



The Breakfast Club

Presents:

Christianity Is For Losers!

by *Ellen S. Bunnell*



The Breakfast Club

PRESENTS: CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS

SUNDAY SCHOOL HAS NEVER BEEN LIKE THIS! STUDY THE LIFE OF JESUS WHILE ENJOYING A CASUAL BREAKFAST AROUND THE TABLE.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB is a thirteen week Sunday School alternative designed for teens who enjoy food, fellowship and Bible study in a fun filled, casual atmosphere.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB features a full classroom breakfast served by teachers and assistants.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB hosts occasional VIP guests who share breakfast and tell the story of their Christian journey.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB reinforces scriptural themes with gentle activities as students interact and share life experiences with class members.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB lessons provide an opportunity to talk about current issues facing Christian teens. "CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS" is a statement made by media mogul, Ted Turner. While not intended to be complimentary, the thought serves as a healthy basis for Christian living. Let's debunk other popular myths Christian teens hear. Discuss issues surrounding these statements:

CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS
THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES!
THE CHURCH IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES
IMAGINE THERE'S NO HEAVEN...NO HELL BELOW US...
DISPOSABLE PEOPLE
I PRAYED. GOD DIDN'T ANSWER.
WHO MOVED THE STONE?
BE A GOOD PERSON
WHAT I THINK DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THE BREAKFAST CLUB HOUSE

THE BREAKFAST CLUB area should resemble a casual kitchen. Place tables and chairs in the classroom or meet in a nearby home. Set up a large table and individual chairs spaced so students and teachers are in position for eating and easy conversation. A casual atmosphere welcomes first time teens while eliminating “new student” tension. While not a formal club, the name captures student imaginations making them feel like they belong to a special group. Print a door sign announcing **THE BREAKFAST CLUB!**

FOOD CENTER: Set breakfast items on a buffet table. When foods are cooked on site, provide a separate card table and utensils. A large wastebasket with garbage bag is helpful for quick clean up.

PRIVATE HOME: It may be nice to have the complete “homey” atmosphere of a private home. Be sure the host family understands the serious commitment to students arriving on 13 Sunday mornings and be sure students respect the private home. The house must be within walking distance so families can drive their student to church and attend other Sunday School classes in one stop.

BREAKFAST AT THE BREAKFAST CLUB

Why food? Some people feel strongly that students should not be fed at church. Perhaps they think this sets a precedent that could become a financial burden. It could be construed as bribing students instead of encouraging the more noble attitude of coming to learn about the Lord. Adult criticism might be based on nothing more than, “I never got to eat breakfast in Sunday School when I was a kid and neither should they!” If this is your attitude, trust me, this program is NOT for you!

However, something amazing happens when food enters the picture. Kids come! They talk about what is being served. Even if some food choices are not popular, conversation is sparked about “the time I had to eat...” There is a rustle of excitement as students chat and choose the foods they enjoy. They tell friends about breakfast in Sunday School and often invite friends and relatives to attend.

These ideas work! Make a special effort to produce a wonderful weekly culinary experience. The curriculum suggestions will make your students feel loved. Resist the urge to take short cuts. That is important when producing a series like THE BREAKFAST CLUB. The goal is to make Sunday School unique—“the caring place to be”—on Sunday mornings.

TABLE CENTERPIECES: Decorate the table artistically. Colorful flowers, candles and special table items invite the class to enjoy the atmosphere. Some special items to consider are wooden toys, ceramic pieces, stuffed animals, angels, shells or any fun item. Change the centerpieces ever few weeks to maintain an element of surprise. If a holiday falls within the thirteen week period, decorate the table using the specific holiday theme.

SETTING THE TABLE: Begin with a colorful tablecloth. “Dollar” stores sell colorful plastic coverings. Place a cloth (twin bed sheet) under the plastic for a more stable covering. Consider using real dishes, glasses, cups and silverware. It makes a big difference in terms of students feeling like the staff is making THE BREAKFAST CLUB special. Leave the tableware in the classroom after clean up.

If using paper products, purchase strong plates, cups and plastic ware. Some breakfast foods require cutting and syrup soaks through thin paper plates. Purchase brightly colored napkins. Change the napkin design every few weeks.

Some weeks serve breakfast as a buffet. Place table service on a side table along with warm foods. Other weeks, set the table and serve breakfast family style. The decisions is yours but mixing up the serving methods is fun and also practical.

WHO COOKS AND HOW DO WE KEEP FOOD HOT? Teachers and assistants may choose to cook. Purchase food from the Sunday School budget or request donations. Interested parents may volunteer their services to purchase and prepare food. The food can be delivered in casserole dishes and placed on warming trays. Hot food dishes can be wrapped in layers of newspapers when brought from home. Foods can be cooked at church and delivered to the classroom for immediate consumption.

FUSSY EATERS: No matter how hard you try, there will be students who do not like anything. Do not be intimidated by “I don’t like that.” “Isn’t there anything else?” “I can’t stand to eat breakfast.” The choice to eat what is served or portions of what is served is completely up to the student. Do not provide extra foods for fussy eaters. When a student complains say with a smile, “Oh, I’m sorry. See if there is anything here you like. If not, perhaps there will be something more to your liking next week.” **Make accommodations for students who have severe allergies or are diabetic.**

Never force anyone to eat anything! Learn from the horror story about the teacher who insisted that a child eat “just one” peanut butter cookie even though the child’s mother had forbidden it. The child protested and then ate the cookie to please the teacher. A severe allergic reaction nearly cost the student his life withing a few minutes of snack time.

DO NOT TELL ANYONE WHAT IS ON THE MENU FOR NEXT WEEK OR ANY WEEK IN THE BREAKFAST CLUB SERIES! Why? Students may be tempted to hold you hostage to their likes and dislikes. They may base their decision to attend Sunday School on the proposed menu. It is best to surprise them. Inform volunteers to keep menus a secret—especially if a parent is cooking and their child is begging to hear the entire list of menus. That student becomes the “hero of the moment” informing everyone and yet, unknowingly, sabotages the program.

BREAKFAST MENU IDEAS: Prepare favorite local dishes. Repeat menus every few weeks if desired. Whatever the menu, prepare the paperwork before the series. Assign volunteers to specific Sundays and telephone them the day before to remind them of their responsibility. Here are a few menu ideas to spark your imagination:

1. **SCRAMBLED EGGS, BACON AND TOAST.** Serve eggs well cooked and hot (top with cheese if desired), crisp bacon. Don’t forget butter and jelly for toast. Make toast in the classroom so it can be served fresh, hot and in large quantities.
2. **SCRAMBLED EGGS, SAUSAGE AND ENGLISH MUFFINS.** Serve eggs well cooked and hot, sausage should be well done (no pink inside) and English muffins should be toasted in the classroom. Provide butter and jelly for the muffins.
3. **DOUGHNUTS AND MILK.** Purchase a large variety of doughnuts freshly baked. Arrange them on a large tray and pass around the table. Milk should be whole milk or 2% milk and

should be icy cold!

4. PANCAKES, SAUSAGE, MINI DOUGHNUTS. Pancakes are always popular. The batter can be mixed at home and brought to the classroom with an electric skillet. Make small pancakes in the room and serve hot with butter and syrup. Sausage should be well done. Purchase tiny doughnuts or doughnut “holes” as an extra treat or an option for light eaters.

5. COLD CEREAL, MILK AND FRUIT CUPS. Purchase three varieties of cold cereal. Place the boxes on the table with pitchers of milk. Offer bananas and/or mixed fruit cups.

6. WAFFLES AND SYRUP. Waffles are difficult to make in the classroom. It can be done and there may be cooks who are willing to make them in the church kitchen. A quick and easy option is Leggo Waffles toasted in the toaster and served with syrup.

7. BAGELS, CREAM CHEESE AND JELLY. Purchase pre sliced bagels. There are many flavors cooked into bagels. Choose plain bagels as well as a sampling of cinnamon, raisin, onion or other options. Toast the bagels and serve hot topped with flavored cream cheeses.

8. BREAKFAST CASSEROLE. Try this delicious recipe! In an ungreased 9 x 13 pan place four slices of torn bread, one pound of cooked sausage or ham and 1 cup of grated cheddar cheese. Combine six eggs, 2 cups milk, 1 T. Mustard and a dash of pepper in a separate bowl. Pour this mixture over the bread, meat and cheese. Refrigerate the total mixture overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for 35-50 minutes. Serve hot.

