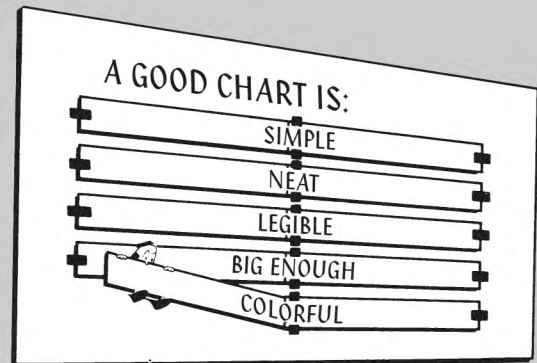
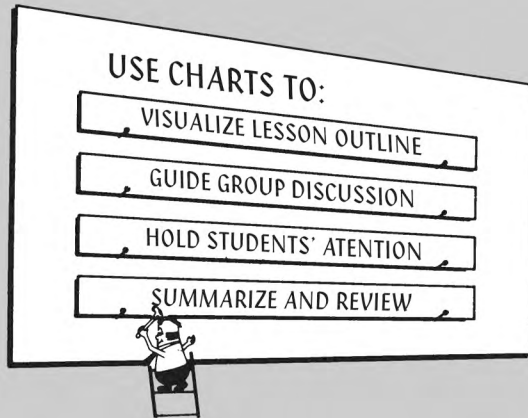


“And he spake a parable . . .”

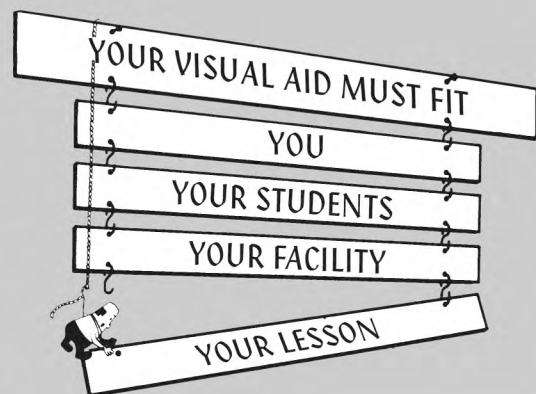
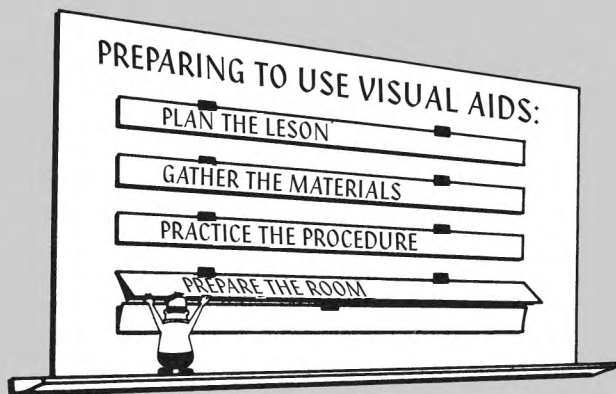
The parables of Jesus as recorded by Luke

Charts and Whiteboards



A PIN CHART is used as a "progressive disclosure" technique. The teacher reveals points as he goes through the lesson, building suspense and keeping the lesson on track. Write points on strips of poster board. Before class, press pins into sturdy backing. Use two pins to support each word strip. Leave pins protruding about 1/4". As you go through the lesson, set word strips on pins to emphasize points.

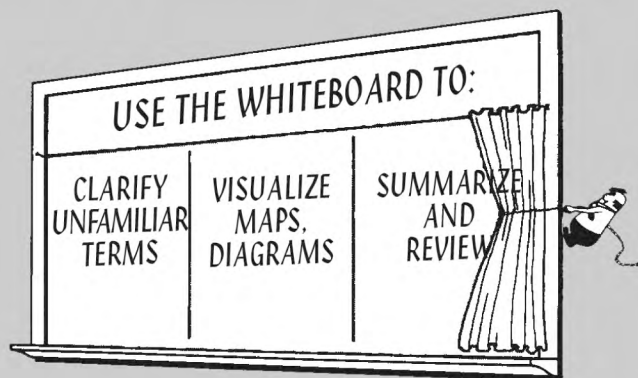
THE GATE CHART is another good way to visualize simple outlines. Letter outline points on strips of stiff paper. Fold each strip at the center and attach the right side to a firm backing with small strips of tape, tacks, or staples. Fold felt half over half that has been attached to the backing, holding folded left side in place with a bit of tape. As you teach, unfold the strips to emphasize key points.



THE FLIP-DOWN CHART is especially effective with youths and adults. Letter outline on strips of heavy paper. Attach strips to a stiff backing with small hinges of tape at the top of each strip. Leave space between strips equal to width of the strips. Then fold strips against backing to conceal the words, and attach them with small bits of tape. Flip the strips down to disclose outline points as you progress through the lesson.

A CHAIN CHART will hold the interest of almost any age. Letter points on strips of poster board, and punch holes near each end 1/4" from top and bottom. Attach first word strip to bulletin board, white board, curtain rod, or other firm support. Bend paper clips into "S" shape to form hooks. Hook word strips together as you progress through the lesson, forming a "chain" of thoughts. Note: Like most charts, the chain chart should not include more than five or six points.

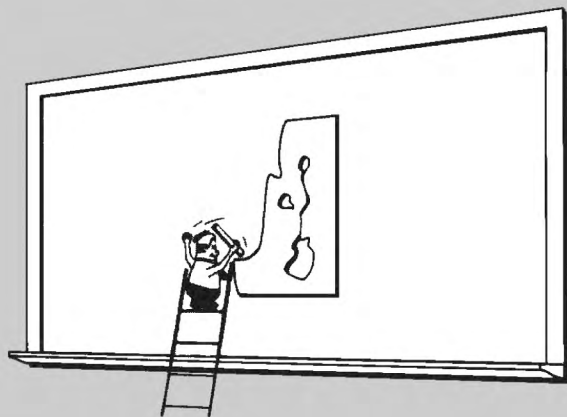
Some innovative tips on using these teaching tools



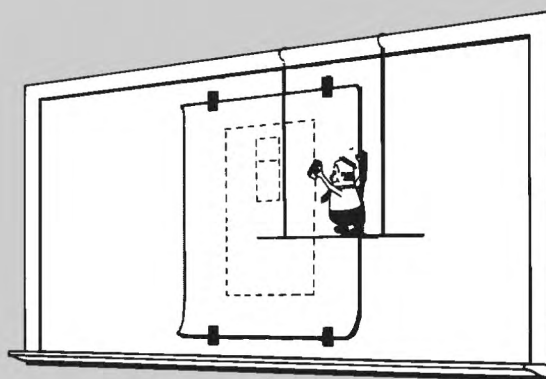
A DRAW CURTAIN helps you create suspense and hold interest. Letter title across the top of the whiteboard. Letter outline horizontally, so points read from left to right. Just below title, stretch wire between screw eyes mounted in whiteboard frame. Hang flannel curtain on wire to hide outline. As you progress through the lesson, draw the curtain just far enough to reveal each outline point.



TEAR-AWAY STRIPS can turn your whiteboard into a "progressive disclosure" chart. Letter outline neatly on the whiteboard, using one line for each point. Then cover each point with a strip of paper (adding-machine tape is handy). Attach strips to whiteboard frame with bits of tape. Tear away strips as you progress through the lesson. The same principle may be used with a posterboard chart.

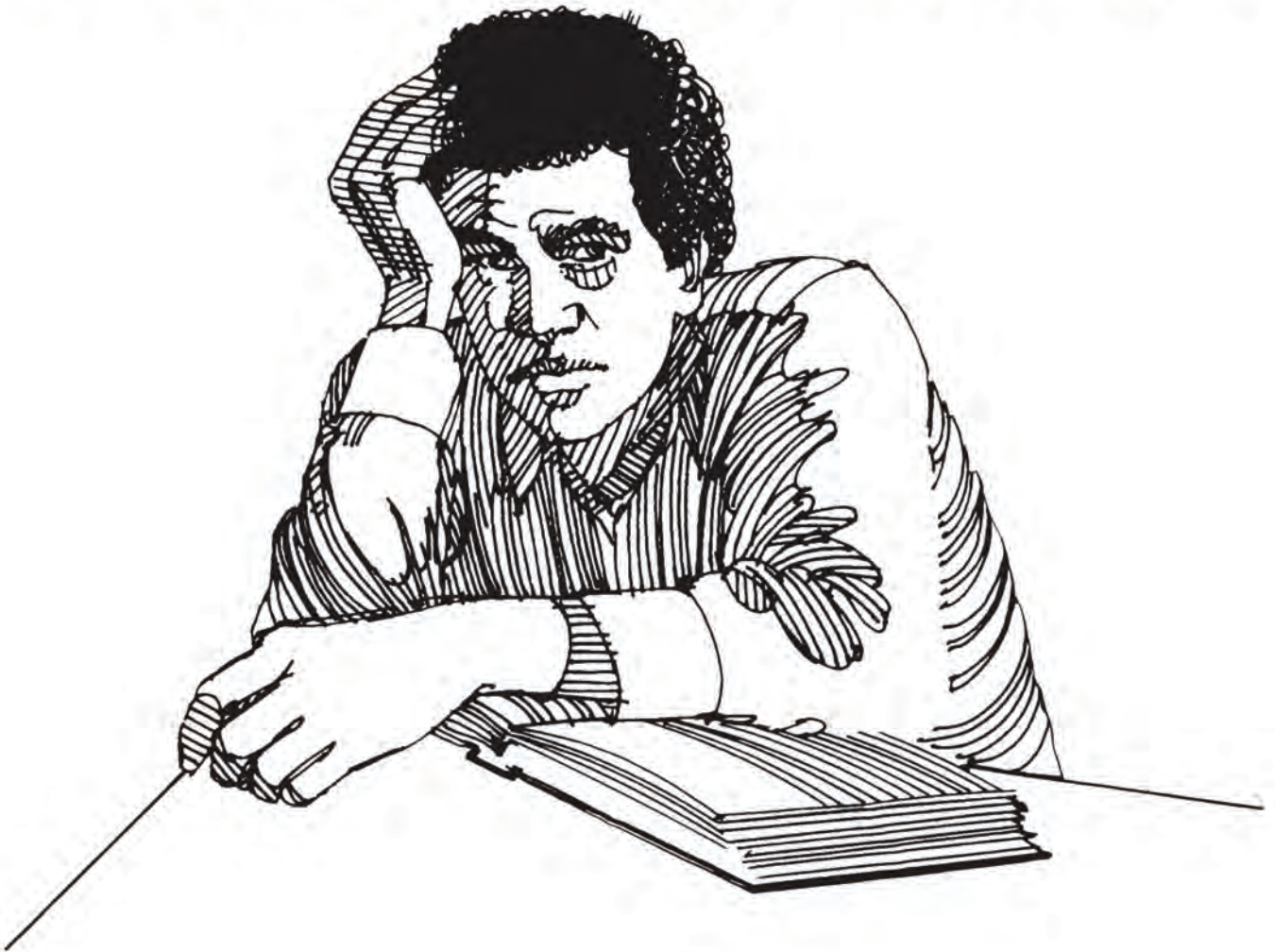


A TEMPLATE PATTERN helps you draw maps or other diagrams on whiteboard. Cut simple, full-sized patterns of desired image from heavy posterboard or plywood. Hold pattern against whiteboard and trace around it for an accurate outline drawing. (Attach handle to template to make it easier to hold.) Template patterns are particularly useful for shapes that are used often. Note: Draw maps or diagrams before class to save time and avoid losing students' attention.



A PERFORATED PATTERN is another way to expedite the drawing of maps and diagrams on whiteboards. Draw diagram or map, full size, on newsprint. Using leather punch or a similar tool, punch holes along the outline, no more than 1/4" apart. Before class, tape punched pattern in place against whiteboard and using powder pat around the punched diagram with a sponge. Remove pattern and connect the dots. Extra hint: Trace outlines only and allow students to add details.

Bored or Attentive?



The amount of class participation encouraged by the teacher may make the difference

The board students began squirming and watching the clock as the teacher droned on monotonously. The seconds were dragging by. This was the same routine they followed every week. The teacher began lecturing at 9:30 and within just a few minutes the majority of the class had tuned him out. He just didn't seem to realize that teaching is more than telling, and class participation is a vital part of the learning process.

Sunday school classes can easily fall into an unfortunate sameness. The classroom set-up is the same each week—chairs in rows, or in a circle around a table. The style of teaching

is predictable. The lesson may be important, but the students are largely unimpressed because the teacher is not actively involving the students.

Learning is an active process. When a child is being taught to swim, the teacher doesn't just talk on and on about the theories of flotation, and the proper leg flexion. He must get the child into the water in order for that child to learn. The same principle can be applied to the realm of spiritual teaching. Learning is best accomplished by doing, and the more a student is involved in the learning process, the more he learns.

Class participation makes Bible learning more personal. A teacher's ultimate goal is to help the students personalize Scripture by responding to it in their daily lives. The students should know what the Bible says, but that is not enough. They need to be obedient to its teachings. For this to happen, the student must understand the Scripture in terms of his own experience.

Sunday school should never become just a spectator sport for those who attend.

The accusation that "Sunday school is basically a spectator sport" should not be true, but sometimes our practices make it so. Not encouraging a student to participate may make him a spectator and not a participant.

Careful planning is needed if students are to participate by getting personally involved in Bible study. Students will realize they are responsible for their Christian growth as they see the need to be involved in the process. Instead of saying, "Feed me," they are taught how to feed themselves.

Student participation may vary from class to class. Adults may be involved in group reports, teenagers may enjoy a round-table discussion, and juniors could even work together at painting a mural. While there are many different kinds of participation, there are some basic guidelines to follow.

You should never force a student to take part. Each student has his own personality. Some are always active in class, frequently getting involved in questioning, discussion, and debating. Other students are listening, but quiet. Their participation is real, but nonverbal. We must allow for both kinds of students and all those that are in-between.

Some students do not want to participate the way we have planned. So, in order to maintain proper control over the classroom activities, the teacher must be sensitive to those who do not want to be involved. Forcing a student to participate is as improper as not allowing participation when students desire it.

We, as Christian teachers, must allow individual differences in our students. This was true even with the disciples. Peter was almost always involved, while the

Scriptures are virtually silent about Bartholomew. He may have been a non-participant who learned by listening.

It is a reality that some students have been frightened away from church by being forced into activities against their wishes. Participation should be actively and lovingly encouraged by the teacher, but never forced.

You should allow for variety in types of participation. There are many ways the students can be involved, and teachers should think creatively as they plan ways for their students to express themselves. Possibilities include asking, writing, drawing, telling, building, etc.

Repetition can become boring, but new experiences stimulate response. The students' interest will be higher if the opportunities for classroom involvement take on a variety of forms.

Always be sure to praise participation. One of the most effective ways to get a person to do something is to praise him when he does it. Even if a student's answer is wrong, he should feel good about the fact that he tried. Saying such things as "That's an interesting thought," "I never thought of that aspect," or "I understand," will provide positive reinforcement. Even a nod, a smile, or just listening attentively is a form of praise. If the student feels good that he tried, he will do it again.

Class participation should always be centered around the objective of the lesson.

A teacher must direct class participation, keeping in mind that participation should not divert attention from the objective. The teacher needs to keep control. Some teachers pride themselves in doing what the students want. If the students want to discuss a certain issue, the day's lesson is set aside to discuss it, and soon the students learn that the teacher can easily be led off the subject and the curriculum is no longer followed. When this happens, the teacher has ceased to be a teacher and is simply a participant in the group. Balance is the key—the teacher should structure his class in such a way that it promotes student participation yet keeps the class from becoming chaotic. A sense of balance can be developed only by experience.



