

The **BEST** Good News of All!

A Study for Children on the Gospel

by Jill Nelson



Truth:78

The Best Good News of All! A Study for Children on the Gospel

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About Truth78

The About Truth78 tab offers the following features:

- the vision, mission, and values that undergird this curriculum
- the theological and philosophical foundations of our teaching resources
- an explanation of our curricula scope and sequence
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Preface

What is the gospel? Why is it the best good news of all?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, (Titus 3:4-5a)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (Ephesians 1:7)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:3-4a)

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

The Best Good News of All!

Scope and Sequence

Grade Range: K-6

Intended Use: Multi-Age (13 Weeks)

The Best Good News of All! is a multi-age study for children on the gospel. The curriculum presents children with 10 essential biblical truths that define and communicate the essence, means, and goal of the gospel. Each truth is carefully introduced and explained within the redemptive narrative of Scripture so that children more fully see why the gospel is truly the best good news of all!

Lesson 1: The Best Good News of All!

Key Scriptures: Mark 2:1-5; Romans 6:23; Colossians 1:13-14

People need their sin forgiven in order to be truly happy. Jesus came to bring sinners the best good news of all—the gospel.

Memory Work: Romans 6:23

Lesson 2: The Gospel Begins with God

Key Scriptures: Romans 6:23; Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 44:24b; Psalm 24:1; Jeremiah 10:12; Jeremiah 10:10a; Psalm 22:28

The good news of the gospel begins with the one true God. God is eternal and is the Creator of all things. He is sovereign and rules over His creation in perfect wisdom and goodness. We belong to God and are to honor Him as our King.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 1: God is the sovereign Creator of all things.
What does this mean for you? God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.
- Jeremiah 10:10a

Lesson 3: Created for a Very Special Purpose

Key Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 86:9-13

God created people in a special way—in His image and likeness. We were created for a special purpose—to glorify God. We are to glorify God by knowing, trusting, and loving Him most of all. Living for God's glory is the only way to experience true happiness.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 2: God created people for His glory.
What does this mean for you? God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.
- Psalm 86:12

Lesson 4: God Requires His People to Be Holy and Righteous

Key Scriptures: Psalm 86:12; Psalm 16:11; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Romans 7:12; Deuteronomy 28:9

We were created so that we might experience the greatest joy of all—living in God's presence forever. God is holy and righteous, and we must be also. God requires that we perfectly keep His commands and walk in His ways always.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 3: God is holy and righteous.
What does this mean for you? You must obey God's commands all the time.
- 1 Peter 1:15

Lesson 5: All Have Sinned

Key Scriptures: Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17; Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 1:21; Romans 3:20, 23

God requires perfect obedience to His holy and righteous commands. Through Adam's sin, sin spread to all people. God's commands show us that we are sinners. It is impossible for sinners to be made right with God through our own obedience.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 4: Man is sinful.
What does this mean for you? You have disobeyed God's commands. You are a sinner.
- Romans 3:23

Lesson 6: The Worst Bad News of All: God's Righteous Judgment

Key Scriptures: Habakkuk 1:13a; Isaiah 45:19b; Psalm 9:7-8; Romans 6:23a; Ephesians 5:6b; 2 Thessalonians 1:9

God is holy and cannot look upon sin. God is a righteous judge and has decided that the punishment for sin is death and hell. Sinners are helpless to save themselves.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 5: God is just and is right to punish sin.
What does this mean for you? You deserve God's punishment of death and hell. You are helpless to save yourself.
- Romans 6:23a
- Ephesians 5:6b

Lesson 7: God Is Merciful to Sinners

Key Scriptures: 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Luke 18:10-14; Nehemiah 9:17b; Titus 3:4-5a

God shows His lovingkindness toward sinners. God made a way to forgive sinners. God's mercy is an undeserved gift. Sinners must depend on God's mercy in order to be saved.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 6: God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.
What does this mean for you? You must depend on God's mercy in order to be saved.
- Nehemiah 9:17b

Lesson 8: God Sent His Son into the World to Save Sinners

Key Scriptures: Nehemiah 9:17b; Hebrews 9:22b; Luke 1:35; Colossians 1:15, 19; Hebrews 2:17a; Hebrews 4:15b; John 3:17

God made a way for sinners to be forgiven. God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 7: God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.
What does this mean for you? Jesus came into the world to save you.
- John 3:17

Lesson 9: Jesus Died in Place of God's Sinful People

Key Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:24a; Isaiah 53:5; Ephesians 1:7a; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 5:8

All people are guilty before God and deserve His just punishment. Jesus died as a perfect sacrifice for sin in order to satisfy the justice of God. In Jesus, God's people are completely forgiven and are given His righteousness. Salvation is in Jesus alone!

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 8: God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus so that His righteousness might be put on them.
What does this mean for you? Jesus died on the cross to be punished in your place.
- Romans 5:8

Lesson 10: Jesus Calls You to Repent and Believe in the Gospel

Key Scriptures: Romans 6:23; Mark 1:15; Luke 15:14-20; 2 Corinthians 7:10a; John 20:31; Ephesians 2:8-9

The gospel is the good news that there is salvation in Jesus. Salvation is a free gift of God and must be received by faith. True saving faith involves repentance of sin and believing in Jesus for who He is, what He has done, and all He has promised to do.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 9: God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.
What does this mean for you? God tells you to believe in Jesus and repent of your sins and you will be saved.
- Mark 1:15b

Lesson 11: Following Jesus

Key Scriptures: Ephesians 4:15b, 24; Matthew 16:24; Ephesians 5:1; John 14:15; Colossians 1:10a; 1 John 2:25

Those who believe in Jesus are to grow up and mature into His likeness. God has given Christians His Word and the Holy Spirit to guide, help, and empower them to grow in maturity. God has promised that everyone who trusts in and follows Jesus will inherit eternal life.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 10: Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life.
What does this mean for you? If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, you must follow Him. Jesus has promised that, when you die, He will bring you to heaven.
- Matthew 16:24b
- Colossians 1:10b

Lesson 12: An Inheritance Like No Other

Key Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:3-4a; Revelation 21:1-3; Psalm 16:11

God has promised a priceless, eternal inheritance for all who are trusting in Jesus. Enjoying the presence of God forever is the greatest treasure a person can ever receive.

Memory Work (Choose one of the following.)

- Review of Gospel Truths 1-10
- Psalm 16:11

Lesson 13: Where Is Your Treasure?

Key Scriptures: Matthew 19:16-22; Matthew 6:21; Philippians 3:8

What we treasure shows what we truly love. God is the greatest treasure and worthy of our greatest love. True, lasting happiness is found in loving Jesus most of all.

Memory Work: Philippians 3:8

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Introduction

Curriculum Overview

What is the gospel? Why is it necessary? How must we respond? These are, by far, the most crucial questions we need to answer for our children. Their everlasting joy or everlasting misery is at stake. Therefore, we must approach this question with an utter sense of urgency and seriousness. Our answer must be thoroughly grounded in the truths of Scripture—noting key doctrines that are absolutely essential for understanding the essence, means, and goal of the gospel—conveyed in a manner understandable to children.

Paul's words to Timothy serve as a clear call and mandate for us.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Toward that end, this curriculum has been written to acquaint children with the essential truths of Scripture that provide a succinct yet comprehensive summary of the gospel that, Lord willing, will guide and implore children to set their full confidence in Jesus for salvation.

Intended Use

The lesson content and presentation is appropriate for kindergarten through sixth grade, making it ideal for teaching in a multi-age classroom. It can also be easily adapted for a more limited age range.

Lesson Order

The lessons have been intentionally structured to systematically and progressively reveal 10 essential truths that summarize the gospel. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that each lesson is necessary for understanding the whole. Each new lesson will briefly review the essential truths presented in previous lessons. Here is an overview of the lessons and the corresponding essential truth that will be taught:

- Lesson 1—An introduction to the necessity of the gospel
- Lesson 2—Gospel Truth 1: God is the sovereign Creator of all things.
- Lesson 3—Gospel Truth 2: God created people for His glory.
- Lesson 4—Gospel Truth 3: God is holy and righteous.
- Lesson 5—Gospel Truth 4: Man is sinful.
- Lesson 6—Gospel Truth 5: God is just and is right to punish sin.
- Lesson 7—Gospel Truth 6: God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.
- Lesson 8—Gospel Truth 7: God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.
- Lesson 9—Gospel Truth 8: God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus so that His righteousness might be put on them.
- Lesson 10—Gospel Truth 9: God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.
- Lessons 11-12—Gospel Truth 10: Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life—enjoying God forever in heaven.
- Lesson 13—Review of gospel truths 1-10 and a call to respond

Lesson Structure

Each lesson includes two main elements:

- **Large Group Lesson**—Biblical teaching that instructs the mind and guides students to interact with the Word of God (**20-30 minutes**). The lessons have been written using the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible.
- **Small Group Application**—Spiritual discussion that engages the students' hearts, encouraging and guiding them to rightly respond to the biblical truths that have been taught (**10-20 minutes**). This is best done with one adult leading a group of no more than six children.

Depending on the time you have available and the age of your students, the time allotted for each can be adjusted. However, the Large Group Lesson should be prioritized if time is limited.

The Role of the Bible in the Classroom

Because one of the goals of this curriculum is to encourage and help students to see the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, it is of the utmost importance that all teaching flows logically and visibly from the Word. Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 should be our goal, too:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Always use your Bible to look up the passages (unless otherwise noted), and teach with an open Bible before you. Our desire is to constantly point the students to the Scriptures. It is important to demonstrate that the source of truth is in the Word of God. By teaching from an open Bible, we want to repeatedly communicate that God, not the teacher, is the source of truth.

Since the Bible is an essential component of the lesson, students should bring their own Bibles to class. They will need to look up the given Scriptures, participate in reading the texts out loud, and answer questions based on the texts. The English Standard Version (ESV) is used because it is accurate and easily understood. This is the version we recommend for the students and teachers. (In order to play Key Verse Games, children need to memorize the same version of the verse.) Note that there are a few instances where we have quoted the 1984 New International Version (NIV) for reasons of readability. For those instances, we have provided the text of the verses since that Bible might not be easily available.

Component Overview

Along with the Large Group Lesson and Small Group Application elements included in each lesson of the **Teacher's Guide**, three other components are provided for this study.

- **Visuals Packet**—Various printed/printable visual elements for each lesson. Please be sure to save the indicated visuals that will be used in future lessons.
- **Activity/Parent Pages**—Activity pages to be sent home with the students after each lesson.
- **The Greatest Treasure!**—One full-color mini-booklet summarizing the 10 essential gospel truths presented during the study. It is recommended that each student be given a copy at the end of the study. (Additional copies can be purchased at Truth78.org.)

Guidance for Teaching the Large Group Lesson

- Carefully review the entire lesson. Prayerfully focus on the main ideas and the Scriptures that will be presented.
- Mark your Bible (e.g., use bookmarks) in order to be ready to read directly from the text noted in the lesson.
- If possible, review the lesson that was taught the previous week.
- Gather all the materials listed in Curriculum Resources and Other Supplies sections on the first page of the lesson.
- Formatting cues are used to help guide the teacher through the lesson material.
 - **Visual Thumbnails**—Located in the left margin to give teachers a quick reference to what should be displayed at certain points in the lesson.
 - **Font Style**—Sentences in *italics* recommend specific wording of the concept or illustration. Scripture portions are in ***bold italics***.
 - **Bullets**—Indicate main points and concepts to highlight in your own words.
 - **Parenthetical () Instructions**—Provide additional instructions and other helpful information for teachers regarding student engagement, activities, illustrations, etc. Read these carefully during your lesson preparation. The information will help you think through how to most effectively teach the concepts presented.
 - **?**—The question mark symbol indicates specific questions to ask the students. These questions are designed to encourage them to actively engage with the material by making observations, drawing conclusions, making personal application, etc. Be careful to set limits on the time taken in doing this.

For more in-depth help on how to teach a lesson print out the free PDF “Core Training Series: Preparing and Teaching a Lesson” found at Truth78.org.

Additional Tips for Teaching Multi-Age Classes

- As you prepare your lesson, look for specific opportunities to involve different ages throughout the lesson (e.g., call on younger children to help with an illustration or hold a visual; have older children read verses or participate in more difficult illustrations from the lesson).
- Be ready to define terms in more than one way—both simple and more complex.
- At times, address different ages, and ask specific questions: “Fifth- and sixth-graders, what problem is Jesus pointing out in these verses?”
- If necessary, tweak lesson illustrations to make them more applicable to differing ages.
- Write out key words on a whiteboard or posterboard. Use different colored markers.
- Use a visually appealing box or gift bag to store visuals that will be used during the lesson.
- Consider using some interactive ways to highlight a key verse from the lesson (e.g., “Build-a-Verse” is an activity found in several lessons).

Guidance for Leading Small Group Application

- In preparation, carefully review the entire Large Group Lesson, focusing on the main themes and Scripture that will be presented.
- Next, prayerfully review the suggested application discussion sections. You are not expected to cover every possible application point listed. These are meant to serve as a guide in directing spiritual conversions. You may only

have time to cover one or two of these. Focus your preparation time on those you believe are more applicable to the children in your group.

- Keep in mind that the goal of this time should be aimed at encouraging a right heart response to what has been taught.
- If extra time is available, consider helping your students complete the Activity portion of the Parent Page provided with each lesson.
- End your time together in prayer.

For more in-depth help on how to lead a small group application discussion print out the free PDF “Core Training Series: Leading Small Group Application” found at [Truth78.org](https://truth78.org).

The Best Good News of All!

Main Ideas

- People need their sin forgiven in order to be truly happy.
- Jesus came to bring sinners the best good news of all—the gospel.

Memory Work

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)*

Scripture

- Mark 2:1-5
- Romans 6:23
- Colossians 1:13-14

Curriculum Resources

Note: Bolded visuals in this list are those that are available for electronic display. Most visuals in this curriculum need to be cut out, assembled, etc., and are therefore not available for electronic display.

- Cut out as indicated:¹
 - Bad News 1-4 (1A-1D)
 - Good News 1-4 (1E-1H, place in the gift bag)
 - Words 1-5 (1I-1M)
- **Paralytic 1-2 (1N-1O)**
- A Note to Parents (for each student)
- Parent Page for Lesson 1 (for each student)

Other Supplies

Note: For every lesson, you will need a Bible, preferably English Standard Version, and the students should have their own Bibles.

- Whiteboard and markers
- Tape
- Small gift bag

Large Group Lesson

Bad News 1-4
visuals, tape,
whiteboard

(Begin the lesson by telling the students that you have some scenarios to describe. Quickly, without comment, read the **Bad News 1-4** visuals. **Tape** each visual to the **whiteboard** to create a vertical list.

(Display the **Bad News 1** visual.)

While painting the living room wall, your dad accidentally knocks over the paint can on the floor.

¹ You may want to practice the illustration with the Good News and Bad News visuals and whiteboard before class to make sure that you allow enough space for everything.

Bad News 2-4
visuals, tape,
whiteboard and
markers

(Display the **Bad News 2** visual.)

You wake up in the morning with a sore throat and fever.

(Display the **Bad News 3** visual.)

You lose an expensive library book.

(Display the **Bad News 4** visual.)

Your bike is stolen.

? *If you had to give a general description of these situations, what would you call them? (Allow the students to respond.) An easy description might be to call each scenario “bad news.”*

Good News 1-4
visuals in the gift
bag

Of all these scenarios, which would you rank as the “worst” bad news? Why?

(Write “Bad News” above the column of visuals on the **whiteboard**. Next, quickly choose four students to remove a **Good News** visual from the **gift bag**. Read each in random order. After each visual is read, call on the class to quickly determine which Good News best matches each Bad News scenario. **Tape** each **Good News** visual to the right of its corresponding **Bad News** visual.)

(Have a student remove the **Good News 1** visual from the **gift bag**.)

The floor was covered by a plastic tarp.

(Have a student remove the **Good News 2** visual.)

The doctor gives you medicine that heals your body.

(Have a student remove the **Good News 3** visual.)

Your brother finds the book under your bed.

(Have a student remove the **Good News 4** visual.)

Your parents surprise you with a new bike.

(Write “Good News” above this column of cards on the **whiteboard**.)

Why would each of these be considered “good news”? [Each solved a problem and brought a happy ending to a bad news scenario.] Which news would you judge as the “best” good news? Why?

(Explain that, in the Bible, there is a true story that relates to this kind of bad news/good news scenario. It happened in a town called Capernaum. Read Mark 2:1-3 to the students.)

Mark 2:1-3—And when [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

? *First of all, did you notice any bad news in these verses? (Allow the students to respond.)*

? *What is a paralytic? [someone who cannot walk because his legs do not work as they should] Why would that be bad news? What kinds of problems might this man have? What kind of things wouldn't he be able to do? (Allow the students to respond.)*

So this paralytic was being carried by four men to the house where Jesus was. What “good news” do you think they were hoping for? What problem did they think Jesus could solve?

- Before Jesus arrived at Capernaum, the Bible tells us that He had been teaching with authority and healing many people who suffered from all kinds of problems. His fame had spread throughout the area.
- The paralytic and his friends believed Jesus could heal his legs and make him able to walk again.
- When the friends came to the house there was more *bad news*. The house was already full of people. They couldn't get in. But his friends had a way to solve that problem...some good news.



(Display the **Paralytic 1-2** visuals as you continue, reading verses 4-5a.)

Mark 2:4-5a—And when they could not get near [Jesus] because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic...

“Your legs are healed. Get up and walk?” Is that the good news Jesus gave to this man? Let’s find out exactly what Jesus said.

Build-a-Verse Activity²

(Choose five students to come to the front and have them stand in a line facing the class. Hand each a **Word** visual—given in card-number order 1-5—to display. Explain that these words, when placed in the correct order, will tell us what Jesus actually said to the paralytic. Have the other students turn to **Mark 2:5** in their **Bibles**. Then, give a signal to begin and have the class verbally instruct the Word card holders to align themselves in the correct (verse) order. Read verse 5a again and have the class read 5b, now displayed on the Word cards.)

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

? *What just happened here? Is this the good news this man and his friends were hoping for? Did this news solve the problem of being a paralytic? Why would Jesus tell him this? (Allow the students to respond.)*

- Jesus knew that this man had a much worse problem than not being able to walk.
- The man had a sin problem that was much more important than his other problems.

(Remove the four **Bad News** visuals from the **whiteboard** and **tape** the “sins” **Word** visual beneath “Bad News” on the whiteboard.)

- Jesus knew that the good news this man needed—news that would solve and bring a happy ending to the bad news—was for his sins to be forgiven.
- This is the “best good news” of all.

(Remove the four **Good News** visuals from the **whiteboard** and **tape** the “forgiven” **Word** visual beneath “Good News” on the whiteboard.)

Why is this the best good news—better news than being able to walk again?

Words 1-5 visuals,
Bibles for the
students, tape,
whiteboard

² The Build-a-Verse activity will appear in several lessons throughout the study. For a multi-age class, it is meant to encourage the participation of both readers and pre-readers alike. When possible, choose pre-readers to display the Word cards and have older students look up the text in their Bibles and verbally direct the Word visual holders to assemble in the correct order.

(Have the students listen carefully as you read the following verses.)

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Colossians 1:13-14—He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

These verses summarize the best good news of all because they answer questions like: Who does the good news come from? How was forgiveness accomplished? How is forgiveness received? What are the promises that the good news brings?

? *In the Bible, there is a special word that is sometimes used to describe this “good news”—the best good news of all. It’s a six-letter word. What is it? [gospel]*

(Make the following points in summary.)

- After Jesus forgave the paralytic’s sins, Jesus also said to him “... rise, pick up your bed, and go home” (verse 11), and the man was healed. He could walk!
- His physical healing, while good news, could not bring the kind of happy ending he—and all of us—desperately need. He needed the best good news of all—the gospel!
- In the coming lessons, we are going on a type of journey through the Bible in order to discover more about the gospel and why it is the best good news ever given to the world!

.....

Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Everyone needs the best good news of all.**

Point out that everyone experiences “bad news” to one degree or another. Ask the students to recall some disappointing “bad news” they have experienced in the past week. Why did they consider this bad news? Did any good news come along to solve the bad news? Now read Romans 6:23a. Ask: *How is this truth the worst kind of news of all? Is this true for just some people? (See Romans 3:23.) What does this show you about yourself? What good news do you need most of all?* Read and talk about Romans 6:23b.

- **Jesus came to bring the good news of the gospel.**

Point out that many people merely see Jesus as a good teacher or a nice “role model”—someone to look up to. Some people simply look to Jesus hoping that He will solve some problem they have (e.g., getting a better job, healing sickness, passing a hard math test, etc.). Ask: *Can Jesus help a person with all those things? But are any of those things the MOST important kind of help we need? Why not?* Review and talk about Romans 6:23 or Colossians 1:13-14. *What “bad news” is found in each verse? What is the “good news”? Have you experienced forgiveness of sin? What would this look like in a person’s life? What would show that a person has been “transferred” from darkness into the Kingdom of Jesus?*

- **Jesus has the authority to forgive sin.**

Read or summarize Mark 2:6-12. Ask: *When Jesus healed the paralytic, what was He proving to be true about Himself? Why is this important? Can you think of other ways that Jesus proved that He was truly God? Are you looking to Jesus to forgive your sin? Do you believe He alone is truly able and willing to forgive you? How will this be shown in a person's life?*

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Send Home

- A Note to Parents (for each student)
- Parent Page for Lesson 1 (for each student)

The Gospel Begins with God

Main Ideas

- The good news of the gospel begins with the one true God.
- God is eternal and is the Creator of all things.
- God is sovereign: He rules over His creation in perfect wisdom and goodness.
- We belong to God and are to honor Him as our King.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 1: God is the sovereign Creator of all things.

What does this mean for you? God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.
- *But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. (Jeremiah 10:10a)*

Scripture

- Romans 6:23
- Genesis 1:1
- Isaiah 44:24b
- Psalm 24:1
- Jeremiah 10:12
- Jeremiah 10:10a
- Psalm 22:28

Curriculum Resources

- Cut out as indicated:
 - God and Words 1-5 (2A-2F)
 - Verses 1-5 (2G-2K)
- **Creation 1-5 (2L-2P)**
- **Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)**
- Parent Page for Lesson 2 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Children's fictional storybook (one that the students might be less familiar with)
- See Preparation:
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard (or whiteboard)
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Tape

Preparation

- **Posterboard for Lesson 2**—Write the text as shown on the posterboard or whiteboard. Use the corresponding **Word** visuals to draw blank lines designating where each will be placed during the lesson. When the poster is completed during the lesson, the vertical letters (in bold) will spell "Gospel." Note: The concepts on this poster will be reviewed in future lessons, so using and saving the posterboard is preferred. If this is not possible, use a whiteboard. An optional review visual will be available for future lessons.

In the beginning... **God**.

He is the **Creator** of all things.

God **owns** all things.

God is **powerful**, wise, and good.

God is the **everlasting** King.

God **rules**—He is sovereign over all.

Large Group Lesson

Storybook, Bible

(Quickly show the **storybook** and do the following.)

- ?** *Suppose I were to read this book to you. Should I start reading at the middle of the book? What about the end?*

(Open the **storybook** to the last page and read a couple of sentences.)

- The end of the story will not make sense unless you know what comes before it. The ending needs “context”—seeing how it fits into the entire story, from beginning to end.
- In our last lesson, we learned that the gospel is the best good news ever given to the world. In a way, the message of the gospel can be seen as a type of story with a beginning, an end, and everything in between.

(Hold up a **Bible**.)

- The story of the gospel is found in God’s Word, the Bible.
- God’s Word is absolutely true—every word of it. (Proverbs 30:5)
- The Bible tells us everything we need to know about the gospel and why it is the best good news of all.

(Open your **Bible** and quickly read Romans 6:23 to the class.)

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ?** *We read this verse in our first lesson. We could say that it summarizes the gospel, the best good news of all. But in order to fully understand why it is the best good news of all, we need to see how it fits into the entire story of the Bible. After all, what exactly is sin and death? Who is God? What is eternal life? Who is Jesus?*

- ?** *So where would be a good place to start? Yes, at the very beginning of the Bible.*

(Ask the students if they can recite from memory the very first verse of the Bible. Have them turn to Genesis 1 in their Bibles.)

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

- The first four words of this verse (“In the beginning, God”) emphasize that the gospel story begins with a *main character*—God Himself.
- If we are to rightly understand why the gospel is the best good news of all we must begin by understanding some very important truths about who God is and what He is like.

Posterboard for Lesson 2, God visual, and tape

(Display the **Posterboard for Lesson 2** prepared before class. Tape the **God** visual on the first blank line.)

