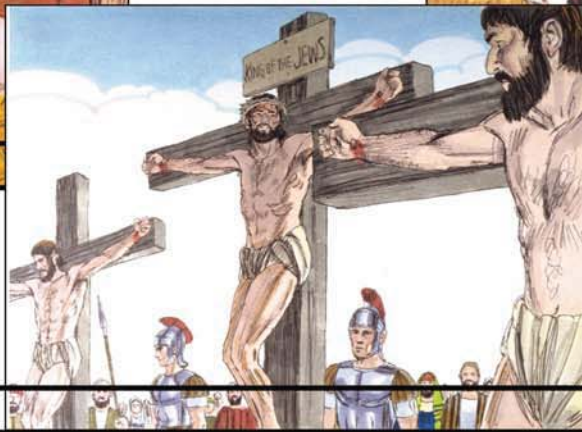
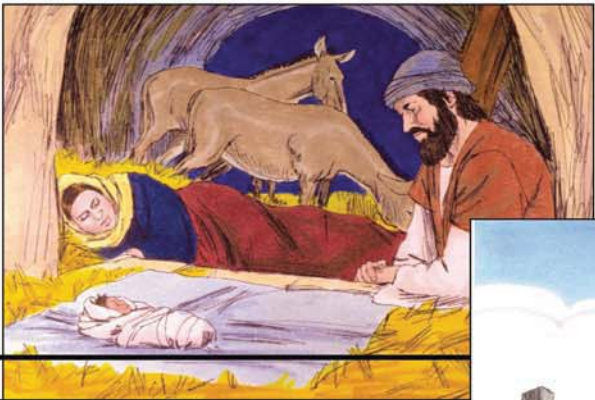


Series 1

1

# principles



principles  published in cooperation with:



# Principles 4 Life

## THE PURPOSE

**M**any churches need to evaluate their discipleship strategy. It is important that everyone who attends the church not only hears and receives the gospel message, but also grows spiritually. Part of being a disciple of Christ is to learn His Word so that we are able to obey it. As the leader, you are responsible to present the entire Word of God to your church.

That means that every church is responsible for the evangelism and discipleship of all its members. The best way to accomplish this task is to develop a plan for systematically studying all of God's Word. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, needs to be carefully studied. Classes, often called Sunday School, can be established to teach young children, youth, and adults. A plan as simple as three groups or as involved as a class for babies, toddlers, and each grade level for children, along with youth and several age groups of adults can be formed to start your program. Whether simple or complex, you need to see that everyone is being discipled.

## THE PLAN

**A**lthough this style of Christian training is often called Sunday School, taking place in classrooms like a school on Sunday mornings, you may find it necessary to plan your Christian education in a different way. You may need to switch to another day of the week, or a different time of day, to accommodate classes due to limited space or time restrictions. You will need to determine how every person, young and old, can receive training. You may need to consider people's work schedules, transportation needs, and the space in your facility. Classes may be in rooms or parts of rooms, outside or in homes, or other spaces you may be able to arrange.

For each group, you will need to have a teacher who has a solid Christian testimony, believes the basic doctrines of the church, and is willing to learn and teach what God's Word says. If you have only one teacher, then you may invite all ages to sit in one class together as you prayerfully prepare more teachers to teach. You may only have three qualified teachers, and so you will arrange for a class for children, youth, and adults. You may have more teachers and soon be able to divide children into several groups, to present the lesson in a manner easily understood by very young children and older children. Your ability to expand classes to meet more specific age groups will depend on the number of teachers you have.

## THE MATERIALS

**T**hese materials are designed with a plan to direct students through a study of the entire Old Testament and New Testament over a four-year period of time. Each year, 20 weekly lessons will cover parts of the Old

Testament and 20 will relate to the New Testament, as well as 8 extra lessons for special occasions. They are not dated because your schedule for teaching may be different from another church's plan. Some lessons may require more than a week to present, if you determine interest is high or the need is great in your congregation. Thus, you do not need to rush through a lesson to maintain a calendar schedule. There are 52 weeks in a year, so the 4 weeks without lessons are available for you to add your own plans for special events, holiday emphases, or extended coverage of some lessons. You may also choose a topic that is of extra importance to your congregation and substitute several weeks of training in that specific topic. (Examples: Ten Commandments, Principles in Giving or Stewardship, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Marriage Helps, etc.)

The lessons provided in this packet are not the only things you can train church members in, but they will provide a way for you to guarantee that you are presenting education in the whole Word of God to everyone in your church. If you have the entire church in one class or teachers in various age level classes teaching from the same lesson, you will begin to see how entire families can grow in their knowledge of God's Word. Young children will grasp the lesson concepts in a simple way while some youth or adults may use the Scripture references to dig far deeper into the lesson.

## THE LESSON

**E**ach lesson is designed with the same format. Once you understand how a lesson is structured, you will become comfortable with the style and ready to develop your own ideas to enrich the lesson. The lesson was planned to provide basic biblical content in a systematic manner, with some optional ideas for additional class activities and helps for the teacher. The story section on the left is designed to present the basic flow of the lesson and the outline at the top right is to help the teacher emphasize the key points. It is obvious that some vocabulary may have to be explained or changed to lower the story to younger students' levels or increase it to the level of some well-educated adults.

Then the teacher is given one idea per lesson for a possible class activity. It is clear that this idea is only a suggestion. You may not have the supplies, space, or the level of students in your class to use this idea. You may have a far better idea. Use it! The suggested activities are only a means to help you enrich your teaching and apply the lessons to your students' lives.

Next, the teachers are given a short word of encouragement or challenge for their personal lives. Teachers are a precious gift given to the church, and it is our desire to give them additional help in their positions of responsibility.



The Scripture references or text from the lesson is provided. You may at times choose to read directly from this reference, but this is not always necessary, especially with very young children. It will be important for the teacher to have read and studied the passage before attempting to teach the lesson. Remember, we want to train believers in God's Word, not a resource material like these lessons. It will be important that students of all ages see the Bible in the teacher's hand so they are sure where the lessons have come from. It would be good to always look up the Memory Verse for the lesson directly in the Bible. The teacher may also ask students to read portions of the lesson text in their own Bibles or to review the lesson in their Bibles at home.

## THE COMMAND

It is our desire to see these lessons used as a tool to help you accomplish the command we have all been given: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) Let's teach everyone the entire Word of God.

## THE OVERVIEW

Lessons are labeled with three digits to help you organize your materials, and coordinate the correct visuals with each lesson. The first number tells you what year you are using followed by the lesson number, and ending with a letter to determine the group of lessons you are using.

**Example:** 1-07-A means year 1, lesson 7, group A or the Old Testament.

**Example:** 1-05-B means year 1, lesson 5, group B or the New Testament.

**Example:** 1-03-C means year 1, lesson 3, group C or Special Events

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# God is the Creator 1-01-A

In the beginning God created everything. In just six days He made absolutely everything we can see in our world. From the largest mountain to the tiniest insect, God created everything. From the farthest place out in space down to the deepest ocean, God made everything. Let's look at how God made our world in just six days.

On the first day God made the heavens and the earth. There was only darkness over the earth. God spoke to the darkness and made light. He called the light "day," and He called the darkness, "night."

On the second day God made the sky above with water below. Then on the third day He made land and set the waters in their place, called seas. On that day God also had the trees and plants begin to grow and cover the earth. God made them all with roots that grow down into the ground, branches that stretch out, and seeds that help to make more trees and bushes.

On the fourth day God made a great light in the sky that we call the sun. He made the moon and stars to be in the sky at night. Have you ever tried to count all the stars in the sky? He made day and night very special.

On the fifth day God filled the water with fish and all kinds of creatures that live in the sea. Then He filled the sky with birds.

On the sixth day God began to make the creatures that would fill the earth. He made the wild animals and the tame animals. He made big animals and small ones that crawl along the ground. Can you think of some different animals that live in our world?

Then God said He wanted to make a man. He created man in His image, or like God, to rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, and all the animals that lived on the earth. God made the man first and called him Adam. Adam began to give every creature a name. Each of the animals had a partner. Each of the fish and the birds had partners. But no one was there to be a partner for Adam.

God didn't want man to be alone. He made Adam go to sleep. While he was sleeping, God used one of Adam's ribs. He added dirt and made another human. God breathed into this human, and she began to breathe. God made a woman to be Adam's partner. The woman's name was Eve.

God blessed Adam and Eve and put them in charge of the beautiful garden He had made. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve took care of all the animals and enjoyed everything in the garden. They had beautiful flowers, fresh fruit, and many animal friends to enjoy.

God was very happy with His creation. He made everything in just six days. On the seventh day God rested. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Today we celebrate God's goodness when we rest and honor Him on the seventh day of each week.

Today we can praise God because He is the great Creator of all things.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **God existed before anything.**
  - A. Nothing existed before God.
  - B. Creator of all things.
- II. **God used six days to create all things.**
  - A. Each day another part of creation.
  - B. God spoke it and was pleased.
- III. **God created man in His image.**
  - A. Man to be different from the rest.
  - B. God created woman in a unique way.
- IV. **God's plan for the seventh day.**
  - A. God gives us a pattern.
  - B. Honor God, on the sabbath.

## Activity

Students can create a simple folded book about creation. Each page would represent one of the seven days listed in the Bible lesson. Cut a long strip of paper for each student, and fold into seven sections, accordion-style, forming a booklet. Label the top of the first page, "Day 1" and have them illustrate what was created. Follow with each page, until the seven squares have each been completed.

## Teacher Growth

We have a mighty God that created all things. We must never accept any part of other theories that would distract from the understanding of God's power that was demonstrated at the creation. We must see God alone as the Creator of all things.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 1:1-2:25, Psalm 8

## Memory Verse:

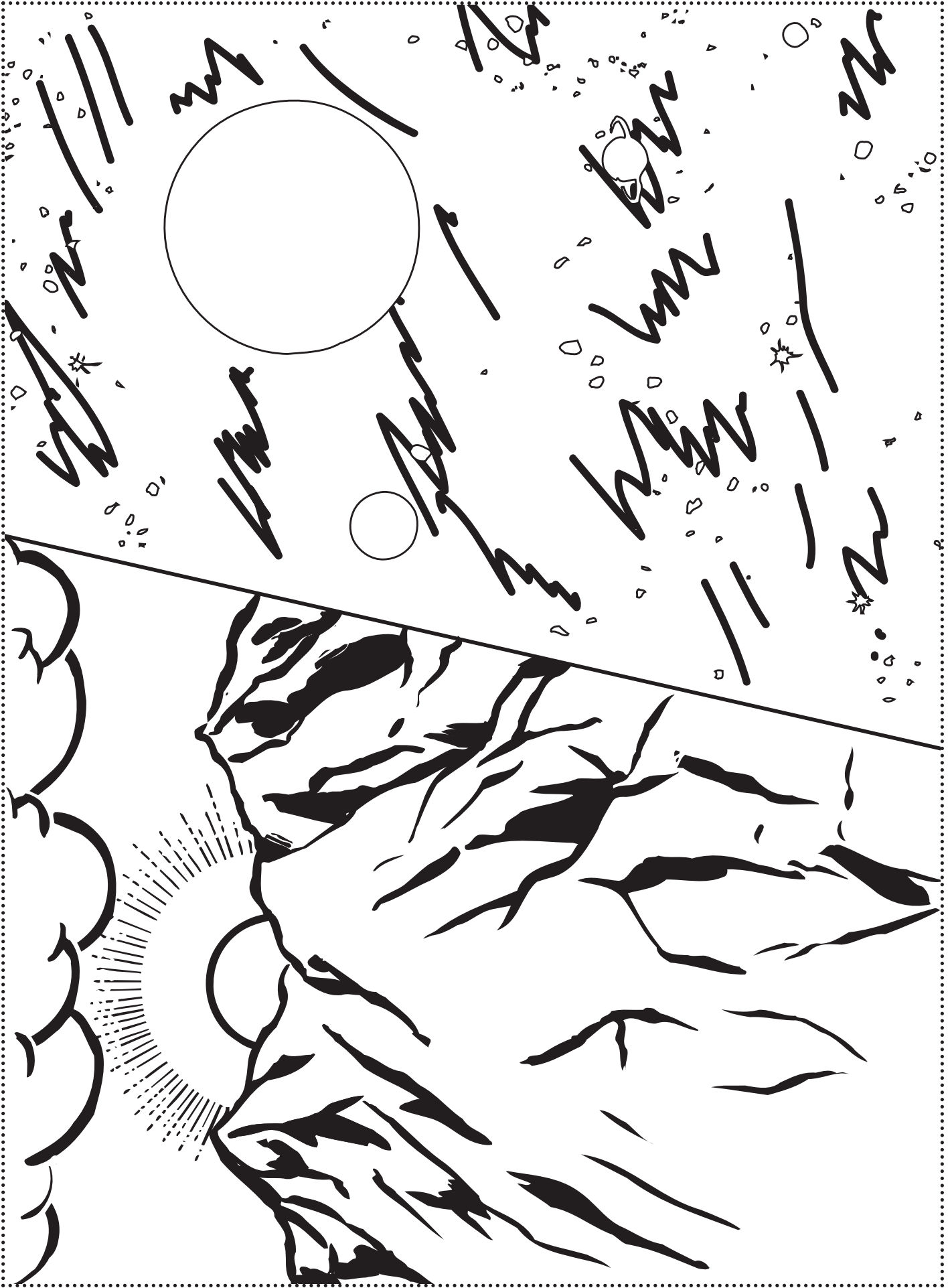
Genesis 1:31 "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."













**T**he creation that God provided for Adam and Eve was so beautiful. God had placed them in a beautiful garden and given them the food they needed, and wonderful rivers with clear water to drink. He told them to eat from everything in the garden except one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told them they would surely die if they tasted of that tree.

One day, one of the creatures in the garden, a serpent, came to talk with Eve. He asked her if she really believed that she would die if she ate of the one forbidden tree. He told her she really wouldn't die, but that God just didn't want them to eat from that tree. The serpent said God didn't want them to have their eyes opened and to know good and evil like God does. Eve listened to the serpent and began to doubt God's words.

Eve looked at the fruit from the forbidden tree and finally picked some and ate it. She did not die immediately, so she believed the serpent's lie about God and gave Adam some of the fruit to eat as well. Their eyes were opened to see that they needed clothes, so they sewed coverings from fig leaves. They suddenly were ashamed of how God had created them.

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. They listened to the lies of the serpent, we call Satan, and then they were living in shame. When the Lord came to walk with them in the garden like usual, they ran and tried to hide from Him. The Lord called for them but they said they were hiding because of their shame. He asked them if they had eaten of the forbidden tree. Adam told Him that Eve had given him some of its fruit. The Lord asked Eve what she had done. Eve said that she had believed the lie of the serpent. They both blamed someone else for their sin.

The Lord cursed the serpent to crawl on the ground and promised he would be crushed some day. The Bible tells us that one day the Lord will crush Satan forever. Then He told Adam he would have to work hard to survive and that Eve would suffer great pain when having children. The Lord killed animals to make clothes for Adam and Eve, and then He made them leave the beautiful garden. God put an angel with a flaming sword at the entrance so they could never return.

How sad it was that Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful garden God had created for them. They could not walk with the Lord every day and enjoy all the food He had given them. They had to work hard to try to survive. They had to live separated from God because of their disobedience. Sin now separates all people from God.

The only way we can walk with God, talk with Him every day, and know we are again part of His family like Adam and Eve used to be, is if we ask Him to forgive our sins. Satan brought evil into the world when he caused Adam and Eve to doubt God's word and disobey God.

We can't hide from God, He still wants to walk with us, but we need to be obedient to His Word. Once we accept His plan for our salvation, we must try to always follow His words without doubt or disobedience. Satan is still a liar trying to deceive us. Sin will always have results that take away God's blessings in our life.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **God blessed Adam and Eve.**
  - A. Eat of everything but one special tree.
  - B. God clearly warned them.
- II. **A serpent, Satan, deceived Adam and Eve.**
  - A. The serpent questioned God's words.
  - B. Satan is always a liar.
- III. **God gave man the ability to make choices.**
  - A. Eve listened and doubted God's words.
  - B. Adam and Eve chose to disobey.
- IV. **Sin always has consequences.**
  - A. Adam and Eve couldn't hide.
  - B. Sin causes separation from God.

## Activity

Students can simply illustrate the effects of sin on the beauty of God's creation. Begin by painting a very beautiful and colorful picture of God's creation. Use a great variety of bright colors and try to fill the entire page with color. When the picture is complete, use a black crayon to cover the entire picture. This represents the sin that covered God's beautiful creation. Now use a coin to scrape away the black crayon in the shape of a heart. After scraping away the black, as God removes sin when we ask for His forgiveness, you will see the bright colors still under the crayon. The colors are still there, but there will always be some gray residue, or consequences of the sin, on the picture below.

## Teacher Growth

How thankful we are that God forgives our sins and makes us clean in His sight. We must be careful that our lives, as examples before our students, remain pure. That means we not only guard our hearts from the sin of this world, but we are also quick to seek His forgiveness when we make mistakes.

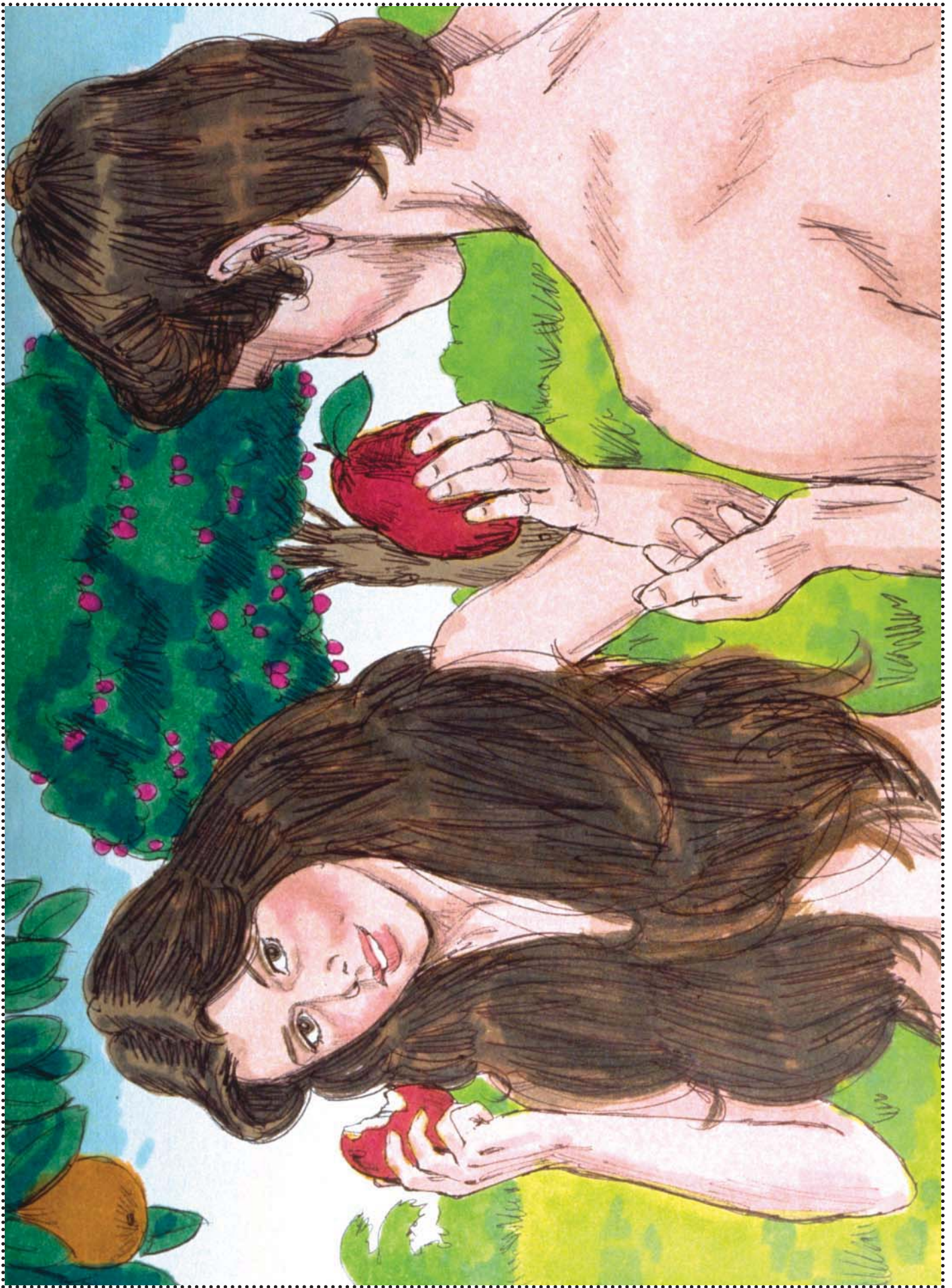
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 2:4-3:24

## Memory Verse:

Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*













# Comparing Two Brothers 1-03-A

**A**dam and Eve were the first parents on earth. They had two sons, Cain and Abel. These two brothers were very different in what they liked to do. Cain was always busy growing crops in the fields. He loved to work hard on the land to make things grow. Abel was a shepherd that enjoyed taking good care of his sheep. The boys knew that it was important to bring gifts, called sacrifices or offerings, to God at special times of the year. Their parents taught them how to show their love and respect to God.

When it was time to take their offerings to the Lord, Cain brought some of the crops he had grown in his fields. This was not what God had asked men to bring as a sacrifice. Abel brought special parts of the firstborn from his flock, just as he had been taught to do.

God was pleased with Abel's gifts but not with Cain's offerings. Cain became very angry and the Lord spoke to him. The Lord warned Cain to do what he had been taught was right so that his offering would also be pleasing to God. God warned Cain that if he did not do what was right, sin was crouching at the door and would get him, like a wild animal waiting to attack. He explained that sin is like something that would eat him, or control his life, if he did not change and master sin by obeying God's laws. The anger caused Cain to continue in more ways to sin or do things that did not please God.

Instead of listening to the Lord, Cain invited his brother Abel to go out into his field and there Cain killed Abel. Immediately, God called out to Cain, asking where his brother Abel had gone. Cain tried to lie to God by saying he did not know where Abel was. We can never lie to God because He knows everything. Anger led to murder and then lies.

God told Cain that he knew he had killed his brother and that because he had sinned, he would now live under a curse. The land that Cain loved to farm would never again grow crops for him. Instead of being a settled farmer, now he would have to live as a wanderer with no real home. Cain cried out to God because his punishment was so strong.

God put a special mark on Cain so no one would kill him, but then Cain had to wander far away from his home and never enjoy farming the land he loved again. The worse part of Cain's punishment was that he had to go away from the presence of God.

We must understand that sin is always crouching, or waiting to attack, at the door of our lives. Cain knew how to please God with the right kind of offerings, but he chose to disobey. God warned Cain about the anger that was growing in him, and yet Cain chose to disobey and let anger grow into murder. Sin so controlled Cain that he even tried to lie to God.

God knows that we need to be careful not to let sin control our lives. God has a perfect plan for our lives, and He loves to see us obey Him. We can please God most when we obey His words and live in His plan that the Bible explains for us.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Adam and Eve had two sons.**
  - A. Cain and Abel were brothers.
  - B. Each boy had different interests.
- II. **God creates people uniquely different.**
  - A. Cain, a farmer who loved the land.
  - B. Abel, a shepherd who loved his flock.
- III. **God deserves our best.**
  - A. Cain brought fruits of the soil.
  - B. Abel brought the fat of the firstborn.
- IV. **Sin is always crouching at the door.**
  - A. Disobedience, anger, and murder.
  - B. The penalty for sin is harsh.

## Activity

Students can develop a list of ways that they can please God. Explain that we no longer give animal sacrifices to God, since Jesus paid the final price for sin on the cross. Today our sacrifices or offerings to God come from our time, talents, and resources. First, God is most pleased with our obedience to Him. But, God also enjoys our giving, even to others, as though it were a gift for Him. Here is an example: "The neighbor lady is very ill, so I can take her family a dinner meal tonight." Students can list ways to help the church, the community, and others, as though they were doing it unto the Lord.

## Teacher Growth

Today's memory verse is quite lengthy and yet there will be some students who can learn it in its entirety. If you teach younger students, you may only have them learn a key phrase from a verse. An example in this verse: The youngest students may learn, "Do what is right." Others may learn the first question segment of the verse. Others may learn the sentence that follows the question. Allow God to speak to your heart about the content of the verse and the portion that your students need to learn today.

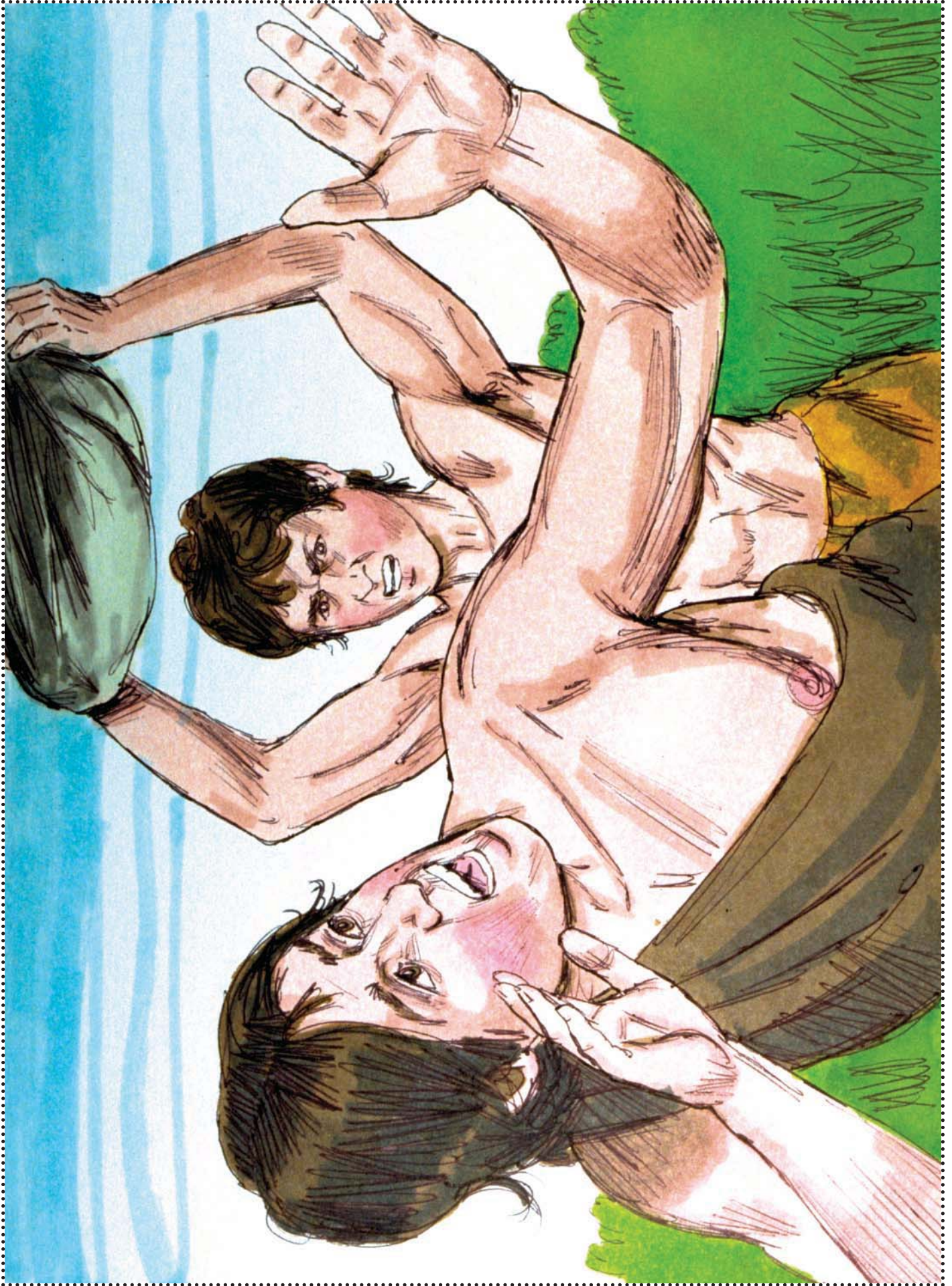
## Scripture Passages:

Genesis 4:1-16

## Memory Verse:

Genesis 4:7 *"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*











# Noah - God's Boat Builder 1-04-A

Long ago people lived to be very old. There was an old man named Noah, with three sons named Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

People were doing very evil things in Noah's day. They did many things that were not pleasing to God. Finally, the people's sin became so great that God was sorry He had ever made them. He decided to destroy all the people living on the earth who did not obey Him.

Noah was a good man who loved God. God planned to take care of Noah and his family. Because God was pleased with Noah, He told him about His plan. "I will bring a flood upon the earth to destroy all living things." God told Noah how to build a big boat, called an ark.

"Make a boat with three decks and many rooms," God told Noah, "and cover it with a roof." The Bible tells us that God gave Noah every measurement and every detail to build the ark. God told Noah how to make the roof and exactly where to put the door. It took Noah a long time to build such a huge boat, but he did exactly as God commanded him. People mocked Noah for listening to God, because they had never seen rain before.

God then told Noah to put a male and female of every kind of animal into the ark to save them from destruction. God sent two of every animal to Noah and his sons. They filled the ark with the animals and all of the food that God had told them to gather as well. Noah followed every detail of God's perfect plan. As soon as the preparations were completed, Noah and his family entered the ark and God shut the door. Then, as God had promised, the rain began to fall.

It rained for forty days and nights, but the ark floated on top of the water. The water became so deep that it covered even the highest mountains. All the animals, birds and people that were left on the earth died in the flood. Only those with Noah in the ark remained alive.

After 150 days the ark finally stopped floating and came to rest on top of a mountain called Ararat. Noah and his family stayed in the ark and waited as the waters from the flood went down.

Forty days later, Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven. It did not come back but just kept flying around.

Next, Noah sent out a dove to check whether the water was gone and the ground was dry. The dove could find no place to land and returned to the ark. Seven days later, Noah sent the dove out again. This time it returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew then that the water had gone down below the treetops. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again. This time it did not come back. Noah knew that it was now safe to leave the ark.

After letting all the animals off the ark, Noah built an altar to the Lord. Noah wanted to thank God for saving him and his family. God was pleased with Noah's offering. God blessed Noah and his family because they had carefully obeyed all that God had asked them to do.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Sin separates people from God.

- A. Sin keeps us from being close to God.
- B. God will forgive us IF we turn to Him.

### II. God wants us to obey Him.

- A. Obedience even when uncertain.
- B. Obey God in all that we do.

### III. God blesses those who obey Him.

- A. The first thing was to give thanks.
- B. God showed He was pleased.

### IV. God has given us a plan to follow in life.

- A. His Word gives us details for life.
- B. Trust God's care for us as we obey.

## Activity

Students can trace a pattern, that you provide, that resembles the ark. After coloring the ark they can draw or trace and cut out pairs of animals to add to this picture. Remind them of the variety of animals from God's creation and the way that God brought the animals into the ark to rescue them for us to enjoy in our world today. Variations to this picture would be to glue on animal cookies or use stickers or stamps of animals if they are available.

## Teacher Growth

A key factor in spiritual growth is to continually be listening to God's voice. This week practice listening for God's instructions in everything you do. Our desire is to become more obedient to His plan.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 6:5-9:3

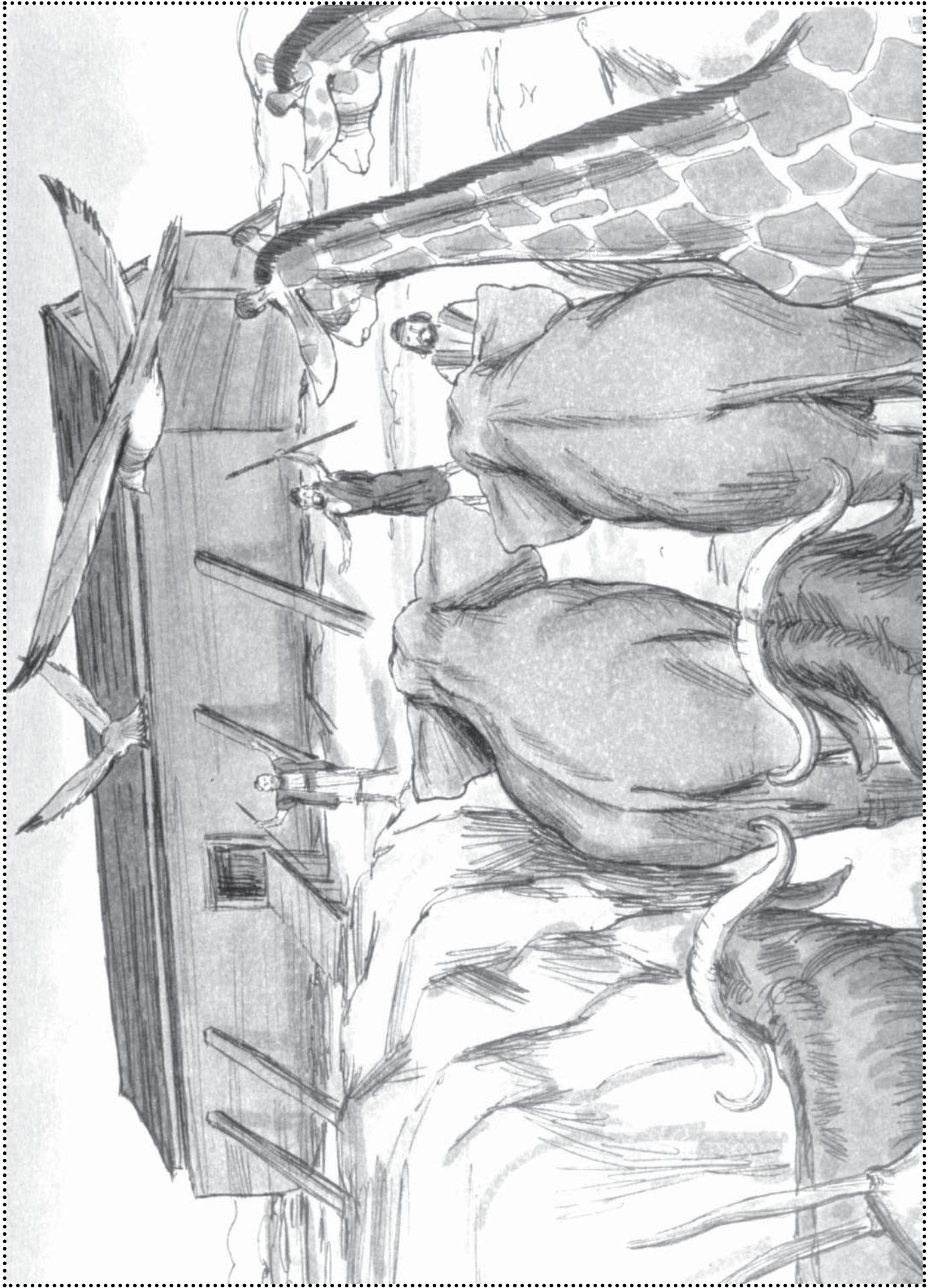
## Memory Verse:

Genesis 6:22 "Noah did everything just as God had commanded him."













# A Rainbow Promise 1-05-A

**G**od told Noah to build an ark so He could rescue Noah and his family, along with pairs of every kind of animal, when He flooded the earth. When the flood ended, Noah and his family, along with all the animals, left the ark. God told Noah it was safe to come out on the dry ground and that the animals needed to go find new homes and begin to fill the earth again. The animals scattered over all the earth. Each animal knew what kind of place it needed to build its home.

Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives did something very important when they first stepped onto the dry ground again. They built an altar to thank God for saving them from the flood. Noah and his sons gathered some large stones and piled them up to make the altar. An altar is a special place to meet with God and talk to Him. There they planned to honor God with a sacrifice or special offering. God had selected certain animals that He called clean. They were pleasing as a gift to honor God.

Noah selected some of the clean animals to use as his sacrifice. He knew that God had given His people rules about what kind of animals they should choose for a sacrifice. As he burned them on the altar, in the way God had told His people to make sacrifices that would honor Him, God was very pleased.

God was honored with Noah's offering and blessed Noah and his family. He made a covenant with them. A covenant is a promise between God and the people. God promised that He would never again bring another flood that would destroy the whole earth and all that lived on it. Because there is sin in every heart, God knew that man would still do evil things that are not pleasing to Him. God had a special plan to take that sin from people's hearts, later in history, through His Son, Jesus.

God told Noah that there would always be day and night, planting and harvest time, hot and cold weather, and the different seasons. Then, God gave Noah and his family a very special blessing. God said to them, "You must have many children so that your descendants will live all over the earth." He also told them they would rule over the animals, birds, and fish, and He gave them control over all living things to be food. Along with this special blessing, God also gave them some rules or standards they were to live by.

God told them that they were not to eat animals that still had blood in them, because the blood was a symbol of life. They were never to kill a person, because people are made in God's image. God was beginning to teach man about the importance of blood as the symbol of life in all living creatures. Some day He would show how important that blood was when His Son, Jesus, would allow His blood to be poured out on the cross as the last sacrifice for sin.

To complete His promise with Noah and all living creatures, God put a rainbow in the sky. He explained that every time a rainbow appeared in the sky it would be a reminder that God would never break His covenant, or promise, with those living on the earth. God wants us to see rainbows and remember His promises. He wants us to come to altars and let Him know that we are thankful for all that He does in our lives as He shows that He never breaks His promises.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **God spared Noah and his family.**
  - A. God kept them safe during the flood.
  - B. God also preserved animals.
- II. **God brought them out on dry ground.**
  - A. God assured them when it was safe.
  - B. God scattered the animals to multiply.
- III. **Noah presented a sacrifice to God.**
  - A. Noah and his sons built an altar to God.
  - B. Noah chose a sacrifice to honor God.
- IV. **God made a covenant with Noah.**
  - A. A rainbow reminder of His promise.
  - B. God faithfully honors His promises.

## Activity

Students can paint or color a large rainbow mural on paper. Then they can write God's promises on small slips of blue paper cut into raindrop shapes. Help students select short phrases that will help them understand many of the promises God has given us. (Example: God will provide, He will guide, the Lord is our Healer, etc...) Attach the raindrops to the rainbow and display as a reminder that God always keeps His promises.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson teaches us that being thankful to a covenant God is important. Many times we can become so busy with the details of life or even the details of the lesson that we forget to be really thankful for the many ways that God has blessed us. Take time to thank God for the way He has showed His faithfulness to the covenant we have with Him today. Watch for rainbows and learn to thank Him even when the rains are still falling.

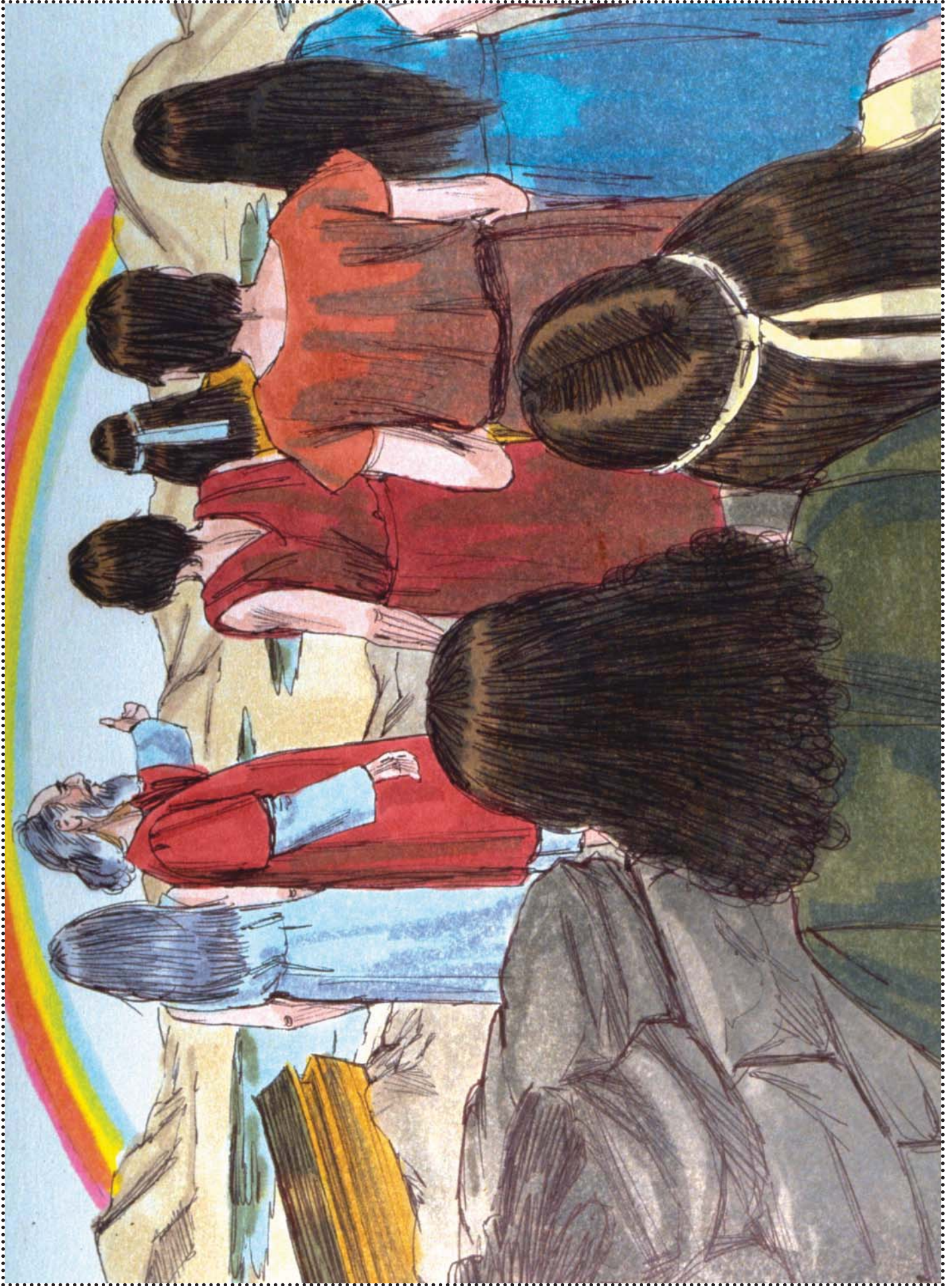
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 8:18-9:17

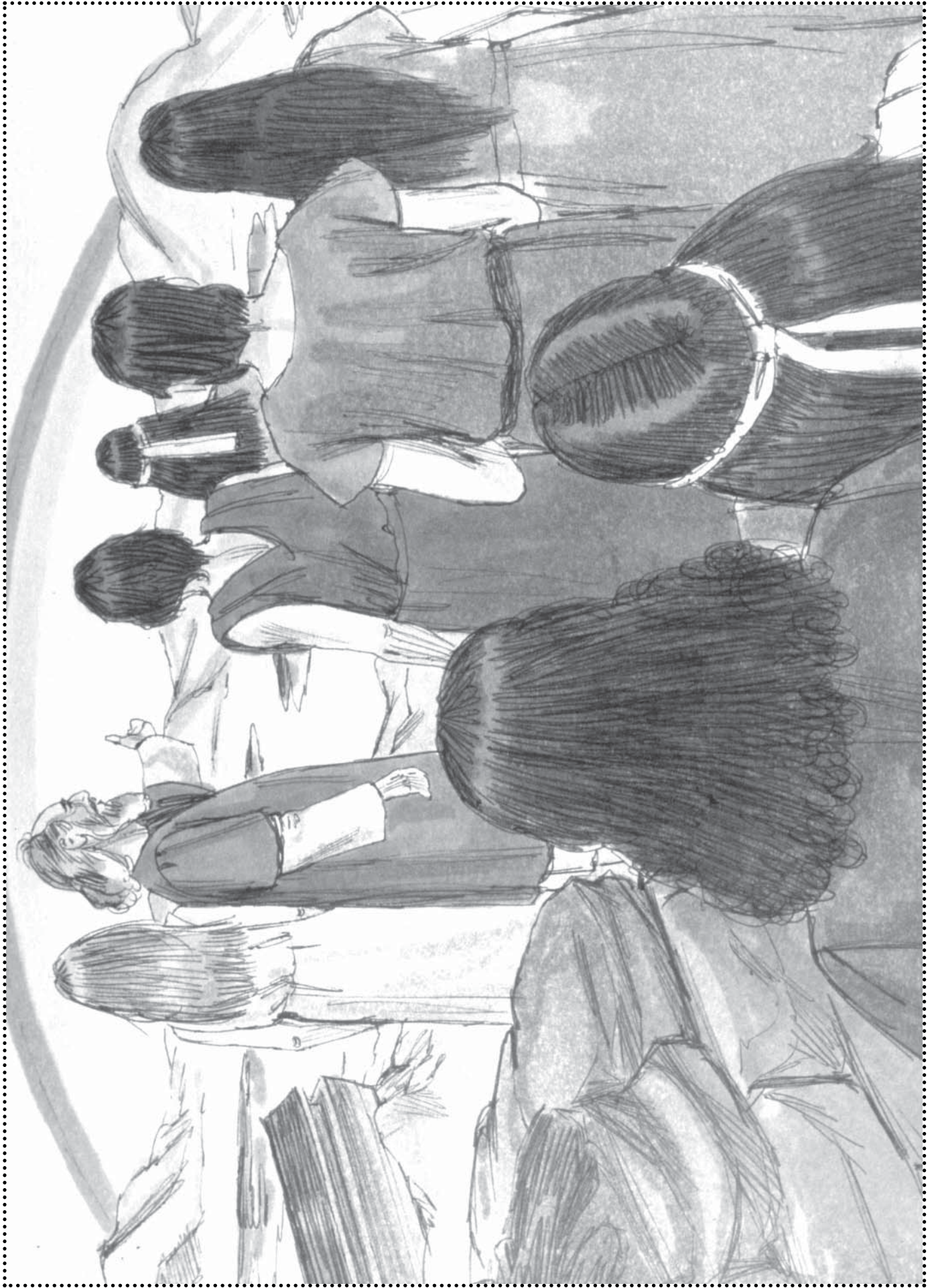
## Memory Verse:

Genesis 9:13 *"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."*













# A Tower of Rebellion 1-06-A

**N**oah and his family had survived the flood inside the ark. God had blessed Noah and told him they were to have big families to again fill the earth with people. As the people spread out to build new homes and cities, they began to forget how God had rescued Noah and his family.

