterns.

Before class take a white crayon and write the “secret” messages on the hearts. Be sure to press down firmly. Put each student’s name in pencil on the back of their personalized message card.

Suggested messages for the hearts are as follows:

(Student’s name), God loves you!

(Students’s name), Jesus loves you!

God loves you so much, (student’s name)!

(Student’s name), God’s love surrounds you!

We never need to be afraid because of God's great love for us. Think about how big and powerful God is. We cannot even imagine how strong He is and what He can do. Now think how powerful His love must be!

God tells us over and over again in the Scriptures how much He loves us. He doesn't just love some people, He loves each one . . . and that includes YOU!

What love messages is God sending you and me through His Word (the Scriptures)?

Chose a student to come up and pull an item out of the bag. If your students are readers, have him or her read the love message on the tag before handing the item to you.

Teach each love message as it is drawn from the bag. They will not be in the following order, but that's okay!

- **“Nothing can separate you from My love for you.”**

Object: A BRICK

Have you ever seen a wall made of bricks? It is strong and thick. Do you think a brick wall could separate you from God's love? No.

Romans 8:39 *“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Full verse for older students:

Romans 8:35, 37-39 *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

- **“You are My sons and daughters.”**

Object: BOY and GIRL play figures. (If you cannot find boy and girl play figures, find a picture of a boy and of a girl, glue them to posterboard, and cut them out.)

1 John 3:1 *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [and daughters] of God.”*

- **“My love for you is everlasting. It has no end.”**

Object: A RING

This ring is a circle with no beginning and no end. Trace your finger around it. You could just keep going around and around forever.

Jeremiah 31:3 *“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”*

- **“I love you no matter what you do. You do not need to earn My love.”**

Object: A BROKEN vase or (plastic) glass, or another broken object that would be safe for children to handle.

Sometimes we make mistakes and bad choices. Maybe our mom told us not to touch the vase, but we did anyway and it fell and broke. Does God stop loving us when we do bad things?

No. God's love is perfect and unconditional. He loves us because we are His creation. He made us. He loves us even when we do wrong things and are sinners (but we cannot live with Him unless we repent).

Romans 5:5-6, 8 “ . . . the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. . . But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Moroni 7:52 “Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever.”

- **“I have shown you just how much I love you by sending My Son, Jesus to die for you.”**

Object: A CROSS

God didn't just SAY He loves us. He SHOWED us by sending His Only Son, Jesus—who He loves very much—to die on the cross to save us. *(Show a picture of the cross or of Jesus on the cross.)*

1 John 4:8-9 “ . . . for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

D&C 33: 1a-b “ . . . Even Jesus Christ your Redeemer, the light and the life of the world . . . who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God.”

Oh, I have one more item. *(Bring out the second bag with the shield or umbrella. Have a student come forward and pull it out of the bag.)*

- **“My love is like a shield (umbrella) over you to protect you.”**

So we do not need to fear! If God is for us, who can stand against us?

“If God be for us, who can prevail against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Here is a personal love message from God to you! **Give each student their personal love message from God.**

Provide the students with water-based colored markers. Thick ones are best. Let them scribble/color over the heart so that their personal love message shows up. Help non-readers or beginning readers to read the words.

Follow-Up Activity (For younger children)

For this lesson you will need a soft blanket, colored paper, crayons and/or markers.

Have one child volunteer to stand in front of the class. Wrap the soft blanket all the way round him. Say, "This blanket is surrounding you. It is all around you. Does it feel soft and warm?"

This is the way God's love surrounds you. God's love is all around us, even though we cannot see it. Sometimes when we pay attention, we can feel God's love in our hearts and it feels soft and warm like this blanket.



Give each child a piece of colored paper.

Trace their hand with a marker or crayon and then say, "God's love surrounds you," as you draw a large heart around their hand print. Write their name inside their hand print and write "God's Love Surrounds Me" inside the heart.

Have the child repeat, "God's love surrounds me," if he/she is able.

Follow-Up Activity (For older students)

Children love a treasure hunt. Help them hunt for the best treasure of all: God's love for them.

Cut out several large hearts from poster board or card stock paper. On the hearts, print Scripture verses about God's love. When you've completed the heart messages, turn them over, draw intersecting lines, and cut into puzzle pieces. Plan so that each student may find one piece during the treasure hunt (or you may make a heart message puzzle for each student, differentiating each puzzle by color or by a symbol or initial on each piece). At a time when the students are out of the room, hide the puzzle pieces and with each one hide a small candy.

Give the students time to search for the puzzle pieces and candy. Each student may find one piece. When all the pieces have been found, have the students reassemble the hearts. Read the Scripture verses, and explain that although the candy treasures were a nice surprise, the best treasure of all is God's love.

Now have the students think of someone who is lonely, sick, or hurting with whom they could share their heart message puzzle. If the person is a child, put the puzzle pieces in a decorative envelope or bag so the child can enjoy putting the puzzle together, too. If he or she is an adult, glue the pieces to poster board or card stock paper. Encourage them to deliver these as encouraging gifts.

How Big is God’s Love for Us? (Object lesson for all ages)

Buy or bake a giant cookie—the bigger the better! If possible use icing to write the words “God’s Love” on the giant cookie. Buy a pack of small bite-sized chocolate chip cookies.

Before class, arrange the giant cookie and the single bite-sized cookies on two separate platters. Keep the cookies covered with a cloth or paper towels while you talk to kids about different kinds of love. Talk about how brothers and sisters love each other; how kids love their parents and grandparents, and how parents and grandparents love their kids; how pet owners love their pets. Share about some people you love and how they make you feel.

Remove the cloth and pick up one of the bite-sized cookies to show the students. (Keep the giant cookie covered.) Tell kids that the cookie is like the love we have for each other—all the kinds of love you talked about. It is sweet and good.

Now show kids the giant cookie. Tell them this is like God’s love. Explain to the kids that God’s love is deeper, bigger, and better than any other kind of love you can receive. Then eat the cookies!

Our Spiritual Toolbox against FEAR (For all ages)

Print out the Toolbox cards so they are double-sided and cut them on the lines. There are six cards. The picture of the tool should be on the front and the instructions on the back. Punch holes in the upper right hand corner. Note that there are simplified scripture and instructions for some cards for younger students. You may allow the students to color the tools on the cards with colored pencils. Crayons or markers may not be a good choice as they might cover up or obscure the words on the card. Help the students put their set of cards on a binder ring and allow them to take them home. Encourage them to use them.

Emotions come to us. They are part of our human experience. But we don’t have to invite them to supper and feed them. But we do not have to let them stay.

We fear things we cannot “control.” But we are not really in control of anything (except our own choices). But it’s okay, because GOD is always in control. We need to practice letting go and trusting God to take care of us. This Toolbox is full of “tools” to help you do that.

“Fear is like the monster under my kids’ beds — its power is fueled not by what’s really there, but by what might be, what we imagine could be. Fear is a hollow darkness in the future that reaches back through time to rob our joy now by belittling the sovereign goodness of God.”
(Jonathan Parnell)

Perfect Peace (A True Testimony for All Ages)

-by Debbie Norman (Reprinted from Zion's Call, Vol. 2, No. 4, Nov.-Dec. 1990)

When I first found the small lump on my jaw, I tried to ignore it. I was twenty-three years old, happily married, and the mother of an active two-year-old. I also suspected another child was on the way.

The lump was under the skin on the left side of my jaw, about halfway between my chin and my ear. "It's just a bruise or a knotted muscle," I told myself, and waited, hoping it would go away. But it didn't. It only grew larger.

When I told my husband, Don, about it, he suggested that I see a doctor right away. I could see the concern in his eyes. I agreed, but my mind still could not face what all this might mean.

At the doctor's office, I could no longer avoid the facts. The doctor looked alarmed as he felt the lump. He checked for lumps on other areas of my body, but found none.

"Do you have a surgeon?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"You must see a surgeon immediately the doctor said. "I will refer you to a good one." And then he left the room to call the surgeon and set up an appointment for me.

I sat there feeling very scared. Could this really be happening to me?

In a few days, I was sitting in the surgeon's office. The lump had grown even bigger. As I listened to the doctor speak, there were only two words that I heard: "tumor" and "malignant." Finally, I heard him say that he couldn't be sure what the tumor was and that I must have surgery right away.

By now, I knew for sure that I was expecting a baby. I told the doctor that I would not consider having surgery until I was past the first three months of pregnancy. I knew in those first three months, the tiny baby inside me might be harmed by the medications necessary for the surgery. The surgeon didn't want to wait, but he had no choice.

The next few weeks became a blur of doctor visits. Every time I saw the surgeon, he would feel the ever-growing lump and shake his head. He told me things didn't look good. I knew he thought that I had cancer.

By now the lump was visible to everyone. It looked as if I had a huge wad of chewing gum tucked inside my cheek.

The surgeon said that I would probably need to start chemotherapy as soon as possible. The balance would be between my life and the baby's. As soon as the baby would have a reasonable chance of survival, it would need to be taken by c-section so I could start chemotherapy—hopefully soon enough to save *my* life.

This was the surgeon's plan, but inside I was screaming, "No! No! This is not how my baby is supposed to arrive." Don and I had planned a natural birth and I planned to breast-feed this baby. I knew all that would be impossible if what the doctor said was true. I felt cheated, but mostly I just felt scared. I was young and the future had seemed like a pleasant road stretching far into the distance. Now, suddenly the road had lead me to the edge of a cliff.

Finally the time for surgery arrived. I was four months along in my pregnancy. The surgeon told me that he wanted his senior partner to assist him in the surgery. He said even though one would think that the tumor would be easily to get to, it really would be a delicate procedure because of all the nerves in my face. He said the incision would actually be on my neck and then the skin would be pulled back to reach the tumor. He warned me that there was still a risk of nerve damage which could leave half of my face permanently paralyzed.

I was administered to by the elders. I knew many of the Saints were praying for me, also. God told me, “Debbie, it will be okay.” He didn’t tell me that the tumor was not cancerous, nor whether I would live or die, but he gave me the assurance that NO MATTER WHAT happened, it would be His will for me, and *it would be all right*. He also assured me that the baby would be protected from any harmful effects of the surgery.

For the baby’s sake, I wanted to avoid any unnecessary medication. The doctor agreed I didn’t have to have the usual pre-operative sedatives as long as I remained calm. When the nurses came in to start my IV and get me ready for surgery, they were surprised because I was so alert (not sedated by medications), but still calm.

After the nurses were done, I was left all alone. My surgery was scheduled to begin in a few minutes, but the doctor was held up doing another surgery, and my wait stretched out over an hour. During this time I sang hymns over and over in my mind. I had memorized two certain hymns before my surgery (God Will Take Care of You and God is My Strong Salvation). I am sure that the Lord prompted me to do this, because He knew of the long, lonely wait I would have.

Instead of this waiting period being a trial, the Lord turned it into a special testimony of His love and His peace and comfort. He told me again that no matter what happened, it would be okay. I felt totally encircled in the arms of His love. I wish that I had the words to describe the way I felt at that time. It was a depth of peace I had never felt before. All fear was gone. I was able to totally relax and trust God for the outcome.

Everything else is really just a postscript, because my main testimony occurred during that hour of waiting. The tumor was all removed. It was a rare type of growth with a very long name and it was benign. After the surgery, the doctor and nurses were amazed, because I didn’t need any pain medication—not even one aspirin!

The baby I was carrying then is our daughter Elizabeth, and she was born perfectly healthy.

My testimony is summed up by one of the hymns I memorized. I KNOW these words are true! No matter what kind of scary things you face in this life, please believe these words:

God will take care of you. Be not afraid.
He is your safeguard through sunshine and shade.
Tenderly watching and keeping His own,
He will not leave you to wander alone.
God will take care of you, still to the end.
Oh, what a Father, Redeemer and Friend.
Jesus will answer whenever you call.
He will take care of you,
Trust Him for all.

He Hears Our Prayers

-by Heidi Lidberg, at age 6, Oak Grove, Missouri



When we were driving to school, we had our windows open. Then a bee flew in our car. I was scared and screaming.

My mom prayed that the bee would fly out the window. Very quickly the bee flew out, and I was happy.

This was a testimony because God wanted me to know that He is true. He hears our prayers, and sometimes answers us quickly!

Cast Your Fears in the Fire (For older students)

For this lesson, you will need a safe place to start a fire outdoors. It is suggested to use a campfire ring or a portable fire pit. You will also need paper and pens or pencils, as well as a way to start the fire (matches or a lighter).

Have the students write down on the papers what they fear. Have them fold the papers so no one can see them, but do not have them fold them multiple times because they will not burn well.

Take the students to your pre-planned safe fire burn spot. Talk about fire safety rules as appropriate. Play the following song. As the chorus plays, have them “cast their fears in the fire.”

(Alternately, you could simply listen to and talk about the song.)

Fear Is a Liar (A song by Zach Williams)

You Tube link: <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/zach-williams-fear-liar-lyrics.html#ixzz5Cm3SFazD>

Wednesday: Jesus is calling you to trade your anger and hurts for His peace and forgiveness.

Theme scripture: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice”* (Ephesians 4:31).

Ephesians 4:31 in simplified words: “Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others. Don't yell at one another or curse or say bad things about each other, and don't be rude.”

Objective: The children should understand that God forgave us when we did not deserve it, and likewise He expects us, and even commands us, to forgive others who have wronged us—even when they don't deserve it. It is important for the children to understand that forgiving someone does NOT mean what he or she did was okay. It just means we are giving the problem to God and letting Him take care of it, instead of trying to get back at the person ourselves. The children need to understand that holding onto hurts, grudges, anger, and offenses can cause a root of bitterness to grow in our hearts. This is like letting weeds grow in our garden and choke out the vegetable plants so they cannot bear any fruit. Not forgiving will hurt us more than the person who wronged us, and it can keep us from bearing good fruit for God in our lives.

Additional Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:32 *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”*

Proverbs 29:22 *“An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.”*

Ecclesiastes 7:9 *“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”*

Matthew 5:24 *“But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of his judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, or Rabcha, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”*

Ephesians 4:26 *“Can ye be angry, and not sin? let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”*

Colossians 3:12-15 *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”*

2 Nephi 12:33 *“And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God.”*

Psalms 37:8 *“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”*

Psalms 145:8 *“The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.”*

Proverbs 15:1 *“A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.”*

Proverbs 15:18 *“A wrathful man stirreth up strife; but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.”*

Proverbs 16:32 *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”*

Colossians 3:8 *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”*

Hebrews 12:15 *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”*

Matthew 6:13 & 16 *“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. . . . For if ye forgive men their trespasses, who trespass against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”*

Mark 11:27-28 *“And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any; that your Father also who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”*

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.”*

Moroni 7:50-52 *“And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.*

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth.

Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them.”

Luke 23:35 *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Meaning the soldiers who crucified him.)

Luke 17:3-4 *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn to you again, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him.”*

1 Nephi 2:34 *“And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness.”*

D&C 64:2c-e *“My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another, and forgave not one another in their hearts, and for this evil they were afflicted, and sorely chastened; wherefore I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses, standeth condemned before the Lord, for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men; and ye ought to say in your hearts, Let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.”*

2 Corinthians 2:6-8 *“Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”*

The Unforgiving Servant (A Bible story for younger children)

Matthew 18:21-34

Introductory activity to lead into the story—How Many Times?

Ask the children how many times they think they can do a certain task. Pick something age appropriate that they can do in the classroom. The suggested task is to shoot a paper wad into a trash can, but you can choose another task that you feel might be more suitable to your class. An alternative task might be to tap a balloon to keep it in the air.

Introduce the task and ask the students to raise their hand if they think they can do it 490 times in a row without missing. Pick a student to attempt the chosen task. Make sure they stand far enough away from the trash can for it to be a challenge. Have the class count together each shot that goes in the wastebasket. They likely won't get to more than 6 or 7 or maybe 10 before they miss a shot. When they miss, the activity is over.

The point of this activity is to show that it is nearly impossible to do something 490 times. This idea ties in with today's lesson.

Today's story is from the New Testament of the Bible, Matthew chapter 18, verses 21-34.

You may choose to use a flannel graph to tell this story.

Lesson preparation:

*Make emoji (emotion) faces on paper plates. You need the following emotions: **Surprised, sad, happy, scared**. Make enough so that each child in class gets a plate. It's okay to have quite a few duplicate emotions. Ask them to hold up the appropriate emoji face as you go through the story.*

You will also need the following items:

- A page of twelve \$100 bills play money
- One cut out \$100 play money

If possible, bring 490 items to class to show how many it is. Suggestions are 490 paper clips linked together, 490 jelly beans, 490 pennies, etc.

One day, Peter came to Jesus and asked how many times he should forgive someone who does something wrong to him. "Is seven times enough?" he asked. Seven times seems like a lot.

A lot of the church leaders in Jesus' time said that it was plenty to forgive someone THREE times. They said if you forgave someone three times and they did something wrong to you again, you did not have to forgive them. Peter probably thought he was being very generous by saying he would forgive someone seven times.

Imagine you are playing with a friend, and this friend hits you. You are playing together happily when all of a sudden, he just whacks you on the arm. But then he says he is sorry. So you forgive him. You play together nicely for a few more minutes and then he hits you again. But he says he is sorry again. So you forgive him again. This keeps happening over and over.

I don't know about you, but by about the third or fourth time this happens, I don't think I would feel like forgiving this friend anymore. If this friend hit you seven times and you forgave him seven times that seems like a lot of forgiving, doesn't it? (Of course, in real life, if someone kept hitting you, you should get away from them and go tell your mom or dad or another adult who can help you with this problem.)

Let's stop a minute and talk about what forgiveness means. If you say to your friend who hit you, "I forgive you," does that mean what he did was okay? NO! It is important to understand that **forgiving someone does NOT mean what they did was okay**. It just means we are going to give the problem to God and let Him

take care of it, instead of trying to get back at them ourselves (instead of hitting them back). **Forgiveness does NOT mean pretending that nothing wrong happened.**

There is something else you need to know about forgiveness. If someone hurts you over and over, you need to forgive them, but **forgiving them does NOT mean you have to hang out with them and let them continue to hurt you.**

For example, if your friend kept hitting you when you were playing together, first of all, you could say, "Please stop hitting me. I don't like that." If they continue to hit you, you should go get your mom or another grown up who can help. Even though you forgive that friend, you do NOT have to choose to play with them again if they won't stop hitting you. It's okay to stay away from them.

What if someone does NOT say they are sorry? Do we still need to forgive them? YES! Forgiving them helps YOU have peace and be right with God, even if the other person never says they are sorry.

The Bible tells us to pray for people who are treating us the wrong way. We are to pray for those who "despitefully use" us, or in other words those who are mean to us. We are to "do good to them." So if you saw the friend who keeps hitting you at school and he forgot his lunch, it would be right to share some of your food with him (but you would not have to sit next to him at lunch).

Matthew 5:46 *"But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."*

Now, let's go back to how Jesus answered Peter's question. Peter asked, "Is forgiving someone seven times enough?"

Jesus answered Peter that we are not to forgive only seven times, but seventy times seven. That's a lot! That's 490 times!

When Jesus said that, Peter must have been surprised! *(Students with the surprised face hold it up.)*

How many is 490? *(Show the linked paper clips or other collection of 490 items.)* It's a LOT! Remember the game we played at the beginning of class time? In our game, it was nearly impossible to do shoot the paper wad into the trash can 490 times in a row. On our own, it is pretty impossible to forgive someone 490 times! We need God's help to be able to forgive someone that many times and still be kind to them and not be angry with them or bitter.

But what do you think Jesus really means when He said we are to forgive 70x7? Do you think He really wants us to forgive people exactly 490 times, and then we should stop forgiving them? *(Let students answer.)*

No. Jesus meant we must keep forgiving and forgiving and forgiving, no matter what, even if it means forgiving more than 490 times!

Then Jesus told Peter this story:

Once, there was a king who wanted everyone who owed him money to pay it back. One servant owed the king a LOT of money. In fact, he owed him millions of dollars! *(Hold up the page of \$100 bills.)* This is \$1200. If I had 100 pages of these \$100 bills that would be \$120,000. That is still not even close to one million dollars. I would have to have almost 1000 pages of these \$100 bills to have ONE million dollars! That's a LOT of money!

When the king had let him borrow the money, the servant must have been happy! *(Students with the happy face hold it up.)*

But when the king told the servant it was time for him to pay it all back, he was sad. *(Students with the sad face hold it up.)* He said, "I can't pay you back. I don't have enough money to pay you back."

The king said, “Then you and your children and your wife are all going to be sold as slaves until you can pay back the money!”

When the servant heard that, he was very scared. *(Students with the scared face hold it up.)*

He dropped to his knees and pleaded with the king, “Oh, please! Give me more time! I’ll pay it all back! I promise!”

Well, the king thought about it and said, “Okay. Here’s what I will do. I will cancel your debt. We will just forget about the money you owe me. Starting right now, you don’t owe me any money anymore.”

The servant was very surprised! *(Students with the surprised face hold it up.)*

And very happy! *(Students with the happy face hold it up.)*

He fell down before the king and thanked him.

But then, something unexpected happened. The servant went out and found a man who owed him just a few dollars. *(Hold up \$100 of play money).*

“Pay me my money right now!” he demanded. Then he put his hands on the man’s throat and started choking him.

The poor man must have been scared. *(Students with the scared face hold it up.)*

The man dropped to his knees and begged, saying, “Oh, please! Give me more time! I’ll pay it all back! I promise!”

But instead saying he would forget about the money the man owed him and cancel the debt, the servant had the man sent to jail until he could pay back the money!

The man was very sad. *(Students with the sad face hold it up.)*

The other servants were surprised the servant would act this way. *(Students with the surprised face hold it up.)*

They went to tell the king, and when the king heard about what the servant did, he was not happy. He called in the servant who had owed him all that money to come to him again.

“You wicked man!” said the king. “I canceled your debt, and agreed to forget about all the money you owed me, but you refused to have mercy and do the same thing for this other man! I am not going to cancel your debt after all. You have to be punished until you can pay me ALL the money you owe me.”

So the king sent the servant to be punished until he could pay back all the money he owed! And believe me, the servant was very sad. *(Students with the sad face hold it up.)*

Then, Jesus said, “This is how God will treat you unless you forgive others from your heart.”

We are like the servant who owes the king a huge amount of money we cannot pay. We don’t owe money, but we owe something BIGGER: We owe the price of our sins—the price of the things we do that are wrong. We can never pay that price, so Jesus paid it for us. He cancelled our debt. He said, “You don’t have to owe God the price of your sins anymore.”

When God has been so kind and merciful to us, then should we turn to other people who have done something wrong to us—who owe us an apology, who should say they are sorry—and should we refuse to forgive them? No. If we do that, God will not forgive us our sins.

Matthew 6:16 *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, who trespass against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”*

To trespass means to do something wrong to someone. So this Bible verse says if we forgive a person who does something wrong to us, God will forgive us. But if we don't forgive a person who does something wrong to us, God will not forgive us either.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, it says even more.

D&C 64:2c-d "My disciples . . . forgave not one another in their hearts, and for this evil they were afflicted, and sorely chastened; wherefore I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses, standeth condemned before the Lord, for there remaineth in him the greater sin."

In other words, if we don't forgive a person who has done something wrong to us, we have a greater sin than they do for doing the wrong thing. God is really serious about this forgiving thing!

Matthew 18:21-34

Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

And the servant besought him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt; because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

The Unforgiving Servant (A Bible story for older students)

Matthew 18:21-34

Introductory activity to lead into the story—How Many Times?

Ask the children how many times they think they can do a certain task. Pick something age appropriate that they can do in the classroom. The suggested task is to shoot a paper wad into a trash can, but you can choose another task that you feel might be more suitable to your class. An alternative task might be to tap a balloon to keep it in the air.

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Imagine you are hanging out with a friend and he says something mean to you that hurts your feelings. You are having a good time together when suddenly, he says something mean to you. But then he says he is sorry. So you forgive him. You hang out together for a few more minutes and then he says the mean thing again. But he says he is sorry again. So you forgive him again. This keeps happening over and over.

I don't know about you, but by the third or fourth time this happens, I don't think I would feel like forgiving this friend any more. If this friend say something mean to you seven times and you forgave him seven times that seems like a lot of forgiving, doesn't it? (Of course, in real life, if someone keeps saying mean things to you, then you should get away from them and go tell your mom or dad or another adult who can help you with this problem.)

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For example, if your friend kept saying mean things to you when you hung out together, first of all, you could say, "Please stop saying that. I don't like it." If he continues to say mean things to you, you should go get your mom or dad or another grown up who can help. Even though you forgive that friend, you do NOT

have to choose to hang out with them again if they won't stop saying mean things to you. It is okay to stay away from them.

What if someone does NOT say they are sorry? Do we still need to forgive them? YES! Forgiving them helps YOU have peace and be right with God, even if the other person never says they are sorry.

The Bible tells us to pray for people who are treating us the wrong way. We are to pray for those who "despitefully use" us, or in other words those who are mean to us. We are to "do good to them." So if you saw the friend who keeps saying mean things to you at school and he forgot his lunch, it would be right to share some of your food with him (but you would not have to sit next to him at lunch).

Matthew 5:46 *"But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."*

Now, let's go back to how Jesus answered Peter's question. Peter asked, "Is forgiving someone seven times enough?"

Jesus answered Peter that we are not to forgive only seven times, but seventy times seven. That's a lot! That's 490 times!

When Jesus said that, Peter must have been surprised! *(Students with the surprised face hold it up.)*

How many is 490? *(Show the linked paper clips or other collection of 490 items.)* It's a LOT! Remember the game we played at the beginning of class time? In our game, it was nearly impossible to shoot the paper wad into the trash can 490 times in a row. On our own, it is pretty impossible to forgive someone 490 times! We need God's help to be able to forgive someone that many times and still be kind to them and not be angry with them or bitter.

But what do you think Jesus really means when He said we are to forgive 70x7? Do you think He really wants us to forgive people exactly 490 times, and then we should stop forgiving them? *(Let students answer.)*

For one thing, if we only had to forgive exactly 490 times, it would be really hard to keep track of. We would have to keep a little notebook with people's names in it and make tally marks for every time we forgive them. *(Demonstrate tally marks on the board.)* Jesus does NOT want us to do this. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that charity, the pure love of Christ, keeps no record of wrongs. So we shouldn't be keeping tally marks of the number of times we forgive someone, should we? No.

If Jesus does not want us to literally forgive 490 times, what do you think He meant? *(Allow students to answer.)*

Jesus does not want us to keep a record of wrongs. He does not want us to tally up the number of times we must forgive. He wants us to keep forgiving and forgiving and forgiving, no matter what—even if it means forgiving more than 490 times!

Jesus knows it is impossible for us to forgive someone this many times on our own. Remember how hard it was to try to shoot the paper wad into the trash can 490 times *(or whatever activity you chose)*? But it is not impossible to forgive someone 490 times or even more if we ask Jesus to help us. He is ready to help us do it through HIS strength.

Philippians 4:13 *"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."*

After Jesus answered Peter's question about forgiving others, He told this story. We are going to act it out.

SKIT: The Unforgiving Servant

Needed:

King—Robe, Crown

Servants 1, 2, & 3—Robes

Other servants (*There can be any number of more servants who do not have speaking parts, but who follow Servant 3 around. It is suggested to have at least two other servants.*)

Guard—Plastic sword

Narrator(s) (You can have up to four narrators so more students can participate).

The dress up props are optional, but make it more fun!

Print off copies of the play and let the student read their parts

Setting: The king sits in a chair. Servant 3, the Other Servants and the Prison Guard stand near the King. Servant 2 stands at the far side of the room.

Narrator 1: There was a certain king who decided to take an accounting of all his servants. He found one servant who owed him a lot of money!

Narrator 2: This servant, who owed the king millions of dollars, was brought before the king.

King: (Sternly) Where is my money? I told you I want ALL my money paid back!

Servant 1: (Humbly and fearfully enters and stands before the king, looking down at the ground.) I cannot pay you back what I owe. I don't have enough money.

King: What?! I want my money NOW! ALL of it!

Servant 1: Please, I don't have that much money right now.

King: Then I order that you and your entire family be sold as slaves to repay me.

Servant 1: Please, no! Don't do that to us! I beg you to have mercy on me! Give me more time! I will pay back everything I owe. I will figure out some way to do it if you just give me more time!

King: Hmmm. (Rubs his chin thoughtfully.) Very well. I will have mercy on you. I will do more than just give you extra time to pay your debt. I will cancel your debt completely. You don't owe me ANY money anymore. All is forgiven.