HANNAH’S BREAKFAST PUDDING

1/4 C. Melted butter or oleo	3 eggs—separated
2 C. Milk	1/2 t. Dry mustard
1/2 t. Salt	1/4 t. Cayenne pepper
1 t. Worcestershire Sauce (optional)	9 slices bread—cubed
3 C. (12 oz. Shredded cheddar cheese	

In large bowl, combine butter, egg yolks, milk, mustard, salt and pepper. Stir in bread cubes and cheese. In another bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form; fold into bread mixture. Pour into a greased 9" square baking dish. Cover and chill 8 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 5 minutes before cutting. (6-8 servings.)

9. HAM AND CHEESE OMELETS. Make your favorite omelet fillings for this family favorite. Make several choices of fillings as desired.

10. HOMEMADE MUFFINS. Make a variety of blueberry, carrot, strawberry, etc. Muffins. Serve with cold milk.

11. POP TARTS. Purchase several varieties of this favorite toaster treat.

12. FAST FOOD BREAKFAST. Purchase breakfast sandwiches, hash browns and other treats from a nearby fast food restaurant.

BEVERAGES: Provide several drink choices. Milk, orange juice, hot chocolate and coffee for adult guests offered each week work well.

VIP SUNDAYS

Choose one Sunday per month to host VIP's (Very Important Persons) for breakfast. Ask three people to join the class each VIP Sunday. The lesson that day comes from the VIP's. When asking people to participate, hand them a VIP BREAKFAST TESTIMONY WORKSHEET. Let them look at the questions and telephone them later to see if they are willing to be part of the BREAKFAST CLUB.

THE PURPOSE OF VIP SUNDAY: To present Christian role models to the teens in THE BREAKFAST CLUB. These guests should represent the best your church has to offer in terms of the Christian lifestyle. Many teens do not have people in their lives who live a life of faith and it is crucial that they hear the life stories of a few who do.

HOW TO CHOOSE VIP'S: Choose approximately three people to visit each time. It is important to group the VIP's in such a way as to get the best discussion from them. Here are a few do's and don'ts:

Don't: Ask married couples to visit at the same time. Their stories may be similar.

Don't: Ask too many people to visit at one time. There will not be enough time to give each VIP a fair hearing of their testimony. VIP Sunday is not the week to invite an entire class to visit. There will be too many distractions.

Don't: Ask too few people to visit. One or two people may feel intimidated and will not feel capable to answer the questions properly.

Don't: Ask people to participate who want to bring young children with them. It does not work well and the parent will be distracted from the discussion to care for the child.

Do: Ask specific groups of people at the same time. Establish one week as church leaders week. Leaders may include the pastor, Christian Education director, music leader, oldest member of the congregation or custodian. One week should focus on parents. Include a mom or dad from within the class and others who have no students in the class. One week should be youth week. Ask faithful, committed, older high school or college teens to share their testimonies.

Do: Prepare the VIP's by giving them a VIP BREAKFAST TESTIMONY WORKSHEET. Include the date and time and call them the day before to remind them.

Do: Make each VIP feel welcome when they enter THE BREAKFAST CLUB. Engage them in conversation and be sure all their breakfast needs are met.

Do: Lead a structured discussion using the worksheet as a guide. Allow VIP's to stray from the questions if they have interesting stories to tell.

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The Breakfast Club

VIP BREAKFAST TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

Thank you for agreeing to have breakfast and give your testimony to our Breakfast Clubbers!

Please arrive at _____ A.M. on (date) _____. Our BREAKFAST CLUB room is _____.

At that time the class and VIP's will gather for a sit down breakfast and fellowship time. During the class we will ask you to give your Christian testimony. The following questions will be the basis for discussion:

1. What do you do outside of church? Career, school, working day, etc.
2. When did you have your first warm feelings toward God and what were the circumstances?
3. What people have been influential in your spiritual life and why?
4. What spiritual gifts do you feel God has given you and how do you use them in the church and outside the church?
5. What are your goals for drawing nearer to Jesus this year?
6. What advice can you give to help us grow in our Christian lives?

The atmosphere will be informal with everyone seated around the breakfast table. Relax and have fun with our small group of students.

Depending upon the available time, we will ask every question or pick and choose which questions we ask.

QUESTIONS?

Call _____

The Breakfast Club TIME MANAGEMENT

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Begin each session with breakfast and general conversation. If the lesson seems long, begin to teach while students are still eating. There is probably more material offered than time available if breakfast takes a full 20 minutes. Choose lesson plan material based on group interests and teacher motivation.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

This time is spent introducing the theme. Gentle activities help the class understand the importance of the spiritual issues. Conduct the activity with humor. Allow students to laugh and enjoy themselves as they participate.

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

This is the scriptural basis for the lesson. Read the scripture portion together and discuss the material as a group. SERIOUS STUFF and ISSUES AND ANSWERS may overlap.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Apply the theme to modern day issues that students face. Encourage them to contribute stories from their own experience.

VIP SUNDAY ORGANIZATION

For each of three VIP Sundays, eat breakfast with the guests and students. Ask the questions listed on the VIP Testimony Worksheet for the remainder of class.

SAMPLE
BREAKFAST CLUB SCHEDULE

(Use this sample schedule as a guide when planning your own breakfast schedule.)

- WEEK #1: CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS!
Breakfast Menu–Scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, beverages
- WEEK #2: THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES!
Breakfast Menu–Doughnuts and Milk
- WEEK #3: THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES–PART 2
Breakfast Menu–Cold cereal, milk and fruit cups
- WEEK #4: VIP BREAKFAST–Testimony Time
Breakfast Menu–Pancakes, sausage, mini doughnuts
VIP Guests--
- WEEK #5: THE CHURCH IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES!
Breakfast Menu–Waffles and syrup, beverages
- WEEK #6: IMAGINE THERE’S NO HEAVEN...NO HELL BELOW US
Breakfast Menu–Bagels, cream cheese and jelly, beverages
- WEEK #7: PEOPLE ARE DISPOSABLE
Breakfast Menu–Cold cereal, milk and homemade muffins
- WEEK #8: VIP BREAKFAST–Testimony Time
Breakfast Menu–Scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, beverages
VIP Guests--
- WEEK #9: I PRAYED. GOD DIDN’T ANSWER.
Breakfast Menu–Breakfast Casserole, toast, beverages
- WEEK#10:WHO MOVED THE STONE?
Breakfast Menu–Pancakes, sausage, fruit cups and beverages
- WEEK#11:BE A GOOD PERSON.
Breakfast Menu: Doughnuts and milk
- WEEK#12: VIP BREAKFAST–Testimony Time
Breakfast Menu–Breakfast Casserole, toast, beverages
- WEEK#13: WHAT I THINK DOESN’T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
Breakfast Menu–Scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, beverages

THE BREAKFAST CLUB SCHEDULE

WEEK #1: CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS!

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #2: THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES!

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #3: THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES--PART 2

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #4: VIP BREAKFAST--Testimony Time

Breakfast Menu--

VIP Guests--

WEEK #5: THE CHURCH IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES.

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #6: IMAGINE THERE'S NO HEAVEN...NO HELL BELOW US...

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #7: PEOPLE ARE DISPOSABLE

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK #8: VIP BREAKFAST--Testimony Time

Breakfast Menu--

VIP Guests--

WEEK #9: I PRAYED. GOD DIDN'T ANSWER.

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK#10:WHO MOVED THE STONE?

