



**A KING FOREVER
AND EVER**



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INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

Vol. 62

Winter Quarter 2024/25

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

No. 1

Price \$5.39

----- Ages 12-14 (Middle School) -----

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INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY — USPS 266 - 360

Volume 62, No. 1, December, January, February 2024/25. An official quarterly of the African Methodist Episcopal Church prepared by the AMEC Sunday School Union. Published quarterly by the AMEC Sunday School Union, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Copyright © 2024/25 by AMEC Sunday School Union.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Intermediate Sunday School Quarterly, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

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**Entered as Periodicals Postage Paid Matter, March 20, 1942, at the
Post Office at Nashville, Tennessee, under the Act of March 3, 1879.**

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

I. Bell tap or organ
voluntary
as a signal for silence

II. Singing

III. The Apostles' Creed IV. Prayer, closing with the

Lord's Prayer in concert V. Singing

VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers

VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school

VIII. The Decalogue

THE LESSON

I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged

II. Class study of the lesson

III. Warning bell — 5
minutes

IV. Closing bell — silence

EDITORIAL STAFF REV. DR. RODERICK BELIN, Publisher REV. DR.
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A.L. STANFIELD, Copy Editor

M.E. RUSSELL, Layout/Design

THE APOSTLES' CREED I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of
heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was
conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under
Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from
the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the
Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the

saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

THE CLOSING

I. Singing

II. Review and application of the lesson

III. Secretary's report

IV. The Church School Creed

V. Singing

VI. Benediction

THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained

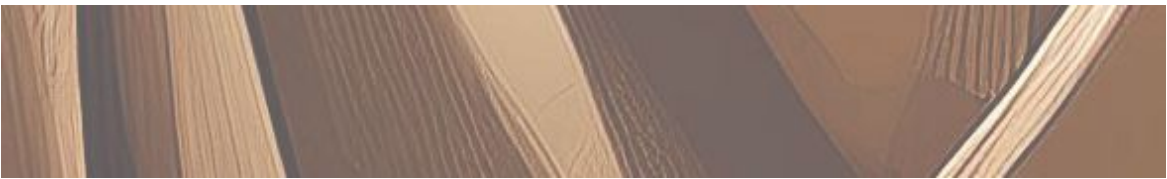
so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

AME Discipline









LESSON 1 DECEMBER 1, 2024 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Ancestry of King David

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1—4; Luke 3:23-38

Focus Scripture: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

KEY VERSE: The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:17

VOCABULARY REDEEMER: *a person who has the responsibility to recover or retain family property.*

INHERITANCE: *property or land given by one person to the next generation.*

KINDRED: *a full male sibling with the same mother and father; a person of the same close clan family, uncle, aunt, or offspring of the same.*

ELDER: *oldest in the house; legal competence in a community; a social class.*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: RUTH 4:9-17; LUKE 3:23, 31B-32

9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.

10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man’s name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses.”

11 Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem;

12 and, through the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin, and may his name be renowned in Israel!

15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.”

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse.

17 The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli,...

31^B...son of Nathan, son of David,

32

son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala, son of Nahshon,...

INTRODUCTION

In a once-prosperous city now overshadowed by despair, people longed for a savior. One day, a man named Josh, claiming descent from the great leader Jonathan, arrived. Known for his acts of kindness, Josh healed the sick and spread hope.

News of Josh’s miracles spread; and, crowds flocked to Josh. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and forgave the guilty. His actions reminded everyone of Jonathan’s compassion, bringing light and hope back to the city.

Inspired by Josh, the citizens began helping each other, transforming their community. Josh showed that true healing comes from mercy and kindness,

proving that everyone has the power to make a difference.

BIBLE STORY

Boaz spoke to the elders of the community as they witnessed him acquire the estate of Elimelech, Naomi's husband, and Mahlon, Ruth's husband. Boaz shared that he would marry Ruth as he was the next kindred of Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. It was through the marriage that Boaz could secure the family property for Ruth.

After their marriage, Ruth gave birth to a son and Naomi took him and they named him Obed, which means he was the son born to Naomi. By the custom of the land, as a son, he was the family of her husband Elimelech and thereby an heir of David. Obed would have a son Jesse and Jesse would have a son David.

The author of Luke explains the lineage of Jesus comes from David through Obed.

LIFE APPLICATION

Each of our families is unique and our connections with family members are different. Ruth's family lineage led to the birth of Jesus Christ. What is the lineage that led to your birth? We invite you to spend time talking with your family to learn about your family tree. Listen to the story of your family, what they did to take care of their family, what type of professions they have, and where they live. After hearing the story of your family and creating your family tree, reflect on how your ancestors shaped who you are today.

Ruth's story includes immigration, poverty, a mixed marriage, and redemptive love. How were these things viewed during the time of Ruth? How are they considered today? What does their inclusion in both the Bible and the lineage of Jesus say about God's perspective on them?

SUMMARY

Families are necessary and they come in many forms. Ruth and Naomi became family through their marriages. Ruth chose to stay with Naomi after her husband died and Boaz made a choice to honor the family practice of the

next of kin. Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi became family and collectively they led their family to the birth of Jesus Christ. Both Ruth and Naomi were widows; they did not have access to their husband's inheritance, and it was not until the marriage of Boaz that they could access their families' resources.

Questions

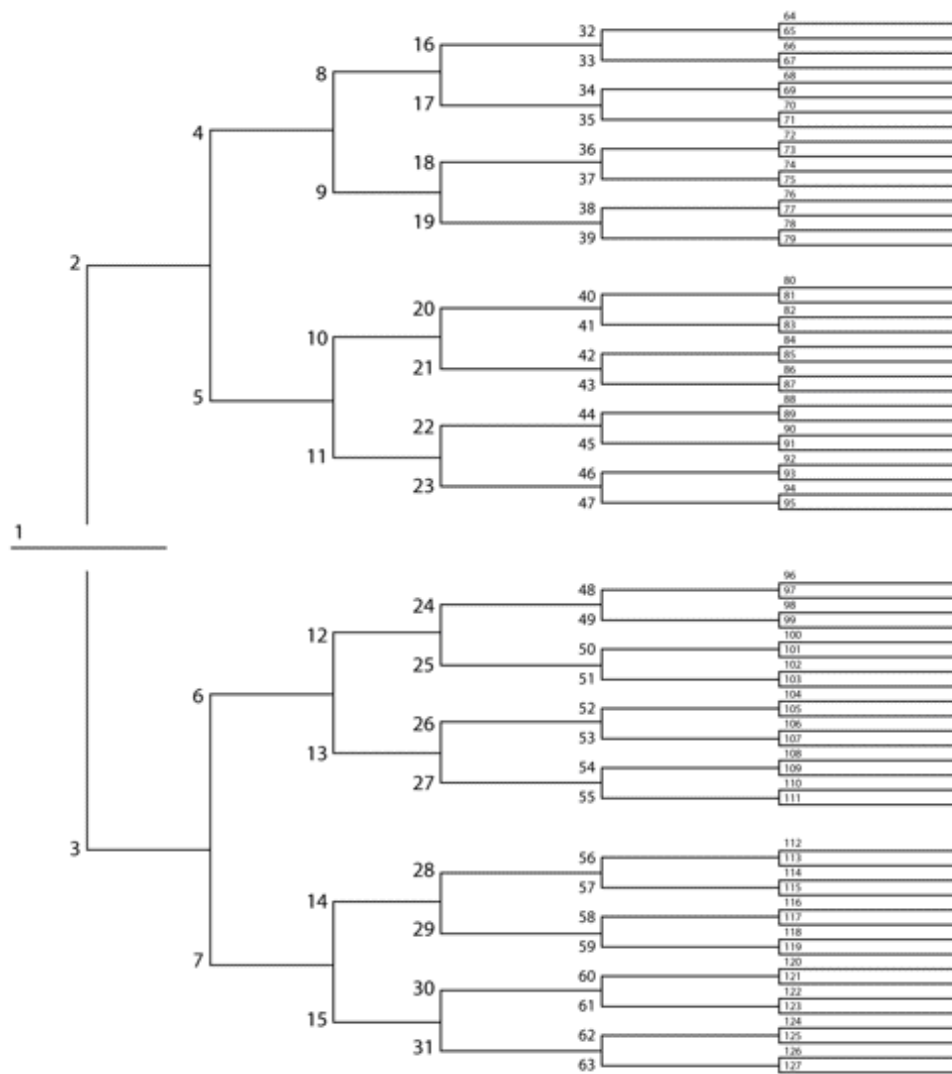
- What do we learn about God through the telling of this story of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi? How does their story affect the understanding of the rest of the Bible?
- How can the lineage of David and Jesus help you enhance the Advent and Christmas celebrations considering current tensions regarding race and immigration?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Lord, we are grateful for the lessons we've learned today about your mercy and compassion through Jesus, the "Son of David." Help us to carry this legacy forward, showing kindness and mercy to those in need. May we be instruments of your healing and love in our communities, reflecting the light that Jesus brought into the world. Strengthen our faith and guide our actions so that we may be effective, just as Jesus was. Let our lives be a testament to your enduring grace and the power of compassion. Amen.

APPENDICES 01 – YOU ARE FROM _____’S FAMILY

7 Generation Family Tree



1. Your name

1. Your name

23 Mom's great grands

23 Mom's great grands

31 Dad's great grands

FAMILY SEARCH

Word Search

J H B H J S S I P D
E A O E Z A P M E J
S B A Z B L X I R A
S R Z R X M D N E O
E A I O R O A A Z N
J H S N U N V H A A
U A S O T M I S P O
D M A B H R D H E M
A J C E J A C O B I
H Q U D L M J N O R

Nahshon

Abraham

Salmon

Ruth

Naomi

Hezron

David

Ram

Judah

Perez

Issac

Jacob

Boaz

Jesse

Obed

LESSON 2 DECEMBER 8, 2024 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

God's Promise to David

Lesson Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

KEY VERSE: “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” 2 Samuel 7:16

VOCABULARY HOUSE: Dwelling, palace, temple, family, dynasty.

PROPHET NATHAN: Prophet in King David's time; delivers God's message to David.

TABERNACLE: A relatively large, portable dwelling, used as a central place of worship; made of cloth, leather, or animal hair, with poles and a superstructure for holding it up.

KINGDOM: Empire, the area or people ruled under a monarchy form of government.

THRONE: An ornate chair, the authority and rulership of a leader over a people; a place in a social arrangement marking a relatively high status.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 7:4-17

4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan,

5 “Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.

7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’

8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel,

9 and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,

11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

15 But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.”

17 In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a thriving community where the mayor decides to build a brandnew city hall to honor the town’s heritage. The mayor plans every detail meticulously, but before he can lay the foundation, a message arrives from the state governor. The governor, appreciating the mayor’s dedication, says, “Instead of you building this hall, I will establish a legacy for your family. Your descendants will lead this town for generations, and they will oversee the construction of many halls, ensuring the prosperity of our community forever.”

In this analogy, the mayor's initial desire to build something magnificent shifts to a greater promise of enduring leadership and a legacy for his family. Similarly, there was a significant moment in history when an important figure received an unexpected promise that extended beyond his immediate plans, shaping the future in profound ways.

