

Four Chapter Gospel through Scripture

In the beginning God created heaven and earth...then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. So God created man in His own image. Like God did God make man; male and female He created them. Then God looked over all He made, and it was excellent in every way. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day...when the woman saw that the tree was good for food...a delight to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, she took of its forbidden fruit and ate...she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked; and sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons. That evening they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; they hid themselves among the trees. The Lord God called, “Why hide?” And the man Adam said, “I heard the sound of Thee in the garden. I was afraid, because I was naked...” Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glory. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All these new things are from God who brought us back to Himself through what Christ Jesus did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into His favor and be reconciled to Him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to Himself, no longer counting men’s sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell. We are Christ’s ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you as though Christ Himself were here pleading with you, receive the love He offers you—be reconciled to God. For God took the sinless Christ and poured into Him our sins. Then, in exchange, He poured God’s goodness into us!

Then I saw a new heaven and earth; for the first heaven and earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. It was a glorious sight, like a bride adorned for her groom. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them. They shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And then Jesus told them, “You are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to **everyone, everywhere.**”



DEVO BOOK SERIES B

4 Chapter Gospel

Creation

Fall

Rescue

Restoration

Instructions for using this book: The devotionals in this booklet are contributed by various individuals. They are provided as a guide. Share the devotional duties among your volunteers. Learn how God is working in each volunteer’s life. Listening to the faith stories of our co-workers will grow each one of us in the process.

Series B Unit 1 Lesson 1

4 Chapter Gospel Overview

Romans 1:16-For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

Truth: God has a plan for all of life.

Response: Participate in God's plan.

Work is often viewed as a curse. However, it was given to us before the fall. Made in God's image, we exercise our creativity and our ability to organize things into new tools or services. According to Genesis 2:15, God made man and woman to tend the garden in community with him and one another. In nearly every job there are ways to be creative, to make a process more efficient, or create something that had not existed before. The creativity we use in our work is a reflection of the Lord's character. At creation, things were as God intended. Later on, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and attempted to become gods themselves. This resulted in a separation from God and a curse levied on all humanity. Here is where "toil" and "sweat" enter into the equation. In our own daily work, we experience the toil and sweat by having to do jobs we don't enjoy, facing enmity between ourselves and our coworkers, and struggling with all the selfish ambition that can undermine what we do.

Thanks to God, our final condition is not fallen, but redeemed through Jesus Christ for those who accept him. 2 Corinthians 5:19 tells us, "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." Redemption was and is the untangling of what humanity did to itself through the fall.

Scripture speaks about Christ's return and final conquest of sin in passages like Matthew 24, 2 Peter 3 and the book of Revelation. The four-chapter gospel is a helpful way to provide context to our broader thoughts on work and vocation. But it also provides insight into our day-to-day work that can help us be better employees, managers, and witnesses of the gospel to everyone around us. Think about how creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration impact your life.

<https://tifwe.org/the-four-chapter-gospel-in-our-work/>

Easter- 2

John 11:25-Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

Truth: Jesus came to earth to give me eternal life.

Response: Begin a relationship with Jesus so you will live forever.

Easter Brings Hope

Death seems so cruel, so harsh, and so final. That is what the disciples were feeling when they saw their Lord, whom they had left everything to follow, hanging on the cross. They were devastated. Death had crushed them. But if they would have gone back in their memories, they would have recalled an important event and statement Jesus had made.

They would have remembered Jesus standing at the tomb of his close friend Lazarus. They would have remembered that Jesus did something completely unexpected: He wept (see John 11:35). Jesus wept, because He knew that death was not part of God's original plan. Humanity was not meant to grow old, to suffer with disease, or to die. But because of the sin of Adam and Eve, sin entered the human race, and death followed with it. And death spread to all of us. Jesus wept, because it broke His heart. But standing there at Lazarus' tomb, Jesus also delivered these hope-filled words: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). Death is not the end. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves it.

If you have put your faith in Christ, then Easter means that you will live forever in the presence of God. Easter brings hope to the person who has been devastated by death. Have you told others about this great hope of eternal life through believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus?

