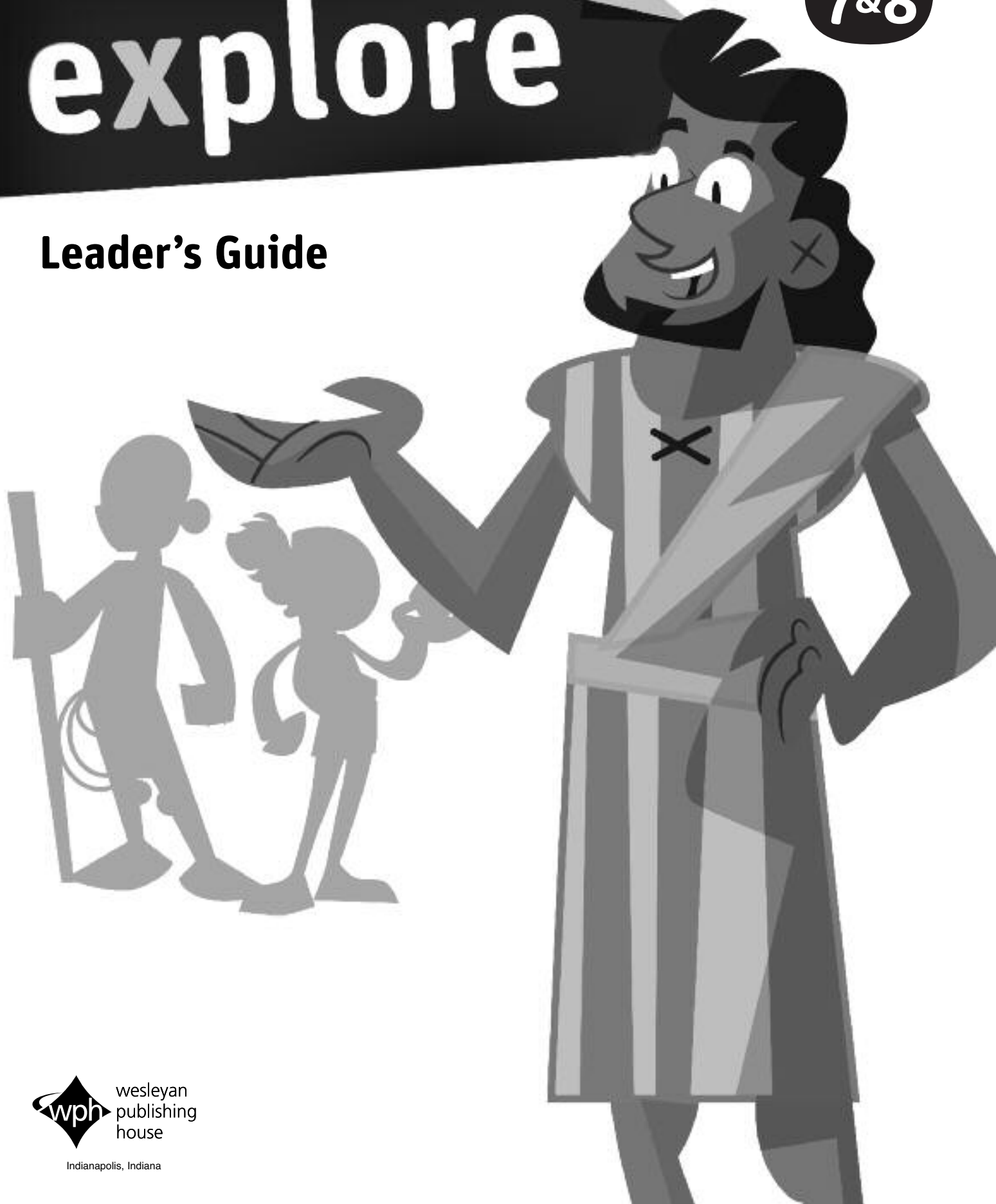


explore

books
7&8

Leader's Guide



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Indianapolis, Indiana



explore

A Discipleship Series for Preteens

**Unearth God's Image
in You**



**Represent the Evidence
for God**

explore leader's guide

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www.wesleyan.org/wph

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introduction

Explore is a discipleship resource for your church's intentional ministry to preteens—those who may no longer consider themselves children but are not yet teens.

Your preteens are on the verge of becoming teens and embarking on a culture that is in need of an infusion of followers of Christ. Intentional discipleship as provided in Explore will help ground them in their faith, establish routines that will move them in their spiritual formation, and prepare them to face a world desperately in need of the Savior.

The Explore discipleship series is written in a small group format to provide opportunity for deeper, relational connections. It's progressive in design, moving students from an internal confirmation of their faith, to commitment to a fellowship of believers, on to service within the fellowship, and finally to personal ministry outside the doors of the church. It's intentional in that it combines personal teaching moments that are highly interactive and reflective with corporate celebrations.

Transition is a key word to describe the life of preteens. Their bodies are transitioning as they move from child-size to adult-looking bodies. Their minds are transitioning as they move from concrete to abstract thinking. They are developing the ability to reflect, interpret, and assimilate. Socially, preteens are moving from being family centered to friend centered. Spiritually, they are moving away from the borrowed faith of their parents and teachers to a personalized faith that they own.

This Time of Transition

"What you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing. . . . Most people's minds are made up and they believe they know what they need to know spiritually by age 13. Their focus in absorbing religious teaching after that age is to gain reassurance and confirmation of their existing beliefs rather than to glean new insights that will redefine their foundations" (George Barna).

This time of transition is a prime opportunity to instill biblical truths and to give your preteens an opportunity to confirm their faith. Preteens are capable of powerful commitment and have the ability to process deep spiritual insights, if given the opportunity and motivation. Here are some key things to remember when sharing biblical truth with preteens:

- They desire authentic relationships with adults who are transparent.
- Boys often respect male leaders greater than female, while girls usually respect either equally. (Make sure you have male volunteers as part of your preteen ministry.)
- They need you to answer the question "So what?" so they can understand why.
- They are active and loud as they sort out who they are and where they fit in.
- They are very self-conscious and desire a great deal of attention.
- They need routine and clear guidelines, but seek independence.
- They need to talk and question.
- They have drastic mood swings and waffle between levels of maturity.
- Girls are all about friends and are into make-up, fashion, and appearance.
- Boys want to play and care little about personal appearance.

What Is the Explore Discipleship Series?

The Explore series is comprised of eight student books, each containing six weeks of discipleship lessons for preteens, for a total of forty-eight weeks of material. Each set of six lessons culminates in a celebration. There are also four leader's guides: one for student books 1 and 2, one for student books 3 and 4, one for student books 5 and 6, and one for student books 7 and 8.

The outline of lessons for the entire forty-eight-week course is:

book 1

Uncover the Truth about God

1. God
 2. The Bible
 3. Jesus
 4. Humanity
 5. Salvation
 6. Baptism
- Celebration: Baptism

book 5

Investigate God's Word for Yourself

1. Jesus in Action
 2. Unclean Jesus?
 3. Just Have Faith
 4. On Your Mark, Get Set, Follow Jesus
 5. Grapes, Bad Guys, and a Son
 6. Curtains Up
- Celebration: Bible Fair

book 2

Discover Your Place in God's Plan

1. The Trinity
 2. Temptation
 3. Bible Study and Prayer
 4. Holy Living
 5. Worship
 6. Membership
- Celebration: Student Membership

book 6

Link Your Life to God

1. The Lord's Prayer
 2. Prayer of Jabez
 3. Prayer for Boldness
 4. Jesus' Garden Prayer
 5. Daniel's Praise
 6. The Voice of God
- Celebration: Prayer Walk

book 3

Experience God's Power in You

1. Bible Study
 2. Prayer
 3. Evangelism
 4. Fellowship
 5. Service
 6. Stewardship
- Celebration: Student Leadership

book 7

Unearth God's Image in You

1. We Need God
 2. Mourning
 3. Humble and Hungry
 4. Mercy
 5. Pure Heart and Peace
 6. Persecution
- Celebration: Beatitudes Video

book 4

Encounter Your Mission for God

1. Fruit of the Spirit
 2. Spiritual Gifts
 3. Spiritual Disciplines
 4. Compassion
 5. The Call
 6. Missions
- Celebration: Mission Experience

book 8

Represent the Evidence for God

1. Bad Things
 2. Hell
 3. The Way
 4. Resurrection
 5. The Truth
 6. Creation
- Celebration: Defend the Faith Day

Christian character development is a lifelong process. No one is too young or old to start or stop growing deeper in their life with Jesus. It's a privilege to disciple every person intentionally. If we want our youth, young adults, parents, grandparents, and culture to behave like Jesus, now is the time to explore the truths of God and His church with our children.



note to leaders

Explore is a small group discipleship tool for the students in transition between your children's ministry program and youth group. The material provides for forty-eight weeks of teaching and eight weeks of celebrations. This can be done by using two of the books in the fall semester for twelve weeks of programming and two of the books in the spring semester for another twelve weeks for two years. Or, it can be used to provide a six-week program each fall and spring semester for four years.

This small group can meet during the traditional Sunday school hour, midweek programming, or Sunday evening. The books are also an excellent resource for setting up a time of independent programming—a time set apart from the typical ministry schedule for the purpose of intentional discipleship with preteens. Establishing a unique time of discipleship for preteens also allows flexibility in finding a time frame and location that works best for the group.

The Leader's Guide for each lesson contains the following elements in this order:

Thesis: A single sentence that summarizes the entire content of the lesson into one thought.

Main Points: Three sentences that summarize the primary teaching points for each lesson.

Lesson Preparation: Provides leader instructions for what to do prior to teaching each lesson.

Connect: Helps create a relational environment, giving the students and leader an opportunity to catch up on life.

Warm Up: Provides a "hook" and introduces the concept for the lesson to gain the interest and attention of students.

Engage: Presents the Bible teaching component, including biblical background.

Relate: Provides the real-life application, answers the "so what?" question and makes the theme personal.

Question: Launches the group into asking interactive and exploratory questions about the content and relational elements of what was presented so that they can process and internalize.

Prayer: Offers a suggested prayer to pray with the students.

Unwind: Creates group connection and lightens the atmosphere before sending them home.

Challenge: Provides a tangible outcome that practically relates the concept to the students' real world. Also includes a challenge verse to study each week with the goal being they will commit the verse to memory.

Additional resources to enhance each lesson can be found at www.wesleyan.org/explore.

Of these elements, *Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge* appear in the student book. The students are asked to use their books as reflection journals, completing the content and following the challenges.

There is enough material provided in each lesson for a full ninety minutes of programming. If your time is shorter than that, pick and choose the elements that work best for your group and fill your time allotment. The elements that parallel the student's book—*Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge*—would be the foundational elements to begin with and build the rest of your teaching time from.

The Bible verses referenced throughout Explore are quoted from the *Live Bible*. We strongly encourage you to make available for each student a copy of the *Live Bible* so that you and your preteens can literally be on the same page. In a small group, it is a challenge to have a Bible study with a leader and students using different Bibles and especially different translations. The Leader's Guide contains the corresponding page number for each biblical reference to help you find the verses quickly. The *Live Bible* is written in the New Living Translation which is most appropriate for this age level, providing easier readability and comprehension for preteens.



book
7

Unearth God's Image in You

Leader's Guide

explore

In this book students will learn—

- Why we all need God.
- What role repentance plays in faith.
- How God calls us to humble action.
- When we can expect God's mercy.
- Why God blesses us.

You are on an amazing journey of faith—let's Explore it together!



1. We Need God

God blesses those who realize they need God by giving them the kingdom of heaven.

Main Points

We are sinners and desperately need God.

When we realize we are poor, we begin to rely on God for everything.

God blesses the poor with a kingdom.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Matthew 5:3 and Luke 18:9–14.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, room temperature whipping cream, cards with opposite words printed on them, a small jar with lid (one per student), crackers, paper, white board, dry erase marker, and tape

Connect

Think about the common phrase, “Take a trip down memory lane.” What do you think that phrase means?

To remember events and people from the past

Will anyone share a special memory from your life?

God has given us an amazing ability to remember significant amounts of information! We can commit anything from random facts, movie quotes, words to songs, people’s names, and even phone numbers to our memory.

How many songs do you think you have memorized? Could you sing one for us?

How many Bible verses do you think you have memorized?

How important is it to memorize the Bible?

For the next six weeks, our goal is to memorize a small portion of the Bible. By remembering just a few verses each week, we will easily be able to recite Matthew 5:3–10 from memory.

plan

ask

We Need God

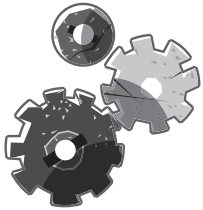
Warm Up

Before class make cards with the following words printed on them: fun, happy, boy, up, fast, under, light, summer, hot, and mean.

Let's begin by playing a word game. I am going to hold up a card with a word on it. You must shout out the opposite word.

Hold up the cards one by one and give the students the opportunity to say the opposite word.

During the next six weeks, we will be studying a passage of Scripture commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. It is here that Jesus described several attitudes that a person must display in order to live for Him. Many of these attitudes seem opposite to the attitudes we find in the world. For example, the world tells us to rely on ourselves; Jesus tells us to rely on Him. The world tells us to hate our enemies, but Jesus tells us to love them. These two truths are just the beginning. Get ready to discover an entire passage that contradicts the world's teaching!



Engage

Everywhere we turn, we're told to believe in ourselves. We hear that the only way to succeed at a task is to look deep within ourselves for strength. If we rely on ourselves enough, then we can accomplish anything. Is this attitude of self-reliance in line with God's Word? Our passage describes a completely opposite attitude.

read

Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:3 with the students (p. 951, Live).

say

I Can Know It's True

1. We are sinners, and we desperately need God. What does it mean if a person is poor and realizes his or her need for God?