The Bible says the people started to build things by making clay bricks instead of using stones like they always had. Maybe they were tired of using the things God gave them and instead wanted to make their own building blocks. The people moved farther out onto the plains and farther away from where God had helped them to be settled. They decided to build a city with a tower that would reach to the heavens. They wanted to be famous and important, and they wanted to set up their own control of the world. They had forgotten that God is the one in control.

When God saw how they were planning to control the world using one language and ruling from one great tower, He knew they had to be stopped. God is the One who is in control of all of the earth and He will let no one take His place. God was angry that the people were forgetting their need to follow His ways and honor Him as the Mighty Ruler of the universe. God suddenly gave people different languages. They tried to talk to each other but couldn't understand each other's words. Can you imagine how confusing it was to suddenly not be able to communicate with the person right next to you? This must have caused the people to be amazed at how quickly God had stopped their bad plan. He scattered the people to other parts of the earth and caused them to quit building the tower.

That is why the city was never finished and the tower was called Babel, because the Lord confused the language of the whole world and scattered the people across the whole earth. God wants people to always remember that He is the God in control of the whole earth. Sometimes humans can think they are as powerful or important as God. Sometimes they think they can invent things or make special plans that will be better than what God has for them. Anything we can make or plan can only be done as God gives the wisdom and ability. Some people think that they can be smarter than God and have a better plan than God. This is called pride, and it is a sin that God hates. We all need to understand that God loves us, has the best plan for us, and is completely in control of everything. We must learn to love Him, obey Him, and follow His plan for our lives.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. The earth was populated again.**
  - A. Noah's descendants filled the earth.
  - B. Everyone spoke the same language.
- II. Spread out across the earth.**
  - A. People moved farther away.
  - B. They used bricks instead of stones.
- III. A tower was designed to reach heaven.**
  - A. People began building a tower.
  - B. All men tried to be equal to God.
- IV. God stopped man's prideful plan.**
  - A. Confusion with many languages.
  - B. Pride is a sin that God despises.

## Activity

Some lessons can be made more effective by adding drama. Even the youngest students can act out this lesson by building a tower and then acting as though they cannot understand each other as God changes everyone's language. The confusion is obvious when they can't understand each other as they use many different pretend languages. The tower can be built from toy blocks or empty boxes. After you have presented the lesson, acting out the story can be an effective way of reinforcing the key points of the lesson.

## Teacher Growth

Every Christian must be on guard against pride. The old human nature will always encourage the sin of pride to step forward in our lives. We need to work hard to prepare and present quality lessons and in a sense take pride in our position as a teacher of God's Word. But, we must never begin to feel that we are better than others or expect honor for merely obeying God's call to teach His Word. With humble hearts we need to always be thankful that God has given us His Word and His Holy Spirit to make that Word come alive in others' hearts. Only His Spirit can penetrate hearts and change lives.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 11:1-9

## Memory Verse:

Proverbs 21:4 *"Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin!"*

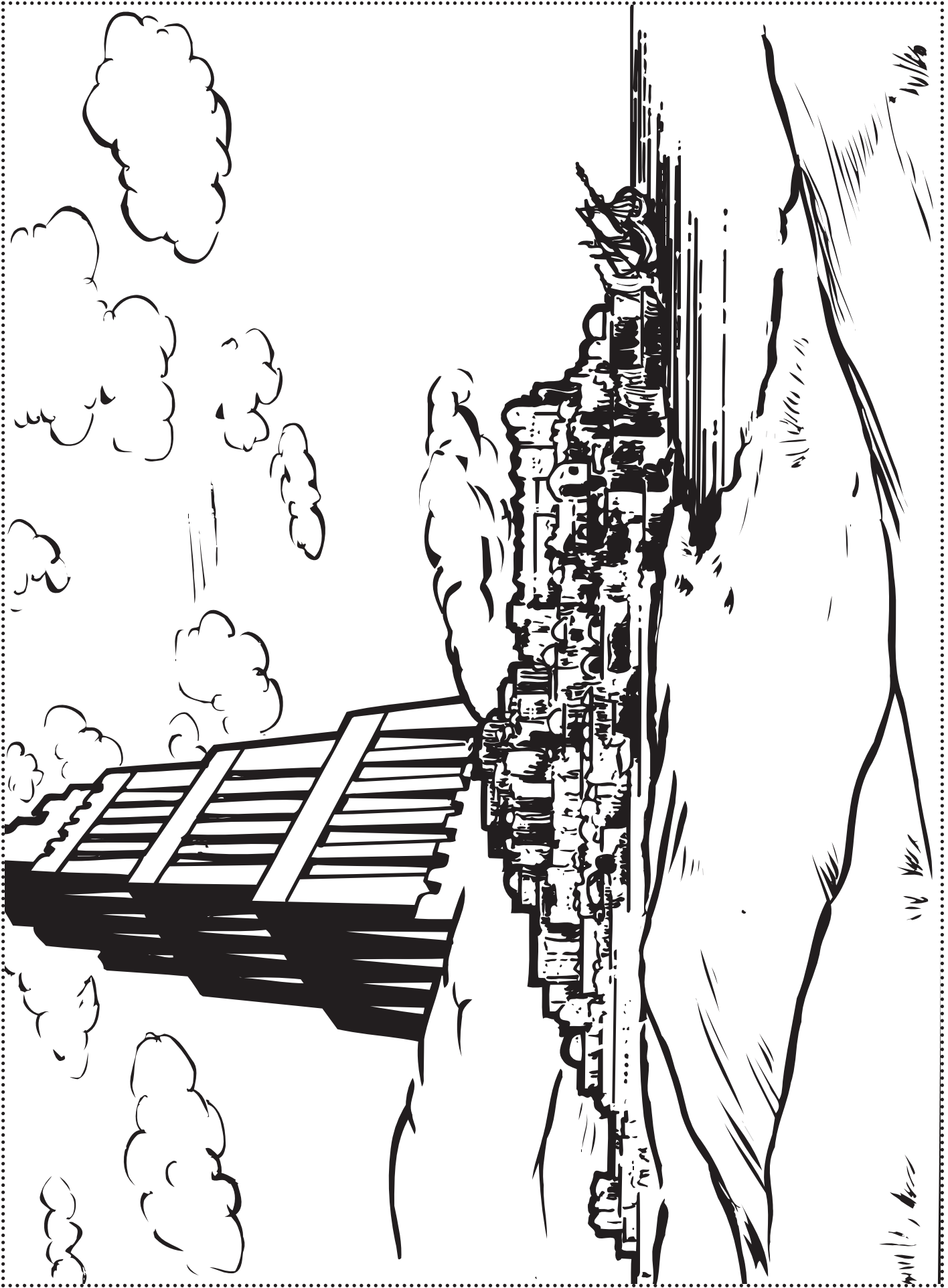












# Abraham - God's Friend 1-07-A

Let's look at the life of a man who was called God's friend. While Abram and his wife Sarai lived in a land called Ur, God spoke to him and asked Abram to go to a new land. Terah, Abram's father, and Lot, his nephew, left Ur with Abram and Sarai to begin a journey to a land promised to them by God. They came to a place called Haran, and settled there. Abram's father died there and Abram was reminded by God to continue his special journey. God had asked Abram to leave his father's household and to go to a land that God would show him. How strange it must have been to leave his relatives and start a journey without knowing where God would lead him. Abram had great faith that God would clearly show him where to go. He trusted that God had a special plan for his life.

When God told Abram to go to a new land, He also gave Abram seven special promises. God said (1) He would make Abram into a great nation, (2) He would bless Abram, (3) make his name great, and (4) make him a blessing to others. God also promised that (5) He would bless those who blessed Abram and (6) curse those who cursed him. The last blessing was very special. God said (7) He would bless all the people on the earth through Abram. This was God giving His unique blessing to all mankind once again. Adam and Eve's disobedience brought sin into the world after God's original blessing, so now Abram was hearing God again promise special blessings for the people who would obey Him.

Abram was a man who heard God's voice and promptly obeyed God's command. Abram had great faith in God's direction and the special plan God had for him to follow. As Abram started the journey, God again reminded him of the promises He would give for obedience to the plan.

Each time God met with Abram and spoke to him in a special way, Abram built an altar. In those days, building up a pile of stones as an altar was a way that people would mark a special place to honor God. They would talk with God and worship or celebrate His presence in that place. When Abram had reached Shechem, even though the land was filled with the enemy Canaanites, God reminded Abram at the altar that He would give all of that land to Abram's children. Abram did not worry about how God would do this, but instead he had faith to believe God would keep his promises.

Later, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, to remind him that God would make him the father of many nations. We read Abraham's name in the list of those honored for having great faith in the New Testament book of Hebrews. The Bible says that because Abraham believed God, he was called the friend of God. He is also known as the father of faith, because everyone who believes God and becomes a Christian, becomes part of the family that receives Abraham's blessings. As a Christian today, you are not a physical descendant of Abraham, but you are a spiritual descendant. God has a special plan for each of us. As we obey God we will receive His promised blessings.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **God had planned a place for His people.**
  - A. Abram's father left Ur for Canaan.
  - B. Abram continued the journey.
- II. **God gave special promises.**
  - A. He had promises just for Abram.
  - B. He also gave promises for everyone.
- III. **Abram obeyed God.**
  - A. The journey began.
  - B. God again told Abram His promises.
- IV. **Abram honored God.**
  - A. Abram had a personal experience.
  - B. Still remembered for his faith.

## Activity

Today's lesson was of a man's personal experiences with God as he obeyed God's directions. Each time the Lord spoke with Abram, an altar was built to honor God and record the meeting. Today we don't build actual altars but we can remember our own encounters with God. Many believers remember when they received direction or blessings from God. Looking back on those times can help people through difficulties. You may talk about journaling, as a private way to write down and remember the "altar experiences" we have with God. Jotting a note on a slip of paper or in the edge of the Bible can be a remembrance of that experience. Children can draw a picture as a reminder of His promises in their life.

## Teacher Growth

There will always be difficulties and times when we need to return to the call that God has given us and the promises He adds to our obedience. Teaching is a special call that often requires sacrifice. Record the life changes you see in your students. Jot a quick note after each lesson of at least one positive change or bit of growth you see in your class. When you are tired or struggling with the sacrifice caused by your teaching commitment, read through these testimonies and be reminded of God's promises to those who obey His call.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 11:27-12:9; 17:1-8, Hebrews 11:8-16

## Memory Verse:

James 2:23 *"And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend."*

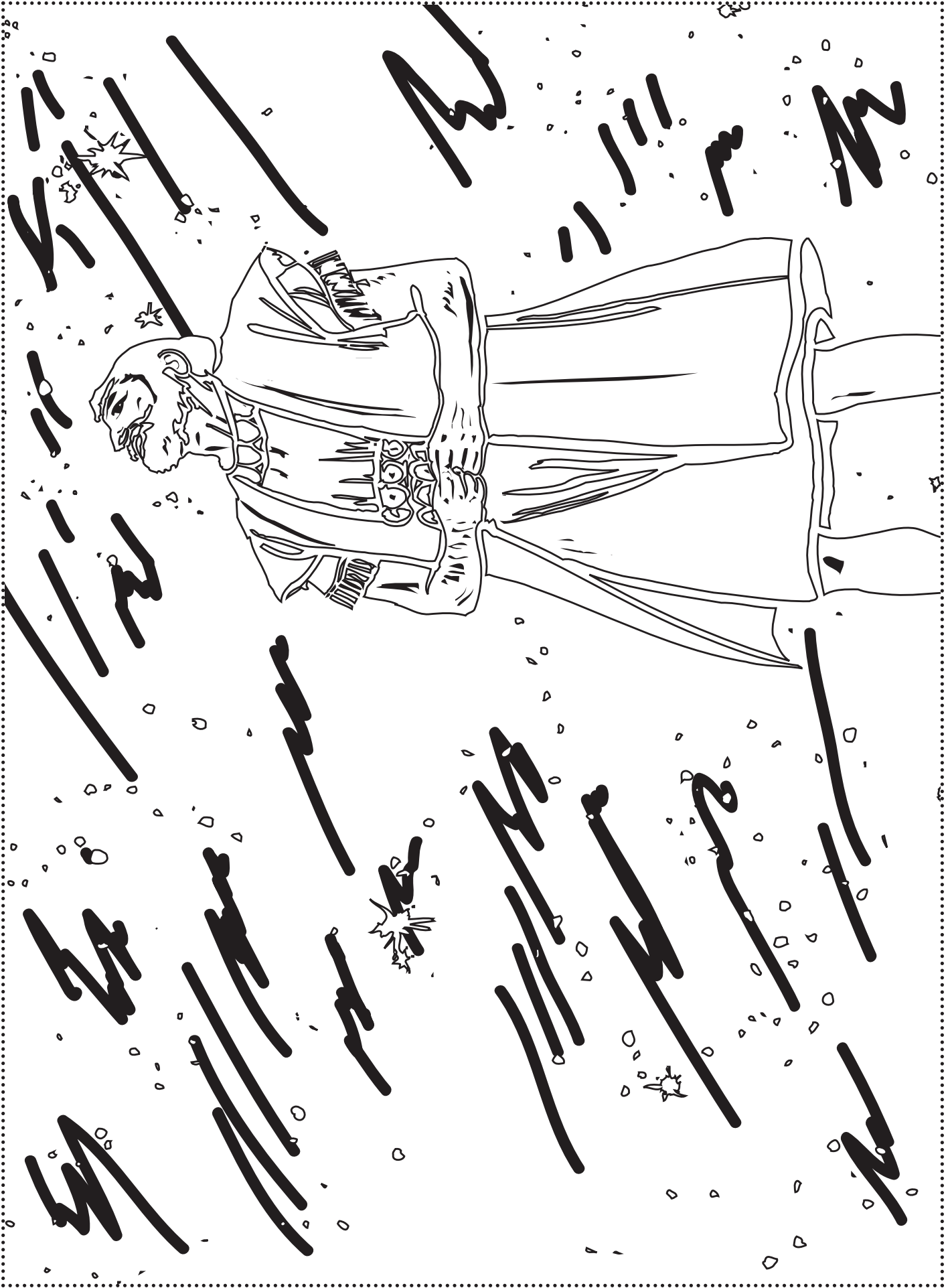












# The Secret of Generosity 1-08-A

**A**bram, who God later called Abraham, and his wife Sarai had traveled into Egypt because of a famine and had gained more livestock, gold and silver, and servants. Their wealth could be seen in how many animals they had in their flocks and the number of herdsmen that cared for the animals. Abram took everything he had and made a journey back to the land where God had first sent him. He went to the very place where he had built his first altar when God gave him great promises. Abram wanted to talk to God again.

Lot, Abram's nephew, had also built up a large family and gathered great wealth. He had many animals and herdsmen to care for the flocks. Lot had continued to travel and live near his uncle, so he also moved everything to Bethel where Abram called out to God.

Both Abram and Lot had such large families and huge flocks that there was not enough land for everyone to live close together. Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen began to fight over the land and the water that was needed for the animals. Something had to be done.

Abram told Lot that they must solve this problem so that there would be no fighting between their families. Abram reminded Lot that there was plenty of land and that they could each go a different direction to be able to spread out and enjoy life. Abram was the man that God had promised the land to, and he was the oldest so he could have chosen the best land for himself. But Abram was a generous man. He told Lot to choose the land he wanted first, and then Abram would take the land that was left over.

Lot chose the beautiful plain along the Jordan River that was well watered. The grass and rich soil made it like a garden that would be perfect for his flocks and family. So Lot headed east to live near Sodom, where men were very wicked and sinning greatly against God.

The Lord spoke to Abram after Lot left him and told Abram to look out to the north, south, east, and west, because all the land he could see was to belong to him. God reminded him that he would be blessed and that his offspring would fill all the earth. God saw Lot choose selfishly and move his family near those who sinned greatly, while Abram generously let Lot go first. God again gave Abram a special blessing for his generosity, and Abram settled his family in a safe area where he built another altar to honor God. One day, God used Abram to rescue his nephew Lot from the evil cities that God destroyed. Abram had learned about the blessings of being generous and following God's plan.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Abram continued his journey.

- A. Abram gathered wealth for his family.
- B. Abram sought God's direction again.

### II. Abram and Lot saw trouble.

- A. Lot built up his own family and flocks.
- B. Trouble came between the herdsmen.

### III. A separation was planned.

- A. Abram and Lot discussed the problem.
- B. Abram presented choices for the land.

### IV. An agreement was made.

- A. Generosity was demonstrated.
- B. God blesses a generous man.

## Activity

The idea of generosity is often only used with money. To correct this, give each student a sheet of paper, or use the chalkboard. Fold the sheet in half and then in half again. Trace the folds, creating four boxes. In the first box they draw money, and label it, "My offering of money." Next, they draw something they can do. A talent may be singing, drawing, teaching, helping, etc. Label this, "My offering of talent." Next have students draw how they can give their time. Label it, "My offering of time." In the last box each one draws a self-portrait. God wants us to give Him all of who we are, so label it, "My offering of my life." Discuss cheerfulness and generosity in these offerings.

## Teacher Growth

Giving is often limited to money or things. We need to give our time or talents to the Lord as well. The abilities the Lord has given you can be offered as a special gift. At times the most important thing we can give is our time to help others. Giving with a cheerful heart comes when we give our time, money, or talents as though they were given directly to the Lord. These may not always be received thankfully by the recipients, but God will add His blessing to our willingness to give.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 13:1-18

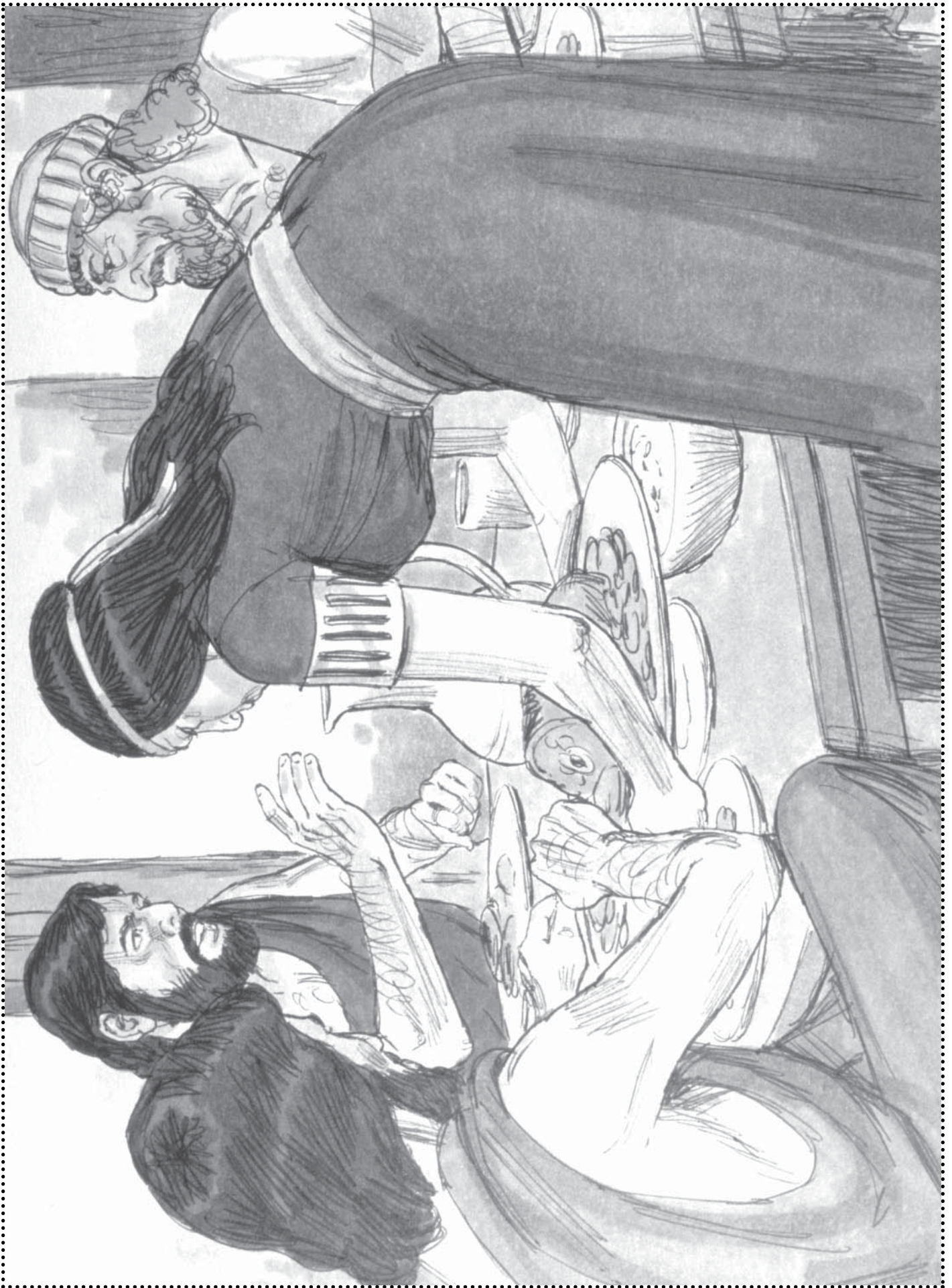
## Memory Verse:

2 Corinthians 9:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."













**A**bram and Sarai settled in the land God had given them, but Sarai was not able to have children, which was a sign of God's blessing. God had promised Abram that he would be the father of a great nation. After ten years, Sarai became very concerned about this as she was getting older. Sarai decided to give her Egyptian servant, Hagar, to her husband so he could start a family with her. Hagar was a servant, so she had to do whatever Sarai told her. Sarai thought she needed to help God with His plan.

Hagar became pregnant and began to make Sarai feel very bad. She teased Sarai about not being able to have her own children. Sarai became angry and blamed Abram for this trouble. Sarai mistreated Hagar, and finally Hagar decided to run away.

An angel of the Lord came to Hagar near a spring in the desert and asked her where she was going. Hagar told him she was running away from Sarai. The angel told her to go back and obey Sarai. He promised that he would bless her for obeying and that she would also see a nation come from the child she was carrying. He told her that the baby inside her was a boy to be named Ishmael because the Lord had heard her cry. The angel said her son would be a strong fighter. Hagar went back to Sarai and obeyed her as her servant. Hagar had a son and named him Ishmael. As Ishmael began to grow he made fun of Sarai. This caused trouble in Abram's home.

God changed Abram's name to Abraham, as He reminded him of the great promises He would give to Abraham and his family. God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah and promised she would have a son. They did have a son, named Isaac.

When Isaac was young, Abraham and Sarah had a big party for him. Ishmael was a teenager who mocked Sarah. He was Abraham's first son, and Sarah worried that he would take Isaac's inheritance from his father. Sarah finally went to Abraham and demanded that he send Hagar and Ishmael away.

Abraham was sad because Ishmael was his son, but he had to make Sarah happy. God told Abraham that Isaac would be the son to start His great nation. God also told him that Ishmael would be blessed as another nation. Abraham obeyed God even though it was hard. Early the next morning, Abraham gave Hagar a bag of food and water and sent her and Ishmael away.

When the water was gone, Hagar had Ishmael sit under a tree, and she went away because she didn't want to see her son die. Again, God heard her cries and spoke to her. He gave a well of water and promised her again that Ishmael would be the leader of a nation. God blessed the boy as he grew up in the desert and became a great archer. Hagar arranged for an Egyptian wife for Ishmael, and he began to build a nation of people.

Abraham and Sarah had to learn an important lesson about waiting for God's perfect plan instead of trying to make their own. Hagar learned that even when life is unfair and she was suffering from the mistakes of others, God still heard her cries and blessed her. God has very unique ways of blessing people even when the situations in life seem impossible.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Settled in Canaan to build a nation.**
  - A. Worried over God's plan.
  - B. Decision to make their own plan.
- II. **Trouble in the home.**
  - A. Sarai and Hagar couldn't live together.
  - B. Hagar planned to leave.
- III. **Struggle in the desert.**
  - A. An angel visited Hagar.
  - B. A promise was given.
- IV. **Ishmael formed another nation.**
  - A. Final separation from family.
  - B. They made the desert home.

## Activity

Sometimes we fail to really see God's blessings. God always has a way of blessing His people. Your class may need you to help them see this. Set up a large sheet of paper or use the chalkboard to create a list of the ways God is blessing them. You may ask one of the students to write, or have each volunteer add to the list. Older students can write a list with words, while younger ones may need to make pictures of these ideas. Sometimes we overlook the rain or sun that helps food to grow, or the jobs that God provides. Some see only the suffering, like Hagar did, but they need to see the blessings God has given even in difficult situations.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson requires time in prayer before its presentation. Some students feel like Hagar, in a bad situation that isn't their fault. This lesson helps you see that no matter how hard we try to make God's plans happen, or come up with answers, somehow we must learn to trust God's plan and obey God's commands, just as Abraham did. God will uniquely bless you as you prayerfully prepare each lesson, because He wants you to present His Word as a guideline for life.

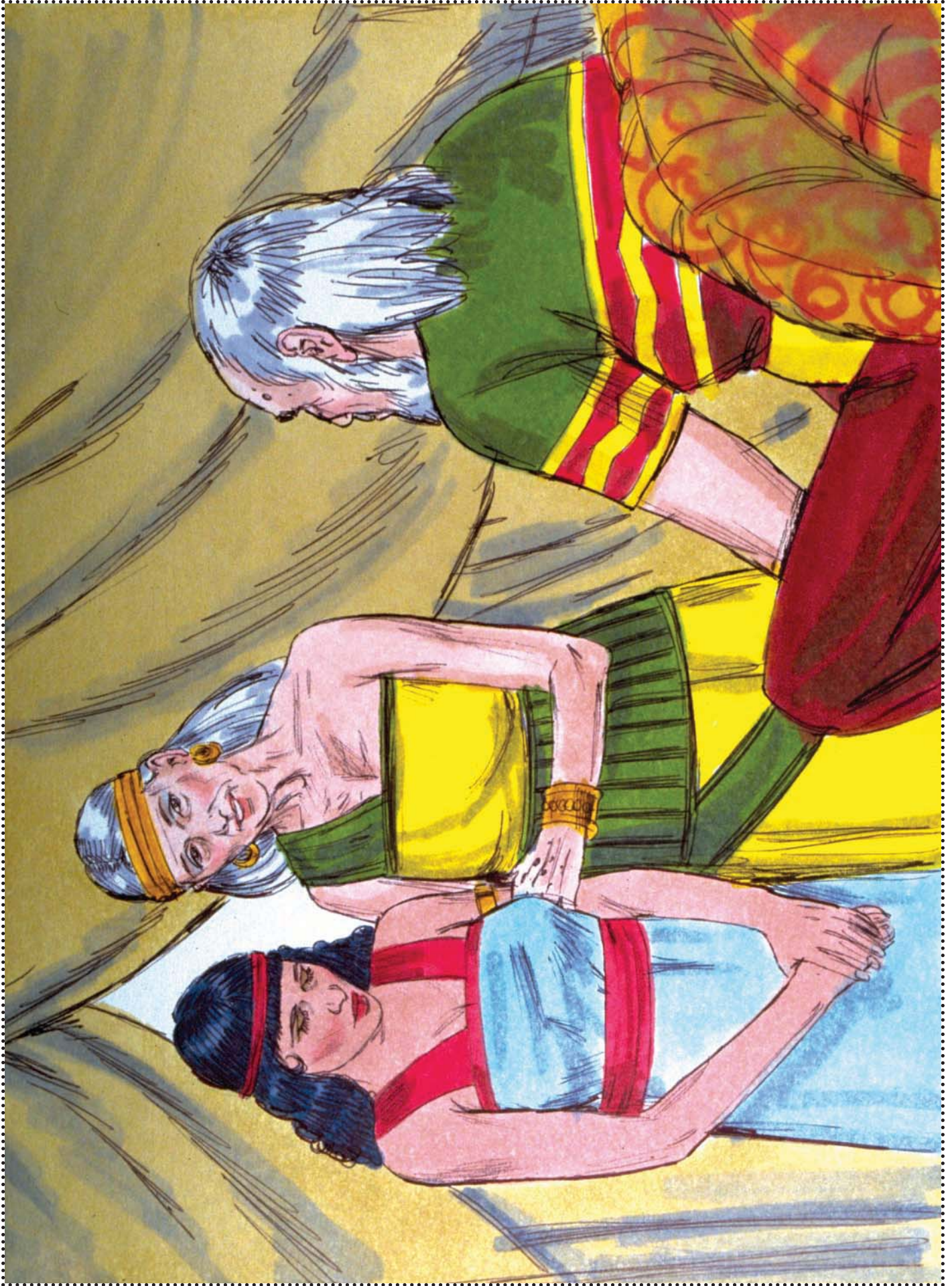
## Scripture Passages:

Genesis 16, 17, 21:8-21

## Memory Verse:

Proverbs 3:5,6 *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."*













# Isaac - The Promised Son 1-10-A

**A**braham and Sarah had learned to hear God's voice as He directed their lives. God had asked Abraham to leave his father's home and land to go to a land that God would show him. God had promised to make Abraham a great nation as He led him into the land He had chosen for Abraham. Abraham had obeyed God and was living in the land that had been promised to him. Even when his nephew Lot had taken the well-watered plains because of Abraham's unselfish offer, God had again promised to bless Abraham in a special way. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be like the dust of the earth and like the stars in the sky. Imagine how big that family would be! God made a covenant, or special promise, with Abraham. But at a very old age, Abraham and Sarah had still never had their first child.

One day, three visitors came to Abraham's home. Two of these men were angels and the third was probably the Lord Himself. They had come to give a special part of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah. Abraham hurried to wash their feet and have a special meal provided for these guests. While they ate some of Abraham's finest food, they asked him about Sarah and then began to give him a special message.

The men told Abraham that they would return the next year and that his wife Sarah would have a son by then. Sarah was listening inside their tent and thought what these men were saying was impossible. Abraham was very old, and Sarah was too old to even have children. Sarah laughed to herself at the promise these men had brought. Then the men asked Abraham why Sarah had laughed at this promise from God. He reminded them that nothing is impossible for God. Sarah was afraid when these men knew that she had laughed to herself inside the tent where they couldn't even see or hear her. She realized they were not just regular visitors and tried to lie about her laughing. But the men just reminded Abraham and Sarah that in a year she really would have a son.

The Lord was gracious and fulfilled the promise of giving Sarah a son. Abraham was more than ninety-nine years old and Sarah was past the age for having a baby, but God did something that seemed impossible. Even though Abraham and Sarah had tried to make another plan for God by having a baby through an Egyptian servant, God still had one special promise to fulfill. God always keeps His promises. The birth of Isaac was God keeping His promise even when it looked impossible. We must never forget that even when things look impossible, nothing is too difficult for God.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Promises for a great nation.**
  - A. God directs Abraham's life.
  - B. Abraham received God's blessing.
- II. **Visitors came to Abraham's tent.**
  - A. Three special guests.
  - B. They cared for these guests.
- III. **A special announcement.**
  - A. A specific promise was given.
  - B. Reaction to the promise.
- IV. **Nothing is impossible for God.**
  - A. Sometimes natural answers are gone.
  - B. But God always fulfills His promises.

## Activity

We may see situations that look impossible, and not even take them to the Lord in prayer. We must learn that nothing is impossible for God, and He wants us to bring every need to Him. Challenge your students to begin praying about the needs that seem impossible in their lives. Provide time for prayer in your class, allowing students to pray individually or have someone share a need that the group can pray for. First, ask some to share how God has already met an impossible need in the past. These testimonies build the faith of others. Give students slips of paper to write down specific needs and date them. When they take this slip home to pray, instruct them to write the date down when God gives the answer and bring it back to share with the class.

## Teacher Growth

Prayer is important in every Christian's life, our communication with God. He has given us His Word to direct us, but He also desires daily communication with us. Prayer is not just telling God our needs, it is also a time to listen to His voice. He wants to teach us, express His love for us, and daily direct us. Before you can teach your students to pray, you must enjoy a vital prayer life. You will challenge students to take impossible situations to God to develop faith like Abraham, but first allow God to make this real to you.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 15:1-6, 18:1-15, 21:1-7

## Memory Verse:

Luke 1:37 "For nothing is impossible with God."

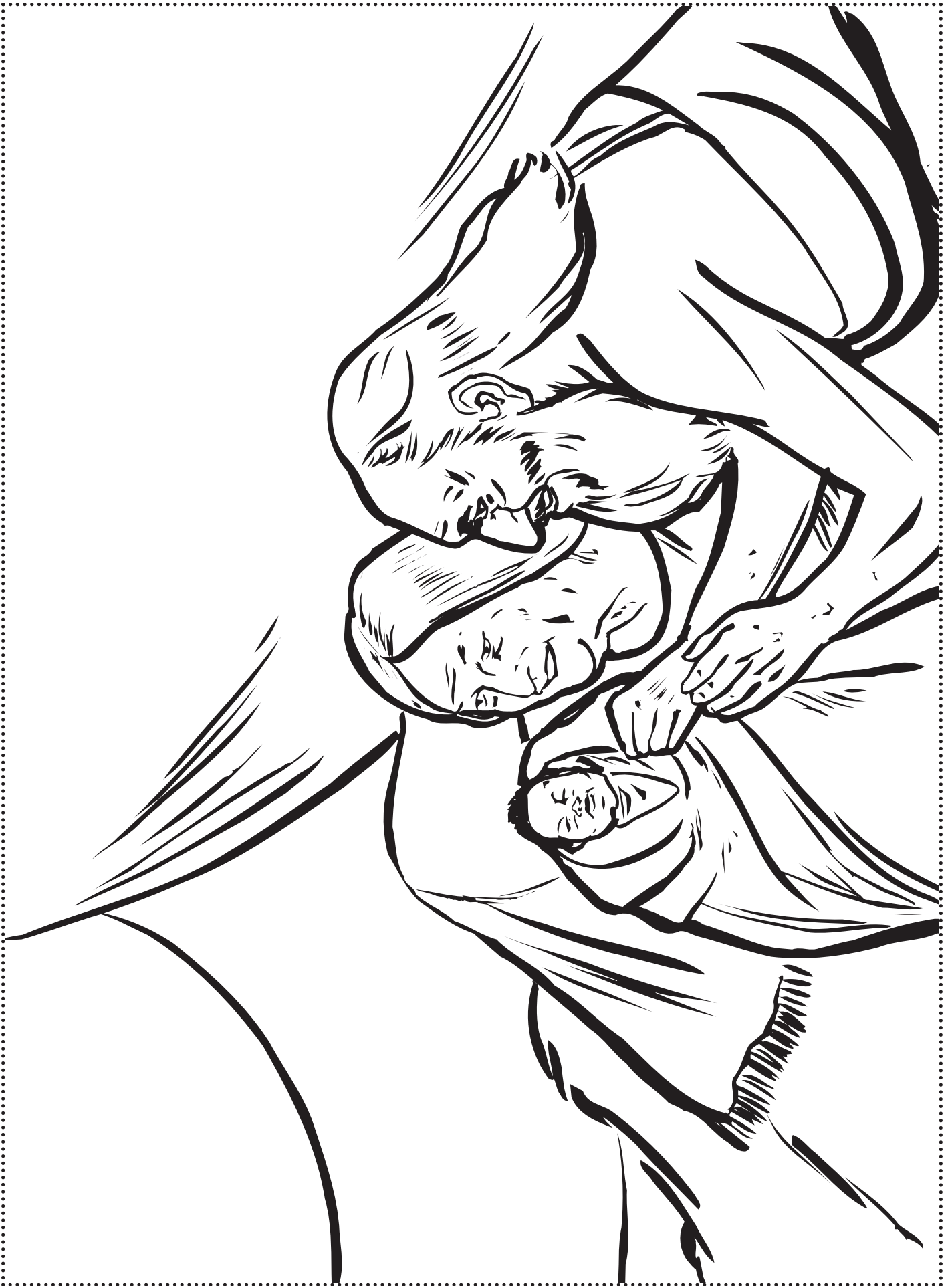












# Finding the Right Wife 1-11-A

**A**braham was growing very old, and he wanted to help his son Isaac plan for the future. Isaac was very sad because Sarah, his mother, had died. Abraham knew that Isaac would need to marry the right wife and continue to build a family that would follow God's ways and live in God's blessings. In those days parents found a mate for their children. Abraham called his chief servant to his bedside and asked him to make a special journey. He made the servant promise not to get a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites where they were living, but to go back to the land of Abraham's family and find a wife that would obey God. The servant promised to obey and to bring a wife back for Isaac so that Isaac would not leave the land God had promised to Abraham's family. The servant left with ten camels loaded with supplies and gifts from his master, Abraham. When he got close to the town of his master's family, he had the camels kneel by the well outside town and the servant prayed. The servant asked God to help him know which was the right wife for Isaac. He planned to ask a girl to reach down in the well with her jar and get him a drink, and then he asked God to have the right girl offer to get water for all of the camels, too. This would mean that she would willingly do a great deal of extra work to care for a stranger's camels. The first young woman, Rebekah, who came to the well was very beautiful, and the servant asked her for a drink of water. Immediately, Rebekah willingly offered him a drink and then asked if she could also get water for his camels. The servant knew that God had shown him exactly the woman that was to marry Isaac.

Rebekah invited the servant to her father's home and introduced him to her family. They were relatives of Abraham who believed God had led the servant to their home. Laban, Rebekah's brother, invited Abraham's servant to come into their home and explain what his plans were for Rebekah. When the family understood how God had led the servant to Rebekah and how God had answered the servant's prayer, they were willing to send Rebekah back to marry Isaac. Rebekah agreed to go with the servant to meet the man God had prepared to be her husband. The servant praised God and gave Rebekah's family the gifts that Abraham had sent.

The next morning Abraham's servant started the journey back to meet his master with Rebekah and her maids. As they got closer to the home of Abraham, Rebekah saw a handsome young man out in the field walking toward them. She asked the servant who he was. When she learned that it was Isaac, she covered her face with a veil. Then the servant told Isaac all that God had done to help him find Rebekah as Abraham had asked him to do. Isaac loved Rebekah and immediately took her to be his wife. God had prepared both Isaac and Rebekah to be married to each other even though they had never met before.

God had a perfect plan already prepared. We can trust God with every detail of our life because He will guide us in every decision we make when we ask for His perfect plan.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Abraham planned for his son.

- A. A servant was chosen.
- B. The task was explained.

### II. The search began.

- A. A prayer for direction.
- B. An answer at the well.

### III. An encounter with Rebekah.

- A. Her gracious offer.
- B. Introduction to the family.

### IV. The agreement is made.

- A. The family gave approval.
- B. Isaac took Rebekah as his wife.

## Activity

Today's lesson shows that God sees way ahead of us. Only God had exactly the right wife ready for Isaac. Only God had seen far in advance the perfect husband for Rebekah. People use binoculars to see things far away. Form two tubes of paper or light cardboard and attach them in the center to create pretend binoculars. If possible, bring a real pair of binoculars so students can see things at a distance. Use this to remind them that God sees everything and always has a perfect plan. For older children or youth, it is important to remember that God sees the perfect mate when it is time for marriage.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson was about choosing the right mate, but God also has a perfect plan for all the events in our life. God knows what you need to be the most effective teacher. He knows every student that will be in your class and He can give you the ideas to make His Word real to them. Just as the servant prayed to know God's chosen girl at the well, you can pray and ask Him to direct you in your class. Learn to prayerfully prepare each lesson, asking God to direct your study of the truth you need to present, and to give you the best way to present it. Humble yourself and seek His help, for God sees far beyond where you can see.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 24

## Memory Verse:

Psalm 25:9 "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way."













# Seeds of Resentment 1-12-A

Isaac married a beautiful woman named Rebekah. His father's servant had obeyed Abraham and brought him the wife that God had chosen for his son. When Rebekah was unable to have children, Isaac prayed and the Lord answered his prayers. Rebekah became pregnant with twins. When the twins inside Rebekah began to jostle each other, she asked the Lord why.

The Lord spoke to Rebekah and told her that two nations were inside her. He explained that each of the twins would be the father of a great nation one day, and that one would be weak and the other strong. He also told her that the older twin would serve the younger one. This was strange, because in their culture the younger son would always serve the older one.

When it was time for the twins to be born, the first boy was very red and hairy, so they named him Esau. The second twin was born with his hand holding onto Esau's heel, so he was called Jacob.

Even though these boys were twins, they were very different. Esau became a skilled hunter who loved to spend time out in the open country. Jacob was very quiet and enjoyed staying around the tents where the family lived. These brothers looked different and acted very differently.

Isaac enjoyed eating the wild game that Esau brought home, so he loved Esau more. Rebekah always loved Jacob more than Esau. Instead of a loving family, the boys grew up with division in their home as each parent chose a favorite son. Surely there were seeds of resentment, or jealousy, sown in this family. The seeds began to grow as these brothers struggled for their parent's love.

One day Jacob was cooking some stew when his brother, Esau, came home from hunting. Esau was very tired and hungry from a long day out in the countryside, so he asked Jacob to quickly give him a bowl of stew. Jacob told Esau that he would give him the food only if Esau would promise to give him his birthright. In those days the oldest son was promised a special inheritance which was called a birthright. Jacob was planning a way to get the special rights that his older brother had received.

Esau was so hungry that he swore a special oath, or promise, to give Jacob his inheritance if he would just give him that bowl of stew. In one desperate moment Esau gave up the most valuable thing in his life. Jacob then served Esau some bread and stew. He had received the most important thing Esau had, his birthright. Esau ate and quickly left, but Jacob understood the deep importance of a birthright.

We see that Esau did not really value the things most important to God. The birthright was a sign of all the special promises that God had given to Abraham and Isaac, his grandfather and father. These covenant promises from God now belonged to Jacob, and to Esau they had only been worth one bowl of stew. God's words to Rebekah were coming true, that the younger twin would rule over the older twin. Now Jacob had Esau's birthright.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Isaac prayed for children.

- A. Twins were promised.
- B. Rebekah questioned the Lord.

### II. The birth of twins.

- A. Differences in the boys.
- B. Differences in their lifestyles.

### III. Parents chose favorites.

- A. A father's love or a mother's love.
- B. A divided household.

### IV. Seeds of resentment were sown.

- A. A desperate trade.
- B. Different values.

## Activity

Understanding that actions always result in consequences can be hard. To help illustrate this principle, God's Word often uses the picture of sowing seeds to reap a harvest. In both the Old and New Testaments, reaping and sowing are used to help explain the results that follow actions. Have students plant some fast-growing seeds. Do this as a class in one container, or have each student plant a few seeds to take home. As you plant, remind them that it is just like making a choice. When growth appears, it is a reminder that what we sow we will reap. Plant several different types of seeds to show that what was planted will be what grows.

## Teacher Growth

Memory verses were selected for each lesson to express the key truth or principle. Today's verse is long and may be difficult for some. You can shorten the verse or have the students learn just the key phrase. Memory verses are ways to hide the principles from God's Word in hearts. There may be another verse or phrase, that would help students grasp the same concept. In Galatians 6:7 a portion of that verse would also teach today's concept.