In the beginning ... **God**.

He is the _____ of all things.

God _____ all things.

God is _____, wise, and good.

God is the _____ King.

God _____—He is sovereign over all.

Verse 1-5 visuals, Word 1-5 visuals

(Explain that the class is going to, as quickly as possible, help you complete the missing words. Hand out the **Verse** visuals to five older children. When called upon, each will read the verse on the visual. Hand out the numbered **Word** visuals to five other older children.¹ When called upon, each child will bring the correct **Word** to be taped in place on the posterboard. Proceed in the following order.)

Verse 1

... ***“I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,” (Isaiah 44:24b)***

? *According to this verse, who alone made all things? [the LORD] When you look at the explanation of God creating the world in Genesis 1, how did God go about it? Did He look around for ingredients? [No, God said, “Let there be . . .”] God spoke creation into existence! What “title” belongs to God for being the maker of all things?*

(Call up the student with the **Word 1** visual to **tape** “Creator” to the **posterboard** on the correct line.)

Verse 2

The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, (Psalm 24:1)

? *According to this verse, who does creation belong to? [God] Just some of creation? No, the “fullness thereof” means all creation belongs to God. He made everything, and everything belongs to Him. What’s a word that means something belongs to someone?*

(Call the student with the **Word 2** visual to **tape** “owns” to the **posterboard** on the correct line.)

¹ If necessary, you could read one or more of verses yourself.



Word 3-5 visuals,
tape, Posterboard
for Lesson 2

Verse 3

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12)

(Display the **Creation 1-5** visuals.)

- ? *When you look at the millions upon millions of things that God created—things of all kinds of shapes, sizes, and colors—God is showing us what kind of Creator He is. For example, look at this huge, rocky mountain. Is God a weak Creator? No, the verse tells us that God is a powerful Creator. He made everything by His power and wisdom—He knew just the right way to make the world, and everything He made shows how good God is.*

(Call up the student with the **Word 3** visual to **tape** “powerful” on the **Posterboard for Lesson 2** on the appropriate line.)

Verse 4

But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. (Jeremiah 10:10a)

- ? *How is the LORD God described here? [true God, living God, everlasting King] The God of the Bible is the one and only God. What does it mean that God is everlasting? [eternal, God has always been alive and will always be alive]*

(Call up the student with the **Word 4** visual to **tape** “everlasting” on the **Posterboard for Lesson 2** on the correct line.)

- ? *This verse also tells us that God is the everlasting King. What does it mean that God is King? What kind of job is that? (Allow a few responses.)*

Verse 5

For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:28)

God is King over all creation. God rules over everything that exists, including all people. God has the final say. He is the highest authority. What God says “goes.” He has absolute control over everything and everyone. Everything in the universe goes according to His perfect plans. That is what it means that God is “sovereign.”

(Call up the student with the **Word 5** visual to **tape** “rules” on the **Posterboard for Lesson 2** on the last line. Recite the six completed statements together. Have the students notice that “Gospel” is now visible, vertically, on the posterboard/whiteboard.)

In the beginning... **G**od.

He is the **C**reator of all things.

God **o**wns all things.

God is **p**owerful, wise, and good.

God is the **e**verlasting King.

God **r**ules—He is sovereign over all.

- The story of the best good news of all begins with God—knowing important truths about who He is, what He is like, and what He has done in creating all things.
- ❓ *Why is this important for everyone to know? Why is it important for YOU to know and understand? Who created you? Who owns you? Who should you recognize and honor as your King, your Ruler? How should this change how you live?* (Encourage a few responses.)



(Display the **Gospel Poster 1** visual and make the following points in summary.)

- The first stop in our gospel story journey is to know and understand what it means that **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
- This statement begins to reveal the truth about why the gospel is the best good news of all.
- Because this statement is the truth, it has special meaning for every person in the world—including you. **God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.**

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Everything has its beginning with the one true God.**

Review Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 44:24b. Emphasize that, apart from God, nothing would exist. He is the source and starting point of everything else. *Why is this important to know? Who is the “main character” of the Bible? Who gets to decide how the “gospel story” begins, ends, and what happens in between? What would be the right way to respond to the one true God?* [e.g., Psalm 95:1-6] *What is one way you could honor God this week?*

- **God is an all-powerful, wise, and good Creator.**

Present several categories to the students and give them approximately 10 seconds to call out specific things God created within those categories. For example: giant things, animals, plants, tiny things, blue-colored things, beautiful things, good tasting things, things in the sky, etc. After you finish, talk about the amazing diversity of God’s creation. *What does this show us about who God is and what He is like? What would be a right way to respond to Him?* [e.g., Psalm 66:1-3]

- **God is the everlasting King.**

Review Jeremiah 10:10a. Ask: *Why is it good news that God is the everlasting King? Do we ever need to worry that God will grow old, lose His power, or be overthrown by another king?* Read and talk about one or more of the following:

- **2 Chronicles 20:6b—You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.**
- **Isaiah 26:4—Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD God is an everlasting rock.**
- **Isaiah 40:28b—The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary...**
- **Psalm 103:17a—But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him...**

Is there a situation in your life where these verses can help you?

- **God owns us and rules over us.**

Have the students note something special that belongs to them. Point out that ownership of something involves having a level of authority over it—“ruling” over it. Give them an example of this (e.g., their parents “own” a car and therefore they have the authority to decide when and how it is used). Now review and talk about God’s ownership over His creation from Psalm 24:1 and Psalm 22:28. *What does this mean for you? Do you treat God with great honor and respect? Do you gladly submit to His Kingly authority? For example, when Jesus says “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15), is this just a suggestion? Is it something you can just ignore? Why not?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 2 (for each student)

Created for a Very Special Purpose

Main Ideas

- God created people in a special way—in His image and likeness.
- We were created for a special purpose—to glorify God.
- We are to glorify God by knowing, trusting, and loving Him most of all.
- Living for God’s glory is the only way to experience true happiness.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 2: God created people for His glory.

What does this mean for you? God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.

- *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*
(Psalm 86:12)

Scripture

- Genesis 1:26-27
- Psalm 86:9-13

Curriculum Resources

- Cut out the following pieces:
 - God (3A)
 - Mind (3B)
 - Heart (3C)
 - Will (3D)
- YFIROLG (3E)
- Know, Love, Trust God (3F, cut out)
- **Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)**
- **Gospel Poster 2 (3G)**
- **Lesson 2 Review (3H, if not using the completed Posterboard for Lesson 2)**
- Parent Page for Lesson 3 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- See Preparation
 - 4 items made in the likeness of real things (e.g., toy car, plastic fruit, small doll, stuffed animal, etc.)
 - 4 gift bags
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard (or whiteboard, see Preparation)
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Tape
- Glue
- Hand mirror (see Preparation)
- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 2 (or the Lesson 2 Review)

Preparation

- **Gift Bags**—Place each of the four items made in the likeness of real things into one of the four gift bags.
- **Posterboard for Lesson 3**—Use the posterboard or whiteboard (landscape orientation) and markers to write the following, leaving about six inches of vertical space between the two-word segments.

Created in a special way → In God's _____ and _____

Created for a special _____ → To _____ God!

Note: The concepts on this poster will be reviewed in future lessons, so using and saving the posterboard is preferred. If this is not possible, use a whiteboard. An optional review visual will be available for future lessons.

- **Mirror**—This mirror will be used in several future lessons and ideally should be at least 8" x 8" in size. A second mirror will be used in Lesson 5. If possible, both mirrors should be the same or very similar in size and shape. These can be purchased very inexpensively at dollar or discount stores.

Large Group Lesson

4 Gift bags with an item inside each

(Choose four students to come to the front and hand each a **gift bag**. Instruct them to remove the **item** from the bag and show the class. Point out that the four items have something special in common. See if they can quickly guess what it is. [Each item has been made in the *likeness* of something else. Although each item is not the *real thing*, each was designed to be like a real version of the thing.]) (Have the students return to their seats.)

Posterboard for Lesson 2 or Lesson 2 Review sheet

(Display the **Posterboard for Lesson 2** or the **Lesson 2 Review** sheet)

In the beginning . . . God.
He is the Creator of all things.
God owns all things.
God is powerful, wise, and good.
God is the everlasting King.
God rules—He is sovereign over all.

In the beginning . . . **G**od.

He is the **C**reator of all things.

God **o**wns all things.

God is **p**owerful, wise, and good.

God is the **e**verlasting King.

God **r**ules—He is sovereign over all.

- These truths were presented in the previous lesson.
- These truths are the beginning of our gospel journey—the starting point for understanding the best good news of all.

One of these truths is that God, and God alone, is the Creator of all things. But it's really important to know that not all things are created equal. There is something that God created to be different from everything else in His creation, something He created in the "likeness" of something else.

(Have students turn to Genesis 1:26-27 in their **Bibles**.)

Genesis 1:26—Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:27—So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

? *In what special way are a man and a woman different from everything else God created? [they were created in God’s image and likeness] What does it mean to be created in God’s “image” and after God’s “likeness”? Let’s find out.*

One of the items from the gift bags

(Quickly display **one of the items from the gift bags** again.)

- Although it’s not the *real thing*, it was specially designed to reflect and show what a real [item] is like in certain ways.
- This simple example can help us understand what it means that people—male and female, boys and girls—have been created in a very special way. God created us in His image and likeness.

Posterboard for Lesson 3 and markers

(Display the **Posterboard for Lesson 3** and write “image” and “likeness” on the appropriate lines.)

Created in a special way → In God’s image and likeness

Created for a special _____ → To _____ God!

Even though we are NOT God, He created us to share certain characteristics or qualities that He has.

- God created us with *minds* like God’s own mind in certain ways. We can think about and understand things, solve problems, and more.
- God created us with *hearts* that are to be like God’s own heart in certain ways. We are able to feel and express special desires and emotions.
- God created us with *wills* like God’s own will in certain ways. We have the ability to make choices and decisions about how and what we say and do.

Tape, and Mind, Heart, and Will visuals

(**Tape** the **Mind, Heart, and Will** visuals below Created in a special way → In God’s image and likeness on the **Posterboard for Lesson 3**.)

Why did God choose to create people in this very special way? Why did He create people to be different from the rest of creation—different from stars, mountains, lakes, plants, and all kinds of animals? God created us in a special way because He has a very special purpose for His image bearers.

(Write “purpose” on the blank line after “Created for a special _____.”)

What is this special purpose? Let’s look in the Bible to find out.

Bibles for the students

(Have the students turn to Psalm 86:9-13 in their **Bibles**. Explain that these verses tell us more about our special purpose—what we were created to do. Have the students follow along as you read the text. Pause at the underlined words and have them speak the missing word aloud. Instruct them to be on the lookout especially for words that describe special kinds of thoughts, feelings, choices, and actions.)

Psalm 86:9-13—All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. ¹⁰For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. ¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to

fear your name. ¹²I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. ¹³For great is your steadfast love toward me;

- ❓ *Who is the psalmist speaking to in these verses? [God, the Lord]*
- ❓ *What does he know and recognize about God? [God is great; He has done wonderful things; He is the one true God; He is great in love; etc.]*
- ❓ *What kind of feelings are in his heart toward God? [worship (adoration); love; thankfulness; etc.]*
- ❓ *What kind of decisions and actions does the psalmist want to take? [walk in God's truth; glorify God's name; etc.]*

So, after reading these verses...

- ❓ *Were we created in a special way so that we could boast about how great we are? [no]*
- ❓ *Were we created in a special way so that we would love to play sports most of all? [no]*
- ❓ *Were we created in a special way so that we would choose to do things our own way? [no]*

There is a special seven-letter word that the Bible uses to summarize our special purpose. It's found twice in the verses we read. What is it?

YFIROLG visual,
hand mirror,
markers,
Posterboard for
Lesson 3, tape,
God visual, and
Know, Love, Trust
God visual

(Hand the **YFIROLG** visual to a student and ask the class to guess the word. Next, take the **hand mirror** and position it so that "GLORIFY" is now visible.)

We were created in a special way so that we would glorify God.

(Write "glorify" on the **Posterboard for Lesson 3** on the final blank line. Below this, **tape** the **God** visual. Next, tape the **Know, Love, Trust God** visual below the words "special purpose" and make the following points.)

To glorify God means to...

- Know and honor Him as your Creator, Ruler, and everlasting King.
- It means to love, treasure, and enjoy Him more than anything else.
- It means to trust Him and walk in His ways—obeying Him.
- Living for this purpose is the only way to be truly happy.

(The **Posterboard for Lesson 3** will now look as follows.)



(Display and recite the following from **Gospel Posters 1 and 2.**)

The gospel journey begins with knowing and understanding...

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.
2. **God created people for His glory.**
God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.



(Conclude by praying that the students would fulfill God's purpose for them—that they would know, trust, and love Him most of all.)

Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Created in God's image and likeness**

Recall the objects in the gift bags. In what ways are they like the *real thing*? In what ways are they different? Review Genesis 1:26-27. Ask: *In what ways are we like God? How are we different from God? Why is this important to remember? How are we different from other created things?* For example, display a Bible and ask questions such as: *Can an animal read the Bible? Could an animal read the verses from Psalm 86 and respond to God in the ways the psalmist describes? What are some special privileges we enjoy being God's image bearers? What is a way you could praise and thank God as His image bearer this week?*

- **Created for a special purpose**

Ask: *Why does God get to decide how people are created, either as male or female—a boy or a girl? Why does God get to decide our special purpose?* Recall that God is the sovereign Creator of all things (Gospel Truth 1). God owns all things and rules over all things, including people. Ask: *Do you think most people honor God as their Creator and live in a way that shows they know, honor, love, enjoy, trust, and obey God? What is evidence that people often do not live this way? Will living apart from God's design and purpose bring lasting happiness? Why not?*

- **Living according to God’s purpose for us**

Have the children think of a car for a moment. Discuss a few ways in which a car is uniquely designed to fulfill a special purpose. Ask: *What if someone bought a new car, parked it in their driveway, and used it as a place to store extra clothing—using the car as a closet. Would that work? But would that be using the car in the right way? What would you think if someone actually did this?* Point out that *not* living for the purpose God intended for His image bearers is even more foolish!

- **Created to glorify God**

Review Psalm 86:9-13 and have the children notice the action words—things that describe how we are to think, feel, and act toward God. Ask: *Can you give some examples of what these action words might look like in someone’s life? Does the psalmist say why it is right and good to act this way toward God? What does he recognize about who God is and what He has done? Do you recognize these things to be true of God? If so, how should this change how you live?* (Also recall that the visual on the poster shows a “God crown” within the heart. Glorifying God involves loving and treasuring Him as your Ruler and King.)

- **Created to glorify God and enjoy Him**

Read and talk about several of the following verses. What is the common theme in each—what does the psalmist find to be true in knowing, loving, and trusting in God? See: Psalm 5:11; 13:5; 33:21; 35:27; 65:4; 90:14; and 92:4. Ask: *Can this kind of happiness be found anywhere else? Why not? Can you give an example of something that has “let you down”? Why is God the only source of all-satisfying, never-let-you-down joy?*

- **Glorifying God by boasting in God**

Give the children a few examples of how people boast about themselves (e.g., sports, music, or other competitions; bragging about something you have; etc.). Ask: *Is this the special purpose we were created for? Why not?* Read and talk about Acts 17:25; Jeremiah 23:23-24; and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Talk about ways that you could boast in and glorify God when winning a competition, getting something new, or even in enjoying a special treat to eat.

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 3 (for each student)

God Requires His People to Be Holy and Righteous

Main Ideas

- We were created so that we might experience the greatest joy of all—living in God’s presence forever.
- God is holy and righteous, and we must be also.
- God requires that we perfectly keep His commands and walk in His ways always.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 3: God is holy and righteous.
What does this mean for you? You must obey God’s commands all the time.
- *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (1 Peter 1:15)*

Scripture

- Psalm 86:12
- Psalm 16:11
- 1 Peter 1:15-16
- Romans 7:12
- Deuteronomy 28:9

Curriculum Resources

- Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)
- Gospel Poster 2 (3G)
- Gospel Poster 3 (4A)
- See Preparation:
 - God (4B)
 - Glorify Forever (4C)
 - Psalm 16:11 (4D)
- Words 1-6 (4E-4J, cut out)
- YFIROLG (3E)
- **Lesson 3 Review (4K, if not using the completed Posterboard for Lesson 3)**
- Parent Page for Lesson 4 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 3 (or use Lesson 3 Review)
- Special glass object (e.g., clear crystal vase, drinking glass, etc.)
- Hand mirror (from Lesson 3)
- Large whiteboard and markers
- Length of ribbon (needed if a large whiteboard isn’t available)
- Tape
- Glue

Preparation

- **Glorify God Forever**—Cut out the **God** heart and glue it onto the **Glorify Forever** visual along the indicated lines, leaving the top part open in order to form a pocket. Cut out the **Psalm 16:11** card and put it within this pocket.

Large Group Lesson

Gospel Posters
1-2, tape,
whiteboard or wall

(Tape the **Gospel Posters 1 and 2** side by side to the left-hand edge of the **whiteboard or a wall**. Remind the students that we are going on a type of journey in order to learn about the best good news of all—the gospel.)

The gospel journey begins with knowing and understanding...

(Have the students recite with you the following.)

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.
God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.**
2. **God created people for His glory.
God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.**

Posterboard
for Lesson 3 or
Lesson 3 Review
sheet

(Display the **Posterboard for Lesson 3** or the **Lesson 3 Review** visual and briefly make the following points.)

- God created us in a very special way so that we could experience a very special relationship with Him.
- We were created to glorify God by ...
 - knowing and honoring Him as our Creator, ruler, and everlasting King,
 - loving and enjoying Him most of all.
 - trusting Him as the one true God and walking in His ways.

But there is something else that we need to know about this very special relationship with God. It's found in one of the verses we read in the previous lesson.

(Read Psalm 86:12.)

Psalm 86:12—I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

? *How long does the psalmist say he will glorify God? Does he say “I will glorify your name until I die”? [no, forever]*

- God created people—men and women—in His image and likeness so that we would be able to enjoy a special relationship with Him forever.

Gospel Poster 2,
marker or ribbon
and tape, Glorify
God Forever
visual

(Beginning from the right edge of **Gospel Poster 2**, use a **marker** and draw a “pathway”—continuous line—on the **whiteboard** that eventually ends at the bottom, righthand corner of the whiteboard. **Or, if you're using a wall instead of a whiteboard, tape a length of ribbon** to the **wall**. Tape the **Glorify God Forever** visual at this endpoint.)

? *Why does knowing what is at the end of a journey matter? (Allow students to respond.)*

- Knowing the end of the journey will serve to either motivate us or discourage us—depending on whether or not it will lead to happiness or misery.

Psalm 16:11 visual,
Glorify God
Forever pocket

(Point out that the Bible makes very clear what is at the end of this journey—what God's people will experience when they glorify God forever. Choose a student to come and remove the **Psalm 16:11** visual from the **Glorify God Forever** pocket.)



***You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)***

- The end of the journey is being with God Himself where there is more joy than we could ever imagine—the best and greatest joy! There will be endless pleasures—wonderful things—to experience forever and ever.

But this verse also tells us that God has made known the “path of life.” That means that God has made a certain path to follow in order to enjoy eternal life with Him. As His image bearers who have been made in His likeness, we must “be” a certain way and “act” in certain ways. Let’s look at what we must “be” and “do.”

Build-a-Verse Activity

Word 1-6 visuals,
Bibles for the
students

(Choose six students to come to the front and stand in a row facing the class. Hand each a **Word** visual, in 1-6 card number-order, to display. Have the other students look up 1 Peter 1:15 in their **Bibles**. Explain that the words being displayed are from the second part of the verse. Instruct the students to give the Word holders verbal commands to move themselves into the correct (verse) order to coincide with the verse. Then, read all of 1 Peter 1:15-16.)

***1 Peter 1:15-16—but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
16since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”***

? *What has God called us to be? [holy] Why are we to be holy? [because God is holy] What does it mean that God is holy? (Allow some responses.)*

- God’s holiness means that He is “set apart.” God is perfectly pure and separate from anything impure—anything wrong and sinful. (See Habakkuk 1:13.)
- Because we have been created in God’s likeness, we also are to be holy. We are to be “set apart,” devoted to God, being perfectly pure and separate from anything impure—anything wrong and sinful.

*We are also told to be holy in ALL OUR CONDUCT. What does that mean? (Allow the students to respond as the students holding the **Word** cards return to their seats.)*

- “Conduct” involves our actions. There are right and wrong ways to act.
- A holy God always acts in the right ways because He is perfectly righteous. (See Psalm 145:17.)
- As His image bearers, we must always act in the right ways, too.

Special glass
object

(Display the **special glass object** and point out its beauty and *purity*—the clearness and cleanliness of the glass. Explain how it is set aside for a special use. It is something of value and should be treated in the right way and not treated carelessly. This can help us understand a little bit about what it means that God is holy and righteous.)

Hand mirror,
YFIROLG visual,
special glass
object

(Display the **hand mirror** and ask the students what mirrors are designed to do. Mirrors are designed to be *reflectors*. In our last lesson, we used the mirror to show what our special purpose is. Display the **YFIROLG** visual and demonstrate how the mirror reveals the word “GLORIFY.” Now, place the **special glass object** in front of the mirror.)

So when the object is placed in front of the mirror, what does the mirror do? [reflects and shows what the object looks like]

- This illustration can help us better understand what it means that God is holy and righteous and expects His image bearers to be holy and righteous, too.
- We are to be like mirrors that reflect God’s holiness and righteousness, and we are to be this way and act this way all the time.
- Apart from doing this, we cannot live in God’s presence and glorify and enjoy Him forever. (See Hebrews 12:14).
- A holy and righteous God cannot live among an unholy and unrighteous people. It would be a little like setting the (special glass object) out in a heap of dirty and worthless trash.

But how are we to know what holy conduct is? What does it look like? How are we supposed to know what is the right thing to do in every situation? Are we just supposed to guess? (Allow a few responses.)

(Read the following verses to the class.)

Romans 7:12—So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Deuteronomy 28:9—The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself...if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.

- Throughout the Bible, God makes known to us His holy, righteous, and good commands.
- All these commands were given so that we would know what kinds of thoughts, feelings, words, and actions are holy and righteous—what is pleasing to God.
- In order to glorify God and enjoy living in His presence forever, we must be holy and righteous. That means we must *always keep and obey* His commands and walk in His ways.

Gospel Posters
1-3, tape

(Tape the **Gospel Poster 3** to the right of the **Gospel Poster 2** so that it now appears along the line, the “path of life” that was drawn earlier. Summarize all three posters by reciting the following together.)

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.
God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.**
2. **God created people for His glory.
God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.**
3. **God is holy and righteous.
You must obey God’s commands all the time.**

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

▪ **The end of the journey: Joy forever!**

Ask the students to recall a special destination they have traveled to. How did knowing what was waiting at the end make a difference in the journey? Did their parents/pilot/other person need to follow a special roadmap or path to get there? Now review Psalm 86:12 and Psalm 16:11. *Why is it important to know what is at the end of the “gospel journey”? How long will the joy and excitement last? What makes the end so extraordinary—more special than anything else?*

- **The path of life**

When people take a road trip, there are many different ways to go and still reach their final destination. Some people believe they can decide the right way to heaven. Review Psalm 16:11 and then read Proverbs 12:28—“In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.” Point out that both of these verses talk about a special path that leads to life. *Do these verses say you can simply take whatever path you want in order to live with God forever? Who decides the path? What has God decided?* Review and talk about 1 Peter 1:15-16 also.

