Finding Jesus

Gospels



"...these are the very scriptures that testify about me." John 5:39

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Gospels

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Jesus the King

Who is Jesus and what is the Bible really about?

The Bible is one story that leads to Jesus. Jesus is at the center of every part of the Bible.

Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is woven like a tapestry throughout the entire Bible.

God created the world by words. He created man in His own image (Genesis 1:28) and man was meant to rule and reign over the earth as part of the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God.

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree, sin entered the world. Man lost his right to rule; he had voluntarily turned over his domain to the enemy.

But God had a plan of redemption

Jesus was always the plan. He was the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8) He was the "seed" spoken of by God in Genesis 3:15. The reader follows this "seed" through the Bible, looking and waiting for the One who will come and save the people and restore God's kingdom on earth.

Prophecies of Jesus

Throughout scripture we see repeated themes and patterns that all point to Jesus. Words were spoken throughout the centuries prophesying about this "seed," this Messiah, who would come to save his people. The prophecies were hidden and spoken in mysteries (1 Corinthians 2:6-8) so that the rulers of this world would not be able to prevent His coming.

The Word

God created the world with words, and all the prophecies of Jesus had to be through words. Everything was prophesied, in a mystery, but it all led to exactly who Jesus would be. But when the fulness of time was come, these words came together and formed the seed, that combined with a young virgin (seed of a woman) became the Son of God, the Word (John 1:1).

This WORD, Jesus, through his death and resurrection, conquered death and the principalities of darkness. He restored the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. We reign with Him as the body of Christ. And we can reign in this life with him and in the life to come. (Romans 5:17, 21).

This curriculum, *Finding Jesus*, is designed to do just that. He can be found from Genesis to Revelation.

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READ THIS FIRST!

Teaching the Lessons

This guide is meant to be a Bible study for the instructor.

These lessons are not written as a script, nor designed to tell you exactly what to say. The lessons are written to help you gain a better understanding of the passages in the Bible.

Each lesson is designed to put the Bible into perspective by showing the historical context, Biblical context, and what was happening on or around that time. Some lessons refer back to the original meaning of the words - the original Hebrew language in which the Old Testament was written, or the Greek in which the New Testament was originally written. Each lesson has multiple cross-references to take the teacher to other places in scripture that are relevant to the story, and also to the message being taught. The author of this curriculum is not attempting to write theology, but to tell the reader a story and highlight other scriptures within the Bible so that the reader can decide. The Bible is meant to be interpreted by the Bible. It is the most complex piece of literature ever written and contains over 63,000 cross-references.

1. **Study the material.**

   Before the lesson, read the Bible passages first. Then **study** the notes and re-read the passage, multiple times if necessary. If the references give the accounts in more than one book or passage, familiarize yourself with versions in all passages. When you study, always read a few verses before and a few verses after for context. See if there is something that the Lord shows you that will enhance your telling of the story.

   > The gospels can be challenging to teach, as there are multiple accounts in different gospels. Read and study all the passages in each gospel. Take notes, combine the information in a way that will be helpful to you. Then choose the gospel from which you prefer to teach that particular story. Each lesson may have a different gospel that holds more information or present a more clear narrative, and is up to you as the teacher to choose the passage that speaks to you.

   This teacher guide contains many cross-references. These are not-necessarily intended to be read to the students. The cross-references are included for personal study of the material, and designed to help the teacher gain a deeper understanding of the material so they can give a better explanation to the students.

2. **Teach ONLY from the Bible.**

   Read the lesson and know the material, but ***always*** teach from the Bible. You do not need to read the Bible passage word-for-word, but can paraphrase it for your audience *without changing the meaning*. It is possible to put it into words that your audience will understand without changing the Word of God. When you teach directly from the Bible, it allows the Holy Spirit to speak directly to the teacher and the students. It gives the Holy Spirit the opportunity to emphasize what is in the passage that is specifically relevant to the listener. The Word of God is alive and powerful!

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Teaching the Lessons:

3. **Help create a mental picture of the scene.**

   Picture it like you were there. This material is designed to tell the story in such a way that helps the listener imagine what it be like if they were there. Elaborate on the story, and help them think about what the characters would have been thinking, doing and feeling, but also being careful to distinguish between what might be speculated, and the definitive details told in the Word.

4. **Ask a lot of questions.**

   The lessons are designed to be interactive; they are not intended to be a lecture. Ask a lot of questions, and allow your students to ask questions also. Questions and discussions make the listeners think.

   You know your students! Do not limit yourself to the discussion passages suggested in the material. Feel free to make up your own questions, begin your own discussions. Discuss things in the story that would be relevant to situations with which your students can understand. And ask questions that encourage discussion. Let the kids participate in the study of the Word of God.

5. **Relate to the characters.**

   Remember that the Bible is a real story about real people doing real things. Help your listeners to not see it as a distant story, but a story with characters with which they can relate.

Finding Jesus in every lesson.

Every lesson ends with "Jesus in the Story." The lessons in the gospels will point back to prophecies of Jesus. The lessons in the Old Testament will point forward to the prophecies of Jesus. He IS the Word of God, and the central core, focus, theme and meaning of the entire Bible. Tell the story first, and incorporate the Jesus in the Story themes into the lesson, being sure to make Him the ultimate focus of everything you teach.

Multiple Age Levels:

This material is for ages 3-99. You are the teacher. A story you know is a story you can tell. These lessons can be adapted to any age level. If you are teaching to very young children, tell them the story in a way that they can understand. If you are teaching to older children, give them more information. And if you are teaching to young people, you can bring in some of the cross-referenced scriptures, and discuss how they connect with the story. If you teach to adults, use it as a full study guide to look up all the scriptures and discuss. Always teach a little above what you think they can understand; you may be surprised at the comprehension of your audience.

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Teaching the Lessons:

Weekly Lesson:

1. Begin each week by discussing the lesson from the previous week. Ask questions, see what the students remember from the last lesson.
2. You do not have to teach the lessons in the order in this guide. It is up to you if you would like to teach a certain theme, a certain story, or a certain time frame. This is your classroom.
3. Feel free to lead children to Jesus after each lesson or if you feel led by the Holy Spirit to do so. You can tell by the response to the lesson if they are ready. And remember, you know your students!

Appendix

Memory Verses & Lesson Questions:

The lessons are designed with a memory verse and optional questions for the teacher to give to the students. If the teacher chooses, they may ask the students to bring a notebook to class to write down the memory verse every week. Writing down the scripture will help with memorization, and the option of using a notebook can also help the student learn responsibility.

The teacher may choose to give the students the additional lesson questions in the appendix. The students can write down the questions and take them home to look up the answers, or simply write the answers in their notebook.

It is completely up to the teacher to determine how to use these resources.

Coloring Pages:

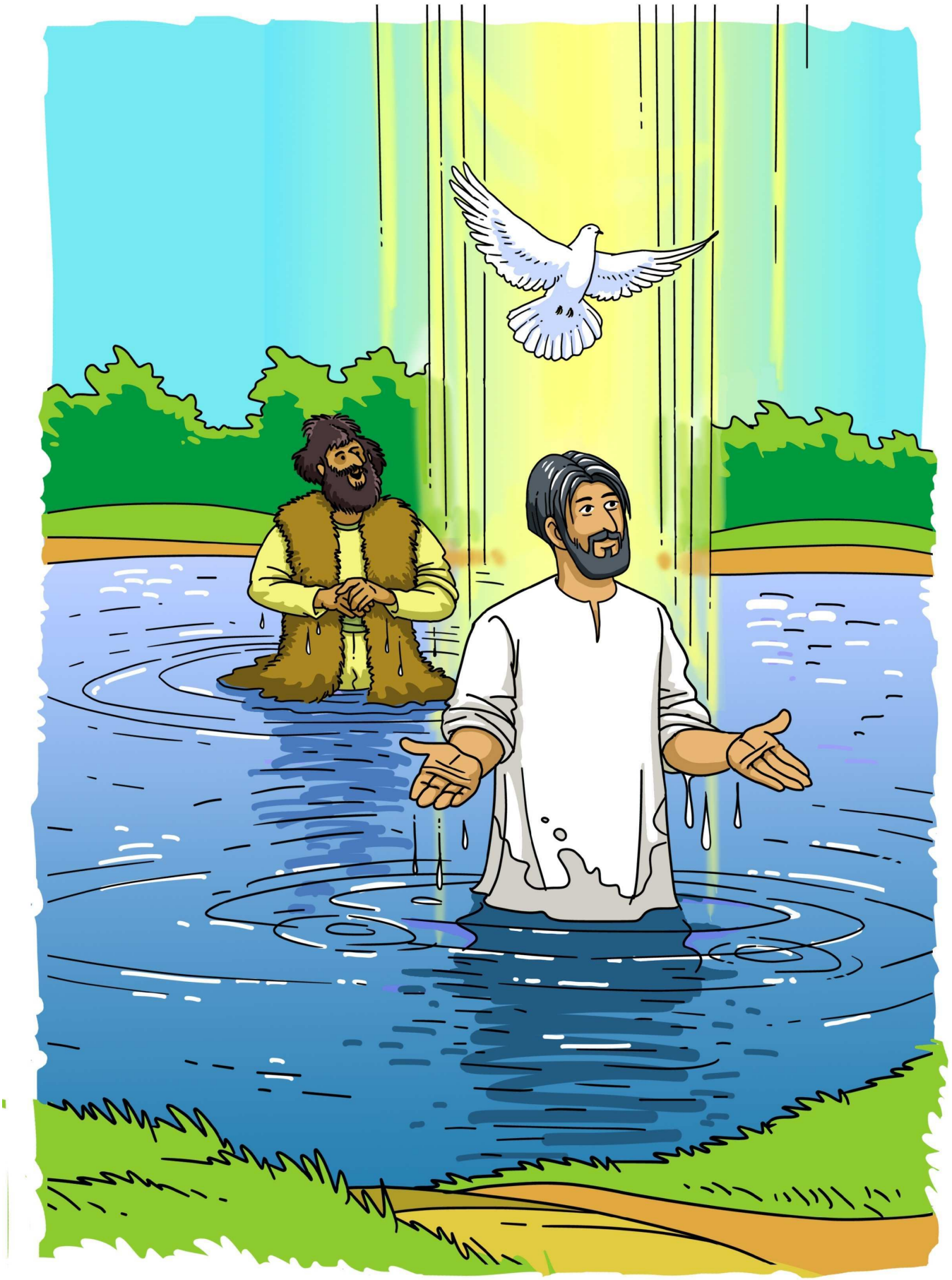
In the back of this book you will find an appendix which includes a corresponding black and white coloring page for each lesson. Feel free to make copies and distribute these to the younger students. You may alternatively choose to have them recreate the illustration with their own drawing in their own notebook.