BIBLE STORY

King David, having established his reign and brought peace to Israel, wanted to honor God by building a permanent temple in Jerusalem. Up until this point, the Ark of the Covenant, symbolizing God's presence, has been housed in a tent or tabernacle. David feels it is inappropriate for him to live in a palace while the Ark remains in a temporary shelter.

Nathan is a prophet and trusted advisor to King David. He plays a crucial role as God's messenger, delivering divine revelations and guidance. Nathan initially supports David's plan to build the temple but later receives a message from God that alters the course of events. Nathan is like a mediator between God and David and David knows when Nathan speaks it is of God and not of Nathan's desire.

God's promises to David have long-lasting implications as the covenant God makes with David is a foundational element in the history of Israel. God promises that David's descendants will establish an everlasting dynasty, and his throne will be secure forever. This covenant lays the groundwork for the hope of a promised savior that is later fulfilled in Jesus.

LIFE APPLICATION

God's promises are faithful. David received God's promise that his descendants would reign forever. We read our Bible to learn of God's promises to believers, yet there are times when we hesitate to believe God will or can fulfill the promises.

As we enter the season of giving and receiving, consider the promises you've made to others; have you been faithful to your promises? Can others trust you to keep your promises? Have you written a list of gifts you plan to give on Christmas? If you have, review your list, and consider if the

recipient of your gift would see your gift as something you just gave without thought or will see your gift as personal and intentional.

God's promises are intentional and personal. He framed David's promise for David and no one else. Commit to be intentional in your gift-giving and take a moment to reflect on God's amazing gift to you.

SUMMARY

God promised David he would establish an everlasting family through David's lineage, which leads to Jesus Christ. God tells David that his kingdom will endure forever and that his children will have an everlasting dynasty.

As followers of Jesus, we are spiritually included in God's family. Our faith in Christ makes us part of that family, heirs of the promises and participants in God's plan. God always keeps his promises. We can celebrate and trust that God will follow through on his promises.

Questions

- Imagine being part of God's family through Jesus Christ. What type of impact does that have on your identity in life and your daily actions?
- Can you think of a time when God has been faithful to you or someone you know? How does this help you trust that God will fulfill his promises in your own life?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

We were reminded of the importance of dedicating our futures to God, by seeking forgiveness, guidance, and mercy. We commit to creating sacred spaces in our lives where we can connect with him daily through prayer and alignment with God's will. We also pledge to extend forgiveness and mercy to others and to advocate for justice and righteousness in our communities.

APPENDICES 02 – REFLECTIONS AND OFFERING What's the best Christmas gift you have **ever given** someone?

Was it the physical gift that mattered most, or was it the thoughtfulness you showed to the person receiving the gift?

What is the best thing that you think you can offer God?

Read the passage again (2 Samuel 7:4-17).

How does God respond to David's best offering?

How have you responded to God's gift to you?

Reflecting on the Davidic Covenant as well as the Abrahamic Covenant and Sinai Covenant, which of God's promises sticks out to you the most? Why?

Davidic Covenant **2 Samuel 7:13-16** The promise made by Yahweh that he would establish for King David a "house" or a dynasty of kings who would perpetually reign over God's people.

Abrahamic Covenant **Genesis 12:1-3**

God's promise to the first patriarch, Abraham, that he would be blessed, his descendants would be greater than the stars in the sky, and his name would be great which became the basis for Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

Sinai Covenant

Exodus 19:3-8

The covenant that Moses mediated between God and Israel at Mount Sinai when Israel received the law (10 Commandments)

Which promise feels nearest to you—something you have experienced, perhaps?

REFLECTIONS OF A PROMISE AND A LEGACY A Promise and a Legacy

Think about a time when someone made a significant promise to you or when you made a promise to someone else. Write a short paragraph describing this experience. What was the promise, and how did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

Write a paragraph about what kind of legacy you would like to leave behind. This could be within your family, community, or even in a broader context. What values or actions do you want to be remembered for? How can you start building this legacy today?

Consider how God’s promise to David about his descendants and their future impacts your understanding of promises and legacy. Write a paragraph connecting David’s story to your own experiences. How does knowing that God made such a significant promise to David change your perspective on the promises and legacy you are building in your own life?

Create a short action plan (3-5 bullet points) on how you can start living out the values you want to be part of your legacy. Include specific actions you can take in your daily life that reflect these values.

Example: Action 1: Stand up against bullying and support those who feel left out or ignored by others.

The word puzzle has a hidden message in it. First, find all the words in the list. Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other. Once you find all the words, copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message. There are 27 words in the puzzle.

Accordance Ancestors Appoint
Build
Enemies
Establish

E D E L L I F L U F A T H E R
M S R O T S E C N A Y O U R T
A H R O R E V E R O F N E K S
N S G N I R P S F F O H I H A
L E A R S I L L B E E N O W E
E L C A N R E B A T G U O N N
T S A F D A E T S D S R H O O
N A H T A N S J O E D T S S R
E C N I R P U M A S B L I T H
A C C O R D A N C E I S L N T
H E D F G O B P E E H S B E R
L E V E S E R U T S A P A T E
R U S L E N E M I E S P T J Q
H H A P P O I N T L P H S U C
T K T S E R V A N T D U E H D

Father

Forever Fulfilled House

Israel

Judges

Kingdom Saul Tent Name Servant Throne Nathan Sheep Words Offsprings

Son

Pastures Steadfast

Prince Tabernacle

LESSON 3 DECEMBER 15, 2024 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Prophet Who Prepares the Way

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:5-23, 57-80

Focus Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

KEY VERSES: And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:76-77

VOCABULARY PROPHECY: A message or revelation from God, often concerning future events.

REPENTANCE: A change of mind or heart, leading to a complete change in one's way of life; turning away from sin and turning towards God in obedience and devotion.

SALVATION: Deliverance from sin and its penalties, often associated with eternal life.

OATH: A solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behavior.

PREPARE: To make ready or to put in a state of readiness.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:67-80

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his child David,

70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant,

73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us

74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him

without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,

79 to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a community eagerly awaiting a new leader who promises to bring positive change and hope. Before the new leader arrives, a trusted messenger comes to organize everyone. The messenger travels through the community, sharing news of the coming changes the new leader will bring to the community. He urges people to reflect on their lives, turn away from harmful habits, and open their hearts to the new beginning that is coming. His words fill the community with anticipation and readiness for the leader’s arrival. Similarly, there was once a key figure whose mission was to prepare people for the arrival of a savior. This messenger’s role was to guide people towards repentance and readiness for the transformative leader from a notable lineage, who would fulfill long-awaited promises and bring lasting peace.

BIBLE STORY

Israel was expecting the promised Messiah as was written in the scriptures. The scriptures of old had indicated that there would be a person who would arrive before the Messiah to prepare everyone. Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesies about the coming salvation through the Messiah, describing the role of John the Baptist as the forerunner.

Israel had longed for deliverance from political oppression and spiritual redemption promised by the prophets. Zechariah speaks of God’s redemption of his people, referring to the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham and

the deliverance from enemies. It had been a long time since Israel had heard the word of a prophet.

Israel needed to be reminded of the promise. Zechariah's prophecies about John's mission to prepare the way for the Messiah would emphasize repentance, forgiveness of sins, and the knowledge of salvation. Israel needed to be prepared for John's arrival. John the Baptist's unique role as the herald and preparer of the way for Jesus involves knowledge of his birth, upbringing, and the cultural and religious expectations of his time regarding the coming of the Messiah.

LIFE APPLICATION

Zechariah's prophecy highlights John's role in preparing the way for Jesus and God's plan of redemption. As believers, we can apply this to our lives by recognizing our role, living with purpose, reflecting the light, and sharing the good news.

Just as John was called to prepare the way for Jesus, we too are called to prepare the way for God's work in our communities and our lives. We are to actively live out our faith and be open to God's leading. We should understand our purpose helps us to focus on what matters. By following Zechariah's example, we can dedicate ourselves to sharing the good news. Zechariah spoke of a "rising sun" that will come to shine on those living in darkness. We too can reflect God's light by offering hope, compassion, and support to those who are struggling. Use today's lesson to show someone the way to God's peace.

SUMMARY

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke about God's plan of redemption and how his son John would prepare the way for the coming Messiah Jesus.

Once John was born, Zechariah was able to speak. He shared that his son John would be a prophet who would prepare the way for the promised Messiah. As followers of Jesus, we are also called to prepare the way for God's plan.

Questions

- How does Zechariah's prophecy about John the Baptist highlight the importance of preparing the way for Jesus and God's plan of redemption?
- In what ways can we, as modern believers, actively prepare the way for God's work and share the message of Jesus in our daily lives?

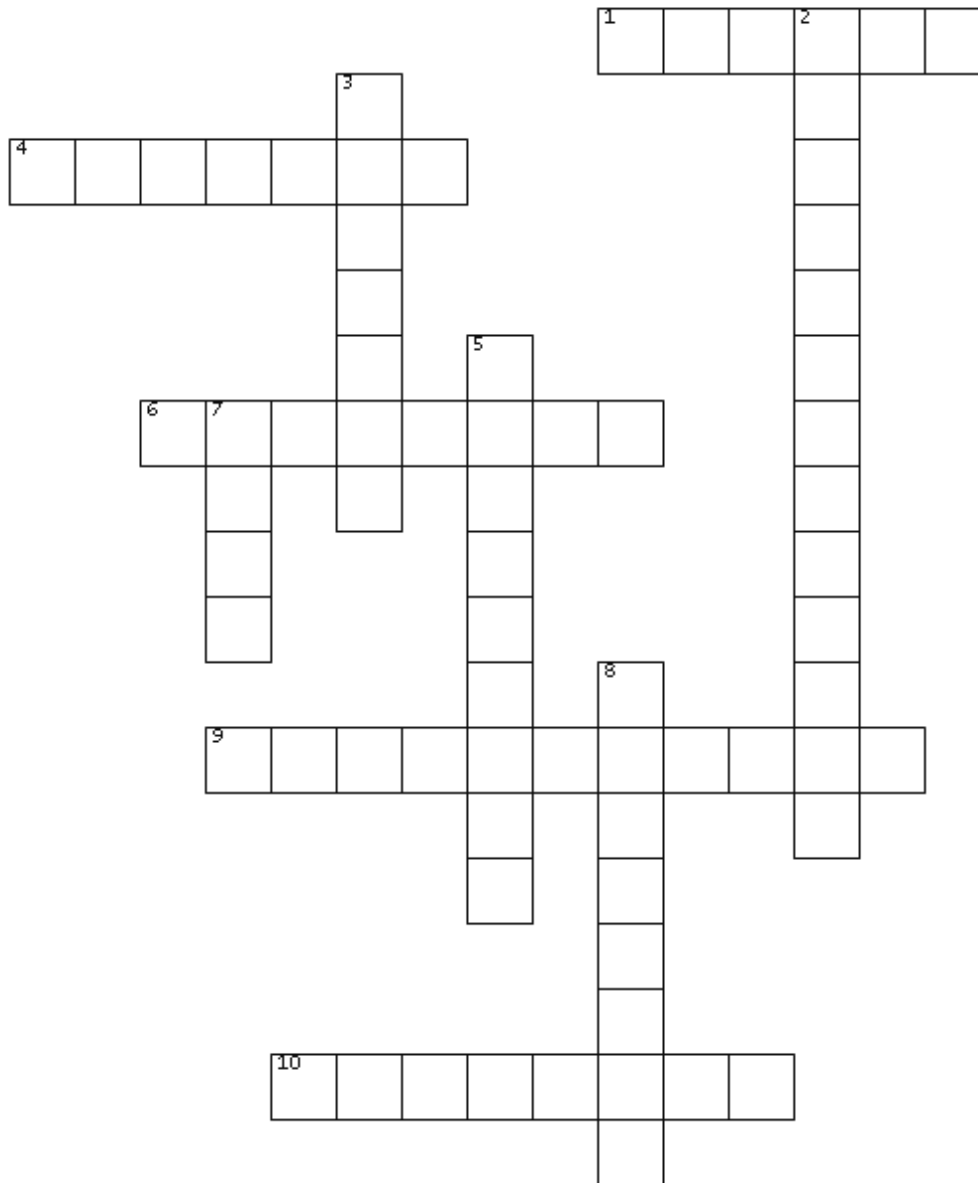
CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Dear God, may we hold fast to the promise of your faithfulness. Prepare us, Lord, through repentance and readiness, just as John prepared the way for Christ. Help us await your promises with hope and expectation, trusting in your perfect timing. May we walk in faith, knowing you will fulfill your plans in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

APPENDICES 03 – ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

Read the definition and fill in the appropriate word based on the definition. Words can go across or down. Letters are shared when the words intersect. There are 10 words in the puzzle.

