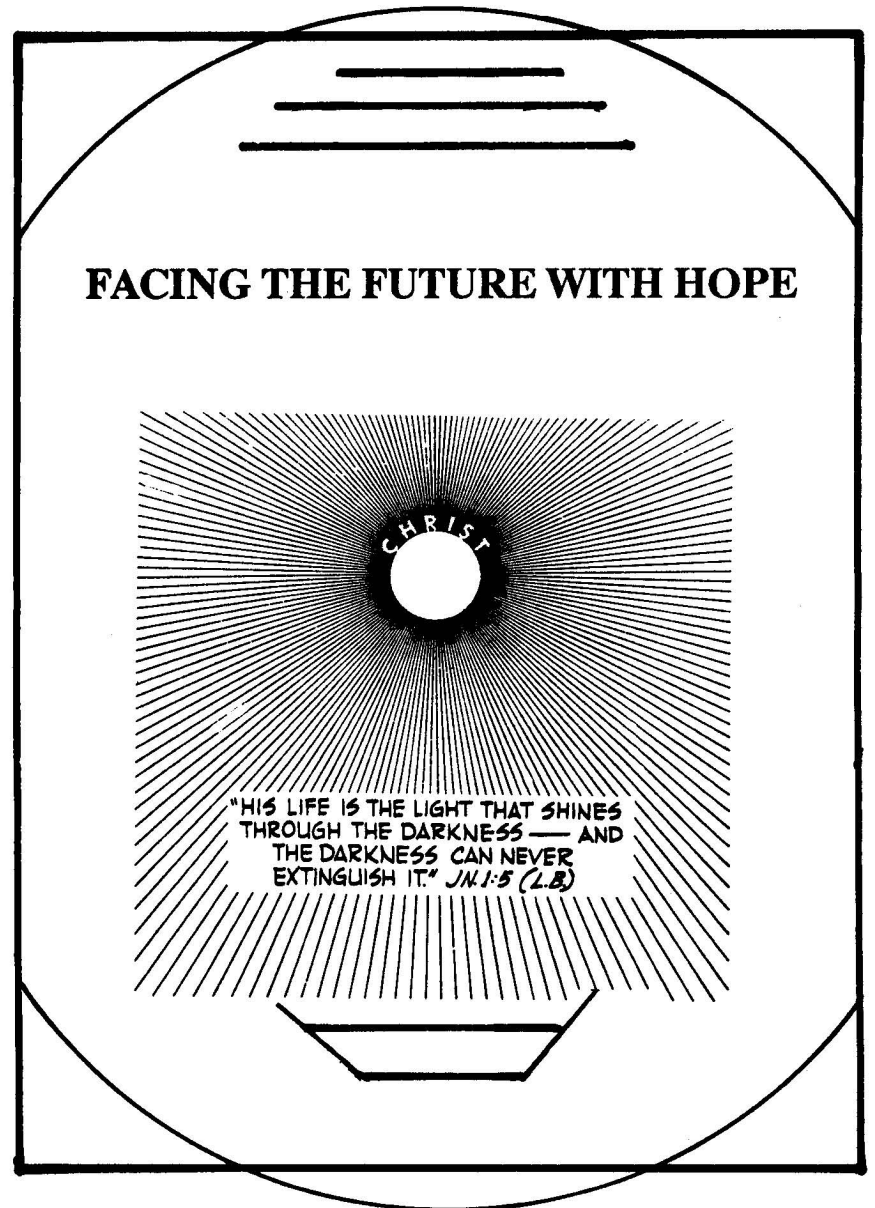
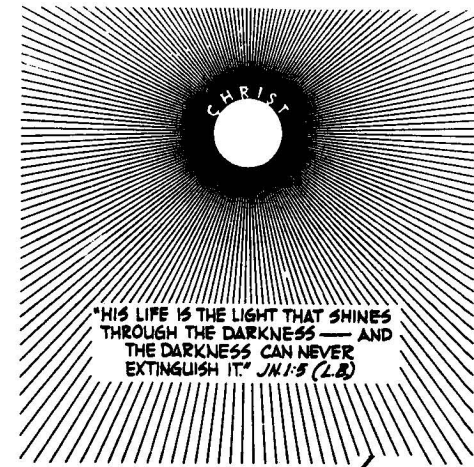


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FACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE



HIS LIFE IS THE LIGHT THAT SHINES
THROUGH THE DARKNESS — AND
THE DARKNESS CAN NEVER
EXTINGUISH IT. JN. 1:5 (L.B.)

FACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

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Application To Our Lives

The last verse (verse 21) was a quote from Isaiah 52:15. That verse talked about the shock of the nations when the Lord appeared as a Suffering Servant. Have this verse read. Say: "Paul's desire was that everyone would see him whom they had not seen (Jesus Christ), and they would understand everything there is to know about him."

Continue: "We are Christ's ambassadors today. An ambassador does not speak his own thoughts and use his own words. He expresses the thoughts and opinions of the nation that sent him. We are to express the thoughts and do the actions and go to the places God has chosen for us."

Say: "It is very easy to be Christ's ambassador if we remember to talk about him. It is easy to tell people what Christ has done for us. We need to remember to talk about Jesus to everyone we meet, to tell them something about Jesus."

Conclude: "If we are to reconcile the world to Christ, we must be busy about it every day. To reconcile means to bring two together. When we speak Christ's name and tell what he has done for us, we are bringing him and the world together. We have a part in evangelising the world. Our job is not done until everyone we know has heard about Jesus."

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God that your members will have the boldness of Paul in telling the world about Jesus.

Ask: “What do you think Paul meant when he said Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness?” Let the adults discuss this and help them see that Christ became a Jew completely, even in the matter of ceremonial law so God would be shown to tell the truth. Say: “When God’s prophets spoke on his behalf, they were saying God’s words. When Jesus came, he showed that these prophets had foretold the future of the Messiah exactly.”

Say: “Verses 9-12 are a series of Old Testament Scriptures that proclaim that Jesus came both for the Jews and the Gentiles. Let us read these Scriptures.” Have each of the following read and explained by the students: Psalms 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalms 117:1 and Isaiah 11:1.

Have someone read Romans 15:13. Say: “This verse sets the theme for all the lessons in this book - hope. Our God is the God of hope. We rest in the hope that we have in him.”

Have verse 14 read. Say: Some people have thought that Paul was a hard man, but this verse shows him as a courteous and gentle one. He had never been to the Roman church, but he knew Romans were full of goodness and knowledge and able to teach each other. Perhaps Priscilla and Aquilla had given him this good news about the Romans.”

Say: “In verse 15 Paul apologized for the boldness he had used in writing to the Romans, but he reminded them that he had written only on some points. Most everything else needed no instruction from Paul.”

Have verses 16-21 read. Say: “It sounds like Paul was boasting about his work, and he was. But he was boasting about the power of God rather than his own power. Paul gave the boundaries here for his work. No other Scripture bears this out, but not all of Paul’s activities were recorded in Acts. He surely could have done what he said that he had done.”

Continue: “Paul most certainly longed for the gospel to be taken to every nation so every man could hear it. That is perhaps the meaning of these verses.”

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. What if the Worst Comes?	3
2. Coping with Change	10
3. Keeping the Faith	18
4. Sustained by Hope	27
5. Our Need to be Reconciled	34
6. Reconciled Through Jesus Christ	42
7. Alive in Christ	49
8. Freedom in Christ	56
9. Secure in God’s Love	63
10. Together Under God	70
11. The Reconciled Life	76
12. Walking in Love	84
13. Our Ministry of Reconciliation	91

points.” In other words he had not tried to instruct them in all matters, only in those of which he was an expert since he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Verse 16 tells us that Paul had been a minister in the priestly service of the gospel of God. He meant he had literally given all he had for the privilege of telling the Gentile people of Jesus Christ.

In verse 17 Paul said he had reason to be proud of his work for God. This was not pride in himself. This was pride in what God had done through him.

Verses 18-21 express Paul’s joy because he had been able to do the work he had done for the Gentiles.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: “It has been said that God has no hands except our hands. We are to do what God wants done. God has no voice except our voice. We are to say what he wants us to say.”

Continue: It is a wonderful thought that we can do God’s work for him. Yet how many of us are committed to the Lord? How many of us would leave our own home, our own village to take the message of Christ to another village, another area, another country? How many of us listen to God to say the words that he wants us to say, instead of saying our own words? How many of us would let our hands be directed in ministering to the sick or the needy?”

Continue: “We say that we will go where God wants to send us, we will say what he directs us to say and we will do what he wants us to do. God really wants that kind of commitment from us.”

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Romans 15:8. Have someone read verses 8-13

CHAPTER 13 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that they have a part in world evangelisation.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalkboard or large paper

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 15:8-13 tells us once again that Christ came for all people everywhere.

Verse 8 says that “Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness.” The meaning is that Christ fulfilled all the laws of the Jews to show that he was indeed the Messiah who was promised, and thus to show that God told the truth in prophecy.

Verses 9-12 are a series of Old Testament Scriptures that proclaim that Christ came first to the Jews, but he came for the Gentiles as well. These Scriptures are: Psalms 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalms 117:1 and Isaiah 11:1.

Verse 13 has the words “God of hope” which sets the theme for the remainder for the letter. If we have faith (in believing) we will have “joy” and “peace,” and we will “abound in hope.”

In verse 14 we read the words of a graceful, courteous man. Paul complimented the Romans whom he had not met on being full of goodness and knowledge. He also said they had instructed one another. Here we need to remember that the Roman church began sometime in the first year after the resurrection, and that it continued for about 30 years without the leadership of an apostle. That is, it took Peter and Paul 30 years after the resurrection to get to Rome.

By way of apology for the strong words he had written, Paul said in verse 15 that he had written boldly only “on some

CHAPTER 1 WHAT IF THE WORST COMES?

AIM: This lesson will help me know that as a Christian I will face some hard times, but God is always there to help me.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Habakkuk 1-3

VERSES IN TODAY’S LESSON: Habakkuk 1:2-5, 12-13; 2:1-4

MEMORY VERSE: “*Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.*” Habakkuk 1:5

For the next few weeks, we will be learning about the history of Israel before and after her exile. The Hebrew people had a firm spiritual background that helped them to live through their nation’s death.

By studying these lessons, we will discover Israel’s spiritual qualities. The way these spiritual qualities helped the Israelites to live through hard times is the same way these spiritual qualities can help us to live through hard times.

What if the worst should come to you? The worst does come to some people. All people struggle with life. When the worst comes, some people give up. There is a great need to be tolerant, to be firm and strong when great problems come upon you to try to push you off balance in the Christian life.

In our days there are people who are experiencing the same problems as Habakkuk. Imagine a man like Habakkuk, professing to love Christ, having his wife and children killed in a car accident! He could not understand it! When such times come, we really need to be strong and depend only on God. Nations also have had bad times. Habakkuk saw his nation get weaker and weaker. He suffered while Judah fell, but he did not give up. He kept trusting God in difficult situations. The story of Habakkuk’s faith is told in the book of Habakkuk. Read about him in your Bible. How did his

faith help him in hard times? Read Habakkuk 1:2-5, 12-13; 2:1-4.

SOME TROUBLING QUESTIONS

We will experience the same questions that faced Habakkuk and his people. Conditions were very bad in Judah when Habakkuk had a vision from God. Read in 2 Kings 23:32 about the evil things the kings did. They paid no attention to what the prophets proclaimed. (See Jeremiah 7) He thought that God did not judge the wicked kings.

The prophet wondered when God would save Judah from violence, wrong, harm or actions that resulted in violence. This included lies, worshipping idols, stealing and treating people wickedly and unjustly. Habakkuk wondered why God did not stop all the violence in his land. He did not complain against God, but to God. He wanted to know how long the bad times would continue (verses 3-4). Habakkuk thought evil men should not cause his people to suffer.

The Lord God had revealed to Habakkuk that the Chaldeans, a wicked nation, would be used to punish Judah. But Habakkuk did not understand this. "How can God use a wicked nation to punish a less wicked nation?" Thought Habakkuk. He also wondered if it was necessary to be silent as the wicked nation destroyed his people.

LISTENING FOR GOD'S ANSWER

Habakkuk kept asking questions. (See verses 14-17.) He tried to find answers. He climbed a watch tower and waited for God's answers. He would not give up.

Then God gave an answer. (See verse 2.) God does answer all his people. "Write the answer in large letters either on stone or wood tablets for all your people to read as they flee from the invaders, the Chaldeans," the Lord said. He also told Habakkuk that those things would not happen right away. (See verse 3.) God would help his people at the right time. God asked Habakkuk to be patient. "Do not give up," he said. "Things will happen just as I planned."

about Jesus Christ. He did not want to build on another preacher's foundation. (See verse 20.)

Paul knew that many people still did not know about Jesus Christ. He wanted to go to those places and preach. He always looked for people who did not know the Lord. Paul wanted more and more people to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Paul was an ambassador for Christ. An ambassador speaks for his country to leaders of another country. Paul spoke for God. He brought a powerful message to the world.

Paul set an example for us. He showed us that we should love others too. He showed us that we must share God's love with those who do not know him.

PEACEMAKER

Ambassadors often work for peace. Paul was a peacemaker too. He helped people know God's love in a personal way. When people live in God's love, they will have peace.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God's power can go to the world through you too. You can tell others what God did for you. You can help the sick. You can teach someone else about the Lord and salvation.

Remember that you, too, are responsible for helping others know about the Lord. You are responsible to help others love one another and live in peace. You are responsible to help others have peace in their hearts.

What will you do today to take the message of reconciliation to someone?

gospel and trusts in Jesus will receive God's power. God's power will help him grow.

Now read the Scripture for today. Did Paul set a good example for other Christians?

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

Jesus is our best example. Jesus was the perfect man. We should keep trying to be more like our Lord.

We follow Christ's example when we try to strengthen the weak. We must accept one another in Christian love. Thus we will bring glory to God.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

Paul's life is also a good example. He was not equal with Jesus. But Paul's life can help us understand how to live for God.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome to help them love their weaker brothers. Paul was strong, but he helped the weak. He followed Christ's example.

Paul knew that many Christians in the church at Rome were strong and could teach others. But he knew they could learn more. He wrote to help those Christians understand God better.

In verses 15-21, Paul wrote about his special call from God. God called him to preach the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles.

God used Paul to help the Gentiles learn about right living. They learnt how to become friends with God after Paul preached to them. Paul travelled to many places to preach to Gentiles. They listened. They learnt about God's love. They learnt about right living. They learnt how to love God.

Paul wanted to be a missionary to far places. He wanted to preach the gospel where no other preacher had ever preached before. He wanted to be first to tell those people

God revealed to Habakkuk what he planned for the Chaldeans. They were proud. They trusted themselves and lifted themselves up. But they would fall just as God said. Read God's woes of judgement on the Chaldeans. (Habakkuk 2:6-10) Note in verse 4 that the forces of evil would destroy themselves. God called Habakkuk to live a faithful life. He was not to question God's actions. He was to trust God. The prophet wondered why Judah sinned so much, and how God could use the Chaldeans. But these were not his problems. God could manage the world. Even today, God continues to manage the world.