Breakfast Menu--

WEEK#11:BE A GOOD PERSON

Breakfast Menu--

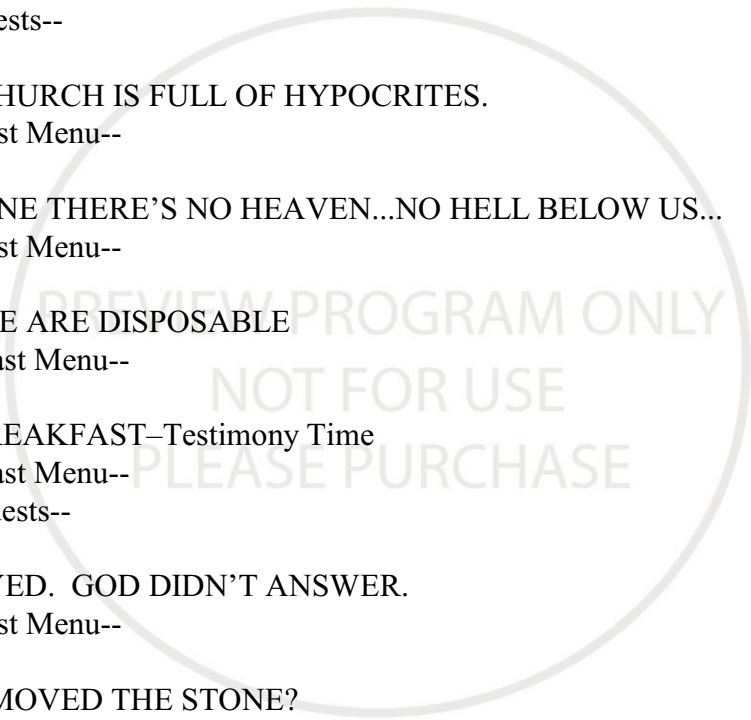
WEEK#12:VIP BREAKFAST--Testimony Time

Breakfast Menu--

VIP Guests--

WEEK#13:WHAT I THINK DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Breakfast Menu--



WEEK #1:

CHRISTIANITY IS FOR LOSERS

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Welcome to THE BREAKFAST CLUB. For the next 13 weeks we are going on a fast paced, fun filled, food festival that will leave you wondering whatever happened to “the same old Sunday School” you remembered from your childhood.

At first glance, the theme of our study may seem insulting--“Christianity is for losers.” This statement was made by Ted Turner, the media mogul and mega billionaire. I can hear Christians all over the world chuckling because, if the truth be known, Ted Turner’s statement *is* true. Think about it. There are many things we give up to follow Jesus. In the end we become winners.

Notes of the Round Table: Give each student one paper plate and a pen or colored marker. They must write their name in the middle of the plate. Pass the plates around the table. Have each person write one “winning” quality they see in that person. Display the plates on the walls of The Breakfast Club.

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

We do not like the “Thou shalt not....” wording of the Ten Commandments. They sound too much like punishment or at the very least confining rules and regulations. Let’s turn each commandment into a loving, positive statement, shedding new light on God’s intent. His desire for believers is not that we drag along as pathetic life losers but that we become brilliant winners in every endeavor and in every emotion.

Ask several students to read Exodus 20:1-17 aloud. Rework each commandment into one of the following positive statements taken from “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy. (If time permits, let students rewrite each commandment in their own positive style.)

1. *You shall have no other gods before Me.*

I love you so much that I will give you Myself. I am true reality, the only God you will ever need. In Me alone will you find wholeness.

2. *You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the*

earth beneath or in the water under the earth....

I desire a wonderful thing: A direct, personal relationship between Myself and each one of you. You don't need inferior representations of Me. Value that.

3. *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*

I love you so much that I have given you My name. You will be known as "God's People" on the earth. Value the privilege; don't misuse it by profaning your new name or by not living up to it.

4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

I have given you a beautiful world to work in, play in and enjoy. In your involvement, though, set aside a day to remember where the world came from. Your bodies need the rest; your spirits need the reminder.

5. *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land....*

6. *You shall not murder.*

Human life is sacred. I gave it and it has enormous worth. Cling to it. Respect it; It is the image of God. He who ignores this and commits the sacrilege of murder must be punished.

7. *You shall not commit adultery.*

The deepest human relationship possible is marriage. I created it to solve the essential loneliness in the heart of every person. To spread what is meant for marriage alone among a variety of people will devalue and destroy that relationship. Save sex and intimacy for its rightful place in marriage.

8. *You shall not steal.*

I am entrusting you with property. You can own things and you should use them responsibly. Ownership is a great privilege. For it to work, you must respect everyone else's right to ownership; stealing violates that right.

9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

I am a God of truth. Relationships only succeed when they are governed by truth. A lie destroys contracts, promises, trust. You are worthy of trust; express it by not lying.

10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your*

neighbor.

I have given you good things to enjoy; oxen, grains, gold, furniture, musical instruments. But people are always more important than things. Love people; use things. Do not use people for your love of things.

5 MINUTES–ISSUES AND ANSWERS

These rules stated positively are not for losers but for winners. God gave the law as the way to the best life. Our own rebellion beginning in the Garden of Eden tempts us to believe He is a mean dictator whose laws keep us from something good. Don't believe Ted Turner's intent when he said "Christianity is for losers." Christians know the meaning of the word "win".

Distribute copies of "What You Give Up To Be A Christian". Read the interesting piece aloud. If time permits, talk about each sin that is given up and each value that is gained.

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What You Give Up To Be A Christian

O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Psalm 136:1

A person once mentioned that Christians don't have any fun because they have to give up everything enjoyable. What do people give up when they become Christians?

Yes, they should give up sinning; but they will be free from guilt.

They will have to give up bigotry, hatred, immorality and despair; but they will have love, forgiveness and peace.

They will give up fear of death because they know they will have everlasting life.

They will give up trying to do everything on their own and discover that they have a loving and helpful God.

We cannot give more than God, and being Christians, we will receive much more than we give up. The sinful things of this world will someday pass away. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. Eternal life is forever and well worth any sacrifice on our part. The Christian goal is to love and serve God in this world and then someday to be happy with Him in Heaven.

WEEK #2:

THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Tool Time: Bring a tool box containing a wide variety of tools. Choose one tool from the box. Challenge students to list ways that the Bible is like that tool. For example: “God’s Word is like a hammer because it helps us penetrate our world with the gospel the way a hammer helps a nail penetrate wood.”

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

This study on the Bible is divided into two parts. Part two is completed next week. Take your time when teaching the truth of scripture.

“While a freshman at Edinboro University, I placed my Bible on the dresser in my dorm room. It was easy to get to and I wanted its’ visible presence to spark discussion with the girls who visited me. It didn’t take long until one gal, leaning against the door frame, pointed to the book and said, “I used to believe in the Bible...that is, until my Sunday School teacher told me that Noah and the Ark was a fairy tale. Now I know that if that if one story was a fake, nothing in the Bible is true. How can you believe in fairy tales?”—Ellen Bunnell, Close Encounters Ministries

This story can be repeated in a multitude of ways. People think the Bible is made of fairy tales because it is read to children. They think it is filled with myths because it talks about God and about miracles—and they don’t believe in either one. “The Bible is just another book.” “You don’t read the Bible, do you?” Professors demean the Bible in front of groups of students, laughing at those brave enough to admit faith in God and in the Book. People pride themselves that a Bible is displayed on their coffee table, dusty but present.

A true believer in the God of the Bible must grapple with these issues and answer the questions in heart and mind before facing an unbelieving world with the gospel of Christ. The Bible is worthy of our attention because it’s an unique treasury of information written under a myriad of circumstances, translated into more languages than any other book, surviving crises that would have crushed lesser works of art or literature.

Let’s take a look at three areas which prove the truth of scripture:

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY: Bible words and stories have been found to be historically reliable. Archaeologists digging in the Holy Land and Middle East have found that the text matches historical facts. Within the last 50 years, artifacts have been found which agree with Biblical stories. Archaeology cannot “prove” miraculous events described in the Bible any more than science can prove the existence of God. These are matters of faith. What it can do is discover the true setting in which the events of the Bible took place.

KING DAVID David, Israel’s greatest leader, defeated the Philistines and subdued them, breaking their power forever. His gifts as a poet, soldier and statesman make him, of all Israel’s kings, the most beloved by his people and the most respected by his enemies. A brilliant leader, David turned Israel from a weak, divided kingdom into an empire. He was loyal to the Lord and the prophets. His colorful Court History, written by a close friend, makes him better known to us than any other Biblical person.

Secular evidence of the existence of King David was never found. He lived only in the pages of scripture for centuries. Recently, archaeologists discovered a star of David carved on a rock at a historical site in Jerusalem. Words carved nearby stated: “David, King in Jerusalem.” Dates were scientifically confirmed to be consistent with the life span of our very own shepherd king. Discovery of the ancient civilizations mentioned in the Bible—the cities and monuments of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians and Greeks and deciphering their difficult, unknown languages made it apparent that many of the events mentioned in the Old Testament were, in fact true.