Allow the students a few moments to answer.

Do you think Jesus was talking about not having any money? No. Jesus was not talking about money at all; He was talking about being spiritually poor. When we are spiritually poor, we realize that we are sinners and in desperate need of a Savior. We understand that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing without Jesus. We need Him to provide everything in our lives. Some great examples of people who were spiritually poor are found in Exodus 4:1–12 (p. 58, *Live*); Philippians 3:7 (p. 1175, *Live*); and Isaiah 6:5 (p. 671, *Live*).

2. When we realize we are poor, we begin to rely on God for everything. Our old self-reliant attitudes will be replaced with a confidence in God. How do we rely on God on a day-to-day basis? We stop worrying about our food and clothing and rely on God to provide for our needs. We now rely on His power

instead of our own strength to succeed at school, in sports, or in band. God wants us to rely on Him when we share our faith and help hurting friends. We can trust that He will give us the words to say to unbelievers. All of these changes only come when we rely totally on God. We can read more about relying on God in Psalm 51:7 (p. 561, *Live*); Philippians 1:20 (p. 1172, *Live*); and John 3:30 (p. 1049, *Live*).

3. God blesses the poor with a kingdom! Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." This verse tells us we cannot be with the Father in heaven unless we go through Jesus. Again, if we try to get into heaven using our own good works, we will fail. The Bible promises the reward of heaven to the poor—those who completely rely on Jesus for salvation. Read about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13:44–45 (p. 963, *Live*) and 18:3 (p. 968, *Live*).

Relate

Jesus calls us to live our lives differently from the rest of the world. When we live for God, our actions and attitudes will separate us from those who are not living for Christ. Let's do an experiment that will remind us to be separate from the world in our actions.

Hand each student a small jar with a lid. Instruct the students to put three to four tablespoons of whipping cream in the jar and secure the lid tightly.

We are now going to shake these jars until butter separates from the liquid.

Have everyone shake the jars. The more vigorous the shaking, the quicker the butter will separate. It can take up to ten minutes of shaking. When the butter has separated, pour the liquid out of the jar.

Just like the butter separated itself from the liquid, being poor in spirit will separate us from those who live in their own power and strength.

Spread the butter on some crackers and enjoy eating your homemade butter.

Question

*Read Luke 18:9–14 (pp. 1034–1035, *Live*) together as a class.*

Which man in this passage was poor and realized his need for God?

The tax collector

What did the tax collector do to show he was spiritually poor?



We Need God

He stood at a distance, looked down, beat his chest, asked for mercy, and admitted he was a sinner.

What kind of attitude did the Pharisee have?

He was prideful, rich, and didn't rely on God.

Who should we be like?

The tax collector

Read Revelation 3:17 (p. 1266, Live).

How does God see those who think they don't need Him?

He sees them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

Read Isaiah 64:6 (p. 727, Live).

How does this verse make you feel about your sins and the things you do?

What would it look like in your life to be spiritually poor?

Examples: I won't brag so much. I would ask God to forgive me. I will ask God to help me obey authority.

What are some things in your life that you need to rely on God for?

Examples: salvation, being nice to others, trusting He will always be with me

Read Luke 5:8 (p. 1015, Live) and Judges 6:14–15 (p. 244, Live).

How did Peter and Gideon show they were poor in these passages?

Peter admitted he was a sinner and not worthy of being around Jesus. Gideon admitted that he was the least and not worthy of being used by God.

pray

Prayer

In Luke 18:13, the tax collector came to God with a poor spirit: "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner" (p. 1035, Live).

Today, we are going to pray with the same attitude as the tax collector. We are not going to beat our chests like he did, but we are going to take a very humble

position as we pray. I would like all of us to lie flat on the ground facedown. Take one minute in silence to admit you are a sinner to God and ask Him for His love in your life.

Spend one minute in silent prayer. Finish by praying out loud.

Heavenly Father,

We come before you with a poor spirit knowing that we are all sinners and need you. Help us rely on your strength and power this week. Amen.

Unwind

Write out the entire verse of Matthew 5:3 (p. 951, Live) on a piece of paper and cut out each word. Create a twenty square grid on a white board using a dry erase marker. Across the room from the white board, mix up the words and place them facedown on a table. Put a tape dispenser next to the words.

Before you begin the game, review the memory verse several times until the class knows it relatively well. Line up the students beside the table.

We are going to play a memory verse relay game. The goal is to put the memory verse in order one word at a time. The first person in line is going to pick a word off the table, run down to the board, and tape the word in the space he or she thinks it belongs. The next person in line can choose to pick another word and tape it to the board, or move the word just taped to a different spot if he or she thinks it is in the wrong square.

If you have enough students, this game can be played with multiple teams competing to put the verse together first.

Challenge

This week as you talk with God, try to have the same attitude as that of the tax collector. Instead of coming to God demanding that He gives you everything you want, tell God you are a sinner and that you need Him. Ask God if there is an area in your life where you need to rely more on Him. Write your prayer in your book.



Explore

Matthew 5:3 says, "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs" (p. 951, Live).

Read this passage at least once a day. Write it down and post it in a place where you will see it daily. This will help you begin to memorize the entire set of Jesus' teachings called the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–12).

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



2. Mourning

God comforts those who are saddened by sin.

Main Points

To mourn means to be saddened by sin.

Mourning will lead us to seek forgiveness.

God promises to comfort our sadness.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 5:4 and Psalm 30:11–12.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, blocks, two-liter bottle, nail, duct tape, bucket, water, paper, markers, wastebasket, and papers with smiling faces and frowning faces

ask

Connect

Were you able to memorize Matthew 5:3 from last week (p. 951, *Live*)? Can anyone quote it for the class?

"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

Was it difficult to pray with the same attitude as the tax collector last week? Why or why not?

Today we are going to talk about being sad. What picture comes to mind when you hear about someone being sad?

What are some things that make you sad?

Warm Up

Begin building a castle of blocks as you talk to the students.

Imagine that you are building the best block castle ever! You love building with blocks, and it makes you so happy when you finish your block buildings. You

spend all day making the best block castle for your dad to see when he gets home from work. As you are putting the finishing touches on your castle, your little brother runs in the room, accidentally causing a chain reaction of blocks flying everywhere!

Knock over the castle in dramatic fashion.

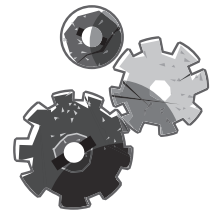
Your castle is ruined! Your brother is very sorry, but all your hard work is gone. At first you are a little upset, but now you are just sad. Your dad will never get to see the beautiful castle you built.

Have you ever had a moment like that when you experienced something very sad?

In our passage today, Jesus said God blesses those who mourn. Mourning is another way to describe being sad. Do you think Jesus was talking about being sad over broken block towers, or was He talking about something else? Let's find out.

Engage

Some people laugh at sin. Others try to pretend it doesn't exist. Sometimes a tragic event happens that makes it impossible to ignore sin. What should be our attitude toward sin? Jesus said that sin should cause us to be sad, as if someone we love has passed away. And He said that those who mourn sin will be comforted by God.



Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:4 with the students (p. 951, Live).



I Can Know It's True

1. To mourn means to be saddened by sin. God created us to have a relationship with Him. When we commit a sin, our relationship with God is broken, and we can no longer have the fellowship He intended. God is deeply saddened by this separation. Just as God mourns over sin, we, too, should mourn. We can either mourn over our own personal sins or over the sins of those around us. We do not have to look far to see people who are hurting, broken, and in need of a Savior. Read about the effects sin has on our lives in Isaiah 59:1–2 (p. 721, *Live*) and Jeremiah 5:25 (p. 739, *Live*). Read about Samuel mourning the sins of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:35 (p. 284, *Live*).
2. Mourning will lead us to seek forgiveness. We do not have to suffer and be sad forever! There is a solution; God is full of compassion and promises that He will forgive us when we ask Him to. God's forgiveness will take away our sadness and restore our relationship with Him. Read about the kind of sorrow God desires from us in 2 Corinthians 7:10–11 (p. 1149, *Live*) and Acts 2:36–38 (p. 1076, *Live*).



Mourning

3. God promises to comfort our sadness. We can find happiness in knowing that God takes our sadness and shame and replaces it with hope, joy, and love. And one day, God promises to take away all the pain in this world forever. Read about God's comfort in Psalm 30:5 (p. 547, *Live*); James 4:9 (p. 1231, *Live*); 1 John 1:9 (p. 1248, *Live*); and Revelation 21:3–5 (pp. 1280–1281, *Live*).

Relate

Before class make a crying bottle by first removing the label from a two-liter bottle. Next punch three to five holes using a nail in a single file line on the side of the bottle. Then use a strip of duct tape to cover the holes. Finally, fill the bottle with water and screw the cap on tightly.

There are many people in Scripture who mourn because of sin. Peter mourned by weeping bitterly. This is our mourning bottle. Matthew 5:4 says, "God blesses those who mourn" (p. 951, *Live*).

At this time, hold the bottle over a bucket horizontally and remove the tape (the water will not come out yet). Unscrew the cap just a little and watch your bottle start to cry.

What does Jesus promise to do for us when we mourn?

Hopefully the students answer "comfort us."

That's right! "God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

When you say comforted, tighten the lid and the bottle will stop crying. Say the verse a few more times. Each time you say mourn, make the bottle cry; each time you say comforted, make the bottle stop crying.

If time allows, give each student a bottle (small plastic bottles are fine). Instruct them on how to make their own mourning bottle.



Question

Both David and Peter provide examples of men whose sins caused them to mourn. Read about David's mourning in Psalm 51:3–4 (p. 561, *Live*). Read about Peter's mourning in Matthew 26:75 (p. 980, *Live*).

How did David and Peter each show God their mourning?

David wrote a poem about how sinful he was. Peter wept bitterly.

Describe how you show God mourning in your life.

Jesus mourned over the sins of Jerusalem. Read Matthew 23:37–38 (p. 975, *Live*).

Why was Jesus saddened over Jerusalem?

Jesus was sad because of the bad things the people in the city had done.

What are some bad things you see that causes you to be sad?

Examples: people fighting, homelessness, cruelty to the innocent

What can you do about them?

Encourage students to come up with specific ideas of what they can do for specific problems around them. Example: help feed the hungry at a food bank

How can you comfort others when they are mourning?

Examples: pray with them, help them seek forgiveness, mourn with them

Second Thessalonians 2:16–17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say” (p. 1191, *Live*).

Who gives us comfort?

Jesus and God our Father

Describe a time when you have felt God’s comfort.

Share a story of your own to get the students talking about God’s comfort in their own lives.

Do you think God wants us to walk around being sad and crying all the time? Why or why not?

*No, there are many passages in Scripture that tell us to be joyful! See Psalm 30:11–12 for a hint (p. 547, *Live*).*

Prayer

Today we are going to pray and tell God we are sorry for the sins we have committed. We are going to write the things we have done that make us feel sad on a piece of paper. Then we are going to apologize to God for those things and ask Him to forgive us. After that we are going to crumple up our papers and get rid of them, just like God forgives us when we ask.



Mourning

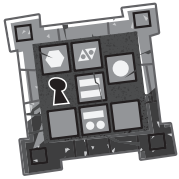
Hand out a few pieces of paper and marker to each student. Encourage them to write down things they have done that made them feel sad. Remind the students not to look at each other's paper; this time is between them and God. After writing on the papers, lead them in confessing their sins to God and crumpling up their paper. Next, have a shooting competition by seeing who can shoot their paper in the wastebasket from the farthest away.

Unwind

Before class, print several smiling and frowning faces on pieces of paper (one big face per paper).

Divide the students into two teams standing at opposite walls. In the middle of the room, place the papers facedown.

We are going to have a relay to help us memorize our verse for today. One at a time, you are going to run to the papers, grab a piece, and bring it back to your team. However, before you bring it back to your team, you must yell something. If the paper has a frowning face, you must yell, "God blesses those who mourn!" If the paper has a smiling face, you must yell, "For they will be comforted!" The team who collects the most faces wins! Ready, set, go!



Challenge

Your challenge this week is to make a list of the sins you see around you that make you sad. Beside each item you listed, write a way you can help bring comfort into that situation. Pray that God will give you the comfort to share with others around you.

Explore

Write on a piece of paper Matthew 5:4: "God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (p. 951, *Live*). Fold up the paper and carry it in your pocket every day this week. Every time you feel this paper in your pocket, quote the verse to yourself. Don't forget to practice Matthew 5:3 as well.

help

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

3. Humble and Hungry

God blesses us when we are humble and desire justice.

Main Points

We are called to be humble.

God blesses those who want to do what is right.

God will help us do what is right.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 5:5–6; James 1:21; Ephesians 4:2; and Deuteronomy 32:3–4.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, crackers, water, resealable quart-size freezer bags, yogurt, milk, squashy food ingredients, straws, Starburst, black licorice, mini Snickers candy bar, paper cups, paper plates, and markers

Connect

What are some things you put on your list last week that caused you to be sad?

Did anyone have a chance to offer comfort to anyone? What did you do?

Give the students an opportunity to tell their stories of comforting someone.

Can someone quote Matthew 5:3 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

Can someone quote Matthew 5:4 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Can someone quote both of them together?

Practice quoting both verses together as a class.

plan

ask

Humble and Hungry

Warm Up

Who is hungry enough to eat five crackers?

Challenge the students to an eating competition. See who can eat the crackers first without drinking any water.

How can you tell when you are getting hungry?

Your stomach hurts; your belly rumbles; you have a lack of energy; or you start to think about food.

Who is thirsty?

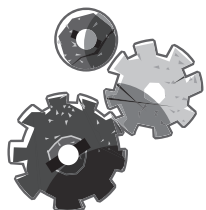
The students should be thirsty after eating the crackers.