Servant 1: (Falls down at the king's feet) Oh, THANK you! Thank you! You are a great king! You are wonderful!

King: (Waves his hand toward the exit) You may go.

Servant 1 exits joyfully.

The **Prison Guard**, **Servant 3**, and **Other Servants** follow **Servant 1**.

As the narrator reads, **Servant 2** walks toward **Servant 1** so they meet.

Narrator 3: The servant left with excitement because his debt had been cancelled. Not long afterwards, the servant met another servant who owed him money. Suddenly, he became angry.

Servant 1: Oh, it's YOU! I remember you! You owe me money. You owe me a hundred dollars!

Servant 2: Uh, hello.

Servant 1: (Gets in his face and acts like he is choking Servant 2) Pay me what you owe me right now! ALL of it!

Servant 2: (Acting scared, falls down at his feet) But I don't have that much money right now. Please be patient and have mercy on me! Just give me a little more time and I will pay back everything I owe you!

Servant 1: I will not have mercy on you! (Motioning to the **Prison Guard** to come) Guard, throw this man into prison until he repays his debt.

Prison Guard: (Grabs **Servant 2** and drags him away) Come on! You're coming with me!

Servant 2 yells and begs for mercy as he is dragged away.

Servant 3: (shocked) I can't believe he wouldn't have mercy on that man after what the king did for him! This is NOT right! Let's go tell the king what happened! (Hurries back to the king and Other Servants follow.)

Narrator 4: The other servants were upset when their friend was thrown into jail, because the first servant was given mercy by the King but wouldn't give mercy to someone else. He called the first servant to come to see him again.

Servant 1 enters and approaches the king.

King: I heard about what you did. You are a wicked servant! I forgave all your debt when you asked me for mercy. Don't you think you should have also had mercy on your fellow-servant?

Servant 1 hangs his head and looks at the floor.

King: Guard, come take this man away and put him in prison to be tormented until he can pay me back EVERY cent he owes me!

Prison Guard: (Grabs **Servant 1** and drags him away.) You are coming with me, bud.

Servant 1: (Yells and protests as he is dragged away) No, please! Don't do this to me!

Narrator 5: Jesus said, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Here are a few things to think about from this parable.

Who are the three main characters? (*The king, the first servant, the second servant. Write these on the board as the students suggest them.*)

The first servant owed the king a LOT of money. In the Bible, the verse says "*one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents.*"

A talent was a type of money used at the time Jesus was on earth. One talent was equal to about 6,000 denarii. A denarii is what a worker got paid for one day of work. So to pay off his debt to the king, this servant would have to work every day for 164, 383 years.

Obviously, this servant owes the king a debt that cannot be paid. Does that sound familiar? Let's think of this parable in spiritual terms. Who does the king represent? (*Allow a student to answer.*)

That's right. The king is God. (*On the board next to "king," write "God."*)

And who is the servant who owes the king a big debt? (*Allow a student to answer.*) Yes, we are the servants who owe the king a big debt. (*On the board, write "us" next to "servant who owes the king a big debt."*)

Now of course we haven't borrowed money from God. The debt we owe God is spiritual. We owe the price of our sins—the price of the things we do that are wrong. Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death.”* Thankfully, Jesus died in our place and paid our debt to God. Romans 6:23 goes on to say, *“but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Since Jesus has paid the debt that we owe God, we can have eternal life. We can repent and be free from the costs of sin, from the debt that we can't ever pay!

What does the servant (who owed the king more than he could ever pay) do after being forgiven his huge debt? (*Allow a student to answer.*) Our parable says he went out to a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount and violently demanded that he pay the debt.

This fellow servant owed 100 denarii, which is 100 day's worth of work—about three months. When compared to the 164, 383 *years* worth of work the first servant owed the king, a few month's worth is practically nothing.

When we apply this parable to our lives, who is the servant who owed the small debt? (*Allow a student to answer.*)

He's anyone who owes us anything. (*Next to “the servant who owed the small debt” on the board, write “others.”*) Of course I don't just mean people who owe us money. The fellow servant is anyone who has done something wrong or hurtful to us, and owes us an apology.

When God has been so kind and merciful to us, then should we turn to other people who have done something wrong to us—who owe us an apology, who should say they are sorry—and refuse to forgive them? No. If we do that, God will not forgive us our sins.

Matthew 6:16 *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, who trespass against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”*

To trespass means to do something wrong to someone. So this Bible verse says if we forgive a person who does something wrong to us, God will forgive us. But if we don't forgive a person who does something wrong to us, God will not forgive us either.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, it says even more.

D&C 64:2c-d *“My disciples . . . forgave not one another in their hearts, and for this evil they were afflicted, and sorely chastened; wherefore I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses, standeth condemned before the Lord, for there remaineth in him the greater sin.”*

In other words, if we don't forgive a person who has done something wrong to us, we have a greater sin than they do for doing the wrong thing. God is really serious about this forgiving thing!

Give offense / Take offense (for children ages 1st grade and up)

To do this acting game scenario, children need to be old enough to understand the difference between reality and play acting. Usually this would be around the age of 6 to 8 years old.

For this lesson, you will need a ball, such as a soccer ball or basketball.

What is an offense? It is saying or doing something mean or rude to someone. Often when someone is offended, it is because someone said something mean to them or about them.

You can GIVE an offense and you can TAKE an offense. We need to be sure we are not doing either one! Let's act it out. *(Choose a student to stand in front of the class with you. Give the ball to the student.)*

Now we are going to act out what might happen if you make a bad choice. What if you said something rude to me? (Student's name) is going to GIVE an offense. This is just pretending. We are going to play a little acting game. It would be a very bad choice to GIVE an offense to anyone.

Okay, (student's name), here is your line to say in the first scene of our little acting game: "I don't want to play with you. You are fat and ugly." *For older students, "You are so dumb. I can't believe you couldn't solve that math problem."* *(Tailor the chosen insult line to be appropriate for your class. Let the student practice saying their line a time or two.)*

Okay, now (student's name), you hand me the ball as you say your line. *Take the ball from the student, and say back to them something like this: "That's just fine! I didn't want to play with you anyway. I will never be your friend again."* *(Immediately assure the student you are just acting and you really do like them.)*

(Student's name) gave an offense and I took it. Now we are both mad and have hurt feelings. Did we make good choices in this scene that pleased Jesus? NO. We did not choose to forgive and have peace in our hearts from Jesus.

Now, what if (student's name) tried to give me an offense, but I wouldn't take it. That would look something like this:

Have the student try to hand you the ball while saying their line of rude words. Start to reach out for the ball, but then stop and fold your hands together. Say, "Oh, wait a minute. I can choose whether I TAKE the offense or not. I cannot control what other people say or do to me, but I can CHOOSE how I act when it happens.

Have the student let go of the ball and do not make any attempt to touch it as it falls to the floor. As this happens, say, "Those words hurt me, but I choose to forgive you. I will NOT take offense."

No one can MAKE you take an offense or be offended! How about this scene? Did we make better choices than the last scene we acted out? Yes, one person made a bad choice, but the other one made a good choice. The person who did not TAKE the offense and chose to forgive will have peace in their heart from Jesus. What about the person who hurt me? What should I do about them? The Scriptures say I should PRAY for them! But even MORE than that—I should "do good" to them. I should be kind to them. Here's what Jesus said:

"But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:46-47).

I don't know about you, but I want to be a child of God, my Heavenly Father. That means even though it is hard, we need to choose NOT to take an offense and we need to pray for people who are mean to us and be kind to them. God will help us do that if we ask Him!

Now let's act out one more scene.

This time you have a new line, (student's name). This time as you hand me the ball, I want you to say, "I like you and I want to be your friend. Do you want to play ball together?" (*Let them practice their line a time or two if needed.*) Or for older students, "You're really good at science! Do you want to come over to my house and study together? I could use some help with my science homework."

(*As the student hands you the ball with their kind words, take it and say kind words back to them.*) "Thank you. I like you too. You are kind and thoughtful to others. I would love to play with you."

Or for older students, "Thanks! I would love to study together. Maybe after I help you with science, you could help me with math."

How about this scene? Both of us made good choices, didn't we? This is the way Jesus wants us to treat each other. The Scriptures teach us that refusing to be offended by other people is an act of love. The more charity—the pure love of Christ—you have in your hearts, the harder it will be to offend you.

Nephi Forgives His Brothers (A Scripture story for all ages)

Most of you know the story of Nephi. God told his father Lehi that their family must leave the city of Jerusalem. From the beginning, Nephi's older brother's Laman and Lemuel did not want to obey and caused much trouble. Nephi obeyed his father and obeyed God. Even though he was their younger brother, he was often the one to remind Laman and Lemuel of God's commandments. This made Laman and Lemuel angry time and time again. They were mean to Nephi over and over again. Yet Nephi forgave them each time.

When the brothers went back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates from Laban and failed the second time, Laman and Lemuel said harsh (mean) words to Nephi and beat him with a stick (1 Nephi 1:90-92). Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

When they were traveling back to their father in the wilderness after going to Jerusalem to get Ishmael's family to join them, Laman and Lemuel tried to kill Nephi by tying him up and leaving him in the wilderness for wild animals to eat (1 Nephi 2:26-34). Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

Later, when Ishmael grew old and died in the wilderness, Laman and Lemuel got angry with Nephi again and wanted to kill him again (1 Nephi 5:48). Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

When they reached the ocean, and Nephi began to build a ship as God had told him to do, Laman and Lemuel called him a fool and tried to throw him in the ocean to drown (1 Nephi 5:85-153). Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

When they were sailing toward the promised land, Laman and Lemuel got mad at Nephi again and tied him up so tightly that he couldn't move. They left him that way for four days (1 Nephi 5:187)! Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

After they arrived in the promised land and after their father Lehi died, Laman and Lemuel were angry and wanted to kill Nephi once again. Nephi had to flee into the wilderness and live in a separate place from his brothers from this time forward. Could you forgive your brothers if they did this to you? Nephi did.

Even after all this, Nephi cared about his brothers and prayed for them. How could Nephi forgive his brothers when they said mean things to him, beat him, tied him up, and tried to kill him so many times? Nephi was committed to follow and obey Jesus Christ. He could only forgive his brothers with the help of God.

“And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness” (1 Nephi 2:34).

When you think about how Nephi’s brothers treated him, the way people treat you probably doesn’t look so bad, does it? If God helped Nephi to love and forgive his brothers after all they did, He can help you love and forgive anyone who is treating you wrongly, too.



**See to it that. . .no
'root of bitterness'
springs up and
causes trouble. . .**

HEBREWS 12:15

Keeping Our Hearts Open to God's Blessings (An object lesson for all ages)

For this lesson, you will need the following items:

- *A pitcher of water.*
- *Four plastic cups.*

Every day of your life is a *Choose Your Own Adventure* story. Because God has given us our agency—the ability to choose—every day we get to choose how we will act and what we choose decides many of the consequences that will follow.

(Set the four plastic cups upside down on a rimmed cookie sheet or tray.)

(Hold up the pitcher of water.) This water is cool and refreshing. Let's say you are hot and thirsty and need a drink. A cupful of this cool water would be wonderful, wouldn't it? It would be silly to set your cup upside down like this if you were thirsty, wouldn't it? *(Pour water over the top of one of the upside down cups, then pick it up and show that no water went inside it.)* No water can get inside. You don't have any water to drink.

Jesus said He is the living water. He wants to pour refreshing peace and joy into our hearts, but we get to choose if our hearts are open *(hold the cup right side up)* or closed *(set the cup back down on the tray upside down.)*

What are some of the things that close your heart, which is like turning your cup upside down? One thing is NOT forgiving others.

(Pour the water over cup number one. Since it is upside down, all the water will run off into the tray.) God really wants to give you His peace and joy, but He cannot fill you with these gifts when your heart is closed because you will not forgive other people who have wronged you.

(Pour the water over cup number two. Again, since it is upside down, all the water will run off into the tray.) Another thing that can close our heart is hanging on to anger or grudges toward other people—choosing to be offended. God cannot fill you with His peace and joy when you hang on to anger toward other people.

(Pour the water over cup number three. Again, since it is upside down, all the water will run off into the tray.) Another thing that can close our heart is being angry toward God and not trusting Him. God cannot fill you with His peace and joy when you are angry and will not trust Him.

But what if you open your heart to Jesus? What if you ask Him to help you let go of anger and hurts? What if you ask Him to help you forgive others and help you to trust Him—even when hard things happen?

(Turn the last cup right side up and pour the water into it.) Then you can be filled with the refreshing peace and joy of God! *(Pick up the cup and take a sip of water)* Wow! That sure is good!

(Set the cup back down right side up and pour until it overflows.) God's peace and joy can fill you up and even overflow from your life to be a blessing to other people around you!

Which cup do you want to be like? You get to choose! Even if your heart has been closed toward God, it's not too late to choose to change. You can choose that right now. Pray in your heart and ask God to help you. *(Provide a few silent moments for them to pray.)*

Give each of the children a small cup and allow them to hold it right side up while you pour a drink of water for them.

Letting Go of Anger and Learning to Forgive (A lesson and craft for all ages)

For this lesson, you will need the following items:

- *The two heart templates printed on card stock paper*
- *Paper clips*
- *Glue or glue sticks*
- *Post-It Notes or paper squares*
- *Scissors*
- *Stapler*
- *Optional stickers*

Instructions are on the heart template pages. Help the students make the Forgiving-Forgiven Heart craft.

Forgiving others is always hard to do when you are still feeling angry and hurt. We can make the decision to forgive even when we don't feel like doing it. Forgiving does not depend on feelings. It is something we CHOOSE to do. We forgive because it is the right thing to do. We forgive because God commanded us to do it. We forgive because it is good for us—it will take away bitterness and give us peace.

It takes courage to decide to forgive someone. In fact, forgiving someone shows strength of character, not weakness.

Remember that by forgiving someone, you are NOT saying that what the other person did is okay.

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a decision—a choice you can make no matter how you feel.

God can help you forgive others. Ask Him to fill your heart with His love.

If it is possible, go to the person you need to forgive and in a calm and kind way, tell him/her what made you feel sad or hurt. Then let the person know that you have forgiven him/her.

Forgiving someone may not take the hurt away immediately. It also won't take away the memory of what happened. You may still feel sad or hurt for a while. You may forgive them, and then have angry and bitter feelings creep back into your heart. You may have to forgive them in your heart all over again many times. This is normal. Just keep forgiving as many times as you need to.