Theme Thoughts

Jesus, the greatest of all teachers, often chose to instruct His followers by means of parables—making a comparison between earthly things with which people are familiar, and spiritual things with which they are not so familiar. The Scriptures teach that there is a striking analogy between the natural and the spiritual. Therefore, Christ's parables were not riddles; they were intended to reveal truth to those who love Him. He told His disciples that it was given unto them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to those who loved darkness rather than light, the meanings of the parables were hidden. See Matthew 13:10-15.

The parables recorded in the Gospel of Luke are remarkable for their simplicity. Jesus sought to put the truth in a form that would bring it within the grasp of man's finite mind. And we read that "the common people heard him gladly."

In this quarter we will focus on eleven of the parables given by Jesus as recorded by Luke, a writer who emphasized Christ's sympathetic attitude toward the poor, the lowly, and the outcast. The objective for each lesson indicates the point the parable makes relative to our lives today. The Christmas lesson features the account of Christ's birth, as given by Luke.

The final lesson of this quarter will be an overview or summary of the material covered during the preceding weeks. May God bless you as we study these lessons together.

Lesson 170

TEXT Luke 7:36-50

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that forgiveness is extended to all, and when God forgives sin He forgives much. When they have been forgiven by the Lord, there should be much love in their hearts for Him.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity. — Psalm 78:38

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. — Psalm 85:2

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

A Place of Forgiveness

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

The Two Debtors

REFERENCE INFORMATION

According to Webster's dictionary, *forgive* means, "1. to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; stop being angry with; pardon. 2. to give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for an offense; overlook. 3. to cancel or remit a debt."

We find some form of the word *pardon* mentioned twenty times in the Old Testament and the word *remission* used ten times in the New Testament. These are often used as the equivalent of forgiveness.

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It further states that the penalty

for sin is death-eternal death. But God in His mercy gave His Son to pay that penalty for the sinner. We read that God is angry with the wicked every day, but He will stop being angry and will abundantly pardon the sinner who will repent. However, the forgiven sinner must also be willing to forgive those who have wronged him.

An outstanding example of God's forgiveness was the sparing of Nineveh when they repented at the preaching of Jonah. God decreed that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown, but upon their repentance the city was spared.

YOUR OPENER

The Two Debtors

TEXT: Luke 7:36-50

KEY VERSE: Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.

— Psalm 85:2

Visualize, if you can, the disdain of the outwardly "righteous" Pharisee, Simon, when a sinful woman enters his home uninvited and seeks the company of Jesus. Consider his contempt as Christ allows this woman to wash His feet with her stream of tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. But Jesus knew why she came and she received forgiveness for her sins. Jesus said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

RESPONSES

1. Your students will bring out that to *forgive* is "to pardon, to give up resentment or desire to punish, to cancel or remit the penalty due." With your class, share some thoughts about why they as humans find it difficult to forgive; what offenses are especially hard to forgive; why forgiveness is important in their human relationships. Then compare each of these aspects of their forgiveness with God's, showing what a far greater scope His forgiveness encompasses. Bring out that when God forgives sin and iniquity, He promises to remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12).

2. Sins of commission could include lying, stealing, murder, fighting. Sins of the heart could include hatred, envy, pride, jealousy, deceit. Sins of omission could be to neglect God's offer of forgiveness, to know to do good but not do it, to fail to show forgiveness. The point of this list is to help your students see that all of these sins are equally damning in God's sight, and to realize that His forgiveness will extend to cover all types of sin. We do not know exactly which types of sin the woman in our text had committed, but we do know that she was forgiven.

3. Allow time for students to discuss their answers. By her actions, the woman showed her contrite spirit, and Christ recognized this. The Pharisee may have offered the best of dinners, maybe even put Jesus at the head of the table, yet his good deeds were not enough to have his sins forgiven because he evidenced no spirit of contrition or seeking for forgiveness.

1. To seek for forgiveness and to forgive others are necessities in one's life in order to find favor with God (Matthew 6:14-15). Write your own definition of what it means to forgive.

2. Sin could possibly be divided into three categories: sins of commission, sins of the heart, and sins of omission. Give examples of each.

3. Jesus' forgiveness is offered to all, but that forgiveness must be sought. Contrast the attitudes of the woman and Simon the Pharisee.

3

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What do you think is meant by the following words?

Repentance

Contrition

Humility

Godly Sorrow

5. In reference to question four, how do these words relate to our finding God's forgiveness?

6. What were the actions of the woman in our text that showed she was seeking forgiveness?

7. Give in your own words the meaning of Jesus' saying: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

8. That the sinful woman loved Jesus much was obvious by her actions. How can we show our love to Christ as well as saying we love Him?

4. Discussing the meanings of these four words will likely bring out some of these thoughts:

Repentance — the resolve to amend one's life as a result of sorrow for one's sins, by coming to the Lord with a sincere heart.

Contrition — a sorrow for sin, growing out of a love toward God.

Humility — the act of submission, a state of lowliness or meekness.

Godly sorrow — a sincere feeling of sadness in one's life for past deeds, causing one to change his attitude toward God.

5. All of these are necessary if a person sincerely wants forgiveness. Ask your students to consider these attitudes and discuss why receiving God's forgiveness is not possible unless each is manifested by a penitent heart.

6. As your students share their answers, they will probably conclude that she showed humility by standing behind the Lord and anointing His feet and not His head, as was the custom. Her tears were evidence of her inner prayer of contrition and godly sorrow. That she realized her need, is seen in the fact that she sought the presence of the Lord by going where she was not invited, risking the displeasure of those high in society. We know she had faith in Jesus because her sins were forgiven. Jesus said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

7. Give the students opportunity to express their answers. Then guide them to conclude that every pardoned sinner has been forgiven much. Rebellion against God is not a small sin, and the unsaved are guilty of this sin. The more a person realizes that it is the grace of God that has brought salvation to him, the more love he should have for God. If a person belittles God's grace by thinking he has been forgiven little, that person will love little, and what a pity!

8. Your students will be able to offer various suggestions. They may include: being willing to work for Him, striving to fulfill His will, denying self, giving freewill offerings, doing one's best to aid those in need.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How did the Pharisee, in our text, react when he saw what the woman was doing to Jesus? Why?

In the parable, two people were debtors to a lord. How are we debtors to God?

Why does God forgive us?

What must a sinner do to receive forgiveness from God?

The sinful woman had a remarkable way of showing love to Jesus. How can we show love to the One who has forgiven us much?

Is it possible to love someone without forgiving him? Explain.

If a person doesn't ask for forgiveness, do you still have to forgive him? Explain.

In our ANSWER story, describe how Josh felt about the accident that nearly took his little brother's life. How did his brother's attitude help Josh?

Make a character comparison between the Pharisee and the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. How did the Pharisee feel toward Jesus? How did the sinful woman feel toward Jesus?

THINGS TO DO

Once the principle of forgiveness has been discussed, have the students rewrite the parable in a modern setting. After they have shared their contemporary parables, discuss how these parables differ from the original and how they are the same. Possible settings: a local banker cancels the debts of two loan customers; a teacher forgives two students for handing in homework late; an employer forgives two employees for the time they have taken off from work.

Have each student make up a "bill" for all the debts he owed God, as a sinner. Take each one's bill and write on

it, "Paid in full with Jesus' Blood," or "Forgiven by God, with love."

Bring to class a nickel and a five-dollar bill. Offer the nickel to one student, the five-dollar bill to another. Discuss with your class the depth of appreciation each felt, comparing this to the parable. Bring out that when the Lord has forgiven them of their sins, they should have a deep, lasting appreciation and love for Him.

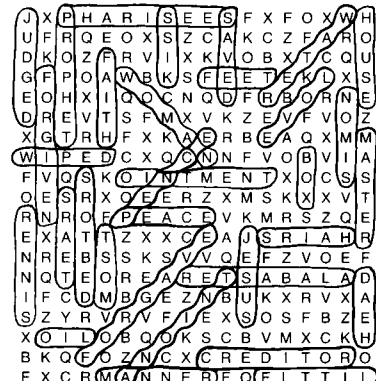
Take an eraser to class. Open your class session by comparing God's love and forgiveness to "erasing" our sins.


Answers for ANSWER

Forgiveness For All

God's forgiveness is for all people. When we are forgiven of our sins there is great love in our hearts for Him. The words on the list below are from the Bible text. Find them in the word-find and circle them. They read up, down, across and diagonally.

BOX
OIL
FEET
HEAD
KISS
LOVE
MOST
FAITH
HAIRS
HOUSE
JESUS
PEACE
PENCE
SAVED
SIMON
TEARS
WATER
WIPED
WOMAN
ANOINT
JUDGED
LITTLE
MANNER
MASTER
SINNER
DEBTORS
FORGAVE
PROPHET
CREDITOR
FORGIVEN
OINTMENT
ALABASTER
PHARISEES





Lesson 171

TEXT Luke 8:4-15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that to hear, to understand, and to bring forth fruit are the evidences of having a receptive heart. The lesson demonstrates that the individual has control of the receptivity of his heart.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. — Ezekiel 3:10

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. — Matthew 13:23

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

Where Do I Stand?

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Sower and the Seed

REFERENCE INFORMATION

In the Bible, we find that the term *hear* means much more than just "the stimulation of the auditory nerves by a sound wave." It definitely implies that we should hear, comprehend, and act upon what we hear. The Apostle James says that if we are hearers of the Word and not doers, we are deceiving ourselves.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, when Moses speaks unto the Children of Israel, rehearsing their wanderings in the wilderness and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, he frequently commands that they "hear." But, so no one might think that just hearing was sufficient, he said, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them" (Deuteronomy 5:1).

The action we take as a response to what we hear will be determined by how well we hear. In today's lesson, the majority of the hearers were wayside hearers. Those who were concerned about the teachings of Jesus went to Him and learned the meaning of the parable. They proved to be the good ground that Jesus was talking about.

A lesson we can learn from this story is the importance of furnishing good ground and continuing on until harvest. The stony-ground hearers and the thorny-ground hearers made a good start, but failed to live to be harvested, refuting the idea that if you are once saved you are always saved. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

YOUR OPENER

Sower and the Seed

TEXT: Luke 8:4-15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

KEY VERSE: But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. — Matthew 13:23

RESPONSES

1. Parables, as defined, were given by Christ to reveal spiritual truths. He wanted to be very sure those hearing Him paid attention to His words, and understood His message. Ask your class why they feel this was so vital. Guide the response to help your class understand the importance of God's Word and hiding it in their hearts (Psalm 119:11). To help explain, hold up an illustrated book and ask your students what purpose the illustrations serve. They will bring out that illustrations attract the reader's attention, may help explain the textual material, or highlight a major point of the written work.

2. The seed was devoured by fowls. This was likened in verse 12 to the seed lost when the devil comes and takes away the Word from the hearts of those who hear. In response to the second question, the students should conclude that the ground would be hard, not broken, and thus not receptive to the seed sown upon it. To what might the fowls be likened? Allow your students to offer suggestions. Some possibilities: false teachers, spirit of unbelief, pride, worldly enticements.

3. Allow time for students to make suggestions. They may bring out such thoughts as previously or continually rejecting God's call, not putting the proper value on the Word of God, and neglecting or procrastinating. It might be interesting to jot down the suggestions on a chalkboard as they are given. Then, in an opposite column, ask your class to suggest some preventive measures for each item noted.

4. A lack of prayer and of reading the Word create a dryness that destroys spiritual life. The verses in Jeremiah and John reveal that the Lord himself is the Fountain of Living Water. Ask for a volunteer to read Isaiah 55:1-3, using these verses to show that this living water is available to "every one that thirsteth."

God's Word brings life and spiritual fruit into the lives of those who receive it into their hearts. They must also believe and be obedient to His Word. But the life-giving power of God's Word can do nothing but condemn if not received in the heart by faith. "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). Jesus brought out the necessity of having a receptive heart in this parable of the Sower and the Seed.

1. A parable is an allegorical story from which a moral message or religious truth is taught. Why do you think Christ spoke in parables?

2. What happened to the seed that fell by the wayside and to what was this likened? What type of ground would you expect to find by the wayside?

3. What circumstances might cause the devil to take the Word from our hearts? What can be done to prevent this?

4. What might the lack of moisture mentioned in verse 6 mean? What is the source of the needed moisture? See Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:14.

5

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. In reading verse 13 of the text, how can temptation cause failure of the seed to bring forth fruit?

6. Explain in your own words how you feel the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life choke the Word.

Cares

Riches

Pleasures

7. How can we really hear with our hearts and "keep it"? The Word gives us many suggestions. Look up the following Scriptures and identify what action should be taken.

Psalms 84:4

Proverbs 4:14

Ephesians 6:11

Ephesians 6:18

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrews 11:6

Revelation 22:14

8. Read John 15:2 and note what happened to the non-fruit-bearing and fruit-bearing branches. Explain what you think is meant by this verse.

5. Temptation comes to all, and yielding to it will cause backsliding. However, God makes a way of escape that we might be able to bear it. See 1 Corinthians 10:13. This might be a good time to encourage your students to cite examples from their own experience or knowledge where resisting temptation brought victory.

6. Your students' responses may bring out thoughts such as:

Cares — crowd out the Word and use time that should be given to the Word.

Riches — cause their trust to be in material things rather than in the Word.

Pleasures — cause one to neglect the Word and follow the dictates of the carnal mind instead of obeying God.

The discussion should focus on the fact that their first priority must be to obey the Word of God.

7. Divide your class into groups. Assign each group one of the Scriptures from the list. Ask them to read the verse, identify what should be done to aid in the 'keeping' of the Word of God, and then suggest some specific ways this might be accomplished.

Psalms 84:4 — Attend church

Proverbs 4:14 — Avoid evil and evil associates

Ephesians 6:11 — Put on the whole armor

Ephesians 6:18 — Pray

2 Timothy 2:15 — Study

Hebrews 11:6 — Have faith

Revelation 22:14 — Obey

8. Nonfruit-bearing branches were taken away; those with fruit were purged to bring forth more fruit. After allowing time for your students to give their answers, ask them for some examples of specific ways the Lord purges. Why should they submit to this purging? Your students' thoughts regarding this should help you conclude your lesson by zeroing in on the objective, especially the responsibility of an individual to present a receptive heart to the Lord.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Who do you think the sower represents?

If the seed represents the Word, what might the water, which is necessary for seeds to grow and multiply, represent? Explain.

Before seeds can multiply they must be put into the soil. Make a comparison between seed-sowing and the spreading of God's Word.

Why does God liken His Word to a seed?

How does God view the open, honest-hearted person?

What will happen to a new convert if he doesn't seek deeper experiences?

Why does God give us a choice to accept or reject Him?

How do we prepare our hearts to receive Jesus?

THINGS TO DO

To illustrate the lesson, bring a good flourishing plant, and a plant that won't grow because of wrong soil or lack of moisture. Point out to the class the importance of both good soil and moisture.

Bring several different types of seeds to class. Have the students try to identify them without a clue. Discuss the importance of sowing the right seed to get the desired harvest.

Bring to class a pair of baby's shoes, a pair of child's shoes, and a pair of adult's shoes. Point out that the different sizes portray growth. We expect a baby's feet to grow, necessitating the larger sizes. God also looks for spiritual growth in His children. The receptivity of our

hearts to the truths of God's Word will determine our rate of spiritual growth.

Bring a brick or piece of cement, a pot of coarse gravel, a pot of good soil, and a pot full of weeds. Discuss whether a seed will or will not grow in each, and why.

Answers for ANSWER

Which Soil Are You?

When the sower was planting the seed it fell on different kinds of ground. There are four bold letters in the maze below. Using these as the starting points, follow each path and write the words on the lines provided.