- **God is holy and deserves to be treated as most special.**

Ask the students if they have a very special object at home—something of special significance and value, maybe something irreplaceable. How is this item treated differently? Now recall the special glass object. Ask: *Why is God more special and valuable than anything else?* [e.g., He alone is God and the Creator of all things; He is eternal, all powerful, and rules over everything; etc.] Ask: *What was the mirror used to remind us of? What did God design us to be and do? Why is this important to know? Pretend that your heart is like a mirror for a moment. Would your “heart mirror” be showing that God is most special and most valuable to you? How might a person treat God in a way that shows He is most special and valuable?*

- **God’s commands show us what holy and righteous conduct looks like.**

Review 1 Peter 1:15-16. Ask: *Do you think that all of your conduct is holy conduct? What kind of measure or test might you use to judge whether your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions are holy and righteous?* Review Romans 7:12 and Deuteronomy 28:9. Ask: *Can you give some examples of God’s holy, righteous, and good commands? Are God’s commands optional—something you can choose to ignore if you want to? Can you give an example of how God’s commands are good for us, protect us, and point us to true happiness?* Emphasize that God’s commands are found throughout the Bible. *What does this tell us about the importance of God’s commands?*

- **God requires obedience to His commands.**

Review 1 Peter 1:15-16. *What words does verse 15 use to show us that being holy in what we do and how we act is not optional?* [“be holy” ...]. Now read Deuteronomy 10:12-13. Explain that Moses was speaking these words to the people of Israel. Ask: *What do the words, “require of you” mean? Does this seem like a difficult list of requirements? Why or why not? Would you measure up to this list? Do you think that you can gain eternal life with God—glorifying and enjoying Him forever—by obeying everything in the list and all of God’s commands? Have you disobeyed any of God’s commands this week? Why is this bad news? Why do you need the good news of the gospel more than anything else?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 4 (for each student)

All Have Sinned

Main Ideas

- God requires perfect obedience to His holy and righteous commands.
- Through Adam's sin, sin spread to all people.
- God's commands show us that we are sinners.
- It is impossible for sinners to be made right with God through our own obedience.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 4: Man is sinful.
What does this mean for you? You have disobeyed God's commands. You are a sinner.
- *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

Scripture

- Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17
- Genesis 3:1-6
- Romans 1:21
- Romans 3:20, 23

Curriculum Resources

- **Adam and Eve (5A)**
- Words 1-6 (5B-5G, cut out)
- God's Commands (5H)
- **Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)**
- **Gospel Poster 2 (3G)**
- **Gospel Poster 3 (4A)**
- **Gospel Poster 4 (5I)**
- **Lesson 3 Review (4K, if not using the completed Posterboard for Lesson 3)**
- Parent Page for Lesson 5 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- See Preparation
 - Face paint, washable marker, or large sticker
- Special glass object (from Lesson 4)
- Hand Mirror (from Lesson 4)
- Mirror (identical or similar size as above)
- See Preparation
 - Black tempera or acrylic paint and dirt (or dirt, water, and flour)
 - Paint brush
 - Small plastic/glass container with lid
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 3 (or use Lesson 3 Review)

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Preparation

- **Blotch on Your Face**—Before class, use the face paint, washable marker, or a sticker to draw/place a large blotch on your face.
- **Mud-Like Mixture**—Make a mud-like mixture by mixing together black tempera or acrylic paint with some dirt (for texture) until it is the consistency of pudding. You could also simply use some sticky mud by mixing together dirt, water, and a bit of flour. You will need enough to cover the surface of the hand mirror. Store in an airtight plastic/glass container. You will need it again in Lesson 6.
- **Posterboard for Lesson 5**—Write the following on the posterboard/large piece of paper/whiteboard using the **Word** sections for drawing the correct sized blank lines.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Large Group Lesson



(Note: When the students draw attention to the large blotch on your face, emphatically and repeatedly tell them that this is not true and move on to the lesson. Quickly display and review the **Gospel Posters 1-3**. Encourage the students to recite the truth statements along with you.)

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.
2. **God created people for His glory.**
God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.
3. **God is holy and righteous.**
You must obey God's commands all the time.

Bibles for the students

(Have the students open their **Bibles** to Genesis 2. Tell them you are going to read about one of the first commands that God gave to the very first man and woman He created. Read the following narrative from Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17, stop at the underlined words and have the students quickly say the missing word.)

Genesis 2:8-9—And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15-17—The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- God is good and loving. He provided everything needed for His image bearers' happiness.
- God gave the man, Adam, a command to obey. That command was holy, righteous, and for Adam's good.
- Adam, and his wife Eve, were to trust and obey God's command. By doing so, they would never die. Disobedience would result in death.



(Continue the narrative¹ by quickly reading Genesis 3:1-6. Display **Adam and Eve** visual at the appropriate times.)

Genesis 3:1-6—Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

? *Did Adam and Eve trust God and follow His command? Why not?* (Allow the students to respond.)

Tape, Posterboard for Lesson 5, Word 1-6 visuals, Bibles for the students

(Tape the **Posterboard for Lesson 5** to the whiteboard or wall. Have six students come to the front and hand each a **Word** section to hold. Instruct the rest of the class to turn to Romans 1:21 in their **Bibles**. Next, as quickly as possible, have the class work together to put the Word sections on the correct blanks. Once this is completed, have the six students return to their seats and read the verse aloud together.)

Romans 1:21—For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Posterboard for Lesson 3 or Lesson 3 Review

(Display the **Posterboard for Lesson 3** or the **Lesson 3 Review** visual.)

- God had created Adam and Eve in a special way for a special purpose.
- God created them to glorify God forever by knowing and honoring Him, loving and enjoying Him most of all, and trusting and obeying His commands always.

So even though Adam and Eve KNEW God, they did not honor Him as their Creator, ruler, and King. They didn't give thanks to God for all His good provision. They didn't LOVE God most of all. They felt they needed something more in order to be truly happy. They didn't obey God's Word. So they DISOBEYED the holy, righteous, and good command of God.

What was the result? They “became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

Special glass object, hand mirror

(Have a student come to the front and hold the **mirror**. Next, hold the **special glass object** in front of the mirror.)

¹ If your students are already familiar with this text, you may want to simply ask them “What happened next?” and summarize the main points of this text.

- In the previous lesson, we used these two things to help us better understand what it means that we have been created to glorify God.
- We are to be like mirrors that reflect back to God that He is holy, righteous, and good.

But according to Romans 1:21, something terrible happened—their foolish hearts were “darkened.” What does that mean?

Mud, paintbrush

(Set down the **special glass object** for a moment. Take the **mud** and, using the **paintbrush**, quickly cover the **mirror** in mud. You may want the student to hold the mirror in a horizontal position while you do this. Have the student hold up the mirror again and place the special glass object in front of the mirror.)

Does the mirror do what it was created to do now? [no] Did the special glass object change in any way? [no]

- This illustration can help us better understand what had happened to Adam and Eve. God had not changed in any way. But Adam and Eve had changed.
- Their hearts had become darkened—they were no longer glorifying God the way they were meant to do. They had become *futile*, meaning senseless or worthless in their way of thinking.

In the Bible, there is a simple three-letter word that describes this: Sin. Adam and Eve were now sinners with futile minds and darkened hearts. And, just as God had said would happen, they would die.

Was that just a problem for Adam and Eve?

Clean hand mirror

(Recall that, at the beginning of class, the students probably already tried to tell you that you have a large blotch on your face. You stated that this was not true. Is there any way that they could convince you that you really do have a blotch? Take the **clean mirror** and hold it up to your face.)

Wow, it's true! I really do have a large blotch on my face!

Tape, God's Commands visual

(**Tape** the **God's Commands** visual to the back of **the second, clean mirror**. Hold the **muddied mirror** up against your chest and hold the new mirror so that it reflects the muddied mirror.)

In a way, God's holy, righteous, and good commands act as a type of mirror—a heart mirror. God's commands show each and every one of us that we are sinners. They show us that we do not always obey God. For example, in the Bible God says...²

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart”—sometimes I have loved other things more than God.

“Honor your father and mother”—sometimes I have been disrespectful to my parents.

“You shall not bear false witness”—sometimes I have lied and not told the truth.

“You shall not covet”—sometimes I have been jealous of what others have.

(Read Romans 3:20, 23.)

Romans 3:20, 23—For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin...²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

² See Deuteronomy 6:5 and Exodus 20:12, 16, 17.



(Display and read the **Gospel Poster 4**.)

4. **Man is sinful.**

You have disobeyed God's commands. You are a sinner.

- We have all inherited a sinful and darkened heart from our very first parents, Adam and Eve. (See Romans 5:12.)
- God's law—His commands—show us and prove to us that we are sinners.
- Sinners cannot have a right relationship with God and glorify Him as we should simply by working to obey His commandments.

From the time of Adam and Eve's first sin, we see throughout the Bible how people have failed over and over and over again to perfectly keep God's commands: Noah couldn't. Abraham and Sarah couldn't. Nor could King David, Queen Esther, Mary, Matthew, Peter, Paul, and on and on, including you and me. This is bad news for all of us!

(Remind the students that we are on a journey to better know and understand the gospel.)

- The gospel is the *best good news of all*.
- But within that story is a very sad truth—that we are all sinners and we deserve death.
- Just as the muddied mirror cannot fix itself, we cannot fix our sin problem by trying to become better at obeying God.
- Only God can solve this problem, and that is why the gospel is truly the best good news of all!

(Note: You will need both the muddied mirror and the God's Commands/clean mirror again for Lesson 6.)

Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **God's commands are for the good of His people.**

Have the students imagine going to a place that has thousands of tasty treats. Their parents told them they could enjoy any treat they wanted, except for one because eating that one treat would not be good for them. Ask: *Would you trust and obey your parents? Why or why not? Would you think they were being unfair or stingy?* Recall the garden of Eden that God had prepared for Adam and Eve. Emphasize that everything was perfect, pleasant, and good. God was Adam and Eve's ruler and King, and He generously and lovingly provided them with every good thing needed for their happiness. Ask: *How was God's command to not eat of the one tree meant for Adam and Eve's good? Can you give an example of how obedience to one of God's commands was for your good? But do you ALWAYS obey? Does that matter?*

- **Trying to hide our sin will not work.**

Ask the students if they know what happened right after Adam and Eve ate of the one tree. Read or summarize what happened in Genesis 3:8-11. Instead of enjoying the presence of God (Psalm 16:11), they were ashamed and tried to hide from God because of their sin. But God knows everything and knew exactly what they had done. They could not hide from God. Ask: *Do you ever feel shame and guilt after you have done something you know is wrong? Have you wanted to hide? Can you hide your sin from God? Why not?*

- **Sin is foolish.**

Recall that Adam and Eve thought they would become wise by eating from the one tree. They decided to believe the lies of the serpent (Satan in disguise) instead of trusting the word of their Creator and King. Read and talk about Romans 1:21 as it relates to what Adam and Eve did. Ask: *How about you? Do you always honor God as you should? Do you always thank Him as you should? Do you sometimes think that doing things your own way is wise and best? In the end, will this prove to be wise or foolish?*

- **Sin spread from Adam and Eve to all people.**

Point out that children inherit certain characteristics from their birth parents—physical characteristics like eye and hair color, facial features, and even things deep inside our bodies that we cannot see (our DNA). Because Adam and Eve were the very first people, we all have inherited something from them, too. Read Romans 5:12. Ask: *What have we all inherited through Adam and Eve?* (Recall the mirror that was muddied in the lesson.) *How is this proven to be true in each and every heart? What also has spread because of sin? Why should this make us want to hear the good news of the gospel?*

- **God's commands are like a mirror for our heart.**

Review and talk about Romans 3:20. Give the children a concrete example of how one or more of God's commands shows us our sin. [e.g., Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1] *Why is it important to understand that we cannot have a right relationship with God through rule keeping? Do you think that "being good" is the "path of life" (from Psalm 16:11) that will lead to glorifying and enjoying God forever? Why won't this work? Talk about Romans 3:23.*

- **Knowledge of sin should make us long for the gospel of Jesus.**

Recall the muddied mirror from the lesson and emphasize again that, even though it is still a mirror, it can no longer do what it was designed to do. Ask: *Do you think this mirror can clean itself? Why not? If it were to be made clean again, what must happen? Yes, the mirror would need to depend on someone to fix it.* In a similar way, we sinners cannot fix our hearts so that we can glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We must depend on someone else. Ask: *Who alone can help sinners with this problem? What is the good news we need to hear and depend on?* Read and talk about verses such as John 3:16 and Romans 6:23.

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 5 (for each student)

The Worst Bad News of All: God's Righteous Judgment

Main Ideas

- God is holy and cannot look upon sin.
- God is a righteous judge.
- God has decided that the punishment for sin is death and hell.
- Sinners are helpless to save themselves.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 5: God is just and is right to punish sin.
What does this mean for you? You deserve God's punishment of death and hell. You are helpless to save yourself.
- *For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23a)*
- *...the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6b)*

Scripture

- Habakkuk 1:13a
- Isaiah 45:19b
- Psalm 9:7-8
- Romans 6:23a
- Ephesians 5:6b
- 2 Thessalonians 1:9

Curriculum Resources

- **Adam and Eve 2 (6A)**
- Print these two pages double-sided and cut along puzzle piece lines:
 - Verses Puzzle—Front (6B-6F)
 - Verses Puzzle—Back (6G)
- Verses Puzzle Template (6H)
- **Gospel Poster 4 (5I)**
- Gospel Poster 5 (6I)
- Parent Page for Lesson 6 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Treat (ingredients or mix for small batch of cookies or cupcakes, or a bag of microwave popcorn)¹
- Plate or large bowl
- Red-colored fabric (e.g., kitchen towel, tissue paper, etc.)
- Muddied mirror (from Lesson 5)
- Glorify God Forever visual (from Lesson 4)
- Clean mirror/God's Commands visual (from Lesson 5)
- Tape

¹ If it is not possible to get either of these and do the corresponding preparation, you could simply pose the beginning lesson illustration of the burnt treat as a scenario for the children to imagine.

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Preparation

- Before class, make the cookies, cupcakes, or popcorn. Follow the instructions EXCEPT for the baking time. Change one number of the time in order to thoroughly burn the cookies or cake (e.g., 35 minutes instead of 15 minutes) or popcorn (e.g., 4 minutes instead of 2 minutes). Place the burnt treat on the plate or in the bowl. Cover with the red fabric or tissue paper.

Large Group Lesson

Covered plate/
bowl of burnt food

(Display the **covered plate/bowl of burnt treat** or pose the following scenario.)

- I made a treat to give to the students I call on to participate in the lesson.
- I followed the directions on the package or the recipe exactly, but I thought it would be wise to change one small thing. Instead of baking them for [15] minutes, I thought it would be better to bake them for [35] minutes.

But something terrible happened!

(Remove the **fabric/tissue paper** from the **plate/bowl** and show the burnt treat.)

I thought I was being wise in changing one little thing, but my decision ruined the treat.

Would you tell me that this treat looks wonderful? Would you tell me that it looks yummy and good for eating? No, of course not. That wouldn't be the truth. What would be the right thing to do with this treat? [Throw it away.]



Muddied mirror,
Clean mirror
with the God's
Commands visual



(Use the **Adam and Eve 2** visual, the **muddied mirror**, the **clean mirror/God's Commands**, and the **Gospel Poster 4** as you briefly review the following points presented in the previous lesson.)

- Adam and Eve, the very first people God created, thought they were being wise when they disobeyed God's one command in the garden of Eden. They ate the fruit of the one tree that God told them not to eat.
- In disobeying God in this one command, their hearts became darkened and sinful.
- Just like this muddied mirror can no longer do what it was created to do, Adam and Eve could no longer glorify God the way they were intended to do.
- Because we are Adam and Eve's descendants, we have inherited a sin nature—we are all born sinners with darkened hearts.
- We all fail to perfectly obey God as we should. God's holy and righteous commands prove this to be true.

So would it simply be okay for a holy and righteous God to say something like "No big deal. Let's just pretend that you are fine with a sinful darkened heart. It really doesn't matter"?
 (Allow the students to respond.)

Cookies/
cupcakes/
popcorn, muddied
mirror, Verse 1-2
visuals

(Display the **cookies/cupcakes/popcorn** side-by-side with the **muddied mirror**. To say that the cookies/cupcakes/popcorn and the muddied mirror are simply okay as they are would NOT be telling the truth. Each has been ruined. Even more so, God cannot say that sinful and darkened hearts are okay.)

Verse 1-5 visuals

(Hand out **Verse 1** and **2** to students to read. Make the following brief points after each.)

Verse 1

You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, (Habakkuk 1:13a)

- God is holy—He is perfectly pure. He cannot even look upon sin as if it is no big deal.

Verse 2

I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right. (Isaiah 45:19b)

- God always tells the truth. He will not lie about the true condition of our hearts (Isaiah 45:19).
- God is righteous. He decides what is right and wrong.
- God also decides what sinners rightly deserve—the right punishment for sin.

(Read Psalm 9:7-8.)

Psalm 9:7-8—But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice,⁸ and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

What has a holy God decided is the right judgment, the right punishment, for sin? Let's see what the Bible says.

(Choose three students to come to the front and hand out **Verses 3-5**. Have them read the verses in the following order. Make the following brief comments after each verse is read.)

Verse 3

For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23a)

“Wages” are something you earn and deserve to get. According to this verse, what do we earn and deserve to get because of our sin? [death] And that is exactly what we see throughout the Bible and even today in our world. That is God's right judgment on sinners.

Verse 4

...the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6b)

- ❓ *God's wrath is His fierce hatred of and anger at sin. God has decided that the right consequence of sin is to experience His wrath. Can you give any examples from the Bible where wicked sinners experienced the fierce anger of God? [e.g., the flood in the time of Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.]*

Verse 5

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

- Sinners deserve God's punishment of "eternal destruction." That means the never-ending suffering of experiencing God's holy and righteous anger.
- Away from God's presence means completely separated from and unable to ever experience endless joy.
- This verse is showing the *opposite* of something we learned about in an earlier lesson.

Glorify God
Forever visual
from previous
lessons

(Display the **Glorify God Forever** visual from previous lessons.)

- God created us in a special way for a special purpose. We were created to glorify God by being holy and righteous so that we would enjoy living in His presence forever and ever.
- Sinners deserve the *opposite*—living away from God and experiencing terrible misery forever and ever.

Verse Puzzle
pieces 1-5, tape,
Puzzle Template
visual

(Display **all five Verse Puzzle** pieces. Have the students notice that there are words on the back of each card. **Tape** the **Puzzle Template** to the wall. Hand the Verse Puzzle pieces to five students and have them quickly place their pieces, within the correct positions on the Puzzle Template. Tape each in place.)

God's righteous

punishment for sin

= Death and Hell

Gospel Poster 5

(Lightly **tape** the **Gospel Poster 5** to the left of the above completed visual and have the students recite the truth statement together.)

5. **God is just and is right to punish sin.**

You deserve God's punishment of death and hell. You are helpless to save yourself.

This is what every single sinner rightly deserves. And just as the burnt (cookies/cupcakes/popcorn) cannot fix themselves and become "unburnt," we sinners are completely helpless to save ourselves from God's judgment. Every one of us deserves death and hell—it is what we have earned. Trying to ignore God's judgment or pretending it really won't happen will not make it "untrue." God ALWAYS tells the truth!

- God's righteous punishment of our sin is our biggest and greatest problem. It is the **WORST** news of all!
- Throughout the Bible, God warns us and gives us examples of His judgement so that we might pay attention and take His judgment very seriously.

No one wants to hear bad news, especially the worst news of all. But we need to hear the worst news in order to understand what is truly good news—the best good news of all.

What is the best good news of all? What is news that you and I need to know and love and trust more than anything else? The gospel!

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **God is too holy to look upon sin.**

Have the students imagine they had friends coming to celebrate their birthday. Ask: *Would it be okay if your mom presented a burnt cake coated with used car oil, dirt, and rotten bits of food to serve to you and your friends? Why not? How might you react? Would it be right to eat the cake anyway? Why not? Have you ever thought of your sin as being similar to that? Why is it right that God would be offended by sin?* Review Habakkuk 1:13a.

- **God is a righteous judge.**

Review and talk about Psalm 9:7-8 and Isaiah 45:19b. Ask: *What do these verses tell us about how God judges? Is God ever unfair? If God knows when someone has done the wrong thing, will God lie about it so the person doesn't feel bad? Why not? Why is it good that God always judges rightly and speaks the truth? Why is it important that He decides what the right punishment is? Why does God's judgment have the "final say"?* (See Jeremiah 10:10a.)

- **We all have earned God's punishment.**

Review Romans 6:23a. Explain that "wages" are something you deserve to get, something you've earned. Ask: *Do you ever think about what it means that you have "earned" God's righteous punishment because of your sin? Should knowing this truth make you feel proud and confident? Why not? What else have we all earned?* Talk about Ephesians 5:6b and 2 Thessalonians 1:9. Ask: *Do you think that ignoring these truths will make them disappear? Will having more friends solve the problem? Or being better at school or sports? Why won't any of our ways of trying to satisfy God's wrath/punishment work? Why is this such terrible news? What does that tell you about yourself?*

- **There are no *little* sins.**

Ask the students to recall the number of instructions the teacher changed when baking the treat. [one] What was the result? Now recall Adam and Eve, who sinned by eating of the one fruit—one seemingly *little* sin. What was God's response? Read portions of Genesis 3:16-19 that summarize God's response. Ask: *Is a seemingly "little" sin okay with God? Could Adam and Eve "undo" their sin—their darkened hearts? (Can the burnt treat "unburn" itself?) Do you think that God is okay with your "little" sins because He is only angry when people do really evil things?*

- **God warns us so that we might look to Jesus to save us.**

Explain that, throughout the Bible, we are told of different times and different ways in which God judged sinners and punished them. These are not happy events to read about. They are very sad but true. Ask: *Why would God want us to read about these things in the Bible? Does He want us to pay attention and take His judgment seriously? What is the only way to escape God's judgment? Why is it such a big deal—the best news of all—that God has provided a way for sin to be forgiven?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 6 (for each student)

God Is Merciful to Sinners

Main Ideas

- God shows His lovingkindness toward sinners.
- God made a way to forgive sinners.
- God's mercy is an undeserved gift.
- Sinners must depend on God's mercy in order to be saved.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 6: God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.

What does this mean for you? You must depend on God's mercy in order to be saved.
- *But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love... (Nehemiah 9:17b)*

Scripture

- 2 Thessalonians 1:9
- Luke 18:10-14
- Nehemiah 9:17b
- Titus 3:4-5a

Curriculum Resources

- Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)
- Gospel Poster 2 (3G)
- Gospel Poster 3 (4A)
- Gospel Poster 4 (5I)
- Gospel Poster 5 (6I)
- Gospel Poster 6 (7A)
- Roadblock 1-2 (7B-7C, see Preparation)
- Words 1-7 (7D-7J, cut out)
- Parent Page for Lesson 7 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Glorify God Forever visual (from Lesson 4)
- Small gift bag or box
- Tape

Preparation

- **Gospel Posters**—Before class, tape the **Gospel Posters 1-5** in left to right order on the wall.¹ Tape the **Glorify God Forever** visual several feet to the right of the Gospel Poster 5.

¹ If you do not have a classroom in which doing this is possible as the study progresses and more posters are added, consider using a wide band of strong ribbon to string the posters together. The length of ribbon will need to be at least 10 ft long to accommodate all 10 posters.

- **Roadblock Visual**—Cut and assemble the **Roadblock** visual as instructed.
- **Gift Bag or Box**—Cut out the seven **Words** visuals and place them in the gift bag or box.
- **Optional**—Arrange for two men to read and act out the parts of the Pharisee and tax collector.

Large Group Lesson

Gospel Posters
1-5, Glorify God
Forever visual,
Roadblock visual,
tape

(As you point to the **Gospel Posters 1-5** on the wall, quickly lead the class in reciting the truth statements along with you. Pause after Gospel Poster 3 to make the comments that follow.)

We have been going on a journey to discover the gospel—the best good news of all! The gospel journey begins with...

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.
2. **God created people for His glory.**
God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.
3. **God is holy and righteous.**
You must obey God's commands all the time.

(Point to the **Glorify God Forever** visual that is on the wall.)

- In earlier lessons, we learned that God created men and women in a very special way for a very special purpose.
- God created His image bearers to be holy and righteous so that we would glorify Him and enjoy living in His presence forever and ever.

But in our last two lessons we learned something very important and very sad—the saddest and worst news of all...

4. **Man is sinful.**
You have disobeyed God's commands. You are a sinner.
5. **God is just and is right to punish sin.**
You deserve God's punishment of death and hell. You are helpless to save yourself.

(Read 2 Thessalonians 1:9 as follows.)

2 Thessalonians 1:9—[Sinners] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

(Tape the **Roadblock** visual to the right of the **Gospel Poster 5**.)

- Our sin and God's righteous punishment act as a type of roadblock to our glorifying God forever.
- Sinners are *blocked* from experiencing eternal life and enjoying His presence forever and ever.

Is this the end of the story? No, the gospel is the best good news of all! So what comes next in our gospel journey? Is there a way around or through this roadblock?

Jesus told a story that will give us a clue about what comes next. It is the story of two men. One man was a Pharisee, a religious leader. The other man was a tax collector. Tax collectors were often despised and looked down upon.

(Read Luke 18:10-14 with the appropriate tone and emotion.)

Luke 18:10-14—“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.”

- ❓ Which man truly understood that his sin had created a type of “roadblock” between himself and God? [the tax collector] How do we know this? What was the difference in their attitudes as they prayed?
- ❓ Which man did Jesus say went home justified, meaning he went home with a right and pleasing relationship to God?
- ❓ What does it mean that the tax collector called out to God to be merciful?