<http://www.christianity.com/devotionals/todays-devotionals/easter-devotional-march-19.html>

Easter- 1

Romans 5:8-But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Truth: Jesus loves you and me so much that He was willing to die on the cross for our sins.

Response: Accept Jesus' love and begin a relationship with Him.

What a Gift!

At one time or another, we choose wrong over right: to lie, steal, curse, or to be resentful, bitter, or jealous of another person. Because we are made in God's image and created to be in relationship with Him, when we violate His character, we separate ourselves from Him and sever the relationship. Still God wants to restore this relationship and is willing to forgive even when we're not sorry. Romans 5:8 says: "God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God did not wait for us to come to Him; for God knew that left to ourselves, it would never happen: "God looks down from Heaven to see if there are any who seek after God...[but] no one seeks for God... they have all turned aside." Psalm 14:2-3; Romans 3:11

And so, before the beginning of time, God arranged a rescue mission to extend forgiveness to those who didn't know to ask. Easter is the celebration of this amazing gift. 2,000 years ago, the Son of God willingly left the glory of Heaven and came to earth, wrapped in human flesh, to become the complete sacrifice for sin. Yet, when we look at the Cross, we often forget that Jesus suffered something far greater than physical death: He suffered spiritual separation from God the Father so we wouldn't have to. The eternal God-head was torn apart for us. The penalty for sin is not the Cross; that's the symbol. The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God, and only the eternal God could pay that price.

The greatest gift ever given is not God's forgiveness that is now available to us, but rather God's Son through whom forgiveness was made possible. Have you told someone about that wonderful gift of redemption?

<http://www1.cbn.com/devotions/what-a-gift>

Series B Unit 1 Lesson 2

Introducing the Bible

Psalms 119:89-Your word, LORD is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens.

Truth: God's Word is all true and needs to be my instruction book.

Response: Memorize scripture so I can use it in my life.

Inspired Word of God

There is no question that men wrote the Bible, but what were they writing? Were they writing from their own thoughts and prejudices, or are the words written directly from God?

Both Paul and Peter declare the source of the scripture, first in 2 Timothy where Paul tells us that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful..." (2 Timothy 3:16), and then again in 2nd Peter where Peter says, "...prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

And unlike any other form of literature out in the world today, the Bible is very unique in that it is active, and living. The Bible is not comprised of just words on paper, but rather the Words of God, the very words that touch our conscience. As Paul says in his letters to the Hebrews, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

And unlike any other book today, the Bible is perfect (not necessarily the translations, but the Bible as originally written). Throughout the Bible, the writers speak of how precious the Word of God is, in Psalms by saying, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless..." (Psalm 18:30)

But is the Word of God meant for us today? Are God's words, those spoken thousands of years earlier meant for our high-tech, internet generation? Perhaps this question is best answered by Psalm 119:89: Your word, O LORD, is eternal... God's word stands eternally, and it wasn't just meant for the Jews and Gentiles of long ago, it's meant for the Jews and Gentiles (all of us) today!

<http://www.simpledevotions.org/learningcenter/inspiredwordofgod.html>

Series B Unit 1 Lesson 3

Creation

Genesis 1:1-In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Truth: God made the world by speaking each thing into existence and forming man with His hands.

Response: Recognize God's greatness through creation.

In the Beginning

In the beginning God... The Bible doesn't argue the existence of God. It does declare that it is the fool who says there is no God. (Psalm 14:1) The very first verse of the Bible begins with His action related to man, the creation of space and matter. That is the logical starting point of creation for an unchanging, eternal God.

The Bible is a declaration of who God is and His relationship to His creation, man. This first verse tells us that God is before all things and the source of all things. The fact that He alone is responsible for all things should cause us to see that we owe our existence to Him. He is the ultimate standard for what is right and appropriate, for He is the source of all. Have you bowed your head to the One who gave you life and acknowledged that you owe your all to Him? Are you living in the recognition of the fact that "In the beginning God..."? What should that mean to you today and every day?

Take a moment to think of the One who inhabits eternity before space was spoken into existence. He brought it into being to create a place for you. He didn't need to. He wanted to. Do you want to know Him? Do you see the world around you today as a gift from the loving hands of your Creator?