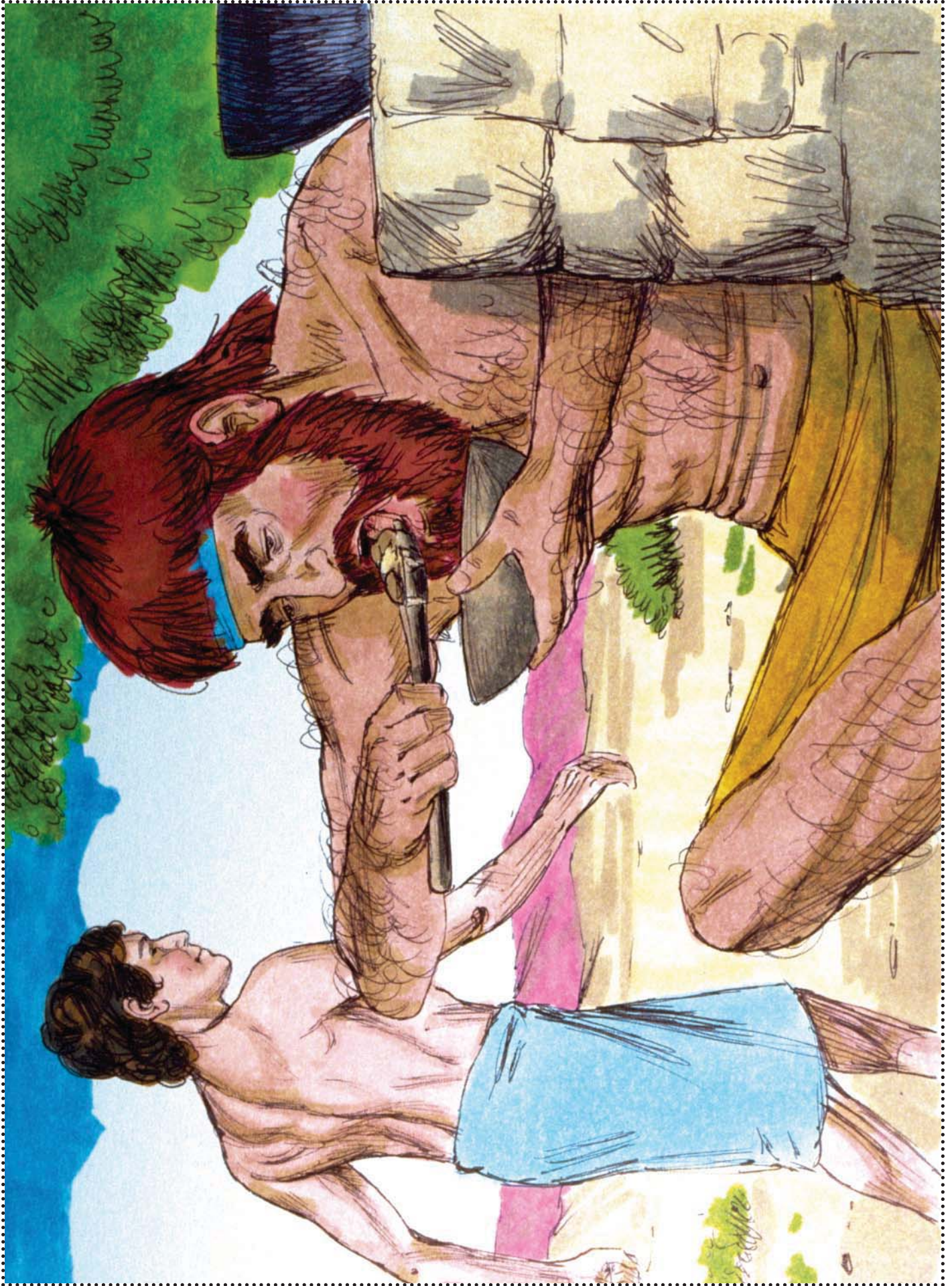
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 25:19-34

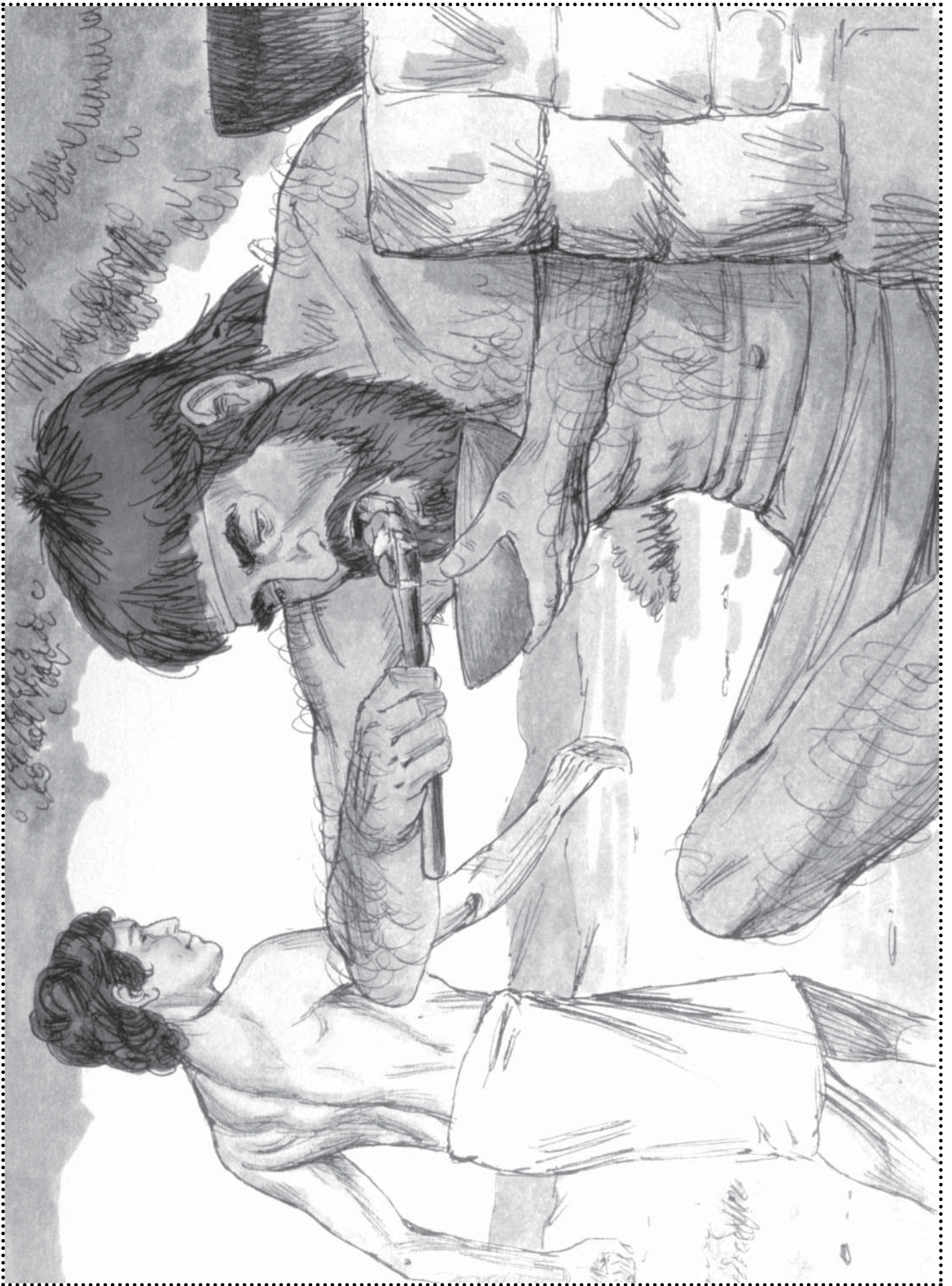
## Memory Verse:

Galatians 6:8 *"The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."*













Isaac was getting very old, and his eyes were so weak that he couldn't see well any more. He called his oldest son Esau to come to his bedside. He asked Esau to get his bow and arrows to go hunting. He wanted Esau to shoot some wild game and to cook his favorite meat for him to enjoy. Isaac promised Esau he would give him a special blessing when he finished eating this special meal. It was a custom in those days for a father to give his oldest son a special blessing just before the father died.

Rebekah, Isaac's wife, had been listening to this special request for Esau. She had always loved her son Jacob more, so she thought of a way for Jacob to trick Isaac into giving the special blessing to him instead of Esau. Rebekah had Jacob bring her two young goats from the flock, so she could cook the meat just the way that Esau did. Jacob was worried that even though Isaac could not see any more, he would touch Jacob and feel that he was not hairy like his brother Esau. Rebekah had Jacob put on some of Esau's clothes so he would smell like a hunter, and she covered his hands and neck with goatskin so it would feel like Esau. Quickly, Jacob served his father and made him believe that he was Esau. Isaac gave Jacob the special blessing that only the oldest son should receive. When Esau returned, he was angry that Jacob had tricked his father into giving him the special blessing. He realized that Jacob now had the birthright and the special blessing, and this caused Esau to be so angry that he threatened to kill Jacob after his father's death.

Rebekah knew that Esau was planning to kill Jacob, so she convinced Isaac to send Jacob far away to find a wife. She hoped that Esau would calm down in time and that some day Jacob could return home without fear for his life. Esau, however, was so angry that he disobeyed his parents' command and married a girl from a family that did not believe in God.

On the journey to find his mother's relatives, Jacob stopped to spend the night and used a stone for his pillow. He had a dream and saw a stairway reaching from earth up to heaven. He saw angels walking up and down the stairs and the Lord standing at the top. The Lord made the same special promise to Jacob that had been given to Isaac and Abraham. The Lord promised Jacob all of the land that was around him and told him he would be the father of a great nation. God promised He would go with Jacob always and give him special blessings.

When Jacob awoke the next morning, he took the rock that had been his pillow and set it up as an altar to worship God. He poured oil on the altar to honor God and made a special promise to God as well. Jacob promised to always serve God and give him one-tenth of all that he had, if God would keep him safe, supply his food and clothes, and help him to return some day to his father's family. Even though Jacob was running away from his brother in fear because he had deceived his father, Jacob realized that he needed to trust in the care and protection of God. Jacob learned how important it was to honor God and seek Him. God showed Himself to be faithful to His promises as He cared for Jacob while his journey continued.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Isaac promised a blessing.**
  - A. Jacob tricked his father.
  - B. Rebekah warned Jacob.
- II. **Isaac sent Jacob with a blessing.**
  - A. Jacob went to find a wife.
  - B. Esau disobeyed in anger.
- III. **Jacob stopped to rest.**
  - A. He had a special dream.
  - B. The Lord spoke to Jacob.
- IV. **Jacob responded to his meeting with God.**
  - A. The stone pillow became the altar.
  - B. He continued his journey.

## Activity

A simple ladder could be made out of sticks or strips of paper. Using glue or string, help students to construct a ladder like the one Jacob saw in his dream. Younger students may only be able to create the ladder, while older students may also be able to add drawn and cut out angel figures, and a symbolic bright cloud to represent God at the top of the ladder. If you do not have the supplies to cut and form this object, then students may also draw a picture of this special dream.

## Teacher Growth

The basic message of a lesson can often be reinforced by a simple art project or drawing. These visual reminders of the main point of your lesson will not only help strengthen your classroom presentation but will also be sending home a visual presentation that can reach others. Family or friends who ask a student about their project will open the door for the student to retell the lesson again and again. Crafts or drawings that illustrate the lesson can be a helpful tool for your students to share their faith, for others to hear the message, and for reinforcing the lesson in the lives of your students long after they leave your class.

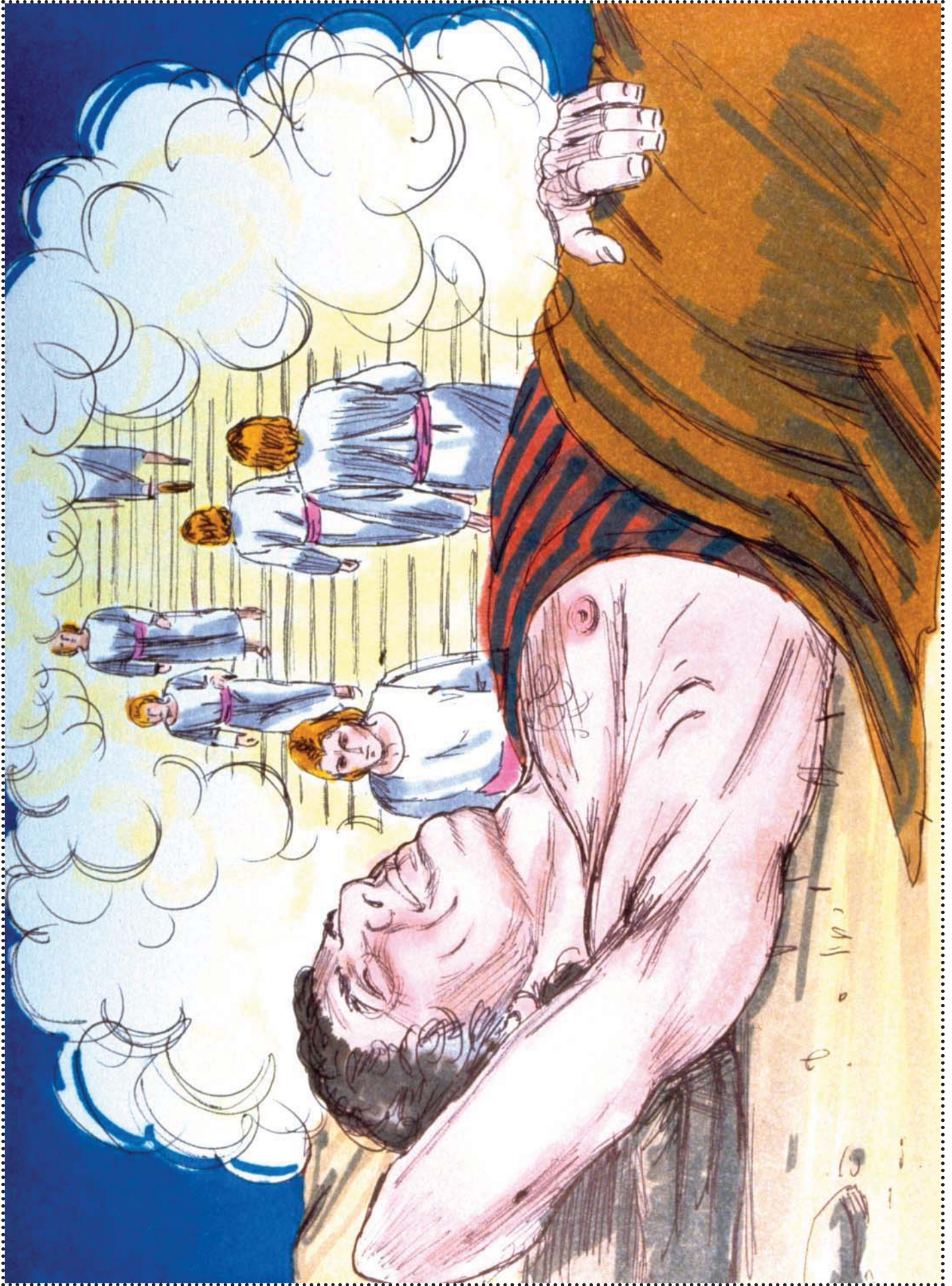
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 27-28

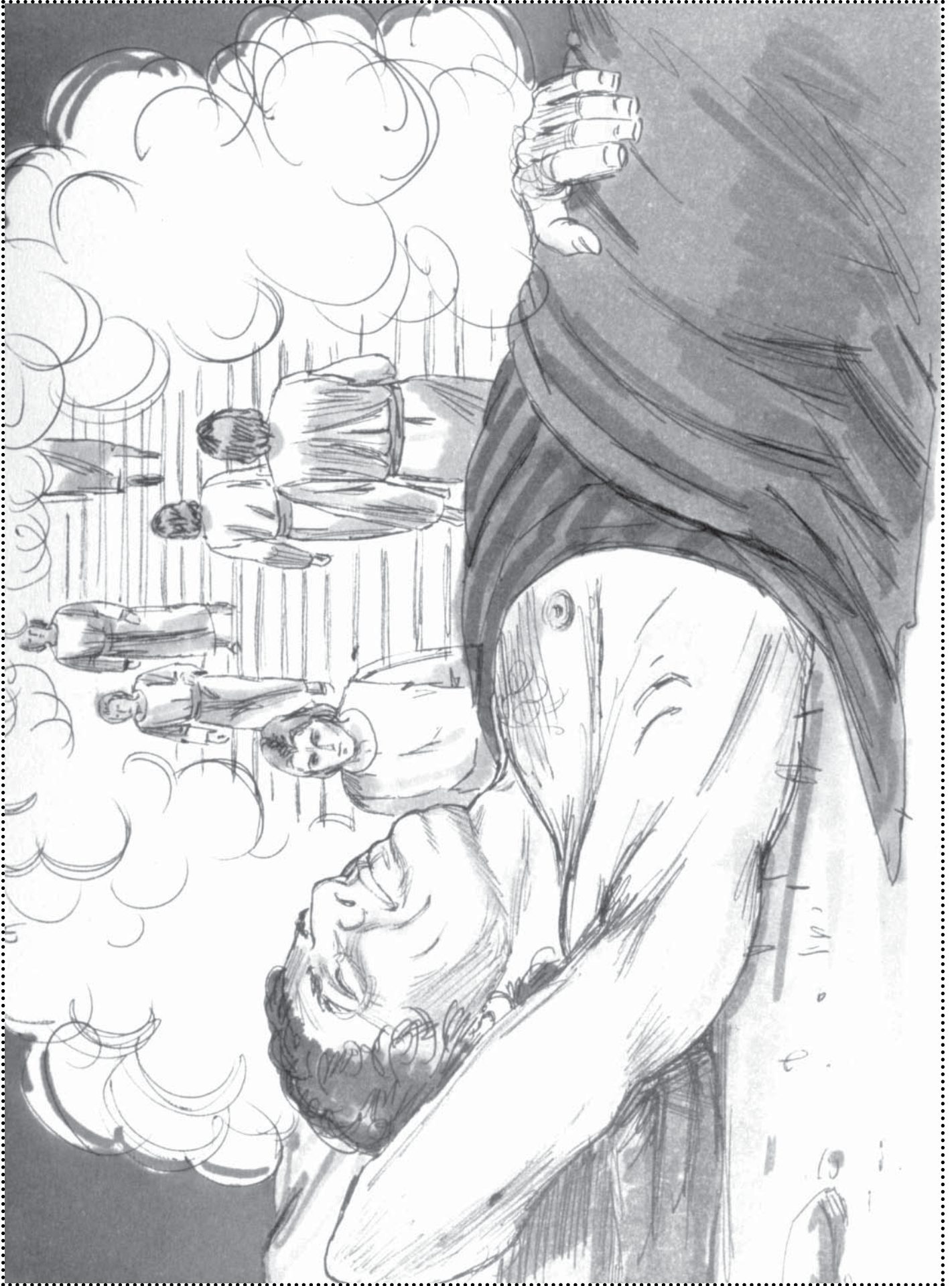
## Memory Verse:

Nahum 1:7 *"The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."*

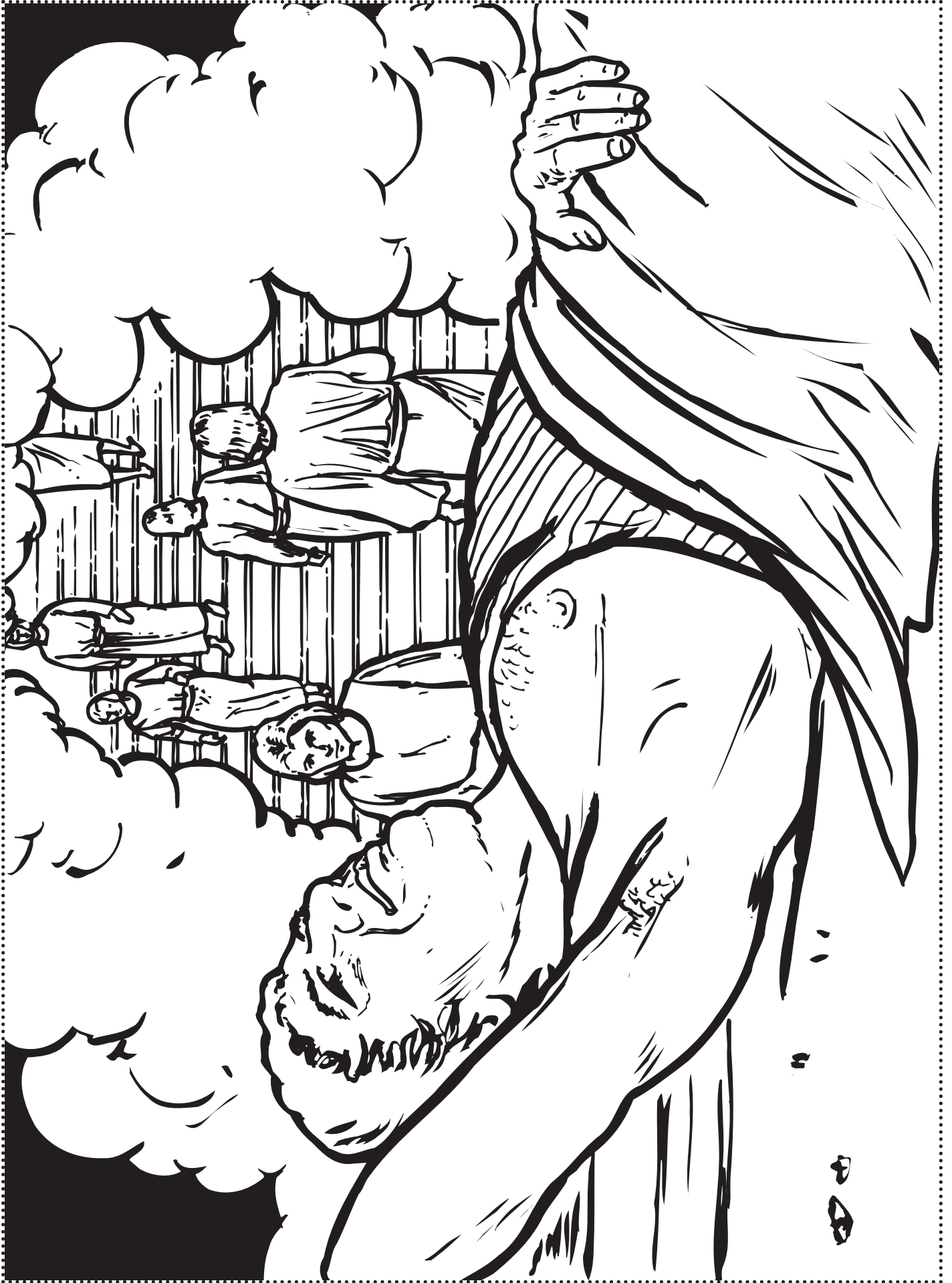












**J**acob left the place where God blessed him in a special way and continued on his journey to find his mother's family. When Jacob arrived near Haran at a large well, he saw three flocks of sheep waiting there for water. The shepherds waited for the other flocks to gather so there would be enough people to roll the stone cover off the well. When Jacob inquired about Laban, his mother's brother, they told him that the woman helping with the sheep coming near was Laban's daughter, Rachel. Jacob was so overwhelmed with Rachel's beauty, that he didn't wait for the other shepherds to arrive. He rolled the stone off the well himself, and began to water Rachel's flock. Jacob kissed Rachel and told her he was a relative. Rachel ran home to tell her father this news.

As soon as Laban heard of his sister's son, he hurried to meet him and invited Jacob into his home. Jacob was accepted as part of the family. Laban had two daughters, Leah, the oldest, with poor eyesight, and Rachel, the beautiful one that Jacob had fallen in love with. After Jacob had been in Laban's home for a month and helping Laban care for all his sheep, Laban offered to pay him for his work. When Laban asked what his wages would be, Jacob told him he wanted to marry Rachel. Laban felt Jacob would be a good husband, so he allowed him to work with his flocks for seven years to earn the right to marry his daughter.

At the end of seven years, Laban held a large feast to celebrate the marriage. At the end of the ceremony Jacob spent the night with his new wife. The next morning Jacob discovered that under the wedding veil and in the daylight, he had been married to Leah instead of Rachel. Laban had tricked Jacob. Laban told Jacob it was their custom to have the oldest daughter marry first, so Jacob would have to work another seven years to earn the right to marry Rachel. Patiently, Jacob worked for the woman he really loved, Rachel.

At the end of the next seven years, Jacob finally married Rachel. By then, Laban's flocks had increased greatly. Laban knew that the blessings of God were upon his flocks because of Jacob. Jacob also began to build up his own flock and saw God greatly bless everything he touched. Leah and Rachel both gave him many sons, another sign of God's blessing. It became evident to everyone that Jacob had been blessed with twelve sons, two wives, and a great flock. God caused Jacob to prosper as he blessed even the father-in-law who had treated him unfairly. God wants us to learn how to bless others, even those who mistreat us.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Jacob found Laban's family.

- A. A shepherd's life.
- B. Jacob loved Rachel.

### II. Laban welcomed Jacob.

- A. Jacob is greeted as family.
- B. He worked for his father-in-law.

### III. Wages for a wife.

- A. Tricked into marrying Leah.
- B. Patiently worked to gain Rachel.

### IV. Jacob's family grew.

- A. Leah and Rachel gave him 12 sons.
- B. Everyone's herds prospered.

## Activity

Place the name of each student on a sheet of paper, to complete the title, "\_\_\_\_ blesses others by:". Pass one of these to each student, being careful they do not get their own name. Discuss ideas about characteristics that some people use to bless others. Examples may be helpfulness in specific ways, or singing, or even a smile. Ask students to think about the classmate whose name is on their sheet of paper and write in at least one way that they are a blessing to others. As time allows, have the students pass these sheets around for others to add more. When the class is over, give each student his or her own list to take home. It is encouraging to see how we bless others.

## Teacher Growth

This lesson focuses on the importance of being a blessing. As a teacher, your preparation and presentation of the lesson is a special blessing that you give each student. There are additional ways that you can bless those you teach. Do you know their needs outside your class? Do you spend time in prayer for them? Do some need extra encouragement? Have you learned to bless those who are difficult? Have you looked for practical ways to bless at least one of your students, going beyond words to deeds? Your actions in blessing someone will speak louder than any lesson you will ever present.

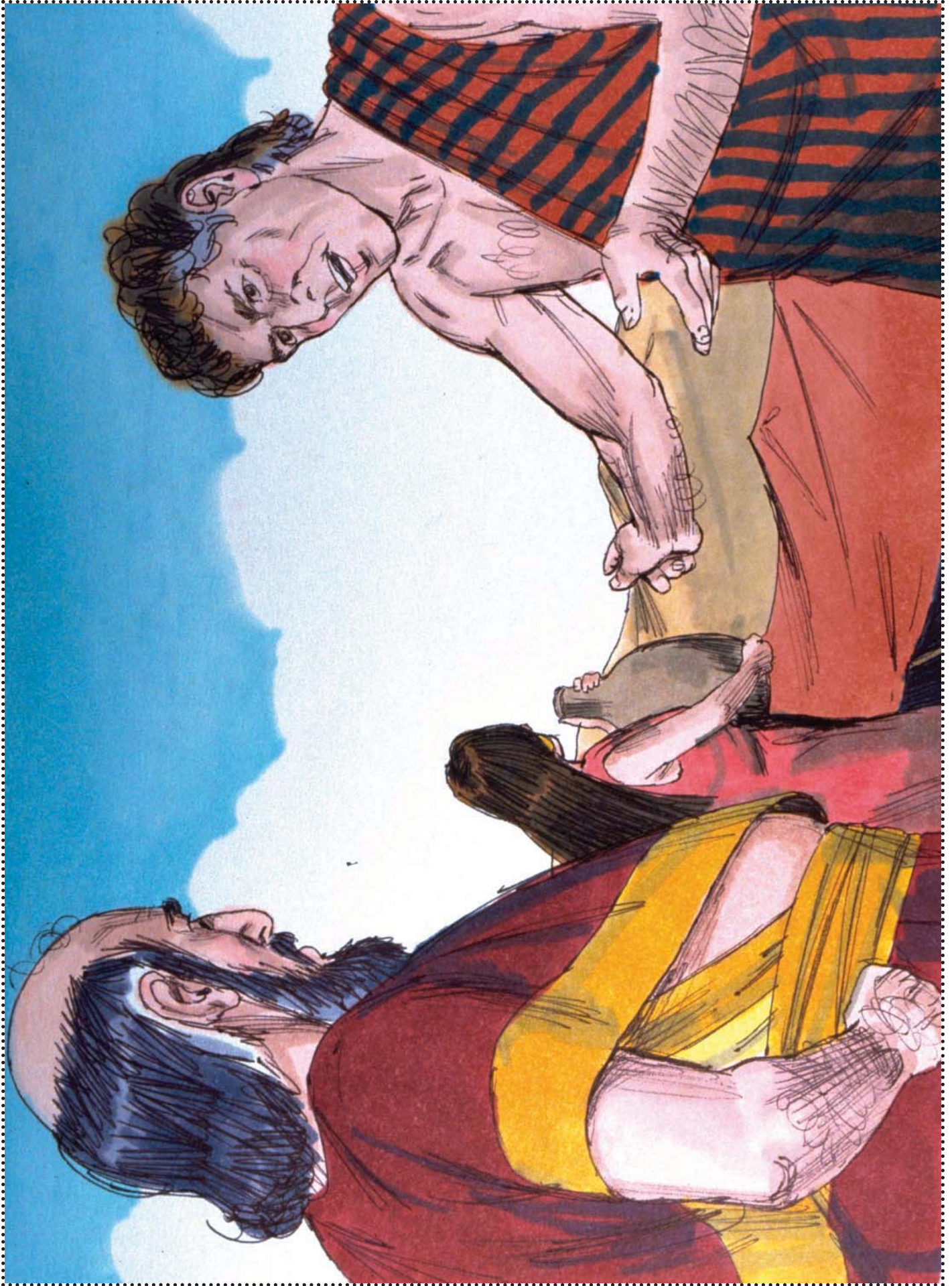
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 29-30

## Memory Verse:

Luke 6:28 "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."













**J**acob had worked many years for his father-in-law and seen the blessings God had brought upon everyone's flocks and families. Then Jacob began hearing Laban's sons complain about the blessings God had given Jacob. Even Laban's attitude began to turn against him. Then the Lord told Jacob to go back to the land of his father, and God promised to go with him. Jacob asked his wives, Leah and Rachel, to come to him in the field for a secret meeting. He told them about their father's feelings against him and explained God's call to leave. They knew that Jacob had been fair to their father and that everyone had been blessed by God because of Jacob. Their father had allowed Jacob to buy his wives as wages for his work, and they no longer had any inheritance from their father, so they agreed to the plan God had given Jacob.

Jacob put his wives and all his children on camels and brought his herds and all his goods to begin the journey. Jacob left not telling Laban and fled across the river towards his father's land.

Three days later Laban heard that Jacob had left, along with all his family, flocks, and goods. Laban gathered his relatives and pursued Jacob for six days. Then the Lord spoke to Laban in a dream and warned him not to harm Jacob. When they caught up with Jacob, Laban asked him why he had left and not given him the opportunity to say goodbye. He told Jacob that he had the power to destroy him, but that God had warned him. Finally Laban gave Jacob and his family a blessing in farewell, and Jacob continued his journey home.

As Jacob neared his father's land, he began to fear the wrath of his brother Esau. Even after all these years Jacob was afraid that his brother had never forgiven him and still wanted to kill him. Jacob sent a messenger ahead to tell Esau he was returning and with many gifts. The messengers returned with word that Esau was coming with four hundred men. With great fear Jacob divided his family into two groups, hoping at least one wife and her children would escape if there was an attack. He prayed and asked God for help. Then Jacob sent large herds and gifts ahead with servants to deliver a humble message to Esau.

That night Jacob sent his family and possessions to the other side of the river and spent the night alone before meeting his brother. Jacob had a special meeting with God. This time the Lord wrestled with Jacob, showing the struggle Jacob must go through to reach the promise God had given him. Jacob's hip was touched and deformed from then on, as a reminder that God was always in control of his life. But Jacob did not give up his demand for God's blessing, so once again God blessed him. As a symbol of this blessing, God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and God's blessing made him a mighty nation.

The next morning Jacob saw Esau coming. As he was dividing his family for an escape plan, Esau came running to greet Jacob with a hug. Jacob found forgiveness from his brother and went on to settle in Shechem, near his father's land. Jacob, now called Israel, had learned that nothing is better than God's blessing. Jacob learned many lessons through the troubles he faced, but as he learned to obey God and seek God's plan, then the blessings of God were evident in his life.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **God sent Jacob back.**
  - A. Attitudes had changed.
  - B. A plan was made.
- II. **Laban went after Jacob.**
  - A. Pursued by Laban.
  - B. Confronted by Laban.
- III. **Jacob prepared to Meet Esau.**
  - A. Gifts planned and family divided.
  - B. Jacob wrestled with God.
- IV. **A reunion between brothers.**
  - A. Forgiveness was found.
  - B. Jacob settled near Bethel.

## Activity

Drama can reinforce the various parts of this adventure in Jacob's life. Write the names of the players in this drama on slips of paper and place them in a bag. Have students select a slip, and act out that character's part in the drama. A few simple towels or robes can serve as costumes, or recreate the story without props. Some roles you may use are Jacob, Leah and Rachel, Laban, Esau, messengers, and others who can act as the children in Jacob's family, the relatives of Laban, or the four hundred men with Esau. Props and costumes aren't needed for a Bible lesson.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson has many smaller lessons in it. One part of the story may contain a biblical principle that God wants you to focus on for your students. He may direct you to spend more time on a section of the lesson and shorten or drop the rest of the information. You are not required to complete every lesson to be a good teacher, but listen carefully as God helps you stress an important principle that your students need to hear. Younger students may not be able to handle all that is written in one lesson, so you may spread a lesson over several classes. Ask the Lord to help you teach exactly what He knows your students need.

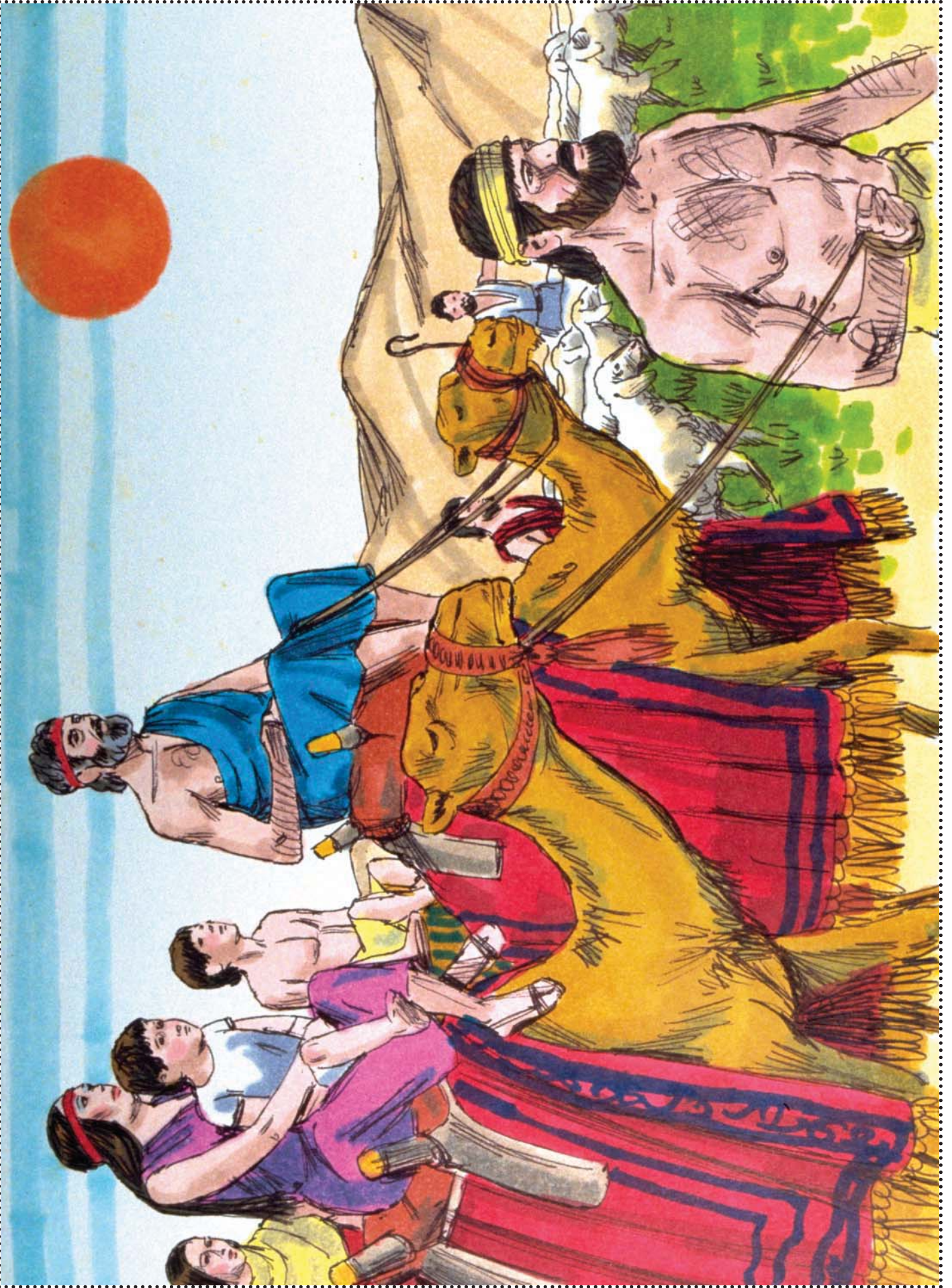
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 31-33

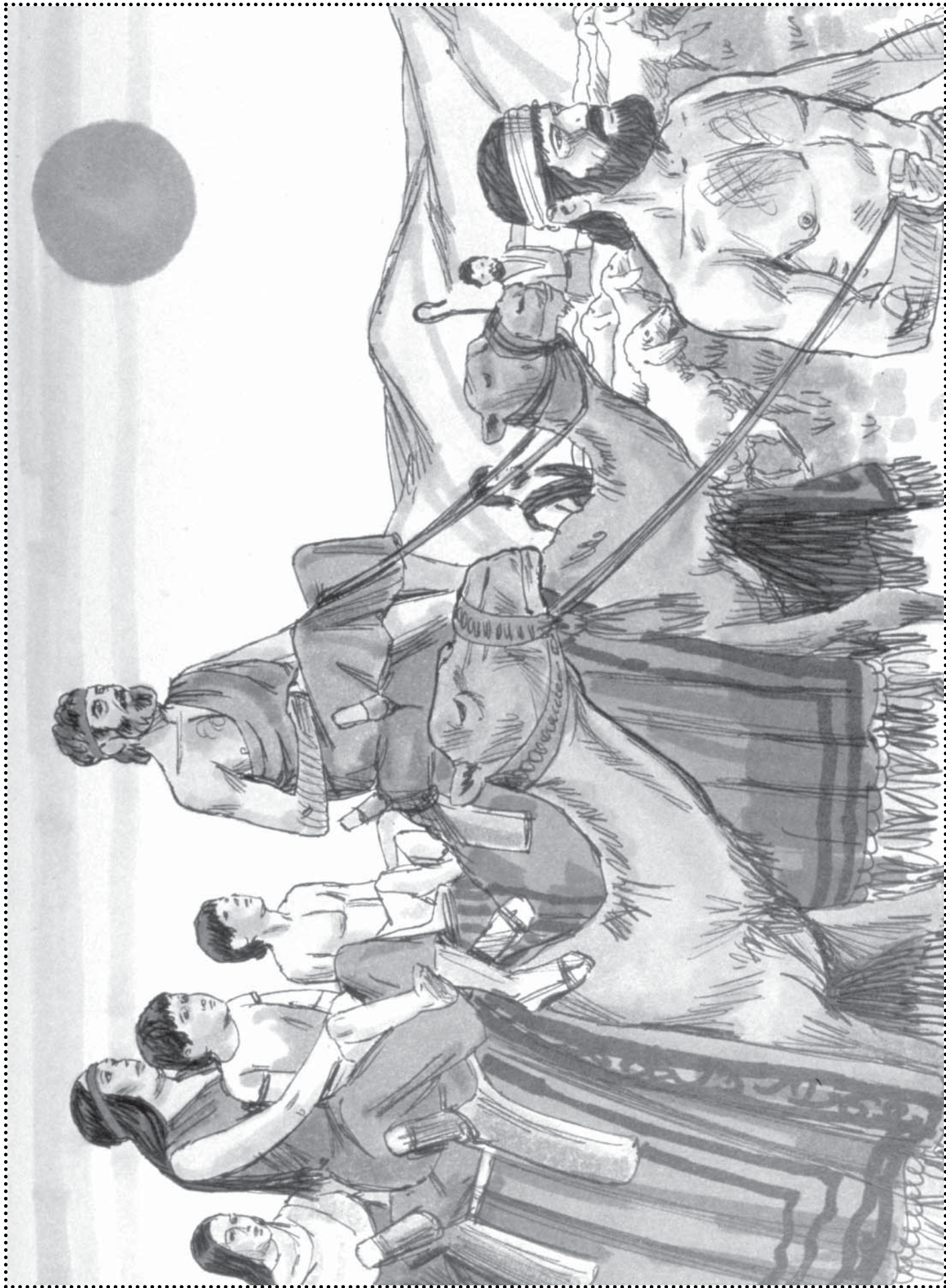
## Memory Verse:

Psalm 67:1 *"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us."*

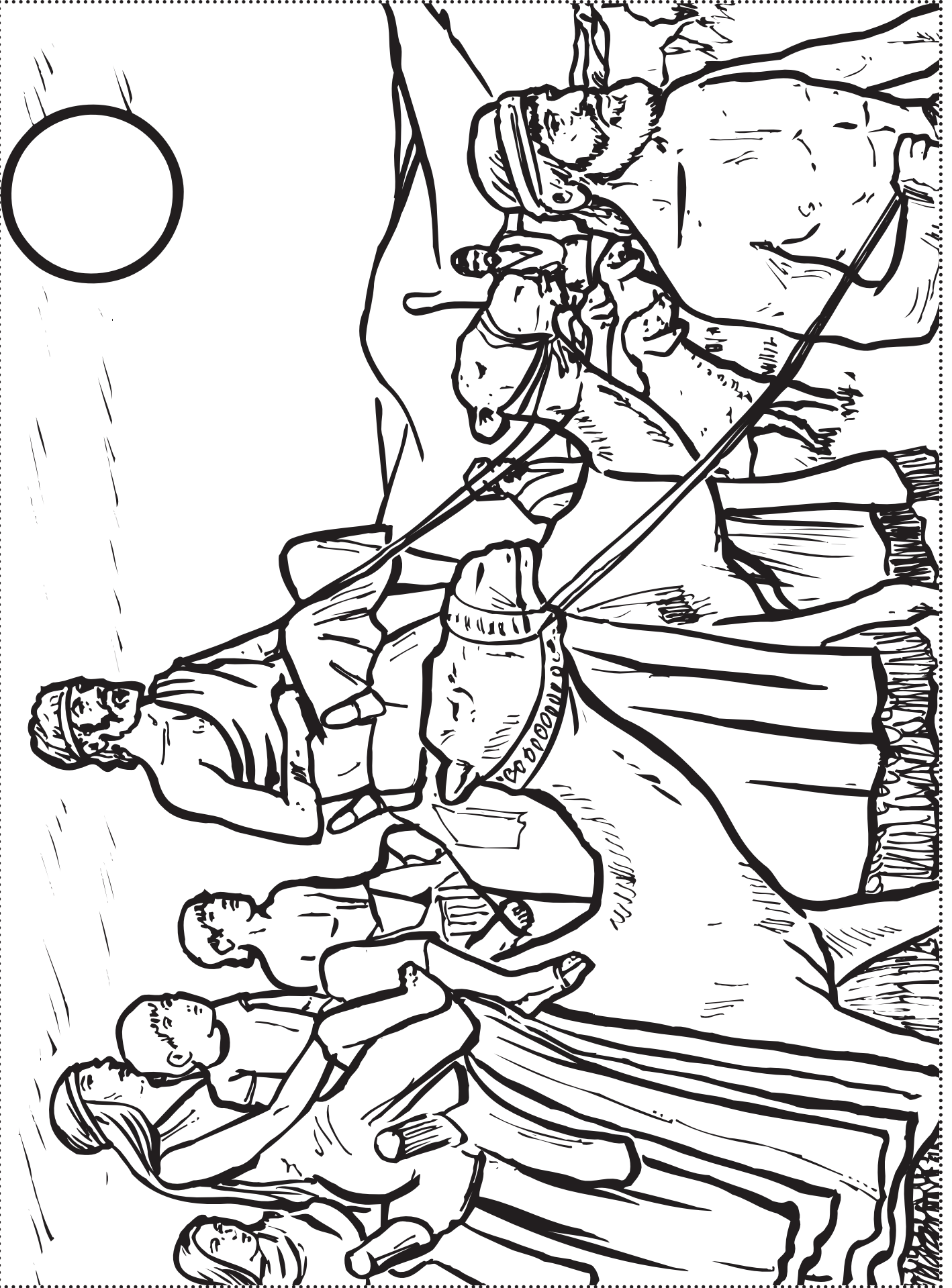












# Dreams Turn To Nightmares 1-16-A

**J**acob, the man God called Israel, lived in Canaan and had twelve sons. One day his seventeen-year-old son, Joseph, returned from helping with the flocks and brought a bad report about his brothers. Israel had loved Joseph more than his other sons. He had a special robe made for Joseph as a sign that Joseph was the favorite son. His brothers were jealous of Joseph.

Joseph had a dream and he told his brothers about it. This caused his brothers to hate him more. Joseph explained that they were bundling sheaves of wheat in the dream and that his sheaf stood up and all their sheaves bowed down to it. His brothers became angry as they asked him if he planned to rule over them. Joseph had a second dream that the sun, moon, and eleven stars were all bowing down to him. This made even his father angry. His father rebuked him for saying that his parents and his brothers would one day bow down to him.

Joseph's brothers had taken the flock to graze near Shechem when his father sent him there. When Joseph arrived, his brothers had moved the flocks farther away, so he went to find them. His brothers saw Joseph coming a long ways away. Before he arrived they plotted to kill him and throw his body in a cistern, which was a deep hole for water. They would tell their father that a wild animal had eaten him. Reuben, the oldest, tried to spare Joseph's life. He asked the others not to kill him, only to throw him in the cistern. Reuben planned to sneak back and rescue Joseph later.

When Joseph arrived, his brothers tore off his robe and threw him in the empty cistern. While they sat down to eat, a group of Midianite traders loaded with spices on their way to Egypt passed near them. Judah convinced his brothers that they would gain more if they sold Joseph as a slave to these traders instead of killing him. Joseph's brothers received twenty pieces of silver in exchange for their brother as a slave.

Reuben returned to find the cistern empty and tore his own robe in sadness. Then the brothers took Joseph's beautiful robe, killed a goat, and dipped the robe in its blood, to take back to their father. Israel saw Joseph's robe and mourned for his son who he believed had been devoured by a wild animal.

Joseph had arrived as a slave in Egypt and was sold to Potipher, one of Pharaoh's officials, and the captain of the guard. Joseph remembered the dreams he had shared with his brothers. He remembered how angry the dreams had made his brothers. Now his life was more like a nightmare than a dream. He must have missed his parents very much as a slave in that strange new land.

God had given Joseph those dreams for a special reason. God had chosen Joseph for a very special part of His plan to care for His people. God was preparing a special young man named Joseph to lead God's people one day. Joseph may not have been very wise in making his brothers more jealous by sharing his dreams with them, but even his father began to think about what God was planning for this special son. It is wonderful to know that many times God begins to call children and young people to be part of His special plan. God can choose even the young for His service.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The favorite son.**
  - A. Joseph's special coat.
  - B. Jealous brothers.
- II. **Two special dreams.**
  - A. Sheaves of wheat.
  - B. Sun, moon, and eleven stars.
- III. **Sent to check on his brothers.**
  - A. A plot to kill Joseph.
  - B. Thrown in a cistern.
- IV. **Sold into slavery.**
  - A. Sold to an Egyptian.
  - B. Sad news for father.

## Activity

Creating a "robe" like the one Joseph got from his father can be a fun way for students to review the story and discuss how today's memory verse shows us how we are to "clothe" ourselves. Using a large bag, if it is available, cut up the front, a neckline, and two arm holes. Paper bags can be colored, painted, or have items glued to them. You can glue decorations to a plastic bag. A large sheet of newsprint, or even a page from the local paper can be folded in half, with a neckline cut in the center, and attached under both arms to create a "robe."

## Teacher Growth

A lesson or memory verse may use vocabulary that is not understood by students. Take each unknown word and use familiar words or phrases to explain its meaning. You may use a simple illustration to help explain the concept. Students need to understand the terms to make the memorization meaningful. Years later, the Holy Spirit will bring these verses, with new words for your students now, to their remembrance right when they are needed. Investing time to teach memory verses guarantees that the Holy Spirit will bring it to our remembrance when it is needed.

