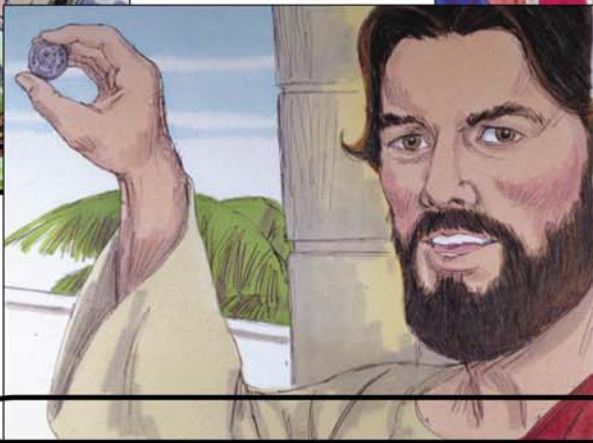


Serie 3

3

principles



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Principles4Life - Series # 3

THE PURPOSE

Many 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 disciplined.

THE PLAN

Although 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

These 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

Each 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: 3-07-A means year 3, lesson 7, group A or the Old Testament.

Example: 3-05-B means year 3, lesson 5, group B or the New Testament.

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

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Deborah and Barak 3-01-A

The Israelites, God's people, lived in the land God had promised them. But over the years they began to disobey God. To the north Jabin, the king of the Canaanites, reigned in Hazor and maintained control over his enemies with 900 iron chariots. For 20 years God allowed the Canaanites to cruelly oppress the Israelites. Finally they cried out to God for help. Jabin ordered Sisera, the commander of his army, to defeat the Israelites.

Among the Israelites, Deborah was a prophetess, a woman that received knowledge and direction directly from God for His people. Every day Deborah sat out under a special palm tree to lead the people. Like a judge, she would listen to the people's problems and then make decisions.

One day Deborah called for Barak to come because God had given her a special order for him. God commanded him to take ten thousand men to Mount Tabor, so that Sisera and his troops and chariots would be lured to the Kishon River Valley, where they would be defeated. Barak heard the command from God and the promise God gave for the victory, but he was not ready to trust God. Barak said to Deborah, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." Deborah agreed to lead the troops into battle, but she reminded Barak that the victory would be given to a woman since he was not willing to trust God.

Barak and the soldiers, with Deborah in the lead, marched to Mount Tabor for battle. Heber, a metalworker, had left the Israelites and moved near the Canaanites. Instead of being loyal to God's people, Heber went to Sisera to tell him that the Israelites were marching to Mount Tabor for an attack. Sisera took his men and chariots to the Kishon Valley for battle, just like God had said.

At the top of the mountain Deborah gave Barak the command to lead the troops for God would deliver Sisera into their hands. Barak and the ten thousand men went down the mountainside and God caused such a confusion that the entire army began to run away in defeat. Every soldier was killed except for Sisera who escaped.

Sisera found the tent of Jael, the wife of the traitor Heber, who had moved away from the Israelites. Only a husband or father is allowed in a woman's tent, so Sisera thought hiding in Jael's tent would be safe. Jael invited Sisera into her tent, covered him, and gave him milk to drink. He told Jael to guard the door. Sisera believed he was safe and fell asleep after the battle. Jael wanted to be loyal to God's people, the Israelites. She knew her husband had helped the enemy and now she could help the Israelites. Jael picked up a tent peg and hammered through Sisera's temple into the ground. Sisera died, and when Barak came looking for him, he found that a woman, Jael, had killed the enemy leader and received the honor for his defeat.

That day God gave His people the victory and they continued to grow stronger against their enemy, the Canaanites. The people who honored God were given strength and victory over their enemies.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **God's people oppressed.**
 - A. Return to evil.
 - B. Years of suffering.
- II. **Deborah, a prophetess.**
 - A. She settled disputes.
 - B. Gave God's command.
- III. **The battle began.**
 - A. Deborah, the leader.
 - B. Victory from the hills.
- IV. **The final blow.**
 - A. Sisera tried to hide.
 - B. The death of an enemy.

Activity

Students can create a song that celebrates the victories God provides. Use a simple melody well known to all the students and divide the class into small groups. Just as Judges 5 is merely a retelling of the story as a song, allow each group to make up a song to a familiar tune. Let each group share their song with the entire class.

Teacher Growth

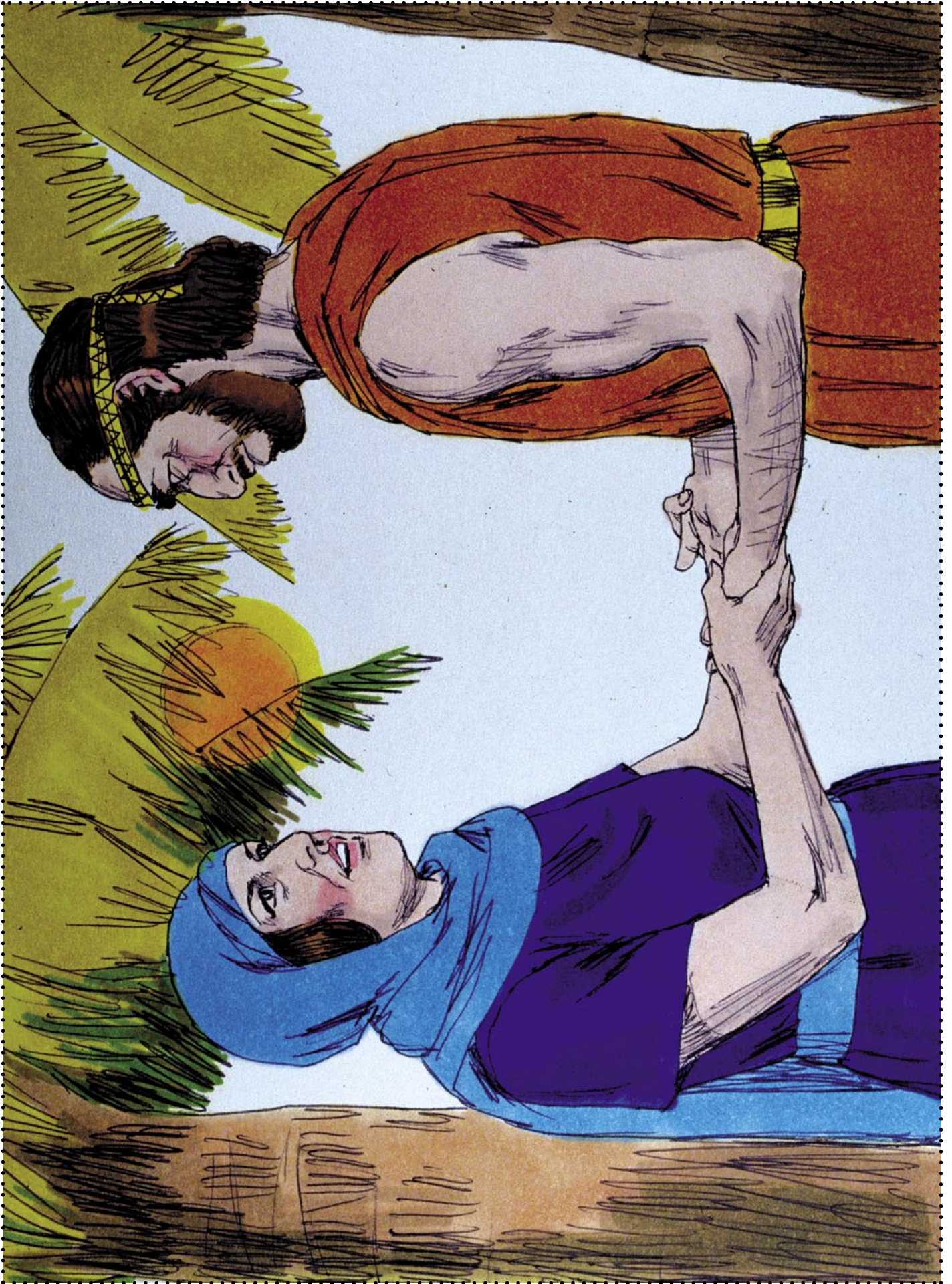
You may be teaching today's lesson to very young children. There are times when we need to skip over some of the detailed facts in a story due to their mature content. That means some details, like Sisera's death, may not be essential for young students. You don't change biblical events, but you do need to remember the age level of your listeners. Today's lesson can end simply with a victory given by God.

Scripture Passages

Judges 4, 5

Memory Verse

Judges 5:31 *"So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But may they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength."*







Gideon, an Uncertain Leader 3-02-A

The Israelites, God's chosen people, did not obey or honor God so He let their enemies, the Midianites, control them for seven years. When the Israelites planted their crops the Midianites would come and take the harvest. The enemies would constantly invade the Israelites, even when they tried to hide in caves. The crops were destroyed and the animals stolen. Finally, the people cried out to God for help. God sent them a prophet to remind the people that they had turned their back on God and had forgotten to worship Him as the one true God.

One day the Lord in the form of angel sat under an oak tree near Gideon who was busy threshing wheat. Instead of threshing out on the open floor like normal, Gideon was working down under the cover of a winepress. The people knew that if they threshed the wheat in the open it would be stolen by their enemies, so Gideon was hiding the harvest in a secret place. Suddenly the Lord said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." Gideon was shocked by this, and even said, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?" He asked the Lord why God did not show them His mighty power like He used to do for their fathers and grandfathers.

The Lord answered, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" Immediately Gideon began to make excuses like being from the weakest clan and the least in his family. The Lord assured Gideon that He would be with him, but Gideon still questioned the Lord and asked for a sign to be sure this was what God wanted him to do. He asked the Lord to wait until he could get an offering for him. Gideon prepared the offering of goat meat and unleavened bread and the Lord told him to place it on a rock. The angel of the Lord touched it with the tip of his staff and fire flared out of the rock to consume the meat and bread. Suddenly, the angel of the Lord disappeared and Gideon realized he had been talking to the Lord, God.

Gideon built an altar to the Lord. That night the Lord again spoke to him. He told Gideon to break down his father's altar to Baal, chop down the Asherah pole beside it, and then to build a proper altar to God and sacrifice a special offering there. Gideon's father and most of the Israelites had turned away from God and had worshipped an idol, or false god, called Baal. Gideon knew that what God wanted him to do would not be liked by the people.

Gideon waited until it was dark and took ten of his servants to help him do what God had told him. The next morning all the men in the town saw Baal's altar and the Asherah pole destroyed. They discovered that Gideon was the one who had done it. They went to his father's home and demanded that he bring his son out to them to die for what he had done. But Joash, Gideon's father, challenged the men to let Baal defend his own altar. Joash said that if Baal was real he would defend himself. We know that Baal was only an idol, not a living god, and Gideon was protected for being obedient in turning the people's hearts back to the real God.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Israel invaded.**
 - A. The cry for help.
 - B. An angel visit.
- II. **A questioned command.**
 - A. Excuses were made.
 - B. A sign requested.
- III. **Demonstrated power.**
 - A. Fire from the rock.
 - B. An altar was made.
- IV. **Action taken.**
 - A. Baal's altar destroyed.
 - B. A father's response.

Activity

Students can create a self portrait that reminds them that God sees their great potential. On a large sheet of paper they can help each other trace their outline and color in the details, or they can simply draw a picture of themselves on a smaller piece of paper. Then add the caption, "A mighty warrior for God." Explain that they are in a spiritual battle.

Teacher Growth

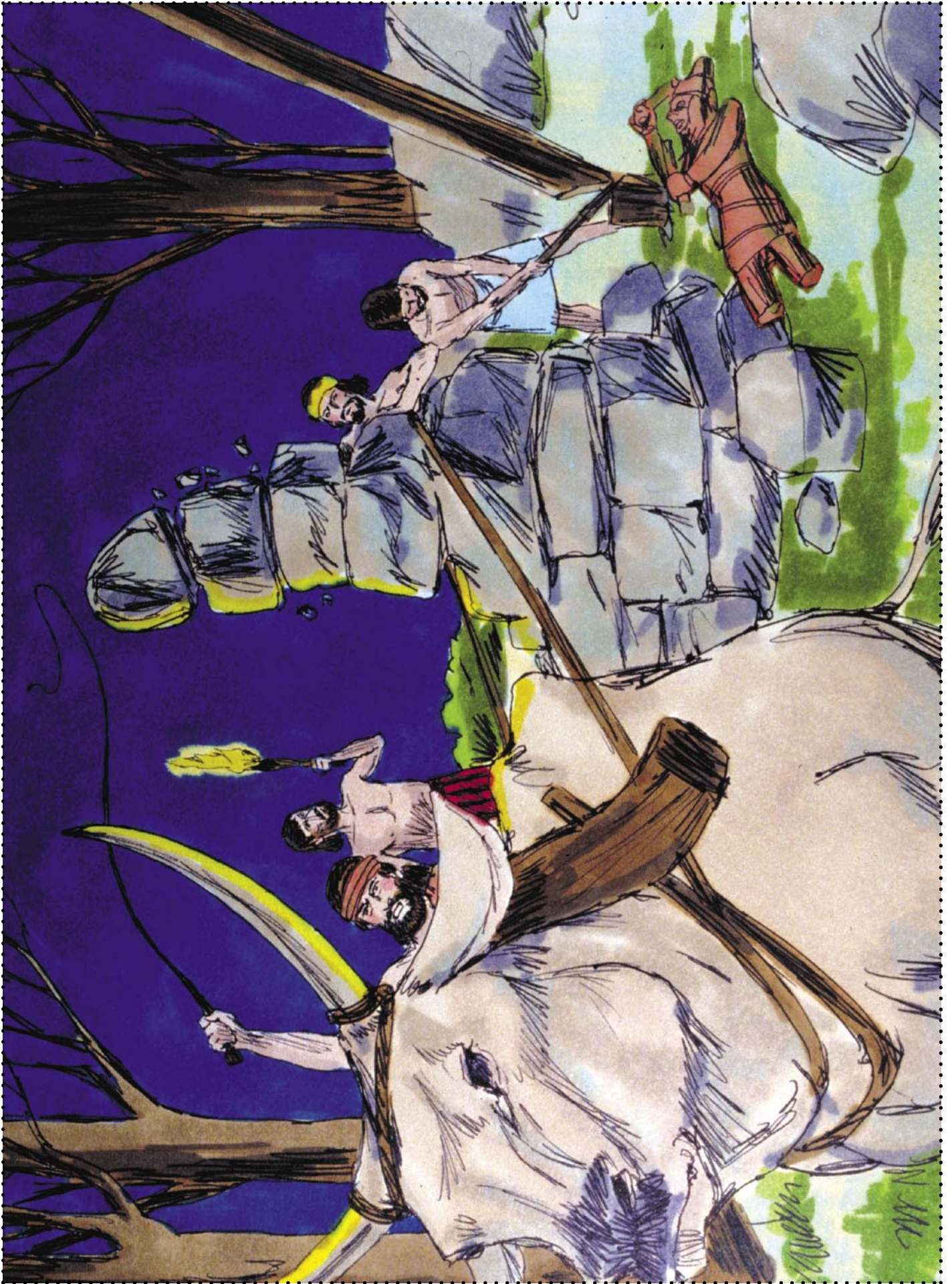
Today's lesson needs to be applied to the lives of your students. They will not be asked by God to fight in a battle like Gideon, with soldiers and chariots, but they are fighting a spiritual battle. There are many idols that the world worships today yet they are to only worship God. They can stand firm for their God and not be led astray, they can pray against the influence of the enemy, Satan, and they can live a life that shows they are mighty for God.

Scripture Passages

Judges 6:1-32

Memory Verse

Judges 6:12 "When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'"







Gideon, a Courageous Leader 3-03-A

Gideon stood firm in his answer to God's call when he destroyed the town's altar to Baal. Now the enemies of God's people were gathering just inside the Israelites territory planning to destroy them. The Spirit of God came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet to call together his fellow Israelites to join him in battle.

Before Gideon was ready to lead the soldiers he checked again that God would help him win. Gideon asked God for a sign to show He would save Israel as He had promised. Gideon would lay a piece of wool fleece on the threshing floor that night and in the morning if the ground was dry and the fleece was wet then Gideon would believe God would help him. Early the next morning Gideon was able to wring a bowlful of water out of the fleece. Gideon wanted one more sign. He layed a fleece out on the same floor the next evening and asked God to make it dry with all the ground around it wet with dew. That night God did that very thing.

The answer was clear, God would go with Gideon and his army to give him victory over the enemy. Early the next day as Gideon began to organize the 32,000 soldiers that had come from each tribe, God spoke to him. God told Gideon there were too many soldiers. He did not want Israel to think they would win just because they had so many men. Gideon told all the men that had any fear to leave and 22,000 men went home. But God said there were still too many, so He told Gideon to take the men down to the water for a drink.

God told Gideon that men that lapped up water with their tongue, like a dog, were to be separated from those who kneeled down to drink. Only 300 men lapped the water without kneeling and God said that was the army for Gideon. The other men were sent home. Not only would God get the glory for giving such a small army the victory, but God also had very unusual weapons.

The enemy was like sand on the seashore and could not be counted, but God wanted to encourage Gideon. During the night God told Gideon to sneak down to the edge of the enemy camp with his servant and listen. So Gideon and his servant heard a man tell his friend about a dream of a round loaf of barley bread that came tumbling into their camp striking a tent with such force that the tent was knocked down. The friend knew the dream meant that Gideon would march his army into the camp and defeat them. When Gideon heard this he worshipped God and hurried back to his camp. Gideon told the men to get up for God was going to give them victory. He divided them into three groups and gave them trumpets and empty jars with torches inside.

With these strange weapons the men were spread around the enemy. Upon a signal from Gideon every man blew his trumpet, smashed the jar so the burning torch could be seen, and shouted "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" In the noise and confusion God caused the enemy to turn and kill each other or run in fear. Gideon's men chased the enemy until God gave Gideon and a very small army victory over the Midianites.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Troops are called.**
 - A. Enemy forces rallied.
 - B. Men are summoned.
- II. **God's help was questioned.**
 - A. Two fleeces used.
 - B. The clear answer.
- III. **God given the glory.**
 - A. Troops were diminished.
 - B. The plan was given.
- IV. **The victory was won.**
 - A. Confusion for the enemy.
 - B. The enemy defeated.

Activity

Students can recreate this story in drama. You do not need fancy props or costumes but you may want to expand the activity and create simple paper "torches in bags" and "trumpets" that the actors can use for the big battle scene. A small piece of cloth or fur for the fleece and a blue blanket for the edge of the water test can make a very interesting play.

Teacher Growth

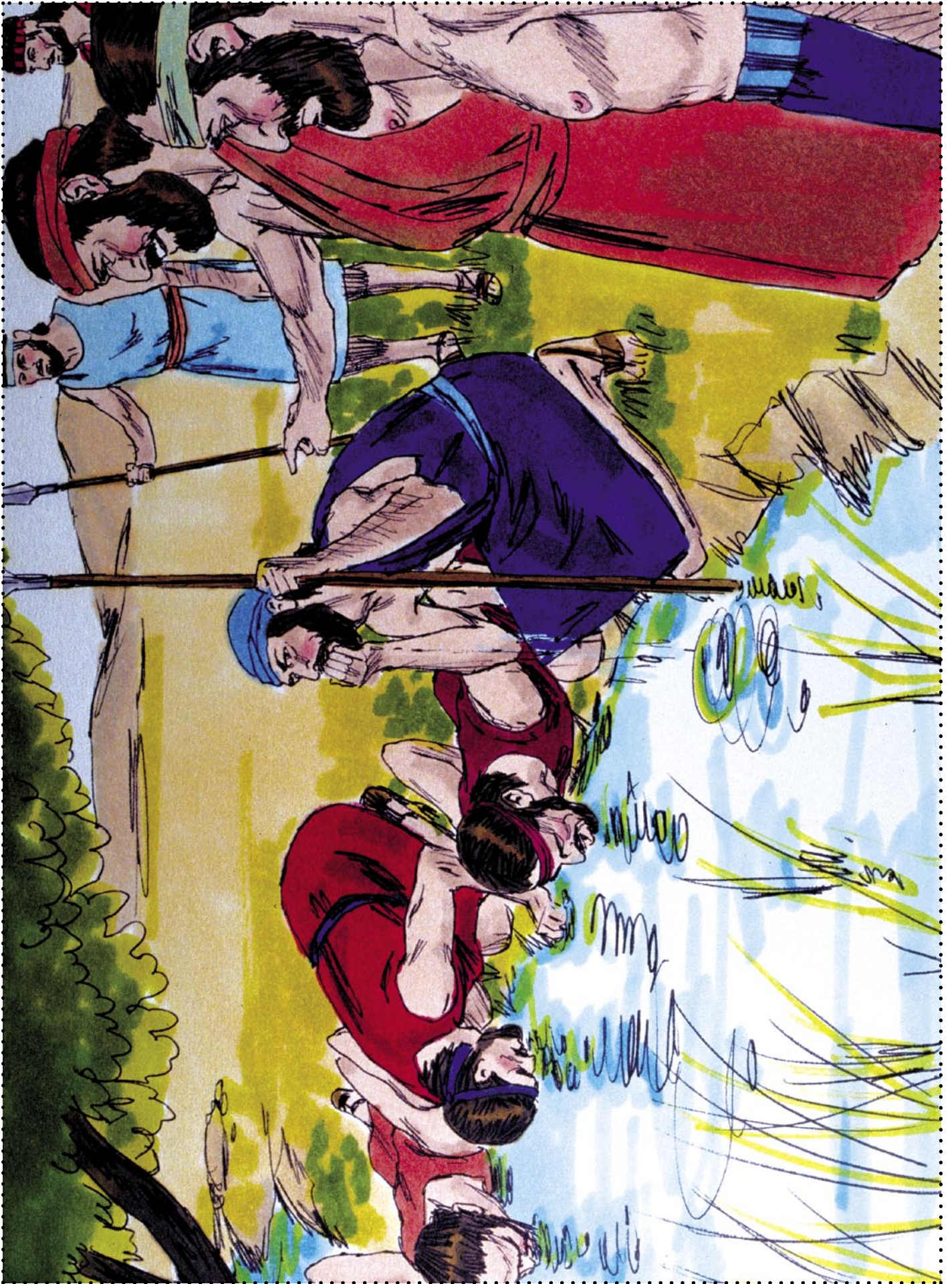
Drama can be a very creative way to reinforce the lesson's events. There are various types of drama, from full costumes in a play to simple mime reenactments using only gestures without props, scenery or script. You may want the actors to speak or choose to use a narrator that simply reads from the Bible as the actors provide the action. From simple to complex, use drama to help the lesson become more real for the students.

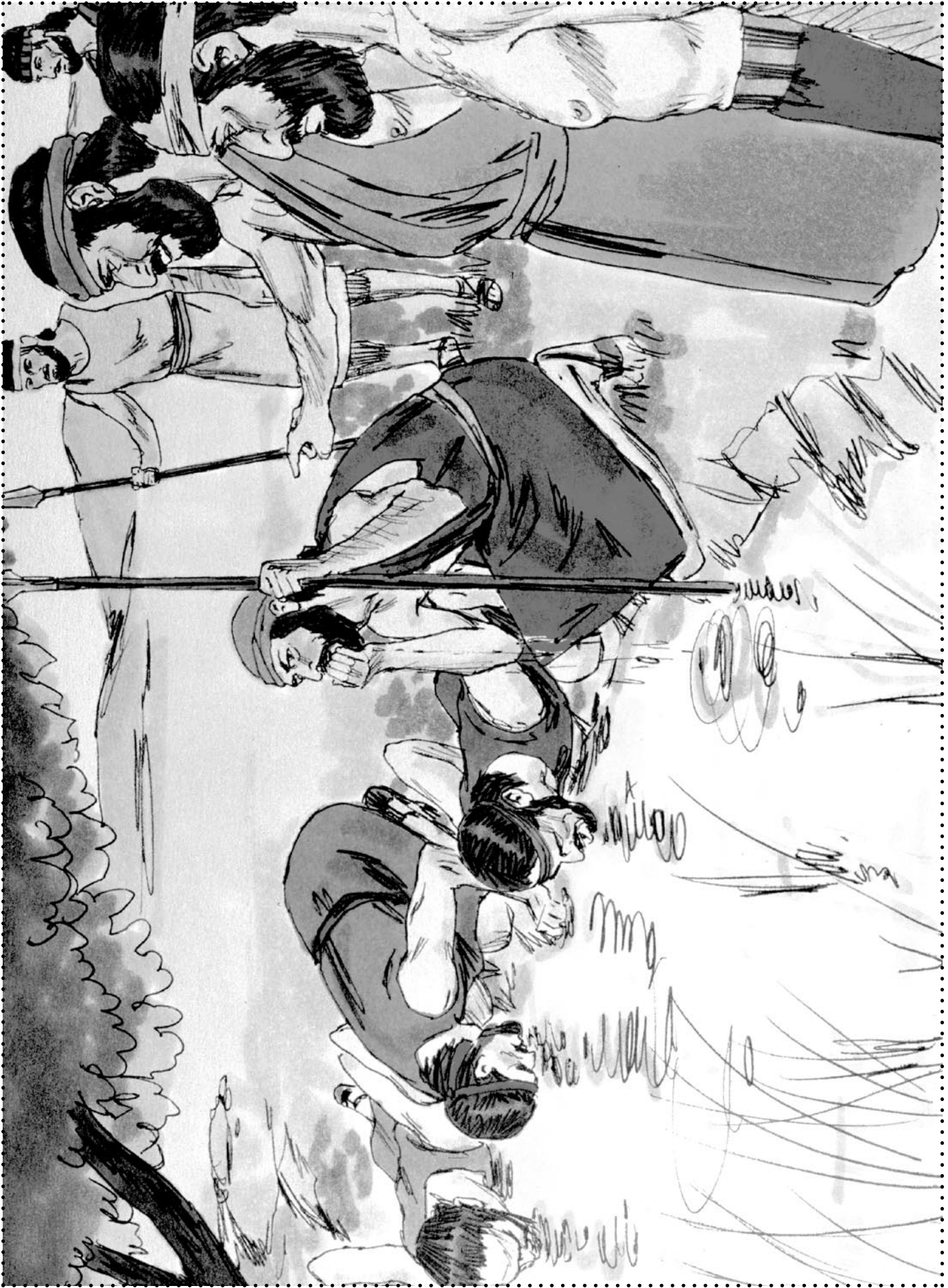
Scripture Passages

Judges 6:33—8:35

Memory Verse

Psalm 9:10 "Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you."







The Promise of Jephthah 3-04-A

For 18 years God allowed the Ammonites to crush His people, the Israelites. The Israelites had turned away from God and worshipped other gods. The people cried out to God for help. God reminded them that they had failed to worship only Him, the one true God. So the Israelites destroyed the idols they had gathered and turned back to God.

The Ammonites gathered in Gilead to destroy the Israelites in battle. The leaders of God's people announced that any Israelite that would lead them to victory over the Ammonites would be made leader of the army and their land.

Several years earlier a boy was born to a man named Gilead. His name was Jephthah and his mother was a prostitute. Gilead's wife also had sons and those boys made Jephthah leave so that he would not embarrass the family nor receive any of his father's inheritance. Jephthah was an outcast, forced to move to Tob. There he gathered a group of men who looked for adventure and had no family.

When the leaders of Gilead searched for someone who would be their commander no one had the courage. Some of the leaders went to Tob and begged Jephthah to return to Gilead to fight for God's people. Jephthah was amazed that those who had made him leave because they were ashamed of him, were now asking him to come back and become their leader. The men promised that if Jephthah would lead them to victory he would be the leader of their land.

Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonites asking them to stop their threat of war. He reminded them that the land the Ammonites were fighting for had originally belonged to the Amorites. He told them that God had given that land to Israel, who had possessed it for 300 years, so they had no right to think it belonged to them now. The Ammonites ignored Jephthah's message and prepared for war.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah as he marched his men toward the enemy. God provided the strength and courage that he needed for battle. Jephthah made a vow, or a promise, to God. Jephthah promised God that if he had victory over his enemies he would offer to God a sacrifice of the first thing that came out of his house when he went home after the battle. God had already given Jephthah the power to be victorious, so there was no need to make such a vow.

God gave Jephthah a great victory. As the men marched home Jephthah remembered his vow. As he neared home he saw his only daughter come dancing out the door, celebrating the victory. Jephthah was sad and tore his clothes in grief. He told his daughter about his promise to God and his daughter agreed that he needed to keep his word. Jephthah let his daughter visit her friends and then he completed the vow. He was a man that God gave strength, wisdom, and victory, but he also had to live with the results of a rash promise made to God. Jephthah continued as the leader of Israel, but he had to do it without his daughter by his side.

How sad that a man made a vow to God when it was so unnecessary. Think carefully about the promises we make to God.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The Israelites punished.**
 - A. Years of oppression.
 - B. A cry for rescue.
- II. **An unlikely leader.**
 - A. A social outcast.
 - B. Asked to return.
- III. **Threats were made.**
 - A. An exchange of messages.
 - B. A vow was made.
- IV. **The enemy defeated.**
 - A. The price of victory.
 - B. More enemies removed.

Activity

Students can create a symbol poster of "A Hero for God." The five symbols can be cut and colored from paper to be placed down the left side of a vertical sheet of paper. Glue down the symbol followed by the rest of the written description. A [heart] that loves God. [Ears] to hear God's voice. [Feet] that follow God's path. A [mouth] that keeps wise vows. [Hands] ready to do what God desires.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson could create confusion or fear about vows. You need to clarify that the important concept to learn is that we think carefully about the kinds of vows or promises we make to God and then we must be sure that we always keep our word. These may be difficult concepts for some to grasp so use simple examples. In marriage a vow is made before God, etc.

Scripture Passages

Judges 10:6—12:7

Memory Verse

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it."







The Secret of Samson 3-05-A

For 40 years the Israelites turned from God and suffered under Philistine rule. Then they cried for God's help. An Israelite man named Manoah had a wife without children, until an angel appeared and told her she would have a son. This boy would be a Nazirite, a man special to God. She was not to drink anything fermented, eat unclean meat, nor allow her son to shave his hair. The angel said her son would begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines.

Manoah prayed that God would tell him how to raise this special son. The angel returned and Manoah offered him a meal, but the angel asked them to sacrifice the meat instead. The angel rose to heaven in the smoke. Manoah realized it was the Lord, and was amazed that God had chosen them.

Samson was born and grew as a Nazirite. Samson wanted to marry a Philistine girl. His parents went with him to meet her family. A lion tried to attack them, but Samson realized God had given him special strength and he killed it by ripping it in half with his hands. Later Samson returned to marry the girl and on the journey he saw the lion's carcass full of honeycomb. It was a custom for the groom to give gifts to guests at the wedding. Samson made up a riddle and promised if they could solve the riddle during the seven days of wedding celebration he would give them new clothes. Read Judges 14:14 for the riddle. Each day the guests tried to solve the riddle. After crying for seven days, the bride finally got the answer. Quickly, she told her friends and Samson was forced to provide the gifts. Samson was angry and with God's power he struck down 30 men and took their clothes for his guests.

When Samson returned for his wife he found she had been given to another man. Samson caught 300 foxes, tied them tail to tail in pairs with lit torches attached. When he let the foxes loose all the Philistine's fields burned. The Philistines then killed Samson's wife and her father. Samson hid in a cave until the Israelites, afraid of the Philistines, tied Samson with ropes to deliver him to the enemy. When Samson got close to the Philistines he broke the ropes and with the jawbone of a donkey killed 1,000 men. Later Samson was nearly killed again but God gave him strength to tear out the gates of the city and carry them to a hilltop.

Samson then fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. Leaders asked Delilah to lure Samson into telling her the secret of his strength so they could overpower him. Every day Delilah asked Samson to tell her his secret. Several times Samson gave Delilah wrong answers but finally he told her the secret of his strength was to never cut his hair. While he slept, Delilah had Samson's hair shaved off and when the enemy came Samson discovered God's strength had left him because he had failed to obey God.

Samson was taken to prison, his eyes gouged out, and was forced to grind grain, like an animal. In time Samson's hair grew back. Finally Samson prayed for God's strength to push down the stadium pillars upon the enemy.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A special son was born.**
 - A. Two angelic visits.
 - B. He became a Nazirite.
- II. **Samson's marriage.**
 - A. Tricked by a Philistine wife.
 - B. Use of riddles and strength.
- III. **Samson and Delilah.**
 - A. A constant annoyance.
 - B. A fall to weakness.
- IV. **Death of Samson.**
 - A. Foolish sight.
 - B. Final request.

Activity

Older students can study the literary form in today's lesson, the riddle. You may be able to find books of riddles that you can read to the class or have students create their own riddles. Discuss the way a riddle is formed and the use of words to give clues without revealing the answer.

Teacher Growth

There was a pattern in Samson's life. The enemy constantly went to weaknesses in Samson's life and used them to trap him. We must be aware of the weak areas of our own character and be on the alert to the enemy who would use those very temptations to cause us to fall spiritually. Ask the Lord to help you be aware of your weaknesses and to help you in those temptations.

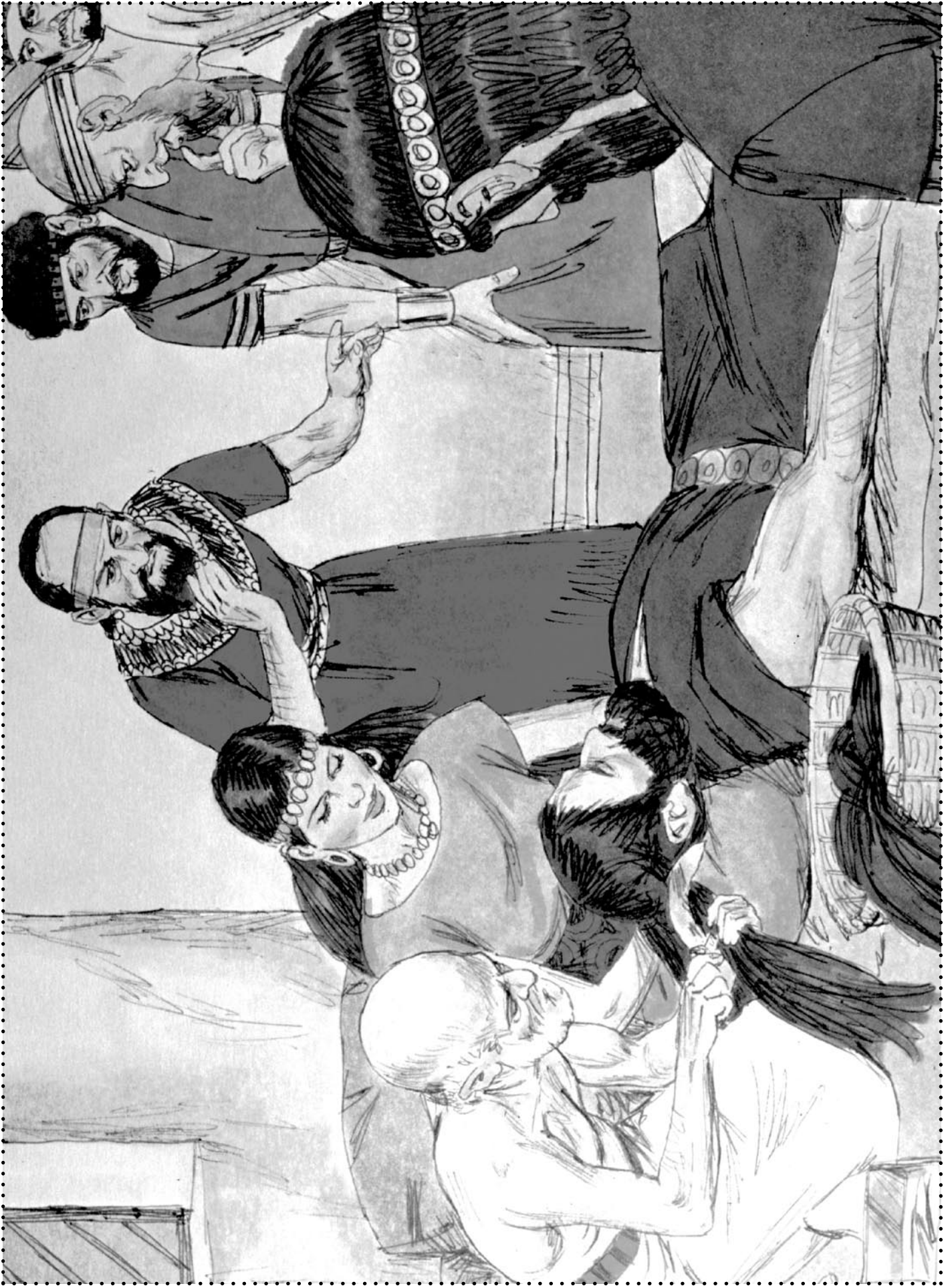
Scripture Passages

Judges 13:1—16:31

Memory Verse

Psalms 112:1 *"Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands."*







The Kindness of Ruth 3-06-A

While judges ruled Israel a drought came and Elimelech moved his wife and two sons from Bethlehem to Moab for food, though the Moabites were enemies of the Israelites. Elimelech died, but his sons grew and married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. After 10 years, Naomi's sons died, and she was left without any men to care for her or her daughters-in-law. Naomi heard God had provided food for the Israelites and she planned to return to her country.

As Naomi prepared to leave she told Orpah and Ruth to return to their families to marry again. Women needed a man to provide for them. They had been good to her sons and taken care of her since Elimelech's death. Naomi knew they were not going to be accepted in Bethlehem.

Orpah returned to her family, but Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law. Ruth promised to go with Naomi, to accept her people, to worship her God, and to care for her always. When they arrived in Bethlehem some were sad that Naomi returned without a husband or sons. Others were surprised to see a Moabite woman with her.

Ruth convinced Naomi to let her go to the fields to glean the loose stalks of barley left by the harvesters. This grain was used for their food. Ruth found that the field she went to work in was owned by Boaz, a relative of her late father-in-law.

Boaz saw how hard Ruth worked and learned that she had come to care for Naomi. Boaz marveled that she was a Moabite who cared deeply for an Israelite. Boaz told Ruth to work in his fields and drink his water. Boaz told the foreman to keep Ruth safe. Ruth bowed to Boaz and asked why he had noticed her, a foreigner. Boaz told her that he heard how she cared for her mother-in-law. He also told the foreman to leave extra grain for her, and give her lunch.

When Ruth returned home Naomi was surprised at how much barley she had threshed. Naomi asked whose field Ruth had worked in and heard of Boaz's kindness. Boaz was one of their kinsman redeemers, a close relative that could help them.

Naomi planned how she could care for Ruth by finding her a husband, Boaz. Ruth was to go to the threshing floor where Boaz was working. After he had dinner and laid down to sleep, she was to uncover his feet, and lay down beside them to keep him warm. Ruth did just as Naomi planned and in the night Boaz discovered her. He admired her, for she could have tried to get a young husband, but she chose him, a relative who could legally care for both Naomi and her. Boaz commented on Ruth's noble character. He promised to go the next day to talk to the town leaders about her care.

As Boaz sat at the town gate another relative who was able to redeem Ruth and Naomi came. Boaz stood and publicly asked if that man planned to help them. The man said no. By ceremonially taking off one of his sandals he announced that Boaz could redeem both the land and the women that had belonged to Elimelech. That day the people blessed Boaz as he married Ruth and took Naomi into his care. Later Ruth had a son and Naomi knew God's blessings once again.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The journey home.**
 - A. A sad situation.
 - B. The pair travel together.
- II. **Provisions for life.**
 - A. Ruth in the fields.
 - B. Boaz showed kindness.
- III. **The threshing floor.**
 - A. A plan was made.
 - B. Boaz responded.
- IV. **Ruth married again.**
 - A. The kinsman redeemer.
 - B. The next generation.

Activity

Students will learn a lot about the planting and harvest process of a local crop by having a guest share with them. Invite a local farmer to explain how the grain or local crop is processed for sale or for use by his family. How does this compare with the story we read in Ruth?

Teacher Growth

The concepts are simple in today's lesson and yet it is important to understand how the same concepts would fit in your society. Who would your community consider to be the despised person, like Ruth the Moabite? What are the traditions surrounding your harvest, courtship, and marriage practices? How can you help students apply the lesson in their culture?

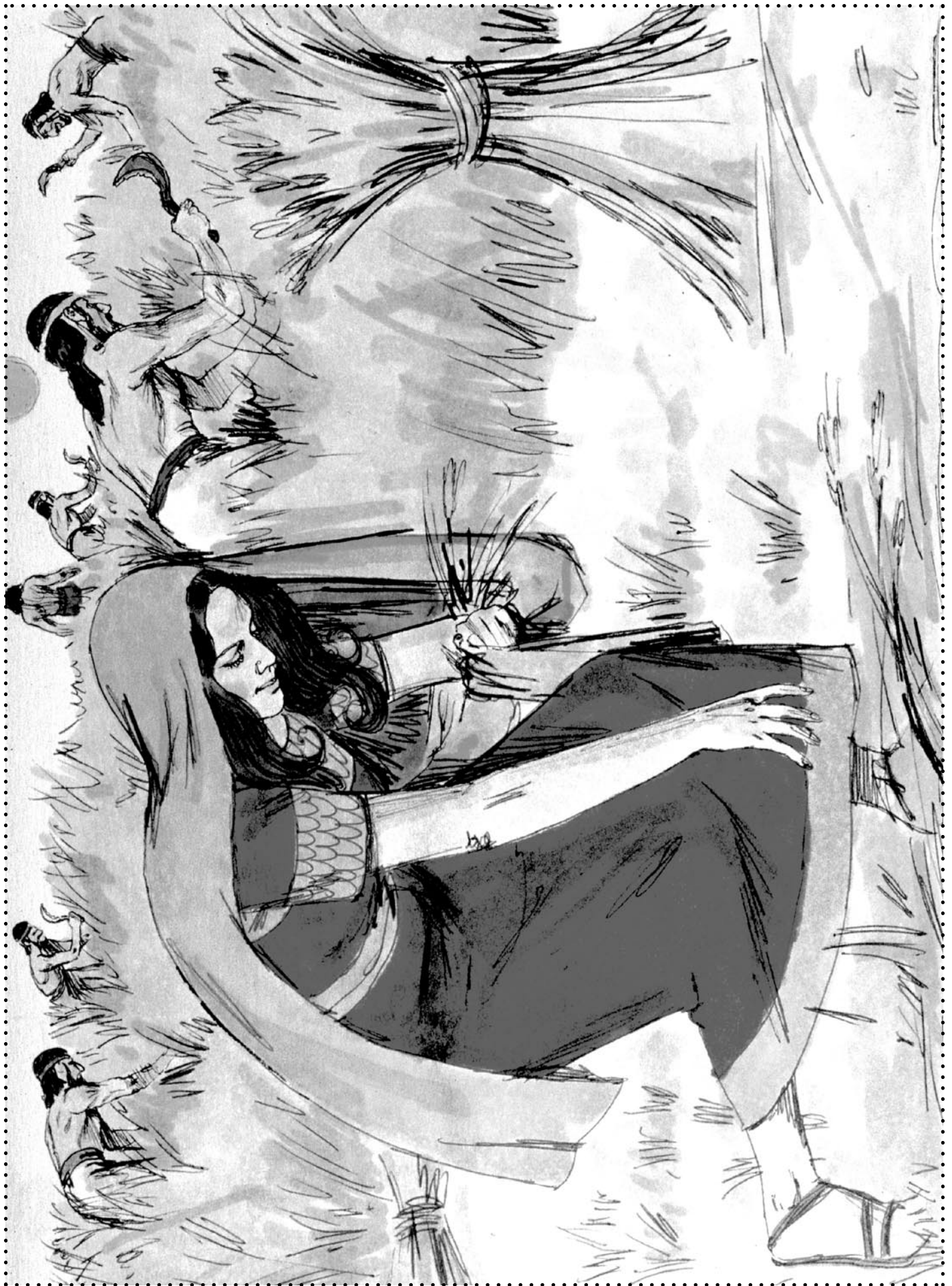
Scripture Passages

Ruth

Memory Verse

Ruth 1:16 *"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."*







Hannah Asks for a Son 3-07-A

Elkanah was an Israelite with two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Every year Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh to worship at the temple and give sacrifices to God. On the days it was his turn to bring the sacrifices Elkanah would give portions of meat to Peninnah and her children. Elkanah would always give Hannah a double portion because he loved her and was sorry she had no children.

Peninnah would mock Hannah because she had no children. Every year this torment would continue until Hannah would weep and refuse to eat. Elkanah was sad to see Hannah suffering.

One year when they finished the special meal at the temple, Hannah stood up and began to weep bitterly. She pleaded with God for a child. Hannah made a vow to the Lord. She promised God saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." This meant that Hannah promised to give her son back to serve God as a priest in the temple for his entire life.

Eli the priest saw Hannah praying and crying so hard that he thought she was drunk. He spoke to Hannah and told her she should not be drinking, but then he learned that she had just been praying very hard. Eli told her to go in peace and that God would grant her what she had asked. Immediately Hannah went happily on her way, believing that God was going to answer her prayer.

When it was time, Hannah had a son named Samuel. His name meant, "Because I asked the Lord for him." The next time Elkanah went to the temple Hannah stayed home with her baby. She told her husband that when the child was weaned she would go to the temple to dedicate him to God and leave him to live there.

When Samuel was about three years old his mother got ready to take him to the temple. She took a sacrifice, Samuel, and a set of clothes for him to wear. Hannah took the boy to Eli the priest and told him how God had answered her prayer for a son. She also told Eli of the vow she made to God and told him that Samuel would now live in the temple to serve the Lord all his life. Then Hannah said a very special prayer that reminded God of His goodness to her and to His people. Hannah realized how Holy and wonderful God is and she was content to have her son there to serve the Lord. She prayed, "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." Hannah left Samuel behind as she went home.

Samuel learned how to minister to the Lord from Eli the priest. Every year when Elkanah and his family went to the temple, Hannah would bring her son a new robe she had made. Eli would always pray a special prayer for Hannah asking God to give her more children to take the place of her first son. Hannah had three more sons and two daughters. Samuel grew up in the temple loving God and serving him with a whole heart.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Godly parents.**
 - A. Hannah the barren wife.
 - B. Annual torment.
- II. **A desperate prayer.**
 - A. Prayer and weeping.
 - B. A vow was made.
- III. **Eli the priest.**
 - A. A misunderstanding.
 - B. A special blessing.
- IV. **Samuel was born.**
 - A. A baby dedicated.
 - B. A boy to serve God.

Activity

Young students can create small outfits that would be like those Hannah made for Samuel each year. Use a large paper bag, or two sheets of paper attached at the sides to make simple robes. The students color these and talk about how their parents also see that they have clothes to wear.

Teacher Growth

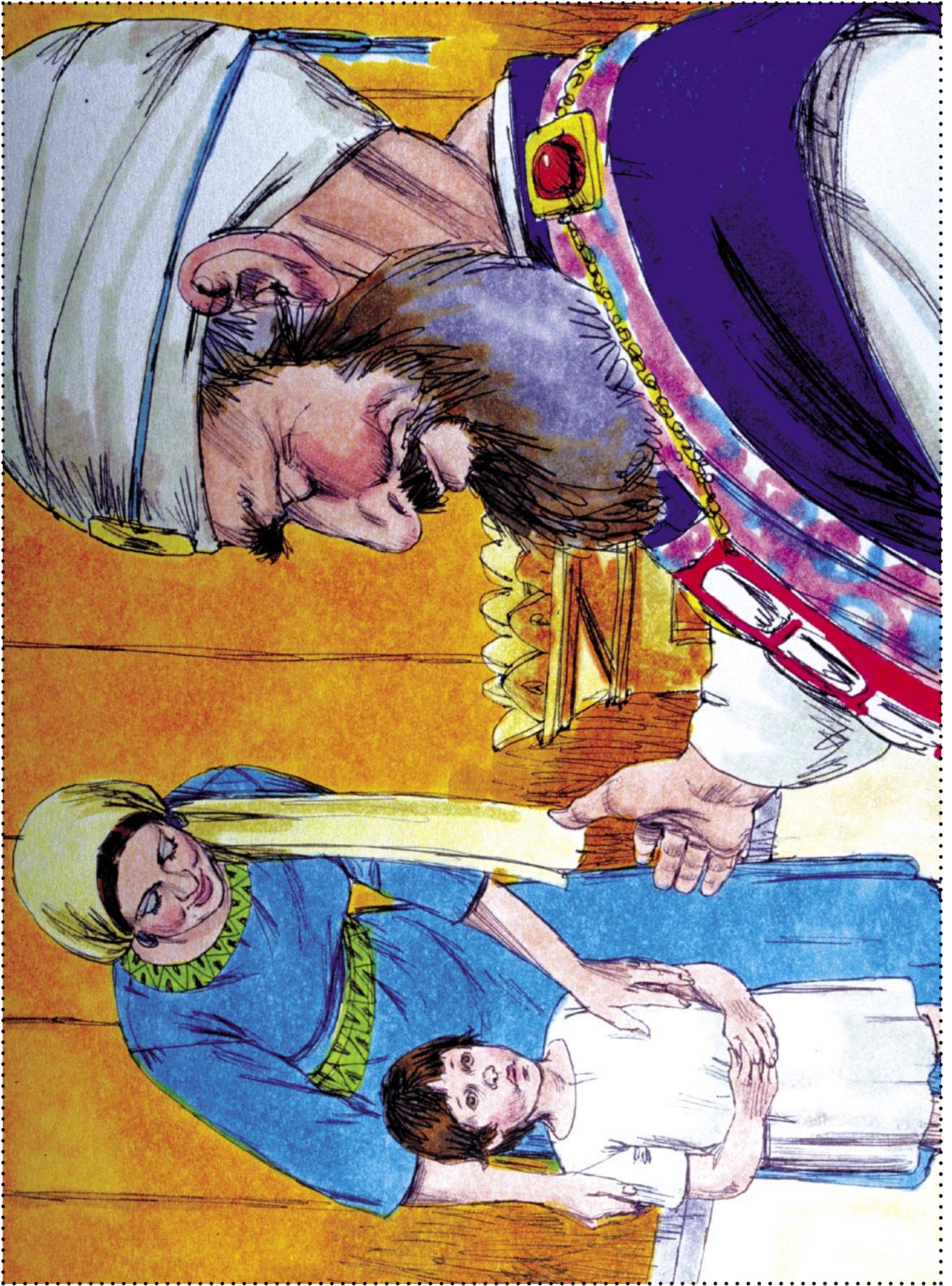
Today's memory verse is a good example of how you may need to remove parts or phrases to make the verse meaningful in the lives of your students. Note the part of the verse marked with a [] that can be removed to clarify the idea. Students can also insert other things they have prayed for into the [] space.