ACROSS



1. The third person of the Trinity, God's presence, and power in the world

4. to make ready or to put in a state of readiness

6. a solemn agreement between God and his people involving a mutual commitment

9. The act of pardoning someone for their offenses 10. the state of being consecrated to God

DOWN

2. a quality of being morally right or justifiable in the sight of God

3. a person chosen by God to speak his Word to the people

5. The deliverance from sin and its penalties

7. a promise regarding a person's future action or behavior 8. The act of being delivered from sin and its consequences covenant, forgiveness, holiness, oath, prepare, prophet, righteousness, redeemed, salvation, spirit,

REFLECTION OF A PROPHECY

Write a paragraph reflecting on a time when you received guidance or insight that you believe came from God. How did this guidance impact your life?

In a short paragraph, explain what it means to you to prepare your heart for God's work in your life. How can this practice strengthen your faith journey?

Conclude with a list of three practical steps you can take this week to apply the lessons from Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:67-80 to your daily life. These could include prayer, acts of kindness, or seeking reconciliation with others.

Example: Action 1: Dedicate 10 minutes each morning to prayer and reflection before I start my day.

LESSON 4 DECEMBER 22, 2024 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Born in the City of David

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

KEY VERSE: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15

VOCABULARY GOOD NEWS: A message of hope, inspiration, and salvation (for this lesson, the birth of Jesus).

SAVIOR: One who delivers, rescues, or saves.

CHRIST: The anointed one, specifically referring to Jesus as the Messiah.

CALL: Summon or invite; also used to refer to the calling or naming of Jesus.

FIRSTBORN: First in rank or preeminence, as well as first in birth order.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:1-16 **1** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 All went to their own towns to be registered.

4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” **16** So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine each of you as a promise waiting to unfold across generations. Like a whisper of hope passed down through time, you hold the potential to bring something extraordinary into the world. Just as a child born in humble circumstances fulfilled ancient hopes, your unique gifts and passions can bring renewal and inspiration to those around you. As we study this lesson, consider how God’s plans for you may not always be what you expect, but they are always perfect and filled with promise. Embrace your potential with faith and courage, knowing that your life has the power to bring hope, joy, and a new beginning to those around you and future generations.

BIBLE STORY

To understand the historical, cultural, and theological context of today’s lesson surrounding the birth of Jesus we need to consider the Roman census, the multiple announcements, and the Messianic expectation.

The political situation surrounding Jesus’ birth was challenging. Joseph and Mary had to travel on foot to respond to the government requirements. The Roman census required Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem, fulfilling

the prophecy that the Messiah would be born there. Understanding the historical context of Roman rule over Judea and the significance of Bethlehem as the city of David provides context for why Joseph and Mary had to travel.

The social status of shepherds during the time is significant to the message of Jesus' birth. God emphasized the announcement by placing shepherds in the position to deliver a radical message of Jesus' birth to others. Shepherds were considered ordinary and humble figures in society. The angelic announcement of Jesus' birth to them underscores God's choice to reveal this momentous event to those considered lowly, emphasizing God's inclusivity and love for all people.

The context of Jesus' birth related to the older scriptures written thousands of years before provides continuity between the old promises and their fulfillment. The birth of Jesus fulfilled numerous Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, including his birthplace in Bethlehem and his role as savior. These prophecies were deeply significant to Jewish believers, pointing to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah promised by God.

LIFE APPLICATION

The inclusion of shepherds in the announcement of Jesus' birth reminds us that God's message of love and salvation is for everyone, no matter their background or status. It helps us understand that God values all people equally and that we, too, should extend kindness and inclusion to those who may feel overlooked or marginalized. Reflecting on the shepherd's role helps us recognize that God often chooses unexpected people to be part of God's plans, and we should embrace and celebrate this inclusivity in our own lives.

Celebrating Jesus' birth is an opportunity to experience and share the profound love that God demonstrated by sending his Son to earth. Just as the shepherds excitedly shared the news with others, we are called to spread the joy and hope of Jesus' arrival with our friends and family. By actively sharing the message of Jesus and celebrating his birth, we participate in God's mission of bringing love and salvation to all, making his message known and experienced in our everyday lives.

SUMMARY

In Luke 2:1-16, the birth of Jesus is heralded by an angelic announcement to shepherds, emphasizing the significance of God's message reaching even the lowest members of society. The shepherds, who were often seen as outsiders, are chosen to witness and share the joyous news of Jesus' birth, illustrating that God's love and salvation are inclusive and available to all. Jesus' arrival represents the profound love of God coming to earth, bringing hope and redemption. It is a powerful reminder of God's universal message and encourages us to embrace inclusivity, celebrate Jesus' birth, and actively share the good news with friends and family. By reflecting on the shepherds' role and the significance of Jesus' arrival, we are invited to spread the joy of his birth and make his love known in our daily interactions.

Questions

- Imagine you're a shepherd in the field when the angel announces Jesus' birth. How would you feel being chosen for such an important message? Reflect on a time when you saw someone who felt left out or overlooked. How can you show the same kindness and inclusion to others in your daily life?
- Like the shepherds who spread the news of Jesus' birth, who are some people in your life who might not know about Jesus? How can you share the message of Jesus with them in a way that feels natural and genuine? Consider creative ways to communicate this message, whether through conversation, social media, or acts of kindness.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Lord Jesus, as we reflect on your birth as the heir of David, we thank you for bringing us good news of hope and salvation. Help us to live as bearers of your good news today, spreading your love and grace to those around us. May our lives reflect your promise fulfilled, bringing light and joy to a world in need. Amen.

APPENDICES 04 – BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Using the below strip, create a storyboard of new things you are expecting for the New Year. As we begin to consider new things to do in our lives that would help us be a promise fulfilled that brings light and joy to the world, identify at least four things you will do.

We Have Good NEWS!!!

Compare the responses to the good news in the text. How did the shepherds, the people of Bethlehem, and Mary respond to the news?

Shepherds _____

People of Bethlehem _____

_____ Mary

The announcement of Jesus' birth included all types of people which demonstrates God's view of inclusion; in the birth narrative regardless of social status, the message was given to different people.

Considering how God shared the good news for all to hear, all to be welcomed, and all to be loved, who have we excluded from the good news? Who haven't we shared the message with?

_____ What
_____ can we do to welcome everyone?

_____ LESSON 5 DECEMBER 29, 2024

The Merciful Son of David

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

KEY VERSE: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Luke 18:39

VOCABULARY ACCOMPLISHED: *Complete, fulfilled, come to an end.*

FAITH: *What can be believed, a state of certainty about belief; believe to a complete trust*

FLOGGED: *Beat with a whip, punished.*

MOCKED: *Ridicule, jeer.*

SHOUT/CRY OUT: *To scream, or call aloud.*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 18:35-43

35 As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

36 When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

37 They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

38 Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

39 Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

40 Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him, and when he came near, he asked him,

41 “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.”

42 Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.”

43 Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine being lost in a vast, unfamiliar place, feeling helpless and ignored as people rush by. Suddenly, a kind stranger stops, listens to your needs, and offers a guiding hand. The person who stops not only helps you find your way but also provides comfort and reassurance, showing genuine care when others have overlooked you. In our lives, when we feel ignored or in desperate need, someone who demonstrates true mercy can change everything. Just like the kind stranger, there's a greater example of mercy that touches hearts and transforms lives, reminding us that no one is too lost or too insignificant to be seen and helped.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus predicts his death and resurrection as it was written in the scriptures from the Old Testament. Old Testament prophecies signify Jesus' role as the Messiah who would suffer for all humanity's salvation. Isaiah 53 depicts the concept of this suffering of the Messiah which Jesus shares with his disciples as necessary for God's redemptive plan.

Jericho is an ancient city located in the Jordan Valley near the Jordan River. In the Old Testament, it was at Jericho that Joshua and the Israelites marched around the wall for seven days (Joshua 6). The conquest of Joshua at Jericho was the beginning of Israel's conquest of Canaan and established Jericho as a place where God's power and faithfulness were and continue to be present. Jericho is one of Jesus' last stops on his journey to his crucifixion. During this time, Jesus performs a healing near Jericho.

The blind man calls Jesus, "Son of David," a Messianic title that acknowledges Jesus as the heir of King David's throne. The blind man's recognition of Jesus as the Son of David is a powerful declaration of faith in Jesus' identity and mission.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus, as the merciful Son of David, demonstrates his compassion by healing a blind man who calls out to him despite the crowd's attempts to silence him. This act of mercy not only fulfills the prophecy of the Messiah from David's lineage but also highlights the profound kindness that defines Jesus' ministry. Luke's writing serves as a powerful example of how we should

embody Jesus' mercy in our own lives. By following his example, we are called to offer kindness and support to those in need, regardless of their circumstances or how others may view them. Just as Jesus reached out to the blind man, we are encouraged to show compassion and actively serve those around us, reflecting the mercy of Christ in our everyday interactions. Allow the lesson to challenge us to be mindful of opportunities to help others and to live out our faith by practicing mercy and kindness.

SUMMARY

Jesus heals a blind man near Jericho, displaying his mercy and fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David. This miracle not only highlights Jesus' compassionate nature but also affirms his identity as the heir of David, embodying the promises made to David about a lasting kingdom. Luke reminds us in his writing that, as followers of Christ, our service to others should reflect the same mercy and kindness that Jesus demonstrated. By showing compassion and serving others, we honor Jesus' legacy and live out our identity as merciful people of Christ, following his example in our daily interactions.

Questions

- How do you think the blind man felt when Jesus responded to his plea? Reflect on a time when someone showed you unexpected kindness or mercy. How can you offer the same kind of compassion to others in your life?
- Like Jesus healing the blind man, think of a situation where someone around you might need help or support. What are some practical ways you can serve others and show them kindness this week? How can you make it a habit to demonstrate mercy in your daily interactions?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Dear God, thank you for showing us mercy through Jesus, the Son of David. Help us reflect his compassion in our lives. Open our hearts to those in need and guide us to act with kindness and generosity. May we serve others with the same love and mercy that Jesus showed and make a positive impact on the world around us. Amen.