Get Creative!

So many of the stories in the Bible can be acted out. Many of the Psalms can be acted out.

Have fun with it! Creating a play or drama from a story helps the children remember the story.
Let them help you design the play. Let them put their own interpretation into the characters. Make it fun, and make the Bible memorable!

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My Beloved Son

Matthew 3
Mark 1:1-11
Luke 3:2-22
John 1

Life of Jesus

Very little is known about the first thirty years of the life of Jesus. The Bible speaks about his birth, his dedication at the temple, the visit of the wisemen, and that the family went to Egypt to escape Herod. There is one story of Jesus at age twelve learning from the leaders and asking questions in the temple.

The next time Jesus is mentioned is alongside John the Baptist. From the stories of the birth of Christ, it is known that John the Baptist was born to Zacharias and Elizabeth, and that Elizabeth and Mary were cousins. That would make John the Baptist a relative of Jesus and it is possible that they knew each other was prior to this time.

John the Baptist is introduced as a prophet. There is no doubt as to his identity, and that he is the one prophesied by Isaiah who is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord," (Isaiah 40:3).

It was prophesied that John would come before Jesus and prepare the way for the Messiah and make "the paths straight."

Discuss:

John was an interesting man. He wore clothes made of camel's hair with a leather girdle (type of belt or band) around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

He stayed out in the wilderness; and people came from all over to be baptized and confess their sins.

He calls the people to repent and warns of coming wrath. He tells them they need to have personal repentance, and they are not God's people merely because they are descendants of Abraham (Luke 3:8).

People then ask John, what should we do? And he tells them to give to others, not to take more from others than they owe. He tells the soldiers not to do violence or make false accusations. He tells the people to be content with their wages (Luke 3:10-14). Then the people begin wondering, Is this the Messiah? Is he the Christ?

The Jews sent messengers to John. Priests and Levites came to him, and asked him, who are you?

John said, I am not the Christ.

Then they asked him, Are you Elijah? It had been prophesied that Elijah would come before the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6) but this was prophetically speaking and comparing Elijah to John the Baptist, and of John coming before Christ (Luke 1:17).

John replied that he was not Elijah. Perhaps he was speaking literally that he was not "Elijah," because Jesus himself said that John was the symbolic fulfillment of the prophecy about Elijah (Matthew 11:12-14). There were distinct similarities between Elijah and John the Baptist. Elijah was a hairy man who also wore a leather girdle around his waist (2 Kings 1:8).

They asked John if he was "that prophet," referring to Deuteronomy 18:15-18 which foreshadowed Jesus, and he said, No.

John said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3).

John is humble. He immediately refers to Jesus. He says, I baptize you with water, but one is coming that is mightier than me, and I am not even worthy to tie his shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.

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My Beloved Son

For centuries, the Jews had been expecting a Messiah. When John came and began preaching about repenting from your sins, they thought that he might be the Messiah.

We can look back now and it seems very clear who John was. But it was not that obvious to those who were watching it happen and living it.

Discuss:

Get the picture of what is happening. There's a strange man who wears camel hair clothing. He eats grasshoppers and honey from bees in the wilderness.

He's preaching a message telling everyone to repent. The people have been living in sin, and they thought it didn't matter what they did because they were descendants of Abraham. John is telling them it does matter what they do, and they need to change their ways. He is preparing their hearts for Jesus.

News spreads about this strange event, and the strange man who is preaching. People are coming from all over and traveling to see what is happening. People are realizing they are wrong, are changing their ways, and getting baptized.

What is baptism?

Baptism is symbolic of a pattern we see throughout the Old Testament.

The first hint we see is at creation, with God's spirit hovering over the water. God divides the water, and creates the land.

Noah and his family are saved in an ark through the water (1 Peter 3:20). A dove is sent out when it is time to return to the land.

Moses, as an infant, is taken through the waters of death in an ark (basket) and rescued.

Moses leads the people of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea *on dry land* (1 Corinthians 10:2).

Joshua leads the people out of the wilderness, through the Jordan River *on dry land*.

In the incidents with Noah, Moses and the Red Sea, and Joshua, the people had broken covenant with God, and they were starting anew by renewing their commitment to the God of Israel. In each scenario God tells the people of his faithfulness.

When John baptizes the crowds, the people repent for being unfaithful to God, and renew their hearts to to prepare for the Messiah.

Jesus shows up while John is baptizing people in the Jordan river.

What is the significance of the Jordan River?

The Jordan has been very important all throughout the Old Testament. The Jordan river was the border between the wilderness and the promised land. After forty years in the desert, Moses dies in the wilderness. Then just as God parted the Red Sea for Moses, God parted the waters of the Jordan so that his successor, Joshua, could lead the people across the river Jordan into the promised land on dry ground (Joshua 3-4).



My Beloved Son

Hundreds of years later, Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan with his cloak, and both Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry ground (2 Kings 2:8). At this time they were leaving the promised land and going out into the wilderness where Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

There are similarities in the lives of Moses and Elijah and the spiritual roles that they played. They both were in the wilderness at the time of their death, and in Elijah's situation, his exit from the earth. This wilderness repeats in the life of John the Baptist. Joshua took over leadership of the Israelites after Moses; Elisha took Elijah's place as prophet and received a double portion.

Both Joshua and Elisha represent the coming Jesus. Joshua means "Jehovah is salvation," and Elisha means "God is salvation." Joshua led his people into the promised land, and Elisha returned across the Jordan into the promised land after Elijah departed.

Elisha the prophet led Naaman the Syrian to dip in the Jordan where he received healing, and worshiped the God of Israel.

(These brief story references will help students understand how the whole Bible uniquely ties and is intertwined together.)

When John saw Jesus coming, he said, Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John told the people that Jesus is the one who is greater than John, because he existed before John.

Jesus came to John to be baptized.

But John said, No. I need you to baptize me, and you're coming to me to baptize you?

Jesus told John, Allow it for now, because this is the way we fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)

John baptized Jesus, and as soon as he came out of the water, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him in bodily shape like a dove and resting on Jesus.

Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What is this all about?

This goes back to what has been said in prophecy. Psalm 2:7 says this is my Son. Isaiah 42:1 speaks that the coming king, the Messiah, will be a servant *in whom my soul delights*. Some translations say, *in whom my soul is well-pleased.* This is an announcement. The servant king has arrived.

As soon as Jesus came out of the water the heavens were opened.

This refers to the days of Noah when the heavens were opened with God's judgment and poured out flood waters. Now God opens the heavens with grace and truth to mankind through Jesus Christ. This is the moment we have all been waiting for. Jesus, the prophesied Messiah is here. He is bringing the kingdom of God to his people.

The Spirit of God descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Jesus.

This refers back to the dove that Noah sent out from the ark seeking a place to rest. This Spirit of God descended and remained on Jesus (John 1:33).

In John 1:32-34, John the Baptist says that this is how he knew who Jesus was. He said that the same one that sent him to baptize with water told him that to whom he saw the Spirit descend on and remain, this is the same one who would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

When John saw it, he knew that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus in the Story



This is the coming Kingdom of Heaven. John was the one who was prophesied to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He had to prepare the hearts of the people for the New Covenant.

John's message of baptism is symbolic. It is a way for Israel to start over again. The Israelites crossed the Jordan into the promised land before, but they were unfaithful to God. Now through baptism they are symbolically crossing through the waters again, but this time not on dry land. Baptism symbolizes the death to the old way of life and repentance, a turning away from what was behind, and a readiness to accept the salvation that is coming - Jesus. This baptism was to prepare their hearts to receive Christ.

Jesus had no sin; he had no need of repentance. But he went through baptism to "fulfill all righteousness."

God opened the heavens and announced who Jesus is. This was a type of earthy unveiling, a statement that showed his obedience to God, and marked the beginning of his ministry. Everything we know about the life of Jesus as an adult begins at this point in time.

This was the announcement that everything was about to change. The Messiah has arrived; a new way is here. Your hearts have been prepared; you have a new beginning. Listen to Him.

Jesus was baptized to represent our need for cleansing from sin.

He would complete and perfect what was represented by Joshua and Elisha. He would deliver God's people from their sins, and bring them into the eternal promised land.

For believers, baptism marks a change.

It represents God's deliverance through water, by not being consumed by the waters. It is a new beginning, and the passage through the waters symbolizes death to what lies behind. In baptism a person signifies that his old self was crucified with Christ (the waters of death) and he is now risen with Christ in newness of life. Baptism shows personal repentance by dying to a life of sin and following Jesus out the other side into the new creation. It symbolizes that our old man died with Christ, and we now through the Spirit walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:12).