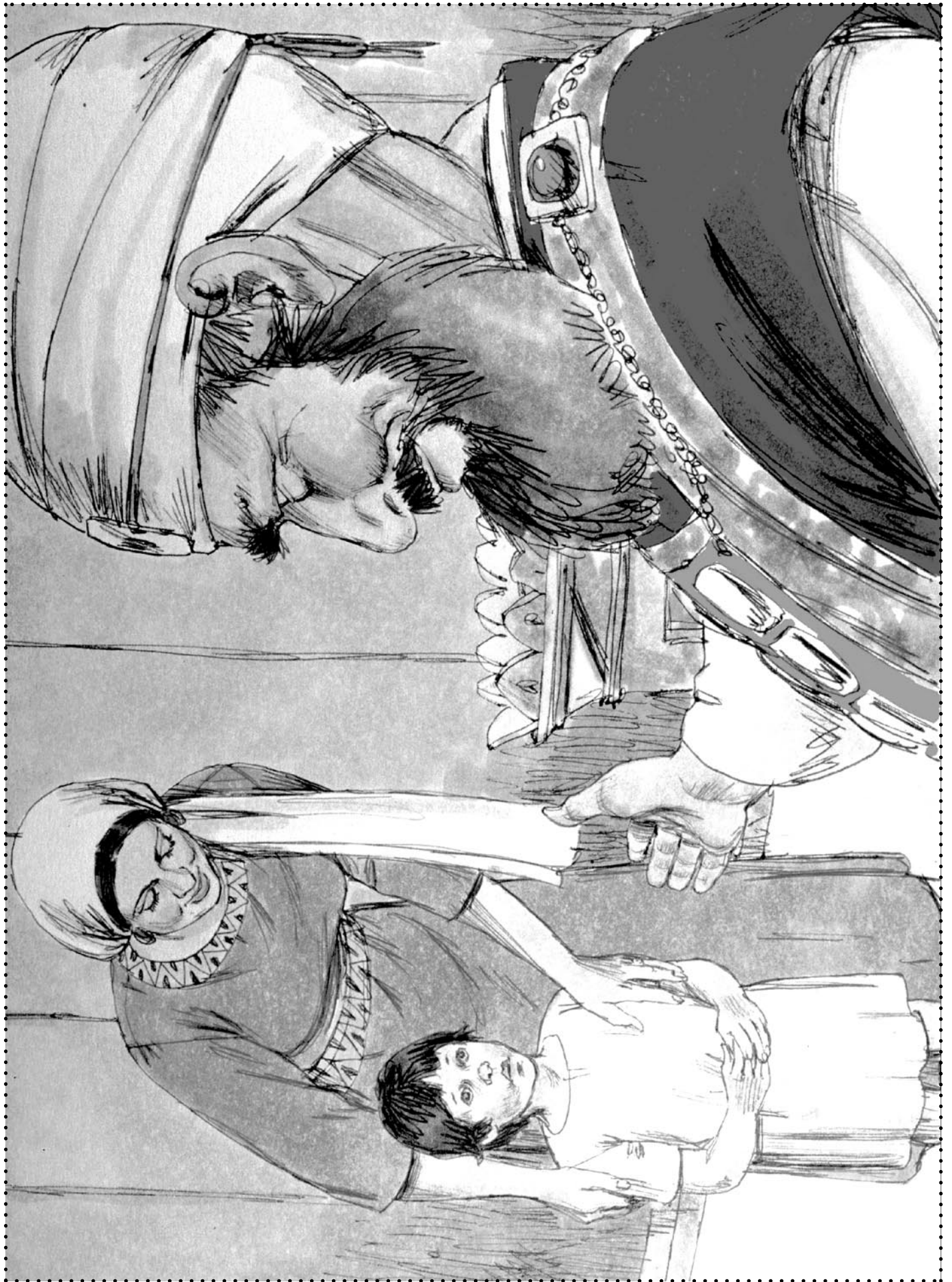
Scripture Passages

1 Samuel 1—2:11

Memory Verse

1 Samuel 1:27 *"I prayed [for this child], and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him."*







God Calls Samuel 3-08-A

Samuel was a young boy that lived with Eli the priest in the temple. Samuel's mother promised that her first son would be given back to serve God. Samuel learned the duties of a priest from Eli and he loved sleeping inside the temple as the soft glow of the lamp shone in the night. During this time in Israel's history there were very few prophets who received visions or messages from God for His people.

Eli began to lose his sight from old age, and now that Samuel was about twelve years old he was a great help to him. Eli's two sons that also served as priests were causing a lot of trouble. They stole the choicest sacrifices from God's altar for themselves and they were involved in activities that did not please God. Samuel had a special love for God and did everything he could to serve God and Eli.

One night as Eli was laying down in his usual place, Samuel was resting in the temple as the lamp of God was starting to dim. It was important for the lamp to stay lit through the night and Samuel had learned how to add oil if it began to go out before the dawn.

The Lord called Samuel and Samuel responded with, "Here I am." Samuel ran to Eli to see what he needed, but Eli told him that he had not called him. Eli told Samuel to go back and lay down. So Samuel returned to his resting place until he heard the voice call his name again. Samuel jumped up and ran to Eli saying, "Here I am; you called me." Once again Eli told Samuel he had not called him and to go back to bed.

Samuel was a boy that did not know the voice of the Lord. For the third time a voice called out Samuel's name, and Samuel ran to Eli with the same response. Then Eli realized that the Lord had been calling the boy. Eli told Samuel that God was trying to speak to him and the next time he heard the voice calling his name he was to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

As Samuel went back and laid in his bed the voice again called his name, and this time Samuel responded as Eli had told him. The Lord spoke directly to Samuel that night. God told Samuel that He was ready to carry out the punishment against Eli's family because of the terrible way his sons lived. God said He would be very harsh against Eli's entire family because Eli had not controlled his sons and stopped them from doing evil. Samuel listened to these warnings from God and then he laid down and waited until morning.

Early the next day Samuel was afraid to tell Eli God's message. As Samuel opened the temple doors he heard Eli calling for him. Eli asked what the Lord had said to him in the night and he told Samuel not to hide any of the message from him. So Samuel told Eli everything that God had said. Eli knew that God was powerful and in control and he said that God would bring His word to completion.

The Israelite people knew that as Samuel grew he was a special young man. He was a prophet, a person that heard directly from God. God spoke to Samuel because he had a heart that really loved God, he was a servant, and he obeyed God's commands.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Life with Eli.**
 - A. Troubled sons.
 - B. Samuel continued to serve.
- II. **Calls at night.**
 - A. The voice was heard.
 - B. Eli denied the call.
- III. **The realization.**
 - A. Directions to follow.
 - B. Ready to reply.
- IV. **The message given.**
 - A. Fearful waiting.
 - B. Life of a prophet.

Activity

Students will enjoy acting out the lesson. It will also help them to understand the three times that Samuel went to Eli by mistake. They will see how hard it was to finally hear the message God had and the fearful wait until morning to tell Eli. Do this several times reinforcing with each student the need we have to learn to listen to God.

Teacher Growth

Stop and consider the opportunities you have to listen to God. Sometimes we get busy worshipping Him or bringing our needs to Him, but how often do we quiet ourselves to really hear Him speak. With all your activities besides preparing to teach these lessons, how do you plan to make time to get in a quiet place to let God talk to you?

Scripture Passages

1 Samuel 3

Memory Verse

1 Samuel 3:10 *"Speak, for your servant is listening."*







The Widow at Zarephath 3-09-A

A king named Ahab ruled over the people of Israel and he disobeyed God's laws. King Ahab caused the people to worship other gods. So God sent a prophet named Elijah to warn the people of their sin. Elijah told the king there would be no dew or rain for several years until Elijah spoke to him again.

Then the Lord told Elijah to move to a valley east of the Jordan river. There Elijah could drink from a fresh brook and hide from the angry king. The Lord also provided food for Elijah in a very unique way. God commanded ravens to fly to Elijah every morning and evening with bread and meat.

One day the brook that Elijah had been drinking from dried up because of the terrible drought that was spreading across the land. God then sent Elijah to Zarephath a town in Sidon. God told Elijah that He had planned for a widow there to take care of him. Sidonians were enemies to God's people. Their king's daughter had married Israel's King Ahab and she had caused him to worship idols. It was strange that God would send Elijah there but he obeyed.

When Elijah arrived at the gates of the city he met a widow who was gathering sticks. Elijah asked her for a little water to drink. That was a big request in a time when drought made water very scarce and precious. Elijah also asked her for a piece of bread to eat. The widow told Elijah that she didn't have any bread to share. In fact the widow was gathering the sticks to take home to build a fire to bake the very last of her flour and oil into one small loaf of bread. She told Elijah that she planned to share the last piece of bread with her son and then they would die because there was no more food in their house.

Elijah told the widow not to be afraid but to go home and do as she had planned. But first she was to make him a small piece of bread and bring it to him before she cooked for herself and her son. Then he told her what the God of Israel said, "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the Lord gives rain on the land." The widow heard God's promise and went home to do just what Elijah had said.

Elijah lived with the widow and her son and there was always enough food for them. The flour was never used up and the jug of oil never ran dry just as God had promised. Later, the son of the widow became ill and finally stopped breathing. The widow asked Elijah why her son had died. She was fearful because her son was the one who would care for her as she got older. Elijah prayed and asked God to help the widow.

Elijah took the dead boy in his arms and went up to the room where he was staying. He placed the boy's body on the bed and cried out to God for help. Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and asked God to give the boy life again. The Lord heard Elijah's cry and the boy's life came back to him. Then Elijah carried the boy back to his mother.

As God provided for their needs and raised her son from death the Sidonian widow's faith grew in the God of Israel.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Drought stricken land.**
 - A. Curse for disobedience.
 - B. Fed by ravens.
- II. **Move to Zarephath.**
 - A. He met the widow.
 - B. Demand with a promise.
- III. **Sustained by God.**
 - A. Her step of faith.
 - B. Provisions continued.
- IV. **A test of belief.**
 - A. Tragedy strikes.
 - B. Her faith increased.

Activity

Students can create ravens as a reminder that God can use the strangest messengers to provide for His people. You can fold birds out of black paper, cut out birds, draw and color the scene, or use a stencil to trace a raven for every student to decorate with paint, colors, or feathers.

Teacher Growth

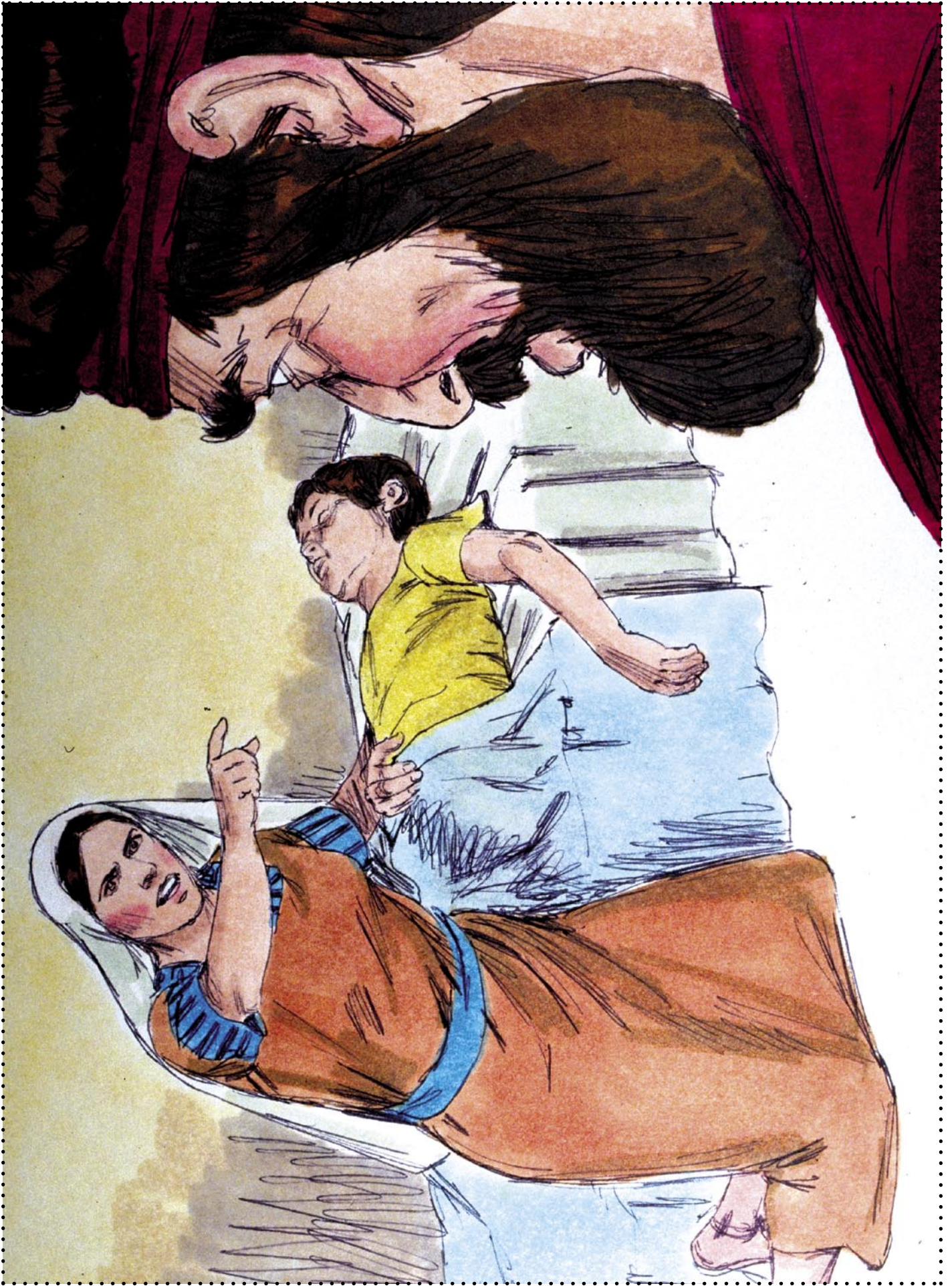
It is common for teachers to ask about ways to bring order or discipline to their class. Usually if you have prepared well and your lesson and activities keep the attention of your students, most of the discipline problem is settled. But be aware of the options you have when you have a student that is beyond your control. Discuss this with your pastor or leader.

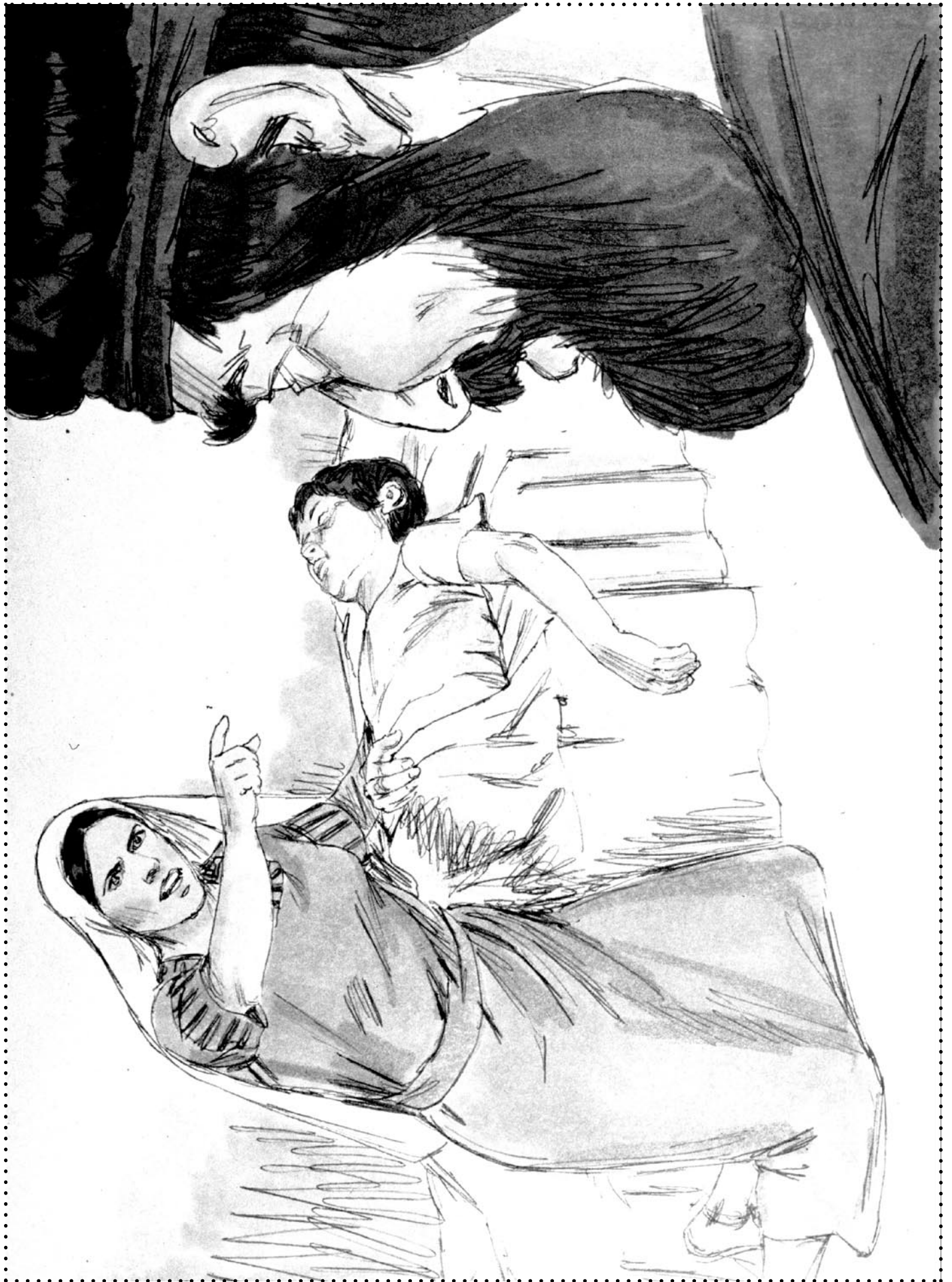
Scripture Passages

1 Kings 16:29—17:24

Memory Verse

Psalm 111:5 "He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever."







Fire from Heaven 3-10-A

For three years the land suffered under a drought God sent as punishment to His disobedient people. Then God told Elijah to go to Ahab the wicked king to tell him that it would finally rain again. King Ahab and Obadiah, the man in charge of the king's palace, were searching in different places for grass and water in hopes that their animals would not die. Suddenly Elijah appeared and Obadiah bowed before the prophet. Elijah told Obadiah to call King Ahab for he was ready to talk to him. Obadiah was afraid that Elijah would disappear again and Ahab would kill Obadiah for calling him.

Obadiah had remained a faithful follower of God. For several years the king's wife, Jezebel tried to kill all the prophets of God. But Obadiah rescued 100 prophets and hid them in two caves with food and water. Elijah assured Obadiah God would honor him and when Ahab was given the message Elijah would speak to him that day.

When King Ahab met with Elijah he blamed Elijah for the drought. But Elijah said it was his disobedience to God that caused the trouble. Elijah reminded Ahab that the people had stopped following God's commands and were worshipping other gods. Elijah told Ahab to call the Israelites to Mount Carmel to see who was the real God.

King Ahab gathered the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah that Jezebel hosted at the palace, and had them stand before the people on Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the people saying, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Then Elijah told them to bring out two bulls and to let the prophets of Baal select one. They were to cut it in pieces and lay it on a pile of wood but not set fire to it. Elijah would do the same thing as a sacrifice for God. The false prophets then called on Baal from morning till noon to send fire down to burn the sacrifice. By noon Elijah began to taunt them asking why their god would not respond. He told the them to shout louder in case their god couldn't hear. The men shouted louder, danced harder, and even cut themselves to show blood and still nothing happened.

By evening Elijah stepped forward. He repaired the broken altar of God with 12 stones for the 12 tribes of Israel who are God's chosen people. Then Elijah dug a trench around the altar and arranged the wood and the cut up bull as an offering. Next Elijah asked men to fill four large jars with water to pour on his offering and the wood. Then Elijah told them to do that again and finally a third time until the wood, offering, and even the trench around the altar was full of water.

At the time of the evening sacrifice to God Elijah prayed a short and simple prayer asking the Lord to show God's power and to help people know He was God. Suddenly the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, wood, 12 stones, dirt, and even the water. When the people saw this they fell on their faces before God and cried out words of worship to Him.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Three years of drought.**
 - A. Obadiah received the news.
 - B. Elijah revealed himself.
- II. **A meeting arranged.**
 - A. The people gathered.
 - B. The prophets called.
- III. **Challenge presented.**
 - A. Elements explained.
 - B. Cries for fire.
- IV. **God revealed.**
 - A. Simple prayer.
 - B. False prophets removed.

Activity

Students can create a news story about the lesson. Let one be a reporter who will interview others acting as participants in this event. Interview students who act as Elijah, a false prophet, Obadiah, and other Israelites who are observing the action. What do they see, hear, and feel?

Teacher Growth

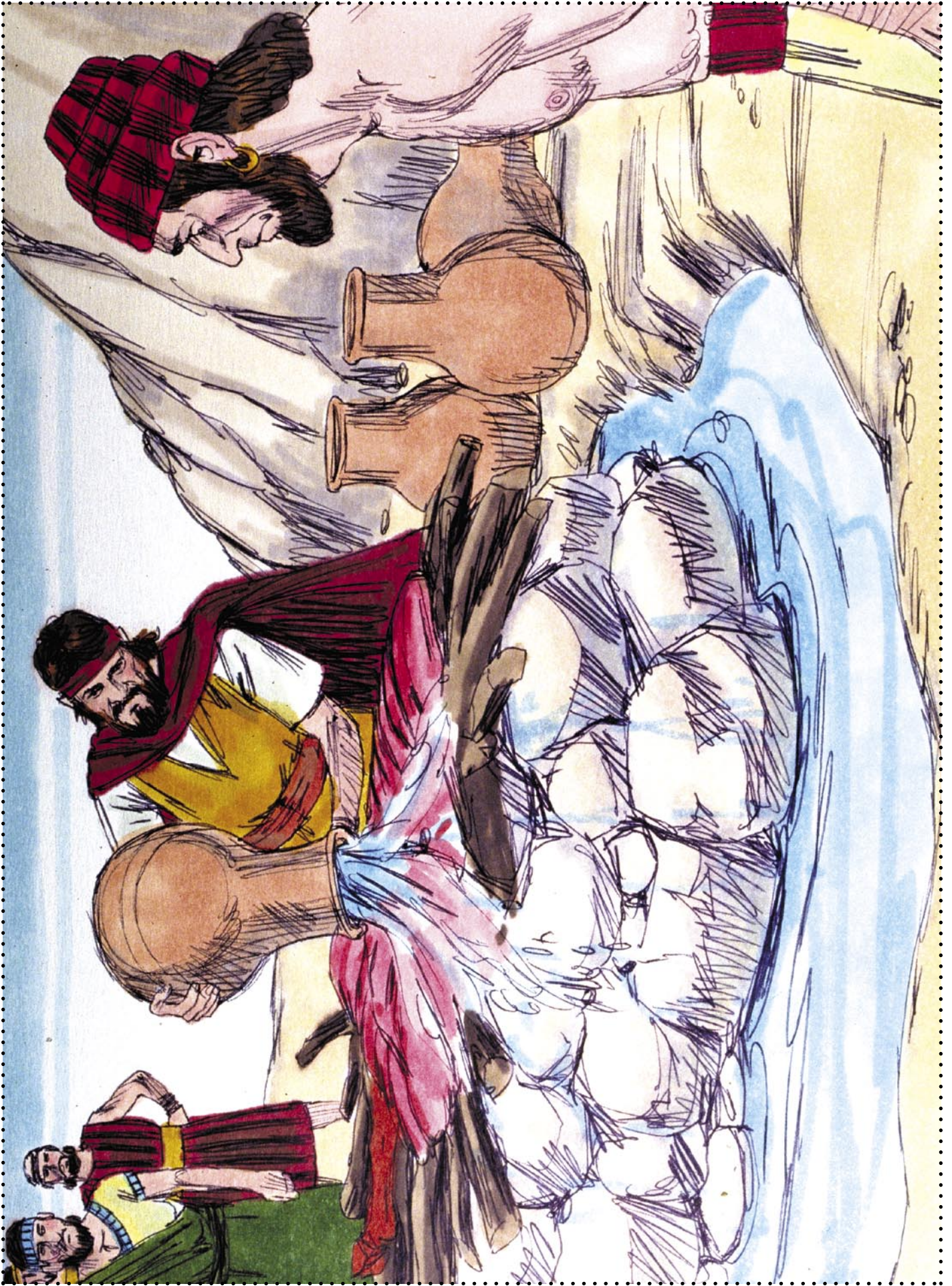
It is important that students don't just accept the lesson as a "story" but that they understand there were real people involved in this miraculous signal of God's power to a disobedient nation. The suggested activity can help them understand what people saw and how they reacted.

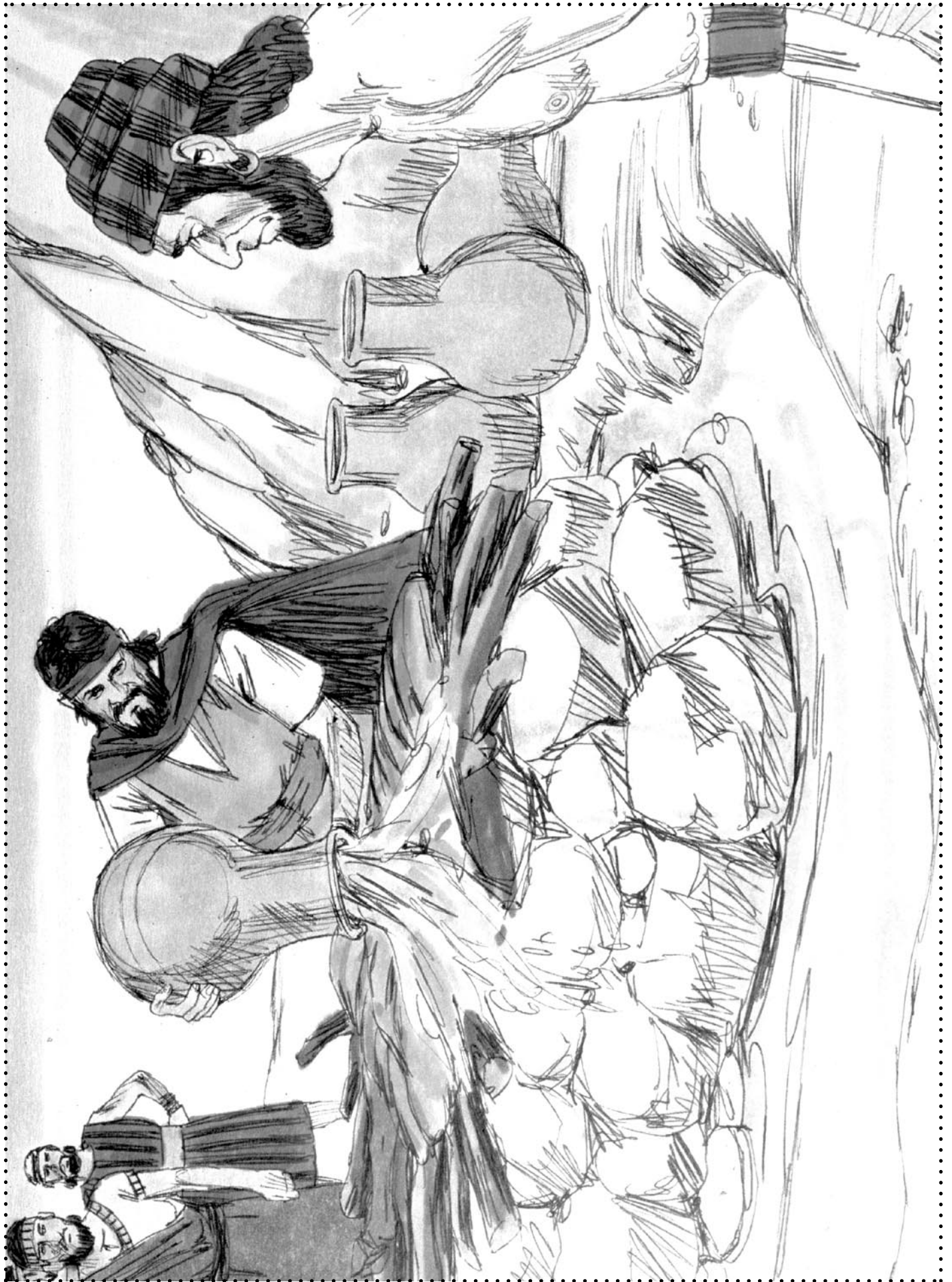
Scripture Passages

1 Kings 18:1-40

Memory Verse

1 Kings 18:37 "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."







Elijah Asks for Rain 3-11-A

God answered Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel before all the priests of Baal. The amazing display of God's fire upon the altar of sacrifice brought an end to the worship of a false god. Elijah then turned to King Ahab and said, "Go, eat and drink, for there is a sound of heavy rain."

The land had been under a terrible drought for three years because of the people's disobedience to God. Elijah was the prophet God used to warn the king about this punishment. Elijah hid from the king during this hard time without rain and now he had finally returned to remind them of God's power. Once the people saw God's response to Elijah compared to the antics of the false priests of Baal, they bowed to the ground in worship to God.

King Ahab must have believed the promise God had given when the drought began, that the curse upon the land and his people would be lifted when they returned to worship God. King Ahab went to celebrate as Elijah had instructed even though there was no sign of the rain they desperately needed. He also trusted Elijah's word to leave him there at Mount Carmel even though he had vanished from the king's control for three years before this.

Meanwhile, Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel to seek God's answer to end the drought. Elijah bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees in earnest prayer for God's deliverance from the curse. He told his servant to go and look toward the sea, but the servant returned telling Elijah there was nothing to see. Seven times Elijah asked the servant to go and look again, and each time there was the same response. But the seventh time the servant reported that, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."

With that news, Elijah had his servant rush to King Ahab with a message to hitch up his chariot and hurry towards home before the rain stopped him. Then the sky turned black with rain clouds, the winds got strong, and a heavy rain began to fall on the king's chariot. The power of the Lord came on Elijah and he tucked his coat into his belt and ran ahead of King Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

When the king told his wife, Jezebel what had happened on the mountain, and that Elijah had all the prophets of Baal killed, she was angry. Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to tell him that he would be killed by the next day. Elijah was afraid of this threat from the king's wife and he ran for his life.

When Elijah arrived in Beersheba he left his servant behind and went alone a day's distance to a remote area. There he sat down under a broom tree and prayed that God would let him die. God heard his prayer and knew that Elijah needed to be refreshed. Elijah laid down and fell asleep. Twice, an angel awakened Elijah and told him to eat a cake of bread baked over hot coals and drink a jug of water placed beside him. With rest and food Elijah traveled for 40 days and nights to Horeb, known as the mountain of God. He went into a cave there to spend the night. Elijah knew he needed to seek God's presence.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A promise given.**
 - A. The king complied.
 - B. The process began.
- II. **Seven prayers.**
 - A. Elijah's position.
 - B. The servants duty.
- III. **The answer came.**
 - A. The small cloud.
 - B. Message to the king.
- IV. **God's faithfulness forgotten.**
 - A. He fled in fear.
 - B. God restored him.

Activity

Students can cut large rain clouds on simple white paper. Then mix various colors of finger paint to color the cloud shape. Next use a stick to scratch out the verse or portion of the verse in the paint before it dries, or allow the cloud to dry and then write the verse on in dark marker color.

Teacher Growth

We can learn important things from the end of this lesson. Just like Elijah, no matter how great the victory we see God do, we need to be aware that the enemy will try to bring us down after that. We need to trust God, gather support from others, get plenty of sleep and eat well, to allow our body, thoughts, and emotions to become strong in Him after a big event.

Scripture Passages

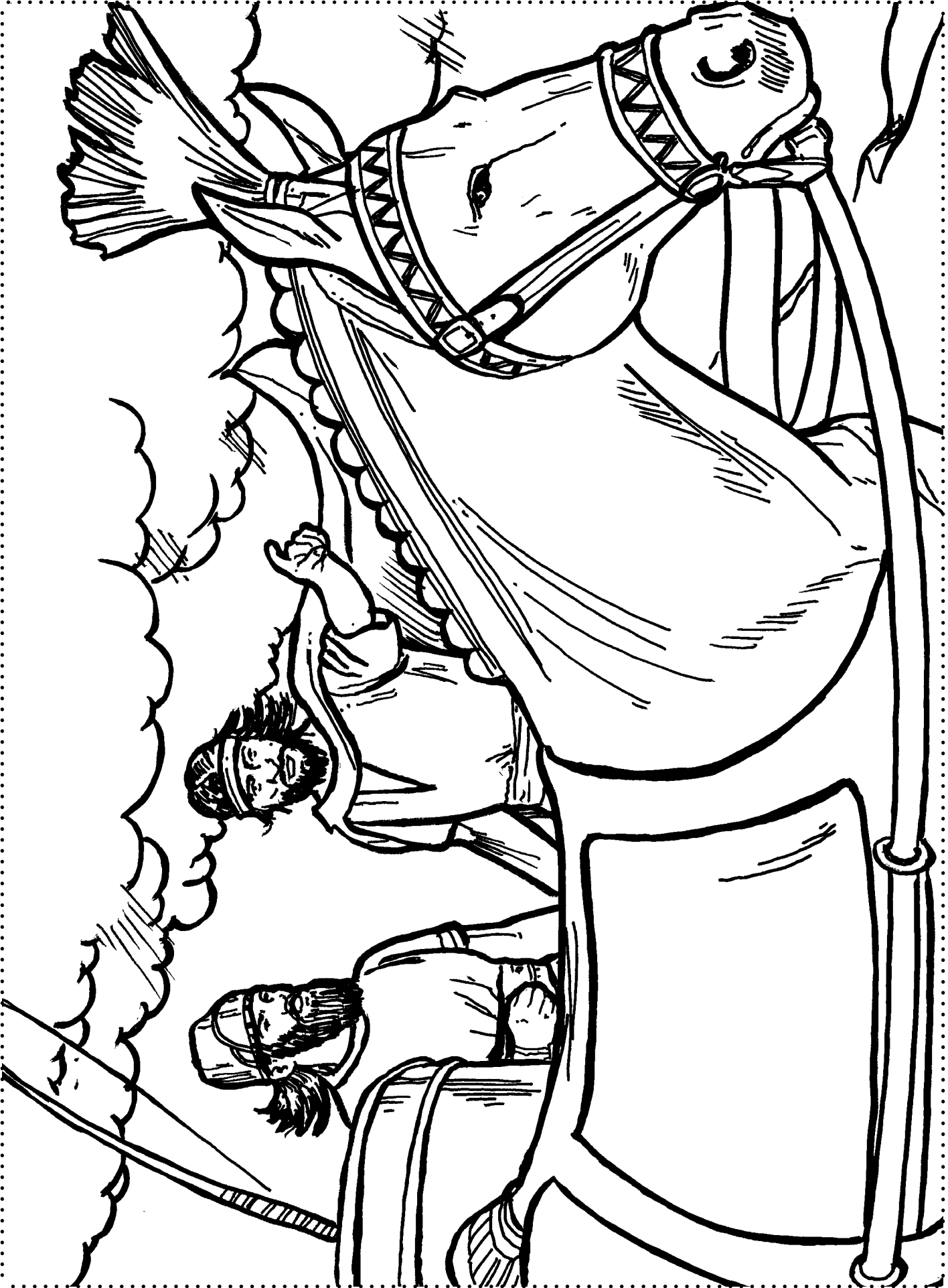
1 Kings 18:41-46; 19:1-9

Memory Verse

Psalm 118:6 *"The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*







The Mantel of Elijah 3-12-A

Today we will try to cover the main events from the end of Elijah's life. This prophet of God had run in fear from the threats of the king's wife, been refreshed by God, and then gone to Mount Horeb to seek God. On the mountain God asked Elijah why he had come, since it was not God that had directed his steps there. Elijah was afraid he was the only one left in the world that served God and he began to doubt that God was in control of everything.

God heard Elijah's plea to talk to Him in the cave where Elijah was waiting. God sent several signs of His power. First a terrible wind tore at the rocks on the mountain, next an earthquake shook the mountain, and then fire roared before the cave opening, but God was not speaking to Elijah in these ways. Finally a gentle whisper was heard by Elijah, and instantly he recognized the voice of the same powerful God speaking very personally to him as before. Elijah covered himself with his robe, came to the edge of the cave door, and listened as God explained the work ahead. God assured Elijah that there were still 7,000 others who served him and that it was time for Elijah to return to the tasks that God wanted him to do.

God had directed Elijah to anoint two kings and choose Elisha who was to be the next prophet. Elijah obeyed God and found Elisha working in the fields. Elisha was working with the twelfth pair of his family's oxen. Elijah walked up to Elisha and threw his cloak around him. This meant that he was asking Elisha to be his follower, the future prophet of God.

Elisha asked if he could kiss his parents goodbye and Elijah allowed him this farewell. Elisha then killed his pair of oxen and burned the plow to cook the meat and enjoy a final feast with his family and friends. Then Elisha left with Elijah to learn how to be God's next prophet.

When it was time for Elijah to be taken to heaven Elisha was determined to see it happen. Elijah tested Elisha several times but Elisha stayed right at Elijah's side. When the two came to the Jordan River men watched as Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water with it. The water rolled back on both sides and they crossed on dry ground.

On the other side of the Jordan Elijah asked Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah said this was a difficult request, but if Elisha saw him going into heaven he would receive his request. Suddenly a chariot and horses of fire appeared and Elisha was drawn up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw it and cried out as Elijah disappeared. After Elisha tore his clothes in mourning he picked up the cloak that Elijah had dropped.

Elisha returned to the Jordan and using Elijah's cloak he struck the water. God miraculously parted the water again. The men from Jericho saw the same power of God work for Elisha. They bowed before him showing the respect a prophet received. Elisha was now the prophet of God who would do God's work.

Teacher's Notes

- I. He heard God's voice.**
 - A. His presence demonstrated.
 - B. Elijah not alone.
- II. On a mission.**
 - A. Men to be anointed.
 - B. Elisha chosen.
- III. Taken to heaven.**
 - A. Tasks completed.
 - B. A promise given.
- IV. The next generation.**
 - A. The powerful symbol.
 - B. The people's respect.

Activity

Students can make a long mural about today's lesson. Divide the story into small parts since there were many different events in this passage of Scripture. Have one or two students draw their individual segment of the story on a single sheet of paper. After each segment is completed, attach them in a long row to put the mural in place.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson is a good example of many segments or parts of a story all flowing into one lesson. Some students may need help to remember all the events and then to be able to place them in order of their occurrence. Sequencing skills need to be developed in younger students and today's activity is one way to build that skill.

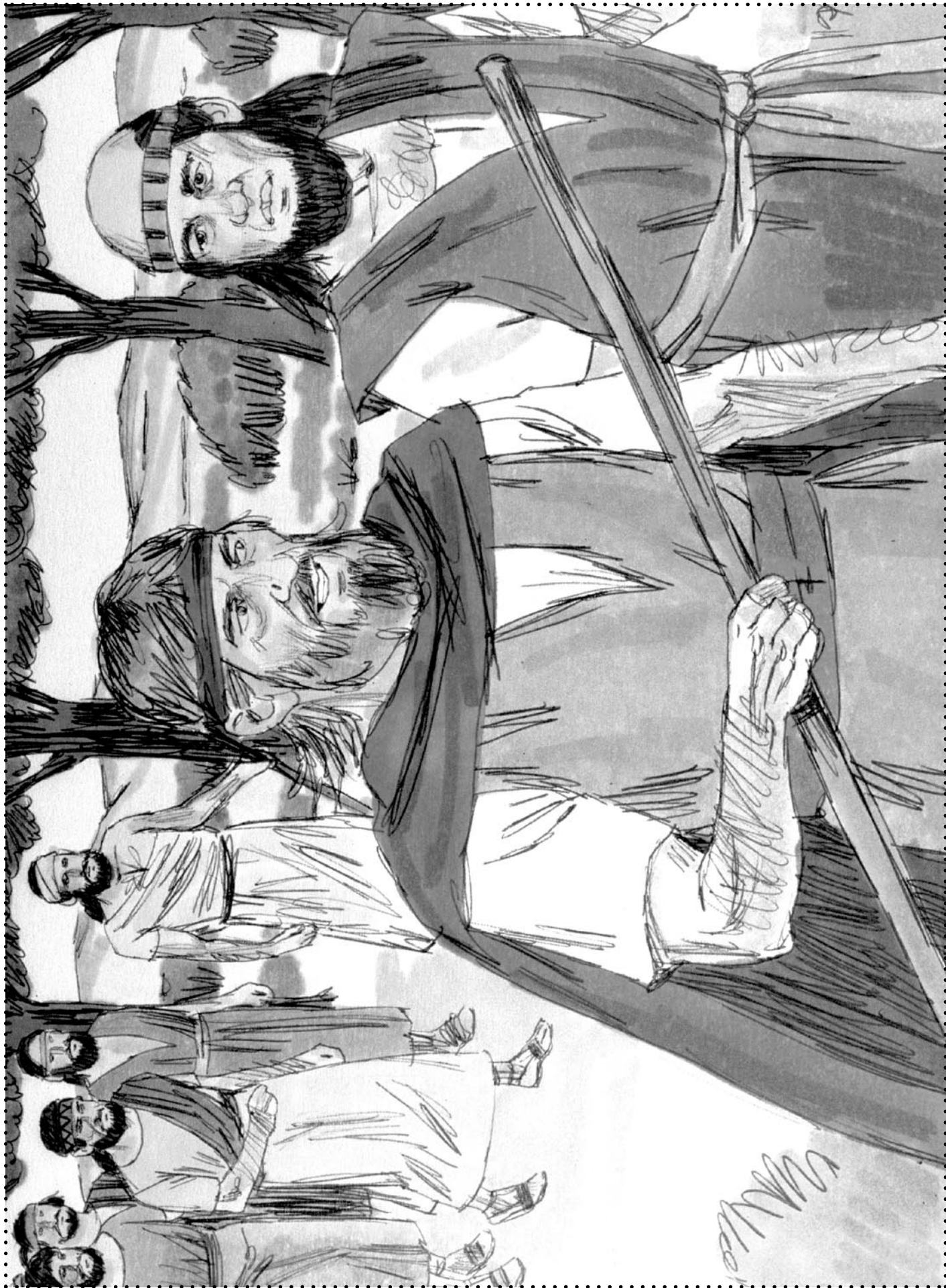
Scripture Passages

1 Kings 19:9-21; 2 Kings 2:1-17

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:58 *"I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise."*







www

The Widow's Oil

3-13-A

Elisha was the prophet of God that had followed after his teacher, Elijah. God had reminded Elijah that there were 7,000 followers of God that had never bowed to false gods. Near Elisha lived a group of men that served as prophets to God and lived lives of obedience to God's commands.

One of these men died, leaving a widow and two sons to survive in a difficult world. Suffering under extreme financial strain, the widow cried out to Elisha for help. She explained, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." It was common in those days for creditors to take children away from a home as slaves to pay off family debts. It was also necessary for a widow to depend on her sons to provide for her livelihood, so losing them would be disastrous.

Elisha heard her plea and understood her need. He turned to the widow and asked her how he could help her. Before she could respond, he also asked her what resources she had available in her home. The widow admitted she had nothing at home, other than a little bit of oil. Elisha instantly gave her some directions to follow that would call for her to use from what she had and to be obedient.

Elisha told the widow to go around to all her neighbors and ask them for empty jars. He specifically told her not to ask for a few, but to gather as many as she could. Then she was to go inside her home with her sons and shut the door. God was going to do a personal miracle for her, not put on a public show for the community. Then he directed the widow to pour oil into all the jars and when each one was filled to set it aside and continue.

The widow obeyed all of Elisha's orders and after her sons had gathered all the neighbors empty jars they pulled the doors shut on their home as they went inside to see the miracle. The widow and her sons must have wondered what God was going to do with all those empty jars when they only had a little bit of oil. The widow began pouring oil into the first jar and when it was full she asked her sons to hand her another jar. She continued to pour oil into each jar until her sons said there were no more empty jars. Then the oil stopped flowing.

The widow went to tell Elisha what had happened, and he told her to take the jars of oil and sell them to pay her debts. Then the widow and her sons were able to pay the debts and live on the oil that was left over. God had helped her pay the bills and provided a means for them to continue living debt-free.

Teacher's Notes

- I. A great need.**
 - A. The widow's debts.
 - B. The threatened price.
- II. A cry for help.**
 - A. Elisha's questions.
 - B. Few resources.
- III. An answer given.**
 - A. Gathered jars.
 - B. The door was shut.
- IV. God provided.**
 - A. The oil flowed.
 - B. The debts were paid.

Activity

Students can create simple jars out of clay. A small version of a clay jar will remind students of God's miraculous provision. If clay is too costly you may consider having a guest visit your class to demonstrate pottery making skills.

Teacher Growth

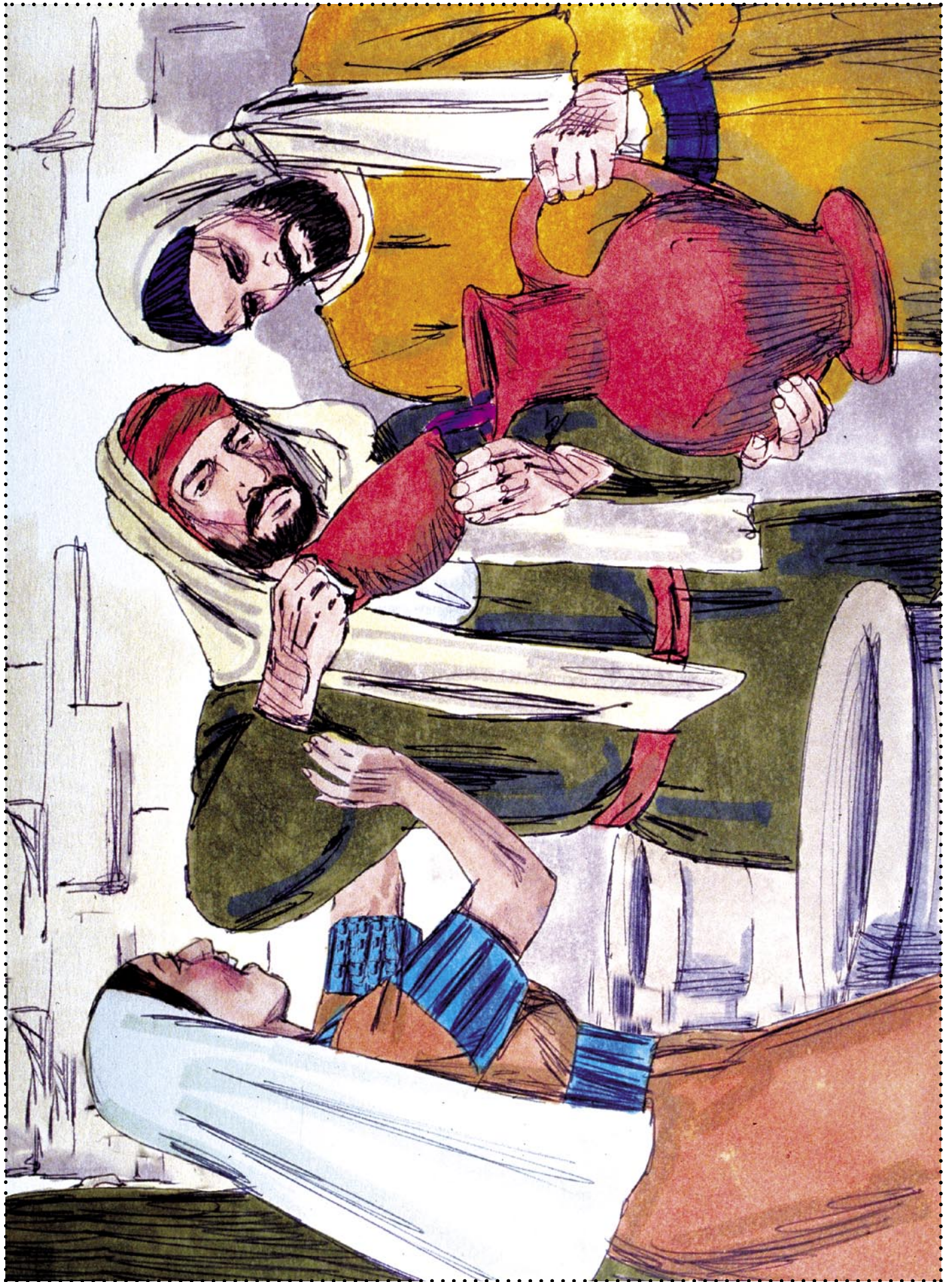
Knowing your students helps you understand their reaction to lessons and the application of biblical principles. Today's lesson may strike some students very differently because they can relate to the widow, the sons without a father, the financial difficulty, or the cry for help in a very impossible situation. Do you know your students?