## Scripture passages:

Genesis 37

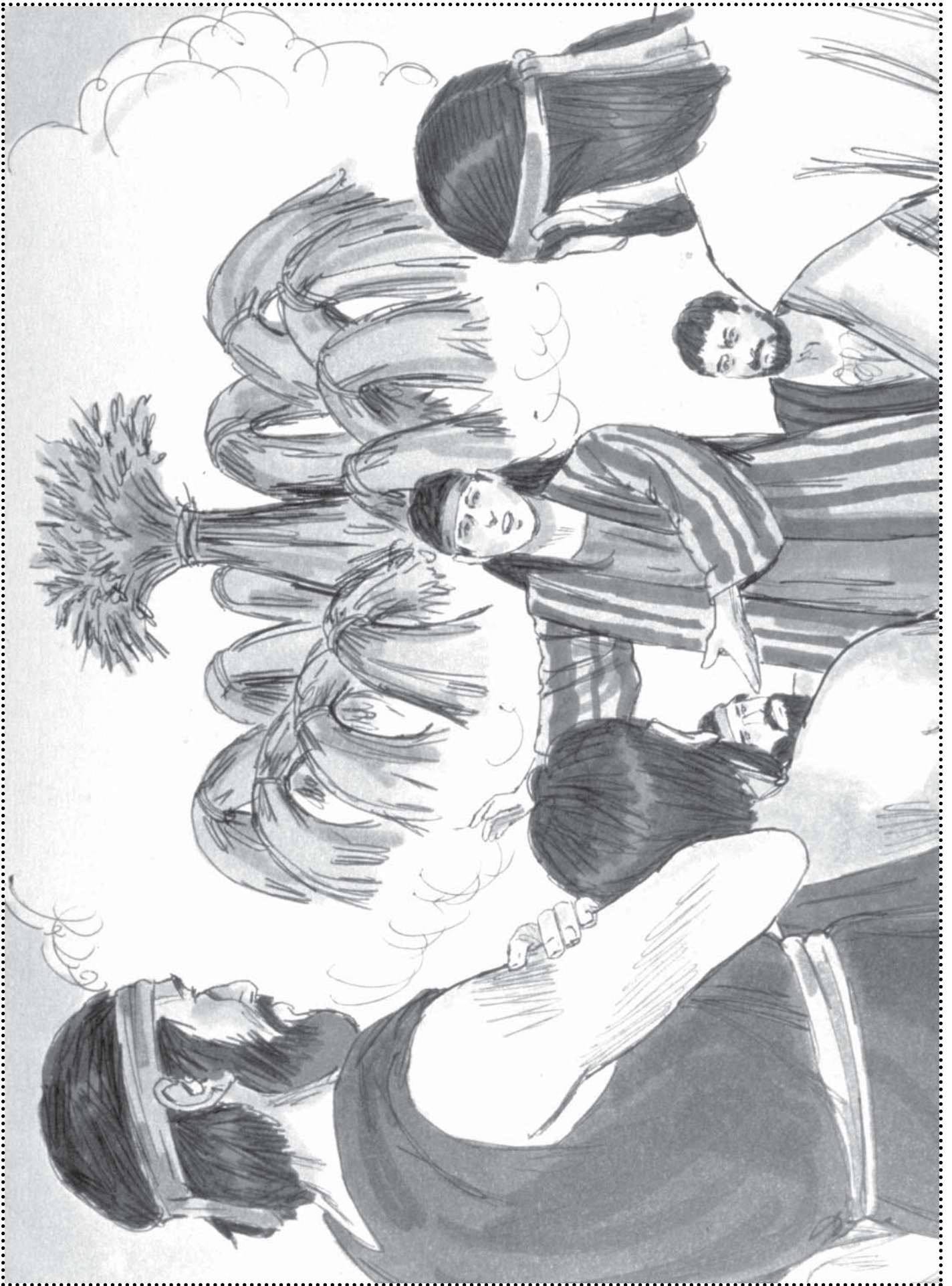
## Memory Verse:

Colossians 3:12 *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*













# Multiplied Trouble 1-17-A

Joseph was now serving in Egypt as a servant. His jealous brothers had sold him as a slave to traders who then sold him as a servant to Potipher. Potipher was one of the Egyptian Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. Joseph was in a strange land with foreign customs and unusual foods. He must have missed the father that loved him so much, and suffered great sadness because his own brothers had done such a terrible thing to him.

The Lord helped Joseph with all the things his Egyptian master had him do. When Potipher saw how God blessed everything Joseph did, he made Joseph one of his special attendants. He even put Joseph in charge of his household and trusted him with everything he owned.

Joseph was a handsome and strong young man that God had really blessed. Potipher's wife noticed how handsome Joseph was and began to watch him closely. She was very attracted to Joseph and began to ask him to come to bed with her. Joseph knew this was not right and stood firm in saying no to her. Potipher's wife would try to convince Joseph every day to betray his master and be with her. Joseph explained that this would be sin, both to betray the trust of Potipher and to do something wicked before God. One day Joseph was doing his work in the house when all the other servants were outside. Potipher's wife grabbed Joseph's cloak and again begged him to be with her. Joseph slipped out of the robe and ran outside. The woman began to scream and told the servants that Joseph had tried to attack her. She waited with the cloak until evening when Potipher returned and then told him this terrible lie about Joseph. Potipher was very angry and sent Joseph to prison for this false charge.

In prison Joseph was again blessed by God, and soon the man in charge of that place put Joseph in charge of many others. Later on, two of Pharaoh's officials were put in that prison. The chief baker and the chief cupbearer had offended the king. The captain of the prison guard placed them under Joseph's care. Some time later each of these two officials had a dream on the same night. The next morning Joseph discovered that they were very sad because there was no one to interpret the dreams or tell them what their dreams meant. Joseph told them that it is God who gives the interpretations of dreams and that he would pray and ask God to help them. God gave Joseph the explanation for each man's dream, and the results were exactly as God had said it would be. The baker was put to death, but the cupbearer was returned to the Pharaoh's palace. Before the cupbearer left the prison, he promised to tell the king about Joseph so that he would be released. This man quickly forgot all about Joseph and continued his work at the palace.

Joseph must have been very disappointed. God had given him the answers to these men's dreams and the cupbearer had promised to help him get out of prison but then failed to remember his promise. Once again Joseph remained in a difficult place, but God continued to be with him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Joseph had a new lifestyle.**
  - A. He started as a slave.
  - B. He missed his family.
- II. **Favor with his master.**
  - A. God's blessing could be seen.
  - B. Joseph was put in charge.
- III. **A dangerous place.**
  - A. A determined woman.
  - B. Falsely accused.
- IV. **Prison life.**
  - A. In charge again.
  - B. Promised but forgotten.

## Activity

A simple game can be used with this lesson if you have the space for students to get up and move. Place a blindfold on one student and turn the person chosen to be "it" around several times in the center. Have the other students spread out around "it" and begin to gently call "its" name. "It" will try to catch another person as he listens for their voices. Once he grabs someone, "it" must try to guess who that person is. If "it" is correct, then the captured person becomes "it." God has given us wonderful ears to listen and make good guesses. Explain that God can also help us to hear His voice and teach us which way to walk in His plan.

## Teacher Growth

Some people believe that once you are a Christian everything in life will go well. Even though Joseph trusted God and stood firm on godly principles, he was thrown into prison. You may face great difficulties and even false accusations and unfair circumstances just like Joseph did. You can be assured like Joseph, God will always be with you. God never left Joseph and even blessed him in adversity. God had Joseph right in the land and place where He needed him to eventually save God's people. We may never understand why some things happen to us, but we can trust the promises of God.

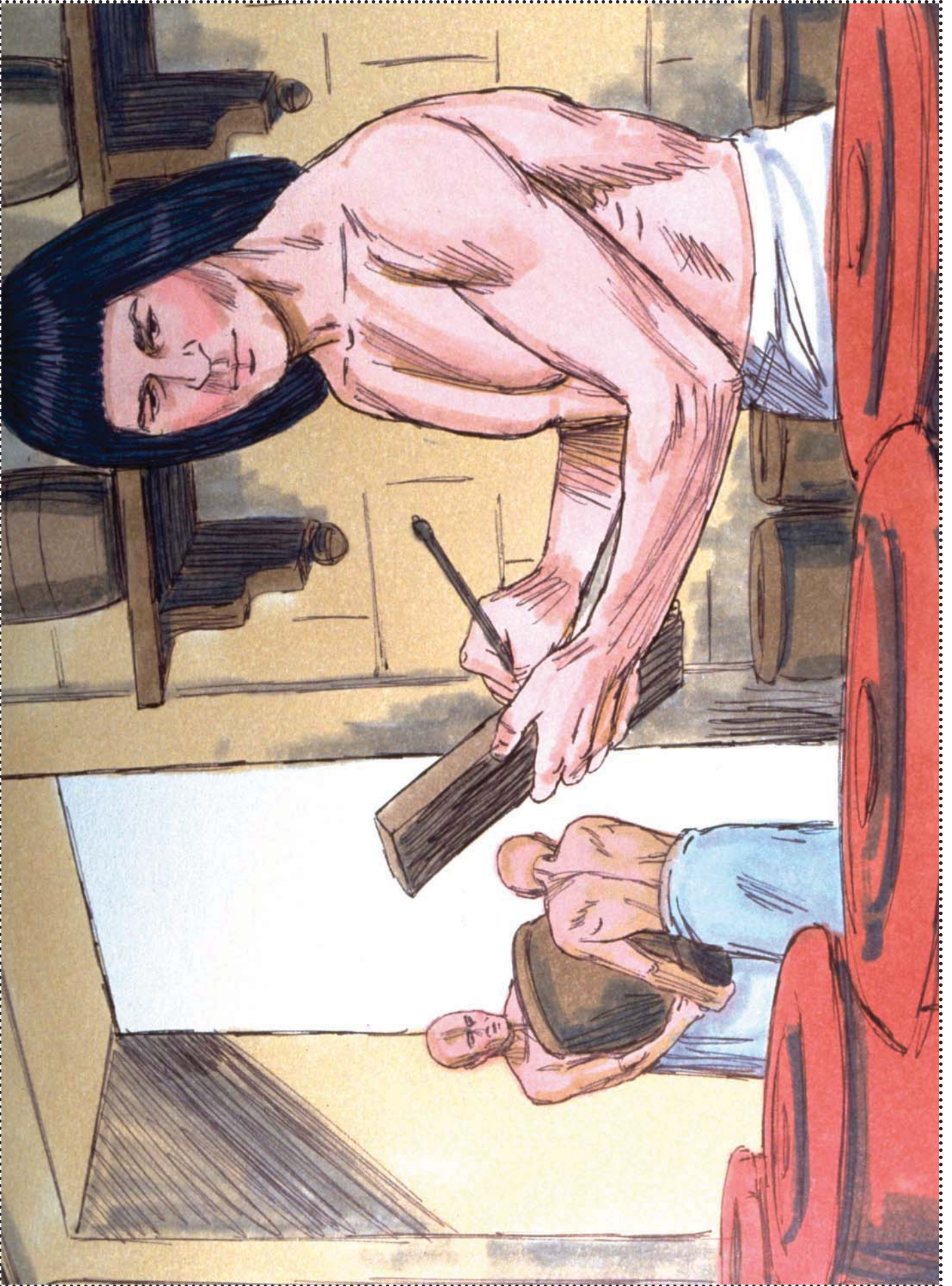
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 39-40

## Memory Verse:

Psalm 34:19 "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."













# Finally Rewarded 1-18-A

**T**wo years passed for Joseph in prison after the Pharaoh's cupbearer had promised to seek his release. Joseph, though forgotten by the king's official, continued to trust God and saw His blessings come to him even in prison. One day Pharaoh, ruler of all Egypt, had a dream. In the dream, Pharaoh was standing by the Nile River and seven fat cows came up to graze among the reeds. After them, came seven thin cows that ate the seven fat cows. When Pharaoh awoke, he wondered what the dream meant. The following night he had a second dream. Pharaoh dreamed that seven healthy heads of grain were growing on the same stalk. Then, seven thin, wind-scorched heads appeared and swallowed up the healthy heads of grain.

Pharaoh called all the wise men in his kingdom to come to the palace and interpret the meaning of these dreams for him. No one understood these dreams. The chief cupbearer suddenly remembered what had happened several years before. He told the king of a dream that he and the baker had told to a young prisoner named Joseph. The cupbearer remembered how Joseph had asked his God and had given the right interpretation for each man's dream. So Pharaoh sent for Joseph to come to the palace. When Joseph had shaved and put on clean clothes, he came before Pharaoh to hear of his dreams. Joseph explained again to the king that only God can give the interpretation, and he would ask for God's help. God gave Joseph the meaning of the dreams to share with the king. Joseph told Pharaoh how both dreams told of seven years that his kingdom would have abundance and then seven years of famine would follow. This was a warning to save extra resources during the good years so the people would not perish during the drought.

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph and this plan to save his kingdom that he put Joseph in charge of the entire nation. The king placed his official ring on Joseph's finger, dressed him in fine robes, put a gold chain around his neck, and sent him in a beautiful chariot as his second in command, to take charge of all the land. At the age of thirty, Joseph now had control, under Pharaoh, of everything that happened in the land. Joseph was given a special wife, started a family, and built huge places to store the grain during the seven years of good crops. When the famine started to hurt the land, Joseph sold grain and bought land and flocks to increase Pharaoh's wealth and save the people from death. The famine was severe and spread throughout the world. All countries came to Egypt to buy food to survive, and God used Joseph in a mighty way.

Joseph had suffered through betrayal by his brothers, slavery, imprisonment for false charges, forgotten promises, and years of hard service, yet he kept his heart turned toward God. God had Joseph in just the place to rescue the world from a famine and finally rewarded him for remaining strong in his belief in spite of the difficulties.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **More prison time.**
  - A. Model behavior.
  - B. Maintained trust.
- II. **Pharaoh's dream.**
  - A. No explanation.
  - B. An inmate is remembered.
- III. **Pharaoh sent for Joseph.**
  - A. Standing for God.
  - B. The dream was explained.
- IV. **Joseph in charge.**
  - A. His new position.
  - B. Ready for the famine.

## Activity

Use a long piece of newsprint, or tape together sheets of paper to create a long mural for the wall. Print the title at the beginning of this strip, "From Prison to Palace." First review the lesson's key points so the students will see the sequence of events in Joseph's life. Now divide the long mural into sections and have each student or group of students draw and color one phase of this story. You can use sheets of paper that each group prepares separately and then attach them to hang them up.

## Teacher Growth

Some students or even you may be in a hard situation. It may seem that you have been treated unfairly or there are false charges against you and it seems like God is not rescuing you. Some read a short chapter in the Bible and think that Joseph's situation was changed quickly. Stop to remember that years passed in prison without Joseph seeing God's plan. Remember that from the age of seventeen to thirty Joseph faced constant troubles. He was away from a supportive father and far from his home, yet he remained sure that God was with him and that ultimately God's plan would bring him reward. Are you confident of God's plan even when you fail to understand it?

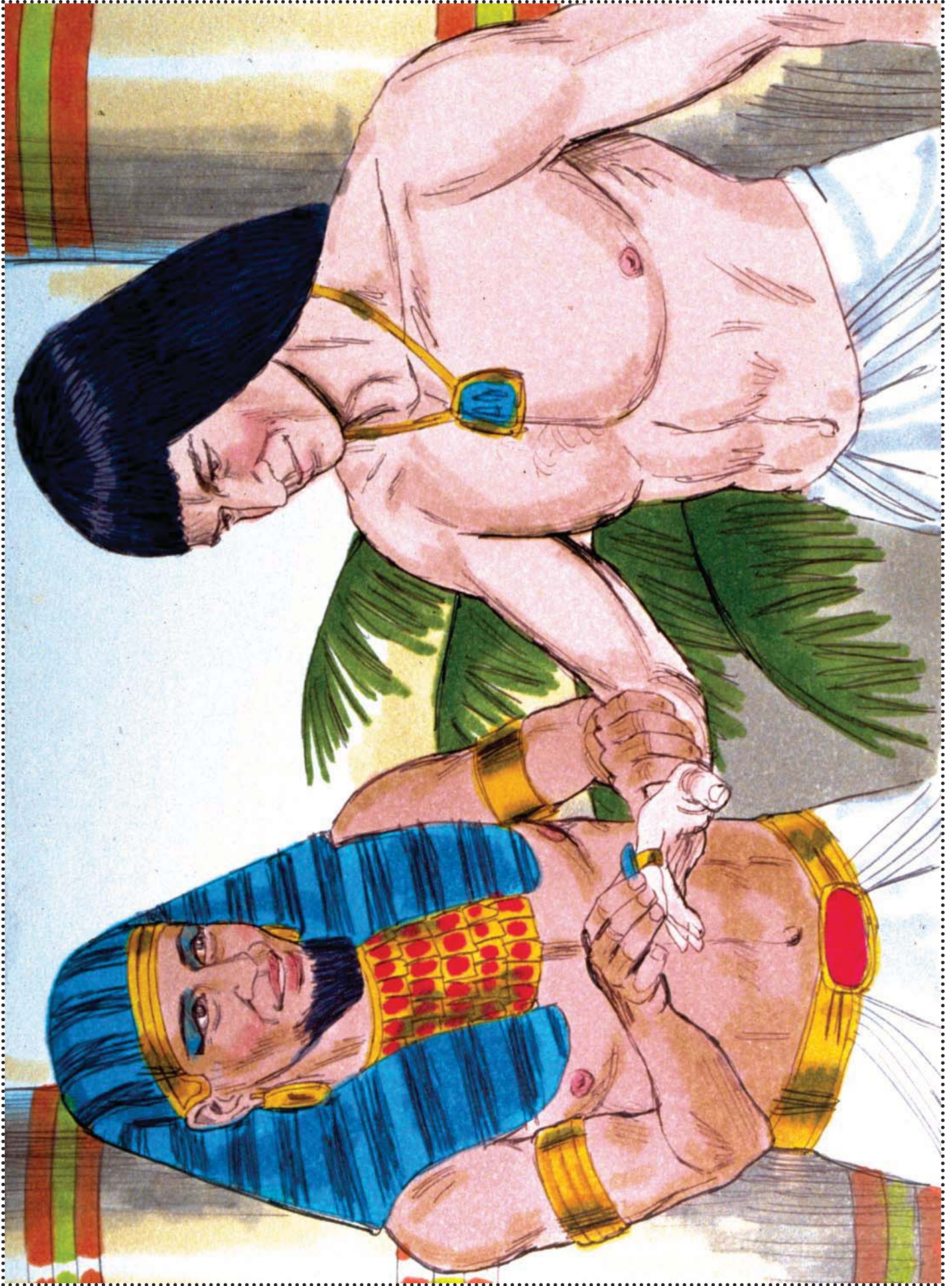
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 41

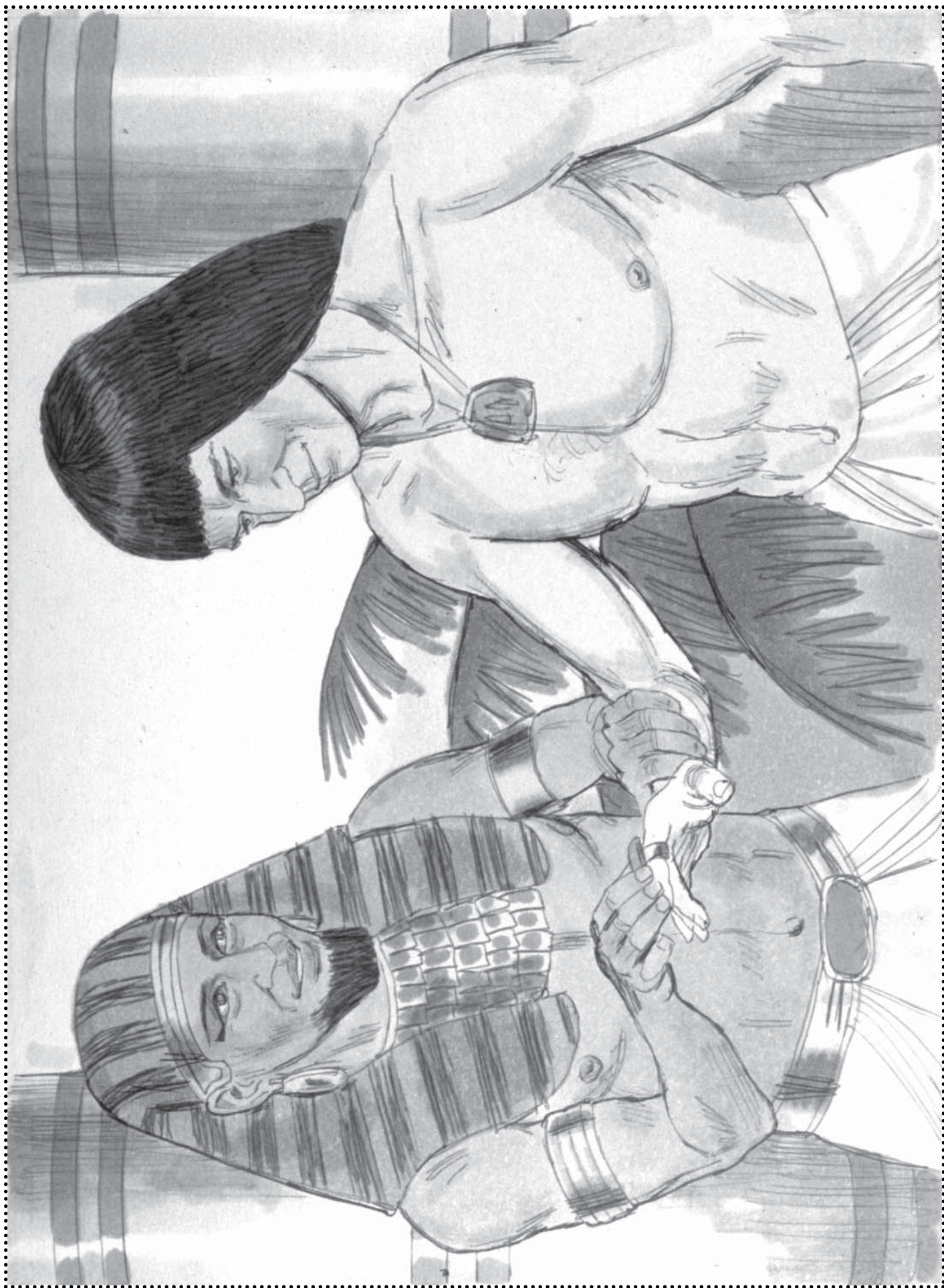
## Memory Verse:

Psalm 18:24 "The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight."













Joseph was the second in command under the king of Egypt. Every nation had suffered terribly under the drought that God had warned about and now even God's people in Canaan were in need of grain to stay alive. Joseph's father, Israel (Jacob), sent ten of his sons to bring grain from Egypt. Israel kept Benjamin, his youngest son, at home. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized them but he pretended to be a stranger. He asked them many questions about their family.

Joseph accused them of being spies and made them leave Simeon in Egypt until they brought back Benjamin. The brothers were sad since they knew their father did not want to let them take Benjamin. But they knew they would have to agree to this to get the grain their families needed. Reuben and the others talked with great fear that because of their guilt for selling Joseph into slavery, they were being punished. They were afraid that this leader would not believe them and instead would punish them for false charges. They felt a bit of what Joseph had struggled with for years. Joseph had servants fill his brothers' bags with grain and then place the silver they had brought back in each bag. When the brothers opened their sacks they discovered the silver in each bag. With great fear, they hurried home to tell their father the terrible news.

Once the grain was gone, Israel had to allow his sons to return to Egypt for more. With sorrow he let them take Benjamin, for they told him that the Egyptian leader in charge of the grain would only see them if they brought their youngest brother. When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph again kept his identity a secret, even when he saw Benjamin. He invited his brothers to a special banquet. His brothers were fearful that they would be trapped as slaves. But Joseph accepted their silver and extra gifts as he returned their brother Simeon. The brothers marveled as the servants seated them in order by age. They still did not know that Joseph was testing them to see if their hearts had changed. Again Joseph had his brothers' bags filled with grain and this time he had his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. After they had traveled a short distance, Joseph sent a servant after them with a message. He asked them why they repaid evil for good by stealing his silver cup, and anyone with the cup would have to return as his slave. The brothers denied any theft and opened their bags as proof. They were torn with grief when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They returned to plead forgiveness before the official.

Finally Joseph could not control his emotions. He revealed himself to his brothers. They were shocked to learn that the one they had sold into slavery was now a powerful leader and able to rescue their family from the famine. The brother they betrayed now had power over their lives. Do you suppose they remembered those boyhood dreams that Joseph had of them bowing before him? But Joseph allowed God's love and forgiveness to rule in his life. He had never become bitter from the difficulties but had instead trusted God's plan for his life. Now he understood that God had allowed all the hard things to happen so he would be in the right place at the right time to save his family, God's chosen people.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A family in search of food.**
  - A. Israel (Jacob) sent his sons to Egypt.
  - B. Joseph recognized his brothers.
- II. **Brothers suffered from guilt.**
  - A. Simeon stayed in exchange.
  - B. Silver found in the grain.
- III. **Second journey for food.**
  - A. Benjamin and extra money returned.
  - B. Silver cup found in a sack.
- IV. **Joseph forgave his brothers.**
  - A. He revealed his identity.
  - B. The brothers were still afraid.

## Activity

A lesson like today's can cause some to remember things they have never forgiven someone for. The Bible is clear that we need to forgive others. Refer to Ephesians 4:32 and Matthew 6:12-14. Give each student a slip of paper and some quiet time to search their hearts for unforgiveness. They can write this and then destroy the slip as a symbolic way of removing it from their heart. You may be outside where you can burn the slips, or the students may just tear them up. Explain that God forgives, and they must forgive. It is also important to go to the one who hurt them and tell them they are forgiven, just as Joseph spoke to his brothers. Encourage them to do that also.

## Teacher Growth

Today's activity is an example of a symbolic act that helps to explain a principle. Illustrating things we can't see is one way some can understand difficult concepts. Be careful not to make the symbolism or the illustration the focus. The activity we use is merely a way to help focus on God. He is the One who makes it possible for us to forgive, for He first forgave our sin. God's loving nature at work in our character helps us to forgive others.

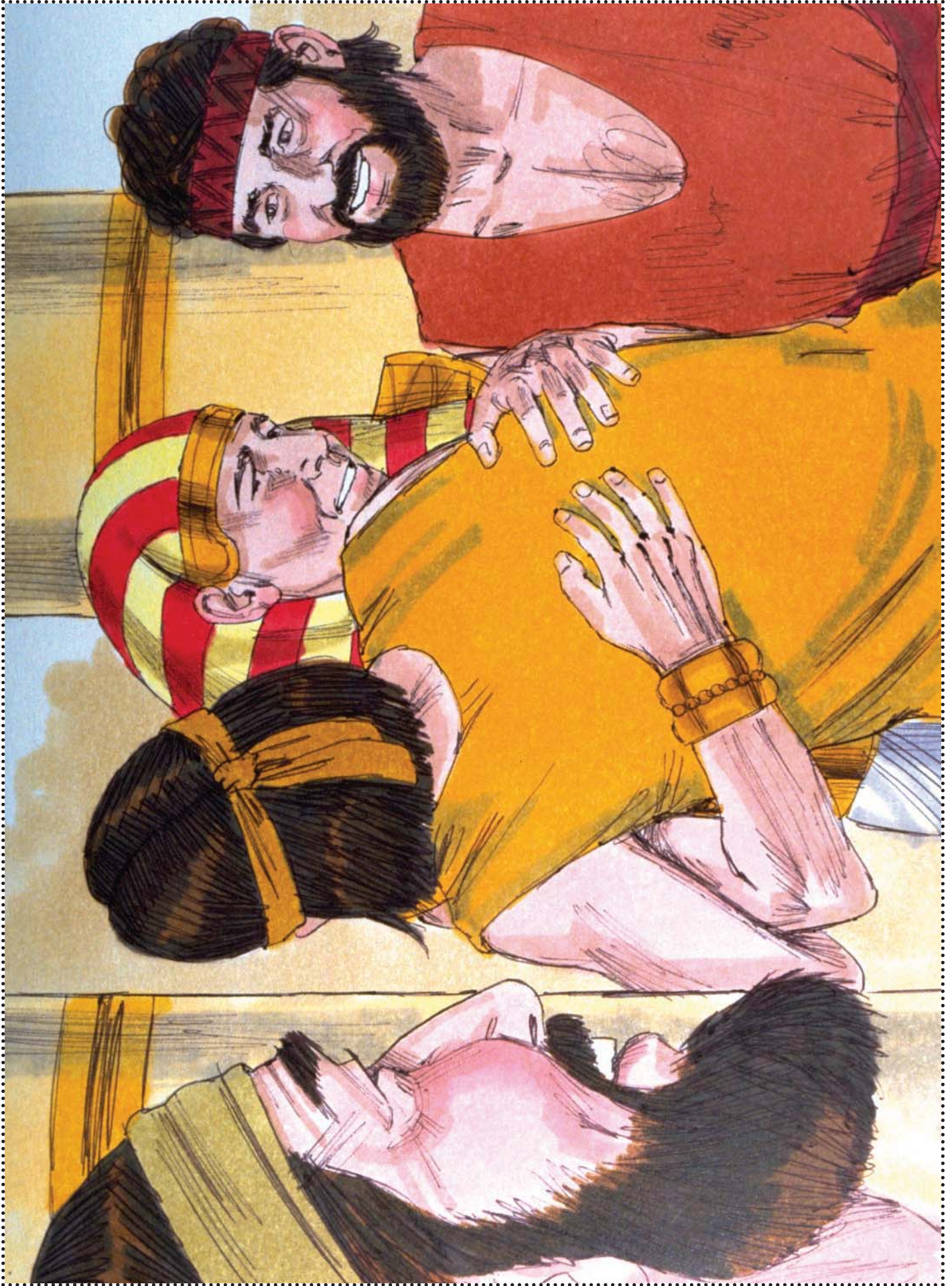
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 42:1-45:15

## Memory Verse:

Colossians 3:13 *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*













**N**ews came to Pharaoh that Joseph's brothers had come and everyone was glad. Pharaoh told Joseph to invite his entire family to return from Canaan to live closer to Joseph and to be cared for on the best of Egypt's land. He also directed Joseph to send carts from Egypt to help in transporting the women, children, and Joseph's father to their new home. So Joseph prepared the carts and provisions, new clothes and gifts for his brothers, and ten donkeys loaded with grain and bread for his father. When the brothers returned to Canaan, their father was overwhelmed with the news that Joseph was still alive. It seemed impossible that the son he most loved and had grieved over was now a great leader and the one who would save his family.

Jacob, now called Israel, was concerned about leaving the land that God had promised to his grandfather Abraham, his father Isaac, and finally to him. But when he prayed, God assured him that this had been part of God's plan all along. His son Joseph had been put in place to rescue God's people and help them survive the terrible famine. So Israel and all his family, with their flocks and goods, began the move to Egypt.

Judah traveled ahead of the family to ask Joseph for directions to their new land in Goshen. Joseph then rode his chariot to Goshen to greet his father and all of the family. When Joseph arrived, he hugged his father and wept for joy. Joseph returned to the palace to ask Pharaoh for land in Goshen for his family to tend their flocks. Pharaoh gave them all that they needed because he valued Joseph. Then Joseph introduced his father to Pharaoh. Israel blessed the ruler. Joseph's entire family settled in the land of Goshen and were provided all the food they needed.

As the famine continued through the seven years, the land became dry and people were forced to sell their land, then their livestock, and finally their lives into slavery for food to survive. Joseph carefully managed all the supplies and in purchasing all these things he built a mighty kingdom for Pharaoh. In his final years, Israel began to grow weak. Joseph brought his two sons for his father to bless. Then Israel also gave special blessings to each of his sons. This was the way that God had taught them to pass their faith on to the next generation. Finally, the day came when Israel died. Joseph and many Egyptian officials celebrated his burial back in Canaan, the land God had promised his people. Joseph's brothers were afraid that now he would turn on them and bring them harm for what they'd done in the past, but Joseph again reassured them that he had really forgiven them and that God had used the bad things to bring good to His people. After many years Joseph died. God had finished this part of his plan. He had used great men who believed in His faithfulness to lead his people to a chosen land. God then led them to a land where they would survive, then suffer, and then see Him bring deliverance through another great leader named Moses, 430 years later. God is still leading us, His people, today.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Pharaoh's invitation.

- A. Carts were sent to Canaan.
- B. Joseph's father was stunned.

### II. Israel came to Egypt.

- A. God assured Israel.
- B. A large family moved.

### III. Joseph reunited with his father.

- A. Introduced to Pharaoh.
- B. Property for all.

### IV. The end of a patriarch.

- A. Israel blessed his sons and grandsons.
- B. Israel and Joseph died.

## Activity

Students need to learn how to evaluate their own lives and the spiritual growth they are making in knowing God and His Word. Help them learn a process they may use for the rest of their lives. On the board, or a large sheet of paper, write the numbers from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest possible score. Ask them to score themselves in several areas and then conclude with a time when they prayerfully ask God to help them improve. Areas could be church attendance, Bible reading, prayer time, consistency, serving, sharing their faith, etc. Challenge them to seek more of God to finish well.

## Teacher Growth

Many start their walk with God in great victory. But difficulties weaken them, or gradually something or someone else captures their attention. Take time to evaluate your relationship with Him. Sometimes teaching becomes a duty, a way to appease God in place of a closer relationship with Him, or even a cover up for living far from Him. If the Holy Spirit nudges your heart as you read these words, consider the challenge. It is great to start a vibrant life for God, but critical that you guard your walk with Him to finish well.

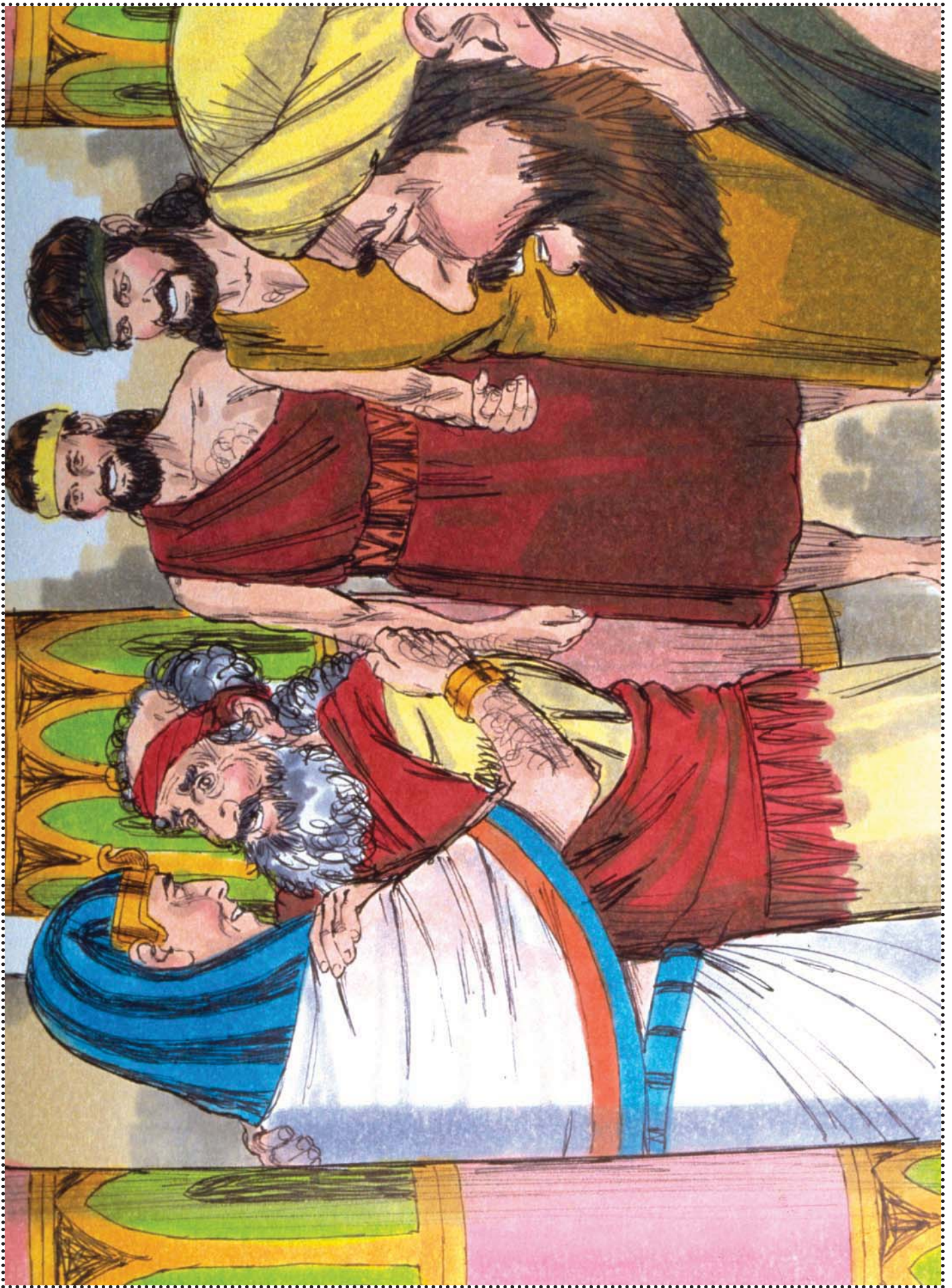
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 45:16-50:26

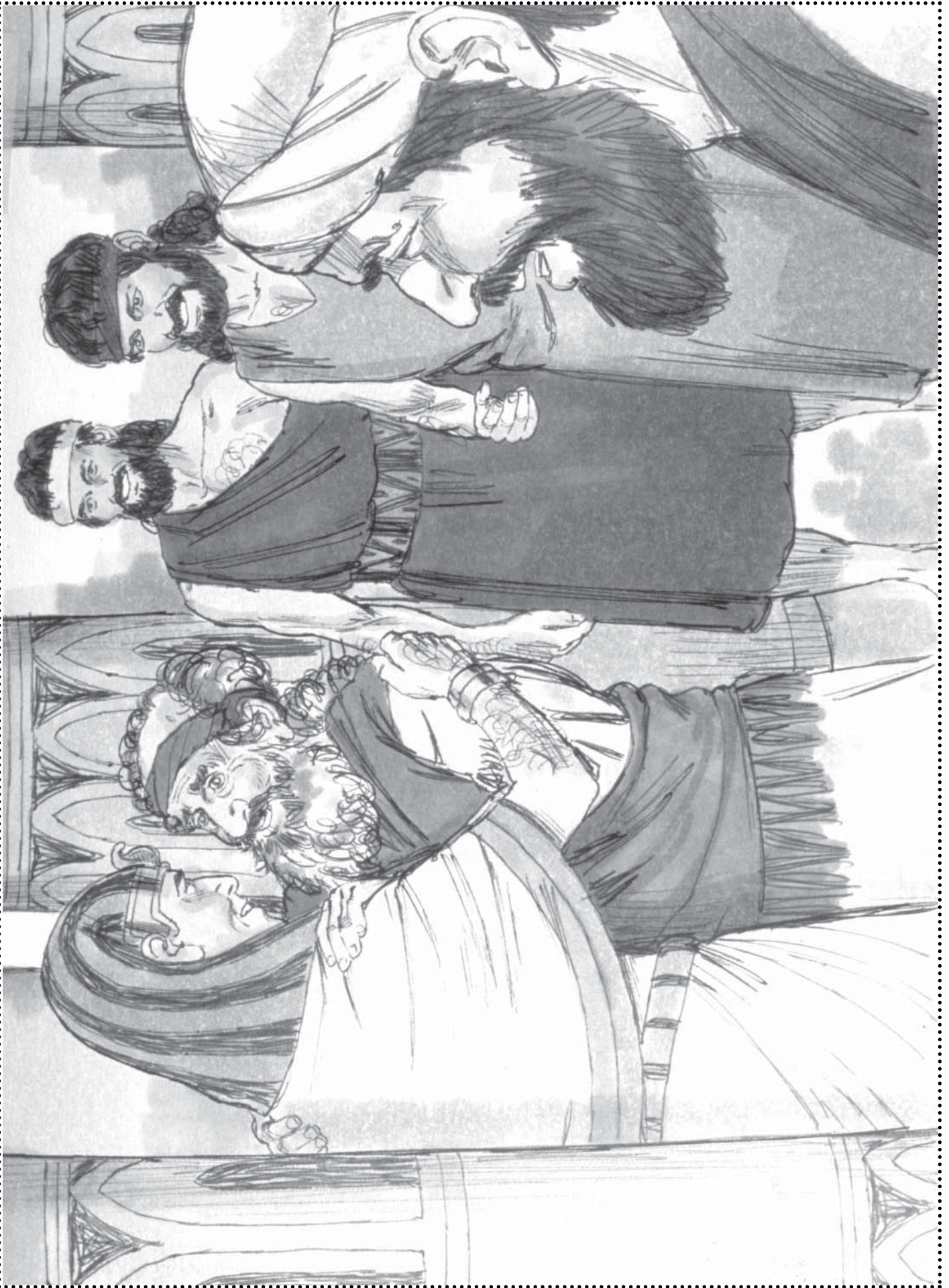
## Memory Verse:

Isaiah 46:4 *"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."*













**G**od sent the angel Gabriel to a young lady named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was a virgin that was pledged, or promised, to be married to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of David. The angel said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." This surprised Mary and made her wonder why she had been chosen to receive a special message from God.

The angel told her not to be afraid because she had found favor with God. Since God was pleased with her, Gabriel told Mary that she would have a baby boy and should name him Jesus. The angel also said, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end." These were shocking words!

First Mary asked how this could even happen since she was a virgin and she had never been physically involved with a man. But the angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come and place the baby inside her. Mary's answer to this news was simple obedience. She told the angel that she was the Lord's servant, and that she was ready for anything that God wanted to do in her life. The angel left after Mary had given her answer.

Now Joseph, the man who was in the process of marrying Mary, heard that Mary was pregnant. In those days, a girl who was pledged to be married was already considered to be a promised wife. The husband began to build a home for his new wife and prepared for a long time before he actually took her home to be his wife and live with him. Joseph was a righteous man and was very upset that Mary was pregnant because they had never had sexual relations. He loved Mary and did not want to embarrass her publicly, so he decided to quietly get the divorce he needed so that he would not have to marry her. He thought she had been unfaithful to him before they even finished the wedding process.

One evening an angel came to Joseph in a dream. He told Joseph not to be afraid or embarrassed to marry the girl named Mary. The angel explained that the baby inside her had been given by the Holy Spirit. He told Joseph she would have a son, and they were to name him Jesus because He would save his people from their sins. The angel reminded Joseph of the prophets who long ago had told of a virgin giving birth to a son and calling him "Immanuel" which means "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he obeyed the angel and did just what the Lord had commanded him to do. He went to Mary and took her home to be his wife.

Mary hurried to a small town in the hills where her cousin, Elizabeth, was now six months pregnant. When Mary arrived, the baby inside Elizabeth leaped for joy. Elizabeth told Mary how happy she was that Mary was blessed by God. Mary explained to Elizabeth the wonderful blessing that God had given her such a special baby to carry. These words of Mary are often sung as a special song to teach us more about Jesus.

Three months later, Mary returned home. Soon after Elizabeth delivered her baby, John, who would be a cousin to Mary's baby. Mary and Joseph waited for the birth of their son, whom they would name Jesus.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Angel's visit with Mary.**
  - A. The message.
  - B. Her response.
- II. **Mary and Joseph's pledge.**
  - A. She's with child.
  - B. Joseph's plan for divorce.
- III. **Angel's visit with Joseph.**
  - A. The message.
  - B. His response.
- IV. **Knowledge of a cousin.**
  - A. Mary meets Elizabeth.
  - B. A special song.

## Activity

Search in resource books to get further information on the wedding customs in Middle Eastern culture. You may want to compare these traditions with those in your own culture. Today's lesson deals with the time when a man and woman agree to marry, then the marriage, and finally the way that this time of promise is just as binding as when the couple has actually married. The institution of marriage and the process of two people becoming married is very serious and should be considered a promise before God and man in all cultures.

## Teacher Growth

Some lessons, like today's, are part of many people's traditions. Some people may celebrate Christmas and know a bit of this story as they have heard it from society. It is important to realize that bits of the story, as the world may know it, are not enough. It is critical that each student grasp the truth that Jesus is the Son of God who came to live among us. He is not just another tradition we celebrate. You must make the lesson clear and then ask the Holy Spirit to make this known in the hearts of your students.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 1:26-56, Matthew 1:18-25

## Memory Verse:

Matthew 1:23 *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, 'God with us.'"*













# The Savior's Birth 1-02-B

**T**he Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, commanded all the men to go back to their hometowns to register, or be counted, for a census and to pay a special tax. Joseph left the town of Nazareth in Galilee to take Mary to a town in Judea called Bethlehem. Bethlehem was called the city of David, and Joseph was from that family. The town was so crowded with visitors for the census that Mary and Joseph had to stay in a stable for the animals because all the inns were full. While they were there, Mary gave birth to their firstborn son, wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in the manger for a bed.

That night shepherds who were out in the fields watching their flocks were shocked when an angel appeared and God's glory shone down on them. The angel told them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly there were many angels praising God before those shepherds. When the angels went back to heaven, the shepherds hurried into the town to find the special baby that the Lord had told them about. When they arrived at the stable, they found everything just as the angels had said it would be. They told everyone about this special child and how God had told them He was to be the Savior of the world. Finally, Joseph, Mary, and their baby moved into a house.

Far away, magi, or wisemen, from the East began to travel to Jerusalem looking for a new king. They followed a star that was leading them to the one they had heard would be the new King of the Jews. Mean King Herod heard this and was angry. King Herod was a jealous king, and he wanted to kill anyone who might try to take his throne from him. So he asked all the wise men to study any information to discover where this baby had been born. God's Word was read carefully, and they found the prophets had said many years before that the Son of God would be born in Bethlehem. This child would grow up to be the Savior of the World, the King of the Jews. King Herod sent the wisemen to Bethlehem, and there the star led them to the house where Jesus now lived with His parents.

Finally, after many miles and several years, the wisemen found the young child with His mother. The wisemen bowed down to the child, Jesus, and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They worshiped Him before starting their return journey. God warned these men not to go back to King Herod, so they started home on another route.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Headed to Bethlehem.**
  - A. The census.
  - B. The family line.
- II. **A birth place.**
  - A. No room in the inn.
  - B. A humble beginning.
- III. **The shepherds.**
  - A. Angels in the field.
  - B. Their worship.
- IV. **The wisemen.**
  - A. A long journey.
  - B. Their worship.

## Activity

Today's lesson is one that is easy to act out for review once the lesson has been given. With very simple props, or with puppets or nativity figures, students can go through the basic drama of the "Christmas Story." Allow students to present the drama of the birth in the stable, the angels telling the shepherds, and the wisemen traveling to the scene led by a star. Retelling the story can also be done with figures on a flannelboard or by simple drawings.