How can you tell when you are thirsty?

Your mouth is dry, and it's hard to swallow.

Give the students something to drink to ease their thirst.

In today's passage, Jesus said that God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty. But Jesus wasn't talking about food and water. Let's find out what Jesus was talking about.



Engage

It is easy to see that many things in the world are not the way they are supposed to be. Too many people put themselves first and don't worry about the consequences for others. Sometimes we're like that too. But Jesus says that those who follow Him will put others first and be hungry to see things turn out the way that they are supposed to.

read

Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:5 with the students (p. 951, Live).

say

I Can Know It's True

1. We are called to be humble. People have a natural desire to be first—first in line, first in sports, first in school. Although we do need to do our best, we do not *need* to be first. That is what being humble is about. Pure humility involves putting ourselves last and using our gifts and talents to serve other people. When we are humble, God promises to bless us. Jesus is the ultimate example of humility. He put His own needs last, served those around Him, and gave God glory for His accomplishments. Read about Jesus' sacrifice, being humble, and the rewards of humility in Mark 9:31 (p. 994, *Live*); John 13:1–17 (p. 1062, *Live*); Psalm 25:9 (p. 545, *Live*); and 37:11 (p. 552, *Live*).

2. God blesses those who want to do what is right. Matthew 5:6 says, “God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.” We face temptation to do wrong every day. Whether the temptation is to cheat, lie, steal, or not stand up for someone being bullied, we have a decision to make. Are we going to do what is wrong or do what is right? God wants us to seek justice—to do the right thing. He compares our desire to do right with those who are desperately hungry and thirsty. If people are truly starving, they cannot think about anything except food. They will seek food and water with everything they have. In the same way, God wants us to seek what is right and good. We should be “starving” for what is right. Read more about seeking God and justice in Matthew 6:33 (p. 953, *Live*) and Psalm 42:1 (p. 555, *Live*).
3. God will help us do what is right. His very nature is just and right; He can do nothing wrong. So when we are “starving” for justice, the only way to be satisfied is to seek the One who is purely just. God promises that when we come to Him, He will give us the power to overcome sin and do what is right. Read about God’s power in Hebrews 13:21 (p. 1225, *Live*); Philippians 4:13 (p. 1176, *Live*); and 1 Timothy 1:12 (p. 1196, *Live*).

Relate

Today we are going to make a treat to remind us that we need to be hungry and thirsty for God’s justice.

Hand each student a resealable quart-size freezer bag. Place the yogurt, milk, and other ingredients on a table for each student to choose from. The other ingredients could include: bananas, grapes, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, chocolate syrup, or any other food product you can mush. Be aware of the potential food allergies in your class and don’t bring anything that might cause an allergic reaction.

Instruct the students to put a half cup of yogurt and a half cup of milk in their bags. Next allow them to choose whatever other ingredients they would like in their treat. After they have added all the ingredients, remove the extra air from the bags and seal them.

Now squish your bags gently until the mixture is nice and smooth.

Once the treats are mixed into a smoothie texture, hand each student a straw, open the bag just enough for the straw to fit, and enjoy your treat.

Remember Matthew 5:6 says, “God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied” (p. 951, *Live*).

Humble and Hungry



Question

What does being humble look like in your life?

Examples: not bragging or being proud, serving others who are less fortunate, complimenting others when they do a good job

A lot of times, we see people who serve us as being weak and unable to be as “good” as we are. Do you think you have to be weak or strong to be a servant? Why or why not?

Let students answer what they think. Remind them that Jesus was strong and could do anything, but chose to be a servant.

According to James 3:13 (p. 1231, *Live*), what comes from wisdom?

Allow students time to look up the verse to find the answer—humility.

Read the following three passages: Matthew 11:29 (p. 960, *Live*); James 1:21 (p. 1228, *Live*); and Ephesians 4:2 (p. 1167, *Live*).

What does each passage teach us about humility?

Matthew 11:29—We can learn humility from Jesus.

James 1:21—We need to accept God’s Word with a humble heart.

Ephesians 4:2—We can be humble by being patient and forgiving other’s faults.

What does Deuteronomy 32:3–4 (p. 206, *Live*) tell us about God’s character?

God is just, perfect, and does no wrong.

Why do you think Jesus compared our desire for justice with being hungry and thirsty?

Example: You can’t survive without food and water just like you can’t survive without God’s justice.

How would your life be different if you desperately wanted to do what is right?

Example: I would read the Bible more, love my enemies more, pray more, and share His love with others.



Prayer

For this prayer, hand each student a Starburst, a piece of black licorice, and a mini Snickers candy bar. Tell them not to take off the wrappers or eat anything until you instruct them to.

As we pray, this candy will help remind us what we are praying for. First, take the Starburst in your hand. Starbursts are a good, sweet candy! During the first few moments of prayer, I want you to think of some things you are very good at. As you eat the Starburst, I want you to thank God for giving you those abilities. Also, ask Him to help you remain humble and use those abilities to serve others.

Give the students one minute to pray quietly while eating the Starburst.

Next we are going to eat the black licorice. Many people think black licorice tastes bad. I want you to think of something you are not good at doing, something that God has not given you a gift to do. As you eat your licorice, I want you to thank God for giving someone else that ability and pray that God will use that gift of his or hers to bring Him glory.

Give the students one minute to pray quietly while eating the licorice. Some students will not want to eat the licorice, but encourage them to eat at least one bite (unless it will make them sick). It is a helpful reminder of what they are to be praying for.

Finally, we are going to eat the Snickers. The Snickers candy bar is known for satisfying your hunger. As we eat the Snickers, pray that God will help you be hungry for Him and that He will satisfy your hunger.

Give the students one minute to pray while eating the Snickers. End with a short prayer of your own.

Unwind

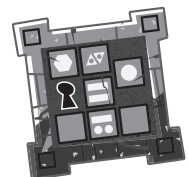
Hand each student a cup, a paper plate, and a marker.

These cups and plates are going to help us memorize our verses in a fun way. On your cup, write out Matthew 5:5: "God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth" (p. 951, *Live*). On your plate, write out Matthew 5:6: "God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied" (p. 951, *Live*).

Instruct the students to stack their cups in pyramids of three on a table. Have all the students line up ten to fifteen feet away from the table. One at a time, the students will use their plates as Frisbees and try to knock over the cups. Before they throw their plate, they must first quote Matthew 5:6. If they hit a cup, they must then quote Matthew 5:5. Restack the cups after they are all knocked over and play again.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to experience hunger to remind yourself how much you should want God and what is right. Ask permission from your parents to skip a meal once this week. Journal about how you feel. Ask God to give you hunger for Him.



Humble and Hungry

Explore

Matthew 5:5–6 says, “God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied” (p. 951, *Live*).

Using a piece of paper and markers, make a placemat at home with these verses written on it. Use this placemat every time you sit down to eat to help you memorize these next two verses. Don’t forget to also continue practicing Matthew 5:3–4.



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

4. Mercy

God will show mercy to those who are merciful to others.

Main Points

A merciful person helps others without expecting anything in return.

Jesus is our example on how to be merciful.

We will receive the same type of mercy we show to others on judgment day.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 5:7 and Luke 10:27–37.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, hard-boiled egg, clear glass jar, salt, water, spoon, scissors, paper, and tape or staples

Connect

Were you able to complete the hunger challenge?

Give time for students to talk about the meal they skipped and how it made them feel.

How did skipping a meal help remind you to be hungry for God?

Can someone quote Matthew 5:5–6 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied."

Can someone quote the previous verses, Matthew 5:3–4 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Who can quote all the verses together, Matthew 5:3–6 (p. 951, *Live*)?

Practice as a class saying all four verses together.

plan

ask

Mercy

What has been the hardest part of memorizing these verses so far?

Encourage students to be honest. If someone is having a tough time, have the class brainstorm new ways to help memorize the verses.

Warm Up

Imagine you are sixteen years old, and you are driving in your new car with some friends.

Encourage the students to hold out their hands like they are driving. Allow them to ham it up a bit. You can even ask a few questions about what kind of car they are driving or who is with them.

You are driving along and you see one of your best friends along the side of the road. He is standing in front of his car with his hood up. Smoke is coming out from under the hood. What would you do?

Hopefully most students would stop to help their friend.

Now you are driving and this time you see a boy from your school that constantly picks on you and says mean things about you. He is standing in front of his car with his hood up. What would you do?

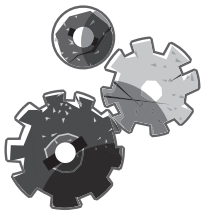
Allow silly answers like, "I would honk loudly and scare him as I fly by."

Who is easier to help, your friend or the person who is mean to you?

Encourage students to be honest; friends are a lot easier to help.

Who does God tell us to help?

He wants us to help both our friends and our enemies.



Engage

Jesus tells us to help others. Are we just supposed to help our friends, or are we supposed to help other people too? Let's find out by looking at our next beatitude.

read

Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:7 with the students (p. 951, Live).

say

I Can Know It's True

1. A merciful person helps others without expecting anything in return. Every day we see people who need some kind of help: a friend might need help with homework, a boy at lunch might need more food to eat, a complete

stranger might need help carrying groceries. Whatever it is, God desires that we show mercy to those in need. How can we show mercy? Do what you can to help without expecting to receive anything in return. Jesus gave us a perfect example of a man who showed mercy on a complete stranger. Read Luke 10:27–37 (p. 1024, *Live*).

2. Jesus is our example on how to be merciful. As we look through the Bible, we see Jesus showed mercy on both His friends and His enemies. He drove demons out of people. Jesus forgave a sinful woman and gave sight to a blind man, even though they had done nothing for Him. Jesus even had compassion on the men who were crucifying Him. None of these people deserved Jesus' mercy, but He gave it freely. When we show mercy to others, we are following in Jesus' footsteps. Read about the mercy God desires in Deuteronomy 15:7–8 (p. 191, *Live*); James 2:14–17 (p. 1229, *Live*); and 1 John 3:17–18 (p. 1251, *Live*).
3. We will receive the same type of mercy we show to others on judgment day—the day when God will judge all people. God blesses us by showing us mercy when we enter into eternity. Even though we have done nothing to deserve forgiveness, He still forgives us. However, God makes it clear that the way we treat other people will effect how God will judge us. When we show mercy to others, God promises to show mercy to us. Read about God's mercy in Matthew 25:31–46 (pp. 977–978, *Live*); Hebrews 4:16 (p. 1216, *Live*); James 2:13 (p. 1229, *Live*); and 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (p. 1144, *Live*).

Relate

Bring out a hard-boiled egg, a clear glass jar, salt, and some water. Fill the jar half-full with water.

Let's have this egg represent someone who needs help.

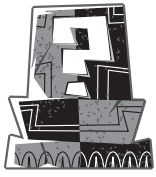
For added effect, you can draw a smiley face on the egg with a permanent marker. Drop the egg in the water and watch it sink to the bottom.

This egg needs help getting to the top of the water. We see people in our lives every day who need help. God calls us to help these people and show them His mercy. Let's help this egg get to the top.

Pour a half cup of salt into the water and stir it with a spoon. Soon the egg will rise to the top and remain floating.

Just like the salt helped the egg to float, we need to help others in need.

Mercy



Question

What can you do to show mercy to others?

Examples: Be nice to those who are mean to me. Play with the kids who others ignore. Be friends with kids who don't have friends. Help my mom with dishes. Give food to a homeless person.

Read Matthew 5:38–43 (p. 952, *Live*).

Give students a couple minutes to find and read the verses.

What does Jesus tell us to do to our enemies and those who hurt us?

Love them and show them mercy

What do you think is the hardest part of showing mercy to those who are mean to you?

Examples: They make me mad, and I don't feel like it. They don't deserve to be helped.

Read Matthew 23:23 (p. 974, *Live*).

Give students a couple minutes to find and read the verse.

Why was God upset at the teachers and Pharisees?

Because they were not showing justice, mercy, and faith

Daniel 9:9 says, "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him" (p. 864, *Live*).

How does it make you feel knowing that God is merciful to you?

Does knowing God is merciful to you help you show mercy to others? Why or why not?



Prayer

In the passage we read about the good Samaritan, Jesus told us to love our neighbors. Today I want us to pray for three types of neighbors.

First, hold up your thumb and point it toward yourself. You are going to pray for someone who is close to you. Think of a friend who needs help and pray for that friend.

Give students thirty seconds to pray for their friends.

Now as you keep out your thumb, hold out your pinky. This finger is the farthest away from you. I want you to think of someone who is far away from being your friend. Think of someone you don't like, your enemy. Pray for God's blessings and mercy on that person.

Give students thirty seconds to pray for their enemies.

Finally, hold up your index finger without putting down your thumb and pinky. This finger is going to remind us to pray for our neighbor who we don't know yet. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to help someone you don't know this week.

Give students thirty seconds to pray for someone they do not know. After the prayer, keep your fingers in the same position.

Does anyone know what this sign means in sign language? That's right—I love you. When we show mercy to others, we are saying, “I love you and so does God.”

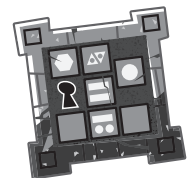
Unwind

Give each student a pair of scissors and some paper. Instruct students to cut the paper into 1" x 11" strips. Each student needs at least twelve strips.

We are going to make a memory chain. On each strip of paper, write one word from your memory verse. Loop the first strip of paper with the word *God* on it, and tape or staple the ends together. Take the next strip with the word *blesses* on it, and loop it through the first loop. Tape the ends together to begin making a chain. Repeat this process for the remaining strips of paper, making sure you put the words in order. You can decorate any extra strips you would like to add on to your chain. Use this chain this week to help you memorize Matthew 5:7.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to help someone who does not deserve your help. This can be someone you have never met or someone who is not your friend. Ask God to give you an opportunity to show mercy and do not hesitate when that opportunity arrives. Write down what you did and how it made you feel.