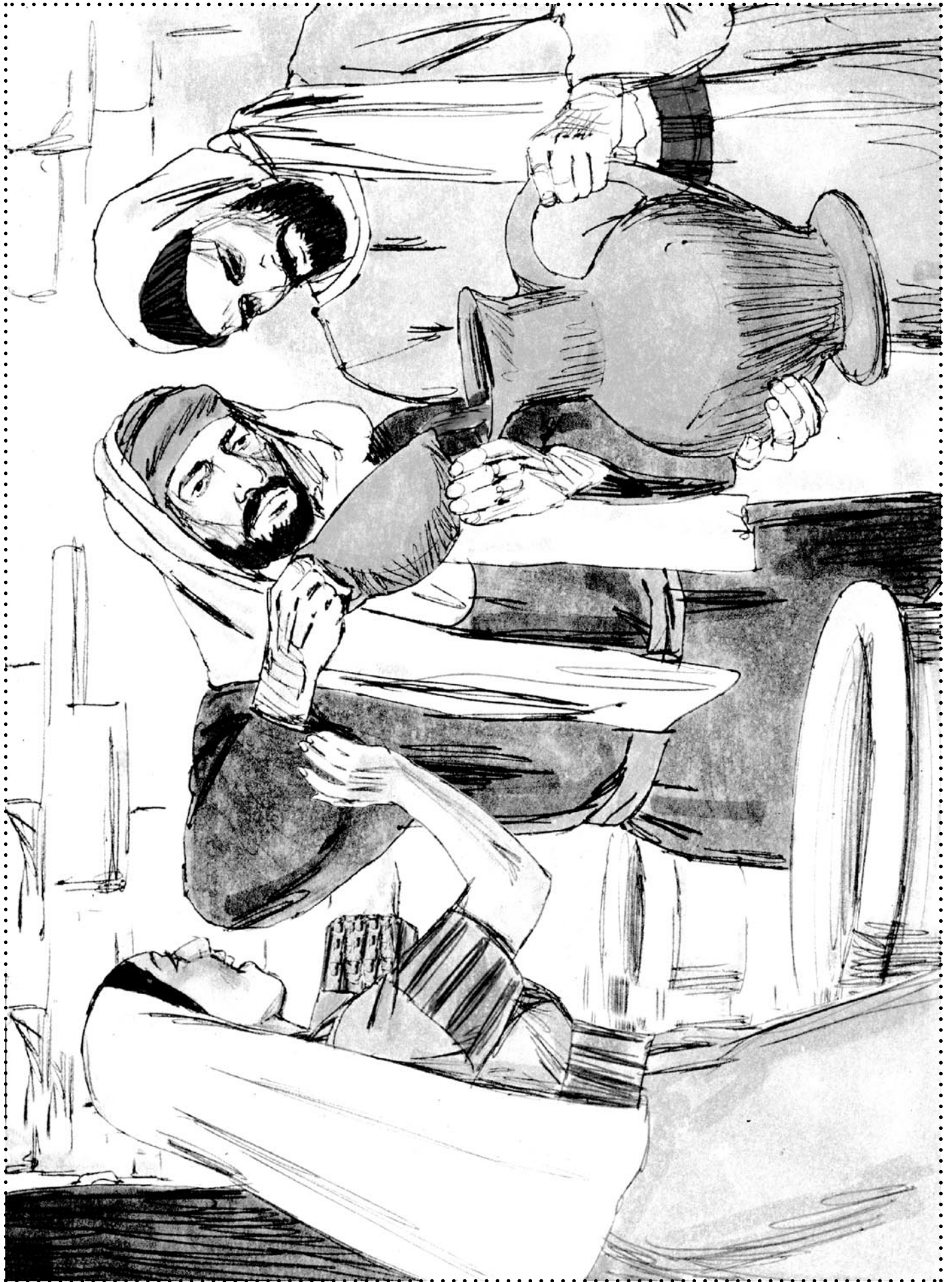
Scripture Passages

2 Kings 4:1-7

Memory Verse

Psalm 68:5 "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."







The Shunammite Woman 3-14-A

Elisha often traveled through a town called Shunem where a wealthy woman and her husband showed him honor. This couple would invite the prophet Elisha in for meals. One day the woman told her husband that Elisha was surely a man of God and she wanted to build a place for him to stay when he was in town. So they built him a small room on their roof.

One day Elisha was resting when he asked his servant, Gehazi, to get the woman. Elisha thanked her again for building the special room for him and asked if there was anything he could do to show his gratitude. He offered to speak to the king or commander of the army for her, but she told Elisha they were content and not in need of any favors.

Then Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son and her husband is old." Immediately Elisha called the woman again. When she stood in Elisha's doorway he said, "About this time next year you will hold a son in your arms." The woman was shocked by such a wonderful blessing. In those days if a woman did not have a son when her husband died all of their property would be taken, she would have no way to make a living, and the family name would be lost. Elisha's gift of asking God to bless her with a son meant she would be cared for in the future.

The following year the woman gave birth to a son. The boy grew and one day he went out to his father in the field with pain in his head. The father had a servant carry the boy back to the house. His mother held the boy on her lap until noon, when he suddenly died. The woman went up and laid him on Elisha's bed, shut the door, and went out.

The woman told her husband that she needed a donkey and a servant to help her go quickly to the man of God and return. The husband was surprised since this wasn't a normal day to visit Elisha, but he complied. She told the servant leading her donkey to hurry to Mount Carmel.

When Elisha saw the woman coming he sent his servant ahead to ask if everyone was all right. The woman said all was well, but she wanted to speak with Elisha. When she arrived, she held onto Elisha's feet. The servant tried to pull her away, but Elisha realized she was in great distress.

The woman said she had never asked Elisha for a son, but now she was overwhelmed by grief. The prophet commanded his servant to take his staff and run to the woman's house to lay it on the boy's face. This would represent his presence as Elisha prayed. Gehazi ran and then returned saying that the boy was still dead. The woman had waited with Elisha, certain that he who had brought her the blessing of a son would be the one to seek God until he was restored.

When Elisha reached the woman's house he went up to his room, closed the door, and prayed. Then he got on the bed and laid on the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands. The boy began to grow warm and Elisha got up continuing to pray. Then Elisha got upon the boy again until the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. The boy lived and the woman's faith grew from Elisha's answered prayers.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A welcome place.**
 - A. Meals provided.
 - B. A room built.
- II. **A blessing given.**
 - A. The question posed.
 - B. A reply of hope.
- III. **His words were true.**
 - A. A son was given.
 - B. The boy grew.
- IV. **Her faith was tested.**
 - A. Sickness and death.
 - B. The prophet's response.

Activity

Students can create a model house out of a simple box. Using cut pieces of paper or clay have them design the special room on the roof that was built for Elisha. Look at the text again to add only the simple but necessary furnishings that the Bible says filled his room. This can also be done as a group or class project.

Teacher Growth

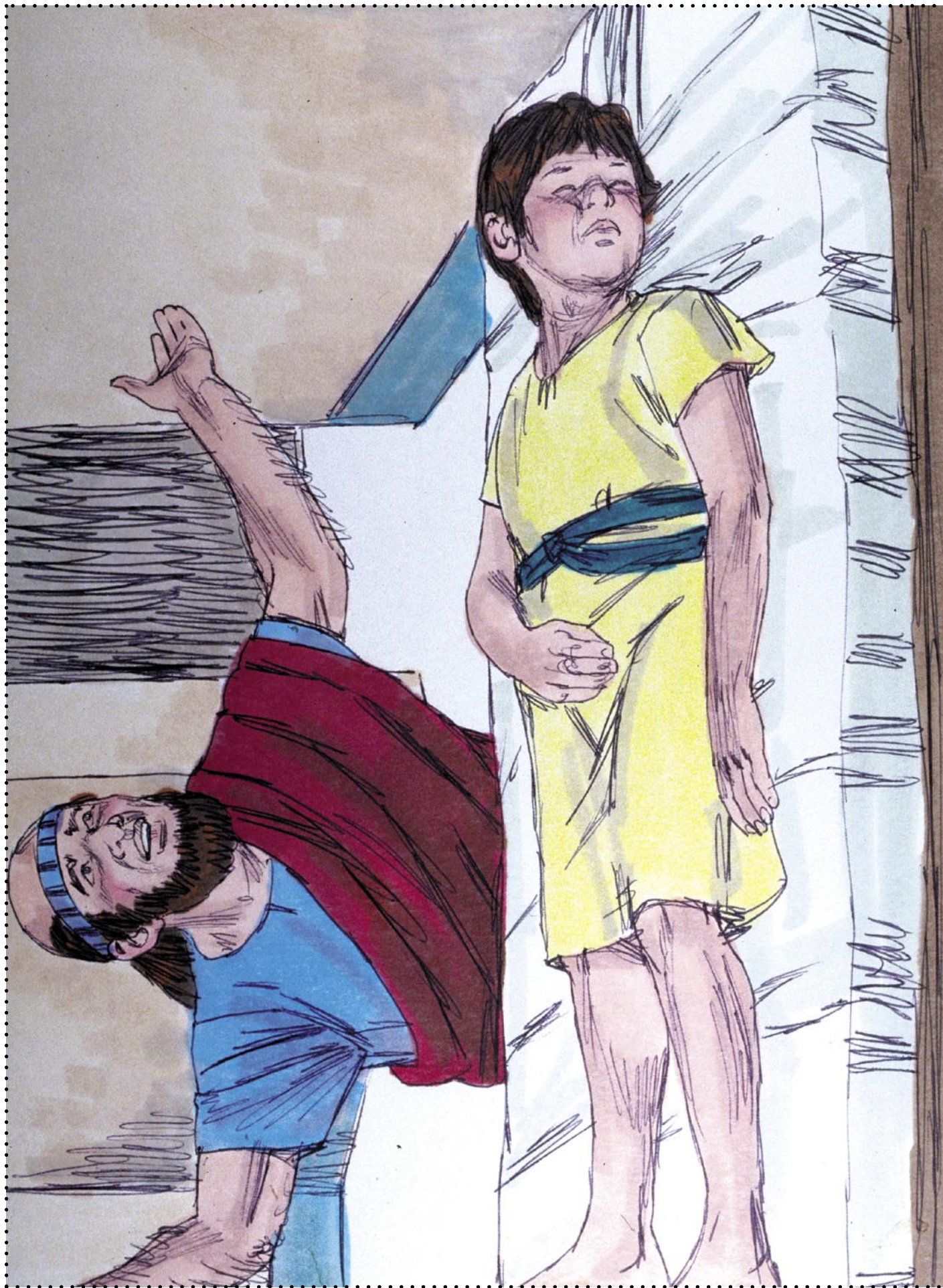
It is important for you to maintain a strong devotional life aside from your Bible lesson preparations. The extra study you do to prepare for your class is enriching, but it should not take the place of your own study of God's Word. Every believer needs to develop a daily habit of learning from God's Word, and they will see that in your example.

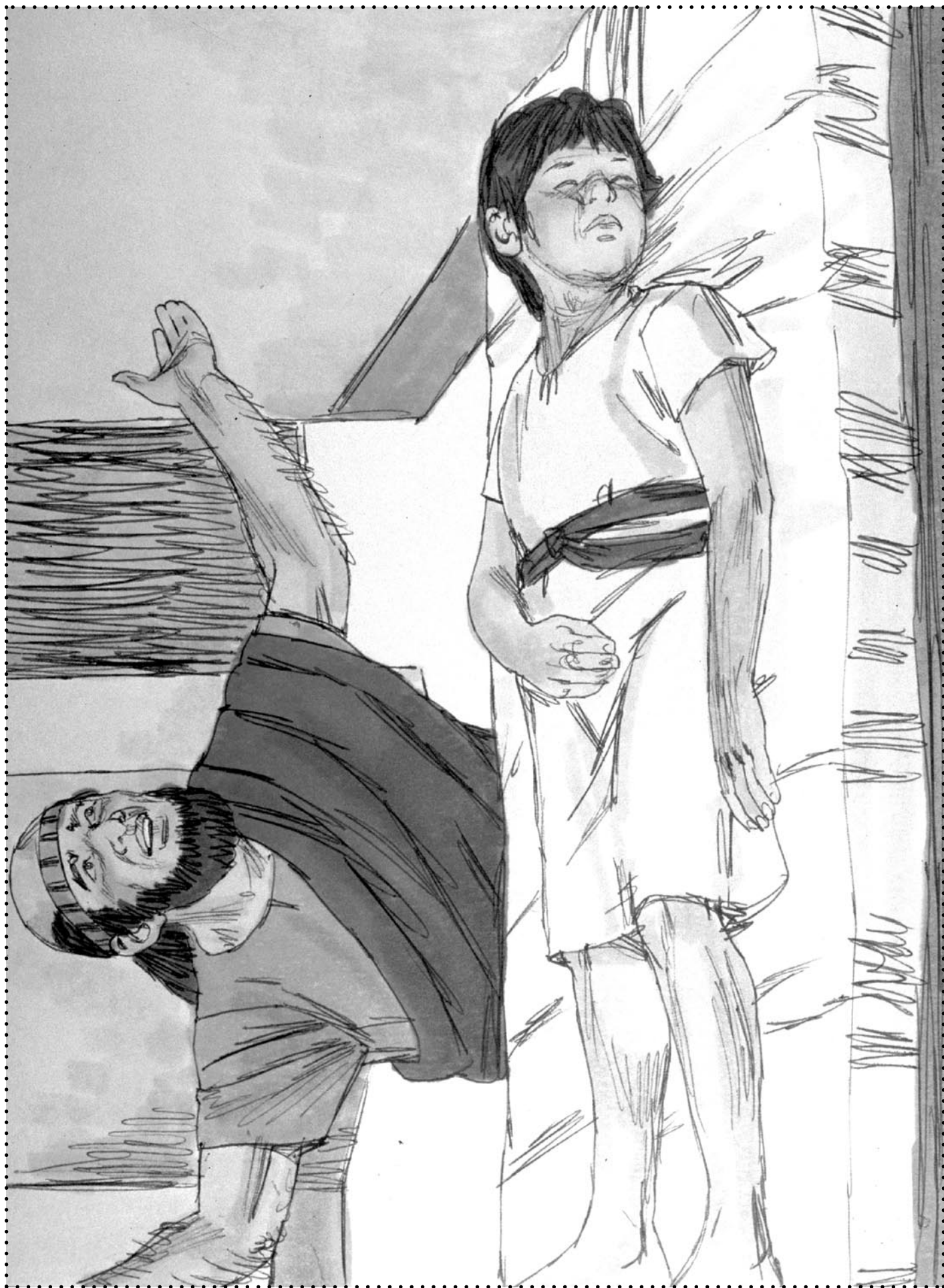
Scripture Passages

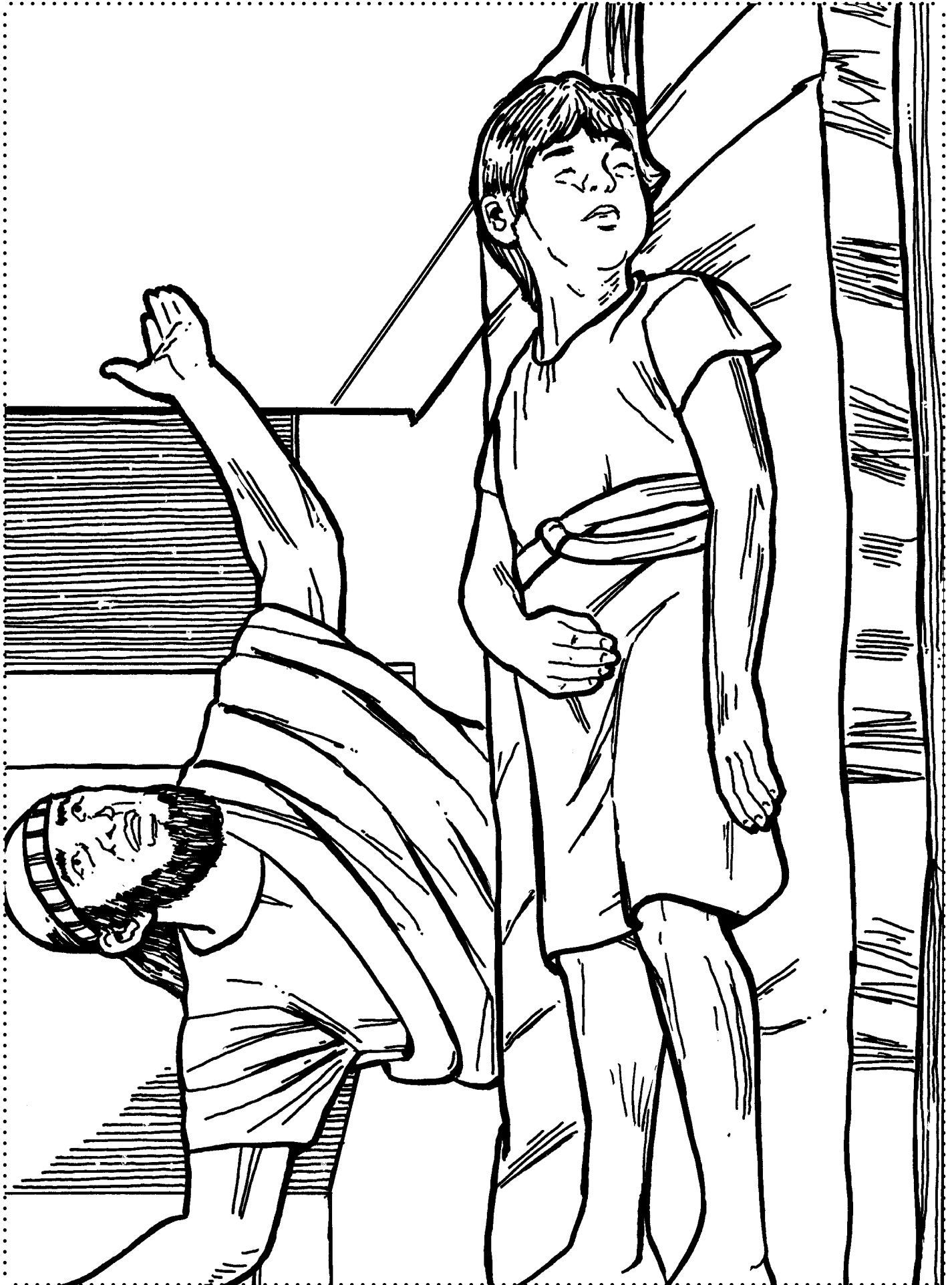
2 Kings 4:8-37

Memory Verse

Psalm 116:5 "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion."







Naaman, the Leper 3-15-A

Naaman was the commander of King Aram's army. He led the army that God sent to punish the people of Israel and took many of God's people back to his country as slaves. This mighty soldier was strong and famous but he had a terrible disease called leprosy.

A young girl, taken captive from Israel, served Naaman's wife. When this little servant girl saw the leprosy on Naaman she said, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." When Naaman heard this he went to the King of Aram and told him what the girl from Israel had said.

The King of Aram sent Naaman to the King of Israel with gifts and a letter that read, "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy." The king of Israel tore his robes when he read the letter because he thought the enemy king was trying to trick him into a battle. Elisha, the prophet of God heard about the king's anger and quickly sent a message to him. He told the king to send Naaman to him so that they would all know there was a real prophet of God in Israel.

So Naaman went to the house of Elisha. Elisha sent a messenger to the door to tell him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." Instead of obeying, Naaman went away angry since Elisha sent a message to him instead of coming to the door in respect. He was angry that Elisha had not instantly healed him. He could not accept that he was told to go to water in Israel, instead of the waters in his own land.

Naaman continued to suffer from the leprosy and his servants finally went to him. They convinced Naaman that if the prophet had told him to do something difficult he would have been quick to obey, but that since his command had been so simple Naaman allowed that to keep him from his healing. Naaman finally went to the Jordan to dip in the water seven times, and after the seventh time he was healed.

Naaman returned to Elisha's home and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel." Naaman offered gifts to Elisha but Elisha refused to accept them because God had done the miracle. Naaman asked for a wagon full of dirt for he planned to take it home to worship Israel's God on Israel's soil.

After Naaman had gone, Elisha's servant Gehazi thought about the money and gifts that Elisha had not accepted. Gehazi hurried after Naaman and when Naaman saw the servant he stopped and asked if there was a problem. Gehazi told a lie about two guests arriving at Elisha's house that needed clothes and money. Naaman was happy to give the servant gifts and asked his servants to carry them back for Gehazi. When they neared Elisha's home Gehazi hid the gifts.

Gehazi went in and Elisha asked him where he had been. Gehazi lied, saying he had not gone anywhere. Elisha told Gehazi that he would be punished for the lies and for accepting payment for God's miracle by leaving with Naaman's leprosy and passing it to all his descendants.

Teacher's Notes

I. Commander of the army.

- A. Enemy leadership.
- B. A man with a need.

II. A faithful servant girl.

- A. Her message of hope.
- B. The angry king.

III. The prophet's answer.

- A. Refusal to obey.
- B. Obedience and healing.

IV. Greed for goods.

- A. The servant's request.
- B. The curse of leprosy.

Activity

Students can create stick figures of the lesson's characters to reenact the story. Use twigs for the body and glue on the clothes that the students can draw, color, and cut from paper. Scraps of cloth may also be available or you may design the cutouts to fold at the shoulders so they slip over the cross-shaped twigs that are tied together.

Teacher Growth

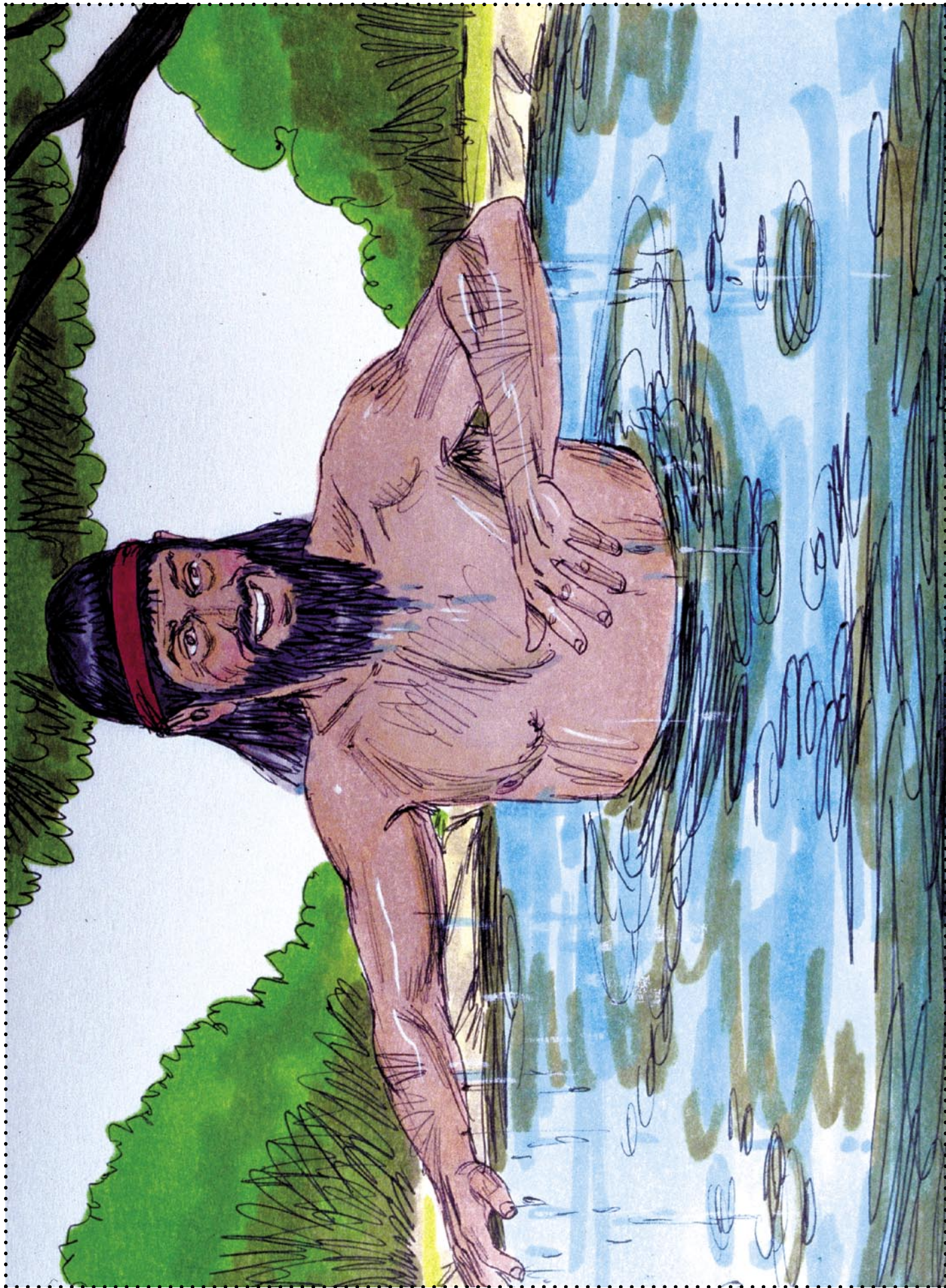
Have every part of your lesson time planned out and ready before the class begins. If a teacher has to search for supplies or try to get the next part of class planned the students will become unruly and realize that you have not taken the time to prepare for them. The best way to maintain order in the class is to have a well prepared teacher.

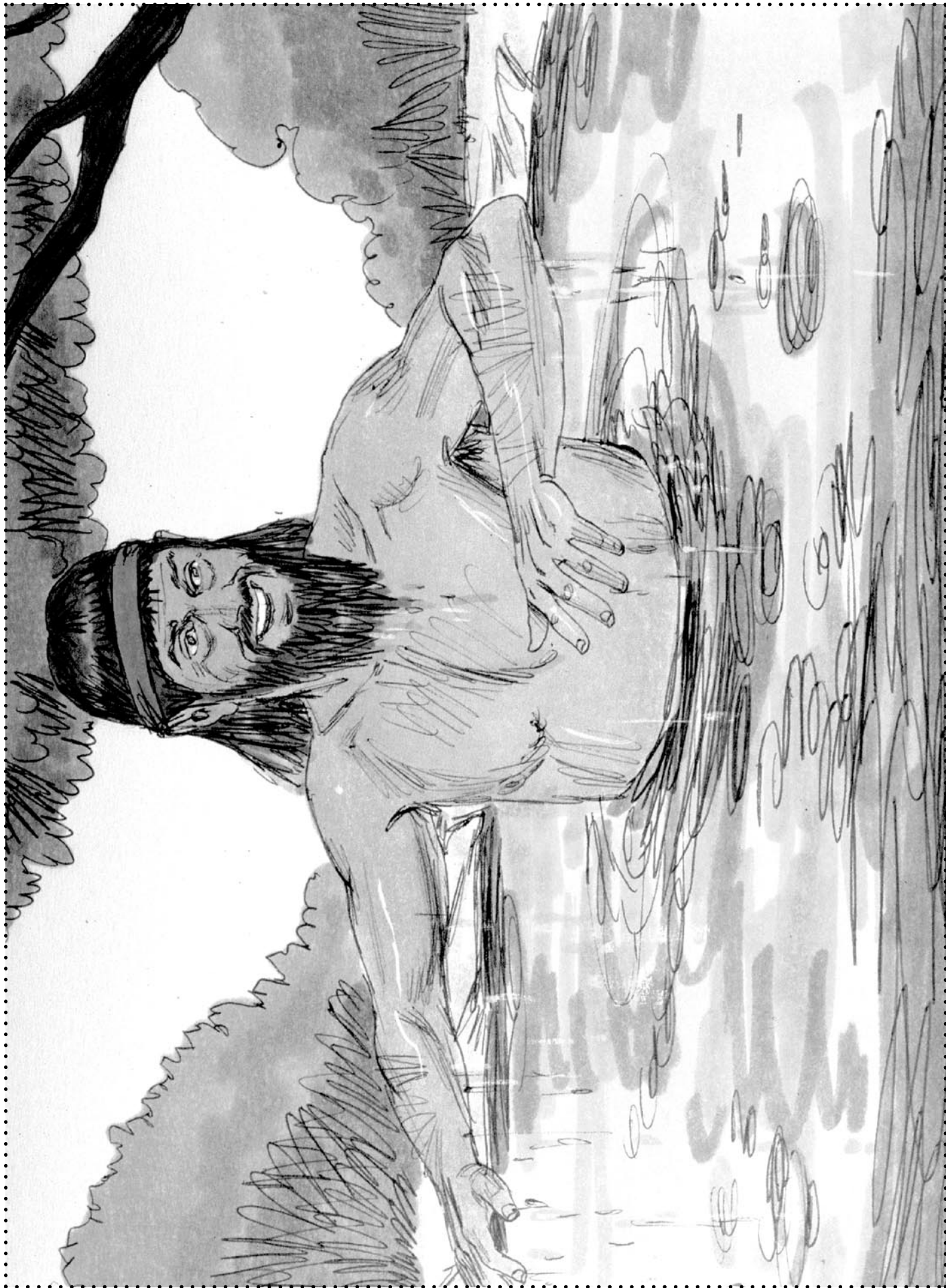
Scripture Passages

2 Kings 5

Memory Verse

Psalm 103:2-3 *"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases."*







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The Axhead that Floated 3-16-A

A company or group of prophets would meet together with Elisha to pray and seek God. Elisha was the main prophet of God in Israel, but it was common to have several schools of prophets being trained in the Scripture and prayer that would receive instruction from Elisha. One day this group of men came to Elisha with the problem that the place where they were meeting was too small. They told Elisha that they planned to go to the Jordan River to gather poles to build a new place. Elisha told them, "Go."

Then one of the prophets asked, "Won't you please come with your servants?" Elisha agreed to go with them and they headed to the Jordan. The men walked together to the site along the Jordan River where they could cut the poles they needed for the new building.

As the men began chopping down trees a sudden accident took place. The iron axhead fell off its handle and into the water. The deep and muddy water made it impossible to find. The man cried out, "Oh, my lord, it was borrowed!" An iron axhead was a very costly tool that a prophet in training could never afford. The young man knew that he could never repay the man for this borrowed axhead that was now gone. It would have been lawful for the young man to go to the man who had owned the axhead and submit to him as a bondservant to work for many years to repay for the lost axhead. This would mean leaving the life of prophetic schooling.

Elisha heard the cry and understood the desperate situation. He knew the need of the young man instantly and stepped forward to show them God's faithful care. Elisha asked the young man, "Where did it fall?" When he pointed to the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into that place in the river. The iron axhead floated to the surface attached to the stick. Then Elisha told the young man to lift it out of the water. The entire company of prophets witnessed a miracle that only God could do.

This is one of the many miracles that the prophets saw Elisha perform. They saw firsthand that nothing is impossible with God. Among others, Elisha healed the water (2 Kings 2:19-22); the land was filled with water (3:15-20); he healed the stew (4:38-41); bread was multiplied (4:42-44). Each one of these miracles is living proof that God is interested in all aspects of our daily life.

As we noted in another lesson, Elisha did the first miracle immediately after God took Elijah to Heaven. Picking up Elijah's cloak, he struck the water of the Jordan River with it, saying: "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" The water divided to the right and to the left, and Elisha crossed over. When the prophets in Jericho saw this, they said: "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." That's true! God made his Spirit rest on Elisha, and manifested his power through him, just like he had done with Elijah.

Likewise, as God was with the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and helped them do miracles, God is with everyone that follows His commands and serves Him. God can do much more for you than to make an axhead float!

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The need to build.**
 - A. A place too small.
 - B. A plan to enlarge.
- II. **The invitation.**
 - A. Sent by Elisha.
 - B. Elisha to come along.
- III. **The work began.**
 - A. Cutting trees.
 - B. The fallen axhead.
- IV. **The need for help.**
 - A. A borrowed tool.
 - B. The miraculous recovery.

Activity

Students will grasp a greater understanding of today's lesson after viewing a real example of an axhead. Let them feel the weight and then drop it into a bucket of water. Observe how floating is impossible and then discuss how our God can do the impossible and we call it a miracle.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson clearly speaks of the impossible and the entrance of miracles in our world. Students may not work with axheads but you will need to help them apply this same miraculous work of God to the impossible situations they are in. Think about the seemingly hopeless things you or your students face and see how a miracle could change it all.

Scripture Passages

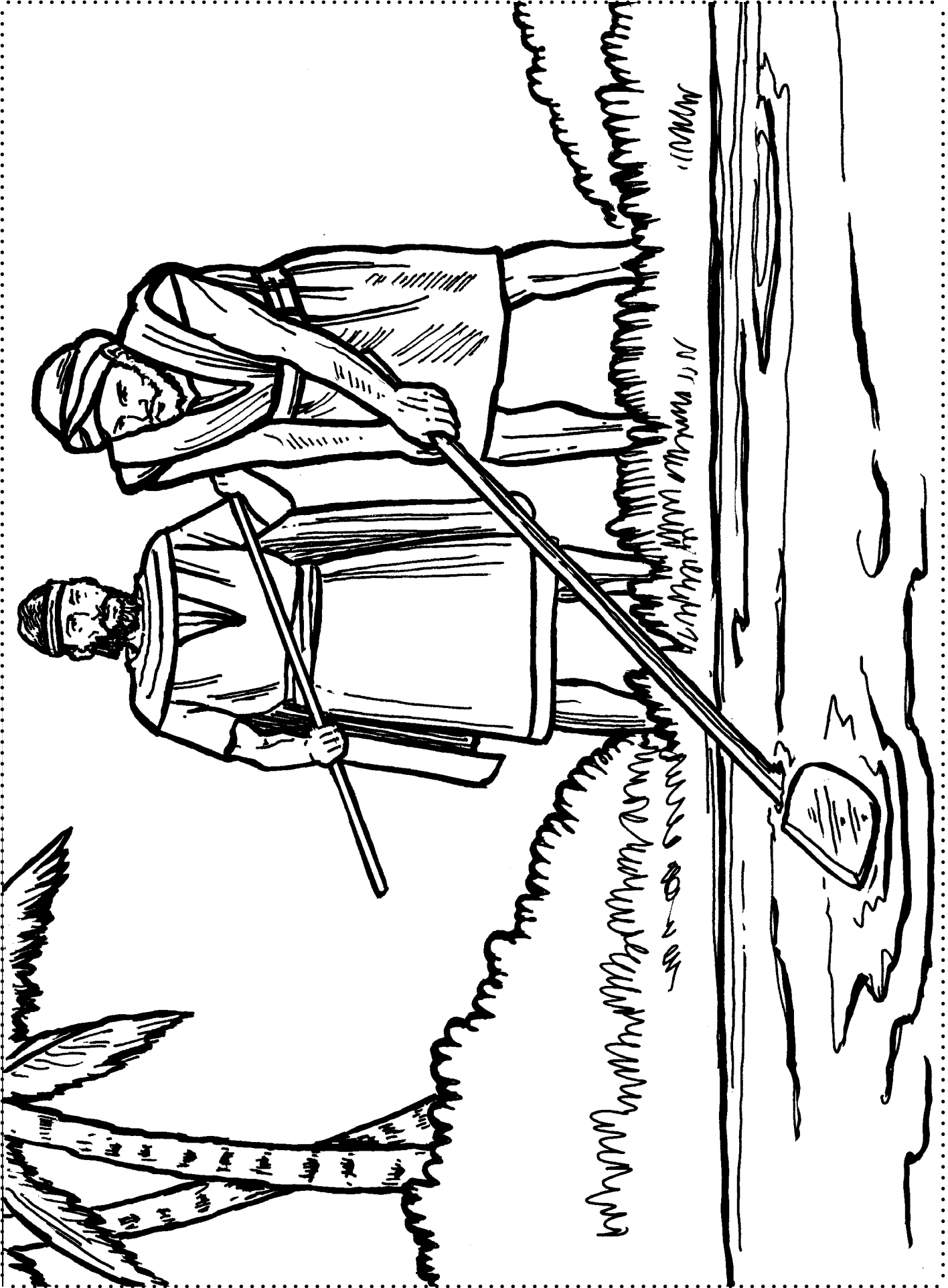
2 Kings 6:1-7; 2:13-15

Memory Verse

Mark 10:27 "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."







Good News for Samaria 3-17-A

King Aram led enemy forces against Israel and laid siege to the city of Samaria. The army surrounded the city and stopped anything from entering. The Bible says that the famine was so great that even the head of a donkey, the worst part of an unclean animal, sold for a high price.

One day the king of Israel was walking along the city wall when he heard a cry. He stopped and heard that one woman had killed her baby for food and her neighbor had agreed to kill her child next. Now the other woman refused to do the same. The king tore his robe in anger. He was angry that God was not helping them and he blamed the prophet Elisha, instead of admitting they were suffering for their disobedience to God. The king cried out a threat to cut off Elisha's head for the trouble they were in. The people noticed that the king had sackcloth on under his royal robes, trying to earn God's help by suffering, instead of obedience.

Elisha was at home talking with the elders of the city who usually met with the king. The king sent a messenger, but before he arrived Elisha told the elders that the king was sending a messenger to cut off his head. Elisha told them to close the door and not let the messenger in because the king would be coming right behind him. Just as Elisha said, the messenger was held at the door and the king arrived to say that this disaster was from the Lord and he did not want to wait for the Lord to rescue them.

Elisha then told them the Lord said, "About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria." The officer that the king leaned on told the prophet it was impossible, even if heaven itself poured down the supplies there would never be that much food. Elisha told him he would see it, but not eat because he had doubted God's word.

There were four leprosy men at the city gate who were dying without food. They decided to surrender to the Arameans in hopes of getting food. At dusk they found the camp empty. The Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses like a great army. They thought the Israelites had hired other nations to help them. The enemy left their camp and ran for their lives.

The lepers entered a tent and ate food and carried away all the silver, gold, and clothes. They went to another tent and hid the things they found. Then the four stopped and realized it was wrong not to tell the starving people in the city. So the lepers told the gatekeepers who reported this to the palace. But the king was afraid it was a trap. One officer convinced the king to send five men on horses to see if this was true. They could die there, but it would be no worse than starving.

The soldiers reported that the enemy had gone as far as the Jordan and the entire way had been littered with clothing and equipment dropped in hasty retreat. Then the people opened the gates, trampling the doubtful officer, and they plundered everything left behind by their enemy making food plentiful.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The enemy's control.**
 - A. A food crisis.
 - B. The king mourned.
- II. **The prophet threatened.**
 - A. Soldiers sent.
 - B. God's promise.
- III. **The lepers' discovery.**
 - A. The goods found.
 - B. Shared news.
- IV. **Just as God said.**
 - A. The enemy defeated.
 - B. Food provided.

Activity

Students can do an interview of one person from today's lesson. Pretend that one of the lepers is visiting your class and you will be able to ask him to tell you in his own words what happened that day. Encourage students to ask good questions and to listen carefully to hear the same details that they read about in the Bible account.

Teacher Growth

Today's activity is an example of making the story come alive in your class. Have a mature student or adult prepare ahead of time to come to your class for this interview. The "leper" could be dressed very simply and must have studied the Bible account to answer the questions correctly according to the Scripture.

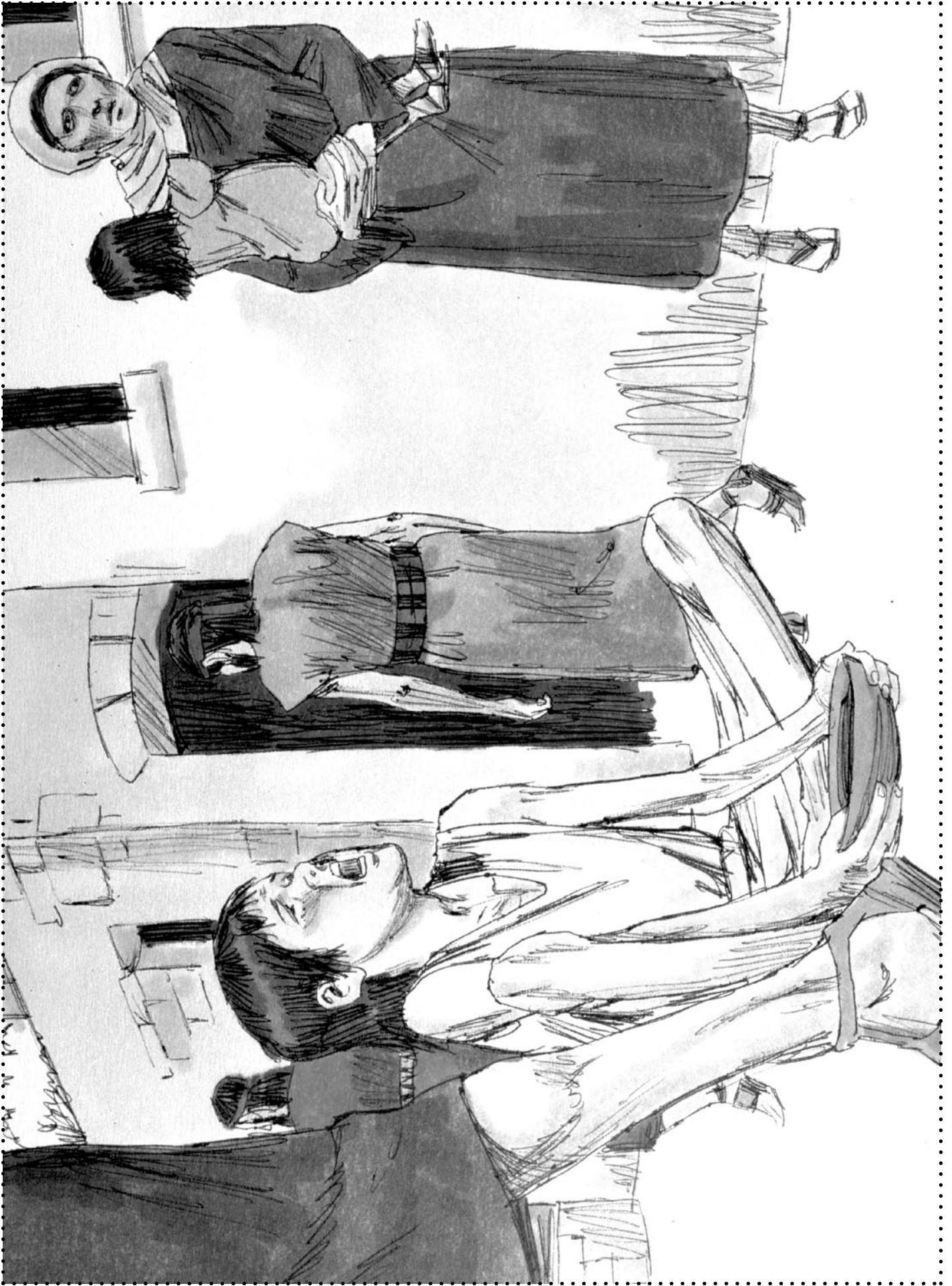
Scripture Passages

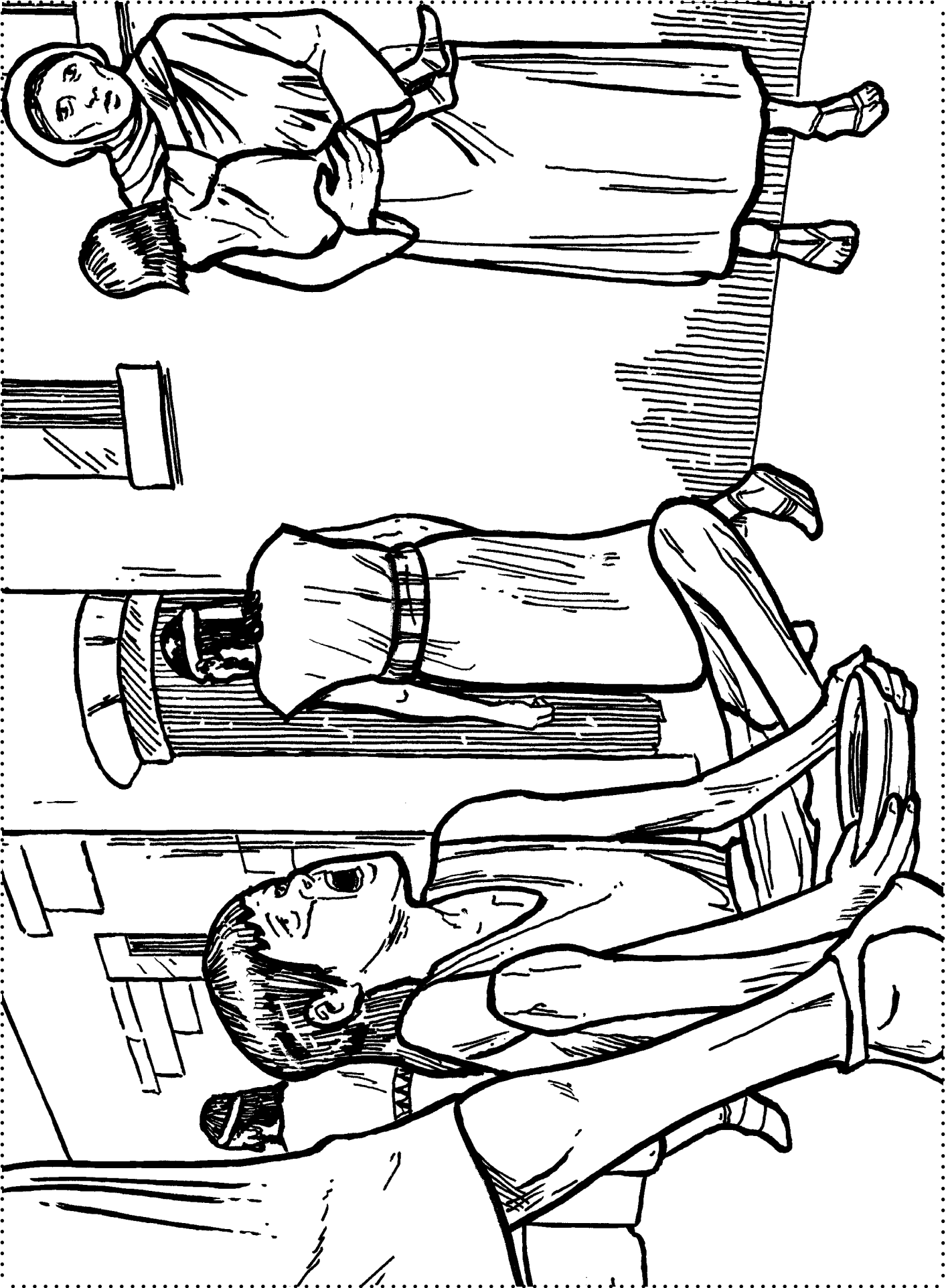
2 Kings 6:24—7:20

Memory Verse

Psalm 118:8 *"It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man."*







The Prophet Isaiah 3-18-A

Let's look at the Bible book of Isaiah and the prophet of God that wrote it. During the life of Isaiah there were four kings that ruled over Judah, the southern region of God's people. You can read more about the kings and their battles in both the northern region known as Israel and down in Judah in 1st and 2nd Kings and Chronicles. These books of the Bible provide historical records. The Book of Isaiah records the warnings and messages that God sent to His people through Isaiah, a prophet. The people of God allowed the nations around them to influence their beliefs and way of life. They turned away from the one true God and worshipped many of their neighbors' false gods. They built shrines to false gods, set up their own priests, and sacrificed their children in pagan worship.

God selected certain men called prophets to warn His people about their sin and to tell them how to return to the worship of God alone. Today's memory verse explains how Isaiah was willing to be used by God. Isaiah the prophet warned the kings and all the people of the punishment God would send if they continued in disobedience. Isaiah was known by all the people to be the one God had chosen to speak to them and he spoke directly to the king. The messages that Isaiah gave were called oracles and were for Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah spoke of their sin against God and the doom that was coming if they did not return to God's ways. He warned them of the Assyrian enemy that would defeat them just like the Northern kingdom of Israel. Even with these warnings God's people refused to turn from their sin and obey God.

The oracles of Isaiah the prophet are recorded in the Book of Isaiah. The book is divided into two main sections, chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66. The first part is filled with warnings and historical notes about the coming punishment against God's people. The first part is written in a strong and compact style and the second section is much more poetic with flowing passionate verses. Scholars today still marvel at the impact of this book upon the world. The influence of the warnings that were related to the sins of that age are timeless and accurate for today's world. The powerful words of punishment for the disobedient and the promises for the deliverance of the faithful still apply. Again God spoke through a prophet to deal with the concerns of the time and gave a vision of the future.

The actual content of Isaiah can be settled into two categories, warning and results for disobedience and the Almighty God revealed to mankind. Just as the first portion of the book deals with the threat of Assyria, the second part reveals the consequences of disobedience that lead to the rise of the Babylonian Empire and the lives of God's people in exile. Isaiah is a dramatic presentation of what will happen at the end of the age. We can read of the events that are yet to happen, as God used the prophet Isaiah to speak to generations yet to come.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. The reign of kings.
 - B. Disobedient people.
- II. **The prophet.**
 - A. A man of God.
 - B. A powerful position.
- III. **The book.**
 - A. Major parts.
 - B. Lasting influence.
- IV. **The message.**
 - A. People warned.
 - B. God revealed.