Pray for the person who has hurt you and look for chances to do kind things for them. This is what God commands us to do and it will help YOU heal and feel God's love and peace.

When It Is Hard to Forgive

Write on a piece of paper what happened and how that made you feel. Use your Forgiving-Forgiven Heart Craft! To show that you won't keep a record of the wrong, you could do one of the following things with that paper:

- Tear it up.
- Soak it in water for a few minutes and then squeeze it into a tiny ball. Throw the ball into a waste basket from a distance.
- Bury it in the garden (in a secret place).

You may think of some other unusual (but safe) way to destroy it.

Ask the Lord to help you get over the feelings of hurt.

Any act of kindness done for the person who has been unkind will show your love in action and will help you get over your hurt more easily.

Remember, forgiving is something you must do. The other person doesn't need to do anything, and he doesn't owe you a favor in return. In fact, the other person might not even be sorry!

What if someone keeps hurting me?

Forgiveness does not mean that you should let the other person keep on hurting you. If someone keeps on being unkind and nasty, speak to your mom or dad, or let your teacher know about the problem. Hurting others is never okay!

What if I don't forgive?

Your feelings for others may become unfriendly as your heart is hardened by angry, bitter, and unforgiving thoughts. The root of bitterness will start to grow in your heart and choke out the "fruit" you could grow in your life for Jesus. It is like letting weeds grow in your garden until they take over and the plants can't produce vegetables.

You will probably start to feel miserable and become crabby. But when you set someone free by forgiving them, you set yourself free to enjoy life!

You cannot expect God to forgive you if you don't forgive others. Jesus taught the disciples to pray to God in this way: *"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one who is indebted to us."* (Luke 11:4).

"If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

What if it's GOD I'm angry with? (For older students)

Hard things happen in this life. Really hard things. Parents get divorced. Someone we love dies in a tragic accident or from cancer. Someone's house burns down and they lose everything they own. Hard things happen in this life that leave us crushed and heartbroken . . . and often we are angry at God. "Why?" we ask. "Why didn't you prevent this, God?"

Maybe you have been angry at God. Maybe you are angry at Him right now.

When we are angry with God it's because deep down inside we know that if God is GOD, He can do anything. So why didn't He prevent our trouble and pain? Why?

We feel like somehow God has let us down or broken His promises to us. Like somehow God turned His back on us.

Anger at God happens when we are not willing to trust God when we do not understand what He is doing. Anger at God is essentially telling God that He has done something wrong, which He never does.

It is the devil who is telling us these lies. The devil wants to tricks us into believing that if we follow Jesus and do our very best to serve Him, our life should be pleasant and easy. If God really loves us, He should say yes to our prayers, preventing tragedy, difficulty, and pain from happening to us. And if He does not, we have the right to get angry at Him. We deserve better than this! It's NOT fair!

Or the devil tells us, maybe there is no God at all.

When pain and hard times come into our lives, has God broken His promises to us? Is there anywhere in God's Word where He promises us an easy pleasant life if we follow and obey Him? That we DESERVE it? *(Let the students respond.)* Can anyone open your Scriptures and show me where it says that?

No. God has not broken His promises to us when He allows pain in our lives.

The Scriptures tell us plainly that the only thing we DESERVE is hell and eternal punishment. God is good because He has promised to save us from what we deserve if we repent and come to Him.

There is no promise that this life will be pleasant or easy, but just the opposite. God tells us to expect trouble in this life, but promises that He will be right there with us in the middle of it. He promises to never leave us on our own.

Another thing to note is that no where in the Scriptures does it say God is required to tell us WHY things happen in this life, but He does promise to be right beside us and help us through every trial.

God also promises that there will come a time AFTER this life when there will be no more pain or tears or suffering.

Does God understand when we are angry, frustrated, or disappointed with Him?

Of course He does. He knows our hearts and He knows how difficult and painful life in this world can be.

If we are struggling with feeling angry at God, there are some things we should do:

- 1) Tell God about it. Talk to Him and tell Him exactly how you feel. He already knows what's in your heart anyway. Give the feelings to Him. Ask Him to take them. Do this as often as you need to.
- 2) Ask for His help to let go of the anger, because if we hold on to anger, it will lead to bitterness and resentment in our hearts. We will be hurting ourselves.
- 3) Work on turning our focus to asking "How?" (instead of "Why?"). How can God's glory be shown through this situation? How might God use your pain for a purpose for His Kingdom? How might God use your hard circumstances to draw you or others closer to Himself?
- 4) Write down your blessings. Don't forget to start with the biggest blessing of all—that God has saved us from eternal torment and hell through Jesus Christ.
- 5) Get help from someone who has a close walk with Jesus Christ. Someone you trust who is strong in their faith and has a solid understanding of God's Word.

The bottom line is, "Can we trust God with everything in our lives?" Yes, we can, because our God is compassionate, full of grace and love, so we can trust Him with all things. Trusting God is not easy. It means we have to give up what WE want and accept what GOD wants! Praying, reading the Scriptures, and attending church will help you grow in your faith so trusting God becomes easier.

A Prayer for When You're Angry at God

God, I pray that you will help me when everything in my life seems to be falling apart. I pray that no matter what happens to me and those I love that You will help me remember and believe that You love us with a powerful love. Sometimes God, I get angry. Help me to open my heart to You! Remind me that You are all-powerful, that You know all things, and that You are always good—even when my life does not feel good right now. Remind me that You care about how I feel and that You have promised a day when there will be no more pain or tears. Even though I don't understand what You are doing, help me to trust You. Help me to let go of my anger and release all of it to You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Burden of Unforgiveness (An object lesson for all ages)

Needed: Two buckets, plus some weight, such as large rocks, large canned goods, dumbbells, etc.

Chose a volunteer to carry the empty buckets and walk around the room. Ask him (her), “Can you walk easily? Can you run and jump?” *(The volunteer should say yes! It’s easy when the buckets are empty.)*

Now we are going to act out a little drama. You (the volunteer) get to play the part of Sam (or Samantha). *(Change the pronouns as needed.)*

Sam felt good. It was easy to walk and even run and jump. But then his (her) friend Charlie said something that hurt his (her) feelings. The more Sam thought about it, the more angry he (she) felt. Charlie had no right to say that!

What should Sam do at this point? *(Let the students respond.)* He/she should go to Charlie and calmly tell him that what he said hurt his (her) feelings. Whether Charlie is sorry or not, Sam should forgive him and pray for him. Sam should ask God for help to do this.

Sam did not choose to do any of those things. Instead, Sam chose to stay angry and hold a grudge. *(Put a weight in one of the buckets. It must be heavy enough to make it an effort to carry it.)*

It wasn’t too bad, really. It was a bit hard to run and jump, but he/she could still walk just fine. Sometimes the grudge (bucket) got heavy, but Sam wasn’t about to put it down. After all, Charlie did not deserve to be forgiven! (Oh, Sam. What are you doing?!)

Time went by and one day, Sam’s best friend Parker didn’t sit with him (her) at lunch. In fact, one of Sam’s other friends said Parker didn’t want to be his friend anymore. What should Sam do now? *(Let the students respond.)* He (she) should go to Parker and find out what is going on. Even if Parker does not want to be friends anymore, Sam should forgive her.

But Sam didn’t. *(Add quite a bit more weight to the second bucket. It should be hard to carry.)* Sam was starting to carry a big burden of grudges and anger. It was impossible to run and jump, and it was getting hard to walk.

Then one day, Sam noticed that Bobbi had a big chocolate bar. “Where did you get that?” he asked her.

“Oh,” said Bobbi, “Brenda gave it to me. I thought she gave one to everybody in class. Didn’t you get one?” Now Sam was really mad. How could Bobbi give a big chocolate bar to everyone in the class EXCEPT him (her)?!

What should Sam do now? *(Let the students respond.)* He (she) should go talk to Bobbi. Even if Bobbi did give a chocolate bar to everyone but him (her), Sam should forgive her and pray for her. Sam should ask God for help to do this. But Sam didn’t. *(Add a LOT more weight to both buckets until the volunteer can hardly pick them up.)*

Sam tried to keep going with the burden of his (her) anger and grudges and bitterness, but it was too heavy. He (she) couldn’t even walk any more.

Finally, Sam prayed and asked for God’s help. “God, please help me,” Sam cried. “Help me forgive my friends who have hurt me.” Sam forgave his friends who had hurt him (her), even though they were not sorry. He turned the whole thing over to God. *(Take all the weight out of the buckets.)*

Sam felt great again! He (she) could walk again, and run and jump! He (she) couldn’t believe he (she) had carried all that unnecessary weight around for so long! From now on, Sam decided he would forgive those who hurt him right away. If he (she) didn’t, he (she) was disobeying God and hurting himself (herself)!

You can learn from this little story to forgive right away and not carry the heavy burden of anger and grudges!

God is Always Good

-by Debbie Norman, Oak Grove, Missouri

Every year, we celebrate the Thanksgiving season as a traditional time to thank God for the blessings He has given us: Our family, a house to live in, full stomachs, clothes to wear, good health, daily protection from harm—and the list goes on. God is good. I firmly believe that it is important to count our blessings and, as the song says, to “name them one by one.” It is uplifting to focus on the positive and to remember *“all things which are good, cometh of God”* (Moroni 7:10).

But what about the times when God does not provide protection from tragedy? What about the ones in the world who do not have adequate food or clothing or shelter? What about those who do not have good health? Is God still good?

A few years ago, I read a true story about a Christian family. They felt very devoted to God and the husband had even decided to quit his job and go to seminary school to become a minister for his church. Then hard times came, and the father put his plans to become a minister on hold.

First their only child, a son, developed a rare form of bone cancer at age nine. He was given a 50% chance to live. After a long and painful struggle through chemotherapy, he did survive, although one leg had to be amputated. Later, the wife and mother also developed cancer, but her treatment could not stop the progression of the disease, and she passed away.

The father was crushed from these difficult trials. His faith faltered. At the end of the book, he declared that he still believed God existed, but he no longer believed that God was good.

When I read those words, I felt heartsick for this man. Of all the tragedies in his life, I knew this was the greatest tragedy of all. I prayed for him for many months with great concern, because he had lost hold of the most beautiful truth of the gospel—the truth that God is always good.

Many years ago when my husband and I were the young parents of a six-year-old son and a three-year-old daughter, we went through a difficult trial. We had been undecided about adding a third child to our family when—surprise!—I found out I was expecting. But only about a week later, I had a miscarriage. (This is when the newly forming baby inside the mother dies when it is still very tiny.) I was sad, but I knew miscarriages were fairly common. After this happened, we decided we definitely did want another baby.

Before long, I was expecting again. I was a bit anxious during the first weeks of pregnancy, but everything seemed to be going well. And of course, we were praying and asking God’s blessing upon this new little life. When I reached twelve weeks along, I thought I had passed the risk of miscarriage—but I was wrong. This second miscarriage was very painful both physically and emotionally. I was devastated. What was wrong with my body? Maybe I would never be able to have a baby again.

Not long after the loss of this baby, I was lying in bed unable to sleep. My husband was working nights at that time and was at work. Our two other children were in bed and asleep. I felt empty and overwhelmed with sadness. With tears rolling down my cheeks, I cried out to God, “Why? Why did you let this happen? Couldn’t you have let this little one stay and become part of our family?” Inside my aching heart was a flicker of doubt. Did God really care? And there was the hidden question behind the first one: If God is good, why did He let this happen?

Very clearly, God spoke into my mind. He did not answer my question why, but said to me, “Debbie, what about this blessing I gave you?” and He brought into my mind a time when He had blessed me. “And what about this one?” He brought another blessing vividly to my mind. “And this one?”

This experience continued, as the Lord reminded me of blessing after blessing that He had given to me:

Two healthy children and a wonderful husband; a house to live in, clothes to wear, a car to drive; parents who had taught me the gospel as a child; the protection and sparing of my physical life in one specific instance of which I was aware (and probably other instances when I was not aware); the sparing of my spiritual life when God intervened in a dramatic way during my teen years; and most of all, the very gift of Jesus Christ, who made a way for me to repent and come back into the presence of God.

My state of mind was changed from a deep despair to an overwhelming joy so powerful that I was compelled to crawl out of bed and get onto my knees before God in humility as I praised Him in thankful prayer.

For the truth is that God is not only good when He gives us healing or good health or a nice house to live in. God is not only good when He protects us from tragedy. If we think we are somehow entitled to these things in this life, we are mistaken.

God is good because *“he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). God is good because He broke the bands of death and made a way for us to be washed clean of our sins and to come back into His presence for eternity. God is good because of the suffering He bore for us so that if we repent and come to Him, we may escape the eternal suffering that we deserve. *“For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent . . .”* (D&C 18:2h).

If God gave us no other blessing than the gift of eternal life, that alone would qualify Him as exceedingly and abundantly good! But of course, He does bless each one of us with many other good things.

God tells us in the scriptures to expect hardship in this life. Jesus said, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Paul knew this truth: *“but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Yet God is good because through each and every trial of this life, He is with us. Deuteronomy 31:6 reminds us of this: *“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”*

God is good because no matter how hard this life is, He will give us hope, peace, and even joy in His presence. *“[H]e who doeth the works of righteousness, shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come”* (D&C 59:5c).

“Wherefore, whoso believeth in God, might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God” (Ether 5:4).

God blessed us with a third child about a year after my second miscarriage, but whether we had been given that blessing or not, this truth was firmly embedded in my heart: God is always good!

Thursday: Jesus is calling you to trade your doubt and confusion for faith in His eternal truths.

Theme scripture: *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”* (Mark 9:21).

Objective: God does not expect us to have a blind faith. Faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for and *evidence* of things not seen. God gives us evidence that He is who He says He is. He gives us evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Then He asks us to trust Him—even when we don’t understand what He is doing in our lives.

Everyone has doubts at times. Doubts come from the adversary trying to pull us away from our faith in Jesus Christ. Confusion also comes from the adversary. God says if we don’t know what to do (we are confused), we are to ask Him, and He will give us wisdom.

Faith starts with a choice—having the desire to believe. As we nourish our faith over the years, it will grow stronger and stronger. Ways we can nourish our faith and overcome doubt include talking to God about the questions we have; reading the Word of God; and spending time with other believers (such as in church).

We should also seek out our own testimonies of Jesus and His gospel and write them down so we can look back on them in times of trouble. Testimonies of others can also bring encouragement to help us grow in our faith and overcome doubt.