Explore

Matthew 5:7 says, “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (p. 951, *Live*).

Hang the memory verse chain you made in class somewhere in your room. Whenever you look at the chain, say the verse to yourself.

Practice saying all five of the Beatitudes you have learned so far together: Matthew 5:3–7 (p. 951, *Live*).

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



5. Pure Heart and Peace

God blesses us when our hearts are pure and we live in peace.

Main Points

We must strive to have clean hearts.

We must strive to have clean actions.

We must strive to live in peace.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 5:8–9; Psalm 119:9; and Romans 12:18.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, old t-shirt, food item to make t-shirt dirty, quart-size resealable freezer bags, water, vinegar, baking soda, paper towel, matching game pieces, and tape

ask

Connect

Was anyone able to help another person without expecting anything in return?

On a scale of one to ten, one being easy and ten being hard, how hard was it to offer that person help?

Give students a few minutes to describe their experiences.

Let's take some time to review our memory verse from last week. Who can say Matthew 5:7 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Who can say Matthew 5:3–4 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Who can say Matthew 5:5–6 (p. 951, Live)?

“God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.”

Can anyone say all the verses we have learned together?

Spend a few minutes practicing Matthew 5:3–7 as a class.

Warm Up

Before class make an old, unwanted t-shirt really dirty. Use ketchup, mustard, chocolate pudding, or anything you can find to make it look filthy.

Hold up the dirty shirt.

Is this shirt clean? No! It’s a disaster! Would you ever wear a shirt that was this dirty?

Allow the kids to have fun with this question.

What would I do to make this shirt clean again?

Put it in the washer with lots of soap, maybe use bleach

In our verse today, God says that He wants us to have clean hearts. Before we have a personal relationship with God, our hearts look like this shirt—filthy! After we give our lives to God, He begins to clean up our hearts. Let’s read about what it looks like to have a clean heart.

Engage

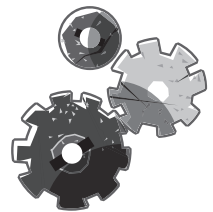
Doing something half-hearted means that you don’t give it your full effort. What usually happens when we do something half-heartedly? It won’t be as good as it can be, and it might fail completely! Following Jesus is so important that you need to do it with your whole heart.

Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:8 with the students (p. 951, Live).

I Can Know It’s True

1. We must each strive to have a clean heart. God desires that we love Him with *all* of us—heart, mind, and soul! He wants 100 percent of your heart to be turned toward Him. So what happens when you turn just a portion of your heart to something else? When your heart is not turned 100 percent toward God, it is not pure as He desires. In order to be blessed by God, we all need to



Pure Heart and Peace

examine our hearts daily to see if there is anything pulling us away from Him. Read about keeping your heart fully devoted to God in Psalm 86:11 (p. 582, *Live*); James 1:8 (p. 1228, *Live*); Luke 16:13 (p. 1032, *Live*); and 1 John 2:15 (p. 1249, *Live*).

2. We must strive to have clean actions. The Pharisees, the religious leaders in Jesus' day, were known for strictly following God's laws. The Pharisees thought they were doing "good" by not straying from the laws. Jesus saw their good works and called them hypocrites. Why would Jesus discourage the good works of these men? The answer is in one of our Beatitudes this week: The Pharisees' hearts were not pure. Their hearts were focused on themselves and getting the praise of men instead of trying to honor God. God desires that we have clean actions based on pure hearts. Read the story of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:25–28 (p. 974, *Live*).
3. We must strive to live in peace. Every day we encounter people who want or think different things than we do. For example, your brother may want to watch a different television show than you do. Your parents want you to clean your room instead of playing video games. A classmate might cut in front of you in line or cheat at a game during recess. It is human nature to fight and argue with others to win an argument. Is fighting with others in line with God's Word? God says we will be blessed if we put away our own pride and work for peace. Read more about working for peace in Romans 14:19 (p. 1123, *Live*); Hebrews 12:14 (p. 1224, *Live*); and Ephesians 4:3 (p. 1167, *Live*).

Relate

Have you ever encountered a person with a bad temper, someone who "blows up" when things do not go his or her way? If we allow anger to get the best of us, we can explode too. Remember, God wants us to be peacemakers. Today, we are going to make a "baggie bomb" that will remind us what NOT to do.

Give each student a quart-size resealable freezer bag. Pour a half cup of water and a quarter cup of vinegar into the bag. Next place two rounded tablespoons of baking soda in the center of a paper towel. Wrap the paper towel around the baking soda as if you were wrapping a present, making it nice and flat. Have students grab their bags and paper towels and head outside to set off the bombs.

Carefully place the paper towel in the bag without letting it touch the liquid. You can do this by pinching the paper towel from the outside of the bag. Seal the bag tightly, still being careful not to allow contact between the paper towel and liquid.

On the count of three, we are going to drop our paper towel into the liquid and shake up the bag. After shaking up the bag, put it on the ground and watch it explode! One, two, three!

Remember, even if others explode with anger toward us, we need to keep calm and try to bring peace to the situation.

Question

What does 1 Samuel 16:7 (p. 284, *Live*) tell us about how God sees us?

He doesn't judge us by what we look like but what is in our hearts.



What are some things we can do to be pure in heart?

Examples: pray, read God's Word, ask for forgiveness of sin

Read Psalm 119:9 (p. 600, *Live*).

Give students a couple minutes to find and read the verse.

What are some examples of doing good works without having a pure heart?

Examples: going to church to please your parents, serving someone to get recognition, giving money in offering to show how much you have

Why do you think it is important to God that our hearts match our actions?

If our hearts do not match our actions, then we are lying.

Read the following Scriptures on having a pure heart: Ezekiel 36:26 (p. 838, *Live*); Psalm 24:3–4 (p. 545, *Live*); 51:2 (p. 561, *Live*); and 2 Timothy 2:22 (p. 1201, *Live*).

Give students a couple minutes to find and read the verses. Or assign the verses to a few students to read aloud.

Why is it important for us to have pure hearts?

We will not carry around guilt; we will do what God wants us to do.

What does James 3:18 (p. 1231, *Live*) say we will get if we plant peace?

A harvest of righteousness

Read Romans 12:18 (p. 1122, *Live*).

Give students a couple minutes to find and read the verse.

What situations do you face every day that you can bring peace to?

Pure Heart and Peace

Examples: arguing with parents, friends fighting, playing sports at recess

How would your life be different if you began to work for peace in everything you do?

*Examples: Life would be a lot less stressful. I would be a lot nicer to everyone.
I would obey my parents. I would have more friends.*

Read 1 Samuel 25:1–35. Abigail's story is a wonderful example of a woman doing all she can to live in peace with everyone (pp. 293–294, *Live*).

What are some things Abigail did to bring peace to her situation?

She gave gifts to David, apologized for her and her husband's mistakes, humbled herself to David, and asked for mercy.



Prayer

For prayer time today, we are going to recite two prayers found in Scripture. The first prayer is found in Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me" (p. 561, *Live*). Let's bow our heads. Repeat each phrase after me.

Lead the students in prayer saying aloud a few words of the verse at a time. Have the students repeat each phrase after you.

Our next prayer is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:16: "Now may the Lord of peace himself give [us] his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with [us] all" (p. 1191, *Live*). Let's bow our heads and pray this prayer.

Remember to pause every few words to allow students to repeat.

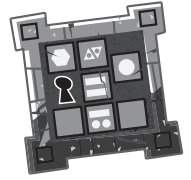
Unwind

Before class, make a matching game using the first seven Beatitudes. Make the game by writing the first part of the verse on one piece of paper and the second part of the verse on another piece of paper. For example, a match could say "God blesses those who mourn" on one page and "for they will be comforted" on the other page. Tape the papers facedown and upside-down on a wall. (It works best if you only tape the top of the paper to the wall. Using this method, students will be able to flip up the papers to reveal what they say without taking them down.)

Divide the students into two teams. The teams will compete to find the most matches. If a team finds a match, that team will get another turn. If they do not find a match, it is the other team's turn to choose two cards.

Challenge

This week your challenge is to focus on working for peace. At the end of each day, write about anytime you experienced anger or fighting. Brainstorm ways you could have brought peace to that situation. Ask God to help you become a planter of peace.



Explore

Matthew 5:8–9 says, “God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God” (p. 951, *Live*).

Read this passage every morning when you wake up. Once you have these two verses memorized, work on saying all the Beatitudes you have learned so far.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



6. Persecution

Followers of Jesus are blessed when they are persecuted.

Main Points

Persecution occurs when people are hurt because of a specific belief.

We will be persecuted because we believe in Jesus.

We should be happy when we are persecuted.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 5:10; 1 Peter 2:21–23; and Luke 6:22–23.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, story of a persecuted Christian, balloons, wooden skewers, vegetable oil, permanent marker, old rag, two toy guns that shoot foam darts or balls, tape, and papers with the references of each beatitude written on them

ask

Connect

Were you able to be a peacemaker during this past week? Would someone share a time when you were able to bring peace to a situation?

Be ready to share a moment from your week when you were a peacemaker.

Who can say last week's memory verse, Matthew 5:9 (p. 951, *Live*)?

"God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God."

Can anyone say the first three Beatitudes, Matthew 5:3–5 (p. 951, *Live*)?

Give one or two students the opportunity to quote these verses.

Can someone say the next three Beatitudes, Matthew 5:6–8 (p. 951, *Live*)?

Give one or two students the opportunity to quote these verses.

Let's all practice saying all the Beatitudes we have learned so far.

Say the Beatitudes as many times as you need for everyone to memorize them.

Warm Up

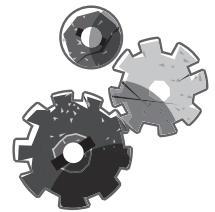
Read the students a story of someone who was persecuted for being faithful to Christ. You can find several of these stories by visiting www.jesusfreaks.net. Ask the students the following questions to get them talking about the story.

- What happened in this story?
- Why did the people hurt the Christian(s) in this story?
- Was it fair to treat the Christian(s) this way?
- Why did God allow persecution to happen to the Christian(s)?

Today our last beatitude teaches us about being persecuted for Christ. We may be surprised at what God has to say about being persecuted for our faith.

Engage

In many parts of the world, people who follow Jesus are in danger of being mistreated, injured, and even martyred (put to death for their beliefs). Jesus said that mistreatment is always a possibility for those who follow Him. But we don't have to be afraid; instead we can be joyful that we have the privilege to live for Jesus.



Check It Out

Read Matthew 5:10 with the students (p. 951, Live).



I Can Know It's True

1. Persecution occurs when someone is hurt because of a specific belief. One form of persecution is physical pain. People have been beaten, tortured, and even killed for what they believed. They have also endured emotional persecution. They have been mocked, made fun of, or lied about for trusting in Jesus. Read about the different types of persecution in Psalm 35:11 (p. 550, *Live*); 2 Corinthians 11:24–25 (pp. 1151–1152, *Live*); Matthew 26:59–60 (pp. 979–980, *Live*); Acts 6:13 (p. 1080, *Live*); and Jeremiah 20:2 (p. 755, *Live*).
2. We will be persecuted because we believe in Jesus. The Bible is full of people who were persecuted because of their faith in God. The Israelite nation was persecuted by evil kings. Prophets of God were persecuted by those worshiping idols. John the Baptist was arrested and beheaded. Jesus' disciples were beaten, stoned, arrested, and killed. Jesus himself was even persecuted and crucified. Just like those before us, we may be persecuted when we decide to follow Jesus. Read about being persecuted as a follower of God in 2 Timothy 3:12 (p. 1203, *Live*); John 15:20 (p. 1065, *Live*); Jeremiah 20:10 (p. 756, *Live*); Daniel 6:12–16 (pp. 861–862, *Live*); 1 Kings 19:1–3 (p. 353, *Live*); and Nehemiah 4:1–4 (p. 477, *Live*).
3. We should be happy when we are persecuted. Read Matthew 5:11–12 (p. 951, *Live*). Jesus told us to be happy about being persecuted. How can anyone be happy to endure pain? Our natural reaction might be to get angry and try to get even. God wants us to react the same way Jesus did. Jesus prayed for His



Persecution

persecutors and forgave them. When we follow in Jesus' footsteps, we will receive great rewards in heaven. That is something to be joyful about! Read about rejoicing during persecution in 1 Peter 3:14 (p. 1236, *Live*); 4:14–16 (p. 1239, *Live*); John 15:18–22 (p. 1065, *Live*); and Acts 5:41 (p. 1079, *Live*).

Relate

Bring out the balloons, wooden skewers, and vegetable oil. Give each student a balloon. Instruct them to blow up their balloon half-way and tie it. Have the students draw a smiley face with permanent marker on their balloons. Next coat the wooden skewers with the oil. (The best way to coat the skewer is to pour oil on a rag and then rub it on the skewer.)

It is easy to be happy and joyful when we are not being persecuted. But God tells us that we will be persecuted if we believe in Jesus. When persecution comes, it will be painful! It may not hurt us physically, but it might hurt our feelings. Watch what happens to my balloon when it is persecuted.

Make sure the skewer is coated with oil and slowly begin to shove the skewer through the thickest part of the balloon on top. Use a twisting motion to get the skewer to go through the balloon. The balloon will not pop!

Even during persecution, our balloon stayed happy! Remember that when we are persecuted, God will reward us in heaven.

Give each student a chance to persecute their balloon. As a side note: If you are careful enough, you can shove the skewer all the way through the thick part on other end of the balloon. The balloon will slowly deflate after you remove the skewer.



Question

According to Romans 12:14 (p. 1122, *Live*), what are we supposed to do to those who persecute us?

Bless and pray for them

What are some practical ways to bless someone who persecutes you?