Habakkuk came down from the tower with a vision and a message. He no longer feared the Chaldeans. He trusted God even though the worst would come. God had answered Habakkuk.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

You, also may face hard times. You may have questions about evil in your life. Do you want to give up? State again your faith in God's goodness and God's purpose in your life. Learn to say "The Lord God is my strength, and he will bring me safely over the mountains."

CHAPTER 1 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to rely on God for the answer to the problems in life.

TEACHING AIDS: Have pencils and paper ready for the students.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The book of Habakkuk is very interesting. Habakkuk is the only Old Testament prophet who represents Israel to God. All the other prophets represented God to Israel. The meaning here is that Habakkuk spoke to God. He had many questions for God and God answered them.

The events in the book took place as a result of the wickedness of Judah's kings. God seemingly had allowed these kings and the people to live as they chose. Sin was rampant in the land. Habakkuk saw all of this and questioned God as to why he had allowed this to happen.

God answered that he had prepared a heathen nation, the Chaldeans (the Babylonians) to conquer Judah as punishment for their sin. He said that he would destroy the Chaldeans for doing this.

God told Habakkuk that he was in control of everything, even heathen nations.

God also reminded Habakkuk that he had his own schedule. God controlled all events.

Habakkuk 1:2-5 is a conversation between Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk said that he could not understand why God was not doing anything about the terrible conditions that existed in the land. He saw that the law was numbed or chilled, unable to take action against the violence and oppression.

CHAPTER 13 OUR MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

AIM: I will study this lesson to help me know that God expects me to minister to others.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:16; 15:7-33

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 15:8-21

MEMORY VERSE: *"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry or reconciliation."* 2 Corinthians 5:18

A long time ago Moses was living in his own home village. One morning the familiar horn for bad news was blown. Everybody knew there was something wrong somewhere in the village. It was certainly something to do with death.

Everyone gathered to learn that the chief's son had died at midnight. Young boys were sent to different places to tell the relatives about the death.

Moses was given a bicycle because he was going to report the death to a village quite far away. On his way he got a puncture. He hoped the tyre would hold the air. So he kept pushing the pump, but it was all in vain. The tube would not hold the air. It was of no use anymore.

Sometimes Christians are like a burst tube that cannot take the air from the pump. They are no longer useful. These Christians do not deliver God's power to the world. God's power is his gospel message. God's power can help us grow more like Jesus. But we must be in "working order." Christians are in working order only when they let God's power go through them.

How can we help God's power get through to the world?

Paul wrote to Christians at Rome to help them understand his plan. Paul said the gospel gives us God's power. The "good news" can change people. Anyone who believes the

them that food was not important enough to cause a weak brother to fall. While everything is all right to eat or drink because God created everything, the Christian should not exercise his freedom and cause someone else to wonder and doubt.”

Applications To Our Lives

Say: “Let us consider our story about Pastor Emmanuel and his two new church members. The pastor went into the bar to get something left there by a politician who would think nothing at all of going into a bar. The two new Christians did not think of any good reason for their pastor to go into the bar. Instead, they judged him, and their own faith was weakened.”

Continue: “The pastor went into the bar without seeing the two men. Had he seen them, he might have gone to them first to explain why he was going into the bar. Certainly, he would never have gone into the bar if he had known the two men were watching him. The bar and nothing in it could harm the pastor, but it could harm his two new members.”

Continue: “We are like David and John many times. We see something happen, and we judge someone without more information. We set our standards for everyone else.

“There are two lessons to learn in this chapter from Romans. First, we are not to judge the actions of others. Second, we are not to do anything that would cause our weaker brothers to fall. Can you think of a time when someone judged you or another Christian wrongly? Or, perhaps you can think of a time when you judged someone only to find later you were wrong. Would you like to tell us about that time?”

Allow time for any discussion that the members might have, then ask them to think of one way they can help their weaker Christian brothers. Ask them to do whatever it is they have thought about during the week to come. They may think of things like not gossiping, or watching where they go. Each one will need to think of his own plan.

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to help the adults remember to help their weaker brothers this week.

In verse 5 God tells Habakkuk that he is at work. The meaning evidently is that he was going to do something about the situation. “Wonder and be astounded” might be translated to “Shudder and be shocked.”

Habakkuk 1:12-13 shows that God’s response to Habakkuk’s first question had confused him. In these verses, he asked more questions.

First, Habakkuk asked God if he was really in charge of all things. Then he expressed confidence that God would see that all things came out right for the Jewish nation. God would not let his chosen people perish, nor would he allow his purpose for them to go unfulfilled. He called God a rock to show that he was reliable in every situation.

In verse 13, Habakkuk asked God how he could look with favour upon such a terrible nation as Chaldea. He was saying that although Judah was very bad, it was good in comparison to the depravity and utter wickedness of other nations.

Verses 1-4 of chapter two tells us that Habakkuk had taken a stand in a “watchtower.” This probably means that he had taken a firm stand upon a solid foundation which is a bit above the usual level of life. From there he attentively looked to God for an answer and thought about how he would answer God.

When God saw Habakkuk in his “watchtower,” he began to instruct the prophet. The answer was in the form of a vision. A vision simply means to see or be aware of something that is normally beyond the ability of humans to see.

The vision was for the whole nation, not just for the prophet. God told Habakkuk to write the vision on tablets. He was to write upon them clearly and legibly so that anyone hurrying past might read them at a glance.

Verse 4 is the answer to all the questions that Habakkuk had. It is the explanation for all that had troubled the prophet. The Chaldeans would suffer death, while the righteous would live because of their faithfulness.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Write this unfinished sentence on the chalkboard or on paper. "When I have trouble, I ..." As your adults come into the class, ask them to finish the sentence. Some may need a few minutes to think it over. Give them the time they need.

After each member has had a chance to respond to the unfinished sentence, repeat some of the things they said. (Do not say, "Kamau says that when he has trouble he talks it over with his wife." Rather say: "We have said that when we have trouble we talk it over with our wives, we go to our employers, we talk to the elder in our area, etc.")

Someone might have said they pray when they have troubles. If so, begin there and say that some of us pray when we have troubles. If no one has mentioned talking to God about the matter, say: "We all have ways of helping ourselves in trouble, but the best way to help ourselves is through prayer."

Continue: Our lesson today is about a time when the Jewish nation was in trouble. One man wanted to find a solution to the problems. This man, Habakkuk, took the problems directly to God."

Interpretation

Give each student who can read and write a paper and pencil. Tell them that you are going to have a circle of questions. (Be sure your students are seated in a circle.) Each student is to take one of the verses in the lesson for today. He is to read the verse, then he is to write one question from the verse.

Give the students a few minutes to do this. (The first student will write a question from Habakkuk 1:2, the next Habakkuk 1:3 and so on.)

When they finish their work, ask one adult to read all the verses. Then ask the first student to ask the question that he has written down to the second student. Make sure that

happened to him. Then David said, 'John, pastor just went into that bar down the road.'

"John could not believe what his friend had said. Both stood there wondering what to do. Finally, John said, 'Maybe our pastor is not the wonderful man I thought he was.'

"Maybe he is not,' agreed David. Both men walked away with a great doubt and uncertainty in their hearts. Neither of them knew that Pastor Emmanuel had gone into the bar to pick up some papers left there by the local chief."

Say: "David and John judged their pastor when they saw him go into the bar. Our lesson today is about that kind of judgement."

Interpretation

Have the class open their Bibles to Romans 14:10-12, and have those verses read. Say: "Paul was speaking here to the weak members of the church at Rome. He was telling them not to judge their stronger brothers. In the early churches, there was some difficulty about what was proper behaviour for Christians. Many realized the new freedom they had in Christ Jesus. These were the stronger Christians. Others accepted Jesus and just added whatever new things they heard about how a Christian should behave to the old laws they were already observing. These were the weaker Christians."

Continue: "All of the meat at that time was first offered to pagan gods, then it was brought to the market place to be sold. Old Testament laws and the laws that the scribes had added forbade the eating of certain meats, especially anything that had been offered to a god. The new Christians believed that they were not to eat meat at all. When they saw other Christians eating meat, they judged them, saying they were not Christians at all.⁷⁰

Ask someone to read Romans 14:13-23. Say: "These verses were to the stronger Christians. Paul told them they were not to judge their weaker brothers. Neither were they to be a stumbling block or hindrance to them. He went on to tell

they to be a stumbling block or hindrance to the weak. If eating meat caused real problems for the weaker brother, the strong Christian should not eat meat.

Paul was “persuaded in the Lord Jesus” that eating meat is all right. This means that Paul was a part of the body of Christ and led by the Holy Spirit.

“Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died” means that we should not let something as small and as meaningless as the food we eat cause trouble for a weaker brother.

Verse 16 is a difficult one, but it probably means that the things you have a right to do should not cause someone else to stumble.

“The kingdom of God,” verse 17, means the kingly rule of God which will take place in the future.

Verse 23 told the weak brother that if he felt guilty when he did an act, then he should not do the act. This would, of course, apply to all Christians. If eating or drinking anything causes us to feel bad, then we should refrain from eating or drinking that thing.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Tell this story. “One day two friends, David and John, were in the market. Both of them were new Christians, and they were talking about the sermon the preacher had given last Sunday.

“David said, ‘I like our pastor. He really knows how to preach’

“John agreed, and said, ‘I just wish I could be more like him. He really knows about God’

Just at that moment, David looked down the road and saw their pastor as he went into a bar. Stunned, David was unable to say anything for a moment. John wondered what had

student answers properly. The second student then asks the third adult his question, and so on around the circle.

When the class has finished the cycle of questions, they should have learnt a lot about the verses. Say: “Judah was in turmoil because of the sins of her kings. The nation was filled with sin. Habakkuk asked God why he allowed such a situation to continue. Then God answered that he had a plan. The plan would be for the Chaldeans to conquer Judah. That confused Habakkuk. He asked God why he would allow such a sinful nation to conquer his chosen people, the Jews. God told him that those who lived righteous lives in faithfulness would be saved, while those who were wicked would die spiritually.”

Application To Our Lives

Say: “Habakkuk knew where to go when he had problems. He went to God. He looked to God for the answers to all his questions. God was faithful to Habakkuk and answered his questions. I particularly like verse 1 of chapter 2 where Habakkuk went up to his watchtower to wait for his answer. We all should have a watchtower, a place where we can go to talk to God. A watchtower suggests that Habakkuk lifted himself above the problems enough to see God. We also should be able to do that.

“I wonder how successful we are when we have problems. Are we able to lift ourselves above the problems so that we can see God? We would be more successful if we could do that. I think it would be a good thing for us to practise doing this week. Every time a problem comes up, let us practise prayer. Let us ask God what he has to say about the situation, and let us wait for God to answer.”

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER 2 COPING WITH CHANGE

AIM: This lesson will help me to understand that faith in God will help me cope with the changes that come constantly in my life.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 137:1-6; Jeremiah 29

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Jeremiah 29:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: *"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."* Jeremiah 29:11

My grandfather died a long time ago. He never saw a bicycle. He never saw a radio and never expected a man to walk on the moon.

Many things change every year. We find it hard to keep up with the changes. Many changes cause fear. Life seems blurred when change comes so fast. We cannot keep things from changing. But can we learn to live with the changes? God's people met many changes when their enemies moved them from Jerusalem to Babylon. How did they face the changes? Read Jeremiah 29:1, 4-11 to help you answer that question.

A STRANGE NEW WORLD

A time came when a king named Josiah tried to lead the Hebrew people back to God. Josiah was a good king, but the people were not loyal to him, especially where godly requirements were to be followed. Because of their disobedience and unbelief God let them be captured.

During Josiah's reign, God called Jeremiah to be a prophet. He prophesied that God would let war come to them. (See Jeremiah 4:19.) But the people did not listen. The kings that came after Josiah did not listen either. This angered God.

CHAPTER 12 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want to lead my students to individually decide one way they can help Christians who are weaker than they are.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Romans 14:10-23 Paul talked both to the weak and the strong in the church. His plea to them was to stop judging one another.

In Romans 14:10-12, Paul spoke first to the weak brothers in the church. They had been causing trouble in the church by holding inappropriate standards of conduct. Their standards were not higher than their stronger brother. Neither were the standards of the stronger brothers lower than those of the weak brother.

It would be well to read 1 Corinthians 8-10 to find what Paul said to the Corinthian Church. There was a deep rift in the church caused by the eating of meat. All meat was first offered in pagan temple, then was brought to the market place. The strong Corinthian Christian saw nothing wrong with eating this meat. Indeed there was nothing wrong in eating the meat. There were, however, groups within the church who held to strict food laws which allowed only the eating of vegetables. This letter to the Romans was written from Corinth. Possibly, there was no great problem with eating meat in the Roman church, but Paul was influenced by the situation at Corinth.

In these verses Paul was simply telling the weaker Christian not to judge the actions of the stronger brothers. Telling their brothers how to live would not strengthen their faith.

In Romans 14:13-23 he spoke to the stronger Christian brother. He told them they were not to judge. Neither were

baby must have good care. Paul said stronger Christians should not make their weaker brothers stumble and fall spiritually.

As Christians, we should not even do a good thing if it hurts our weaker Christian brother. What we do may be talked about. The good thing, to us, may be called evil by others.

Christians should help others have peace and joy. This will please God.

God's kingdom will not come to earth by what we do. The kingdom of God is already here. The kingdom of God is right living, peace and joy given by the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Paul told the Christians at Rome how to live the Christian life. Read verses 19:23 again. Christians should do things that bring peace. They also should build up one another in their faith. No Christian should eat or drink anything that may cause another to stumble.

If you think you know what God wants you to do, tell him so. Each Christian must answer to God for what he does. No Christian has the right to force on another Christian what he thinks is right for himself. Christians should walk together in love.

In verse 23, Paul was not talking about sins like envy or greed. Such sins are all bad. Does what people think make an act right or wrong? No. Yet, if the person believes the act is wrong for him, he should not do it. If weaker Christians believe the act is wrong, strong Christians should not do it. They may cause the weak Christians to stumble.

Would you be willing not to have your own way if it would help your brother?

Thus, when Jehoiakim was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded and captured Jerusalem. He came back later and took ten thousand captives from Jerusalem, including all the princes and the best soldiers, craftsmen and smiths. Only the least skilled people were left in the land.

The Jews were in their captors' hands. They were living in a strange new world. They could not understand why God let a wicked nation destroy Judah.

They had to leave the beautiful temple which was meant for worshipping God. They also left some of their family members in Judah. They saw Jerusalem destroyed. When they left, driven away by their captors, they did not know if they would ever return.