Giftbag/box with Nehemiah visual and Word visuals

(Hand the **gift bag/box** to a student. Ask: *Based on its appearance, what does it appear to be?*)

- Gifts are something wonderful given to you that you have not earned and have done nothing special in order to receive.
- A gift-giver freely chooses to give you something special.

(Have the student open the **gift bag/box** and remove the **Nehemiah** visual and the **Word** visuals.)

What is the gift inside? The answer can be found in Nehemiah 9:17.

Build-a-Verse Activity

Bibles for the students

(Choose six students to come to the front and stand in a row, facing the class. Hand each a **Word** visual, in 1-6 card-number order, to display. Have the other students look up **Nehemiah 9:17** in their Bibles. Instruct the students to, as quickly as possible, give the Word holders verbal commands to move themselves into the correct (verse) order. When they are finished, read the verse together.)

But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love... (Nehemiah 9:17b)

- ❓ What do we learn about God in this one, short verse? Is He quick to get angry and quick to punish sinners? [He is slow to anger.]
- ❓ What is He ready to do? [forgive sinners]
- ❓ Is He ready to forgive sinners because we deserve it or have earned forgiveness? No. It is because God is gracious and merciful. He is loving and kind to undeserving sinners. His forgiveness is a gift.

Tape, Gospel
Poster 6

- This is why the tax collector humbly cried out, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” He knew that he didn’t deserve God’s love and kindness.
- He knew that he was helpless to save himself from God’s righteous judgment.
- He knew that he desperately needed God’s mercy in order to receive forgiveness and be made right with God.

(Tape the **Gospel Poster 6** to the wall so that it completely covers the **Roadblock** visual. Read the truth statements together.)

6. **God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.**

You must depend on God’s mercy in order to be saved.

- Depending upon God’s mercy is the only way to overcome the “roadblock” to experiencing joy forever with God.
- Understanding this truth is absolutely necessary for understanding the gospel—the best good news of all.

(End the lesson by reading Titus 3:4-5a. This verse gives a clue and points us forward toward the next stop in our gospel journey.)

Titus 3:4-5a—But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...

Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Everlasting misery or joy**

Read and talk about the two very different *paths* and destinations found in Psalm 16:11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:9. *Which “path” are we born into?* (Recall Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12; and Romans 6:23a.) *Do you see that our sin and God’s righteous judgment is like an impossible roadblock for us to overcome? What has God said we must depend upon? Did the Pharisee in the story think he had a different way? Did it work? Do you ever think like the Pharisee? If you do, will it work?*

- **God is both angered by sin and merciful toward sinners.**

Review 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and then read and talk about Nehemiah 9:17b. Have the students notice the different characteristics or qualities used to describe what God is like. Ask: *Does this verse say that God isn’t angry at sin? No. What does it say?* [slow to anger] *Why is this important to know?* Recall the worldwide flood during the time of Noah. God poured out His righteous judgment on sinners. Ask: *But in that judgment did God also show mercy? Did God destroy every person and every living thing? No. Who did God save from the flood? That was a display of His mercy.* Also point out that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, warning people, giving them time to repent.

- **Seeing and experiencing mercy everyday**

Give the students an example of a time when you were shown mercy by another person when you had done something wrong, broken something, forgotten something, etc. Encourage the students to give an example of their own. Ask: *How does it feel to be on the receiving end of mercy? What is the right way to respond when*

someone is merciful toward you? Do you understand why we all need the saving mercy of God? Have you ever felt like the tax collector from the story? Read and talk about Titus 3:4-5a.

- **Crying out for God's mercy**

Ask the students to describe what it feels like to be really thirsty. What do they desperately crave and seek out? Point out that sinners need God's mercy even more desperately. Review the words and actions of the tax collector from Luke 18:13. Ask: *How did his words and actions show how desperate he was for God's mercy? How did this compare with the Pharisee? When sinners run to God and humbly cry out for mercy, what is it showing that we understand to be true about ourselves and what is true of God?* Also read and talk about Titus 3:4-5a.

- **God's mercy should not be treated lightly.**

Point out that God Himself gives all people life and breath and every other good thing (Acts 17:25; Psalm 145:9). Every day, people receive hundreds of *undeserved kindnesses* from God. We are dependent on God's mercy for everything we need. Ask: *What would be the right response to God's gifts of kindness? What does He deserve? Did you thank and praise Him this week for His mercy? Do you understand that you also need to depend on His mercy for your greatest need? Is this something you can ignore and not pay attention to?* Read and talk about Romans 2:4-5.

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 7 (for each student)

God Sent His Son into the World to Save Sinners

Main Ideas

- God made a way for sinners to be forgiven.
- God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 7: God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.
What does this mean for you? Jesus came into the world to save you.
- *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)*

Scripture

- Nehemiah 9:17b
- Hebrews 9:22b
- Luke 1:35
- Colossians 1:15, 19
- Hebrews 2:17a
- Hebrews 4:15b
- John 3:17

Curriculum Resources

- Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)
- Gospel Poster 2 (3G)
- Gospel Poster 3 (4A)
- Gospel Poster 4 (5I)
- Gospel Poster 5 (6I)
- Gospel Poster 6 (7A)
- Gospel Poster 7 (8A)
- Adam and Eve 2 (6A)
- Puzzle Pieces 1-14 (8B-8O, cut apart)
- Verses 1-2 (8P-8Q, cut out)
- Parent Page for Lesson 8 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- See Preparation
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Red-colored fabric or paper (from Lesson 6, if available)
- Several pieces of red paper (or something similar)
- Muddied mirror (from previous lessons)
- Clean mirror/God's Commands visual (from previous lessons)
- Tape
- Glorify God Forever visual (from previous lessons)

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Preparation

▪ **Posterboard for Lesson 8**—Use the posterboard or whiteboard to write the following, leaving about six inches of blank space at the top of the list. Make sure to draw the blank lines long enough to accommodate the missing words.

1. Is the _____ Son of God.
2. Is fully _____.
3. Became fully _____.
4. Was _____.
5. Always _____ God.
6. Is _____.
7. _____ God.

Large Group Lesson



(Display the **Gospel Posters 1-5** in order, and quickly review the gospel truth statement at the top of each.)

So far on our gospel journey we have learned the following important truths...

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
2. **God created people for His glory.**
3. **God is holy and righteous.**
4. **Man is sinful.**
5. **God is just and is right to punish sin.**

The worst bad news of all is that each and every one of us are sinners who deserve God's punishment of death and hell—experiencing God's fierce anger forever. We are completely helpless to solve this bad news. But...



(Display the **Gospel Poster 6**).

6. **God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.**

(Read Nehemiah 9:17b to the students.)

Nehemiah 9:17b—But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...

So does forgiveness just mean that God forgets about our sin and pretends it's not there? Or does God simply change His mind about what the right punishment for sin is? Let's find out.

Red fabric/paper,
Verses 1-2 visuals,
muddied mirror

(Display the **red fabric/paper** and ask the students if they can recall what it was used for.)

- The red fabric/paper was used to cover the burnt treat from a previous lesson.
- There is a reason the color red was used.

(Hand **Verse 1** to a student to read.)

Verse 1

...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22b)

(Display the **muddied mirror**.)

- We have used this mirror in previous lessons to remind us what a sinful and darkened heart is like.
- A holy God cannot ignore sin and pretend it's not there.
- God is righteous and always tells the truth. He has decided that the "wages of sin is death."
- That is why God's forgiveness requires the shedding of blood—meaning forgiveness requires death.

So after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God, in His kindness, "shed blood" on their behalf. In His mercy, God provided a covering for them—a type of covering for sin. Let's see what God did.



(Display the **Adam and Eve 2** visual.)

- God covered Adam and Eve with the skins of animals. The animals had to be killed for this to happen.
- The animal acted as a kind of substitute so their sin would be covered and forgiven.

(Cover the **muddied mirror** with the **red fabric/paper**.)

- Throughout the Old Testament, God required His sinful people to kill and sacrifice animals for the forgiveness of sin.
- God's people had to shed the blood of animals over and over and over again

(Cover the **muddied mirror** with additional pieces of **red paper**.)

- But the sin was still there. That is because the blood of animals could never *take away* sin (Hebrews 10:4). It could never make sinners holy and righteous.
- The death of animals could never take away the punishment of death and hell.

God knew this all along. The killing of animals for the forgiveness of sin was only temporary. From the very beginning, God had the perfect plan to completely and forever solve the worst bad news of all.

Activity

Posterboard/
whiteboard,
Puzzle Pieces 1-14

(Display the **posterboard/whiteboard** and explain that there are seven missing words on the posterboard. Next, in random order, hand out **Puzzle Pieces 1-14** to students.¹ Each puzzle piece fits together with another piece in order to complete one of the seven words. When you give the signal to begin, the students should search for the other student who has the other piece that

¹ For a smaller class, give students more than one puzzle piece.

Posterboard/
whiteboard,
Puzzle Pieces 1-14,
tape

completes the word. Provide help if necessary so that the activity takes no more than 2 to 3 minutes. **Tape** the completed words on the correct numbered lines.)

1. Is the **holy** Son of God.
2. Is fully **God**.
3. Became fully **man**.
4. Was **sinless**.
5. Always **obeyed** God.
6. Is **righteous**.
7. **Glorified** God.

Marker

? *Who do these statements describe?* [Jesus.]

(Write “Jesus” in large letters above the seven statements. Read the following verses, point to the corresponding statement on the **posterboard**, and make the brief comments that follow.)

And the angel [said to Mary], “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

- 1) At just the right time, God sent His holy Son into the world as a little baby born to Mary in the town of Bethlehem. Jesus is holy. He is perfect and pure.

He is the image of the invisible God...¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (Colossians 1:15, 19)

- 2). Jesus is truly and fully God. Everything that is true of God the Father is true of Jesus the Son. Jesus is the Creator of all things. He is eternal, all-powerful, sovereign, good, loving, merciful, etc.

Can you give a few examples of how Jesus demonstrated that He is fully God—things He did that only God could do? (Allow students to respond.) [e.g., Jesus walked on water, fed 5,000, raised Lazarus from the dead, healed the blind, etc.]

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, (Hebrews 2:17a)

- 3) Even though Jesus is fully God, Jesus also became fully man when He came to earth. He was a real human being. He grew from a baby into a man. He needed to eat and sleep. He spent time with family and friends.

...[Jesus] in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15b)

- 4) Even though Jesus was fully human like us, unlike us He was born without a sin nature. And all through His childhood and as an adult, Jesus never ever sinned. Not even once. Even when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness to sin against God, Jesus would not sin.
- 5) Jesus always obeyed God’s holy, righteous, and good commands. Jesus was able to do what Adam and Eve and all other people had failed to do (Matthew 5:17).
- 6) That is why the Bible calls Jesus the “Holy and Righteous One” (Acts 3:14).

Clean mirror/
God's Commands,
muddied mirror,
tape, Glorify God
Forever visual,
posterboard

(Display the **clean mirror/God's Commands** next to the **muddied mirror**.)

So, if we were going to use one of these mirrors to represent what Jesus is like, what mirror should we choose? Yes, the clean one.

7). Because Jesus was perfectly holy and righteous, all His thoughts, feelings, words, and actions were pleasing to God. Jesus glorified God as He lived on the earth (John 17:4).

(Lightly **tape** the **Glorify God Forever** visual below line 7 on the **posterboard**.)

How does all of this help sinners? How does it help us with the worst bad news of all—that we deserve God's punishment of death and hell? Let's look at another verse.

(Hand a student **Verse 2** to read.)

Verse 2

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)



(Display **Gospel Poster 7**.)

7. God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners. Jesus came into the world to save you.

And, as we will learn in the next lesson, the salvation that God provides sinners would come at a very high price because God has said, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Forgiveness of sin requires the shedding of blood.**

Recall God's promise to Adam from Genesis 2:17. Ask: *Did Adam and Eve die as soon as they ate from the one tree? How did they try to "cover" themselves after they had sinned? (See Genesis 3:7.) Who provided them with the right covering? Why was it important that blood had to be shed—a living thing had to die? Would God be truthful if He made a promise but then didn't keep it? (Review Hebrews 9:22b and Romans 6:23a.) How does the need for the shedding of blood show how serious sin is? Why should this matter to each of us?*

- **The sacrifice of animals was a temporary solution.**

Give an example of a temporary solution to a problem (e.g., taping broken eyeglass frames until you can get a new pair). Emphasize that, in the Old Testament, God instructed His people to sacrifice animals—kill them and shed their blood—so that sin could be forgiven. It was God's plan as a temporary solution to sin. Thousands of animals had to be killed because people kept on sinning, needing a covering for sin over and over again. Ask: *How do you think it felt to have to kill animals over and over again because of your sin? Read and talk about Hebrews 10:3-4. Ask: How is "taking away" sin different from "covering" sin? Why do sinners need their sin "taken away"?*

- **The Old Testament was always pointing to Jesus.**

Have the students imagine going on a road trip to a certain destination. As they are traveling, they find that the road they were planning to travel is closed for construction so their dad looks for a different road to take. Ask: *Is*

*that something like our gospel journey? Did God have to come up with a different route or plan after Adam and Eve sinned? [No.] Read and talk about Ephesians 1:3-4. Salvation in Jesus was God’s plan from before the world began. Everything that we read in the Old Testament was leading to Jesus. Everything happened exactly as God planned. The sacrifice of animals was pointing to a perfect and final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. Ask: *Why is Jesus the perfect and final sacrifice?**

- **There is no one like Jesus.**

Review the seven statements that were presented concerning Jesus. Ask the students to give examples from the Bible of how Jesus demonstrated that these things were true. For example: Son of God—His miraculous birth as was prophesied hundreds of years before He was born (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2); fully God—all kinds of miracles; fully man—falling asleep on the boat, eating with His disciples; etc. Ask: *Is there anyone else like Jesus? Why is it important that we understand who Jesus is and what He is like? What did God send Jesus into the world to do? Could anyone else do this? Why not? How are you looking to Jesus as your one and only hope to fix the problem of your sin?*

- **Jesus came to save you from condemnation.**

Read and talk about John 3:16-17. Point out that many people know and have memorized verse 16. Ask: *What motivated God to send His Son into the world? [love] What special word is used in verse 17 to remind us of God’s just punishment for sin? [condemn]* Explain that condemn means to sentence someone to a specific punishment. Ask: *What has God decided is the right punishment for sinners? So what is the good news in this verse? Who is included? What does it mean to “believe in” Jesus? Make the verse personal and read as follows: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn me, but in order that I might be saved through him.” What would be the right way to respond to this best news of all?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 8 (for each student)

Jesus Died in Place of God's Sinful People

Main Ideas

- All people are guilty before God and deserve His just punishment.
- Jesus died as a perfect sacrifice for sin in order to satisfy the justice of God.
- In Jesus, God's people are completely forgiven and are given His righteousness.
- Salvation is in Jesus alone!

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 8: God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus so that His righteousness might be put on them.
 What does this mean for you? Jesus died on the cross to be punished in your place.
- *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

Scripture

- 1 Peter 2:24a
- Isaiah 53:5
- Ephesians 1:7a
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 1 Peter 1:3
- Romans 5:8

Curriculum Resources

- **Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)**
- **Gospel Poster 2 (3G)**
- **Gospel Poster 3 (4A)**
- **Gospel Poster 4 (5I)**
- **Gospel Poster 5 (6I)**
- **Gospel Poster 6 (7A)**
- **Gospel Poster 7 (8A)**
- **Gospel Poster 8 (9A)**
- Cut out as indicated
 - Righteous (9B)
 - Unrighteous (9C)
 - Darkened Heart (9D)
 - Red Heart (9E)
 - Empty Tomb (9F)
 - Eternal Life (9G)
 - Death & Hell (9H)
- See Preparation
 - God Heart (9I)
 - Cross (9J, see Preparation)
- Verses 1-3 (9K-9M, cut out)
- Parent Page for Lesson 9 (for each student)

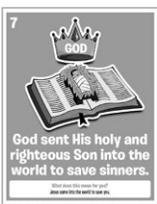
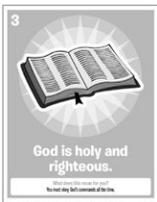
Other Supplies

- 22” x 28” piece of white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
- Regular or whiteboard markers
- See Preparation
 - Aluminum foil
 - Glue
 - 3 bags (gift or paper bags)
 - 2 large nails
- Tape
- Markers

Preparation

- **Shiny/God Heart**—Cut out the **God Heart** and glue a piece of aluminum foil (shiny side out) onto the backside of it. Cut the foil along the outer edges of the heart. This will be referred to as the Shiny/God Heart in the lesson.
- **Cross**—Cut out and assemble the **Cross** pieces.
- **3 Bags**—Label the three bags - 1, 2, 3. Place the 2 nails in Bag 1, the Red Heart in Bag 2, and the Empty Tomb in Bag 3.

Large Group Lesson



(Display the **Gospel Posters 1-7**)

- We have been on a journey to discover what the gospel is and why it is the best good news of all.
- On that journey, we have discovered that we have two main problems.

First, in order to be able to enjoy living with God forever we must be perfectly holy and righteous. (Gospel Poster 3) But we are not. We are unrighteous sinners. (Gospel Poster 4) We are helpless to fix this problem.

Second, because we are sinners we deserve God’s punishment of death and hell. (Gospel Poster 5) We are also helpless to fix this problem.

Did Jesus have any of these problems? No. That is why Jesus is able to save sinners. That is why God sent Jesus into the world. But how did Jesus do this? Let’s create a picture to show what Jesus did.

Posterboard, markers, tape, and the following visuals: Darkened Heart, Shiny/God Heart, Righteous, Unrighteous, Eternal Life, Death & Hell

(On the upper left corner of the **posterboard**, write “Us” in large letters. In the upper-right corner write “Jesus.” Next, tell the students that you will be showing them various visuals. They are to decide if each visual describes us or Jesus. Use the order that follows. Lightly **tape** each visual under the correct person.)

- **(Darkened Heart)** *Would this heart describe the kind of heart we have or that Jesus has? Why would it describe us? (Recall muddied mirror from previous lessons.) Yes, our hearts are darkened by sin. We are sinners. (Tape underneath “Us” on the posterboard.)*
- **(Shiny/God Heart)** *What about this heart? Does it look a little like the clean, perfectly shiny mirror we used to show what it means to glorify God in all we think, feel, say, and do? So who would this heart describe? (Tape under “Jesus” with the shiny side facing out.)*
- **(Righteous)** *Righteous means to always think, say, and do what God says is right, always obeying God. Who perfectly obeyed all of God’s holy and righteous commands and never, ever sinned? (Tape Righteous onto the lower portion of the Shiny/God Heart.)*
- **(Unrighteous)** *Unrighteous refers to having a sinful heart. How is this proven to be true in our lives? What have we disobeyed? (Tape Unrighteous within the Darkened Heart.)*
- **(Eternal Life and Death & Hell)** *God is holy and righteous. He has decided that there is a certain “reward” or consequence for being each kind of person. Which sign goes where? (Tape Eternal Life beneath the Shiny/God Heart, and Death & Hell beneath the Darkened Heart.)*

So look what belongs to Jesus and look at what belongs to us. How did Jesus solve our problem?

Verses 1-3, three bags, tape, Cross visual, whiteboard

(Hand out **Verses 1-3** and the **three bags** to students. Call upon them in the following order to read the cards or reveal the content of the bag.)

Verse 1

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree... (1 Peter 2:24a)

What does the “tree” in this verse refer to? [the cross] Who was on that cross? [Jesus]

(**Tape** the **Cross** to the middle of the **whiteboard**. Draw an arrow from “Jesus” to the center of the Cross.)

The Bible tells us that Jesus was placed on a cross to die. That is the way the government punished really bad criminals back then. It was a very slow and painful way to die.

But these verses also tell us about something very important: While Jesus hung on the cross, He “bore” something in His body—He took something upon Himself to carry. What was it? [our sins] So what visual needs to go on the cross?

(Remove the **Darkened Heart/Unrighteous** visual from beneath “Us” and **tape** it to the center of the Cross.)

Verse 2

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities... (Isaiah 53:5a)

Verse 3

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace... Isaiah 53:5b

These words are describing Jesus’ death on the cross. Was Jesus “pierced” in any way? Yes, He was.

Bag 1, tape, nails

(Have a student open **Bag 1** and **tape** the **nails** to the **Cross**.)

- The Bible tells us that Jesus’ feet and hands were pierced through as He was nailed to the cross, making His death even more painful and bloody.

This verse also says that Jesus was “crushed” for our sins and received “chastisement” for us. What does that mean? It means that Jesus was punished.

Death & Hell visual

(**Tape** the **Death & Hell** visual on top of the **Darkened Heart** upon the **Cross**.)

- While Jesus hung on the cross, carrying all the sin of God’s people, God punished Jesus.
- God poured out His fierce anger—His wrath—on Jesus.
- God punished His own Son to death.
- Jesus willingly took the place of His sinful people. He received the punishment we deserve so that we could have peace with God.

Bag 2, Red Heart visual

(Have a student open **Bag 2** and **tape** the **Red Heart** on top of the **Death & Hell** visual on the **Cross**. Read the verse on the **Red Heart**.)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, (Ephesians 1:7a)

? *Why is it important that Jesus actually “shed” His blood when He died on the cross? [without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin—Hebrews 9:22]*

- Because of what Jesus has done, God’s people are completely and forever forgiven of their sins.
- Jesus has redeemed His people—He has saved His people from the punishment we deserve.
- But there is one more problem Jesus needed to solve in order for His people to be able to enjoy eternal life with God.

Jesus “took away” something from His sinful people—their sin and punishment—but there is also something we need to “get.” What must we have in order to enjoy eternal life with God?

(Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 as follows, emphasizing the last portion of the verse.)

2 Corinthians 5:21—For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Shiny/God/Righteous visual

(**Tape** the **Shiny/God/Righteous** heart beneath “Us.”)

Jesus gives His people His own righteousness. So now God looks on His people and sees them as righteous, because of Jesus.

? *And because they are counted as righteous, what promise do God’s people now receive? [eternal life]*

Tape, Eternal Life visual, Bag 3 with Empty Tomb visual inside

(Tape the **Eternal Life** visual beneath the Shiny/God/Righteous heart.)

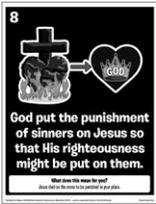
How do we know that this is true? How can we be sure that Jesus accomplished the mission that God sent Him to do? How can we be confident that Jesus has saved His people from sin, death, and hell? Has God given us any kind of proof? (Allow a few responses.)

(Have a student open **Bag 3** and remove the **Empty Tomb**. Ask the class what event this visual represents—Jesus’ resurrection. **Tape** the visual below “Jesus.” Draw an arrow from the center of the cross to the Empty Tomb.)

- After Jesus died on the cross, He was buried in a tomb.
- But Jesus did not stay dead. He rose from the dead in a resurrected body that will never die again.
- Jesus’ resurrection is *proof* that His mission to save sinners was finished once and for all time.

(Read 1 Peter 1:3.)

1 Peter 1:3—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,



(Display the **Gospel Poster 8** and recite the truth statements together. **Tape** this poster to the right of **Gospel Poster 7**.)

- 8. God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus so that His righteousness might be put on them.**
Jesus died on the cross to be punished in your place.

(Read Romans 5:8.)

Romans 5:8—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(End by having the students quietly ponder the following question for a few moments: When you think about all that Jesus has done for you, how He willingly received God’s terrible wrath and died so that you could be completely and forever forgiven, what would be the right way to respond?)

(Note: Save the Shiny/God Heart visual and the Paper Cross with Darkened/Red Hearts attached to use again in Lesson 10.)

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Jesus willingly suffered for sinners.**
 Ask the students to recall some of the terrible things Jesus endured before dying on the cross. [e.g., He was mocked, falsely accused, beaten, given a crown of thorns to wear, etc.] Remind them that when Jesus came to earth He became fully human with a real body like ours that can feel pain. Ask: *Did Jesus deserve to be treated*

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like this? Why not? Recall that Jesus is also fully God and rules over all people. Ask: *Could Jesus have stopped these bad things from happening? Then why didn’t He?* Read and talk about John 3:16-17.