Additional Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 14:33 *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace . . .”*

Mormon 4:93 *“Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.”*

James 1:5-6 *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”*

Hebrews 10:23 *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.”*

Hebrews 11:1 *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

Alma 16:151 *“But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.”*

Psalms 34:8 *“Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”*

Matthew 14:26 *“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”*

Matthew 21:19 *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this to the fig tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.”*

Matthew 28:16 *“And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.”*

Alma 26:56-57 *“Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death: and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers, than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they*

did not doubt, that God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, We do not doubt our mothers knew."

3 Nephi 4:5 *"And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given."*

Mormon 4:88 *"And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth."*

Psalms 71:1 *"In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion."*

Isaiah 65:1 *"I am found of them who seek after me, I give unto all them that ask of me; I am not found of them that sought me not, or that inquireth not after me."*

Matthew 7:12-13 *"Say unto them, Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened."*

Alma 16:187 *"Now, behold, my brethren, I would ask, if ye have read the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God?"*

Deuteronomy 4:29 *"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."*

Searching for Evidence (An activity for all students)

For this lesson, you will need the following items:

- *For younger students—as many magnifying glasses as possible, ideally one for each student.*
- *The evidence card. Cut them out and hide them around the room before the lesson. Hide duplicate copies of the cards if necessary so that each student can find his/her own card.*
- *Optional: Photo or plaster cast of a raccoon track*

Police detectives solve mysteries by looking for **evidence**. **Evidences** are things that help us see that something is true.

For example, if I am walking in the woods and I see the footprint or track of a racoon in the mud, that is **evidence** that a racoon was there. I can safely believe that a racoon was there even though I didn't see it because of the **evidence** of the track the racoon left behind.

God does not expect us to just blindly believe in Him. Just like the racoon left tracks in the mud that show he was there, God has left **evidence** to help us believe in Him! He wants us to use our eyes and ears and brains to find the huge amounts of **evidence** He has placed all around us to help us believe that He is really God, that His Words are true, and that Jesus, His Son, died on the cross and rose up alive again!

We are going to search for evidence right now! (*For younger students . . .*) Here are magnifying glasses to help you look. (*Pass out the magnifying glasses.*) There are evidence cards hidden all around the room. Let's see if you can find them. After you find a card, bring it back to the table and sit down until everyone has found an evidence card. (*When all the students have found a card, have everyone sit down and continue the lesson.*)

Let's look at the evidence you found.

Who has a card with stars and planets in the night sky?

Have you ever gone outside after dark and looked up in the sky? There are hundreds of stars that we can see with our eyes. With powerful telescopes scientists have found out that there are 200-400 billion stars in our Milky Way Galaxy alone.

They estimate there are over 100 billion galaxies in the universe, each one containing hundreds of billions of stars! The total number of stars in the universe is mind boggling, estimated to be at least 70 sextillion and possibly as high as 300 sextillion, that's 300,000,000,000,000,000,000,000! (*Write the number to show the students on either a white board or a piece of paper.*)

The Bible says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Psalms 19:1). Do you think the amazing number of stars in our universe is evidence of God? Yes it is!

Who has a card with beautiful mountains and flowers?

The deeper we explore our world, the more beauty we find.

How did all this come to be? Experience tells us that beauty doesn't happen by accident. The amazing beauty all around us points to a designer—God!

God made the beauty of His creation so exquisite even with our best technology, we cannot duplicate it. For example, if you look closely at the petals of man-made flowers they are rough and not natural looking. It is evidence that creation didn't just “happen.” God created everything and added beauty simply for the sake of beauty—just like an architect works to make his buildings beautiful, and a car designer adds special touches to make his cars look good.

The beauty of nature is one of those things we tend to take for granted. But when we stop and think about why something is beautiful, we can appreciate the wisdom and goodness of God the Creator. The beauty all around us in nature is evidence of God!

Who has a card with blue sky and green trees and grass?

Did you ever stop to wonder why the sky is blue and trees and grass are green?

The colors in the nature are evidence of God! God created all sorts of details which work together to give us our blue-and-green color scheme, which is both restful and coordinated. If we were surrounded by large amounts of red, for instance, it would raise our blood pressure and not be restful at all.

Moreover, think about how smart it was that God made the color of the earth contrast with the sky. How strange it would be if both the earth and sky were green, or both the earth and sky were blue! This color scheme is no accident. When God designed chlorophyll for plants, He deliberately made it a green color so as to produce the right color scheme for creation. And when God designed air molecules, He deliberately made them scatter light so that the sky would be blue.

God also especially designed green grass and trees to be just the right background color for bright flowers. One of the reasons for the beauty of a field of flowers is not just the bright yellows, reds, and blues of the flowers but the fact that they contrast with the green background.

When you consider the color scheme of creation, it is clear that an expert in art has coordinated and planned the colors with great care and attention. If God did not create everything, and our world just happened by chance evolution, there is no reason we should even see colors in the first place.

Who has a card with the bird?

Have you ever wondered why a bird can fly, but people cannot? It is because birds were created from the beginning especially to fly, and we were not.

In order to fly, a bird must be lightweight. A bird's bones are not thick and heavy like ours. They are hollow like a straw. These lightweight bones are designed so well that the bird's feathers usually weigh more than its whole skeleton!

Birds also have air-filled sacs between their heart, lungs, stomach, and other organs. These air-sacs are connected to the bird's lungs, so when they fly, air flows through them. This arrangement quickly sends oxygen to the bird's body tissues while keeping it light in the air.

Even a bird's beak is designed to be lightweight. Unlike our heavy jaw bone, a bird has a beak made of lightweight horn. This is another feature that shows perfect planning in God's creation of birds.

When you see a bird fly through the sky, you are looking at evidence that God is real and that He created everything just like it says in the Scriptures!

Who has a card with the bucket orchid (yellow flower)?

God made such amazing details in His creation that they could not have happened by chance or accident! This is the Bucket Orchid, a flower that God designed in a very interesting way!

These orchids have a very complicated way to attract bees, trap them and then let them go.

(Show the kids the pictures on the card illustrating these steps.) First the bee comes to the flower because its nectar smells good. When the bee lands on the orchid, its surface is slimy and slick, which causes the bee to slip and fall into the "bucket" inside the flower. The bucket is full of water. Now the bee cannot fly out because it is wet. The only way the bee can get out is through a tunnel. There is even a convenient step leading into the tunnel.

As the bee is about to escape, the flower squeezes the bee so it cannot move. The flower then glues two pollen sacs to the bee's back, and after allowing time for the glue to dry, the flower lets the bee go. This whole process can take up to 45 minutes. When the bee then flies to another bucket orchid, the same process takes place, except that this time, when the bee attempts to leave the tunnel, a hook in the roof of the tunnel removes the pollen sacs, so the flower is pollinated!

This whole process is so amazing! It is very strong evidence that God is real and that He designed and created everything!

Who has a card with a boy and girl?

Some of the best evidence that God is real is . . . you! You are God's masterpiece! Our bodies are designed so complicated and marvelously that scientists still cannot understand everything about them.

The human body has a dynamic framework of bone and cartilage called the skeleton. The human skeleton is flexible, with hinges and joints that were made to move. But to cut down harmful frictions, such moving parts must be lubricated. Man-made machines like motors are lubricated only by outside sources. But the body lubricates itself by manufacturing a jelly-like substance in the right amount at every place it is needed.

The body has a chemical plant far more intricate than any plant that man has ever built. This plant changes the food we eat into living tissue. It causes the growth of muscles, blood, bones and teeth. It even repairs the body when parts are damaged by accident or disease. Power, for work and play, comes from the food we eat.

The brain is the center of a complex computer system more wonderful than the greatest one ever built by man. The body's computer system computes and sends throughout the body billions of bits of information, information that controls every action, right down to the flicker of an eyelid. In most computer systems, the information is carried by wires and electronic parts. In the body, nerves are the wires that carry the information back and forth from the central nervous system. And in just one human brain there is probably more wiring, more electrical circuitry, than in all the computer systems of the world put together.

These are just a few things that show us God is real. We could talk all week about how creation shows evidence that God is who He says He is!

Who has a card with the Scriptures?

The Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants all give us evidence that God is real. Some of the evidence for the Bible and the Book of Mormon come from archeology—scientists have found ancient ruins from people who lived long ago that support that these Scriptures are true.

Another evidence for the Scriptures is that many of the prophecies in them have already come true. God told His prophets things that were going to happen before they happened. Many of these things were written in the Scriptures. When these things happened like God said they would, it is evidence that His Words in the Scriptures are true!

If you ask God, He will give you your own personal testimony that His Scriptures are true!

One of the biggest evidences that the Scriptures are true is what they say about Jesus. Let's talk more about that with our next Evidence Card.

Who has a card with the cross and empty tomb?

The main message of the Scriptures is that Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth, died on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose up alive again. Do we have evidence that this is true! Yes we do!

Jesus said He was God's Son. There are only three possibilities: Either he was lying and knew he was lying, or He was a crazy person who thought He was God's Son, or He really is God's Son.

Lots of people—even those who are not Christians—agree that Jesus was a great teacher of right and wrong. If He was, He couldn't be a liar. Was He crazy? None of His other words or actions suggest that He was crazy. The only possibility left is that He's who He claims to be—Our Lord, the Son of God.

We have evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus died, yet three days later He was alive again. What happened? The Romans made sure Jesus was dead. His body was wrapped in cloths with spices, which made the grave clothes stick to the body—very difficult to remove. He was placed in a burial chamber cut into solid rock, its one exit covered by a huge stone that took several people to move. Soldiers guarded the tomb. They knew that if they went to sleep on the job they would be killed.

Three days later, the tomb was empty. The huge stone had been moved away from the tomb. The grave clothes were empty as if Jesus' body had passed right through them. The soldiers were bribed to say they'd fallen asleep, yet they were not punished for it.

Did you know that over 500 people saw Jesus after He had been raised from the dead and was alive again? The four gospels of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were written by people who knew Jesus and saw what happened with their own eyes! These and other disciples of Jesus never changed their story of what happened. They were so committed they were willing to die for it.

This is good evidence that they were telling the truth when they say they saw Jesus alive again after he was crucified.

There is much more evidence of God, of the truth of the Scriptures, and of the death and resurrection of Jesus than we have time to talk about today!

Next time you have doubt creep into your mind about God, use your eyes, ears, and brain to look at the evidence! Remember, God has put evidence all around you to show that He is real and that He really is who He says He is!

Do You Trust Me? (An object lesson for all ages)

You will need the following items for this lesson:

- 3 teaspoons of water gel (sodium polyacrylate) -- approx. 14 grams
- 1 cup of water in a glass or pitcher (transparent/translucent is best)
- 2 plastic cups (not transparent!) It is best if they are different colors

NOTE: Sodium polyacrylate can be obtained from disposable baby diapers. Pampers brand contains more than off-brands. Each Pampers diaper will contain not quite 4 grams of the powder, so 4 diapers will be needed to get the amount of sodium polyacrylate required for this experiment.

Here's how to do it: Place a new and unused disposable diaper on the piece of paper. Carefully cut through the inside lining and remove all the cotton-like material. Put all the stuffing material into a clean, zipper-lock bag.

Scoop up any of the polymer powder that may have spilled onto the paper and pour it into the bag with the stuffing. Blow a little air into the bag to make it puff up like a pillow, then seal the bag. Shake the bag for a few minutes to separate the powdery polymer from the stuffing. Carefully remove the stuffing from the bag and you are left with sodium polyacrylate!

To prepare for this lesson, without your students observing you, place 1 ½ teaspoon of water gel in each of the two plastic cups.

I am going to choose two volunteers. (Choose a student who does **not** know you very well, then choose a student who **does** know you well.) This volunteer (name) knows me very well. He/she has attended church with me and known me for years. (List any other ways they know you.) He/she has evidence that I can be trusted.

This student does not know me very well. He/she has only met me this week at Vacation Church School (or tell how long they have known you). He/she does not have much evidence that I can be trusted.

Ask the class, "Which student is going to have an easier time trusting me?"

Ask both volunteers, "Do you trust me?" (They will probably say yes. Press them a bit.) "Do you REALLY trust me? Why or why not? Do you have evidence that you can trust me? How much do you trust me? Would you trust me with your life?"

Say to the class, "The better the volunteers know me, the more likely they are to trust me and the more trust they have in me, right? They have collected more evidence that I am trustworthy. If they know me well enough and have enough evidence that I am trustworthy, they might even trust me with their life."

(Have the two volunteers sit in chairs several feet apart in the front of the room.) Now we are going to see how much you really trust me.

(Bring out the supplies for the object lesson.) Here we have some water and two cups. What I am going to do is pour this water into these two cups. (Pour ½ cup of water into each plastic cup. Make sure the students cannot see inside the plastic cups, which of course, contain the water gel.)

NOTE: It takes a couple of minutes for the water gel to absorb the water. Make sure you talk for about two minutes AFTER you pour the water in the plastic cups containing the gel and BEFORE you turn the cup upside down over the volunteer's head!

(Work with the volunteer who knows you the best first.) Now, (student's name), I am going to take this cup and hold it over your head (right side up!). (Do it.) Are you worried yet? Then in just a minute, I am going to turn the cup upside down over the top of your head. (Don't do it yet!)

Look the volunteer right in the eyes and tell him/her, "I promise you will not get wet. Do you trust me?"

(They may say yes or no!) Are you ready? Here we go! (Turn the cup upside down over their head. Of course, no water will come out because it has been absorbed by the water gel.)

See, you did NOT get wet! I promised you that you would not get wet and I kept my word. *(Set the plastic cup back on the table.)*

(Turn to the second volunteer, the student who does not know you as well.) Okay, now it's your turn.

(Pick up the second plastic cup.) I poured water into this cup, too, didn't I? *(Let the class confirm that you did.)*

(Talk to the second volunteer.) I am going to hold this cup of water over your head. *(Do it.)* And in a minute I am going to turn the cup upside down over your head.

Look the volunteer right in the eyes and tell him/her, "I promise you will not get wet. Do you trust me?" *(Let the volunteer respond. They will probably say yes.)* Aren't you worried that you are going to get wet? *(He/she will probably say no.)* Why not? *(He/she will probably say because they saw that the first volunteer did not get wet.)*

(If the volunteer says they are still worried that they will get wet, let them know that you are going to turn the cup upside down anyway!)