"By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:1-4)

"These changes are too much and the environment is cruel," the Jews thought. The Jews did not feel like singing or making music. They knew the songs of Zion, but they felt like crying when their captors told them to sing. They could see no hope in their present lives nor for their future lives, since they were in the hands of their oppressing captors.

They could not have freedom, neither could they change the place where they were staying by crying. That is what everybody knew. King Nebuchadnezzar would not let them go home. What could they do to stop their grief?

HOW COULD THEY TAKE THE CHANGES?

Jeremiah, the prophet, did not go to Babylon with the rest from Judah. He remained in Jerusalem.

He knew that the captives, his people, were in a time of deep sorrow and suffering. God told him that the captives could

not return home for many years. So Jeremiah wrote a letter to the captives in Babylon. He told them that God had not forgotten them.

FACE THE CHANGING WORLD

Jeremiah wanted the best for those in captivity. He wanted them to know the truth that Babylon would be their home for many years. They had to accept that they were captives, and the Babylonians were their masters. They would not return to Jerusalem. God wanted them to make the best of their new life.

Jeremiah told them to feel at home. He told them to do the same things they did in Judah, their real home, “build homes, marry and have children.” This was not Jeremiah’s decision, but God’s. God told them to start calling Babylon their home. He required them to be peaceful in Babylon. The only way they would find this peace was through prayer.

Immediately, false prophets found a very good way to spread their lies. They preached that freedom was near. This was the opposite to what the God-sent prophets said.

This preaching of nearness of independence was aimed at having the captives rebel against King Nebuchadnezzar. God insisted they not trust the false prophets. God promised better things for his people. One day their lives would change.

While the captives waited, God was with them. God was present in Babylon and in Judah. He blessed them while they experienced changes in their new and strange world. They were not to lose hope. They dreamed of returning home someday. One day their dream would come true. God knew the plans he had for them. They were plans for good, not for evil. He gave them a future and a hope.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

How do life’s changes affect you? Does your trust in God’s power and plan give you hope and help you to meet changes?

is wrong for him to do, and yet he goes ahead and does it, then it is a sin for him to do it.

What did Paul tell the Christians at Rome about this matter?

DO NOT JUDGE YOUR BROTHER

The church at Rome had two groups. Paul called the first group strong in the faith and the other group weak in the faith. The strong in the faith believed they were free in Christ. They could eat any meat that was good to eat. The weak in the faith still held to some of the old rules. They believed they sinned if they ate meat which had been sacrificed to idols. They had a bad feeling about it because they were weak in their faith. Paul told the Christians at Rome not to find fault with one another. God did not make them judges of one another. God himself would be their judge. “....What God has cleansed, you must not call common” (Acts 10:15). Common means ceremonially unclean.

DO NOT MAKE YOUR BROTHER FAIL

Read verses 14-18 again. Most people today know about football (soccer). There is a referee, and there are two teams. Perhaps one team is a well-trained team, but the other team is much weaker. The weaker team would not dare even to play, if the stronger team began to “play rough” during the first half session. The stronger team would be encouraging the weaker team and establishing good relations. If they had been rough to start with, they would have destroyed the weaker team’s confidence and courage.

So it should be with Christians. Stronger Christians should be very careful what they do. If an action causes a weak Christian to stumble and doubt Christ, then do not do that thing. Show the weaker Christians how to live a Christian life. Teach him how to build his faith in Christ. Help him to grow spiritually.

When a person becomes a Christian, he is not mature. He must grow. He is a baby spiritually. We all understand that a

CHAPTER 12 WALKING IN LOVE

AIM: A study of the lesson will help me help weaker Christians.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 14:1-15:6; 1 Corinthians 8

VERSE IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 14:10-23

MEMORY VERSE: *"Then let us no more pass judgement on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother."* Romans 14:13

Some Christians are strong in their beliefs. Others are weak in their beliefs and weak in their practice of their beliefs.

A young man named John, arrived at a secondary school for the first term. He was very small in stature. Some students made fun of him because of his size.

John was a believer. Other Christians in school began to help him. He did not know English, but he tried very hard. The Christians were kind to him. They encouraged him. It caused John to become a strong Christian.

THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS

Read Romans 14:10-23. Some of the church members in Rome were weak Christians. Some were strong Christians. Some of the weak members were Jewish converts. They had been taught not to eat certain kinds of meat. Now they were Christians. What should they do? They decided it would be a sin for them to begin to eat all kinds of meat. They wanted to feel right in their hearts and in their daily practice of their religion.

The eating of meat does not save a person. Neither does eating meat make a man sin. But if a person thinks something

Can you accept changes and make the most of them? Will you listen for God's Word and not be led astray by false leaders? Do you have hope, trusting God to carry out his will in the world?

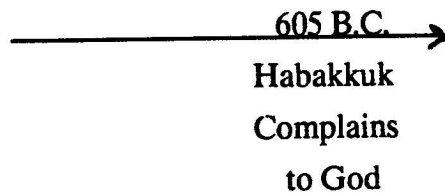
Pray for God's help in these matters.

CHAPTER 2 FOR THE TEACHER

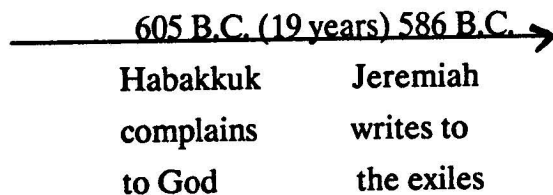
TEACHING AIM: Life is constant change. I want my students to experience a deep faith in God so they can live with change knowing God is in control.

TEACHING AIDS: You will begin today to develop a time line. For this you will need a rather long piece of paper. Take sheets of paper and put them together with paste or glue or tape or pins. Put this up on the wall where all the students can see it each time the class meets.

Draw a long line across the paper. This is the time line. Draw one line down and under it write: "Habakkuk complains to God." Your line will look like this



During the lesson, you will add another event, so that at the end of the lesson your time line will look like this:



Be sure your line looks like the first line at the beginning of the lesson. During the lesson you will add the second event. Save this time line to use again next week. When you finish the line in three weeks, you will have four events written on it.

Also, have small papers and pencils ready to use.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Each one of us has a spiritual gift. I am going to read a list of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives. This is not a complete list, but it is nearly so. It includes the gifts listed in this chapter of Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. I will give some explanation for some of the gifts. When I finish reading the list, we will go over the list again, and I want each of us to prayerfully think of people in this class or in our church who have this gift. When I go over the list the second time, I want you to say that person's name that you feel has the gift I have named."

Now, using the list in Teaching Aids, read the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For prophecy explain that this is preaching or sharing the gospel of Jesus. "Spiritual discernment" is the ability to recognize the spirits. "Exhortation" is not only to strengthen, it is to encourage as well. "Shepherding" is caring for others in ways like visiting the elderly and the sick. "Knowledge" is knowing many things. "Wisdom" is the ability to use knowledge. "Leadership" is the ability to lead groups of people.

This should be a spiritual experience for your class. Some of them may deny that they have a certain gift that others recognize in them. Assure them that others will often recognize our gifts before we do.

Close the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts God has given each of you.

the teacher and themselves as well. If your class is new or has only new Christians, they may not be able to answer the question at all, or they may say that the pastor has a gift for preaching.

After the discussion say: "God through the Holy Spirit has given every one of us gifts, spiritual gifts. That is what our lesson is about today."

Interpretation

Have the class open their Bibles to Romans 12. Have someone read the first two verses. Say: "This chapter was written both to individual Christians and to the body of Christians which is the church. These first two verses are to the individual. What do these verses tell us to do?" (Present your bodies as living sacrifices.)

Ask: "How can we present our bodies as living sacrifices?" Give time for discussion, and lead the class to determine that Paul means that they are to give their lives every day to his service and honour.

Ask: "What does it mean to be conformed to this world?" (It means to be just like everyone else in the world.)

Ask: "How can we be transformed by the renewing of our minds?" (by Bible study, by talking with other Christians, etc.)

Have someone read verses 3-8. Say: "A little later in this lesson we are going to spend some time on the spiritual gifts that God gives us. Just now, let us notice that Paul said that we are to use our gifts to build up the body. Every gift we have is to be used to build up the church which is the body of Christ."

Have Romans 12:9-21 read. Say: "These verses tell us how we are to behave as Christians. Name one characteristic of the Christians." Allow the adults to name each characteristic given in these verses (be loving, be generous, weep with the sad, pay back bad with good, etc.) Make sure they name each of the characteristics named here.

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

The events in this lesson from Jeremiah 29:1-11 happened about nine or ten years after Habakkuk went up on the watchtower (from your last lesson). The Chaldeans (Babylonians) had conquered the city of Jerusalem and had taken captive the remnants of the royal family, skilled craftsmen and scholars. These captives had been taken to Babylon.

After the captives had been in Babylon for a few years, they were given considerable freedom to move about the city. Among the exiles were some bad prophets. These prophets were telling the people that they would soon return to Jerusalem. This false prophecy was causing unrest among the exiles. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles to tell them to face the changes that had come into their lives.

Verses 1-3 tell how the letter was sent to Babylon. Elasah was probably the brother of Ahikam who stood up for Jeremiah when he had been arrested (in earlier chapters). Gemariah had the privilege of hearing Baruch read the scroll in his chamber. (See chapter 36:10)

These two men were probably sent to Nebuchadnezzar from King Zedekiah to carry tribute (tax) to the conquerors. Jeremiah sent his letter with them.

Verses 4-7 begin the letter. They begin with the words, "Thus says the Lord of hosts," which is the usual way prophecies were begun. The Lord told the Jewish people that they were to settle in Babylon. They would not be coming back to Jerusalem until seventy years had passed. Seventy is one of the numbers in the Bible which means a perfect number. This means that the Lord did not say they would return in exactly seventy years, but rather at the future time that he decided on.

Verses 8-9 are a warning against the false prophets living among the exiles.

Verses 10-11 gave assurance from the Lord that the people were still his chosen people. He had not forgotten them, and he was still making plans for them.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "In chapter one we discussed what we do when we get into trouble. We find that some of us talk to friends, to our wives or husbands, to our pastor or to God. When we talk about our problems, we can usually get help. The best source for help is God himself. We always need to pray about every problem. Our lesson today teaches us that God is always concerned about his people.

"The Memory Verse for today is a verse of encouragement. I want us to write this verse down on paper. Put it some place where you can see it often. It will reassure you."

Give the paper and pencils to the adults. You write the verse on the chalkboard or on large paper, and they will copy what you have written. If you have people who cannot read, let someone else copy the verse for them.

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles. Ask one to read Jeremiah 29:1-3. Say: "Last week we studied about Habakkuk and how he talked to God about the conditions existing in Judah. What did God tell him?" (God told him that the Chaldeans or Babylonians would conquer the Jewish people.)

Say: "Look at this time line I have drawn. We see that Habakkuk complained to God about 605 B.C. B.C. means before the birth of Christ, and the years are numbered backwards. Soon after God spoke to Habakkuk the Babylonians came in and conquered Jerusalem. Many of the most important members of the city were carried away to Babylon to live in captivity.

"The Jews had been in Babylon for a few years when Jeremiah wrote the letter that these verses tell about. They were not happy there. They wanted to go home. Among them

Each Christian has been given at least one gift by the Holy Spirit. Some have been given more than one gift. All of the gifts are to be used for the good of the church. That is the reason the gifts have been given. God makes complete, whole bodies. Our churches need to see the spiritual gifts of their members and let them do the work of the body.

Romans 12:9-21 tells us individually and as a whole (as a church) how we are to behave toward one another.

First, we must genuinely love one another. This is difficult in many churches today. People do not even know one another. How can they love one another.

We are to hate what is evil. It has been said that people fear the consequences of sin but do not hate sin. When sin has the ability to shock us, then we are in a condition to hate it.

We are to outdo one another in showing honour to each other. This means putting the other person before ourselves, giving him first place. We are to be eagerly serving at all times. Christians must faithfully do God's work for as long as the Lord gives them strength.

We are to be liberal in our giving, and open our houses to others. We are to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. This is a form of generosity. Many times we envy those who have cause for rejoicing and cannot rejoice with them. This is wrong. We are also to weep with those who are weeping. This is also difficult to do.

We are to leave revenge to the Lord. If someone has done evil to us, we are to repay him with good and leave the accounting to God.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Can you think of someone in our church who has a special gift from God?"

If your class has been meeting a long time, they may begin to name many people with gifts from the Lord, including you

CHAPTER 11 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to begin to use their God-given gifts for the good of the church.

TEACHING AIDS: You will need the following list of spiritual gifts: prophecy, spiritual discernment, exhortation, shepherding, faith, evangelism, apostleship, miracles, helps, mercy, giving, healing, wisdom, knowledge, teaching, leadership.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 12 gives directions to the individual and to the church as a body.

Romans 12:1-2 are often quoted verses. Paul urged Christians to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God. A living sacrifice indicates that we are to give our entire lives to God as a worship experience. Many people think of worship as that time when we go away from the world into the church to pray, sing and hear a sermon. Paul, however, was saying that we must give our lives everyday to God as worship. How can we do that? We do it in the Christian sharing we do, in the love we show to others, in the care with which we live with others.

Paul said that we are not to take on the appearance of the world. Instead we are to be changed by the constant renewing of our minds. This is done through walking with God, praying, reading the Bible, having conversation with Christian friends and trusting God.

Romans 12:3-8 talks to the church. All of us are part of one body. In a human body, the hand is not ever angry with the neck. The foot does not think of itself as better than the nose. The whole body works together for the good of the entire body.

were some false prophets who were telling them that they would soon go home. This was not God's plan so he told Jeremiah to write to them. Let us read verses 4-7 now and see what God advised the Jews to do."

Have the verses read, then say: "The prophecies were always begun with the words, 'Thus says the Lord.' This showed the Jews that the words were God's. What did God tell the people to do?" Let the adults talk about this. Conclude with them that he said for them to forget about going home for a while and face up to the changes in their lives.

Ask: "Why did God tell them to pray for Babylon?" (To show that he would hear and answer their prayers even if they were not prayed from Jerusalem.)

Have verses 8 and 9 read. Say: "These false prophets were leading the people astray. Do you see how this teaching would disrupt the peace?" Let the students talk about this.

Have verses 10-11 read. Say: "Then God gave the Jews the comforting words here. He would return the Jews to Jerusalem. He had plans for them. How reassuring that must have been for these exiles!"

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Now we will add to our time line." Add the years and events as shown in your teaching aids section.

Say: "You will note that the number of years decrease as time moves on. We will add events to this time line for the next two weeks.

"God still has plans for his children. When we have to face changes, we may think sometimes that God has put us somewhere and forgotten us. That is never the case. He loves us and will always be there as the changes come. One of the greatest changes we see is the aging of our own bodies. Other changes come as our nation progresses. God loves us through all the changes that come to us. What are some of the changes that you have had to face? Did God see you through them?" Give the students time to discuss these questions. Then pray that God will continue to help the adults in your class to live strong Christian lives in the midst of change.