APPENDICES 05 – COMPASSION CHALLENGE

Write down one specific act of mercy you will commit to this week. It could be helping a friend, volunteering, or showing kindness to someone in need.

Example: I will invite a lonely classmate to join my lunch table.

What are your plans to ensure you meet this week's challenge? Outline a simple plan. **Example:** I will sit with a classmate who's eating alone at lunch and invite him to eat with me.

Throughout the week, keep a journal of your actions and any responses you receive. Reflect on how these acts of mercy impact others and yourself.

I pledge to: _____

I would have completed my pledge when: _____

The Blind Man

The letters from each cell are below the puzzle. Try to rebuild the original message by choosing the letters for each cell. Hint, it's a Bible verse.



T V E J
 A L A R O U D M S S I J S Y
 N A A E Y D T O L A P A E S C N S B O N F F
 C D H L I D T H H I H I M E R U S E O N S M O O H E

Write the Bible verse here:

LESSON 6 JANUARY 5, 2025

The Lord Is King

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 9, 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

KEY VERSE:

O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17

VOCABULARY

HELP: A shout of distress or plea for assistance.

ARISE: To get up or come to action.

JUSTICE: Judgment; a decision or law; fairness.

DOMINION: Rule; often referring to his sovereignty or authority. WICKED: Unjust or morally wrong.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: PSALM 10:12-18

12 Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed.

13 Why do the wicked renounce God and say in their hearts, “You will not call us to account”?

14 But you do see! Indeed, you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers; seek out their wickedness until you find none.

16 The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land.

17 O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear

18 to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more.

INTRODUCTION

There was a young girl named Maya who sold lemonade from a small stand. Every day, she poured her heart into making the best lemonade and served

her customers with a smile. One day, a bully came by and took a pitcher of her lemonade without paying. Maya felt helpless and disheartened as no one seemed to care about the injustice.

Later, the town's wise elder, known for her keen sense of fairness, learned about what happened. She didn't just reprimand the bully; she took action to make things right. The elder ensured that Maya received what she was owed and made it clear to everyone that dishonesty and taking advantage of others wouldn't be tolerated. Her actions restored balance and respect, reminding everyone that every person's effort and integrity are valued.

BIBLE STORY

Psalm 10 is a heartfelt plea for justice from God. The psalmist describes how it feels when people are treated unfairly and when those in power seem to ignore the suffering of the poor and oppressed. The psalmist's plea is to bring justice to those who have been wronged. In the psalm, God is deeply concerned with fairness and righteousness.

The psalmist passionately calls on God to rise, to defend the weak, to act on behalf of the oppressed, and to bring justice where there is wrongdoing. The passage highlights the stark contrast between the arrogance of the wicked and the plight of the vulnerable. It describes how the wicked boast and oppress, without fear of consequence, while the righteous suffer under their cruelty. Despite the current situation, the psalmist holds onto the belief that God is a righteous judge who will intervene.

LIFE APPLICATION

God is deeply concerned with justice and fairness. The psalmist's plea for divine intervention shows us that God's purpose is to uphold righteousness and protect those who are oppressed. Today's lesson highlights the importance of understanding justice not just as a concept, but as a divine mission to make things right. We are encouraged to value God's way of establishing justice, which involves defending the weak, correcting wrongs, and ensuring that everyone is treated with fairness. Therefore, we should look for ways to address injustice in our own lives and communities, whether by standing up against bullying, supporting those who are marginalized, or advocating for fairness. By aligning our actions with God's

vision for justice, we contribute to creating a world where everyone's rights and dignity are respected.

SUMMARY

We learned about God's deep commitment to justice and righteousness. The psalmist's heartfelt plea for divine intervention reveals a profound understanding of God's purpose to defend the oppressed and correct injustices. God remains attentive and will act to restore fairness. We discovered the importance of valuing God's approach to justice—standing up for the marginalized, addressing wrongs, and striving to make a positive impact in our communities. By reflecting on the psalmist's call for justice, we are inspired to actively participate in creating a fair and compassionate world, aligning our actions with God's vision for justice and taking steps to restore balance wherever injustice occurs.

Questions

- How can you personally contribute to addressing injustice in your community or school, and what specific actions can you take to support those who are marginalized or oppressed?
- What are some things you have witnessed in your community, church, or school that you believe were unjust? In what ways can you remind yourself and others of God's commitment to justice when you witness these injustices?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Our God, open our eyes to places of inequity around us. Help us act with courage and compassion to restore justice to where it is lacking. Guide us in creating a plan to support and uplift those who are oppressed and give us the strength to follow through with our intentions. May our actions reflect your commitment to fairness and love. In your name, we pray. Amen.

APPENDICES 06 – INJUSTICE

Who are you? On the following page is a social identity wheel. Fill in your social identity for each of the categories listed. In the inner circle, identify

those identities which are most important to you. In the outer circle, identify those identities that are less important to you.

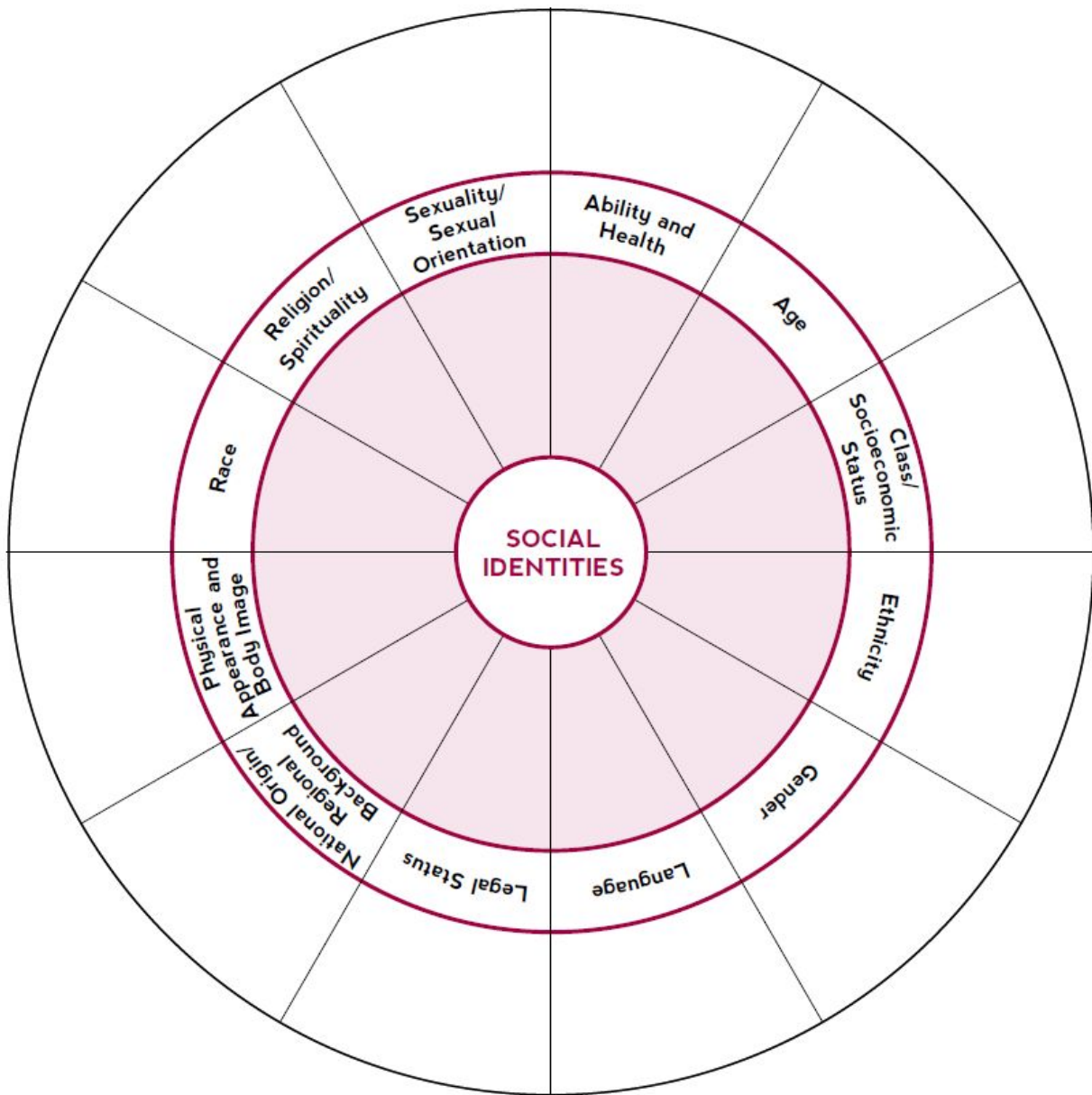
Just as the shepherds had a social identity in society based on their class/ socioeconomic status and were not the most likely to be called by God to deliver the message of the Messiah, yet God used them. Social identity is a sense of self that you develop based on your identity.

After you complete the wheel, identify:

Which identities are visible? Which identities are not visible? Which identity has been most beneficial to you?

Which identity has caused you the most harm?

Which of the identities has resulted in unjust actions by others?



CREATING JUSTICE FOR OTHERS

Charity Justice

Provides food during special Look at what causes individuals holidays for selected families. to need food and emergency

services and ask the question: Why are people hungry? Do they have access to food? Why is social assistance not enough to feed a family adequately? Visits the sick

Finds short-term solutions (housing, transportation, food, employment)
Look at the causes of the
sicknesses that are making people sick. Ask the question: Why are poor people twice as likely to die before their 60th birthday? Why are poor children likely to die before their first birthday? Is health care accessible for all? Look at what is causing the need for short-term solutions and ask the following questions: Why do they need a short-term solution? How can we create a long-term solution? Who are the individuals needed to make the necessary changes?

Charity creates social services - Justice creates social change

Charity

Focuses on the effects of injustice, such as helping people survive and flourish. Charity is often private and individual and can involve direct engagement with people in need.

A biblical example of charity – the Samaritan on the road.

Justice

Focuses on the root causes of social problems, such as challenging values and policies that allow inequalities to continue. Justice is often public and collective and can involve actions like legislative advocacy and political action. Justice can also require people to reevaluate their choices and how they affect others

A biblical example of justice – the children of Israel's exit from Egypt.
Currently, does the local church provide charity or justice? Should the local church focus on charity or justice? Explain.

LESSON 7 JANUARY 12, 2025 BAPTISM OF THE LORD SUNDAY

The Lord Is Robed in Majesty

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 47, 93

Focus Scripture: Psalm 93

KEY VERSE:

The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he is girded with strength. Psalm 93:1

VOCABULARY

REIGNS: Become king or queen; to rule over; to make king. MAJESTY: Pride, excellence; elevation.

WORLD: The earth; fertile and inhabited earth, the habitable globe.

FIRMLY ESTABLISHED: To set up, to make firm; to stand upright; to erect.

THRONE: Seat of honor or authority; lofty and covered with a canopy or hanging.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: PSALM 93

1 The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he is girded with strength. He has established the world; it shall never be moved;

2 your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.

4 More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!

5 Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

INTRODUCTION

In a small town surrounded by mountains, there was a legendary lighthouse perched on a cliff by the sea. The lighthouse was known not just for its light

but for its incredible beauty and strength. During the fiercest storms, when the waves crashed violently and the wind howled, the townspeople would look up to the lighthouse. Its light pierced through the darkness, and its structure stood unshaken by the tempest.