Examples: pray for them, show kindness by helping them, say good things about them, compliment them

What are some types of persecution you might face today as a follower of Christ?

Examples: being made fun of, not allowed to read Bible in school, talked badly about because you won't do wrong things, and left out of some friendship circles

How does it make you feel knowing that you will be persecuted if you follow Christ?

Allow the students to be honest about their feelings. Be honest yourself.

Have you already faced persecution because of your faith?

Share a time when you were persecuted for your faith.

Divide the class into five groups. Have each group pick one of the following passages to read as a group and report how that person was persecuted.

- Genesis 4:3–8 (p. 7, *Live*)—Abel was killed by his brother.
- Daniel 3 (pp. 856–857, *Live*)—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace.
- Acts 4:1–3 (p. 1077, *Live*)—Peter and John were arrested.
- Acts 7:54–59 (pp. 1081–1082, *Live*)—Stephen was stoned to death.
- John 19:1–3, 16–19 (p. 1069, *Live*)—Jesus was mocked, beaten, and crucified.

Prayer

When we are persecuted, Luke 6:22–23 (p. 1016, *Live*) tells us to leap for joy! We are going to practice giving praise to God and leaping for joy. We are all going to get into a squatting position. If we stay in this position for a long time it will start to hurt. If it starts to hurt, don't stop. The pain will help remind you of the pain that happens during persecution. I am going to give God praise for something. After I say a praise, I want all of us to jump as high as we can and make a joyful noise. This can be a "Woo Hoo!" or a "Yay!" or anything else. Let's pray!



Get all the students to squat down with you. After each praise, jump up and make a joyful noise with the students.

- Thank you God for giving us a beautiful earth! *Leap for joy!*
- Thank you God for making each one of us! *Leap for joy!*
- Thank you God for providing for us! *Leap for joy!*
- Thank you God for the times people hurt us because of you! *Leap for joy!*
- Thank you God for our rewards in heaven! *Leap for joy!*
- Thank you God for salvation through Jesus our Lord! *Leap for joy!*
- Amen! *One last leap for joy!*

Unwind

Write the reference of all the Beatitudes on separate pieces of paper. Hang these papers in random places on one wall. Divide the students into two teams and line them up ten to fifteen steps away from the wall. Hand the first person on each team one of the toy dart guns.

Persecution

I am going to quote one of the Beatitudes. Your task is to figure out which reference on the wall matches that verse. The first person to shoot the reference on the wall with a dart receives one point. If you shoot the wrong reference, you lose a point. Ready?

Quote the Beatitudes in random order several times. Keep track of which team scores the most points.



Challenge

There are many Christians who are being persecuted physically because of their beliefs. Your challenge this week is to do research on Christians who are being persecuted around the world. A good place to look is www.christianfreedom.org and www.wesleyan.org/gp.

Write down anything you find interesting.

Explore

Memorize Matthew 5:10, which says, "God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs" (p. 951, *Live*).

Write down Matthew 5:3–10 (p. 951, *Live*). Writing these verses out will help you memorize them. Read these verses every day this week. Be prepared to quote the entire passage next week.

help

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

Beatitudes Video Celebration

Memorizing a large passage of the Bible is a significant accomplishment in a preteen's life. It is important to make a meaningful celebration that will encourage the preteens to continue memorizing God's Word. The following pages provide an outline of preparation for this celebration, a sample celebration, and ideas on making the day memorable.

For this celebration service, your students will be putting together a Beatitudes video. This video will be presented to the church before you hand out certificates congratulating the students on memorizing Matthew 5:3–10.

Preparation for the Celebration

1. Meet with the pastor to set a date and time to present the video and certificates. Suggested times could be during Sunday morning service, the Sunday school hour, or Sunday night service.
2. Meet with the students to create the Beatitudes video.
 - a. Begin by brainstorming what you would like to do on your video.
Examples: You could turn the Beatitudes into a song or a rap, or you could have students act out each verse as one student quotes the passage. Come up with as many creative ways you think you could present the Beatitudes in a video. During the brainstorming time, encourage the students to allow their imaginations to run wild. Don't work out details right now; that will come later.
 - b. The next step is to decide which idea you want to use. Give the students the opportunity to talk about which idea they like best. Eliminate the ones that would be impossible to do first. Finally, take a vote on the idea you are going to do. Remind the students that it is OK if their idea is not picked. This is not a competition to see who is better. Remember, "God blesses those who are humble" (Matt. 5:5).
 - c. Begin writing the script. Allow each student to take part in creating the video. Gather materials needed to create your video. Assign rolls and practice a few times before taping. Remember to be encouraging to the students.
 - d. If possible, have a student or someone in your church edit the video to play during the presentation service.

Beattitudes Video Celebration

3. Instruct the students that they will be saying Matthew 5:3–10 from memory for the presentation service. If there are too many students to say the passage individually, choose one or two students to represent the class, or have the class say the verses in unison.
4. Give the students the information on when the service will take place. Remind them to be there early to practice the Beatitudes before the service.
5. Create a certificate for each student to give them during the service (like the one in the back of the student book).
6. Promote the promotion service to the congregation.

The Celebration

1. Before students arrive, make sure the video will play on your church's system.
2. When students arrive, run through the Beatitudes a few times until the students are comfortable with the verses. Praise each student for his or her hard work and great accomplishment.
3. Encourage the students to sit together during the service. Begin the presentation portion of the service with the video the students created.
4. For the presentation say, "During the past six weeks, our students have been working on memorizing an entire passage of the Bible. Psalm 119:11–12 says, 'I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. I praise you, O LORD; teach me your decrees.' This is exactly what our students have done. Not only did they memorize Matthew 5:3–10, the Beatitudes, but they also studied each verse to understand what it means. They have accomplished something great. They have hidden God's Word in their hearts. Today we would like to recognize each student for this great accomplishment. First, the students will recite the Beatitudes, and then I will present their certificates. Please show each student your support and appreciation as they receive their certificates."
4. Recognize each student and present him or her with a certificate.

Following the Celebration

1. Congratulate each student for his or her wonderful accomplishment.
2. Challenge the students to keep memorizing sections of the Bible. Ask them what they are planning to memorize next. Record this and remember to periodically ask the students how they are doing.
3. Continue memorizing the Bible yourself. Share with the students what you are memorizing and how you are doing.

Leader Notes

Represent the Evidence for God

Leader's Guide

explore



In this book students will learn—

- Why bad things happen.
- What made hell necessary.
- How there is only one way to God.
- Why Jesus was raised from the dead.
- How you can know the Bible is true.

You are on an amazing journey of faith—let's Explore it together!

1. Bad Things

Bad things happen in this world as the result of sin.

Main Points

God made a perfect world.

The world became imperfect because of sin.

Bad things happen to everyone because of sin.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Genesis 1–2; 3:7; 14–24; and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, a picture of someone you admire, toilet paper, electric leaf blower, paint brush roller, butcher paper, markers, and papers numbered one to four

Connect

If you could ask God one question, what would it be?

Do you ever talk to your friends about God? Have your friends asked you any tough questions about God?

Do not discuss the answers to the questions at this time. Offer positive reinforcement when each student shares.

Were you able to answer their questions?

Remind students that sometimes we may not know the answer and that is OK.

What is your biggest fear when you are asked tough questions about your faith?

Examples: not knowing the answer, being wrong, offending the person or making them mad, being made to look stupid in front of friends

During the next six weeks, we will uncover answers to several tough questions that we or our friends may have about God. Knowing these answers will help us share our faith with others.

plan

ask

Bad Things

Warm Up

Bring in a picture of someone you admire for being a good person. Be ready to share about the person and something bad that has happened to them.

Think about someone you know who is a good person. Who are you thinking about?

Give students a few moments to answer who they are thinking about.

Has anything bad ever happened to that person?

The answer is usually “yes.” If they say “no,” it is probably because they do not know about the bad times in that person’s life.

I bet if you talked to that person, they could tell you about something bad that has happened to him or her. Let me tell you about my person.

Show the students the picture you brought and share the story with them.

Remember to repeat several times how good this person is (or was) but that bad things still happened to him or her anyway.



Engage

Sometimes it is hard to understand why there are so many bad things that happen in this world. It is especially hard to understand when bad things happen to us. It is important to know that God’s original plan was for only good things to happen. Evil entered the world because humans rebelled against God.

read

Check It Out

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Read Genesis 1:31 with the students (p. 4, Live).

ask

I Can Know It’s True

1. God made a perfect world. There was no pain, no death, no natural disasters, and no sin. God created Adam and Eve to take care of the earth and all the animals and to have a relationship with Him. He commanded them not to eat from a tree in the middle of the garden. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into this world. Read about the perfect world God created in Genesis 1–2 (pp. 4–5, *Live*) and Job 38:4–14 (p. 529, *Live*).
2. The world became imperfect because of sin. From that point on, we have seen hostility, hate, deceit, jealousy, fear, pain, and corruption. All of creation experienced the effects of sin. Read about sin and its corruption in Genesis 3:7 (p. 6, *Live*), 14–24 (pp. 6–7, *Live*); 6:11–13 (p. 8, *Live*); and Romans 8:22 (p. 1116, *Live*).

3. Bad things happen to everyone because of sin. We can face bad times as a result of our own sin, as a result of someone else's sin, or as a result of the earth being cursed. For instance, if you tell a lie, you might be grounded for a week. Being grounded is a result of your own sin. But what about the person whose mom dies from cancer or the classmate who lost her whole house in a fire? Did these bad things happen because someone in that family sinned? No, those things happened because the earth was cursed after Adam and Eve sinned. Everyone now has to face death and natural disasters on earth. In all these scenarios, sin is the reason the bad things happened, whether the people who were affected were "good" or not. Read about bad things happening as a result of sin in Genesis 4:8–13 (p. 7, *Live*); 1 Corinthians 15:56 (p. 1141, *Live*); and John 16:33 (p. 1066, *Live*).

Relate

Note: This will create a very large mess that will be easy for the students to clean up.

Hand each student a roll of toilet paper. Instruct them to hold the roll without unwinding the toilet paper. Bring out the electric leaf blower and paint brush roller.

We are going to make a mess today! Our goal is to cover this entire room with toilet paper.

Pick one student to go first. Show the student how to place the toilet paper roll on the paint brush roller. Unravel a few sheets of toilet paper before you begin.

Hold the handle on the paint brush holder tightly. Aim it where you would like the toilet paper to go. When you are ready, I am going to turn on the leaf blower and point it at your roll of toilet paper. It will blow the toilet paper all over the place. When your roll is gone, the next person will get a chance to cover a different portion of the room.

Blow the toilet paper all over the room. It may take a little bit of practice to get the perfect angle on the roll to shoot it high into the air. Remind students that the leaf blower is not a toy and should not be blown at anyone. Give everyone a chance to disperse of their toilet paper roll.

Note: If you do not have a leaf blower, the students can still cover the room with toilet paper the old fashioned way!

Look at this room! Everywhere I look, I see toilet paper! The same is true about our world and sin. Sin is everywhere and it affects everyone.

Now let's clean up.

Bad Things



Question

Read 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 (p. 1140, *Live*).

Do you think you would have disobeyed God in the garden? Why or why not?

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Remind students that every person has disobeyed God, so they would have sinned too.

What are some bad things that can happen as a result of your own sin?

Examples: fail a test from cheating, lose friends from gossiping about them, or get in trouble for punching your brother

What are some bad things that can happen as a result of someone else's sin?

Examples: hurt from parent's divorce, sadness over a murder, being abused

What can you do to help ease the pain of sin in other people's lives?

Examples: feed the hungry, pray for someone who is sick, visit people in the hospital, and help the elderly

Can you sum up the answer to the question: Why do bad things happen to good people?

Give students the chance to see how short they can make their answers.

Here is a simple acronym to remember our answer.

S—Sin

I—Ignores

N—Nobody

Write this acronym on the white board. Remind the students that bad things happen because of sin and the curse of sin affects everyone. Have students memorize the acronym and practice explaining the answer to a partner.



Prayer

Before class, number the classroom walls with the numbers one through four.

For our prayer time today, you are going to have a choice on what to pray for. I have numbered our walls and made a list of different things to pray for. After I read the list, go to the wall that matches your choice.

*Read list 1 and instruct the students to choose what they are going to pray for.
Repeat for lists 2 and 3. Give them one minute to pray silently for their choices.
If students would like, you can repeat the lists so they can pray for something else.*

List 1: a friend, your sibling, yourself, your parents

List 2: a missionary you know, your teacher, your pastor, your coach

List 3: your attitude at school, home, a friend's house, the sports field

Unwind

When God made the earth and everything in it, it was perfect. What would your perfect world look like?

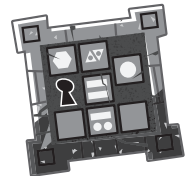
Allow students to pick a partner or two to work with. Give each team a large piece of butcher paper and some markers.

Each team will have ten minutes to create your own perfect world. You need to come up with a name, a drawing of what your world would look like, the different things you would find in your world, and any other kind of information you would like to add. Each team will present their world after ten minutes. Go!

*Allow students to have fun with this. If they want their world to be silly, that is fine.
Enjoy time laughing and talking about each other's world.*

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to observe the results of sin. List at least five effects of sin you notice this week. After you have created your list, pray that God will give you the wisdom to avoid sin and help others when they are hurt by sin.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Bad Things

Explore

Romans 8:22 says, “For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (p. 1116, *Live*).

Read this passage every day this week. Work on memorizing this verse as well as remembering the SIN acronym. This will help you be ready when someone asks you why bad things happen to good people.



For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

2. Hell

Hell is the punishment for sin and rejecting Jesus.

Main Points

God is holy.

God is just.

God is love.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Isaiah 6:3; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 6:23; and John 3:16.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, bag, candle, matches, hot pads, picture of a sad face crying, picture of Satan, fake worms, ping-pong ball, hair dryer, scrap paper, and trash can

Connect

Can someone share some results of sin you observed last week?