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Into the Wilderness

Matthew 4:1-11
Mark 1:12-13
Luke 4:1-13

Life of Jesus

Matthew and Luke give the most detail; they reverse the order of the last two temptations but give the same account.

Jesus was baptized, and Luke says he was full of the Holy Ghost. Afterwards

He was immediately led by the Spirit into the wilderness *to be tempted* by the devil.

Discuss:
Jesus is in the wilderness, out in the desert. It might be really hot. It might get cold at night.
There were wild animals (Mark 1:14), and he was probably sleeping on the hard ground.

He fasted forty days and forty nights; he was hungry.

Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully man (Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16). He had all the human characteristics that we do. He got tired; He needed sleep. He got hungry; He needed food. Watch as Jesus stays focused.

Discuss:
Talk about being hungry.
What would it be like to not eat for this long?
Have you ever fasted? How long?
Is it hard to focus when we are hungry?

There are three types of temptation listed in the Bible, and every temptation can be put into one of these categories.

For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:16

Notice what the devil says,

"IF you are the Son of God…".

He wants to make Jesus **prove** who he is. He first tempts him with the desires of the flesh. Jesus is hungry, and Satan tells him, *IF you are the Son of God*, command this stone into bread.

The devil knows how the kingdom works: by authority and words. Jesus has the authority to command the stone with his words, but He doesn't do it, because that would be a response to prove the challenge IF you are the Son of God. He already KNEW He was the Son of God.

Jesus responds the same way every time:

It is written.

He answers every temptation with the word of truth.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth John 17:17.

Jesus responds with, It is written, and quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 "…man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

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Into the Wilderness

The devil tries again.

Satan takes Jesus up to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, perhaps in a vision. He saw everything at a glance. Talk about these kingdoms; what they may have looked like; what that would mean. Large cities, powerful kings, rulers of the earth.

Satan did possess this power over the earth, giving him the ability to make this offer to Jesus. When Adam and Eve were tempted and sinned in the garden, they turned over their dominion (Psalm 115:16) on this earth to Satan making him the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) also called the prince, or ruler, of this world (John 12:31, 14:30).

Jesus came to the earth to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

and through his death and resurrection He won back dominion over this earth (Ephesians 1:19-22; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Satan was offering a shortcut; Jesus could have power and glory without suffering and sacrifice. Satan tells Jesus that IF He will worship him, he would give Him all the power and glory of the world.

Satan is a liar (John 8:44). It is doubtful that he would have ever given Jesus the power he promised. Nonetheless, Jesus knew that if He would have accepted Satan's offer, He would not have been the sinless sacrifice and the world would not be redeemed. This was clearly not the will of the Father.

Ask the students - how did Jesus respond?

It Is Written!

He again responds with, **It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.**

(Deuteronomy 6:13; 4:19; 8:19; 10:20, 11:16; 30:17; 1 Kings 9:6; 2 Chronicles 7:19; Jeremiah 13:10; 25:6)

Satan then brings Jesus to the top of the temple; we are not told how they got there, perhaps supernaturally. But they clearly ARE there, as Satan challenges Jesus to throw himself down from this temple IF he is the Son of God. Satan knows the Bible; he quotes Psalm 91:11, but twists the wording. Satan took out 'protect you in all your ways' and added 'at any time' If Jesus had jumped off the roof of the temple, that would have been tempting God, and the Lord will not be tempted (Deuteronomy 6:16; Acts 5:9).

Discuss:

What does it mean to tempt God?

What are some ways that we could tempt God?

If you jumped off a building, etc.. this would be tempting God.

Ask the students - how did Jesus respond?

It Is Written!

This was an IF you are the Son of God temptation, and again Jesus responds with,

***It is written*, "you shall not tempt the Lord your God."**

After these three temptations, we are told that Satan leaves Jesus *for a season.*

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Jesus in the Story



This is what Jesus must face as the coming king. He has just been announced by God at his baptism, and now he is going into the wilderness to do battle with evil. He is coming into his kingdom; coming to do battle and conquer as he prepares for his reign. But does not have a physical kingdom to conquer. He is mirroring the temptations of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They failed; he is victorious over evil.

We might look at these temptations and think they are different from ours. But we read that Jesus was tempted just as we are.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. Hebrews 4:14-15

These temptations were an attack on Jesus' identity. Satan's temptations all began with "*IF you are the Son of God*." Jesus had just been baptized. The heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit came down like a dove, and the voice of the Father from heaven said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus was the Son of God and the Son of Man, fully God and fully human. He had to meditate on this and focus on the truths of what God said about Him. He had to know in His heart that this was true.

Because Jesus knew who He was, He knew His identity, and He was able to stand strong during temptation.

We need to know our identity so we can also stand strong when we are tempted.

If we know who we really are, it is much easier to use our authority to speak the Word of God against the devil. As believers in Jesus, who does God say we are?

Righteous - received as a gift (Romans 5:17-18, 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 3:9).

Children of God - heirs with Jesus, children of the King! (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17; 1 John 3:1).

Discuss:

If you completely trust the Lord for everything, you will not be tempted to do wrong to get the things you need.

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A Wedding Invitation

John 2:1-12

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Discuss:
Talk about weddings.
Have you ever been to a wedding?
What does a wedding look like?
What do all weddings have? A bride and a groom.

God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman.

A wedding is a celebration that usually involves family and friends and is celebrating a change.

After a wedding, things are different than they were before. What used to be two people living separately now becomes a man and a wife, and now they start a family together.

A wedding is often a party that involves feeding a lot of people. In Jesus' culture, weddings were long and sometimes would even mean celebrating for days. In this story, it appears that they ran out of wine and did not have enough to finish the celebration. This was insulting to the groom and could have made it look like he didn't prepare for his guests.

Jesus and his friends were invited to this wedding, and it appears that his brothers were there also (see John 2:12). We aren't given a lot of information, but It seems like maybe it was a family wedding, or a close friend, because Jesus' mother Mary seems to be coordinating things. She is the one who is handling the wine problem and is also the one giving instructions to the servants.

Mary comes to Jesus and simply tells him, "They don't have any wine." Jesus' response may seem a little harsh to us, but our understanding of these words may not be the same as he intended it. He says, basically, "What does this have to do with me? It's not my time yet."

Mary seems unfazed by his response, and simply tells the servants,

"Do whatever he tells you to do."

There are six large stone water pots nearby. These are used for washing, or purification, and the Jews used them to wash before and after meals. They did not have toilets and sinks or plumbing like we do, so they used these for washing their hands and cleaning. **Jesus told the servants to fill the pots with water all the way up to the top.**

After the servants fill the pots with water,

Jesus tells them to dip it out and take it to the master of the wedding feast. When they took it to the man who was in charge of the wedding, he had no idea what had happened, but it says the servants knew. The man praised the groom and said that usually people put the best wine out first, and after everyone is drunk they bring out the cheaper wine. But in this case, he congratulates him, and says, **you saved the best wine for last.**

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A Wedding Invitation

This made a lot of wine.

These pots would have held about 20-30 gallons each, which would be between 600-900 bottles of wine.

Jesus was not looking for attention. Most of the people at the wedding never knew what happened. Jesus and his disciples knew, and the servants knew, but this miracle brought honor to the bridegroom of the wedding.

This was Jesus' first miracle.

John tells us that it showed his glory and made his disciples believe on him. They had only very recently joined Jesus in his travels, and they were new to his ministry, but this apparently persuaded them.

There are very specific things that are mentioned in the story that are not explained to the reader, but we can use them for discussion.

Discuss:

There was probably significance in the fact that there were six stone pots of water, and that these pots were used for cleaning, washing and purification.

Why did Jesus tell Mary it wasn't his concern or his time?

Why did he do something anyway even though he told Mary it wasn't time?

Did Jesus perform this miracle to protect the reputation of the bridegroom?

Mary's response could be seen as faith; she apparently knew Jesus was able to do something. Did her response motivate Jesus to act?

John is very specific in telling us that the servants knew what had happened. So often the Lord works in the ordinary and doesn't bring attention to the leaders but works through ordinary people.

News of this event inevitably spread. Later in John 4:46 we are told that Jesus came back to this area in Cana of Galilee that a nobleman came to Jesus asking for healing of his son. It appears that this nobleman was at the wedding. Either way, he heard what Jesus had done and had faith for his son to be healed. When we put our faith in Jesus, he makes all things new, and we become new creatures. He transforms us in the same way that he transformed this ordinary water into wine (2 Corinthians 5:17).

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Jesus in the Story



There are several different ways of looking at this story. Some say that the pots of water may have been used in an orderly way. The first pot was the dirtiest, and a person would wash their hands in this one first. Then they would continue rinsing in each pot, until they reached the last pot where the water was the least polluted. No matter how dirty the pot or the water, it was all turned into the same high-quality wine.

We can compare this to our lives. No matter what we've done, or how much we have sinned, everyone becomes new when they believe on Jesus. He gives us all the same purity, and the same righteousness. As vessels, or pots, we are better now that we have Jesus and the new version of us in Christ is better than we were when we tried to purify ourselves.

The pots can also symbolize that before Christ we were trying to purify ourselves and be "good enough" for God. The dirty water will never be clean enough, it can't be. But this wine symbolizes Jesus' blood, and his blood makes us cleaner than we could ever be without his transformation in our lives.

This was Jesus' first miracle, and it showed his glory and power to others. He had very recently asked his disciples to follow Him and they believed on Him after this miracle.