NOAH’S FLOOD Archaeologists uncovered the city of Ur. This large city was the hometown of Abraham. Five huge temples were found and many proofs of false gods. It was from Ur that God called Abraham to become the father of all believers.

As layers were uncovered it became obvious that a layer of clay 8 to 10 feet deep showed signs of Noah’s Flood. Archaeologist Sir Charles Leonard Woolley wrote: “We have found the Flood.” Below the clay they found ruins of Ur which had existed before the Flood. Scientists caution that it is probably unwise to proclaim this the biblical flood but traces of the same flood have been discovered in many areas. Flood stories written on tablets called the “Tablets of Gilgamesh” tell a Flood story almost exactly like that of Noah’s.

Former astronaut Jim Irwin searched for the remains of a large ship grounded near the summit of a mountain in Turkey, encased in ice and seen by at least 10 people at different times—a shepherd, an arch-deacon, three Russians and four American airmen. The search for Noah’s ark continues.

BIBLE PREDICTIONS: These are called prophecies and are events foretold by a prophet of God which came true exactly as predicted hundreds of years before the actual events. *(Scripture states the test of a true prophet—100% of the prophecies spoken by the prophet must come to pass. If even one prophecy fails, that person is a false prophet. Considering this statement, how many modern day fortune tellers, palm or foot readers, witches, horoscope writers, star gazers or people who contact the dead would you guess to be true prophets of God? 0)*

THE CITY OF TYRE: A prophecy by Ezekiel (Ez. 26:3-21) made around 590 BC. said King Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city of Tyre and that the debris would be thrown into the water, that the city's site would become a bare rock that fishermen would spread their nets upon and that Tyre would never be rebuilt. At the time it sounded ridiculous. Who would predict the utter destruction of Tyre, a flourishing kingdom, so strongly defended and safe that it held up the great Alexander on his way to conquer Egypt? In 573 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the coastal city of Tyre after a 13 year siege. The city's population moved to a nearby island and rebuilt Tyre. Alexander the Great attacked the thriving island city in 333 BC, throwing the debris from the mainland city into the water to build a land bridge out to it. The island city was finally destroyed by Muslims in AD 1321 during the Crusades. One historian has described the mainland site of Tyre as "bare as a rock" and has noted fishermen spreading nets there. The great city of Tyre has never been rebuilt and exists only as a small fishing village named Tyre further down the coast.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

It may be a *politically correct* attitude to feel the Bible is filled with fairy tales and that Christian believers are living in a "Never-Never Land" of impossible faith. What kind of comments about the Bible and your faith do you face at school, at home or in the work place that challenge you as a believer?

Let this scripture encourage you this week:

Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1 (Contemporary English Version)

Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is set ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. Hebrews 12:1-2CEV

WEEK #3:

THE BIBLE IS A BUNCH OF FAIRY TALES-PART 2

20 MINUTES-BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES-INTRODUCTION

Let's talk about some of our favorite books. What book have you read—other than the Bible—which affected you in a positive way. What were you challenged to think, be or do because you read that book?

10 MINUTES-SERIOUS STUFF

We're going to continue our discussion about the Bible. Last week we discovered that the Bible is worth our belief because of historical and archaeological discoveries and because its' predictions (prophecies) have come true. There are other issues we should consider when thinking about the truth of scripture.

COMMON SENSE ANSWERS FOR LIFE: The Bible answers the “why” questions about life. So many books promote theories that end up making the reader feel more depressed and hopeless. The Bible answers questions like “Why was I born?” “Where am I going?” “What is the purpose of my life?” “What is truth?”

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: Personal experience is powerful. It is difficult to argue with personal experience. Once you experience the Lord's love and protective care, no one can dissuade you from your faith in God or in His Word.

Money was scarce for a young Christian couple attending graduate school in Chicago hundreds of miles from family and home. They had been blessed with jobs to see them through the school year. It took 45 minutes of travel each way to school and work. Within weeks of arrival, the couple was devastated to dig into their pockets and find they had spent their last dime. Paychecks were held two weeks so nothing was going to be available for several days. Looking at the gas gauge, they could see that the tank was nearly empty and they would not get to work the next day or any day until they could get money. The husband said to his wife, “I won't be discouraged if you're not.” She agreed and they prayed together for the Lord to provide immediate help. They remembered scripture to bolster their sagging spirits:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Arriving at their apartment, they picked up the mail. One letter from home contained a note from mom. It read, "Rick (a sister's boyfriend) is here as I write this and he gave me this \$5 bill to place in my letter to you." He had never sent money to them before and has never sent money since then. In those days the cash was enough to get back to work and the waiting paychecks. Just try to convince them that prayer and trusting in God's Word is not real. They had a personal experience that changed their lives.

A LIBRARY OF AGREEMENT: We look at the Bible as one book but actually it is a library of 66 books written in three languages by 40 authors from different cultures with diverse backgrounds and training over about 1600 years. The books agree on questions of the existence of God, creation of the universe and mankind, establishment of a plan of salvation through Jesus, the Son of God, heaven and hell.

One of the strongest reasons Christians believe in Old Testament scripture is because Jesus believed in the truth of the Old Testament. He quoted it often and was fully convinced of its' truth. His own life is the result of hundreds of fulfilled prophecies related to every phase of His life (see Luke 24:27, 32; Acts 10:43).

PEOPLE ARE CHANGED: If the Bible is true, it will be true for people from the past, present and in the future. What the Bible teaches about God, Jesus, salvation, sin and peace has been verified by an endless line of believers from the very first men and women of God until now.

Solid evidence of the truth of scripture is around us every day. Open your eyes to the changed lives of people surrounding you. Notice the answers to prayer and evidence of Christ in your own life. So often we forget our prayers as soon as they leave our mouths. Take time to establish a prayer journal. Keep track of answered prayer. Prove scripture true by tracking your personal journey of faith.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Sometimes adults pass on the feeling that the Bible is boring, old fashioned and hard to understand. Begin to take your devotional time seriously, by thinking of ways to make it interesting and enlightening to you. Here is a great series of questions to ask (and write down) for each paragraph you read:

1. What is the main point of this passage?
2. What does it teach about God—Jesus—Holy Spirit?
3. What should I think or do because I read this?
4. Make this the basis for prayer and action throughout the day.

Practice using this study method with the group by reading John 3:16 aloud and answering the questions. The method works best by writing down the questions and answers.

WEEK #4:

VIP BREAKFAST
...TESTIMONY TIME

This is the first of three special Sundays reserved for Very Important People. Ask at least three Christian leaders from your local congregation to visit the class for breakfast and a discussion of their life journey with Jesus.

Take time to enjoy the visitors and welcome them royally. Encourage the visitors to sit at spaced intervals between the students. There should NOT be a head table where VIP's are separated from the group.

This is an informal breakfast and discussion. Try to keep it casual.

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WEEK #5:

“THE CHURCH IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES!”

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Play a quick game of “Gossip”. Whisper this message to one person and let the whispered message travel around the table. The fun is in discovering how the original message changed as it moved from person to person.

Tell the person next to you: *There was a man from Old St. Paul. He had a goat that ate six red shirts from off the clothesline. The man screamed and swore that the goat was going to meet his Maker. He grabbed him by his coat and tied him to a railroad track. The goat was so afraid that he threw up the shirts and flagged the train!*

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

Christians hate hearing “The church is full of hypocrites” because people who say it use it as an excuse to stay away from church and all things related to faith. The statement is true. Why do so many of them end up in church? It’s because we throw open the doors and let anyone walk in and sit down and participate and become involved in our lives. There is no way to figure out who is and who isn’t hypocritical. Would we really want to? Hypocrites need the Lord too!