Activity

Students can create a simple timeline that will help them see the dates of prophets and the reigns of kings in both Israel and Judah. This information can be taken directly from Scripture or you may have access to a Bible commentary or resource that will provide the data. Use calculator paper or tape together thin strips that you've cut to form the timeline.

Teacher Growth

Today's memory verse is rather long and contains several parts. With young students you may select only the final part of the verse. For older students you may use the complete verse listed here or even additional verses before or after the verse. Consider the memorizing ability of the students and see that they understand what they memorize.

Scripture Passages

Isaiah

Memory Verse

Isaiah 6:8 *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"*







The Sufferings of Jeremiah 3-19-A

Jeremiah was a strong prophet from God and the biblical journal of his life and message gives us more information about this man than any other Old Testament prophet. Assyria had been the strongest nation against the people of God. They had been given victory over Israel and Judah as God used them to punish His people for disobedience. But as Assyria's power dwindled and Egypt could no longer provide the backing they needed, the Babylonian Empire began to rule that whole region.

During the reigns of various kings in Judah, a young man grew up in a small village just an hour's walk from Jerusalem. His father and other family members were priests, but Jeremiah was chosen by God to be His prophet. This young man was very open in his writings to reveal his inner thoughts and emotions. The words of warning from God often caused him to be hated by the people, even the priests and his own family. He was never allowed to marry and often lived with the rejection of people. At times he became deeply depressed or angry and at other times he almost sang of the goodness of God.

Reading through the book of Jeremiah we can follow the historical records of the kings and the conquering of nations. From the earliest response of Jeremiah to the call of prophesy, there are the warnings for God's people to reject the foreign gods they had begun following, to rid themselves of the immorality, and to return to biblical principles for life. Jeremiah had seen the reforms of the boy king Josiah who had desperately tried to turn people's hearts back to God. But Jeremiah warned people that outward acts were not what God wanted, but instead the hearts of the people needed to pursue God alone. Jeremiah began to warn them of the impending doom coming from the North that God would send to punish them for their disobedience.

The people tired of the prophetic warnings from Jeremiah. Instead of heeding his words they became angry as they watched the prophesy turn to reality. Babylon, the powerful nation to the North, began to overtake Assyria, Egypt, and finally Judah. The people became so hardened against Jeremiah's message of repentance and obedience that they decided to get rid of him. The men took Jeremiah to an old cistern, an empty, muddy well, and lowered him to the bottom by ropes. The men expected Jeremiah to die from hunger and the damp cold mud, and in this way they would quiet the voice of God. A foreigner that worked in the palace heard that Jeremiah was in the cistern and he had the prophet rescued. Jeremiah continued to spend periods of time in prisons but he never stopped speaking the words of prophesy that God gave him.

God's people refused to turn from evil and were taken into Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah watched his king and the people of God exiled and imprisoned, the fulfillment of God's words for the destruction of Jerusalem. The final word of God that Jeremiah brought forth was the message of God's great mercy and His covenant of love and forgiveness even to the disobedient.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. Assyria's decline.
 - B. The Babylonian threat.
- II. **The prophet.**
 - A. Growing up in a village.
 - B. A man of many moods.
- III. **The book.**
 - A. Historical records.
 - B. Constant warnings.
- IV. **The message.**
 - A. Reception by the people.
 - B. Prophecy fulfilled.

Activity

Arrange for a guest to visit your class acting as the prophet Jeremiah. Let the actor tell the students about the history and events that took place around him. Let him explain the messages God gave him and the way he was treated. The dramatic presentation of a Bible character is a great way to understand that it was real people dealing with real life.

Teacher Growth

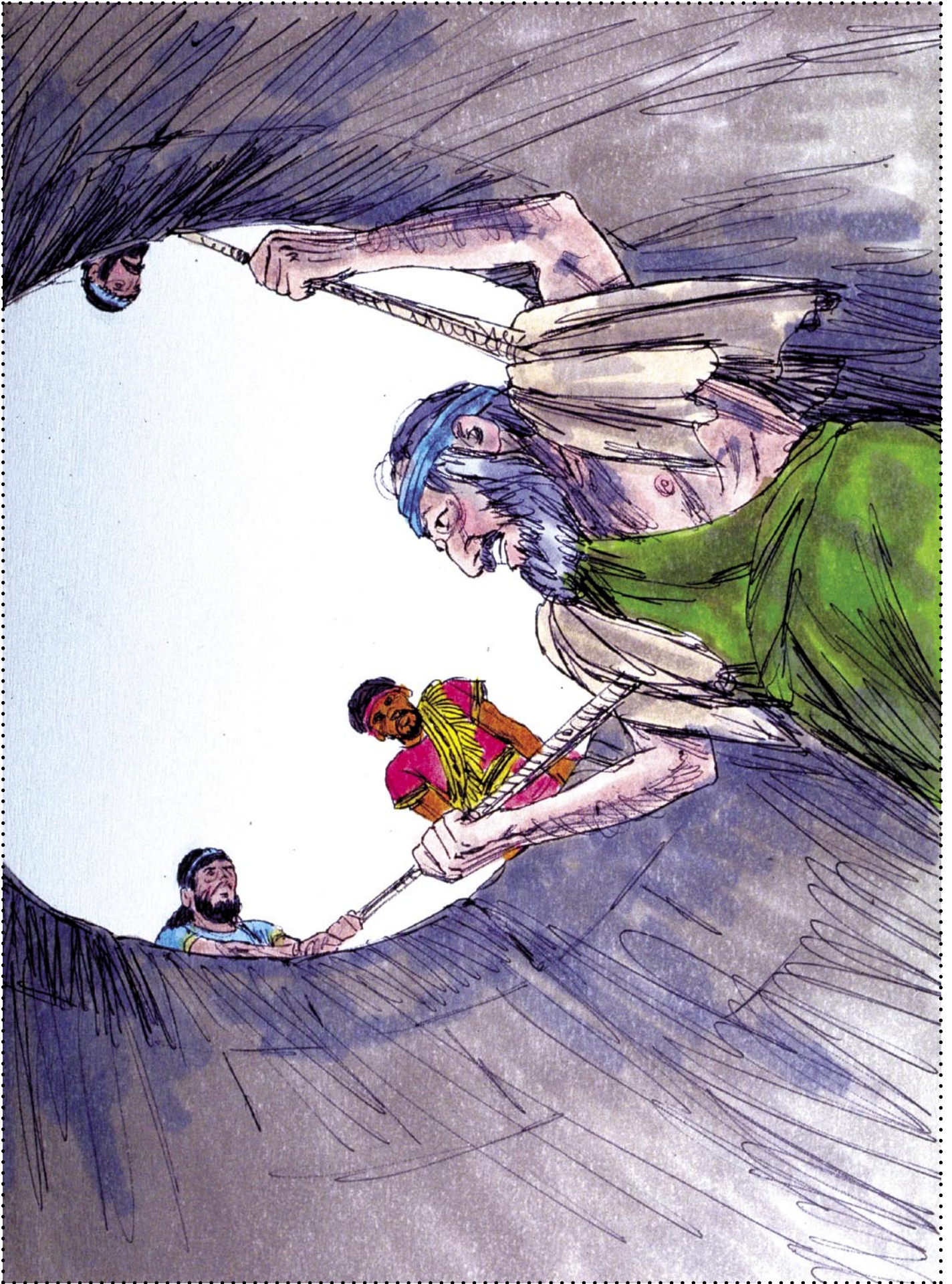
It is important that the memory verse be understood and that portions of the verse be selected according to the age and ability of the students. Younger children may only learn the first phrase, "The Lord is with me." Others will add the rest, "But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior." Older students can learn the verse in its entirety.

Scripture Passages

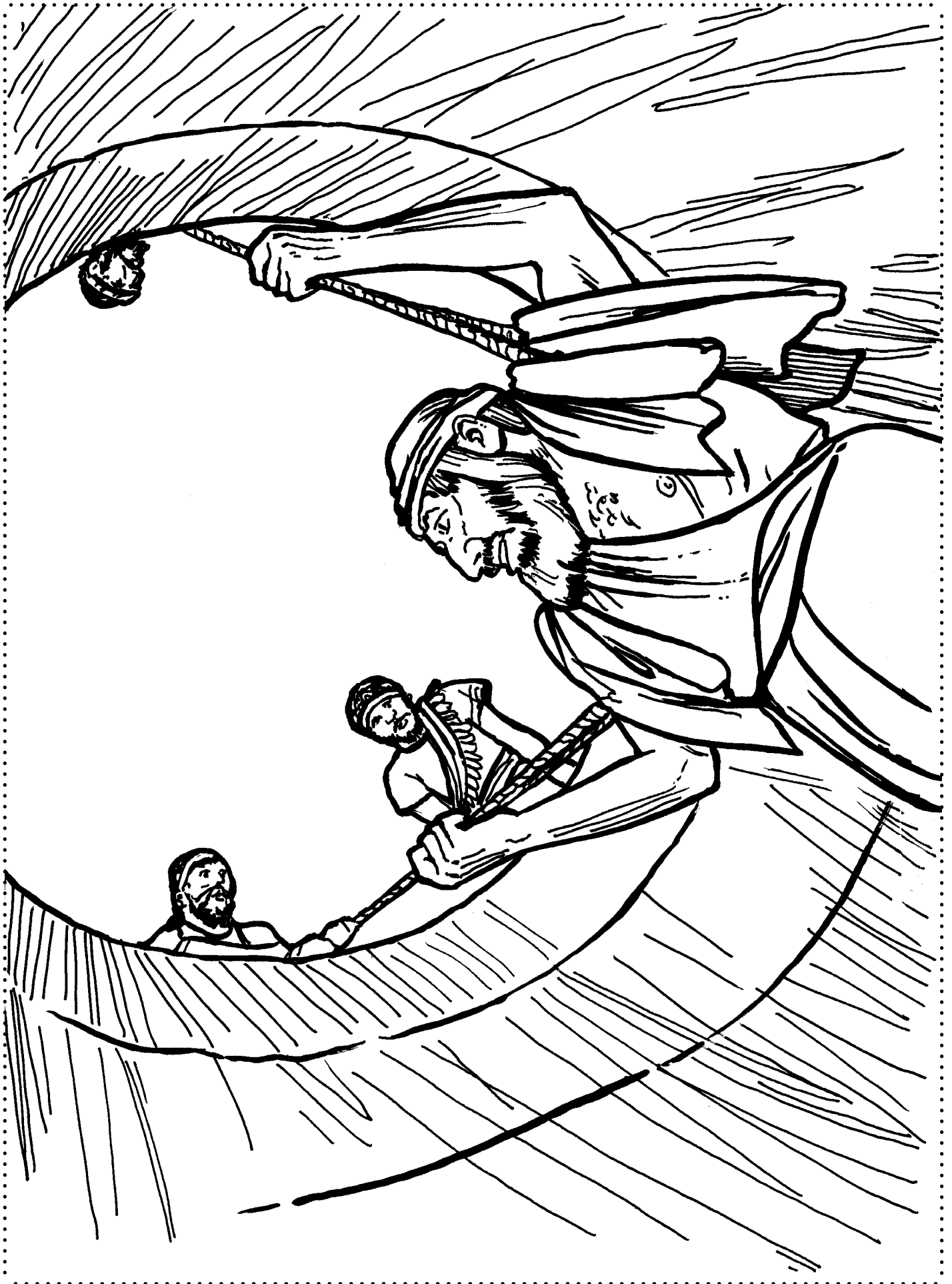
Jeremiah

Memory Verse

Jeremiah 20:11 *"But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten."*







God Talks to Ezekiel 3-20-A

The nation of Israel fell to the Assyrians and Judah, which included Jerusalem, also faced the overwhelming strength of its enemies. For seven years God used a man named Ezekiel to speak to His people about the future. Soon Assyria, even with the help of Egypt, fell to the dominance of the great power from the North, Babylon. For a period of time Jerusalem was subject to Babylon and the men in charge paid tribute to remain in their homeland. But after several attempts at rebellion, Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem and the city God chose for His temple was captured and burned. Even after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel continued as a prophet for 15 years in captivity.

Ezekiel was raised in a priestly family and it was during his time as a Babylonian prisoner that God called him to be a prophet. Ezekiel was married and even though he lived in his own home under enemy rule he was fairly free to live a normal life. This man was well educated and knowledgeable about history, culture, and ship building. He was also very familiar with the priestly duties and the temple in Jerusalem. Since these people were taken far from the temple of God Ezekiel continued to teach the people about the laws that God had given. He even provided clear plans for the future rebuilding of the temple and the priests who would serve there after God's rescue.

The book of Ezekiel has the most detailed historical records of any of the Bible's prophetic books. The events can be linked with other Bible books as well as historical accounts. The book constantly repeats the theme of God sovereignly at work in the world. All three major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, have the same basic message. Each contains oracles, or warnings for Israel, warnings for other nations, and then a future hope for Israel. The book contains 4 visions, 12 symbolic acts, and 5 parables. Ezekiel is filled with the repetition of people coming to God, in chapters 1-24 through the fall of Jerusalem, in chapters 25-32 as nations see His judgement, and in chapters 33-48 through God's promise of restoration and renewal. (See chapter 37 for the story of Ezekiel and the dry bones.) Ezekiel speaks of the balance between the wrath of God against disobedient people and the comfort of God through his grace to obedient followers.

The style of Ezekiel is unique in his use of drama to act out the message God had for His people. This prophet spoke with actions as well as words. In chapters 4 and 5 Ezekiel used a clay tablet, many days laying on his side, special foods, and a razor to act out God's plan for punishment. In chapter 12 a packed bag, digging a hole in the wall, and trembling while eating brought the message of judgement to God's people. In spite of these clear pictures of God's warning about disobedience the people still failed to seek God.

Ezekiel was a powerful prophet that clearly communicated the glory of a great God and the holiness that God demands. The entire life and book of Ezekiel covers the plan of God's unfolding salvation in history.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. A fallen nation.
 - B. Jerusalem's darkest hour.
- II. **The prophet.**
 - A. An educated man.
 - B. His personal life.
- III. **The book.**
 - A. Clear records.
 - B. Unique style.
- IV. **The message.**
 - A. Prophetic symbolism.
 - B. Judgement and grace.

Activity

Students may need a more concrete example of Ezekiel instead of the more general coverage of his life and book presented in the lesson. Turn to chapter 37 and study together the story there. You may want to sing the song that is taken from this passage or act out the story.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson presents a broad introduction to a prophet's life and an entire book of the Bible. In one lesson it is impossible to cover all the materials that could be studied in this area. You need to decide whether your students can benefit from this overview approach or if you need to select a smaller passage or event to focus on.

Scripture Passages

Ezekiel

Memory Verse

Psalm 106:47 *"Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise."*







It was common in Jesus' day for teachers to have students, called disciples, that would travel with them to receive training. These teachers would be seated in large halls or found on hillsides or grassy fields. One day Jesus gathered his followers, both the disciples and a group of women that had been healed, as well as the large crowd, near a lake. The crowd was so big that Jesus sat in a boat in the water while the crowd gathered along the shore. From the boat Jesus began to teach them many things by parables. A parable is a story from ordinary life that illustrates a spiritual or moral principle. Jesus used nature or human life to help people see and understand what He was trying to teach them.

Jesus called for the people's attention and then began the lesson with a parable about a farmer. Let's look at the details of the parable. The farmer went to his field to sow seed. The seed was usually in a large basket or cloth and would be scattered onto the ground by hand. This meant the seed was often scattered onto unproductive soil as well as good soil.

Some of the seed fell along the path where the birds quickly ate it. Other seeds fell onto rocky places where the thin soil prevented roots from growing deep and the sun scorched it. Even though the seed had sprung up quickly the scorched plants withered and died. Other seed fell into the soil covered with thorns and weeds. When the plants tried to grow the weeds choked them so they could not mature and produce grain. The rest of the seed fell on good soil where it grew and produced a crop that was multiplied thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.

When Jesus was left alone with His disciples and the special group of women He was asked to explain the meaning of the parable. He explained to His closest followers that parables were used to explain the principles of the Kingdom of God so that those who really believed in Him and wanted to understand could learn more and those who were against Him would not understand. Then Jesus explained each symbol or element of the parable and what it represented.

The seed is like the Word of God and the farmer who spreads the Word of God is sowing seed to different listeners, or types of soil. Some people are like the rocky path. When they hear the Word Satan quickly snatches away the message and it never gets into their heart. Others are like the rocky places, when they hear the Word they receive it quickly with joy, but they do not continue to learn and let the Word take root deep into their heart. Then when troubles come they are quick to walk away from God because the Truth has not grown deep into their life. There are also people who receive the Word, but they let weeds like worry, greed, and selfish desires choke these biblical principles instead of letting them grow so they are not fruitful Christians. Finally, there are those who hear God's Word like good soil. They accept and allow the Truth to grow and produce a multiple crop or spiritual growth. What type of soil are you?

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting and audience.**
 - A. How He taught.
 - B. Teaching with parables.
- II. **The farmer.**
 - A. The sowing process.
 - B. The seed used.
- III. **Types of soil.**
 - A. The places.
 - B. The results.
- IV. **The meaning.**
 - A. Using parables.
 - B. Life application.

Activity

Individual students or the class can create small models of the farmer's field. In an open box create four divided sections. Use dirt, small rocks, paper bird figures, and weeds to recreate the four types of soil from the parable. Have the students label the four sections and explain the parable using the model.

Teacher Growth

Jesus used parables to explain biblical principles. He used common daily situations to help people understand. You need to take the principle of the parable and adapt it to your culture. The type of seed, the types of soil, and other details can become even clearer if they are similar to the setting of your students.

Scripture Passages

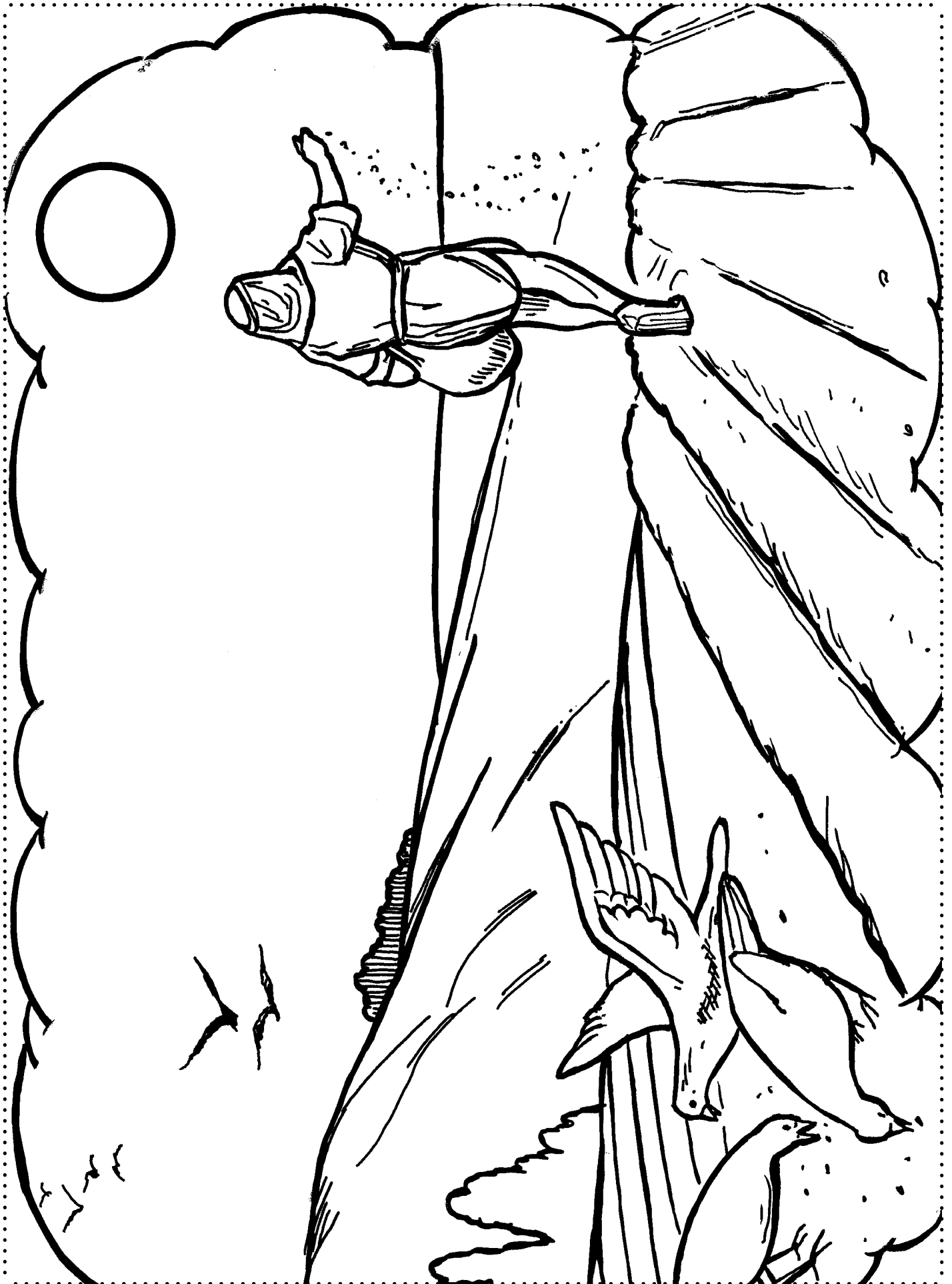
Mark 4:1-20; Matthew 13:3-23; Luke 8:5-15

Memory Verse

Luke 8:15 *"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."*







At various times Jesus taught the people using parables or stories that created pictures in the minds of His listeners. When Jesus taught the people He wanted them to not just listen to His words, but to change their lives to live the way He taught. One day Jesus told the crowd a number of different parables and lessons. When He was almost finished He shared a final story about two builders.

The characters for His lesson were a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man heard what Jesus taught and then put it into practice. The foolish man went on living His life without obeying the Lord's instructions. Everyone wants to be called wise instead of foolish, so Jesus wanted them to understand how obeying God's Word makes a person wise.

Then Jesus used the story of these two men to show the crowd how a wise and a foolish man acted. Each of these men built a house. I am sure the people were picturing the kind of house they lived in. Jesus wanted them to see the place they chose to build their homes. The story was looking at the way people choose to build their life. The wise man selected a solid rock to build on. The foolish man chose to build on the sand. Every listener saw the difference between the two men's choices for the foundation of their homes.

Once their homes were built, Jesus said a storm came up. Jesus describes the terrible storm so that people would get the picture clearly in their minds. He said the rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against those houses. No one was surprised when they heard that the house on the solid rock stood firm in the storm and the house on the sand fell down with a great crash.

When Jesus finished the story the people were amazed at His teaching. Jesus had helped them to clearly understand His message by the use of a story. He had helped them form a picture in their minds that would teach them to be wise doers of God's Word not foolish listeners that failed to live a life pleasing to God. The crowd saw that Jesus spoke to them with authority. He knew what He was teaching, believed it completely, and taught them in ways they could understand. They had become used to teachers that only gave them large lists of rules to follow instead of lovingly teaching them to change their hearts.

Jesus helped people understand that you must change your heart, like choosing to build on a rock, and then you will live a life of obedience to God that will help you to be wise. First we choose to believe in Jesus and then we choose to read His words and follow them. Only those who live a life of putting God's Word into practice will be able to stand firm during the storms of life. When sickness, disasters, and troubles come along like a storm, the wise person that has learned to live God's way will be able to stand firm and survive the crisis with God's help.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Two builders.**
 - A. A wise man.
 - B. A foolish man.
- II. **Two building sites.**
 - A. The rock.
 - B. The sand.
- III. **The storm.**
 - A. The elements.
 - B. The effects.
- IV. **The results.**
 - A. The teacher.
 - B. Our lives.

Activity

The students will create small houses out of clay or dough upon a stone. Gather stones that have a smooth surface where the students can glue or bake their house to its surface. This project may have to be done during the class today and then left in the sun or an oven to bake it to completion.

Teacher Growth

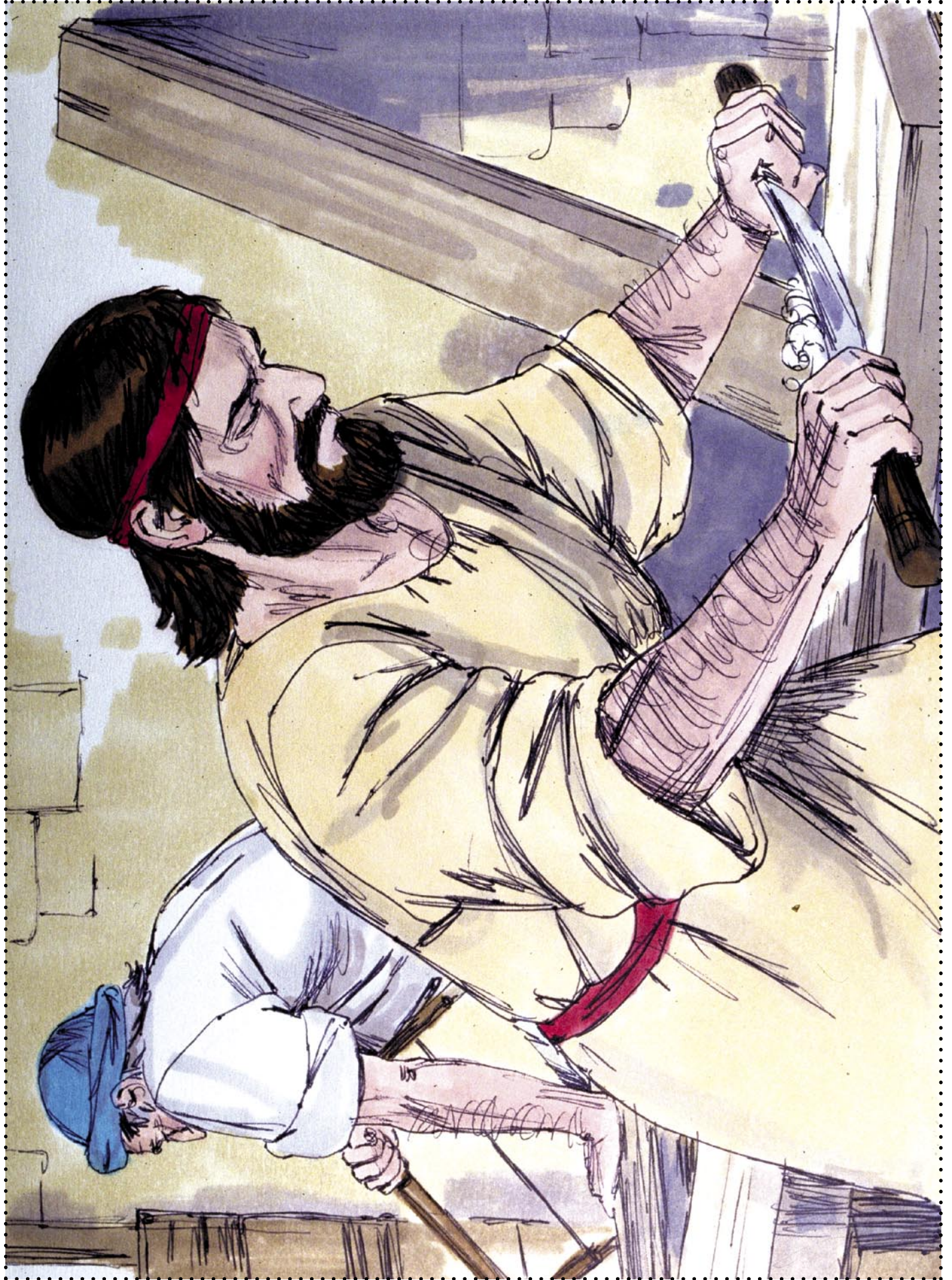
Just as the Lord used object lessons to make the lesson clearer you can do that with the lesson today. Bring in sand and a rock for your lesson. Place a small house or object that would represent a home to your students on a pile of sand. Pour water over it and watch the sand shift away from the house. Repeat this with a large rock and observe how the rock remains firm under the house.

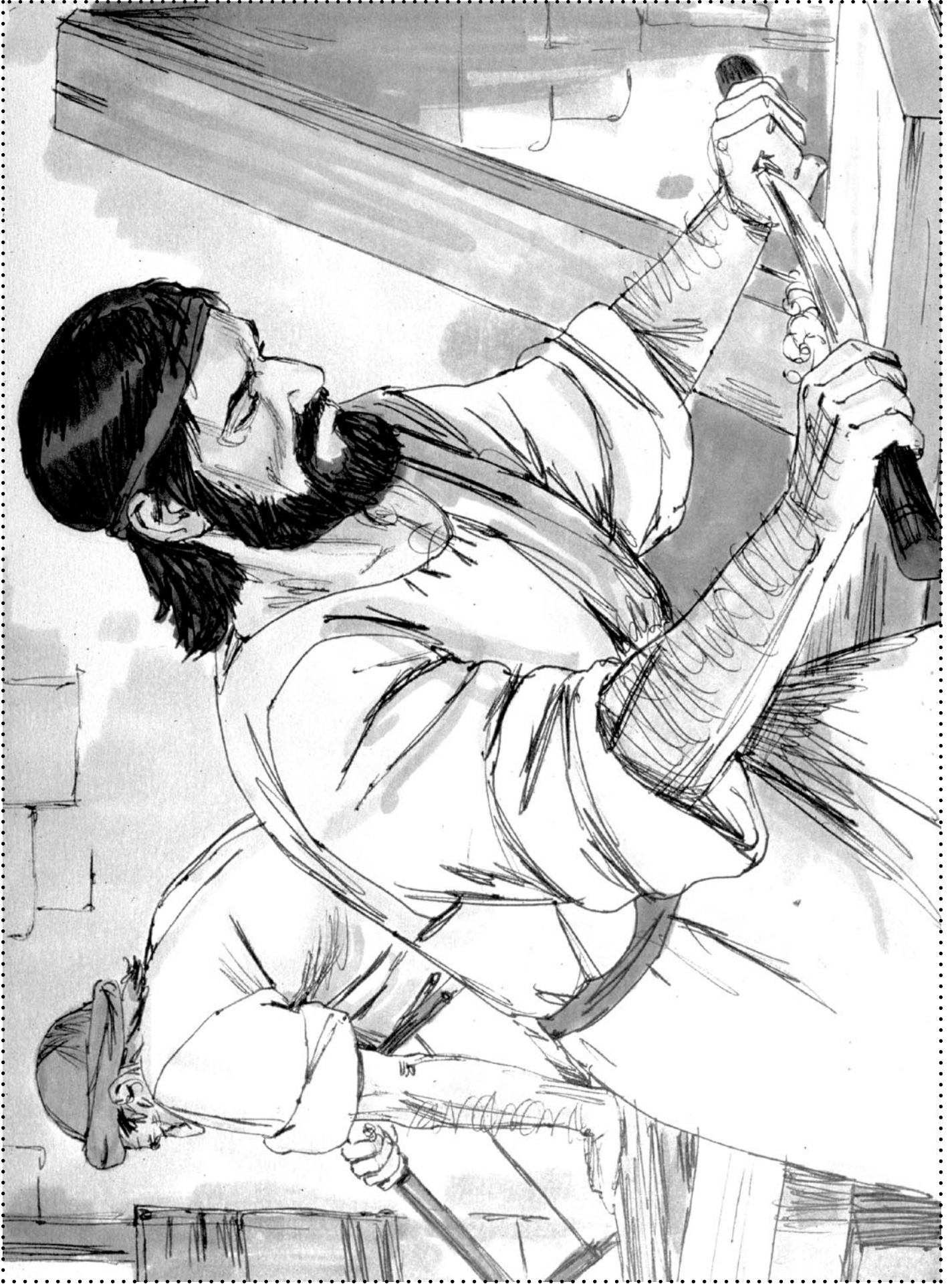
Scripture Passages

Matthew 7:24-29; Luke 6:47-49

Memory Verse

James 1:22 *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."*







The Golden Rule

3-03-B

It was common to find Jesus surrounded by people who wanted to hear Him teach. One day He was seated in a place where both crowds and other teachers were gathered. A man was there that day who spent his life studying the Law. He studied parts of the Bible we call the Old Testament as well as added rules that men tried to make all the people follow. Jesus tried to help people see that added rules do not impress God, but a changed heart with God's character will do what is pleasing to God.

The expert on the Law tested Jesus with a question, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him what the Law said, and he answered correctly with, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said this was correct and that the man only needed to obey it. However this man was used to adding all kinds of extra rules to make living for God difficult. He wanted the people that were listening to be impressed by his knowledge and so he asked Jesus to explain this passage by telling them who the neighbor is that they must love.

To make the lesson clear enough for every listener to understand, Jesus used another parable, or teaching story. The story begins about a man that was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers attacked him, beat him severely and stole his clothes, leaving him half dead. The road that the traveler had to take was about 17 miles long through rocky desert country. It was not unusual to hear of thieves that would attack defenseless people along that route.

The story continued with several other people who traveled that same road. First, a priest, a church leader, came down the road and when he saw the beaten man he crossed over to the other side of the road and continued his journey. He did not want to be involved in the mess. Next, a Levite, a man that helped with church ministries, also crossed the road so he could pass the beaten man without getting too near him or the trouble he was in.

Finally, a Samaritan came down the same road and stopped when he saw the beaten man. The people of Samaria were hated by the Jews and looked down upon as foreigners. The very person that the Jewish listeners scorned was the one who stopped to help the beaten man. The Samaritan poured oil and wine on the man's wounds to clean them and applied the bandages that were needed. He put the wounded man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him through the night. The next day the Samaritan gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and told him to look after the wounded man until he returned. He even promised to pay any further expenses for his care.

Then Jesus asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" Even the expert in the law that had challenged Jesus said that the real neighbor was the man that had mercy on the victim. Jesus told them all to go and do the same.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. The people.
 - B. The test.
- II. **The need.**
 - A. A beaten man.
 - B. Left to die.
- III. **Those who passed by.**
 - A. The priest and Levite.
 - B. The Samaritan.
- IV. **Care given.**
 - A. Immediate care.
 - B. Continued care.

Activity

Today's lesson is a wonderful script for a simple drama. You may recreate the story with or without costumes and props. You may even choose to update the story and make its characters and actions current with your local setting. Let students determine what the story would be like if Jesus told it to your class today.

Teacher Growth

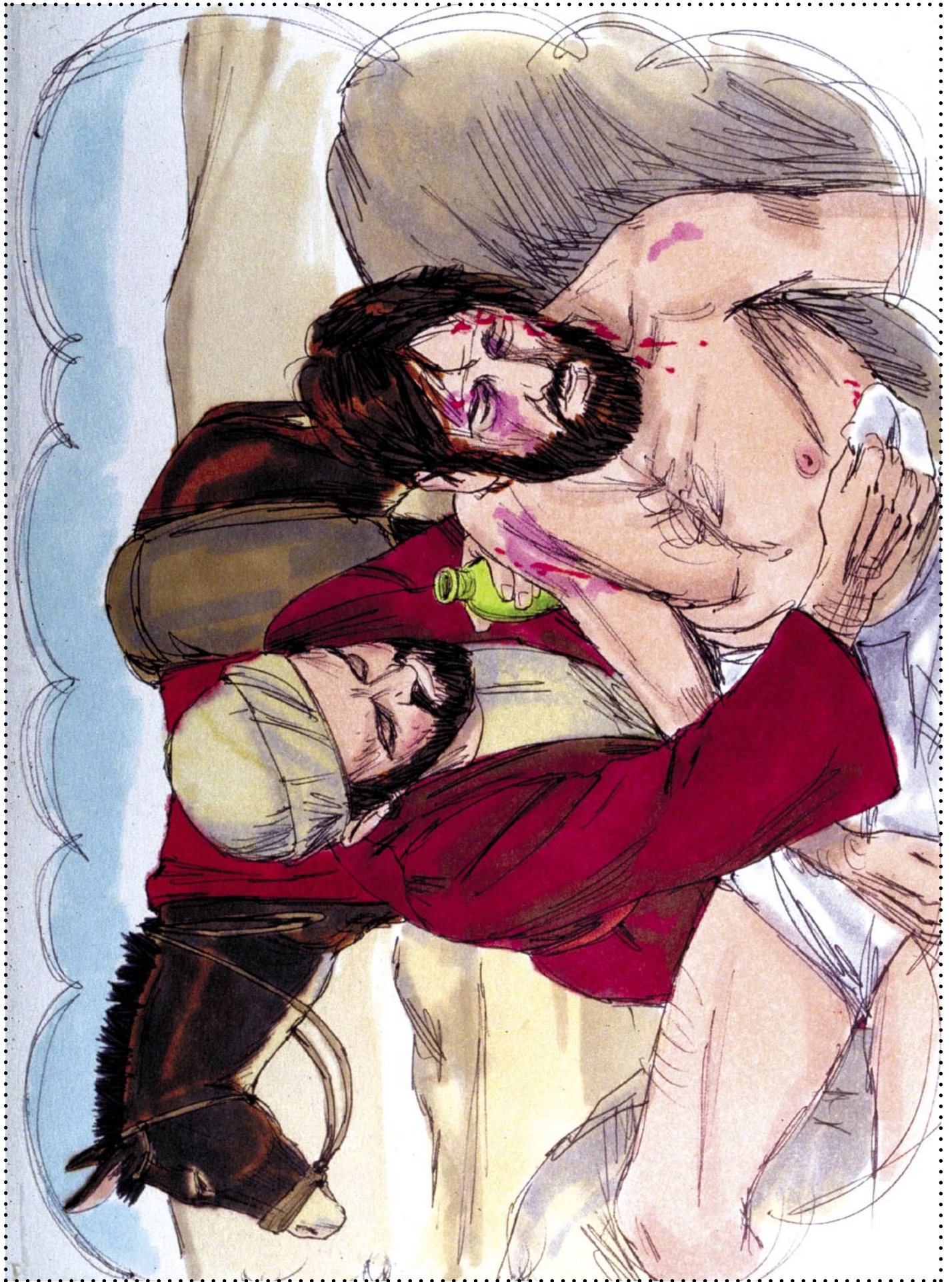
Jesus was careful to portray biblical principles with stories that fit into the people's daily life and understanding. Part of every lesson is called the application. You help students to understand the principle being presented and how it fits into their world. The Bible's teachings do not change, but your students may need help to apply the principles to their lifestyle.

Scripture Passages

Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31

Memory Verse

Matthew 7:12 *"So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*







It was very common to see crowds of people gathered around Jesus to hear Him teach and watch Him do miracles. One day Jesus led the people to a hillside for a special time of teaching. There was a grassy hillside near Capernaum on the Northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee where this day probably took place. Jesus sat down on the hillside, as most teachers did in those days, and His disciples gathered closest to Him with the crowd spread out around them.

Jesus began to teach the people about a life filled with blessing. This special teaching time is often called the Sermon on the Mount. He wanted people to understand some basic principles to live by so that they would experience the blessings God has for them. It was important that the people learned the difference between happiness and the deep joy that God provides. So Jesus began a list of ways that people need to live, or attitudes they need to cultivate, so that their lives can be blessed. We often call this list the Beatitudes. Let's look at each of the ways that Jesus explained how to live with Godly character after you read today's passage in Matthew.

Jesus began, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Our sinful nature makes us try to be in charge of our own life and everyone around us. We think highly of our own opinion and try to do things our own way. But Jesus wants us to realize we are really poor, or lacking in our own selves, and we need His Spirit to live a life that is pleasing to God. Once we realize we are poor in ourselves but rich by letting His Spirit control our lives we will be headed to heaven.

Jesus continued to explain how we need to live and the rewards or blessings for obedience. He explained that, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." True sorrow, especially for the things that make God sad, will be soothed with comfort, and those who are meek, or humble before God, will inherit the earth. God rewards those who humble themselves and allow Him to direct their life.

Not only did Jesus want them to understand the actions worthy of God's blessing, but He desired a heart change that would affect their motives. Jesus wanted them to understand that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled with the Spirit of God to help them live a blessed life. He said those who are merciful will receive mercy, and those who have a pure heart will see God.

Jesus wanted them to know that if they acted as peacemakers they would be like God's sons here on earth, and yet there would still be persecution because of their faith. Many people wanted to follow Jesus for His provisions, miracles, and blessings, but He wanted them to know that the same persecution that was poured out on the prophets would also come to those who believed in Him and followed Him. Yes, there are blessings for those who love God, but there are also lies, insults, and evil persecution ahead. Jesus said we are to rejoice in spite of this because our reward is in heaven.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. The people.
 - B. The place.
- II. **A blessed life.**
 - A. True sorrow.
 - B. Deep joy.
- III. **Lifestyle of blessing.**
 - A. The actions.
 - B. The reward.
- IV. **Promised persecution.**
 - A. Rejected for Him.
 - B. Rejoicing response.

Activity

The students can work together to create a banner for each of the beatitudes. Write the verse across the top of each sheet of paper. Have students illustrate the phrase, and then color or paint their drawings. Trim the bottom of the banner with cut or glued on decorations and attach the top to a stick. Tie a string to each end of the stick for hanging the banner.

Teacher Growth

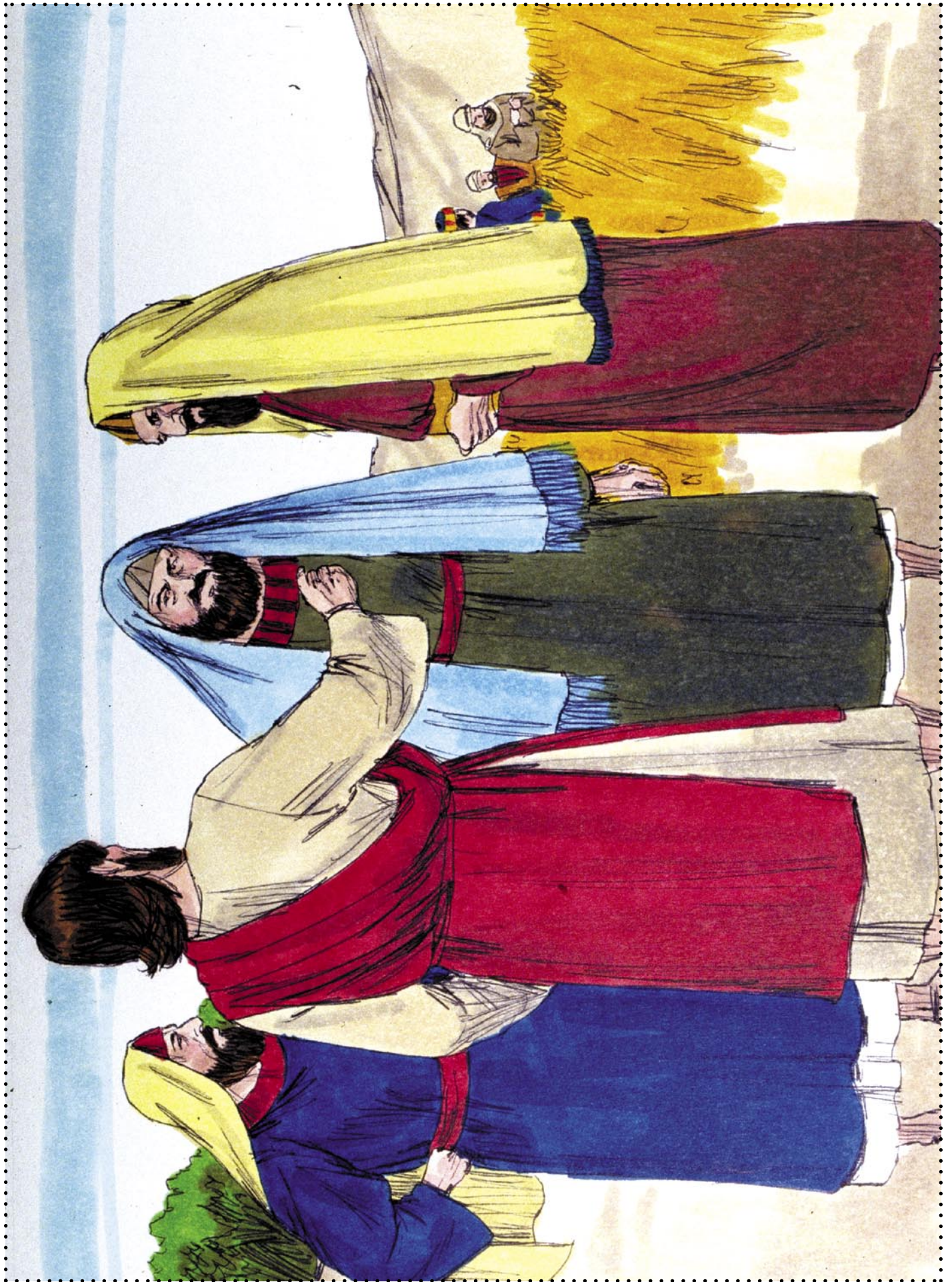
Today's lesson is all about the attitudes or character of a person. The only way you can see if the biblical principles you teach are becoming part of your students' character is to observe how they respond to others and the challenges they face in daily life. Don't just ask for details from your lesson, but look for ways they demonstrate God's character.

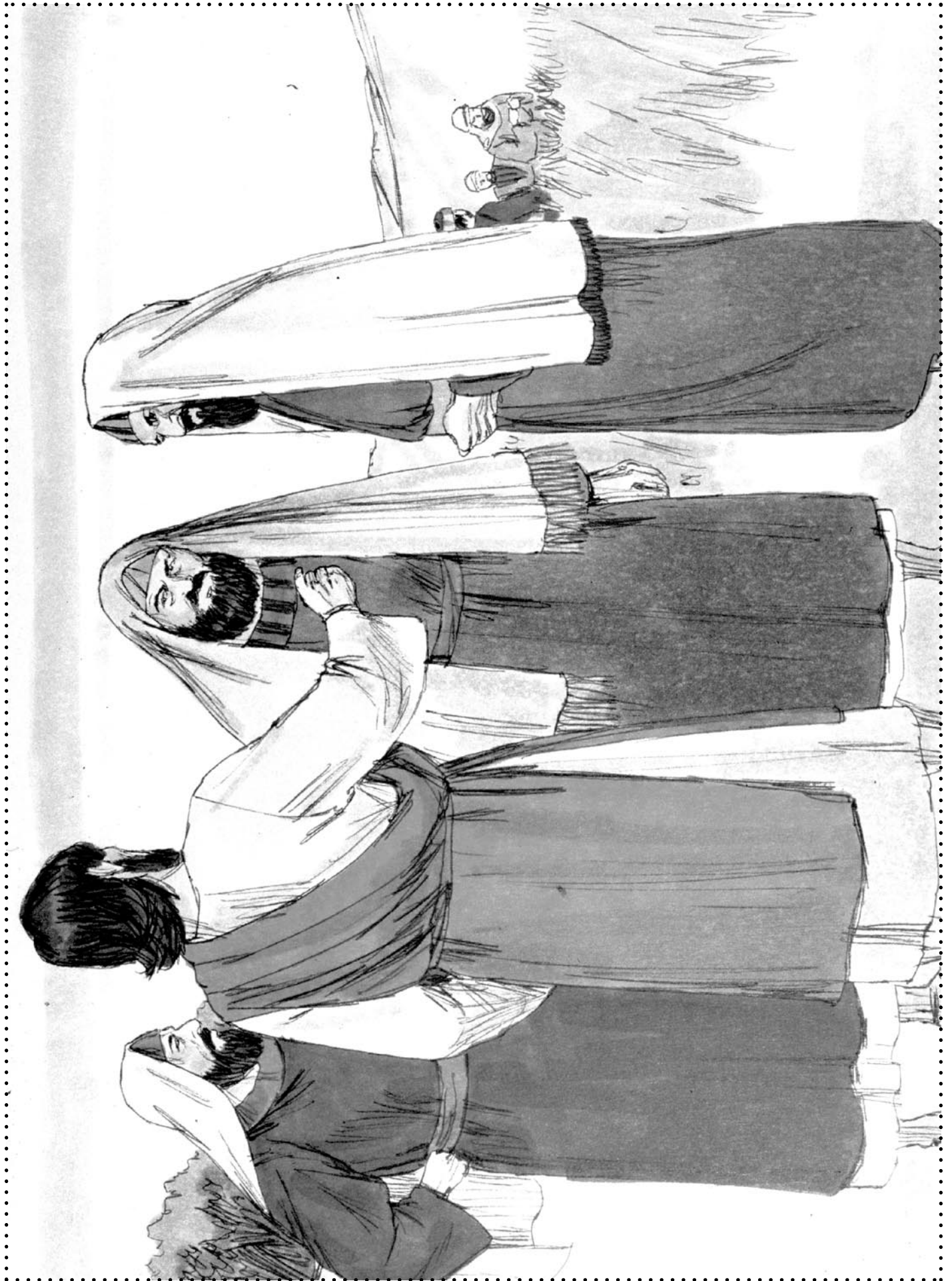
Scripture Passages

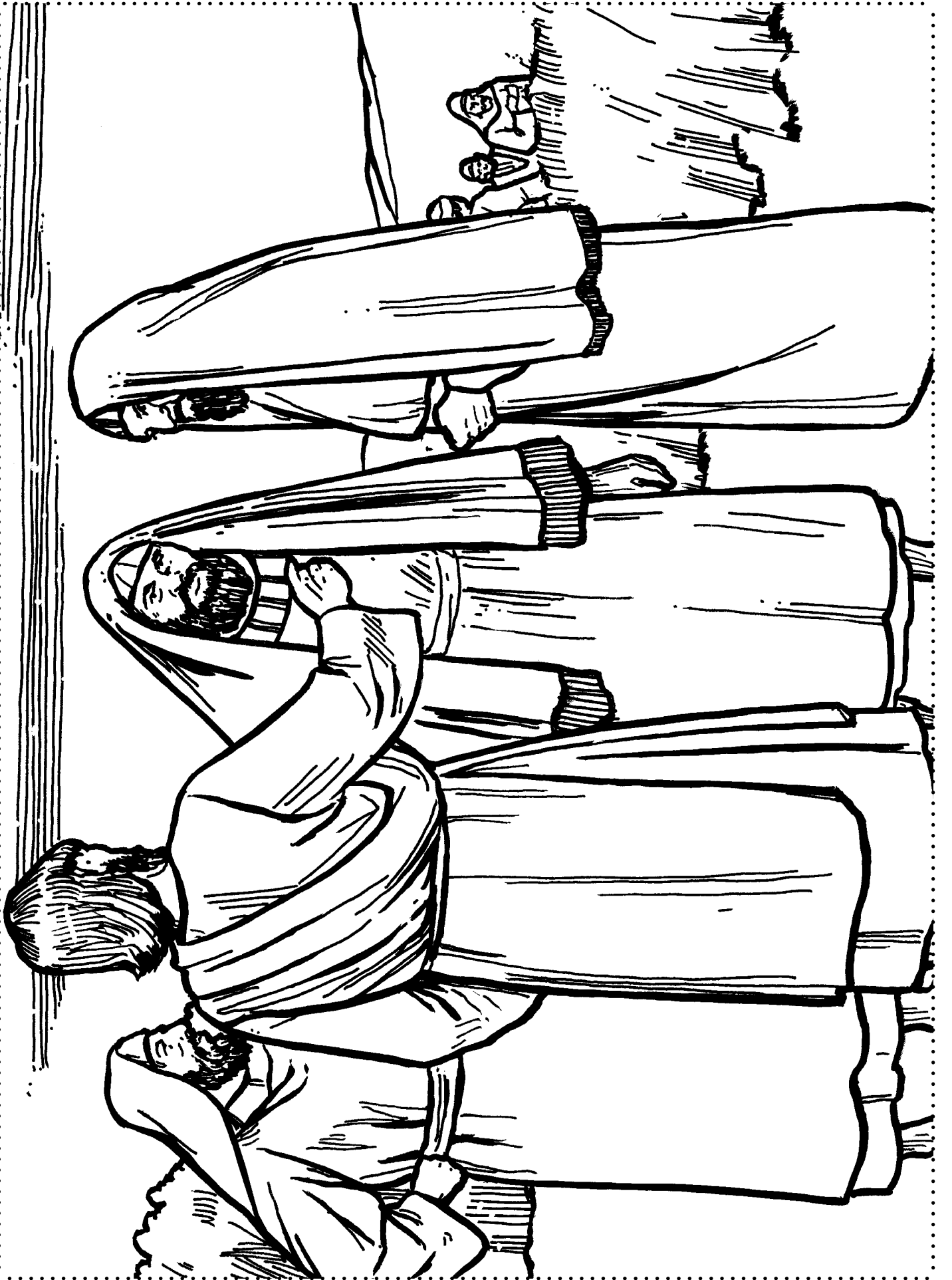
Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-23

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."