Jesus quietly performed this miracle at the wedding, and the groom was congratulated for saving the best wine for last.

At the time, the servants and Jesus' disciples and family were the only people who really knew what had happened at the wedding. Apparently the news spread, because the next time Jesus came to Cana they knew what he had done at the wedding feast, and people came to him for healing where he performed his second miracle (John 2:5-12; John 4:45-47).

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A Den of Thieves

Matthew 21:6, 12-17
Mark 11:15-18
Luke 19:44-48; 21:6
John 2:13-25

Life of Jesus

The story of Jesus cleansing the temple takes place in all four gospels. But it takes some research to fully understand the story and determine exactly what is happening.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus cleansing the temple near the very end of his ministry, less than a week before his death. However, John also has a record of the cleansing of the temple at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, just days after his first miracle at Cana. Both times Jesus did this was near the week of Passover.

The incidents are so similar, why would Jesus do this twice, years apart? First, we will look at *what* he did, and then we will look at *why*.

The first time Jesus did this was not very long after his ministry began.

What was the event that happened that launched the ministry of Jesus? His baptism by John the Baptist.

What was his first miracle? The water into wine at Cana. This took place shortly after his baptism.

Shortly after the wedding at Cana, Jesus went to Capernaum, and then on to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem it was near the time of Passover, and this is the next story we see of Jesus.

Jerusalem is the capital city, a large city. Everyone came to worship God in Jerusalem.

Where would they worship? At the temple.

Jesus went into the temple, and found that people were using it for a marketplace, they were selling things. They had stalls set up, and were selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and the money changers were sitting and collecting money.

Discuss:
They were selling oxen, sheep and doves.
What do we know about these animals? Do they stink?
Oxen are very large. Do oxen and sheep know where to use the toilet?
No. They would have dropped manure everywhere; they would have urinated all over the place.
They would have made the temple a mess.

Jesus made a whip out of small cords and drove them out of the temple.

Discuss:
Where did that come from? What did he make it out of?
Where did he get the cords?
Maybe there were ropes there for the animals? Maybe he braided them together?
We aren't told.

He drove all of them out of the temple.

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Discuss:

Do you know what a whip looks like? Do you know what a whip feels like? It has a whistle when it goes through the air, and it has a snap when it hits a target.

Jesus probably started snapping the whip towards the people, the sheep, the oxen, all of them, telling them, Get out of here! The people are running to get out of the way.

He dumped out the money changers' money; poured it on the floor and turned over the tables; he knocked them all down. They probably had the birds in cages sitting on the tables, and he knocked them over. The cages may have broken, and birds may have been flying around.

Is this a big deal? Yes. This would have made news. He tore up their marketplace and made a whip and drove them out. They did not have television or radio, but we can guess that everyone heard about this.

Discuss:

Why do you think they were selling goods there?

Were they selling these animals so people could buy them for sacrifice?

Then he said to the people that sold the doves, Take these things out of there and do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise. Maybe the people argued that they were selling them for sacrifices. But did Jesus think this was okay?

Then his disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of your house has eaten me up," Psalm 69:9.

The Jews said to him, Can you tell us who gave you the authority to do this?

Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

They thought this was crazy. They said, It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will build it again in three days?

But Jesus was talking about the temple of his body. When he was risen from the dead, the disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scriptures.

After this, he stayed in Jerusalem for the feast day, and he did many miracles. But he did not trust them, and he did not need their testimony of him.

The next time this happened it was mentioned in all three gospels. This time it happened the week before he was arrested, just days before he was crucified.

Jesus went into the temple and began casting out all the people that were buying and selling in the temple.

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Discuss:

He told them a few years before to stop. But are they still here?

Did they just set up their stuff again after he left the first time?

It was the same scene, except there is no reference to a whip this time. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and he threw down the chairs of the people selling doves. The people and animals are running, gathering their things and trying to get out of the way. The birds may have been flying around. It was quite a sight to see.

It is mentioned more than once that Jesus seemed to focus on those who were selling the doves. It could be because the dove sellers would be selling to the poorest people. The poor could not afford the larger sacrifices and would sacrifice a dove, or pigeon.

This was Passover week.

This was their largest annual opportunity to make money. Everyone came from all around, not only from surrounding cities, but many people would travel to Jerusalem at Passover. The people would have to have animals to offer for Passover sacrifice. It would be like a tourist attraction. The merchants knew where the people would be, and what they would be buying. The prices might have even been higher because they knew people needed these things.

Discuss:

This would have made news. These people probably prepared for this sales event all year, and they may have relied on the money they made during this week to use throughout the year. Jesus shut it all down and did not care about their financial opportunities. They were violating the temple of God.

Jesus said,

Isn't it written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," (Isaiah 56:7) but you have made it a den of thieves (Mark 11:17).

But then Jesus did something else. After he kicked everyone else out of the temple, the crippled and the blind people came to them, and he healed them. Isn't this what the temple is supposed to be for?

The priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, and the people that he healed. The children in the temple were loudly calling out in the temple, saying,

Hosanna to the Son of David!

When the priests saw that Jesus was healing all the people, were they happy for the people that got well? Absolutely not. They were very upset, and even more upset that the children were praising Jesus.

The word, "Hosanna," literally means, "Save us!" It is a cry for salvation. But it has a double meaning and also means "praise," or adoration.

The priests said to Jesus, "Do you hear what they are saying?" They were basically telling Jesus, You should not let them say these things to you. They should not be doing this. And they wanted Jesus to put a stop to it.

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A Den of Thieves

But Jesus said,

Have you never read, Out of the mouth of children and babies you have perfected praise, (Psalm 8:2; Matt 21:16)?

What does this mean? What is Jesus talking about?

Jesus is talking about how children and babies praise him. Have you ever showed a baby how to lift its hands to the Lord? You can sing a song with a baby or a small child and show them how to lift their hands. They do it. They praise the Lord. And even though they may not really know seem to know what they are doing, Jesus is calling this "perfect praise." This means more than we can understand and it definitely means something to God (Matthew 18:1-4).

The priests and scribes were very upset that the people admired Jesus.

They were looking for a way to destroy Jesus, but they were afraid of the people because everyone was amazed by him, and he was so liked by the people. Jesus left, he went out of the city and stayed in Bethany.

What does all this mean? Why did Jesus tell everyone to get out of the temple, and why did he do it twice?

Discuss:

What is a temple?

What is it for?

Let the students share their answers and guide them to correct answers.

The temple was not always the temple. Before it was the temple, it was called something else. It was mobile, it was used in the wilderness. It was called the tabernacle. This was like a very large tent that could be moved from one place to another.

Where did the Israelites get the idea to build this tabernacle?

Do you remember a very well-known man who wrote five of the Old Testament books? This man was very famous in Egypt. He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

He wrote the Ten Commandments:

Moses.

Where did Moses get the idea to build the tabernacle? Where did he get the Ten Commandments? Moses went up on a mountain for forty days where God spoke to him. God gave him the Ten Commandments, and the plans for this tabernacle.

The temple.

The tabernacle.

Moses on the mountain.

All of these have a theme and are part of a picture that God was trying to illustrate.

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But we must go back even further. We must go back to the very beginning.

When God first made the world, where did he put people? In the Garden of Eden. In this garden, who came and talked to them every day? Who came and walked with them? God.

He planned for the Garden of Eden to be the place where God would come and visit with his people. They would have a relationship and they would spend time together there. But the people messed up his plan, and they had to leave the garden.

Discuss:

Why did God make them leave the garden?

They ate the fruit of the tree that they were not supposed to eat. What was that tree: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But there was another tree in the middle of the garden. What was that tree? The Tree of Life.

Because they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that brought in sin, there is now evil in the world. If they then eat of the Tree of Life, then they would live forever with sin and evil in the world (Genesis 3:22). God sent them out of the garden not for punishment, but for their protection. He did not want them to have access to the tree of life with sin.

At the very beginning, from the foundation of the world, God already had a plan for Jesus to come into the world to bring salvation. So he had to preserve this plan; but it was not yet time (1 Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 13:8).

God had planned for the garden of Eden to be the place where God would communicate and fellowship with his people. But now they are not allowed in the garden anymore.

Where can God meet his people?

After Moses led the people out of Egypt, God came to Moses and the people and wanted to have a relationship with them. But the people were scared of God so they told Moses to go talk to God for them (Exodus 20:18-21). Moses went up on the mountain to talk to God. At that time the mountain was seen as a place where “heaven touched earth", and Moses talked to God on the mountain. God gave him the Ten Commandments and then 603 more laws.

God told Moses that he wanted to have a relationship with his people. He wanted to be with them, to be their God and live among them (Exodus 25:8-9). So he told Moses to make him a tabernacle where God could live among them. But it had to be sacred, it had to be a holy place to protect them from his glory. God is so powerful, and his glory is like a “devouring fire ”(Exodus 24:17).

God told Moses very specifically how to build this tabernacle where God would come down and meet with his people. He even told him what color to make the curtains and all the pieces.

It had three parts, or sections. It had an outside area, an inner area, and a smaller inside part called the “Holy of Holies,” where God lives, and only the priest could go.

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Years later, David told God he did not want God to live in a tent, and he wanted to build him a real temple of stone. God told David that Solomon would be the one to build this temple, and they built a beautiful temple for the Lord. And God came down into the temple, and this is where he met with the people.

We can see that the temple was very important to God. It was sacred. **It was where God and the people came together.**

With all the background information, we can now go back and look at WHY Jesus cleansed the temple.

God gave many laws and rules to Moses, and one of the laws is about cleansing your house.