Are you ready? Here we go! *(Turn the cup upside down over their head. Of course, no water will come out because it has been absorbed by the water gel.)*

See, you did NOT get wet! I promised you that you would not get wet and I kept my word. *(Set the second plastic cup back on the table.)*

(Thank the volunteers and tell them they may go back to their regular seats.)

What can we learn from this object lesson?

Sometimes having faith seems hard. It can be difficult to trust God when you don't know what He is doing or when what He is doing does not seem to make sense.

It could have been hard for the students to trust me when by all appearances, I was going to dump a cup of water on their head.

Sometimes by all appearances, it seems like God has abandoned us when He really hasn't. Sometimes it looks like God won't keep His promises, when He really will. Sometimes it seems like our pain has no good purpose to it. It is in times like these that we have to have faith and trust God.

God understands and knows things that we don't. He gives us evidence that He is who He says He is. He gives us good reasons to believe in Him—then He asks us to trust Him. We have to stop trying to control our lives and be willing to give God control, believing that His plans are always for our best good—either in this life or in our eternal life.

(Student's name who knows you well) didn't have too much trouble trusting me even though things looked bad! He/she knows me well enough to trust me.

The closer we have come to God and the better we have come to know Him and His promises in the Scriptures, the easier it will be for us to trust Him! This is why it is so important to work on growing your faith now, so doubt won't overcome you during hard times.

(Student's name who does not know you well) didn't have as much trouble trusting me after seeing what happened to *(other student's name)*.

In the same manner, the testimonies of others experiences with God can help you trust Him, too!

Red Light, Green Light . . .Yellow Light (A Scripture lesson for all ages)

For this lesson, you will need the following things:

- Room to play the game *Red Light, Green Light*
- Small pictures of Joseph Smith, Nephi, Laman and Lemuel, the (unnamed) father and his son
- A large paper replica of a traffic light.
- Sticky tack

To make the large paper traffic light, you will need the following:

- A black or dark colored sheet of poster board or foam board, standard 22x28 inches
- One piece of green construction paper
- One piece of yellow construction paper
- One piece of red construction paper

Cut the sheet of black or dark colored posterboard or foam board into a 28x12 inch rectangle. If possible, use dark foam board instead of poster board to make it more sturdy.

Cut circles of about 8 inch diameter from each of the pieces of construction paper (two yellow, two red, two green).

Glue the construction paper circles to the posterboard. Red should be on top, yellow in the middle, and green on the bottom.

To prepare for the lesson, use sticky tack to attach the pictures of Scripture people to the yellow light circle.

Let the students play **Red Light, Green Light** for a few minutes. For older students, ask them how long it has been since they played this game. Encourage them to have some fun with it like they did when they were “little kids.”

Line the students up at a starting point, perhaps against the wall on the far side of the room. When you say, “green light,” they can move forward, but when you say, “red light,” they have to stop. If they move after you say red light, they have to go back to the starting point. (For the youngest students you may wish to skip this penalty.) Specify that they can only take small walking steps on a green light, so they don’t run all the way across the room on one or two green lights.

For the very last call, say, “yellow light.” The students may hesitate and not know what to do. You can ask them, “What do you do with a yellow light?” (*Slow down, hurry through?*)

Have the students go back to their seats and proceed with the lesson. Display the giant traffic light with the Scripture people attached to the yellow light circle.

Every day, Jesus wants to come and be with us. Every day, we choose to give Him a red light, a yellow light, or a green light.

The red light is if someone chooses not to believe in Jesus. It is if someone chooses to do what he or she wants to do and not what God says to do. The red light stops blessings God wants to give that person. It will stop someone from moving forward toward God’s Kingdom and eternal life with Him.

The green light is when we choose to believe in Jesus. We give Him the green light to come into our lives and be in charge of our lives. We try hard to do what He says to do. We are moving forward on the path toward God’s Kingdom and eternal life with Him.

The yellow light is like someone who wants to believe in Jesus, but they have doubts. They are still moving, but it might be pretty slowly. They are hesitating. They have to choose whether to stop or go forward. They cannot stay on yellow forever. They have to choose green or red. They have to choose to let Jesus work in

their lives and trust and obey Him or choose to not trust Him and turn Him away. Most believers in Jesus have had doubts at some point in their lives. It's what we decide to do with our doubts that is important.

Let's look at who is in the yellow light. (*Point to the pictures of Scripture people on the yellow circle.*)

Here is a father. We don't know his name. When Jesus was here on earth, this father's son had a big problem. (*See Mark 9:15-26.*) The father had tried and tried to get help for his son, but no one could heal him. Even Jesus' apostles could not heal this young man. When the father heard that Jesus was coming, he brought his son to Him and asked Jesus to heal him. The father was frustrated and struggling with doubt.

Jesus knew this. He said to the father, "If you will believe all things I shall say to you, this is possible."

The father was very honest. He cried out with tears in his eyes, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

You could say this father's faith was tiny like a mustard seed, but he wanted to believe! Sometimes when life is hard, we might find ourselves like this father and our faith might feel small, but we want to believe. It is good to know that a tiny bit of faith the size of a mustard seed can overcome a whole lot of doubt!

Jesus will honor even a little bit of faith and a desire to believe. He took that little bit of faith and worked a miracle. He healed the father's son. Did this father choose to open his heart to Jesus? Did he move to the red light or the green light? (*Move the father and his son to the green light.*)

Some people who have a yellow light might just have questions. God wants us to ask questions. He tells us in His Word to ask, seek and knock. Joseph Smith had questions. He did not know which church to join. He did what it says in God's Word, and he took his questions to God. He asked God what to do. What did God tell him? (*Let the students answer.*) Yes, to join none of them, because God was going to use Joseph to restore His true Church to earth. Did Joseph choose to believe God's answer and trust Him? Did Joseph decide to give God the red light or the green light? (*Move Joseph to the green light.*)

Here's Nephi and his brothers Laman and Lemuel. Remember how God told them to leave their home and everything they had in Jerusalem and took them on a long journey to the promised land? Nephi had questions. He wanted to know for himself. He chose to ask God, to diligently seek God. (*See 1 Nephi 3:26-32.*) God answered his questions and Nephi's faith grew stronger and stronger. Which way did Nephi choose to move? (*Move Nephi to the green light.*)

But what about Laman and Lemuel? One time Nephi found his brothers arguing about what their father had said about God. They had doubt and questions. Did they ask God? No. They said, "We haven't asked God because He doesn't talk to us." Nephi told them that if they kept God's commandments and opened their hearts to Him, God would answer them. (*See 1 Nephi 4:1-5, 7-13.*)

What did Laman and Lemuel decide to do? Did they move to the green light or the red light? (*Move them to the red light.*) Even though God gave them many evidences of His power, Laman and Lemuel made a choice to close their hearts to God. They made a choice NOT to believe.

That's very sad, isn't it? We don't want to give God a red light and close our hearts to Him. If you know anyone like Laman and Lemuel whose heart is closed to God, pray for them. Don't give up, because God wants them to believe. He wants them to give Him a green light in their lives, and He will keep giving them chances to change their mind.

Grow Your Seed of Faith (Scripture lesson for all ages)

You will need the following items for this lesson:

- A mustard seed. Since they are so tiny, stick it between two pieces of clear tape so you can hold it up and also pass it around for the students to see.
- A photo of a full-grown mustard tree.
- A photo of a dead, withered tree.
- A set of transparencies of the seed sprouting and growing using the master drawings provided.

Place the master drawing under a clear plastic sheet and trace it with permanent marker. You may use colored permanent marker for a nicer visual effect.

Do you believe this seed can grow into this plant? (*Hold up the seed, and the photo of the full-grown tree.*) When I look at this seed, I see no evidence that it can turn into this plant. How do I know that it will? (*Let the students answer. Bring up the following points if they don't, and discuss the analogies.*)

Other people we trust have planted seeds like this. They have seen the seeds grow into plants and have told us about it. This is like other's sharing their testimonies of Jesus with us.

Maybe you have planted seeds yourself and seen them grow into plants. This is like having your own testimonies of Jesus.

There are reliable books with pictures of seeds growing into plants. This is like the Scriptures telling us about Jesus.

How could I know this specific seed can grow into this specific plant? (*Hold up again the seed, and the photo of the full-grown tree.*) I would probably just have to plant the seed and tend it and see what happened, wouldn't I?

In the Book of Mormon, Alma compares growing our faith and overcoming doubts to growing a seed. He tells us that God wants us to believe in His words (Alma 16:144).

Alma 16:149-173, paraphrased:

Now as I said concerning faith, that it was not a perfect knowledge, even so it is with my words.

Experiment on my words. Test them and see if they are true. You cannot know for sure they are true at first, but if you can only WANT to believe, if you can just have a tiny bit of faith, let this desire work in you, and make a place in your mind and your heart for my words.

Now we will compare the word unto a seed. (*Show the first transparency with the drawing of the seed.*)

Make a place so that the seed can be planted in your heart. (*Layer the second transparency over the top of the first one so the heart is around the seed. Make sure the younger students understand that this is a story to help us understand how to grow our faith. We are not literally talking about planting a seed inside their bodies.*)

And if it is a true seed, or a good seed, if you don't throw it out by choosing not to believe, then it will begin to swell inside your heart. (*Layer the third transparency over the seed so it looks like it is swelling and getting bigger.*)

When you feel those swelling motions, you will begin to say to yourselves, This must be a good seed—the word is good—because it is beginning to help me understand more about God. It is beginning to be delicious to me.

Won't this increase your faith? Yes it will, but the seed is not done growing yet.

The seed continues to swell and sprout and grow. (*Layer the fourth transparency that shows roots and sprouts coming out of the seed.*) You can tell it is a good seed! You know for sure that the seed is good—that God’s Word is good—because it begins to sprout and grow. You understand more about God and it brings light and joy into your heart.

Now as the seed begins to grow into a tree, you must take good care of it and nourish it, so it can grow strong roots and branches and have fruit that you can eat. (*Layer the fifth transparency which shows the seed growing into a tree.*)

How would you nourish and take good care of a young tree that was growing in your garden?

Water it, pull the weeds that grow near it, make sure it has rich soil to grow in, keep bugs from damaging it.

How can you nourish and take good care of the Word of God growing in your heart?

Read the Scriptures, pray, go to church and worship with others who believe in Jesus, go to Sunday school and VCS, read good books that help you think about God, pull the weeds of bad influences that might choke out the tree (Music, movies, books, video games that do not glorify God; friends who try to get you to do wrong things, etc)

And now behold, if you nourish it with much care, it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

But if you neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, it will not grow strong roots, and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorches it, because it doesn’t have strong roots, it withers away.

What would you do with this tree? (*Show a picture of a dead withered tree.*) You would chop it down and throw it away.

Now if the tree dies, it is not because the seed wasn’t good, Neither is it because the fruit of the tree would not be tasty. But it is because you chose not to nourish and care for the tree, so you do not get to eat the fruit from it.

And so it is that if you will not nourish and take good care of the word of God in your hearts, and look forward with eyes of faith to the fruit that will come from it in the future, then you will not be able to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

But if you DO nourish the Word of God in your hearts and take good care of it with patience and diligence, it will be like a tree springing up to everlasting life. And the fruit you eat from it will be more sweet and precious than anything else in the world. (*Layer the last transparency that shows the fruit on the tree.*)

What is this fruit that Alma was talking about? Did he mean an apple or a pear? No, he was talking about the pure and precious “fruit” of the love of God and eternal life with Jesus. There is nothing more precious than this!

And you shall feast upon this fruit, even until ye are filled, that you hunger no more; neither shall you thirst.

This will be the reward of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long suffering, while you carefully took care of the tree and waited for it to grow and have fruit for you to eat.

Journaling Your Testimonies

You will need the following items for this lesson:

- A spiral notebook for each student
- A “Journaling Your Testimonies” box for each student to glue inside the cover of their notebook
(Note that there are different ones for younger and older students.)
- A cover title to glue on the front of their notebook.
- Glue sticks

Give each student a notebook, and a paper with the Journaling Your Testimonies tips and prompts. Allow them to select a cover title. Tell them where to glue these (cover title on outside front, tips and prompts inside the cover). Let them glue them in place and write their name on their journals while you talk about how to use the journals.

One of the most important things you can do to insure you make it through times of trouble and doubt is to write down your testimonies of how God helps you and blesses you. You can also write down what you are praying about in your journal and keep a list of things you are thankful for, also!

Any notebook will work! If you have a smart phone, you can download a journaling app. There are many to choose from.

Even the very youngest children can draw pictures of their testimonies and blessings.

How can you get started writing in your journal?

- Think about testimonies God has given you:
 - Has God ever helped you find something that was lost?
 - God helped someone you know who was sick get well?
 - Has God ever kept you safe and comforted you when you were scared?
 - Has God ever answered your prayers?
 - Have you ever felt God’s love for you by something special He did for you or showed you?
 - Have you ever felt God’s Spirit?
- Write down questions you have for God and then pray about them. Write down any answers God gives you. Be sure to look carefully for these answers, since they might not come in the way you expect.
- Write a letter to God. Be truthful and tell Him how you feel. (He knows anyway.) Tell Him where you are right now in your journey with Him, and where you wish you were. Describe how you see God and how you see yourself at this point in your life’s story.
- Write down what you are pray about, and when God answers specific prayers, write down how He did it, so you will have a record of His power in your life.
- Keep a list of things you are thankful for and remember that everything good comes from God.
- Write down favorite scriptures and inspirational sayings in your journal.

When you're feeling discouraged, reading your spiritual journal will remind you of all that God has done for you and for your family. Over time, you will learn to trust God more as you look back in your journal and remember the goodness and power God has shown in your life and the lives of those near you.

The Proof is in the Pudding (An object lesson for all ages)

(Based on an object lesson by Susan Smart)

You will need the following items for this lesson:

- *A recipe from a family member or friend*
- *A copy of the pudding recipe card for each student*
- *1/4 cup milk*
- *1 tbsp. of instant pudding mix*
- *Ziploc bags*

There is an old saying, “The proof is in the pudding.” Actually the original saying is, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” This means we can only judge how good something is (or tastes) when we have used it (or tasted it).

In the same way, the proof that God’s Word is true will only be revealed as we actively put it to use in our lives—reading it, praying about it, obeying it. John 7:17 says, “*If any man will **do** his will, he shall **know** of the doctrine, whether it be of God . . .*”

Have you ever used someone else’s recipe? Has your mom ever used someone else’s recipe? This is a recipe that was given to me by someone I trust. (*Explain who it was—family member, special friend, etc.*)

My (friend/family member) made this recipe and said it tasted great! It was so good, he/she wanted to share it, so he/she gave me a copy of the recipe so I could make it myself.