Jesus Teaches us Humility 3-05-B

Part of the crowds that heard Jesus teach were people who were considered very religious. The men who believed they knew all of God's laws thought that their own righteousness was good enough. They believed they were better than others and often looked down on other people as being less important to mankind and to God. Their self-confidence led to pride and a judgmental attitude toward others. One day Jesus told a parable to explain the problem with the sinfulness of pride that had even saturated the church at prayer time.

It was customary for men to go to the temple to pray during scheduled times every day. Morning and evening the Pharisees would be sure that everyone saw them being faithful to these times so that they would appear to be very spiritual. These men wanted everyone to know how important they were to the community, to the temple, and even to God. Pharisees tried to live under a heavy list of rules they had created to make them appear better than the average person.

In his parable Jesus also mentioned a tax collector. As the Romans controlled the countryside they often hired Jewish men to collect the taxes from their fellow citizens. The Jews hated these men for being traitors. Not only did they exact taxes from their neighbors, but it was a common practice to add a little extra fee to every tax so that they could become rich while their countrymen struggled under Roman rule. Tax collectors were hated as traitors and thieves, certainly sinners far below the Pharisees.

In the parable, two men enter the temple to pray, a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up so that everyone could see and hear his eloquent prayer. He prayed about himself, "God I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector." Pharisees had made up another rule for fasting twice a week and he noted that as well as the tenth of everything that he gave to God. This prideful man actually thought he was so good because of his own actions that even God was thankful for him.

Now look at the other man that Jesus tells us about in the parable. The tax collector did not stand up in the front for everyone to see, but he stood off in the distance so that he would not draw attention to himself. Instead of looking up and speaking to God in a loud voice for others to hear, he looked down and beat his breast, a sign of great sorrow and humility. His prayer was, "God, have mercy on me a sinner." He did not consider himself important or religious, but he humbly asked God to accept Him because of God's great mercy and not his own merit.

Jesus surprised the crowd when He explained that the humble tax collector was justified, made right with God, not the Pharisee. Just as our memory verse says, God will cleanse and send a humble sinner to heaven who has asked God for forgiveness. But a proud man that fails to see his own desperate need for God will be humbled and left out of heaven unless he seeks God's forgiveness.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The audience.**
 - A. The Pharisees.
 - B. The lowly.
- II. **The setting.**
 - A. The temple.
 - B. Prayer time.
- III. **Two kinds of prayer.**
 - A. Prideful prayer.
 - B. Humble prayer.
- IV. **The results.**
 - A. Sinful condition.
 - B. Righteous forgiveness.

Activity

The students will each write out a prayer before the lesson, and fold it inside a sheet of paper. After the lesson is presented and discussed ask them to read their prayer silently and evaluate its motivation. Allow the students time to rewrite their prayer if they choose to, and then once they have been given time to silently pray, allow them to discard their written prayer as a reminder that God loves to hear from us daily in a very personal way.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson is based on the old tradition of set times for prayer. We often teach students about prayer before meals, at bedtime, or in church, but there is so much more to really communicating with our Heavenly Father. Starting your day in prayer, prayer for needs, and prayer for others also have merit, but be sure you also experience and teach your students about the times of just conversing with the Lord, sharing your thoughts and listening for His direction.

Scripture Passages

Luke 18:9-14

Memory Verse

Luke 18:14 "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."







Jesus Teaches us to Love 3-06-B

Jesus, God's only Son was sent to earth because of God's love for people. Jesus taught people about God's love by showing them love and helping them to learn how to love God and others. Those that followed Jesus, His disciples and many more people, began to learn how to love from Jesus by watching Him and listening to His teaching. The twelve men that Jesus called His disciples left their homes and work to constantly be with Jesus.

The Bible says that a special group of women were often involved in helping provide for Jesus' needs. These women had a special love for Jesus and His disciples and helped them as they traveled from town to town. These women had experienced Jesus' love in unique ways and gladly served Him. Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene and she loved to serve Jesus. We read that Joanna was the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household. This meant she would have been a leader's wife and able to provide the funds that were needed. Susanna and many other women also lovingly provided food, clothes, and funds that blessed Jesus.

By the time Jesus faced the cross and its horrible death by crucifixion the crowds were anxious to find His followers and threaten them with the same punishment. Even the closest followers, His disciples, scattered during Jesus' trial and public humiliation. But the Bible records that a group of women remained near Jesus' cross throughout that long and painful day. Named for being there are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of James and John. There were many others as well, who so loved Jesus that they refused to abandon Him in the final hours.

Early in the morning of that first week after Jesus' death, it was the women who went to the tomb to lovingly wrap Jesus' body in the traditional spices and linen. Not willing to leave His body uncared for in death, Mary Magdalene and others arrived at dawn on that resurrection morning. Mary saw the stone rolled away from the mouth of the empty tomb. She ran to tell the disciples the joyous news. As she cried outside the empty tomb Jesus spoke lovingly to her. Yes, Jesus spoke first to the women that had lovingly served Him.

Jesus came to show us the love of our Heavenly Father. Those who accepted His teaching and became His followers learned how to love Him and others. The women that experienced His powerful love in their lives continued to be faithful servants that helped to meet His needs in love. Today we can still show our love to Jesus in serving Him and lovingly serving others.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus, the example.**
 - A. His love.
 - B. His followers.
- II. **Women that served.**
 - A. Changed lives.
 - B. Grateful service.
- III. **Women at the cross.**
 - A. Steadfast followers.
 - B. Loving to the end.
- IV. **Women see first.**
 - A. Faithful in service.
 - B. Honored by Him.

Activity

Students can make coupons for their parents or leaders that offer help with tasks. Each coupon can state that "I _____ will freely serve you in love as Jesus has taught me to do by _____ (list a task or time to offer service)." As loving servants they can create these gift tickets that promise free help for household chores, or help at work or the church. Remind them to serve with love and without complaints.

Teacher Growth

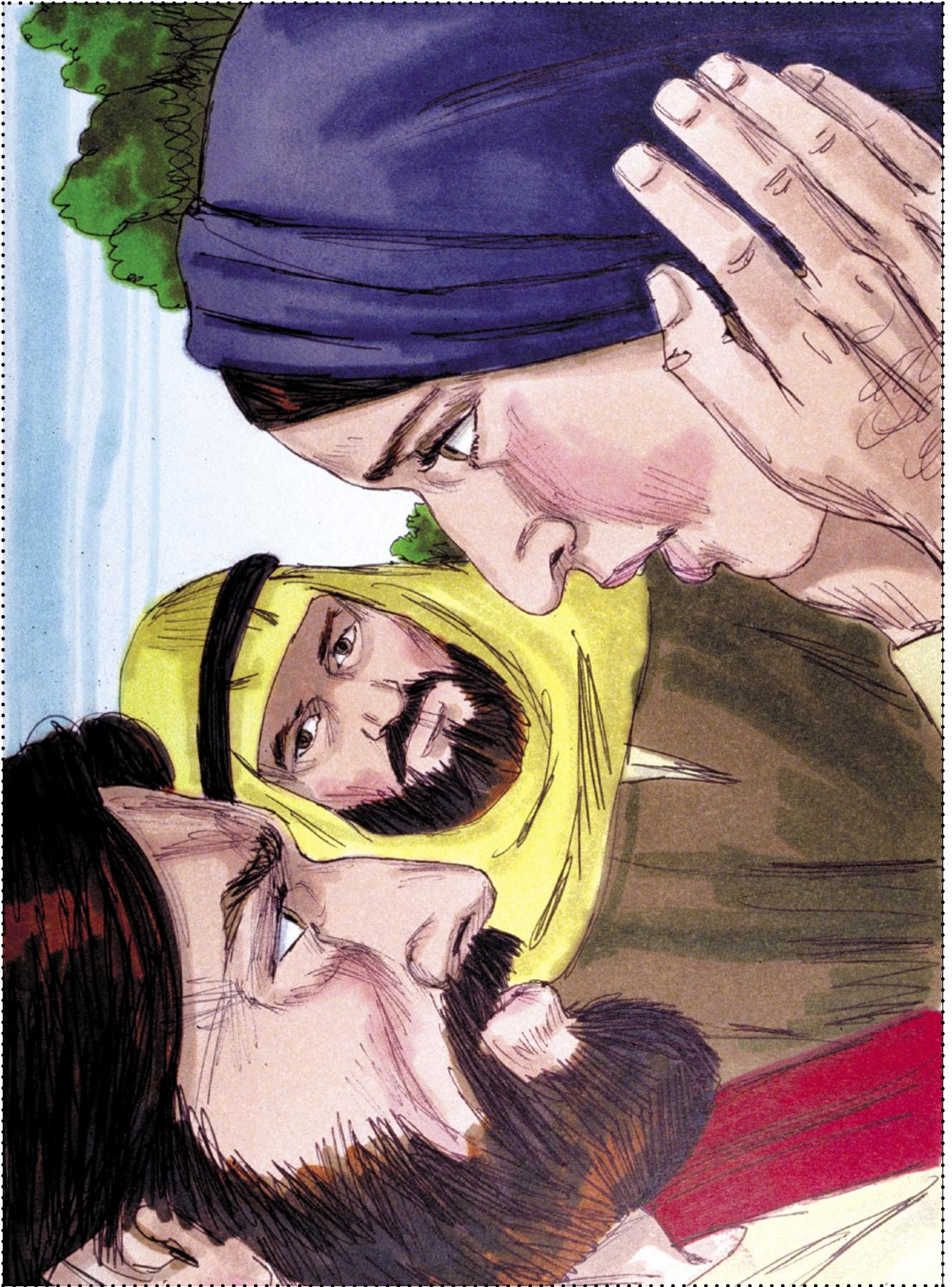
As a teacher your students will learn to serve in love by following your example. One clear way they see this is when you prepare and teach your class. Do they hear you complain about having to teach them? Do they see how you lovingly prepare instead of just arriving without a plan? You are the servant they watch.

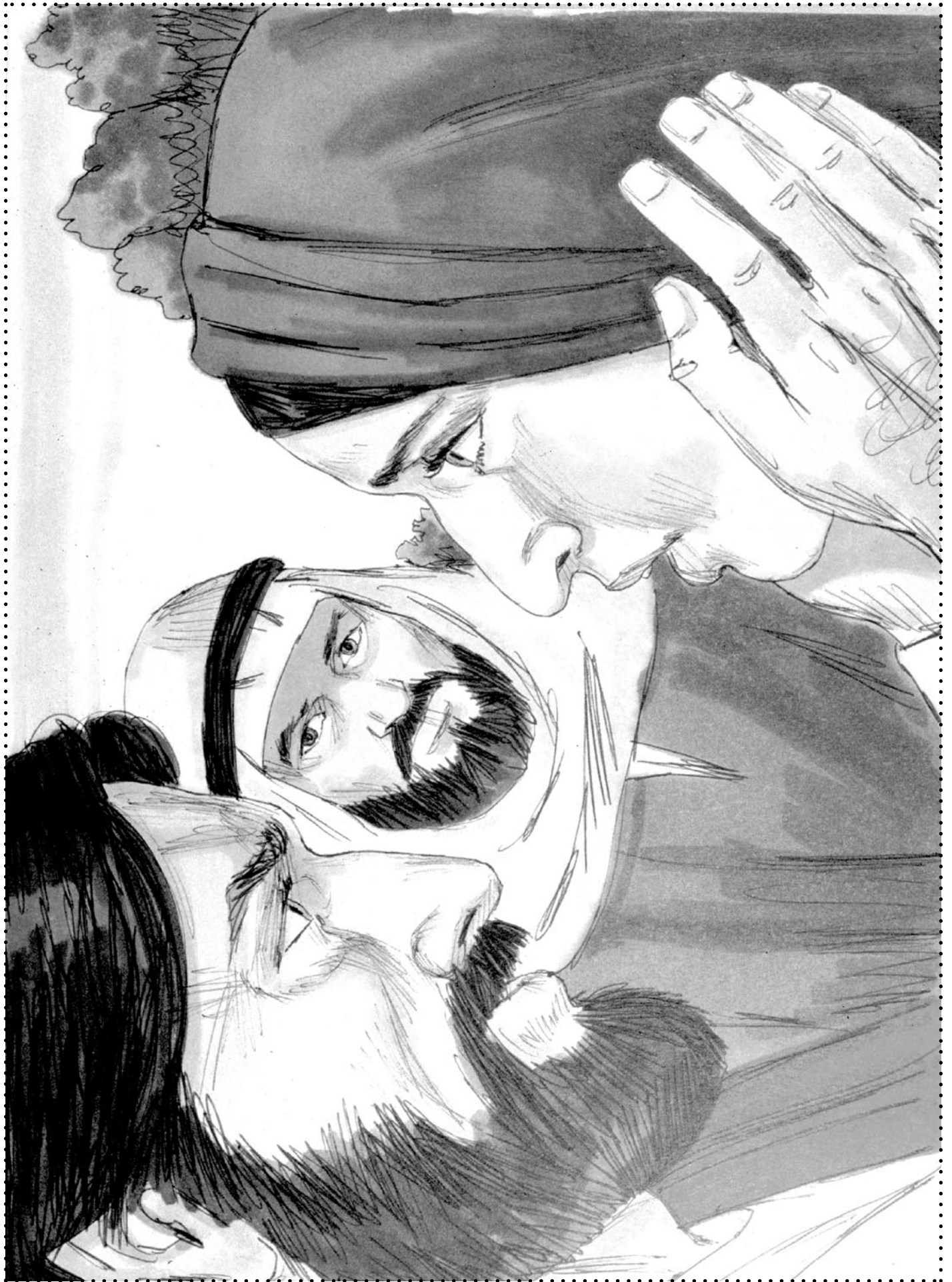
Scripture Passages

Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 27:55-56; John 20:1-18

Memory Verse

Luke 10:27 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"







Jesus Teaches us to Forgive 3-07-B

One day Peter came to the Lord with the question, “How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?” He wondered if seven times was enough, thinking surely if someone wronged him seven times in the same way that was all he should have to take. But Jesus’ answer was seventy-seven times, not that we count that many responses, but that forgiveness should be uncountable. Then Jesus began to illustrate this lesson with a parable. Jesus wanted Peter, and the others who were listening to understand the principle of forgiveness in the Kingdom of heaven, which is how Christians are to live right here on earth.

A king decided it was time to settle his accounts. He found that one of his servants owed him ten thousand talents. The debt was so large that it was more than he could ever repay. The king had the servant brought to him and since he was unable to repay the debt he ordered the servant and his wife and children as well as all that they owned be sold to pay towards the bill. It was a common practice in those days to place people in slavery if they developed large debts that they had not repaid. The servant fell on his knees and begged for the king’s patience, promising to repay everything. The king knew that repaying the debt was impossible. Even if the man had worked his entire lifetime he could never earn enough money to repay the debt. Because of the king’s mercy he cancelled the debt and let the servant go free.

The servant left the king and found another servant that owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him by the throat and began to choke him as he demanded that he pay back what he owed him. The fellow servant fell on his knees and begged for patience so that he could pay the loan back. But the servant refused to have any mercy and he ordered the man to be thrown into prison until he pay the debt. When other servants saw what happened they were very upset and told the master what happened.

The master called the servant to come back and called him a wicked servant. He had been forgiven a debt that he could never have paid back, but he did not have any mercy for a fellow servant that only owed a small sum. The angry master turned the servant over to the jailers to be tortured until he paid back everything. This meant he would be tortured forever since the debt was so great it could never be repaid.

Then Jesus explained that this is how the Heavenly Father will treat those who cannot forgive others. The debt of our sin is so great that we can never pay for it, but God in His mercy sent His Son Jesus to die for the payment of our sin debt. When we believe in Jesus as our Savior our debt is forgiven because of God’s mercy and we need to forgive others.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Peter’s question.**
 - A. Seven times.
 - B. Uncountable times.
- II. **The king’s actions.**
 - A. A debt to settle.
 - B. A debt forgiven.
- III. **The servant’s actions.**
 - A. A debt owed.
 - B. A man in prison.
- IV. **The master’s response.**
 - A. An angry rebuke.
 - B. Forgiving a brother.

Activity

The students will use puppets to retell the parable in their own words. First discuss the basic parts of the parable and how that could be said in your current words and lifestyle. Then have the students create simple puppets to retell the story. Puppets can be as simple as paper figures on a stick, a decorated bag or sock, or real puppets that are available for your use.

Teacher Growth

Today’s lesson talks about forgiveness. The story deals with the forgiveness of a debt, and your students may only see it as related to a financial setting. However you will have to help them understand that it applies to much more than finances. At times we must forgive others for their words, actions, or hurtful behaviors. The attitude of forgiveness and mercy like God has shown us must become part of our character.

Scripture Passages

Matthew 18:21-35

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:12 *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*







Jesus Teaches us to be Thankful 3-08-B

One day Jesus was walking along a road between Samaria and Galilee headed toward Jerusalem. This road led Him between the borders of two regions. Galilee was the Jewish area that Jesus knew so well and Samaria was the land of people that Jews hated as half-breeds. A good Jew in those days would have passed the area of Samaria as quickly as possible in hopes of not coming in contact with any of these hated neighbors. But Jesus began to enter a village along the way and was met by ten men.

The men all had a terrible disease called leprosy. Lepers are forced to live outside a town, begging for food to survive. They cannot live with their families among the rest of the people in fear that their disease will spread to others. The leprosy causes their skin to get terrible sores and as their flesh rots it falls off. They lose their fingers and toes and then it begins to eat away at their ears, nose, and other parts of the body. These ten men were no longer able to be with their families or friends, they had lost their jobs and homes, and even the respect of others.

From a distance the men called out to Jesus asking, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When Jesus saw them He told them to go show themselves to the priest. The Jewish people knew that if a person ever had a sickness they had to go to the priest when they were well before they could return to their family or work. Once a person had leprosy they never got well again, so it must have been strange to hear Jesus' command. But the ten lepers turned and went toward the center of the town of which they had lived outside. The Bible says that they were healed of the leprosy as they walked into town.

One of the ten men noticed the leprosy gone and his healthy body restored by this miracle from Jesus. He came back to Jesus praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself down at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him for his healing. The one man that came back with a thankful heart was a Samaritan. Jesus commented on the fact that there had been ten lepers but only one came back to say thank you. The amazing thing was that the one who returned was not a respected Jew, but a hated Samaritan, the foreigner. Then Jesus told the man, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

That day ten men were healed by Jesus of a terrible disease of leprosy, but one man was healed of something far worse. His faith in Jesus and thankfulness for a great blessing caused him to be healed spiritually as well. His faith had saved him. Some people only want God to give them blessings, but they miss His greatest blessing, salvation, by not coming back to Him with thankfulness for Him as Savior and Healer.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. A border route.
 - B. A village entrance.
- II. **The meeting.**
 - A. Ten lepers.
 - B. The Master.
- III. **The miracle.**
 - A. A command.
 - B. Quick results.
- IV. **The response.**
 - A. Thanks expressed.
 - B. Great faith.

Activity

The students will create a list of all the things they can be thankful for. We often dwell on the trials or things we lack instead of the many blessings God has given us. Discuss ideas and then give the class time to just begin a list of what they would like to say thank you to the Lord for.

Teacher Growth

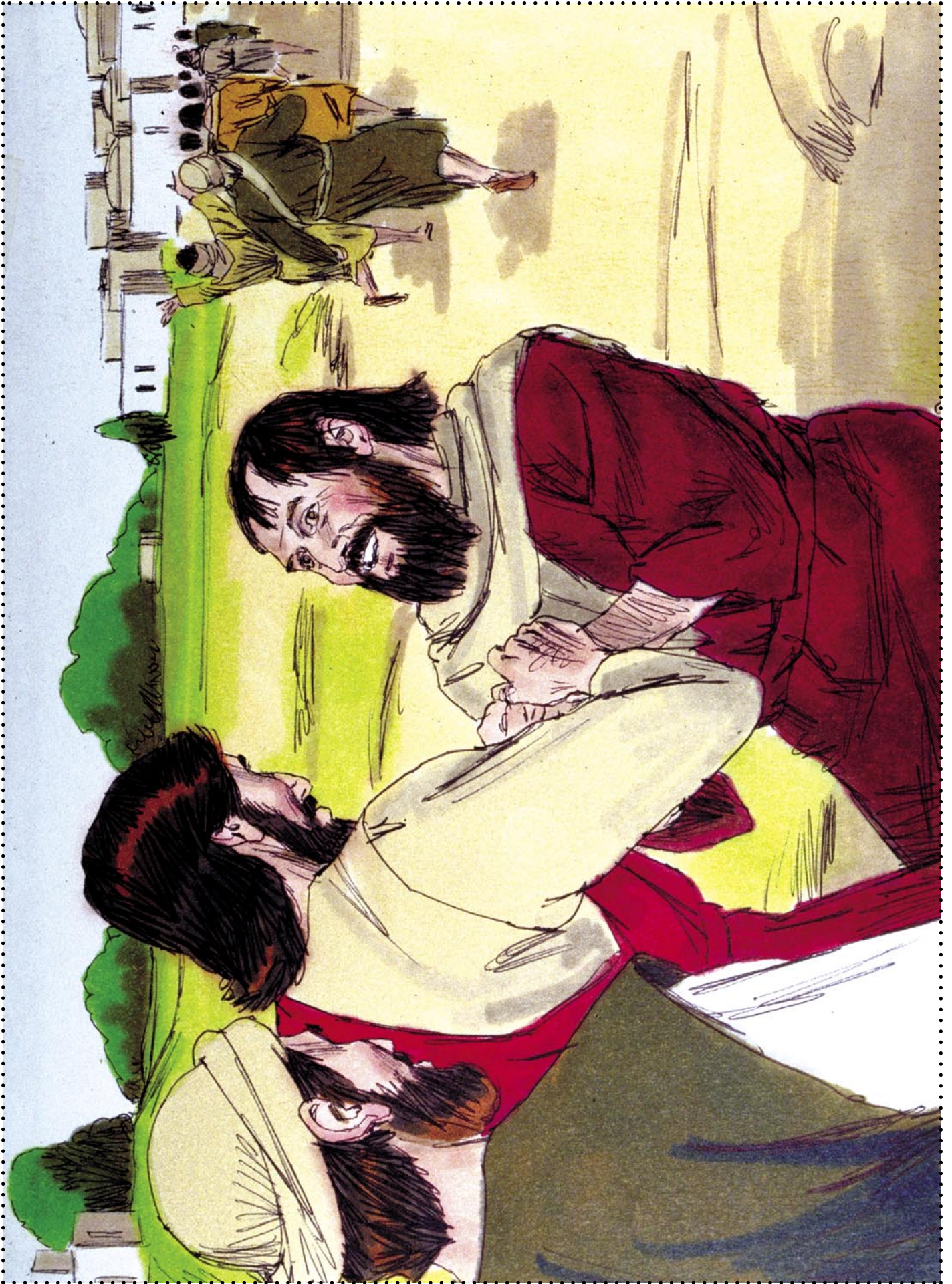
Take a careful look at each one of your students and begin to list the things you are thankful for in their lives. There will always be a student or two who make our lesson presentation a challenge, but even these ones have something you can be thankful for in their character.

Scripture Passages

Luke 17:11-19

Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *"Give thanks in all circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*







Jesus Teaches us to Serve Others 3-09-B

As Jesus was entering His final days on earth He spent some very special teaching time with His disciples. The twelve men that had traveled with Him for 3 years became the main focus of Jesus' attention. As Jesus was nearing the city James and John took Him aside and asked if they could have the honor of sitting at His right and left when He sat upon His throne. This request made the other disciples angry and Jesus could see that they still desired places of honor the way the world seeks power.

That evening Jesus and the twelve gathered in the upper room that had been prepared for them to celebrate the Passover Feast. Judas Iscariot had already plotted with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver later that same night. Jesus planned to demonstrate the full extent of His love and the type of leadership position that His disciples should seek.

When they gathered at the table to begin the meal Jesus stood up and took off His outer clothing and wrapped a towel around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples feet, drying them with the towel wrapped around Him. Normally a servant would have washed each of the guests feet before the meal, a menial but necessary task in the days when travel meant walking over long dusty roads. There was no servant there on this occasion and no one volunteered to take care of the others, so the meal had begun without this courtesy. Jesus had waited to this point drawing even greater attention to the fact that no one had offered to serve the others.

When Jesus kneeled at the feet of Peter He met with both questions and embarrassment. Peter did not understand the concept of humility at that point, but Jesus, knowing all things assured him that soon this lesson would become clear. Peter objected to the Lord washing his feet, but when Jesus explained that this was necessary in being a part of Jesus' plan, he asked for even his head and hands to be washed too. Jesus was not just trying to cleanse these men of the dust, but He was teaching them a lesson on humility.

Jesus told Peter and the others that a person coming to the table who has had a bath, needs only his feet cleaned, just as a person who has been cleansed on the inside by Jesus doesn't need a bath to sit with Him. Jesus said they were already clean of sin on the inside except for one, because He knew that Satan was already inside and controlling Judas. It is amazing to see that Jesus still washed Judas' feet just like the others.

When Jesus finished washing all of their feet He stood and put back on His outer clothes and took His seat at the table. Then He asked them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He explained. They called Him "Teacher" and "Lord" which were true titles of respect and honor, because that is what He deserved, but He had humbled Himself to kneel and wash their feet as their servant. They were to do the same to one another. Jesus set an example for them to humbly become servant leaders.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. Planned betrayal.
 - B. Final deeds.
- II. **The actions.**
 - A. Towel and basin.
 - B. Kneeling to work.
- III. **The responses.**
 - A. Peter's words.
 - B. A question posed.
- IV. **The lesson.**
 - A. His example.
 - B. Servant leaders.

Activity

The students will help an elderly or disabled person in the congregation with some tasks they cannot do themselves. Before class determine who your class can serve and speak to that person about allowing your class to serve them. Once the plan is set and the lesson has been presented, then challenge your students to put today's lesson into practice.

Teacher Growth

You not only influence your students with biblical principles but also their homes and families. Make every effort to get acquainted with the families of your students. Often parents are only informed when their children are in trouble. Be sure to also share encouraging words of growth and good reports to parents.

Scripture Passages

Mark 10:42-45; John 13:1-15

Memory Verse

Mark 10:43 "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."







Jesus Teaches us to Give 3-10-B

Jesus arrived in the town of Bethany six days before the Passover. This was the final week of Jesus' life on earth. Every thing that Jesus did was always under the direction of the Heavenly Father and that included stopping at the home of His special friends before entering Jerusalem. He went right to His dear friends' home and greeted Lazarus, whom He'd raised from the dead, and his sisters Martha and Mary. A very special dinner was prepared and as Martha served the meal Lazarus reclined at the table visiting with Jesus and the other disciples.

Then Mary took a pint of pure nard, a very expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. She used her hair to dry His feet as the entire house was filled with the fragrance of this extravagant perfume. This act was unusual for several reasons. The perfume was so costly that it would have only been used in a very small portion, but Mary broke the container it was in so it was completely poured out on Jesus. A servant normally cared for the feet of the guests, but Mary kneeled herself and using her hair was an even greater sign of her humility before the Master. Mary was showing Jesus in a gentle and loving way the extent of her love and devotion to Him. It was a beautiful act of true worship.

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who handled the money and the one who would later betray Jesus, objected loudly to this extravagant worship. He complained that the perfume should have been sold instead and the money given to help the poor. The perfume had been so valuable that its price equalled a year's wages. The Bible says that Judas did not really care about the poor, but he was a thief and he often helped himself from the money bags he carried. This man was reacting out of greed in sharp contrast to Mary who was acting out of love.

Jesus quickly responded to this angry accusation by Judas. He told the men to leave Mary alone, because it was all part of God's plan that she had saved the perfume to actually anoint His body before He would be buried. He knew exactly what would be happening in the coming days. There would always be poor to care for and that was good, but this was a unique form of worship that would honor Him through what laid ahead.

That very week Jesus would face the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and death with the subtle scent of that lavish perfume. It would linger on His body as a reminder of a very humble woman that had worshipped Him with her very best gift. Does our worship and humble service for Him have the scent of extravagant perfume?

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. The final week.
 - B. Home of friends.
- II. **The act.**
 - A. Perfume used.
 - B. Personal care.
- III. **The responses.**
 - A. The objection.
 - B. The reply.
- IV. **The motivations.**
 - A. Greed and pride.
 - B. Gift of love.

Activity

Students will plan a way to pour out their love to Jesus in a tangible way. They cannot pour perfume on His feet, but they can give of their time, talents, and goods to someone else. Jesus taught that when we poured out our lives to serve others it was as though we had done it directly for Him. Discuss how collectively or individually they can pour out this type of "perfume."

Teacher Growth

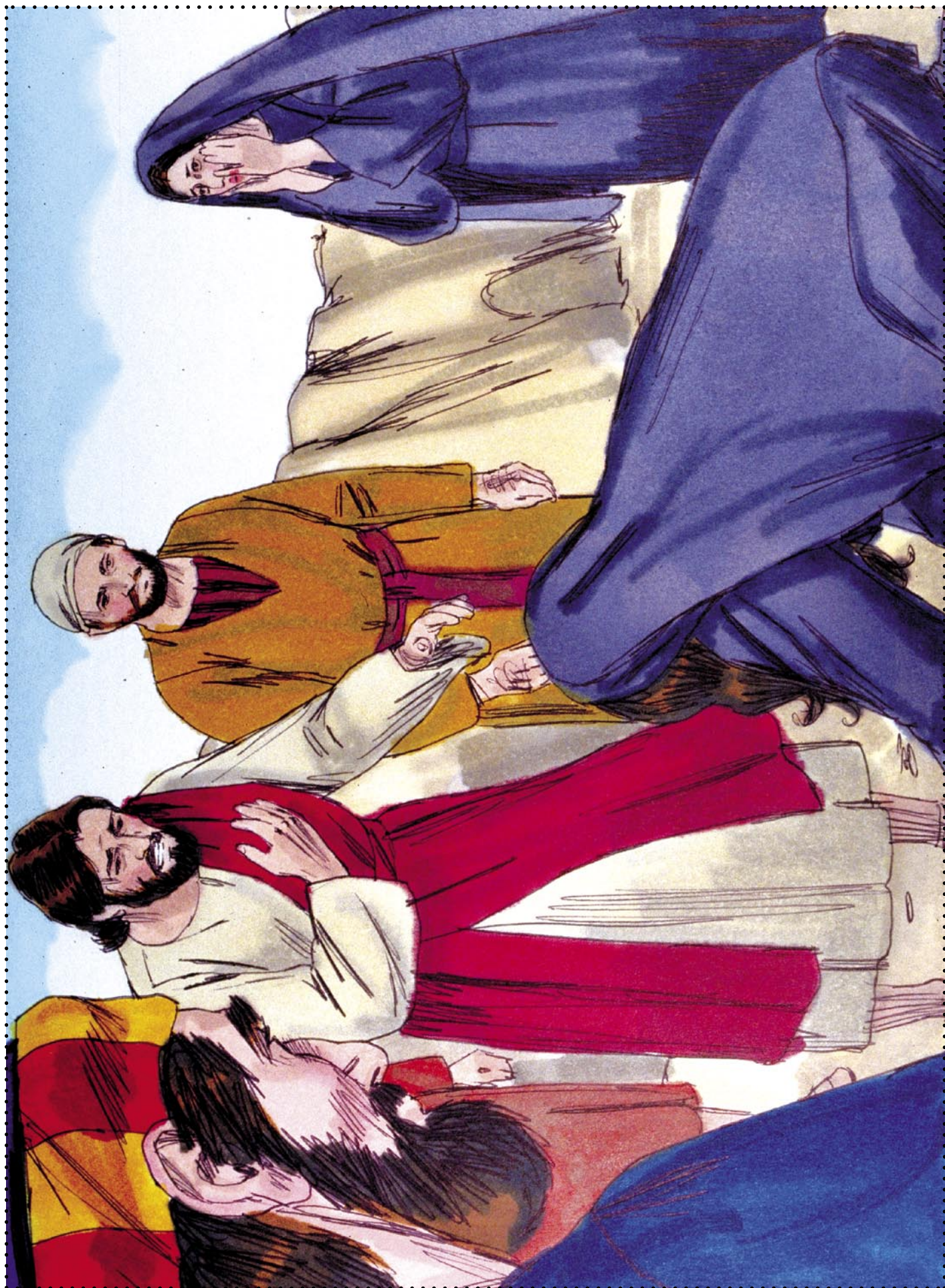
Thank you for the extra effort you put into teaching others from God's Word. The hours you pray and prepare are the perfume of your life being poured out in His honor. Often your efforts may go unappreciated by people, but Jesus never ignores this type of sacrificial giving.

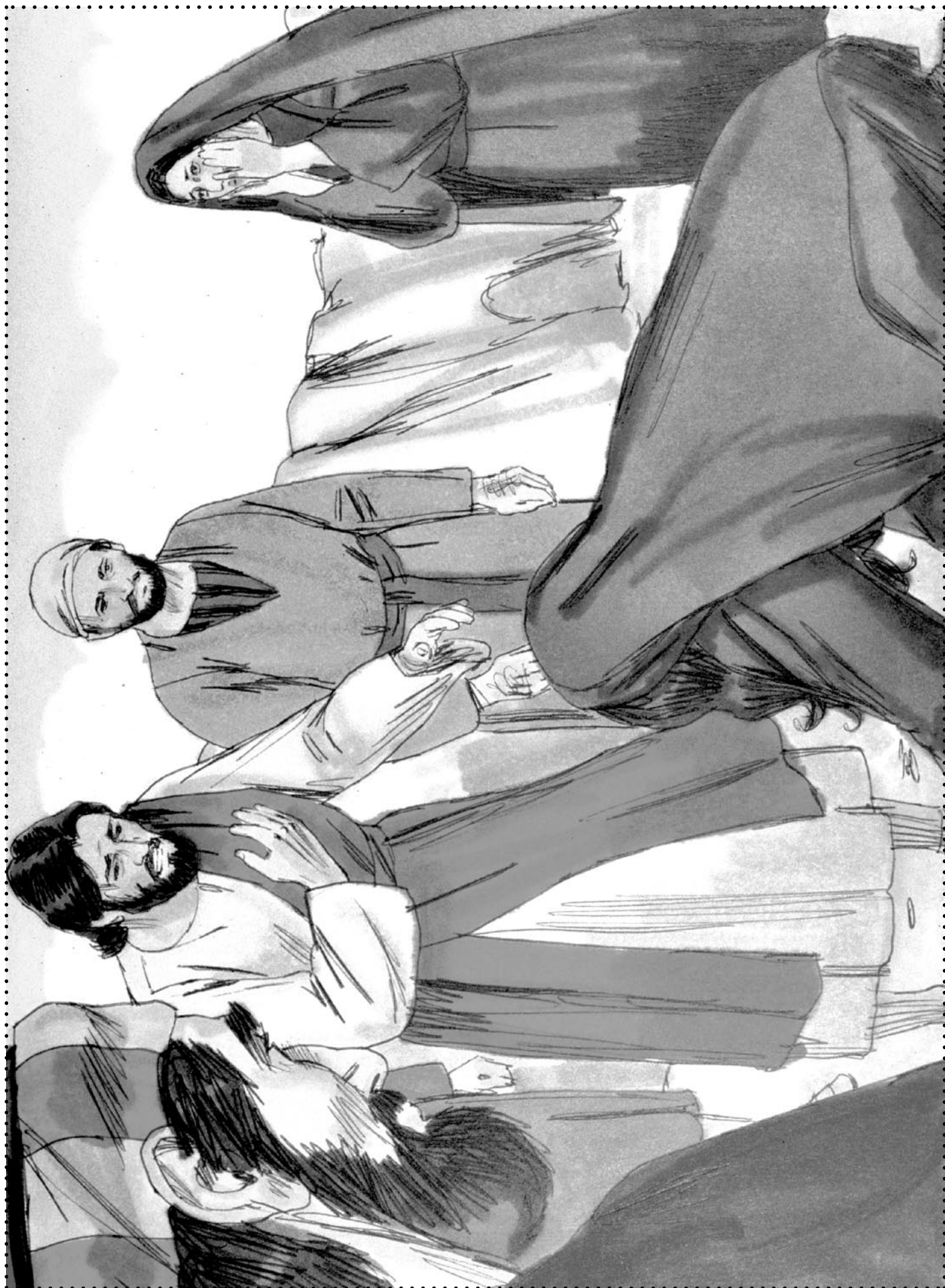
Scripture Passages

John 12:1-8; Mark 14:3-9

Memory Verse

Acts 20:35 *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*







We Learn to Trust in Jesus 3-11-B

There were a number of times when Jesus taught people using everyday illustrations. On one occasion Jesus was speaking to believers about the things they often worried about. Jesus lived among ordinary people and He observed their fears about basic provisions of food, clothes, and shelter. He also watched them live under the pressure of their constant desire to obtain possessions and riches. Jesus selected two examples from nature to teach people how to trust God for all their needs.

Jesus asked the crowd to consider the life of ravens, or ordinary birds that were very common in that area. The birds do not sow their crops or worry about harvesting them. They don't build barns to store up food, and yet the Heavenly Father feeds them. Jesus never spoke against hard work and planning, but He wanted them to learn how to live without constant worry. God cares for the birds and yet He asked, "Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Jesus wanted them to understand that God will provide and worrying is not part of trusting. Jesus wanted to make this so clear that He reminded them that no amount of worrying could ever add a single hour to a person's life. Our Heavenly Father will always meet the basic needs of His children as they trust Him.

Next Jesus asked the crowd to consider the lilies, one of the most common flowers that spread across the hillsides before them. He challenged them to realize that worrying about how beautiful their clothes were was also a waste of time. The flowers do not work hard to spin and weave their garments, yet they are more beautiful than the robes of Solomon. The people had long heard stories of the splendor of that famous king's wardrobe. Now Jesus was showing them that wild flowers on the hills were clothed with majesty by God Himself. The grasses and flowers lived a short life under the summer sun, and were gathered in dry bunches to burn as fuel under the simple clay oven found in every home. Even though they were just dried cooking fuel in a matter of weeks, God still saw that they were clothed with beautiful blossoms.

So Jesus reasoned with the believers that if God cared that much for something that was here one day and gone another, certainly He would see to their needs for clothing and shelter. But Jesus also wanted them to grasp the importance of trusting God and developing a faith in His ability and desire to provide for their needs.

Jesus told them that the pagans, those who do not believe in God, spend their entire lives running after these things. The worry for provisions and the unquenchable desire for more possessions are the basic components of life for unbelievers. The people that love God and choose to live under His plan should not worry in the same way the rest of the world does because God already knows what is needed and is faithful to provide. Jesus taught them to seek first the kingdom of God, living in righteousness, and trusting God to meet all their needs.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Life's worries.**
 - A. Daily provisions.
 - B. Our possessions.
- II. **The birds.**
 - A. Their food.
 - B. Wasted worry.
- III. **The flowers.**
 - A. Their clothes.
 - B. Short life.
- IV. **Our treasure.**
 - A. Seek His kingdom.
 - B. Needs met.

Activity

The older students will participate in a discussion about the worries they have. Talk about the fears that many people have for daily provisions that are necessary and constant. Then specifically take these needs to the Lord in prayer. You may have the requests on slips of paper that you wrip to pieces as you pray, showing how they are not to be worried over once they are given to God in prayer.

Teacher Growth

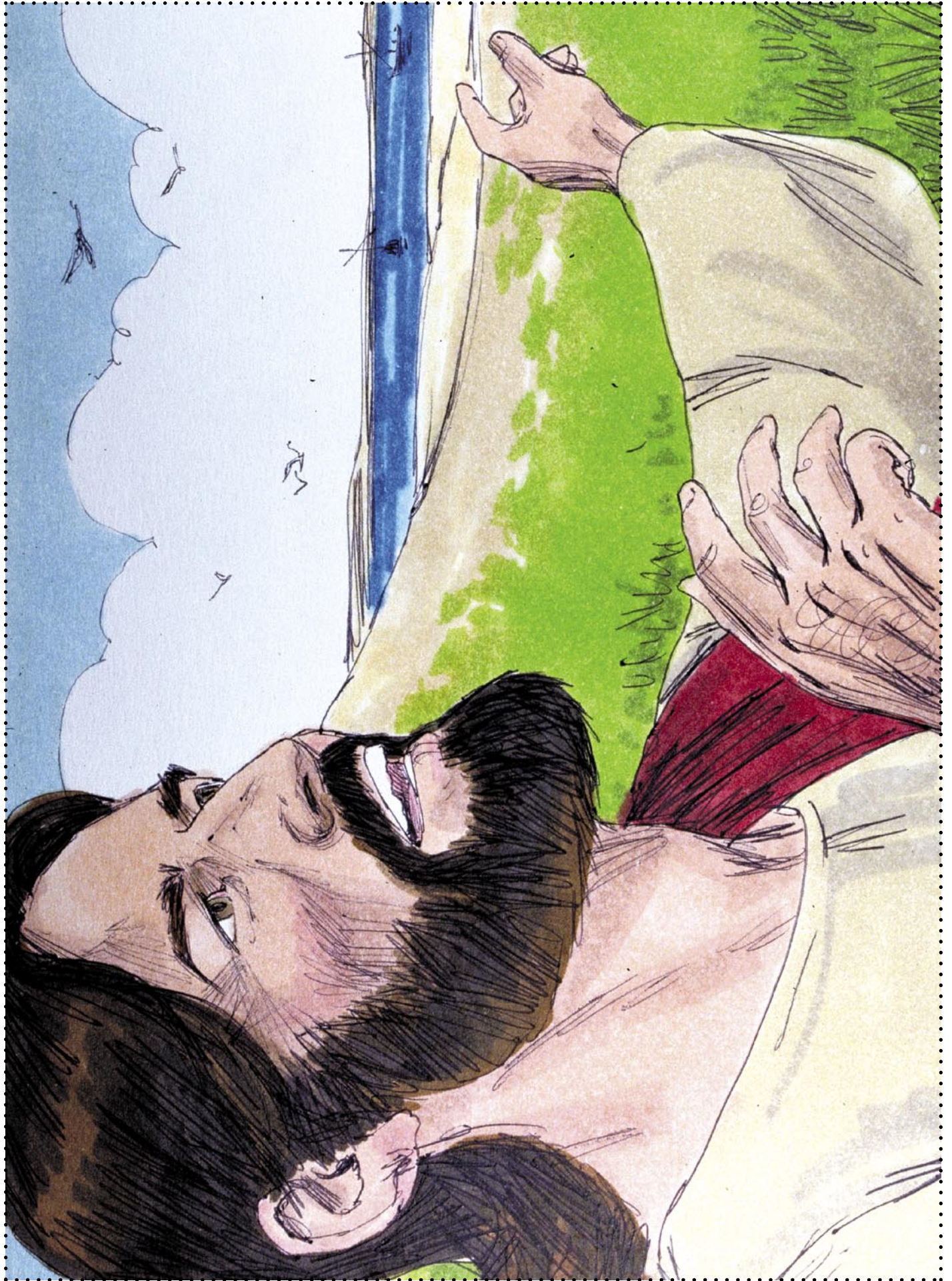
Small children can learn from the simply told story. Older students can get a greater understanding by enriching the message. Today's lesson could include information on local birds and flowers that God has provided for through His creation. Scientific information only makes this lesson stronger.

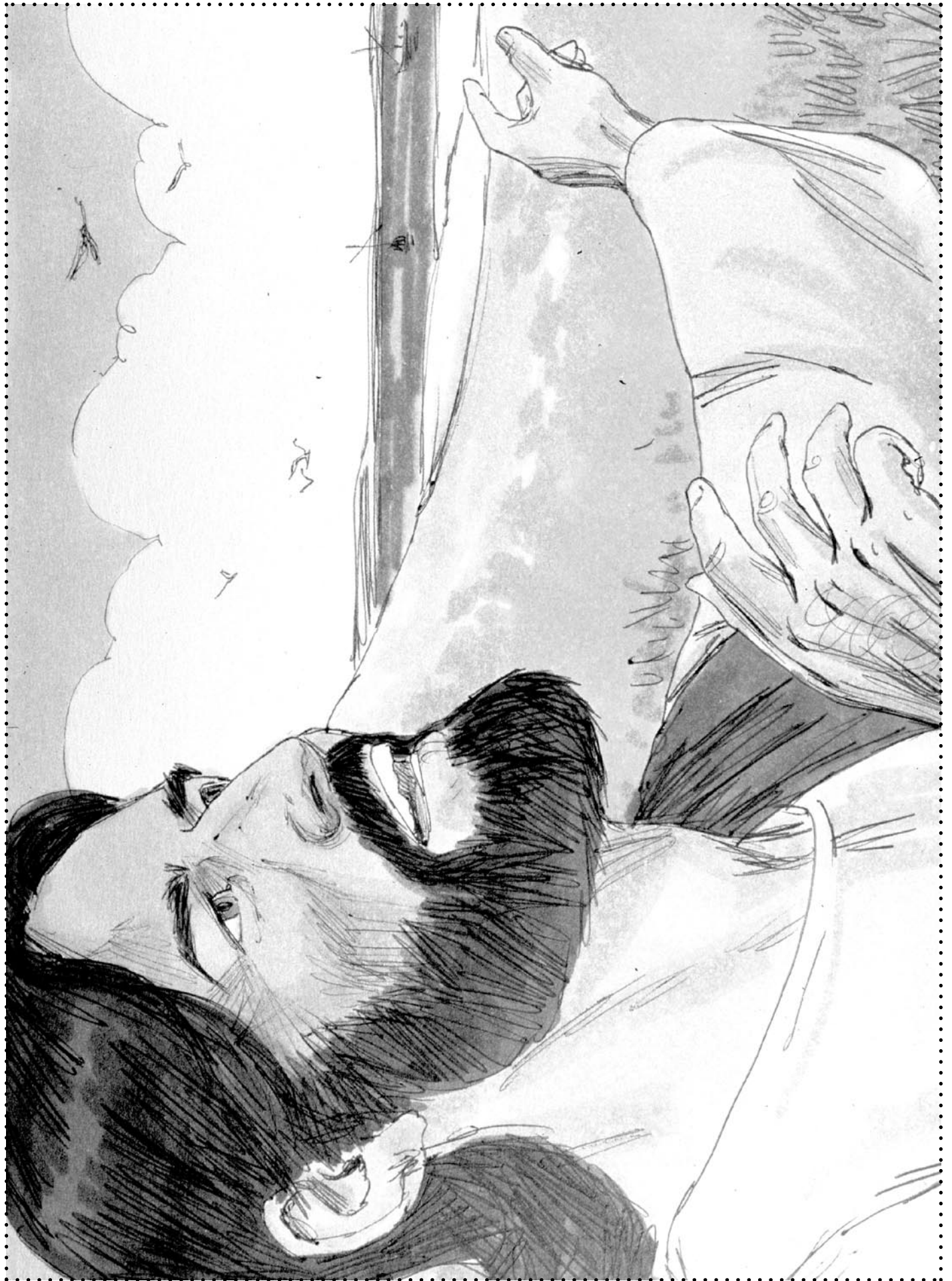
Scripture Passages

Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31

Memory Verse

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







Jesus is All-Powerful 3-12-B

A very special friend of Jesus, Lazarus, became very ill. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters became very worried and sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." Jesus was one of their closest friends, so they knew He would come and pray for their brother to be healed. But when word arrived Jesus stayed right where he was another two days.