CHAPTER 3 KEEPING THE FAITH

AIM: I will learn that I need to keep my faith strong and true.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Daniel 1, 6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Daniel 1:3,5, 9-10, 18-19:
6:10, 21-22

MEMORY VERSE: *"...Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God."* Daniel 3:28

A few years back, John and his family moved to a new country. They found very few Baptist churches there. This did not stop them from attending church. They kept their faith and finally found themselves starting a Baptist church in their new city.

Nebuchadnezzar captured Judah. He carried the strongest Hebrews to Babylon. They lived in a strange country. Jeremiah, the prophet, told them to make Babylon their home. Could they keep their faith in God?

YOUNG HEBREWS CHOSEN FOR TRAINING

Read Daniel 1:3-5, 9-10, 18-19; 6:10, 21-22. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted some Hebrew boys to be trained so that they would serve in his court. "I want some young Hebrew men. They must be strong, healthy, well-educated, smart, quick to learn, and they must also be good looking," the king told his main steward, Ashpenaz.

The young Hebrews were to be taught the civilization of the captors. For three years they were to learn how to read and write the Chaldean way. The boys were privileged to live and eat in the king's palace. King Nebuchadnezzar would test the

teach them to do good to those who wrong them. They were to conquer evil with good."

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Remember that God gives every Christian a gift or gifts, to use in serving him. Do you know your gift? Also ask God to help you use your gift as you live your reconciled life.

2. **Serving (verse 7).** This gift enables Christians to help people in need. Let us call it ministry, serving others.
3. **Teaching (verse 7).** This gift enables Christians to tell others about the Lord, explaining the Scriptures.
4. **Exhorting (verse 8)-encouraging.** The preacher or speaker for God was also to encourage others. He was to encourage the people to serve God with their whole hearts.
5. **Contributing-sharing (verse 8)** The gift enables a Christian to share what he has with others. He shares money, love and mercy in a happy, loving way.

LOVE IN DAILY LIVING

Read Romans 12:9-21. Verses 9-13 give ideas about how Christians can get along together. Look for ways to live your reconciled life.

Christians should hate the wrong and hold on to the good. They should be honest with one another, especially in love.

We live in days of "make-believe" love on cinema and radio. But we need honest love as we relate to one another. We should show the spirit of serving the Lord with great excitement and enthusiasm.

When Christians have times of trouble, they should pray, be patient and even rejoice. This can happen because of their hope in Jesus Christ. They should share what they have with others in need. The early Christians were urged to welcome overnight travelers into their homes. It was an opportunity to witness and share the love of Jesus.

LOVE FOR OTHERS

The Christians at Rome were urged to love one another. Christians suffered persecution in many places just as we do today. Paul said to them, "Pray for your persecutors to be saved." Probably most of them found it hard to do that. But Paul quotes Old Testament Scripture in Verse 20 to strongly

boys. He would choose the best men to serve on his palace staff.

Daniel and his friends were chosen for training. They were given new Chaldean names. (See verses 6-7.) Daniel was to be called Belteshazzar, Hananiah would be Shadrach, Mishael was to be Meshach and Azariah would be called Abednego.

DANIEL'S REQUEST

Because of Moses's special food law Daniel decided that he and his friends would not eat the king's food and wine. (Read verse 8.) They would not compromise their faith in God. Daniel asked the king's steward to let them eat vegetables and drink water. They wanted to keep God's laws.

This was Daniel's first test of faith. He took a chance on losing the favour of the king. "It is more important to obey God than to obey the king," Daniel decided.

In verses 9-10, we see that the steward in charge of the young Hebrews liked Daniel. He was ready to accept Daniel's request, but he was afraid. He thought Daniel and his friend would not look as good as the other boys. God put a tender feeling in the steward's heart. But he was afraid for his life if the boys did not look good.

Daniel told the steward to give them vegetables and water for only ten days, and he could then judge if the boys were healthy. If not, they would take the king's food and wine. After ten days the four boys were stronger and healthier and looked better than the others. So the steward let them keep on eating only vegetables and water.

THE FOUR MEN CHOSEN

The young Hebrews lived on simple food and water for three years. They grew stronger, learnt all that was taught them and then came before King Nebuchadnezzar who tested them.

Daniel and his three friends were chosen over all the others. They looked healthier and stronger. They were ten times

wiser than all the wise men in Chaldea. God gave them the ability to learn and remember what they learnt. God also gave Daniel the ability to tell the meaning of visions and dreams.

Daniel got a high pass mark in his first test of his faith. His plan to stand for truth made him stronger.

HE DID NOT COMPROMISE

Daniel's tests were not over. It was only the beginning. Read Daniel 6:1-9 again. It tells of another test of faith for Daniel.

Daniel prayed daily to God. When Darius, the Mede, became king he chose Daniel to be head prince, which is similar to Prime Minister today. The other princes, cabinet ministers, did not like Daniel. They tried to find something wrong, so they could get him removed. They were defeated. Finally they decided that they would have to find something wrong in his religion. They could not find anything wrong. Daniel was faithful to God and to King Darius.

When they found no way to accuse Daniel they decided to plan a law that had to do with worshipping the king for thirty days. So they talked the king into passing this new law. All people had to ask the king for whatever they wanted. If they asked anyone else, even God, for anything they would be thrown into the lion's den! The other princes were very happy with the trap they had laid for Daniel. Would he be true to God?

Daniel knew about the new law of King Darius, but he refused to compromise his faith in God. Daniel continued to kneel by his window which faced towards Jerusalem. He prayed to God three times each day.

THE LAWS OF THE MEDES AND PERSIANS

The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be done away with once they were written. The princes went to King Darius and told him about Daniel praying to his God. King Darius realized he had fallen into a trap himself, for he loved Daniel very much and could trust him. The king knew the others

Paul wanted the Christians at Rome to learn how to love God better. He wanted them to get along together. He wanted them to live the reconciled life. Read Romans 12:1-5 to learn the meaning of the reconciled life.

ONE BODY IN CHRIST

Christians, the believers in Christ, live the reconciled life. They become the body of Christ.

Paul wrote that the church is like a human body. A body has many parts. It has hands, ears and feet. A body needs all its parts. Each part helps in a different way.

All Christians are one in Christ. One church has thirty members. A larger church has members exceeding one hundred. Another has several hundred members. Each group of Christians is a part of Christ's body.

Whether a church has a few, or many, members, each member should have a job to do. We must not think too much about ourselves. We need one another. (See verses 3-5) When we work together, we can do God's work. God gives each Christian a gift or gifts to use in serving him.

USE GOD'S GIFTS

God gives each Christian a gift or gifts. Read Romans 12:6-8. We have these gifts by God's grace (unmerited favour) to build up the church. When we use our gifts, we help the church to grow.

God has given a gift to a blind beggar at the city center in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. He reads his Bible with his fingers and people walking on the street are really amazed. He witnesses to Moslems who would never go to church or listen to anyone else. Although he is blind this beggar is busy witnessing for God.

What gifts does God give Christians? Paul wrote to the Romans about these gifts.

1. Prophesying (verse 6). This gift enables a person to speak for God. Let us call it preaching.

CHAPTER 11 THE RECONCILED LIFE

AIM: This lesson will teach me about the gifts of the Spirit and how they are to be used.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 12

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 12:1-21

MEMORY VERSE: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* Romans 12:21

Do you know when your church started?

A church in southern Tanzania started in 1970 when two men began to worship in their home village. They had been members of a church twelve miles away.

To start the church they distributed many tracts. They witnessed to more than 30 village youth and elders. These eventually accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and became a church.

The church was meeting every Sunday. One man was the secretary while the other was the church leader. Many other youths gave themselves for service in the church.

Everyone in that Church had a job to do, and it was all necessary. Not everyone stood in front of the church and preached, but all worked. The girls, for instance, walked a long way down the hill to bring water from the river. This water was used for sprinkling the floor in the dusty building they were using.

Someone may wonder why two people decided to start a church that would not have a trained pastor or even someone who had gone through any kind of training. They loved God, and they knew they could learn to love him better. They knew they could learn to love God better if they had a church in their own village.

were filled with jealousy. He did not want to put Daniel in the lion's den, but he had to.

GOD SAVED DANIEL

Darius worried about Daniel all night. In the early morning, Darius went to the lions' den and called out to Daniel. Daniel told the king that God's angel shut the mouths of the lions so they did not hurt him. Daniel did not sin against God or against the king.

Daniel passed another test. He kept his faith in God. He did right when many persons around him sinned.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

What will you lose if you compromise your faith in God? How much will you think of yourself? Will you gain true friends? Will you help more people follow God? Will God approve what you do? Ask God to help you stay true to him.

CHAPTER 3 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: Many Christians fail to practise their faith. I want my students to begin to exercise their faith more often and with greater effect.

TEACHING AIDS: You will use the time line used last week. Leave it where the students can see it. After you use it this week it will look like the one below:

605 B.C. (19years)	586 B.C.
Habakkuk	Jeremiah
complains	writes to
to God	the exiles

You will also use the chalk board for another activity.

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

The book of Daniel is about events that happened about the same time as Jeremiah wrote his letter to the exiles. (See Chapter two.)

The king of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Jerusalem and sent its people into captivity. At first he chose only skilled craftsmen, scholars and members of the royal family. This was the first captivity. Later he came again and took other captives. Daniel was taken in the first captivity.

Daniel 3-5 tell us that the king decided to choose some pages from among the exiles. Pages are young men trained to stay in the king's presence for the purpose of doing any necessary work. It was the custom to choose youths from among captured nations so they could learn to be loyal to the king.

After the questions have been written, collect them from the students. Then, read the questions and have the students search for the answer to each.

When you have completed this exercise, say: "Let us look at Leviticus 18:5 which is the verse Paul was speaking about." Have this verse read.

Say: "Moses was talking about righteousness that was based on the law. Paul was saying that righteousness based upon faith in Jesus Christ is the way to life."

Ask: "Who ascended into heaven and was brought from the dead?" (Christ). Say: "It is not necessary for a person to do unusual acts to be saved. Christ has already done all that is necessary. All that we have to do is to proclaim that he is the Lord and believe that God has raised him from the dead. That is all. God through Christ Jesus has done everything else that needs doing for us to be saved."

Ask the class to turn to Romans 11:33-36. Have these verses read. Say: "These verses completed all that Paul had been writing about the meaning of the revelation of God through Christ. He seems to have realized that his words might not have been adequate to explain the wonder of this great revelation. So Paul simply praised God and stood in awe at the wisdom and knowledge of God. This is like a hymn that Paul sang to the greatness of the glory of God."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "The song: 'His Banner Over Us Is Love' says that I love you and you love me, but the great banner over all of us is God's love. I love you because of God. You love me because of God. Nations love other nations only through God's love. It is sad that in today's world, very little of God's love is seen. Yes, we see it around the church buildings on Sundays, but do we see it in the market place on Tuesday? Do we see it when the leaders of nations meet together? "Who is responsible that God's love be shared with all men everywhere? It is our responsibility. We need to share God's love with everyone every chance that we have. How many people did you tell about Jesus? I pray that we will become busy in sharing God's love with everyone."

End the class meeting with prayer.

In verses 11-13 Paul showed that salvation is for everyone. "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." All have sinned, and all can have salvation. Even the Gentile has the same opportunity for salvation that the Jew has. There is no difference in God's sight.

Romans 11:33-36 is like a hymn. Paul was bringing together all of his thinking about Christ that he had given in the other chapters of Romans. Perhaps at this point Paul realized that all he had said was inadequate. He wanted to say more, but realized he was unable to do so. He said that there was nothing left to do but to accept Christ and to adore him. Much of this scripture was from the Old Testament and mixed Greek thought and Hebrew thought so that he could praise God in a satisfactory way.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Ask: "Who can be saved?" Let the class discuss this. Help them conclude that anyone, anywhere can be saved.

Say: "Our lesson today is about the salvation that comes to all of us when we accept Jesus."

Interpretation

Say: "Today we are going to study our lesson in a different way. I am going to give each one of you a paper and a pencil. I want you to open your Bibles to Romans 10:5-13. When you find those verses, I want you to read them to yourself, then I want you to write down some questions about this passage. You may write as many questions as you want to."

Give the class as much time as they need. If you have those in your class who can not read nor write, have them work with someone who can read and write. They can think of questions just as easily as those who can read and write.

Move around the class and help if you need to. You might read a verse and suggest a question about it. Some questions might be: Who wrote these verses? What is meant by practising righteousness? What is righteousness based on faith? How can we be saved? Can everyone be saved?

Ashpenaz was the chief of the eunuchs. He was in charge of the royal harem. He also trained the pages.

The pages chosen were from the sons of the king as well as from among his nephews and other kinsmen. They were to be especially intelligent and good-looking. It was necessary that they learn the language of the Babylonians so they could serve well in the king's court. All the wisdom of the Babylonians would be taught them.

As pages, the Jewish boys would be fed from the king's table. This meant they would be given the same kind of food the king ate. This would be heathen food which was considered unclean by the Jewish people.

Verses 9-10 show how Jewish writing often portrays Jews as being in special favour with the officials of the kingdom. Joseph was favoured in Egypt, Esther in Ahasuerus's court and Ezra at the court of Artaxerxes. Daniel is the one in this story who found favour with the chief eunuch. In previous verses, the four boys had refused the king's food. In verse 10 the eunuch expressed his fear that the boys would not prosper well without the king's food. If they were to become sick, he would be responsible.

Verses 18-19 are about the end of the three year period of training. The youths were brought before the king. He found the four boys to be much smarter and better in every way than the other youths.

Chapter 6 of Daniel concerns Daniel at a later time in his life. The King trusted him very much. The other advisors to the king became jealous of Daniel and plotted together to get Daniel removed. They had the king sign a law that said no one could ask for anything from anyone but Darius, the King, for thirty days

Daniel 6:10 says that Daniel went ahead with his usual prayers even after the law went into effect. The lesson in the story is that God blesses those who are loyal to him.

Daniel was put into the lions' den because he broke the law. In verses 21-22 we learn that God prevented the death of Daniel by shutting the mouths of the lions. Although the king came to the den in great anxiety, he found that Daniel was in great peace among the lions.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Use the time line to begin your lesson. Ask the students: "Do you remember our time line?" Have one of them explain to the others what the time line shows. (It shows in a picture the passing of events).

Say: "Today we will add another event. This event happened at about the same time as Jeremiah wrote his letter to the exiles." Add 586 B.C. and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah to the time line as it is in 'Teaching Aids.'

Continue: "Our lesson today teaches us that we need to keep our faith strong. When we use our faith, it grows strong. The young men we will study today used their faith in God, and it made them and their faith stronger."

Interpretation

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Daniel 1. Say: "We may already know the stories in our lesson today. We will see how much we already know." Have a student read verses 3-5. Ask another student to tell when this event took place. He may need to look back at verses 1 and 2 to find out. Make sure the class understands that this is the first captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Explain that not all the Jews were taken in the first captivity. Recall with the students that Jerusalem had been ruled by bad kings. Habakkuk had asked the Lord how long the situation would go on. God answered that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) would conquer them. This happened and the people were taken away in a series of captivities.