I believed that if I followed the recipe, the (food) I made would taste good, too. This is not because I thought I was a good cook, but because I trusted that this was a good recipe.

Would I get much good out of this recipe if I just stuck it in my kitchen drawer and forgot about it? No. How about if I carried it around with me everywhere I go? Still no.

To experience the good food this recipe promises, I had to take a step of faith and actually DO what the recipe says to do.

The Scriptures are like a wonderful recipe for life. Other people we love and trust share this recipe with us. Maybe your mom and dad have shared this recipe for life with you. Maybe your grandma and grandpa have shared this recipe of following God’s Word.

We can see the good this recipe is working in their lives. We can believe that the outcome of obeying God’s Word will be good, but until we actually DO it—until we actually put God’s Word into use in our own lives—we don’t experience all the good that will come from it.

Everyone has doubts sometimes, but don’t let doubt cause you to stick this recipe in the drawer and forget about it or to carry it around with you, but never follow what it says to do. Step over your doubts, and step forward in faith. Experiment on God’s Word. Go ahead and begin to obey God’s Word and put it to use in your life—then God will confirm to you that He is real. You will “taste and see that the Lord is good”! The proof of the pudding is in the eating!

“Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalms 34:8).

Here is our recipe. You can decide what to do with it. I hope you will decided to DO what the instructions say so you can taste and see if it is good.

Instant Pudding in a Bag

Ingredients:

1/4 cup milk
1 Tbsp. of instant pudding mix
Ziploc bags

Instructions:

- Pour the pudding mix into a bag.
- Pour the milk in the bag next.
- Zip your bag shut carefully and make sure it is sealed.
- Add a second Ziploc bag (or two) to prevent spills
- Squish/squash the bag for 2-5 minutes
- Remove the outer bag(s)
- Cut a hole in the corner of the bag and squeeze your pudding into a cup. . . or directly into your mouth!

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For older students. Copy and cut out one for each student.

Journaling Your Testimonies and Blessing!

One of the most important things you can do to insure you make it through times of trouble and doubt is to **write down your testimonies** of how God helps you and blesses you. You can also write down what you are praying about in your journal and keep a list of things you are thankful for, also!

Any notebook will work! If you have a smart phone, you can download a journaling app. There are many to choose from.

How can you get started writing in your journal?

- Think about testimonies God has given you:
 - Has God ever helped you find something that was lost?
 - God helped someone you know who was sick get well?
 - Has God ever kept you safe and comforted you when you were scared?
 - Has God ever answered your prayers?
 - Have you ever felt God's love for you by something special He did for you or showed you?
 - Have you ever felt God's Spirit?
- Write down questions you have for God and then pray about them. Write down any answers God gives you. Be sure to look carefully for these answers, since they might not come in the way you expect.
- Write a letter to God. Be truthful and tell Him how you feel. (He knows anyway.) Tell Him where you are right now in your journey with Him, and where you wish you were. Describe how you see God and how you see yourself at this point in your life's story.
- Write down what you are pray about, and when God answers specific prayers, write down how He did it, so you will have a record of His power in your life.
- Keep a list of things you are thankful for and remember that everything good comes from God. Try to write one or two things on this list each day.
- Write down favorite scriptures and inspirational sayings in your journal.

When you're feeling discouraged, reading your spiritual journal will remind you of all that God has done for you and for your family. Over time, you will learn to trust God more as you look back in your journal and remember the goodness and power God has shown in your life and the lives of those near you.

For younger students. Copy and cut out one for each student.

Journaling Your Testimonies and Blessing!

An important thing you can do to help your faith grow so that you can make it through times of trouble and doubt is to **write down your testimonies** of how God helps you and blesses you. You can also write down what you are praying about in your journal. Keep a list of things you are thankful for also! Any notebook will work!

***PARENTS:** Please help your young child to journal their blessings and testimonies. They can dictate what they want to say as you write it down. Then allow them to illustrate it!*

Brief journaling is a great supertime or bedtime routine to help your child write down one or two blessings which they would like to remember from the day. We hope you, the parent, will be inspired to journal, too!

How can you get started writing in your journal?

- Think about testimonies God has given you:
 - Has God ever helped you find something that was lost?
 - God helped someone you know who was sick get well?
 - Has God ever kept you safe and comforted you when you were scared?
 - Has God ever answered your prayers?
 - Have you ever felt God's love for you by something special He did for you or showed you?
 - Have you ever felt God's Spirit?
- Write down questions you have for God and then pray about them. Write down any answers God gives you. Be sure to look carefully for these answers, since they might not come in the way you expect.
- Write a letter to God. Tell Him how you feel. Thank Him for the good things He has given you.
- Write down things and people you are praying for, and when God answers your prayers, write down how He did it, so you will have a record of His power in your life.
- Keep a list of things you are thankful for and remember that everything good comes from God. Try to write one or two things on this list each day.
- Write down favorite scriptures and inspirational sayings in your journal.

When you're feeling sad, reading your spiritual journal will remind you of all that God has done for you and for your family. Over time, you will learn to trust God more as you look back in your journal and remember the goodness and power God has shown in your life and the lives of those near you.

Friday: Jesus is calling you to SHINE for Him (Trade your weaknesses for His strength!)

Theme scripture: *“Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:18).*

Objective: The students should understand that Jesus is the light of the world. When we answer the call of Jesus and come to Him, He touches our lives so that His light fills us and shines out of us for others to see. We do not want to allow others to blow out our light. We do not want to keep the light only for ourselves. We want our lights to shine brightly in the darkness to light the way for others. To do this, we need to come to Jesus often to “recharge” our light! The students should understand that even as children, or often ESPECIALLY as children, there are many things they can do to let their light shine for Jesus!

Additional Scriptures:

Psalms 18:28 *“For thou wilt light my candle; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.”*

Proverbs 4:18 *“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*

Isaiah 5:20 *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

Isaiah 60:1 *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”*

Matthew 6:22 *“The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single to the glory of God, thy whole body shall be full of light.”*

2 Corinthians 4:6 *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

John 12:46 *“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:5 *“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”*

1 John 2:8-11 *“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing was of old ordained of God; and is true in him, and in you; because the darkness is past in you, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”*

2 Nephi 7:21 *“For I the Lord, the King of heaven, will be their king; and I will be a light upon them forever, that hear my words.”*

Mosiah 8:82 *“He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.”*

Mosiah 11:192 *“I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God.”*

Alma 15:51 *“And thus we see the great call of the diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord; and thus we see the great reason of sorrow, and also of rejoicing; sorrow because of death and destruction among men, and joy because of the light of Christ unto life.”*

3 Nephi 8:49 *“Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you.”*

3 Nephi 8:53-54 *“And behold, ye shall meet together oft, and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you, and forbid them not; But ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft, ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name; therefore hold up your light that it may shine unto the world.”*

3 Nephi 8:55 *“Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.”*

D&C 10:12a *“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world.”*

D&C 50:6b *“and that which doth not edify, is not of God, and is darkness: that which is of God is light, and he that receiveth light and continueth in God, receiveth more light, and that light groweth brighter and brighter, until the perfect day.”*

D&C 83:7b-c *“For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”*

D&C 85:18a *“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you, and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.”*

D&C 90:6a *“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth; and light and truth forsaketh that evil one.”*

Matthew 13:45 *“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Philippians 2:13-16 *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings; That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life.”*

Are You a Glow-in-the-Dark Christian? (An object lesson for all ages)

Based on a testimony by Megan Norman

For this lesson, you will need the following items:

- *A candle and a match or lighter to light it with*
- *A glow-in-the-dark star or other object (not a glow stick, but an object that must absorb light before it will glow)*
- *A flashlight, solar powered if possible*
- *A card for each student with a picture or short scripture verse on it (as appropriate for their ages.)*
- *A pitcher of water just in case of an emergency with the fire used in this lesson.*

Cover the windows, and turn the lights in the room on and off as indicated in this lesson. Pass out the cards so each student has one.

Are you shining for Jesus like a candle? (Hold up the unlit candle.) That sounds good, doesn't it?

A candle is easily lit by fire. (Light the candle and set in a safe holder in a safe location away from any flammable objects, then turn off the lights.) Its light shines brightly in a dark room. It does not make just a

little light for itself, but it sends out light to brighten the room for others to see. It gives out enough light to light up our pathway on a dark night.

Can you see (or read) your card by the light of this candle? *(They should be able to see it.)*

However, the light of a candle is also easily put out. Any small breeze will make the flame flicker and waver. *(Blow toward the candle to make it flicker.)* Just a little puff of a breeze can make its light go out. There may be no warning that the flame is about to die. One second it is burning brightly, and the next second it is gone *(blow the candle out)* and it becomes part of the dark room.

(Let the room be dark for a few seconds before turning on the light. For the youngest students, you may wish to make sure there is still enough light in the darkness that they do not become afraid.)

We want to shine our lights more faithfully than this candle. We don't want to let the troubles in our lives blow out our light. Do you remember some of the things we talked about this week that could blow out your light if you are not careful? (Anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, not repenting, doubt, fear.)

Are you a glow-in-the-dark follower of Jesus? *(Hold up the glow-in-the-dark object.)*

Something that glows in the dark has to have a source of light to absorb before it will glow. *(Hold the object—which we will call a star—up to the light of the flashlight to charge it up.)* Once they absorb the light, they will glow in a dark room. *(Turn out the lights.)*

This glow-in-the-dark star cannot be blown out like the candle. Can you blow out this glowing star? *(Let several students try.)* The star's light will slowly fade over time. This is a warning that it needs to be recharged by its light source again before being ready to go back into the darkness to glow.

It seems like enough to glow in the dark with the light of Jesus, doesn't it? A breeze (or the trials in our life) cannot blow out our light, and when we notice our light is growing dim, we can recharge by from the light of Jesus—by going to church, reading the Scriptures, and praying. Sounds good, doesn't it?

But . . . does this glow-in-the-dark star light up the room? Can you see (read) your cards by its light? No. Its light is very dim.

Glow-in-the-dark things are pretty to look at, but are useless when it comes to brightening a dark room. Have you ever tried to walk outside at night by the light of a glow stick? Glow-in-the-dark things don't give out enough light to light anyone's way on a dark night. *(Turn on the lights.)*

Do we really want to only shine bright enough with God's love that people might notice us, but their lives are not changed? Like a glow-in-the-dark star, are we going to just keep the light all to ourselves and not shine it out to brighten the way of others around us?

No. We don't want to let our light be easily blown out like the candle or have just a little dim and useless light like the glow-in-the-dark star.

How about this flashlight? *(Hold up the flashlight.)*

This is a solar flashlight. It is powered by the sun. Once it is charged, you can take this flashlight into the darkest of places, and it will continue to shine brightly. *(Turn off the lights. Turn on the flashlight.)* Like things that glow in the dark, its light will eventually start to dim as a warning that it needs to get back to its source of light to recharge. Can the light from this flashlight be blown out by a breeze? No.

What makes a flashlight different from things that glow in the dark is that the flashlight shares its light with everyone. See how this flashlight lights up our dark room? This flashlight will help others see their way. Can you see (read) your cards by its light? Yes!

If you have ever been in a group of people walking on a dark path, you will notice that they are all drawn to the flashlight's light and will hover as close as they can behind it as they try to walk down the path. People can't help but to be drawn to the light to prevent themselves from stumbling around in the darkness. People who see how brightly the flashlight shines will eventually want flashlights of their own so they can help bring more light to the darkness.

Another cool thing a flashlight does is that it can be a source for things that glow in the dark. Did you notice how I used this flashlight to charge up the glow-in-the-dark star. (Use the flashlight to charge the star with light again and hold it up.)

You can put a flashlight up to something that glows in the dark to keep it glowing a little longer before it eventually needs to go back out into the sun to get fully recharged.

We want to shine our lights for Jesus like this flashlight shines! We want to be charged by the Son—that is Jesus, the Son of God. We want to shine our lights into the darkness of this world and share the light of Jesus with others. We want others to see the light of Jesus in us, and want to have that for themselves. As long as we keep going back to the source of our light (Jesus), we can continue to shine all of our lives.

So ask yourself—Do you want to be a bright glowing candle that lights the room but is easily blown out by trials and hard times? Or do you want to be a glow-in-the-dark star that shines a pretty, but dim light that is not enough to help anyone else but yourself?

Or do you want to be a flashlight that shines brightly not only for yourself but for everyone around you?

I want to shine for Jesus like a solar flashlight. How about you?

We do not want to HIDE the light Jesus gives us, but let it shine out to others. *(Turn off the lights, with the flashlight turned on. Then cover the flashlight with something that will hide its light.)*

What if I covered up this flashlight? It is still shining, but no one can see its light. Its light is not useful at all when it is hidden. It is not going anyone any good like this, is it?

(Uncover the flashlight.)

Jesus said, (paraphrased from Matthew 5:16-17) "I give to you to be the light of the world. Would someone light a candle and put it under a basket so its light is hidden? No, but he would put it on a candle holder in the middle of the room so it gives light to everyone who is in the house."

Don't be afraid to let your good deeds shine out so that everyone can see that you know Jesus. If you live with your light shining, other people will see it and they will want to find out how to have light in their lives like you do. Your light can point them to Jesus!

Being a "light of the world" means working our hardest to live like Jesus Christ, because He is our example. He is the light of the world.

Matthew 5:18 *"Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father [God] who is in heaven."*

The Brother of Jared and the Shining Stones (A Scripture story for all ages)

Book of Mormon, Ether 1:7-85, 3:2-3

For this lesson, you will need 16 clear glass gems, such as are used to fill vases.

For younger children, consider using a flannel graph to tell this story.

God led several groups of people to this land of America, the promised land. Jared and his brother and their families, along with a few other families, were led here from the tower of Babel.

Do you remember the story of the tower of Babel in the Bible? The people became proud and thought they did not need God. They decided they could build a tower to get to heaven without God. Until this time, all the people on the whole earth spoke the same language. Because of their pride, God had to change their language so they could not understand each other's speech. The people were scattered far and wide.

The brother of Jared prayed to God and asked Him not to change their speech or the speech of their family and friends. God said He would not change their language. Not only that, God said He would lead them to a new home in a promise land.

Jared and his brother and their friends and families traveled a long way. God went before them in a cloud and told them which way to go.