The disciples knew how much Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters. They had seen Martha minister to His needs and watched Mary sitting at His feet. They had all spent many wonderful times in Lazarus' home. They must have wondered why He wasn't going there right away. After two days, Jesus suddenly announced that they would go back to Judea. His disciples reminded them how the Jewish leaders had tried to stone Him on His last visit there, but Jesus was insistent. He told them that Lazarus was asleep and they thought He meant a restful recovery. Then Jesus clearly told them that Lazarus was dead, and it was all for a purpose.

Upon His arrival Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Many of the Jews had come the two miles to Bethany from Jerusalem to comfort Mary and Martha in their sorrow. When the sisters heard that Jesus was coming Martha hurried out to meet him while Mary sat at home. Martha asked Jesus why He had not come sooner. She told Him that if He'd been there and prayed that God would have healed him and her brother never would have died. How those words must have hurt. But Jesus told her that her brother would live again. Martha thought Jesus meant at the time of the final resurrection, but Jesus wanted her to know He had resurrection power for that day too.

After Martha spoke words of belief confirming Jesus' power, she went home to get Mary. When Mary heard that Jesus was asking to see her she quickly got ready and headed to the edge of the city to meet Him. The Jews in her home saw Mary leave so quickly they followed her thinking she was grief stricken and wanted to weep near the tomb. When Mary saw Jesus she fell at His feet and cried out the same thing that her sister had said. Jesus again was asked why He had not prevented His friend's death when He had healed so many others.

Jesus asked them to take Him to the tomb, and as He stood there, with Mary, Martha, and the crowd crying loudly, He also wept with deep emotions. The Jews noted His reaction, while some accused Him of not caring enough to return in time.

Jesus stepped toward the tomb, a cave with a large stone over the entrance. He said, "Take away the stone." Martha reminded Jesus of the stench that would be there after four days of decay. But Jesus reminded her again that if she believed she would see God's glory. The stone was removed and Jesus looked toward heaven as He prayed. Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man walked out and Jesus had them remove the strips of linen that held his feet, hands, and face. What a miracle by an all-powerful God!

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A sick friend.**
 - A. Worried sisters.
 - B. Word sent.
- II. **A strange delay.**
 - A. Reason to wait.
 - B. Time to go.
- III. **A hard reception.**
 - A. Strong accusations.
 - B. Comforting words.
- IV. **A powerful miracle.**
 - A. Command given.
 - B. Tomb exited.

Activity

The students will enjoy acting out today's lesson. Using a simple cloth, towel, or sheet, they can take turns being Lazarus coming out of the tomb. Crying sisters, and Jesus moved by His emotions can be recreated by dramatic presentation. After the lesson, plan the basic scenes, characters, and series of actions that took place in today's lesson.

Teacher Growth

Part of today's lesson is based on understanding the emotions of the people who were involved. How would Mary and Martha have felt? Deal with the sorrow, fears, anger, and confusion. Talk about Jesus and His understanding the need to demonstrate His resurrection power, along with His sorrow for these close friends. These were real people with real emotions, not just a story with pretend characters.

Scripture Passages

John 11:1-44

Memory Verse

John 11:25-26 *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.'"*







We Learn to Keep our Word 3-13-B

Jesus again taught a serious lesson to His listeners by using a parable, or simply understood story. There was a man that owned a large vineyard who had two sons. Immediately the people understood the life and work involved in a vineyard. They also understood the role of a father with his sons. A man wealthy enough to have a vineyard probably had a number of hired laborers, but his sons would be expected to also work. The sons would learn every aspect of the family business so they could run it some day when the father no longer could. The sons would also act as managers of the hired workers to see that the work was done well and in a timely way so that their family money, or inheritance, would not be wasted. Now Jesus would use this setting to continue His parable.

The father went to the first son and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard." The son first responded, "I will not." But later he changed his mind and went to work in the vineyard.

Then the father went to his second son and asked him to work in the vineyard as well. The second son answered, "I will, sir." But he did not go to the vineyard to work.

At this point Jesus asked His listeners a question. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

The crowd all answered, "The first." Even though the first son had not given his father a good answer, he had followed through and done the work his father needed. Although the second son had given his word that he would go work, he never completed his promise to help.

Then Jesus took this parable and explained how it related to the lives of His listeners. He used very strong and clear words to rebuke the religious people who loved to appear important but failed to obey God. The religious leaders and Jewish people felt they were God's chosen sons and they could live in any way they chose because God had selected their forefathers to be His people. These are the people that would come and challenge Jesus' teaching instead of accepting His words and changing their ways in repentance.

Jesus told the crowd that the tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom of heaven before any of them. This shocked the crowd. They thought they were secure in being part of God's chosen people, and they had created their own set of religious rules that they followed carefully. The tax collectors were considered traitors and thieves, while the prostitutes were obviously sinful people that broke all of God's laws. Jesus continued explaining that John the Baptist had come clearly teaching them what God desired, to repent, follow biblical principles, not rules, and to accept Jesus and His teachings. But the religious people rejected this and the sinners accepted the grace of God's forgiveness and new life.

Jesus wants everyone to understand that saying you are a believer but not acting like one is not what the father wants. He wants us to promise to live for Him and then to really obey His Word and live that way. When we promise to serve Him we need to keep our word.

Teacher's Notes

I. The father's vineyard.

- A. A father.
- B. Two sons.

II. The first son.

- A. The command.
- B. The response.

III. The second son.

- A. The command.
- B. The response.

IV. The final question.

- A. Obedient son.
- B. Repent and believe.

Activity

Today's memory verse is found in another part of the Bible. To find where it is located and know what it says the students will have to use a code to decode the verse. Write a the code to be used and the coded verse where all can see it. Codes can switch numbers for letters, symbols for letters, or dots for letters like braille.

Teacher Growth

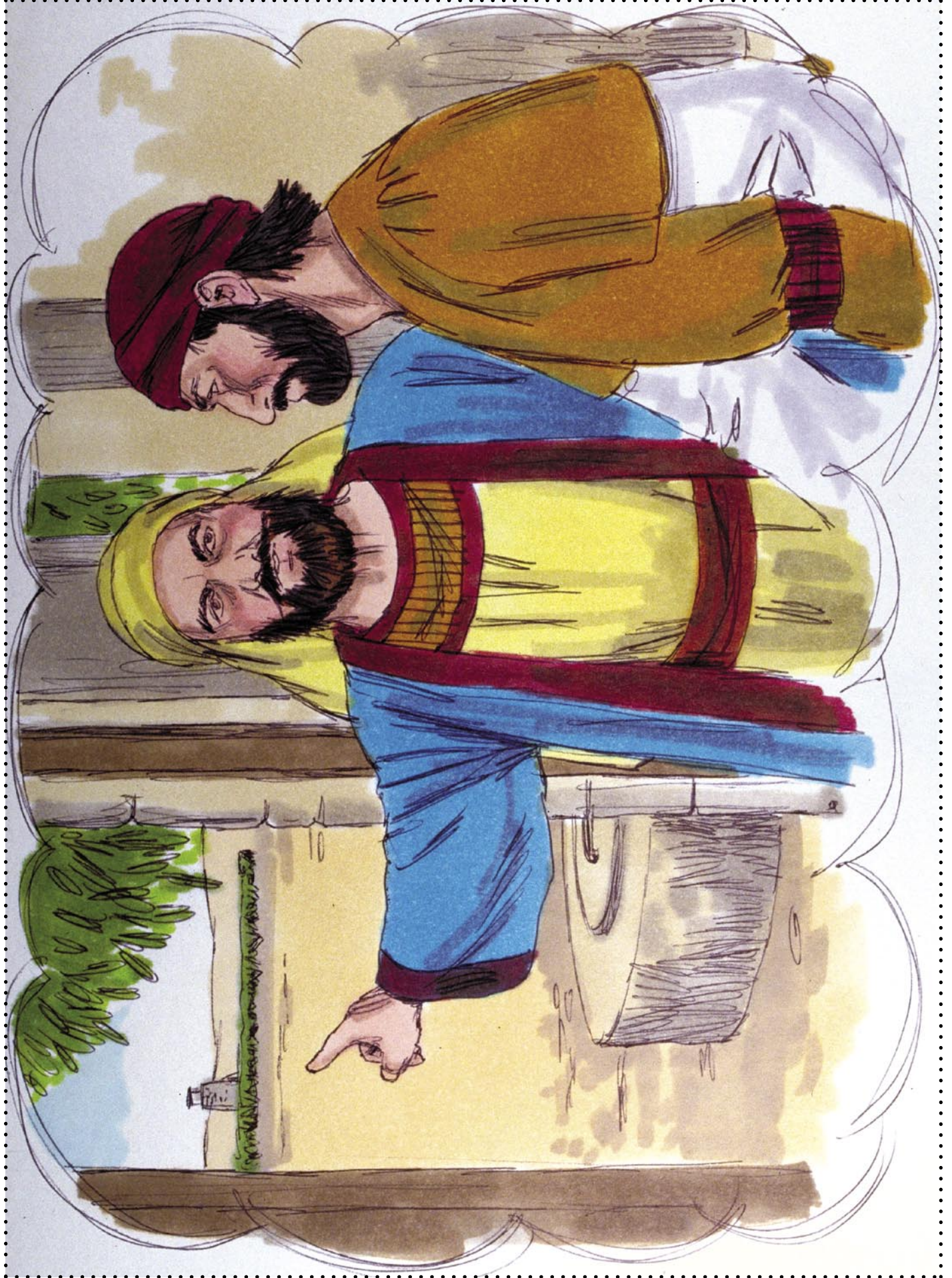
Just as today's lesson teaches us to obey and respond to our promise to serve, so will a good teacher take her preparation and prayer time seriously. When you agreed to teach this class that meant you also agreed to be ready to teach for every session and careful to have your materials prepared in advance.

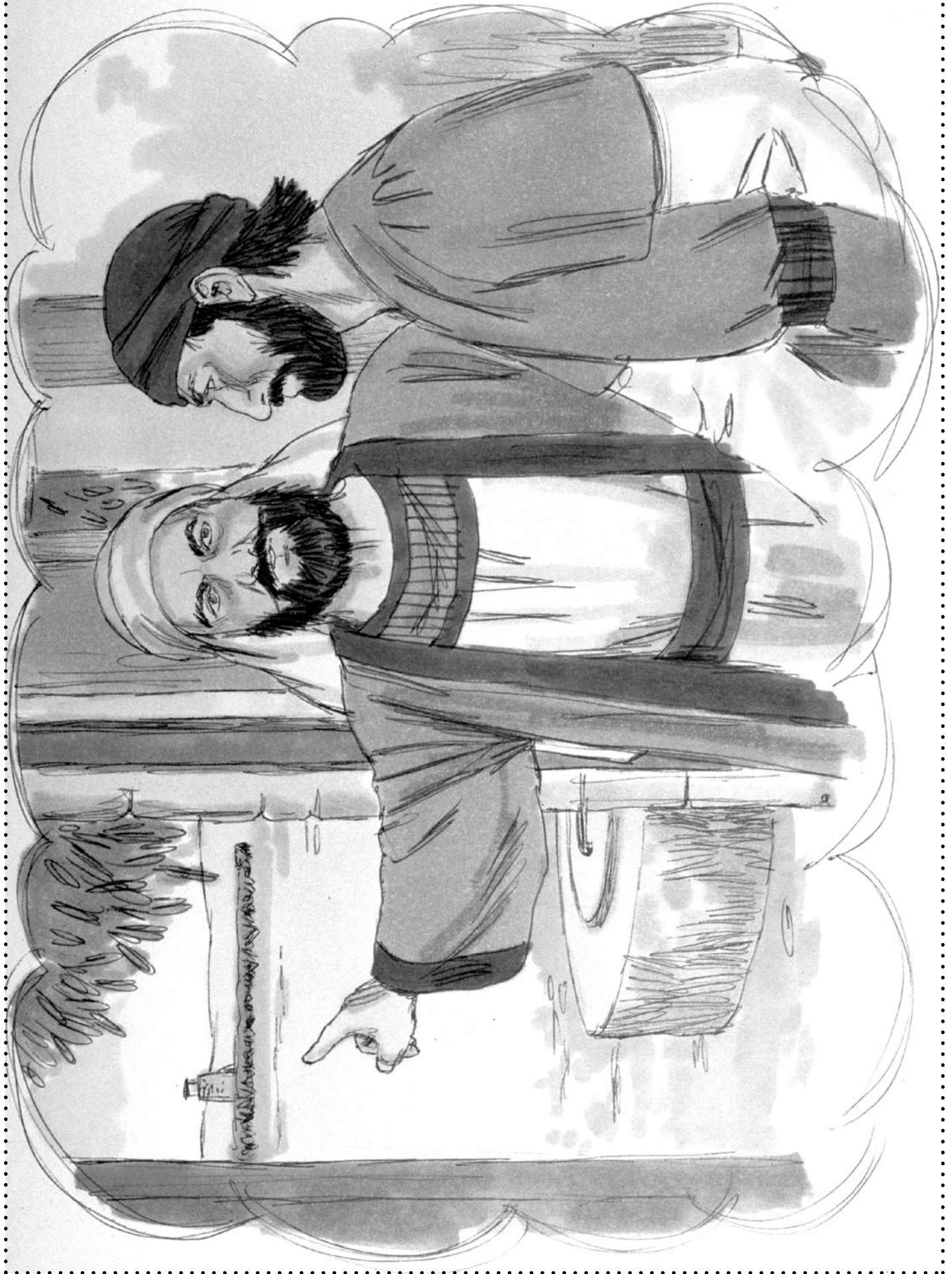
Scripture Passages

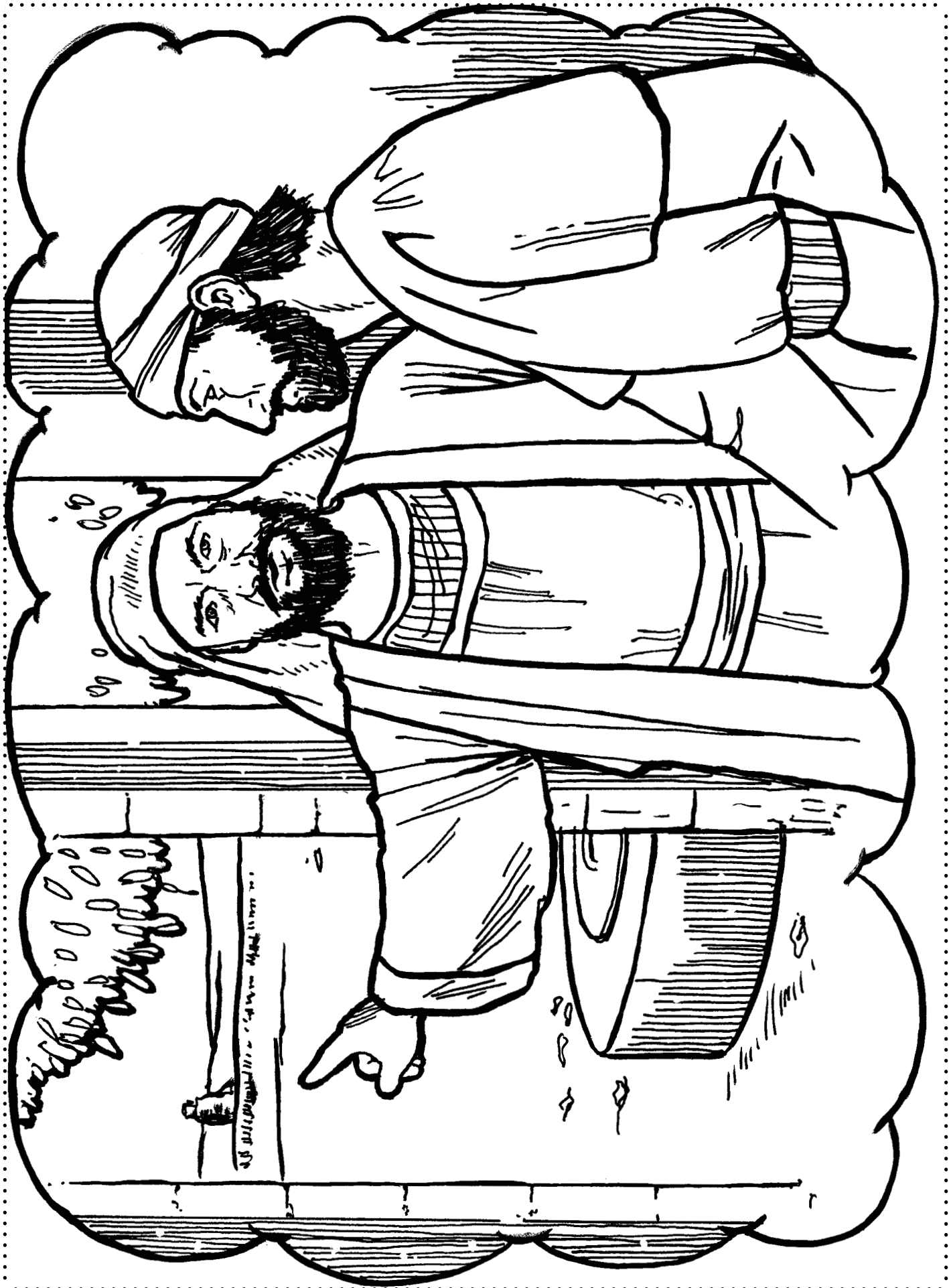
Matthew 21:28-32

Memory Verse

Ecclesiastes 5:4 "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it."







We Learn to Use our Talents 3-14-B

Again, Jesus used a parable to clarify a biblical principle for His listeners. There was a man that had to leave on a long journey. Before he left he gathered his three servants to give them some final instructions. He wanted to entrust his property to them while he was away. He wanted them to guard it and make its value increase during his absence.

To one servant he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to the third, one talent. A talent was a type of coin that represented about two or three year's wages. This valuable coin represented a large sum of money and the use of skilled work over a great length of time. With the coins in each servant's care the master left on his journey.

While the master was away each of the servants did something with their talents. The first servant with five talents immediately put the money to work and gained five more talents. The second servant, with the two talents also put his money to work to gain two more. The last servant with one talent dug a hole in the ground and buried the master's money.

After a long time the master returned home and it was time to settle his accounts. The master was anxious to see how his finances had grown while he had been away. He called each servant into the room to determine how well they had done with the money. The first servant showed the master how he had gained five more talents. The master responded with, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" The master was pleased with the servant's ability to increase his wealth for him.

The next servant was called in and he reported how he had doubled his talents, gaining two more with the two talents he had been given. Again the master was very pleased and told him the same thing he had said to the first servant.

The third servant was called in and he said, "Master, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you." The master was very angry. Since the servant knew that the master expected an increase from the talent he had entrusted to him, it was unbelievable that the servant had been so lazy to not increase its value. At least the servant could have put it on deposit in a bank and increased it with some interest.

The angry master then ordered that the one talent be taken from the third servant and given to the one who had ten talents. He explained, "For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

The master rewarded the servants who used the talents to earn more and then he ordered the last "worthless" servant to be punished, or thrown outside into darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. What have you done with all that God has entrusted to you?

Teacher's Notes

- I. **On a journey.**
 - A. Three servants.
 - B. Talents entrusted.
- II. **Time passed.**
 - A. Two at work.
 - B. One buried.
- III. **Master's return.**
 - A. Good reports.
 - B. Bad report.
- IV. **The results.**
 - A. Two rewarded.
 - B. Cast out.

Activity

The students will dramatize the story into today's setting. Act out the steps of the story but place the characters in today's world, using your form of talents and system of employer and employees. The master uses modern transportation and the men use today's methods for increasing their funds.

Teacher Growth

Every student in your class has been given talents to use for God. You can help them to discover these gifts and put them into service for the Lord. Find ways to use art, music, organization, serving, teaching, etc., to enrich your class and to help students see their talents used for the Lord.

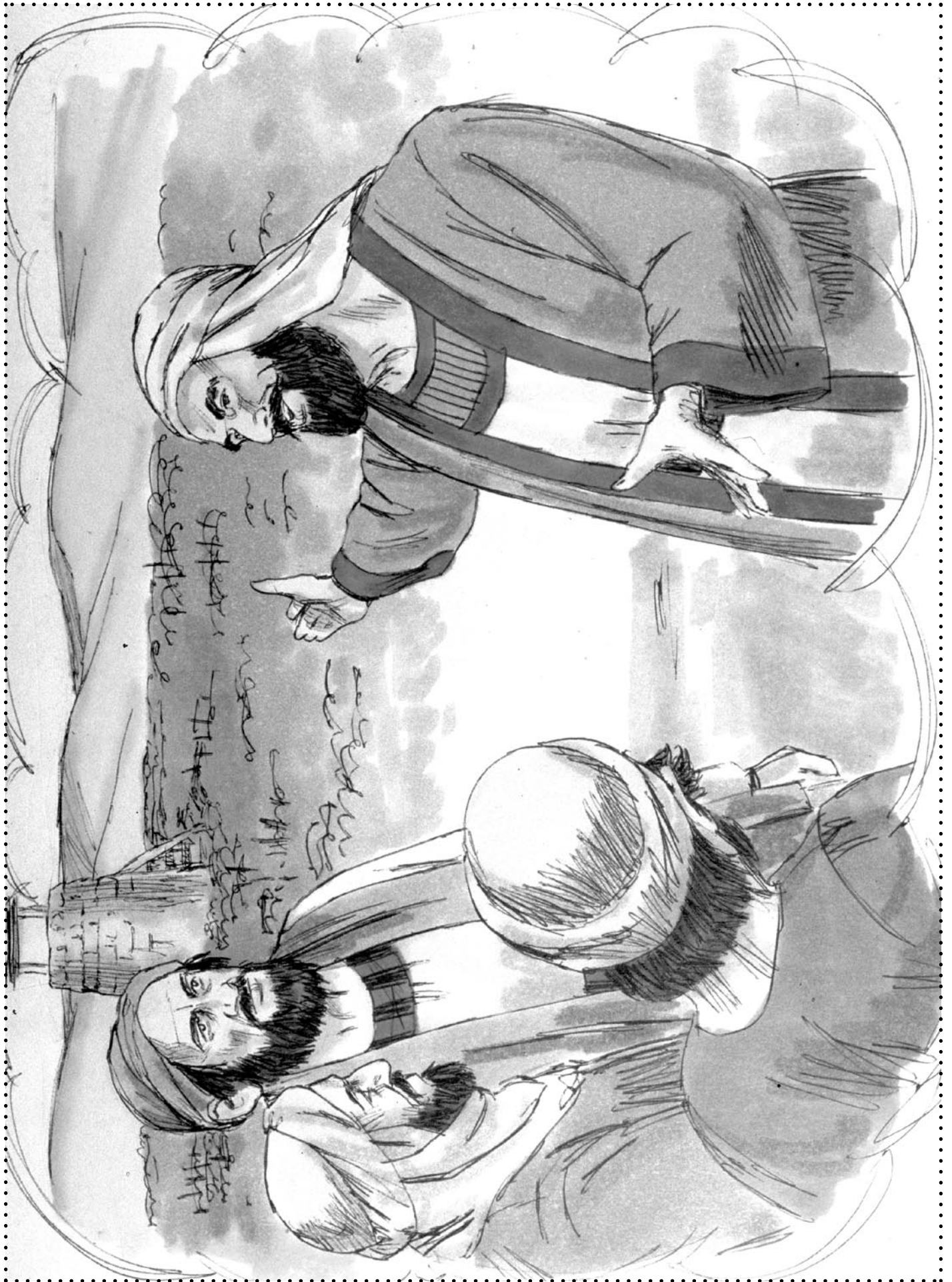
Scripture Passages

Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27

Memory Verse

Matthew 25:23 "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"







Jesus, the Good Shepherd 3-15-B

As usual, a large crowd had gathered around Jesus one day to hear him teach. The tax collectors and other types of sinners were there as well as the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The religious men muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." They knew that in their culture if you sat down to eat with someone you were accepting them and recognizing their worth. The religious leaders were so busy making rules and condemning people who broke them, that they spoke against Jesus for caring about sinners. Jesus wanted them to compare the love of God to their exclusive religious ways.

Then Jesus told them a parable. There was a shepherd that had a hundred sheep but he lost one. The sheep were taken to the hillsides where they wandered over a vast area, so it was possible to have one sheep stray away from the flock. The shepherd would leave his flock gathered in a safe place on an open field and search for the missing sheep. The shepherd would search as long as it took to find the lost sheep.

When the sheep was found the shepherd would joyfully carry it on his shoulders and return home. He would call his friends and neighbors together to celebrate the return of the lost sheep. Jesus explained, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." How clearly the difference was displayed between heaven's rejoicing and the Pharisees' self righteous judgement.

Again Jesus used the example of a shepherd. Seven times Jesus spoke of Himself using the phrase "I am..." and here he described Himself as the gate for the sheep. Sheep pens were built with only one way in and out to protect the sheep from beasts or thieves. He told of false shepherds, like thieves and robbers that would try to steal His sheep; the religious leaders who led people away from His love instead of to Him. But as the gate, Jesus said that every person that entered in through Him, by believing and accepting Him, would be saved. Under His care they would be able to live freely and enjoy the blessings of His provisions. Again he clearly explains that the thief, another name for Satan, comes to "steal and kill and destroy," but Jesus came to give fullness of life.

Next Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." In those days a shepherd would risk great danger for his sheep, but he was expected to live through difficulties. Jesus amazed them by saying He would go so far as to actually die for His sheep. Men were hired to care for the sheep of others and if a wolf came that would threaten his life, he would run rather than die for his job. With the flock abandoned by hired workers who had no personal attachment or love for the sheep, the wolves would attack and scatter the flock.

In contrast, Jesus explained how He had chosen to lay down His life and take it up again for the salvation of His sheep in both flocks of Jews and Gentiles.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The lost sheep.**
 - A. Divided crowd.
 - B. Shepherd's search.
- II. **Joyful results.**
 - A. Sheep found.
 - B. Sinner repents.
- III. **The gate.**
 - A. To steal.
 - B. To enter.
- IV. **The Good Shepherd.**
 - A. Kept from wolves.
 - B. His sheep.

Activity

Interview a shepherd or person that knows a lot about raising sheep. The class will learn important aspects of sheep and their care that will make today's lesson more meaningful. Raising sheep and caring for them is hard work, yet a shepherd loves his sheep so much he will do what it takes for their good.

Teacher Growth

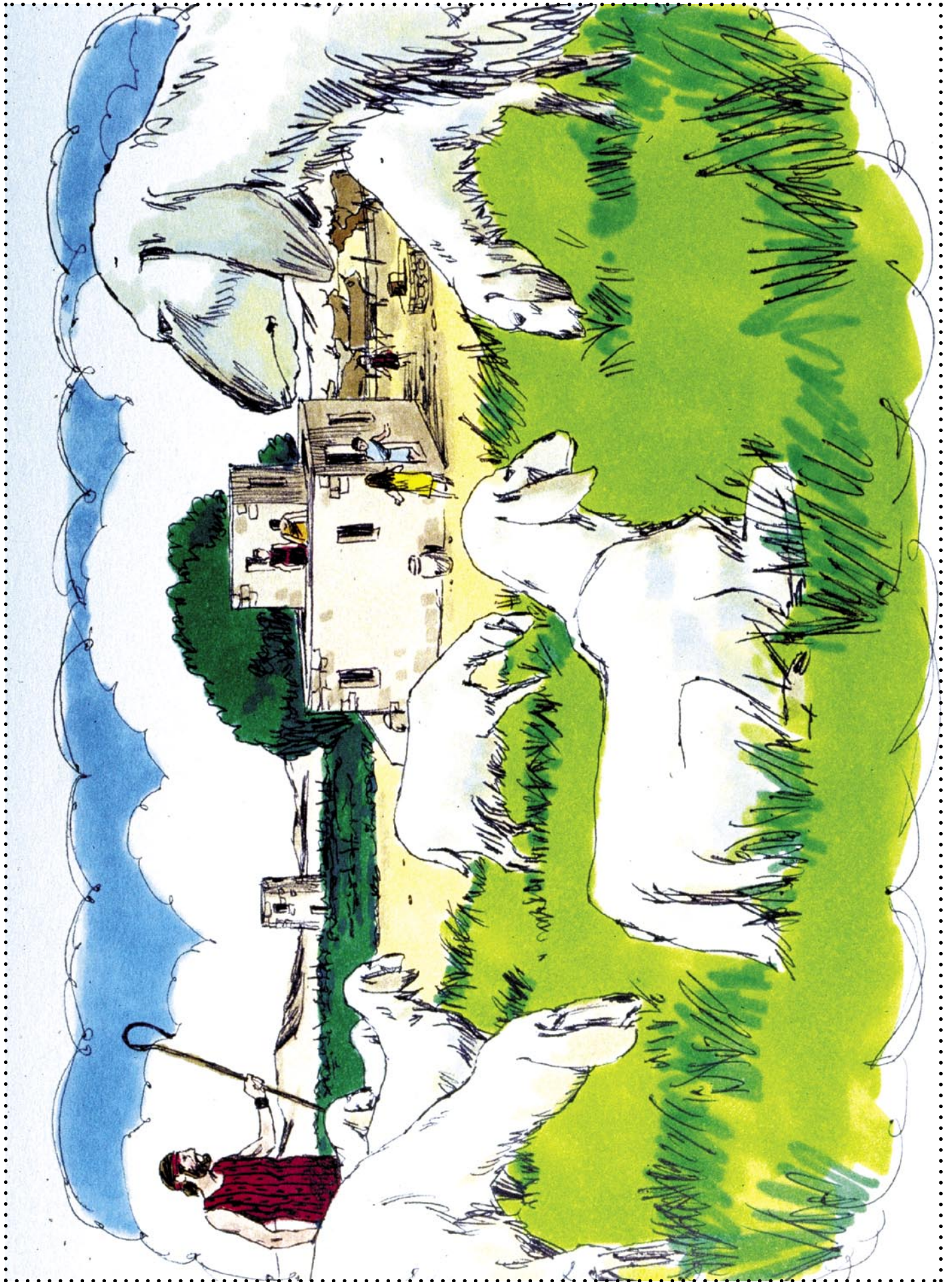
Help your students understand the lesson by making it relevant to their world. Just as Jesus placed His parables into the current way of life, so you can adapt these parables to fit life for you today. Retell the stories using current terms, lifestyles, and fashion. Guard the biblical principle being taught, but help your students apply those principles in their world.

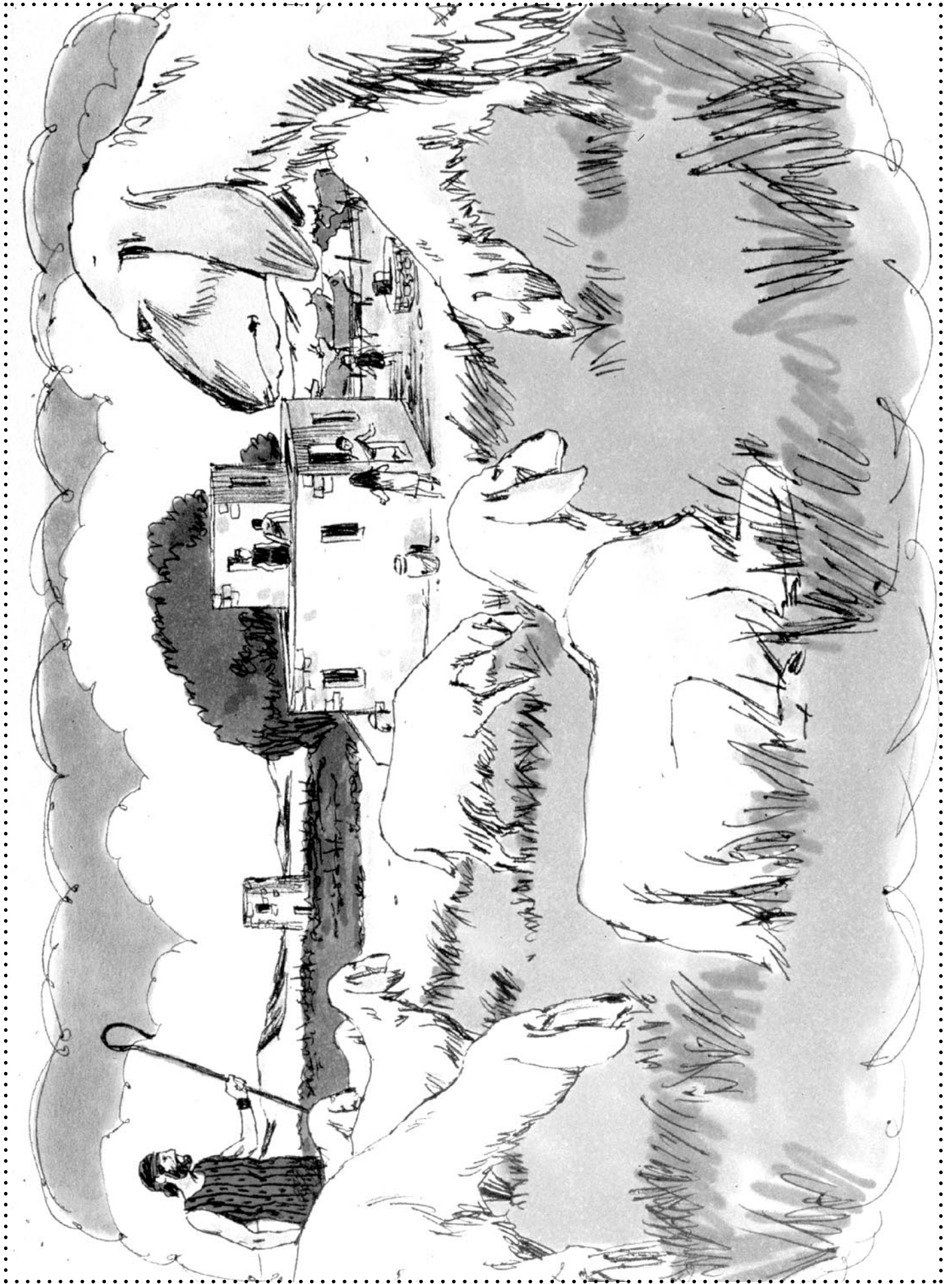
Scripture Passages

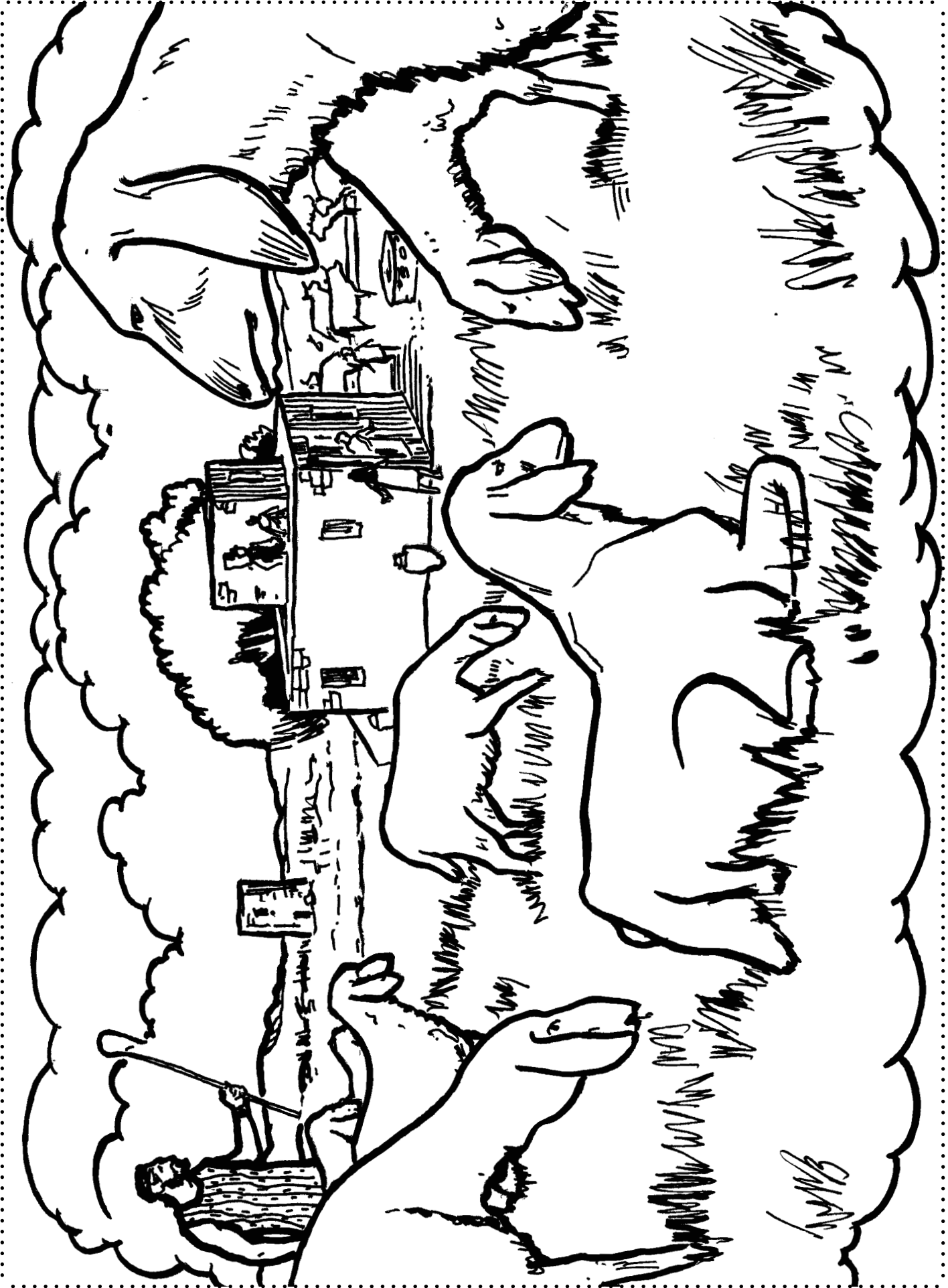
Luke 15:1-7; John 10:7-21

Memory Verse

John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*







The Prodigal Son

3-16-B

Jesus continued teaching with parables as he described a man with two sons. The youngest son asked his father to divide up the inheritance so he could have his half right away. Normally the father's land and goods would be divided between the two sons upon the father's death. But the father divided his property between his two sons. A little later the younger son took his half of his father's estate and set off for a distant country where he squandered all he had.

Living far from home the young son spent all his money on parties and wild living. He was surrounded by people who enjoyed spending his money, not friends, and when it was gone they left him alone. After all the money was gone a terrible famine spread across that region. The son was in need of food and shelter so he hired himself out to a farmer in that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. The Bible says he "longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything." How terrible to be so hungry that you would beg for the pigs food, especially when the Jews considered any work around pigs, an unclean animal, the ultimate depths of humanity.

Finally the son came to his senses and realized that even the servants on his father's farm were well fed and cared for. They were living far better than he was. They had food to spare while he was starving. He determined to return to his father. He planned to apologize for sinning against his father and heaven's plan for his life, and plead for a job as a hired man since he was no longer worthy to be treated as a son. So he began the journey home.

Daily his father must have looked towards the road hoping to see his son's return, for when he was still a way off the father saw him and came running to meet him. The father threw his arms around him, and kissed him with compassion. The son began his apology when the father sent servants to fetch the best robe, a family ring, and sandals for his son's feet. He also ordered that a great feast be prepared with music and dancing to celebrate the return of his lost son.

When the music and preparations were noticed by the older son he asked what was happening. Upon hearing the news, the older son became angry that his father would honor a son that had so dishonored his father. He complained to his father about never throwing a party for him. But the father explained to his angry son that judgment needed to be set aside and sheer joy and celebration needed to fill his heart for the prodigal had returned. The older son had all of his inheritance still available, but the younger son had returned, even if it was without anything. The father showed God's great mercy while the older brother showed the same attitude as the Pharisees and teachers of the law that opposed Jesus. Religious criticism had no place around the celebration of a sinner who was lost and then found.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Two sons.**
 - A. Divided estate.
 - B. The youngest left home.
- II. **Life abroad.**
 - A. Wild life.
 - B. Nothing left.
- III. **At the bottom.**
 - A. Low life.
 - B. Return home.
- IV. **Father's reception.**
 - A. Warm welcome.
 - B. Lost and found.

Activity

After first reading through the Bible passage with your class have the students retell the story in today's terms. Using a contemporary setting and current language, have students help you retell this story in terms of a modern teen and his father. They may want to do this by acting out the story or by a pretend radio interview of the characters and events.

Teacher Growth

You may select a different way to introduce the story to the class. Instead of reading it directly from the Bible, or telling the story, try presenting the story as a live broadcast on radio or television. Seat yourself as a reporter similar to those on your daily newscasts. Present the situation as though you are speaking very dramatically into a microphone.

Scripture Passages

Luke 15:11-32

Memory Verse

Luke 15:10 *"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*







Lazarus and the Rich Man 3-17-B

Jesus used a story one day to teach another important lesson to His listeners. He wanted both the sinners and those who were the religious leaders, Pharisees and teachers of the law, to understand this concept.

There was a very rich man that dressed in purple and fine linen, signs of great wealth. He lived in luxury in a mansion behind a gated entrance. There was a very poor man that laid outside of Lazarus' gate and begged for food every day. He would have been satisfied even with the crumbs from the rich man's table. The dogs on the street would come and lick the open sores that covered Lazarus' body.

Finally Lazarus, the beggar, died and the angels took him to Abraham's side. The people of that day knew that it would be paradise, or we would think of it as heaven, to be with Abraham their forefather. The rich man also died and was buried. You can see the contrast already between angels taking Lazarus to paradise and the rich man being buried. But there was even more to this contrast. The Bible says the rich man went to hell where he suffered in torment.

The rich man looked up from hell and saw Lazarus at the side of Abraham. So he called, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire." The description of this place matches what other biblical descriptions state about endless fire and agony as part of the eternal punishment for the unsaved.

Abraham responded to the request with a firm no. He reminded the rich man of how both he and Lazarus had lived on earth, and now that cannot be changed. While the rich man had plenty he never shared anything with the poor, like Lazarus. The vast chasm that separates heaven and hell cannot be crossed.

Then the rich man presented a second request. He asked for Lazarus to be allowed to go back to earth to speak to the rich man's five brothers. He wanted Lazarus to warn these brothers so that they would not also come to the end of life in the same place of torment.

Abraham reminded the rich man that they had heard the words of God's prophets and ignored them. They had grown up just like their older brother and had their ears closed to the message God sent. The rich man argued even stronger that if someone came back from the dead to tell them they would surely listen and change their ways. Abraham said that if they had not listened to the prophets they would not repent even for someone who came back from the dead.

The sad part of this story is that the very people who thought they were rich in religion had ignored for centuries the prophets that God had sent to teach them how to live a life that pleased God. The very listeners that day who rejected Jesus' teachings were also the ones who so hardened their hearts that they would not believe in Him even after He was crucified and raised from the dead. This story reminds us of the urgency to bring people to salvation before it is too late.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Daily life.**
 - A. A rich man.
 - B. The beggar.
- II. **End of life.**
 - A. In paradise.
 - B. In hell.
- III. **First request.**
 - A. Drop of water.
 - B. No crossing.
- IV. **Second request.**
 - A. Five brothers.
 - B. Closed ears.

Activity

Students will select five people that have not accepted Jesus as their Savior. Just as the rich man couldn't reach his five brothers after it was too late, so your students need to find ways to go to these five people and share the Gospel with them while there is still time. Start by prayer and then discuss ways of sharing their faith.

Teacher Growth

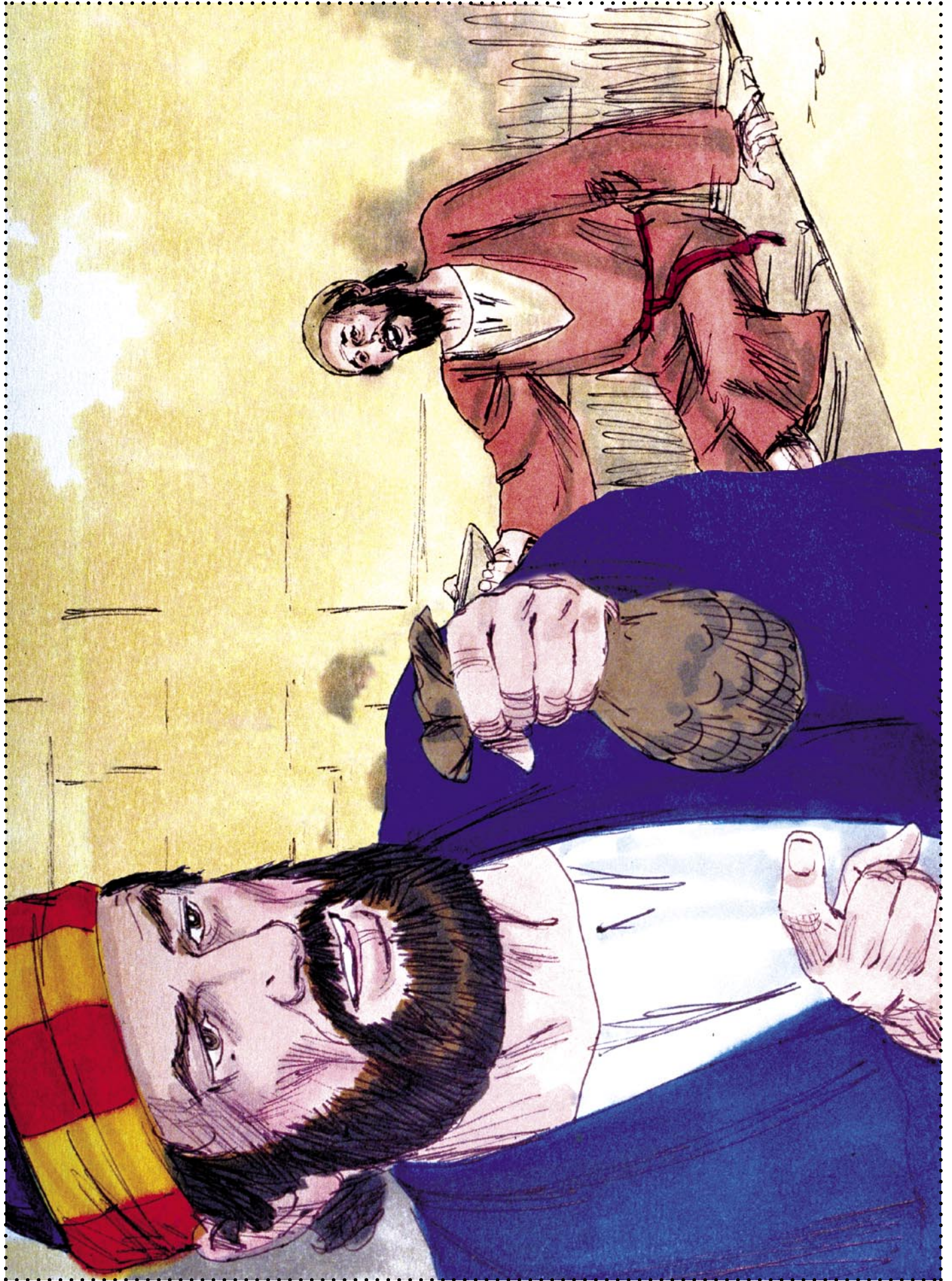
Encourage your students to share their faith and the biblical principles they learn outside of class. Help them to practice leading someone else to Christ, don't just assume they know how. Help them understand the basic concepts of salvation that they will be effective in witnessing to others.