<http://www.daily-devotions.net/devotions/01-01.html>

Series B Unit 6 Lesson 3

Armor of God

Ephesians 6:17-Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Truth: God provides salvation/rescue through Jesus and gives us His Word to fight the enemy.

Response: Begin a relationship with Jesus and know and live by God's Word.

When a fighter enters the ring, what is the most logical part of the body to swing for? The head. They go for headshots because that is where the most damage can be done in the shortest amount of time. Satan attacks us in the same fashion. He goes for our spiritual head; the assurance of our salvation. A helmet protects a soldier's head in the line of battle, and salvation does the same for the believer. Our salvation was and is secured by Jesus' shed blood as he stood in our place, making perfect and final atonement for all of our sins (John 19:30; Ephesians 1:7). The Devil attacks our salvation by speaking lies, planting doubt, and bringing condemnation and guilt upon us. We begin to feel or believe that we are too dirty for a perfect God to love, and we need to clean ourselves up before we enter into conversation with him again. This creates a distance between ourselves and God that becomes ever greater.

Essentially, what happens is that we begin believing that our sin has greater power to condemn than Christ has to save, and this is not so! Our salvation was bought not by our works, but through Jesus bearing God's wrath against our sin. That is the strength of this spiritual helmet, Jesus! Not our works. For we may know there "is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), and also, "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21), but do we really believe his Word more than the condemning lies? We stand righteous before a holy God because when he looks at us, he sees Jesus. And what a beautiful sight that is. Jesus is our rescuer.

<http://shortdailydevotions.com/ephesians-617-20-the-whole-armor-helmet-and-sword-pt-1/>

Series B Unit 6 Lesson 2

Armor of God

Ephesians 6:13a-Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.

Truth: God provides protection from the devil.

Response: Put on the Armor of God each day so I can stand against the devil.

Stand and Fight!

We, as Christians, are in a continual battle against our adversary, the devil, a spirit being whose sole intent is to cause havoc for each of us. His goal is to get us off track of God's plan for our lives. He waits until we're at a vulnerable place before bringing forth his attack. This is why we have to be on our guard every single day.

1 Peter 5:8-9 commands us: Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.

There are times when we may feel like our backs are against the wall with no way out. The thought of having to fight the giants of life in order to move forward can be intimidating. This is when the enemy comes alongside us to speak words of fear and doubt. Satan is always trying to discourage us from believing we will ever walk in triumph. He is a liar and the king of all lies. We can either stand and fight or run and hide, the choice is ours to make. It doesn't matter what the circumstances look like and what the devil says. The most important thing is what God's Word says about our particular situation.

"So let us seize and hold fast and retain without wavering the hope we cherish and confess and our acknowledgement of it, for He Who promised is reliable (sure) and faithful to His word" (Hebrews 10:23 AMP).

God sent forth His Son, Jesus, to die for us so we could have victory over the evil one. Our victory was bought with the price of Jesus' blood. We, therefore, are protected by the blood of Christ and because of this protection Satan cannot have dominion over us. Christ Jesus has restored us so that we can serve him.

<http://www1.cbn.com/devotions/stand-and-fight>

Series B Unit 2 Lesson 1

Adam and Eve-created by God...choose to sin

I John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Truth: God made people special and He designed us to live a life of righteousness but we chose sin.

Response: Recognize God made me and loves me but I still sin.

Sin Enters the World

God created a perfect world in Genesis 1. In Genesis 2:17 God told Adam he could eat fruit from the trees in the Garden of Eden except the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." By Genesis 3 the perfect world was replaced by an imperfect world when Eve, tempted by the serpent, chose to disobey.

Eve ate the fruit and gave some to Adam to eat. Genesis 3:6 tells us that Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom. Sin can be appealing but the consequences are devastating. God punished Adam and Eve. He put them out of the garden. Adam had to work the land, which now had weeds. Eve's punishment included pain in child birth. Even the serpent was disciplined and forced to crawl on it's belly and was hated by mankind.

Adam and Eve tried to hide their sin but God always knows. Our verse for today says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) Pretending won't make our sins go away. If we read and obey the following verse, I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Today, let's provide hope for the students by sharing both verses.

Series B Unit 2 Lesson 2

David Anointed King

Psalm 139:2-You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

Truth: God know everything about me.