One stormy night, a young boy named Gavin found himself caught in the chaos of the raging storm while trying to find his way home. He stumbled and fell, feeling scared and lost. Then he remembered the lighthouse. As he looked up, he saw its light shining brightly, guiding him with its steady, calming presence. The sight of the lighthouse, majestic and unmovable, filled him with peace and courage. He knew that if he followed its light, he would find his way home.

BIBLE STORY

Psalm 93 celebrates the majesty and power of God, describing him as a mighty ruler who reigns over the world with strength and stability. The Psalm portrays God as being clothed in splendor and eternal, having established the world so it cannot be moved. It emphasizes that God's reign is eternal, and his decrees are trustworthy. The Psalm also identifies the holiness of God, which endures forever.

Understanding God being "robed in majesty" is knowing about the royal imagery of kings who were adorned in elaborate robes to signify their power. God's majesty surpasses all human kings.

God's throne in the Psalm is eternal, it has no end. God's reign is timeless and unchanging and a part of God's nature unlike humankind which is temporary and unstable. The human rule never has been, nor will it ever be, eternal. We can never compare God's reign to human reign.

The psalmist declares that the world cannot be moved. It's not speaking to the physical immobility of the planet but more toward the order and reliability of the world under God's reign. The world is God's creation and therefore under God's control.

LIFE APPLICATION

Psalm 93 teaches us that God's unmatched majesty and power bring peace and stability to our lives. Amidst the chaos and challenges we face, we can rely on God's strength and eternal reign to restore our inner peace. By nurturing our relationship with God and recognizing his creative power, we align ourselves with his divine order. Our awareness inspires us to actively work towards establishing peace in our surroundings—as a way of praising God. Whether it's resolving conflicts among friends, standing up against bullying, or fostering a supportive community, our efforts to create peace reflect our trust in God's majesty and serve as an expression of our gratitude for his unwavering presence.

SUMMARY

The Psalm reveals the immense power and majesty of God, portraying him as the eternal ruler who brings peace and stability to the world. The Psalm reminds us that God's reign is unshakable, providing a foundation of strength and order in our lives. The lesson emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's power to restore peace amidst life's challenges. By nurturing our relationship with God and recognizing his creative authority, we are inspired to work towards establishing peace in our communities as an act of praise.

Questions

- As a leader at church, How can you use your influence to create a more peaceful and supportive environment? What specific actions can you take to reflect God's stability and strength in your community?
- Was there a time when you felt overwhelmed by life's chaos or uncertainty? How did you find peace? How can remembering God's unshakable majesty and power help you and your friends handle demanding situations in the future?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Thank you, God, for your unshakable majesty and power that bring peace to our lives. Help us to see creating peace in our communities as an act of praise to you. Guide us to resolve conflicts, support one another, and spread

harmony. May our efforts to establish peace reflect our trust in you and honor your everlasting reign. In Jesus' name. Amen.

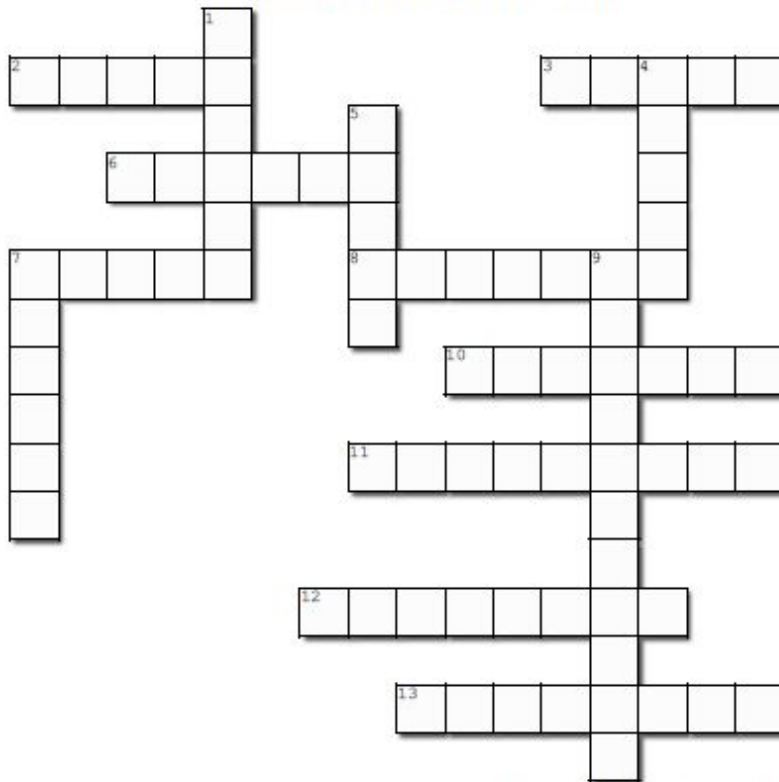
APPENDICES 07 – PEACE AS PRAISE

Peace as Praise

Across

- 2. the sound or sounds uttered through the mouth of living creatures, especially of human beings in speaking, shouting, singing,
- 3. the earth or globe, considered as a planet; any sphere, realm, or domain with all pertaining to it
- 6. the chair or seat occupied by a sovereign, bishop, or other exalted personage on ceremonial occasions
- 7. a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relations:
- 8. to encircle with a belt; to encompass; enclose;
- 10. supreme greatness or authority; sovereignty; gradeur
- 11. to show to be valid or true; prove:to cause to be accepted or recognized
- 12. effective force, potency, or cogency, as of inducements or arguments:
- 13. the quality or state of being holy; sanctity.

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Down

1. a formal and authoritative order, especially one having the force of law: one of the eternal purposes of God
4. To clothe; cover
5. the period during which a sovereign occupies the throne.
7. the act of expressing approval or admiration; commendation; laudation.
9. lasting or continuing for an indefinitely long time:

PEACE

Create an acrostic poem from the word PEACE.

Example: Praise

Peace fills the heart, a gentle embrace,
Rays of kindness illuminate our space. Actions of grace uplift those around,
Inviting joy in each moment found.
Songs of gratitude echo through time,
Every whisper lifts us—together we climb.

P _____ E

_____ A
_____ C
_____ E



LESSON 8 JANUARY 19, 2025

The Lord's Throne Is Established

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103

Focus Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

KEY VERSE:

The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. Psalm 103:6

VOCABULARY

SOUL: The spirit embodied in human beings.

BLESS: To hallow or consecrate by religious rite or word.

REDEEMS: To free from what distresses or harms; to act as kinsman-redeemer, to buy back.

SATISFIES: To fill, to be sated; to carry out the terms of (something, such as a contract); to make happy.

TRANSGRESSIONS: Infringement or violation of a law, command, or duty.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: PSALM 103:1-14

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits— **3** who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, **4** who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast

love and mercy,

5 who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. **7** He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. **8** The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. **10** He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our

iniquities.

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

13 As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

14 For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

INTRODUCTION

There was a towering skyscraper known for its incredible stability. No matter how strong the winds or how severe the storms were, the skyscraper stood tall and unshaken. It was the tallest building in the city, with a foundation that went deep underground, anchoring it firmly in place.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company that owned the skyscraper was known for making wise decisions and leading with integrity. The CEO's office, located at the very top, was a symbol of steady leadership and reliability. The staff felt confident and secure knowing that the company's leadership was unshakable, even in tough times.

The skyscraper became a symbol of trust and stability for the entire city, reminding everyone that true strength and security come from a solid foundation that can weather any storm.

BIBLE STORY

The psalm is a celebration of God's incredible love and compassion. It begins with a call to praise God for all the blessings he provides, including forgiveness, healing, and redemption. The psalm highlights God's deep kindness and how he consistently shows mercy as a loving caregiver or guardian. The psalmist used the description of love to be "steadfast" to help grasp the depth of God's unwavering care and support, even when we face challenges or make mistakes.

LIFE APPLICATION

The psalmist teaches us that the Lord rules with love and righteousness, always caring for us and offering forgiveness, healing, and redemption. We must recognize that God's way of leading is rooted in compassion and fairness. When given responsibilities, we should strive to reflect these qualities by showing kindness, making just decisions, and treating others with respect. By exercising disciplines of faith—such as prayer, reading the Bible, and serving others—we can grow in our ability to lead with love and righteousness. Our actions are ways in which we honor God and positively impact those around us, just as God's love and justice shape our lives.

SUMMARY

Psalm 103:1-14 reminds us of God's incredible love and righteousness, showing how God forgives our sins, heals our diseases, and redeems us from trouble. It highlights God's deep compassion and grace and emphasizes God's everlasting love. The lesson reminds us that just as God leads with love and righteousness, we should strive to show kindness, fairness, and respect in our daily lives. When given responsibilities, we can reflect God's character by practicing faithful discipline. By doing so, we honor God and positively impact those around us, living out the love and justice that God demonstrates toward us.

Questions

- Think of a recent situation where you had a responsibility, whether at school, at home, or with friends. How did you handle it, and in what ways can you improve to reflect God's love and righteousness in similar situations in the future?
- What are some specific ways you can incorporate prayer, Bible reading, or acts of kindness into your weekly routine to grow in your faith and positively impact those around you? Share one practical step you can take this week.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

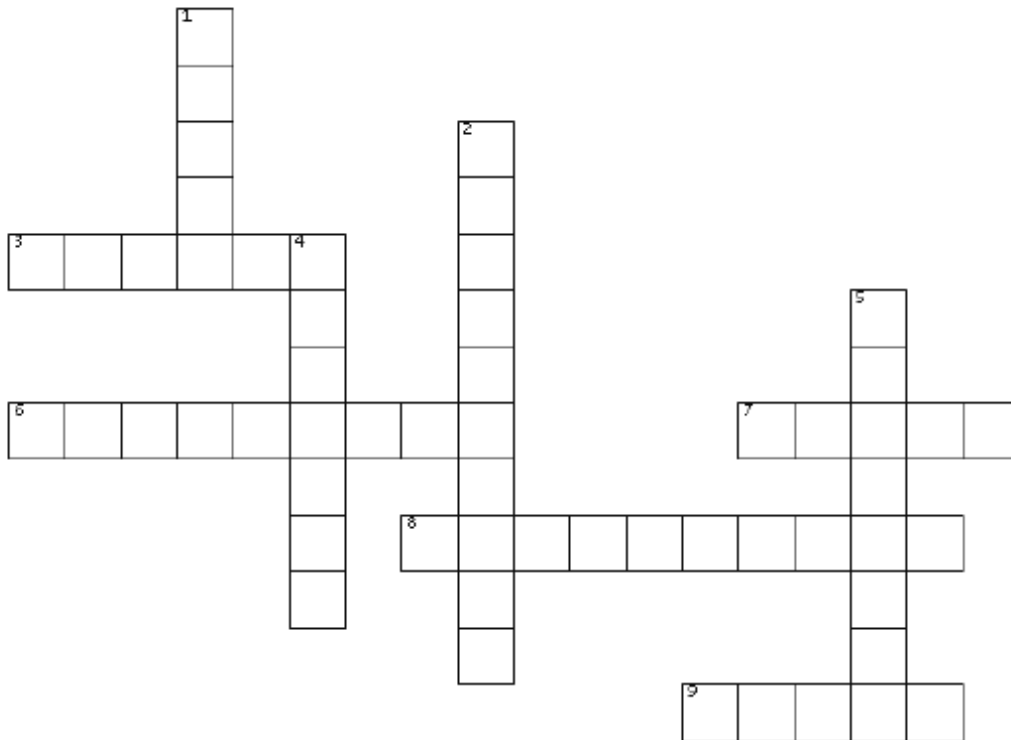
Dear Lord, thank you for your endless love and righteousness. Help us to reflect your character in all we do. When we are given responsibilities, guide

us to show kindness, fairness, and respect. Strengthen our faith through prayer, Bible study, and serving others. May our actions honor you and make a positive impact on those around us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

APPENDICES 08 – I AM BLESSED

Use clues to fill in the words. Words can go across or down. Letters are shared when the words intersect.