Which kind of "soil" would you want your heart to be, when the seed (Word of God) is planted?

Good Soil

Wayside

Stony Soil

Thorny Soil

Lesson 172

TEXT Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Matthew 26:36-46

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that importunity in prayer will bring an answer. It is important that we do not become discouraged though there may be no evidence of an answer until it is given.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. — Luke 18:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. — Luke 11:9,10

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 57 — Prevailing Prayer

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

Praying Pays Off!

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

A Friend at Midnight

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Importunity means "persistence in requesting or demanding," even to the point of being annoying. In both examples given in this lesson, the request was granted because the grantor didn't wish to be bothered. However, God is not displeased with our continual coming to Him. He uses these stories to teach us to be persevering in our coming to Him for our needs. In the Book of Hebrews we read that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

We have several examples in the Bible of those who importuned for specific things, and the Lord granted their requests. In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis we read

how Abraham pled with God to spare the city of Sodom if fifty righteous could be found there. Abraham brought the figure down to ten and the Lord agreed to spare the city for ten righteous. Unfortunately there weren't even ten righteous!

Jacob wanted assurance from God that he would meet his brother in peace. He wrestled all night with a "man" who could impart that blessing. The man told him that his name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel: "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," and Jacob received the blessing that he desired.

YOUR OPENER

A Friend at Midnight

TEXT: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:36-46

KEY VERSE: And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. — Luke 11:9,10

RESOURCE MATERIAL: Tract No. 57 — Prevailing Prayer

RESPONSES

1. God delights in giving us the things which are needful in our lives (Matthew 7:11), even though at times the answer may seem delayed (Luke 18:7). Bring out that God knows the things we have need of even before we ask (Matthew 6:8), and if we seek to please God first, these things will be supplied. See Matthew 6:32-33.

2. To *importune* means "to request or demand persistently or repeatedly." We are to continue to ask until we receive the answer to our prayer. Jesus instructed His disciples to tarry until they received power (Luke 24:49). Have one student read Jeremiah 29:13, and then discuss the meaning of the word *seek*. Bring out that it implies a strong, time-consuming effort, but Jesus promised that those who seek shall find.

3. In both cases the petitioner refused to take no for an answer, but continued asking until he was granted his requests. God wants us to come in the same way. Another fine example of prevailing with God can be found in Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:24-29. Encourage your students to give an example from their own knowledge or experience of an instance when prayer was answered after a time of prevailing.

4. Your students' responses to the question will likely bring out that they might have experienced some doubts if faced with either one of these situations. Discuss with your class the different ways Satan will come in with doubts and discouragements, and stress the importance of overcoming them through believing God and the promises in His Word. Sometimes it may even seem that God is not hearing us, as with Jesus and the woman, but if we are asking according to His will, He does hear and He will answer. How can we be sure that our prayers are according to God's will? Your students should conclude that we must pray as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine, be done." There may be times when the answer He sends will be no, but we have the privilege to prevail in prayer until we do receive the answer from Him.

Jesus had much to say during His ministry about effectual, prevailing prayer. He gave several parables showing the importance of praying. He also left us a beautiful example by His personal prayer life. His disciples wanted Him to teach them how to pray. He gave them as a model the "Lord's Prayer," and told them what was necessary to pray a prayer that would be heard and accepted by God. The Bible also provides examples of others who prayed and received answers.

1. In both of the parables given in our text, requests were being made of someone who had no desire to supply the need. How does this contrast with God's response when we come to Him with a need?

2. What does it mean to importune? How can we apply this to the requests we make in prayer to the Lord?

3. The principal verses in Jesus' two parables are Luke 11:8 and 18:5. They show the reason the requests were granted. How can we profit spiritually by following these examples in our prayers?

7

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Many times discouragements will come when we are desiring something from the Lord. Sometimes others may try to discourage us. Read the accounts of the blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43, and the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:22-28. How might you have reacted in the same situation?

5. Sometimes a lengthy period of time may pass without any seeming answer from the Lord. Elijah and Daniel, two great men of God, both went through such times (1 Kings 18:42-44 and Daniel 10:1-13). What was the answer they received for their waiting?

6. Elijah's servant saw a little cloud, like a man's hand. What action did Elijah take and what spiritual attribute do we see exhibited here? Read Hebrews 11:1.

7. Jesus said that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. What is the meaning of the word *faint* and how can it be applied to our prayer life?

8. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for praying to be seen of men, and for the use of vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-7). What is the difference between these kinds of prayers and the importuning prayer that Jesus commended?

9. What encouragement can we receive from Abraham's prayer life and his faith in God in times when he had to wait?

5. Elijah continued in prayer while his servant went to look toward the sea seven times, and on the seventh time the servant saw a cloud like a man's hand. On the twenty-first day, an angel came and strengthened Daniel. Elijah had God's promise that He would send the rain, and he stood on that promise. Daniel had no such promise, but still he waited on the Lord. Ask your students what lesson we might find in these two examples. Your students should see that if we have a direct promise from God that the answer will come, it may be easier to hold on and believe than in the times when we have not received any direct assurance. But in either case, to hold on is necessary.

6. Elijah didn't go to see if his servant's statement was correct, but immediately sent word to Ahab to make haste and get off the mountain, for there was going to be a great rain. This shows that Elijah had great faith. Discuss with the students that no matter how long and hard we may pray, God cannot answer unless we have faith that He will. A person must believe that He is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We may have little or no evidence of an answer, but if we trust Him, the answer will come.

7. *Faint* means "to be weary; to lose courage or hope." This is the opposite of perseverance and faith in God. James tells us that if we waver, doubt, or give up, we shall not receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6-7). Knowing that the Word of God says this, we should endeavor to keep in a spirit of prayer and not be discouraged or quit praying.

8. The heathen thought they would be heard for their much speaking, and the Pharisees (called hypocrites) prayed to receive the applause of men. James said some received not because they asked amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts, or own desires (James 4:3). Ask your students to give some possible reasons why God might not answer prayers today. Their answers may include praying with the wrong motive, praying to be seen of men, and lack of faith.

9. Abraham's life story is an outstanding example of waiting before God in prayer. He prayed twenty-five years for an heir that God's promises might be fulfilled, and God in His time answered. In concluding your class time, it would be good to rehearse with the class the kind of prayer that God answers: one which is prayed according to His will, in faith, and with a purpose to receive an answer from God.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does *importunity*, as referred to in verse 8 of our text, mean?

Why did the judge in our text decide to help the widow?

Our key verse says that we "ought always to pray, and not to faint." What does this mean?

Name some Bible characters who prayed until the answers came.

Can you think of a situation or need in your life that you would like God to work out? If so, is it any more difficult than the Bible characters' situations we've just discussed? What will it take on your part for God to work this out for you?

What are some things that will hinder our receiving an answer to our prayers, and how do they hinder us?

Why does Jesus stress the fact that the judge avenged the widow of her adversary though he neither feared God nor regarded man?

In our ANSWER story, even though there was no sign of Larry's grandpa's ever coming into the Gospel or of his changing, did Larry's dad ever give up praying? Did all the years of prayer make a change in Grandpa's life? Was there a noticeable change in Grandpa when he got saved?

THINGS TO DO

Play a guessing game by having each student act out a Bible character whose prayer was answered by God.

Have students do a skit on the topic of importunity. It could portray friends who want us to do something that we are too tired or lazy to do. As they continue to persist, we give in and do what they ask. Another could illustrate two people looking for work. One is content to sketchily fill in an application. The other gives every detail asked for, then drops back to follow up on his application. He could state how he would appreciate a personal interview, and that he would like to present his qualifications for the job in greater detail.

Talk to your students about a prayer-request search. Have them go out during the coming week with a note-

book and pencil in hand and look around their neighborhoods, at school, and at church. Is someone sick? Have new neighbors moved in? Who is on vacation? Tell them to write out a prayer request for each situation they discover. On the following Sunday, ask them to share the prayer requests with the rest of the class. (They should omit names.)

Ask your class if they have ever heard of or participated in a prayer chain. Explain that each person is assigned a time to pray: 2:30-3:00 a.m., 11:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m., etc. All the people in the prayer chain know that there will be round-the-clock prayer for any given situation. But what happens if you fail to pray during your time? What if you fall asleep? Yes, God will still honor the others' prayers, but what about you? Remember that importunity in prayer will bring an answer.

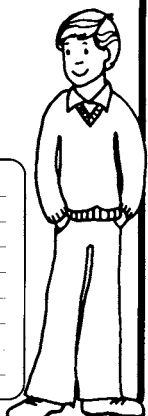
Answers for ANSWER

Keep On Prayin'

Importunity is a big word that means, "to be persistent." God wants us to be persistent in our prayers and not become discouraged. Read the Bible text given in the multiple-choice quiz below. For each of the eight sections, decide which one of the three choices is correct. Write your choice (a, b, or c) on the line beside the matching number in the smaller box.

1. Luke 11:5	a. Which of you shall have a neighbor b. Which of you shall have a friend c. Which of you shall have a brother
2. Luke 11:5	a. shall go unto him at midnight b. shall go unto him at lunch time c. shall go unto him at evening
3. Luke 11:5	a. Friend, lend me three loaves b. Neighbor, lend me a loaf c. Brother, lend me two loaves
4. Luke 11:6	a. for my mother has come b. for a friend of mine is come c. for a neighbor has come
5. Luke 11:6	a. I have no milk b. I have no loaves c. I have nothing to feed him
6. Luke 11:7	a. Trouble me not b. Ask someone else c. You can have some tomorrow
7. Luke 11:8	a. because of his need b. because of his importunity c. because he asked
8. Luke 11:8	a. he will give him as many as he needs b. he will give him what he can spare c. he will not give to him

1. B
2. A
3. A
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. B
8. A



TEXT Luke 2:1-20

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that this account of Christ's birth records an actual event which altered the course of history. Every detail of this miraculous event was God-directed and a part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. — Luke 2:11

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. — Micah 5:2

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

God Has a Plan

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

The Christmas Story

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The greatest event that ever took place in the history of mankind was the birth of Jesus. Since our present calendar was established, every person who has written down a year on a school paper, letter, check, or any other item, has knowingly or unknowingly acknowledged Christ's birth. Of course the successive great event was His death and resurrection. These events were foretold throughout the Old Testament and came to pass with unerring accuracy.

Bethlehem (house of bread) is located five miles southwest of Jerusalem, 2,550 feet above sea level, in the hill

country of Judea, on the main highway to Hebron and Egypt. In Jacob's time it was called Ephrath (fruitful) and was the burial place of Rachel. Here David kept his father's sheep and was anointed king by Samuel. Hence, it was known as "the city of David." Here the Messiah was born, for which this town that was "little among the thousands of Judah" achieved its great fame, fulfilling the prophecy related in Micah 5:2.

The number of miles traveled by Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem was approximately ninety miles.

YOUR OPENER

The Christmas Story

RESPONSES

1. From the very first Messianic promise (the word *Messiah* means "the Anointed One") given in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) until the birth of Jesus, sinful man needed, and often longed for, a Savior that he might be delivered from sin. Man has solved many problems, but he cannot solve the sin problem by himself. God's love found the way and fulfilled the need, sending His Son to save men from their sins, and this salvation is available for us even today.

2. He was born in Bethlehem. This was prophesied by the prophet Micah more than seven hundred years before Jesus was born. Ask your students how it happened that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem. Where was their home? God caused Caesar Augustus to make a decree of taxation at that precise time. Thus, Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, and Micah's prophecy was fulfilled.

3. Jesus came from the lineage of David (Luke 2:4; Matthew 1:20). Have the students trace the Messianic promise through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Judah (Genesis 49:10), and David (Matthew 22:42-45). The prophets inquired and searched diligently, prophesying of the grace of Christ which should come. The Children of Israel anticipated Christ's coming, yet did not receive Him when He came (John 1:11). But today all mankind has the blessed privilege of believing and receiving Him with the promise of eternal life.

4. There was no room in the inn, so Mary and Joseph were staying in a stable that night. This would indicate the poverty of His family. Discuss the different things in Christ's life that indicated His earthly poverty. For example: He had no certain dwelling place during His ministry; no money to pay taxes, so He sent Peter to catch the fish with money in its mouth; the seamless garment He wore (a type of clothing of the poorer class).

5. The announcement was made to shepherds. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees were in no spiritual condition to receive the Lord Jesus. Lead a class discussion regarding the fact that God does not choose the poor because of their poverty, nor does He reject the rich because of their riches. He chooses the one whose heart will respond to Him. He calls everyone, but few heed His call. The poor have great need, but are not so occupied with worldly treasures, so generally they are more willing to give heed to spiritual matters. "The common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

KEY VERSE: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. — Micah 5:2

For centuries the coming of the promised Messiah had been the cherished hope of God's people. Now on this first Christmas night, the promise became reality. Jesus came to earth in the likeness of man to dwell among men. He was God's Gift to the world, but came willingly to pay the price of man's redemption. Jesus knew that the Cross lay at the end of His earthly pilgrimage, but His only desire was to do the will of His Father. God desires only one thing of us in return for the love He has manifested ó that we do His will.

1. Joseph was directed by the angel of the Lord to name Mary's Son "Jesus." This name means "Savior," "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). What significance does this truth have in our time?

2. In what city was the Christ Child born? Why is this birthplace more than just a coincidence? See Micah 5:2.

3. From what royal lineage did Jesus come? How can this be proved (Matthew 1:1-16; 22:42)? Does this mean, then, that the Gentiles are excluded from God's plan of salvation? See Ephesians 2:12-18.

4. Why was Christ laid in a manger? What does this seem to indicate? See 2 Corinthians 8:9.

9

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Who heard the announcement of Christ's birth ? Why was the proclamation made to this sort of people, rather than to the scribes and priests? See Luke 2:15-20.

6. The angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11). Compare the angel's announcement with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Which is the greater, and why?

7. The shepherds believed the message of the angels, and left their sheep and went quickly to see the Savior. How should men respond to the story of Christ today?

8. How did Mary react to the news concerning the angel's proclamation? What advantage can be gained by meditating on God's Word? See Joshua 1:8.

9. "God so loved . . . he gave" (John 3:16). Who does God love and what did He give on that first Christmas night?

6. Discuss with your class the results of each proclamation, bringing out that Lincoln's decree released the slaves in the United States from servitude— a wonderful day for those people. The message from Heaven told of the Savior who would bring release from the bondage of sin— an even greater freedom "which shall be to all people." Discuss the fact that many people have hated the bondage of sin and have tried hard to be freed, only to fail time after time. Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ provides grace and power to be made free from sin and the ability to live a life of victory over sin.

7. Discuss with the class that the shepherds believed the message of the angels, left their sheep and went to Bethlehem. They found the Christ as they had heard, and they spread the news of what had been told them concerning this Child. Ask the students to compare the actions taken by the shepherds to the steps that should be taken by one who hears the story of the Gospel today. They, too, must believe and leave all in order to meet the Savior. It is then that the joy of Heaven comes into their hearts inspiring them to tell others about Him. How does giving a testimony help in our spiritual life? See Revelation 12:11.

8. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Joshua 1:8 indicates that by meditating on God's Word we have God's assurance that our way will be prosperous and that we will have good success. Allow the students opportunity to give their answers, then discuss the advantages of meditating on God's Word. Joshua was not a formally trained soldier by today's standards, yet by meditating on and obeying God's Word, he was promised a prosperous way and good success as he led the Children of Israel into Palestine. The Psalmist said that blessed is the man whose delight "is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The Psalmist further stated that by meditating on God's Word, he had more understanding than all his teachers (Psalm 119:99). Timothy was advised that it would be profitable to him to meditate on the things of God which he had learned. See 1 Timothy 4:15.