Response: Think and act the way God wants me to think and act.

God chooses the least to do His work

It was in the midst of a great national crisis that David was selected to rule over the nation of Israel. After Saul proved to be a great failure (1 Sam. 15), the Lord came to the prophet-judge Samuel and instructed him to anoint a new monarch who would replace him. At first, Samuel was afraid to follow God's instructions because he knew that Saul would kill him if he learned there was a conspiracy to replace him (16:1–2a). This fear is not unlike what many of us feel when we realize what we are supposed to do for the Lord's glory but know we will meet worldly opposition.

In any case, God reassured Samuel with a plan to keep secret the true purpose of his mission in Bethlehem. So he went forth to the house of Jesse (vv. 2b–5). What followed was a long process of having each of Jesse's sons stand before Samuel one at a time so that he might discern which of the lads the Lord had chosen to be the new king. Certainly God could have just told Samuel to find the boy named David and anoint him straightaway, but it seems that He had the prophet go through the ritual to teach him and those who would hear and read this story a lesson. We often select good-looking and charismatic people for leadership, not the "least likely" candidate. But in having Samuel choose the least of Jesse's sons to be the king, God demonstrated that the real way to choose a godly leader in the church is to look at the heart of the person under consideration. Samuel thus anointed David according to the Lord's will, and the Holy Spirit came on the young man to prepare him for leadership (vv. 6–13).

God gives each of us the strength to speak up for Him. How is He using you to proclaim the gospel to all human kind? What situations is He bringing you through so that you can shed light in a dark world?

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/davids-anointing/>

Series B Unit 6 Lesson 1

Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-Finally, be strong in the LORD and in His mighty power.

Truth: God provides us with tools so we can stand strong against the devil.

Response: Rely on the Lord and be strong.

Maybe you are emotionally strong. Maybe you can handle a lot of pressure, work for long hours, day after day after day. Maybe you are the one who is the emotional anchor in your family, and everyone leans on you for support.

There are many kinds of strength. But the most important one is the strength you need in the Lord. True Christian strength is not of the body. True Christian strength is of the spirit, measured in faithfulness, trust, and perseverance. By Grace we live by Faith. Our (true) struggle is against powers and principalities, and the Lord wants you to be strong.

There are many things to fight in this world. For instance, you can fight sickness, fatigue, death of loved ones, failure of your plans and hopes, questions without answers, and pain without reason. Yes, we fight in this world. But we also fight in the spiritual world.

It is Satan who opposes you. It is he who seeks to sift you and destroy your bodies and souls in the eternal blackness that will be his unending grave of torment.

Yet the blood of Christ has guaranteed your deliverance from that awful end. Jesus bought you with His blood and ensured that none of those so bought would be lost. Jesus is the one who rescues us. Praise the name of the Lord!

<https://carm.org/christianity/sermons/ephesians-610-20-how-strong-are-you>

Series B Unit 5 Lesson 3

Prodigal Son

Luke 19:10-For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Truth: Jesus came to earth to save sinners.

Response: Make the choice to follow Jesus.

The parable of the prodigal son has something for each of us. Some of us are the prodigals. We've wandered far from home, far from our father, and far from our true calling. The here and now got the better of us and we recklessly pursued the pleasures of this world. But when the emptiness of it all sinks in, we've found ourselves completely alone at the end of a dead end street. Without options, we swallow our pride and prepare our hearts to go back to our father's house.

Others are the older sibling—the one who stayed with the father and worked hard while his younger brother squandered his money away. We are the ones with a sense of duty and obligation, the responsible ones who obey the rules and get the job done.

And when the partier comes home to a warm welcome from our father, we struggle to rejoice. We become bitter and resentful not only towards our brother but even our father.

Shouldn't our little brother be punished for his betrayal? Why does he get special treatment after he walked away? You see, we know our Father's rules but we do not understand his heart.

This isn't just a story of a boy who wanted to experience the wealth of this world or a brother with the heart of a Pharisee. It's the parable of the compassionate father. He loved his sons and showed them grace and forgiveness in different ways. He embraced and celebrated the prodigal who felt so unworthy. But even in the midst of the celebration, he left the party to affirm and encourage his eldest son, while gently correcting his attitude.