Have someone read verses 9-10. Say: "What happened between verses 5 and 9?" Let the students look over in their

CHAPTER 10 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: My adult students will understand that God desires salvation for all men no matter what race, what colour, what sex, what financial position they occupy.

TEACHING AIDS: Paper and pencil for each member

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

Romans 10:5-13 focuses on the lordship of Christ. When Paul said that Jesus is Lord, he placed him on the same level as God. The idea of lordship was a common idea in the days that Paul lived. They called Caesar lord. The pagan gods were also called lord. This was the highest term given to anyone.

"Moses writes" refers to Leviticus 18:5 where Moses was talking about a righteousness that is based on the law. Here Paul was talking about the very opposite - a righteousness based upon faith.

"Shall live by it" might be better understood if it read "shall have life by it, or shall be saved by it."

Paul said it was not necessary for anyone to go up into heaven or descend into the grave to get salvation. That has already been done for us by Jesus himself.

All that is necessary is that a person acknowledge with his mouth that Jesus is the Lord and believe with the heart, and he will be saved. One of the first creeds was "Jesus-Lord." (A creed is a statement of one's belief.) So from the very beginning all that was necessary was to state that Jesus was the Lord. Paul said that Christians must believe with the heart that Jesus has conquered death. This seems to mean more than simple belief. Paul was saying that the life must bear evidence of belief. That is, the person must show by his living that he is part of the Christian community.

The Lord will give his riches to all, and he will save anyone who calls upon his name. Who can have faith? Anyone who calls upon the Lord to save them can be saved.

A SONG OF PRAISE

As Paul wrote about God's love and wisdom, his heart was full. The verses of Romans 11:33-36 are like a song. Paul praised God for who he is - wonderful, wise and rich. He praised God for his gifts to man.

Man was a sinner. Man was God's enemy. But God gave man the great gift of his Son, Jesus. Man often acts wrongly to other people. Some people hate others who are different. They often mistreat those who are different. But God does not act this way towards man.

God's ways are above the ways of man. Can we tell God what he ought to do? No! Can we as human beings give God anything that will please him? No! He is the eternal, all-powerful, all knowing God. What can we give him that he does not already own? He is the creator of all things. Yet he chose to give us life. He chose to give us his Son. Read verses 35-36 again. We cannot give God more than he gave us. But we can give him ourselves. We can let God use us. We can let God show love to others through us.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Jesus is always near. We can trust him. He will save us. Jesus will give us strength to live. Are you happy because Jesus loves you? Tell someone else how happy you are. Do you dislike people who are different? Why? God made them also. Do you dislike those who have more (or less) material things than you? Why? God gives all people everything they have. God also holds each one responsible for what he does with what he has. How are you using the things God has given you? Are you using them for his honour and glory?

books and their Bibles to find out. Ask: "What happened in these verses?"

Have someone read verses 18-19. Ask: "What happened between verse 9 and 18?" Then ask: "What happened in these verses?"

Ask: "What can we learn from this story?" (that the boys were faithful to God at a time when it would have been easy to be unfaithful.)

Say: "Many years later when Daniel had become a man, he was given another chance to test his faith. He had become an advisor to the king. King Nebuchadnezzar had died, and King Darius had begun to reign. King Darius loved Daniel very much and trusted him more than he trusted his other advisors. They became jealous and wanted to get rid of Daniel. What did they do?" The students will find the answer in Daniel 6. After they tell about the law, ask: "What difference would this law make to Daniel?" (He would have to choose between God and the king.)

Ask a student to read verse 10 for the class. Ask: "Was Daniel faithful to God?" After the students answer, ask: "Was this a difficult thing for Daniel to do?" Let the students discuss this for a few minutes. Ask: "What was the punishment that Daniel would suffer?"

Have a student read verses 21-22. Ask: "What happened to Daniel?" After the students answer, ask: "Was he at peace with himself after his long night in the den?" Then, ask: "Who was the anxious one?" (Darius)

Say: "Daniel again proved to be faithful to God. And his faith made him stronger."

Write the following list on the chalkboard or on paper:

Daniel refuses to obey the king's law.

The boys refuse the king's food.

The Jewish boys are chosen.

King Nebuchadnezzar decides to have pages chosen.

Daniel prays to God.

The chief eunuch asks the boys to eat the king's food.

The boys become smarter and better than the others.

Daniel spends the night with lions.

The king finds Daniel safe.

Tell the students that the events are not in the right order. As a revision of the lesson, they will number them in the order in which they occurred.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "What does our lesson teach us about the way that we should live?" Allow discussion.

Ask: "How do we exercise our faith?" (by witnessing to others, attending church, studying the Bible, teaching others, etc.)

Say: "I challenge you to practise your faith this week."

Close with prayer

Read verse 5 again. What it really means is to keep or obey every part of the law. If a person becomes righteous by obeying the law, he has to obey it all, and no one can do that. The Jews failed to become right with God. They depended on the law to save them.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

Read verses 6-7 again. People did not need to try to bring Christ down from heaven. He lived on earth. They did not need to look for him in the resting place of the dead. God raised him from the dead. If they based their salvation on trusting Christ, they did not have to search for it. It was as near as their mouths and hearts.

CONFESS AND BELIEVE

Many people believe verse 9 was a statement of faith in the early church. A person had to make this statement to become a church member.

A person confessed that Jesus Christ was his Lord, and this would show that he trusted God. He had faith in God when he confessed that God raised Jesus from death. This saved him.

A person shows that his faith is in his heart when he confesses Jesus as Saviour. His confession says that he was saved from that time. It tells that he is on the Lord's side. He is not ashamed to tell anyone that he is a believer in Christ.

If this is true, why do you see so many Christians today who are ashamed to tell anyone they are believers? Could it be that these people are not Christians at all?

JEWS AND GENTILES

God loved the Jews. He still loves them today. The Jews were God's chosen people long ago. God gave them special promises. But we are not saved because of what we are. Our salvation depends only on what we believe and do about Jesus. Man cannot be saved in any other way. We can be saved only by putting our faith in Jesus.

CHAPTER 10
TOGETHER UNDER GOD

AIM: This lesson will teach me that all people can be saved.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 10:1-13; 11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 10:5-13; 11:33-36

MEMORY VERSE: *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him."* Romans 10:12

Relationships between different races is an age-old problem. It has caused fights, broken homes and even started wars. Long ago, the Jews thought God did not like Gentiles, because they were not Jews. This was wrong.

Recently, some Christian were singing a chorus, "His Banner Over Me Is Love." A Jewish girl was singing. There were also Americans (black and white), British, Irish, Africans - Kikuyu, Wakamba, Jalu, Meru, Wanyakyusa, Wasambaa, Zambians, Asians, Arabs, all singing, "His Banner Over Me is Love." It is a miracle of God's love that all people of any race or colour may be together, sheltered under God's great love.

The Jews had a problem. They did not love Gentiles. Paul learnt that God loves Gentiles. Paul wrote the church at Rome. He wanted them to know that God loves all people, without partiality. Paul also wanted all people to be made right with God.

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW

Read Romans 10:1-13. Paul showed in Romans 10:1-4, how much he wanted his Jewish brothers to be saved. But he said the Jews could not gain "Righteousness" by obeying the law. "Righteousness" means right standing with God. The Jews tried to be righteous by being good. They thought gain God's righteousness by their own efforts. They thought Paul said they could not earn their own righteousness,

CHAPTER 4
SUSTAINED BY HOPE

AIM: This lesson teaches that I need never lose hope.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 32; Ezra 1

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Jeremiah 32:6-11; Ezra 1:1-4

MEMORY VERSE: *"And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever toward Israel...'* Ezra 3:11

Peter faced the darkest time of his life. He had tuberculosis, and the doctor told him he had three months to live since his lungs were bad. Unlike most people, Peter could see his life's destination.

As a strong believer what did he do when the doctor talked to him? Do you think he gave up?

No! His strong faith and hope in the Lord kept him alive. The three months went by, and he was still alive. And he lived for more than three years. All of us face hard times. World problems and our own problems cause us to lose courage. What can we do when others lose hope and want to quit? We can prove we will still have hope.

Jeremiah proved his hope when others wanted to quit. What did he do? Read Jeremiah 32:6-11 to find how Jeremiah proved his hope.

JUDAH'S DARK HOUR

Jeremiah lived during Judah's darkest hour. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jerusalem. He took gold from the temple. He took ten thousand of Judah's best people as captives. He asked Zedekiah to rule in Jerusalem. Zedekiah put Jeremiah in jail for telling the truth!

The prophet said Jerusalem would fall to Babylon, Zedekiah would be captured and taken to Jerusalem where he would

be kept until the Lord visited him. The Hebrews could fight Babylon, but they would not win. At that time Jeremiah had a message. "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar." (Jeremiah 32:1)

GOD'S MESSAGE

Jeremiah received a message from God to buy a piece of land when he was in prison. People usually did not buy land in such bad times. They would buy land when they believed they could pay for it. They wanted to be able to use the land to help themselves. But Jeremiah was in prison, and Judah was controlled by Babylon. Why should he buy land?

God told Jeremiah that his cousin, Hanamel, would come to him and ask him to buy his land in Anathoth, Jeremiah's home town. Jeremiah was next in line in the family to buy the land. How did God's message help Jeremiah and the other Hebrews? Did Jeremiah obey God?

Jeremiah believed God. He trusted him to do what he said he would do. God's message encouraged Jeremiah. God showed Jeremiah that he still had a purpose for Judah. The prophet bought the land from his cousin.

GOD GAVE REASONS FOR HOPE

The years passed, Jeremiah died and God's people stayed in Babylon. They built homes, went into business and raised their families. But they did not forget Judah and Jerusalem. Many of them still wanted to go home. God kept their hope alive.

JEREMIAH'S HOPE REALIZED

Read Ezra 1:1-4 again. Cyrus of Persia defeated Babylon. God used Cyrus, a heathen king. God stirred up the spirit of Persia's king. Cyrus made a rule, put it in writing, and had it proclaimed all over his kingdom.

"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he

Application To Our Lives

Write on the board these words:

When trouble comes the mature Christian baby Christian

Say: "Our lesson today has been about hope and trouble. It tells us how we are to react when trouble comes. Let us complete the sentence on the board. Spend some time letting your students name the ways that mature Christians should react, then some time listing the ways that spiritual babes react. Your list may look something like this:

When trouble comes the:

Mature Christian

Baby Christian

praises God

Complains

endures

grumbles

hopes

cries

is patient

blames God

prays

blames others

finds good in it

quits going to church

accepts it

fight

sings

fusses

Let your list develop as the students make it. After you have finished, ask: "Which are you, the mature Christian, or the baby Christian? We should try to meet each trial with patience, endurance and hope. Let us pray."

After each person who wishes to do so has shared, say: "We all go through sufferings. The bad things in our lives are caused by sin. It may not be our own sin, but it is the evil that is in the world that causes our sufferings. Today we will read words of hope that Paul wrote. In the lesson we should learn how we are to react when trials and tribulations come to us."

Interpretation

Ask the class to open their Bibles to Romans 8:18. Have verses 18-25 read aloud. Say: "Paul says that the sufferings that we are presently enduring are nothing to be compared to the glory that will be our reward. Many times when we suffer we complain like little children about what is happening to us. We cry and grumble, but God expects us to remember what our future holds. Even nature, the fields, the trees and the rivers are waiting with eagerness for the time when Christ will come in his glory."

"Genesis 3:17-18 tell us that all of creation suffered when man fell into sin." Have these verses read. Say: "The end of the travail will come when Christ returns to the earth. This is our hope. Romans 8:25 tells us how we are to go through the trials of this life. How?" (with patience or endurance) Say: "If we suffer with endurance and patience we are behaving as mature Christians, not spiritual babies."

Have verse 26 and 27 read. Say: "These two wonderful verses tell us that the Holy Spirit helps us when we pray. How does he help?" (He interprets what we want to say to our Father.)

Ask: "Who is the Holy Spirit?" (He is the third person of the Godhead.) Say: "Since he is God, he is able to know us and God and explain our yearning and desires to God."

Have someone read verses 28-39. Say: "Here our hope is made clear. God works in everything that happens to bring good to his children. He has always known us, and he has always loved us. What can separate us from God's love?" (Let the class conclude that nothing can separate us from God's love.)

has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel - he is the God who is in Jerusalem," (Ezra 1:2-3).

Cyrus said that all Jews who did not go should give a money offering to help the others. The Jews in Babylon should pay the cost of travel, food, clothes and other things needed for the trip. They should also give an offering for the temple.

The happy people returned to Judah. They carried no idols or gods with them. They went home to rebuild the temple of their God. They wanted to worship God in Jerusalem. God blessed them for not losing hope.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

You, too, live in a dark hour. Many people have no jobs. Many are sick, lonely and hungry. You find people near you with many other needs. What can you do to help? You can be friendly and cheerful. Offer to help anyone you can help. Do what you can to find help for the others. Above all, show that your hope is in Jesus Christ. Tell people about Jesus so they may have hope.

**CHAPTER 4
FOR THE TEACHER**

TEACHING AIM: My students need to know that God is strong and able to see them through all their troubles.

TEACHING AIDS: You will use a time line again. After you add this week's event, your time line will look like this:

605 B.C. (19 years) 586 B.C. 587 B.C. (55 years) 538 B.C.

Habakkuk	Jeremiah	Jeremiah	The exiles
complains	writes to	in	return
to God	the exiles	Prison	to
			Jerusalem
	Daniel		
	Hananiah		
	Mishael		
	Azariah		

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

The two Scriptures, Jeremiah 32:6-11 and Ezra 1:1-4, in today's lesson are separated by many years. The Jeremiah incident occurred just about the time that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, 587 B.C. The Ezra event happened in 538 B.C. fifty-five years later. The very fact that they are separated by time is of importance to this lesson because in the Jeremiah account, hope and faith in God is expressed. In the Ezra event, hope and faith are realized.

In Jeremiah 32:6-11 we read that Jeremiah was in prison. Babylon had besieged the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah received a message from God. The message said that a piece of land belonging to the family of Jeremiah was about to be sold.

how to pray, we can tell the Holy Spirit who will pray for us. He knows the mind of God and can make intercession for us. God, too, knows the mind of the Spirit and will understand the prayers the Holy Spirit makes on our behalf. The Holy Spirit is God's own Spirit, one of the three persons that make up the Godhead.

Romans 8:28-39 are the wonderful verses that carry the theme of the believer's hope.

Verse 28 tells us that God works in everything for our good. Nothing that happens to us is unknown and unused by God for our good.

Verse 29 can appear to be saying that God chooses some men to be his and does not choose others. This is not true. Free will belongs to man and God never takes it away. What is happening here is that Paul was telling us how well God knows us and how well he has planned for us. He continues this explanation in verse 30. He speaks of how those who come to the Lord are to become like his Son. They are to become like brothers to the Son, sharing his glory.