## Teacher Growth

Help students to capture the wonder of our God sending His Son to the earth in this manner. Help them see that this is truth from God's Word, not just a nice tradition that many places in the world see only as a legend or story. Though you may know this lesson without any preparation, it is important to prayerfully ask God to make the lesson fresh and real, so that you do not pass it on as a stale legend lacking spiritual impact.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12

## Memory Verse:

Luke 2:11 *"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord."*













# A Special Blessing 1-03-B

**M**oses had given several laws to the people from God, and Mary and Joseph were careful to obey them. On the eighth day after birth, a baby boy was to be circumcised, and then he was officially given his name. Mary and Joseph called their baby “Jesus,” the name the angel had given them before Jesus was even born. Then they had to wait forty days until it was time to take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem for the next step of obedience.

God’s Law says that the firstborn son of every family is to be presented to God. The family would give God a pair of doves or two young pigeons as a sacrifice to God, and the boy was to be careful to serve the Lord all his life. Joseph and Mary brought their sacrifice to the temple.

Simeon was a very old man in Jerusalem who loved God and had served God all his life. Simeon had been waiting to see the Savior that God had promised to send to His people. When Simeon saw Joseph and Mary arrive with baby Jesus to obey the customs of the law, he was very excited because God’s Spirit told him this was the Savior. He asked them to let him hold baby Jesus in his arms. Then Simeon praised God and prophesied again that Jesus would be the Savior of the world. He blessed Mary and Joseph and told them how special Jesus was going to be. Jesus’ parents were amazed at this old man’s words.

An old lady named Anna was also there that day. She had been married for seven years and then her husband had died. After that, she had lived in the temple until she was eighty-four as a prophetess, or one who hears God speaking and tells people what He is saying. She had never left the temple, worshiping day and night, and often fasting and praying to hear more from God.

Anna walked up to Mary and Joseph just as Simeon had praised God for the baby Jesus. She spoke to everyone around there in a loud voice, telling them that this child was very special. Anna gave praise to God. She also told the parents of Jesus and all the people in the temple courtyard that Jesus was the Savior that they had been waiting for.

Both Anna and Simeon were people who spent many years worshiping God and listening carefully to His voice. They heard God tell them that this baby, Jesus, was going to be the Savior for the world. God used these two to bless Jesus and His parents, and to tell everyone that the Savior who would bring salvation to the world had been born. God wants everyone to know He has provided a plan for salvation.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Law of the firstborn.**
  - A. The time.
  - B. The sacrifice.
- II. **A holy man.**
  - A. The promise.
  - B. Moved by the Spirit.
- III. **Simeon holds the baby.**
  - A. Praise to God.
  - B. Words to the parents.
- IV. **Anna speaks.**
  - A. Her life.
  - B. Her words.

## Activity

Older students may be interested in digging into the Old Testament passages to see where the customs and laws from today’s lesson were first given and explained to the Jewish people. For more information on circumcision, study the passage in Genesis 17:9-14. To understand why every firstborn male was to be consecrated, read Exodus 13:1-15. Leviticus 12:2-8 explains the days that Mary observed and the sacrifices they brought to the temple.

## Teacher Growth

Today’s lesson has some unusual information about customs and laws that were obeyed by the Jewish people. But be careful to focus on the most important point of the story. God has provided a Savior for both Jew and Gentile, all the peoples of the earth. Never miss an opportunity to present the plan of salvation to your students.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 2:21-40

## Memory Verse:

Luke 2:30-32 *“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”*













# God Protects His Son 1-04-B

Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem where Jesus was born in a stable during the time when everyone had to register and be counted in the census. Then shepherds had come from the fields to worship Jesus because angels had told them about His birth. About two years later, wisemen had arrived from the East to worship because a star had led them to the place where they could worship Jesus, the Savior. God had warned the wisemen not to go back through Jerusalem, since Herod was waiting there for their report. God knew that Herod, a jealous king, wanted news about Jesus, not so he could come and worship the child, but so he could have Jesus killed.

When King Herod realized that the wisemen had tricked him and they were not coming back to bring him the news he wanted, he became very angry. He knew that the child had to be about two years old because the wisemen had told him when the star that they had followed had first appeared. So King Herod, in his great anger to kill the child that he feared would take over his kingdom, gave a special command. He ordered that every boy age two and under in Bethlehem and the nearby towns was to be killed. Prophets many years before had said that a terrible thing like this would happen one day in that region. Herod was sure he would kill baby Jesus.

Once the wisemen had left for the East, God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream. The angel warned Joseph about Herod's plan to search for the child Jesus and kill him. The angel told Joseph to take his wife and child and escape to Egypt. He was told to stay there until God told him it was safe to leave.

Joseph was quick to obey God's warning and packed up his things, his wife, and son that very night. They moved to a new home in Egypt. They lived in Egypt for some time until Herod died. The Lord had also prophesied, or told about this, years before when He said that He would call His Son out of Egypt. Once they got the word that Herod was dead, an angel came to Joseph in a dream. The angel spoke to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

Once again, Joseph obeyed God's words quickly. He got up and took his little family back to Israel. He then learned that the wicked King Herod's son was ruling in Jerusalem, so God again warned Joseph not to settle there. Joseph obeyed God again and moved into a home in the district of Galilee, in a town called Nazareth. The people who lived in Nazareth were called Nazarenes. This also fulfilled the prophesy from many years earlier that said Jesus would be a Nazarene.

Every step of Jesus' life was directed by God, His heavenly Father. God sent warnings for His safety and even told His father exactly when to move away and when to move back. God gave them the directions of where to live and for just the right amount of time. Joseph was careful to always obey God's warnings and to listen carefully for His direction. We can be thankful that the same God will direct our lives and warn us of danger if we are careful to listen and obey when He speaks to us.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. Herod's jealousy.
  - A. Feared another ruler.
  - B. Joseph warned in a dream.
- II. An angel's visit.
  - A. Sent to Egypt.
  - B. Quick response.
- III. An angry king.
  - A. Young boys killed.
  - B. Prophecy fulfilled.
- IV. The return home.
  - A. An angel brought word.
  - B. A home in Nazareth.

## Activity

Students can make a list of the things that worry them. First discuss what things tend to worry people. This can include relationships, finances, health, safety, and the future. People tend to worry about many things, and yet the Bible is clear that we are not to carry those worries. Explain how today's memory verse tells us to give those things to God because He takes care of us. Just as God protected the Christ child and His parents, He will also care for us. Conclude the activity by praying over the list they have created and then tearing it up as they trust God to meet their needs.

## Teacher Growth

Do you allow your students to see you worried and fretful over circumstances in your personal life? Do they observe a teacher who turns the needs of life over to God and trusts God to care for them? Today's lesson can help students place their needs at the feet of Jesus and learn to live a life of trust, not worry. Your example will speak louder than any words you may use with your students. They need to see a teacher who trusts God with anything in this life.

## Scripture passages:

Matthew 2:13-23

## Memory Verse:

1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."













Joseph, Mary, and their son, Jesus, moved back from Egypt to a town called Nazareth in Galilee, after the wicked King Herod died. It was then safe to begin making a home and building a business to provide for the family. Joseph needed to begin setting up a carpenter's shop. Jesus was only a few years old, but He began to watch His earthly father working hard for his family. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong. This would be important to help His father in the carpenter's shop. We will learn a verse today that says Jesus grew in wisdom (mental abilities), in stature (physical strength), and in favor with God and man (social and spiritual development). Even God's Son had to grow in every area of life.

It was a custom in those days that every Jewish family would travel to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. This was a special holiday to remember how God had passed over the homes of His people in Egypt and killed the firstborn of every Egyptian family. It was the final event that caused Pharaoh to let God's people leave the slavery of Egypt and begin their journey to the Promised Land. Even though this had happened many years before Jesus' birth, it was the custom God had given His people to remember the miracle by celebrating at the temple with thanksgiving sacrifices, or offerings to God, and a special feast. When Jesus was twelve, His parents took Him to the temple in Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus' parents taught Him all of God's laws and helped Him to learn at an early age how important it was to obey God.

When the feast ended, Jesus' parents began the journey back home. They did not know that their son was still in the temple. After a day's travel, Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus. None of their relatives or friends knew where Jesus was. They hurried back to Jerusalem to look for their son.

After three days, Joseph and Mary finally found Jesus. They had been searching for Him everywhere with great fear. But Jesus had been in the temple with the religious teachers. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His great understanding of God's laws. When Mary saw Jesus, she too was amazed and asked Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." Jesus was surprised by what His parents said. He had been so interested in what the teachers were discussing that He had not even realized that His parents had left. Jesus told His parents He had only been busy in His Father's house, meaning God's house, but Joseph and Mary did not understand.

Jesus got up immediately and went with His mother and father. Even though Jesus' Heavenly Father is God, He was still an obedient son to the parents God had given to raise Him on the earth. The family returned to Nazareth, and Jesus continued to grow up as an obedient and helpful son. He became a good carpenter's helper for Joseph, and He also studied to become wise in God's Word. Jesus must have been very kind and helpful to all the people, for the Bible says he gained favor with both God and man.

Mary did not always understand this unique son that God had given to her to raise, but the Bible says she was careful to treasure the special things about Jesus in her heart.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Return to Galilee.**
  - A. Life in Nazareth.
  - B. Growing up.
- II. **Annual trip to Jerusalem.**
  - A. The feast.
  - B. Jesus in the temple.
- III. **Missing a son.**
  - A. Panic among the travelers.
  - B. Return to Jerusalem.
- IV. **Found after three days.**
  - A. Obedient to His parents.
  - B. A mother's heart took note.

## Activity

Some students may not know what it would be like to grow up in a carpenter's home and to learn that trade. This would be a great time to invite a carpenter or woodworker to visit your class. You will need to explain the purpose of the visit so the carpenter could come prepared with tools, small pieces of wood and other ideas to explain the trade. Either let the carpenter speak to your class or interview him so his answers specifically address the aspect of a young man like Jesus who grew up learning the trade from His father, Joseph. Obviously you will need to cover the fact that the trade has greatly improved since Jesus' day, but the basic knowledge and hard work will still be the same today.

## Teacher Growth

Learning is an important part of everyone's growth. Just as today's lesson teaches the importance of developing physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually, so we must continue to grow as the Lord helps us. The best teachers are those who never stop being students themselves. Ask God to give you a desire to always be learning more about Him and His Word. Ask Him to help you grow in every aspect of your own life to become the person God desires you to be.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 2:39-52

## Memory Verse:

Luke 2:52 *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."*











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# Preparing the Way 1-06-B

**W**hile Herod was king of Judea, a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were serving God with their whole hearts. They obeyed all of God's rules and were blameless before God. Elizabeth had not been able to have children, and they were both too old now. One day Zechariah was chosen to go into the temple to burn incense before the Lord while the worshipers were praying in the outer court. This was one of the customs God had for His priests in those days.

An angel appeared to Zechariah inside the temple at the right side of the altar. Zechariah was startled. The angel told him not to be afraid, because his prayers were being answered. God was going to give them a son. He said that Elizabeth would have a baby and they were to name him John. The angel said many people would be happy when this boy was born and that he would be very special. They were not to let him drink fermented drinks, and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit when he was born. The angel also said that John would bring the people of Israel back to God and that he would prepare people's hearts to come to the Lord. John would cause parents and children to honor one another, and the disobedient would want to change their ways to please God.

Zechariah was amazed. He asked the angel how this could possibly happen. He told the angel that he and Elizabeth were too old to have a son. The angel said his name was Gabriel and that he brought this good news directly from God in heaven. He told Zechariah, "Now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." Zechariah had to pay a price for his unbelief.

Zechariah had been inside the temple for a long time. When Zechariah came out, the people realized that he could not speak. He made signs to them so that they knew he had seen a vision inside the temple.

When his duty in the temple was over he returned home and his wife became pregnant. Elizabeth was surprised that God had blessed her in such a special way. She knew God had allowed her to have a baby because He had been pleased with her obedience. When it was time for her baby, it was a boy, just as the angel had said. All of her family and friends rejoiced with her. It was their custom to circumcise the boy on the eighth day and then name him after his father. But Elizabeth said no. She told them the baby was to be called John. This was a surprise to everyone, because by custom his name should have been Zechariah. No one in their family had been named John. They asked the father and Zechariah surprised everyone when he wrote on a tablet, "His name is John." In that instant, he was able to talk again. Zechariah began praising God. All the people in that region heard of this special son.

As Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, he told all the people that God had promised to send a Savior to the world. He told them that his son, John, was to be the one who would come first to prepare people for the Lord. He said that John would be a holy man and that he would tell people about God's plan of salvation that was coming.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. A son was promised.
  - A. Gabriel was sent.
  - B. A price for unbelief.
- II. The promised son was born.
  - A. He was named John.
  - B. The Lord's hand was on him.
- III. His father prophesied.
  - A. God promised a Savior.
  - B. God promised one to go before Him.
- IV. John's ministry.
  - A. His lifestyle.
  - B. His message.

## Activity

In the days of Zechariah and Elizabeth, a baby's name was very important. It was normally a name that had been used by a family member. The meaning of the name also reflected the attributes or desires that the parents had for their child. Find a book that gives the meaning for names and have students check their names. They may also share the history of their name if they have a family name. See if the names that were given at birth really reflect the type of persons they are today. We are not trapped by our name's meaning, but God can help us be a special person for His Kingdom no matter what our name may be.

## Teacher Growth

Think about the students who have attended your class who are no longer coming. Maybe they have not been in your class for a week or two, or an extended time. Why they are missing? If it is an extended illness or a work-related absence, get them a copy of the lesson. Maybe they are wondering if you care enough about them to even notice their absence. Prayerfully contact students who have been missing to assure them that they are important in God's Kingdom and to you.

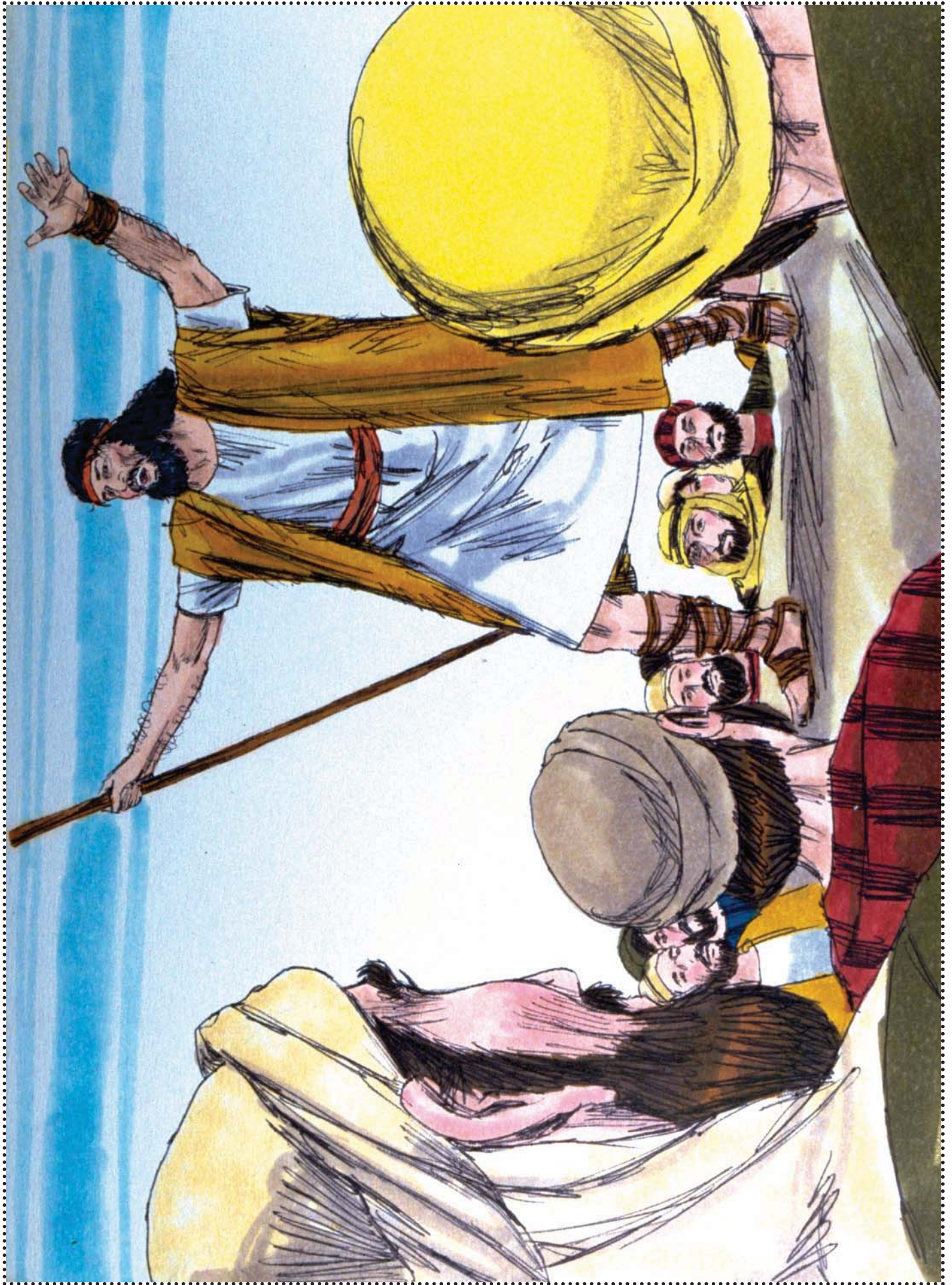
## Scripture passages:

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80, John 1:19-28, Matthew 3:1-6

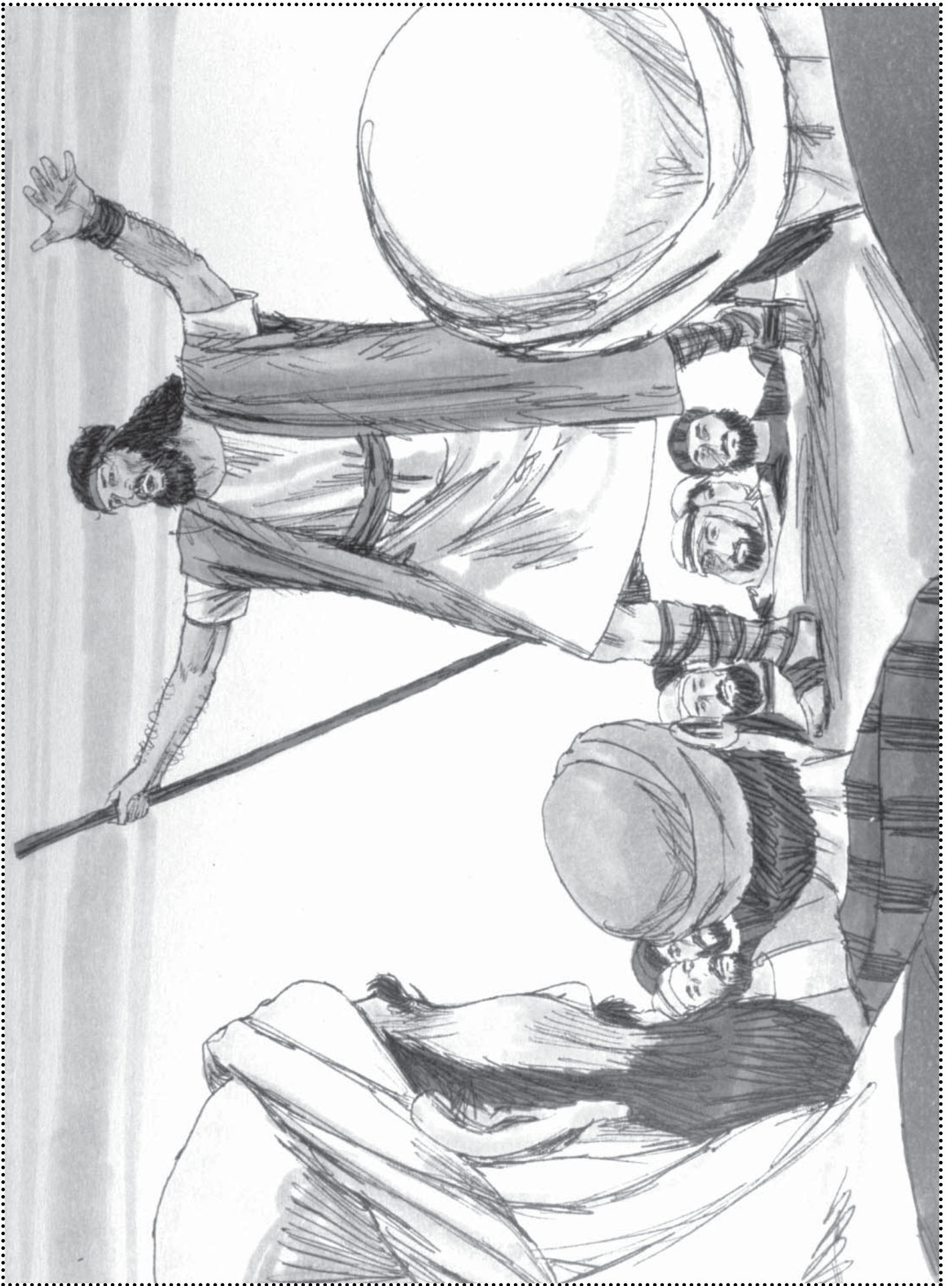
## Memory Verse:

Matthew 11:11 *"I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."*

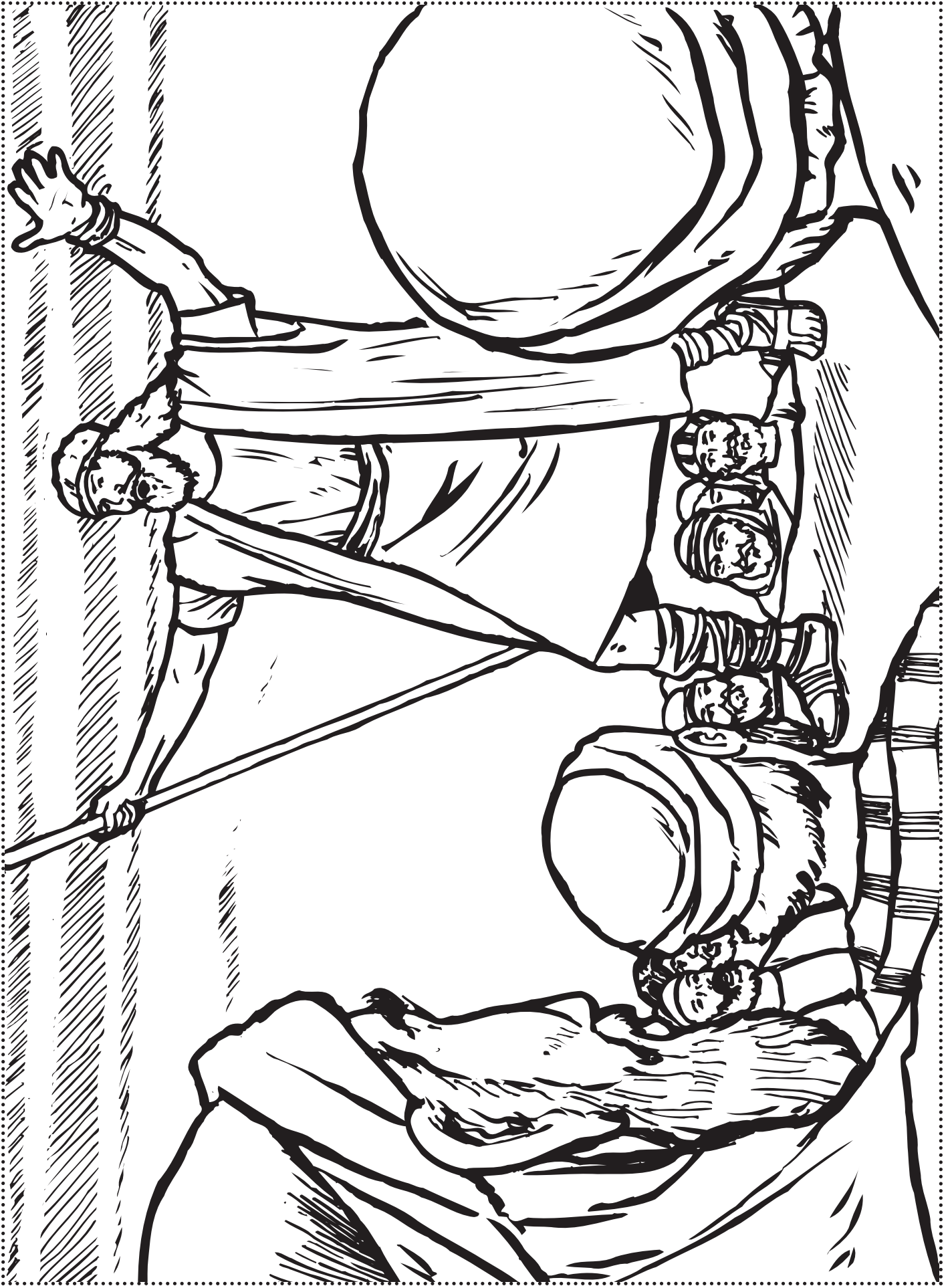












# The Baptism of Jesus 1-07-B

**J**ohn the Baptist was in the Desert of Judea preaching to everyone who came out to hear his message. He told people to repent, because the kingdom of heaven was near. That means they needed to leave their lives of sin and be ready to accept the Lord's way of life. John explained that he was the one that Isaiah, a prophet, had told them would be coming. Many years earlier in the history of God's people, Isaiah had told them that a man would come who would be a voice calling out from the desert. That man would tell them to "prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." John was the man, in the desert, telling people to get their hearts ready to accept the Lord who was coming.

John was there to baptize people who wanted to please God and be ready to accept the Lord when He came to them. John told them that he was baptizing in water, but soon there would come a man more powerful who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. The religious leaders who came out to hear John were surprised and angry at John's words. John told them they were not going to escape God's anger just because they were born into a certain family or because they did religious things. They needed to repent, or turn their lives away from sin, and do things that showed God's love.

One day John saw Jesus coming. John said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." John was telling people that this was the Savior. He knew that Jesus was God who always existed.

Jesus asked John to baptize him in the river. John was amazed and at first he said no. John told Jesus that he should be baptized by Jesus instead. But Jesus told him that it was important to follow this custom because it showed people that He was following God. He also did this to show us today how important it is for every believer to be publicly baptized to show the world our willingness to obey God.

God gave two special signs of His approval at Jesus' baptism. When John dipped Jesus down under the water and then brought Him back up again, heaven opened up and the Holy Spirit, like a dove come down to rest on Jesus. John also heard a voice from heaven say, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." God, the Father, was pleased that Jesus had obeyed His plan to be baptized. Jesus left the carpenter's shop and headed into the desert to prepare for ministry.

When we study the New Testament, we see that baptism and salvation are closely linked. Baptism does not save a person; only belief in the saving power of Jesus can do that. There should be a life of repentance, or turning from old sinful ways, and a desire to follow God's ways. We start with being obedient to the command for baptism in water. This is a sign to the world that we are buried in the water, just like Jesus being buried at death, and then we come up out of the water to show that we are living a new life just as Jesus did when He was raised from the grave. It is an important step of obedience for every Christian to be baptized as a public sign of faith.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **John announced the Lord.**
  - A. His sharp message.
  - B. Warned the religious leaders.
- II. **Request for baptism.**
  - A. John's response.
  - B. Jesus' reply.
- III. **Two signs at baptism.**
  - A. The dove.
  - B. The voice.
- IV. **A command.**
  - A. Following His example.
  - B. Obedience for today's believers.

## Activity

One way that students can learn to apply a lesson concept to their own life is to hear how it has happened in another's life. You may be able to have a few guests or even class members who have already been baptized come to share their testimonies with the class. When students hear how this step of obedience has enriched others' lives, they are more likely to understand its importance and the blessing they will receive from obedience to God's plan.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson speaks of a very important step of obedience that every believer needs to take. You may be the key person who will explain baptism and help your students to follow this command. It would be good to discuss this lesson with your pastor so that you are aware of how he would like to plan for the baptism of your students who realize their need to obey God in this way after hearing your lesson. You will need to work with your pastor to help students with this important step. Your pastor will help you to know how to best accomplish this for your students.

## Scripture passages:

John 1:29-34, Matthew 3:1-17

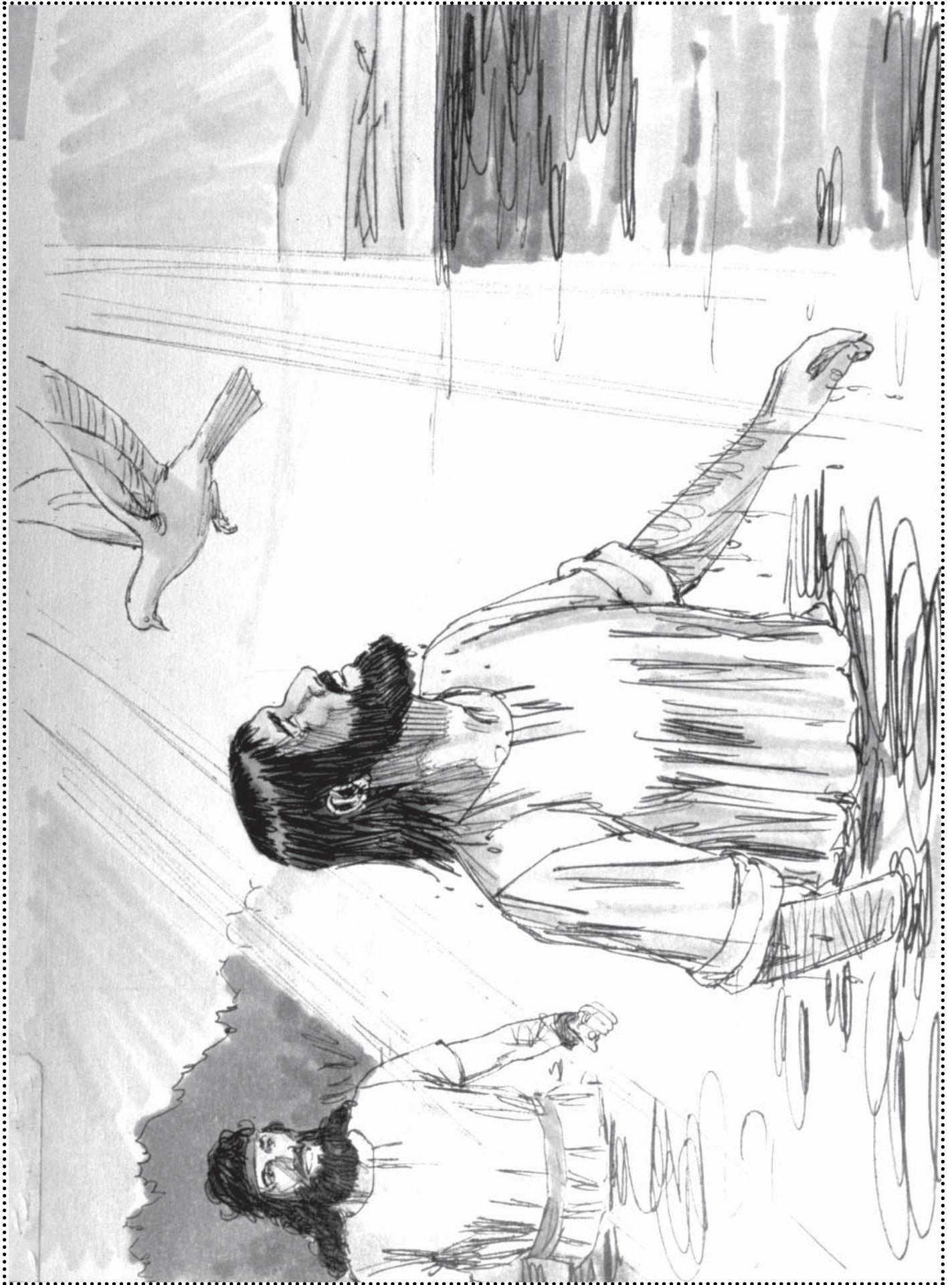
## Memory Verse:

Romans 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."













# Choosing Special Followers 1-08-B

John the Baptist had preached about Jesus coming and finally had even baptized Jesus to publicly show His obedience. Jesus spent time in the desert where Satan tried to tempt Jesus to disobey God, but Jesus used God's Word to defeat Satan. When Jesus came back into the city to begin teaching people about God, He heard that John the Baptist had been put in prison. Jesus walked to Galilee where He began telling people that the time had come and that the kingdom of God was near. The people were to repent or turn from their sins and believe the good news. Some of the followers of John the Baptist came to see Jesus. Andrew was one who believed Jesus was the Messiah, or the One that God had promised to come. The first thing Andrew did was go to his brother Simon to tell him about Jesus. Later, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. Soon Jesus began to call a group of men to be His followers or disciples.

As Jesus walked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He saw two fishermen hard at work. Simon and his brother Andrew were casting their nets and Jesus asked them to leave the nets behind to be His followers. A little farther down the shore Jesus saw James and John who were also fishermen. These brothers were working on their nets when Jesus called them to follow Him as well. While Jesus was in Simon's boat, He preached to the crowd. Then He caused Simon and Andrew, along with their partners, James and John, to catch a miraculous amount of fish. Jesus said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," and they followed Jesus.

In those days, the Romans would use greedy men to help them collect high taxes. The Jews did not like these traitors who helped the Romans and who usually added extra fees so that they could become wealthy while they cheated the people. One day Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at a tax booth. Jesus simply said, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed Jesus immediately. Levi was so excited about becoming a follower of Jesus that he held a great banquet at his home. Jesus was invited along with a large group of tax collectors and other friends. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were quick to complain to Jesus' other disciples about them eating and spending time with this kind of people. Jesus answered, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus also found a man named Philip whom He asked to become His follower. Philip ran to find Nathaniel and tell him that the man whom Moses and the prophets had written about had finally come. Jesus told Nathaniel that He had seen him sitting under the fig tree when Philip ran to talk to him. Nathaniel knew that Jesus must be the Son of God to know those things. Both Nathaniel and Philip became disciples.

Jesus called out twelve special men to be His closest followers or disciples. These men, also known as the apostles, were Simon, whom He called Peter; James and John, whom He called the Sons of Thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

Even today Jesus is looking for those who will be His followers to take the message of God's Son to those who haven't heard.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Four by the shore.**
  - A. Simon and Andrew.
  - B. James and John.
- II. **Chosen from tax collectors.**
  - A. Levi named.
  - B. Trouble at a banquet.
- III. **Others chosen to complete the twelve.**
  - A. Philip and Nathanael.
  - B. All twelve.
- IV. **Seventy-two sent out.**
  - A. How they were sent.
  - B. Reports on their return.

## Activity

Sometimes a simple game can be used to add activity to the class and clarify something in the lesson. Since today's lesson is about Jesus' followers, use the game "Follow the Leader." One person leads all the others in a single file line behind him. Any way that he walks, hops, makes motions with hands or face, the followers will do also. Wherever the leader goes, around, under, over, or through various paths or parts of a room, the followers will follow behind. This is a fun example of how we are to be followers of Christ, going where He leads us and acting the way He did.

## Teacher Growth

The Bible is very clear, especially as you study the writings of Paul, that we are to be followers of Christ and that others should be able to follow us. Periodically we need to evaluate our lives with a simple question. If others follow me, would it be the same as if they are following Christ? Does my life so reflect Him as I follow Him, that others only see Christ in me? These hard questions will remind us that everywhere we go and everything we do may be followed by those students God has placed under our care. Are we good leaders to follow?

## Scripture passages:

Mark 1:16-20, 3:13-19, Luke 5:27-32, 6:12-16, 10:1-20, John 1:43-51

## Memory Verse:

Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

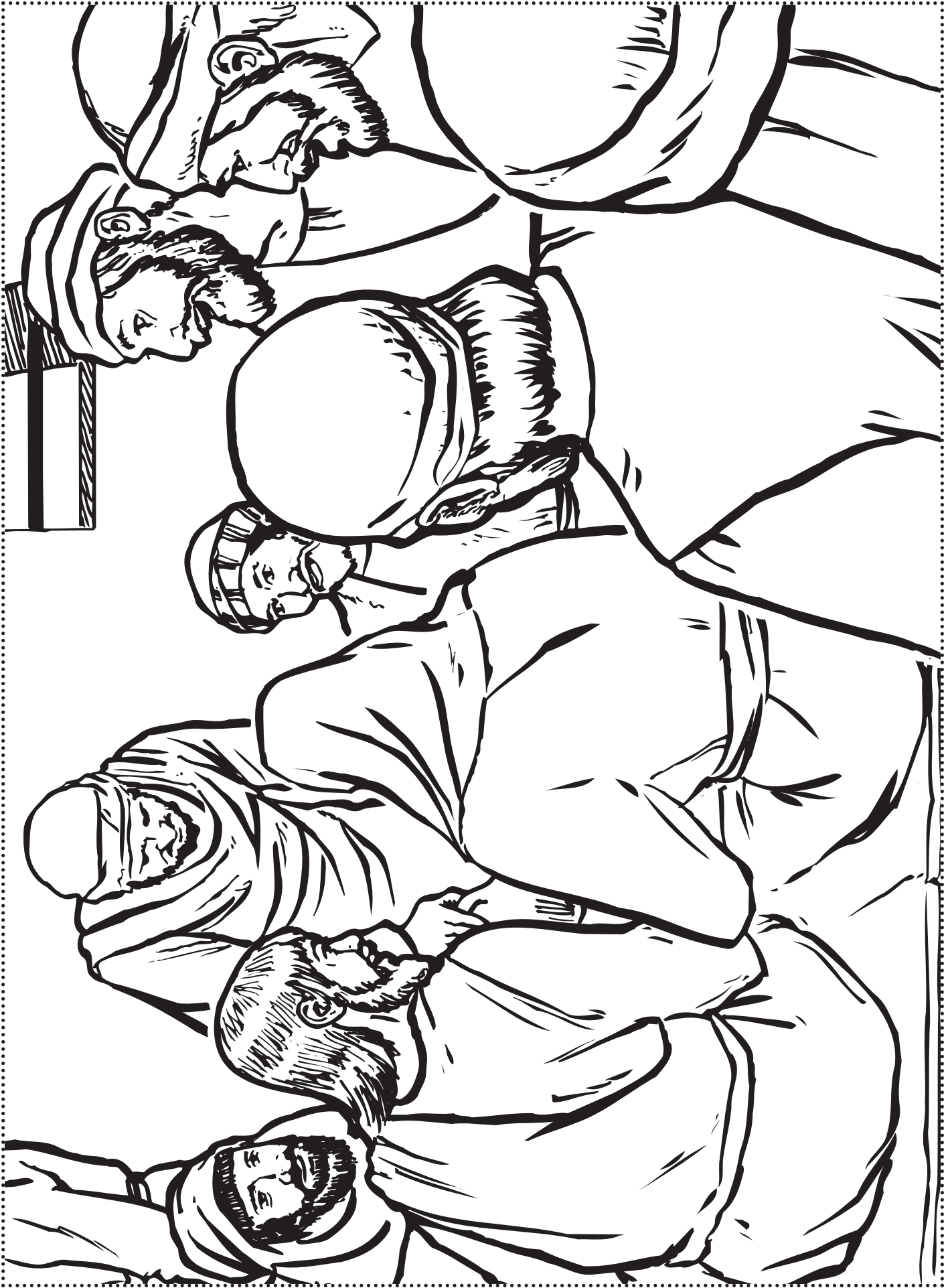












**W**hen Jesus taught people to understand the kingdom of God, He would often use a parable. The parable would be a short story with characters or things that were familiar which helped to describe a biblical principle. Today we will look at three different parables that are found in one chapter of the New Testament with the same theme: the importance of something lost that was found.

The first parable is called “The Parable of the Lost Sheep.” Jesus began with a question, “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” Shepherds were common in those days. The number of sheep one owned was a sign of wealth, so every sheep was valuable in the flock. The importance of a single sheep is demonstrated when the shepherd in the parable leaves ninety-nine alone to go searching for the one that was lost.

Jesus explained that when the shepherd finds the lost sheep, “he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’” When a person repents, turns from sin, and follows God’s ways, there is rejoicing in heaven.

Next, Jesus told “The parable of the Lost Coin.” The woman in the parable had ten silver coins but she lost one. Each coin was the pay for an entire day’s work. Jesus explained that when the woman discovered one of the ten coins was lost, she was not satisfied just to keep the other nine coins, but she would, “light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she found it.”

Everyone in the crowd would understand the great relief and joy that come from finding the lost coin. Jesus told them, “When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’” There is rejoicing by the angels over one sinner who repents.

Finally, Jesus told “The Parable of the Lost Son.” Jesus knew that even if the listeners did not have sheep or homes with silver coins, everyone would understand a parable about a family. The ties between a father and his sons was the way that all families handed down their land, homes, inheritance, and family name. The father in this parable had two sons. The younger one asked his father to give him his inheritance early so he could go to a far country and enjoy his riches. This must have saddened the father. The younger son wasted all of his money, then realized that there was a famine in the land and he had no money to buy food. So he had to work for a stranger. He even began to wish he could eat the scraps he was feeding to pigs.

Finally the young man realized that the men who worked for his father had plenty of food, while he was starving. He decided to return to his father’s home as a worker since he was not worthy to be called a son. While he was still a long way from home, his father saw him. The father did not become angry, but ran out to meet his son.

The son was quick to tell the father that he had sinned and did not deserve to be his son. But the father placed the best clothes on him and then ordered that the very best feast would be prepared. He invited everyone to a special celebration.

## Teacher's Notes

### I. Three parables in a chapter.

- A. Explaining a parable.
- B. Repeating the theme.

### II. Parable of the lost sheep.

- A. The one that was lost.
- B. Rejoicing over one found.

### III. Parable of the lost coin.

- A. The one that was lost.
- B. Rejoicing over one found.

### IV. Parable of the lost son.

- A. The one that was lost.
- B. Rejoicing over one found.

## Activity

Have students create new parables to explain the same biblical principle that was presented through the parables in today’s lesson. They need to use modern and culturally appropriate concepts that would help people around them understand the idea of the lost being found. This can help them actually create a parable they may share with others in evangelism, or just be a way that you can evaluate if they understand the principle behind the parables told by Christ.

## Teacher Growth

Some people tend to think about the entire world’s population that is still lost. God does want us to be aware of that. But it is more important to allow God to help you see a few people in your life who are lost. Then let Him help you be an instrument He can use to help turn those specific people back to Him. It can be helpful to list just a few names that you specifically pray for and try to bring into the fold. Let Him help you find the lost sheep, recover the lost coin, and welcome home the lost son.

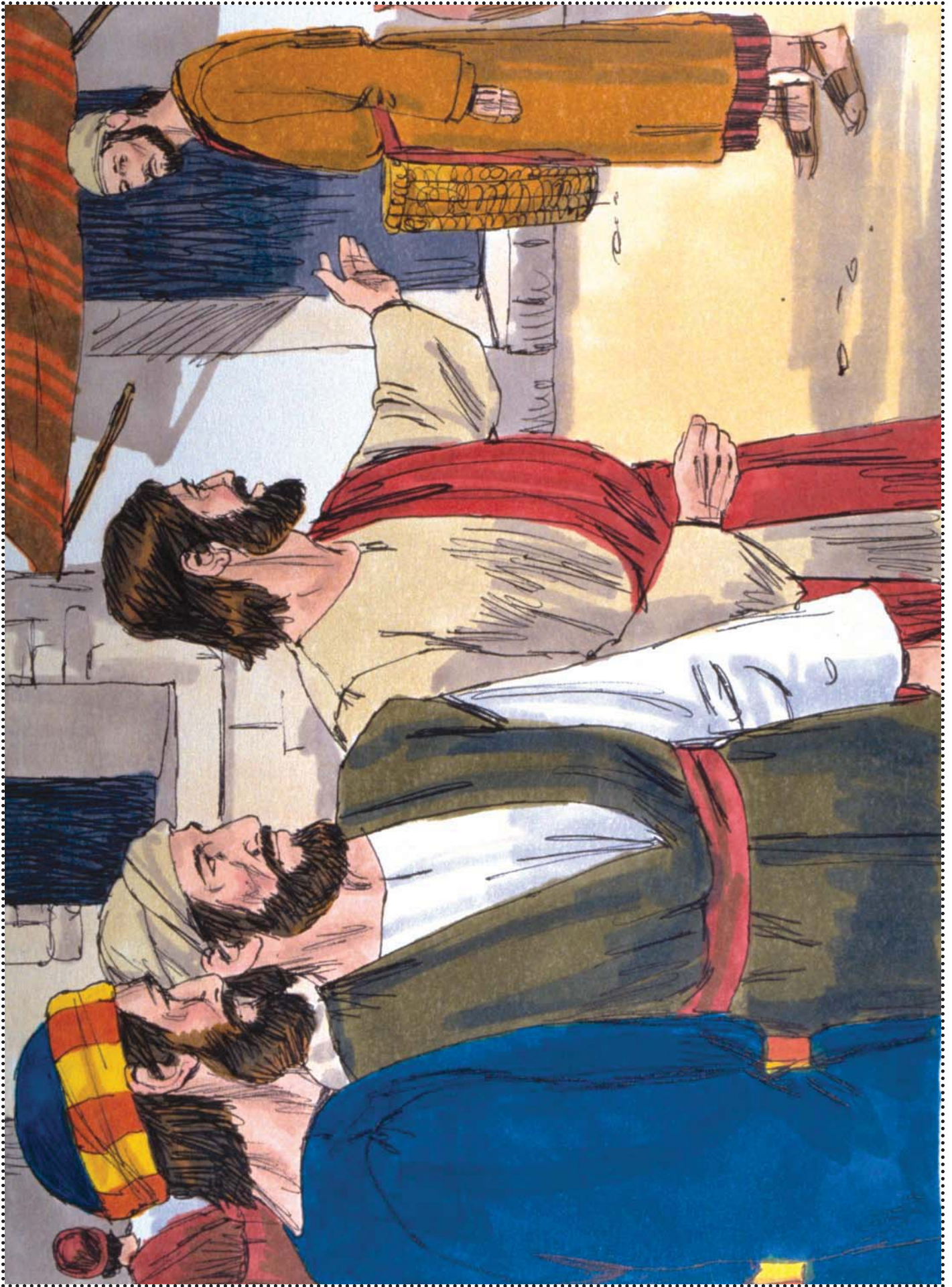
## Scripture passages:

Luke 15, Matthew 18:12-14

## Memory Verse:

Luke 15:10 “...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”













**T**he Sabbath was a special day set apart each week by God for rest from the regular work schedule and a time for people to put their attention on God's Word and their relationship with Him. One Sabbath Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, or church, when He saw a lady who had been crippled for eighteen years by an evil spirit. The enemy had kept that lady in pain for a very long time. The Bible says she was bent over and could not stand up straight. Everyone had seen her suffering for many years.