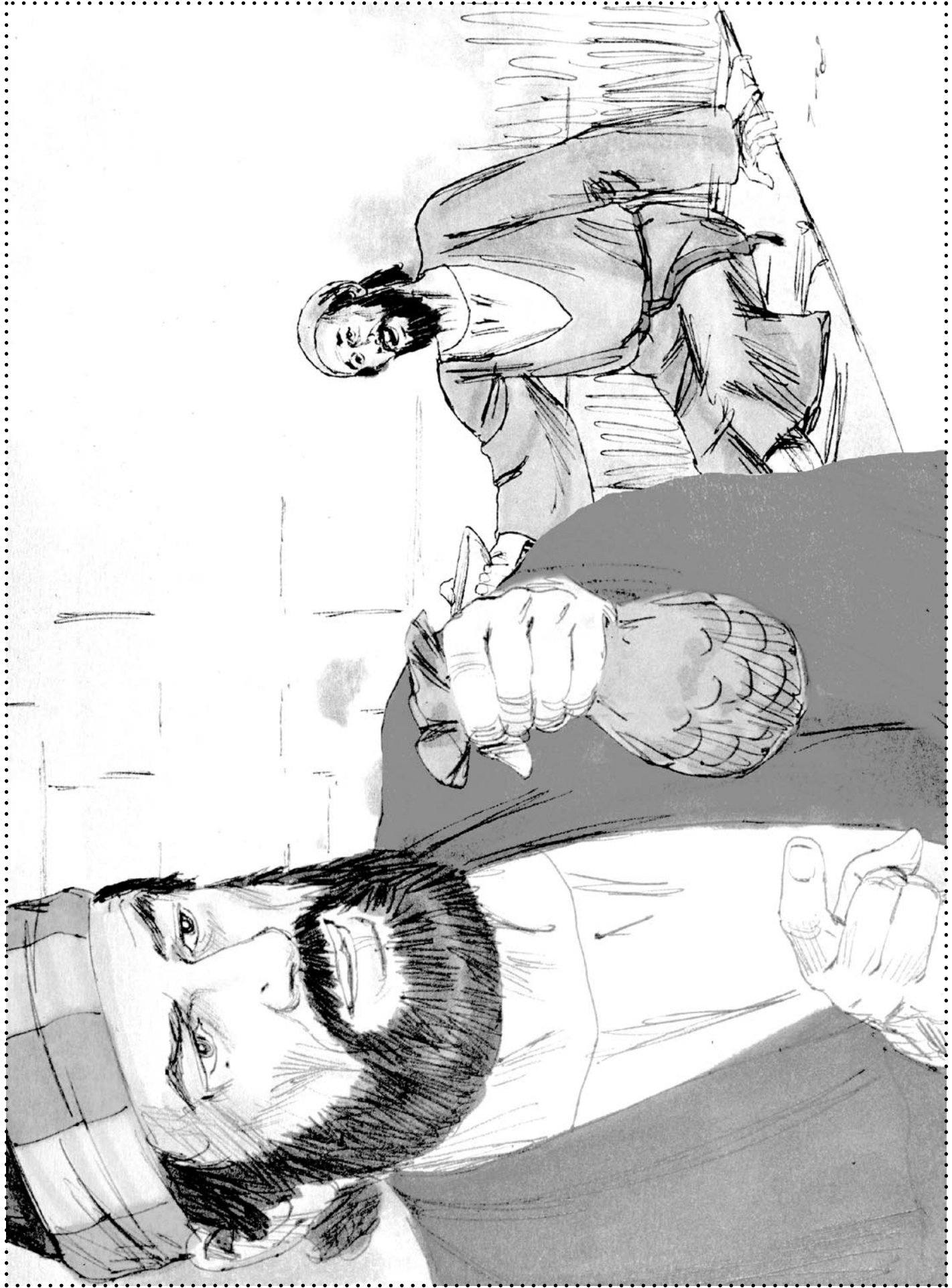
Scripture Passages

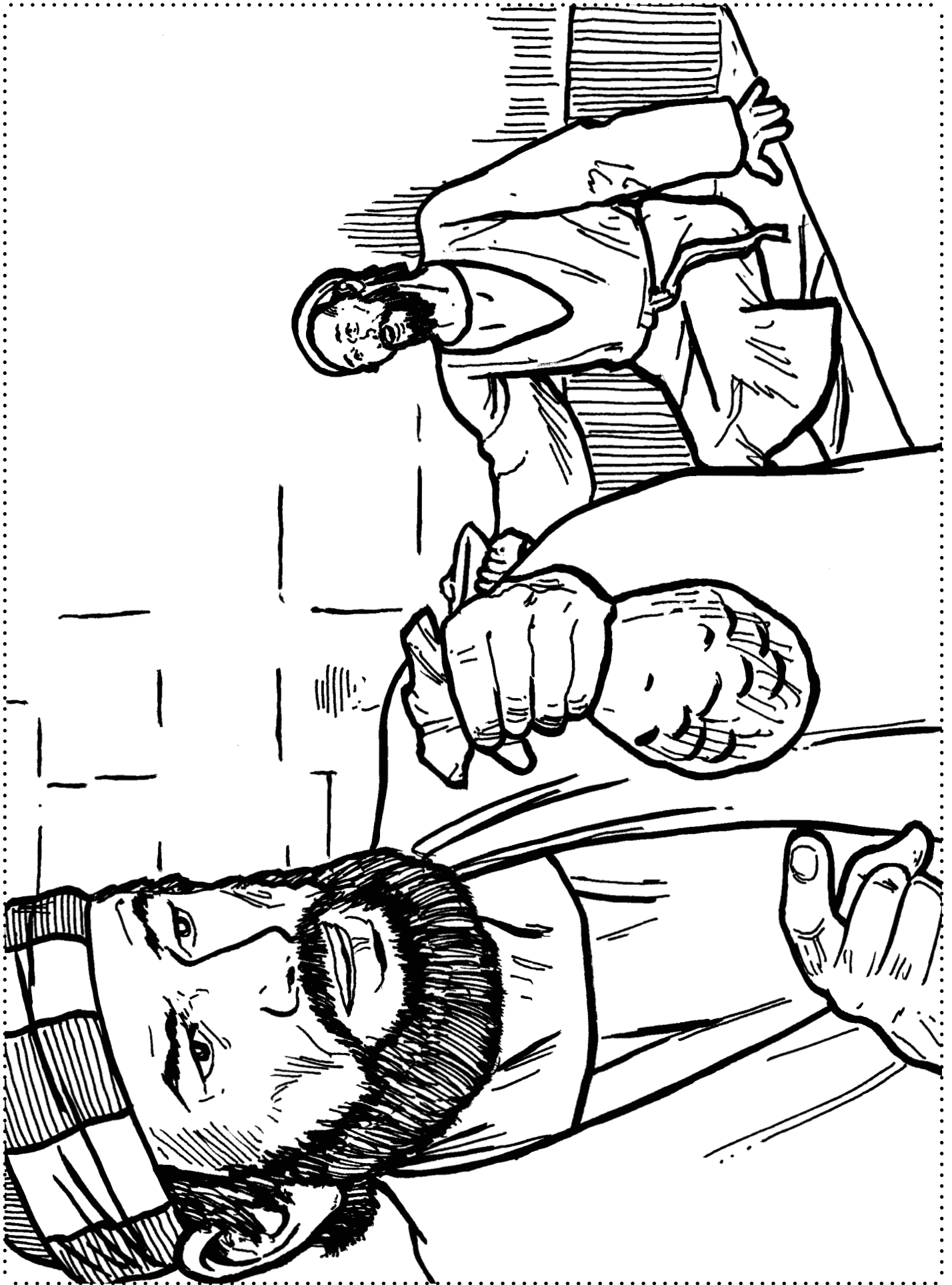
Luke 16:19-31

Memory Verse

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







Jesus used a story to help people understand their need to accept the gospel message and be ready for the end times. He explained it by using an illustration common at weddings in those days. On a number of occasions Jesus compared the church, or group of believers to the bride and spoke of His return for them as a bridegroom coming to take his bride away.

There would always be a group of bridesmaids or attendants that would assist in the wedding process. These ten virgins in the story would have helped prepare the bride for the wedding and they would wait to direct the bridegroom and his procession into the place where the wedding would be completed. They were to be ready at any time for their role in the wedding. That meant having enough oil for their lamps in case it happened in the night hours. Each woman held a torch with a large rag drenched in oil extending from a long pole. Without oil in the rags they burned quickly or were blown out by the evening breezes. Only the properly prepared rags soaked in oil would maintain a workable light to direct the bridegroom into the wedding feast.

Ten virgins went out to wait for the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but no oil, while the wise ones had their lamps and plenty of oil in jars for the entire night. They waited so long into the night hours that they were drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the call came, "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" All ten of the virgins jumped to their feet and busied at preparing their lamps. They trimmed the long cloth wicks and settled them into the oil poured over them. The foolish ones asked the wise virgins for more oil. They had come unprepared and without more oil their lamps sputtered and went out. The wise virgins refused to give their oil away, knowing there was not enough to be shared. They told the foolish women to run to those who sold oil in the village and buy some more.

While the foolish virgins were away buying oil the bridegroom and his entire procession of family and friends arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. Then the door was shut. Later the foolish virgins arrived with their oil to find the others gone. They hurried to the door of the wedding feast and pleaded for the doors to be opened again. But the doors remained closed. The bridegroom inside called out, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you."

Jesus explained that those who loved Him and obeyed Him would be watching and ready for His return one day. They would not be foolish and unprepared but they would be watchful, living a life pleasing to God so they would enter into the wedding feast He will prepare one day for His believers. His final words that concluded the lesson were words of caution, especially for those who live unprepared for that final day. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A wedding coming.**
 - A. Ten virgins.
 - B. Out waiting.
- II. **Lamps and oil.**
 - A. Five wise.
 - B. Five foolish.
- III. **Bridegroom came.**
 - A. Awakened by the call.
 - B. Begged for help.
- IV. **Late scramble.**
 - A. Entered in.
 - B. Too late.

Activity

Bring in several lamps that use oil for light. Demonstrate how the lamp and wick are set for use and then try to light one without oil. Observe how quickly it sputters out or refuses to light at all. Then show a lamp with oil added and watch how well it burns. Stress the need for oil to have a workable lamp.

Teacher Growth

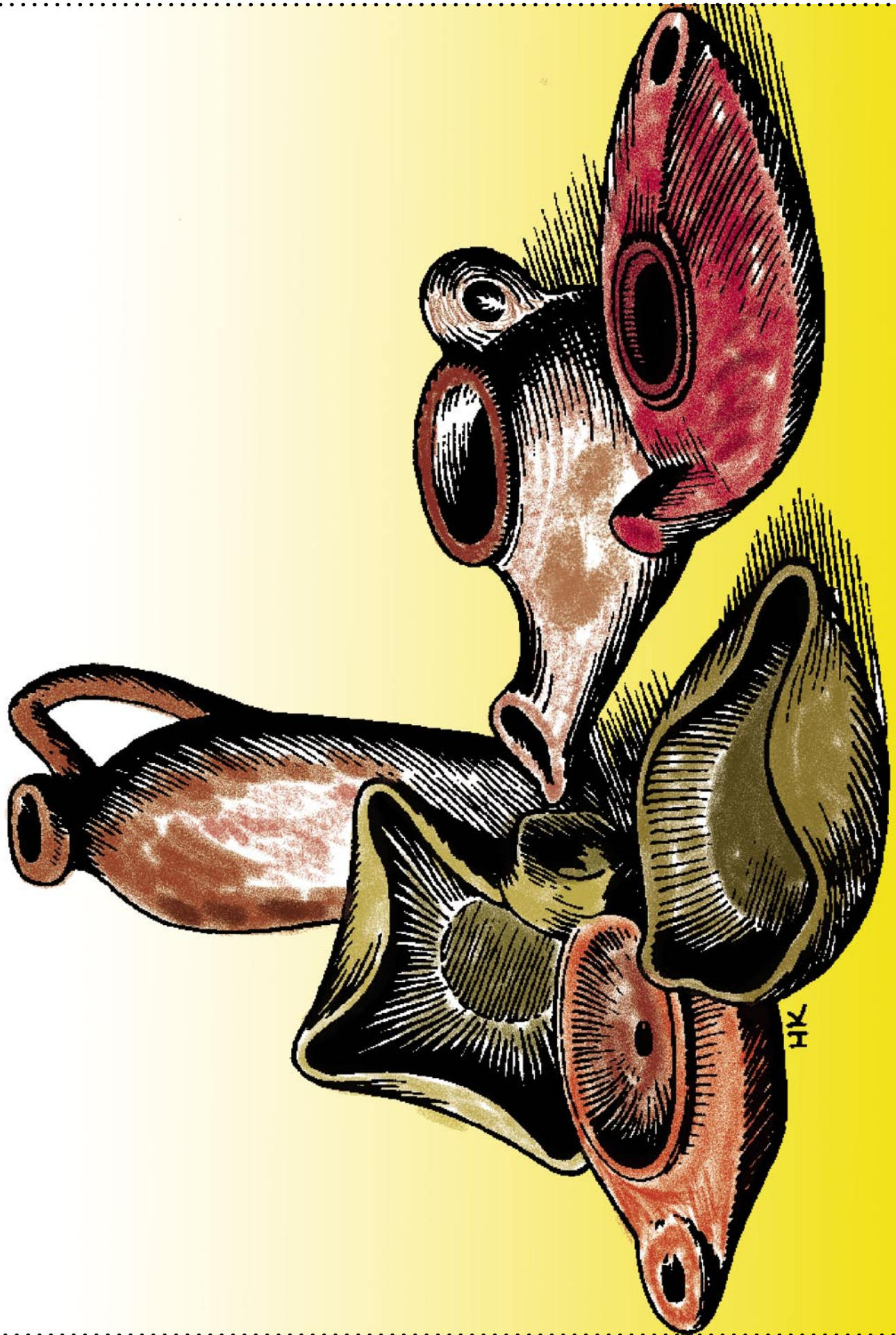
This story can also speak to our hearts about the fuel we need as Christians. Jesus has called us to be light in a dark world. We need the fuel of the Holy Spirit in us to keep burning brightly. The Bible says His Spirit gives us the boldness to be a witness for Him. You and your students need to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit.

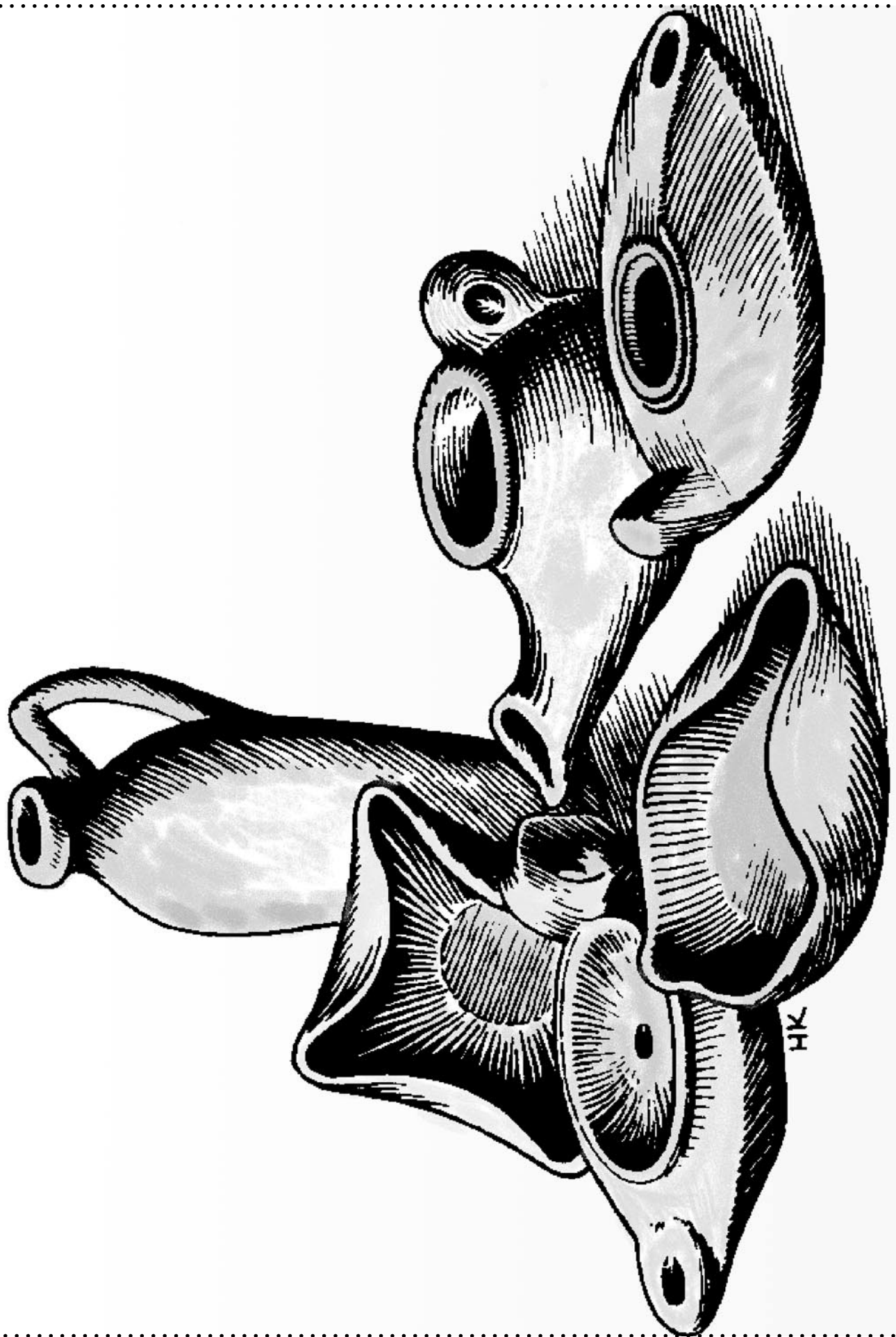
Scripture Passages

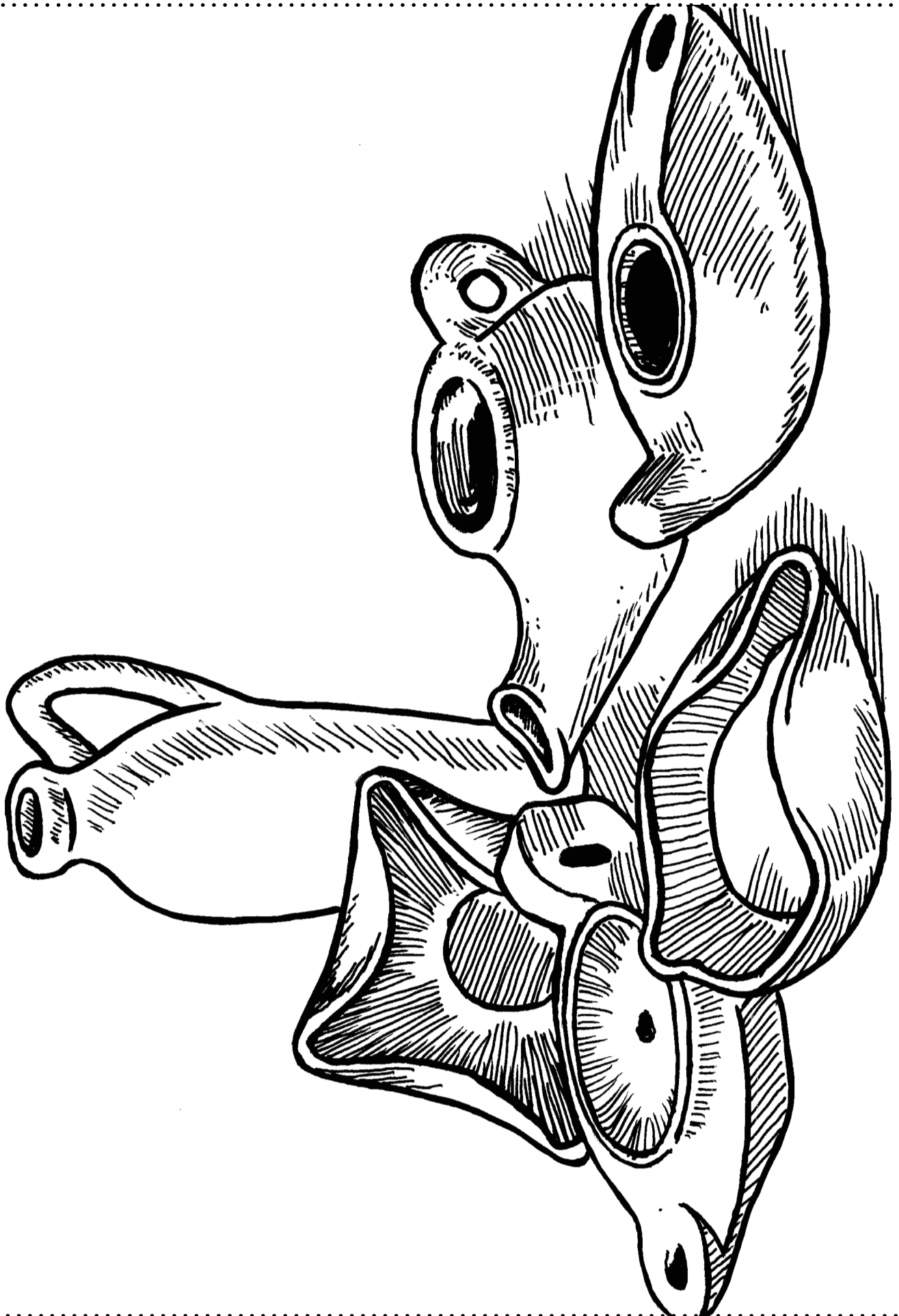
Matthew 25:1-13

Memory Verse

Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."







A Wedding Feast

3-19-B

Jesus again used a parable to speak to them about the kingdom of heaven. He explained that the kingdom of heaven was like a king that had prepared a great wedding feast. This giant banquet was designed for his son's wedding and was truly magnificent. The king sent his servants to all those who had been invited to the banquet, but the guests refused to come.

Again the king sent his servants out to remind the guests of all the work that had gone into preparing the perfect banquet. The king had butchered his oxen and fattened cattle and everything was ready. This shows he had prepared the very best. He really wanted them to come to the wedding banquet. But again the guests paid no attention to the invitation. One went to his field to work, another to his business, and still others mistreated the servants and even killed them. The king was enraged at this terrible response to his invitation and sent his army to kill the murderers and burn their city.

Then the king gathered his servants and again gave them orders. He said, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." The servants went right to those places and invited everyone to the wedding banquet that was already prepared. They brought in both the good and the bad people and the wedding hall was filled with many guests.

When the king entered the banquet hall he noticed a man who was not wearing wedding clothes. He had provided the proper wedding clothes for every guest that came to the banquet, but this man had not put them on. When the king asked the man how he had gotten into the hall without wearing the wedding clothes the man was speechless. There was no answer for this kind of behavior.

Then the king told the attendants to tie the man's hands and feet and throw him outside into the darkness where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The king explained that many are invited but few are chosen.

God is preparing the greatest of all wedding banquets for the day when His Son, Jesus, shall come home with His bride, the church. Everyone in the world is an invited guest, but only those who accept the invitation will come into the banquet. Those who have asked Jesus to forgive their sin will all receive a robe of righteousness from Him, just like wedding clothes that will prepare us for that great heavenly celebration. But there will be those who refuse to respond to His invitation just like the first recipients in the story. The Jews were the first to be invited and the first to reject Him. There will also be those who try to live for God in their own goodness, but He says we must live by faith and obedience and He will clothe us with His righteousness, the only garment accepted in heaven.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **A banquet ready.**
 - A. All prepared.
 - B. Guests refused.
- II. **Invited again.**
 - A. Servants' orders.
 - B. Guests' response.
- III. **New plan.**
 - A. To the streets.
 - B. Gathered many.
- IV. **King arrived.**
 - A. Heaven's garment.
 - B. Hell's end.

Activity

Provide the paper and supplies needed to help students create invitations to an evangelistic event or church activity. Discuss how they will invite someone to hear the gospel in the same way Jesus was teaching through today's story about inviting everyone to hear the message.

Teacher Growth

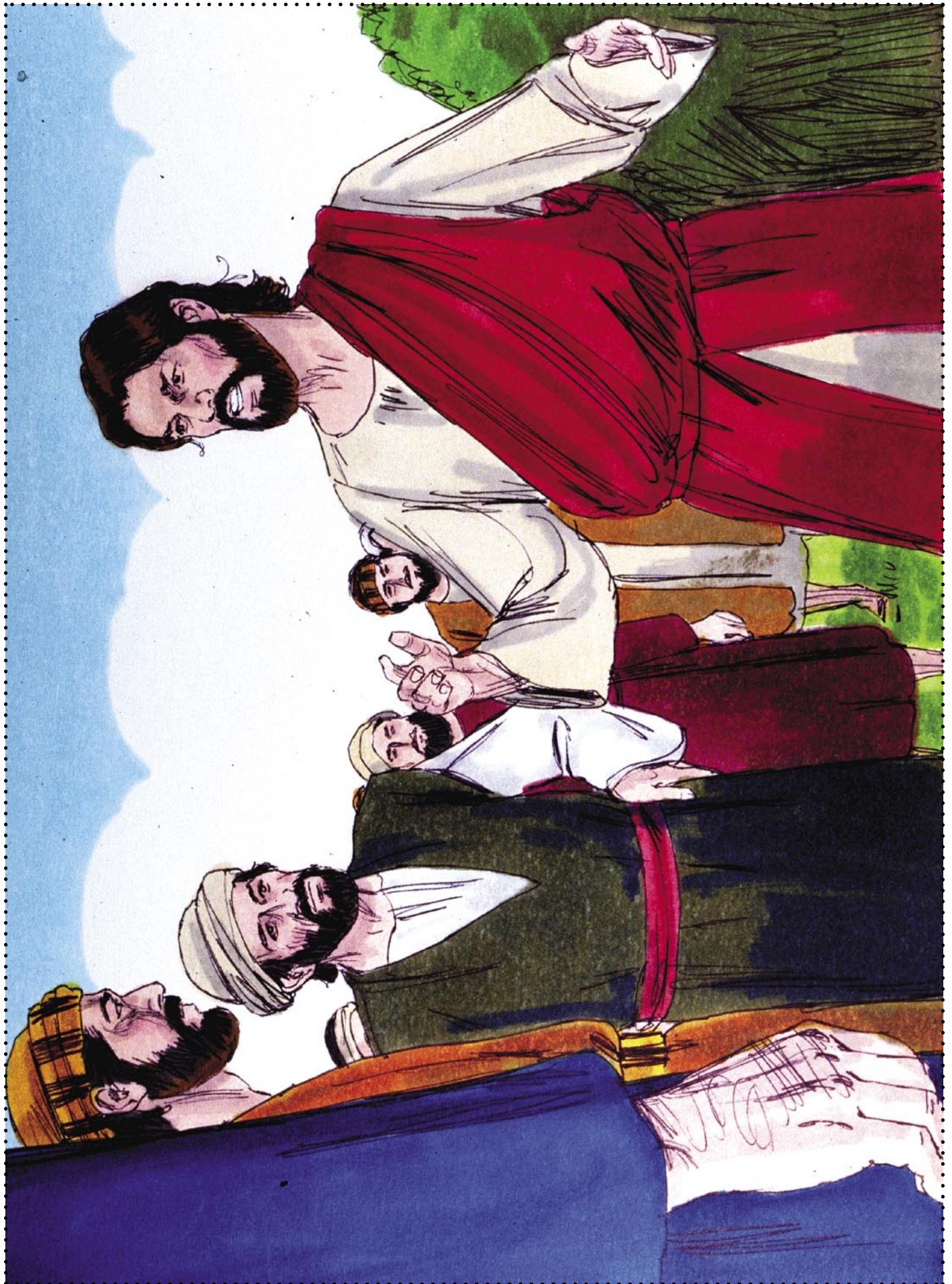
At the banquet there were all kinds of people present. God loved and invited everyone. You may have to have God's help to love everyone He sends to your class. Teaching God's love means loving even the unlovely. There may be a few that are very hard to love, and yet God can give you the love for even these students.

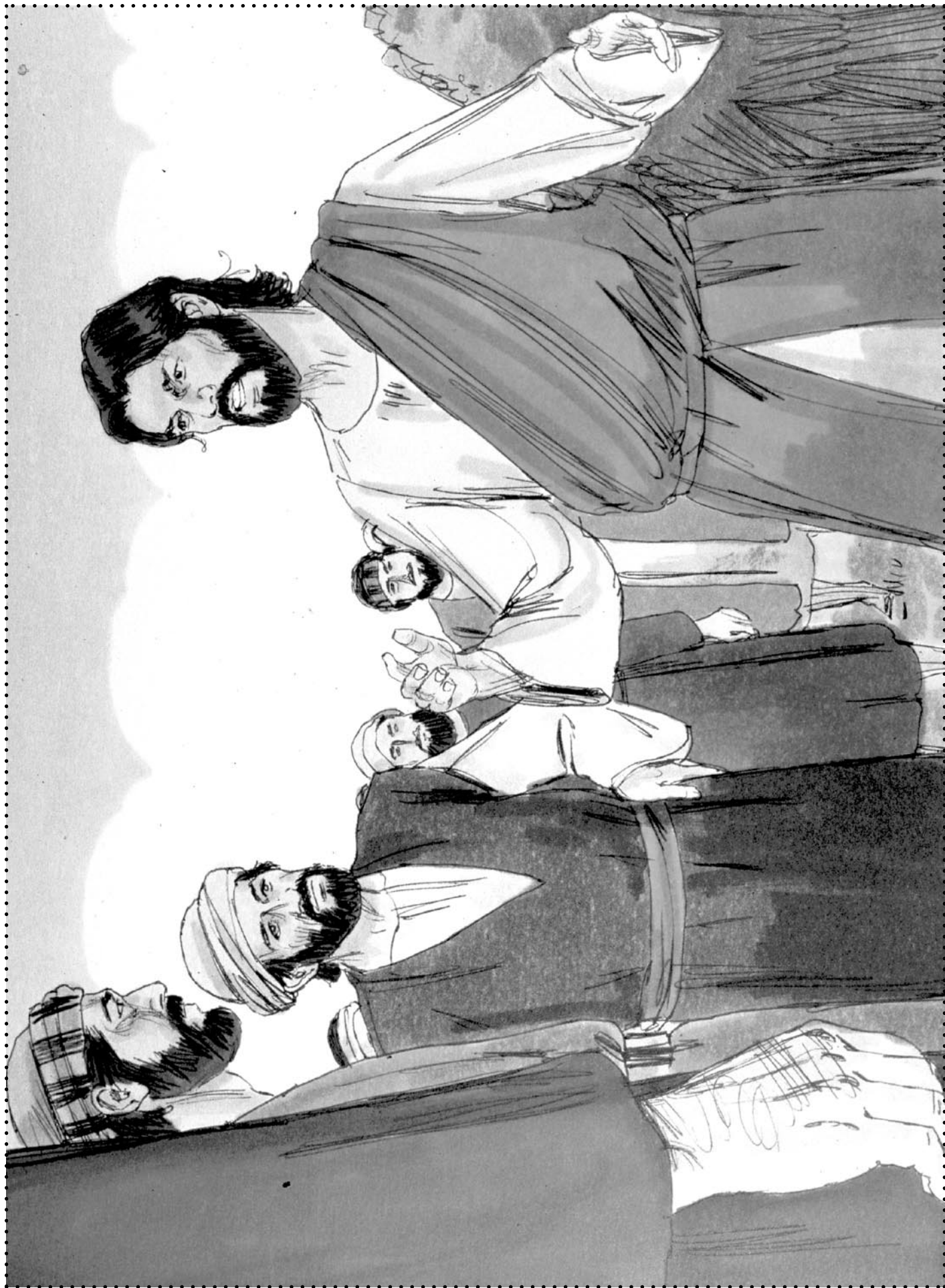
Scripture Passages

Matthew 22:1-14

Memory Verse

Matthew 22:9 "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find."







The Gospel for Everyone 3-20-B

Jesus was crucified on a cross atop Golgotha's hill. His body had been laid in a tomb with a large stone covering the entrance. The disciples and followers of Jesus were hiding in grief and fear for their own lives. Judas, the disciple who had betrayed Jesus took his own life, and the women had prepared funeral spices to properly wrap Jesus' body after the Sabbath. But on that first day of the week the tomb was found empty. Jesus spoke to the women first and when they hurried to tell the others, their words were met with great doubt. Peter and John ran to the tomb and found that Jesus was gone. Two others were sadly walking in the country when Jesus appeared to them. They hurried back with the report that Jesus was alive, but the rest still refused to believe it was true.

Finally Jesus appeared to the eleven remaining disciples while they were eating one day. He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubbornness in not believing the reports of His resurrection. Not only had He told them countless times that He would rise again from the dead, but their fellow brothers and sisters had seen Him and they had still refused to believe.

Then Jesus gave them a final command, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Jesus was giving them a command to go out into the entire world and make sure that every person has the opportunity to hear the gospel message, accept Jesus as their Savior, and be baptized to obey Him as their Lord.

Then Jesus told them there would be certain miraculous signs that would occur as they followed this command in obedience. These signs were not what they were trying to find, but they would come as an assurance to them when they obeyed this command completely. Jesus said, "And these signs will accompany those who believe; In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

When the Lord finished teaching them these things he was taken up into heaven. As they watched He went right up before their eyes! Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, the highest place of honor second only to God the Father. Then the disciples scattered to many places preaching the good news just as Jesus had commanded them to do. The Bible says they began preaching everywhere, and the Lord worked with them causing all the signs and wonders He said would follow them.

That same command to spread the good news is for us today. Every Christian is responsible for sharing the message with others. Jesus will help us to do that in the same way He helped His disciples. The same miraculous signs will confirm His Word being preached around our world today. How are you personally fulfilling the Great Commission in today's memory verse?

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus appeared.**
 - A. Risen Lord.
 - B. Lack of faith.
- II. **Great Commission.**
 - A. Preach to all.
 - B. Belief and baptism.
- III. **Following signs.**
 - A. People delivered.
 - B. Kept safe.
- IV. **The ascension.**
 - A. Taken to heaven.
 - B. Scattered to work.

Activity

Bring a map to your class. Talk about the various regions of the world and the countries and people groups that are spread around the world. Jesus wants the gospel message to go to every part of the world. Ask your students to place their hand on one part of the world and pray for that area to receive a full presentation of the gospel and pray for souls to be saved there.

Teacher Growth

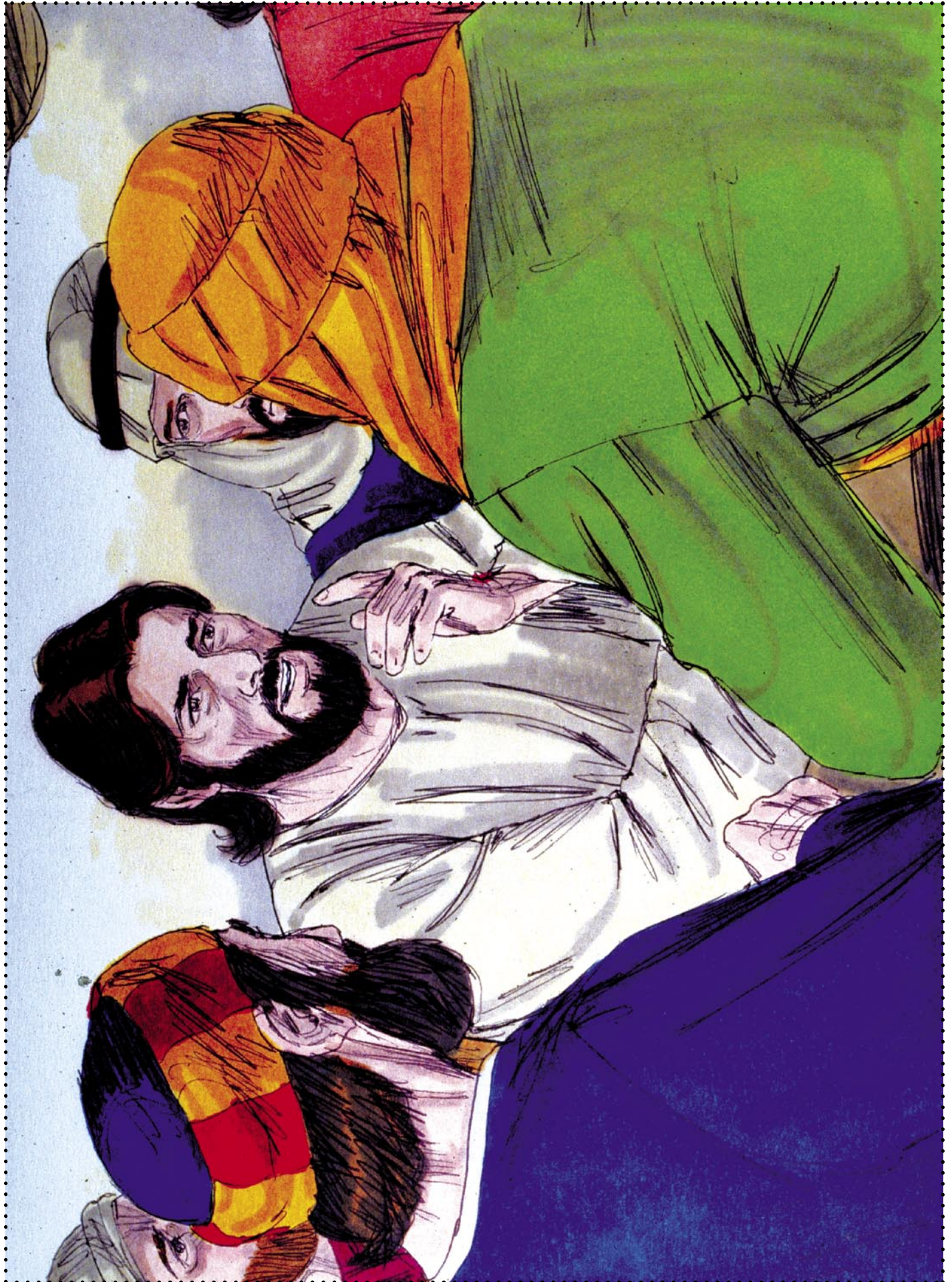
Part of the command for believers is not only to get people saved from sin but also that they are baptized in obedience to Jesus' command. Talk with your pastor about the guidelines your church has about water baptism and be prepared to explain this practice of the church, encouraging your students to obey God in this step of their Christian walk when it is appropriate.

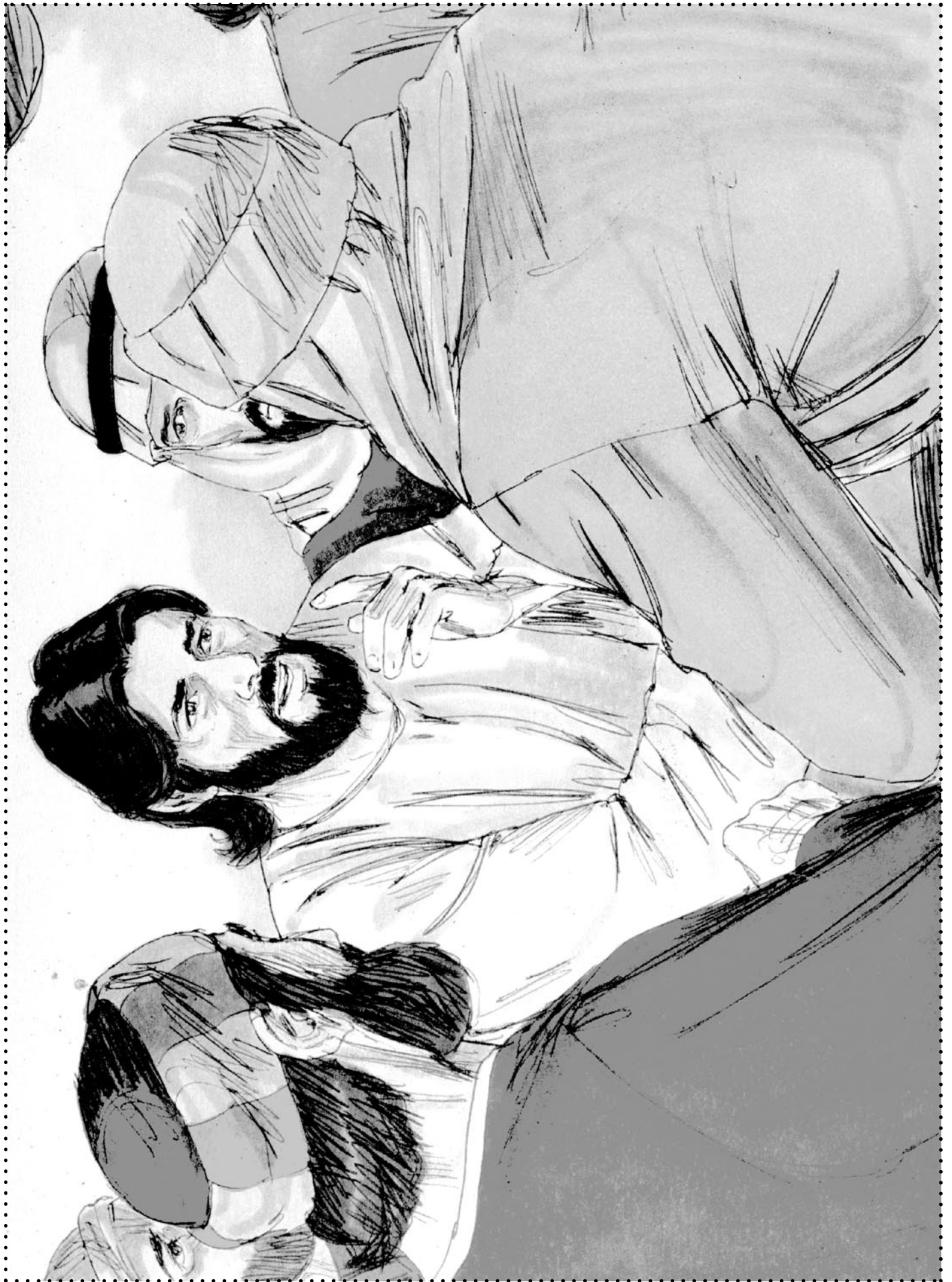
Scripture Passages

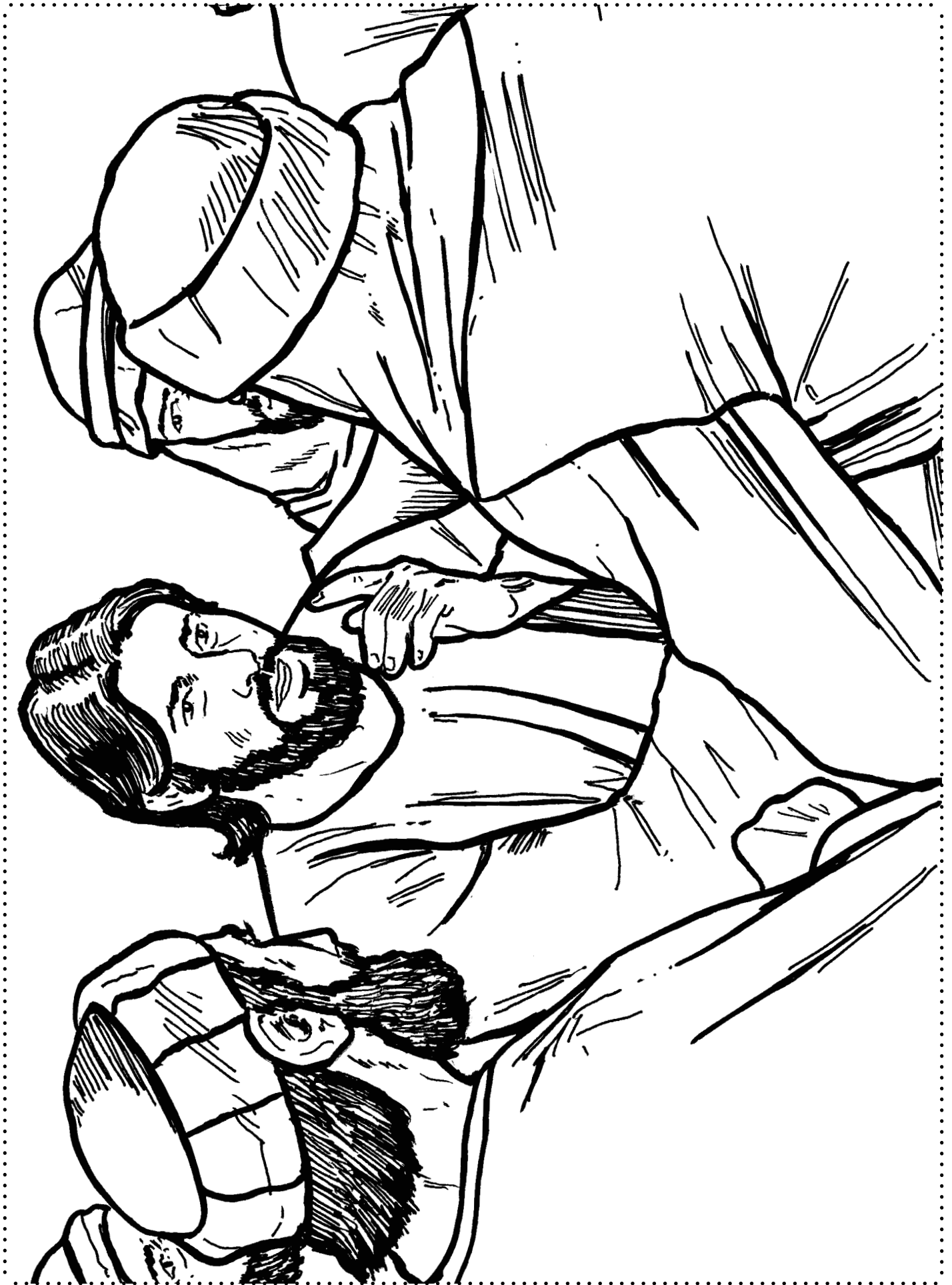
Mark 16:14-20

Memory Verse

Mark 16:15 *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*







(Christmas) Shepherds and Angels 3-01-C

There were shepherds out in the fields on a dark night keeping watch over their flocks. It was normal for shepherds to live near their flocks to protect their sheep against wild animals that could harm or kill them. That night the shepherds were in for a very special surprise.

Suddenly an angel appeared surrounding them in the bright light of God's glory. Imagine being a great distance from the village in the darkness of the night without any light and in an instant be almost blinded by heaven's bright light. The Bible says the shepherds were terrified. It was a normal response to a very frightening event that they had never experienced before.

The angel brought those shepherds good news of great joy, that would be for all people. In a few short sentences the angel explained that on that very day in the town of David a Savior was born. Right there in Bethlehem a baby had been born that was Christ, the Lord, the Messiah that all Jews had awaited. The angel described what they would find in the city. The baby would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly the angel was joined by a heavenly host or a large group of angels that joined in praising God and delivering this special announcement. The entire chorus said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." They recognized the praise that God is worthy of in the highest place, heaven. And because of God's favor He had sent the world the Prince of Peace, His only Son, who would truly give peace to those who believe in Him.

After the angels left, going back to heaven, the shepherds talked together about going into Bethlehem. They all agreed they needed to go and see what the angels had told them. The Lord had sent them this special message and they knew it was important to go see the baby.

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem where they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby who was lying in a manger. Everything was exactly the way the angel said it would be. After seeing this, the shepherds began to spread the word about what they had been told. Everyone that heard them was amazed by what the shepherds said. Mary treasured their story in her heart and pondered everything that happened.

The shepherds returned to their fields and flocks. They went back glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which they found to be just as they had been told. This was the introduction the world received of a tiny baby born in Bethlehem who would be our Savior.

Have you heard the message, met Christ, and returned to your family and work to spread the message of our Savior? We can all learn a lesson from those shepherds long ago.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **In the fields.**
 - A. A shepherd's life.
 - B. A special night.
- II. **An angel appearance.**
 - A. Shining glory.
 - B. Fearful response.
- III. **The announcement.**
 - A. The details.
 - B. More angels.
- IV. **Spread the word.**
 - A. Hurried trip.
 - B. News confirmed.

Activity

Students can create Christmas banners, either individual ones or a large class banner. Decorate the sheet of cloth or paper with cutouts of angels and shepherds, stars and sheep. Use the verse from Luke 2:14 as the message on the banner.

Teacher Growth

The message of the Savior's birth was given to ordinary people, just like your students. Make this aspect of God's gift clear in spite of the commercialism that often surrounds this holiday. Let your class be a place that simply looks at the true Christmas story without the stress of traditions in this world.

Scripture Passages

Luke 2:8-20

Memory Verse

Luke 2:10-11 *"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."*







(Easter) The Lamb of God 3-02-C

God's people were slaves in Egypt when He asked Moses to lead them out of that country into the land He had promised them. The last night of the terrible plagues that God had sent upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians was the death of every firstborn. The only way that the Israelites would be protected was to take a perfect lamb, kill it, and place its blood on the doorposts of their homes. That night when the death angel came he passed over the homes with the blood on the doorposts and spared the Israelites. God then told His people that they were to always celebrate this special night with a symbolic dinner called the Passover Feast. Annually, every Jewish family selected a perfect lamb to receive special care. Then the lamb would be killed on that same night as the first Passover lamb. The family would quickly eat the meat and other special foods to remember that night that God led them out of slavery. From the animals God killed in the Garden of Eden to cover Adam and Eve in sin, to the ram He provided for Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son Isaac, God continued to teach His people about sacrificial animals that would have to shed their blood to pay for sin. For many years the Jewish people lived by the Laws that God had given them and were careful to offer the continual sacrifices of animals to pay for their sins.

In the New Testament John the Baptist was the one God had selected to announce His Son's ministry on earth. While John preached to the crowds in the desert he made a special announcement one day as Jesus came out to be baptized. John cried out, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" In one sentence John was teaching the people that the final sacrificial lamb had come. Instead of killing animals to shed their blood for sin here was the One who would shed His blood to pay for sin eternally.

During the final week of Jesus' life on earth it was the Passover celebration time. This was not a coincidence, but part of the amazing plan of God to provide the perfect lamb for the final sacrifice for man's sin. Jesus gathered His disciples to celebrate the feast that last night before His death. Jesus raised the bread and explained how it represented His body that would be broken and the cup which represented His blood that would be poured out for them. That night Jesus taught them a new way to celebrate a new covenant or promise that He was giving them. Instead of killing the annual passover lamb, they were to now continue a new celebration with bread and wine to celebrate the final Passover Lamb. Later that evening came His betrayal and arrest, the mock trials and the steps that led to Calvary. On the day, at the very hour when the Passover lamb was to be killed, Jesus gave up His life on the cross for our sins. Then He rose again that third day to be the triumphant Lamb of God who paid the final price for our sin.