- **Jesus takes away the sin of His people.**

Recall that, in the previous lesson, we learned that before the coming of Jesus, God had provided a temporary solution to sin. God covered the sin of His people by the sacrifice of animals—shedding their blood. Read John the Baptist’s words when he saw Jesus: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Ask: *Why would John refer to Jesus as a “lamb”? How is taking away sin different from covering sin? Which is better? Why?* (Give an illustration, such as sweeping dirt on a floor under a rug to cover it up versus sweeping the dirt up in a dust pan and throwing it away.) Ask: *Do you believe that your sin has been taken away, or do you feel like you are still carrying your sin? Who is the only one who can solve your sin problem?*

- **Those who trust in Jesus no longer need to fear death and hell.**

Point out that in previous lessons we described God’s just punishment of death and hell as the worst news of all. Now read and talk about John 3:18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Ask: *Who no longer needs to fear condemnation and God’s wrath—death and hell? What has God promised to those who are believing in Jesus for salvation?* [e.g., Romans 6:23] *Why is this the best good news of all? However, are there people who should fear death and hell? Why? What is their only hope? What is your only hope?*

- **Jesus is the perfect and final sacrifice for sin.**

Ask the students if your church ever sacrifices animals for the forgiveness of sin. Ask: *Why don’t we sacrifice animals like the people in the Old Testament did? How was Jesus able to act as a perfect substitute for sinners?* Review the visuals and verses that were used to show what happened on the cross. Then read and talk about 1 Peter 3:18a and Hebrews 9:26b. *Why is this the best good news of all? Do you believe this to be true for your own life? How would believing that Jesus truly died to save you change how a person lives?* (See for example 1 Peter 2:24b.)

- **Jesus gives His people His own righteousness.**

Have the students imagine they were playing outside, and their clothing gets ruined—all dirty, stinky, and torn. That afternoon, they are invited to a friend’s special party. So their mom has them remove the ruined clothes and takes them away to the trash. Ask: *Would you be ready for the party now? What do you need? Yes, clean clothes to wear.* This illustration can help us understand that we don’t simply need our sin taken away; we also need to be given a perfect righteousness in order to be pleasing and acceptable in God’s sight. Ask: *Why is Jesus alone able to give us a perfect righteousness? Why is receiving His righteousness a gift, not something we deserve or can earn? So what is the right way to receive a gift? How should this gift change a person’s life? Has it changed your life? In what way?*

- **A guaranteed living hope**

Ask the students what people often get when they purchase something at a store. Point out that a receipt is proof that you own something—you paid for it. Read and talk about 1 Peter 1:3. Ask: *Why is it important to know that Jesus was resurrected from the dead? What is meant by “a living hope”? What does Jesus’ resurrection from the dead prove? Who made the salvation of sinners possible? Who did all the work from beginning to end? What word does this verse use to remind us that salvation is a gift from God and not something we deserve and work for?*

- **Responding to Jesus**

Ask: *If a person can explain what happened when Jesus died on the cross, does that mean that person is saved? Can you recall any Bible verses that tell us the right way to respond to Jesus’ gift of salvation?* [e.g., John 3:16 and

John 11:25—believe in Jesus; Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 5:1—by faith in Jesus] *What does it mean to believe in Jesus? What does it mean to be saved by faith? Does belief and faith involve more than just knowing true things about who He is and what He has done? Why does it also involve your whole heart (your deepest desires and emotions) and your will (your choices and decisions and how you live)?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 9 (for each student)

Jesus Calls You to Repent and Believe in the Gospel

Main Ideas

- The gospel is the good news that there is salvation in Jesus.
- Salvation is a free gift of God and must be received by faith.
- True saving faith involves repentance of sin and believing in Jesus for who He is, what He has done, and all He has promised to do.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 9: God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.

What does this mean for you? God tells you to believe in Jesus and repent of your sins and you will be saved.
- ... *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* (Mark 1:15b)

Scripture

- Romans 6:23
- Mark 1:15
- Luke 15:14-20
- 2 Corinthians 7:10a
- John 20:31
- Ephesians 2:8-9

Curriculum Resources

- **Romans 6:23 (10A)**
- **Son and Pigs (10B)**
- Verses 1-2 (10C-10D, cut out)
- **Lesson 8 Review (10E, if the posterboard from Lesson 8 is not available)**
- Eternal Life (9G)
- **Gospel Poster 9 (10F)**
- Parent Page for Lesson 10 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Special-looking gift bag
- Posterboard for Lesson 8 (or use Lesson 8 Review)
- Paper Cross with Darkened/Red Hearts visuals attached (from Lesson 9)
- Shiny/God Heart visual with the Righteous visual attached (from Lesson 9)
- Choose one of these two options:
 - Option 1—Clear glass filled halfway with dirty water; box of plastic cling wrap.
 - Option 2—Sturdy rope
- Whiteboard or large piece of paper
- Whiteboard or regular markers

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Preparation

- Before class, write the following on a large piece of paper or whiteboard:

_____ and _____
 _____ in the _____

Large Group Lesson

Gift bag

(Display the **gift bag** and have the class imagine the following scenario.)

Suppose your parents told you that they had a really special gift for you to open—a gift so wonderful and exciting that they know you will absolutely love it! In fact, they tell you it’s the best and greatest gift they’ve ever bought for you.

Now pretend you did one of the following after receiving the package...

(Quickly act out the following scenarios using the **gift bag**.)

“I’m on my way to the park to play with friends. I don’t have time to open this right now.”

(Set down the **gift bag** and walk away from it.)

Or you said this: “I was hoping for a new bike. This obviously isn’t a bike, so I don’t want it.”

Or what if you said and did this: “Thanks. I’ll put this under my bed and save it with my other stuff. It might come in handy someday.”

Would any of these responses be a right way to receive a special gift? Why not? (Allow a few responses. Answers may vary.)

- In our last lesson, we learned about the greatest, best, and most costly gift of all time.

(See if the class can recite Romans 6:23 from memory, and then show the **Romans 6:23** visual.)

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

? *Why is receiving eternal life a gift?* [because we all are sinners who deserve death and hell] *Who purchased this gift for sinners?* [Jesus] *What was the “price” He paid for this gift?* [dying on the cross, shedding His own blood, experiencing God’s fierce anger at sin] *Who offers this gift to sinners?* [God]

- Salvation—being saved from death and hell in order to receive eternal life with God—is a gift from God.
- From beginning to end God, and God alone, has done all the work to save sinners.
- But, just like our beginning illustration demonstrated, there is a right way and wrong way to receive a gift.

Salvation is a free gift from God that must be received in the right way. God has decided the right way to receive salvation.



Activity

(Choose one of the following options.)

Paper/whiteboard
and markers

Option 1

(Display the **paper/whiteboard** that was prepared before class. Divide the class into two teams—boys vs girls. Call on a member of the first team to guess a letter. Write the correct guesses wherever that letter appears. Mark a point for incorrect guesses. Alternate turns between the two teams. The game ends when all the letters have been guessed. The winning team is the one with the fewest points.)

REPENT

and

BELIEVE

in the

GOSPEL

Option 2

Bibles for the
students

(Display the **posterboard/whiteboard** that was prepared before class. Have students turn to Mark 1:15 in their **Bibles**. Give them a moment to read the verse to themselves. Call on three volunteers to come up and write in the missing words on the posterboard/whiteboard.)

(Read Mark 1:15.)

Mark 1:15—[Jesus said]...“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

The way to receive the free gift of salvation is to repent and believe in the gospel.

What does it mean to repent? What does it mean to believe in the gospel? Let’s look at each, one at a time.

(Have the students turn to Luke 15:14-20 in their **Bibles**. Before reading the text from Luke, give a very brief introduction to the parable. Tell the students to listen carefully for someone demonstrating what it means to repent.)

- Jesus told a story about a young man who left the home of his loving father.
- Before leaving, the son asked to receive his inheritance (money) from his father so that he could spend his time living his own way, doing his own thing.
- The son spent the money on “reckless living”—he was living in a sinful way.



(As you read the text, stop at the underlined words and have the students call out the missing word, and then continue reading. Show the **Son and Pigs** visual at the appropriate spot.)

Luke 15:14-16—“And when [the son] had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.”

Luke 15:17-20—“*But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’”²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”*

(Quickly ask the following types of questions.)

- How would you describe how the son’s attitude had changed? What did he come to understand about doing things his own way?
- What did he realize about his own heart?
- Did he just sit and feel sorry for himself?
- What did he remember about his father? What did the son do in response?

This is an example of what it means to repent.

Verse 1-2 visuals

(Hand **Verse 1** to a student to read.)

Verse 1

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret... (2 Corinthians 7:10a)

- To repent means to experience a heartfelt sorrow for your sin in such a way that you hate your sin and want to turn away from it, just like the young man did.
- To repent also involves turning to Jesus for forgiveness—turning to Jesus for salvation.
- The right way to receive the gift of salvation involves this kind of repentance.
- Jesus gladly welcomes repentant sinners.

Let’s look now at what it means to “believe in the gospel.” First, what exactly is the gospel? Can you give a one sentence summary? (Allow a few responses.)

- A simple summary of the gospel: The gospel is the good news that there is salvation in Jesus.

(Hand **Verse 2** to a student to read.)

Verse 2

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)

- Believing in the gospel means believing in who Jesus is, what He has done for you, and all He has promised to do.

(Use the following **visuals from previous lessons** to very briefly elaborate.)

- (**Posterboard for Lesson 8 or Lesson 8 Review**) Who is Jesus?—He is the holy Son of God, fully God, became fully man, without sin, etc.

Posterboard
for Lesson 8 or
Lesson 8 Review



Paper Cross with Darkened and Red Hearts attached visual, Shiny/God Heart with the Righteous visual attached, Eternal Life visual

- **(Cross/Darkened and Red Hearts)** What has Jesus done?—Jesus took the sin of His people and was punished in our place so that we could be completely and forever forgiven. **(Shiny/God Heart with Righteous visual attached)** Jesus has given His people His perfect righteousness.
- **(Eternal Life)** What has Jesus promised?—The gift of eternal life for all who believe in Him.

But is believing IN Jesus simply saying something like, “Yes, I agree with all of those facts about Jesus. I know that I am a sinner. I know that Jesus died to save me”?

Illustration

(Quickly do one of the following.)

Option 1

(Display the **roll of plastic cling wrap**. Explain that the makers claim that it will cling to a container. Show the **glass of dirty water**. Cover the glass with the cling wrap and ask the students if they believe it will hold the water if the glass was turned upside down. What would demonstrate whether or not you truly “believed in” the cling wrap?)

Option 2

(Display the **rope** and give some specific details about it including its weight bearing capacity. Next, ask if they, knowing all of these facts about the rope, would trust it— put their full confidence in it—to hold all their weight if suspended from a high cliff? What would truly demonstrate whether or not you truly “believed in” the rope?)

(Emphasize the following points.)

- Believing in Jesus does involve knowing and affirming true things about Him, what He has done, and all that He has promised to do.
- But believing in Jesus is much more than simply “knowing” about Jesus.
- Believing in Jesus is trusting Him completely and placing your full confidence in Him to save you and trusting that He will forgive your sin and give you eternal life.
- Believing in Jesus is coming to Jesus, clinging to Him, loving Him more than anything else—it’s an ongoing relationship with Him.
- Believing in Jesus means believing in Him as your one and only Savior and King!

(Display the **Gospel Poster 9** and recite the truth statement.)

9. God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus. God tells you to believe in Jesus and repent of your sins and you will be saved.

The good news of the gospel is that there is salvation in Jesus! It is the best good news of all! God has decided that the right way to receive this gift of salvation is by repentance of sin and belief in Jesus. The Bible has a very special word that it uses to describe this. It’s called “faith.”

(Read Ephesians 2:8-9.)

Ephesians 2:8-9—For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Roll of plastic cling wrap, glass of dirty water
OR
Sturdy rope



Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Salvation is a free gift that must be received in the right way.**

Recall the beginning illustration in which the teacher gave examples of wrong ways to receive a gift. Ask: *What would those kind of responses show about the child's attitude toward their parents? What would the parents be right to do in this situation?* Point out that many people actually treat God's gift of salvation in a similar way. Read and talk about John 1:10-12. Ask: *Do you believe that salvation is the best, greatest, and most valuable gift offered to you? Have you responded in the right way? What does Jesus say you must do?*

- **Repentance is experiencing godly grief and running to Jesus.**

Recall the story of the young man from Luke. Have the children imagine that he just sat there with the pigs, feeling sorry for himself because he was miserable. Or suppose he simply decided to go looking for a better job. Ask: *Would that have demonstrated a repentant heart? Why not? What was important that he recognized about himself? What was important that he recognized about his father? What did he turn away from, and what did he turn and seek?* Review 2 Corinthians 7:10a. Ask: *Do you see yourself in this story? Have you experienced true, godly grief for your sin? Are you looking to Jesus alone to save you? What would "running to Jesus" look like in your life?*

- **Things that hinder people from true repentance.**

Point out that many of us want to do things our own way, thinking our own way is best. Recall the story from Luke. Ask: *When the young man first left home, did he probably enjoy doing things his own way at first? Might he even have felt proud of himself for living on his own? How did thinking this way hinder him from godly grief? How is repentance—godly grief that runs to Jesus for salvation—the "opposite" of feeling proud of yourself or thinking you should do things your own way?* (See also Luke 18:10-14.)

- **What it means to truly believe in Jesus**

Ask the students to, as quickly as possible, recall true things about Jesus—who He is, what He has done, and things He has promised to do. Ask: *Where do we learn these truths? Would Jesus be able to save you if these things were not true? Why not? When you think about believing in Jesus, do you simply think about saying the right words about who He is and what He has done? How is truly believing in Jesus more than just knowing the truth about Jesus? How does true belief "look, feel, and act" differently from just knowing facts? Point to the illustration of the cling wrap or the rope. What might this look like in someone's life?*

- **Repentance and belief are ongoing in the life of a Christian.**

Have the students imagine their parents gave them a terrific new bike as a gift. They gladly got on it and went for a bike ride. Ask: *Would you then park it in the garage and not ride it anymore? No, of course not. Your parents would want you to keep riding it.* Point out that there is a moment when a sinner comes to repentance for sin and turns to believe fully in Jesus for salvation—a person becomes a Christian. But just like the illustration of the bike, repentance and belief in Jesus are to be ongoing in a Christian's life. Ask: *What would ongoing repentance and belief look like in the life of a Christian?*

- **Sinners are saved by grace through faith.**

Show the students a coin and point out that, even though it has two different sides, the two sides are part of the same coin. Point out that repentance and belief in Jesus can be thought of in a similar way—they are both part of saving “faith.” They go together. Read and talk about Ephesians 2:8-9. Ask: *Do you see salvation as a gift from God, something you have done nothing to earn or work for?* That is what “by grace” means. Through “faith” means depending on Jesus alone to be saved, trusting in Him, and having complete confidence in Him. Ask: *What might this look like in someone’s life? How might a person demonstrate that salvation is the best, greatest, and most valuable gift you have ever been given?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 10 (for each student)

Following Jesus

Main Ideas

- Those who believe in Jesus are to grow up and mature into His likeness.
- God has given Christians His Word and the Holy Spirit to guide, help, and empower them to grow in maturity.
- God has promised that everyone who trusts in and follows Jesus will inherit eternal life.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Gospel Truth 10: Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life.
 What does this mean for you? If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, you must follow Him. Jesus has promised that, when you die, He will bring you to heaven.
- *...“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24b)*
- *...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work... (Colossians 1:10b)*

Scripture

- Ephesians 4:15b, 24
- Matthew 16:24
- Ephesians 5:1
- John 14:15 (1984 NIV)
- Colossians 1:10a
- 1 John 2:25

Curriculum Resources

- **Gospel Poster 9 (10F)**
- **Gospel Poster 10 (11A)**
- Cut out as indicated:
 - Thorny Plant (11B)
 - Trusting in Jesus (11C)
 - Jesus (11D)
 - Verses 1-4 (11E-11H)
 - Word 1-5 (11I-11M)
 - Bible (11N)
 - Holy Spirit (11O)
 - Eternal Life Ribbon (11P)
- Parent Page for Lesson 11 (for each student)

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Other Supplies

- Package of pea seeds
 - Small- to medium-sized plant pot (or something similar)
 - Potting mix or dirt
 - Whiteboard or large piece of paper
 - Whiteboard or regular markers
 - Tape
 - 3 straws, pencils, or sticks (see preparation)
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Preparation

- **Plant**—Fill the pot with potting mix or dirt. Securely tape the **Thorny Plant** visual to one of the straws, pencils, or sticks. Leave about 3-4 inches of the straw, pencil, or stick exposed from the bottom. The exposed end will be inserted in the soil during the lesson. Do the same for the **Jesus** visual and the **Eternal Life** visual.
- **Posterboard for Lesson 11**—On the whiteboard or large piece of paper write the following. Use the corresponding **Words 1-5** cards to guide the size of the scrambled words.
 1. woollf Jesus
 2. teamiit Jesus
 3. oyeb Jesus
 4. Live to elespa Jesus
 5. rabe fruit

Large Group Lesson

Package of pea seeds, pot of soil, Thorny Plant visual

(Display the **package of seeds** and the **pot of soil**. Tell the students that you recently planted some pea seeds in the pot. Point out that you followed the instructions on the package, watered the soil, and placed the pot in warm sunshine.)

If I were to show you this same pot next month, would you expect it to look the same or different in some way? Would you expect to see this?

(Insert the **Thorny Plant** visual into the soil.)

Why not?

(Display the **Gospel Poster 9** and quickly review the following points.)

- The gospel is the best good news of all. It is the news that there is salvation for sinners in Jesus!
- God has decided that the way to receive His free gift of salvation is by repentance of sin and belief in Jesus. This is the only way to be saved.



Pot of soil with the Thorny Plant visual, pea seed, tape, Trusting in Jesus heart

(Hold up the **pot of soil** again and remove the **Thorny Plant** picture. Have the students pretend for a moment that this pot represents a person. Next, hold up a pea seed and have them pretend it represents the gospel. Press the seed into the soil. Tape the **Trusting in Jesus** visual to the outside of the pot.)

Suppose this person says, “I have believed the good news of the gospel and have repented of my sins, and I am trusting in Jesus. He is my Savior. I am a Christian.”

What might we expect to see? What would a “gospel plant” grow up to look like? What kind of fruit would it produce?

(Read the following verses.)

Ephesians 4:15b—...we are to grow up in every way into him...into Christ.

Ephesians 4:24—...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

? What is a “gospel plant”—a Christian—supposed to grow up and be like? [Jesus, righteous and holy]

Jesus visual

(Insert the **Jesus** visual into the **pot of soil**.)

? Do you think that a Christian just sits back, relaxes, and waits for this to happen? (Allow a few responses.)

Whiteboard/
paper, Verses
1-4 visuals, tape,
Word 1-5 visuals

(Explain that we are going to look at six verses that show us about growing as a Christian. Display the **whiteboard/paper** and notice that the underlined words are scrambled—the letters are out of order. Next, hand **Verse 1-4** to four students. Have the class listen carefully as each verse is read and see if they can identify the scrambled word. Then, tape the correct **Word** to cover the scrambled one. Emphasize the points that follow each.)

Verse 1

...Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)

Word 1: Follow Jesus.

- Following after Jesus means turning away from your own sinful ways and doing things Jesus’ way instead.
- Following Jesus means trusting that His way is best, even when it is hard to follow.

For example, other people might make fun of you for being a Christian and even treat you badly. That’s really hard. Jesus knows this—He was treated worse than anyone else. But if you trust Him, you will follow Him even in the hard times.

Verse 2

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. (Ephesians 5:1)

Word 2: Imitate Jesus.

? What does it mean to “imitate” someone? What must you pay really close attention to in order to imitate someone?

- God not only sent Jesus into the world to save us from our sin but to show us how to live as His loved children.
- In order to grow in righteousness and holiness, we must look to Jesus: learning from Him, striving to be like Him in our thoughts, desires, and actions.

Verse 3

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15, 1984 NIV)

Word 3: Obey Jesus.

- If you truly love Jesus as your Savior, you will strive to obey Him in all things.
- Jesus’ commands—God’s commands—show us what thoughts, desires, and actions are right and good in every situation.
- When you disobey Jesus, it will cause you sorrow and regret, and you will seek His forgiveness.

Verse 4

...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work, (Colossians 1:10a)

Word 4: Live to please Jesus.

- If you are truly trusting in Jesus, you will want to live in a way that is pleasing to Jesus.
- Before you respond to a situation, ask yourself: *“Would these thoughts, feelings, words, or actions of mine bring a smile to Jesus’ face? Would He say to me, ‘Well done!’?”*

Word 5: Bear fruit.

- Those who are living to please Jesus will bear fruit.

What might this “fruit” look like? (Allow some responses.) [e.g., the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—Galatians 5:22-23; doing good works; spending more time reading your Bible; praying; telling others about Jesus; etc.]

- These verses offer a glimpse of what a *gospel plant* would look like.
- The gospel, when truly believed, will result in a person growing and maturing to become more and more like Jesus.

However, just as real seeds must have soil, water, warmth, and sunshine to grow, Christians are dependent on certain things, too—help that God gives to His children.

(Display the **Bible** and the **Holy Spirit** and **tape** each visual onto the outside of the **pot of soil**.)

- The Bible is absolutely necessary for growing as a Christian (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- We are to hunger and *feed on* God’s Word every day (1 Peter 2:2).
- God has also given His children the Holy Spirit, the Helper (John 14:26).
- The Holy Spirit is fully God and lives within every Christian to guide us and give us strength to grow.

There is also a promised reward or prize for everyone who loves, trusts, and follows Jesus. What is it?

Bible visual, Holy Spirit visual, tape, pot of soil

Eternal Life Ribbon, pot of soil

(Insert the **Eternal Life Ribbon** in the soil and read **1 John 2:25**.)

1 John 2:25—And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

(Display the **Gospel Poster 10** and read the truth statement together.)



10. Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life.

If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, you must follow Him. Jesus has promised that when you die He will bring you to heaven to enjoy the GREATEST TREASURE of all...

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **Growing to become more and more like Jesus**

Review and talk about the verses that were presented in the lesson. Give some concrete and practical ways these verses could be lived out. Ask the students to quietly think about the following: *If somebody were looking at your life this past week, would that person see signs of a “gospel plant”—someone who is slowly but surely growing to become more and more like Jesus? Would there be any evidence that you love Jesus and desire to obey Him? Would that person see any kind of righteous “fruit” in your life? Would they see you reading His Word and praying for help?*

- **Putting off sin and putting on the new self**

Pose the following scenario: *Suppose your parents gave you a brand new bike to replace your old rusty, broken-down bike that has dangerous wobbly wheels. Would your parents be pleased if you wanted to keep trying to ride the old bike instead? Why not?* Read and talk about Ephesians 4:21-24. Ask: *Why are Christians to “put off” our old sinful ways? What are we to “put on”? Why is this “new self” important?* (Recall Gospel Poster 3: God is holy and righteous, and we must be holy and righteous, too.) Jesus not only saves us from the judgment we deserve because of our sin, He also saves us so that we would become righteous and holy.

- **Seeking forgiveness when we sin**

Point out that even people who have been Christians for a long time will still sin. That is because, even though Christians have been given Jesus’ perfect righteousness, our sin nature is still within us and is at war against doing things Jesus’ way instead of our own way. This is not a surprise to God, and He tells His children what they are to do when they sin. Read and talk about 1 John 1:8-9.

- **Hungering for God’s Word**

Ask the students what happens if a plant is not given any water. Over time, it will wither and die. Plants must have water. In a similar way, Christians must have God’s Word to grow and bear fruit. Read and talk about one or more of the following: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:11, 14-16, 36-37, 103-105. Ask: *Are you depending on and making use of God’s Word in your life? How does a person do this?* [e.g., making reading the Bible a high priority, memorizing verses, paying attention when being taught from the Bible, etc.] *Can you give an example of how God’s Word has helped you grow?*

- **Depending on the Holy Spirit for help**

Point out that plants not only need water to grow, they also need power from the sun. In a similar way, Christians need God’s Word AND the Holy Spirit in order to grow. Just like God the Father and Jesus are fully God, the Holy Spirit is also fully God. Therefore, He is all-powerful. Read and talk about John 14:15-17. Ask: *Does a Christian ever need to worry that God will not be available or will be unable to help you? How does a Christian access or get help from the Holy Spirit? What does God tell us to do in order to get help and strength so that we might follow and obey Jesus in a certain situation?* [e.g., pray— Ephesians 6:18a; Philippians 4:6] Give an example of this in your own life and encourage the students to share any examples they might have.

- **God has promised to bring His people to maturity.**

Explain that farmers and gardeners have to be very patient people. Seeds take a long time to sprout, grow, and bear fruit. Talk about your own walk of faith and how long you’ve been a Christian. Give some examples of ways in which you (or an older Christian you know) have grown to become more Christ-like during that time. Read and talk about the hope of Philippians 1:6.