Jesus saw her that Sabbath day and called her to come up in front of all the people. He told her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then Jesus put His hands on her, and she straightened up and praised God. This was a great miracle that showed God's love for that lady. She had needed to be healed, and at the same time she needed to be set free from the evil spirit that had caused her physical problem. The people were amazed at what they had seen, but the religious leader, called the ruler of the synagogue, was upset. He was not happy that Jesus had shown the people His power over evil spirits and His ability to heal people.

The ruler must have been very jealous of Jesus, because he said to the people that there were six days to work and that it was not right to be healed on the Sabbath. He publicly attacked Jesus with these words to try and stop people from coming to Jesus.

Jesus had a powerful answer for these men who were against Him. He called them hypocrites, or men who act religious but are sinful on the inside. He said, "Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" Jesus knew that even though the Sabbath is not a work day, people would at least let their animals eat and drink on that day of rest. Even though God had given them rules to keep that day special, they still had the sense to be kind to their animals and not consider it work. But these men were using God's Law in a wrong way. They were making the Law more important than the God who made the Law. They were using the Law to keep people from God's compassion and love. Jesus spoke strong words that day in the synagogue to tell people that God's love was ready to set people free in their spirits and in their bodies on every day including the Sabbath.

The example that Jesus spoke of was clear to all the people. It made the religious leaders look foolish. These men were humiliated while the people rejoiced over the wonderful things that they saw Jesus doing.

Jesus is our healer today. His miracles did not stop when the Bible was finished being written, but they continue today. Some people here today or people that you know may need healing in their bodies or freedom from evil spirits. The same Jesus from our lesson in the Book of Luke is ready to set people free today. Pray and believe that Jesus will again show His great compassion as our Healer and Deliverer.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A need presented.**
  - A. Happened on the Sabbath.
  - B. Eighteen years of suffering.
- II. **Jesus acted.**
  - A. He called her.
  - B. He healed her.
- III. **The ruler's response.**
  - A. Attacked Jesus.
  - B. Greater regard for rules.
- IV. **Jesus' answer.**
  - A. Normal Sabbath routines.
  - B. Freedom from Satan.

## Activity

Students need to study the Bible on their own as well as hearing a lesson in class or the pastor's sermon. Challenge students to search the Scriptures for more examples of God's healing power. Find the New Testament for this activity and the first four books, the Gospels. Acts is a continued record of what began in the Gospels. You can use this activity as a class project, a contest, or an assignment to complete at home. Ask them to find every healing account with reference in these five books. You are helping their personal study of the Word and building their faith in our Healer.

## Teacher Growth

Many passages in the Bible show how the Lord is our Healer. At times your students may be ill or have family or friends in need of healing. Do you encourage them to bring these needs to the Lord in prayer? Do you actually pray for the sick? Just as in the New Testament days, Jesus still uses miraculous healings to show His power and to draw people to His message of salvation. Prayerfully ask Him for miracles that will encourage the believers in your class and draw the unbelievers to hear the Good News.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 13:10-17

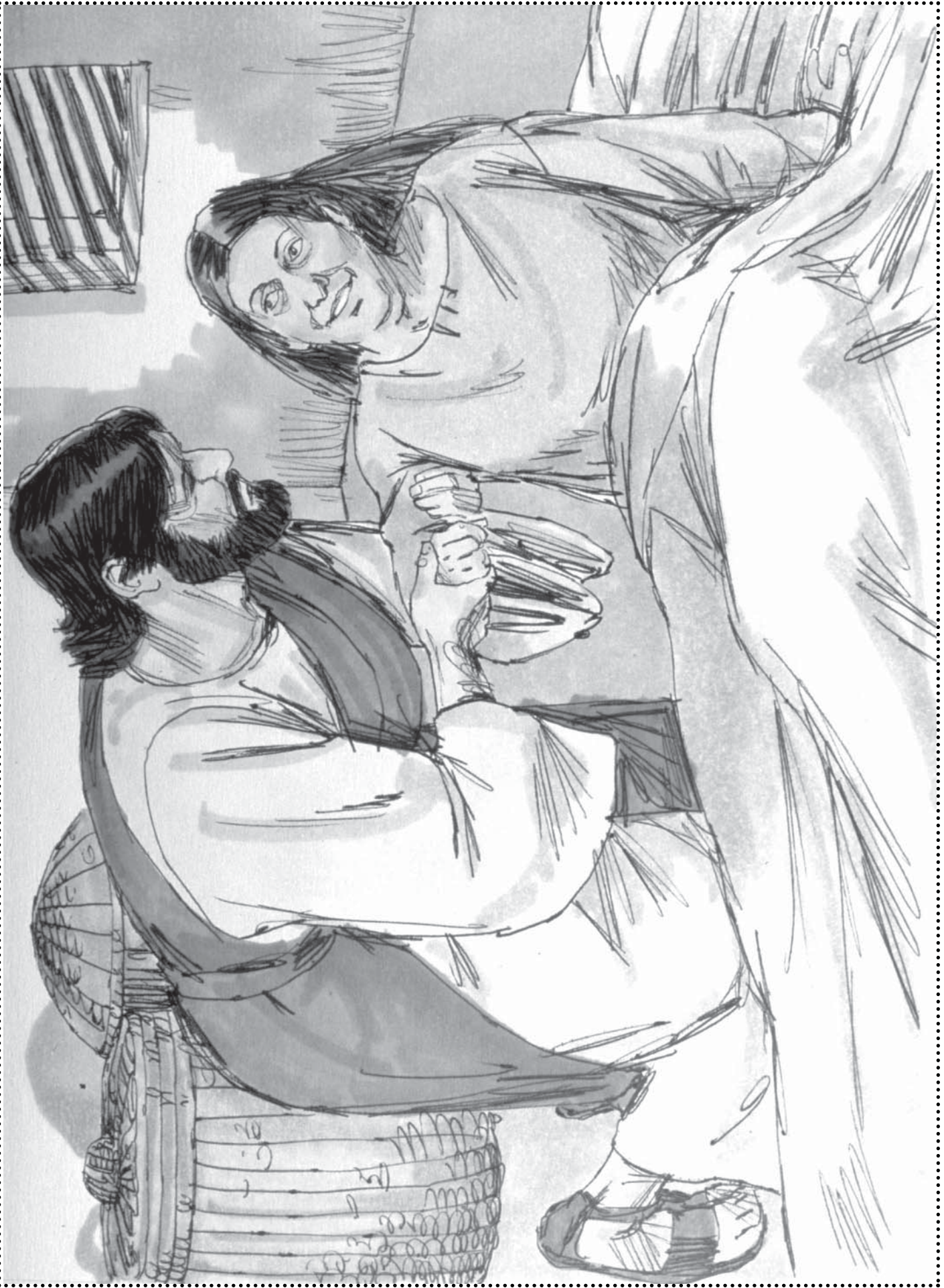
## Memory Verse:

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













# Sight For the Blind 1-11-B

**O**ne day Jesus saw a blind man. Jesus did not ignore or overlook the poor, the sick, or the blind as most other people did. This man had been born blind, and everyone in that area knew he had always been a blind beggar who had to survive on the coins some people might toss his way.

Jesus' disciples asked about a belief in that day. The people had been taught that if anyone was sick or blind, it was always because either the person or his parents had sinned. They wondered if this man or his parents had sinned to cause this blindness. Jesus explained that not all bad things are caused by sin, but that even this blindness had happened so that by bringing him healing, this man's life would show others God's power. Jesus told them He was the Light of the World, and He showed them He was able to bring sight to the blind.

Jesus healed many people and was creative in the ways He healed. On this day, Jesus spit on the ground, made mud, and put that mud on the man's eyes. Then Jesus told the man to go wash in a special pool. The man immediately obeyed Jesus' command. After the man washed the mud off his eyes, he had perfect vision. Faith and obedience are important to God.

The people saw the man who had always been the blind beggar and were surprised that now he could see. At first people doubted that he really was the man who had been born blind. They asked him how he had received his eyesight and he told them what Jesus had done, but the people doubted him. The people took the man to the Pharisees, or religious leaders, who also had many questions about the man's story.

The Pharisees, angry that the event took place on the Sabbath, or holy day, asked the man how he had received his sight. When the man explained how Jesus had put mud on his eyes and when he washed he could see, some began to say that Jesus was not from God. They claimed that a godly man would not have done this on the Sabbath, for it was not in obedience to the rules they had made. But others asked how a sinner could do such a miracle. When they again questioned the man, he now called Jesus a prophet. The Pharisees began to doubt that the man had really been blind, so they called in his parents. The parents said this was their son and that he had been born blind. They did not understand how he had been healed. The parents told the leaders that he was old enough to answer this question himself.

A second time the leaders asked the man how he had been healed, but they refused to believe him. He reminded them that God is the only one who could heal eyes that had been blind since birth, so this man must be from God. This made the leaders angry, and after insulting the young man with claims that his blindness must be a result of sin.

Jesus heard that the man had been thrown out and went to find him. The man believed in Jesus and worshiped Him. Jesus told the man that He had come into the world so the blind could see and those who thought they could see would be left blind. He wanted the man to understand that now he had spiritual sight, because he saw Jesus as God's Son, while the Pharisees had physical eyesight but failed to see Jesus as God.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A man born blind.**
  - A. Jesus saw the blind man.
  - B. A question about blindness.
- II. **Steps for healing.**
  - A. Jesus' part.
  - B. The man's part.
- III. **Reactions to the healing.**
  - A. Others questioned.
  - B. Pharisees doubt.
- IV. **Investigating the event.**
  - A. Sin and blame.
  - B. A spiritual lesson.

## Activity

Today's lesson comes from a rather lengthy passage of Scripture and has a series of events to the story. Have students break the story down into the various parts that make up the sequence of the story. Next, have a student or team of students draw a picture for each portion of the story, much like an act in a play or a picture page in an illustrated book. Now have the students take their completed drawings or paintings and clip them in order on a rope hung across your room or class space. You are helping them note the key points of the story and place them in sequence.

## Teacher Growth

The area where your class meets can be decorated in a number of ways. You may have the luxury of a classroom where you can hang art, illustrations, timelines, posters, or other items. However, many times space is shared, or you may be meeting outdoors. You can use a simple rope and clothespins or clips to create a "wall" to hang your projects on. This is useable outdoors or even to be portable inside a borrowed room.

## Scripture passages:

John 9

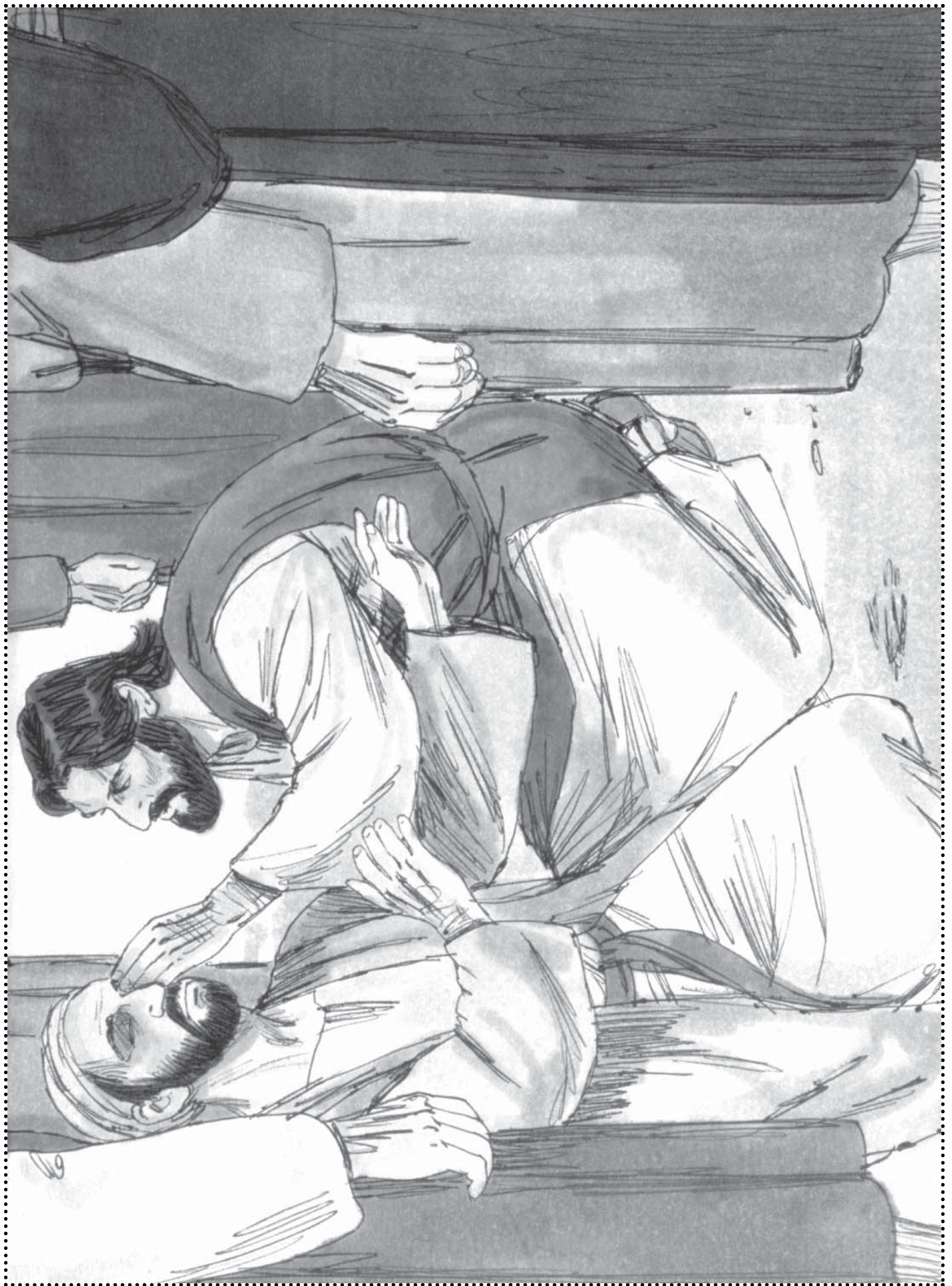
## Memory Verse:

John 9:3 *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."*













**T**oday's lesson begins in the middle of a very sad scene. Nothing is more sorrowful in the life of a family than the loss of a loved one, and yet this story is even more dramatic. Everyone in town knew the widow lady who lived alone with her son. After her husband died, she could have been worried about how she could get money for food, but God had blessed her with a fine son. Her son was a strong young man and had been able to work and provide for his mother's needs. But somehow the son had become ill or had suffered an injury, and then he had died. The mother was shocked and very sad, but she also had to be worried about how she would survive without a husband or a son to care for her. In those days, women like that would lose their homes and have to beg for food to survive.

The day when the young man was placed in a casket and carried to the place outside the city for burial, many people walked along the road to cry with the grieving mother. The Bible says there was a large crowd from the town of Nain walking with the widow as Jesus was nearing the city gate with a large crowd following Him. Many people were in the middle of this sad scene. When Jesus saw the lady crying, the Bible says His heart went out to her. He told her not to cry. Isn't it wonderful to know that Jesus understands and cares about our emotions?

At that moment, in the middle of His followers trying to enter the city and the mourners with the casket trying to leave the city gate, Jesus stepped right up and touched the coffin. The men who were carrying the coffin stopped immediately. In their culture a person was considered unclean if he came close to the coffin or touched it. It was odd to have a stranger step up and make himself unclean by touching a coffin of someone he did not even know. In fact, the coffin was probably open and the body would have been visible, making it even more unusual to have a stranger get so close. Then Jesus amazed everyone by giving a very simple command. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"

Instantly the crowds saw a miracle of God's power before their own eyes. The young man sat up and began to talk. Jesus must have taken his hand to step out of the coffin that had been set on the ground, and then the Bible says Jesus gave him back to his mother. The people, especially the widow, were in awe of Jesus' power, and they began to praise God. They called Jesus a great prophet and said, "God has come to help his people." There must have been much hugging and dancing and shouting and laughing as they marveled over a God of such miraculous power who cared so lovingly for people. The Bible says that the news of Jesus raising this young man from the dead was spread throughout the whole region of Judea and the surrounding country. What a comfort for us to know God's power and love for people is the same today as it was for the widow of Nain.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A funeral procession.**
  - A. Local customs.
  - B. A widow's loss.
- II. **Reaction to the loss.**
  - A. The crowd from town.
  - B. The compassionate Lord.
- III. **Action was taken.**
  - A. He stopped the coffin.
  - B. He gave a command.
- IV. **Miraculous results.**
  - A. A son for the mother.
  - B. News about Jesus.

## Activity

Write today's memory verse on a sheet of paper for every student. See that the verse is written large enough to fill the whole sheet. Now have students tear very tiny scraps of colorful paper, or use the dots from a hole punch used on colorful paper, to create mosaic pieces. Have the students glue little mosaic pieces, slightly overlapping along each part of every letter in each word. The finished verse will be mosaic colored block letters that create a nice copy of the verse to hang at home as a reminder of God's help.

## Teacher Growth

Storytelling is an ancient art form and a strong way to present the Bible lesson. This story has all the elements needed for a wonderful oral drama. Begin with a colorful look at the main characters. Build to the drama of the emotional scene on the road to the burial site. Reach the climax of a compassionate Jesus who stops the coffin and calls out to the son. Conclude with the incredible miracle of Jesus placing the son back in his mother's arms. Use your voice to create the drama of this powerful story.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 7:11-17

## Memory Verse:

Luke 7:16b "God has come to help his people."













# A Widow's Offering 1-13-B

Jesus entered the outer courtyard of the temple area. This was the place where both men and women could come to give their offerings. The women could only go this far inside the temple while men could enter the next area or the inner courts for prayer. Thirteen large trumpet-shaped metal containers were placed in the courtyard for people to give their offerings. Jesus sat down and began to watch people. It is amazing how much we can learn just from taking time to sit down and watch people. Two basic kinds of people were in the outer court. One group wore nice clothes and brought a lot of coins to drop noisily into the offering containers. The loud sound of large coins hitting the metal containers caused everyone to notice their wealth. There were also people who dressed simply and entered the courtyard quietly. These people were there to worship and honor God, not to draw attention to themselves.

The two types of people in the courtyard could also be set apart by the type of offering they had to give. It was possible to use large heavy coins that would quickly announce to others that you were a person of great wealth. Then there were small, simple coins that are valued today at a mere fraction of our smallest coins. In some countries these coins would not even be made because their value is less than the cost of making the coin. But Jesus saw a difference far more important than the value of the coins.

Jesus used this common scene to teach his disciples and us an important principle. He wanted the disciples to learn that the quality of the offering was not to be found in the quantity or value of the money that was given. Jesus also wanted to explain that the world's value of public importance was far different from the heavenly value of a person's heart condition. So Jesus pointed to the rich people who were throwing large, noisy piles of coins into the offering container and the poor widow who quietly put in two small copper coins.

Jesus spoke clearly about the importance of motivation behind the giving of offerings. He said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." The widow's coins were insignificant compared to the large sums of money the rich were giving, but Jesus knew that they were critical in the survival of this poor woman. Widows in those days often had to beg for coins just to get food for survival. Jesus knew this widow was giving all she had with a heart of love and honor for God. That motivation made the offering an acceptable gift. God wants us to give our finances, our time, and all that we have with willing hearts. He wants us to give out of our love for God, not for the attention of others. God deserves our willingness to give as a way to honor Him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus observed the people.**
  - A. He watched the religious crowd.
  - B. He watched the simple people.
- II. **Two types of offering.**
  - A. The riches of the wealthy.
  - B. The coins of the poor.
- III. **Jesus explains the difference.**
  - A. Not the quantity.
  - B. Not public worth.
- IV. **Motivation for giving.**
  - A. Public acknowledgement.
  - B. A willing heart.

## Activity

Have students fold and cut or trace from a pattern, two heart shapes that are matching. Connect the edges of the hearts with glue, tape, stitches, or staples, leaving a slot open at the top. On the front they can write "My willing gift to God." Then have students take the heart banks home and place inside them the offering they would like to give willingly to the Lord's work. This may be for the church, your class, missions, or a special project. The idea is to help students apply the idea of willingness in their giving to God.

## Teacher Growth

The motivation of our giving is more important than the size of the offering. Teachers often invest in the materials needed for their class. Some do this with a willingness and a love both for their class and for the Lord. For many, these "special offerings" are never seen by others and can be a real sacrifice from the teacher's finances. Yet if this is done grudgingly, hoping others will see your giving, it is no longer an acceptable gift from a willing heart. The investment of your finances and time, from a willing heart, are wonderful gifts for our Heavenly Father.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 21:1-4, Mark 12:41-44

## Memory Verse:

2 Corinthians 8:12 "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."













**J**esus and His followers began the final journey to Jerusalem. Near the hill called the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two of His disciples special instructions. Jesus said, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"

The disciples did not question Jesus, worry about the details ahead, or delay their reaction. Immediately they hurried ahead to the city where they found everything just like Jesus had told them. They found the young colt that had never been ridden, tied and waiting there. When they untied the colt, its owners asked them why they were taking their animal. The disciples told them, "The Lord needs it." This was the answer that Jesus had told them to give, and all things went according to the plan that had been foretold many years before. Prophets had said this very scene would come about just like it did. God had arranged every detail in the plan He had for Jesus' life on earth.

The disciples brought the colt to Jesus. The people gathered around the animal, and many placed their coats on the colt's back to make a soft seat for Jesus. The people waiting alongside the road also placed their coats out in the path before Jesus. They wanted to honor Jesus as He traveled toward Jerusalem.

When Jesus got close to the Mount of Olives, where the path winds down the hillside, the disciples and followers of Jesus began to shout with great joy. They praised God for all the miracles they had seen. They even cried out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord." As they continued to shout praises along the roadside, some of the Pharisees reacted differently. They were not happy. They asked Jesus to rebuke His followers, to stop them from praising Him. Jesus answered them, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Jesus was happy that people were rejoicing over Him as He entered the town. This was the right reaction for the Son of God.

Jesus knew the Pharisees were jealous of the followers who loved Him, they were scared of His popularity, and they were unhappy with the way that Jesus was teaching people about God. When the people shouted out praises to Jesus, the Pharisees were angry because these were praises for the Messiah, or the promised Son of God. The Pharisees did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They did not understand that Jesus was God's Son, and they plotted to have Jesus killed.

Jesus had looked down on the city and wept. He cried because so many people did not accept Him as God's Son. He told them that the city would be attacked by its enemies and terrible things would happen to their families, but the people did not believe Him. History tells us that 70 years later Roman soldiers marched into Jerusalem and did the terrible things Jesus had told them. This was the punishment because they would not believe and accept Jesus as the Son of God.

The Bible says that there is only one way to go to heaven. That is by believing that Jesus is God's Son who came to earth and died for our sins. Every person needs to understand Jesus is God's Son and praise Him as King Jesus.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A plan for transportation.**
  - A. Approaching Jerusalem.
  - B. Two disciples sent.
- II. **The disciples' experience.**
  - A. Quick to obey.
  - B. Just like Jesus said.
- III. **Jesus rode the colt.**
  - A. A ride in style.
  - B. The crowds' reaction.
- IV. **In sight of the city.**
  - A. Jesus wept.
  - B. Strong words.

## Activity

Some churches enjoy hanging special banners in their worship areas. They contain a name for Jesus or a phrase that brings praise to Him. Today you can create a large class banner or individual banners for every student to take home. Banners can be made out of cloth or paper, using a stick across the top and string or yarn looped on the stick's ends to hang it. Today's banner may say, "Hail! King Jesus" or parts of Luke 19:38-39. Letters may be cut out and attached, or written or painted directly on the banner. Added bright colors or symbols can make the banner look royal, worthy of a King.

## Teacher Growth

Think about the use of every minute in your class. Are you there early, so you have everything prepared before the first student arrives? This will allow you to concentrate fully on your students. They may come with a special need or a praise report, and it is critical that you give them some attention instead of busying yourself with class details. You need to appear available, to listen to them, to talk with them, and to get to know them better. These moments before class can often teach you a lot about your students.

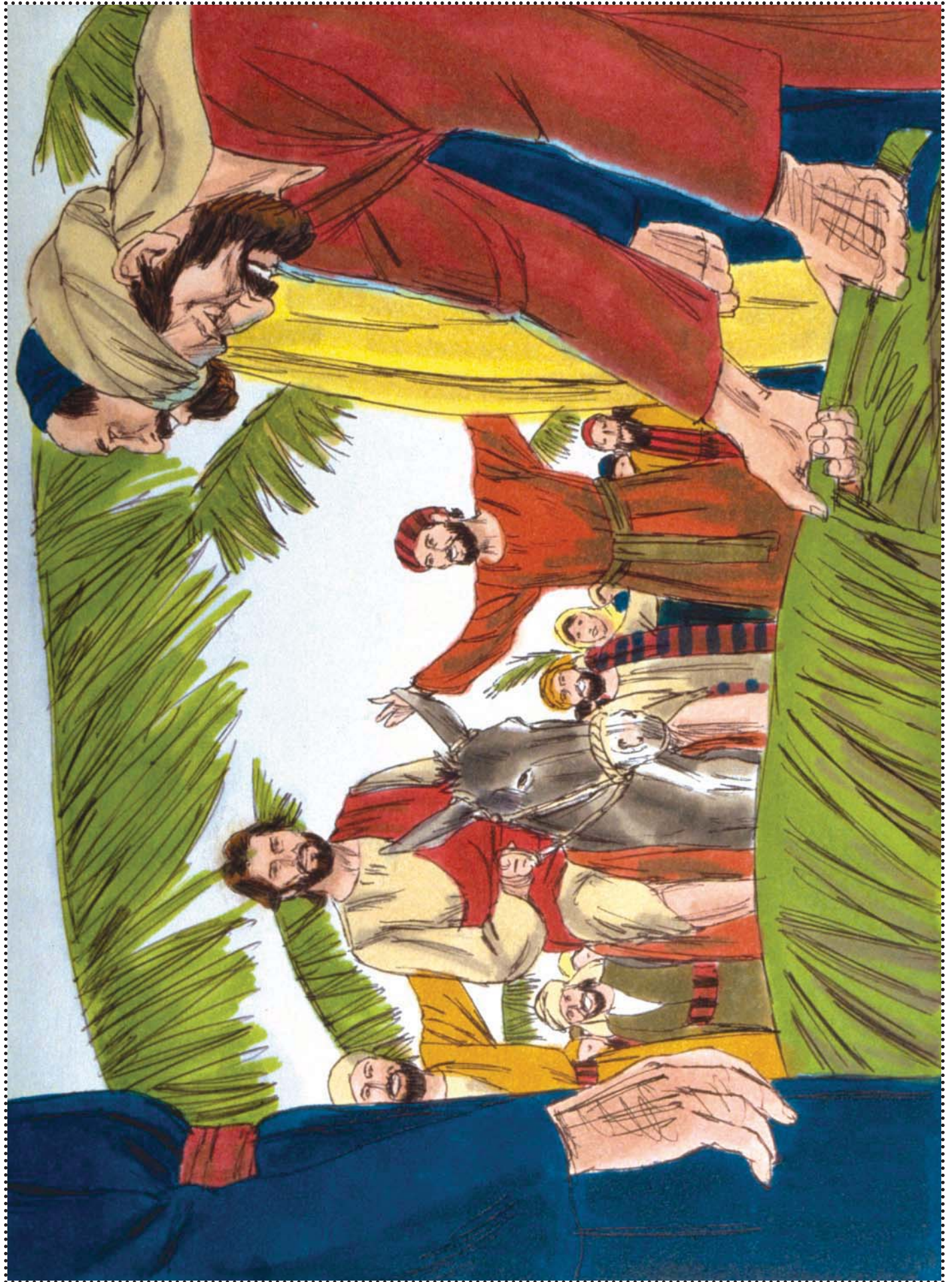
## Scripture passages:

Luke 19:28-44, Matthew 21:1-11

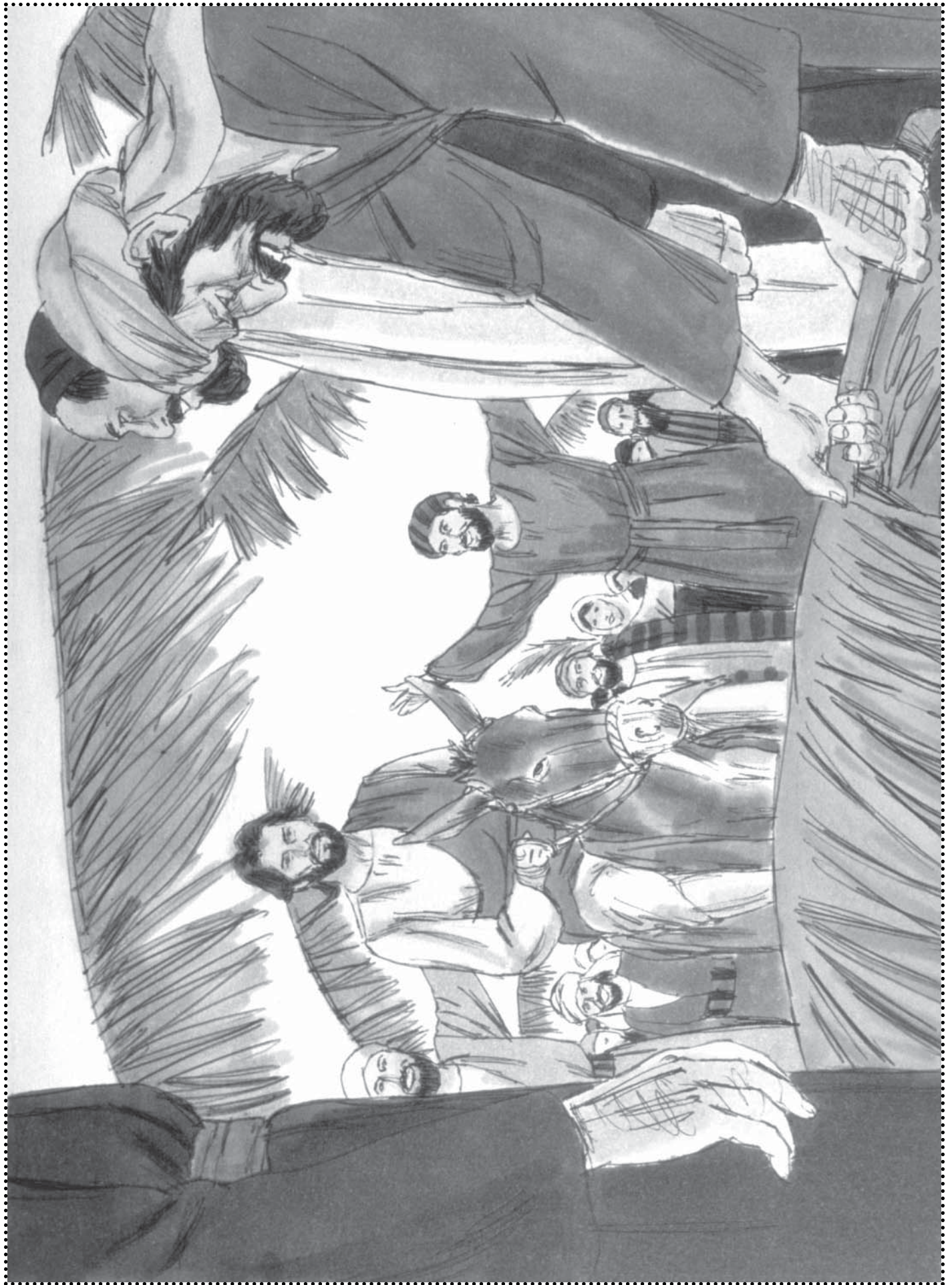
## Memory Verse:

Luke 19:38 *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord."*

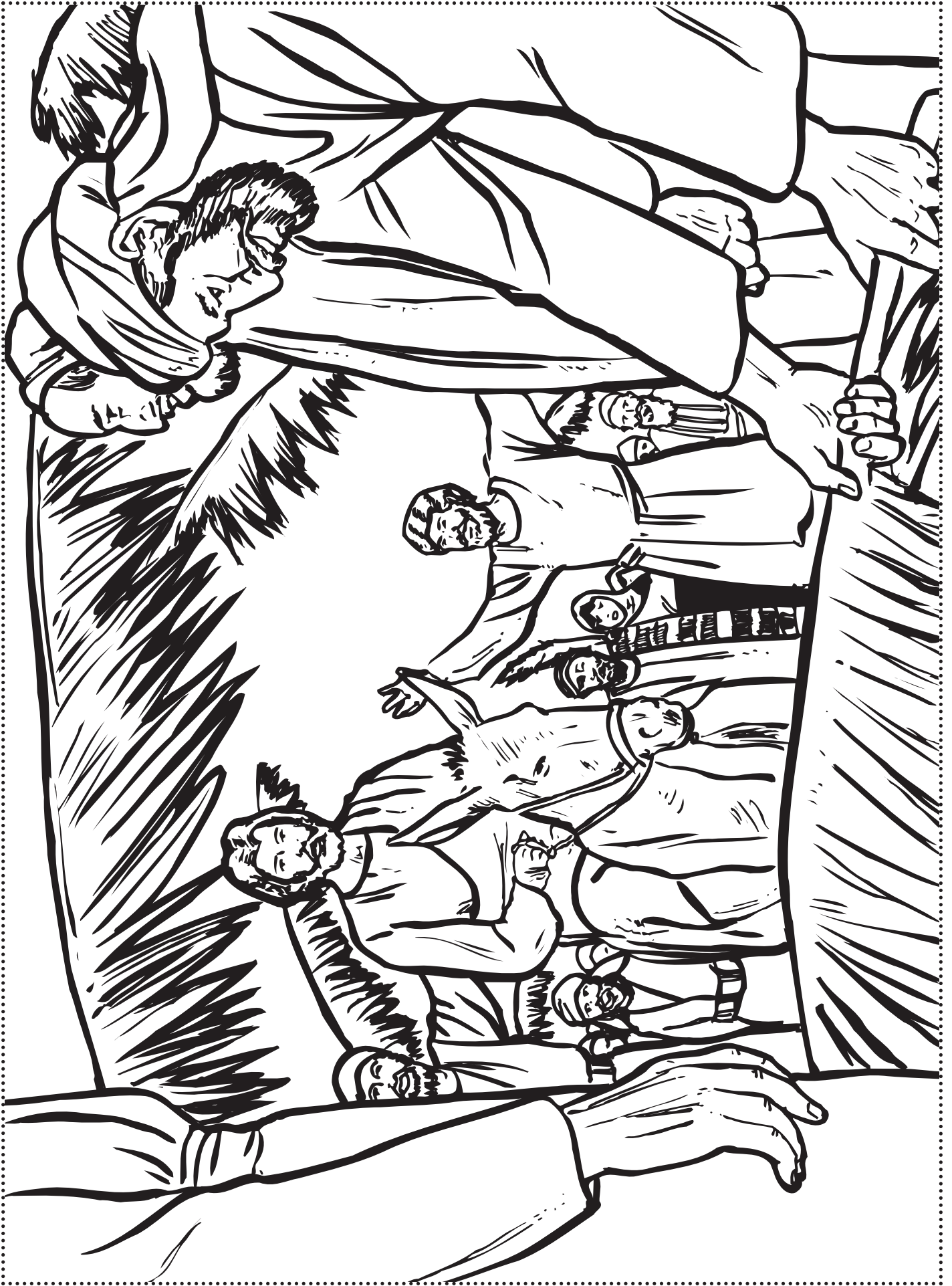












# A House of Prayer 1-15-B

Jesus knew the importance of being in the temple; today we would say the importance of being in church is to learn more about God. This was the final week of Jesus' life here on earth, and going to the temple was a detail that Jesus continued.

When Jesus got to the temple, large crowds were gathered in the outer courts. Let's look at how the temple was built. The temple was divided into three areas. The outer courtyard that surrounded the temple was an area where people came to give their offerings, sacrifices, and prayers to please God. This area could be used by both men and women and even by Gentiles, or people that were not Jewish. The next courtyard was set aside for worship and special teaching only for Jewish men who were considered clean because they had obeyed the laws given by God. The very inside part of the temple was called the most holy place where only special priests could enter on rare occasions to communicate directly with God.

The people had started bringing in birds and animals to sell to those who needed one for a special offering to God. They brought these noisy and dirty things right into the temple courtyard. The men who sold them raised the price to cheat people who had come from far away who needed them as a gift for God. They also used unfair scales to measure out the money and charged people extra fees. The people who came from far away were forced to exchange their money for the coins used in Jerusalem, and the moneychangers would cheat them with an unfair exchange. These men were acting like thieves and stealing money from people right in God's temple. This part of the temple was the place God had designed for all people, Jews and Gentiles, men and women, to be able to come and worship Him in prayer, giving, and praise. Jesus saw the way that people had made it dirty with animals and cheating.

Jesus walked into the temple courtyard and chased outside all the people who were buying and selling. He turned over the moneychangers' tables and scattered the doves from the bench where they had been tied down. The dust, noise, feathers, and shouting must have been unbelievable. The people had also been using the temple courtyard as a shortcut to move their animal herds and wares for sale across town more quickly. They were not passing through to worship but to do business and just add to the confusion, noise, and mess in God's house. Jesus stopped all those who were passing through the temple and made them go around the temple like they were supposed to do. This must have caused some men to be very angry as well. But Jesus was angry at the people for what they were doing to God's house.

Jesus stopped everyone and taught them a special lesson that day. He explained that God's house was for prayer, not thieves. They needed to give God honor in that place and not use it as an area to cheat people and do business. God's house should be treated as a special, or sacred, place where people come to honor Him. After this incident, the blind and the lame came to Jesus in the courtyard and He healed them. Healing these people was a sign of God's goodness, and the praise they gave Him was honoring to God.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A divine appointment.**
  - A. Jesus went to the temple.
  - B. Jesus' final week.
- II. **Drastic action.**
  - A. He cleared the temple.
  - B. He stopped further business.
- III. **A lesson Jesus taught.**
  - A. A house of prayer.
  - B. A den of robbers.
- IV. **Reactions to the lesson.**
  - A. Fear and a plot for death.
  - B. An amazed crowd.

## Activity

There are different types of prayer. Prayer in a group can be led by one person with others agreeing. Smaller groups of people can pray, taking turns around the circle to lead out in prayer. You may choose to put prayer requests on a board or sheets of paper to allow everyone to pray individually about common topics. Prayers can also be written or read directly from the Bible as we learn to claim God's promises. There are many styles of prayer, yet the important thing is to praise, confess, request, and worship Him, as well as listen to Him. Communication involves two, both speaking and listening.

## Teacher Growth

Teachers will always have lessons to study, extra activities to plan, and supplies to collect, but there is nothing more important for your students than a teacher who prays. Your private devotional life, time spent in prayer and in the Word, will affect every word you speak to your students. You cannot effectively teach today's lesson unless you are a part of a prayer emphasis in your own church. Tell your class about the opportunities in your church to pray. If there are none, then go to your pastor and ask him about starting something.

## Scripture passages:

Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19

## Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:13a *"My house will be called a house of prayer."*













# The Last Supper

# 1-16-B

**T**he Jewish people have an annual celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover. This was a week-long celebration of a miracle God had done many years before. To learn more about this, read in Exodus Chapter 12 of the miraculous way God delivered His people from Egyptian slavery. God told them they were to eat foods like those their forefathers had eaten as they left Egypt and to sacrifice a Passover lamb. The lamb would represent the one that had been killed by each family to place the signal blood on the doorposts when the death angel passed over God's people. God wanted them to remember what He had done.

During the last week of Jesus' life, the people were preparing to celebrate the Passover. On the day it was to begin, Jesus sent Peter and John into the city to make preparations for the feast that evening. They asked Jesus where they were to go to find a room. Jesus said, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a large jug of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there." When the two men entered the city, everything happened just as Jesus said it would.

Jesus and the disciples gathered around the table. It was a custom in those days that a servant would wash the feet of the guests before they ate a meal. Jesus got up from the table and took off His outer robe. Then He wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water in a basin, and began washing the disciples' feet. He dried their feet with the towel from His waist. Peter stopped the Lord and said that Jesus should not stoop to washing his feet. But Jesus told Peter that if He did not wash them, he would not be His follower. Peter agreed, and Jesus completed the task before returning to His place at the table.

Jesus asked them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He wanted them to see that even though they called Him Teacher, or Lord, He still served them. No one is above serving others. Jesus wanted them to learn that a leader is a servant.

Jesus then continued the meal with the disciples. He let them know that He was going to be killed, but that He would return.

Jesus announced that one of the disciples would betray Him. They were shocked. Each man began asking if he were the one who would betray Jesus. They wanted to know who it was. Jesus said it was the man He was eating with and handed a piece of bread to Judas Iscariot. They were all eating with Jesus, so they failed to understand. The disciples did not hear Jesus tell Judas to do it quickly. Judas ran out of the room and went to the religious leaders. Events leading to the cross were set.

Jesus held up the bread, blessed it and broke it, explaining that it represented His body that would be broken for them. Then He lifted His cup and explained that it represented His blood that would be poured out for them. It was a symbol of the new covenant, or promise, that He would have with all believers. In the New Testament, we read how churches are to repeat this ceremony, called the Lord's Supper or Communion, in remembrance of Him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **A special holiday.**
  - A. Historical purpose.
  - B. Preparations made.
- II. **A demonstration of love.**
  - A. A servant's role.
  - B. A lesson on leadership.
- III. **Betrayal predicted.**
  - A. The betrayer known.
  - B. Events placed in motion.
- IV. **An ordinance of the church.**
  - A. Symbols explained.
  - B. The church remembers.

## Activity

Speak to the pastor about serving communion to your class. This can be a way to involve the pastor with your class and a strong reinforcement of the lesson. Involve students in preparing the elements so they understand each symbol. Explain your lesson to the pastor and ask him to review the key points of this ordinance of the church. You may need to explain the process that your church requires for participation in this ordinance. This explanation can also be done by your pastor, in place of actually participating in communion, if necessary.

## Teacher Growth

Standards are given in God's Word for believers, and even higher standards are set for leaders. Every church also has certain expectations for the leaders of the congregation. Your students will always be observing how you follow these guidelines. No one is perfect, but we can all be expected to have a desire to serve God with all that is within us. We need to ask daily for His help, strength, and wisdom to accomplish what He has called us to do. As a teacher, a leader, you have a responsibility to model a servant leader's heart.