Our heavenly Father's love for us is beyond measure. When we are far from home, he eagerly awaits and yearns for our return. And while we are still far from his doorstep, he rushes to meet us and walk with us the rest of the way. In the same way, he has such compassion and understanding for those who have trouble welcoming the prodigals. And he will walk us into the party too. We are in his family and our Father loves all his children.

<http://skitguys.com/blog/post/the-prodigal-devotional>

Series B Unit 2 Lesson 3

David and Goliath

II Timothy 1:7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Truth: God gives us strength to speak up for Him even in difficult situations.

Response: Share Jesus boldly.

Felling The Giants In Your Life

What giants in your life are taking your joy of the Lord away from you? Are you able to put a name to them? Maybe it is being too busy or making someone or something too important in your life. To fell the giants in life, we need a spiritual perspective.

Whatever the problem, if you want to conquer it, the first step is always to do what David did, to call it what God calls it and to call yourself what God calls you. I'm not just a servant of Saul; I'm a member of the army of the living God; I've been redeemed by the blood of Christ and the battle is His! That's the starting point for victory.

To fell the giants in life, we need a practical faith in the living God. David not only had faith in the Lord; he also had faith in the Lord **in him** in this difficult and challenging situation. He said, "Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (17:32). That's faith in shoe leather! Such faith is always active and aggressive; it goes out after the problem and takes it on.

To fell the giants in life, we need a deliberate focus on God's glory, not our own. David publicly states why he wanted to defeat Goliath (17:46-47): First, so that all the earth (pagans) may know that there is a God in Israel. He wanted unbelievers to see that God is real and that He is mighty to save those who trust in Him. Second, David wanted all the professing believers who weren't really trusting in God ("this assembly") to know that the Lord does not deliver by the latest methods ("sword or spear"), but rather, "the battle is the Lord's." How are you going to share the gospel with others?

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-2-felling-giants-your-life-1-samuel-17>

Series B Unit 3 Lesson 1

Gideon

Psalm 23:3-He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake

Truth: God guides my life.

Response: Follow God's words in the Bible and live His way.

Gideon – an Unlikely Hero

Scripture tells us that God called Gideon. The angel of the Lord came to him and found him threshing wheat in an unusual place. He was threshing wheat in a winepress. Why? He was hiding from the Midianites to keep them from stealing his wheat. Gideon was not so bold and courageous after all. He was timid.

Gideon lacked confidence, too. When the angel called him a mighty warrior and told him that God was calling and sending him, Gideon replied: "Pardon me, my lord, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (Judges 6:15).

One might think that Gideon would discover his gifts and become courageous and mighty. Not everyone gets a personal visit and endorsement from an angel of the Lord. Not so. Gideon remained timid and skeptical. Gideon needed three signs from God before he would venture forth.

The story of Gideon is the story of our God. Our God is as patient as he was with Gideon with ordinary men and women like us. And our God is continually at work to redeem and restore his disobedient children. He is slow to anger and he is abounding in love for us. He never lets go of his own.

Consider Gideon. Gideon was an ordinary, weak human just like us. He was an unlikely hero. But God uses unlikely heroes for his purpose. He calls unlikely heroes like us too. Called to follow; ready to serve. What is it God wants you to do? Do you find it impossible to believe? Follow God's words, be obedient and you may become an unlikely hero.

<http://www.called-to-lead.com/?p=1945>

Series B Unit 5 Lesson 2

Jesus Heals the Deaf Mute Man

Matthew 4:23-Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Truth: Jesus came to earth to share the good news.

Response: Tell others about Jesus.

There was a crowd and there was a man brought to Jesus who needed healing. This man was both deaf and had a speech impediment (likely due to the deafness, but we're not told why). Jesus doesn't heal this man in front of the crowd. Rather, He takes him aside and heals him in private. It wasn't about the show. It was about meeting this man's needs. Now you think about the elaborate actions Jesus takes in this miracle, too. He puts His fingers into the man's ears, then wets His own finger and touches the man's tongue. Only then does He, after looking up to the Father, ask that they be opened. Think about what those touches meant to the man. They revealed that Jesus took his condition seriously and was actively at work to correct it. And then, as expected, the man was healed. His ears were immediately opened and he could speak quite clearly. Jesus met the man's need at every level.