Verse 31 through 39 tell the reader that if we are on God's side, nothing can be successful against us. Paul recalled Abraham in Verse 32 when he said that God (like Abraham) was willing to give up his only Son for us. Nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God. He loves us through every trial and tribulation, through every sin, through every sickness, through every temptation that we face. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Has anyone here ever suffered in any way?" Allow your members to tell of times they have suffered. They may tell of sickness, of death of a loved one, of financial loss, of trouble in the family over the ownership of land, of a house burning, of a daughter or son disappearing or many other problems.

CHAPTER 9 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that they can welcome struggles and hard times into their lives since these are times when God will strengthen their faith.

TEACHING AIDS: Chalkboard and chalk.

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

Romans 8:18-25 tells of the future time when the sin that dominates the world will no longer have power. The sufferings of the present time are brought by sin and are shared by nature itself.

Genesis 3:17-18 says, "...Because you....have eaten of the tree...cursed is the ground because of you; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you."

When man fell because of sin, all of nature fell, too. These verses tell us that the whole of creation is groaning because of the sin of the world. The picture is that of a mother giving birth in great pain.

But there is a great promise in these verses. At a future time, when Christ comes in his glory, nature will be set free from the sin and evil that holds it in bondage now.

Verse 22 tells that we have the first fruits of the Spirit. These were received at Pentecost, and are received again each time a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Verses 24 and 25 tell us that if we endure with patience we will see our hope realized. That hope is that Christ will indeed come in power and glory. That is a sure and certain hope.

Verses 26 and 27 are very precious verses that Paul has written. During the present suffering that all of us must endure, we have the Spirit to help us. When we do not know

The laws of the Jews concerning land are in Leviticus. If it was at all possible, a family kept the land that it owned. Only in very critical situations would the family consider selling their land. They would call in even a very distant relative to take the land just to keep it in the family. This was the case in these verses.

Jeremiah's uncle, Shallum, was having a difficult time because of the siege. Land values had gone down. Nobody would buy land that was about to be occupied by another nation. Many people, however, were trying to sell their land. Remembering the Levitical law, Shallum sent his son, Hanamel to see if Jeremiah would buy the land so it would remain in the family.

Jeremiah bought the land, even though at the time it was worthless. But the act had very much significance. Jeremiah was saying to the world that one day the land would return to the people. God would see that the conquerors were overthrown. It did not matter to Jeremiah that this would probably happen after his death.

Ezra 1:1-4 takes place after Jeremiah's death. Cyrus of Persia had conquered Babylon. "Now in the first year of Cyrus" does not mean his first year as king of Persia, but rather his first year as king of Babylon.

God stirred the heart of this Gentile king. This shows again the power of God over the Gentile world.

"The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" means that God would fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy that the people would return from exile in Babylon.

Verses 2-4 tells that Cyrus decreed that the Jews might begin to return to Jerusalem. Thus, God had done what he had promised his people he would do.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Ask: "Have you ever lost hope about anything?" Allow the students to discuss this. Let them relate experiences when

they lost hope. Or, they may want to tell times when it would have been easy to lose hope, but they held on. Remember that you are teaching adults. Adults may take the conversation in new directions. Your job is to stay within the subject of losing or keeping hope.

Say: "We all face very dark times in our lives. We experience illness or the death of a loved one. We may lose our jobs or our health may fail. At such times it is easy to lose hope. It is easy to forget that God will be with us and help us in all our trials and troubles. Our lesson today is about the darkest time in the history of Jerusalem when Jeremiah refused to lose hope."

Interpretation

Point to the time line in the room. Say: "The events in our lesson today take place fifty-five years apart in time. The first event happened just before Jerusalem fell to Babylon. The second event occurred when Cyrus conquered Babylon and released the Jews who have been in captive exile in Babylon. We will put in our last date and event." Write down the date, 538 B.C. and the words, "The exiles return to Jerusalem."

Continue: "The first event took place just after Habakkuk complained to the Lord." Point to that event on the time line.

Have the students open their Bibles to Jeremiah 32:6-11 and have this Scripture read. Use your Background Study to explain to the adults about the Levitical land laws concerning keeping the land within the family.

Say: "Shallum wanted to keep the land within the family. We need to know that Jerusalem was besieged at this time. That means that the army of Babylon had encircled the city. No one could leave Jerusalem or go into it. It was evident that the city was going to fall to the mighty Babylon army. At such times, land is worth nothing to the people. Money is valuable. At times you can use the money to escape or to feed your family or many other things. Land that is about to be occupied, on the other hand, is worthless. Shallum decided he needed the money more than he needed the land. He

to punish God. They stop going to church. They continue grumbling. These actions show that Christians who act like this are still spiritual babies. God wants Christians to grow spiritually. He will help us become mature Christians. We must want to grow spiritually. We must trust God completely.

God made plans for us before he created the whole world. (See verses 29-31.) God loved us so much he planned a way for us. We can never know why God loved us so much. But we can know his love. The more we trust God, the more he is able to help us. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Verse 31) If God is for us, then we have security. We have hope and help.

A SECURE SALVATION

God's love is stronger than anything in the world. God is for us, so nothing can destroy us. Even if we suffer and die, we are not beaten. Satan cannot win against us. God gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sin.

A SURE VICTORY

Christians will win through Christ's love. Paul wrote that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us (verse 37). Can anything remove us from God's love? What did Paul say in verses 37-39? Praise God. Nothing can separate us from God! All Christians are secure in God's love. Nothing can remove God's love from us.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do hard things and hard times come to you? God's love will help these hard things and hard times make you a better Christian. If you trust God, he will bring good out of the bad things.

We can have security only if we know Jesus. Have you trusted Jesus? You can begin to trust him now. Ask Jesus to come into your life. As you ask him to save you and to completely forgive your sins, he will give you a feeling of security also. For God will never fail you if you trust him.

We know that Christians have troubles. But God's spirit fills our hearts, reminding us of God's love. We know that God will help us.

How should Christians act when trouble comes? Read Romans 8:24-25 again from your Bible. A Christian should have hope. When our hope is in God, we are safe. We have security. We can trust God because he loves us. God never changes.

A STRONG, SECURE HELP

Verses 26-27 tell us that God's Holy Spirit helps us. Are you strong? Do we have patience? Can we pray in the right way? No! But God loves us, and gives his Holy Spirit to help us. God knows how we feel. He sends his Holy Spirit to live in us to give us guidance in our Christian lives. His Spirit will tell us exactly what to pray for and how. And even if we do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will pray for us when we ask him to do so.

What does verse 28 say about all things being good? It teaches us that God can use all things to help us if we are seeking to follow his will for our lives. God uses what happens to us to help us grow in the Christian life. Even trouble makes us grow Spiritually.

Paul wrote strong, clear words. We can see that God wants us to grow. We are not perfect, but God wants us to become strong Christians. He wants us to become more like Jesus. God must help us to grow, or we will stay like babies in Christ.

Have you noticed how babies act? When a baby wants something, he smiles and acts in a pleasant way. He begins to complain when he does not get what he wants quickly. Then he begins to cry, without tears. He then begins to cry real tears, and to kick. If all of this does not help him get what he wants, he begins beating his parents.

For many Christians, this is a picture of their spiritual growth, or lack of it. They pray. They wait. No answer to their prayers. They begin to complain. They begin to grumble. They decide

offered it for sale first to a member of his own family, Jeremiah."

Continue: "You might think that if Jeremiah bought the land he must be a very great fool, or at best a very poor businessman. Why would anyone want to buy land about to be taken by a foreign army? but Jeremiah was not a fool. He was a great man of God. He believed that God was going to return the city and the surrounding fields to the Jewish people at some future date. He refused to lose hope although he was in prison. Jeremiah bought the land."

Continue: "Now we will see what God does." Have the students turn to Ezra 1:1-4. Have that Scripture read.

Say: "God returned the city of Jerusalem to the Jews. Jeremiah's hope was fulfilled, even though the return came after Jeremiah himself had died. God was faithful to his people. Jeremiah did not lose hope, and God rewarded that faith."

Continue: "Now let us tell the story that we have been studying for the last four weeks. I will begin the story. When I stop I will call one of your names and I want you to continue the story. When you stop, you call on another to continue the story and so on until we finish."

Start in this way: "Habakkuk was a man who was very concerned about his city. It was being ruled by very wicked men. Habakkuk wondered why God did not do something about the situation." Stop and let a student proceed with the story.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We have seen in this history of the Jews how God rewards hope and faith in him. We need to remember their example as we face the trials and troubles of our own lives. Their example is good for us to follow."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER 5
OUR NEED TO BE RECONCILED

AIM: I will learn through studying this lesson that God holds me responsible for my sins.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:16-2:11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

What does salvation really mean? Perhaps you have been asked this question many times. As a Christian, it is important to know in a way you can explain easily. These next lessons will help you, as a Christian, to truly know what salvation means. These lessons will also help you know how a saved person should live.

Each of us has become angry with someone in the past. We stopped talking to them. We stopped being friends with them. We needed to be reconciled. When we talked together and came to a new understanding, we were friends again. We were reconciled.

Reconciled means to forgive those who do wrong to us or ask for forgiveness when we have wronged someone else. We forgive each other, then we can be friends again. Reconciliation has taken place.

Paul told the Christians in Rome about reconciliation. He told them that people need to be reconciled to God. They have wronged God, and they need to make things right again between themselves and God.

How have people wronged God? How can people become friends with God? Why do people need to be friends with God again? Paul answered all of these questions when he wrote to the Christians in Rome while he was in Corinth, Greece. He had heard of their problems of faith and

CHAPTER 9
SECURE IN GOD'S LOVE

AIM: God can use the hard times to test and strengthen my faith.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:18-39

MEMORY VERSE: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

Many years ago, there was a terrible storm on the sea. A ship sank, with many passengers drowning. A man, Horatio G. Spafford, lost all of his children in this terrible tragedy. During Spafford's time of grief, he wrote a hymn. The hymn told how a Christian should feel during a time of deep sorrow. The hymn is called, "It Is Well With My Soul." Perhaps you know this hymn which says that peace is like a river. Even when the sea billows are all around us, we can depend upon the river of peace to keep us steady. We can say that it is well with us in all situations.

Spafford was telling Christians that God will take care of those who belong to him, no matter what comes upon them. The security of God's love is a gift whose value cannot be estimated.

Romans 8:18-39 is often called "Christian's Eternal Security" chapter. As you read the Scriptures today, look for the promises of God for all who truly believe. These promises give all believers eternal security. Do you have this kind of faith in God?

A POSITIVE HOPE

Read Romans 8:22-39. Our world is filled with trouble. People suffer and die. They are hungry and starve. War takes people from families. All of God's creation hopes for a better world. Not only sinners have troubles. Christians have troubles, too. Their faith is strong when circumstances are good. That faith sometimes fails when trouble comes.

Ask: "Why did Paul fail to do the right thing?" Discuss this. Let them find in the verses that it was sin that caused him to do wrong.

Ask: "When we become Christians, do we lose our tendency to sin?" Discuss this again. Recall last week's discussion that there are church groups whose members believe they are sinless. Help your class members to see that life is a struggle to do right.

Ask: "Who helps us to do the right thing?" (the Holy Spirit)

Ask: "What is the only hope we have?" (Christ Jesus)

Ask: "How can Christ Jesus help us?" Let them discuss this for a bit, and help them conclude that we must believe on the Lord Jesus.

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Do these verses comfort you?" Allow time for answers.

Say: "They comfort me because they tell me that I am to do right, but I fail. I am like the man in the story at the beginning of the lesson. However, we are not to continue to sin just because we can be forgiven each time. We should remember the lesson from last week that we should not increase sinning so that we can increase getting grace. God forbid! We, like Paul, know what is the holy and just way to live. We should ask the Holy Spirit to direct our lives every day. We should win over sin every time we can.

Say: "I want us to pray now. But before we pray, I want us to think about the sins we have in our hearts and lives. I want us to ask God to show us any secret sins we may have. Then I want us to confess them silently to God."

Ask your members to bow their heads and give them a few minutes to pray silently, then voice a closing prayer asking God to forgive sin.

questions about salvation. Since he could not go himself, he wrote them a letter that they could read to the whole church.

Paul told them the good news of Jesus and how the gospel (good news of Jesus) tells exactly how man is put right with God.

MAN REBELLING AGAINST GOD

Read Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-11. In Romans 1:1-27, we see how man moves away from God. Verse 28 shows what happens to him at those times. Man sins when he does this.

What is sin? Sin is missing God's plan for our lives. Sin means more than doing wrong. It is forgetting God. Paul said in verse 28 that evil people forget God and think only evil thoughts. They stop thinking about God. Sin leads people to act foolishly like animals. They live wrong and love wrong things and wrong actions.

Man sinned when he moved away from God. He was not God's friend any more. God let him do as he pleased. When man turned away from God and started doing what he pleased, he stopped loving God.

In verses 29-31, Paul lists some sins, but he did not list all of them. Man still sins in these ways when he turns away from God.

Greed is one of the mentioned sins. Greed means always grabbing for more. No one likes greedy people. It separates us from others. Greedy people make God unhappy. There are other examples of sin that separate persons from their friends and families. Some examples are disobedience to parents, envy and not wanting other people to get something good.

ENEMIES OF GOD

Read verse 32 again. Paul said that man becomes so bad he should die. Man should die because of the law. The law requires that a sinner should die. Sinners know this law, but they sin anyway. They become enemies of God.

Evil people try to make other people become enemies of God. An evil person enjoys seeing other people sin, too. Evil people are not worried about sin. They know God's punishment, but they sin anyway.

GOD'S REWARDS

God cannot accept sin. Read Romans 2:1-3 again. Paul told the Roman Christians to be careful about judging others. God cannot accept evil people. He hates their sin. God will not accept sin in those he loves. Man must be free from sin to be friends with God.

Sin keeps man from God. Sinners hate God. God loves the sinners even though he hates the sin. Verses 4 - 5 show that God is kind to man even when man sins. God tries to show man's sin to him. God wants to be friends with man.

God rewards man according to what he does. If man sins, he is punished. If man believes in Jesus, he becomes God's friend. God's promise to man is new life in Jesus Christ. Read Romans 1:16. This verse tells how we can be friends with God. When we have faith in Jesus, we become friends with God.

When man sins and hates God, he suffers. Sin brings its own punishment. Read Romans 6:23 in your Bible. This verse says the results of sin is death.

Evil people who sin will suffer. They will suffer from their own sin. They will not be friends with God.

FRIENDS WITH GOD

God wants everyone to be his friend. God gave everyone his promise. All men can trust Jesus. Verses 10-11 tell us who makes God happy. Those who serve him make him happy.