- **The importance of Jesus’ church**

Ask the students what would be more difficult—having to clean the house all by themselves, or having several other people to help. Explain that Jesus doesn’t expect His disciples to simply try and grow up on their own. Jesus has established local churches so that Christians will help one another grow into maturity. Read and talk about Ephesians 4:11-13. Ask: *In what ways do our pastors and teachers equip us?* (Point to some specific things: through the worship service, Bible studies, Sunday school, small groups, prayer meetings, etc.) *Can you give an example of something you have been helped by—something that has encouraged you to grow in love for Jesus? How could you help and encourage someone this week?*

- **Looking forward to the promise of eternal life**

Ask the students if they have ever won a prize or special reward for doing something that required a lot of effort and endurance. How did it feel? Did that feeling last? Did the prize or reward last? Were they glad they put in the effort to achieve the prize? Why or why not? Now review 1 John 2:25. Ask: *Who is this promise for? Why is it better than any other kind of prize? If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, how should this promise encourage you as you strive to follow Him?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 11 (for each student)

An Inheritance Like No Other

Main Ideas

- God has promised a priceless, eternal inheritance for all who are trusting in Jesus.
- Enjoying the presence of God forever is the greatest treasure a person can ever receive.

Memory Work

(Choose one of the following.)

- Review of Gospel Truths 1-10.
- *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)*

Scripture

- 1 Peter 1:3-4a
- Revelation 21:1-3
- Psalm 16:11

Curriculum Resources

- See Preparation
 - Gospel Poster 1 (2Q)
 - Gospel Poster 2 (3G)
 - Gospel Poster 3 (4A)
 - Gospel Poster 4 (5I)
 - Gospel Poster 5 (6I)
 - Gospel Poster 6 (7A)
 - Gospel Poster 7 (8A)
 - Gospel Poster 8 (9A)
 - Gospel Poster 9 (10F)
 - Gospel Poster 10 (11A)
 - Gospel Truths 1-10 (12A-12J)
 - Greatest Treasure Template 1-2 (12K-12L)
 - Treasure Template Cover 1-8 (12M-12T)
 - Inheritance 1-8 (12U-12BB)
- **New Car (12CC)**
- God Treasure Chest (12DD, cut out)
- Parent Page for Lesson 12 (for each student)

Other Supplies

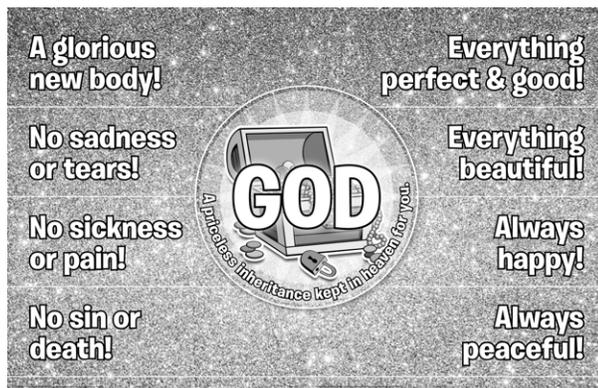
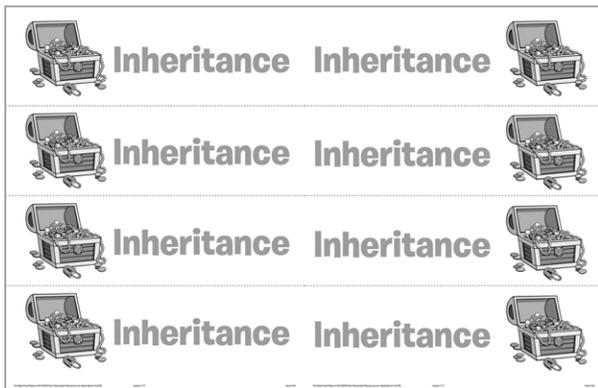
- 8 paper clips
- Glorify God Forever/Psalm 16:11 visual (from Lesson 4)
- 10 sheets of paper (see Preparation)
- Tape

Preparation

- **Gospel 1-10 Posters**—If these posters have been displayed on the classroom wall, cover them with sheets of paper for doing the opening activity.
- **Greatest Treasure Template**—Tape the two pieces of the **Greatest Treasure Template** together. (You will add the **God Treasure Chest** visual later during the lesson presentation.)

Cut out the **Treasure Template 1-8 Cover** pieces along the lines. Place each in its correct place on top of the Greatest Treasure Template, securing the pieces using paper clips along the outer edge of the template.

See the two graphics below, the one on the left showing the Greatest Treasure Template with all of the Treasure Template Cover pieces in place, and the one on the right with the Cover pieces removed and the God Treasure Chest visual taped in the center.



- **Inheritance Cards**—Before the lesson begins, hand out the eight **Inheritance** visuals to students. Do not tell them what they refer to yet. Tell them to keep the cards until you call upon them during the lesson.

Large Group Lesson

Activity

Gospel Truths 1-10,
optional tape

(Explain that you are going to do a quick review of our journey through the gospel. Hand out **Gospel Truths 1-10** to 10 students. When you give the signal to begin, they are to assemble them in the order they were presented in this study. They can either do this by standing in order while holding their Gospel Truth, or by taping the Gospel Truths in order on a whiteboard or wall. Finally, quickly recite the statements together in order.)

1. **God is the sovereign Creator of all things.**
2. **God created people for His glory.**
3. **God is holy and righteous.**
4. **Man is sinful.**
5. **God is just and is right to punish sin.**
6. **God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.**
7. **God sent His holy and righteous Son into the world to save sinners.**
8. **God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus so that His righteousness might be put on them.**

9. **God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.**
10. **Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life.**

What is so special about the promise of eternal life? Let's look at what the Bible has to say.

Bibles for the students

(Have the students turn to 1 Peter 1:3-4a in their **Bibles**. Have them follow along as you read. Pause at the underlined words and have the students call out the missing word.)

1 Peter 1:3-4a—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

- In His mercy, God has caused His chosen people, Christians, to be “born again”—giving them new hearts that repent of sin and truly believe in Jesus for salvation.
- ❓ *What is meant by Christians having a “living hope” or “living confidence”? [hope or confidence that is active, sure, and ongoing] Why is our hope a “sure thing” both now and forever? What do we know about what happened to Jesus after He died on the cross for our sins? [He was resurrected.]*
- These verses say that Christians will receive an inheritance—something very special and valuable will be given to us.



(Display the **New Car** visual.)

Suppose I inherited a brand new car. What will happen to it over time? The paint will fade. It will get dirty and rusty. It will need repairs. It might get into a car crash. It might even be stolen. Eventually, it won't work anymore and will need to be replaced.

- ❓ *How is the inheritance God has for Christians different? What three words does the Bible use to describe the inheritance that Christians will receive? [imperishable, undefiled, and unfading]*
 - Imperishable—this inheritance won't crumble or be destroyed. It will last forever.
 - Undefiled—it won't get dirty or ruined. It will remain perfect forever.
 - Unfading—it will always remain beautiful and lovely.
- ❓ *Where is this special inheritance being kept right now? [in heaven]*
 - The inheritance being kept for Christians can't be compared to any other reward—it is a priceless treasure.

What is this better-than-anything-else treasure? Let's find out.

Tape, Greatest Treasure Template assembled as described in the introduction, students with Inheritance 1-8 visuals

(**Tape the Greatest Treasure Template** to the whiteboard or wall. Call on the students who were given an **Inheritance** visual before class to come up to the front.)

Every Christian possesses a type of receipt—a guarantee—of receiving this priceless treasure.

(One at a time, have the students hand you their **Inheritance** card and then quickly remove **one of the covers from the template**. After this has been done, read each statement aloud.)

- A glorious new body!
- No sadness or tears!
- No sickness or pain!
- No sin or death!
- Everything perfect and good!
- Everything beautiful!
- Always happy!
- Always peaceful!

Think for a moment of one of the best and most exciting vacations you've ever had or something similar. Does it measure up to these statements? Why not? (Allow a few responses.)

- All these statements give a tiny glimpse of what the Bible tells us about the inheritance that awaits everyone who is trusting in Jesus and following Him.
- These statements show that the inheritance is a great and priceless treasure. Nothing else can compare.

But there is something missing from this inheritance... There is a "hole" at the very center. It is the most important part of the inheritance because, without it, none of these other treasures and rewards would be possible. What is missing? The Bible has the answer.

(Read Revelation 21:1-3 and emphasize the word "God" as you read.)

Revelation 21:1-3—Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

What is the greatest and best inheritance? What is missing from the visual? [God]

Tape, God visual, Greatest Treasure Template, Gospel Poster 10

(**Tape** the **God** visual within the center of the **Greatest Treasure Template** and tape the template to the right of **Gospel Poster 10**.)

Weeks ago, at the beginning of our study, we said we were going on a journey through the gospel so that we might better understand why it is the best good news of all. And we said that there was a certain destination or goal that the gospel was meant to lead us to.

Glorify God Forever/Psalm 16:11 visual

(Display the **Glorify God Forever/Psalm 16:11** visual and **tape** it below the **God** visual.)

 *Does anyone remember what is tucked away inside this heart?*

(Choose a student to come and remove the **Psalm 16:11** card.)

Psalm 16:11—You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The gospel exists to lead us to the greatest treasure of all—being able to enjoy living in God's presence forever, seeing Jesus face to face, glorifying Him forever! That is what the Bible means by "eternal life." It is the promise for everyone who is truly trusting in Jesus for their salvation.

(End in a time of prayer. Pray that the students would trust in Jesus as the one and only “path of life” so that they might receive and enjoy the greatest treasure of all.)

(Note: You will need the Greatest Treasure Template/God visual for Lesson 13.)

Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **An incomparable priceless inheritance**

Ask the students to think about a favorite gift they’ve received for their birthday or Christmas. What did they enjoy about it? Will they still feel the same way about it 10 years from now? Review and talk about 1 Peter 1:3-4a. Ask: *What is different about this inheritance compared to your favorite gift? How is it millions of times better? Who will receive this inheritance? Can you see it now? But if you are trusting in Jesus, why can you be confident that you will receive it?*

- **God’s sure promise for all who believe**

Read and talk about some of the following promises that Jesus made regarding eternal life: John 3:16; John 6:40; John 10:27-29; John 11:25; John 14:1-3. Emphasize that the promise of eternal life is for those who are trusting in Jesus for salvation. Ask: *Why does Jesus repeatedly assure His disciples about the promise of eternal life? How do we know that God is able to keep this promise? How are these promises meant to encourage Christians? What don’t Christians need to fear? How should that change the way we live?*

- **Experiencing Jesus as your greatest treasure**

Read and talk about how the Apostle Paul expressed all that Jesus meant to him from Philippians 3:8. (See also Psalm 73:25-26.) Ask: *Why do you think Paul felt that way about Jesus? What did he know to be true of Jesus? What had Jesus done for him? Do you see Jesus as your greatest treasure? What kinds of things might try to pull your heart away? What can you do about this? What are some steps you could take this week to help you see Jesus as the greatest treasure in your life?*

- **Looking forward to heaven**

Point out that many people simply think of heaven as living forever in a perfect, new world. Review the statements that were first uncovered on the Greatest Treasure visual and emphasize that all those things are true of heaven. Heaven is a real place where God will live forever with His people. Now review Revelation 21:1-3 and Psalm 16:11. Ask: *What kinds of things are you experiencing now that make you eager for heaven? Are you looking forward to being able to see Jesus face to face some day? If a person is not looking forward to this, why might that be?*

- **Running with the greatest treasure in mind**

Have the students imagine that they are training for a race or some other kind of contest. Would it affect *how* they train and compete knowing that the prize was \$1,000? In what ways? Now read Paul’s illustration in 1 Corinthians 9:24-26. Ask: *What does Paul want us to understand about living the Christian life? What is the prize he is referring to? Would you say that you are paying more attention to striving to follow Jesus than you are to pursuing “earthly prizes”—like having more friends, winning at sports, getting good grades, etc.? What would running toward the prize of eternal life—trusting and following Jesus—look like in a person’s life?*

- **Sharing the best good news of all**

Point out that Jesus wants His disciples to share the good news of the gospel with others so that they might come to see and experience God as their greatest treasure. Ask: *Is there someone you know that needs to hear the best good news of all? How could you pray for that person? Is there a way you could share the gospel truths that we have learned?* Pray together for some specific people that the students bring to mind.

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 12 (for each student)

Where Is Your Treasure?

Main Ideas

- What we treasure shows what we truly love.
- God is the greatest treasure and worthy of our greatest love.
- True, lasting happiness is found in loving Jesus most of all.

Memory Work

- *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:8)*

Scripture

- Matthew 19:16-22
- Matthew 6:21
- Philippians 3:8

Curriculum Resources

- See Preparation
 - Heart and “God” Circle (13A-13B)
 - Treasures 1-8 (13C-13J)
 - Optional for Small Group Application (for each small group): Verses 1-8 (AR-13)
- Parent Page for Lesson 13 (for each student)

Other Supplies

- Greatest Treasure Template/God visual (from Lesson 12)
- See Preparation
 - Gift Bag
 - Adult volunteer
 - Optional for Small Group Application (for each small group): Small gift bag

Preparation

- **Heart**—Cut out the **Heart** visual and cut out the **“God” Circle** inside the heart as a separate piece to add back during the lesson presentation.
- **Gift Bag**—Cut out **Treasures 1-8** and place them inside the Gift Bag
- **Testimony**—Prepare to have an adult volunteer ready to share his testimony at the end of the lesson (4-5 minutes). Option 1: Choose someone who can share from first-hand experience “losing something” for the sake of following Jesus (e.g., a missionary from your church, someone shunned by family or friends, exposed to danger, etc.). Option 2: Give a biographical sketch that conveys the same (e.g., John Newton, Corrie ten Boom, Jim Elliot, etc.).
- **Optional for Small Group Application**—Cut out the **Verses 1-8** cards and place them in the small gift bag.

Large Group Lesson

(Briefly recall that in our very first lesson we learned about a paralytic—a man who couldn't walk, who was brought to Jesus because he wanted to be healed and walk again. Today we are going to learn about another man who came to Jesus wanting something, too.)

(Have the students turn to Matthew 19:16-22. Read the text as follows, pausing at the underlined words for the students to read aloud.)

Matthew 19:16-22—And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”¹⁷ And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”¹⁸ He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”²⁰ The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

- ❓ *What important question did this young man ask Jesus? What did he want to know? [he wanted to know how to gain eternal life—what he needed to do in order to get it]*
- ❓ *What did Jesus say the young man needed to “keep” in order to receive eternal life? [keep God’s commandments] After Jesus gave him examples of certain commandments, did the young man believe he had kept these commands? [yes]*
- ❓ *Even though the young man believed he had kept these commands, he still realized that he lacked something—something was missing from his life. What did Jesus tell him he must do? Look at verse 21. [sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Jesus]*
- ❓ *How did the young man respond? [he went away sorrowful, unhappy]*
 - The young man thought eternal life was to be gained simply by *checking off a list* of things to do.
 - Jesus knew this and wanted to show the young man something very important about his heart condition—what he treasured and loved most.

(Read Matthew 6:21.)

Matthew 6:21—“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- What we treasure—what we consider really valuable and important to us—is showing what we truly love.
- Jesus was showing this man that he loved and valued his possessions more than he loved and valued Jesus.

Why is this story important for each of us? Because we all treasure some things over others. And what we love most will either lead to amazing happiness forever or terrible sadness forever.

Heart visual, gift bag with Treasure slips inside

(Explain that you are going to do a treasure quiz—giving examples of things that people treasure and love. Have a student come to the front and hold the **Heart** visual against his chest with the words “Loving _____ as Your Greatest Treasure!” facing outward. Next, choose students to quickly come and remove a **Treasure** slip from the **gift bag**. One at a time, read each slip aloud and briefly place it within the empty circle on the Heart visual, noting that it doesn’t “fill” or complete the heart.)

- **Treasure 1—Sports**
- **Treasure 2—Money**
- **Treasure 3—Games**
- **Treasure 4—Television**
- **Treasure 5—Toys**
- **Treasure 6—Pets**
- **Treasure 7—Friends**
- **Treasure 8—Family**

(Take the **Heart** visual from the student and have him return to his seat.)

- Everyone has things they love and treasure—things they think will bring them joy and happiness.
- All of these things can bring us some measure of happiness, and many are wonderful gifts given to us to enjoy.
- Some, like friends and family, *should* be loved and treasured more than other things.

Even loving and treasuring your family most of all cannot bring you the promise of eternal life. It cannot bring you “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

? *What have we learned is the greatest and best treasure? [God]*

Greatest Treasure Template/God

(Display the **Greatest Treasure Template/God** visual from the previous lesson.)

? *So who are we to love and treasure most of all? [God] Why is it right that God should be treasured and loved more than anything else? What is true of God? (Take a few moments and encourage the students to recall some of God’s attributes and what Jesus has done to save sinners: One true God, Creator of everything, everlasting King, loving, merciful, powerful, wise, good, died on the cross for sinners, righteous and holy, etc.)*

“God” piece, tape, Heart visual

(Display the missing “**God**” **Circle** visual and **tape** it within the **Heart** visual so that it now reads “Loving God as Your Greatest Treasure!” Have the student return to his seat.)

This is how the Apostle Paul described this kind of love for Jesus as compared to any other earthly treasure...

(Read Philippians 3:8.)

Philippians 3:8—Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

- Jesus is a treasure so valuable that everything else is like garbage in comparison—He is worthy of our greatest love.

- If you are trusting in Jesus, He will be more important to you than anything or anyone else!

? *How might a person show that Jesus is his greatest treasure and that he loves Jesus more than anything else? (Encourage some responses, which may include things such as spending time with Jesus through reading the Bible and praying, prioritizing going to church over other activities, being eager to share with others what Jesus means to him, seeking to obey Jesus even when it's hard, etc.)*

In what ways might a Christian suffer loss in order to follow Jesus as their greatest treasure? Let's hear [from someone/about someone] who has experienced this very thing.

(Have the adult share his testimony or give the class the biographical sketch. End the lesson by praying that the students would experience Jesus as their greatest treasure and follow Him all their days.)

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Small Group Application

Depending on the age of your students and time available, choose one or more of the following suggestions for interacting with the students.

- **The surpassing worth of Jesus**

(Use Optional Gift Bag and **Verse 1-8** cards, if available.) Tell the students that inside the bag are verses that have been presented during the study. One by one, choose students to remove a verse card from the bag. Discuss what each verse tells us about who God is and what He is like. Ask: *How do these verses show that God is most special and the greatest treasure of all? How does God compare to other things or people? How has God shown His love for us in a way that no one else could? Review Philippians 3:8. Why is knowing and gaining Jesus of "surpassing worth"? This week, what would help to remind you that Jesus is the greatest treasure of all and deserves your best and greatest love? Is there anything you need to "count as loss" compared to Jesus—something that you treat as more valuable?*

- **True love for Jesus will be evident in our lives.**

Ask the students to imagine meeting someone who really loves [baseball]. *How will you know that they love it? How might they talk about it? [e.g., that person spends a lot of time practicing and playing, he talks about it with excitement and joy, his room is filled with baseball stuff, etc.] If you love Jesus as your greatest treasure, what might that look like? What would others see and hear from you?* If possible, point the students to examples of one or more people you know who give evidence of this in their lives.

- **Growing in love for Jesus**

Have the students think about someone they love very much. What is it about that person that causes their hearts to love that person? Ask: *Do you have this same kind of love toward a stranger? Why not? How can knowing more about someone and spending more time with them cause your love to grow even stronger? Do you think this is also true about Jesus? Are there any steps you can take this week to grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus?*

- **Looking to Jesus and away from earthly treasures**

Ask the students to imagine that they spent their free time every day going to candy stores. In doing so, would they be more or less likely to buy and eat a lot of candy? Why? Ask: *Do you spend a lot of time eagerly looking for and surrounding yourself with new and exciting earthly treasures—a new and better bike, more time watching TV, the latest Lego® set, etc.? Why do we find things like this so appealing? How do they give us some measure*

of happiness? But is there any way that they might draw away our hearts from seeing and loving Jesus as our greatest treasure? Is there anything that hinders you from treasuring Jesus most of all? Do you need to take any steps in order to change how much you fill your life with earthly treasures?

▪ **Loving Jesus most of all will increase our love for others.**

Have the students think of a huge waterfall where the water just keeps coming and coming, never running out. Ask: *Suppose you placed a drinking glass under the waterfall. What would happen?* [the glass would fill up and overflow] Point out that God’s love is like that waterfall and Christians are like the glass, filled to overflowing. Loving Jesus most of all is meant to *overflow* in love for others. Read and talk about Mark 12:29-31. *Can you give some examples of how Christians are to love other people? How might this look in your own family? In our church? To the kids in your neighborhood or at school? How do some Christians even go and bring His love around the world? What is one thing you could do this week to show someone the love of Jesus and the treasure that He is?*

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Send Home

- Parent Page for Lesson 13 (for each student)

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Additional Materials You Will Need

The following resources are not provided as Curriculum Resources (electronic downloads). Most are common household items, but a few might require planning and preparation. We recommend that you review this list before starting this curriculum to make sure you have everything you will need.

For Every Lesson

- Bible (preferably English Standard Version)
- Your students should have Bibles as well.
- Whiteboard and markers
- Tape

Lesson 1

- Small gift bag

Lesson 2

- Children's fictional storybook (one that students might be less familiar with)
- See Preparation
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard (or whiteboard)
 - Regular or whiteboard markers

Lesson 3

- See Preparation
 - 4 items made in the likeness of real things (e.g., toy car, plastic fruit, small doll, stuffed animal, etc.)
 - 4 gift bags
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Glue
- Hand mirror (see Preparation)
- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 2 (or the Lesson 2 Review)

Lesson 4

- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 3 (or use Lesson 3 Review)
- Special glass object
- Hand mirror (from Lesson 3)

- Large whiteboard and markers
- Length of ribbon (needed if large whiteboard isn't available)
- Glue

Lesson 5

- See Preparation
 - Face paint, washable marker, or large sticker
- Special glass object (from Lesson 4)
- Mirror (identical or similar size as above)
- See Preparation
 - Black tempera paint or acrylic paint and dirt (or dirt, water, and flour)
 - Paint brush
 - Small plastic/glass container with lid
 - 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
 - Regular or whiteboard markers
- Completed Posterboard for Lesson 3 (or use Lesson 3 Review)

Lesson 6

- Treat (ingredients or mix for small batch of cookies or cupcakes, or a bag of microwave popcorn)
- Plate or large bowl
- Red-colored fabric (e.g., kitchen towel, tissue paper, etc.)
- Muddied mirror (from Lesson 5)
- Glorify God Forever visual (from Lesson 4)
- Clean mirror/God's Commands visual (from Lesson 5)

Lesson 7

- Glorify God Forever visual (from Lesson 4)
- Small gift bag or box

Lesson 8

- See Preparation
- 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
- Regular or whiteboard markers
- Red-colored fabric or paper (from Lesson 6 if available)
- Several pieces of red paper (or something similar)
- Muddied mirror (from previous lessons)
- Clean mirror/God's Commands visuals (from previous lessons)
- Glorify God Forever visual (from previous lessons)

Lesson 9

- 22" x 28" white- or light-colored posterboard or whiteboard
- Regular or whiteboard markers
- See Preparation
- Aluminum foil
- Glue
- 3 bags (gift or paper bags)
- 2 large nails

Lesson 10

- Special-looking gift bag
- Posterboard for Lesson 8 (or use Lesson 8 Review)
- Paper Cross with Darkened/Red Hearts visuals attached (from Lesson 9)
- Shiny/God Heart visual (from Lesson 9)
- Choose one of these two options:

- Option 1—Clear glass filled halfway with dirty water; box of plastic cling wrap
- Option 2—Sturdy rope
- Whiteboard or large piece of paper
- Whiteboard or regular markers

Lesson 11

- Package of pea seeds
- Small- to medium-sized plant pot (or something similar)
- Potting mix or dirt
- Whiteboard or large piece of paper
- Whiteboard or regular markers
- 2 straws, pencils, or sticks (see Preparation)

Lesson 12

- 8 paperclips
- Glorify God Forever/Psalm 16:11 visual (from Lesson 4)
- 10 sheets of paper (see Preparation)

Lesson 13

- Greatest Treasure Template/God visual (from Lesson 12)
- See Preparation
- Gift bag
- Adult volunteer
- Optional for Small Group Application (for each small group): Small gift bag

Memory Verse Games and Activities

- **Patterns**—Seat the children in a circle. Review the memory verses using SIMPLE patterns. For example, clap on each word of the verse; clap and tap the floor (e.g., Genesis-clap, 1-tap, 1-clap, In-clap, the-tap, beginning-clap, etc.).
- **Object Hunt**—Place a slip of paper containing a verse reference inside small containers in the room (e.g., plastic eggs, small boxes). “Hide” containers around the room in plain view when the children are not looking. Seat the children in a group. Call on a child to find a container and take out the Bible verse. Read the reference and ask the children to recite the verse.
- **Act It Out**—Read the verse to your children. Talk about what the different words mean, and then come up with hand motions to help everyone remember the verse. Using the hand motions, recite the verse together until the children can do it without your help.
- **Picture It**—Print the memory verse on letter-size paper, giving lots of space between lines of text. Give one copy to each child and read the verse together. Talk about what the verse means, and then have each child draw matching pictures for as many of the words as possible.
- **Puzzle It**—Print the verse on letter-size paper. Glue the verse to a piece of colored construction paper or cardstock. Once the glue has dried, cut the construction paper into puzzle pieces and store in an envelope (one puzzle per envelope). Give each child a puzzle to put together.
- **Echo It**—Split the memory verse into logical phrases that are easy to memorize. After you speak a phrase, have the children “echo” after you. To add variety, you may want to use different voices from time to time. Repeat the verse, gradually putting the phrases back together into larger and larger parts, until the children are able to recite it without your help.
- **Put It Together**—Print out the memory verse, leaving space between words and lines. Cut the verse apart so that each word is separated from another. Mix up the word pieces. Students must place the words in the correct order.
- **Line It Up**—Write each word of the verse on a separate index card. Hand one card to each child. At your command, they are to line the cards up in the correct order as quickly as possible. Note: This can also be made into a team game, using multiple sets of cards given to different groups. Groups should compete to be the first one to line up the cards in the correct order. (Variation: Tape a card onto the back of each child, have that child ask questions to find out which word is on his back, and then line up in verse order.)
- **Erase a Word**—Write the memory verse on the board. Erase the verse a word at a time, each time asking the children to recite the verse.
- Write each word of the memory verse on a slip of paper. Children must place the slips in the correct order.
- Children line up or sit in a circle. Each child says a word (or phrase) of the verse, going from child to child.
- Write the first letter of each word of the memory verse on the board. Children then try to write the verse.
- **Ping Pong**—Children call out the first phrase of a verse; another child calls back the second phrase, and so forth. This can be played in pairs or in teams with the children facing each other in a line.
- Children sit around a table. Someone writes the first word or phrase of a verse (or the reference) on a sheet of paper and passes it to the next person who writes the next word or phrase, and so forth until the verse is completed. The next person starts another verse, and so forth. By timing the children to see if they can “beat” their previous time, you can liven up the activity. Timing the activity may help you determine which verses and how many to include (e.g., see how many verses can they write in 10 minutes).
- Have a “spelling bee” to review verses.