9. Wrap up the lesson by bringing your students into dialogue concerning the love that God manifested in sending Jesus Christ to the earth. Mankind was not worthy of this love, having forfeited every hope of eternal life through sin. See Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:12,13. God gave His Gift to the world willingly because of His love. Jesus Christ came to earth and suffered willingly to fulfill God's plan of redemption. How thankful the redeemed should be at this Christmas season. We should willingly do whatever God reveals, in order to enjoy the fullness of the Gift God has given!

10

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

The angel and the heavenly host in Luke 2:14 were saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." What did they mean?

Jesus is referred to by the angel in verse 11 as a Savior. Why do we need a Savior, and from what did He come to save us?

What is the significance of the angel's saying, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"?

What does Luke 2:15 indicate about the shepherds' faith?

When and where in the Bible is the first mention of Jesus' birthplace?

Do you think the people in that day looked for His coming? Why or why not?

Why did only a small number of people believe Jesus was the Messiah? What about today?

In our ANSWER story, why did Grandpa want to give David the puzzle on Christmas Day? What special significance did it have?

Can the darker pieces of a puzzle, or the shadows in our lives, be beneficial to us?

THINGS TO DO

Make a large, paper Christmas tree. Cut out decorations and have your class put a different name of Jesus on each decoration (Emmanuel, Savior, King of kings, etc.). Put them on the tree.

Gift-wrap a big box and make it really special. Have the name tag on the gift read something like this: To All People on Earth. Put into the box things that represent the birth of Jesus as a very special gift to mankind. For example: a miniature nativity scene or a picture of one, a picture of Jesus, a picture of a cross, and something to

represent Heaven. This will show what the birth of Jesus led to, and will lead to.

Bring to class a map showing the location of Bethlehem. Trace Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth. Pictures of Bethlehem today, found in magazines and Biblical reference books, might also be of interest to your class.

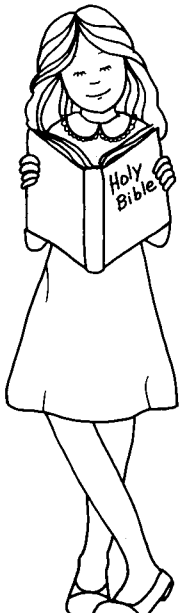
Cut up sheets of white tagboard or construction paper to make Christmas cards. Have the students decorate these cards so as to announce to their friends and loved ones the good news of the birth of the Savior.

Answers for ANSWER

No Surprise!

Jesus' birth should not have been a surprise to the people. God had let them know in Old Testament times where Jesus would be born and into what family He would be born. When they really thought about this they finally asked . . . Well, you figure out what they asked. Each letter of the coded verse below represents the letter that comes BEFORE it in the alphabet. Example: B = A, C = B, etc.)

Hath not the scripture
said that Christ cometh
of the seed of David
and out of the town of
Bethlehem where David
was



Lesson 174

TEXT Luke 12:35-48

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that we must be ready for the Lord's return or suffer the consequences. They will be able to describe what is required in order to be ready.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. — Matthew 24:44

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. — Mark 13:35

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **I Want to Be Ready**
**SEARCH
TITLE:** **Watchful Servants**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The coming of the Lord has been the hope of the righteous of all ages. We read that Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, foretold the coming of the Lord. He became a type of the saints who will be translated, for it is said of him, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Lest someone should think that he simply died a natural death, the writer of Hebrews plainly states that Enoch was translated.

The Rapture is set forth typically in the Old Testament. We understand that it is not the will of God for His Church to go through the terrible judgments that God will send on the earth during the period known as the Great Tribulation. One of the types that depicts this is the account of Noah. God told Noah of the coming judgment and what he must do to escape it. Just as the righteous were provided with a means of escape in Noah's day, so

God will spare the overcoming saints when His judgment is poured out on the earth in the last days.

There are other accounts in the Old Testament that are also typical of the Rapture. However in Isaiah 26:20-21 it is plainly indicated that the Lord is going to make a way of escape for His people when judgment is poured out on the earth.

In the New Testament, Jesus frequently spoke of His coming again, sometimes directly stating the fact, sometimes in parables. Usually He stressed the importance of being watchful. He told us that we would not know the day nor the hour, yet He gave many signs by which we would be aware that His coming is right at hand in our day. We cannot overemphasize the importance of being ready for that momentous event!

YOUR OPENER

Watchful Servants

TEXT: Luke 12:35-48

KEY VERSE: Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning. — Mark 13:35

RESPONSES

1. You might wish to open your discussion by focusing briefly on how we are watchful in certain areas of our daily lives. For example, ask your students to explain the ways a person must be watchful while driving an automobile. Talk about the watchfulness that is required for being on time to work, keeping alert at the check-out counter in the store so that you are not charged too much or that you receive the right change, etc. Using these examples, draw a parallel to the importance of being watchful for our Lord's return.

2. The ones who were waiting were apparently eager and fully prepared. They were dressed and ready— their loins were girded about, and their lights were burning. This could be compared to having the porch light on when we know that guests will soon be approaching. When the Lord did arrive, those who were waiting opened the door for Him immediately. Your students should see there was no last-minute hurrying to do in order to have the preparations all made. They were anticipating His arrival. In this same manner the students, too, must be ready and anticipating Christ's coming again.

3. Your students will no doubt respond with ways they would try to protect themselves, and most certainly with the thought that they would be alert and watchful. After they have explored several ideas along this line, bring out that just as a thief does not announce his coming, so Christ will come without warning.

After Jesus fulfilled His mission on earth He went back to Heaven; but He is returning very soon to take His people unto Himself. The question is asked, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2). One meaning of *abide* is "to face or to submit without shrinking." The verse does not mean that no one will be able to stand, for the Christians are preparing themselves, and we can all be ready. We can see from our text that an acceptable service must be rendered with watchfulness and prayer, that we may be ready at any moment for the Lord's return.

1. *To watch* is "the act or fact of keeping awake, especially to be attentive or vigilant." How does this word pertain to our lesson today?

2. In reading the first two verses of our text, how would you describe the attitude of the ones who were waiting? Which portions of these verses give you this indication?

3. According to our text, the coming of Christ will be as a thief. If you knew a thief was likely to come to your house, what measures would you take?

11

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. The Lord will return for those who look for Him, and for those who are ready. How can we be ready for His return?

5. How could a person show by his actions that in his heart he is saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming"?

6. One of the requirements for being ready for the Lord's return is that we be good stewards. Give a definition of stewardship. How does this relate to the Christian experience?

7. According to our text, what were the consequences suffered by the servants who had not been faithful in performing their duties and were not watching for their lord's return? What parallel can you draw between this and the fate of one who neglects his responsibilities as a Christian and fails to be watchful for Jesus' return?

8. Referring to our key verse, when will the Master return?

Thought provoker: Are you ready for the Lord's return if He should come at this moment?

4. Allow time for your students to discuss this question, concluding that this state of readiness involves a performance of those duties known to each individual as God's will for his life. Ask your class if they think that being ready is an active or a passive state of being. Help them see that constant watchfulness and performance of the duties God has given them does require action on their part.

5. Your students should bring out that if a person has neglected salvation or has a careless or indifferent attitude toward the things of God, it would be apparent that he did not feel the Lord's return was imminent. Help the class see that one's attitude foretells actions. If men and women become intoxicated with the cares of life, the Lord's return will come upon them unexpectedly.

6. Your students' thoughts should bring out that stewardship has to do with the duties of one in a position of supervision. Relative to the Christian experience, a steward is one who has been a recipient of God's grace, and so has a responsibility to give an account to God for that which has been entrusted to him. See 1 Corinthians 4:1 and 1 Peter 4:10. Ask your students to discuss some of the attributes of a good steward. Some possibilities would be: honesty (Romans 12:17), accountability (Romans 14:12), faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2).

7. One servant was cut in sunder (cut off) and appointed his portion with the unbelievers; another was beaten with many stripes. The one who neglects in this day to make preparation for the Lord's return will be punished according to his misdeeds. All are going to be judged —the sinner for his sins, the servants of God for their faithfulness. But the consequences will be commensurate with the privileges given and how the requirements of those privileges were met.

8. We do not know the time of the Lord's return. Use this factual statement as a springboard to wrap up your lesson. Jesus said over and over again that the time of His return is not known, nor will it be pre-announced. But He has given ample signs to tell of His imminent coming. In a circle response, it might be interesting to rehearse briefly some of the signs we see around us that point to the nearness of this great event.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

In the parable, what reward was offered to the servant whom the Lord found watching?

What punishment was meted out to the servant whom the Lord found not watching?

What are some of the rewards we will receive if we are watching and ready for Christ's second coming?

What punishment will we receive if we are not ready for Christ's second coming?

Why did Jesus tell His disciples to be watchful?

How do you think Jesus' command to His disciples to be watchful affected the disciples' lives?

What could happen if the following people did not have a watchful attitude?

Lifeguard
Air Traffic Controller
Hunter
Soldier on Guard Duty
Christian

In our ANSWER story, what was the first question Carl asked his grandparents? Why is this an important question for us to consider too? How did his grandparents' answers affect Carl?

THINGS TO DO

Interview a fireman, asking why he must always be prepared when the alarm goes off. Take notes, or tape the interview, and play it back as an opener or conclusion to the lesson. Types of questions: How can you be prepared to move quickly when the alarm goes off? What sort of preparation goes into your equipment and vehicles? Has there ever been a time when someone at the station wasn't prepared? Conclude by stating that firemen must always be prepared because they never know when a fire will occur. Christians also have to be ready for something important—Jesus' return to earth.

After studying about the need for preparedness, have the students write a letter to the servant who was unprepared, explaining why it is necessary for him to watch for

his lord. Ask them to consider what they can say to make the servant watch for his master. Give them five minutes to write their letters, and then share the letters with the class.

Tell the class that next Sunday, if they bring their Bibles and say the key verse, you'll have gifts for them. There may be some who will come unprepared. Give the gifts to those who have earned them and use this example to explain the necessity for being prepared and watching for the Lord's coming. Help students to realize you can give them another chance to earn a gift, but there will be no second chance for those who aren't prepared for the Lord's coming. (If all your students are prepared, build on the fact of how wonderful it will be for all of them to be ready for the Lord's coming.)

Answers for ANSWER

Are You Ready?

We know for sure that Jesus will return. Are you ready? Look up Mark 13:35 and 36 in your Bible. Write those verses on the lines below. Some of the lines have numbers below them. Match them with the numbered boxes at the bottom of the page and write the correct letter in each box. Do what the words tell you and you can make sure you will be ready!

Verse 35: Watch ye therefore for
ye know not when the master
of the house cometh at
even or at midnight or at
the cockcrowing or in the
morning.

Verse 36: Lest coming suddenly
he find you sleeping

We must always . . .

WATCH

1 2 3 4 5

AND

6 7 8

PRAY

9 10 11 12



Lesson 175

TEXT Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the Lord expects fruit from our lives. Though He may postpone judgment, the time will come when those who do not bear fruit will be eternally punished.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. — Luke 13:9

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — John 15:2

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **One More Chance**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Fig Tree**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The fig tree is very common in the land of Israel and is mentioned in Deuteronomy as being among the blessings the Children of Israel would find in the land of Canaan. To sit under one's own vine and fig tree was an expression among the Jews to denote peace and prosperity. See 1 Kings 4:25.

On various occasions, Christ used the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. One commentator explains this parable in the following manner. The certain man is God, the fig tree is the Jewish church, and the vineyard is the land of Judea. God sought fruit, indicating that He expected the Jewish church to show forth the fruit of right-

eousness. The vinedresser is Jesus and the three years are the years of Jesus' ministry. The phrase, "Cut it down," suggests that God would permit the Romans to come in and destroy the nation. The vinedresser, Jesus, said, "Let it alone." He would give it further care and then if it bore no fruit, it could be cut down. Sad to say, there was little response to Jesus' efforts and the nation was cut down by the Roman army in 70 A.D.

In many other places in Scripture we are admonished to bring forth fruit. We should be sure we do not pass over this parable and fail to perceive a warning in it for us.

YOUR OPENER

The Fig Tree

TEXT: Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

KEY VERSE: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — John 15:2

RESPONSES

1. As your students discuss this parable, the point should be made that in our lives, too, God is looking for fruit— evidences of the graces of true Christianity. If this does not transpire, the Lord may extend mercy for a time because of the intervention of our advocate, Jesus. But in the end, we will be eternally doomed for our continued failure to show the evidences of a fruitful Christian life.

2. Verse 8 tells us that He asked that He might have one more year to dig about the fig tree and fertilize it. Christ did not ask God to excuse the fruitlessness, but He did ask God to allow Him to work with the tree that it might become fruitful. Ask your students to give some ways in which God patiently deals with individuals, trying to bring them to a realization of their need to bear fruit.

3. Your students will no doubt bring out that he had the right because he was the owner of the fig tree. He had purchased the tree and placed it in his vineyard. In the same sense, God has the right to expect the Christian to bear spiritual fruit. He would not expect those of the world to bring forth fruit for Him. The price has been paid, but until the sinner accepts the payment made for him he is not planted in God's vineyard.

Jesus often used trees, gardens, vines, branches, and fruit to teach lessons of truth. A Christian life is like a tree—not just a tree with leaves, but a tree that bears good fruit. As in the natural, fruit is the product of plant growth, so it is only by spiritual growth that man bears fruit unto the Lord. Without growth, one becomes fruitless, resulting in eternal punishment. However, as one walks in the commandments of God, he is able to bear the fruit expected of him.

1. On various occasions, Christ used the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. This parable illustrated the patience of God with Jerusalem, whose day of doom was approaching because of their failure to show forth the fruit of righteousness. However, there is also a warning in it for individuals. Explain how you feel this parable applies to us.

2. What did the dresser of the vineyard do to try to improve the fig tree's production?

3. Why did the owner of the vineyard have the right to expect fruit?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Looking at our text in John 15, how are we to bring forth fruit? Explain.

5. What does God do to the fruit-bearing branches? How much fruit must we bear?

6. God cares for every branch. Each has the same nurturing and opportunity to bear good fruit. Each receives the "sunshine and rain" of God's love. What happens to the branch that does not bear fruit?

7. What fruit does God expect to see in a life? Give a specific example of how each one is a spiritual benefit.

8. If one discovers he is not bearing as much fruit as he should, what do you think he should do to improve?

4. We are to bring forth fruit by abiding in the Vine. Ask your students to discuss the phrase, "Abide in me." They should note the fact that the branches draw their strength from the Vine. Ask them to bring out specific ways we can "abide" in Christ and be productive Christians. They may bring out that this can be done through the study of God's Word, through prayer, personal consecration, and seeking the Lord's will in every aspect of life. We should recognize that "abiding" is not a passive state—it requires determined effort and persistence in order to be maintained.

5. God purges the fruit-bearing branches. We must bear "fruit," "more fruit," and "much fruit." Ask the students why they think God purges the fruit-bearing branches. Draw a parallel between God's purging and the orchardist's pruning the trees in his orchard. Often a branch is pruned so that another branch might gain strength. A tree growing without pruning is soon misshapen. Untended, a tree grows too dense to allow the sunlight to enter into the midst of it. Over a period of time, the fruit then becomes smaller and less desirable. In the same manner, a Christian cannot thrive without God's care and attention.

6. It is cast forth and is withered and burned. Help the students recognize that one who has been saved but does not continue to bear spiritual fruit will be lost. His final end will be a lost eternity in hellfire unless he repents of his backsliding.

7. Using the students' answers, list several spiritual fruits. You may wish to refer to Galatians 5:22-23. Discuss with the class members the need to bear all these as they should. Point out that the fruit of the Spirit is for everyone who is saved, and that God desires all to have the full benefit of them.