I am Blessed



ACROSS

3. an address such as a petition to God or a god in word or thought
6. acting in accord with divine or moral law : free from guilt or sin
7. good name or public esteem a showing of usually merited respect
8. control gained by enforcing obedience or order
9. to hallow or consecrate by religious rite or word; to invoke divine care for

DOWN

1. compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power
2. sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it
4. to free from what distresses or harms
5. the quality or state of being kind

LESSON 9 JANUARY 26, 2025

My God, the King

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 145

Focus Scripture: Psalm 145:1, 10-21

KEY VERSE:

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13

VOCABULARY

STEADFAST LOVE: Loving-kindness, mercy, loyalty, and unfailing love. It conveys a deep sense of compassion and commitment.

EVERLASTING: Eternal, forever, without end.

MIGHT: Power, strength, and force.

GRACIOUS: Kind, merciful, and compassionate. UPHOLDS: Supports, sustains, or holds up.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: PSALM 145:1, 10-21

1 I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you.

11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,

12 to make known to all people your mighty deeds and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and gracious in all his deeds.

14 The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

16 You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

17 The Lord is just in all his ways and kind in all his doings.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.

20 The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

INTRODUCTION

In a small town, there was a remarkable lighthouse keeper named Mr. Burnett. Every night, no matter how fierce the storm or how thick the fog, Mr. Burnett faithfully lit the lighthouse to guide ships safely to shore. His commitment was unwavering because he understood that countless lives depended on his steadfastness.

One winter, the town experienced an unprecedented blizzard. Power lines were down, and people huddled in their homes, fearing the worst. Despite the harsh conditions, Mr. Burnett braved the storm, climbing the icy steps of the lighthouse. He lit the beacon, providing a ray of hope in the darkness.

The next morning, the townspeople discovered that a ship, lost and battered by the storm, had safely docked in the harbor. The crew credited the lighthouse for their survival. They spoke of how the light pierced through the storm, guiding them home when all seemed lost.

BIBLE STORY

Psalms 145 is a powerful hymn of praise to God, celebrating his greatness, compassion, and everlasting kingdom. The psalmist, King David, begins by declaring his intention to exalt and bless God's name forever. He emphasizes that God's greatness is beyond measure and that each generation will tell of his mighty acts and wondrous works. David describes God as gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love, highlighting his goodness and mercy to all his creations.

The Psalm continues by proclaiming that God's kingdom is an everlasting one, marked by his faithfulness and righteousness. He supports those who fall and provides for all living things, giving them their food at the proper

time. The Lord is near to all who call on him in truth, fulfilling the desires of those who fear him and hearing their cries for help. God's righteous and loving character is a constant source of comfort and strength for his people.

LIFE APPLICATION

We are called in today's lesson to understand that "steadfast" concerning God's character is recognizing God's unwavering and constant love, regardless of circumstances. Individuals are not required to act in a specific way for God to love them. To reflect God's steadfast mercy, goodness, and compassion, we must strive to be dependable friends, showing kindness even when it's challenging. We must practice patience and forgiveness, mirroring God's slow-to-anger nature. Additionally, being generous and supportive to those in need, just as God provides for all living things, helps develop a heart of compassion. By embodying these characteristics, we can become a reflection of God's steadfast love in our daily lives. Psalm 145 beautifully illustrates God's steadfast character, highlighting his mercy, goodness, and compassion for us to read about and reflect upon.

SUMMARY

The lesson highlights God's unmatched greatness, eternal reign, and steadfast character, emphasizing his mercy, goodness, and compassion. These qualities are unwavering and ever-present, providing a powerful message of God's continual presence and support. Knowing this encourages us to recognize and praise God for his faithfulness and provision. The story of God's attributes inspires us to develop similar traits in our lives. By striving to be kind, patient, and compassionate, we can reflect God's steadfast love and become reliable and supportive individuals in our communities. Allow this lesson to motivate us to understand and appreciate God's eternal kingdom and his unwavering commitment to his people, encouraging us to embody these divine qualities in our everyday interactions.

Questions

- Think about someone in your life who might need extra support or kindness this week. What specific actions can you take to show them steadfast love, similar to how God is always there for us? Plan one act of

kindness each day and reflect on how it makes you feel and how it impacts the other person.

- Consider a situation at school, home, or within your community where you can practice compassion. How can you be more understanding, patient, and forgiving in that situation? Write down your thoughts and any changes you notice in yourself or others as you consciously choose to act with compassion throughout the week.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Lord, as we go through our week, help us to share your steadfast mercy, goodness, and compassion with everyone we meet. Give us the strength to be kind, patient, and forgiving, just as you are with us. Show us practical ways to offer support and love to those in need and help us to be reflections of your unwavering love in our daily lives. Amen.

APPENDICES 09 – STEADFAST LOVE

Make a list of the character attributes that we admire in the people closest to ourselves, that we see in ourselves, and that we hope that we grow into.

Character Attributes

Using the below strip, create a storyboard of the character attributes you admire in people close to you. Use each section to describe an attribute. You can draw characters or be creative in the use of the box. Identify at least 4 attributes, some you may already have, or it can be attributes you desire to grow into.

STEADFAST LOVE
Unscramble the words below. Then place the corresponding letters into the

coded area below to reveal a special message.

Steadfast Love

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LESSON 10 FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Praying for Relief

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

KEY VERSE: May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

VOCABULARY ALMS: *Charitable giving or acts of kindness to the poor and needy.*

PRAY: *To speak to God or make a request, especially in worship or supplication.*

KINGDOM: *The domain or realm of a king; in a biblical sense, the reign of God.*

TEMPTATION: *An attempt to lead someone into sin; a trial or test of faith.*

DELIVER: *To rescue or save from danger or distress.*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 6:5-15

5 “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 Pray, then, in this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be revered as holy.

10 May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And

do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

INTRODUCTION

Think about taking a hike in a sprawling national park. As you set out, the trails seem endless, and it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the size of the park and the challenges that might lie ahead. But then, you meet a park ranger who knows the terrain inside and out. This ranger has guided countless hikers, helping them navigate difficult paths, avoid dangers, and find the best spots for rest and enjoyment.

With the ranger’s expertise and reassuring presence, you feel a lot more confident. You know that even if the trail gets tough or you feel uncertain, there’s someone experienced who has your back, ensuring you stay safe and on the right path.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus addresses how we should approach prayer and our interactions with others. He begins by cautioning against praying to show off in public. Instead, he emphasizes that prayer should be a personal conversation with God, done in secret where only God sees. Jesus then provides a model for prayer with the Lord’s Prayer, which includes praising God, asking for daily needs, seeking forgiveness, and committing to forgive others.

Jesus highlights that forgiveness is crucial; just as we seek God’s forgiveness, we should also extend forgiveness to those who have wronged us. The passage underscores that our communication with God and our relationships with others should reflect sincerity, humility, and a willingness to forgive, aligning our actions with God’s expectations.

LIFE APPLICATION

God’s kingdom can transform our lives by shifting our focus from shallow actions to a genuine connection with God. It is important to approach God

with sincerity and humility, rather than seeking attention from others. By following the pattern of the Lord's Prayer, we learn to prioritize God's will, seek daily support, and embrace forgiveness. This helps us understand our need for God's forgiveness and encourages us to extend that grace to others. Cultivating a prayer life that reflects these principles not only deepens our relationship with God but also shapes our character, aligning our actions with his kingdom values.

SUMMARY

Jesus teaches his disciples and us the importance of genuine, heartfelt prayer and forgiveness. Prayer is not about showing off or seeking approval from others but about connecting deeply with God. By following the example of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew we discover a pattern of praising God, asking for daily provisions, seeking forgiveness for ourselves and others, and committing to forgive others who have done something we perceived against us. We are encouraged to reflect on how God's kingdom transforms our approach to prayer and relationships. We are called to seek the need for authenticity in our spiritual practices and the importance of extending the same grace we receive from God to those around us. The scripture reminds us to foster a sincere relationship with God and align our lives with his kingdom values.

Questions

- Think about how you currently approach prayer. How might you change your prayers to be more sincere and focused on your relationship with God? Write down one specific way you can enhance your prayer life this week.
- Reflect on your relationships with family, friends, or others. Is there someone you're holding a grudge against or struggling to forgive? How can the forgiveness you receive from God influence how you approach forgiving them? Share a plan for how you can take steps towards offering forgiveness in your life.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Lord, help us to pray with sincerity and focus on you. Teach us to honor your name, seek your guidance, and ask for our daily needs. Give us the strength to forgive others as you forgive us. Guide us away from temptation and protect us from harm. Let our prayers reflect your love and grace. Amen.

APPENDICES 10 – SCAVENGER HUNT

Below is a list of notable prayers. Please use the prompts in any way you see fit. Document your responses below.

1. Find the prayer of a woman in 1 Samuel.
2. Find the prayer in 1 Chronicles where the petitioner asked God to “enlarge my territory!”.
3. Find the prayer in 1st Kings 3 where the king prayed to God for wisdom.
4. Identify what type of prayer was rendered in Psalm 60.
5. David rendered a prayer for repentance, and it is used during the Lenten season. The prayer is found in the Psalms.
6. Find the prayer rendered from the inside of a fish.
7. Where is the Lord’s Prayer found?
8. In John 17 what did Jesus pray that the Lord would protect the disciples from?
9. What did John pray for his friends to experience? (John 3) 10. Find Paul’s prayer for believers to have spiritual wisdom in Ephesians.

Consider the following after you have completed the hunt! ✓ What did you discover during the scavenger hunt?

✓ Did anything surprise you about the prayers?

✓ How can you incorporate some of these prayers into your life moving forward?

LESSON 11 FEBRUARY 9, 2025

Resistance to the Kingdom

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24

KEY VERSE: Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent. Matthew 11:20

VOCABULARY TEACH: To instruct or impart knowledge; to provide education or guidance.

PROPHET: A person chosen by God to deliver messages or prophecies, often about future events or divine will.

WILDERNESS: A desolate or uninhabited place; a barren or empty land.

BAPTIZE: To pour, sprinkle, or immerse in water or to ceremonially wash, often as a religious rite. It is one of the sacraments of the church.

LEAST: The smallest in importance or rank.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:7-15, 20-24

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and violent people take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets

and the Law prophesied until John came, **14** and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. **15** Let anyone with ears listen!”

20 Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent.

21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.”