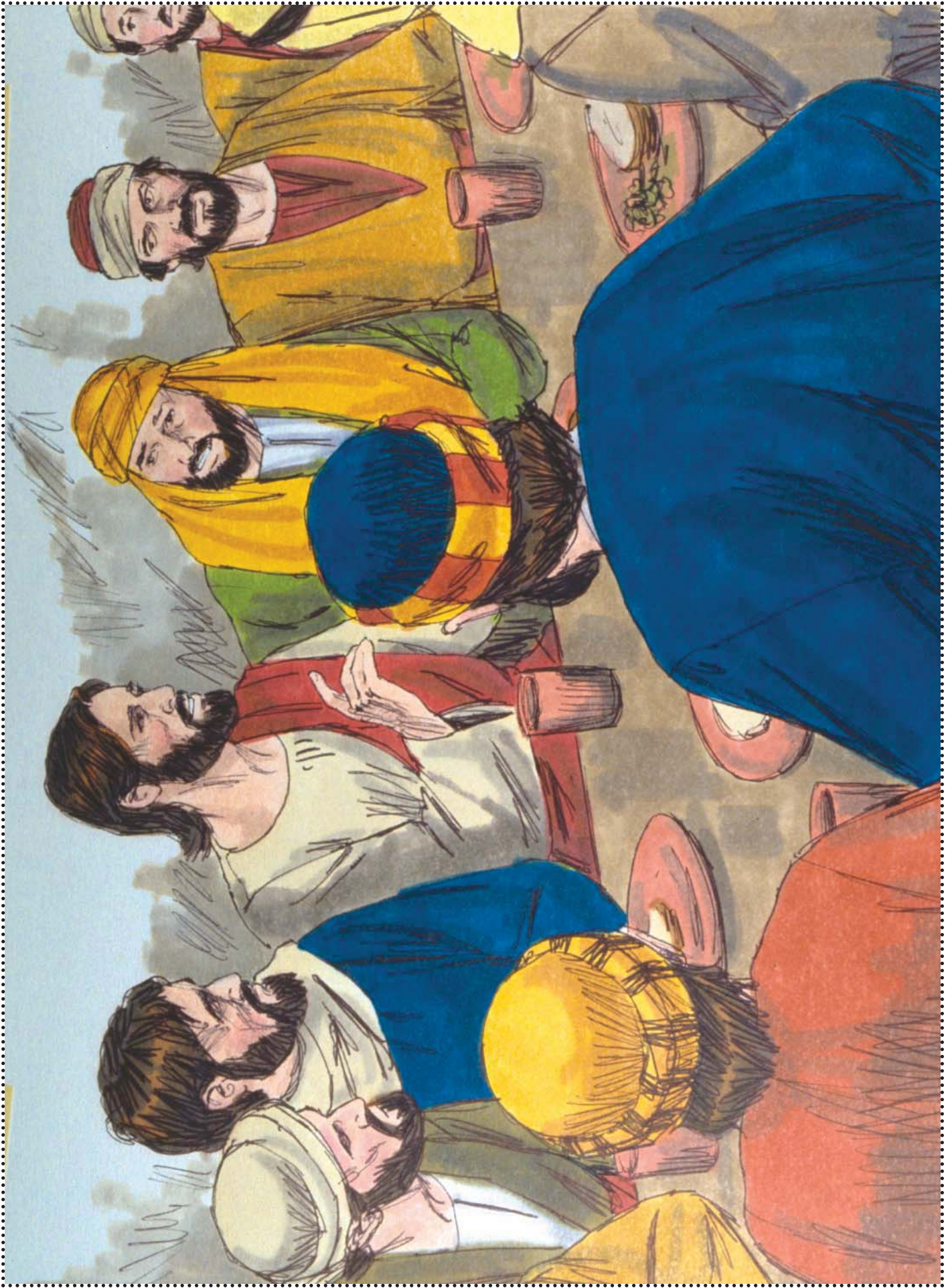
## Scripture passages:

Luke 22:7-23, John 13:1-28,  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

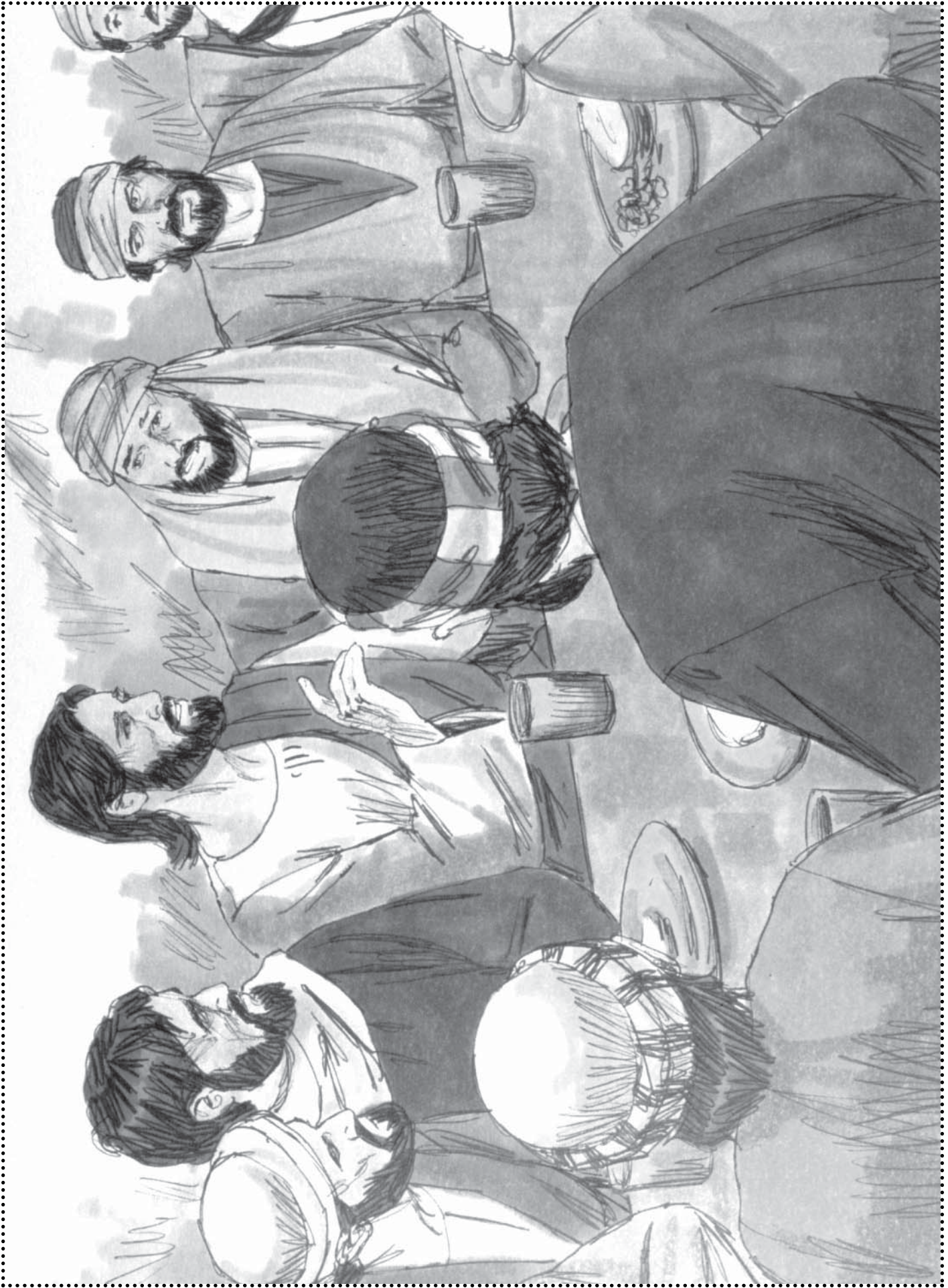
## Memory Verse:

John 13:15 "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."













**A**fter Jesus finished His prayer at the Passover meal, He left with His disciples and walked to a special garden in an olive grove on the eastern side of Jerusalem. Jesus often went there with His disciples to pray. That evening Jesus prayed a difficult prayer, accepting the plan God had for Him even though He knew the agony that was ahead. He asked His disciples to pray with Him, but they fell asleep that evening.

Suddenly, a large group of soldiers and some of the religious officials arrived in the garden. They approached Jesus, carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. The group was led by Judas. Once Judas stepped forward and greeted Jesus with a kiss, the soldiers arrested Jesus. Peter drew the sword he had with him and hastily swung it at these men. He cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus told Peter to put the sword away, and Jesus healed the servant's ear. Jesus knew the time had come to complete His Father's plan.

A series of illegal trials followed. The soldiers led Jesus, bound as a prisoner, to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the former high priest. The trial was not legal, for Jesus was questioned by a man who already saw Him as guilty, without proper witnesses. Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the current high priest, who earlier had said Jesus should be killed. Again, a mockery of a trial heaped insults upon Jesus.

Finally, Jesus was led to the Roman governor where the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to sentence Jesus to death. Pilate asked Jesus many questions and then said he could find no fault in Him. The religious leaders continued to push Pilate, so Jesus was stripped and whipped. He was beaten with a leather whip which had sharp objects to tear open His back. The soldiers pushed a crown of thorn branches down on His head, placed a purple robe on Him, and mocked Him. They hit Him and spit upon Him as they jeered Him, "Hail, king of the Jews!"

Pilate brought Jesus out to the people along with Barabbas, a rebel and murderer. Under law he could release one prisoner during Passover, and Pilate wanted to avoid killing the innocent Jesus. But the religious leaders caused the crowd to cry out for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate condemned Jesus to die.

Jesus was not weak or unable to save Himself from death, but He willingly followed the plan that would provide the payment for mankind's sin. Jesus was the Lamb that had to be sacrificed during that special Passover celebration. Every year the lamb that was killed represented what was God's future plan to rescue all people. Finally His Son, Jesus, was the last Lamb that would ever have to die for the rescue of God's people.

Jesus was nailed to the cross on a hill called Golgotha outside the city. Criminals were crucified on each side of Jesus, and the people read the sign over His head that called Him the King of the Jews. The soldiers divided up His clothes and gambled for His undergarment. Even in death Jesus cared for His mother and His disciples. He asked God, the Father, to forgive the very ones who were crucifying Him and gave a criminal acceptance into heaven as the guilty man believed from the cross. Then the cry came from Jesus' lips, "It is finished." Jesus was dead. God's perfect Son paid for the sins of the world.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Garden events.**
  - A. Jesus prayed.
  - B. Jesus betrayed.
- II. **The trials.**
  - A. The high priest.
  - B. The Roman governor.
- III. **A choice was proposed.**
  - A. The crowd's response.
  - B. The sentence given.
- IV. **Christ crucified.**
  - A. Death on the cross.
  - B. A borrowed tomb.

## Activity

Provide a simple nail and a piece of red ribbon, yarn, or string for each student. Have them tie the ribbon to the nail and discuss how this can be used to explain the plan of salvation to others. Simply hang the nail from a tree near your class or the student's home. The red ribbon stands for the blood Jesus shed when He was nailed to the tree formed into a cross on Calvary. Sometimes a simple symbol can create an open door for sharing our faith.

## Teacher Growth

The trials of Jesus were filled with false information that caused many people to misjudge the Son of God. A teacher may misjudge a student and underestimate God's plan. Don't allow incomplete information, gossip, or a quick judgment form a negative opinion in your heart and mind about a student. God has chosen each of us with a specific plan. As a teacher, He may be using you to shape part of that plan in each of your students' lives. Prayerfully teach every student God gives you without judgment and with His great love.

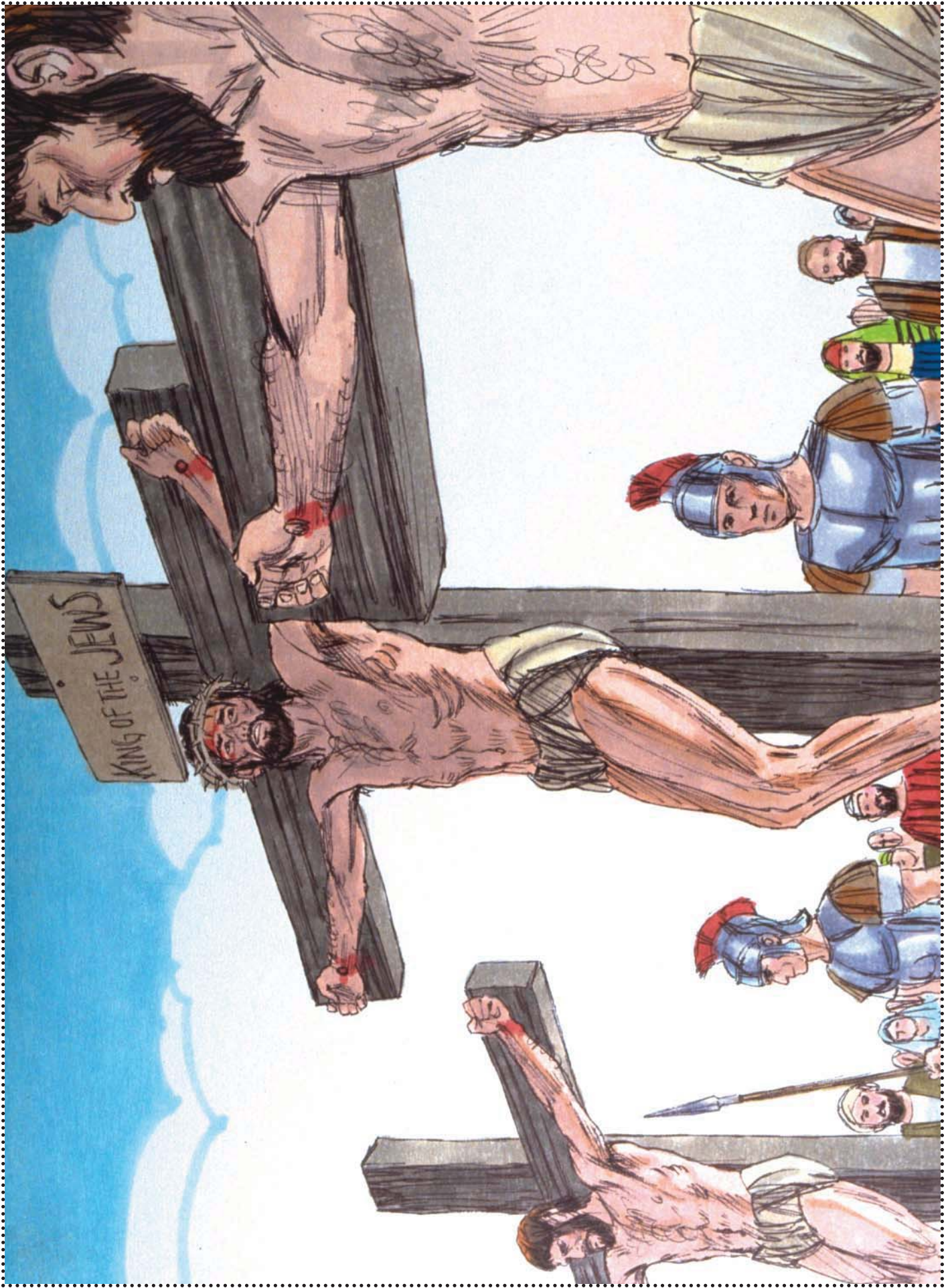
## Scripture passages:

John 18-19

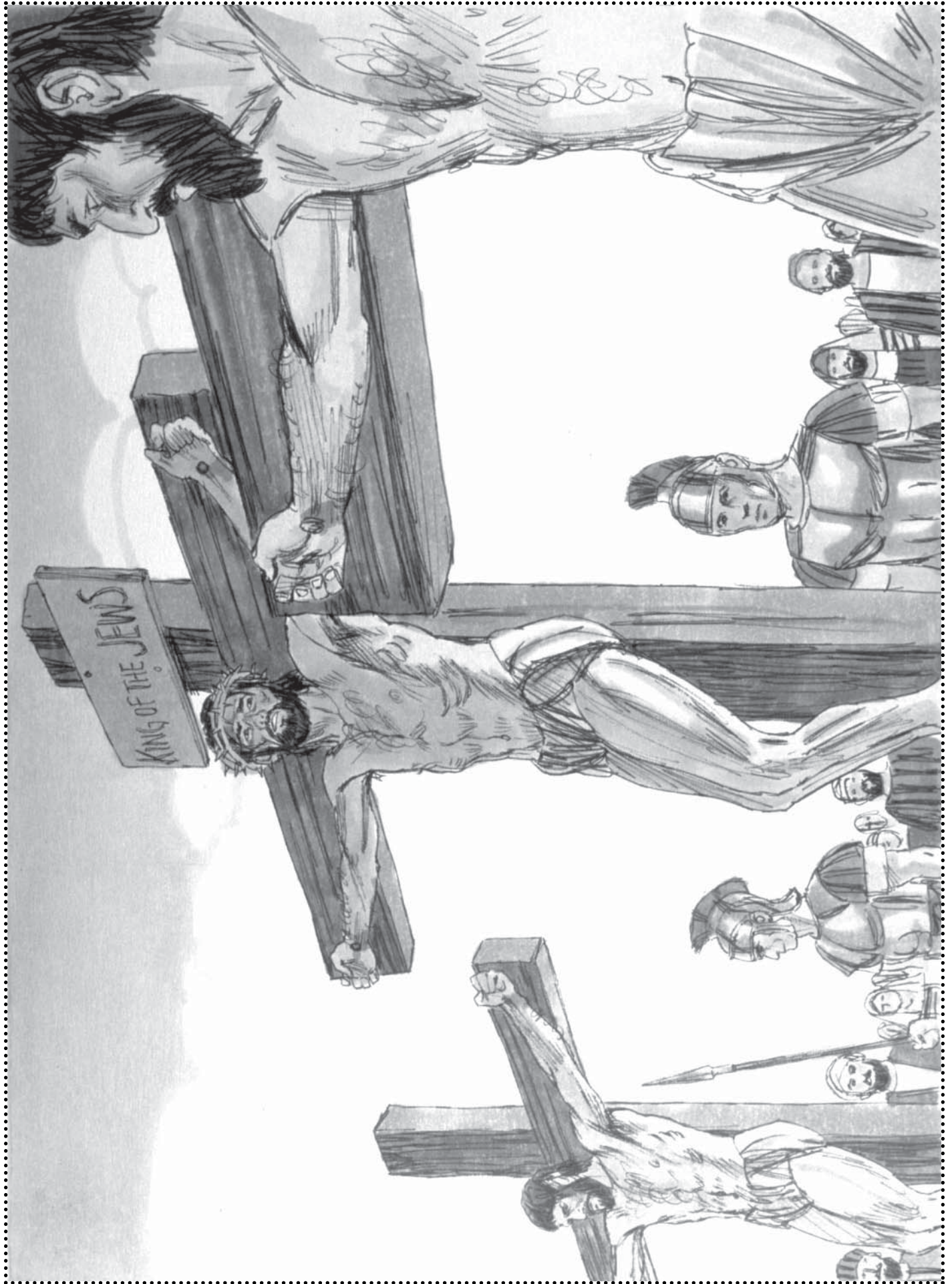
## Memory Verse:

John 1:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'"

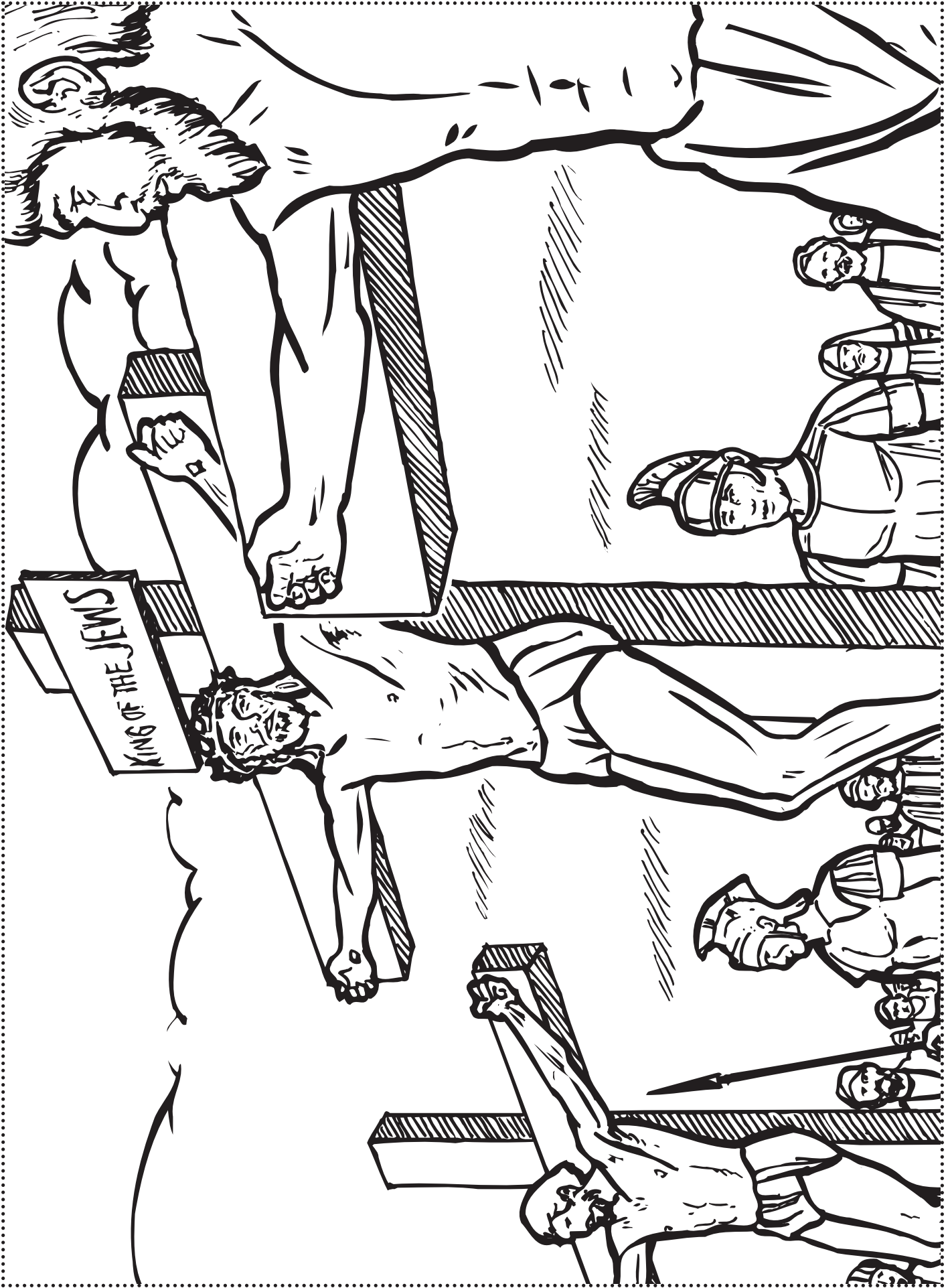












**A**fter Jesus' death on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, a good man who believed in Jesus, came and took Jesus' body. Joseph wrapped the body in cloth and spices and placed it in a new tomb that he had planned to use himself. The women from Galilee who had come with Jesus saw exactly how Joseph had placed Jesus' body in the tomb. They hurried to prepare more spices to lay around the body but rested in obedience to the Sabbath law before taking them to the tomb.

Early in the morning, on the first day of the week, these women took spices to the tomb. The large stone that had been over the entrance and sealed by Roman soldiers, was rolled away. They looked inside and discovered the body was gone. Suddenly two men whose clothes shone like lightning stood beside them. The women were so afraid they bowed to the ground. The angels said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then the women remembered Jesus' words.

The women hurried back with this unusual report to the place where the other eleven disciples were. The men did not believe them. They had seen Jesus die on the cross. Peter and John got up and ran to the tomb. John arrived first and just looked at the open entrance, but Peter arrived and went right inside. When they saw the strips of linen cloth that had been wrapped around the body, they left with great wonder.

That same day two of the followers of Jesus began walking to a village called Emmaus. They talked sadly about the events that had just happened. Then a stranger joined them and asked them questions. Cleopas was amazed that this man had not heard about Jesus' death. He explained the events of the crucifixion and the puzzling empty tomb. The stranger used the words of the prophets to explain God's plan.

As they neared the village, the followers convinced the stranger to stop and enjoy dinner. At the table the stranger took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it for them. Suddenly they realized that this was Jesus. They understood why they had felt a burning in their hearts as they had listened to His words. Immediately, they hurried back to tell the others.

Early that first morning, while still dark, Mary Magdalene had gone to the tomb to mourn. She had returned to stand outside the tomb and weep. As she cried, a man came near that Mary thought was a gardener. She asked if the man had seen who had taken away the Lord's body. Then, Jesus spoke Mary's name, and Mary realized it was Jesus. Jesus sent her to tell the others that He had risen just as He said He would.

Most of the disciples were together when Jesus suddenly appeared in the room. He reassured them that He was alive. One disciple, Thomas, was not there. He later heard the news of Jesus' visit and yet he doubted it was true. Thomas said he would only believe if he could place his hand in the wounds in Jesus' hands, feet, and side. Then Jesus came into the room and went right to Thomas. Thomas bowed before Jesus and worshiped Him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The tomb found empty.**
  - A. Women discover loss.
  - B. Angels explain.
- II. **The story is checked.**
  - A. A race to the tomb.
  - B. A true report.
- III. **On the road.**
  - A. Two had an encounter.
  - B. The stranger revealed.
- IV. **He continued to appear.**
  - A. To Mary and Thomas.
  - B. To many others.

## Activity

Give each student a lump of clay and several pieces of chenille wire or wire. Have them make a small tomb and a stone to be rolled over the front. Then use the wires to create the characters from today's lesson. The students can also make small paper figures, cut out and attached to twigs if wire is not available. Place their "resurrection scene" on a small piece of old cardboard for a base.

## Teacher Growth

Clay is a medium that students enjoy working with. Some places may have inexpensive clay for classroom use, or you may need to make your own. There are a number of recipes for making your own clay. Here is one: Place in large saucepan 2 c. flour, 1 c. salt, 4 tsp. cream of tartar, 2 c. water. 2 Tbs. vegetable oil, 1 package unsweetened Koolaid or 1/2 tsp. food coloring. Cook mixture over low heat, stirring constantly until non-sticky ball forms. Store in air-tight container.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 23:50-24:12, John 20:1-18

## Memory Verse:

Luke 24:6-7 *"He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"*

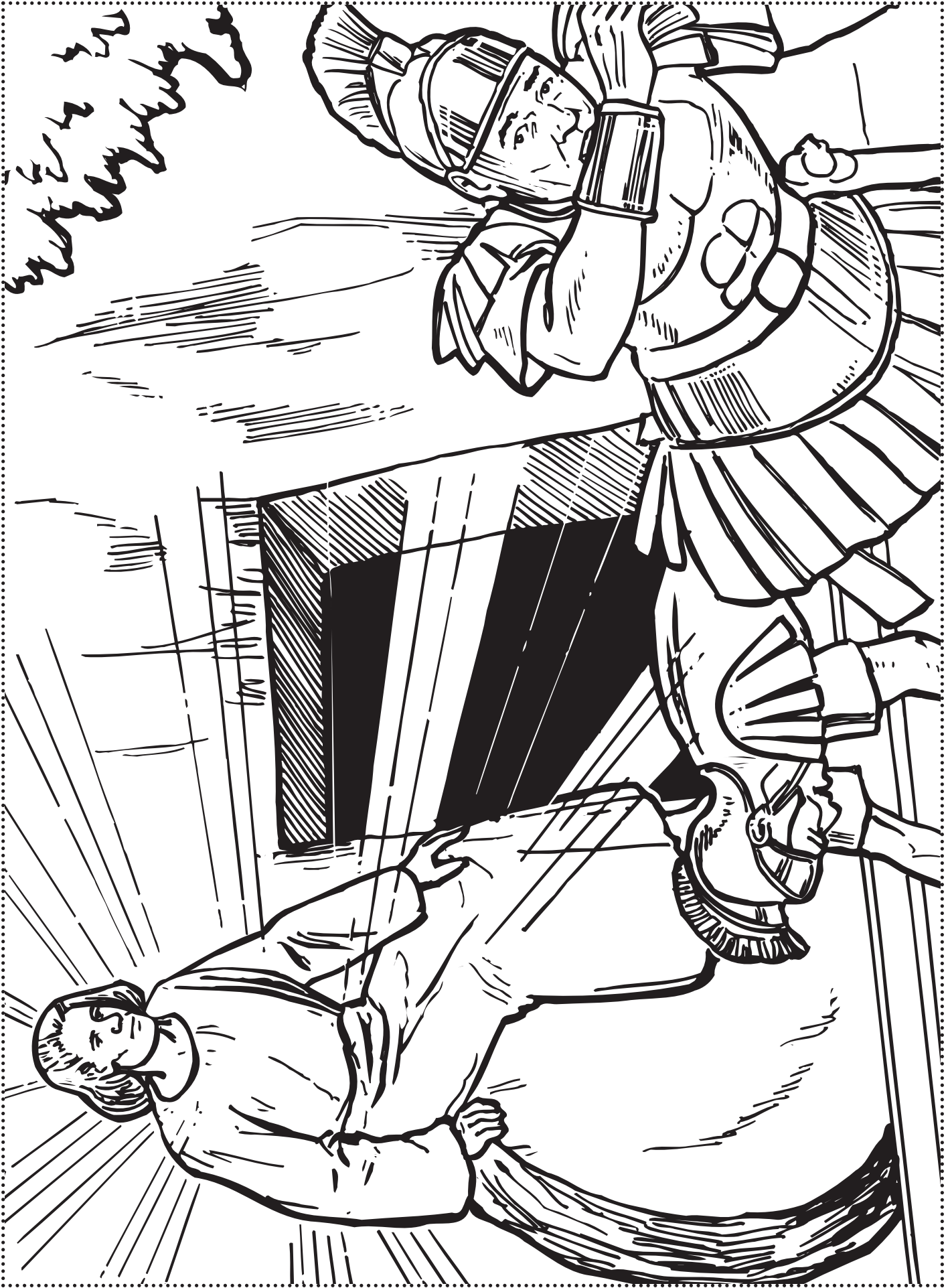












The night before Jesus was crucified, the disciples had gathered with Him for the feast of the Passover, what we call communion today. At the table Jesus again told them of the terrible things that would be happening and even the fact that one disciple would betray Him. Jesus gave Peter a special warning that the enemy would sift Peter like wheat and once he turned back, Peter was to strengthen the other believers. (To sift like wheat was like being tested in a strong way.) Peter was quick to tell Jesus, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Peter was sure that he was brave and loyal and that nothing would cause him to turn away from Jesus. Jesus knew everything. He told Peter, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me." Peter must have thought that surely the Lord was mistaken.

Later that night, Jesus was arrested and the disciples ran. But Peter followed in the shadows as they led Jesus away. The soldiers had a fire out in the cold courtyard. Peter sat near the fire when a servant girl looked at him and said he had been with Jesus. Peter denied it and said he did not even know Jesus. A little later another noticed Peter as a follower of Jesus. Again Peter told the man he was not a disciple of Jesus. In the dark, with the painful sounds of Jesus' trial, mockery, and flogging, Peter became afraid that he might be arrested as well. Finally, another man told the crowd in the courtyard that surely Peter was a follower of Jesus. Peter became angry and denied even knowing Jesus. While he was speaking, the rooster crowed and Jesus turned to look straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said. Peter ran out of the courtyard and wept bitterly. How sad Peter was to know that he had failed Jesus.

Jesus was then killed on a cross, and placed in a borrowed tomb. Jesus came back to life, or was resurrected, and the tomb was empty. The disciples had seen Jesus alive and now they were learning why Jesus had died and been raised again to pay for our sins as the perfect sacrifice. Jesus still needed to teach His disciples more lessons before He went to heaven.

One day a group of the disciples went fishing like they used to do before they were Jesus' followers. They fished all night and caught nothing. Early the next morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't know it was Him. Jesus called out, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When the disciples did this, their nets were so full they could not pull them into the boat. Then John knew it was the Lord who had done this miracle. Peter wrapped his coat around himself and jumped in the water while the others began to row quickly toward shore, towing the net full of fish behind them. When they landed, they saw a fire on the shore with fish cooking and bread for them to eat. Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had just caught. Peter pulled 153 fish out of the net, and even with that many, the net had not broken. It was a great miracle.

When they had finished eating, Jesus asked Peter three times if he really loved Him. Peter answered, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me!" How wonderful that the Lord would speak so personally to the very disciple who had failed Him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Disowned by a follower.**
  - A. Jesus foretold.
  - B. Peter failed.
- II. **Fruitless night.**
  - A. Fished all night.
  - B. Jesus questioned them.
- III. **He changed the outcome.**
  - A. New instructions.
  - B. Breakfast ready.
- IV. **A follower forgiven.**
  - A. A challenge repeated.
  - B. A plan for everyone.

## Activity

Today's story is well suited for drama. The story has several parts, each being another "act" in the play you put together. You do not need costumes or props, but your students will enjoy acting out the various stages of the lesson. 1) The Lord's supper where He predicts the denial. 2) The scene by the fire with the accusations and denial followed by the rooster's crow. 3) The tired fishermen and the great catch of fish. 4) The forgiveness and challenge for Peter by the breakfast fire. Drama can help students put life into the words they hear or read from the Bible. They will remember the lesson and the key points far longer when they have become involved in the story.

## Teacher Growth

At times, you may get weary of the task of preparing and presenting lessons for your class. Maybe you have even failed tests that have come your way. Today you need to be reminded that the Lord lovingly forgives our shortcomings and will always ask us again to follow Him. What an honor it is to care for His sheep. Even with the youngest students, remember you are feeding His lambs.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 22:54-62, John 13:31-38; 21:1-22

## Memory Verse:

Galatians 5:13b "Serve one another in love."













# A Home In Heaven 1-20-B

**B**efore Jesus was taken to the cross, He began to prepare His disciples for what would happen. He comforted them by telling them, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas then asked the Lord how to get to that place. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Many times Jesus taught His followers that they would have to follow Him and believe in Him to have eternal life.

After Jesus was killed on the cross, buried and resurrected, He appeared to His followers over a period of forty days. During these visits, He reminded them of all that He had taught them during His three years of ministry on earth. Jesus proved to them over and over that He really was alive. Then one day, as they were eating, Jesus gave them a special command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." The disciples asked Jesus if He was now going to set up His kingdom on earth. Jesus explained, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Just as Jesus finished giving the disciples these final instructions, He was taken up into the clouds before their very eyes. The disciples were staring up into the clouds when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

The disciples and other followers went back into Jerusalem, into an upper room, and there they waited until they received the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had commanded. We also need the Holy Spirit as those first disciples did, to be His witnesses as we await His return. Jesus told us there was a wonderful place called heaven where He is preparing a place for us.

The Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, tells us what will happen in the future. We can read about the wonderful place that God has for us for all of eternity. What will heaven be like? Revelation tells us that it will be very large with walls of jasper and a city made of gold as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls will be of every kind of precious stone with huge gates, each made from a single perfect pearl. The streets will be made of pure gold, and there will be bright light, not from the sun or lamps, but from the glow of God's glory. Heaven will have no sin, nothing impure, no death or pain, no crying, no sadness, but only perfect joy. Revelation, Chapter 22, gives us some word pictures about the river of the water of life, the tree of life, and the beautiful things God will provide there. At the end of the Bible, there is a warning. No one is to ever add or take things out of the Bible. God's Word is perfect, true, and complete. We need to read it, study it, and obey it.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus comforted His disciples.**
  - A. A home prepared.
  - B. The way to the Father.
- II. **Jesus ascended into heaven.**
  - A. He promised power.
  - B. Angels promised His return.
- III. **The New Jerusalem.**
  - A. A city description.
  - B. God's glory revealed.
- IV. **Jesus is coming soon.**
  - A. The water of life.
  - B. As it is written.

## Activity

Place a large sheet of paper along the floor or against a wall. This can be simple butcher paper or newsprint paper. If that is not available, tape a number of sheets of paper together to create a long mural sheet of paper. Now encourage the entire class to get involved in drawing, and painting or coloring the way they picture heaven. Today's lesson has given them some clues to include, but they will also enjoy adding all the things they think will make heaven a wonderful place.

## Teacher Growth

A special blessing is promised for those who will read and share the contents of the book of Revelation. Some books of the Bible are much more difficult to teach than others, and yet it is important that we study and learn from all of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation. As you study the whole Bible personally, you will become better equipped to lead your students into a full appreciation for all of God's Word. We must remember the caution from Revelation 22 to never add or take away from the Bible's content. He has given us all that we need to live for Him until He returns.

## Scripture passages:

John 14:1-6, Acts 1:1-11, Revelation 21-22

## Memory Verse:

John 14:3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."













# The Gifts of Christmas 1-01-C

**G**od introduced a special plan for an incredible gift for the world. If we read the first part of the Bible that we call the Old Testament, we would find ways that God kept reminding people about this special gift. Finally the New Testament part of the Bible tells the actual stories of God's gift, His Son, being given. Let's look at the way God has given us the gifts of peace, joy, love, and hope through His Son, Jesus.

Joseph and Mary were people that had a love for God. They each were visited by an angel who told them that they would be part of a special plan. Mary was told that even though she had never been with a man, she was going to give birth to Jesus. Joseph was told that this was a baby given to Mary by God so he should go ahead and take Mary as his wife. God gave both Mary and Joseph the gift of peace.

Joseph and Mary then had to go to Bethlehem to register for the census. They were in a crowded city with no place to stay. Every room was full and there was no place for Mary to give birth. But God gave this little family the gift of peace as they found space in the stable and Jesus was born. A lowly animal shelter was flooded with the gift of God's peace.

While Mary and Joseph were making a soft bed of hay for their new baby, a group of shepherds were out in their fields. Their job that night was to protect their flocks. This was a hard job that had to be done every night, but something happened to make that night special. God sent angels to announce the gift of His Son to the world. The angel told the shepherds good news that would give them the gift of great joy. Suddenly the sky was filled with many angels giving praise to God and telling them of the peace that God had sent through this baby.

The shepherds were amazed and went to see this baby in Bethlehem. They had been given good news of great joy. When they hurried into the stable to see Jesus they were amazed at this special gift of great joy. These hard-working shepherds who had to work through the long night hours had their hearts filled with the gift of joy. The Bible says that they hurried to tell this news, for the angels had said it was a gift of joy for all people. Everyone was amazed at the gift of joy.

From the time in the Garden of Eden, when sin came to separate people from God, He has promised to send a gift of love to restore that relationship. Now in the birth of His Son, Jesus, we see that gift of love given to the world. The Bible tells us in John 3:16 that the incredible gift of God's love was sent to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus would later grow to be convicted, though innocent, to die on a cross for our sins, and rise again to bring us lovingly back to God. What a gift of God's love.

There was another gift given in that first Christmas celebration, the gift of hope. God saw how hopeless people were to be lost in a sin-filled world, with only death and hell ahead. He knew He would have to provide a sacrificial gift that would pay for the sin of people so that they could have the hope of being in heaven some day. The gift of hope was wrapped up in the body of Jesus that was killed on the cross to pay for sin.

Christmas is a time we celebrate the greatest gift, Jesus. Thank God for the gifts of peace, joy, love, and hope.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The gift of peace.**
  - A. The plan for Mary and Joseph.
  - B. The stable in a crowded city.
- II. **The gift of joy.**
  - A. The angels' appearance.
  - B. The hearts of shepherds.
- III. **The gift of love.**
  - A. The promise from the beginning.
  - B. The Savior was sent.
- IV. **The gift of hope.**
  - A. The restoration of the lost.
  - B. The gifts of Christmas are here.

## Activity

Decorate special little gift boxes using scraps or throw-away items. Use the most common or inexpensive materials to create a beautifully decorated gift. Inside the box place slips of paper with "The gift of peace" and each of the other four gifts that are covered in the lesson. Help the students marvel again over the way God used ordinary people and lowly things to present the most wonderful gifts to the world.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson is a perfect example of how a lesson can be tied to objects to make it more memorable. You may choose to unwrap a gift with the title of the four points from the lesson, or place words on a gift that you will reveal one at a time as you work your way through the lesson. Students will forever relate the points of your lesson to the gifts they see in any setting. Thus you have created a trigger for them to remember God's gifts to us.

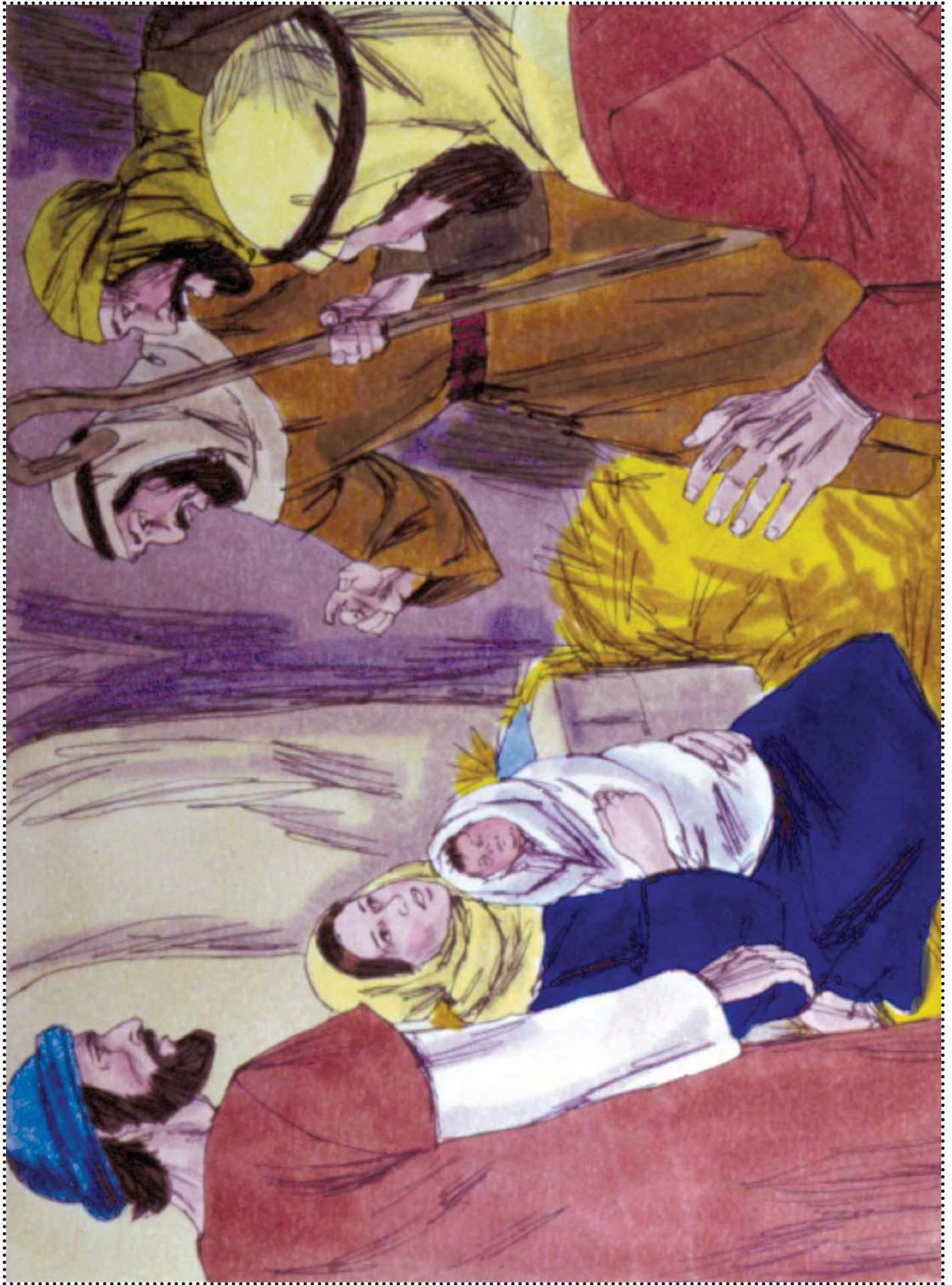
## Scripture passages:

Luke 2:1-20

## Memory Verse:

Luke 2:10b *"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."*













# Amazing Easter News 1-02-C

**T**hroughout the world newspapers call people's attention to the news and special events. The activities or events that affect more people are given more attention, both by those who write and read the newspapers. Today's lesson is about news that affected the entire world and continues to be the best news anyone could read even now.

Jesus spent three years of His life teaching crowds and spending even more time with a group of twelve men, His disciples. These followers along with many others had seen Jesus publicly do many miracles and they had heard Him teach the principles of God's kingdom. Now one follower, Judas, had agreed to betray Jesus to the religious rulers that wanted to do away with Him. After a special dinner, Jesus and His disciples were praying in the garden when Judas led the temple guards directly to Him. Jesus was arrested and led away even though He was innocent, and His followers fled.

As the false accusations mounted against Jesus, one disciple tried to watch from a safe distance. Out in the courtyard, Peter was trying to remain loyal, but he denied even knowing Jesus when asked by others. Jesus faced the insults and false testimony alone. After hours of illegal questioning, mockery, and torture, Jesus was finally sentenced to die.

Jesus, an innocent man, died a painful and humiliating death by crucifixion, a death reserved for those who deserved public punishment for crimes against the people. Jesus came to find and save the lost. He came to bring love, healing, and hope to people, and now He would be executed in a public way to appease these people. The long and cruel death sentence fell upon Jesus, not because He was helpless, but because He allowed these things to happen to fulfill His plan. Jesus knew that He would have to die, without sin, to pay for the sin of all people. He would bring new life out of His death.

A follower placed Jesus' body in a tomb, or large cave, and soldiers were sent to seal and protect the grave. The soldiers were to be careful no one stole the body. The leaders remembered that Jesus had promised to come back to life, and they were sure that someone would try to steal His body to trick people into believing Jesus was alive.

On the third day, the earth shook, the stone rolled away, and Jesus was shown to be alive again. The soldiers fainted in amazement, and later were payed so they would not admit that Jesus was alive. Jesus let His followers see Him and believe in His new life, the resurrection. They had all seen His terrible death on the cross. They had all seen His body sealed in a tomb. Jesus told them again how God had planned every part to happen just like it did. He wanted followers to understand how He had paid for the sin of anyone who believed on Him. For forty days Jesus reminded them to go and tell the whole world this good news. Then Jesus went up to heaven in a cloud, while His followers were watching.

These events were big news. Every promise that Jesus made came true. Most news stories become old and unimportant after awhile, but this good news is still important for today.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus' trial and conviction.**
  - A. Betrayed, denied, and falsely accused.
  - B. Sentenced to die.
- II. **Jesus' death and burial.**
  - A. The cruel crucifixion.
  - B. Sealed in a tomb.
- III. **Jesus' resurrection.**
  - A. He's seen by many.
  - B. His ascension.
- IV. **Jesus' promises.**
  - A. Power for believers.
  - B. Return one day.

## Activity

Think about something in your area that best represents new life. Sometimes it is the starting of a new season, or the new grass beginning to grow. You may wish to plant some seeds for students to watch the miracle of growth from a seed that looks dead. Some people like to teach about the beginning of new life with the birth of living creatures. You may be able to see baby chicks that have come from an egg or some other living animals that represent new life. Just as God took a dead body in the grave and brought it to life, so He wants to take a life in sin and make it new.

## Teacher Growth

Since today's lesson talks about the new life God wants to give every sinner, it requires a response from your students. This holiday can often be a time when people are first introduced to the full work of Christ. Many hear of the baby born and celebrated at Christmas, but some have still never heard of this Jesus that died and rose again for their sin. You will need to prayerfully prepare for the lesson's conclusion to encourage unsaved listeners to respond.

## Scripture passages:

Luke 22-24

## Memory Verse:

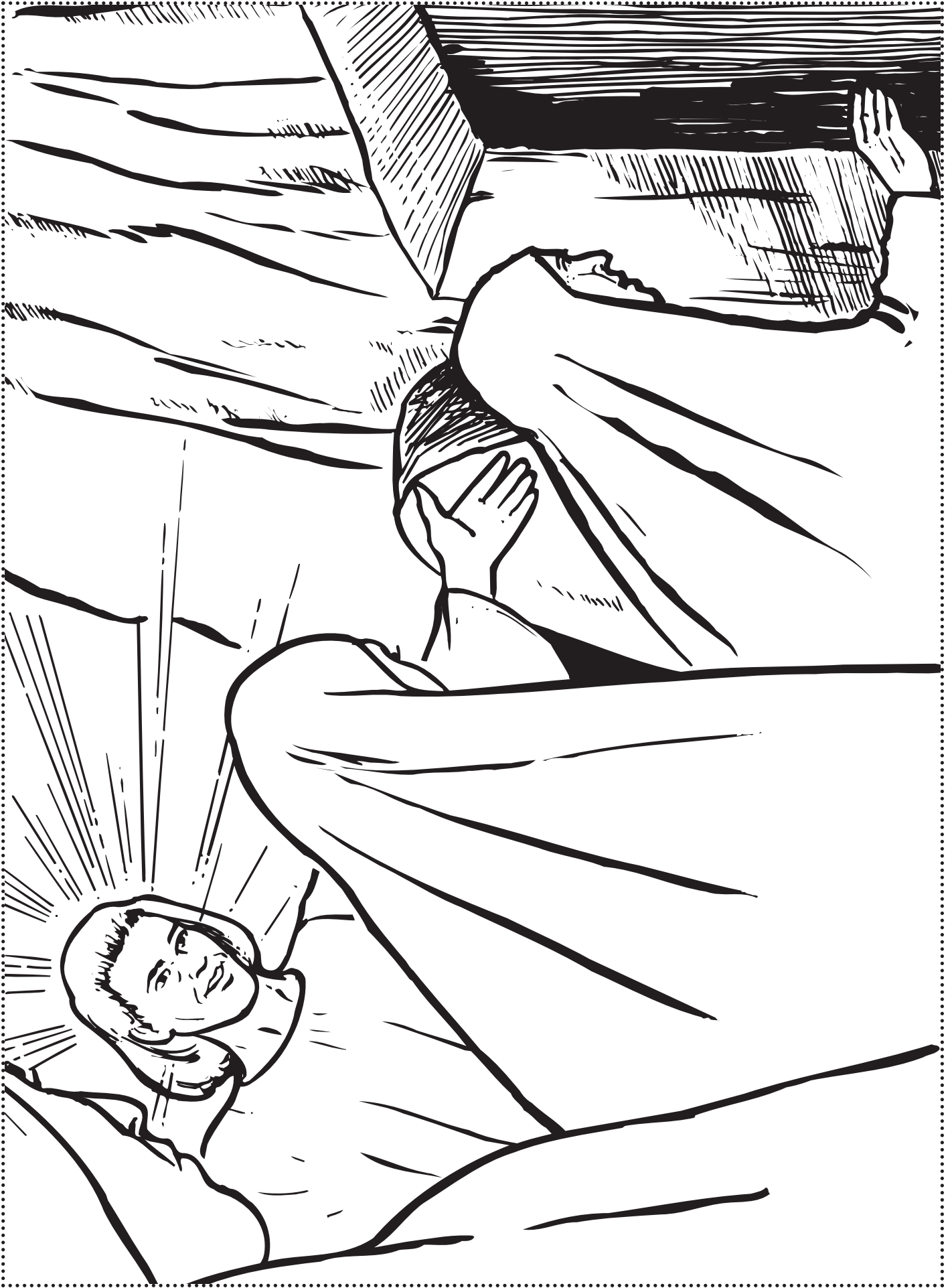
Luke 24:46 *"This is what was written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*











# The Day of Pentecost 1-03-C

**L**uke, one of Paul's co-workers, wrote the Book of Luke with a special look at the life of Jesus. Luke wrote a second book called Acts. He began this book with an explanation. He wrote Luke, "about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen." Luke wrote the Book of Acts to tell what followed.