If your house got a disease in it, or a mold or mildew in it, you would tell the priest, First, they would take everything out of the house, and then the priest would come and look at your house and see what was wrong (Leviticus 14:34:45).

Then they would close the door and shut the house up for seven days, and then he would come back again to inspect your house. If the disease had spread, they would clean the stones where the mold or mildew was, and replace them with new stones.

Later, if the plague returned after it was cleaned, after the stones were replaced, then the priest would come and inspect your house, and declare it unclean. The house would be torn down; this is the only way to get rid of it.

Jesus is the ultimate priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14).

At the first of his ministry, Jesus examined the temple, and he cleansed it by removing everyone and everything.

Then again at the end of his ministry, he came back to see if anything had changed. Was it still “diseased”?

Yes. Jesus examined the temple and found that he needed to cleanse it again and he removed everyone and everything again. But he had already condemned it. In Luke, just before Jesus came in the temple to cleanse it again, he said that enemies would come in and they would not leave “one stone upon another” (Luke 19:42-44). This is exactly what happened in 70 AD when the Roman emperor laid siege on Jerusalem, and the temple was completely destroyed.

Do you think that Jesus had probably been at the temple at times in between those two events? It is very likely. However, it was not yet time for him to perform the second cleansing. He specifically chose these times at the very beginning of his ministry, and again at the very end of his ministry to fulfill prophecy.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus IS the temple.

…the Word, (Jesus) was made flesh and dwells among us, full of grace and truth.

After Jesus cleansed the first time, he said **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," (John 2:19).**

He was speaking of his body (John 2:20-21). He was speaking of his death, and that he would rise in three days.

Up until Jesus, God had to have a way to communicate with his people, and this is why Moses met God on a mountain, they built the tabernacle, and later the temple.

God's desire was always to have a relationship with man, but in the Old Testament it was limited. There were people that the "Spirit of the Lord" came upon, but it would come and go, and only a few people, such as King David, did the Spirit stay.

When Jesus came to earth, the Spirit of God came on him at his baptism, and it stayed.

We no longer need a physical temple. We do not need a place where heaven touches earth, because God IS on earth through Jesus. Before Jesus came, God needed a physical temple, a place to connect with his people. But once Jesus came into the earth, God could be here through Jesus, His son.

Jesus ascended after he rose again and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1).

If Jesus is not physically in the earth now, how is he here?

He is here through the Holy Spirit. Where is the Holy Spirit? It lives in us.

So who is the temple now? We are. **We are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16).** You are living stones (1 Peter 2:5).

Discuss:

What does that mean?

There is no longer a physical temple on the earth but is made up of people. As believers, we make up the temple.

Peter said that we are living stones, living rocks. Just like the temple was made of stones, we are now the stones in the temple.

Jesus is the "cornerstone" and we are built upon him (Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:20).

When you build, you must start somewhere. One stone is carefully measured and laid down on the foundation. All the other stones go out from that one stone because you know it is straight, and it is in the right place.

That is who Jesus is, and we are the stones built on the foundation of Jesus.

We are the body of Christ on earth. The things that Jesus does on this earth are done through his people. Jesus is not physically bringing food to people, that is our job. If someone needs help, we are the body of Jesus on the earth, and it is our job to do the things that Jesus wants done (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

So how does God meet with us and talk with us now?

He talks to you. Because you have the Spirit of God living on the inside of you, it's like a private line directly going from you to God. You no longer need to go through a priest, we have Jesus, the ultimate priest. He has also made us priests so that we can bring Jesus to others (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10).

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An Evening Visit

John 3:1-21

Life of Jesus

This was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus had been baptized by John, performed his first miracle of turning the water into wine, and then cleansed the temple of those who were buying and selling.

Discuss:

After the temple event, the Jews came to Jesus and asked him what authority he had to do the things he did.

An event is being held at the temple, and a marketplace is set for people to do business. Someone that may or not be familiar to the people at the event comes in, tears everything down, and tells the people to leave.

People are wondering, Who is this? Who told him he could do this?

Did someone tell him he could take charge?

Did someone tell him to shut everything down?

Then, on the feast day at Passover, many people believed in Jesus when they saw the miracles he did (John 2:23).

Cleansing the temple was a very overt, very bold move on the part of Jesus. Immediately afterwards, the Jews came to Jesus. They asked him for a sign to show them he had the authority to act as he did.

Soon afterwards, one of the Pharisees named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.

Who was Nicodemus?

He was a Pharisee.

Pharisees were a sect, or group of Jews who were highly respected for their religious beliefs and practices. They were seen by others as experts for their knowledge of the scriptures, and they held great influence among the common people.

From a biblical context Pharisees were seen as those who were seeking distinction and praise by observing rituals such as ceremonial washings, fasting, prayers, and giving of alms to the poor. The gospels view them as insincere in their holiness, but they were very proud of their own good works. The Pharisees believed in a Messiah, and in accountability for individual deeds.

The Pharisees were highly educated, and they knew the Old Testament scriptures and passages very well. They interpreted the Old Testament laws and other writings very strictly and held others to their interpretations and practices. They held places of influence in the community, and although they did not perform priestly duties, they did influence temple rituals and practices. They were able to make decisions to put someone "out of the synagogue," which is essentially casting them out of the community of the Jews.

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An Evening Visit

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, which meant he was an elite religious leader with authority. He was well-known; as a person who held leadership among the Jews, he would have been recognized by the people. They would have looked up to him and highly respected him. Because of his leadership position, most likely he was an older man.

Nicodemus was a scholar of the law, and the Old Testament.

He would have been respected, of privileged status. He was most likely wealthy as we can see at Jesus' crucifixion.

He would have been a very devout religious man who prayed multiple times a day.

He had a place in the council of the Pharisees as we see later in Jesus' ministry.

Why did he come to Jesus at night?

It seems very likely that he came at night to visit secretly. He was curious about Jesus and his ministry. It could be that he was embarrassed to be seen associating with Jesus, or he was simply trying to avoid persecution from his fellow Pharisees.

We see in John 2:20 that the Jews already came to Jesus asking him where he got the authority to perform the temple cleansing. We can guess that the Pharisees probably held a council meeting about what he had done.

It seems that regardless of what has been said about Jesus, or already decided by the other Pharisees, Nicodemus wants to talk to Jesus personally, and he doesn't seem to want other people to know, so he comes at night.

Nicodemus said to Jesus,

We know that you are a teacher from God, because no one can do these miracles that you do except God is with him.

Now, we know for certain they have been talking about Jesus. The Pharisees have noticed him. They saw his bold statement he made about the temple, but now he is also healing people and performing many miracles.

There are a couple of ways of looking at what is happening here.

It is possible that Nicodemus is genuinely curious. He really wants to know what is going on but he's afraid of his own reputation so he comes to Jesus at night looking for some answers.

Another possibility is that this could be a political move. Nicodemus could see that Jesus is already gaining influence among the common people. Perhaps Nicodemus comes at night as a representative of the ruling Pharisees.

Jesus already knows the Pharisees disagree with him, but Nicodemus could be thinking, you have something, we have something, let's work together on this; let's talk. We are also told later in the gospel of John that the Pharisees were concerned about Jesus because they felt like he was a threat to their political position with Rome (John 11:47-48). This could have been an attempt to gain favor with Jesus early in his ministry.

Jesus does not even respond to Nicodemus' comment, nor does he take it as a compliment. Jesus is not impressed or intimidated by Nicodemus and his position of authority. He completely disregards it and seems to completely change the subject.

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An Evening Visit

Jesus says, Truly I say to you, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

Discuss:

Do you think Nicodemus thought he was already in the kingdom of God?

Nicodemus is a very religious person. He is very moral.

Is Jesus trying to tell him that he has it all wrong?

Nicodemus responds, How can a man be born again? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

We can look at this as Nicodemus speaking foolishly, but it seems he's actually quite an intelligent man. It is more likely that he is possibly speaking sarcastically. Nicodemus says, What are you saying? I must become a baby again?

This could have been quite offensive to Nicodemus. He's educated, he's been teaching the Bible his whole life, and he's a person of influence. It would seem his life is quite a success. It is often harder for people who have a good life and everything they want to see their need for God. But Jesus is telling him that everything he thinks he knows about God and his kingdom is wrong. He needs to start over.

Again, Jesus completely ignores Nicodemus' comment. Jesus rephrases his earlier comment.

Jesus says, Unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Discuss:

What does this mean?

When Jesus says "born of water" it seems to be referring to the physical birth of a baby born from its mother's womb.

But this is not enough. You must have a new Spirit. This new Spirit is the only way you can enter, or even see, the kingdom of God.

This is something that should at least sound familiar to Nicodemus.

What is Jesus talking about?

God created man in his likeness, in his image. Man was designed to represent God on the earth (Genesis 1:26).

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, it changed everything. Their children were born in their likeness, not God's (Genesis 5:3).

Every person born into the world after the fall of man was born into sin (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Jesus says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit."

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An Evening Visit

God knew that in order to save mankind, he had to offer them new life. The Old Testament prophesied that God would give them a new heart and put a new spirit in you (Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-28). This new Spirit was his Spirit, the personal presence of God.

Jesus compared wind to the Spirit. We cannot see the wind. Jesus said, The wind blows, and you hear the sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. He said it is the same with the Spirit; meaning you cannot see the Spirit, but you know it is there and you see the effects of it.

The only way that God can communicate and have a relationship with man is through the Spirit. God is a spiritual being, and we have to relate to him on a spiritual level (John 4:24). He had to give us his spirit so we could communicate with him.

Nicodemus did not understand. He said, How can this be?

Jesus said, Are you a master of Israel, and you do not know these things?

Is Jesus saying that he is studied but the way he has interpreted is false?