8. Your students' responses to this question should provide a good summary to the lesson. Ask your students what role they have in improving their spiritual productivity. They should see the necessity of asking the Lord to make them more willing to accept the pruning and cultivation He does in their lives. Refer to Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:11.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How can we know if we are fruit-bearing Christians or not?

Who is represented by the "certain man"? Who is represented by the "dresser of his vineyard"? What does the "fig tree" represent?

What does Luke 13:8-9 indicate about God's mercy and judgment?

Compare each of these gardening duties with the spiritual care needed to produce spiritual fruit: planting good seed, preparing the ground, fertilizing the soil, watering and hoeing, weeding and cultivating.

What does Galatians 5:22-23 tell us is the expected fruit of a good Christian life?

In our ANSWER story, why did Gene's plans for a great strawberry crop fail? Why did he decide to give it a second chance? Compare Gene's strawberry plants to a Christian's life, noting the care and attention needed for both.

THINGS TO DO

Bring to class a houseplant that doesn't appear to be thriving. Mention that it is supposed to be a blooming plant, but that it does not have blossoms. Tell how you have fertilized it, watered it, moved it about, etc., but to no avail. Discuss with the class what they think you should do with it next.

Bring a plant to class and have a lesson on pruning. Explain the purpose, and why it is beneficial.

Show your students a simple drawing you have made. Point out why you are not pleased with it. Conclude by destroying the drawing. Bring out that because you made it, you have the right to frame it and display it if you

wish. But you also have the right to destroy it if you are not pleased with it. God created us, and if He is not pleased with us, He has the right and the power to condemn us to eternal death.

Bring a diary to class. Ask your students to consider this thought: If Christ were to read through a daily record of the events of their lives, would He find evidence of spiritual fruit in their everyday actions?

Answers for ANSWER

What Do Others See?

If we have fruit in our lives others will see and know what Jesus has done for us. To find out what some of this fruit is you will need to cross out any squares in the tree where the math problem does not equal nine. Then write the letters from the squares that do equal nine on the lines at the bottom of the page.

3×3	10-1	8+7	11-2	15-6	2×8
THE	FRU	IT	TO	FT	MOS
6+3	27÷3	14-5	2+7	8+2	16-7
ERI	GHT	JUN	EOU	RET	SIS
5+5	3+6	14-5	5×2	5+4	9-8
FOX	ATR	EEO	INX	FLI	DOT
18÷2	7+2	1+8	5+6	13-4	1+8
FEA	NEV	NDH	ALH	ETH	ATW
9-8	17-8	3×6	5+4	9-7	3×3
WEN	INN	AT	ETH	IN	SOU
2×6	18-9	10-1	8+7	14-6	18÷2
TEP	LSI	SWI	ESC	EBW	SE

Scratch Paper

THE FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS
IS A TREE OF LIFE: AND HE
THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE.

TEXT Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-14

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to tell that God is displeased with self-exaltation, but He will honor those who honor Him and maintain a humble spirit in their attitude toward others.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. — James 4:6

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

The Right Attitude

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Chief Rooms; Publican and Pharisee

REFERENCE INFORMATION

In James 4:6 we read, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." God hates pride. According to many theologians, that is what caused Satan to be cast out of Heaven. Satan appealed to Eve's ego when he told her that the fruit on the tree in the midst of the Garden would make her wise (Genesis 3:5). The idea so tempted Eve that she disobeyed God and ate of the fruit. From that time on, pride has been found in the hearts of mankind, and unless repented of, will bring certain judgment.

As early as 145 B.C. there were three Jewish parties

existing: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Pharisees separated themselves from those who neglected the Law. Their piety made them popular, but Jesus condemned their self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

There were two kinds of "publicans," or tax collectors, in Jesus' day: 1) the tax gatherer who collected land, income, and poll taxes; 2) the more hated customs men who collected tolls on everything from bridges to food. The Bible does not state what kind of tax collector the publican in this text was.

YOUR OPENER

Chief Rooms; Publican and Pharisee

TEXT: Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-14

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10

KEY VERSE: All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

RESPONSES

1. These men were no doubt very much concerned about prominence and place. Ask your students why this attitude is not in accord with Christian behavior. They should see that Christians are not self-promoting individuals, but rather have the objective of glorifying God.

2. Your students' responses should provoke a discussion regarding prominence and place. People active in the church must guard against self-promotion. If, because of our privileges in the Gospel, we are in positions of performance or leadership, we must remember that our business is to glorify Christ, hiding behind His cross. The place occupied is unimportant. God's final assessment could be opposite to the human one.

3. Your students' answers should be directed to zero in on motives. Could it be that the chief Pharisee's motive for inviting those present was selfish? Possibly he was hoping each would, in turn, give him honor or return the favor. Perhaps his real purpose was self-exaltation. He may have wished that each Pharisee present would cultivate his friendship because of who he was.

4. He was instructed to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. The discussion should center on the fact that love for our neighbor, not self-exaltation, will be the motive for invitations if we are a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. Then we will be blessed here and rewarded hereafter. The students should understand that Christ was not condemning having dinner with friends. He was condemning selfish motives.

Doing things which appear right before others does not guarantee a right standing in the sight of God. Jesus probed the hearts of the men who were invited to the dinner as they sought the chief rooms in which to eat, and told a parable about taking the lower place. The parable also brought out that one should not invite his friends, relatives, and rich neighbors to his dinners, but rather the poor, lame, maimed, and blind. Our motives will determine our reward. Humility, not self-exaltation, is a hallmark of the Gospel. This is demonstrated again in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

1. Why do you think that those who had been invited to dinner by one of the Pharisees chose the chief rooms in which to eat?

2. How could church meetings be a possible place of testing a Christian's motives in regard to "place seeking"?

3. Why did Christ advise the chief Pharisee not to call friends, brethren, kinsmen, or rich neighbors to his feasts?

4. Whom did Jesus advise the Pharisee to call to his feast? Why?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What was commendable about the Pharisee who went up to the Temple to pray? What was abhorrent to God about the same Pharisee?

6. What did the posture and actions of the publican in our text indicate about his approach to God?

7. Why is it so difficult for people to pray the simple, one-sentence publican's prayer? Why is it vital that they do?

8. Explain the difference between the publican's justification and the Pharisee's.

9. Explain Luke 14:11, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

5. The Pharisee would not seize another's property through false pretenses. He would not deal unjustly with his neighbor, taking advantage of him, for example, in some business deal. He would avoid all manner of uncleanness, including adultery. He fasted and gave tithes. All of these things were commendable. But one sin blanketed all the Pharisee's goodness and resulted in his condemnation—pride! In Proverbs 6:17 we find that among the seven abominations that God hates, the first is "a proud look." Pride caused Lucifer to fall from Heaven and become God's arch-enemy, Satan. Pride in their own good works has kept many people from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and making Heaven their eternal Home.

6. The words "standing afar off" probably signified that he felt unworthy of God's favor. The fact that he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" conveyed his deep distress and his consciousness of guilt. When he "smote upon his breast," he was expressing extreme grief for the sins he had committed, and his desire to be forgiven. When he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," it was his confession of guilt. The students will understand that in that way, the truly penitent sinner will come to God.

7. In many cases, the reason probably is pride. Your students' answers should bring out that in the world today it is popular to talk much about self-assertion and self-worth. Courses and seminars are offered on these subjects, but little is said about humility. And yet the humble way of the Cross remains the only way to God's forgiveness. The first of the Beatitudes says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). No matter how good he is, a person is guilty before God until he asks forgiveness and is justified by the grace of Jesus (Romans 3:23). Without Calvary there would be no forgiveness.

8. Only the publican received God's justification and forgiveness. The Pharisee was justified only in his own eyes. He remained condemned by God. The students should realize that, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). The root cause for continuing in that way is usually pride. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

9. Your students' explanations of this passage is a good way to conclude your lesson. What is the final goal of the true Christian? Obviously, it is to be received into Heaven. Could we ask for any greater exaltation? If the requirement is humility, surely it is incumbent upon us to strive for that attitude.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

When a person exalts himself, what kinds of things does he think about and do? Why does exalting oneself anger God?

How did Jesus himself show humility? Why must we follow His perfect example?

Are the unsaved the only ones who exalt themselves? Can a Christian exalt himself? If so, how?

How do you think God resists the proud?

What would you say is meant by the phrase, "but giveth grace to the humble"?

How can you relate the key verse to your everyday life?

Do you think only adults are proud? Why? What are some of the things young people do that show they are proud?

How can we humble ourselves?

How did Jeff, in our ANSWER story, show that he was humble?

THINGS TO DO

Ask two people to come to your class and pantomime the parable of the publican and the Pharisee as you read the parable to your class. Set the room up as a beautiful temple (if possible) with art work done on a large piece of paper or cardboard. Use costumes from past Christmas plays. Follow up with discussion questions, asking the students to compare themselves with the two characters in the lesson. Ask them which one they want to be more like, and why.

Take two items to class with you, one imitation and the other genuine; for example, candy, money, or a flower. You could also have the imitation to be larger and possibly more pleasing to the eye. Explain to the students how the imitation is different from what it appears to be.

It isn't made of the same things as the genuine. The Pharisee in our lesson was like the imitation, but the publican was a genuine believer. He was small in his own sight but his repentance was genuine, and thus great, in God's eyes.

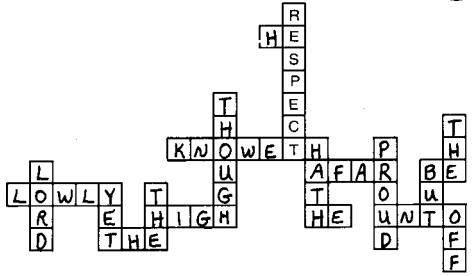

Have class members act out a skit showing what a proud person is like. Then have them act out a skit showing what a humble person is like. Discuss the skits, directing them to pinpoint the kind of person that God wants us to be.

Answers for ANSWER

Be Humble

God honors a humble spirit. Find Psalm 138:6 in your Bible and write it on the lines provided. Then write each of the words from that verse in the fill-in below. Memorize the verse so you will always remember what God expects of you.

*Though the Lord be high,
yet hath he respect unto
the lowly: but the proud
he knoweth afar off.*



TEXT Luke 14:16-24

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that although many people make excuses for not serving God, no excuse will stand under the scrutiny of the Almighty. If we persist in excusing ourselves, others will assume our responsibilities and ultimately receive our reward.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Come; for all things are now ready. — Luke 14:17

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. — Luke 14:16-18

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **The Folly of Making Excuses**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Great Supper**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

People have been making excuses for not serving God for as long as there have been people on earth. Our first record of an excuse was when Adam blamed his wife for giving him the forbidden fruit. Eve followed her husband's example and blamed the serpent. Actually, Adam implied that God was at fault also. He said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Of course God did not accept their excuses and neither will He accept excuses today.

Many people blame God for their problems or circumstances, but the problem is sin. Circumstances may cause us to have difficulties, but God has provided a way for us to have peace in our hearts, no matter what the situation may be. In Romans 8:35-39, we learn that

nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, so if we find sin in our lives, it is because we have failed to walk with the Lord and we are without excuse. King Saul, the first king of Israel, transgressed the commandment of the Lord. Although he made an excuse, God did not accept it. God said that He would take the kingdom from Saul and give it to one after His own heart.

King Saul knew what God expected of him, but he chose to disobey. Others may not have the light that Saul had, but God states that He enlightens every man that comes into the world (John 1:9). Paul says that God's eternal power and Godhead are clearly revealed in His creation so that all men are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

YOUR OPENER

The Great Supper

TEXT: Luke 14:16-24

KEY VERSE: A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. — Luke 14:16-18

RESPONSES

1. Allow your students to give explanations of their choices. While all of the four may apply in some sense, the best definition possible is the fourth one. Bring out the vast difference between an excuse being offered and an excuse being accepted. Number 4 points out that the reasons given were only a pretext. In each case, the man could have made arrangements to attend the supper if that had been his true desire.

2. After listing several excuses commonly offered for not serving God, ask your students if these excuses sound any better than the ones offered in the text. Point out that they are only a poor alternative to a refusal. People who excuse themselves from serving God don't want to serve Him, so they choose to be doing something else instead.

3. Your students should pinpoint the danger of putting off getting right with the Lord, realizing that it is possible to delay until it is too late. There comes a point where the line is crossed over, and the opportunity to accept God's mercy is forever in the past. Man does not know precisely when that point will be reached in his own life; hence the urgency of preparing to meet God today. See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Jesus had no illusions as to the general reception of His Kingdom. He knew that many, from the religious leaders of His own nation and people of the nation itself, to the distant Gentiles, would flout Him and His offer of eternal redemption. They would give the most trivial excuses, preferring for themselves the husks of the world. Webster defines the word *excuse* as "1. a plea or explanation given in defense of one's conduct, 2. a release from obligation, duty, etc., 3. something that excuses; an extenuating or justifying factor, and 4. a pretended reason for conduct; a pretext."

1. Study the definitions of *excuse*. In our parable, all who were invited requested that they be excused. Which of the four definitions best applies?

2. The man who had bought the field asked to be excused from the feast. What are some of the excuses offered today for not serving God? What is the basic reason behind all these excuses?

3. One of the most commonly offered rationalizations for making an excuse in our day is the thought, I'll do it later. What is the danger of procrastination regarding one's eternal destiny?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What was Adam's excuse for having eaten the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:12)? Did God excuse Adam? Why or why not?

5. The man who had married a wife said, "I cannot come. In reality, do you think he could have gone? Explain.

6. If you were a pastor, how would you want a person to react when you asked him to do something in God's service? With reference to this thought, explain 2 Corinthians 8:12.

7. What often results when one asks to be excused from doing a specific task in God's service?

8. What is the feast to which all are invited (Revelation 19:9)? What awaits those who accept the invitation to God's great feast?

4. His excuse was that his wife gave him the fruit, but God did not excuse Adam for his sin. God cannot overlook sin; this would include the sin of neglect. See Hebrews 2:3. Point out that God can see the heart's true desire in spite of the excuses offered.

5. In reality, he probably could have gone and taken his wife along with him. He could have asked if the invitation included her. Or perhaps she would not have objected to his going alone. But he apparently made no attempt to make any of these arrangements. Ask your class to define the difference between *cannot* and *will not*, bringing out that often *cannot* really means *will not*. Stress the necessity of establishing right priorities.

6. Your students' answers will no doubt bring out that a pastor would want a willing response. Allow time for them to offer their explanations of the verse, zeroing in on the thought that God accepts a man for what he is and the talents he has. He does not expect him to be something he cannot be. However, God can give grace and add talents to enable one to do more than he thought possible as he yields himself to Him. Ask students for personal examples where they said yes to God and received help to perform His will in what they considered a difficult task.

7. This question should generate considerable discussion regarding attitudes motivating the excuse. There are times when a person could be asked to fill a position which really does require more strength and attention than he is able to give. At that point, what might be considered an excuse is seen to be a valid reason. Declining the responsibility is not due to lack of desire or willingness, but rather is realistically facing one's limitations. On the other hand, a person could excuse himself because of physical restrictions or lack of time, when in truth neither of these would really be limiting factors if he had a willing attitude. One with this type of excuse will find he has also excused himself from receiving God's reward.

8. All are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Discuss the blessings that are available to those who accept responsibilities and privileges in God's service. Conclude your session by discussing the blessed hope of the Christian— that he will someday attend this great event if he remains faithful.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

In the parable, why was the man who was giving the supper angry? Was he more angry with the guests' not coming or the excuses that they made? Why?

We, like the guests, are invited and called to serve God. What excuses are many making today?

What is the main idea behind this parable? What is Jesus trying to teach us?