Give each student a chance to share one or two observations from the week.

Can someone share the acronym that helped us remember why bad things happen to good people?

S—*Sin*
I—*Ignores*
N—*Nobody*

Can someone explain the SIN acronym?

Sin has ruined the perfect world God created. The effects of sin are felt by everyone. Nobody is left out, whether you are good or not.

How does it make you feel when you see the effects of sin all around you?

plan

ask

Hell

Try to encourage students to say how they feel when they see different sins and their effects. Examples: sad when I see parents divorced, upset when I see a homeless person, or mad when I see someone cheat

Warm Up

Before class, place the following in a bag: candle, matches, hot pads, picture of a sad face crying, picture of Satan, and fake worms.

When you think of the place hell, what comes to your mind?

Allow students to talk about the different things they think of or picture when they think of hell. You might have to clarify that hell is not a bad word when you are talking about the actual place.

This is what I think of when I think of hell.

Bring out each item as you talk about what you picture. First, bring out the candle, matches, and hot pads. Light the candle.

The first thing I picture is fire and it being very hot.

Show the students the sad face.

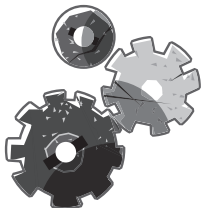
I also picture a lot of sadness, crying, and pain.

Bring out the picture of Satan.

Of course, I do not think of hell without thinking of Satan.

Finally, bring out the worms.

I also think of the Bible verses Mark 9:47–48, which talk about worms never dying there (p. 995, *Live*). Yuck!



Engage

People sometimes find it hard to understand why there has to be judgment and punishment in hell. The short answer is because of sin. The existence of hell actually shows that God is holy, just, and loving.

read

Check It Out

Why does there have to be judgment and punishment for sin?

*Read Romans 6:23 with the students (p. 1115, *Live*).*

I Can Know It's True



1. God is holy. To be holy means to be set apart or separate from evil. God has never done anything wrong or evil, and He never will. He is totally perfect. Because He is set apart from sin, God cannot allow sinful people to be in His presence in heaven. Our sins keep us from entering into the eternal presence of our Holy God. Read about the holiness of God in 1 John 1:5 (p. 1248, *Live*); Habakkuk 1:13 (p. 918, *Live*); Psalm 145:17 (p. 613, *Live*); 1 Samuel 2:2 (p. 271, *Live*); and Revelation 21:27 (p. 1281, *Live*).
2. God is just. When we do something wrong, we deserve to be punished. For example, if someone keeps kicking you at school, she deserves to get in trouble. Or if your brother lies about you, he deserves to be punished. When we sin and disobey, we deserve to be punished. God always judges sin; it would be wrong of Him not to. That is what being just is all about. The Bible says that the punishment for sin is death and separation from God in hell. It is our own sins that make hell necessary. Read about the punishment for sin in Romans 6:23 (p. 1115, *Live*); Matthew 25:46 (p. 978, *Live*); 1 John 1:8, 10 (p. 1248, *Live*); Revelation 20:12, 15 (p. 1280, *Live*); and Psalm 92:7 (p. 586, *Live*).
3. God is love. God did not create hell for us; He made it for Satan and his demons. God does not want anyone to be separated from Him. In fact, God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross and take the punishment for our sins. If we believe in Jesus, God will wipe away our sins, making it possible to be in His presence forever. Because of God's love and sacrifice, we do not have to pay the penalty for our sins! Read about God's love in 2 Peter 3:9 (p. 1244, *Live*); 1 John 1:9 (p. 1248, *Live*); John 3:16 (p. 1049, *Live*); Romans 2:3–5 (pp. 1110–1111, *Live*); and 10:9–10 (p. 1120, *Live*).

Relate

Hand each student a ping-pong ball. Plug in the hair dryer and have the students line up beside the hair dryer.

If we put the ping pong balls into the path of air of this hairdryer, they will not fall. This simple activity reminds us that if we believe in Jesus, we will not fall and perish.

Turn on the hairdryer and carefully place the ball in the middle of the airflow. The ball will float in mid-air. Give each student a chance to place a ball in the air.

Question

What does 2 Peter 3:9 (p. 1244, *Live*) tell us about God?

He does not want people to be punished. He wants everyone to repent of their sins and receive His forgiveness and grace.



Read Matthew 25:41 (p. 977, *Live*).

Hell

Who does Jesus tell us hell was originally prepared for?

The devil and his demons

How does it make you feel knowing that God did not create hell for mankind but for Satan and his demons?

Read Isaiah 6:3 (p. 671, *Live*).

What does it mean for God to be holy?

He is perfect and separated from sin.

Why would God give up His only Son for us?

He loves us and wants to have a relationship with us.

If you were God, would you have given up your son to take the punishment for everyone's sins? Why or why not?

Remind the students how hard it would be to give up their child.

Why do you think everyone does not choose to believe in Jesus and go to heaven?

Examples: They don't think they need God. They've been hurt by a Christian. They like sin too much. They believe the lies of Satan and worship a false god.

What stops you from telling people about Jesus so they have the chance to go heaven?

Examples: I'm scared. I don't know how. I don't want to offend someone. I don't want to get made fun of.

Write a poem to answer the question: Why is hell necessary?

Divide students into groups of three. Instruct them to write a creative poem to memorize the answer to the question.

After five minutes, have students share their poems with the rest of the class. If students are really creative, you can have them turn their poem into a rap.

Record your poem in your book so you can remember it for next week.



Prayer

God does not want anyone to perish in hell. He has paid for all of our sins and all we have to do is believe in Jesus. Today, I would like us to pray for those who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Think of one person who does not know Jesus. Once you have thought of that person, raise your hand. We are going to write their first name on the white board so we can all pray for that person.

Give students time to think of someone to pray for. Write the names on a white board. Remind students that this is not time to gossip or talk badly about someone.

I would like each of us to choose one person on this list to pray for. Choose a name other than the one you put on the list. Pray that your person will accept Jesus.

Divide the names and allow each student to pray out loud for their person.

Unwind

We learned today that God is a perfect God. Today we are going to play a game in which we will try to be perfect.

Hand each student five pieces of scrap paper. Instruct them to wad up the paper to make five paper balls. Place a trash can on one side of the room and line up the students about fifteen feet away from the basket.

Each of you will get a chance to shoot all five of your paper balls into the basket. I have a prize for whoever wins. However, the only way to win is to be perfect. You must make all five shots to win.

Give them all a chance to shoot their papers. Do not give out the prize unless someone makes all their shots. If there is time, you can allow them to shoot again a few feet closer.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to pray for the person you chose during the prayer time. Write down his or her name in the space provided in your books. Pray for that person every night before you go to bed and in the morning when you wake up.



Explore

Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent" (p. 1244, *Live*).

Read this verse every night this week. Remember that God wants everyone to repent and no one to be separated from Him.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



3. The Way

Jesus is the only way to God.

Main Points

All religions cannot be right.

Jesus claims He is the right way.

Jesus invites everyone to believe in Him.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read 1 Kings 8:60; John 14:6; Galatians 1:6–7; and Matthew 7:13–14.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, road map, glass drinking bottle with a large mouth, peeled hard-boiled egg, matches, paper, markers, and random items from around the room

ask

Connect

Were you able to pray for the person you chose from last week?

How did it affect you by praying for the same person all week?

Usually after praying for someone specific all week, you begin to care about that person more and think of ways to show God's love.

Can someone answer last week's question: Why would God send someone to hell?

God is holy. God is just. God is love.

Would someone share the poem they wrote last week?

Give students time to share their poems. Give affirmation to those who have their poem memorized.

Warm Up

Bring out a road map to show the students. Point to a place on the map.

If I wanted to get to this place, what roads could I take to get there?

Help students read the map and come up with several different routes to get to your destination.

A lot of people try to compare different religions to a road map. They say that it does not matter what you believe or which road you take; all paths lead to the same destination.

Do you think they are right? Does it matter what you believe? Will we all end up in heaven some day?

Engage

Sometimes it might feel harsh to come right out and say that non-Christian religions are false. But the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is the only way. So the most loving thing to do is to persuade others that their religion is leading them on the wrong pathway.

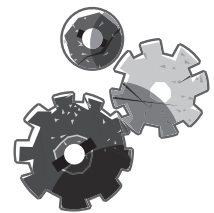
Check It Out

Aren't all religions the same?

Read John 14:6 with the students (p. 1063, Live).

I Can Know It's True

1. All religions cannot be right. The different religions may look somewhat similar, but they are very different. Hindus believe in many gods and reincarnation (being reborn in a different body). Muslims believe you have to earn salvation by strictly following the laws in the Quran (their sacred writings). Buddhists don't really believe in any god, but in finding a state of mind called Nirvana (no cares, pain, or reality). Atheists believe there is no God. We can see that each of these religions conflicts with the others and ends in a different place. For example, a person cannot believe in many gods and no god at the same time. Since all religions cannot be right, there can be only one that is right. Read about different false religions in Judges 10:6 (p. 249, *Live*); 1 Samuel 12:21 (p. 280, *Live*); 1 Kings 18:18–39 (pp. 352–353, *Live*); Jeremiah 10:15–16 (p. 746, *Live*); Matthew 24:24 (p. 975, *Live*); and Acts 17:22–23 (p. 1095, *Live*).
2. Jesus claims He is the right way. In 1 Kings 8:60, God says He is the only God. Every other god or idol is false and should not be served. Not only does the Bible say there is only one true God, Jesus says He is the *only* path to the true God. Jesus leaves no room for other religions to be right. Read about the one true God and Jesus as the only way in Psalm 81:9 (p. 580, *Live*); John 10:9 (p. 1058, *Live*); 14:6 (p. 1063, *Live*); and Acts 4:12 (p. 1077, *Live*).
3. Jesus invites everyone to believe in Him. Some people say it is narrow-minded to believe Jesus is the only way, but God invites everyone, regardless of their



The Way

skin color, gender, or past beliefs. He does not require us to be good before we believe in Him or perform certain rituals. He does not want us to earn, pay, or fight our way to heaven. He simply wants us to accept His Son who died on the cross for our sins. Read about believing in Jesus in Romans 3:25 (p. 1113, *Live*); John 3:16 (p. 1049, *Live*); Ephesians 2:8–9 (p. 1164, *Live*); and Matthew 10:32–33 (p. 958, *Live*).

Relate

There is only one God and one way to God that is right; that way is through Jesus.

Bring out a glass drinking bottle with a large mouth and a peeled hard-boiled egg. The egg should be slightly larger than the mouth of the bottle.

How do you think we can get this egg into the bottle without breaking the egg?

Give students some time to guess how to get the egg into the bottle.

The only way to get this egg into the bottle is by using fire. Are you ready?

Bring out the box of matches and pull out three matches. Holding all three matches together, strike the box and light the matches. Drop the matches into the bottle and quickly place the egg in the opening of the bottle. The matches will burn out and slowly pull the egg into the bottle.

Just as there was only one way to get the egg into the bottle, there is only one way for us to get to heaven. Jesus is the only way, and all other beliefs are false.

If you have time and enough eggs, allow the students to do the experiment. Be sure that you are the one to light the matches and place them in the bottle. The students can place the egg on top. Note: The only way to get the egg out of the bottle is to cut it up and pour it out.



Question

What are some different beliefs you encounter at school that do not line up with Jesus' teachings?

Students come in contact with many different beliefs. A common belief is atheism—the belief that God does not exist.

Why do you think some people believe that all religions are the same?

Examples: They don't want to leave people out. They are called judgmental if they say Jesus is the only way.

In the Old Testament, there were some popular false gods of that time. Read 2 Kings 21:2–3 (p. 384, *Live*).

What are some popular false teachings of our time?

Examples: We can do good works and make it to heaven. It doesn't matter what we believe as long as we include everyone. Just think positive thoughts and everything will be OK. Humans evolved and were not created.

What does Matthew 7:13–14 (p. 954, *Live*) teach us about who will believe in Jesus?

There will be many people who will choose not to follow Jesus.

How can we avoid being fooled like those in Galatians 1:6–7 (p. 1156, *Live*)?

Compare what we hear to the Bible to see if it is true, memorize Scripture, or ask a trusted pastor or Sunday school teacher about different beliefs.

How would you answer the question: Aren't all religions the same?

This is the chance for students to internalize the lesson and put it into their own words.

Hand each student a piece of paper and some markers.

I would like each of you to draw a picture that will help remind you of the answer to today's question. You will have five minutes to complete your drawing. When everyone is finished, we will have the opportunity to share our drawings with each other.

Prayer

For our prayer time today, each of us will have a chance to pray out loud. However, each prayer must only be one sentence long. Our one-sentence prayer will remind us that there is only one God and one way to Him—through Jesus. So take a few minutes and carefully choose what words you are going to pray to God. Let's pray.



Give each student the chance to pray a one-sentence prayer. End the time with your own one-sentence prayer.

Unwind

Before class gather a bunch of random items.

There are many differences in what people believe. Sometimes it is hard to see the differences in what others believe and sometimes it is easy. We are going to play a game called "What's the Difference?"

The Way

Divide students into teams of three or four people. Have each team designate a writer and give that person a piece of paper and pencil.

I am going to hold up two objects. As a team, you will have one minute to write down as many differences between the two objects as you can. The team with the most differences wins.

Ready? Remember to tell your writer the differences quietly so the other teams cannot hear you.

Hold up two items. They can be very close to being the same, like two different types of apples or a pencil and pen. Or they can be very different, like a key and a phone. Play as many rounds as time allows.



Challenge

This week your challenge is to read through three passages in the book of John. Highlight anything that stands out to you. Write down any questions you have about these passages in your student books.