INTRODUCTION

Karen and Whitney were working on a group project with their friends. They planned out the project and had great ideas, but suddenly, they hit a snag. One of their teammates, David, doesn’t like the direction they are going and keeps throwing up objections. He is adamant about doing something different and he doesn’t see the value in their ideas and tries to steer the project in a different direction.

It’s frustrating because Karen and Whitney believe strongly in their plan; but, they know they need to find a way to address these objections and keep the project on track. They discuss it among themselves and decide to take a step back, listen to David’s concerns, and find a way to incorporate his feedback while staying true to their vision.

After several discussions, everyone was able to move forward and complete the project. Karen and Whitney were happy with the outcome; and, David felt heard by the group. In the end, his input added value to the project but did not change the course of the plans.

BIBLE STORY

John the Baptist was a pivotal figure in the Bible known for his role as a prophet and for preparing the way for Jesus' ministry. His primary role was to call people to repentance and to baptize them as a sign of their commitment to turning away from their sins. John's message was one of preparation, urging people to get ready for the coming Messiah.

The Old Testament prophets foretold John to prepare the way for the Messiah. He proclaimed that someone greater than him was coming, someone who would bring a new era of salvation. John baptized people in the Jordan River as a symbol of their repentance from sin. John's baptism was not just a ritual; it was a powerful statement of personal transformation and readiness for a new phase in God's plan.

Jesus reflects on the role of John the Baptist and the responses people have had to his and Jesus' teachings. He highlights that John was a remarkable prophet who prepared the way for him, but despite his significant role, many did not recognize his message. Jesus contrasts this with the reactions of different cities to his miracles and teachings, expressing disappointment that they did not repent or change their ways. He uses this to challenge his listeners to recognize and respond to the divine message and its impact.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus speaks about the resistance he and John the Baptist faced from those who did not embrace their message. This resistance can be seen in various forms today, where people and situations oppose or ignore the principles of God's kingdom. To navigate such challenges, we must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who helps us discern and overcome obstacles to living out our faith. By staying connected with the Holy Spirit, we can identify effective Christian practices—such as prayer, service, and advocacy—that promote positive change and reflect God's values. As the Holy Spirit guides us, we can contribute meaningfully to our communities and uphold the teachings of Christ in the face of resistance.

SUMMARY

Jesus reflects on the critical responses to John the Baptist and himself, highlighting how many people failed to recognize and embrace the

transformative message of the kingdom of heaven. Despite his pivotal role as a prophet, John faced skepticism and rejection, just as Jesus did when performing miracles and preaching repentance. During the time of John the Baptist and Jesus, there was resistance to God's message. This challenges us to recognize similar sources of resistance in our lives. We can navigate these obstacles by seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance and committing to Christian practices that drive positive change. Embracing prayer, service, and active community engagement allows us to effectively live out and advocate for the values of God's kingdom, even when faced with opposition.

Questions

- Jesus spoke about how cities that had witnessed his miracles still did not repent or change their ways. What do you think this teaches us about the importance of being open and responsive to God's message? How can we make sure that we are not just passive observers but actively responding to the teachings of Christ in our own lives and community?
- Identify one Christian practice (such as prayer,

volunteering, or speaking out against injustice) that you can incorporate into your daily life to promote positive change. How do you think this practice will help you address resistance and contribute to making a difference in your community? Share your plan with the group and discuss how you can support each other in these efforts.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Gracious God, help us see where we can make a difference in our world. Guide us to choose a Christian practice, like volunteering or prayer, which brings about positive change. Inspire us to act, reflecting your love and values in our daily lives. May our efforts show your kingdom's impact and encourage others to follow your example. Amen.

APPENDICES 11 –

Today, we're exploring Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24 and how we can live out Jesus' teachings in our daily lives.

Read Matthew 11.

- What are the specific actions that Jesus commends in this passage?
- Why do you think these actions are so important to Jesus?

Think about these questions and write your thoughts:

1. A Time I Helped Someone:

- Describe a time when you helped someone in need. How did it make you feel?

- How did your actions reflect Jesus' teachings in Matthew?

2. A Time I Missed an Opportunity:

- Was there a time you could have helped someone but didn't? What happened?
- How can you prepare yourself to act next time?

Service Pledge:

- **Write a pledge** committing to one specific action you will take this week to serve others in need.
- Share your pledge with a friend or family member and ask them to help hold you accountable.

Part 7: Reflection Questions

Take these questions home and ponder them throughout the week:

1. How can I incorporate acts of kindness and service into my daily routine?
2. What steps can I take to better recognize and respond to the needs of those around me?

LESSON 12 FEBRUARY 16, 2025

The First Will Be Last

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Focus Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

KEY VERSE: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:24

VOCABULARY ETERNAL: About eternity or everlasting; not subject to time or change.

COMMANDMENTS: Instructions or orders; in this context, they refer to the rules given by God, particularly those in the Law. TREASURES: Valuable items or wealth; in this context, it refers to material possessions and wealth.

CAMEL: A large mammal with a hump, used here metaphorically to illustrate something large or difficult to pass through. DISCIPLES: Students or followers of a teacher or leader; in this context, it refers to the followers of Jesus.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 19:16-30

16 Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

17 And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness.

19 Honor your father and mother. Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

20 The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?”

21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

22 When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had

many possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?”

26 But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”

27 Then Peter said in reply, “Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”

28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

30 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

INTRODUCTION

At the annual high school track meet everyone’s eyes are on the fastest runners, eager to see who will finish first. Rashad is one runner, however, who always seems to come in last. Despite this, he practices tirelessly and encourages others along the way. During the race, he continues to run at his steady pace, while some of the faster runners start to tire and lose focus.

As the race progresses, the spotlight shifts. The runner who always finishes last is recognized for his incredible sportsmanship and perseverance. Though he doesn’t cross the finish line first, he receives the “Most Inspirational Runner” award, celebrated for his dedication, encouragement, and determination.

We learn from Rashad that sometimes true victory isn’t about finishing first but about the impact you make and the character you display along the journey.

BIBLE STORY

A young man asks Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus tells him to follow the commandments and to sell his possessions and give to the poor. The young man is disheartened because he is wealthy and struggles with the idea of giving up his riches. Jesus then explains that it's difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven, using the metaphor of a camel passing through the eye of a needle to illustrate this challenge.

Some scholars suggest that the “eye of the needle” referred to a small, narrow gate in the city walls of Jerusalem. This gate, known as “the needle’s eye,” was so narrow that it was impossible for a camel, which was heavily laden with goods, to pass through it without unloading its burden and kneeling. The metaphor thus conveys the difficulty of a rich person entering the kingdom of heaven. Just as a camel would need to shed its load and bow down to fit through the narrow gate, a wealthy person must be willing to let go of material attachments and humble themselves spiritually to enter God’s kingdom.

Jesus assures us that with God, what seems impossible for humans becomes possible. Jesus also promises that those who sacrifice their wealth or otherworldly attachments for his sake will be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus teaches that true fulfillment and eternal life come from prioritizing spiritual values over material wealth. The lesson encourages us to extend mercy and forgiveness to others, just as God extends these qualities to us. By recognizing that holding onto grudges or material attachments can hinder our spiritual growth, we learn to let go of past hurts and offer forgiveness. The process involves forgiving others and being open to receiving forgiveness when we’ve wronged someone. Embracing this cycle of giving and receiving forgiveness helps us build stronger, more compassionate relationships, reflecting the values of God’s kingdom and fostering personal growth and peace.

To grant forgiveness to others, we must learn to acknowledge the hurt experienced, communicate openly with those who have caused harm, and show empathy to others. Recognize and name the pain or wrongdoing

you've experienced. It's essential to understand your feelings before you can forgive. It's important to talk to the person who hurt you. Next, share how their actions affected you and express your desire to move forward. Finally, try to understand the other person's perspective and why they might have acted the way they did.

To receive forgiveness from others, we must learn to acknowledge our mistake(s), apologize sincerely, be open to feedback, and accept responsibility. Then, own up to the actions that caused hurt. Also, offer a genuine apology to those you've wronged. In addition, be specific about what you're apologizing for and express remorse for the impact of your actions. Likewise, listen to how your actions affected others and be open to their feedback. Finally, understand that receiving forgiveness involves recognizing your role in the conflict and accepting responsibility for your actions.

SUMMARY

Jesus teaches about the challenges and rewards of following him, using the example of a rich young man who struggles with the idea of giving up his wealth to gain eternal life. Jesus explains that it's difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven because material possessions can be a significant barrier to spiritual growth. Through this story, Jesus emphasizes that while it may seem impossible for humans to overcome such obstacles, with God, all things are possible. He assures that those who sacrifice their earthly attachments for his sake will be richly rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. We learn the importance of prioritizing spiritual values over material wealth and illustrate the concept that true fulfillment comes from putting God first.

Questions

- If you had to give up something you value to follow Jesus more closely, what would it be and why? How do you think giving up this item or activity could help you grow in your faith?
- Think about a time when you faced a challenge that seemed impossible, but you overcame it with help or perseverance. How does this experience relate

to the idea of “with God, all things are possible” as seen in the story of the rich young man?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Dear God, guide us to show mercy and forgiveness to those around us, just as you forgive us. Help us embrace humility and seek reconciliation in our relationships. As we extend grace to others, may we also open our hearts to receive forgiveness with gratitude. Transform us through your love, making us instruments of peace and understanding. Amen.

APPENDICES 12 – UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM Find the word in the puzzle. Words can go in any direction. Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

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E	F	D	S	U	R	Z	H	R	Z	W	D	E	L	F
M	R	R	Z	X	X	O	F	E	Z	L	M	V	U	O
Z	E	L	D	X	G	I	M	T	E	D	Q	J	D	L
D	P	R	S	X	W	R	D	E	N	A	Y	Y	I	L
O	E	R	I	Y	T	R	E	A	S	U	R	E	S	O
F	K	Z	Q	C	V	C	M	T	K	L	Q	K	C	W
A	W	S	I	N	H	M	A	L	I	J	L	Z	I	S
V	O	Y	C	T	O	I	U	M	O	G	H	I	P	N
Y	S	A	E	C	P	C	Y	H	E	Y	B	G	L	Z
G	F	M	P	R	X	A	N	L	S	L	D	Z	E	G
S	U	S	E	J	W	R	B	A	G	M	I	J	S	I
I	M	P	O	S	S	I	B	L	E	C	D	K	L	W

Baptized Easy Jesus Needle Camel Eternal John Perfect Commandment
Follow Mercy Rich Disciples Impossible Mortal Treasures Solve the
anagrams to reveal the letters to the final phrase.

The Last Will Be First

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Solve the anagrams in the top part of the puzzle. Use the numbered letters from the words in the top part to complete the final word or phrase at the bottom. LESSON 13 FEBRUARY 23, 2025

The Kingdom Life

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

KEY VERSES: “The king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food...’”
Matthew 25:34-35

VOCABULARY

SON OF MAN: A title Jesus uses for himself, emphasizing his role as the Messiah and human representative in the context of judgment.

SHEEP: A domesticated animal often used symbolically to represent the righteous or faithful.

GOAT: A domesticated animal symbolizing the unrighteous or those who have failed to live according to God’s will. THIRSTY: Experiencing thirst; in need of a drink of water, etc. STRANGER: A foreigner or traveler; someone outside one’s community.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 25:31-46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,

33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,

35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

37 Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you

hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing?

39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’

40 And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’

41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,

42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

44 Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?’