What do you really lose when you begin to make excuses for not doing God's work?

Did the host of the supper tell his servants to ask these guests to come a second time? What warning does this give us?

Why is it important to "hurry" in to dinner? Make a spiritual parallel.

Why is it easy to excuse yourself from something unpleasant or untimely, and just as easy to refrain from making an excuse if you will gain something?

What is an excuse? How does an excuse differ from an explanation?

How do you feel when someone makes an excuse to you?

What was wrong with the excuses that were made in the parable?

Why do sinners make excuses for not being saved?

THINGS TO DO

Have the students brainstorm on the consequences that result from making excuses. Make up situations such as doing chores at home, doing homework for school, or being summoned to appear in court. Have the students give some excuses for not doing their duties, and then figure out what would happen if they always excused themselves from duties required of them. What happens when they do the same with their duties in serving God?

Have a contest to see who can write the silliest excuse for not attending a dinner. After the students read their excuses, ask them to imagine how they would feel if they were given such excuses. How does God feel when

people offer excuses for not serving Him? Emphasize that, though the Silliest Excuse Contest was fun, God will not laugh if we make excuses for not serving Him.

Hand out a dinner invitation to each class member. Use it as an opener for this lesson. The invitation could be written as follows:

You are invited to a
GREAT SUPPER
To be held in Heaven
For all those who have believed
In Jesus as their Savior.
Please mark your response
to this invitation below.


- ☐ Thank you for the invitation! I accept with great pleasure.
- ☐ I am sorry I cannot attend. I must go to Hell because

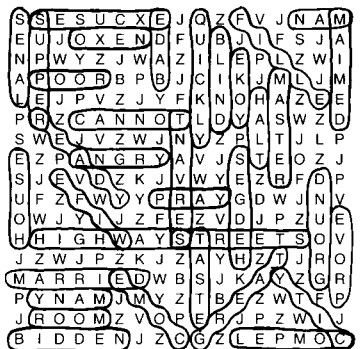
Answers for ANSWER

No Excuses!

Many people make excuses for not serving God but no excuse is good enough. If they continue making excuses they will receive no reward. The word list below is from our Bible text. Find each word in the word-find. Remember, they read up, down, across, and diagonally.

MAN
BADE
CITY
COME
HALT
MANY
OXEN
POOR
PRAY
ROOM
WIFE
YOKE
ANGRY
BLIND
GREAT
HOUSE
LANES
PROVE
READY
TASTE
BIDDEN
CANNOT
COMPEL
FILLED
GROUND
HEDGES
MAIMED
MASTER
SERVANT
SUPPER
EXCUSES
MARRIED
QUICKLY
STREETS
HIGHWAYS





Lesson 178

TEXT Luke 15:1-10

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that God is vitally concerned about one who goes astray, and that His mercy will extend to any length to restore one into the fold.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. — John 10:11

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? — Matthew 18:12

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **The Lost One**
**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Lost Sheep**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Shepherding was an important occupation in Bible times because sheep were a source of food, and their thick wool and tanned skins were used to make clothing and tent materials. Sheep are helpless animals. They are unable to find their own food and water, and without direction they would wander aimlessly about the hillside. Hence, a shepherd was essential for the care and protection of a flock.

The shepherd lived with his flock, cared for them, and protected them. Out of this grew a tremendous bond of affection. If a single sheep wandered, the shepherd would risk his life to bring it back to the fold. An injured sheep was carried upon his shoulders until it was able to walk. A newborn lamb was sometimes carried in the shepherd's cloak until it was strong enough to move along with the rest of the flock.

YOUR OPENER

The Lost Sheep

TEXT: Luke 15:1-10

KEY VERSE: How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? — Matthew 18:12

Our text for this lesson reveals the love and compassion of Jesus. This is portrayed as the shepherd's seeking his one lost sheep and the woman's searching for her lost coin. It brings out the helplessness of some who are lost, as well as the needs of those who are lost and do not realize it. Jesus is seeking for both. He gave these parables to the scribes and Pharisees to show how much He loves and values even one soul, and to show the joy in Heaven when a sinner repents.

RESPONSES

1. Class discussion should bring out that this was the very reason why Christ came to earth. His purpose was to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and, of course, this necessitated His association with them.

2. The scribes were the copiers and transcribers of the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees were a religious party during the time of Christ. As seen in these Scriptures and many others, they were strict in repeating the Law, but lax in doing it. In discussion, bring out that there still are persons today with this same attitude. Do not speak of them in a critical way, but help your students see that it is God's will that His people be "doers of the word." See James 1:22.

3. Class discussion will likely bring out that a sheep is a helpless animal. It is gregarious and dependent upon the protection and guidance of its master. Few creatures stray more easily, or are more heedless. After bringing out some of these characteristics of sheep, continue by discussing how many people show these same traits in wandering away from God. Conclude by mentioning the fact that "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). There is no one who does not need to be found and brought into the fold.

1. The scribes and Pharisees complained, saying that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Why was this complaint inappropriate?

2. Who were the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-7)? In what way did they fall short of Jesus' expectations of them?

3. In what respect are we all like sheep who have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6)? Explain your answer.

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Who rejoices when a sinner is saved?

5. Think of your concern for a loved one who is unsaved, and list several things you could do to help bring that one to the Lord. How is the value of a lost soul shown in the parable of the Lost Coin?

6. How does the woman's reaction to finding her lost coin, coincide with the words of Christ in Luke 5:32?

7. Describe the differences in the awareness of the sheep and the coin in regard to their lost condition.

8. What is repentance? See 2 Corinthians 7:10.

4. Oftentimes the friends, family, and loved ones of the sinner will rejoice as well as the rejoicing which takes place in Heaven. The shepherd found his lost sheep and called his friends to rejoice with him. Jesus said there is more joy in Heaven over the lost one that is found, than over ninety-nine just persons who were not lost. Continue your discussion by bringing out that not only is there joy in Heaven, but the one who has been found and has repented finds joy in his life. The prophet Isaiah wrote that "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). There may be battles and hard places for one to go through after he has repented, but as he clings to the Lord he can find joy and strength for every need.

5. Students' lists will vary according to their relationship to the sinner. They may mention prayer, fasting, witnessing to the sinner, and asking the ministers to visit. The woman who owned the coin realized the coin was lost and sought for it diligently. Ask your students to list the three steps she took in finding the lost piece: She lit a candle, swept the house, and sought diligently, thus showing her great concern over the loss. Help the students compare their love and concern for one who is lost, with Christ's far greater love. He came to save those who are lost (Matthew 18:11). In the discussion with your class, assure them of the saving grace of Jesus Christ today.

6. She called her friends and neighbors and asked them to rejoice with her. The discussion should center around the fact that the rejoicing was over the fact that the lost coin was found, not that the other nine had not been lost. This coincides with the words of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees when He told them that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

7. The sheep knew it had been in the fold and wandered away. The coin was lost, but being a coin, it had no knowledge of being lost. Discuss with your class that there are some people in the same condition today, who are lost but don't know it. Others know they are sinners and realize their need of God. Continue the discussion with the fact that Jesus came to seek and to save all who are lost. See Luke 19:10.

8. Repentance is godly sorrow for sin. Your class may mention other definitions. Repentance is spoken of by Jesus in both verses 7 and 10, showing that the rejoicing in Heaven was brought about by the repentance of one who was lost. Wrap up your lesson with the thought that all men everywhere are to repent (Acts 17:30), and except they repent, they will perish (Luke 13:3,5). As you close, bring out that repentance brings salvation. When the wicked man (unsaved) turns to the Lord, repents and forsakes his way, he will find pardon (Isaiah 55:7). This promise is for the "whosoever"! See Revelation 22:17. It was God's love for all of us that caused Him to send His Son to the cross. See John 3:16.

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YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How does this lesson show God's care for you?

How has God revealed to you that He wants you to be saved?

In what ways does God call His "sheep" that have gone astray?

How does God show His care and concern for His children?

Discuss some of the dangers that might be faced by a wandering lamb, such as thickets, ravines, wild animals. Then discuss the dangers which might face one of God's children who wanders away from the spiritual fold.

Imagine that your child is lost in the woods. What emotions would you feel? What action would you take? Compare this to the love of our heavenly Father for His lost child, realizing that this could mean eternal, not merely physical, death. How would you feel when the child is found? How does this compare with the rejoicing in Heaven when a sinner repents?

Do you think the lamb that the shepherd was seeking knew it was lost? Would this always be the case? Draw a spiritual parallel.

THINGS TO DO

For young juniors, bring a stuffed lamb to class. Use it to begin a discussion of the characteristics of a sheep. (See Reference Information.) Then compare these to the spiritual characteristics of a young Christian.

Bring a magazine or newspaper article about missing children. Discuss the parents' concern and emotions. Then compare this to Christ's concern for His lost child.

Have an adult come to class and give his testimony about how he was drawn to God through His love and mercy. Use this to illustrate that God really cares about us as individuals.

For each of your students, make a copy of the following paragraph which is printed in all capital letters. Instruct them not to look at the paper until you say go. When it's

time, tell them they have one minute to read the sentence and count all the F's they find in it.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE
THE RESULT OF YEARS OF CAREFUL
PRAYER AND DEDICATION OF THEIR LIVES.

Try it yourself before you read the answer below! Most people will count four. Others will see six or seven. Very few will count all eight F's that are in the sentence. Ask the students for their various answers, and then surprise them with the correct answer. After you point out to them the word "OF," tell them that most people tend to overlook this because they are looking only at the bigger words. Remind them that this should prove to be a good example of how diligent the good shepherd was when he searched for his lost sheep.

Answers for ANSWER



TEXT Luke 15:11-24

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain how the parable of the prodigal son depicts the spiritual condition of many people today. They should be able to parallel the forgiveness the prodigal son received when he admitted his need, to the forgiveness a sinner finds when he returns to God.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Come, and let us return unto the LORD. — Hosea 6:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. — Luke 15:21

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 51 — Prayed Out - Stayed Out

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **Back to Father's House**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Prodigal Son**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Swine were considered unclean, and were forbidden as food in Israel. As a Jew, the prodigal son must have detested these swine, but in a foreign country and at the point of starvation, feeding them was the only available job. In the eyes of any Jew, he could stoop no lower.

The prodigal son was so hungry he would have eaten the

Pods or husks that were fed to the pigs. These were probably carob pods which come from the locust tree. The pods grow six to ten inches long and are very bitter when green. But as they ripen, they take on a darker color and a sweet syrup forms inside. In Jesus' time, these pods were used to feed swine and cattle. The poor people also ate them because they were cheap.

YOUR OPENER

The Prodigal Son

TEXT: Luke 15:11-24

KEY VERSE: And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. — Luke 15:21

RESOURCE MATERIAL: Tract No. 51 — Prayed Out ó Stayed Out

RESPONSES

1. The students will likely conclude that the son's leaving home was an act to throw off parental restraints and control. In the same manner, Adam and Eve in their original state had everything they could hope for, yet they did not want to abide by the condition which would perpetuate their tranquility.

2. As your students draw a parallel between the prodigal son and a person's moving away from Christianity, the thought should be brought out that the steps may seem small at first. In the case of a backslider, it may be a lack of reading the Bible or praying, then the Lord's work becoming less of a priority, a lack of respect for other Christians, ignoring the authority of the ministry, justification of unrighteous behavior.

3. The young man had wasted all that was given him by his father, and was impoverished by riotous living. He was driven to extremes— feeding swine and desiring to eat their husks. Ask your students to compare this to those whose lives are dissipated by sin. The results of drunkenness, avarice, pride, profligacy, etc., might be likened to the husks.

4. Nothing was provided by his friends. In trying to find a solution to his problems, he "joined himself to a citizen of that country." Ask your students to compare this to the one who finds himself in trouble in the world of sin. In many cases, his initial reaction is not to turn to God. He likely will strive to alleviate his problems in some manner of his own devising. Was the attempt of the young man in the parable successful? No, he found himself reduced to the level of the pigs he was feeding. The answer will show that sin is a cruel thing.

The prodigal son may have enjoyed the pleasures of sin, but it was only "for a season." Sin, as he discovered, has a kickback. The straits into which the prodigal son was brought in the far country is a typical example of the degradation which a man can reach who has cast to the winds the restraints of Christian teaching. His only hope is to come to himself and ask forgiveness of the One against whom he has rebelled.

1. Since there was plenty at his father's house, what motive prompted the young man to leave?

2. Arriving at his destination in a "far country" was not an instantaneous happening. The prodigal son went step by step, farther and farther away from his father's house. Each step was an act of will, another decision or action which took him even farther from the benefits and blessings of home. Parallel this to the steps taken by one who is moving away from the blessings and benefits of Christianity.

3. We read that the young man had "spent all." What is meant by that expression? Draw a spiritual parallel, explaining why sin is expensive.

4. When the young man was in want, what was provided for him by his friends? What was his initial attempt to help himself?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What does the phrase, "he came to himself" mean?

6. What did the young man resolve to do, and how can we liken this to the actions of a sinner who wants out of the life of sin?

7. How was the son received by the father? How does the heavenly Father receive the repentant sinner?

8. The first request the son had made was "Father, give me . . ." inferring that he felt he had some rights to his father's possessions. What request was the young man proposing to ask of his father when he left the "far country" and what change of attitude did this show?

9. Who would you say is the most outstanding character in the lesson and why?

5. In contemplating his situation, the young man realized he was in dire straits, and in desperate need of help. The depth of his need made him face the facts, which to this point he would not do. Ask your students to parallel this to the experience of the sinner when he realizes the awfulness of his condition and acknowledges the need of a complete about-face in his life. The young man would never have started toward home had he not come to this realization. Just so, the sinner can never come to God until he recognizes his wretched condition through the convicting hand of God.

6. He resolved to return to his father's house and confess that he had done wrong. Likewise, a sinner must resolve to turn to God, forsake his evil ways, confess that he has sinned, and ask forgiveness. Ask your class members what followed the resolve of the young man in our parable. They should bring out that the resolve was followed by action. The sinner, too, must do more than purpose to do right. He must repent and come to his heavenly Father for pardon. See Isaiah 55:7.

7. The father saw his son a great way off and had compassion, and ran to meet him. He fell on his neck and kissed him, receiving him with joy. The class will see that the love of the father reached out to the son in such a measure that he offered no word of rebuke, no criticism of the son's neglect or past behavior. He accepted his son home with words of welcome and a heart full of thanksgiving. Such is the love of our heavenly Father. Have your students note, however, that though the father loved the son deeply, he did not compel him to come home. This had to be the son's decision. He left of his own choice, and he had to return by his own free will.

8. The proposed request was to have been "Father . . . make me as one of thy hired servants." The son realized that he had relinquished his rights to his father's love or anything that his father had. Ask your group what response this radical change in the son's attitude brought forth from the father. They should respond that he called for his servants to bring the best robe, the ring, the shoes, and to kill the fatted calf. The point of this discussion should be to show that when man is willing to settle for God's will in his life, God will give him more than he could ever hope for.

9. While the parable is generally considered the parable of the prodigal son, and he is the central character, yet your students may conclude that the far-reaching and selfless love of the father demonstrated a quality of love that could be equated with that of our heavenly Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). When the son was willing to settle for nothing, the father gave him everything.

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YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

In the parable, why do you think that the younger son of the wealthy man wanted to leave home? What caused him to make this decision?

What do you think makes people today want to leave the Christian way and forsake God?

Why does God let people go off in the way that they plan when they decide to leave the Gospel?

What does "came to himself" (verse 17) mean? What did it take for the prodigal son to realize his sin?

What would it take today for the backslider (a person who has removed himself from God) to realize his sinful mistake?

Describe the condition and the attitude of the prodigal son when he arrived home. What was the first thing he did?