Seven hundred years before it actually happened, Isaiah prophesied about Jesus being led like a lamb to the slaughter, to give His life for us.

In Acts 8 Philip and the Ethiopian show us how we need to continue sharing with others this Good News of the Lamb of God.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The Passover.**
 - A. Selected lamb.
 - B. Shed blood.
- II. **The announcement.**
 - A. John's description.
 - B. Tied to history.
- III. **New covenant.**
 - A. The elements.
 - B. The crucifixion.
- IV. **Lamb of God.**
 - A. Isaiah's words.
 - B. The Good News.

Activity

The students will create a mural on paper or poster board of the open tomb and a lamb upon the rock that was rolled away. This will be a symbolic project that reminds them that when Jesus died and rose again He was the final sacrificial lamb for our sins. In the background have the doorframe of a house and the blood at the top and sides with the cross in front of it with the blood on its wood as well.

Teacher Growth

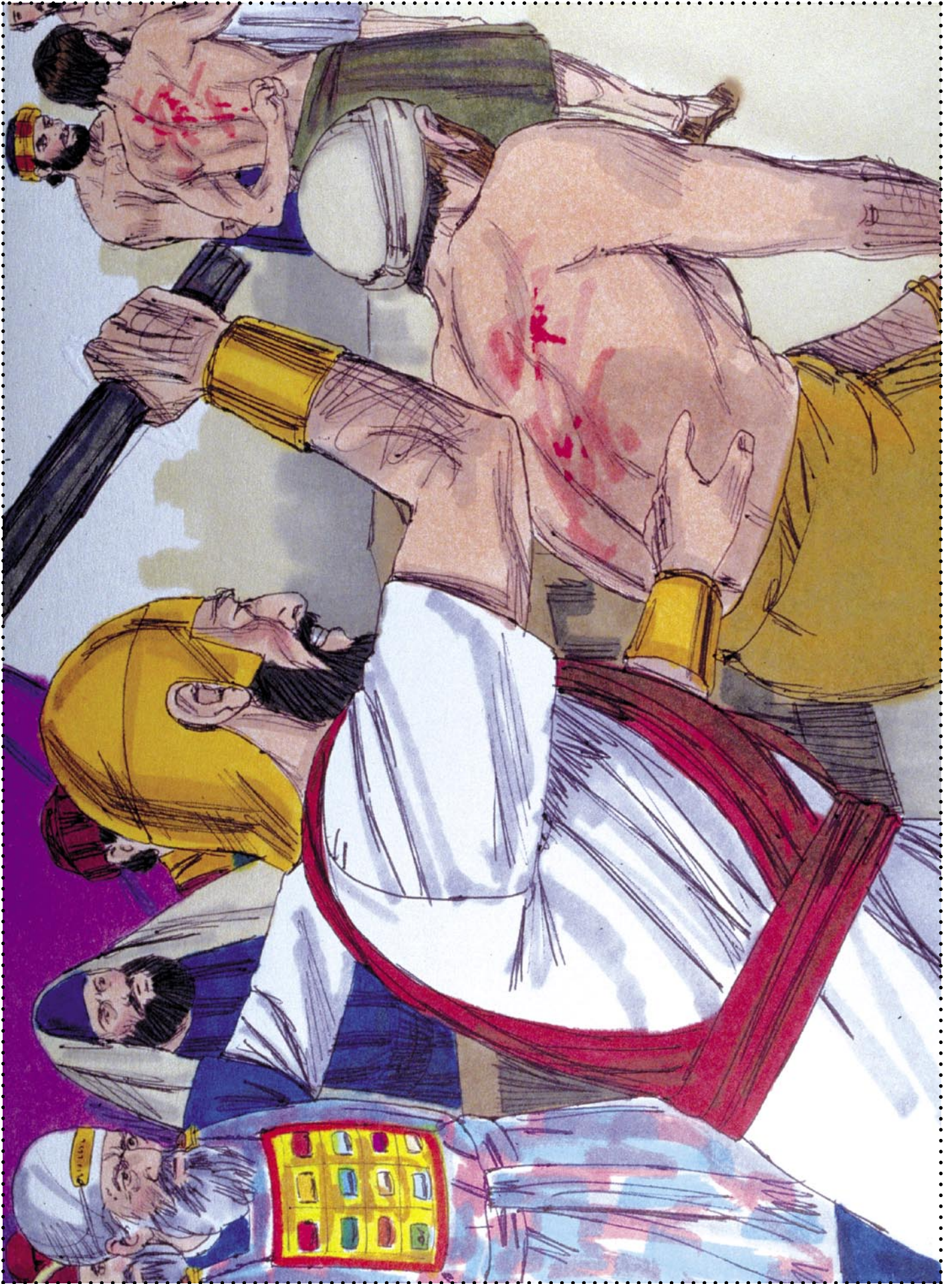
Today's lesson attempts to tie Old and New Testament accounts of the Lamb of God together. You may need to study a few more of the numerous passages that give more details to this lesson. The following references will get you started: Genesis 22; Numbers 9; Isaiah 53; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19.

Scripture Passages

Exodus 12:1-30; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29-31; Mark 14—16; Acts 8:26-35

Memory Verse

Revelation 5:12 "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise."







(Pentecost) Power to Witness 3-03-C

Just before Jesus was taken into heaven He gave one final important command to His followers. He told the men and women not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for a gift that His Father had promised them. He told them that in a few days they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. After this Jesus ascended to His place in Heaven and the followers went from the Mount of Olives back into Jerusalem to an upper room to wait. They selected Matthias to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle, and spent all their time together in prayer. Then on the day of Pentecost a sudden sound like violent wind filled the room where they were sitting. They saw what looked like tongues of fire rest on every person and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

During the Pentecost festival, also called the Feast of Weeks, there were many Jewish pilgrims in the city of Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. The crowds were amazed when they heard these sounds from the room and began to hear the believers speaking in the many languages represented there that day. The Bible lists the many types of people and languages there that day from the North, South, East, and West. The crowd marveled at them declaring the wonders of God in all these languages. Many were puzzled and curious, while others began to mock them by saying they were drunk from wine.

Peter stood before the crowd to address them that day. Yes, the same man who had denied even knowing Jesus in front of servants was now empowered by the Spirit to boldly proclaim the Good News. Peter spoke to the crowd about the prophet of old, Joel, and David's words because these Jewish pilgrims would all know these Old Testament references from their religious studies. God's people were always watching for the fulfillment of prophecy and Peter wanted them to see the two important aspects of that day. After assuring them there was no drunkenness he explained that this was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit that had been promised by God and written from the prophecy of Joel. Then He continued to explain to them the descendant of David that had been promised for the throne was Jesus. The very Messiah they had been waiting for had come. They had murdered the Messiah yet this Jesus had then risen to life again and He was wanting everyone to experience the salvation He had for them.

Peter explained that the need to repent and be baptized as well as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was a promise for all people. The adults and children, the Jew and Gentile, the people of their day and all people in the future. The Day of Pentecost brought the fulfillment of God's promises and plan for all generations into fulfillment.

Today it is just as important for people to repent and be baptized, and then to receive the overflowing gift of the Holy Spirit to be as bold as Peter and the rest who spread the Gospel around the world. A lost world today still awaits Spirit empowered witnesses.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The promise.**
 - A. Jesus' command.
 - B. The Spirit fell.
- II. **The crowd's response.**
 - A. Mocker's accusation.
 - B. Curious listeners.
- III. **Peter's address.**
 - A. Referred to prophets.
 - B. Clarified event.
- IV. **Promise for all.**
 - A. Salvation message.
 - B. Gift of Spirit.

Activity

The students will do research using the Bible, commentaries, and other books to study the spread of the Gospel around the world. If you are limited to only a Bible then dig through the rest of Acts and the New Testament. If possible find out how the Gospel came to your country and how your own church was started.

Teacher Growth

Determine how many students have not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Begin to earnestly pray for their infilling. You may spend several weeks providing additional teaching on the Holy Spirit and set aside times to pray with your students. Obviously you can do this only if you are maintaining a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit in your own life.

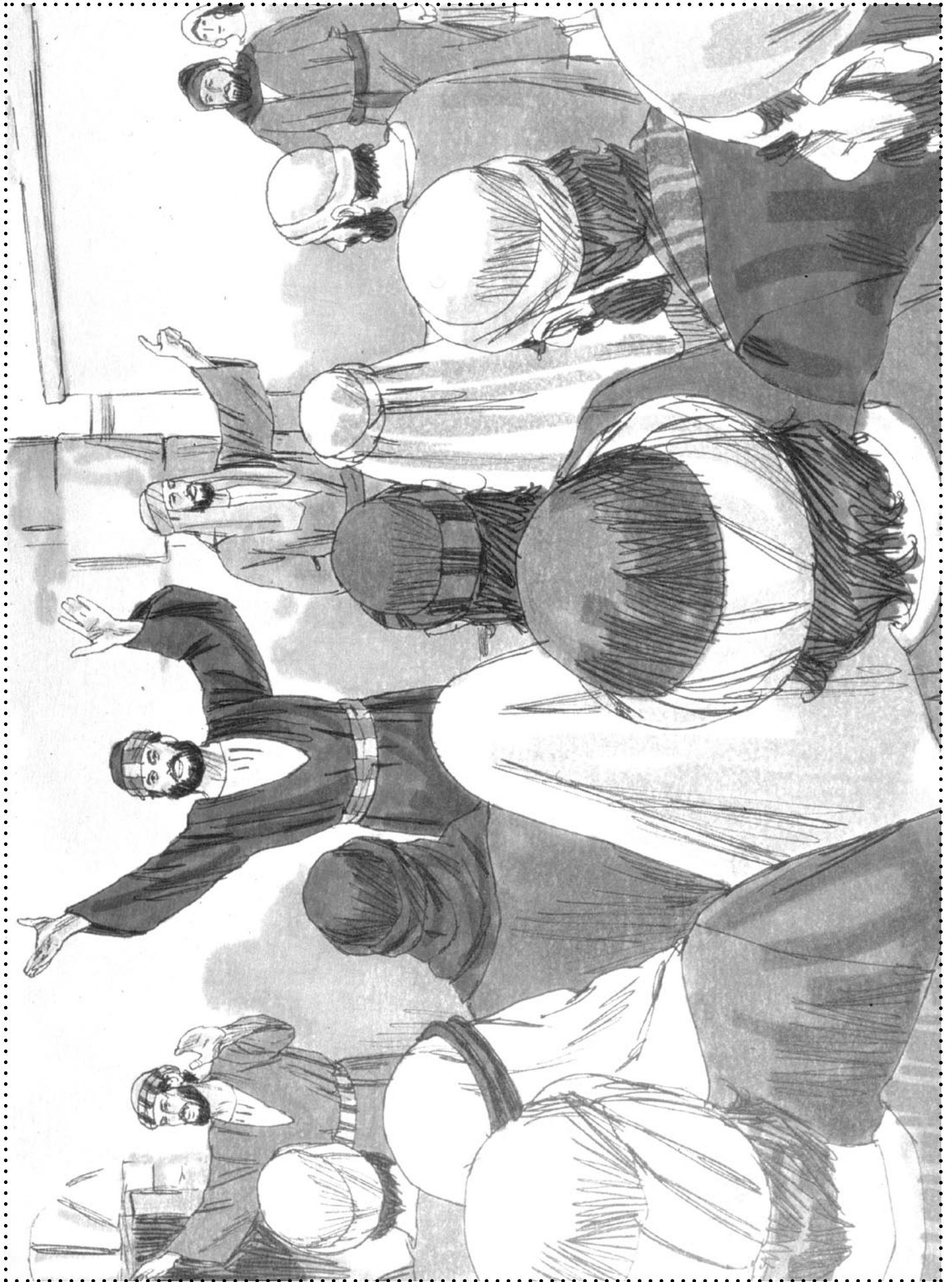
Scripture Passages

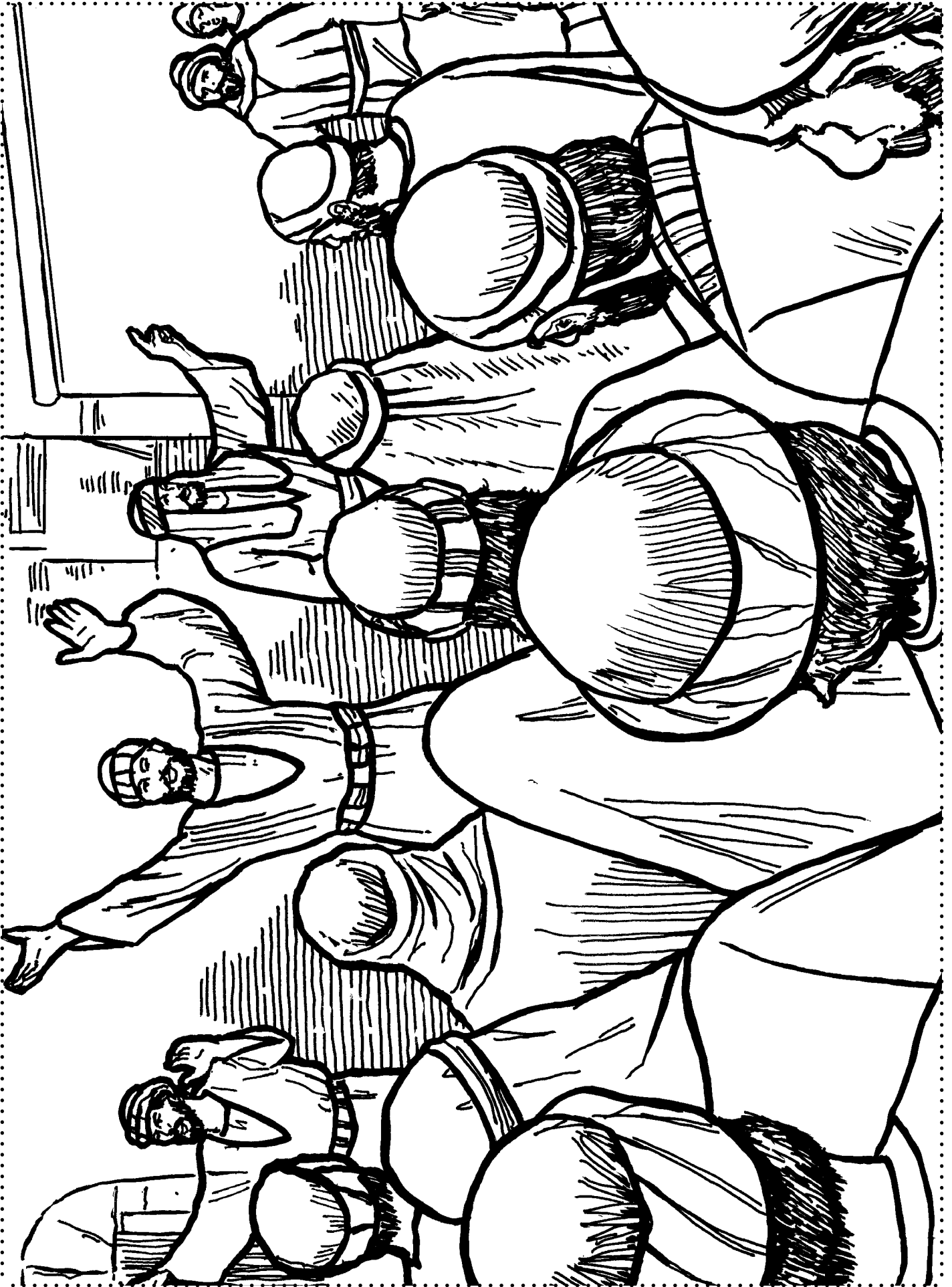
Acts 1:4-9; 2:1-47

Memory Verse

Acts 2:39 *"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*







(Mother's Day) Moses' Mothers 3-04-C

The Israelites had settled in the land of Egypt when Joseph had brought his father Jacob and his brothers' families there during a terrible drought. Many years after Joseph's death the new Pharaoh, or ruler of Egypt became worried about the many Israelites that had begun to fill their land. The Egyptians were concerned at the multitudes of these foreigners in their country and when a new king rose to power he knew they needed to control the Israelites in case there was a war and they turned against the Egyptians. So they decided to put slave masters over the people and use them as slaves. They also went to the midwives that helped deliver the Hebrew babies and ordered these two women to kill any male babies while they were being born. This would also help to control the number of Israelites. But the midwives refused to kill any of the babies God gave the women and lied to the king for their safety. God honored these women by giving them their own babies.

During this time a man from the family of Levi married a Levite woman. Levites were from the family, or tribe of people, that God selected to be used to serve Him in a special way. They would be the priests or men set aside to honor and serve God. This woman was ready to have a baby right at the time when Pharaoh was trying to kill all the Hebrew baby boys. When her son was born he was a very special child. It was obvious that he had been selected by God for something very important, for the Bible says that even his parents knew he was not an ordinary child. For three months the baby was hidden by his mother.

It seems unbelievable that a baby could be kept a secret for three months by his mother. She must have quietly sang to him and told him many stories of how God cared for His people. She must have prayed for countless hours so that even the baby began to grow hearing her prayers to God. Finally she could hide him no longer. The mother took a basket woven from papyrus and covered it with tar and pitch to make it waterproof. She placed the child in the basket and set it afloat near some reeds in the Nile River. The baby's sister, Miriam, stood along the shore at a distance to see what would happen to him.

When Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe she saw the little boat. She commanded one of her attendants to get her the basket. When she looked inside the baby was crying and she felt sorry for the poor child. She knew it was one of the Hebrew babies. Miriam had been watching and stepped forward at that very moment. She asked, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" It was common to have a woman nurse a child for someone who could not. Pharaoh's daughter said yes, and the baby was given back to its mother who would be paid to raise her son through his early years. Then the boy was returned to Pharaoh's daughter who gave him the name Moses and raised him as royalty. When God was ready to use Moses, he returned to the first lessons his mother taught him about God.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **The setting.**
 - A. Israelite slaves.
 - B. Babies killed.
- II. **A Levite's wife.**
 - A. Special child.
 - B. Hidden in fear.
- III. **A baby protected.**
 - A. Basket boat.
 - B. Set afloat.
- IV. **Rescued boy.**
 - A. Raised in riches.
 - B. Return to roots.

Activity

Today's lesson is one that students would really enjoy acting out. Create a simple drama by retelling the story and emphasizing the danger, the fear, the creative boat idea, and the discovery down by the river. Be sure to focus on the emotions and actions of the two mothers that are involved.

Teacher Growth

It is easier for students to remember a lesson much longer if they have seen and touched an object related to the lesson. Find a simple basket and some type of tar or pitch that you can smear on it to make it waterproof before floating it in water. If these items are not available, just holding a basket will help.

Scripture Passages

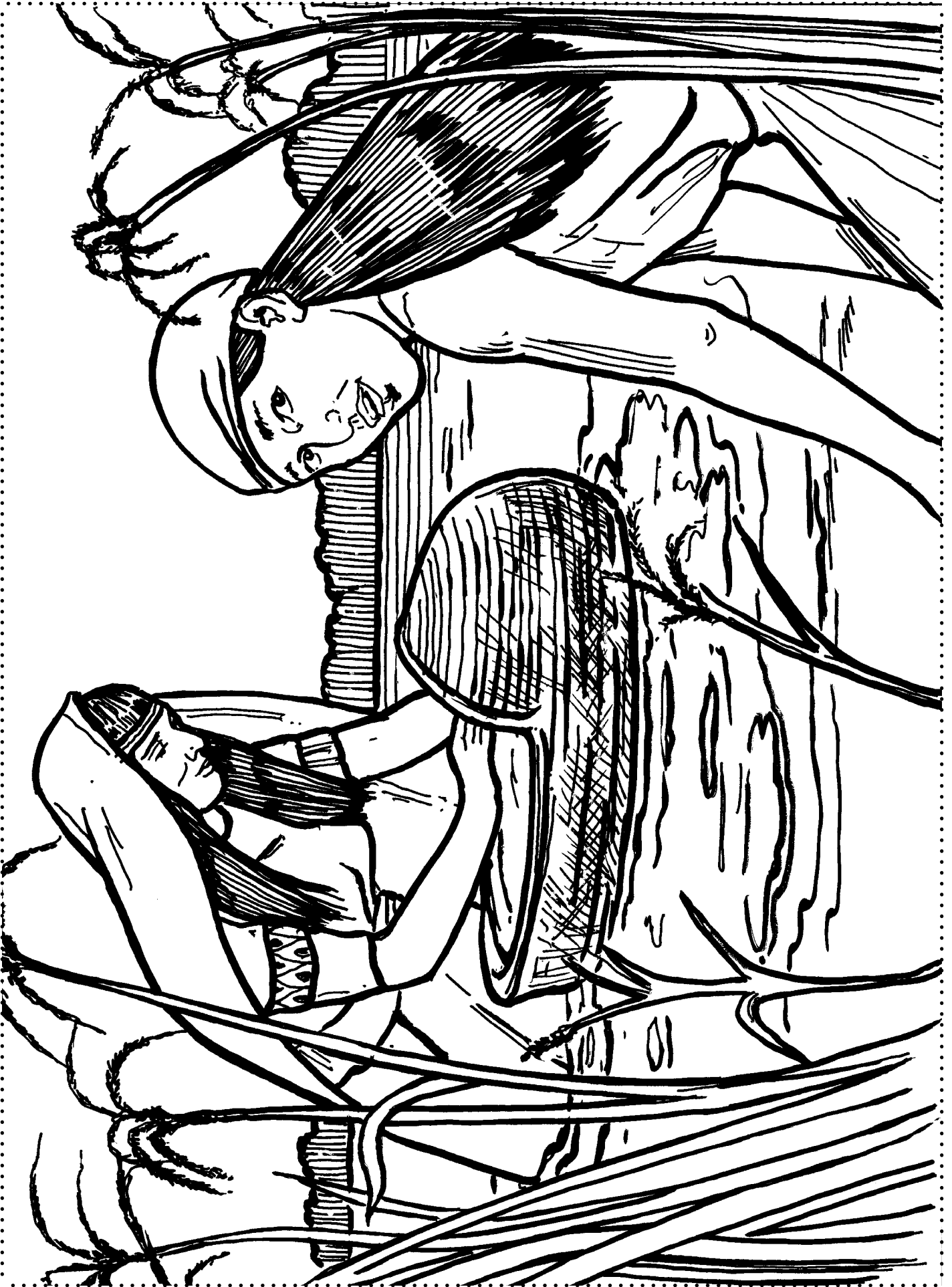
Exodus 1:1—2:10

Memory Verse

Proverbs 1:8 *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*







(Pastor Appreciation) A Shepherd 3-05-C

First, let's read the two passages for today's lesson and then look at what they are teaching us about the role of a pastor. As we understand the responsibilities that are placed upon the pastor from the Bible, we will be better able to support him and pray for him in this role. Your pastor is a brother or sister in Christ, but they have been given a distinct level of duty in the building of God's kingdom.

Luke was one of the original apostles and also Paul's traveling companion. He had the opportunity to watch both the Lord and Paul model godly leadership principles so we will look at his points in Acts. Peter, also an original apostle and the one who first stood and preached the initial message on the Day of Pentecost that ignited the growth of the church, also has credibility to help us understand the role of our pastor. We see that it is the Holy Spirit that God uses to call a person to the role of pastor. He is asking them to care for a flock, but they are much more than just a group of people. The Lord has died for the flock; Jesus is the Good Shepherd that gave His life for these people to be forgiven of sin. The Lord is asking for willing hearts that will serve His flock.

Just as a flock in the fields faces danger, so the Lord's flock, the church also faces danger. The enemy, Satan, will do everything he can to rob, steal, and destroy what belongs to God. That means that he will try to destroy the flock with false doctrine, division, and sin. The Bible warns that a shepherd must keep watch over himself as well as the flock. Savage wolves will come in from the outside and there will even be those who turn on others from within the flock, distorting the truth and drawing others away. For this reason a pastor must always be prayerfully watching over the flock.

A pastor is to serve the flock in the same way that Christ came not to be served, but to serve. They are not to be greedy or wielding power in a way that dominates people. A servant shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep and he knows that ultimately his reward will be great in heaven. The flock should be careful to see that the shepherd's needs are met so that he is not even tempted to seek after ways to provide for himself or his family. The shepherd should be cared for in such a way as to free him from worry so that his entire attention can be placed on caring for the flock and not his own needs.

The shepherd, or pastor, is to be an example to the flock. Just as Luke explained, the pastor is to be committed to the Word and in that be built up. In that way he will be able to build up the flock, strengthening their faith and adding to their numbers. In that same way they are to be hard workers that do not avoid the labor that is required for all the tasks they must do. As examples before the flock, our pastor models for us the strength we need from the Word and the willingness to work hard for the Lord. Today, let's show our pastor how much we appreciate him as the shepherd of this flock.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **God's flock.**
 - A. Holy Spirit's direction.
 - B. Willing servants.
- II. **Protect the flock.**
 - A. Price paid.
 - B. Wolves attack.
- III. **Serve the flock.**
 - A. Not greedy.
 - B. Not dominating.
- IV. **Example to the flock.**
 - A. Built up in the Word.
 - B. Hard worker.

Activity

Have the students make cards of appreciation for the pastor. Ask them to emphasize the idea of him being the shepherd that God has asked to lead your flock, the church. Older students can be more specific in their expression of thankfulness for the ways he cares for the church as today's lesson has described.

Teacher Growth

Take time to write out your words of appreciation for the leader God has given your church. Thank your pastor for the support you have as a teacher and the way the sermons have enriched your own spiritual life. You are expressing thanks for the one who is in authority over you, teaches you, and supports you.

Scripture Passages

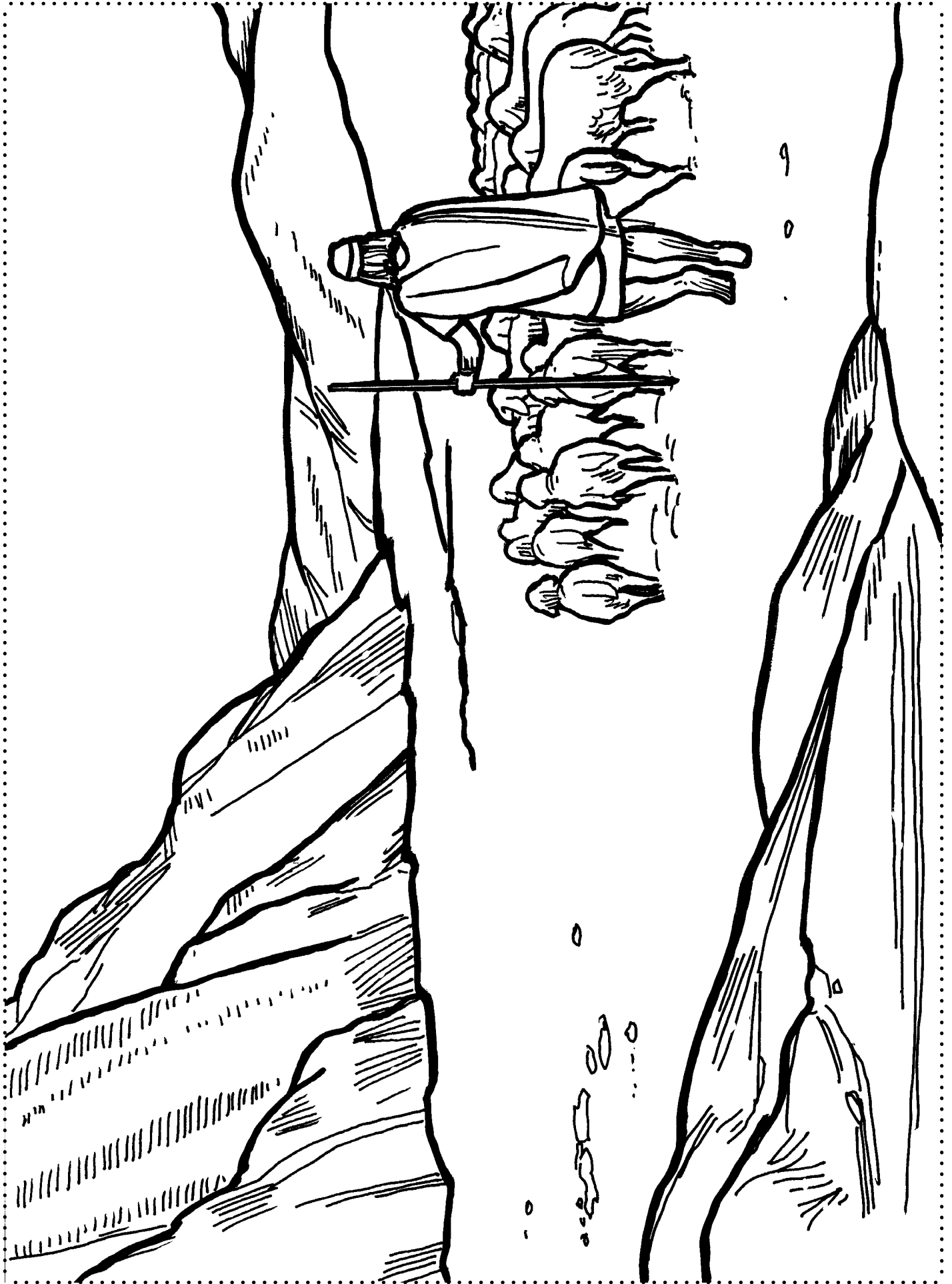
Acts 20:27-35; 1 Peter 5:1-4

Memory Verse

1 Peter 5:4 *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."*







(Independence Day) Show Honor 3-06-C

While Jesus was teaching on earth there were always those who tried to discredit Him. One day two groups joined forces in a plan to trap Jesus and end His popularity. The Pharisees were strong nationalists that struggled under Roman rule and tried everything possible to regain the nation of Israel. The second group was called Herodians, who honored the Roman rule of Herod. What would normally have been bitter enemies became partners in planning a trap for Jesus. They devised a question about paying taxes to put to Jesus in a public place. If he approved of these taxes the Pharisees would convince the crowd that He was a disloyal Jew, a traitor. If he disapproved of the taxes the Herodians would have Him arrested for being disloyal to face execution for treason. They believed they had a perfect plan to place Jesus in a public position with no correct answer.

Jesus understood the trap behind what appeared to the crowd to be a simple yet important question. Jesus was not surprised by the plot of the Pharisees and the Herodians, but He understood the bigger picture or consequences of His answer far better than those deceitful men. Jesus was not going to become involved in the politics of His day for He came to begin a spiritual kingdom for eternity, not a political overthrow of an earthly government. Jesus knew that it was important to obey the laws of the land, but it was even more important to obey the Heavenly Father. He had the perfect answer.

Jesus asked someone to hand Him the coin that was used to pay taxes. They handed Him a denarius which He held up before the crowd that had gathered to hear His reply. Jesus asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" Everyone knew the answer to that simple question. They replied, "Caesar's." Jesus used a common object that everyone recognized to teach a lesson they would remember every time they handled one in the future.

Then Jesus stunned them with the words, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." This strong and clear answer spoke volumes and caused the people to leave in amazement. Jesus had simply reminded them that the image on the coin deserved the honor belonging to political leadership. But these people also knew that the Word says we are created in God's image, and our lives are to be given back to God who deserves the spiritual honor.

Today we celebrate our national government and its leadership. It is fitting, as Jesus taught, to honor that with obedience to the laws, payment of taxes, and respect for its leadership. At the same time it would be wrong to do that and ignore the fact that we are to also show honor and respect by giving our lives to the God in whose image we are all created. Let us show honor to our God and our nation today.

Teacher's Notes.

- I. **The place.**
 - A. A religious trap.
 - B. A national trap.
- II. **Jesus understood.**
 - A. Politics of His day.
 - B. Knew the real problem.
- III. **Illustrated lesson.**
 - A. Asked for a coin.
 - B. Asked a question.
- IV. **Giving honor.**
 - A. Pay your taxes.
 - B. Give to God.

Activity

Students will create banners with today's verse. They will decorate the banner with the national flag and coins around the first phrase. They will draw or apply pictures of people around the second phrase. We show honor to our nation but we also show that our lives are to be given to God.

Teacher Growth

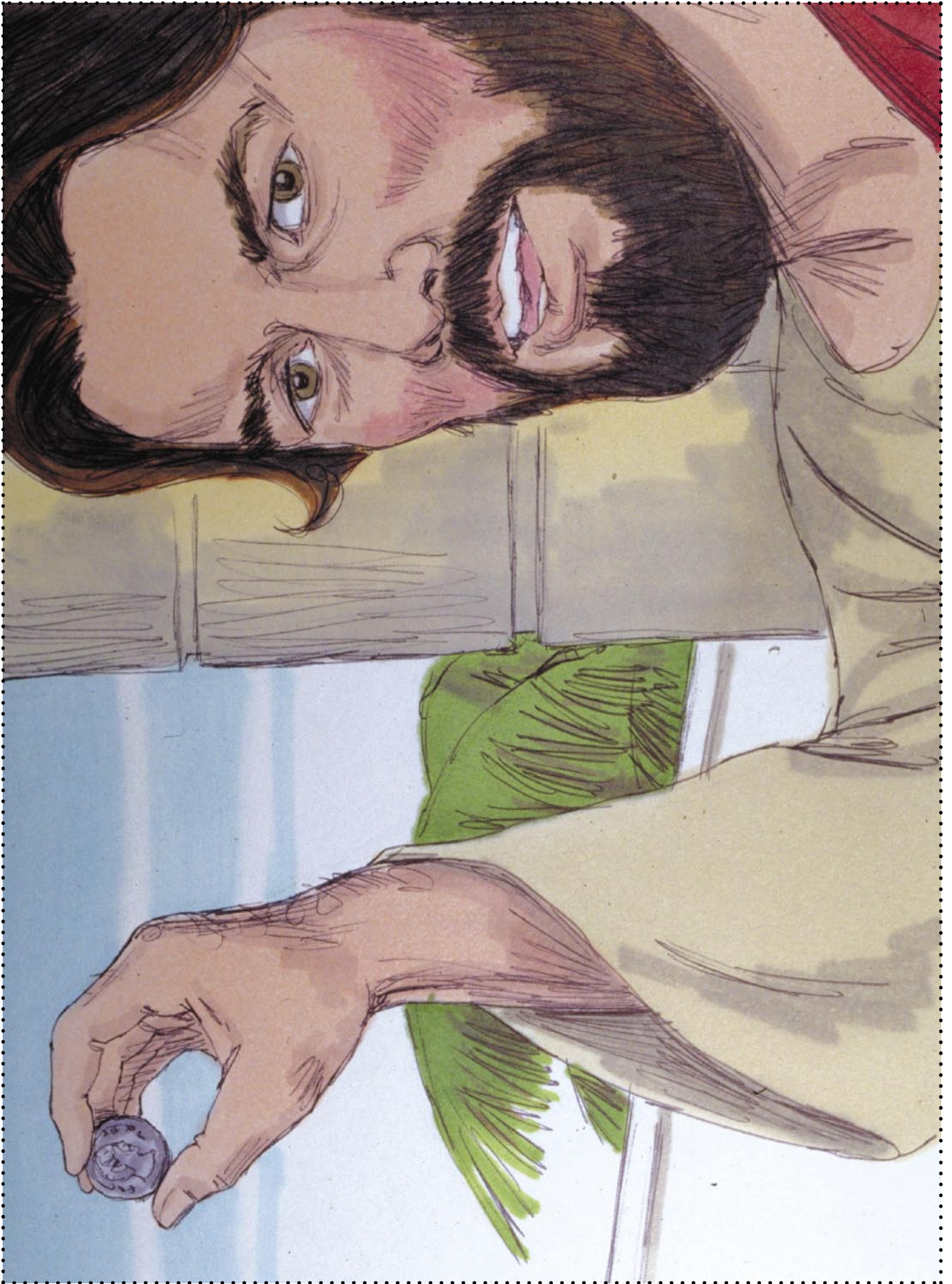
Do some preparation before today's lesson on the history of your country. Bring in some items or materials that will help you explain your nation's flag, history, and coins. Talk about the symbols selected for your country's monetary system and how they have meaning related to history.

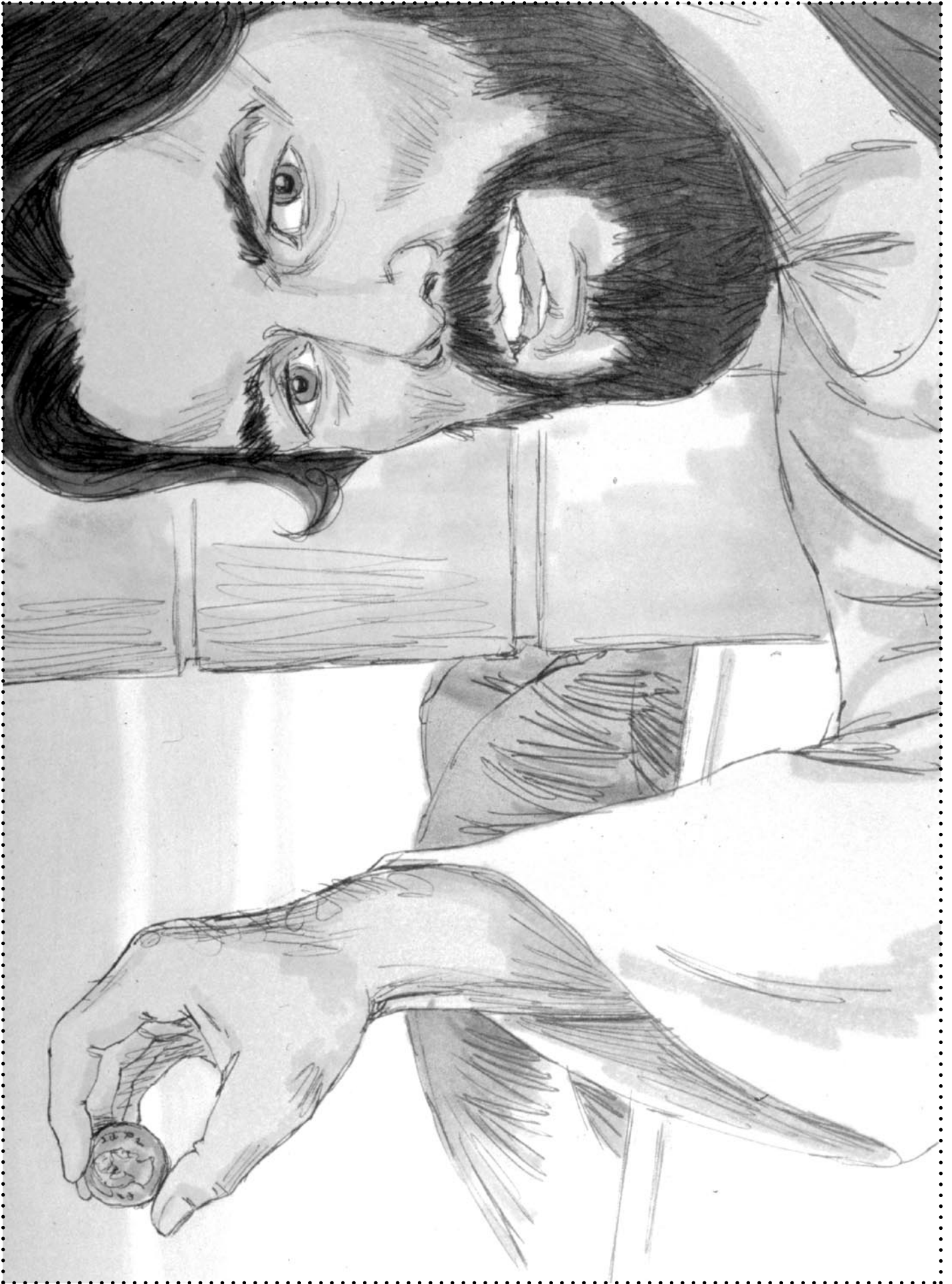
Scripture Passages

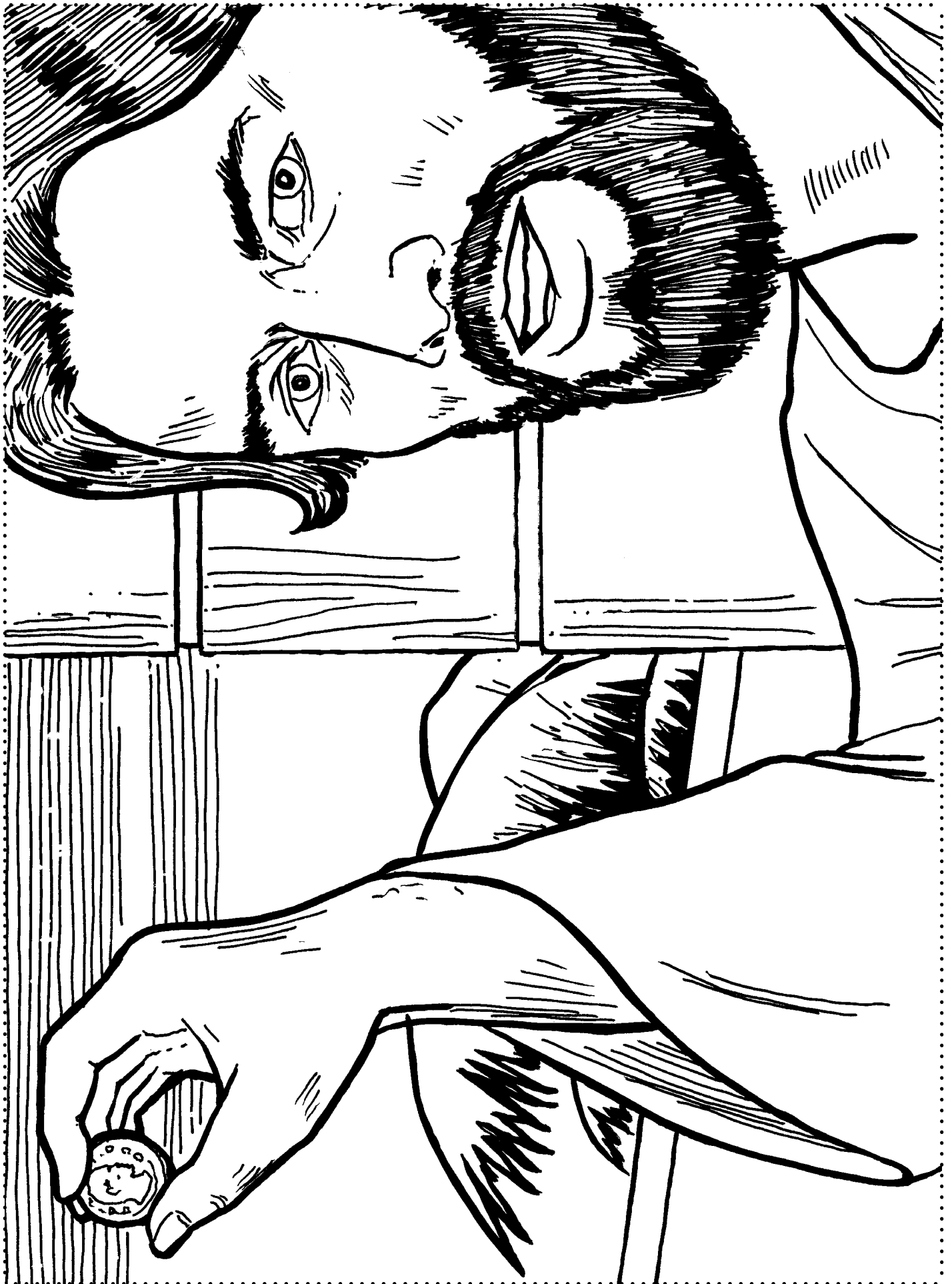
Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26

Memory Verse

Matthew 22:21 *"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*







(Labor Day) Hard Work 3-07-C

Jesus had a rather unusual birth and we know that His parents then followed all the rules in God's Law about presenting Him before the priest in the temple. The Bible says He then began His childhood like all good Hebrew children. It says, "The child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." During these early years Jesus' parents were also diligent about His religious training. Annually the family traveled from their home in Nazareth to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. Jewish men knew it was very important to attend this special feast in obedience to God's command and they often brought their entire family, knowing how important it was for their sons to learn these habits early in life.

One year during their family's trip to Jerusalem a large number of extended family and friends were traveling together. On the return trip Jesus' parents thought He was enjoying part of the trip with a relative, but after a days journey they realized Jesus had been left behind. Joseph and Mary hurried back to Jerusalem to frantically search for their missing son. After three days they found Jesus sitting with the teachers in the temple courts. He was merely listening and asking them questions when His parents rushed to Him in relief. His parents asked Jesus why He had worried them in this way, but Jesus was surprised that they did not know He had been in the temple doing what His Heavenly Father would have expected. He was God's Son as well as the earthly son of Mary and Joseph. His parents did not understand this, but Jesus was quick to obey them and return with them to His home in Nazareth.

Back in Nazareth Jesus worked with His father in the family trade. Many believe this was carpentry work, or a woodworker or builder in the local town. The Bible says Jesus grew up like any other boy. He had no special abilities or powers, but He learned a trade from His father that would be similar to the training every boy would undergo. This kind of work would have been very hard, requiring physical strength and endurance. The Bible says that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." He had the mental and physical ability to learn a trade and to be good at it. He also developed His relationships with people and with God.

Every kind of work requires the worker to grow and do well in those same ways. We need to be thankful for work that helps us provide for family needs. We need to have the same desire to do well that Jesus had, to grow mentally, physically, and in favor with God and man. Jesus was a model of hard work and a good example in the community.

Today let us pause and thank the Lord for work and the ability He gives us to accomplish work. Let us ask Him to help us be the example in the workplace that Jesus was.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Early childhood.**
 - A. Normal routines.
 - B. Godly training.
- II. **Future purpose.**
 - A. Still God's Son.
 - B. Obeyed parents.
- III. **Back to work.**
 - A. Learned a trade.
 - B. Did well.
- IV. **Our work.**
 - A. God connection.
 - B. Good reputation.

Activity

Invite several people to explain their occupation to the class. Select people who are good Christians and good at what they do. You will ask them to be prepared to either talk for a set amount of time or you may choose to interview them. Allow time for the class to ask a few questions of each guest.

Teacher Growth

Today's lesson deals with the work ethic. The way people use their talents, minds, and energy to accomplish tasks. This same principle of hard work instead of laziness is just as important in spiritual work. Take some time to privately evaluate your work ethic in teaching this class.

Scripture Passages

Luke 2:39-52

Memory Verse

Proverbs 10:4 "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth."







(Thanksgiving) Give Thanks 3-08-C

Today we celebrate a day that reminds us of all we have to be thankful for. The roots of this holiday come from people who wanted to express their thankfulness for the very basic food and shelter that helped them to survive. These people realized that God provided for their needs. Let's look at how Jesus modeled thankfulness as well. Stop and let that last sentence really affect you. I am talking about the very Son of God, the Provider Himself, being thankful to His Heavenly Father.

Twice we can see Jesus in a situation where multitudes were hungry and in need of a meal. Jesus had compassion on a crowd of five thousand as He spent the day healing the sick. The place was so remote and the hour so late that there was no way that people could go for food. Jesus told His disciples they would feed the crowd. All the disciples brought to Jesus were five loaves of bread and two fish. Once Jesus had the crowd seated in an orderly way He took the loaves and fish, lifted them to heaven, and after giving thanks He broke it and fed them all with twelve baskets left over. It didn't matter that the loaves and fish were inadequate, Jesus still gave thanks for them.

The same thing happened with another crowd of four thousand. This time the disciples gave Jesus seven loaves and a few small fish. Once again Jesus settled the crowd and gave thanks for the meager supplies before He fed them, leaving seven baskets of leftovers. The multiplier of all things demonstrated a thankful heart by giving thanks for what He had.

The pattern of thankfulness continued to the last supper Jesus had with His disciples. As He gathered with them in that upper room for a Passover meal, He lifted bread and the cup with thanksgiving. That evening Jesus taught them a new way to be thankful for what God provided. Through His death on the cross, Jesus, God's Son, was giving them a new covenant. He explained how He wanted the celebration of thanks to continue on a regular basis to always remind believers to be thankful for His death and the payment of sin it brought.

We need to develop our own pattern of thankfulness. Just as Jesus gave thanks for such a small amount of bread and fish, so we need to be careful to thank our Heavenly Father for all the things He provides us. Thanksgiving is not just a special day once a year but it needs to be an attitude that affects our lifestyle every day of the year. When we sit down to a meal we thank God for His provisions. Every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Communion, we thank God for His provision of salvation and the new covenant He provided through His death and resurrection, paying for our sins. We must learn to be like Jesus, giving thanks for what God blesses us with and giving thanks for our relationship with the God who blesses.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Jesus our example.**
 - A. Son of God.
 - B. The provider.
- II. **Pattern of thanks.**
 - A. Simple supplies.
 - B. Miraculous provision.
- III. **Pattern continued.**
 - A. At the supper.
 - B. To continue.
- IV. **Our pattern.**
 - A. Thanks for blessings.
 - B. Thanks for Him.

Activity

The students will create a collage of the things they are thankful for. Cut and paste old magazine pictures or draw things that represent the many ways we are blessed by God. Overlap items to completely cover the length of paper. Then write "I am thankful to Him for all His blessings" across the top of the pictures.

Teacher Growth

Take some time this week to write down a list of all that you are thankful for. Include the daily blessings He provides as well as the spiritual blessings. Stop and think about the everyday provisions that you often forget to thank Him for. Develop a thankful heart that you can reproduce in your students.

Scripture Passages

Matthew 14:13-21; 15:29-39;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 11:24 *"And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'"*