God will give peace to all who believe in Jesus and accept him. Verse 10 means God blesses those who obey him. We obey God first by trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. When we trust Jesus, we become friends with God. We are reconciled to God. Then we can truly know his love for us.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "I want to tell you a story. Once there was a man who lived in a small village. This man was a Christian. He loved to go to church and hear the sermons preached there. He loved to sing the songs that the other Christians sang in church. He loved to read his Bible, and he loved to pray.

"He had a small shop in his village. He was able to earn enough for his family to live fairly well. The shop was in the middle of the town. The man could see much of what went on in the town. One thing he liked to do was to tell other people what was going on. At times, the man would add just a bit to the news he was telling. He made the stories more lively and interesting. It was not much that he added, but he knew deep within him that he was lying when he added on his bits and pieces of information. This bothered him very much. But he was unable to stop. He was popular in the town, and he knew that much of his popularity came from his never-ending supply of stories about the people in the town.

"This man might have been named Paul because Paul had the same kind of trouble that the man had. He loved the law, but he could not keep himself from sinning."

Interpretation

Ask your adult members to open their Bibles to Romans 7:14.

Say: "In our Bible verses for today, we will look into the heart of Paul. We will see how like Paul each of us is."

Recall with the adults the definitions of the four words you studied last week: grace, law, sin and righteousness. Say: "Our lesson today continues with the lesson from last week. Paul confessed that he wanted to do right, but he did wrong."

Have Romans 7:14-8:2 read. Ask: "What kind of person was Paul?" Discuss this. Be sure that it is mentioned that Paul was just like we are. He wanted to do what was right, but he failed.

do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Verse 19).

Let us examine these verses more closely.

Verse 14 tells us that the law is spiritual which means it is given to us by God. Paul contrasted the holy, just and good law with his own nature which was carnal and invaded completely with sin.

In verse 15 Paul continued to explain what “sold under sin” means in verse 14 when he said he was in bondage to sin: “...I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

Paul told of the intensity of the struggle he was undergoing in verses 16-20 when he said that he agreed with the law. He saw that it is God given, and he wanted to follow it. But, then, he seems to have said that he had no control over himself. Sin forced him to do wrong. This was Paul’s acknowledgement that there are evil forces that wage war within the Christian.

The pain and turmoil of having both good and evil within him causes Paul to say in verses 21-24 that he delights in the law of the Lord. He wants to do right with his whole mind and heart. He was caught, however, in sin and did evil. The “body of death” that he wanted to be free of was his body which was dominated by sin. This is not to say that Paul hated his fleshly body. He hated his tendency to sin.

Paul’s cry of hope rings true for us as well as he says, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” in verse 25. This is our only hope, our only way to defeat a sinful world. Jesus Christ is the only answer.

In Romans 8:1-2, Paul told of God’s saving mankind through Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus that we will rid ourselves of our body of death. If we daily walk in the Spirit we are free from the law of sin and death. We can find freedom from the power of sin. This comes only as we seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit every day.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God wants you for his friend. God’s friends do not want to keep on sinning. They try to stop sinning. Are you God’s friend? If you are, will you help another person become God’s friend, too?

CHAPTER 5 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that God holds each person responsible for his own sins. I want them to confess their sins to God.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

In Romans 1:28 through 2:11 Paul, the writer, tells what happens to a man who leaves God out of his life.

Verse 28 tells us that when man fails to acknowledge God, God will give him over to himself. When man considers only himself, he is ruling himself. He is worshipping himself. God allows him to continue his self-worship.

In verse 29 we begin a list of the sins that fill a man who puts God out of his life. Among this long list is evil which is worse than badness. This is the desire to do harm to others.

Another sin is covetousness which is the urge within a person to disregard all others while trying to get something for oneself.

Malice is a spirit within a person which causes the person to want to hurt others. Out of this bad attitude, many other sins can grow and flourish.

Envy is the sin which causes people to resent any good thing that happens to someone else.

Deceit is the quality that makes a person accept things as true when they are not true. This attitude makes a person treat others unfairly. There are many other sins listed in these verses (29-31). God hates all sin.

CHAPTER 8 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to know that as Christians they will desire to do good, rather than to sin.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study:

Romans 7:14-25 is a series of verses that causes Bible Students to have many questions. These questions came to mind as Paul discusses the spiritual work of the law as opposed to the realities of his life as a mortal man.

Paul speaks of the conflict he is experiencing in his life between two spiritual forces, God's law verses the law of sin. This conflict involves the claim of God's law on his life - the things that he knows are right and wrong. Yet even though he knows what is right in God's Law, he feels the powerful pull of temptation to sin.

Since we all know that this struggle to do right is part of our everyday Christian experience we identify closely here with Paul. Paul is known to Christians after his conversion, as a strong man of God. Yet he is telling us of the great struggle he has to overcome the power of sin in his life. God can use Paul's testimony to comfort and encourage us. Paul writes of his struggle but also praises the Lord Jesus Christ, who rescues him.

We are not dead to sin after we become Christians. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, a Christian church, told them they were doing some of the same things they had done before they became Christians. We continue to be subject to temptation and to sin after our conversion experiences.

We must rely upon the Spirit to keep us in the path of righteousness. It is he who will direct our ways into the ways of goodness and sinlessness. Left to ourselves we do "...not

When we trust God and live with Christ, God gives us his Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit fills us and leaves no room for sin. We get strength to fight and to win over sin.

Can a person who is not a Christian live a perfect life? No, he can be a good person. But a good person is not perfect. Unless a good person is a Christian, he will always lose to sin. Only Christ can defeat sin.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do you have a friend who is not a Christian? Tell your friend how Jesus wins over sin. Pray that your friend will accept Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Then share with him what Jesus did for you.

Romans 2:1-11 is addressed to Jewish people. In the verses just explained, Paul was talking about the heathen or Gentile world. Now he turns his attention to his own people.

The Jews had always known that the heathen world was bad and that they would be condemned by God for their sinfulness. But the Jews did not think they were living under the same condemnation. The Jews had always believed they lived with a special relationship to God. They were sure that God loved the Jews alone of all the peoples of the world.

Paul tells them that God will not always treat them with kindness, forbearance and patience. They will be called upon to answer for their sins just like the Gentiles will. They will be the first to face the condemnation for their sins. They were the first to have a relationship with God. It is right that they will be the first to answer for their sins.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Ask: "Have you ever talked to people who believed they were Christians simply because their mother and father were Christians?" Let the class discuss this for a bit.

Say: "Some people believe they are Christians because they were baptized when they were babies, or because their parents were Christians, or because they are not Muslims. Our lesson today is about sin. The Jews believed they would not be condemned for their sins simply because they were Jews. Today there are people who think they are Christians but they have never been saved. It is important that these people realize that each person is responsible for his own sins. God will condemn him unless he repents and turns from his sins."

Interpretation:

Tell this story: "Once there was a man named Joshua. Joshua loved himself very much. He lived in a very large house. He had a car to drive. At night electricity lighted his home. Joshua liked to show off the things that he had."

Joshua also made a very great show of his Christianity. He went to the church every Sunday. He gave offerings. He helped pay to paint the church.

One thing that Joshua enjoyed was inviting people into his home to eat. He would spend the evening talking about himself and showing guests all his possessions. One day, Joshua invited some people to his house for roasted meat. They were important people in the town. When the people arrived at the house, the servants greeted them and took them to the table to eat. Joshua was nowhere to be seen. He had finally become so self-important that he wanted to show these people that he did not even have to show up to eat with his own guests."

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Romans 1:28. Tell them to read the verses there to the end of that chapter. When they have read, ask: "Which sin did Joshua have?" The class may agree that Joshua had more than one of the sins listed. They should include arrogance as one of the sins, or perhaps they feel it is Joshua's only sin.

Ask: "What does the Bible say about someone with his sin? What will happen to him?"

Tell this story: "Martha was a member of the church. She was faithful to attend the meetings of the church. She was always there when she could get away from her market stall. The other members of the church felt uncomfortable around Martha. Most of them had been to buy something from her. They had found that Martha frequently tried to cheat them. It was never for much money, but it was cheating nevertheless.

"Sometimes the people bought goods from her and found the goods to be of bad quality when they arrived home. Other times, they would discover that she had put something else into the paper she wrapped things in instead of what they had paid for.

"The church members wondered if Martha cheated everyone like she did them. Now find Martha's sin among

to let the law rule him. He forgets that the law is to teach him how to live. It does not save.

A BATTLE INSIDE

Read verses 15-16 again. Did Paul understand his actions? He told about a battle inside himself. He knew what God wanted him to do, but he did not always do it. Paul knew the danger of sin, but he still sinned. Why?

What made Paul feel the way he felt? What does verse 17 say? Paul knew Jesus. He loved God. But his human nature was not perfect. Sin lived in his nature. Paul was free from slavery to sin, but he was not perfect or without sin.

GROWING LIKE CHRIST

Jesus was perfect. He had no sin in him. Jesus always did what pleased God. Jesus never made God sad. He is our perfect example. We want to please God. He is our heavenly Father.

Verses 20-21 help us see what is happening to us. We often get into trouble. We sin. We know we should follow Christ, but we still sin. We are not perfect.

One difference between sinners and Christians is desire. A sinner wants to sin. A Christian rejoices in God's law. He loves God's law even though he does not always obey it. A sinner does not care. He does not even want to do right or obey the law. A Christian desires to please God. He wants to live right and to do right.

CHRIST IS THE ANSWER

Verses 14-25 showed a big problem all people have to experience. Paul gave the answer to that problem. Read Romans 8:1-2 again.

Verse 1 can be said in another way: Guilt for sin is all taken away from those who have faith in Jesus.

When we are "Joined" with Christ, we depend on him. Christ's strength is all we need. We do not have to fight sin alone.

CHAPTER 8 FREEDOM IN CHRIST

AIM: This lesson will help me to understand that I depend on God for my strength in growing like Jesus.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 7:1-8:17

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 7:14-25; 8:1-2

MEMORY VERSE: *"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* Romans 8:14

There is a story about a man who got his freedom too late. He spent fifty years in prison for a bad crime. He served his time and was set free.

This old man had no family or friends. He did not know what to do with his new life of freedom. At last he went back to prison.

Some new Christians are like the old man. They were slaves to sin before they trusted in Jesus Christ. They gained freedom, but did not know what to do with it. They needed to learn to trust God for help. Instead, they did things that hurt God. Some of them almost went back into sin's prison.

A Christian can win over sin. God promised Christians victory. Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome to tell them about these things. Read Romans 7:14-25; 8:1-2 to find out what Paul wrote.

Paul wrote that the law was spiritual. "Carnal" means being human, of the world, not spiritual. Paul said he was carnal. He belonged to the flesh. He still sinned, even though he put his faith in Jesus Christ.

We will sin, too, because we are not perfect. We cannot be perfect like the law. The law tells us to obey God. Sin leads us to forget God. Sin and the law are at war.

Man will give in to sin often, because he is not perfect. But he will forget God if he lives under the law. Man will begin

those listed." (The class may find several, but deceit was certainly one of Martha's sins.)

Ask one of the adults to read Romans 2:1-11. Say: "The Jewish people were much like Joshua and Martha. They were able to see the sins of the Gentile world, but they thought that they were perfect. They had a special relationship with God. They felt that this special relationship allowed them to do anything they liked and still have God's favour. Paul told them they were wrong. He said that every man is responsible for his own sins. God will judge each man individually.

"He went on to say that the Jews would be judged first since they had known Jesus first."

Application To Our lives

Say: "We are like the Jews, too. We have sins in our lives. Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We may think that we are sinless, but we are wrong. We may see sin all around us, and we may be horrified by it. We fail, though, to see the pride and envy in our own lives. God tells us that we are each responsible for our sins.

"If we are Christians, we need to confess our sins before God just as the lost person must do. We need to do this every day. Sometimes we are unable to see our sins. We need to ask God to show us our sins so that we can confess them to him. First John 1:9 says that God is ready to forgive our sins whenever we ask him.

"If we allow sins to remain in our lives, they separate us from true fellowship with God."

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to reveal hidden sins to each adult in the class.

CHAPTER 6
RECONCILED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

AIM: I will learn what being reconciled with God means in this lesson.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 5:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."* Romans 5:8

James became a believing Christian. His wife was not a believer. He stopped drinking beer and going to bars. He stopped fighting. His wife liked going to bars. She decided to leave him. He was unhappy, but he continued to pray for his wife. One day she returned and knelt before him so he could beat her, as their custom demanded. James said, "I cannot beat you. I forgive you. Jesus forgave me. So I forgive you." His wife became reconciled with her husband and their home was happy again.

God wants to be friends with man. But he cannot accept sin. So God did something to reconcile man to himself. Read these Scriptures to find out what God did.

LIFE OF PEACE

Read Roman 5:1-11. In verse 1, Paul said that God saves men who put their faith in Jesus. Man sinned. He went away from God. But man can have peace within his heart when he puts his faith in Jesus Christ. He becomes reconciled to God. Do you remember the meaning of "reconciled" from the last chapter?

When man is reconciled to God, he has peace with God, too. He has peace with others. God's love helps us to love other people.

Have the class open their Bibles to Romans 6:12. Have someone read all the verses from 12 through 23. Then, using your Background Study and the pupil's books, go back and study the passage, verse by verse. Allow the adults to express themselves about each of the verses. Recognize that these are difficult verses and that we have a difficult time understanding them.

As you study, keep saying that as Christians we should not want to sin, but we do. Do not allow any of your students to think it is possible to live a sinless life. Make sure they understand that Paul is talking about our goal, not our actual situation.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Among several sects or branches of religion today, people hold the belief that they are sinless. They believe that others sin, but they do not. They judge others. I suppose we all know some of these people. They can cause everyone to feel very badly and can even cause people to turn away from the church. We need to help them understand that we have all sinned. Paul himself said he did those things he knew were not pleasing to God. We should not be troubled by these people, but we should help our weaker Christian brothers who might be troubled to understand that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Ask if there are questions.

Close with prayer.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Point to the question that you have written on the chalkboard or paper. Ask: "As Christians are we free to sin, or are we free from sin?" Allow the adults to discuss this for a few minutes. Some may say that we are neither free from sin, nor are we free to sin. Agree that this is true.

Say: "Our lesson today is a very interesting one. It is about grace and the law. It is also about sin and righteousness. Before we begin, let us decide what each of these words mean."

Say "The word grace" is found many times in the Bible. Grace describes God's attitude toward man. We are sinful, still God is gracious, reaching down in love, ready to save and lift us up. Grace is the mercy given to us by god through His Son, Jesus Christ. Many Christians like the definition, "grace is the undeserved merit, or favour, of God."

Say: "The law as used in the Bible verses for today means each and every commandment of God and of man. Many times in the Bible we read of the law as being Old Testament law. Other times, it means the law that the scribes and the Pharisees had added to God's law. But the law in these verses is all law."

Ask: "What is sin?" Allow several minutes discussion. You may wish to mention some of the sins that come to mind.