45 Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

46 And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”

INTRODUCTION

Jimmie oversaw distributing supplies to people who needed them: food for the hungry, clothes for the cold, and support for those who were struggling. Everyone’s busy, and Jimmie has the chance to help. He notices someone who seems lonely and neglected. Though it’s easy to stick to his list, he remembered that every person he had met had a story and a need. Jimmie decided to step out of his comfort zone, lend a hand, and offer a smile. As he connected with others and shared his time and resources, he saw the positive impact of his actions. The joy and relief on others’ faces showed him that what he had done mattered.

BIBLE STORY

In biblical times, sheep were often seen as more valuable and were symbols of the faithful, while goats represented the opposite. The “kingdom of God” represents a state of living where God’s will is done on earth, characterized by justice, peace, and love.

Jesus describes a future time when he will separate people like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. Those who have lived by showing kindness and helping others—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick—will be welcomed into God’s kingdom. Jesus explains that these acts of love are seen as serving him directly.

LIFE APPLICATION

Christ provides an example of unconditional love for everyone and highlights the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion. To celebrate God’s love, we should reflect on how our actions can mirror Christ’s care for humanity. We must actively help those in need—whether it’s feeding the hungry, supporting the sick, or offering comfort to the lonely. By understanding that every act of kindness we extend to others reflects our love for Christ, we embrace our responsibility to live out our faith daily. Our commitment to Christian living is shown through the way we interact with and support those around us, embodying the love and compassion that Jesus exemplified.

SUMMARY

Jesus describes a scene of final judgment where he separates people into two groups, like a shepherd separating sheep from goats. Those who have shown compassion and kindness—by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting prisoners—are welcomed into God’s kingdom. Jesus explains that these acts of love are not just about helping others; they are seen as serving him directly. We learn from the lesson that our treatment of others reflects our faith and relationship with God, emphasizing that genuine Christian living involves practical acts of kindness and compassion towards those in need.

Consider a recent situation where you helped someone in need or could have been helped. How did your actions or inactions reflect your values and beliefs? Share with a partner or group how you felt and discuss how these actions align with the message of Matthew 25:31-40.

There are communities where resources are scarce, and people are struggling to get necessities. How would you prioritize helping different individuals

based on their needs? Create a plan for how you would approach this situation and discuss how your decisions reflect the principles of kindness and compassion from Matthew 25:31-40.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

As you reflect on today's lesson, remember that serving "the least of these" is a way to honor Christ. Consider joining or supporting a local ministry that helps those in need—whether it's serving meals, tutoring, or offering companionship. By actively participating in these acts of service, you make a real difference and live out the love Jesus calls us to show. Your involvement not only helps others but also strengthens your faith and commitment to following Christ's example.

Dear God, thank you for the reminder of your immense love and compassion. Help us to see the needs of those around us and to serve them with genuine kindness and care. Guide us in finding ways to participate in ministries that support those who are struggling and empower us to be a beacon of hope and love. May our actions reflect your grace and mercy, and may we always strive to live out our faith through service. Bless our efforts and keep us focused on your example of love. Amen.

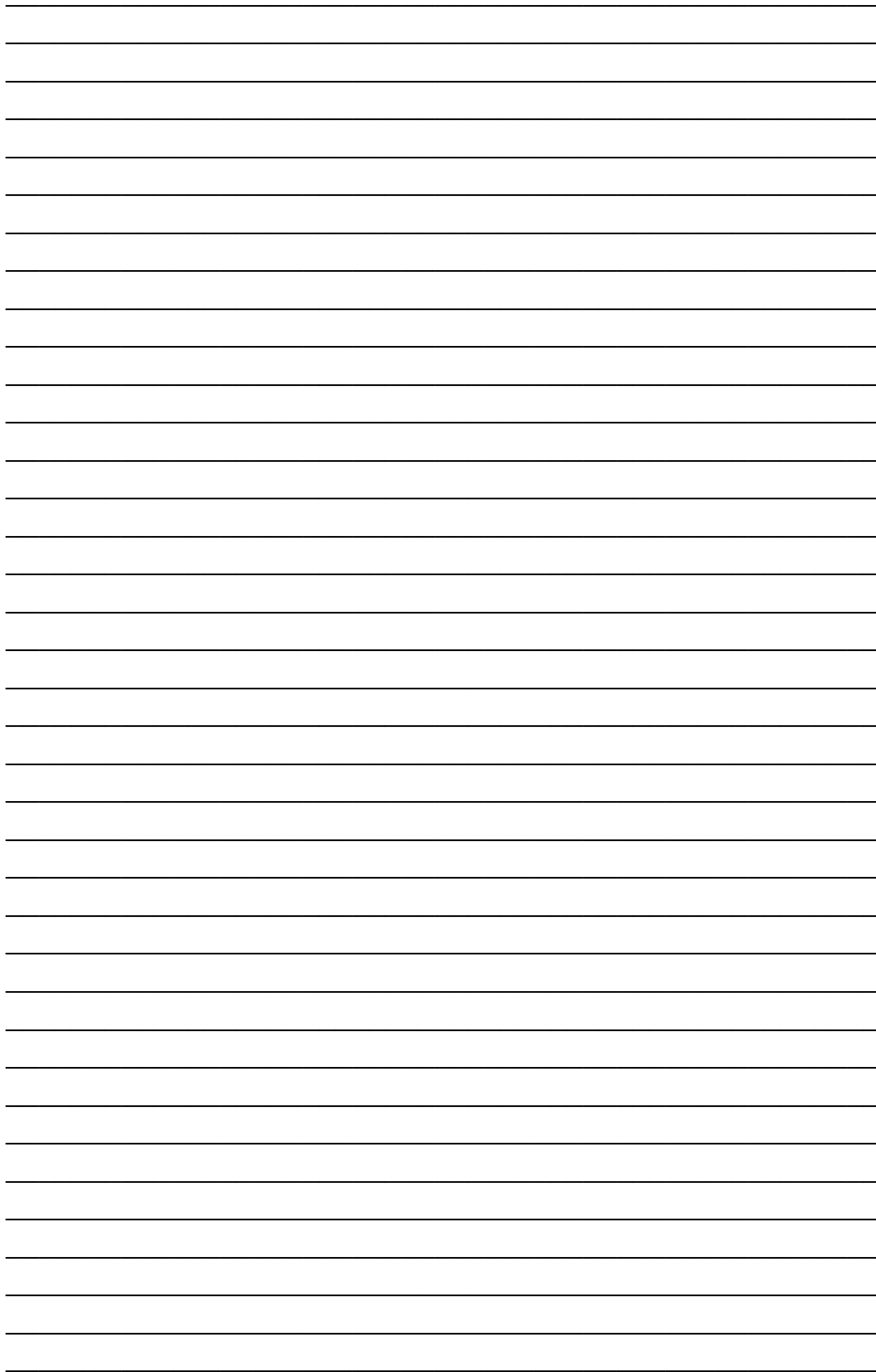
APPENDICES 13 – FAITH IN ACTION

Read Ephesians 2:1-9 ¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and

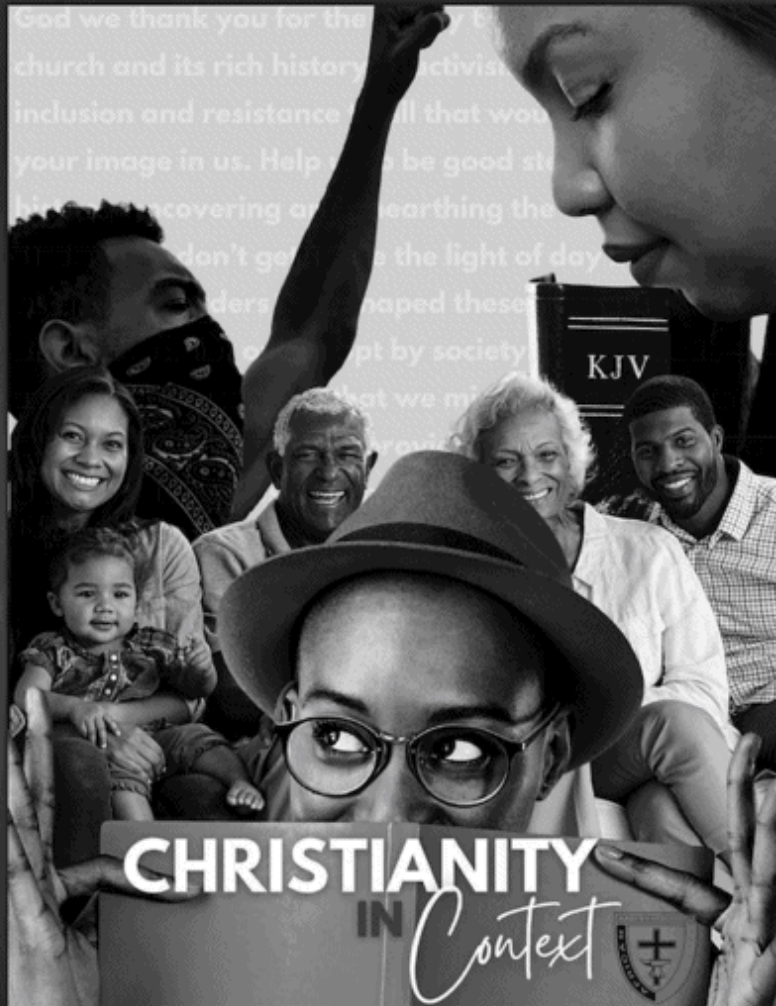
this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Read James 2:14-26 ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Based on the scriptures above, reflect on how faith and works go hand in hand.



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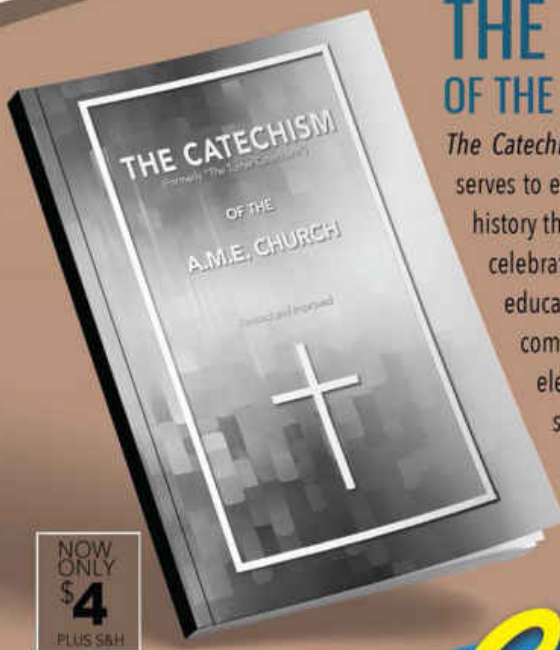
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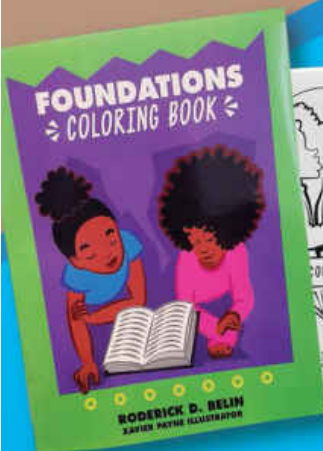
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