Then Jesus goes on speaking.

He asks Nicodemus if he doesn't believe earthly things, how will he believe the heavenly things?

Jesus says that he is the only one who came down here from heaven. He's basically telling Nicodemus that he knows, because he has been there.

Jesus goes on to prophesy of his death.

He goes back to a familiar story that Nicodemus would have known.

He says that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man (*Jesus*) must be lifted up.

He was speaking of a time when the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. The people were complaining and the Lord sent serpents among the people and many of them died. Then the people repented, and asked the Lord to take the serpents away. The Lord told Moses to make a serpent out of brass and put it on a pole. When the people that had been bitten looked at the serpent, they would live.

Jesus was saying that he would be lifted up on the cross, and then

"Whosoever believes on him would not perish, but have eternal life," (John 3:15-17). Jesus said that God did not send his son to condemn the world, but to save it.

We do not know how Nicodemus responded to Jesus.

But, we can find two other times in scripture that Nicodemus is mentioned, and it seems very likely that he came to believe in Jesus.

The Pharisees were holding a council meeting and were upset that no one had arrested Jesus.

Nicodemus was at this meeting, and he defended Jesus (John 7:45-53).

After Jesus was crucified, Nicodemus was one of the people who came to the tomb when they buried the body. Nicodemus brought a 100 pound mixture of very expensive spices and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus.

He was one of the people who helped wrap the body of Christ with linen and spices.

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Jesus in the Story



Mankind was originally made by God to be His representatives here on earth. When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, sin entered the world. God's perfect man was now flawed, and every man after him was born into sin (Romans 5:12).

God gave the Israelites a set of laws to follow in an attempt to keep them separate and preserve them until Jesus came into the world to complete God's plan of salvation. His whole plan was to have a relationship with his people, but sin kept dominating people, and they were completely unable to follow the laws given to the people by God through Moses. Again and again, the people sinned against God (Romans 3:20).

The only way for God to have a relationship with humans was for God to give them a way to be redeemed from sin once and for all. Jesus was the only way. He had to come as a human, and be the perfect human, to save humanity from their sins. Then people would be able to receive His righteousness, not their own, which could never be good enough.

They had to have the righteousness of Jesus to completely redeem them from sin (Romans 3:22; 4:5).

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, sin was nailed to the cross (Galatians 2:20).

Our old man died with Christ, and we have risen with him (Colossians 3:1).

Because the old sinful man was crucified, we are now able to receive a new heart and a new Spirit, God's spirit. And God is able to finally have a relationship with his people because he is able to fellowship with them through the Spirit (Romans 5:1; Colossians 2:13-15).

Without this Spirit, there is no way to enter the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is here. When you accept Jesus, you are in the kingdom. You are seated with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

But it is a spiritual realm, and without the Spirit of God living within you, you are not able to see the kingdom of heaven (Romans 8:6-9; Ephesians 3:12).

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Everything I've Ever Done

John 4:1-42

Life of Jesus

Jesus was leaving Judaea and heading to Galilee. To get there, he had to go through Samaria.

Samaria is where the Samaritans lived. A brief history lesson will help us better understand the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The Jews and the Samaritans hated one another and would have nothing to do with each other. The original dispute began hundreds of years prior when the Israelites were exiled into Babylon (2 Kings 24 & 25). There was a remnant of Israelites that remained in the land after the people were taken captive, and the remaining Israelites married with other pagan groups, and what resulted was the Samaritan race. When the Israelites later returned to the land, there was resentment among the Israelites that the Samaritan people were not pure Jews. The Israelites considered them half-Jew, half-pagan. The Samaritans considered themselves to be descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh but had adopted a modified form of worship that mixed Judaism with pagan practices. This was blasphemy, and the Jews would not allow them to worship alongside them. The Samaritans then created their own place of worship on Mount Gerazim.

For all practical purposes, this was an early incidence of racism, and it would have been quite puzzling to anyone as to why Jesus would have anything to do with a Samaritan. The Jews felt that this was the land that God had given them, and these people should not have been in their land. We can see that racism and immigration have been issues for centuries.

Jesus needed to go through Samaria (John 4:4).

At this time, if a person needed to travel from Judaea to Galilee, many Jews would go completely around and go out of the way to avoid having to travel through Samaria. However, Jesus seems to have no problem making a direct route.

On their way, Jesus came to a city in Samaria that was near a piece of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. (Make sure the audience is familiar with Jacob and Joseph, and if necessary, briefly catch them up with very light references to Genesis 26-50. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, son of Isaac, and his son Joseph was the favored son of twelve boys, who was also a ruler over Egypt second to Pharaoh.) This is symbolic, as Jacob's well was also on this piece of land. What is interesting is that thousands of years later, people still knew exactly what had taken place at this particular location.

Jesus was tired from his travels, and at noon he came and sat down at the well. His disciples had gone into the city to buy food, and Jesus stayed behind to rest.

It helps to understand the significance of wells in the Bible. There are recurring themes in the Bible of trees, water, and…wells.

Wells were a meeting place throughout scripture.

Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac; the servant meets Rebekah at the well. She draws water for the servant and soon becomes a wife for Isaac.

Years later, Isaac's son Jacob meets his future wife, Rachel. He rolls away the stone from the well and draws water for her.

Hundreds of years later, Moses meets his future wife after drawing water for her at a well.

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Everything I've Ever Done

We can see a pattern in scripture:

Someone journeys to a foreign country.

A man and woman meet at a well.

One of them draw water.

The woman hurries home to tell news of the visitor.

The visitor stays (often a meal is mentioned).

The two parties are joined by marriage.

This well pattern is repeated in scripture and is a theme of people from two different cultures who do not know one another. The stories focus on the family of leaders from that nation. And the result is that the marriage, or union, will result in leading the nation in a covenant relationship with God. This well picture goes back to the garden of Eden, where a man and a woman were together near a life-giving water source.

As with so many things in scripture, Jesus has come to fulfill or mirror an event that has taken place. And this story does just that, with some changes.

Jesus is now sitting at the place where some of these interactions have taken place centuries before.

He is sitting at Jacob's well.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water, and Jesus asked her to give him some water.

It was noon. Generally, the women would come in groups together to get water earlier and later in the day. History tells us that going to the well was somewhat of a social event, and women would come together and draw water. But this lady was alone, and she and Jesus were the only ones there. This in itself is amazing. Jesus was always followed by a crowd, and not that many people got a private audience with Jesus.

Discuss:

Why do you think this lady was alone? We find out more about her later.

Maybe she was rejected by her peers, maybe she did not have a lot of friends, we do not know.

The lady responded to Jesus, Why are you, a Jew, asking me, a Samaritan, for a drink? The Jews do not have anything to do with Samaritans. Some Bible scholars say that Jews would not even use the same cups and bowls.

Then Jesus said, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

Discuss:

What does this mean?

What is living water?

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Everything I've Ever Done

Living water contains life from the source of life. Life from God, that will satisfy the deepest thirst in our hearts. Deep down everyone is searching for truth, searching for something to fill the void inside than can only be filled by the Lord. (Psalm 63:1-2) People try to fill this void with material things, with substances, with lifestyles, with power, but it can only truly be filled by a relationship with Jesus Christ, and that is what he was offering this woman.

The lady does not understand what he is talking about. She looks at what she can see, and she says, You do not have anything to draw water with. The well is deep, where will you get this living water?

Discuss:

How do you get water out of a well? Talk about pails, buckets, cups.

Often there is a handle with a crank, and you must lower a pail down into the water.

She saw that Jesus did not have anything to get the water from the well.

Then she asks him, are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, with his children and his animals?

This is a somewhat telling question. She is asking it almost with sarcasm or unbelief, but IS Jesus greater than Jacob? Yes.

Jesus says, If you drink from this water, you will be thirsty again. But if you drink of the water that I give, you will never thirst. **And the water I give will be IN YOU a well of water springing into everlasting life.**

Discuss:

Wow. What is he talking about?

She takes him literally. She responds, and says, Give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, and will not have to come back here to draw water.

Then Jesus says something different. He says, "Go tell your husband to come here."

She responds, I do not have a husband.

Jesus said, You are right when you said you do not have a husband. You have had five husbands, and the man that you have now is not your husband. What you said is true.

How did he know this? Did she tell him this? No.

Discuss:

Discuss her possible situation; divorce, widowed, etc.

Currently living with someone but not married.

Could this be why she was not at the well with friends?

Could it be that she did not have a good reputation?

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Everything I've Ever Done

She then responded, I can see that you are a prophet.

Then she asks a question. She says, Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but the Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we should worship.

Some scholars have theorized that she is trying to divert or trying to change the subject. However, there is another possibility. It seems that she has been searching for something, possibly happiness, fulfillment, contentment. Perhaps she is beginning to see that worship could be what she is seeking? Maybe now she sees that possibly this man can tell her the answer to a long-standing dispute: where should she worship?

Jesus answers her with something unexpected.

He tells her the time is coming when people will not worship on this mountain, or in Jerusalem. He says, You do not know what you worship; we know what we worship because salvation is of the Jews.

BUT…the time is coming, and is here now, that the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for people who will worship Him that way.

God IS a Spirit and if you worship him, you must worship him in spirit and in truth.

This was a new concept.

For thousands of years the only way to worship God was to go TO the temple. God was in the earth, but he resided in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies. Jesus is giving her a glimpse into the new covenant. What we have now is so much greater than what was available prior to the death and resurrection of Christ (John 8:56). In the new covenant, we are given a new spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17), we are transformed by our faith in Christ, and we worship God in Spirit, not in the flesh by a physical place.