Finally, ask: "What is righteousness?" Discuss this until you have decided together that righteousness is goodness. It is the opposite of sinfulness.

Say: "Now that we have the meaning of these four words, let us look at the Scripture."

Interpretation

Say: "We are going to study each verse of our lesson together."

LET US REJOICE

Christ goes to God for us, when God reconciles us to himself. God gives us grace. Grace is God's free gift of love. God's grace makes us rejoice. We are happy about the future. When God loves us, we have hope. We know that God saved us.

We must believe that God loves us. We must have faith in Jesus. Then we get God's free love and share his glory (verse 2).

WHEN TROUBLE COMES

Trouble comes to everyone. Life is never easy. But when we belong to God, we do not face trouble alone. God's grace helps us when trouble comes. We can rejoice because God's grace helps us within. We have hope that he will help us to face trouble.

Verses 3-5 say that we should be happy in times of trouble. Should we be happy just because we have trouble? No. Suffering is not good. We should be happy because of what we learn from trouble. Trouble brings out the best in Christians. Trouble brings out the worst in sinners. We should rejoice that God's grace is with us. He gives us power to win over our trouble. We become stronger friends with God when we work through our trouble (See verse 4.), experiencing God's help and power.

GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God gave a gift to those who believe in his Son. The gift God gave was the Holy Spirit. When we fully believe and trust in Jesus, God fills us with his Holy Spirit. He fills us with his love through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us become what God expects us to be.

THE GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST

All people sin. No one is without sin nor without fault. Because people sin, they need to be made right with God. They need to make peace with God. They need to be reconciled with God. Man cannot change himself.

Some men have said, "When I get better and live a better life, I will become a Christian!" This is impossible. God did not wait for man to become better. God did not wait for men to stop sinning. Even while men were sinning God gave his Son, Jesus, to die for us. Jesus died in our place. Jesus died that we might have eternal life.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?

Would you have died to save someone you had never seen before? It is not easy to choose to die so someone else might live. Jesus did!

In Romans 5:10, we read that we were enemies of God, yet God loved us. Because God loved us, he let Jesus die on the cross for our sins. This shows how much God loves us. Paul tells us that we can be reconciled to God only through Jesus' death in our place. If Jesus had refused to die for us, we would still be lost and without hope. Jesus gave his life that we might live.

NEW LIFE FOR BELIEVERS

Was that the end, when Jesus died? Was he dead? Yes, Jesus died. His physical body died, but Jesus Rose Again. Jesus did not remain dead. Jesus is alive. He is still living! Because Jesus lives, we are saved from our sins. Because he lives, God saves us from a life of sin, and from eternal punishment. As believers, we have a new life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

We should live like Jesus. His life shows us how we should live. We trusted Jesus to save us from our sin. Now we should trust him with our daily lives. Jesus will help us grow in his love day by day. He helps us become more like him. The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to live in our hearts, teaches us how to love others. Now we are friends of God. We have been reconciled to God.

Christians should be happy, joyful people. Why? Because Jesus died for our sins. We are friends of God. We have hope and joy because Jesus died for us, and we belong to him now.

instructed completely before they were baptized. An untaught or uninformed person could not be baptized. The new believers are told that they must now live up to their instruction before they were baptized.

Verse 18 tells us that we have been set free from sin. Again this does not mean that we will not sin, or that we are never tempted to sin. Instead we should have this as the ideal for our Christian lives. We should be slaves to goodness. To understand this, we must understand that a slave has absolutely no rights, not even to life itself. If the master commands something of the slave, the slave must do it, and he must do it at the exact moment the master wishes it done. If we are slaves to righteousness or goodness, we will not have a desire for sin.

Verse 19 follows the same line of thought. We are human beings, and we understand as human things. Grace is a creation of God, and is above your understanding. Once while we were still lost, we allowed our bodies to be involved in many sinful acts. Now that we are Christians, we should not be willing for our bodies to be involved in sin.

Verse 20 and 21 continue to discuss our old situation of being slaves to sin. As sinners, we reaped the harvest of our sinfulness. We did not reap a harvest of goodness. Instead our reward was death.

Verse 22 repeats that we have been set free from sin. We have become slaves to God and to his righteousness. In this new condition we are rewarded with sanctification. Sanctification means almost the same as holiness. That is, we have been set aside for God's special purpose. The end of a life of righteousness is eternal life. This is saying that there is no end to a life of righteousness.

Verse 23 tells us that when we sin, we are rewarded with death. But when we trust in the Lord Jesus we have a free gift of eternal life. We do not deserve this eternal life. God has given it to us freely.

CHAPTER 7 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: It is important that each of my adult students know what “growing in Christ” means so each may determine his own position in relation to Christ.

TEACHING AIDS: Write on the chalkboard or a large paper these words: “Free to sin, or free from sin?”

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

Romans 6:12-23 is very difficult passage of verses. Paul seems to write on one subject, then quickly to change to another without finishing what he had been saying. If we remember that this is a letter, not a book written for publication, we can understand the book of Romans better. Paul is writing a letter just like we write letters, and the subjects flow into each other just as his thoughts flowed.

Verse 12-14 are part of a discussion that Paul makes on sin and law. He seems to say that a Christian should not just be free from sin, but he must free himself from the power of temptation to sin as well. Paul is saying that sin exists, that we are all tempted by sin. We are not, though, to allow sin to become the ruler of our bodies. We must resist temptation. When verse 14 says that sin will have no dominion over a Christian because he is under grace, it simply means that sin should not have control of that person. We changed creatures should not desire to have sin in our lives.

In verse 15, Paul asks if we should sin because we are not under the law, but under grace. Then he answers, “Absolutely not!” We have left the old life, the old sin, the old man, the old law. Our faith has been placed in Jesus Christ. We have obtained grace.

In verse 17, Paul says again that we have been made free from sin. We are to be committed to a new teaching. This may refer to the fact that at that time perhaps all believers were

CHAPTER 6 FOR THE TEACHER

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to become reconciled with God if they have not already done so. If they are Christians I want them to be able to tell others how they may become Christians.

TEACHING AIDS: Arrange three chairs at the front of the room to be used as a role-playing area.

PREPARING TO TEACH:

Background Study

Romans 5:1-11 is closely connected to the last verses of chapter 4. The word “therefore” carries the reader on from a discussion of justification in chapter 4 to further discussion in chapter 5.

Justification is the act by which God brings a sinner into a state of righteousness. Verse 1 tells us that because we are justified, we have peace. Peace means unity and harmony with God. This peace also includes harmony with the environment in which we live. It is because we have accepted God’s justifying act of giving his Son, Jesus, that we are able to have this peace.

“Lord Jesus Christ” tells us who Jesus is. He is the Lord of our lives. He is in control. We allow him to rule ourselves. Jesus was an historical person whom people remembered. Paul knew much about the man Jesus. Christ tells us that it was Jesus who was the instrument (Messiah) through whom God justified mankind.

The “grace” of verse 2 is undeserved merit or favour. God loved us when we were unlovable. He saved us even though we did not deserve it. We “rejoice” or glory in our hope.

In verses 3-4, there are four words of great importance. “Sufferings” are the trials and tribulations that Christians must face in the present age so they may live in glory in the age to come. “Endurance” is the ability to withstand, to hold

fast, to resist. "Character" is being reliable, dependable, trustworthy. Suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character which produces "hope." This is our hope and belief in God and his promise of eternal life.

"God's love has been poured" like rain upon dry, parched ground.

Some have called verses 6-11 a hymn of love, It is God's love for mankind. God loves man because God is love. It is not because man deserves to be loved.

"While we were yet helpless" means we were unable to make ourselves good. "At the right time" means that God has his own timetable. "Christ died for the ungodly" tells us that he did not die for the good or the righteous, but for those least likely to deserve such a sacrifice.

Verse 9 tells us we can be saved by his blood now, but we must be saved from his wrath at a later time.

"Reconciliation" is the act of bringing ourselves into a right relationship with God.

TEACHING THIS LESSON:

Introduction

Ask a student to read the story about James from the student book.

Say: "This is a beautiful story of reconciliation between James and his wife. God wants us to be reconciled with our fellow men. But more than that, God wants us to be reconciled to him. Last week we studied about our need to be reconciled. Our lesson today tells us what it is like after we have been reconciled with God."

Interpretation

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Romans 5:1-11. Ask one of them to read these verses, or you may read them to the class yourself.

Say: "To understand these verses we need to understand the meaning of some words. I will write the words and the

SAVED TO SERVE GOD

Paul told the Roman Christians that they were not strong spiritually. God forgave their sins. They were free because they put their trust in Jesus. They were no longer slaves to sin. But new Christians need help to understand spiritual things. Paul made it clear that Christians are not perfect. They do sin. Paul wrote to tell how a Christian can grow. A weak Christian needs to grow to understand spiritual things. A Christian wants to do right. If he grows more like Christ, he must give all of himself to Christ. Then he can live the life that God wants him to live (verse 19).

SIN'S WAGES

When a person was an enemy of God, God could not control him. He was free from God. He was free from right living, but he was a slave to sin. What does sin give us in life? Christians can remember what their lives were like before they accepted Christ. Paul asked the Roman Christians what sin gave to them. Sin resulted in death. When we are slaves to sin, we work for pay. That pay is death.

GOD'S GIFT

A gift cannot be earned; it is free. What is God's gift to us and to all persons? God's gift is eternal life (verses 22:23). When does God give us his free gift? Read verse 23 again. God gave us his free gift when we trusted in Jesus.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

When you accept Christ, you begin a new life. This new life means you should grow. Are you growing? Are you becoming more like Jesus? Pray that God will show you how to grow and become alive in Christ.

FREE IN CHRIST

When we sin, we obey a master. Sin is our master. It controls us. Man was not created to sin. God made man able to choose right or wrong. God meant for man to choose right, but man's nature chooses sin. (see verse 12.) When we become Christians, we stop obeying sin.

Sometimes something or someone may tempt we Christians to sin. We may want to sin, but we should not surrender to sin. When we were in sin, we were like dead persons. Now we serve God, and we are alive in Christ. Sin keeps us from serving God. When we put away sin, God can use us.

FREE FROM THE LAW

Grace is God's free gift of love. Jesus Christ brought grace to man. Grace took the place of the law of Moses. The law demanded justice, but Jesus brought grace in place of the law. We do not live under the law. We live under grace.

How free is a Christian? Our faith in Jesus sets us free from the law. Does this mean we are free to do anything we want to do? What did Paul say? He said we should not sin because we are free. Read verse 15 again.

WHO IS YOUR MASTER?

In verse 16, Paul told the Roman Christians they had a choice. They could choose sin, or they could choose God. You have the same choice to make. Each person must choose for himself.

Sin leads the way to death. Obedience to God leads to eternal life.

When we choose God, we change masters. Satan stops being our master, and God becomes our master, when we put our faith in Jesus. Christians are set free to live righteous lives. Jesus' life shows us the right way to live. Paul said we should become slaves of righteousness. In Jesus, God showed us the way of right living. Read verse 18 again. Write beside this verse in your Bible: Who is your master, God or the devil?

definitions on the board." (or on paper if you do not have a chalkboard)

Write the following words on the board one under the other. The words are: justification, peace, Lord, Jesus, Christ, grace, hope, rejoice, sufferings, endurance, character, love, reconciliation.

Start with the word justification. After you have written it on the board, have the adults find "justified" in the verses. Help them decide what it means. They should come up with something like: The way that God brings people to goodness.

Continue in this way with each word. Use your Background Study to help the adults make a good definition of the word. Always write the definition beside the word.

When you finish, ask if someone can reread the verses, using the definitions you have come up with instead of the words themselves.

The reading of the first verse would be something like this:

Therefore since God has brought us to goodness, we have unity and harmony with God and our surroundings through the one who is the ruler of our life, Jesus, the Messiah."

Continue this way through all the verses. This should bring a very good understanding of these verses to your students.

Say: "Do you find it amazing that God died for the sinner?" Let the adults discuss this for a few minutes.

Ask: "Who is the sinner?" Allow discussion. Agree that we are all sinners, but some of us have been saved by grace.

Ask: "Do we have any responsibility for those sinners who have not yet been reconciled to God?" (Yes, we must share the good news of Jesus Christ with all who are lost.)

Say: "Some of us share our faith effectively. Some of us do not. Usually we do not because we do not know how. We will learn how today."

Application To Our Lives

Use role-playing to teach the class members how to witness for Christ.

Ask one class member to come up and pretend to be a lost person. Be sure that you choose a Christian for this job. Have him or her sit in one chair, you sit in the other. Invite another person to come up to sit, too. He is the person who has gone with you to witness.

Use any plan that you normally use when you are winning someone to the Lord. A simple plan is called the Roman Road. You will use the Scriptures from Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 10:13.

First, pretend to come to the lost person's home. Greet him in the normal way. Carry on with the usual talk, waiting for an opportunity to tell him about Jesus. You might ask, "Where do you go to church?" Other questions will do as well to give you an opportunity to ask if the person has been reconciled to God through Christ. Then, go through the plan of salvation with your "lost person." If he agrees to accept Christ pray a simple prayer with him. You say a line, and he will follow after you saying the same thing in prayer. The prayer might be like this: Lord I am a sinner. I want to be a Christian. I want to leave my sins and become new in Christ. Forgive me my sins now, Lord, as I accept Jesus as my Saviour. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

After the role-playing, invite other students up. Let them practise winning someone to the Lord. If the class is large, divide them into groups of two people each. Let them witness to each other.

Teacher, this is a very important lesson. If you do not feel confident in teaching it, ask your pastor to come in and do the role-playing. It is important that it be done well.

Close the meeting with prayer, ask God to give each adult an opportunity to witness for him this week and the boldness to do it.

CHAPTER 7 ALIVE IN CHRIST

AIM: I need to grow constantly in my Christian life. This lesson will help me decide if I am growing.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 6

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 6:12-23

MEMORY VERSE: *"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."* 2 Corinthians 5:17

Miriam was cooking. The baby was playing just inside the door of their house. She heard water splashing and knew the baby was playing in a bucket of water. "He will be all right," she thought to herself.

After a few minutes Miriam did not hear the baby. Quickly she went to see about him. Terrible! The baby had fallen into the bucket of water and could not get out. Miriam grabbed up the baby. He was not breathing.

She began running towards town. As she ran, she met a friend with a bicycle. He turned around and took her to the hospital. On the way, she heard the baby gasp for air. At the hospital, the sisters and doctor treated the baby. They told Miriam, "He is alive. He will live!" What good news!

Each of us needs to become alive. We are dead in sin, if we have not believed in Jesus. We cannot become right with God, if we do not trust in Jesus to help us. Only Jesus can make us right with God.

Before we believed in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we were slaves to sin and slaves of Satan. We thought we were free, but we were controlled by sin and Satan. When we trust in Jesus, sin can no longer control us. Paul wrote the church in Rome, telling them how they were free from sin. Read Romans 6:12-23 to learn how a Christian can be truly free.