- **Hot Potato**—Have children sit on the floor in a circle. The first child says the first word of the verse and rolls a ball to anyone in the circle. The child receiving the ball says the second word of the verse and so on.
- **Verse Relay**—Divide the children into two teams. Place a chalkboard, whiteboard, or large sheet of paper at a distance from the starting line. Hand the first child of each team a writing implement, and on the shout of “Go” have him run to the writing surface and write the first word of the verse. Then have him return to his team and hand the writing implement to the second person. The team that finishes writing the verse correctly first wins. (For pre-readers, you can have an adult write the word for the child.)
- **Verse Symbols**—(Note: This one is great for preschool and kindergarten.) To help memorize the verse, assign hand symbols to the words and phrases. For example, walking fingers on your palm can symbolize sheep, cup your ears for listen, place hands around mouth for voice, etc. After saying the verse several times with the symbols, see how well the kids can say the verse by themselves while watching you do the hand symbols.
- **Sing the Verse**—(Note: This one is great for preschool and kindergarten.) Practice saying the verse out loud several times, then have the kids sing the verse to God in praise and thanksgiving.
- **Team Scramble**—Before class, write each word of the verse on separate index cards. Say the verse together as a group several times. Divide the kids into two teams. Have a race to see which team can put the cards in order so the verse reads correctly in the shortest amount of time.

Books of the Bible Games and Activities

Note: If you are using these games with pre-readers, you will have to read the names of the books to the children. You may also need to start with a limited number of books of the Bible and expand the number as children become more familiar with the names and order of the books.

- Write the name of each of the books of the Bible on a folded sheet of paper. String a clothesline across the front of the room. Hand the children these sheets as they come in, or hide the sheets around the room. The children then approach the clothesline and try to arrange the books of the Bible in order. Adults should be on hand to help the children look in the table of contents in their Bibles if necessary.
- For each child, make a set of slips of paper with a name of a book of the Bible on each slip. (These can be easily made by copying a list of the names and cutting them apart with a paper cutter.) Children must place the slips in order. When they have finished, they may help a friend. In the beginning, children may need to use the table of contents. Slips can be kept in an envelope and used periodically.
- **Next Card Please**—This game works best if you have six or more children. Deal out all the cards, excluding category cards, to every child. Have the children stand in a line a few feet away from a table. Explain that the object is to place all the cards in order on the table as quickly as possible. Use a stopwatch to determine how long it takes. As the children hold the cards so they can see them, start the game by asking who has Genesis, and have that child run to the table and place the card on the far left side. Then he will go back to where he stood on the line. The child who has Exodus runs up and places his card next. Continue until the children place all of the cards on the table in the correct order. Record how long it took. Then, set a goal to have kids beat their previous time and play again.
- Write the names of the books of the Bible on the side of a cereal box using one box for each book of the Bible (so they can be stacked on top of each other, or lined up like books on a bookcase.) Using these books of the Bible blocks, play one of the following games:
 - **Order the Stack Game**—Divide your children into teams of two or three and have the teams take turns stacking the boxes in order. Give them a certain amount of time to stack. Mix up the boxes after each team takes a turn. The team that stacks the most boxes in the correct order wins.
 - **Books of the Bible Relay Race**—Divide your children into teams. Place the mixed-up boxes and one team at one end of the room. Have the teams take turns picking up boxes, racing to the other end of the room, and placing them in order. Time how long it takes each team to complete the task. The team that completes it the fastest wins. Or you can play using the whole class as one team. Time them to see how long it takes. Have them repeat the game to see if they can beat their time.
 - **Which Book Is Missing?**—Pick five to 10 consecutive books of the Bible and display them in front of the class. Pick one child to remove one of the books (Boxes) while the other children close their eyes or turn around. Have the children all turn around at the same time and see who can discover which book is missing first. The child who answers correctly first gets to take a turn and remove a book.

- Print the name of each book of the Bible on a sheet of paper. (You may want to laminate the sheets.) Using the sheets, play one of the following games:
 - Put all of the pages on the floor and have the children put them in order.
 - Hand out the pages to individual children and have them line up in order.
 - Put the pages in order in a line on the floor (or have the children do it), and then have them walk beside the sheets reading the names aloud as they go down the line.
 - Put the pages all over the floor in order. Call out a book of the Bible and have the children find that page and go stand by it.
 - Similar activities can be invented to help children to learn other biblical information (e.g., the Ten Commandments).
- **Bible Songs**—There are a number of good Books of the Bible songs for children. Choose one of these songs and teach it to your classroom. Make a poster of the books of the Bible so that you can point to each book as you sing its name. Not only will this help keep the children together and reinforce the order, but it will also help familiarize them with the spelling of each name.
- **Recite in Rhythm**—Have the teacher start a rhythm, which the children then join in (e.g., slap the knees twice, clap twice). At some point in the rhythm (for example, after the second hand clap), have the children say a book of the Bible, starting with Genesis or Matthew. Have them progress with the other book names in order.
- **Echo the Books**—Have a teacher lead in reciting the books, pausing after each name so that the children can echo. As the children learn the order, the teacher can say more books between echoes, until the children recite the books without the help of the teacher.
- **Hide and Seek Scramble**—Before the children come into the classroom, hide your Books of the Bible Boxes or Signs around the classroom. As each child enters the room, hand him a slip of paper with one book of the Bible written on it. This is the book he is in charge of finding. As children find the books, they should bring them to the front of the room and start putting them in order. Have an adult leader there to help them put the books in order. If needed, children should be assigned to find more than one book. The game is done when all the books have been found and put in the correct order. (Note: If you don't have time to do a whole testament, consider focusing on just a section of the Bible.)

Discerning a Child's Profession of Faith

by Jill Nelson

As parents and teachers, our greatest goal for our children and youth should be that they come to genuine faith in Christ and live as His faithful disciples for the glory of God. Therefore, clearly presenting and explaining the essential truths of the gospel and demonstrating what it means to follow Jesus in daily life is our greatest duty and privilege as we teach and train them. But it's harder to discern or assess whether or not a child has truly understood and grasped the meaning of the gospel. Therefore, we can better serve our children and youth by applying wise discernment when we share the gospel with them.

One way in which parents and teachers can be more discerning when a child professes faith in Christ is by asking some specific questions. In his excellent book, *The Faith of a Child: A Step-By-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child*, Pastor Art Murphy provides some questions to help discern a child's profession of faith. Here are a few:¹

- *Can the child explain in his or her own words the basics of becoming a Christian?*
- *When explaining how one becomes a Christian, does the child use "good works" answers such as "going to church, reading the Bible, getting baptized, praying, being good," etc.? Or do his answers mention his need for forgiveness?*
- *Does the child have an affection for Jesus or a strong desire to be close to Him?*
- *Does he show a passion to follow Jesus or just a basic knowledge of the facts about Him?*
- *Does the child demonstrate a personal need or desire to repent of his sin? Is the child ashamed of the sin in his life? Knowing what sin is, is not the same as being ashamed of sin. If a child is not repentant but goes ahead and makes a decision to become a Christian, then his decision is premature and incomplete.*
- *Listen to how he talks about salvation. Is there an urgency on his part? Does he have a personal desire to talk about salvation?*
- *Does the child demonstrate a personal desire to make this commitment with his life, or is he just being agreeable with those around him who want him to become a Christian?*
- *Is this a way of getting some undivided attention or public recognition?*
- *What influenced him most to make this choice?*
- *Has his decision come after realizing how much he needs and wants Jesus in his life?*

When using questions such as these, it's always important to keep in mind that God is ultimate in a child's salvation. His sovereign grace will have the final say, not our efforts, nor a child's ability to articulate what he or she has experienced in his mind and heart. But these questions are helpful reminders for parents and teachers to apply great care and wisdom when our children and youth express a desire to repent and believe the good news of the gospel and pray for the Holy Spirit to do His life-giving work.

¹ Art Murphy, *The Faith of a Child: A Step-By-Step Guide to Salvation for Your Child*. (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Publishers, 2000), 73-78.

Practical Implications for the Classroom

1. As you interact with your students, it is important to ask yourself, “Have the children in my classroom or small group been exposed to these key gospel truths in a manner that is biblically accurate and age-appropriate?”

Often, a child will demonstrate spiritual curiosity or even a desire to “trust in Jesus” devoid of an adequate understanding of the gospel. For example, many are drawn to the loving nature of Jesus without recognizing their own sin and need for repentance. It is good to be drawn to Jesus’ loving nature, but His love also serves to expose our sin and need for a Savior. Jesus is not merely a loving figure; He is the righteous Son of God who alone has the power to forgive our sin and rescue us from God’s just condemnation. Therefore, we need to be discerning when a student asks questions concerning salvation or expresses interest in faith in Jesus. If he seems to show a sincere and tender heart toward trusting in Jesus, it may be helpful to briefly review the essential truths of the gospel to better discern whether he understands its basic facts and implications.

Furthermore, we should be careful to use biblical language when presenting the gospel. For example, asking, “Would you like to invite Jesus into your heart?” may distort the gospel’s clear language that you must *believe in* (trust or have faith in) Jesus in order to be saved.

2. We must also recognize our role as teachers and mentors: We are to support and assist believing parents as they assume the primary responsibility for nurturing their child’s faith.²

God has given parents the primary role of biblical instruction and gospel proclamation in their child’s life (Deuteronomy 6:7; 2 Timothy 3:14-15). For Christian parents, there is no greater joy than seeing your children come to faith. As teachers, we should always seek a secondary role, especially as it relates to a child responding to the gospel in faith. This does not mean we should ignore a student who seems to be demonstrating a sincere desire to repent and believe the gospel. However, we can use these God-appointed opportunities to encourage the child and involve his parents. For example, suppose the Holy Spirit has been at work in a student’s heart in your small group. During an application discussion, he expresses an informed and sincere desire to repent of his sin and put his trust in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. You could both encourage him and also play a secondary role to his parents by praying with him in the following manner:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving Joe a heart that wants to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins. I praise You that you are at work in his life. Please help Joey to truly know and understand who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. May Joey seek to love, trust, and obey Jesus with all his heart. When Joey goes home today, I pray that he will talk with his dad and mom about how You are working in his heart.

Then contact his parents and talk to them about your conversation with their son.

Be in fervent prayer and trust in God’s sovereign grace.

As teachers, we do have a responsibility to articulate the gospel and challenge students to respond to it in faith. But ultimately, their salvation depends on God. He alone is able to bring about regeneration and saving faith. Therefore, in our desire for saving faith, we must not be manipulative and try to bring about something devoid of the work of the Holy Spirit. Children tend to want to please adults, especially those they particularly admire. Pressuring a student to say a prayer or make a premature confession of faith does not serve to advance the gospel or nurture the soul of the child. We must pray for God to act in their hearts and trust His good and sovereign grace. We must rest in this great truth from Romans 8:30:

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

² See “Ministering to Children from Non-Christian Homes” in this Appendix.

Ministering to Children from Non-Christian Homes

by Jill Nelson

Having students in your classroom from unbelieving homes provides both opportunities and challenges. For example, your words, demeanor, and actions can serve as a beautiful demonstration of the gospel. At the same time, you may need to deal with issues that arise from students who are not being spiritually nurtured in the home, requiring a greater investment of your time and attention. Below are some suggestions for ways to maximize the potential for spiritual impact on these children:

- Understand that students from both Christian and non-Christian homes have the same basic spiritual need: They are sinners in need of a Savior. Do not assume that a student from a difficult home situation has a heart that is any more desperate than a pastor's child who has not yet come to saving faith. Both students need to hear and respond to the same biblical truths. Furthermore, ultimately, their salvation is not dependent on their parents' belief or unbelief, but on the sovereign mercy of God.
- Whenever possible, introduce yourself to the parents in person or via phone, letter, or e-mail. Try to connect with the parents on a regular basis, even if it is by simply writing a short note on the student's weekly Parent Pages.
- As a leadership team, commit yourselves to weekly prayer for this student and his parents.
- Provide the student with any necessary resources that he may need, especially his own Bible. The ESV Children's Bible (Crossway Books) is very child-friendly in its design and provides helpful study tips and additional resources at the end that explain the message of the Bible.
- A younger student may be greatly helped by your providing him with a good storybook Bible to make him familiar with the main biblical themes, people, and events.
- If possible, seek out a mentor family from your church to provide the student with spiritual nurture beyond the classroom. Make sure that this is done with sensitivity and with permission from the student's own parents.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere in your classroom and small groups. Be careful not to make the student feel odd or excluded because his parents are not Christians. For example, try to avoid statements that assume parental belief such as, "Your parents read the Bible to you and pray with you and bring you to church. Your parents want you to know and follow Jesus." Rather, try to use language that takes into account that, although the above comments are God's desire for all parents, this is not necessarily the experience of every child.
- If you encounter any problems in communicating with the parents or with interacting with a student, seek counsel from your children's ministry leadership and/or a pastor or elder.

Welcoming Children with Special Needs

by Brenda Fischer

As we prepare our hearts to teach truth from God's Word to children, it is wise to consider that there may be one or more students with disabilities in our classrooms. Our response to this should be reinforced by these truths from the Bible:

- **God is sovereign and creates children with special needs.** Exodus 4:11—"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord?"
- **God has a special plan for their lives.** Jeremiah 29:11—"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."
- **God has designed them the way He wants them to be.** Psalm 139:13-14—"You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
- **God has gifted them with abilities and talents, and they are indispensable to the body of Christ.** 1 Corinthians 12:21-22—"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable."
- **God looks at their hearts.** 1 Samuel 16:7b—"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
- **God's glory shines through them.** 2 Corinthians 4:7—"We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."
- **God can call them to Himself.** Mark 10:49—"Jesus stopped and said 'Call him,' and they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.'"
- **God uses disability as a powerful visual reminder that we are all sinful and weak.** 2 Corinthians 12:9—"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

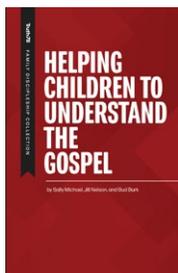
Including students with disabilities in our church body and in our classrooms is a reflection of our love for God and His Word. It is a living lesson of doing what God calls us to do. We are trusting that God has brought these special students into the body. If our focus is on God as the marvelous Designer and on His greatness, out of this will come a love for students with special and, perhaps, challenging needs. The blessings that come from loving and including students with disabilities are far-reaching:

- Parents who have a child with disabilities are blessed to have a community of believers who accept and encourage them. They are strengthened and equipped to seek out God and grow in their faith through difficult life circumstances.
- Students with disabilities are blessed when they are a part of the body and have the opportunity to share their unique gifts with the rest of the classroom.
- Teachers and other classroom volunteers are blessed when they depend on and trust in God for provision and wisdom to help them include students with disabilities in a loving and accepting way. They are able to see firsthand how God has given gifts to all of us.
- Typical students are blessed when they see and imitate adults in the classroom who are responding to disability with a loving trust in God's good design. They are also blessed by friendships with students with disabilities. They are given the joy of God-honoring friendship as well as a true life lesson on weakness.

Appendix

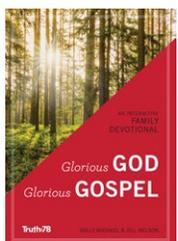
Thoughtful classroom provision is a loving way to model Christ's love to students with special needs. Some will do best with a helper or aide. Others will do fine with just a bit of extra attention from the team. Most are helped by some adaptation and visual examples of the truths being taught. Volunteers do not need to be experts on disability. Just taking the time to get to know the student and asking the parents about their child is an important first step.

Gospel Resources for Families



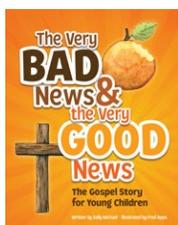
Helping Children to Understand the Gospel

Prepare the hearts of children to hear the gospel, discern stages of spiritual growth, communicate the essential truths of the gospel, and present the gospel in an accurate and child-friendly manner with this booklet that includes a 10-week family devotional based on the 10 essential truths of the gospel.



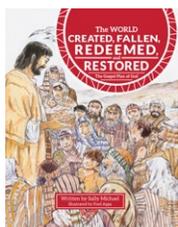
Glorious God, Glorious Gospel

A family devotional to help all ages know who God is and what He is like. The devotional features 15 lessons for family discipleship designed to ground children in the essential and glorious truths of the gospel. Also available is a notebook to help students stay engaged and apply the lessons, and a coloring book to engage the youngest minds by keeping their fingers busy.



The Very Bad News and the Very Good News

We have all turned from God and cannot fix our sinful hearts. Sin, sorrow, sickness, and death have entered God's good creation. This is very bad news! But there is also very good news! God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to take away the sins of everyone who trusts in Him. Jesus can give us a new heart that trusts, loves, and wants to obey God. But there is more good news! Someday Jesus will return and make all things new! Forgiven sinners will live forever in heaven with Him. This simple gospel presentation uses the themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration to help young children (ages 4-7) understand and be able to explain to others the good news of the gospel.



The World Created, Fallen, Redeemed, and Restored

The Bible is breathtaking in its breadth and depth, and yet there is an amazing simplicity to its overarching and hope-giving message, which can be explored within four basic themes: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. From beginning to end—from Genesis to Revelation—these themes highlight the glorious work of God! *The World Created, Fallen, Redeemed, and Restored* has been written so that children (ages 6-10) might know and embrace these life-transforming truths of the gospel. Through the use of key Scriptures and child-friendly, compelling narrative, children will encounter the greatest realities in all the universe—and in their own lives.



The Greatest Treasure/The Greatest Gift

The Greatest Treasure is a small (24-page, 4.75" x 4.75") full-color booklet that has been designed to help children discover 10 essential truths of the gospel, leading to the greatest treasure of all—enjoying God Himself forevermore! Each two-page spread includes a simple truth statement, supporting Scriptures, a brief explanation, a call for personal application, and an accompanying illustration to summarize and reinforce the truth learned. *The Greatest Treasure* and *The Greatest Gift* (a Christmas-themed version of this booklet) are helpful evangelistic tools for churches and families.

About Truth78

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Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Truth78 is a *vision-oriented* ministry for the next generations. We use the term “vision-oriented” to describe our ministry because we are aiming our children and youth toward an end goal and target.

Our vision has been shaped by Psalm 78:1-7.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.⁴We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

These verses serve as a foundation for our vision for the next generations. They also guide our ministry’s specific mission and the values that undergird and define our resources and training materials.

Our vision is that the next generations know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

Our vision is that the next generations will, by God’s sovereign grace:

- Come to genuinely **know** the truth of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—by becoming acquainted with His divine character, glorious deeds, redemptive work, and steadfast promises as revealed in His inerrant Word, the Bible.
- **Honor** and revere God in a way befitting His incomparable greatness and worth.
- **Treasure** God with undivided love and devotion, experiencing Him as their all-satisfying joy.
- Set their full confidence and **hope in Christ alone**, who through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, reconciles sinners to God so that they might live as His covenant people.
- **Live as faithful disciples** of Jesus through grace-dependent, Spirit-empowered obedience to His holy and righteous ways, which day by day progressively conforms them into His image and likeness so that they will bear fruit and stand mature in Christ.
- Do everything **for the glory of God** by proclaiming His excellencies in all they think, say, and do—so that His great name might receive all honor, thanksgiving, and praise!

Our mission is to inspire and equip the church and the home for the comprehensive discipleship of the next generation.

■ Inspire and Equip

While many churches have been growing in their understanding and eagerness to pursue a more comprehensive approach to Christian discipleship at an adult level, not all churches and parents have fully embraced or implemented the means necessary to incorporate this within children's ministries and parenting. We are eager both to inspire the church and parents to embrace the privilege and the responsibility for the intentional discipleship of the next generation, and to equip them with the tools and resources that will support their efforts, enabling them to fulfill this high and holy calling.

■ Church and Home

We believe that God has called both the church and home to raise up the next generations to know, honor, and treasure God through Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through a strategic, loving partnership between the church and home. This partnership affirms the role and responsibility of church leadership to provide encouragement and training for parents, and also to provide formal instruction for children and youth. This partnership affirms that parents, by proximity, opportunity, and God's design, bear a unique responsibility for nurturing their children's faith. Our resources are designed to foster this partnership.

■ Comprehensive

By "comprehensive" we mean discipleship that is deeply rooted in the breadth and depth of Scripture and that touches upon the mind, heart, and will. With the Apostle Paul, we dare not shrink from declaring to the next generation "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). As we faithfully impart the full testimony of God's revealed truth to the children in our homes and churches, our earnest hope and prayer is that they would, by God's sovereign grace, become faithful and joyful followers of Jesus who are actively invested in the mission of the Church—for the praise of His glorious name!

■ Instruct the mind.

God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible, which communicates through words and concepts that first must be understood by the mind. Therefore, we are committed to developing resources and training that teach the next generations to rightly read, study, interpret, and apply Scripture. We believe that this is best done by an incremental, age-appropriate approach that provides the tools and skills needed for studying Scripture. Additionally, we aim to teach in a manner that fosters critical thinking and reasoning so that children and youth have an unwavering confidence in, and defense of, the Christian faith.

■ Engage the heart.

We believe that true saving faith in Jesus involves a radical heart transformation, which produces new desires, attitudes, and actions. While we fully acknowledge that only God can bring about this Spirit-wrought, grace-dependent transformation, we believe that it is our responsibility to guide, inspire, and implore the next generations toward a personal and sincere response to God's truth. What is learned in the mind needs to transform the heart and will. Therefore, our teaching and training incorporates a format and methodology that challenges children and youth to embrace the truth of God by graciously entreating them to love, trust, obey, and delight in God through Christ.

▪ **Influence the will.**

We believe that true saving faith will be evidenced by a growing desire to walk in obedience to God. While this is dependent on the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, God also expects His children to exert real effort. Our wills must put to death sinful, selfish ways and choose instead to daily trust Christ, submit to Him, and be doers of His Word. Therefore, our teaching and training is designed to influence the will of the next generations by guiding, challenging, and encouraging them to be Christ-like in all of their thoughts, words, and actions. We want them to see and experience the surpassing worth and lasting joy of living life fully surrendered to the perfect will of Jesus.