She responds, **I know there is a Messiah coming, who is called Christ, and he will teach us all things.** It seems that this was one of the beliefs that the Samaritans held in common with the Jews.

And Jesus said, I am the Messiah, and I am speaking to you now.

At this point, the disciples returned. They were amazed that he was talking to this Samaritan lady. But no one asked, What do you want, or why are you talking to her?

Then the lady left. She left her water pot. She went into the city and talked to the men. She told them,

Come see this man who told me all the things I've ever done: isn't this the Christ?

Discuss:

Think about this. The Bible doesn't put emotion into this. But she dropped everything.

She left her pot, which was the whole reason she was there in the first place, to get water. It appears that she did this in a hurry, maybe in distraction, very possibly excited. She didn't think, I need to take the water home first and then I'll go share this news. She was EAGER to share this news to the people in the city.

But, notice WHO she shared the news with. She shared it with the men. From what we know about her, it may be that she had more of a relationship with the men than the women, and that might explain why she was there at the well alone.

Or, it could be that she went to share it with the leaders of the city because it was such an important revelation.

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Everything I've Ever Done

After she went to the city and shared her news, the men came out of the city to meet Jesus.

Meanwhile, the disciples are back with the food, and they are encouraging Jesus to eat.

But Jesus says, I have meat to eat that you do not know about.

Discuss:
The disciples are looking around at one another asking, Did you bring him something to eat?
Where did he get food?
What is he talking about?
I didn't give him any food, did you?

Then Jesus tells them that his meat is to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work. He then tells the disciples to look at the fields that they are ripe and ready to harvest. He is speaking about a spiritual harvest and bringing people into the kingdom of God. Then he tells them that there are wages that are received from bringing people to the Lord, and here is implying that this is more satisfying than eating food.

****

One person will sow, and another person will reap. It does not always happen at the same time. Jesus tells the disciples that they are reaping another person's harvest. It would seem that he was speaking of the Samaritans.

You could be the person who tells someone about Jesus and life in the kingdom, but you might not be the person who sees them come to Christ. It may be that you planted a seed that had to grow in their heart. It could very well be that someone else comes along later who says something that brings everything together for that person, and they are the ones that actually lead them to belief in Christ.

After this, many of the Samaritans in that city believed on Jesus because of the testimony of the woman at the well, because she told them, He told me everything I ever did.

The Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them, and he stayed there for two days. Even more of the Samaritans believed on Jesus because of his own words. Then the Samaritans told the woman, we believe, not because of what you said, but because now we have heard him ourselves.

We know that this is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

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Jesus in the Story



We can look at the story and see how the pattern of the well is presented here in this story.

Someone journeys to a foreign country	**-**	**Jesus traveled to Samaria.**
A man and woman meet at a well	**-**	**Jesus met this lady at a well**
One of them draw water	**-**	**Jesus asked this lady to give him water**
The woman hurries home to tell news of the visitor	**-**	**She ran back to tell the men of the city**
The visitor stays (often a meal is mentioned)	**-**	**Jesus stayed for two days**
The two parties are joined by marriage	**-**	**Samaritans come into the kingdom as the bride of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 21:2)**

Living water is a reminder of the garden of Eden where a tree of life stood, with a river going out of Eden to water the garden.

Jesus is a source of water as the rock in the wilderness, from which the Israelites get water, the source of life.

Jesus also presents a new way of seeing God. The gospel of John is the first place in the Bible that we see God as our Father. Jesus presents God as a Father who is searching for his people. The Father is looking for people who want to worship him in the spirit and in truth. He is presenting God in a different way; he explains that God is a Spirit, and he is looking for people who will relate to him on his level.

To truly worship him, we must meet God where he is in the Spirit, and we can now do that through the righteousness that we have through Christ, and the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

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The Nobleman's Son

John 4:43-54

Life of Jesus: Miracles

John 4:54 tells us that this was the second miracle that Jesus did when he came out of Judaea into Galilee. This seems to mean the second miracle that he did in this area in Galilee, because we are about to read that he did miracles in Jerusalem.

Some time has passed since Jesus did the miracle at Cana, and now he is returning to Galilee, where he grew up.

Discuss:

In John 4:44, he tells us that Jesus has said that a prophet does not have honor in his own country.

Talk to the students about what this means. If you knew someone for years, they were an ordinary friend of yours, and then people started saying this person was the son of God, would you be a little skeptical?

Would you think, I've known this person my whole life, that can't be true?

This is what some people thought, they had grown up with Jesus, and they found it hard to believe he was anything other than an ordinary person.

When Jesus came back to Galilee the people were curious. It says that many of these people from Galilee had been at the Passover feast in Jerusalem, and they saw all the things he did there. We aren't told what happened there, except that he performed miracles (John 2:23).

Jesus came back to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. We can guess that people had heard what happened at the wedding.

Discuss:

What would you do if you had been a servant at the wedding?

Would you tell people what happened?

Do you think people probably heard about what happened at the wedding?

There was a certain nobleman, or royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come to Galilee, he came to Jesus and begged him to come heal his son.

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The Nobleman's Son

Discuss:

This man may have been royalty, or a ruler, or a government official.

Talk about what this man's life would have looked like.

This man was a nobleman; he would have been well known in his area.

He was probably wealthy; we know he had servants.

His son was dying; they did not have medicine to make the fever stop.

This would affect a person whether they were very rich or very poor, they would be very sad and upset if a son was about to die.

After he asked Jesus to come, Jesus made a statement. It is not clear if this remark was referring to the man, or if it was referring to the people that were around. But Jesus said, "unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." The man seems to show some faith, or desperation, because he then asks Jesus again to come before his child dies.

Jesus responds, but he does not go with him. He tells the man to go on his way, his son will live.

The man BELIEVED the word that Jesus had spoken, and he went on his way.

This man had traveled about 25 miles, or 40 kilometers to come see Jesus, so it took him a while to get back home. While he was heading home, his servants were traveling to tell him his son was alive, and they met him on the way.

When he met his servants, the nobleman asked them when his son began to get well. It is interesting that he asked this question. The servants told him that his son began to get better the day before, at the seventh hour (this is between 1:00 - 2:00 in the afternoon). The father then knew that this was the exact same time when Jesus told him his son would live, and the time he had believed. After this, the man's whole household believed on Jesus. You can discuss how many people this may have been; the man was wealthy and probably had many servants, a wife, other children.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus did not have to go to the man's house to heal his son. He told the man to go on his way, and his son would live. The man believed the words that Jesus spoke, and he found out later it was that at that exact moment he believed when his son began to get well.

Faith doesn't make God move. Faith allows God to move. As soon as this man BELIEVED, his son's fever went away and he got well. After that, everyone in the man's household believed on Jesus.

Talk about what faith means. Ask the kids for their definitions; feel free to discuss. Then give the definition given in the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 11:1 (NASB)

Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen.

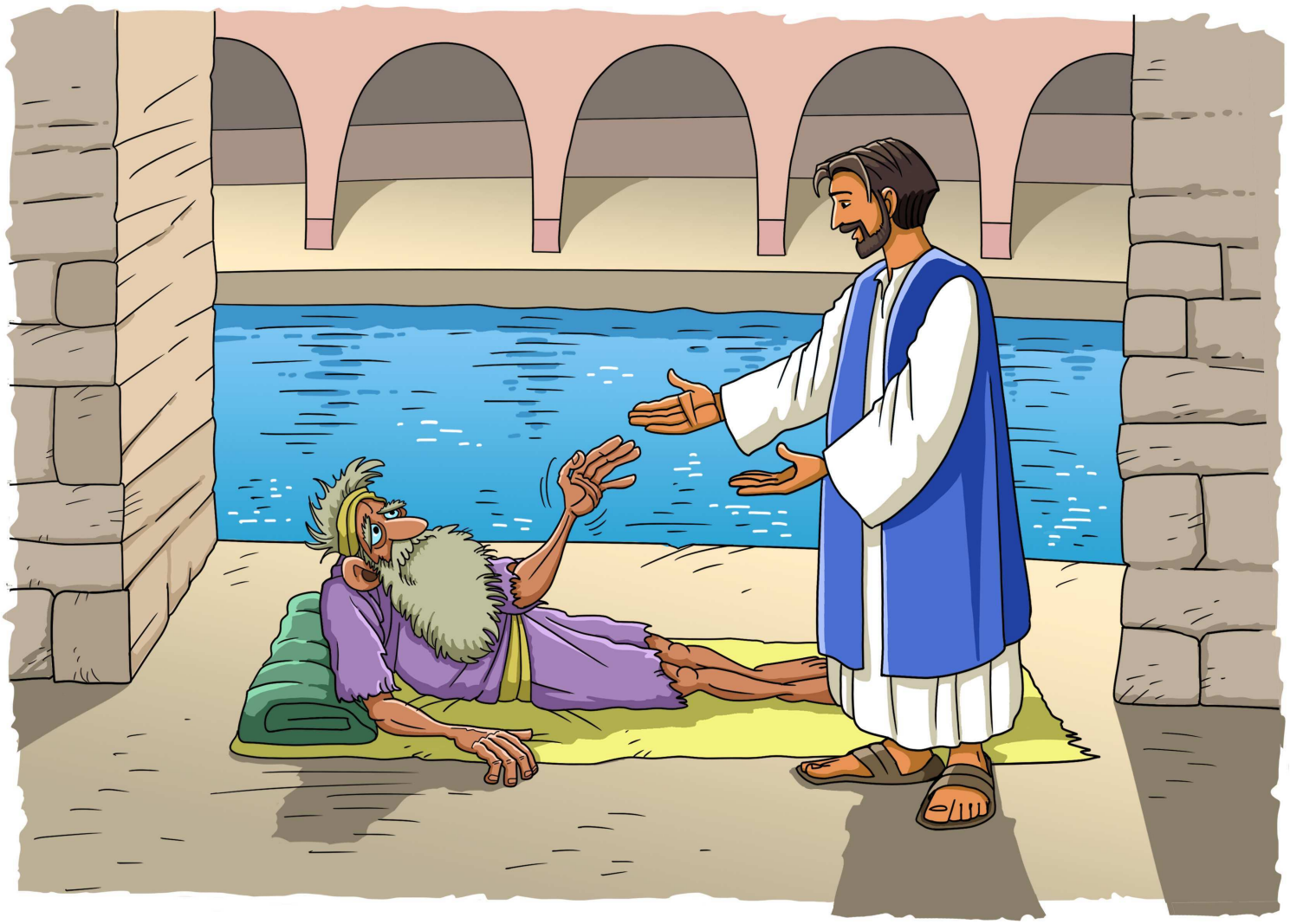
Faith is not hope, but an assurance. It's what you know, that you know, that you know, and you do not doubt it in your heart. Without faith we CANNOT please God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)

It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

Faith gives us the assurance that God exists, and we believe that what he says is true.