What He does next is something we've seen Jesus do before. He asks that he not spread the news of what He has done. Jesus hadn't come to glorify Himself, but the Father. And in this instance, He remained true to that purpose, and that's why He again asked that no mention be made of the miracle. But as we might expect, the folks who saw it couldn't restrain themselves. They shared what had been done all the more. And as they did so, they talked about Jesus' nature: how He did all things well. Think about that for a minute. None of us can make the same claim. There are certainly things we're great at. But there are other things we're terrible at. But not Jesus. Everything He attempted He did well. He even did things that were beyond natural ability. That's what the people were saying.

But do you know that God isn't interested in our particular ability in something so much as He is our hearts? Jesus did the miracle in private. He didn't do it for show. He did it because He was reaching out and taking care of a need, and in doing so glorifying the Father. We're called to the same. How are you glorifying God?

<https://wddm.wordpress.com/2011/01/06/the-miracles-of-jesus-2235/>

Series B Unit 5 Lesson 1

Jesus Calms the Storm

Psalm 120:1-I call on the LORD in my distress, and He answers me.

Truth: God hears our prayers and answers us.

Response: Talk to God in prayer and expect Him to answer.

While Hurricane Katrina headed toward the coast of Mississippi, a retired pastor and his wife left their home and went to a shelter. Their daughter pleaded with them to go to Atlanta where she could take care of them, but the couple couldn't get any money to make the trip because the banks were closed. After the storm had passed, they returned to their home to get a few belongings, and were able to salvage only a few family photos floating in the water. Then, when the man was taking his father's photo out of its frame so it could dry, \$366 fell out—precisely the amount needed for two plane tickets to Atlanta. They learned they could trust Jesus for what they needed.

For the disciples, trusting Jesus through the storm is the Bible narrative for the day found in Mark 4:35-41.

Jesus had instructed His disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and then He went to sleep in the boat. When a quick and violent storm blew in, the disciples dripped as much with fear and anxiety as water from the waves. They woke Jesus, saying, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (v.38 NIV). Jesus stood up and with three words, "Peace, be still!" He muzzled the storm.

We all experience storms—persecutions, financial troubles, illnesses, disappointments, loneliness—and Jesus does not always prevent them. But He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He will keep us calm in the storm.

Are you in a storm? What do you know about God's character that could help bring calm to your heart?

<http://odb.org/2015/05/26/calming-the-storm/>

Series B Unit 3 Lesson 2

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Luke 4:8-Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Truth: God wants me to worship and serve only Him.

Response: Worship and serve God only.

Extreme Faith

What extreme faith Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had! King Nebuchadnezzar does an "extreme" thing by throwing them into the furnace. The three young men showed "extreme" devotion to God by saying, "Even if God doesn't rescue us, we will not worship your statue." And, God does something quite "extreme", even though it was quite unexpected.

God did not keep them from going into the furnace. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said they wouldn't bow down to the statue, God could have done all kinds of things that would have kept them from being thrown into the furnace. Sometimes God does make our bad situation disappear. But, most of the time, God allows life to happen to us.

God will walk through the furnace with us! We go through situations sometimes that feel really bad and sometimes are even scary. We feel like we're the only one going through something terrible. God didn't show up in the furnace after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in there. No! God went with them into the furnace and the three men were never burned, not even when they were first thrown in. God was with them right there where flames were all around them! When we decide that no matter what, we are going to live God's way, God is with us even in the really bad times.

God sets us free in the middle of our furnace. It's really interesting that God didn't just sit with the boys in the furnace. He untied their hands and feet, so they could walk around. He set them free even when they were surrounded by flames! How do we react when we're going through a difficult situation? Would you have taken a stand for Jesus or would you have bowed down to the statue?

Series B Unit 3 Lesson 3

Daniel

Isaiah 41:10a-So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

Truth: God is with me all the time.

Response: Don't fear because God is with me.