▪ **Proclaim the whole counsel of God.**

God calls us to make known to the next generations His greatness and worth through the testimony of His Word. This entails proclaiming the majestic breadth and depth of Scripture—both the whole, grand narrative and the individual, glorious parts.¹ We believe this is best accomplished with an intentional, strategic plan that acquaints children and youth with the following:

1. A chronological overview of the Bible's key stories and themes.
2. A study of the Bible's historical, redemptive narrative (biblical theology).
3. An examination of the essential doctrines of the Bible (systematic theology).
4. God's moral and ethical instruction: His law and commandments, the wisdom literature, and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.
5. An explicit and careful study of the essential truths of the gospel.

To that end, we have developed resources and training that are undergirded and defined by the following values: God-centered, Bible-saturated, gospel-focused, Christ-exalting, Spirit-dependent, doctrinally grounded, and discipleship-oriented.

God-Centered—We heartily affirm that everything exists and has its being through the one eternal, sovereign, triune God, who alone is worthy of all honor, thanksgiving, devotion, love, obedience, and praise. Therefore, we must impress upon the next generations the necessity of a Godward orientation in all of life. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36). To that end, our resources and materials aim to communicate, first and foremost, the incomparable majestic holiness of God. It is from this Godward perspective that we can then properly understand and embrace man's duty and delight in glorifying God in all we think, say, and do.

Bible-Saturated—We are committed to boldly upholding and communicating the authority, sufficiency, clarity, and necessity of Scripture. We want the next generations to have the Scriptures permeate their hearts, minds, and souls. Therefore, every resource we develop is rooted in Scripture, encourages interaction with Scripture, and draws conclusions from Scripture. By doing so, our hope and prayer is that the coming generations will be equipped to rightly interpret the Bible, memorize and recall it, personally apply it, proclaim it, and confidently defend it. Furthermore, we aim to treat the Scriptures in a manner and tone that appropriately conveys the weight, gravity, and joy of God's holy Word.

Gospel-Focused—We believe that the central message of the Bible conveys God's work of salvation for His chosen people accomplished through the Person and work of Jesus, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, all for the glory of God. The gospel is simple, yet amazingly profound, freely offered, yet extremely costly, and should be communicated as such. We believe the gospel must be firmly grounded within the whole counsel of God, consistently

¹ Piper, John. “The Great Story and the Single Verse.” October 24, 2012, desiringGod.org/articles/the-great-story-and-the-single-verse (accessed 3/4/21).

and carefully explaining essential doctrines that are necessary for a proper and thorough understanding of the gospel. Therefore, the scope, sequence, and content of our resources reflect this incremental and comprehensive approach. Finally, we are committed to declaring to the next generations the gospel's serious and urgent command to repent and believe in Jesus. Consequently, our resources are designed to encourage thoughtful, meaningful, sincere, biblical reflection in responding to gospel truth, rather than simply affirming gospel facts.

Christ-Exalting—We must emphasize the preeminence of Christ, who is God the Father's holy and righteous Son and is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus Christ is the anointed Savior, who alone reconciles sinners to God so that we might glorify God forever. We aim to provide the next generations with a rich and profound understanding of the Person and work of Christ, emphasizing His full deity and His full humanity; His role as prophet, priest, and returning King; and the necessity of His perfect obedience, atoning death, and resurrection. Therefore, our resources lay a sure foundation, building precept upon precept, regarding the character of God, the nature of man, the essence of sin, and God's righteous condemnation. It is through these foundational realities that the Person and work of Jesus is fully magnified, bestowing on Him a name that is highly exalted above all others. We want our resources to inspire genuine praise and worship of Jesus for all that He is, all He has done, and all He has promised to do.

Spirit-Dependent—We humbly acknowledge that true regeneration and saving faith is by God's sovereign grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit who makes us alive to Christ. We acknowledge every believer's daily dependence on the Spirit as He gives understanding in spiritual matters, guiding and empowering us to become more like Jesus. Our resources and training are designed to encourage parents, teachers, children, and youth to rely on the Holy Spirit. For this reason we emphasize prayer as an essential component for instruction.

Doctrinally Grounded—We believe that there are biblical doctrines essential for being firmly established and mature in the Christian faith. These doctrines reinforce right thinking about God, ourselves, and the world, guiding us in godliness and guarding us from deceit. Therefore, our resources are grounded in solid doctrinal truths that are clearly taught, explained, and repeatedly communicated with increasing depth as our children and youth grow and mature. We also believe that difficult doctrines, such as God's absolute sovereignty, His wrath, human suffering, and the existence of evil must be addressed and explained so that the next generations will remain steadfast in their faith through the storms of life. Our resources are carefully reviewed for their theological integrity to ensure they adhere to sound doctrine.

Discipleship-Oriented—We want the next generations to be serious, passionate, joyful disciples of Christ, who are fully equipped and prepared to deny themselves, take up their cross, and daily follow Jesus. Furthermore, we want them to eagerly embrace the work of the Great Commission and live as Christ's witnesses, shining the light of the gospel so that the lost might be saved. Therefore, our resources emphasize a discipleship orientation that fosters lifelong instruction in and practice of the Christian life. We aim to accomplish this through the following:

- Developing a carefully designed scope and sequence of teaching content that progressively moves children and youth toward greater spiritual growth.
- Using a relational, interactive teaching style in which the evidences of Christian discipleship are clearly communicated, visibly demonstrated, and faithfully encouraged.
- Intentionally providing resources and training for the home that encourage and equip parents for their responsibility in discipling their children.

The Theological and Philosophical Foundations of Our Teaching Resources

We believe that if our children are to become mature disciples of Jesus, they must be given a theological education that is grounded in both the breadth and depth of Scripture—teaching them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Additionally, it must be done in an age-appropriate manner that instructs the mind, engages the heart, and implores children and youth to trust in Christ and walk in His ways. Paul's words to Timothy can serve as a model for us:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.—2 Timothy 3:14-17

Acquainting children and youth with the Scriptures in this manner will involve exposing them to the actual content of Scripture, while also emphasizing a core set of *essential truths* (doctrines) regarding the Christian faith. In conjunction with this, there must be a focus on a call to personally respond to those truths (relational). Both are important. John Piper states:

Sometimes it is necessary to stress that Christianity is primarily a relationship with Jesus rather than a set of ideas about Jesus. The reason we do this is because no one is saved by believing a set of ideas. The devil believes most of the truths of Christianity. We need to stress that unless a person has a living trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, all the orthodoxy in the world will not get him into heaven.

But if our stress on the personal relationship with Jesus leads us to deny that there is a set of truths essential to Christianity, we make a grave mistake. There are truths about God and Christ and man and the church and the world which are essential to the life of Christianity. If they are lost or distorted, the result will not be merely wrong ideas but misplaced trust. The inner life of faith is not independent from the doctrinal statement of faith. When doctrine goes bad, so do hearts. There is a body of doctrine which must be preserved.²

Therefore, we must stress both the doctrinal and relational aspects of the Christian life. Our teaching resources are designed to emphasize and carefully balance these two.

Teaching the Whole Counsel of God

In Acts 20:27 Paul writes:

for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

D. A Carson makes the following observation from this text:

What he must mean is that he taught the burden of the whole of God's revelation, the balance of things, leaving nothing out that was of primary importance, never ducking the hard bits, helping believers to grasp the whole counsel of God that they themselves would become better equipped to read their Bibles intelligently, comprehensively. It embraced:

- *God's purposes in the history of redemption (truths to be believed and a God to be worshiped),*

2. Piper, John. "Contend for the Faith," a sermon delivered at Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minneapolis on November 25, 1984, copyright © 2015 Desiring God Foundation. Used by Permission.

- *an unpacking of human origin, fall, redemption, and destiny (a worldview that shapes all human understanding and a Savior without whom there is no hope),*
- *the conduct expected of God's people (commandments to be obeyed and wisdom to be pursued, both in our individual existence and in the community of the people of God), and*
- *the pledges of transforming power both in this life and in the life to come (promises to be trusted and hope to be anticipated).³*

One way to evaluate whether or not we are teaching our children and youth the whole counsel of God is see if they can answer these crucial questions, with increasing biblical depth, as they grow and mature:

- What's in the Bible? Who is the Bible about?
- What's the main message of the Bible?
- What are the essential doctrines of the Christian faith?
- Why do we need to be saved? How are we saved?
- How are we to live?

At Truth78, we have identified and incorporated the following five elements (or theological disciplines) into our scope and sequence. We believe that these five elements, interspersed at different ages and emphasized to varying degrees throughout these ages, comprise an appropriate breadth and depth of Scripture needed for teaching the whole counsel of God. Each element addresses specific and essential questions.

Bible Survey and Book Studies—a chronological overview of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In the preschool years, this is accomplished by story-based presentation that introduces children to the key people, places, events, and themes of the Bible. Most importantly, it emphasizes God as the Author and main character of the Bible. This provides children with a fundamental Bible foundation upon which the other elements will be built. In the older grades, books of the Bible are studied with more depth.

Addresses: What's in the Bible? Who is the Bible about?

Biblical Theology—introduces students to the main storyline of Scripture, whereby God progressively reveals His redemptive purposes, which come to their complete fulfillment in the Person and work of Christ, for the glory of God. Students are taught to see that the Bible's many diverse stories, written over time, all serve to communicate one main unified message.

Addresses: What's the main message of the Bible?

Systematic Theology—a topical approach in teaching the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Systematic theology presents the Bible's teaching on various subjects, one at a time, and summarizes each topic based on the entirety of Scripture.

Addresses: What are the essential doctrines of the Christian faith?

Gospel Proclamation—an explicit presentation of the essential truths of the gospel, leading to a clear understanding of the Person and work of Christ and what it means to respond in true repentance and belief.

Addresses: What do we need to be saved? How are we saved?

3. *Preach The Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, edited by Todd A. Wilson (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007), 177-178.

Moral and Ethical Instruction—acquainting students with the nature, role, and importance of God’s laws and commands, the wisdom literature, and the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus and the apostles. This instruction is necessary for understanding God’s character and standards and our need for the gospel, and for guiding believers in righteous and godly conduct.

Addresses: How are we to live?

Teaching Philosophy and Methodology of Our Teaching Resources

Though each curriculum has a distinct targeted age range, study focus, and suggested program use (e.g., Sunday School, Midweek Bible, Intergenerational, etc.), all are meant to serve this one main goal:

That the next generations know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.

Toward this common goal, each curriculum incorporates a teaching philosophy and methodology that, in age-appropriate ways, is characterized by the following:

- **Nurtures Faith**—Our aim is to see that children and youth experience true conversion and grow in Christian maturity. Therefore, the curricula are designed to stress an appropriate balance between clearly articulating the essential truths of the gospel and the essence of gospel-living (Christian discipleship). Keeping these two goals in balance will challenge both believing and unbelieving students. Furthermore, it is important to note that, while not every lesson explicitly presents the entire gospel, every lesson presents essential gospel truths. Also, each curriculum as a whole clearly communicates the gospel.
- **Builds Precept upon Precept**—Just as children are taught the alphabet before they are taught to write words and then sentences, biblical instruction is best grasped when taught incrementally with an intentional, step-by-step, age-appropriate approach.⁴ Therefore, much care has been taken in the development of our curricula so that each lesson and each curriculum as a whole builds upon and expands upon the previously learned truths and concepts. This precept-upon-precept approach lays a strong foundation for helping children and youth know and grasp deep truths, and also encourages them to increasingly respond to God’s Word in faith.
- **Instructs the Mind**—If children are to know, honor, and treasure God through Christ, they must become well acquainted with His Word. Toward that end, they must be given the proper tools and skills needed for rightly studying, interpreting, and applying Scripture. Beginning in earnest in first grade, our curricula use an interactive teaching model that guides students to personally engage with the Bible. This model fosters critical thinking and reasoning skills that are important for confidence in and a defense of the Christian faith.
- **Engages the Heart**—While we fully acknowledge that only God can bring Spirit-wrought, grace-dependent faith in Jesus, and lead us to walk as His faithful disciples, we believe that it is our responsibility to guide, inspire, and implore students toward a personal and sincere response to God’s truth. What is learned in the mind needs to transform the heart and will. Therefore, the curricula include elements meant to challenge and graciously entreat students to love, trust, obey, and delight in God.
- **Influences the Will**—We believe that true saving faith will be evidenced by a growing desire to walk in obedience to God. While this is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit, God does expect His children to exert effort, choosing daily to trust Christ, submit to Him, and follow in obedience. Therefore, each lesson includes Scripture and discussion prompts that guide, challenge and encourage students to specific Christ-

4. We understand that it is sometimes necessary to combine age groups. Therefore, our materials give a targeted age range that includes multiple age levels.

like thoughts, words, actions, and attitudes. Additionally, these discussions are set in a context of showing the surpassing worth and lasting joy of living life fully surrendered to the perfect will of Jesus.

Explore Further

The following are some free seminars available at Truth78.org, as well as some books and booklets that you can purchase through Truth78.org that provide further explanation and practical application of topics covered in this article:

Seminars

- “Teaching Difficult Doctrines in Children’s Ministry”
- “The Importance of Biblical Literacy for the Next Generation”
- “Involving Students in the Learning Process”
- “Reaching the Heart: The Importance of Application”
- “Teaching the Whole Counsel of God”

Books & Booklets

- *Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generations*
- *Glorious God, Glorious Gospel: An Interactive Family Devotional* (also see the related student notebook and children's coloring book)
- *Discipleship Through Doctrinal Teaching and Catechism*
- *Helping Children to Understand the Gospel*
- *More Than a Story* (full-color illustrated books that will help you to take children on a chronological journey through the Bible)

Curricula Scope and Sequence

The following scope and sequence charts are designed to help you understand the basics of each curriculum (age, subject, number of lessons) and also the primary theological discipline that provides the main framework for the subject of the study. It is important to note that there is overlap when using these theological labels. For example, no one curriculum is strictly “systematic theology” or “biblical theology.” Also, keep in mind that as the curricula progress from younger to older, each incorporates age-appropriate, interactive Bible study skills into the lesson format. Finally, each chart has a “Gospel Proclamation” banner over it since every curriculum, in its entirety, has been written to emphasize and proclaim the gospel.

Sunday Morning Foundational Curricula

Curriculum	Target Grade	Subject	Lessons	Bible Survey & Book Study	Biblical Theology	Systematic Theology	Moral Instruction
				† Gospel Proclamation (All Studies)			
A Sure Foundation	Birth–36+ Months	Foundational Bible Stories	29	✓			
He Established a Testimony	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Old Testament Bible Stories	64	✓			
He Has Spoken by His Son	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	New Testament Bible Stories	52	✓			
Jesus, What a Savior!	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Story of Redemption	40		✓		
The ABCs of God	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Attributes of God	40			✓	
Faithful to All His Promises*	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Promises of God	40			✓	
In the Beginning... Jesus	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Redemptive History	40		✓		
To Be Like Jesus	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	What it Means to Follow Jesus	40				✓
How Majestic Is Your Name*	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Names & Character of God	40			✓	
My Purpose Will Stand	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Providence of God	40			✓	
Teach Me Your Way	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Surrender & Submission to Christ	40				✓
Your Word is Truth	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Biblical Worldview	40				✓
Open My Eyes	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Studying & Applying God's Word	40	✓			

* The expanded age range for these curricula are based on the use of both the lower- and upper-level versions of the student workbooks/notebooks and may require the teacher to make some adjustment to the lesson material.

Midweek Curricula

(For midweek, children's church, and a shorter Sunday school year)

Curriculum	Target Grade	Subject	Lessons	Bible Survey & Book Study	Biblical Theology	Systematic Theology	Moral Instruction
				† Gospel Proclamation (All Studies)			
He Has Been Clearly Seen	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	God's Creation	26			✓	
Your Words Became a Joy	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	God's Word, the Bible	28			✓	
The Way of the Wise	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Walking in God's Wisdom	28				✓
I Will Build My Church	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Family of God	28			✓	
Fight the Good Fight	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Perseverance in Faith	28			✓	
Pour Out Your Heart Before Him	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	A Study of the Psalms	28	✓			
Abiding in Jesus	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Daily Trusting in Jesus	28			✓	
Rejoicing in God's Good Design	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Biblical Manhood & Womanhood	28			✓	

Multi-Age Curricula

(For summer, multi-age classrooms, and short studies)

Curriculum	Target Grade	Subject	Lessons	Bible Survey & Book Study	Biblical Theology	Systematic Theology	Moral Instruction
				† Gospel Proclamation (All Studies)			
The Righteous Shall Live By Faith	1st Grade-Adult	The Ten Commandments	13				✓
Lord, Teach Us To Pray	1st Grade-Adult	The Lord's Prayer	13			✓	
Words to Live By	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Foundation Verses	13			✓	✓
The Best Good News of All!	K-Grade 6	The Gospel	13		✓	✓	

Backyard Bible Club/Vacation Bible School Curricula

(For evangelistic outreach, camps, and Vacation Bible School/Backyard Bible Club)

Curriculum	Target Grade	Subject	Lessons	† Evangelistic Gospel Proclamation (All Studies)
Things Hidden	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Kingdom Parables	5	✓
The Call of God	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	The Gospel Call	5	✓
God Always Wins	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seeing God's Greatness in Salvation	5	✓
Wisdom Quest	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Wisdom and the Fear of the Lord	5	✓

Distinctions of Truth78 Curricula

Though each curriculum in our scope and sequence will differ somewhat based on age and particular focus, all of our Sunday School, Midweek Bible, Intergenerational, Youth, and Backyard Bible Club curricula share the following distinctions.

A Big Vision of God

Our curricula aim to acquaint children with the incomparable majesty of the triune God by digging deep into His divine character as revealed throughout Scripture. We believe that children should be taught the beauty and grandeur of His manifold perfections. In completing our scope and sequence, children will have learned and explored, with increasing depth, more than 20 distinct attributes of God.

The Centrality of God in All Things

Every lesson in every curriculum aims to magnify the triune God above all—His name, fame, honor, and glory. We believe that children will find their greatest joy when they esteem God most. Therefore, the lessons use language, illustrations, and applications that point children toward God-adoration. Furthermore, the curricula challenge children to see that every aspect of life is to fall under the centrality of God and His sovereign rule.

Doctrinal Depth, Accuracy, and Clarity

We believe deep, biblical truths and doctrines can and should be taught to children. Doing so requires teaching truths in an accurate, clear, yet child-friendly manner. To that end, every lesson in our curricula is carefully reviewed by a highly qualified and experienced theological editor.

Faithfulness to the Gospel

The central message of the Bible culminates in the Person and work of Jesus—the gospel—in which He brings sinners near to God. The gospel is simple yet amazingly profound, freely offered yet extremely costly, and should be communicated as such. We believe this is best done by repeatedly drawing attention to essential gospel truths found throughout Scripture: God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler; God is holy; man is sinful; God is just; God is merciful; Jesus is holy and righteous; Jesus died to save sinners; etc. Every lesson presents one or more of these essential truths, and every curriculum, as a whole, clearly and explicitly presents the gospel to children.

A Serious and Sober View of Sin

In order to fully embrace the gospel, children must first come to an appropriate understanding of the true nature of sin and the offense that it is to God's holiness. Sin is no trifling matter. It is not simply a matter of "mistakes" or disobeying rules. Its consequences go far beyond a broken friendship with God. Our curriculum takes our total depravity very seriously, as well as God's righteous wrath and condemnation. Therefore, lessons dealing with sin and God's judgment use texts, illustrations, and explanations that convey these truths in an appropriate tone and manner. Children are challenged to think deep and hard about their standing before God and Jesus' call to repent and believe.

Interactive Engagement with Scripture

Using an age-appropriate, step-by-step approach, the lesson format trains students to interact with the text using proper Bible study methods. This process begins in earnest in first grade, and increases in depth and rigor as children age and mature. Furthermore, we incorporate an interactive teaching style, carefully laid out for teachers, which serves to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills aimed at a deeper understanding of the things of God and the ability to rightly apply the Word of God.

Age-Appropriate Visuals and Illustrations that Enhance the Learning Experience

Key truths are often more easily grasped and better understood when explained in conjunction with concrete visuals and illustrations. Our curricula offer numerous color visuals and suggested illustrations to enhance the learning process. This provides children with opportunities to be actively involved in the lesson. These visuals and illustrations are age-appropriate, yet also treat the subject matter in an honoring manner.

Personal Application that Encourages a Proper Response in the Mind, Heart, and Will

Each lesson in our curricula ends by encouraging children to personally embrace and apply the truths learned. Through carefully constructed questions, we offer adult leaders practical, specific suggestions to challenge the children in their faith and spiritual walk. Our goal is to encourage genuine faith that is increasingly evidenced by love for God, spiritual fruit, and good works. We also offer questions that specifically challenge unbelievers to consider the truths of Scripture.

Excitement for God's Global Purposes

We desire that our children and students come to know, love, and actively participate in God's mission among the unsaved and unreached. Every curriculum includes specific, age-appropriate components that focus on evangelism and world missions.

Maximizing Time with Biblical Teaching and Spiritual Discussion

We believe that time should be structured to emphasize biblical teaching and application. However, depending on the age group and time availability, additional hands-on activities may be warranted. Therefore, each lesson suggests further optional activities. They have been developed to either reinforce lesson themes or introduce some other valuable faith-building endeavor: missions, Bible skills, Bible memory, etc.

Assistance for Parents in Discipling Their Children

We provide parent resource pages to accompany curriculum lessons. Not only do these pages outline the Scripture and main themes presented in the lesson, but they also give suggestions for further spiritual discussion in the home, as well as simple activities to reinforce the lesson.

Stewardship of Resources

We believe it is incumbent on churches to be responsible stewards of the resources God has given to them. To that end, we strive to offer resources that have been specifically designed for durability and reuse. Though in the first year an average church will spend approximately the same amount of money, or slightly more than it would have spent purchasing a curriculum package from another publisher, subsequent years are much less expensive since only our student materials are consumable. Teacher's materials, including visual aids, are printed and packaged for years of reuse.

Truth:78

Our vision is that the next generations may know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God. It is our mission to inspire and equip the church and home for the comprehensive discipleship of the next generation. To that end, we develop resources that put God at the center, focus on the gospel, and exalt Christ. They are grounded in sound doctrine for faithful discipleship.

We equip churches and parents by producing curriculum for Sunday School, Midweek Bible, Multi-Age, Youth, and Backyard Bible Club settings; vision-casting and training resources (many available free on our website) for both the church and the home; materials and training to help parents in their role in discipling children; and the Fighter Verses™ Bible memory program to encourage the lifelong practice and love of Bible memory.

Curriculum

We publish materials for formal Bible instruction in the classroom including Sunday School, Midweek programs, Backyard Bible Clubs/VBS, and multi-age studies. The scope and sequence reflect our commitment to teach children and youth the whole counsel of God over the course of their education. Most materials can easily be adapted for use in Christian schools and homeschools.

Vision-Casting and Training

We offer a wide variety of booklets, video and audio seminars, articles, and other practical training resources designed to assist ministry leaders, volunteers, and parents to implement Truth78's vision and mission in their churches and homes. Many are available for free at Truth78.org.

Parenting and Family Discipleship

Truth78 equips parents to disciple their children with booklets, video presentations, family devotionals, children's books, articles, apps, and more. Curricula include take-home pages to help parents nurture faith at home by applying classroom lessons to their child's daily experience.

Bible Memory

Truth78 publishes Fighter Verses, the collection of 260 passages uniquely suited to arm individuals, families, and whole churches for the fight of faith. Companion resources include study guides, journals, coloring books, and songs to encourage Scripture memory, as well as Foundation Verses to help toddlers and preschoolers lay a firm biblical foundation.

For more information about resources and services,

Truth78.org
info@Truth78.org
(877) 400-1414



The **BEST** Good News of All!

What is the gospel? Why is it necessary? How must we respond? These are, by far, the most crucial questions we need to answer for our children. Their everlasting joy or everlasting misery is at stake. Therefore, we must approach this question with an utter sense of urgency and seriousness. Our answer must be thoroughly grounded in the truths of Scripture—noting key doctrines that are absolutely essential for understanding the essence, means, and goal of the gospel—conveyed in a manner understandable to children.

Paul's words to Timothy serve as a clear call and mandate for us.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Toward that end, this curriculum has been written to acquaint children with the essential truths of Scripture that provide a succinct yet comprehensive summary of the gospel that, Lord willing, will guide and implore children to set their full confidence in Jesus for salvation.

Truth78 is a vision-oriented ministry for the next generations—that they may know, honor, and treasure God, setting their hope in Christ alone, so that they will live as faithful disciples for the glory of God.