Matthew 15:7-8 CEV: *Jesus said, And you are nothing but show offs! Isaiah the prophet was right when he wrote that God had said, ‘All of you praise me with your words, but you never really think about me.’*

The Pharisees didn’t like hearing these words. Even a hypocrite doesn’t like a hypocrite and most spend a lot of time denying that part of their personalities. Listen to a few memorable quotations:

Hypocrite: the man who murdered both his parents...[then] pleaded for mercy on the grounds he was an orphan. Abraham Lincoln

A hypocrite is the kind of politician who would cut down a redwood tree, then mount the stump and make a speech for conservation. Adlai E. Stevenson

A bad man is worse when he pretends to be a saint. Francis Bacon

No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true. Nathaniel Hawthorne

A hypocrite is a phony, a fraud, a pretender, a deceiver. Today's hypocrites usually pretend to be better than they really are. Think about it. If you are truthful, haven't you been a hypocrite and haven't I been one too? Who does not pretend to be better than he is? Don't we all put our best behavior on display when we go into public view? Don't we try to look as attractive as we can? This isn't the kind of hypocrite Jesus was discussing. Jesus never used the word to describe godly men and women trying to serve Him in all their imperfect humanness.

Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because they puffed themselves up with their own importance and power. They set impossibly high standards for people as they handed down a list of rules they controlled. There was no love for God or compassion for the sinner. Jesus knew a hypocrite is someone who claims to love God but who has turned away from God.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Acts 5:1-11: Read the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

This is a tragic story. Scripture does not say this couple turned from belief in Christ. They “blew it” big time. They were believers who committed a hypocritical act. The church leaders did not require the sale of their property. They were bringing the money as a gift. However, they lied. They kept back some of the profit. They became an example of dishonesty to the entire church for ages to come.

Did they go to heaven or hell? Interesting question. Once we join God's family, we become saints on a journey which may include many failures, successes, sins, mistakes, joys, faithful struggle, etc. So it was with Ananias and Sapphira. It could be that they were in total shock at the discovery of their deceit and died of heart attacks. It could have been that God struck them dead as an object lesson to other believers (very effective, I might add). If so, He took them home to heaven before they could get into any more trouble. God knows our hearts. You may be a phony on the outside but you will never mislead the Lord.

The success of our spiritual journey does not depend upon our perfection. If it did, we would all end up like Ananias and Sapphira. We are weak but Christ is strong. He will be faithful to us when we are unfaithful to Him.

“The church is full of hypocrites!” You bet it is! Whether we are the hypocrite or our friend is the hypocrite, this is an opportunity to let God work in our lives. Be patient with hypocrites. Accept the weakness of other believers. They may not be as far along in their Christian journey as you are. Love them, accept them, urge them on to more maturity. Do not shun them and isolate them. The growing Christian needs to learn these principles from those who have been there before them. Become a helper to the hypocrite at the same time you are guarding your own life from hypocrisy.

WEEK #6:

"IMAGINE THERE'S NO HEAVEN
...NO HELL BELOW US."
...JOHN LENNON

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Discuss this theme: *We all enjoy security. One of our most secure places is home. While at home, what is your favorite type of chair? Why?*

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

If a copy of John Lennon's song "Imagine" is available, play it for the class.

"Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try, No hell below us, above us only sky. Imagine all the people, livin' for today...."

It is easy to deny life after death. We cannot see it, feel it, taste it or smell it. No one has come back to tell us what it's like to be dead. Death is so final. It is frightening and often the subject is taboo. God's original plan for humans did not include death. However, He knew that love isn't love unless it is chosen freely. He told Adam, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17) You can hear Adam thinking, "Die! What's die?"

The Bible believes in Heaven, Hell and Satan. Jesus believed in Heaven, Hell and Satan. As Christians, we believe in the Bible and in Jesus. Both are trustworthy sources. Before Adam and Eve, God created an entire universe which included other beings. Angels were given the same opportunity to love and serve God. Lucifer, who was the most favored of angels, desired to overthrow and then become the God of Heaven. Of course, God would not allow that and so Lucifer and about 1/3 of all the created angels became fallen angels. They sinned and were condemned to roam the earth from their new home in Hell. Lucifer became the serpent, Satan, who tempted Eve to sin. Suddenly the choice for all mankind became "Serve God and have everlasting life or serve Satan and die." There is no in between category.

Singer Tori Amos in a 1998 television interview with *Roseanne* said her father was offended by her song, "Father Lucifer". She told the interviewer she asked to meet Satan because she was curious and did! She said, "I now know that the Prince of Darkness" is a white woman driving an ice cream truck." The audience laughed and Miss Amos glibly explained how wonderful

Father Lucifer was and how impressed she was with her experience.

Jesus said, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23) and *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

This is God’s message which people may accept or reject. Satan has been presented in such cartoon and myth like caricatures that it is no wonder that when people “Imagine...no Hell below us, above us only sky....” they reject a literal Satan and Hell or render him harmless.

5 MINUTES–ISSUES AND ANSWERS

“I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly human can believe in everlasting punishment....I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hellfire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty.” Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian”

“You’re gonna have to serve somebody; Well, it may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody....” Bob Dylan, “Slow Train Coming”

“Many people visualize a God who sits comfortably on a distant throne, remote, aloof, uninterested and indifferent to the needs of mortals, until they can badger him into taking action on their behalf....The Bible reveals a God who, long before it even occurs to man to turn to him, while man is still lost in darkness and sunk in sin, rises from his throne, lays aside his glory and stoops to seek until he finds him.” John R.W. Stott, “Basic Christianity

Take a few minutes to reflect on these quotes by some very famous people. How do these statements make you feel? Can you defend your position for the existence or non existence of heaven and hell?

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

WEEK #7:

DISPOSABLE PEOPLE

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

THIRTY SECONDS OF PRAISE: Using flashlights, “spotlight” one person in the group for 30 seconds. During that time, have kids race to say things they appreciate about that person and tell why they’re glad that person is a part of the group. Every 30 seconds, switch to a different person. Continue until everyone has been spotlighted—including yourself! *This can be done during breakfast.*

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

We don’t say it aloud but our actions as a nation shout that we believe in “Disposable People”. More and more America’s media reflects what people of the *Me* generation have been whining about for a long time, “...but what about *me*?” How did we get to this point?

ABORTION/ DISPOSABLE INFANTS: A young couple in a small Pennsylvania town gave birth to a little girl. She had blond hair, blue eyes and rosy, pink cheeks. They were so happy she had finally arrived. The doctor entered their room and gravely told them the baby had a problem. He wondered if it had been a “happy” pregnancy. He wondered if they had other children. He wondered if they would consider allowing this baby to die of natural causes—ie. No feeding. Her stunned parents asked, “Why?” Her problem, according to the doctor, was that she was born with club feet. Club feet? Wasn’t this fixable with surgery? Yes, but it was a long, difficult road and could be expensive. Perhaps it would be better for all concerned to let this baby go. The parents protested vigorously. They insisted upon second opinions and convinced medical people that they would love her even if she never walked a straight line in her life. They would figure out a way to pay the bills. This is a true story. The mother recounted her experience while her healthy, walking four year old daughter danced around her. No one would ever know she had been through surgery, therapy and countless prayer offered by determined parents.

Many women have been hoodwinked into abortions by believing that the tiny human being growing inside them is a sort of tumor. They hear words like, “Inconvenient,” “Unwanted,” “Imperfect,” “Will ruin your lifestyle,” “Just a blob of tissue.”

This is not new to the human race. The next logical step after abortion is to allow newborn infants to die (just like the offer made to the Pennsylvania couple) if they are not perfect or are

unwanted. Thinking twins are unnatural, tribes in Africa allow one of a set of twins to die. Handicapped babies are thought to be monkeys and are placed in trees (like monkeys) to die. In China, baby girls are unwanted and are sometimes left to die. Sound terrible? It is....and yet it is not so far from the American practice of aborting babies when tests show that the baby is not the sex desired by the parents. Medical journals reports that so far, most of these abortions have been to get rid of an unwanted female child.

Then there is the issue of teen sexuality. Teens are told “You are incapable of remaining a virgin until your wedding day so we will make other options available to you. Want an abortion? Sure, come on in. We’ll have you home in an hour.”

Listen to what God thinks of the baby growing inside its’ mother: Psalm 139:13-16CEV

*You are the one who put me together inside my mother’s body.
And I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.
Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt.
Nothing about me is hidden from you!
I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below,
But with your own eyes you saw my body being formed.
Even before I was born, you had written in your book
Everything I would do.*

REJECTION: There are many reasons we dispose of people. Disposable people do not have to die, they just have to get out of our “personal space”. Here are a few reasons we toss people out of our lives:

Illness/Physical Unattractiveness: Not every human being is perfect. Some are not “Hollywood” worthy in their looks or actions. There are people who are born with or contract debilitating illnesses and deformities. Diseases cause families to reject some family members. AIDS has been the latest disease to cause rejection. It has been called modern day *leprosy*.