Jesus appeared to many people for forty days after He had risen from the dead. One day Jesus gave His followers special instructions. He told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about." Jesus had talked to them about leaving one day, but not leaving them alone. Out of fear, the apostles and the other believers could have left the city and hidden far away. Jesus knew they needed special power, and His Father had promised to give every believer that power in the Holy Spirit. Once Jesus went into heaven, the apostles obeyed His instructions. They selected Matthias to take the place of Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus. Then they found a large room upstairs in a man's home where they could wait for the promised gift.

There were about one hundred twenty people gathered in that upper room. The apostles and the men and women that had loved and followed Jesus during His ministry on earth, were waiting together. They were there with the same desire to obey God and receive what He had for them. They had prayed together and waited for ten days before something happened.

On the Day of Pentecost, a special holiday for the Jewish people, the Bible says, "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." These outward signs let them know God was present. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says they knew this because each person began to speak in another language as the Spirit gave them the ability to do that. This new language was the evidence that God would continue to use for all people to know when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Today we call this experience in our lives the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The crowds below that heard the wind and the unusual languages were amazed. They tried to make fun of them and said they must be drunk. But Peter stood up and began to explain. The same man that had been afraid to tell a servant girl he even knew Jesus, was now bold enough to speak to a huge crowd. The Holy Spirit gave Peter the power to explain the promise that had been made for the Holy Spirit to come. Peter explained the death and resurrection of Jesus, God's Son, and the sin that people needed to have forgiven. The crowd cried out, "what shall we do?" Peter told them they needed to repent of their sin, ask forgiveness, be baptized, and then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. About three thousand people were saved that day.

The powerful work of the Holy Spirit did not stop on that day. The power of the fullness of the Holy Spirit that came upon those people on that first Day of Pentecost is still available today. God wants all of His believers to receive that power to be bold witnesses for Him.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The promise was given.**
  - A. The history was recorded.
  - B. The group was completed.
- II. **The people were prepared.**
  - A. They obeyed the orders.
  - B. They waited for the answer.
- III. **The presence of God.**
  - A. The wind and fire came.
  - B. The evidence of tongues.
- IV. **The powerful impact.**
  - A. The crowds were affected.
  - B. The world is to be won.

## Activity

Get a map of your neighborhood, city, country, and the world. Use these to help students understand the command Jesus gave His followers. He wanted them to see the lost, or unbelievers, in their own neighborhood, city, and nation. Then He wanted them to go to the very ends of the earth. Using a map or globe try to find the farthest place from your church. Pray for that place to respond to the Gospel. Then begin moving closer to your city and praying for countries and cities that are nearer. Pray for those in their neighborhood, school, workplace, or family that need to accept Jesus. The Holy Spirit will give you power to reach the lost!

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson is about an integral part of the Christian life. The infilling or baptism in the Holy Spirit is a necessary part of every believer's life. This power is for you to be effective as a teacher, and for every believer to be a bold witness. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a free gift, like salvation, and God has placed no limits like age, experience, or any other special requirements upon this experience. Encourage every believer to seek this power that will help us all to live for God.

## Scripture passages:

Acts 1-2

## Memory Verse:

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."













Let's look at four mothers that are mentioned in the Bible. There are many others you can study. A mother can be a critical example in the life of her children, who learn from her how to pray, live, obey, and lead others to Him.

Hannah could not have children. It was common for Hannah to spend many hours praying, but one day she began to weep and pray with great urgency. Hannah made a promise to God. If He would bless her with a son, she would give the boy back to serve. Eli, the priest, saw Hannah's lips move as she prayed, but since she prayed silently in her heart he did not understand. Eli told her God would answer her prayer. She left full of faith. Hannah did have a son, Samuel. When he was old enough, she took the boy to live in the temple to grow up to be a servant of God. Every year she brought him a new set of clothes she had made. More importantly, Samuel grew up knowing he was an answer to his mother's prayer and faith in God.

Naomi was a mother that faced terrible tragedies, the death of her husband, and loss of both sons. Naomi was left in a foreign country, with two daughters-in-law and no way to survive. Naomi cared so much for the wives of her sons that she begged them to return to their own families to marry again. She was willing to be all alone just to send the girls to a better life. Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law. Ruth had great respect for this woman, not her mother, but who had become a precious mother to her by marriage. Naomi brought Ruth into her own land, taught her the culture and helped her to find a man to care for her. Naomi took great care to see that Ruth was cared for by a new husband. Naomi gave Ruth a wonderful example of a mother's loving care in spite of her sorrow, and in return God blessed Naomi with grandchildren to bless her in old age.

Mary was selected by God to be the one who would carry His Son, Jesus. Mary had a heart ready to serve God. When the angel came and told her of God's plan she received the news with gladness. God gave great honor to a young lady that was available for His use. Mary gave birth to Jesus and then watched Him grow. The Bible tells us that Mary treasured all that God did in her heart. When Jesus was found as a boy in the temple she saw her need to be a servant to God's plan in the boy. Mary watched the miracles and heard the teaching during those three years of ministry. She treasured it all in her heart. At the foot of His cross, when Jesus was in His greatest pain, He saw to the care of His mother. She was there at the tomb and again in the upper room, obedient to the God who had placed a promise in her heart. Mary gave us the example of a life totally available for God's plan.

As the Early Church began to grow, Timothy became one of the special followers of Paul, the great missionary evangelist and apostle. Timothy grew up with a Greek father and a godly mother, Eunice. In spite of his father's unbelief, Timothy grew to be a young man of great faith. Paul spoke about the wonderful heritage Timothy had from his mother and grandmother, Lois. Thousands were reached with the Gospel through this young man. Lois reminds all grandmothers of the incredible influence they have on the world through the lives of grandchildren. Let us pray for more women to be godly examples.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Hannah, a mother of prayer.**
  - A. A pattern of prayer.
  - B. A promise kept.
- II. **Naomi, a mother that cared for others.**
  - A. Sacrifice in loss.
  - B. Guiding a daughter-in-law.
- III. **Mary, a special mother.**
  - A. Available for God.
  - B. Treasures in her heart.
- IV. **Lois, a mother that affected generations.**
  - A. A shared faith.
  - B. Leadership in grandchildren.

## Activity

Create cards or letters to present to mothers as gifts. Help students to spell out the word, mother, down the left side of the paper. Each letter will then begin a sentence or paragraph about your mother. These can be attributes or actions that you want to thank your mother for. Writing about each letter in a word is called an acrostic, and can be a unique way of drawing attention to a number of things you want to note from the word mother.

## Teacher Growth

Whether you are male or female, the Bible tells us that God gives the characteristics of motherhood a high value. God wants us to give honor to mothers. You, or some of your students may personally struggle with the celebration of Mother's Day. Not everyone has had the privilege of being raised by a godly or even a good mother. Some have already lost their mother. You can still use this holiday to honor the ideal of a mother used by God. You may influence a mother to become the example that God wants her to be. Use the opportunity well.

## Scripture passages:

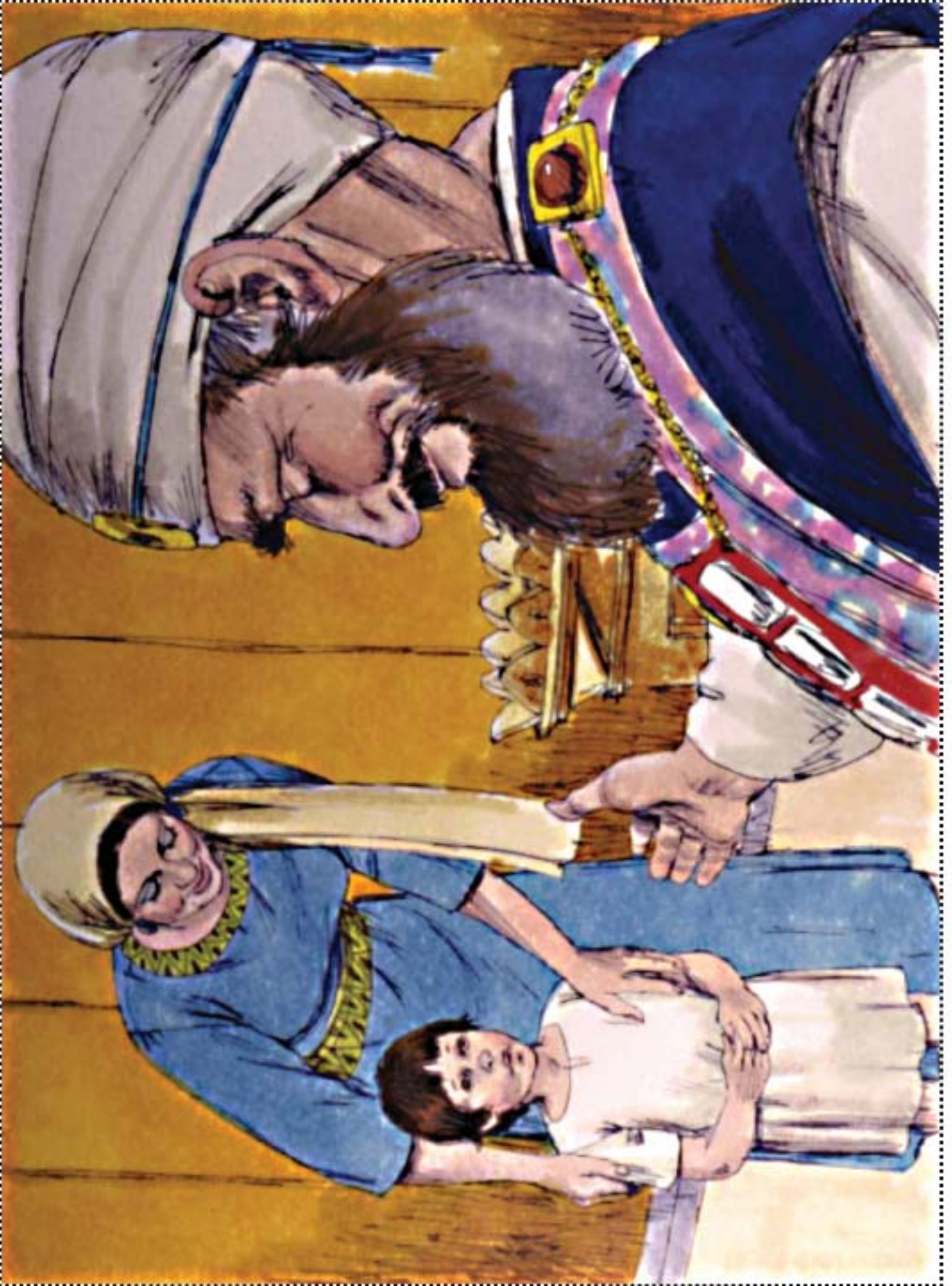
1 Samuel 1-2:1,21, Ruth, Luke 1-2, John 2:1-11; 19:25-27, Acts 1:9-14, 2 Timothy 1:5

## Memory Verse:

Luke 1:45 "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished."



1-04-C











# Appreciation for the Pastor 1-05-C

**W**e have a God that does things in an orderly way. The Old Testament tells how He set up a line of authority, and called special people to the tasks in the temple and to speak His words to the people. Jesus then came to show us how leaders must be servants directed by the Father in all that they do. Finally, the Lord commanded believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit for the power and direction it would take to spread the Gospel to the entire world. He left a command to make disciples of all nations. The Early Church began to grow and the Spirit of God, working through the pen of Paul, began to give us more direction and special insight into the lives of those God would place in spiritual leadership, pastors.

Paul spoke to leaders of their role as overseer or shepherd of the flock of God. He even said, "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." Paul continued throughout his letters to Timothy and Titus to give a clearer view of the tasks and the qualifications of a pastor. He combined a high standard of purity and obedience with the high honor that should come to the role. The role of a pastor is like a soldier, one who plants, and a shepherd. A pastor must defend the church and Truth, plant the seeds of the Gospel and biblical truths, and provide for the flock. A soldier has his expenses met, a planter drinks of the grapes, and a shepherd has milk from the flock, just as a pastor should receive honor from the church. A quote is used from the Old Testament, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." God was teaching of a pastor receiving what is needed from the church.

A pastor is to have one wife and control of his children. God expects a leader to lead his home before he gives him the responsibility for a church. A pastor must show "leadership" which means order and the provision for those under his care. There are many that expect the pastor to meet all their needs in the church yet often forget that his first priority under God's system of authority is to care for his own home. When a church provides for the needs of a pastor, his wife, and family, they will reap the benefit of helping that pastor meet the needs of his home so he is free to meet the needs of the congregation.

A pastor's call is a unique blessing and heavy responsibility. Paul writes these warnings to Timothy. He challenges Timothy to "train yourself to be godly." The readers had often watched both athletes and soldiers pass through difficult training to be competent. The emphasis on spiritual training must outweigh all other distractions in a pastor's life. A church that honors a pastor in meeting his needs, caring for his home, and responding to his teaching without adding to his load will give that pastor time to focus on spiritual training. A pastor must have a primary loyalty to God and His Word. The distractions are overwhelming that could cause him to lose his focus on spiritual training.

A church must honor the biblical position of pastor to obey God's Word. The church needs to help a pastor care for his own home so he is free to meet the needs of others. The church must understand the pastor's spiritual training and loyalty to God which will allow him to be the leader God wants for His people. The greatest honor a pastor receives is when people respond to his teaching.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. Honor the position.**
  - A. The role of pastor.
  - B. The principle of honor.
- II. Honor the home.**
  - A. Care for family.
  - B. Care for needs.
- III. Honor the call.**
  - A. The high responsibility.
  - B. The loyalty to God.
- IV. Honor the work.**
  - A. Respond to the message.
  - B. Lighten the load.

## Activity

Organize a special event that will demonstrate honor to your pastor. You may provide special songs, poems, or speeches that would reflect your honor and appreciation for this spiritual leader. Celebrate God's goodness in giving you a pastor. It would also be an appropriate time to encourage the entire church to write messages of appreciation to be presented at this time. You may use part of your class to allow students to write their cards or letters.

## Teacher Growth

The Scripture passages for today's lesson are full of warnings, helps, and principles. Often these passages are used to speak of the pastor or main leadership of the church, yet they also are a helpful standard for all Christians in positions of authority or influence. As a teacher you influence each of your students. The standards that call for leaders to be "an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" are just as important in your life as a teacher.

## Scripture passages:

Acts 20:28-31, 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

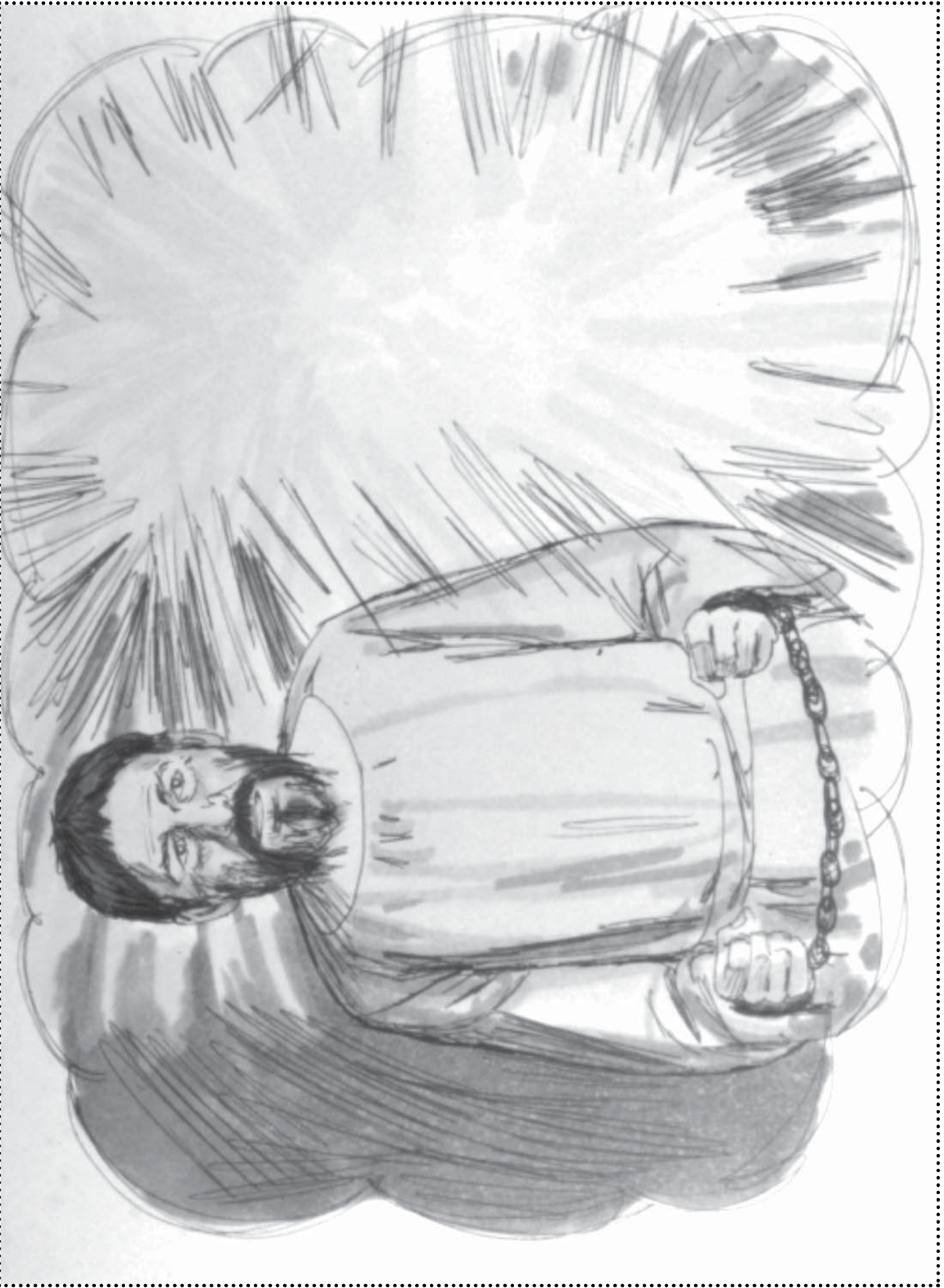
## Memory Verse:

1 Timothy 5:17 *"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."*













# Independence Day 1-06-C

**T**oday we are going to look at freedom. Freedom is usually thought of in the political sense but I want us to look at spiritual freedom. The Bible tells us that Jesus spoke about bondage and freedom. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Jesus then explained that He, God's Son, would set people free from slavery. Jesus was talking to the Jewish people who were living under terrible Roman rulers. He was not speaking to them of political freedom, but of spiritual freedom. Jesus wanted them to know that no matter what life was like in their country, He was the only One that could really give them true and eternal freedom. Let's look at this same idea explained through a passage in the Psalms.

Just as the Jews under Roman rule were not free, so the writer of this Psalm tells us he was "laid low in the dust." Some people are suffering under a bondage to sin, heavy responsibility, a sickness, or circumstances they cannot avoid. The first step in freedom for any person is to come to Jesus, the One who paid for our freedom when He died for our sins. Once we ask Jesus to forgive our sins we become free from the slavery of sin, but we may still live in a hard place. The writer of this Psalm, we'll call him the psalmist, does not ask for an escape from the heaviness, but instead he asked to be taught from the Word. People need to ask God to teach them from His Word before they are set free from a difficult place. The psalmist wants to understand and meditate or think on His Word.

Being a slave to someone or something can make a person weary. The psalmist admitted that his slavery was making his soul tired and sad. He understood that thinking about his lack of freedom was not encouraging, so he asked God to strengthen him with the Word. We may be tired and sad about where we are living, but we too can ask God to strengthen us from the Word. When we look at His promises to free us from eternal slavery to sin, we find strength. He gives us many verses that lift our hearts and He speaks comfort to us. Then we can also ask, as the psalmist did, to have the Word become a guard for our life. To keep us from doing wrong, called sin, and to bring God's grace to us when we make mistakes.

The Word of God becomes like a straight path for us to follow. Some people grumble about the commands in the Bible, but God has given us these rules to help us know His path. The psalmist asked God to help him to run on the path of His commands forever. This meant he would need to set his heart to always follow God's ways and then obey the Word of God completely. Some people would think that would be a hard way to live and would take away their freedom. Just the opposite is true!

The psalmist says that as he runs the path of God's commands his heart is set free. There is a freedom in living under God's Word. The psalmist says it gives him great delight. It is only God that can preserve a life with righteousness. He does that for those who obey His Word. Instead of living under the slavery of sin and disobedience, God encourages us to run with freedom and delight on the path he gives us in His Word.

Real freedom comes from living by the Word. It is possible for every believer to live a life of spiritual freedom. Celebrate your independence day.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The Word while in bondage.**
  - A. Places in the dust.
  - B. Lessons to be learned.
- II. **The Word brings strength.**
  - A. Guarding our life.
  - B. Bringing grace.
- III. **The Word as the way of truth.**
  - A. Set your heart.
  - B. Complete obedience.
- IV. **The Word sets us free.**
  - A. Finding delight.
  - B. A life of righteousness.

## Activity

Have the students create a large mural on a long sheet of paper or several sheets attached together. Include the national flag, a map of the country, and other things that represent the crops, people, and culture of your nation. This exhibit should be hung where everyone can see it as a symbol of the honor you want to give to the leaders God has allowed to be in authority over you. Then have the students gather around this mural to pray for your nation and its leaders. Whether you celebrate political freedom or not, your students must learn to pray for leaders.

## Teacher Growth

The church will find itself existing in the midst of a community and political conditions. The Bible is clear that we are to honor those in authority, obey the laws of the land, and pray for our leaders. Beyond that the Bible deals with the conditions of a man's soul, not his political status, for the spiritual condition is eternal and this world's systems of government are not. Be cautious about teaching anything that is not directly tied to the Bible. As the psalmist, direct your focus to His Word as your guide.

## Scripture passages:

Psalm 119:25-40, John 8:34-36

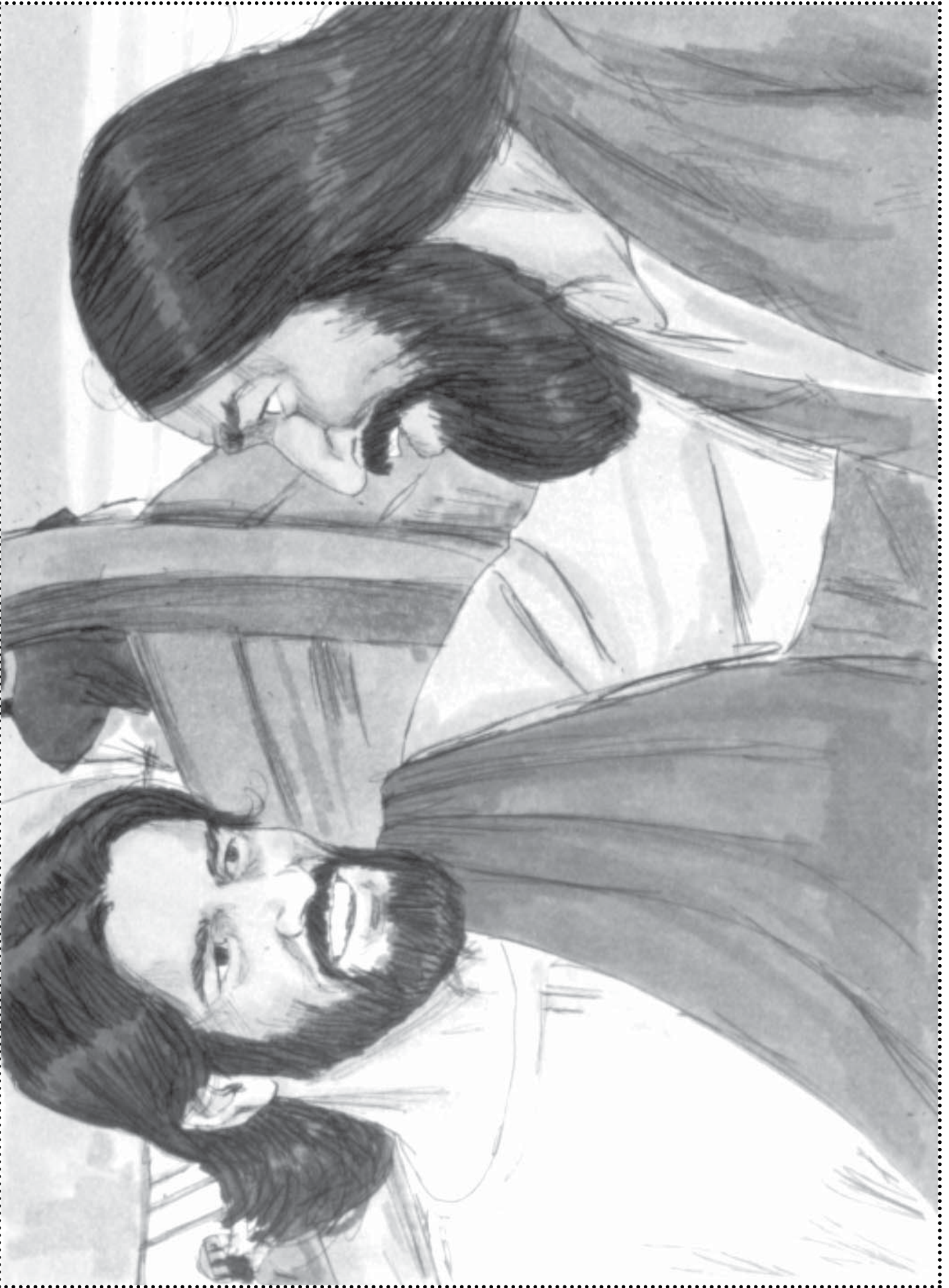
## Memory Verse:

Psalm 119:32 *"I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free."*

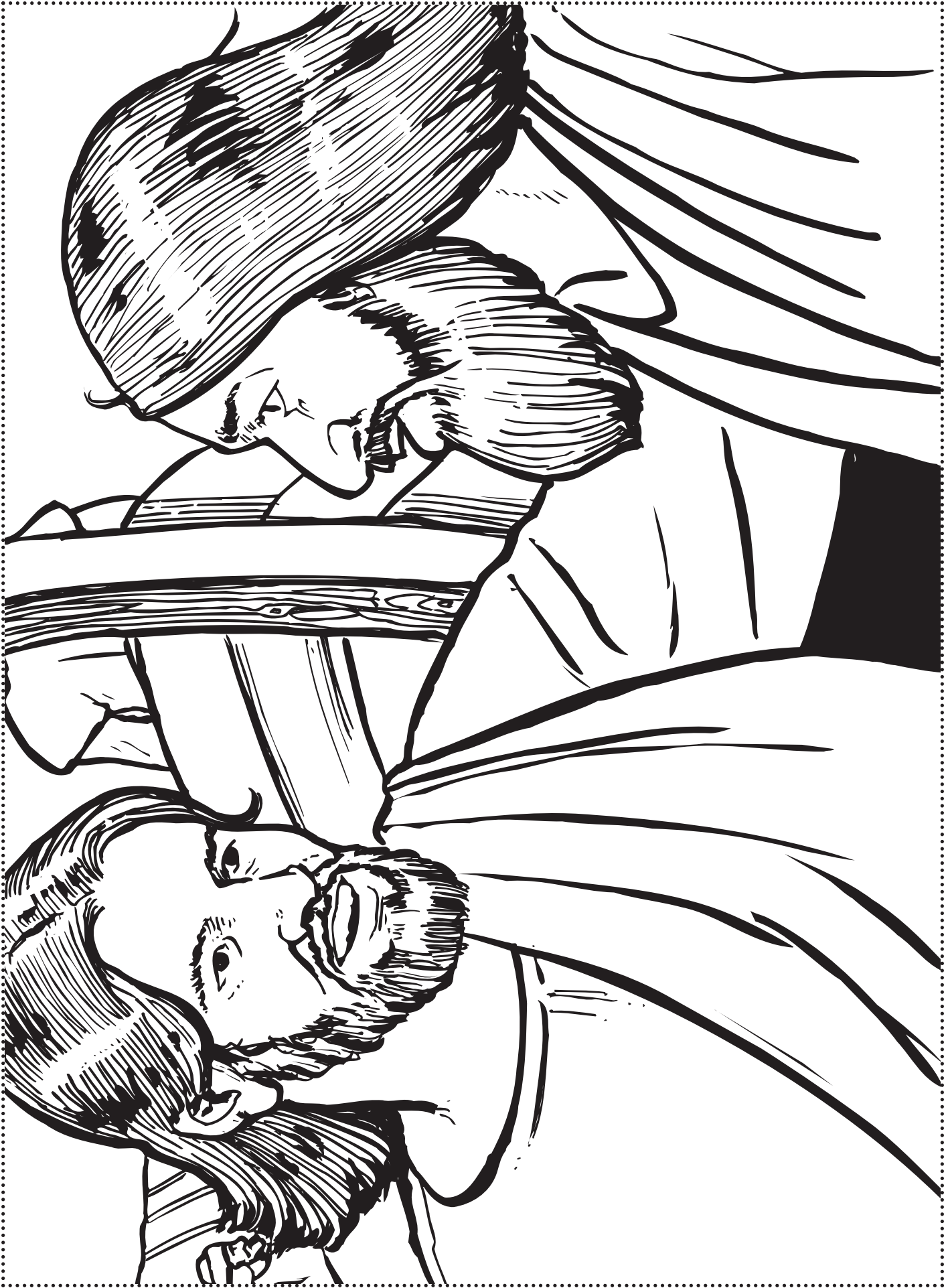












# Labor Day, the Day of the Worker 1-07-C

**G**od created a beautiful garden and placed man and woman there. The garden and all the creatures in that place were under the care of Adam. From the beginning, God put man to work. Work is not a result of man's fall and the entrance of sin in the world, but is a natural and good part of how God created people. Once sin affected the world the work became more difficult, but God still planned for people to always make work part of their lifestyle. The way we work and the pay we receive may vary throughout history, but it has always been customary for man to work and receive pay for that labor. A young man named Jacob went to work for his father-in-law to receive a form of payment common in Old Testament days. He worked 7 years each for the right to marry this man's daughters.

There have been occasions in the Bible where God has asked someone to work very hard to accomplish part of His plan. Noah was a man that was asked to build an ark, or very large boat, to rescue animals and people from the flood God was sending. Countless hours of hard labor were required of Noah and his sons as they constructed the vessel God designed. The Old Testament also tells of a lady named Deborah that spent every day out in the desert under a palm tree sitting as a judge to hear people's problems. As the leader of God's people, Deborah listened to all their problems and then made decisions based on God's principles. God told Deborah that He would give their army victory over the enemy that was controlling them. When Deborah told the leader of the army to go into battle, he refused, and Deborah had to lead the soldiers to victory. God used a hard working woman for His plan.

In the New Testament church you read of Paul and some of his co-laborers that worked hard as tentmakers to support themselves. Instead of asking the churches for money, these believers were willing to work hard to support the ministry God had called them to do. One day Paul met with a group of women near the river. He had gone to find a quiet place of prayer and instead began to share the Gospel message with Lydia, and other women who wanted to know God better. Lydia was a business-woman. She traveled to various cities and sold purple cloth. Lydia and all that lived in her home accepted the Lord and were baptized. Then Lydia asked Paul and his partners to stay in her home so that she could help support their ministry. This lady of wealth and reputation was able to use her home, food, and finances to support the men God had sent to preach in her area.

Work is a part of how God planned life, a way He has accomplished some of His plan, and a means for helping support ministry, but it is also a way that every worker can share their christianity. The way we do our work reflects our character or what is inside our heart. The Bible says we are to work hard and do our very best, as if every task we do is done for the Lord. Scripture tells us to work hard even when no one is watching, and to make wise use of our employer's time and money. Employers are also told to treat their workers fairly just as God does not show favoritism. How we do our job is actually part of our personal witness. Those who see how we work will judge our honesty in serving the boss with our best. Be thankful for work and ask God to help you be a good witness.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **Work as part of life.**
  - A. Adam began work.
  - B. Jacob earned a wife.
- II. **Work as part of God's plan.**
  - A. Noah built an ark.
  - B. Deborah, a judge and leader.
- III. **Work that supported ministry.**
  - A. Paul the tentmaker.
  - B. Lydia, the seller of cloth.
- IV. **Work as a witness.**
  - A. Work that shows character.
  - B. Work that wins the lost.

## Activity

Interview people with different types of jobs. Explain the theme of your lesson in advance and tell each guest that your class will want to know about their job and then how they believe they can show Christian character and win the lost through the work they do. Try to find a wide variety of workers that will help your students see how every believer can be used by God in the workplace.

## Teacher Growth

Today's lesson deals mainly with the work in secular jobs, but the same principles of hard, honest, and productive work should obviously be found in the jobs, or ministries that we do for the Lord in church. Your class is a type of work for the Lord, where your students will be able to see how hard you prepare to do the job. When you are late, unprepared, or only reading this lesson without extra activities, students will see that you have not given your best as a teacher.

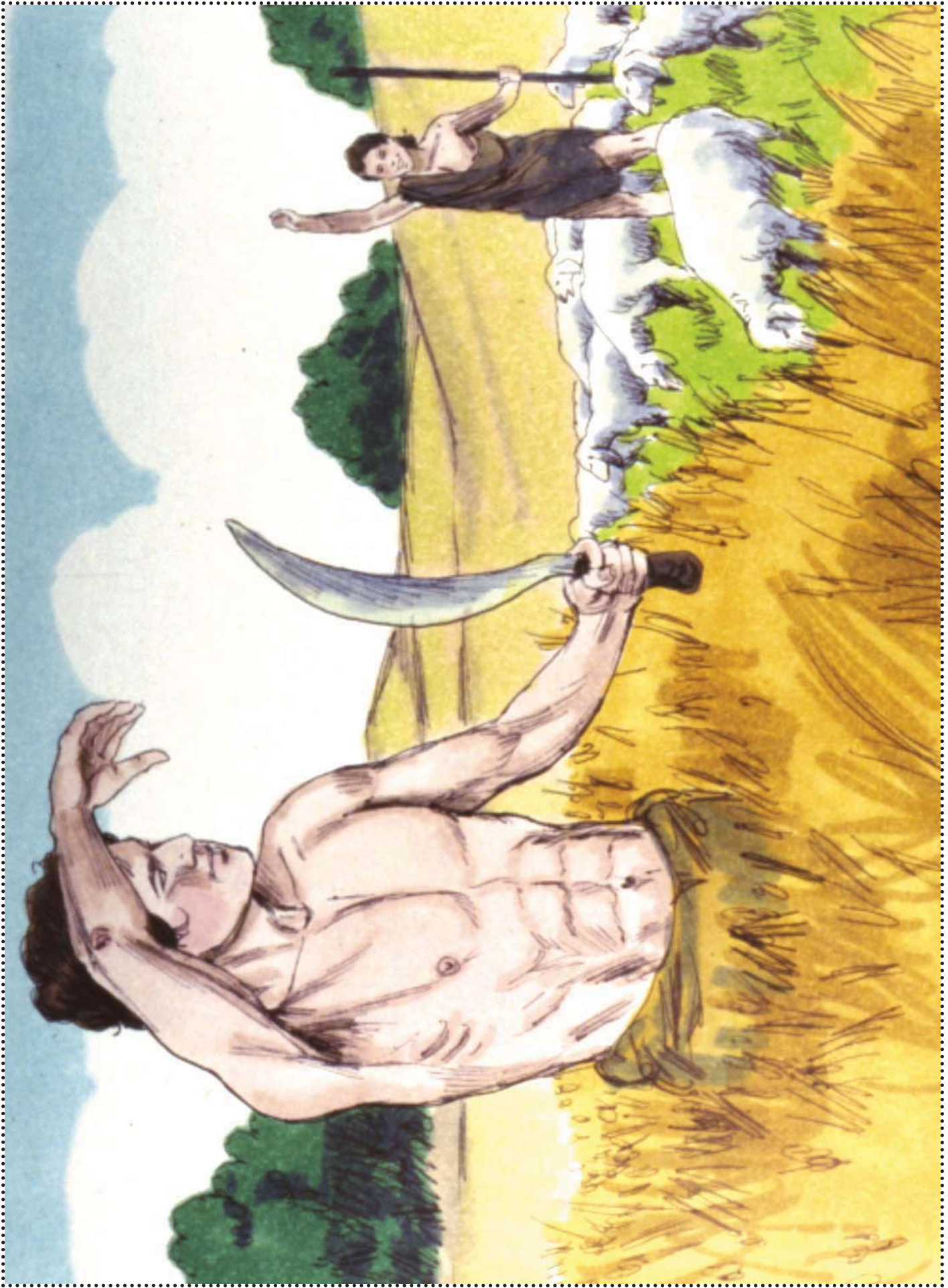
## Scripture passages:

Genesis 2:15; 3:17-19; 29:15-30; 6-9; Judges 4-5;  
Acts 18:1-4; 16:13-15; Ephesians 6:5-9;  
Colossians 3:22-25

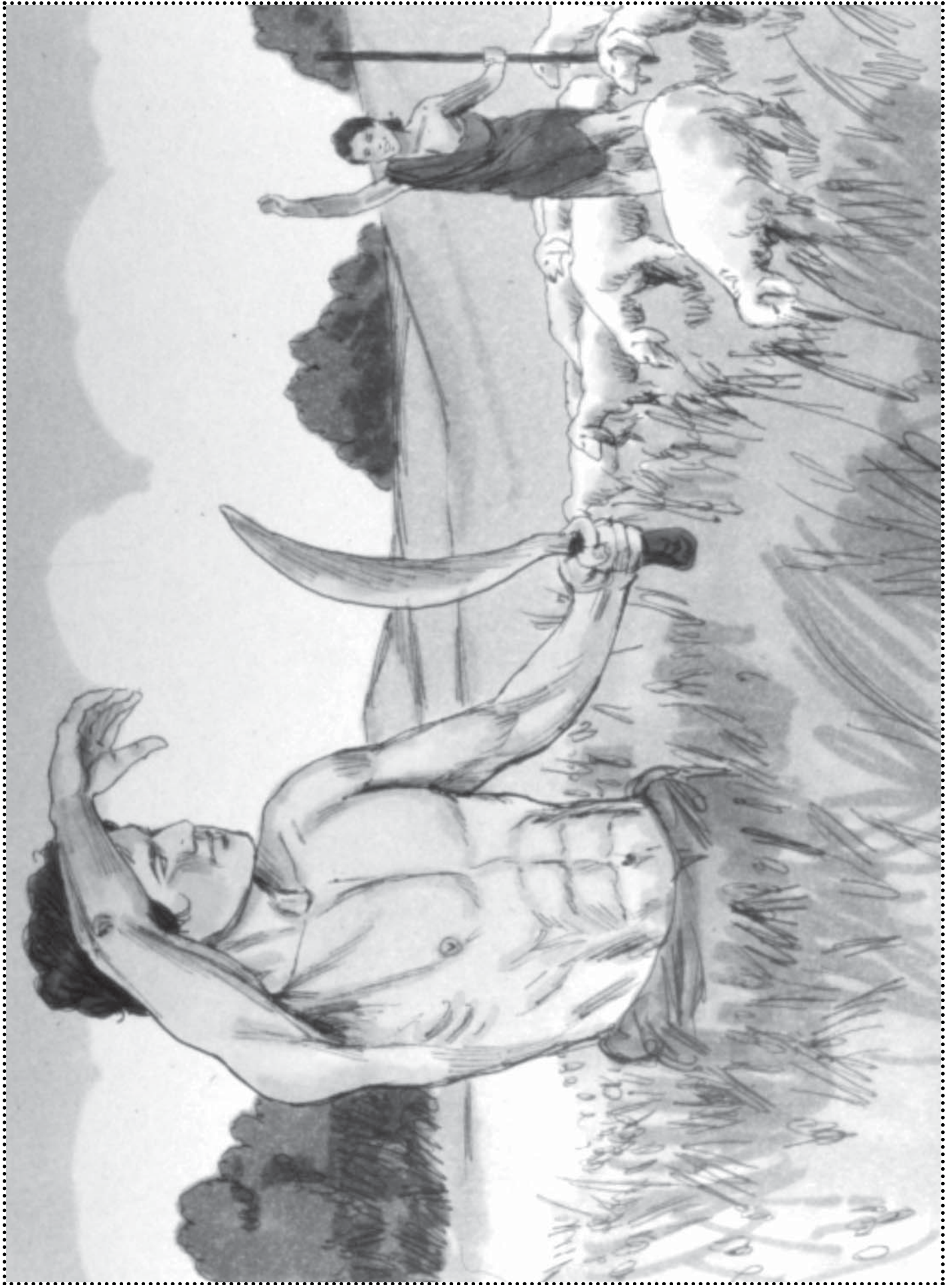
## Memory Verse:

Colossians 3:23 *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."*













# Thanksgiving, a Harvest Celebration 1-08-C

**F**rom the beginning, God taught people the importance of celebrating the harvest. God wanted people to know that He was the One who provided the harvest and that He should receive the honor. God wanted people to see His goodness and His desire to be their provider. To honor God, several special celebrations were planned each year. God explained many types of animal sacrifices and offerings in His Word, but He also had several other special ways He wanted the people to honor Him. One holiday was called the celebration of the firstfruits. This was the first harvest celebration tied to the first crop that would be ready to harvest, the barley. God had each family leader bring a sheaf of barley to honor God. They waved the sheaf before God and burned some of the grain as an offering of thanksgiving. For seven days the people had only eaten bread without yeast because yeast, or leaven, represented sin. This was to remind them that God had chosen them to be His sinless people. This celebration followed the Passover.

Seven weeks later came the feast of weeks which was also called Pentecost because it was 50 days from the Passover celebration. At this holiday the leader of each family would come to the temple with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. The priest would celebrate God's blessing for the entire harvest season by waving two loaves of fresh baked bread before the altar. These loaves had leaven, and reminded people that God had provided the harvest for both the Jew and the Gentile, all people. These celebrations taught people to honor God for the harvest.

The Old Testament celebrations were pictures to teach people about the Messiah that would come later. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus came to bring fulfillment to these pictures. Jesus was crucified at the very hour the Jewish people were killing the Passover lamb, for Jesus was the final sacrifice for sin. Then the unleavened bread was used to represent the message of salvation first being brought to the Jewish people. Fifty days later, to celebrate Pentecost God brought the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the harvest of both Jew and Gentile.

Jesus often spoke to His followers of the harvest and the need for laborers. He was referring to the people who still needed to hear and believe in Him. People were represented by the stalks of grain and every believer that would lead someone to salvation was shown as a laborer in the harvest field.

The Early Church experienced the beginning of God's great international harvest. On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit empowered the believers, God was using the day when the priest lifted the two leavened loaves, to represent the entire world, both Jew and Gentile, filled with sin, being reached for the Master of the harvest. Throughout the Book of Acts are testimonies of those from across the known world that were believing, being baptized and being filled with the Spirit to become laborers. Each story is a repeated report of the harvest.

Today, the world is a field ready for harvest. Missions outreach around the world is the work of laborers going into the field to bring in the harvest. One day the harvest will end and the final harvest for judgment will come for those who have not accepted the Lord. Celebrate the local harvest season with thanksgiving. Be thankful that the Lord can use you in the harvest.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. Harvest celebrations of old.
  - A. The goodness of God displayed.
  - B. Honor God with Thanksgiving.
- II. Harvest principles taught by Jesus.
  - A. Representation of the crop.
  - B. The need for laborers.
- III. Harvest events in the Early Church.
  - A. The power for harvest.
  - B. Repeated stories of harvest.
- IV. Harvest fields ripe today.
  - A. Missions around the world.
  - B. The final harvest.

## Activity

Create a time line that will help the students see the progression of the feasts, the activities or sacrifices made, and the connection they have with the life of Christ. Across the top of the time line put the number of weeks or dates. Next add the names of the celebrations and the symbols used as they are explained in Leviticus. Below each symbol show the connection to Jesus as the fulfillment of that symbol, and the dates from the New Testament that are the same.

## Teacher Growth

Bring in bread without yeast, bread with yeast, and a sheaf of grain if possible to help your students understand more clearly how God taught people using pictures or objects. God used the grains and bread that were common to the people so they would understand His message. You may have to adjust your teaching to include pictures or objects that would be understandable in the lives of your students. Adjust the materials you use to make the unchanging biblical truths clearer.

## Scripture passages:

Leviticus 23:9-21, Matthew 9:35-38, Luke 10:1-17, John 4:31-38, Acts, Revelation 14:14-16

## Memory Verse:

Luke 10:2 *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*