Ever feel like you are in a lion's den where hungry lions are ready to tear you limb from limb? In your den, you may have people trying to get rid of you, make you look bad, make up false accusations about your character, question your every decision, or make a mockery of your faith. If anyone in the Bible can feel your pain, it is Daniel. He was in the lion's den because he was such a good leader and others were jealous of his success. His adversaries despised his success and his God, so they formed a plot to have him eliminated.

They proposed an edict proclaiming that for 30 days, anyone who prayed to another god besides the king would be thrown into a lion's den. The king thought this was a good idea and signed the edict into law. The officials waited to see if Daniel would take his normal posture of prayer to the God of heaven, and if he did, they would have him. Their plot counted on Daniel staying true to his God. And guess what? Daniel did as they expected.

No earthly decrees were going to stop Daniel from worshipping God. He had learned as a teenager that God was King of kings and Lord of lords. His life remained in God's hands, and he trusted God with the results. Nothing altered or changed Daniel's trust in God. He was consistent, steady and grounded in Christ.

When you are put in the lion's den, are you able to worship God and put your life in God's hands? Are you able to trust God with the results? Are you consistent, steady and grounded in Christ? Are you allowing God to rescue you from your "lion's den" or are you trying to control the outcome?

<http://fcaresources.com/bible-study/lion%E2%80%99s-den-and-faithfulness-daniel-study-chapter-7>

Series B Unit 4 Lesson 3

The Sower and the Seed

Matthew 13:23a-But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

Truth: People respond to hearing the Bible in different ways.

Response: Share the message of Jesus with everyone.

Do you find yourself saying, "I read God's Word but an hour later I can't remember what I read." Or "I hear God's Word taught in church but I've already forgotten what I heard by the time I get to the parking lot." The enemy has snatched away that seed that was sown into your heart because the soil was hard and the seed didn't penetrate.

People with shallow hearts respond quickly to the gospel.

They're like, "Man, I've been waiting my whole life to hear this!"

They embrace it and swallow it whole. Then we rush them up to the front of the church when they've only been a believer for 14 minutes and we're like, "Listen to this powerful testimony of this person who's come to know the Lord!" Within a week they have a book out. And within two years, they're back in the world.

Soil cannot germinate seed when the nutrients are spent nurturing weeds. In the same way, your heart cannot respond to the Word when it's focused on other things. Like what? Look at the Scripture: worries of the world. What's up ahead? What's going to happen to me? Will I be okay? Fear. Fear about security . . . about safety . . . about reputation. You say, "Everyone struggles with that." Yes—but do we calculate the cost of worry? We could be growing stronger and more fruitful for God if worry wasn't choking our lives.

When a Christian is planted, he bears the fruit of the Spirit. You say, "Well, I don't have as much joy or patience or peace in my life as I should." Well, are you growing in that? You say, "Well, I'll try harder." Don't try harder; you don't produce the fruit—the Spirit of God produces the fruit, you will bear the fruit. Jesus said, "And this is your Father glorified, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Lord, till the soil of my heart so I am more receptive to You. Help me not to resent Your work in me, even where it's painful to plough up that fallow ground. Help me to embrace Your Word that is sown in my heart."

<http://www.jamesmacdonald.com/teaching/devotionals/2006-05-22/>

Series B Unit 4 Lesson 2

Jesus Blesses the Children

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Truth: Jesus loves children and wants to be with us.

Response: Come to Jesus, knowing that He loves me.

Jesus Loves Children

In 1860 Anna Warner and her sister Susan co-authored a novel named Say and Seal, in which a dying child is comforted with the words of a poem about Jesus. The poem later became a famous hymn sung in more than 100 languages:

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus encountered lots of children throughout his ministry. He understood their needs, fears, and pains, and he delighted in their simple faith. He took children in his arms and prayed for them. He used the gift of a child's bread and fish to feed more than 5,000 people. He said everyone must have trusting, childlike faith to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Caring for children is not easy, and it often goes unappreciated. But to everyone who lovingly cares for children and leads them to Jesus, his words remain precious and true: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me" (Mark 9:37).

Jesus loves children. He invites us all to be the children of God, and we are safe in his love forever.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, embrace all God's little children around the world, and plant within them (and all of us) a pure, trusting faith in your love and salvation. In your name, Amen.

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotionals/jesus-loves-children-2006-10-16>

Series B Christmas Lesson 1

John 3:17-For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Truth: God sent Jesus to earth as a baby so He could save the world.