Race: People from different cultures with different colors and facial features have been prime targets for rejection. Think long and hard about situations where people of different races are killed in drive by shootings or dragged behind trucks. Who thought up the idea that people of a different color are meant to be disposable?

Social Status: Is someone richer or poorer than you are? Are you uncomfortable in their presence? Is it easier to gather with people who are similar in situation and looks? Check out the lunch tables at school tomorrow. How do you choose who to associate with in social situations?

Intelligence Quotient (IQ): There are people who have been blessed with extreme brain power, brilliance, giftedness. There are others who struggle to put two words together. Is it easier to dispose of them than to deal with the unique challenges at either end of the IQ scale?

Divorce: Ahh, the other (abortion is the first) greatest example of Disposable People. Statistics show that 1 in every 2 marriages end in divorce. Men and Women enter marriage thinking if the relationship doesn't work, they can get a divorce. Reasons for divorces range from annoying daily habits to unfaithfulness. Children born into these marriages see their parents struggle to stay in love. When the hard work of raising a family, earning a living and staying faithful begins, couples bail out. Children from divorced families are the walking wounded. They carry their wounds into adulthood and old age. What happened to honoring the wedding vow, "Love, honor and cherish until death do us part?"

EUTHANASIA/ASSISTED SUICIDE: What good is a person when they grow old? They cannot work like they did when they were young. They aren't very good looking and they dress funny. Most old people are sick all the time and they walk so slow. They are hard of hearing and shout their questions and answers. Older folks are intolerant of new ideas. They take up space and time and money that could be better used on the younger generation. Hey, some of them actually want to die. They beg to die. What's wrong with helping them along in the natural process? Can you hear the logic for euthanasia?

Dr. Jack Kervorkian has brought the issue to the forefront by helping over 100 sick and dying people commit suicide. Legal argument states that a person cannot agree to his own murder. So far, state laws have been trying to hang onto the dignity of life and death. We'll see what happens in the next decade.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

It is easy to raise appropriate questions concerning these huge issues of Disposable People. Does it make a difference when YOU are the person involved in one of the Disposable People issues? How would you handle an unwanted pregnancy, sick child, unpleasant people as neighbors or a sick grandma begging you to help her die? No one ever said solving these problems is easy. When in doubt, turn to The Book. Check out what the Bible says about the worth of human life. Ask yourself, "What Would Jesus Do?"

What could turn Disposable People into Always Valuable People? God's Word offers an explanation. See the words in Genesis 2:26-27 CEV:

God said, 'Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds and all other living creatures.' So God created humans to be like himself (in the image of God); he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said: 'Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control....'

Humans were made in the image of God. Of course, God is God and we have human weaknesses but we also have unique personalities, emotions and we make choices. Each human being has 100% value in God's sight, regardless of age, sex, IQ, physical fitness, race or psychological condition. Jesus paid special attention to the down and outers of his society. The prostitutes, lepers, the hated Samaritan, the woman. Did you know that every day Pharisees prayed, "Thank you God I was not born a woman."? Jesus made these Disposable People feel loved and valuable throughout his ministry on earth.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

WEEK #8:

VIP BREAKFAST
...TESTIMONY TIME

This is the second of three special Sundays reserved for Very Important People. Ask at least three Christian leaders from your local congregation to visit the class for breakfast and a discussion of their life journey with Jesus.

Take time to enjoy the visitors and welcome them royally. Encourage the visitors to sit at spaced intervals between the students. There should NOT be a head table where VIP's are separated from the group.

This is an informal breakfast and discussion. Try to keep it casual.

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WEEK #9:

"I PRAYED. GOD DIDN'T ANSWER."

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Give each student one piece of paper and an envelope. Encourage them to write down one or more prayer requests on the piece of paper. These are private. They can be prayers for personal family problems, temptations they face, school decisions, careers choices or choice of mates. Date the requests and seal them into separate envelopes. Encourage the students to place their envelope inside the cover of their Bible and each time they see it, they should pray about the requests. Date the envelope one year from today. Long after this series has ended, students may open their envelopes on that date to discover how God has been working in their lives and answering their prayers.

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

Does prayer work? Come on now, do you really think so or have you given me the dreaded "Sunday School" answer? Perhaps you secretly think today's statement could be your quote, "I prayed. God didn't answer!"

Here's a good verse to print on a 3 x 5 card and tack to the refrigerator: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you. John 15:7 NASB*

Many books have been written about prayer. There is no way we can learn everything in 10 minutes so let's concentrate on a "crash course" in prayer. Questions and answers may work best.

WHAT IS PRAYER? Prayer is two way communication (better than a telephone) between a human and God. It is speaking and listening to God. Prayer is faith in action. What can be more adventuresome than taking a huge problem to God and then waiting and watching until He answers.

TO WHOM DO WE PRAY?

1. We pray *to* God the Father. Matthew 6:6 CEV says, "When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private and he will reward you."
2. We pray *through* Jesus, the Son. I Timothy 2:5 CEV says, "There is only one God, and Christ Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God."

3. We pray *in* the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us since we don't really know the right words to say to influence the will of God. Ephesians 6:18 CEV says, "Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit."

WHY DO WE PRAY? Jesus said we should pray. He showed us how as he personally prayed The Lord's Prayer. We have many needs—physical, mental social, emotional and spiritual that God can meet when we ask. Other people need us to pray for them. The best reason to pray is that God loves to hear from us. Proverbs 15:8 CEV says, "The Lord is disgusted by gifts from the wicked, but it makes him happy when his people pray."

WHEN DO WE PRAY? We should be praying all the time. I Thessalonians 5:17 CEV says, "Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do." Pray on specific occasions like before meals, in times of crisis, when important decisions are needed, on a daily basis.

WHERE SHOULD WE PRAY? We should pray in private—inside or outdoors. Pray with other Christians. Pray in church. Pray anywhere we are.

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY? The Lord's Prayer says we should pray for God's will to be done. There are many prayers in Psalms that teach us how to pray. We should be persistent and humble and forgiving. We should be sincere, simple, intense, expectant and to the point. Our prayers can be spoken aloud or silently. Don't worry about using "Thee's and Thou's". Use whatever words you are most comfortable with.

Our physical position doesn't matter. Some may kneel, others bow their heads and close their eyes. Some people stand and lift their eyes to the heavens. It may be appropriate to use all of these positions at different occasions.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Do you feel like you have been on a whirlwind tour of prayer? Learning how to pray is one of the enjoyable things about being a Christian. We learn as we go. Here is a quick method of organizing your personal prayers that has been a favorite of Christians for a long time. Use the word A-C-T-S as the basis for prayer.

A-Adoration: Worship God at the beginning of each prayer. Tell him how much you love and appreciate him. Praise him for his goodness, love and power.

C-Confession: God cannot stand sin. He cannot answer your requests until you settle your sins with him. It is a good idea to keep your sins "confessed up to date". Take a few moments to try and remember what we have done and the things we have omitted as well. If nothing comes to mind immediately, go on to the next portion of your prayer. God will impress upon you the sin he wants you to deal with on any given day.

T-Thanksgiving: Thank God for every situation. Keep in mind not every situation you are going to be thankful for is necessarily happy. Paul tells us to rejoice and thank God for all circumstances, even when we don't feel thankful.

S-Supplication: This is the time for specific requests. God loves to give good gifts to his children. He wants to meet our needs. Our faith in him increases as we see him answer our prayers.

So...DOES GOD REALLY ANSWER PRAYER? Yes, but the answers may not be what you expect. Sometimes he says "Yes". Sometimes he says "No". Sometimes he says "Wait". Sometimes he says, "Yes, and here's more".

With all your heart you must trust the Lord and not your own judgment. Always let him lead you and he will clear the road for you to follow. Proverbs 3:5-6

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WEEK #10:

“WHO MOVED THE STONE?”
...FRANK MORRISON

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Start a ‘Round The Table Discussion with the following question:

If you had an opportunity to change the world, how would you personally do it? *Your choice should reflect your personal interests and skills, hopes and dreams and should reflect the presenting needs of the world today.*

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

The following information is a compilation of questions and proofs for the resurrection taken from a variety of Christian sources. Use some or all of it in your discussion.