When they reached the seashore, God told them they were to build barges to cross the ocean. The barges had to be tight so water could not get into them, because God said they would be like a whale in ocean and the waves would crash over the top of them.

The problem was that the barges were so tight that no air or light could get into them. The brother of Jared prayed and asked God what to do about these problems. God told him how to make openings in the top and bottom of the barges that could be opened as they needed to get fresh air to breathe.

The brother of Jared asked God about having light inside the barges. God asked him, "What do you want Me to do so you can have light in the barges? You cannot have glass windows because the waves would break them. You cannot have fire inside the barges because you will be tossed about too much."

The brother of Jared thought about this. He went to the mountain and molten out of a rock sixteen small stones—two for each of the eight barges. Molten means he got the rock very hot until it melted and then shaped the stones. They were white and clear like glass, perhaps something like this. (*Show the sixteen clear glass gems.*)

The brother of Jared carried the stones to the top of the mountain, and prayed to God, asking Him to touch the stones with His finger that they would shine in the darkness.

"I know, O Lord," he prayed, "that You have all power and can do whatever You will for our benefit."

And the Lord stretched forth His hand and touched the stones one by one with His finger.

Because of his great faith, the brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord, and then the Lord showed Himself to the brother of Jared and talked to him, telling him many wonderful things.

When the brother of Jared came down out of the mountain, he put two of the shining stones in each barge. And so the Lord caused the stones to shine in the darkness to give light unto the men, women, and children in the barges so they did not have to cross the ocean in darkness.

Think about this:

The brother of Jared had to think, and work, and prepare the sixteen stones. Then the Lord touched the stones and filled them with light.

We are like the sixteen stones. We need to prepare ourselves so that the Lord can touch us and fill us with His light.

We cannot shine with light of our own. We must be filled with light from Jesus, who is the light of the world.

Flashlight Scavenger Hunt (An activity for all ages)

Moroni 7:18 *“Wherefore I beseech you, brethren, that ye should **search diligently in the light of Christ**, that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.”*

For this activity, you will need the following items:

- *Flashlights—one for each student*
- *Scavenger hunt cards—at least one for each student*
- *Small candies or prizes—one for each student*
- *Binder rings—one for each student*
- *Optional reflective tape*

Lesson Preparation:

Cut out the two sets of cards—scavenger hunt cards and the rest of the cards. Cut out enough for each student to have a full set of scavenger cards—but you are only going to hide ONE complete set. The rest will be passed out to students after the scavenger hunt. The point is for each student to find at least one card during the scavenger hunt, but to take home a full set of scavenger hunt cards.

All the cards should have holes punched in the upper left hand corner so they can be put on the binder rings.

Please note that there are different sets of cards for older and younger students.

Hide the scavenger hunt cards along with small wrapped candies or small toys/prizes.

Make sure the cards will be visible when a flashlight shines on them. A great way to do this is to **attach a small piece of reflective tape to each card**. When the flashlight shines on it, the tape will “light up.”

Lay out the rest of the cards on a table for the students to choose from after the scavenger hunt activity.

Darken the room before the scavenger hunt. With younger children, you may wish to not totally darken the room, but leave enough light so that they are not afraid.

Presenting the Lesson:

Just like the brother of Jared prepared the stones to be filled with the light of Jesus, we need to prepare our lives and ask Him to fill us with His light. How can we do that? We are going to use our flashlights and search for ways we can prepare and be filled with the light of Jesus.

(Let them move around the room and hunt for cards. Let them know ahead of time how many cards they may collect so that each student finds at least one card.)

When the students have found all the cards, discuss the ways listed on their cards in which they can prepare to be filled with the light of Jesus. Pass out the rest of the cards, so each student has a full set of scavenger hunt cards to take home.)

Once the stones were filled with light, it would have been no good if the brother of Jared did not take them into the darkness of the barges and let them shine. If he covered them up or hid them away, they could not shine and give light to everyone in the barges.

So we need to shine out with the light Jesus fills us with. How can we do that? There are many, many ways, but all of them depend upon us loving God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

We cannot do this by ourselves, any more than the stones could shine light by themselves. They had to be filled with light by the touch of Jesus' hand. Jesus said, *"Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you"* (3 Nephi 8:49).

When the light of Jesus' love fills us, He will help us to be cheerful and thoughtful of others, even when we are going through bad times of our own. He will help our light to shine all the time, not just when we are having a good day.

Then, when we tell people Jesus loves them, they will know it is true. They will know He has sent us to make their lives brighter. They will see and welcome His light that shines from us.

The light of love is much better than the darkness of a selfish heart. It makes us happy and it makes others happy. It spreads from person to person, just like a fire spreads from tree to tree. Selfishness darkens the world, but the light of Jesus' love brings brightness to everyone around.

If we love Jesus, if we let His love and His Word fill our hearts, the light of His life and love will shine out in all we say and all we do!

What good works can you do for Jesus? Did you know that God has created and designed each one of you with special ways you can let your light shine? He had given each of you individual talents and ways that you can shine for Him. Remember, don't try to do these good works on your own. Be sure to fill up with the light of Jesus first, and then shine it out with good works that bring glory to Him.

"Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:18).

On the table are more cards with some specific ways you might be able to shine. Pick out several of them that you feel YOU can do. Take them home and work on DOING these things to shine for Jesus.

(Help the students choose their cards and put all their cards on the binder rings. Let them take the cards and prizes home.)

"Don't shine so others can see you. Shine so that through you others can see Him." C. S. Lewis

Additional Teaching Points for Older Students:

Believe it or not, people are always watching you. When you chose to shine, you're showing others who Jesus Christ really is and why they should follow Him too.

Did you know that your actions influence unbelievers, and the way they perceive Jesus Christ Himself? Think about it.

If Christians are doing everything the non-Christians are doing, why would anyone want to change their ways and follow Christ? The sad thing is, they wouldn't.

We are called to be a "peculiar people." We are called to be different. That can be hard, but obeying God can also bring great joy.

When we make our covenant to follow Jesus, He gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost and uniquely equips us to "shine" His light to the world. When we live based on the light of Jesus that is within us, we are truly living. We are doing what He wants us to do. We are in His will. We are living with purpose and with power. It is amazing. It is powerful. It is exciting!

10 Ways to Let Your Light Shine Bright:

1. Remember your aim is to please the Lord, not other people.
2. Speak in ways that are right, true, honorable, kind, and trustworthy.
3. Listen to others opinions. Be slow to anger and quick to listen.
4. Decide if others are pulling you into sin. You may need to retreat and bless them through prayer.
5. Realize that Christ has already determined your value, so now you are free from the need to please others.
6. Authentically praise the name of the Lord when given the opportunity.
7. Pray! Pray! Pray! Trust that God will lead you in His ways.
8. Speak truth—no matter what. Balance it with love.
9. Be who God created you to be, despite how others feel. God created you as you for a good reason.
10. Daily immerse yourself in the Word of the God.

When we shine light – when we let our light shine bright – God sends it into dark places. We may not even know the distance that our light will shine. He will send it far and he will send it wide. Our job is to keep our eyes on him and trust Him as we let Him lead.

Practicing the Gift of Giving (All ages)

We are going to practice letting our lights shine in real life! Today we are going to have some special guests come and visit us. These are grandmas and grandpas and great-grandmas and grandpas. We can shine the light of Jesus' love to them.

First of all, we are going to make gifts to give them. *(Choose appropriate choices for the ages of your class. Suggestions are bookmarks, handmade cards and notes, drawing (from the youngest students), or Scripture verses the students color.)*

When our special guests come, we are going to let our lights shine and serve them in as many ways as possible. We can be quiet and pay attention to what our guest say. We can give them smiles, and if you feel like it, you may give them a hug. These are great ways to let your light shine.

(You may also serve your guests a snack and drink. Designate children ahead of time who will serve the snack and drink. Then all the children can give them the cards, bookmarks, etc which they have made.)

One of the best ways we can shine our lights for Jesus is to pray for others. When our guests are here, we will ask them what their needs are, then we will take turns praying for whatever it is that they need. It may seem scary to pray out loud, but remember, we should be bold in sharing the light Jesus gives us.

(Consider praying ahead of time in your classroom for the children to be bold and be able to pray out loud for our guests. You may wish to ask for volunteers before our guests arrive.)

For older children, you may choose to have some children read a short scripture or poem or share in other ways with our guests.

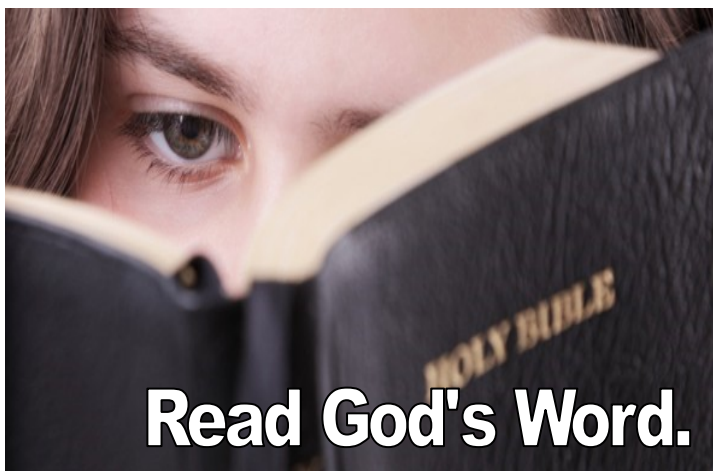
You may also ask the guests if they would like to share a testimony with the children.



Pray--Talk to God often.



Go to church.



Read God's Word.



Ask God to fill your heart with CHARITY, the pure love of Christ.



Forgive others...

and ask anyone you have hurt to forgive you.



Obey your Mom & Dad...

even when you don't feel like it.



Praise God

every day for how great He is!



Ask God to show you how He wants YOU to let your light shine!

**When you are in a church service,
ask God to help you listen and
understand and remember
what you hear.**

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth.

Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons of God, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, that we may have this hope, that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen. (Moroni 7:51-53)

There are times when obeying our parents can be really tough. We all think we know enough to make our own decisions. But do we really? God tells us in the Bible that it is a foolish person who will not receive instructions and learning. Our parents can lead us in the path God has for us...if we let them. For most of us, our parents offer advice and discipline out of love, and we would do well to listen and learn from what they have to say. ● Yet no one says obeying our parents is easy. Sometimes it feels like our parents are from a whole other world. We don't always understand God, either, but we know that what God does is for our own good. In the case of our parents, it's usually that way, too. Obedience is difficult. It takes work. But it is right and will bring us closer to God. God is our Heavenly Father. If we cannot obey our earthly parents, how are we to obey our Heavenly one?

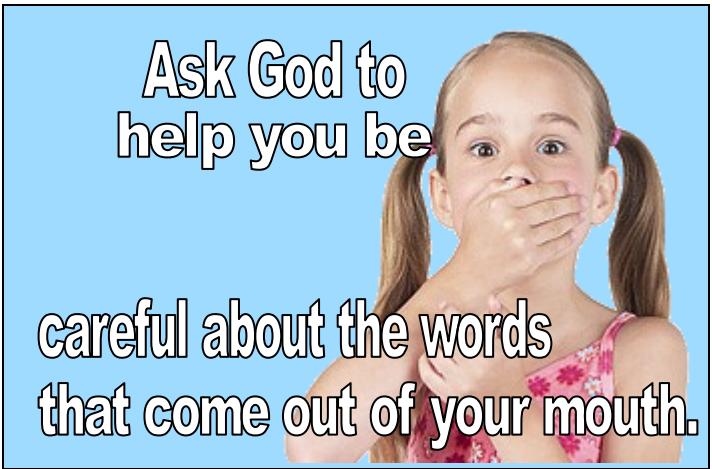
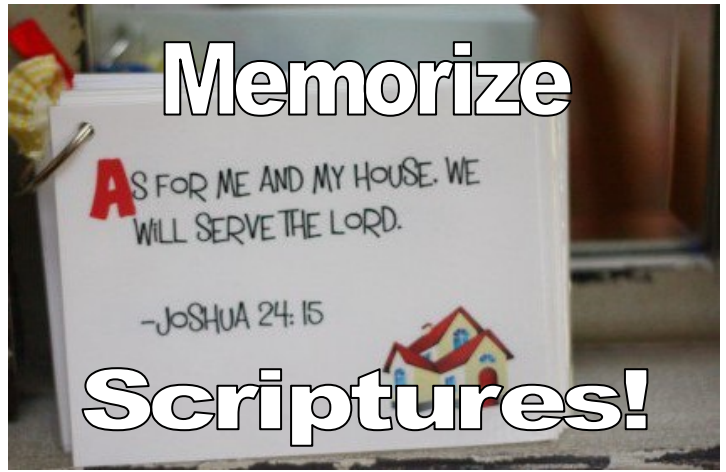
Make some quiet time when you can pray and listen to what God has to say to you. It's hard to hear God's voice when we are always busy doing something. Take some time to be still.

There is power in God's Word. Read the Scriptures daily. Ask God to help you understand what you read. Ask your mom, dad, or other grownups who follow Jesus to help you understand what you read, too. Write favorite Scriptures verses on cards that you can keep near you to read often (beside your bed, in your backpack, etc). Or write them in your journal.

Forgive anyone who you feel has wronged you. Even if you don't think you are angry with anyone, ask God to help you know if there is someone you hold a grudge toward or have not forgiven.

If there is anyone you have hurt, go to them and ask him or her to forgive you.

I will praise you, O Lord, for You are God and beside You there is no Savior. Great is Your wisdom and marvelous are Your ways, and the extent of Your doing, none can find out. Your purposes will never fail, neither is there anyone who can stop Your plans. From eternity to eternity You are the same and Your years never fail. You have all power and all wisdom both in heaven and in earth. You know all things. I confess that neither I nor any person can understand all the things that You, O Lord, understand.



Ask God to give you testimonies about Him, how much He loves you, and the truth of His Gospel.

Thank God every day for the blessings He gives you. Ask Him to help you see the blessing you have and be thankful for them! You can keep a list of blessings and things you are thankful for in your journal.

Ask God to help you to stop trying to control your life and to let HIM control your life.

Tell God you are sorry for things you have done that you know are not pleasing to Him. Ask God to help you see the “hidden” sins in your life and to be willing to repent and turn away from them.

Ask God to help you choose things that are good—and to recognize and stay away from people, books, movies, video games, magazines, etc. that are a bad influence and will turn your heart away from Him.