Response: Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins.

God's Love or Condemnation?

I realized the importance of spiritual balance. Here's what I read: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV) and another verse, John 3:18: Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:18 NIV)

Taken alone, these verses seem almost contradictory. John 3:16 is all about God's love for us, while John 3:18 is about condemnation. We can tend to forget balance when we read these two verses. Some may teach only the love, forgiveness, and endless grace of God; never mentioning sin. Some may teach only condemnation for sins and never mention the truth of love and redemption.

Let's take a balanced approach to this and realize that we need both of these verses as we speak to each other about God. A person will never know the astounding love of Jesus on the cross and what it means for their lives unless they realize their sins are what has separated them from God. Understanding sin, however, never points a person to repentance unless they know there is a loving God willing to redeem them.

As you walk with others in faith, or when you speak about the Lord, keep steadiness in mind. Always point to the redemption of the cross, (rescue and restoration), and strive for balance in your dealings with those around you.

<http://shortdailydevotions.com/john-317-gods-love-or-condemnation/>

Series B Christmas Lesson 2

Luke 2:20-The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and see, which were just as they had been told.

Truth: God deserves praise for all He has done for us.

Response: Glorify and praise God for giving us Jesus.

We've all heard the story before, and we're sung it many times in Christmas carols: shepherds visited in their fields at night by the angel delivering good news that the Messiah has arrived as promised by the prophets. Have you ever stopped to consider why the announcement of such an important event was delivered first to shepherds?

In fact, everything about the Lord's arrival was quiet and peaceful and unadorned. He was a Baby, not a conquering King. He was sleeping in a place intended for animals, not in a palace. His parents were anonymous, His hometown was (dishonorable) (John 1:46), and His enemies were powerful (Matthew 2:13-18). Furthermore, when the Lord assigned others the privilege of heralding Christ's arrival, He selected a group that perfectly represented the Messiah's own ministry of service to God's flock. The shepherds leave to "make known" everything they had experienced.

Who were they telling? Shepherds normally spent their time in the fields alone, but because of their excitement these shepherds came in from the fields and went into the towns and villages proclaiming the good news to family, friends and probably strangers.

God called upon lowly and humble servants to carry that message to the world. These men became His first witnesses, just as humble Jesus became the First Fruits of the Resurrection. The Lord is still calling humble, lowly servants to leave our stations in life so we may proclaim what we have heard and experienced to our family, friends and even strangers (This is known as restoration). We proclaim a Savior born in Bethlehem, and we call the world to accept Him as Lord. Let's be like the shepherds of that first Christmas. Let's engage someone this week in a conversation about the Messiah and the reason we celebrate His arrival.

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/devotionals/be-a-shepherd-this-christmas>

Series B Unit 4 Lesson 1

Jesus Chooses 12 Disciples

John 15:16a-You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last.

Truth: God chose each of us. He wants us to tell others about Jesus.

Response: Recognize that God chose us to go tell others about Jesus.

3 Reasons To Tell Your Friends About Jesus

It is amazing as Christians how easy it is for us to get wrapped up in our own lives. Days can pass and we've never really invited non-Christians into our lives. We haven't spent time thinking about where our friends, family and our neighbors will spend eternity. So with that in mind here are three reasons we should be telling others about Jesus.

If you don't who will?

You might be the only person who has a chance to speak into your friend's life. You may be the only chance they get to hear the gospel. So don't hesitate to speak up about Jesus.

Romans 10:14 – How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? You've been strategically placed into the lives of your friends and family. Don't hesitate to tell them the good news about Jesus.

Jesus said do it.

Some of Jesus' last words were telling His disciples to share the gospel with others. If Jesus tells us we should do something, then we should do it!

Mark 16:15 – He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Jesus instructed us to tell the good news to everyone. So we should be doing it!

If you don't they might go to hell.

This should be enough of a reason by itself to tell others about Jesus. If you don't tell the people in your life about Jesus, they might die and go to hell. So be sure to look for opportunities to tell others about Jesus. You could have the privilege to save someone from going to hell!

<http://studentdevos.com/3-reasons-to-tell-your-friends-about-jesus/>