What must the attitude of a backslider be when he returns to God?

It must have hurt the father when the younger son took his possessions and left. How do you suppose God feels when we ignore His will and choose our own way?

What do you think were some of the characteristics that the prodigal son might have had when he left his father's house?

Do you think a person would have to go as deep into sin as Peter, Cliff and Ron (the young men in the ANSWER story) did in order to be considered a "prodigal"? How might a Sunday school boy or girl be a prodigal?

THINGS TO DO

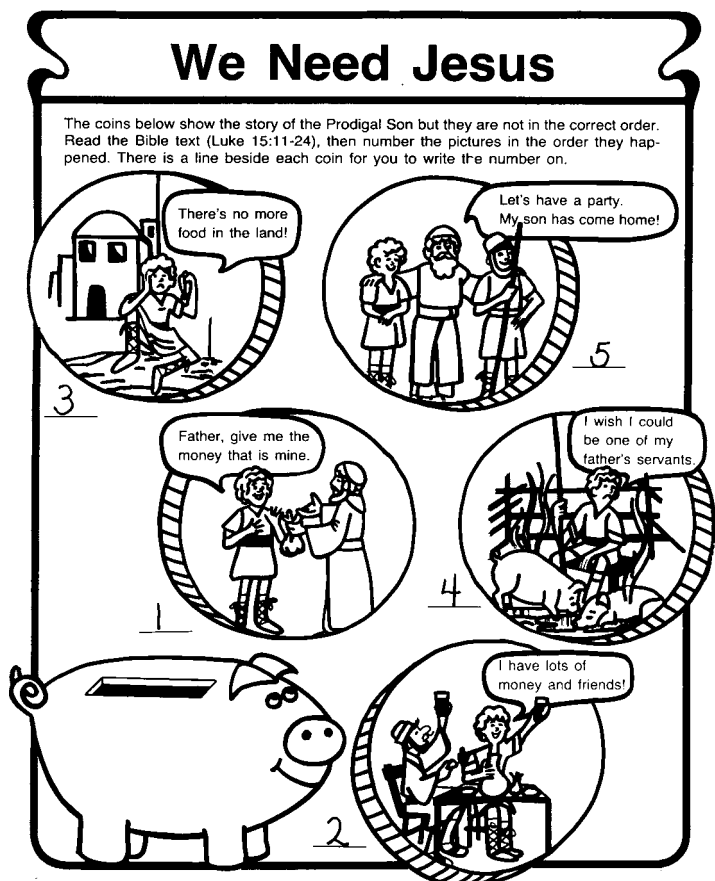
For young juniors, bring some magazine pictures illustrating things for which the prodigal might have spent his money in our day— for example: luxurious car, home, entertainment. Discuss how these items went as he wasted his money, putting the story into terms of our daily living . . . his car was repossessed, he had to sell his home at a loss, etc.

Have a mini-skit at the beginning of class with several children acting out the characters in the story. Talk about what could have been different to make a happier story.

The following activity can be started in a couple of ways. One way would be to send an assignment home with each child the week before this lesson. Have each child draw a different picture from the list below and tell them to bring it back the next Sunday. Use these pictures to teach the lesson. Another way would be to take three to five minutes at the beginning of class to have the children draw pictures, then teach from the pictures. You could put the pictures on a bulletin board for others to see after class.

1. Draw what you think the man's two sons looked like.
2. Draw what you think the prodigal son looked like when he first went to the city.
3. Draw what you think the prodigal son looked like when he was feeding the pigs.
4. Draw what you think the father looked like when his son left.
5. Draw what you think the father looked like when his son returned.

Answers for ANSWER



TEXT Luke 16:1-13

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the time is coming when we shall be called to give an account before God concerning the use we have made of the good things with which He has entrusted us.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. — 1 Corinthians 4:2

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. — Matthew 25:21

ANSWER TITLE: **Which Prince Should Be King?**
SEARCH TITLE: **The Unjust Steward**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

There is a considerable amount said about stewardship in the Word. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." This is a prime requisite for a steward and is absolutely essential whether the stewardship is an earthly occupation or a spiritual calling.

The lesson before us portrays the story of a man who was employed as a steward. Most of us will not be hired as stewards, but whatever may be our employment, as Christians we should be good stewards of our time, of the equipment we use, the supplies that are furnished, etc. Jesus said that we are lights in this world. If our employer or the ones with whom we work cannot detect that we are faithful workers, our light isn't shining very brightly.

In the spiritual realm we must realize that it is not only the pastor who must be a good steward for the Lord, but

all are included. Are we found faithful in whatever we are called to do in the service of the Lord? Pastors, ministers, teachers, workers, musicians, singers, gardeners, janitors, or any who are called into the service of the Lord will someday answer to God for the way the service assigned was performed. May we hear, "Well done," when our names are called.

The first mention of a steward in the Bible is found in Genesis— he was the steward of Abraham. It is very evident that Abraham was able to trust him completely, for we read that all the goods of his master were in his hands. When it was time to find a bride for Isaac, Abraham sent his steward to Mesopotamia to find a bride among Abraham's kinfolk. The story of Abraham's steward is an excellent example of one who complied with the key verse for ANSWER although he lived centuries before it was written.

YOUR OPENER

The Unjust Steward

TEXT: Luke 16:1-13

KEY VERSE: His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. — Matthew 25:21

RESPONSES

1. He reduced their debt, thereby making them indebted to himself. Discuss with the class how the steward expected his scheme to work. He was either unable or unwilling to work manually for a living, and he was ashamed to beg; so by reducing the size of the debts owed, he would gain a favorable acceptance from the debtors and they would take him into their homes when he was put out of the stewardship.

2. With class participation, bring out how worldly people often put their minds to work on things that will benefit themselves. A good example is the way manufacturing companies offer a cash reward for suggestions or methods that will save the company time and money. People will work long and hard if there is some personal benefit to be received.

Jesus gave an account of a man who was steward for a wealthy and influential lord. The steward had absolute and complete control over the goods of his master. He was accused of wasting his master's goods, and when he heard that he was going to be called to give an account of his stewardship, he began to scheme how he could provide for his immediate future. His plan was clever enough that even his lord commended his foresight. Jesus added that often the children of this world are wiser than the children of Light (God's children). They spend more effort in securing their immediate future than some children of Light spend in making provision for their eternal future.

1. What was the method the steward used to gain favor with his lord's debtors?

2. The lord spoken of in this parable is the owner of an earthly estate, not the Lord of Heaven. The lord recognized that, though the steward had not been faithful in the management of his goods, he had acted wisely in his own behalf. Draw a parallel between the steward's actions and the actions of worldly people in our day.

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

3. Worldly people often take advantage of present opportunities. The children of light have spiritual and eternal advantages promised to them, but they are sometimes seemingly indifferent and slow to take positive actions. Why did Jesus emphasize over and over again that spiritual values are more important than earthly rewards?

4. Fill in the blanks: "He that is faithful in that which is _____ is faithful also in _____." Is this true in a physical sense as well as in a spiritual sense? Give examples. See Luke 19:17-19.

5. In your estimation what are the true riches?

6. Give the meaning of verse 12, using your own words.

7. According to verse 13, how many masters can we serve? Why?

3. Your students' answers should bring out that Jesus repeated this over and over because many people seek so diligently the things of earth. Bring out that this is probably true because earthly things are here and now, while spiritual values seem more indefinite. A small hill, close at hand, may block the view of the distant, beautiful mountain peak. We should not allow things close at hand to obstruct our attention, knowledge, and action toward eternal matters.

4. "He that is faithful in that which is *least* is faithful also in *much*." This is true in both a physical and spiritual sense. Examples are the faithful servants who received and used the pound (money) given to them. Ask your students if everyone they know is equally diligent in performing the duties of life. Of course the answer is no. Some people work willingly no matter what the task, while others perform only when someone is watching. Jesus pointed out that to receive the ultimate heavenly reward we need to be faithful in all aspects of Christian living. Many Christians have found that being faithful in lesser things brings greater responsibility and privileges. In most cases the "much" of responsibility is not given until the person has proven faithful in the "least" in God's service.

5. In verse 11, the true riches are contrasted to unrighteous mammon, therefore the true riches point out the eternal treasures. Referring to the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), ask your students to list some of the indications of the rich man's affluence. Now have the students list the assets of Lazarus. What sign of wealth did he have? What was his wealth, and how do we ascertain this? Lead a discussion centered around the thought of the superior value of the eternal riches and our absolute need of them. Point out that we cannot live in this life as the rich man did and then be like Lazarus in Heaven.

6. Your students should conclude that verse 12 implies that true stewardship regarding the things of others indicates one deals honestly with his own affairs. God is aware of it when we care for the things of others as carefully as if they were our own. If we are trustworthy in this regard, He may bless us with material advantages of our own. But we must never lose sight of the fact that all material possessions are just loaned to us; they really belong to God.

7. We can serve only one master. One cannot be loyal to conflicting masters at the same time. God imploringly calls for the individual to make a decision for Him, whether it be to give one's life, service, or material treasure to Him. God has set before us "life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). We cannot serve the world and God at the same time. See Romans 12:2; also 1 John 2:15. Have your students rehearse the thought that we will be called upon to give an account to God concerning the use we have made of the things with which He has entrusted us.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be faithful?

How faithful do you think God requires a Christian to be?

At some time we are going to have to give an account to God for the things we have done. When is this going to be? How do you want your record to look? Why is it important to keep your record in good shape?

In our text, for what was the unjust steward commended? Can you explain why the lord seemingly commended his dishonesty?

What are some of the good things God has entrusted to us?

What are some things that might help us to faithfully perform the tasks and duties of our everyday life?

In our ANSWER story, what was Prince Ganlin's reply to the question? Why was Prince Gawain's answer better?

Compare our accounting before God to an auditor's checking bookkeeping records. How are they similar? What are the penalties involved?

THINGS TO DO

Have the class make a list of things they think would be good to have on their records when they stand before God someday. Display the list on a bulletin board.

If possible, bring a school teacher's grade book to class. Discuss how a teacher keeps a record of each student's endeavors by noting test and assignment grades. Compare this with God's record of our actions. Daily assignments could be likened to the tasks He gives us to fulfil—do we perform them faithfully? School tests could be compared to spiritual tests we face—how do we react? God is keeping track, and just as the student faces

a day of reckoning when report cards are issued, we face a time when we will stand accountable before God for our actions in this life.

If you have students who are taking music lessons, bring a notebook giving an assignment and a music book they are to practice from. What happens at lesson time if no practicing is done? Use these to illustrate that a time of spiritual accounting will come.

Answers for ANSWER

Giving an Account

We should all be very careful how we use our time. The coded verse below tells us why. To complete the verse, the letters in each column must be placed in the proper boxes directly above them. The letters are in order. Example: In the second column there is a V and an I. The V is at the top so write it in the top empty square and then the I in the empty square below. Do each column in this same way.

[illegible]

We want to
Please God.
LASEEP

(Unscramble word in sentence above.)

Lesson 181

TEXT Luke 20:9-19

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain the parallel between the rejection of the master's son by the husbandmen to the rejection of Christ by the majority of people in the world today. They will also relate what the end result will be of those who turn Christ aside.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER He came unto his own, and his own received him not. — John 1:11

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. — Isaiah 53:3

ANSWER
TITLE: **The Consequences of Rejection**

SEARCH
TITLE: **The Wicked Husbandmen**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Husbandmen is an archaic or poetic term used for "farmers, plowmen, tillers of the soil, or laborers." They may have been either tenants or owners. In this parable the husbandmen were tenant vine dressers. They rented from the landowner who was to be paid from each year's grape crop.

Most Jewish vineyards were on slopes or hills where they got the most sun. The vines usually grew along the ground. Around them were stone walls which had watch-towers, both of which helped keep out animals, thieves, and other intruders. Wine presses were cut out of solid rock.

YOUR OPENER

The Wicked Husbandmen

TEXT: Luke 20:9-19

KEY VERSE: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. — Isaiah 53:3

RESPONSES

1. The parable was directed against the chief priests and scribes. They tried to lay hands on Jesus, as the husbandmen in the parable did to the heir, because of their jealousy, hatred, and rejection of Him. The sinner who is confronted with evidence of his wrongdoing may deny his guilt, try to excuse his misdeeds, or at times even become violent. None of these reactions change the fact of his guilt.

2. God was turning away from the Jews, and His vineyard, or church, was being given to the Gentiles. Thus we have the opportunity to receive salvation. Discuss with the students what was required of a Gentile who wanted to be saved during Old Testament times, bringing out that he had to submit to the Law with all its ordinances and sacrifices. Jesus fulfilled that Law, and opened the door to justification by faith. Because the Jews as a nation rejected Christ, the Gospel has been offered to the Gentiles. They have the privilege of enjoying God's salvation— His love and mercy being directed toward them. See Romans 11:11-12.

3. As soon as Jesus Christ was crucified, God began to open the door of His mercy to the Gentiles. Have your class talk about the miraculous way God showed Peter that the Gentiles were to be included in receiving the Gospel (Acts 10:9-16). Discuss the attitude of Paul: how he preached first to the Jews, but when they rejected the preaching of the Cross, he preached to the Gentiles (Acts 18:5,6), resulting in many conversions. Why did God reject the Jews? Because their religious leaders rejected Him and crucified His Son. The nation was overthrown in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem with a fearful slaughter of the Jews.

4. "The stone" refers to Jesus, the Son of God, who is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Even though the Jews did not receive Him, but rejected Him, to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:11-12). Emphasize the fact that there is no "other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus. See Acts 4:12.

Jesus' parables were given to provide spiritual lessons. In this story the religious leaders of God's chosen people are likened to wicked husbandmen of the vineyard which their lord had planted. Through the years God sent prophets to Israel instructing and admonishing them to be obedient and to do right, that they might be a fruit-bearing vineyard. But the leaders, on the whole, treated the prophets shamefully, wounding some and killing others. Finally God sent His only begotten Son, but they rejected Him also, causing Him to be crucified.

1. Against whom was Jesus directing this parable? Compare their reaction to the reaction of a sinner confronted with evidence of his wrongdoing.

2. What did Jesus mean in the parable when He said God would destroy those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others (Matthew 21:41,43)? What impact does this have on us?

3. In reference to the answer for question two, when did this happen? See Acts 10:34-35,44-45.

4. What is meant by the prophecy which Jesus quoted in our text, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner"? See Acts 4:10-11.

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44). How would you explain this?
6. Do you think the Gentiles as a whole are treating Jesus any better today than the Jews did? Give reasons for your answer.
7. Many who are rejecting Christ today, and giving Him little or no thought, seem to be prospering materially. After reading Ecclesiastes 8:11-13, what are your feelings as to the end result in the lives of those who are turning Christ's love aside?
8. Some do not outwardly deny Christ or reject His deity, but continually neglect to do anything about their soul's salvation. What danger is there in following such a pattern in one's life? See 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 and Hebrews 2:3.
9. God's Spirit departed from the Jews and turned to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected Christ. In these days, the Gentiles' rejection of Christ will cause God to turn back to the Jews (Luke 21:24; Romans 11:19-22). What does this tell us concerning God's time for us? See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

5. Falling on this stone, which is Jesus, signifies one's coming to Him in repentance. His sinful tendency or desire will be broken, and Christ will give him a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). Judgment will fall on the one who refuses to come, who rejects Him as the Jews did. The Jewish nation was destroyed and the people scattered among the nations. This would be a good time to stress the importance of coming to Christ while mercy's door is open and God's Spirit is drawing.
6. Many Gentiles are receiving Christ as their personal Savior. However, bring out that even many religious groups are denying Christ's deity as the Son of God, His virgin birth, His Blood atonement, and His resurrection. They are trying to bring Him down to man's level as just a good teacher and example. Stress the importance of believing in Him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
7. Give your students an opportunity to express their thoughts. Then discuss the fact that even today there is no way the Christ-rejecter can escape the judgment of the Lord. As the Jews in Christ's time were punished for their sins, so will those in our day eventually be punished, even though they seem to prosper materially for a time.
8. Show that neglecting God and putting off salvation until some other time is one of the most dangerous things a person can do. One of these days sudden destruction will come to those who say, "some other time."
9. Discuss with your class that as surely as God judged the Jews, so will He judge the Gentiles. Stress the importance of daily obeying and following God's Word, so we will be ready when Jesus comes for us.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does *reject* mean?