OPEN YOUR BIBLES TO MATTHEW 27:45-28:15 USE THIS AS OUR TEXT OF CLUES AS WE TRY TO SOLVE THIS MYSTERY.

Our theme question today was a question stated by lawyer Frank Morrison. Convinced that Jesus did not miraculously come back from the dead, he decided that someone moved that stone! He was determined to use all his investigative skills to discover who that person was. His resulting book “Who Moved the Stone?” ended with the story of Frank Morrison’s conversion to faith in Christ.

The account of the Resurrection in the gospels reads like a murder mystery: Man is tried in a court of law and convicted. Man is sentenced to death which is carried out by Roman crucifixion. Man is buried in a public tomb owned by well known citizen. Man’s body is guarded by government military officials. Man’s body disappears after three days.

Where did the body of that Man go? Crowds of people were present at his noisy trial and at his execution. The borrowed tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus was also a member of the same group. They were the equivalent of our senators. A group of women friends helped prepare the body for burial. The government officials knew where he was taken because Roman guards were assigned to guard the tomb. There was so much interest in Jesus that the body was not hidden in a secret place. There are several viable options for his disappearance that have been discussed for centuries as possibilities. Let’s take a look at them:

THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY: Look at the accounts of the confusion after the death of Jesus. The disciples were hiding, grieving, wondering what was next. In all of the recorded information, we never once hear them planning to steal his body to make it appear as if he was back from the dead. The chief priests devised a plan (Matthew 28:12-15) to pay the frightened guard lots of money to say ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If the governor hears about it, we’ll tell him the story and keep you out of trouble. (They would have been executed for sleeping on duty.) So the soldiers took the money, told the story and the Jews still say the disciples stole the body to this day.

How many disciples stole the body? Did all surviving 11 (Judas committed suicide) hatch the plan or did one or two men sneak in under cover of darkness, roll the stone, grab the body, sneak past the guards and rebury him elsewhere.

Was it Peter? He was terrified of being discovered by servants and strangers. It is hard to believe that he would have had the courage to carry the message of Jesus to thousands in the years to come and to die upside down on a cross (traditional thought) if he knew the claims of Jesus to be false.

How about Thomas? Remember, he was the doubter who had to be convinced by the very presence of the resurrected Lord. If he knew he was still dead, he would have shouted down his buddies when they began their crazy tales of seeing Jesus alive and well. He would have produced the body and said, “See, here he is. Still dead after all these days.”

...And John? John was closest to the Lord and cared deeply about what happened. Maybe he couldn’t bear to keep the body on such public display. Where would he take it? A dead body is hard to hide in warm climates. He didn’t have the tools or the place to bury his friend.

All of the disciples, except John, died martyrs deaths. Their courage and faith was evident as they preached the good news of the Messiah and the hope of salvation for all mankind. There was intense opposition. Would they—or you—risk their lives for a story they knew to be a lie?

SOMEONE ELSE TOOK THE BODY: There is a host of suspects for this theory. If someone else took the body, they did not tell the disciples judging by the shocked reaction of the men. Maybe Joseph of Arimathea had second thoughts about such a controversial political figure lying in his tomb. The women might have tried to embalm him in a more convenient spot but why wouldn’t they bring him back when they discovered everyone looking for him and how did they move him?

The soldiers or Pilate or some of the chief priests or several Pharisees could have stolen the body. They hated him. These enemies would have paraded the body through the streets of Jerusalem if they could have once the stories of his resurrection began to circulate. They didn’t do it because they couldn’t. Never once did they deny he was missing, try to replace his body with that of another dead body. Never did they say they knew where the body was.

Whoever did it didn’t seem to be in a hurry. They left the body wrapping lying where it was and even folded the face cloth and placed it neatly in its’ spot. Why unwrap the body? Yuck! A dead, wounded, naked man leaking bodily fluids would be hard to move and even harder to hide.

The scene showed no signs of chaos or panic despite the fact that the huge stone had been moved and the body carried from the site without alerting the Roman guards. Then they had to hide Jesus and make a decision to remain absolutely quiet when people began to tell everyone that Jesus was alive again.

THE WOMEN WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB: Admittedly the women were upset. Women tend to cry when they are sad and it is possible that they got mixed up. Scripture says Joseph's tomb was near the execution site (John 19:41-42). Mary watched the burial. It took awhile to complete the work at the site. Joseph and Nicodemus knew the place. After all, Joseph had it chiseled out of rock for later family use. It was in his private little garden. How could he have forgotten where it was? Surely he would have checked it out when the women appeared to have over active imaginations and shout that Jesus was alive. Someone has said the women got mixed up when a young man (they thought he was Jesus) saw them and tried to redirect them. "He's not here; he is over there." Did they only hear the first part of his statement and conclude the rest of the story in their state of grief? Is that what you think happened?

JESUS DIDN'T DIE ON THE CROSS: This theory is raised every so often. Maybe a friend gave him a strong drug that caused him to become unconscious. He spent several days recovering in the cool tomb and then pretended to "rise again" on Sunday.

There is a lot known from the public record of his punishment and crucifixion. He was beaten with 40 lashes. It was a severe punishment and many people died while being whipped. The injuries from the crucifixion were horrible and the hours spent on the cross without nourishment would have taken further physical toll.

When he died, his friends thought he was dead. The soldiers thought he died. The Centurion (who crucified a lot of people) thought he was dead. In fact, to be sure, he stuck a spear into his side. The priests and Pilate thought Jesus was dead. The guards at the tomb thought he was dead. Could it have been an act that so thoroughly fooled all these people?

Then there were people who saw him after the resurrection. He did not stumble from the tomb into the arms of Mary Magdalene. She thought he was the gardener. The women who meet him recognize him and fall at his feet in worship. Two men traveled with him to Emmaus and did not notice weakness and they walk seven miles together. He doesn't collapse in the presence of the disciples later that night. They saw the marks but did not mention any appearance of pain.

THE DISCIPLES ONLY THOUGHT THEY SAW JESUS: Was this an hallucination? The disciples were grief stricken. They did not expect him to rise from the dead. Their thoughts were not focused on conjuring up a dead person. They were trying to figure out how to get out of this alive and what steps were next to carry on with life.

THE BIBLE IS NOT RELIABLE: The story was recorded almost immediately. It is like a journal record. Scholars have traced the materials and stories back to the days of Jesus. Over 500 people also saw Jesus and would have recorded their own versions if they knew it to be false.

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

When people die, there are almost always witnesses to the illness or accident. There are family members, medical people who take care of the person, coroners, funeral directors, grave diggers and tomb stones marking the graves. People stay dead. One person did not stay dead. That person is Jesus, the Son of God. Is Jesus who he claimed to be? Where do you think Jesus is?

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WEEK #11:

“GOOD PEOPLE GO TO HEAVEN.”

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Tell us about one really good person you know or have met in your lifetime. What makes that person special to you? What qualities of goodness in that person impressed you? How is your life different because you have known that person?

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

“Good people go to heaven.” Yes, they do. All of the people in heaven will be good. However, goodness doesn’t count and so not all good people will be in heaven. How can we make such a cruel statement? We say it because the Bible says “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Notice Paul doesn’t say, “For some have sinned....or, only murderers are sinners....or, you’ll know a sinner when you see one, the rest of us are okay...and fall short of the glory of God.”

What makes a person good? (Let the students respond.) We know a good person when we see one. They are caring, concerned, help the downtrodden, they are clean, well groomed and live in nice houses. Good people always think of others first and give their money away when they hear of a special need. Good people cry when they hear a sad story. Good people come to help you in the middle of the night. They babysit on a moment’s notice and they fix your car without payment. A good person doesn’t necessarily go to church every Sunday but they talk about God. Others are in church every week and never miss a chance to shake the pastor’s hand at the door. Good people are nice people. They are the kind of people we enjoy. It is fun to be with them at a party or on a trip. It is a special treat to have a good person living next door.

Why don’t all good people go to heaven? There is more to God’s plan of salvation than being good. Of course, people have been trying to get to heaven by their own methods since the beginning of time. Goodness is just one way people think they are worthy of God’s notice. People have tried to reach God by doing good works, following a specific set of religious rules, believing in complicated philosophies and by being moral.