- John 3:1–21 (pp. 1048–1049, *Live*)
- John 8:12–20 (p. 1055, *Live*)
- John 11:1–42 (pp. 1059–1060, *Live*)

Explore

Romans 3:22 says, “We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are” (p. 1113, *Live*).

Ask your parent’s permission to write this verse on your bathroom mirror with dry erase markers (they come off with window cleaner). Read this verse every time you look in the mirror and try to have it memorized by next week.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.

help

4. Resurrection

Jesus died, was buried, and came back to life.

Main Points

The evidence in Scripture shows that Jesus really did die on the cross.

Jesus' body was missing from the tomb.

Jesus was—and is—alive.

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Matthew 27:26–54, 57–61; 28:1–15; and 1 Corinthians 15:3–6.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, Easter bunny or an Easter basket, candle and matches, a prayer cube (see "Prayer" section below), marbles, and paper cup

Connect

Did anything stand out to you from last week's challenge?

Give students time to share one or two highlights from their reading.

What are some questions you had about the Scriptures you read for the challenge?

Try to help them understand anything they had questions about. If you do not know the answer, don't be afraid to tell them that. If you do not know the answer, find out from the pastor or other Bible teacher and pass on the answer to the student who asked.

Who can quote Romans 3:22 (p. 1113, *Live*)?

"We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are."

How would you answer last week's question: Aren't all religions the same?

Remind students that there can only be one right way, and Jesus is that way. He invites everyone to have a relationship with Him.

plan

ask

Resurrection

Warm Up

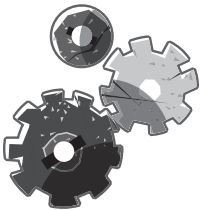
Bring an Easter bunny or an Easter basket to class. Hold up your object and show it to the students.

What does this remind you of?

We know Easter is not about bunnies and baskets. What is Easter about?

Jesus dying on the cross and coming back to life

There are some people who put the story of Jesus in the same category as the Easter bunny. They say just as the Easter bunny is made up, so is the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. Are those people right? Did Jesus really die on the cross and come back to life?



Engage

The resurrection was the most significant event in all of human history. It showed that Jesus really was who He claimed to be, and it was the beginning of God's new creation. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then we could not follow and serve Him today.

read

Check It Out

Did Jesus really die and come back to life?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:16–19 with the students (p. 1140, Live).

say

I Can Know It's True

1. The evidence in the Bible shows that Jesus really did die on the cross. Jesus was severely beaten. He was flogged with a lead-tipped whip and had a crown of thorns stuck on His head. He lost so much blood carrying the cross that He could not finish taking it to the place where he would be hung on it. He was nailed to the cross through His hands and feet. After the soldiers decided He was dead, they drove a spear through His side. The Bible says water and blood came out when He was stabbed. Read about Jesus dying in Matthew 27:26–54 (pp. 981–982, *Live*); John 19:28–36 (pp. 1069–1070, *Live*); and Mark 15:15–39 (pp. 1004–1005, *Live*).
2. Jesus' body was missing from the tomb. After Jesus died, he was buried in a tomb with a large, heavy stone rolled in front of the entrance. The tomb had guards in front of it to make sure no one could steal Jesus' body. Some women and a few of Jesus' disciples came to the tomb and found the heavy stone rolled away from the entrance. They were surprised to see that the tomb was empty! The guards also saw this and went to tell the priests what

had happened. Today we might hear people say that this never happened. If the disciples were just making up the whole story, the Jews and Romans could have easily gone back to the tomb and said, “Look, Jesus’ body is right here. Stop telling lies!” The only problem was the Jews and Romans could not find Jesus’ body either. There is no doubt the tomb was empty! Read about Jesus being buried and the tomb being empty in John 19:38—20:10 (pp. 1070–1071, *Live*); Luke 23:50—24:12 (pp. 1042–1043, *Live*); Matthew 27:57–61 (p. 982, *Live*); and 28:1–7 (p. 982, *Live*).

3. Jesus was—and still is—alive. There were two different accounts circulating of what happened to His body. The Jewish religious leaders said Jesus’ body was stolen, and the disciples said He was alive. The disciples were so sure that Jesus was alive that they were willing to die for the truth. In addition to the disciples seeing Jesus, there were over five hundred other witnesses who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. Jesus truly came back to life. Read about Jesus’ resurrection in Matthew 28:8–15 (p. 982, *Live*); Luke 24:13–43 (pp. 1041–1042, *Live*); Romans 8:34 (p. 1117, *Live*); Acts 1:3 (p. 1074, *Live*); and John 20:11–29 (p. 1071, *Live*).

Relate

Bring out the candle and matches. Light the candle and place it in the middle of the table.

Jesus is the Light of the World. When the religious leaders saw Jesus die, they were sure they had defeated Jesus and put out the “light.” But Jesus did not stay dead. Watch what happens to this light.

Light another match using the flame from the candle. Blow out the candle and quickly place the lit match in the stream of the smoke from the candle. The candle will relight without touching the match to the wick.

Wow! The light was not gone forever. It came back—just as Jesus came back to life.

Question

Read Romans 15:14 and 20 (p. 1124, *Live*).

How important is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?

It is very important. We cannot be saved without Jesus dying and coming back to life. Like Paul said, our faith would be useless.

According to 1 Corinthians 15:3–6 (p. 1140, *Live*), how many people saw Jesus alive after He died?

Over 512 (the twelve disciples and the other five hundred followers)



Resurrection

Read Matthew 28:12 (p. 982, *Live*).

Why do you think the Jewish leaders made up a lie like this?

Examples: They didn't want people believing in Jesus. They wanted the people to follow them and not Jesus. They didn't want to admit they were wrong.

Why do you think people today try to discredit Jesus' resurrection?

Examples: They don't want to believe in Jesus. They want to live their own ways and not God's ways, so they have to say He is fake. They want to be accepted by others who don't believe in Jesus.

Why do people find it hard to believe in Jesus' resurrection?

Examples: They haven't personally seen Jesus alive. Coming back to life is very unusual, so they don't believe it's possible. Many people have lied about Jesus and others believe those lies.

Would it be easier for you to believe if you saw Him alive? Why or why not?

There is no right or wrong answer. Encourage students to talk about why they believe in Jesus' resurrection.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (p. 1187, *Live*).

What kind of hope does Jesus' resurrection give us?

We will have life with Jesus when He returns.

How would you answer today's question: Did Jesus really die and come back to life?

Give students time to give the answer in their own words.

As a class, make up hand motions to 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: "Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said" (p. 1140, *Live*). This passage summarizes the answer to our question perfectly.

Give students a few minutes to come up with hand motions, then say and "sign" the passage a few times to help memorize it.



Prayer

Before class, make a prayer cube out of thick paper. On each side, write a reason to praise God. Or you can use a pair of dice and assign a different praise to each

number: (1) dying for our sins; (2) coming back to life; (3) giving us the Bible; (4) never leaving us; (5) preparing a place for us in heaven; (6) free choice—pray for anything you want.

We are going to pray as a class today. On each side of this prayer cube, there is a reason to give praise to God. You will get to roll this prayer cube and whatever you roll is what you will give God praise for.

Unwind

Give each student a marble and place a paper cup on the floor somewhere in the room. Mark a starting line on the other side of the room.

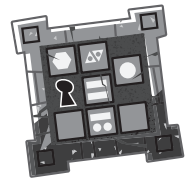
These marbles represent the large stone that was rolled away from Jesus' tomb. You are going to get a chance to roll your own stone away. Let's take turns rolling your marble toward the cup. Leave your marble wherever it stops. That will be your starting place on your next turn. The person who hits the cup in the fewest rolls wins!

Give the winner the chance to place the cup in another part of the room and play again.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to read the story of Jesus' death and resurrection from two out of the four gospels. Choose which two passages you would like to read. Underline or highlight the parts that stand out to you as you read. Jesus' death and resurrection is found in:

- Matthew 27:11—28:15 (pp. 981–982, *Live*)
- Mark 14:53—16:8 (pp. 1003–1005, *Live*)
- Luke 23:1—24:12 (pp. 1041–1043, *Live*)
- John 18:28—20:18 (pp. 1068–1071, *Live*)



Explore

First Corinthians 15:3–4 says, "Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said" (p. 1140, *Live*).

Memorize this passage throughout the coming week. As you memorize, give Jesus praise for dying for your sins and coming back to life.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



5. The Truth

The Bible is true.

Main Points

The Bible is God's word.

The fulfillment of prophecy proves the Bible is true.

Archeology proves the Bible is true.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read 2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; and Psalm 19:7–9.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, children's fiction picture book, different solids and liquids to dissolve, water, paper cups, a blender, paper, and pencils.

ask

Connect

Can someone quote 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (p. 1140, *Live*), the memory verse from last week?

"Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said."

Out of the two passages you chose to read last week, which was your favorite?

Give students a chance to discuss what they underlined or liked from the reading.

How would you answer this question: Did Jesus really die and come back to life?

Yes, it would be impossible to fake His death; the tomb was empty, and there were over five hundred witnesses who saw Jesus alive.

Warm Up

Bring one of your favorite children's fiction picture books to class.

I want to begin by reading one of my favorite childhood stories.

Read the story to the students.

What's the difference between this book and the Bible?

Allow students some time to give their opinions on the differences.

Engage

Some people do not believe the Bible is true. They view it as a collection of nice stories or fairy tales that did not really happen. But you can be confident that the Bible is God's true word.

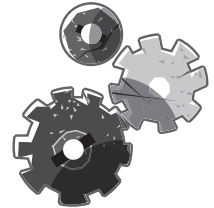
Check It Out

Is the Bible true?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 with the students (p. 1203, Live).

I Can Know It's True

1. The Bible is God's word. Even though there were over forty men who recorded the events in Scripture, God inspired each man and told him exactly what to write. Since the words in the Bible came directly from God—who does not lie—we can trust that the Bible is entirely true. Still, some people choose to believe only parts of the Bible. They claim some parts are not relevant, are outdated, or simply could not have happened. Although it may be hard for our imperfect minds to understand some of the passages in the Bible, we cannot pick and choose what parts we want to believe. The Bible is either 100 percent true or not true at all. Read about the truth of the Bible in Psalm 19:7–9 (p. 542, *Live*); Luke 1:1–4 (p. 1008, *Live*); and 1 John 1:1–4 (p. 1248, *Live*).
2. The fulfillment of prophecy proves the Bible is true. In the Old Testament, which took place hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, God chose several men to be His prophets. God gave these men the ability to predict several details about the coming of Jesus. For example, the prophet Micah wrote seven hundred years before Jesus was born that He would be born in Bethlehem. The prophets even predicted Jesus' betrayal and death hundreds of years before they actually happened. And in the New Testament, we can see that every single prediction about Jesus came true! These prophecies—all from different men—could not have come true unless they were revealed by the true God, the One who knows the future. Read about these prophecies and how they came true in Psalm 41:9 (p. 555, *Live*) and John 13:18 (p. 1062, *Live*); Isaiah 53:7 (p. 716, *Live*) and Mark 15:3–5 (p. 1004, *Live*); and Isaiah 50:6 (p. 714, *Live*) and Matthew 27:29–30 (p. 981, *Live*).
3. Archeology (the study of past human life and remains) proves the Bible is true. Archeologists have found numerous artifacts that match the events we



The Truth

read about in the Bible. For example, a tablet called the Tel Dan Inscription was found in northern Israel in 1993. This tablet describes the exact event mentioned in 2 Chronicles. Archeologists have also found a stone tablet proving Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea during Jesus' death. Not one artifact that has been found disproves the Bible. In fact, the extreme opposite is true; there are thousands of artifacts that prove the Bible is reliable! To read about the event mentioned on the Tel Dan Inscription, see 2 Chronicles 22:1–9 (p. 444, *Live*). To read about Pontius Pilate, see Mark 15:1–15 (p. 1004, *Live*).

Relate

God gave the prophets the ability to see what was going to happen in the future. Let's do a fun experiment to see if you can predict the future.

Before class, gather different solids and liquids to dissolve in a blender. Examples: baking soda, vegetable oil, salt, sugar, pepper, chalk dust, and soap. Bring out the blender, a pitcher of water, extra cups, and the different ingredients to dissolve.

We are going to blend each of these ingredients with water. Before we blend them, you are going to predict if they will dissolve in the water or not. Are you ready?

Bring out the first ingredient.

If you think this will dissolve in water, stand on this side of the room and if it will not dissolve, stand on this side of the room.

Pour some water into the blender. Put the ingredient into the blender and turn it on for a few seconds. Show the students if the ingredient dissolved. Pour the water into a cup and prepare for the next ingredient. Keep track of how many predictions the students get right.

It was fun to try to predict if these ingredients would dissolve or not. God enabled the prophets in Scripture to perfectly predict the future. These fulfilled prophecies are proof that God's Word is true and reliable.



Question

What does 2 Peter 1:20–21 (p. 1243, *Live*) tell us about the prophecies in Scripture?

They were not made up by the prophets but were the actual words of God.

What do you picture when you read Hebrews 4:12 (p. 1216, *Live*)?

Give students the opportunity to use their imaginations as they picture what this passage is talking about.

What does this passage teach us about the word of God?

It is powerful, alive, and exposes our thoughts and desires.

List everything 2 Timothy 3:15–17 (p. 1203, *Live*) teaches us about the Bible.

1. Gives wisdom to receive salvation

2. Inspired by God

3. Useful to teach what is true

4. Makes us realize our wrongs

5. Corrects us when we are wrong

6. Teaches us to do right

7. Prepares and equips us to do good works

Why do you think some people do not trust what is in the Bible?

Examples: They don't want to admit there is a God. They don't want to believe they are sinners. Their minds are closed about believing in miracles.

Why is it important for us to believe the entire Bible is true and not just certain parts?

If certain parts are false, then we cannot trust any part of it.