What are some of the reasons people today reject Christ?

Why is it important not to reject Christ, and how can we keep from doing this?

Name some ways to prove you love God and are not guilty of rejecting Him.

Why would anyone reject Christ after hearing of what He has done and will do for them?

What are some of the consequences of rejecting Christ?

Can one actually reject Christ without really knowing it? Explain.

What would have happened if the husbandmen had repented of their wrongdoings and had accepted and honored the owner's son? What happens when we repent and honor Jesus Christ today as our Lord and Savior?

In our ANSWER story, what was Shannon's reaction to the fact that the warnings of an expert were ignored? What warnings are being ignored by people in our day? In a spiritual sense, to what would you parallel the rejection of the expert in our story?

THINGS TO DO

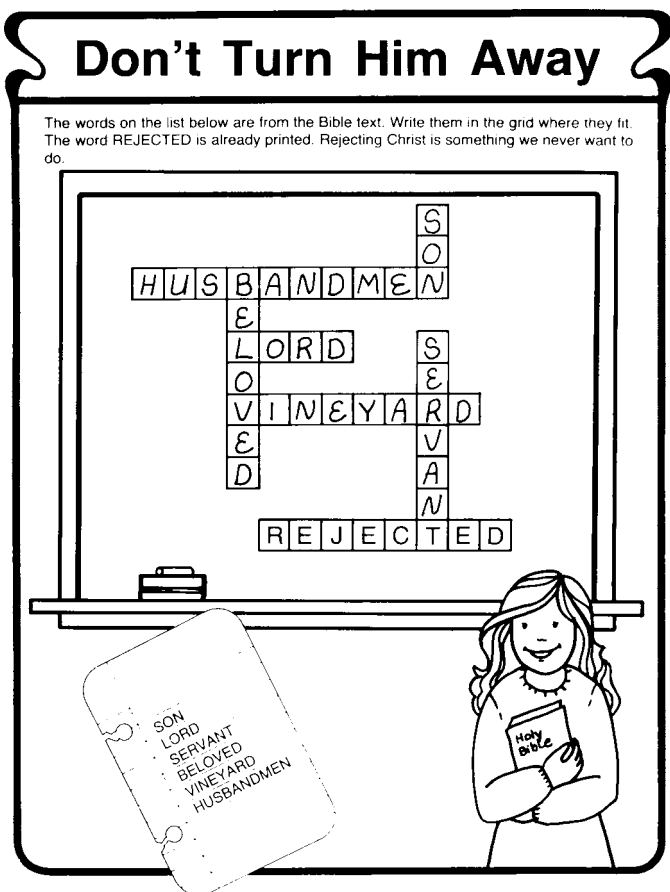
Show your students a gift-wrapped box. Tell them it represents God's gift to man—salvation through Jesus Christ. (You might put this label on the box.) Demonstrate two ways of rejecting the gift. One way is to lay it aside and ignore it. And the other is to stomp on it to destroy it without regard. Ask the students how they would feel if they had been the giver of the gift. Imagine how God must feel when we reject His precious Gift.

Bring a job application to class. Using it as an introduction, make a list of rejections that can change your life, such as being fired from your job, turned down by the college of your choice, or jilted by your sweetheart. Compare these to rejecting Christ and the consequences one would face.

Hand one of your students something you have made. Bring out that, because you made it, this gift is a part of you. Discuss your probable emotions if the gift were to be rejected. Liken this to God's giving of Himself when He gave His own Son. How grieved He feels when His Son is rejected!

Prepare a basket of apples and include a few which are partly spoiled. With your class, sort out the good apples leaving only the spoiled ones. Ask what will happen to the spoiled ones. (They will be destroyed as were the husbandmen in our lesson.) What will happen to the good apples? They will be used. (Give one to each student.) Show how the end results will be enjoyable or good just as with a person who has chosen to exalt Christ.

Answers for ANSWER



TEXT Review Quarter Texts

OBJECTIVE The students will review the past twelve lessons and be able to explain how Christ's parables illustrate many vital points relating to salvation and spiritual growth.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them. — Matthew 13:34

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. — Matthew 13:34-35

Quarter Review

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The word *parable* comes from the Greek verb *paraballo*. *Para* means "beside," and *ballo* means "to cast." It is literally a comparison or an illustration of one subject by another.

Parables were used chiefly in the New Testament and by Jesus only. The Old Testament made mention of the word *parable* fifteen times, but it is translated from a different word than in the New Testament. Also the usage is somewhat different. For an example, see Numbers 23:7.

A parable and an allegory are somewhat similar, as both

have a lesson to teach. However, a parable does not depart from the natural order of things, and its meaning has to be searched out. An allegory can readily be understood as the contents are read. A fable also is used to teach moral values, but may use animals talking or other mythical ideas to bring out the lesson to be learned.

Jesus found the use of parables in His teachings to be very valuable. When the disciples asked why He taught in parables, He told them that it was given unto them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to those who loved darkness rather than light, the meanings of the parables were hidden. Matthew 13:10-15

YOUR OPENER

Quarter Review

TEXT: Review Quarter Texts.

KEY VERSE: All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

— Matthew 13:34-35

RESPONSES

1. Guide the students' discussion toward the thought that the Lord will go to any length to restore a lost soul. Be sure to point out that God will never violate a person's free will. God's love to lost mankind is evidenced in the mercy that He extends to sinners (John 3:16). Lead into the next question by asking the class what a sinner can expect when he comes to God with a repentant heart.

2. "When he came to himself . . ." was the turning point in his wayward life. Help the class see that realization of one's need is the first step toward salvation. Use this opportunity to discuss with the class what it takes to bring sinners to the realization of their need of God. Personal experiences might be solicited.

3. Establish a definition for *forgiveness*. Then help the class understand how, according to the parable of the Creditor and the Debtors, the one who has been forgiven much will love Christ with a greater love than the person who has been forgiven little. You may want to emphasize the importance of being forgiven. Everyone who has had his sins forgiven owes the Lord an inestimable amount of love and thanksgiving. Direct the discussion toward the next question by asking how a person gets to the place where he realizes his need of forgiveness.

Look back over the last twelve lessons we have studied. We have examined individual parables that have to do with different aspects of becoming a Christian and living a Christian life. In this lesson, we will review several of these illustrations showing Christ's plan for our salvation and the ways we can be a fruit-bearing Christian.

1. God's love for lost mankind was beautifully proved when He gave His only Son for our salvation. His concern for the sinner is illustrated by the parable of the lost sheep. To what length will the Lord go to restore one who has gone astray? See Luke 15:4.

2. What was the turning point in the life of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17)? Compare this to the first step a sinner must take in turning to the Lord.

3. When we truly realize our need for salvation, the next step should be to seek for the forgiveness promised by God. Define forgiveness, and then explain the direct relationship between one's love for the Lord, and the amount of forgiveness that one has received. See Luke 7:47.

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. People who hear the Word of God, both before and after they are saved, seem to respond in different ways. How do the different types of soil spoken of in the parable of the sower relate to the response of a human heart (Luke 8:4-15)? In what way is the word "receptivity" a key to the explanation of this parable?

5. If we have received the Word of God in our hearts, there will be outward evidences of this. Explain the importance of bearing fruit, and list several kinds of spiritual fruit that the Lord is looking for in our lives.

6. God calls all Christians to serve Him, and willingness to work for Him is a part of the spiritual fruit He desires to see in our lives. What will be the final outcome of the people who persistently excuse themselves from the service of the Lord?

7. Prayer is a vital aspect of keeping close to the Lord in our daily lives. Praying in faith and believing are important, but Luke 11:8-9 brings out another key element in receiving an answer to one's prayers. What is it and why is it important?

8. The most important focus of our Christian life is anticipation of the Lord's return to earth, and making sure we are ready for this event. Using the words "uncertainty" and "certainty" as a basis, explain why it is so important to be ready and watching for Christ's second coming. See Luke 12:39-40.

4. Discuss with the class the different types of soil. Compare the types of soil to the various ways God's Word is received by different people. Stress the importance of cultivating a receptive attitude to the Word of God (even after being saved).

5. Allow students to give their explanations. Emphasize the point that Jesus made: There is a time where a person's failure to bear fruit is no longer tolerated by the Lord and separation follows. Use Matthew 7:20 to help the class understand that, both to God and man, they are known by their fruits. Reiterate the fruit of the Spirit.

6. Help the class to realize that excuses are unacceptable before God. If a person continues to excuse himself from His service, another person will assume that responsibility and ultimately receive the reward. Help the students realize that if a person does stray because of excuse-making, or for any other reason, the Lord will go to any length to restore that one in love.

7. Help the class discuss the importance of importuning (the act of coming with requests, persistently or repeatedly). Have the class turn to James 5:16 and read, ". . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Discuss with the class the meaning of the words *effectual*, "to produce the desired effect," and *fervent*, "intensely devoted or earnest."

8. Lead the class in a discussion about the uncertainty of the hour, but the certainty of Christ's second coming. Discuss the necessity of being ready to meet Jesus in the hour when we "think not." Ask the class what a Christian should be doing while he is watching and waiting for Christ's return.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is a parable?

How does God speak to us today? Does He sometimes speak to us in parables?

Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Relate a specific thing that happened which opened your spiritual eyes and caused a deeper understanding and growth.

Of the twelve parables and applications taught in this quarter, which ones did you feel particularly applied to you or were a help to you? Why?

Which of the twelve parables were addressed mainly to sinners? Which were addressed to Christians?

What is the difference between a parable and some other account or story Jesus told?

Can the same principle be used today in teaching?

THINGS TO DO

Bring a miscellaneous assortment of articles to class, such as a clock, shoe, rubber band, or pocket knife. Allow each student to select one and, either in a circle response or briefly written summary, outline a short parable using that object.

For a review or departmental project, ask students to pantomime or present a freeze sculpture portraying the different parables studied. Have the audience identify each parable as it is portrayed.

Prepare a Hidden-Words puzzle for your group. Choose key words from all the lessons taught during this past quarter and write them on a grid. Fill in the blank spaces with random letters. Type, in alphabetical order, the list

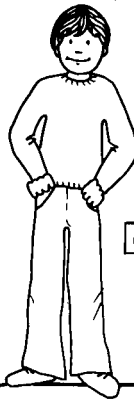
of words you chose. Give a copy of the word list and the puzzle to each student. Allow a certain amount of time for them to find the words in the puzzle. Also, next to each of the words have them write the different parables which they represent.

Plan a mini-quiz asking your students to identify the parable by key words or phrases taken from the twelve accounts studied.

Answers for ANSWER

Why Parables?

Christ spoke in parables so that people who heard Him could understand Him better. The acrostic below is about parables. Look up the verses and fill in the missing words. Then fit those words into the puzzle. They are not in order so be sure you spell the words correctly.



	S	H	E	E	P															
	S	T	E	W	A	R	D	S	H	I	P									
					F	R	U	I	T											
					W	A	T	C	H	I	N	G								
				D	E	B	T	O	R	S										
C	O	N	T	I	N	U	A	L	C	O	M	I	N	G						
								E	X	C	U	S	E							
								S	O	W	E	R								

"Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16:2)

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors" (Luke 7:41)

"For I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 8:5)

"A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5)

"I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (Luke 18:5)



"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."
(Luke 12:37)



"And if it bear fruit, well" (Luke 13:9)



"And they all with one consent began to make excuses" (Luke 14:18)



Answers for Quarter Review Pages in *The Answer*



Color in the "Thumbs Up" if the following statements are correct. Color in the "Thumbs Down" if they are false:

  The creditor had two debtors who owed him different amounts.

  The one knocking did not receive even though he kept on knocking.

  The parable about the choice of rooms at a wedding feast illustrated the importance of humility.

  The shepherd rejoiced over finding the one sheep that was lost.

  When a servant came to the owner of the vineyard, he was beaten.

Draw a line between the parable in the column on the left and the key word of that parable in the column on the right.

Two Debtors	Receptivity
Sower and Seed	Excuses
Fig Tree	Repentance
Great Supper	Rejection
Prodigal Son	Forgiveness
Wicked Husbandmen	Fruitfulness

Complete the following sentences.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord finds watching when He returns.

It is impossible for a man to serve two masters.

The seed that fell on stony ground withered away.

The man who planted a vineyard looked for fruit for three years on his fig tree.

One man who was invited to the great supper said he had bought a piece of ground; another said he had bought oxen.

Read the following summary. Then fill in the blanks by unscrambling the words after each line.

The Pharisees (shaPreies) and scribes complained because Jesus ate with sinners. So He told them the parable of a man who had a hundred (dherund) sheep. When he discovered that one was lost, he went into the wilderness (dersnwisle) to look for it. When he found it, he laid it on his shoulders (huldsoers) and carried it home. Then he called his friends and neighbors (bsnorgehi) and told them to rejoice (cijeroe) with him because the lost sheep was found (dofun).

Answers for Extra Activity Pages in *the Answer*

Activity Page 41

Missing Words

Fill in the missing words of the key verses below. Find the correct words in the box and write them on the blank lines. See how many you can do without looking up the text in your Bible.

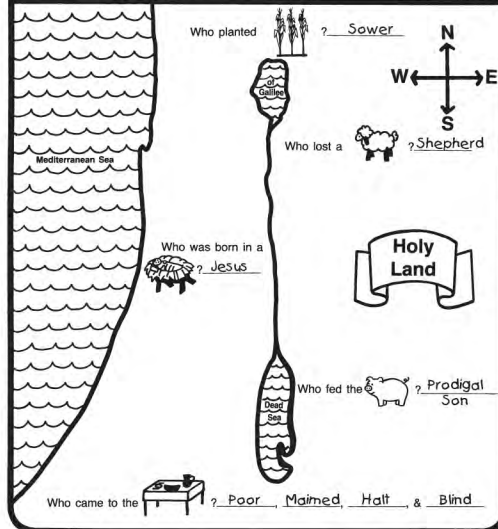
Christ	David	fruit	multitude	proud	return
Come	faint	hear	own	ready	shepherd
cometh	faithful	humble	parable	receive	stewards
cut	forgave	life	pray	received	words

- "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them." — Matthew 13:34
- "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." — Luke 2:11
- "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." — Matthew 24:44
- "All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears." — Ezekiel 3:10
- "And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." — Luke 13:9
- "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity." — Psalm 78:38
- "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." — John 10:11
- "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." — John 1:11
- "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." — 1 Corinthians 4:2
- "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." — Luke 18:1
- "Come; for all things are now ready." — Luke 14:17
- "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." — James 4:6
- "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." — Hosea 6:1

Activity Page 42

Who Did It?

Jesus traveled to many places in the Holy Land and told many parables. Read the questions below and fill in the answers. They are about the parables you have been studying this quarter. If you have read all the Bible texts this should be simple.



Activity Page 43

Find Your Favorites

On the bookmarks below, write the names of your favorite parables from Luke and where they can be found. Cut out the bookmarks and place them in the correct places in your Bible. You might want to cover them with a clear, adhesive-backed paper so they will last longer.

	Luke	
	Luke	
	Luke	
	Luke	