The Bible says, “There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12 and “...your iniquities have separated you from God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2

The only thing people have not tried is the only way to heaven God has approved, belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Every human being must take this path whether they live in America

or India, Russia or South Africa. God provided the only way and we must make our choice.

The Bible says, “For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...” I Peter 3:18a.

What should good people do to get to heaven? It is easy to spot a Christian headed for heaven. Just ask them. They answer that they have been redeemed by Jesus’ death and resurrection. The only way to get to God is to receive Christ by personal invitation.

Jesus said, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20 and “...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9

5 MINUTES—ISSUES AND ANSWERS

You may feel you are a good person and you probably are! It is not enough. Be sure of your place in heaven at this very moment in time. Here is the simple way to receive Christ:

1. **Admit your need.** That means admitting you are a sinner. This is usually hard for good people to admit.
2. **Be willing to turn from your sin.** The Bible word is “repent”. Be sorry that you have separated yourself from God. Turn the opposite direction and begin a new life journey.
3. **Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross and rose from the grave.** If the entire Bible were somehow destroyed and all we had left was a scrap of paper with these words you could still go to heaven. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever (insert your name here) believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16
4. **Invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. Receive Him as Lord and Savior.** It’s as easy as talking to the person sitting next to you. Speak to the Lord in prayer.

What to Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

WEEK #12:

VIP BREAKFAST
...TESTIMONY TIME

This is the third and last of three special Sundays reserved for Very Important People. Ask at least three Christian leaders from your local congregation to visit the class for breakfast and a discussion of their life journey with Jesus.

Take time to enjoy the visitors and welcome them royally. Encourage the visitors to sit at spaced intervals between the students. There should NOT be a head table where VIP's are separated from the group.

This is an informal breakfast and discussion. Try to keep it casual.

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WEEK #13:

“WHAT I THINK DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

20 MINUTES—BREAKFAST IS SERVED

Serve breakfast to the group.

10 MINUTES—INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to take a 10 point quiz to discover how we experience the world. (Hand out copies of the quiz to each student. Let them answer the questions while they eat breakfast. Answers do not have to be shared unless they want to.)

10 MINUTES—SERIOUS STUFF

It's easy to feel insignificant in a world of billions of people. Sitting in an educational class room with 20 or more peers can be intimidating. After all, don't we think that just about everyone knows more about everything than we do? Only a few very self assured people never feel a pang of insecurity. Television brings visual experiences into our homes and we see gifted people from all over the world offering their expert comments on issues ranging from politics to religion. When they are wrong, it is hard to stand firm and say, “That's wrong!” because deep in our hearts we think “What I think doesn't make a difference,” and we silently agree to disagree without making ourselves heard.

We cannot do great things on this earth. We can only do small things with great love.
—Mother Teresa

Countless acts by millions of self centered, instead of God centered, individuals may reasonably be thought to be destroying the world. —G. K. Chesterton

On humanist assumptions, life leads to nothing....If there is a bridge over a gorge which spans only half the distance and ends in mid air and if the bridge is crowded with human beings pressing on, one after another until they fall into the abyss..., it does not matter where they think they are going, what preparations for the journey they may have made, how much they may be enjoying it all. H. J. Blackham, Objections to Humanism

*Often this earth has no time for my feelings,
Under His love is where I find my rest....
Under His love, He takes away my sorrow.
I've found my place, I've no desire to roam.
I watch the skies, for He may come back tomorrow,
And if He does, well I'm ready to go home.
...Steve Camp and Larry Norman, “Under His Love*

I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. –C. S. Lewis

The one message the world needs to hear is the salvation message you have already received. God will use you to make a difference in your world.

The best advice for any Christian with a defeated attitude is: “Know what you believe. Read God’s Word. Become an expert by living out your faith in Christ wherever you are. Put your faith into action everyday. Look for ways to be heard. Speak up! Roar like a lion but be as gentle as a lamb.”

5 MINUTES–ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Read MY DEDICATION aloud as a litany. Assign parts around the table.

CLOSE THE SERIES IN PRAYER.

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Experiencing Your World

For each question, select one response that best matches your reaction to the question. Go quickly, without much deliberation; mark the response that initially strikes you as best.

1. How do you think of snow on an early winter morning?
_____ a. A blanket of white everywhere
_____ b. Silence and peacefulness
_____ c. Cold and frosty

2. Imagine you're a scuba diver. What impresses you most about your first dive to 60 feet below the surface?
_____ a. Watching the fish swim by
_____ b. Hearing your breathing in the underwater silence
_____ c. Feeling weightless

3. When talking with a friend, how are you most likely to respond?
_____ a. "I see what you mean."
_____ b. "I hear what you're saying."
_____ c. "I know how you feel."

4. Think of the house of your favorite grandparent (or some other beloved relative or person from your childhood). Do you ever encounter places that remind you of this house? What usually triggers these memories?
_____ a. Similar architecture, furniture or decorating
_____ b. A familiar sound (such as a creaking floor, noisy fan or Lawrence Welk music)
_____ c. A familiar smell (such as baking, mustiness or disinfectant)

5. Imagine you've been asked to give a speech to a large group of people you admire. You're nervous. How do you feel as you step to the podium?
_____ a. "There are a thousand eyes out there looking at me!"
_____ b. "What if they don't like what I'm going to say?"
_____ c. "It feels like I've got a thousand butterflies in my stomach!"

6. What is most prominent in your memory about your visits to the dentist?
_____ a. The hovering dentist thrusting his tools into your mouth
_____ b. The sound of the drill
_____ c. The pain

7. Imagine you've just attended a rousing Broadway musical. What did you like best?
_____ a. The dancing, costumes, dazzling sets
_____ b. The singing, the orchestra, the music
_____ c. The exhilaration

8. The President is coming to your house to "get close to the people" and explain his policies. What would you most surely do?

- _____ a. Have your picture taken with the President
 - _____ b. Listen carefully to what he has to say
 - _____ c. Shake the President's hand or give him a hug
9. Imagine someone has just made a presentation for starting a new program in your church. The presenter was _____ an inspiring speaker and came prepared with handouts. You like the speaker's idea. What would you likely _____ say?
- _____ a. "It looks good to me."
 - _____ b. "It sounds good to me."
 - _____ c. "I feel good about this idea."
10. Imagine you're present during Jesus' ministry 2000 years ago. Which of the following _____ would you most _____ like to experience?
- _____ a. See him perform a miracle
 - _____ b. Hear him teach
 - _____ c. Feel him touch you or heal you

Count the number of "a" responses, "b" responses and "c" responses.

If you marked mostly "a" responses, you're probably visually oriented. You tend to learn best and remember more by what you see.

If you marked mostly "b" responses, you prefer auditory learning. Your ears may be your favorite information receivers. Sounds seem to stick in your memory.

If you marked mostly "c" responses, you may be most "in touch" with your sense of touch. You tend to remember more about what you touch or use with your hands.

This quiz may give you a little insight on how you view your world. There is no "wrong" way to learn and to communicate to others. Enjoy the input you have into making contributions to the world based on your view. God created your brain the way it is and desires you to use it. Others will enjoy your thoughts too!

(Taken from "Do It! Active Learning in Youth Ministry", Thom and Joani Schultz, Group Books, Loveland, Colorado, 1989.)

MY DEDICATION

Lord, I dedicate my eyes to You this day:

Psalm 101:3 "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."

Lord, I dedicate my mouth to You this day:

Psalm 141:3 "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the doors of my lips."

Lord, I dedicate my ears to You this day:

John 10:4 "When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them and they follow, because they know his voice."

Lord, I dedicate my hands to You this day:

Job 17:9 "People who are truly good would do the right thing and because they did
They would grow stronger and stronger."

Lord, I dedicate my feet to You this day:

Romans 10:15 "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace
And bring glad tidings of good things."

Lord, I dedicate my heart to You this day:

Psalm 141:1 "Incline not my heart to any evil thing...."
Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart O GOD; and renew a right spirit within me."

Lord, I dedicate my mind to you this day:

I Cor. 2:16 "...we have the mind of Christ."
Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O GOD and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts:
See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Be Free in Jesus' Name! Apply this as we commit our heart to God just for today and then tomorrow wake up and do it again. This is a day by day walk.