How would you answer the question: Is the Bible true?

Help students internalize the answer as they put it into their own words.

Here is a fun song that will help us remember that the Bible is absolute truth and not a book of fairy tales.

The B-I-B-L-E
Is proven true you see
Through archaeology and prophecy
The B-I-B-L-E

The B-I-B-L-E
Is God inspired you see
Which makes it true for you and me
The B-I-B-L-E

The Truth



Prayer

The Bible is God's Word. It is as true today as it was when it was inspired. Let us take time to pray some prayers from the Bible.

We are going to use some Scripture passages as guides to our prayer. We have three passages we are going to pray from. One of you will pray one of the passages; another will pray the second passage; and I will pray the final passage. Who would like to pray first?

Assign the first passage to one student and the second to another student. Show the students how to change the words me and I in the passage to us and we to make it personal for the class.

Prayer 1—Psalm 86:11–13 (p. 582, *Live*): “Teach [us] your ways, O LORD, that [we] may live according to your truth! Grant [us] purity of heart, so that [we] may honor you. With all [our hearts we] will praise you, O Lord [our] God. [We] will give glory to your name forever, for your love for [us] is very great. You have rescued [us] from the depths of death.”

Prayer 2—1 Chronicles 4:10 (p. 396, *Live*): “Oh, that you would bless [us]. . . . Please be with [us] in all that [we] do, and keep [us] from all trouble and pain!”

Prayer 3—*This prayer is taken from Colossians 1:9–12 (p. 1179, Live). It is Paul's prayer for the church and has been reworded as a prayer for your students.*

God, please give these students complete knowledge of your will and give them spiritual wisdom and understanding. I pray that they will live in a way that is always honoring and pleasing to you, Lord, and that their lives will produce every kind of good fruit. I pray that they will grow as they learn to know you better. I also pray that they will be strengthened with all your glorious power so they will have the endurance and patience they need. May they be filled with joy, always thanking You. Amen.

Unwind

The Bible is 100 percent true. Let's play a game to see how good you are at figuring out the truth.

Hand each student a piece of paper and pencil. Number the classroom walls one through four.

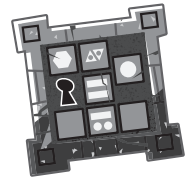
I want each of you to write your name at the top of the paper. Now write four statements about yourself. Make three of the statements false and only one of the statements true. Try to write statements that you think nobody in this class would know. Do not tell anyone which one is true.

Give students a couple minutes to write their statements. Make sure they number them one through four. Collect the papers from the students.

I am going to read the statements on the paper. You are going to decide which statement you think is true about that person. Stand by the numbered wall that matches your answer. When I read your paper, you must sit out that round so you do not give away the answer.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to read four different Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. After each prophecy, research where Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in the New Testament. Record your findings beside for each passage listed.



1. Isaiah 9:6–7 (p. 674, *Live*)—Fulfillment: Luke 1:32 (p. 1008, *Live*)
2. Micah 5:2 (p. 909, *Live*)—Fulfillment: Luke 2:4–7 (pp. 1009–1010, *Live*)
3. Jeremiah 31:15 (p. 767, *Live*)—Fulfillment: Matthew 2:16–18 (p. 949, *Live*)
4. Zechariah 9:9 (p. 936, *Live*)—Fulfillment: Mark 11:7–11 (p. 997, *Live*)

Explore

Second Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right” (p. 1203, *Live*).

This is a wonderful verse to memorize and remind us that God’s Word is true and inspired by Him. Read this passage several times this week. Pray that God will give you the desire to read and study His Word this week.

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



6. Creation

Everything that exists was made by God.

Main Points

God created everything that exists.

God created all humans in His image.

God created a harmonious world.

plan

Lesson Preparation

Background: Make sure you have completed last week's challenge and read Genesis 1:31—2:15.

Items Needed: *Live Bible* (one per student), student books, objects or pictures related to several professions, several small flat objects, paper plates, masking tape, paper, pencils, and crayons

ask

Connect

What were some of the prophecies you found from last week's challenge?

1. Jesus will rule forever. 2. Jesus will be born in Bethlehem. 3. There will be weeping over the children who were going to be killed. 4. Jesus will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey.

How would you answer this question: Is the Bible reliable?

Yes, the Bible is God's words, and He does not lie. The fulfilled prophecies in the Bible prove it is true. Archaeology also proves the Bible is accurate and reliable.

Can anyone sing the song we learned last week to help us remember the Bible is true?

Warm Up

Bring in several items or pictures of items representing different professions, such as a stethoscope, gavel, shovel, firefighter's helmet, and paintbrush.

The Bible teaches that when God created the earth long ago, it was a perfect place. There was no sin or evil in the world. Can you imagine what that would have been like?

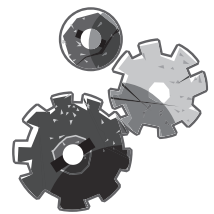
Pause a moment for responses.

It's interesting to think what life would have been like if humans had never sinned. For example, what kinds of jobs would people have found to do? Do you think there would be doctors in a world without sin? Judges? What about construction workers? Firefighters? Artists?

Encourage students to think of other professions that may or may not exist in a world without sin.

Engage

For nearly as long as humans have been around, we have told one another stories about where we came from and how the earth was created. But the Bible tells the true story of how God created the earth and everything in it. He gave us a life and a home that is perfectly suited for us.



Check It Out

What does the Bible say about creation?



Read Psalm 24:1 with the students (p. 545, Live).

I Can Know It's True

1. God created everything that exists or ever has existed. The first verse in the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The earth is where we live, and the heavens include the sky and outer space. The Bible teaches that God created them all. Some religions teach that there is no God and that the heavens and the earth came into existence without any "outside help." They teach that life began with single-cell organisms and then gradually evolved into plants, animals, and humans. But the Bible says that God carefully and lovingly designed the universe and each species of life. Read about God creating the earth in Genesis 1:1–25 (p. 4, *Live*).
2. God created humans, both men and women, and gave us a special honor above the rest of His creation. He created us in His image (Gen. 1:26–27). This means we are like Him in some ways. One of the ways we are like God is that He shares with us the responsibility of taking care of part of His creation (Gen. 1:28). This is a much different picture from those who teach that humans gradually evolved from other life-forms. The Bible clearly teaches that humans have a special place in God's creation and have been given a special responsibility and purpose in life. Read about the creation of humanity and the job God gave us to do in Genesis 1:26–28 (p. 4, *Live*).



Creation

3. God gave humans a perfect place to live and everything we need. Before the first sin, every living thing existed in perfect relationship with the earth and other living things. It was very good (Gen. 1:31). Though some people teach that there have always been predators and death, the Bible teaches that God created everything and everyone to live in perfect harmony with one another and with Him. And one day, God will cause this to happen again. Read what the Bible says about the future of God's creation in Isaiah 11:6 (p. 677, *Live*).

Relate

The Bible says God made humans in His image. After making man and woman, He looked at His creation and declared it to be very good. We were created just the way God wanted us to be. Let's take some time today and thank God for one of His simple designs on us.

Look at your thumbs. Aren't you glad God gave you thumbs? Your thumb is a very important part of your body. Without our thumbs, we couldn't hold on to many different objects. We couldn't play some sports. Let's do a fun experiment to show how important our thumbs are.

Divide students into two teams. Sit each team around a different table and spread a bunch of small flat objects in the middle of the table. Keys, coins, paper clips, buttons, and similar items work the best. Give each student a paper plate to place in front of him or her.

We are going to have a competition. You have thirty seconds to see how many objects you can pick up with your right hand and place on your plates. The team with the most objects wins! Here's the catch—one team will not be able to use their thumbs.

Pick a team and tape each student's thumb to the palm using masking tape.

Ready? Go!

Give students thirty seconds to pick up as many items as they can. The ones with their thumbs taped should easily lose. Switch roles and tape the other team's thumbs for round two.



Question

Why do you think it's important to know that God made everything?

It teaches us to give God praise and thanksgiving for giving us everything we need for life and happiness. It teaches us that we belong to God and that He has authority over us because He created us.

Read Genesis 1:11–12 (p. 4, *Live*).

God created the plants with seeds in them so that they would produce more plants and survive from generation to generation. How does this show God's wisdom and His care and concern for the human race?

He provided resources that, if we take care of them, will never run out. They are renewable resources.

How can Christians express our appreciation to God for providing for us this way?

By offering Him our gratitude and praise and by taking care of the resources He has provided.

Read Genesis 1:27 (p. 4, *Live*).

Did God give His image and glory to only part of the human race or to all?

God's image is found in both males and females. No one is worthless, because we can all give God glory with our words and our lives.

In what ways do you think people show God's glory?

Examples: creating things, caring for one another, meeting others needs, etc.

How does Genesis 1:28 (p. 4, *Live*) and 2:15 (p. 5, *Live*) show what God's original purpose was for the man and woman?

God gave humanity responsibility to care for the whole earth and all of its inhabitants (1:28). Then He gave Adam and Eve responsibility to provide special care for the place where they lived (2:15).

Read Genesis 2:8 (p. 5, *Live*) to see what kind of home God created for the man and woman.

Name everything you can think of that God gave the man and woman to provide for their lives and happiness.

Numerous answers could be given.

Let's take a quiz to see how well we understand this concept. Label each statement "True" or "False."

1. God created the earth. (*True*)
2. God had "outside help" in creating the universe. (*False*)

Creation

3. God didn't care much how everything turned out. *(False)*
4. The way God formed the world was perfect for humans. *(True)*
5. God gave the man and woman an important job to do. *(True)*
6. God gave humans the earth to do with as we want. *(False)*
7. God gave humans a special role in His creation. *(True)*
8. God's image is found in both men and women. *(True)*
9. Broken relationships have been a part of life since the beginning. *(False)*
10. One day God will make the heavens and earth new again. *(True)*



Prayer

For our prayer time today, I would like each of us to pray for something in our own lives. We are going to use different motions to help us remember what to pray for.

Everyone point behind you. For our first prayer, we are going to pray for something in the past. It can be anything from asking forgiveness for a sin you committed to giving praise for something God has done for you. It just has to be about something that happened in your past.

Give the students one minute to pray silently.

Next I would like everyone to point toward your feet. We are now going to pray for something that is happening in your life right now.

Give the students one minute to pray silently.

Finally, I would like everyone to point in front of you. For our last prayer, we are going to pray for something in the future.

Give the students one minute to pray silently, then say, "Amen."

Unwind

We are going to have some more fun with our thumbs. This time I am going to tape everyone's thumbs to the palms of their hands. I am going to hand out paper, pencils, and crayons.

Without your thumbs, I would like each of you to write out Genesis 1:26 at the top of our paper: "Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image, to be like

ourselves” (p. 4, *Live*). Below the verse, I want you to draw the picture that comes to your mind when I read the second part of the verse: “They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” After five minutes, everyone can share their drawings with the class.

Challenge

Your challenge this week is to imagine what life would be like if we still lived in God’s perfect creation. Think about the following questions:

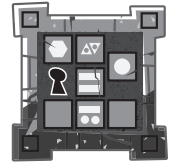
- What would our relationships with God be like?
- What would our relationships with each other be like?
- How would we care for God’s creation?
- Would there be any poverty or hunger?
- Would we have any purpose in life or anything to accomplish?
- Would there be conflict or disagreement? Would there be counselors, police, or judges?
- What great things do you think humans could accomplish to give God glory?

Explore

Revelation 21:1, 5 says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . And the one sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’” (pp. 1280–1281, *Live*).

The fact that God made everything in the first place means He can make all things new again. How does this give you confidence that He can be trusted with your life?

For additional electronic resources, go to www.wesleyan.org/explore.



Defend the Faith Day Celebration

Completing this Explore series is a wonderful accomplishment in a preteen's life. It is important to make a meaningful celebration that will encourage the preteens to continue growing in their faith. The following pages provide an outline of preparation for this celebration, a sample celebration, and ideas on making the day memorable.

For this celebration service, your students will be planning a "Defend the Faith Day" in your class. The students will set up a mock courtroom and each student will present his or her case to the judge.

Preparation for the Celebration

1. Meet with the students to plan the details of the Defend the Faith Day.
 - a. Explain to students that they will be defending their faith in a mock courtroom. Each student will have one question to defend in front of the court.
 - b. Give students time to look over their student books. Allow each student to pick the one question they would like to defend on that day. Try to have every question from the past six weeks represented by at least one of the students.
 - c. Next decide the order the students will be presenting their answers. Have fun deciding the order. One way is to play a game from the last six weeks and the winner chooses the order. You could even go by age or alphabetically.
 - d. Instruct students to go home and study their answers. Let them know that they should be able to answer their questions in a very clear and concise way. They should also use at least one Bible verse to support their answers.
 - e. Make the final plans on when and where the students will be presenting their defenses.
2. Invite the parents of your students to class the day of the celebration. They will have a great time watching their children defend their faith.

The Celebration

1. Before the students arrive, set up fake courtroom in the classroom. Set up a judge's bench and witness chair beside the bench. Recruit an adult to put on a choir robe to act as the judge.
2. As the students arrive, show them where to sit and remind them of the order they will be presenting their defenses.
3. Open the day by introducing the wonderful, crazy judge. Have the judge walk out and sit down. Encourage him or her to ham up being a judge as much as possible.
4. Call the first student to sit down in the witness chair. Ask that student his or her question and allow time to answer. After he or she has answered the question, have the rest of the students cheer loudly. (This is a great time for the judge to bang his or her gavel on the table and call for order in the court.)
5. After all students have had the opportunity to speak, congratulate them for doing such a wonderful job.

Following the Celebration

1. Challenge the students to continue asking tough questions and researching the answers.
2. If possible, present each student with a Bible of their own. Remind them to always look to the Bible for answers in life.

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

Leader Notes