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Waiting for the Water

John 5:1-18

Life of Jesus: Miracles

The lesson opens with a feast of the Jews. Where do you think this feast would have been?

It was in Jerusalem, and Jesus went there for the feast.

The story takes place in Jerusalem, near the sheep market. This market was where sheep were sold, some historians believe this was where the sheep were purchased for the sacrifice, but this is not clear from the biblical text. Some markets could have been a place where you purchased a live sheep, and the animal is slaughtered for you to take home to cook for dinner.

By the market there was a pool with five porches, and the name of the pool was called Bethesda.

Discuss:

There is a large pool of water, and a large number of people around the pool.

What do you think is wrong with the people around the pool?

All around this pool there were many sick people who were blind, lame, and paralyzed.

All of them needed healing, and they were waiting for the "moving of the water."

The next verse is very unusual, and this verse has been debated for years. Many modern Bible translations do not include John 5:4. But if you remove this verse, then John 5:7 does not make sense. This lesson will assume that the teacher has a translation that includes John 5:4.

John 5:4 says that at a certain time, an angel went down and stirred up the water. The angel would make the water bubble, or move, and the first person who got in the water after this would get healed.

It is difficult to find anything like this anywhere else in the Bible, so some scholars believe that this could have been a legend. Others say there may have been a spring connected to the pool, or it was connected to the water system in Jerusalem and air would bubble into the pool. Often people try to make the Word of God of less effect by explaining things away in a natural sense, but this can also detract from the power of God. The apostle John writes this very matter-of-factly and does not give any reason for the reader to believe that it was anything other than an angel; therefore, this lesson will assume the literal translation of John 5:4.

We can imagine the scene. When the water is stirred, there would be a mad rush for everyone to try to be the first one in the water.

Discuss:

What would this look like? There were a lot of sick people around this pool.

Some people might have been watching the water all the time waiting for it to move.

What do you think happened when the water started moving, or bubbling?

This could be a very crazy scene.

Do you think people would be rushing down to the water trying to get in first?

What would you do if you saw the water bubbling? Would you yell out that the water is moving?

Would you be quiet, not say anything and try to get in before anyone else noticed? Either way, people might be shoving other people out of the way, pushing to be the first one into the water.

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Waiting for the Water

There was a certain man there who was waiting around the pool, and he had been sick for thirty-eight years.

We do not know how old he is, or how long he has been waiting by the pool.

There is one other time in the Bible where the number thirty-eight is mentioned. Deuteronomy 2:14 says that the Israelites wandered from Kadeshbarnea (where they sent the spies into the promised land) to the brook of Zered for thirty-eight years. This specific time period was part of the forty years that they were in the desert and this was the time that all the men of war died in the desert.

The possible parallel is that this time of thirty-eight years in this man's life was a time of wandering, a time where he was completely aimless, and waiting to die. But when given the opportunity to go into the promised land, he made a different choice.

For some reason, Jesus seems to have singled this man out. We don't know why he chose this man, or if he was the only person he healed at Bethesda.

Jesus saw this man lying there near the pool, and he knew that he had been that way for a long time.

Discuss:

How could Jesus have known that this man had been sick for a long time?

He seems to have known this just by looking at him.

Is it possible that the man's legs were skinny - small and shriveled? Sometimes when people are not able to walk for long periods of time their legs completely lose all muscle and strength; the legs become thin and frail.

Could that be what Jesus saw when he looked at this man?

Jesus came to him and asked him a question. What do you think he asked this man?

Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be made well?"

Discuss:

What kind of a question is this?

What would you say?

If you had been sick for thirty-eight years, what would you say?

Do you think the man wanted to be healed?

Was that why he was there at the pool waiting for what may have been a very long time?

Do you think this man said yes?

He did not actually answer the question. He basically offers an excuse, or an explanation of why he is not well. He blamed things on other people.

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Waiting for the Water

He told Jesus that he did not have anyone to put him into the water when it was stirred up. And when he tries to get in the water, someone else always gets there first, and he can never get there in time.

We aren't sure why he offers this vague explanation; he seems to be trying to make excuses of why he is not healed.

Jesus does not respond to any of this.

He just says, "Get up! Pick up your bed, and walk." What do you think the man did?

What is interesting and unusual is that the reader finds out later that he does not even know who Jesus is. It is not like he heard about the healings that Jesus had performed, or knew the reputation that Jesus had. So as far as this man knows, this random man told him to get up and walk.

The man gets up. Immediately. He picked up his bed and walked. He was healed and made whole!

But what day of the week was it?

It was the sabbath.

Discuss:

What always happens when Jesus helps someone on the sabbath? Who is going to be angry?

The Jewish leaders always got upset. Why?

The Jews saw this man carrying his bed. Maybe he had it thrown over his shoulder. But the Jews saw him carrying his bed and said, Hey! What are you doing? It's against the law to carry your bed on the sabbath day! This is considered work.

The man told them, the man that made me well told me to pick up my bed and walk. Then the Jews said, Who? Who did this? What man told you to pick up your bed and walk?

They could have said, this is amazing! They probably knew this man. If he was a beggar, and he had been sick for so long, people probably knew who he was. He most likely had been sitting out there every day for days and people would have recognized him.

It is likely that many people in the city knew who he was.

The Jews could have been happy for the man. This man is excited; this is the best day he has had in thirty-eight years!

This is where we see that this man did not even know who Jesus was; he did not know who had healed him. There were so many people there that Jesus had left unnoticed.

Jesus found the man in the temple. If he found him, he must have been looking for him.

Jesus went up to the man and said something to this man that makes the reader wonder what was going on in this man's life, or what caused his condition in the first place?

Jesus said, You are well now; stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.

Why did Jesus say this? What does this mean?

Does this mean that God made him sick? No. God does not put sickness on us because of our sins.

First, does God forgive us when we sin? Yes.

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Waiting for the Water

Look at Romans 6 to find out what happens when we sin.

We are not under the law anymore, we now live under grace (Romans 6:1, 14,15).

What is grace? It is God's favor, loving-kindness, pleasure. When we accept Jesus, God gives the gift of righteousness and in God's eyes he does not see our sin (Romans 5:17). Our old self died with Jesus, and we are made new just like Jesus was when he was raised from the dead (Romans 5:15-21; 6:6) God sees us as dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ Jesus. He looks at us the way he looks at Jesus.

What does it mean when we say "the law"? What is it talking about?

It means the Ten Commandments, and the other 613 laws in the books that Moses wrote in the Bible. The Jews lived by these laws for thousands of years.

If we are not under the law anymore and God forgives us, then can we just go and do whatever we want to because we know he will forgive us? No.

Sin is a trap. It is dangerous; it opens the door for the devil to come into our lives.

The apostle Paul wrote that **if you sin, you make yourself a slave (Romans 6:16)**. Do you want to be a slave?

Paul said if you obey God, it is like you are a servant to God, but if you sin, you will be a servant to the devil. If we sin, it is like opening the door for the devil to come into our lives.

Discuss:

Do you think that's why Jesus told this man to stop sinning?

Was he trying to protect him?

Jesus is warning him: if you keep sinning, it will let something worse in your life than you had before.

Just because God's grace covers our sin, it doesn't make it okay to sin.

If we continue to sin because we know that God's grace covers our sin, it is very dangerous. Yielding to sin makes us servants of sin, makes more sin, and ultimately sin will kill you. Satan will be your master, and he will pay you what you earned, which is death.

After this, the man left, and he told the Jews that Jesus was the one who made him well. That made the Jews want to kill Jesus even more, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

Then Jesus told the Jews, My Father is always working, and I am working.

This made the Jews even more angry, and they wanted even more to kill him. Not only had he broken the sabbath, but now he was saying that God was his Father, and he was making himself equal with God.

Jesus continued speaking about himself and his relationship to the Father.

Jesus explains who he is, and his relationship with the Father. He tells them many things, but his underlying theme is that you cannot separate Jesus from God. You cannot say you believe in one and not the other. You cannot say that you honor one and not the other.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus told them that he does not do anything of himself, but only what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19).

To honor God the Father, you must also honor the Son (John 5:23).

If you hear his word, and believe on him, you will have everlasting life (John 5:24).

If you search the scriptures, you will see that they speak of Jesus (John 5:39).

If you do not receive Jesus, you do not have the love of God in you (John 5:42).

Jesus said that He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

He said that if you've seen Jesus, you've seen the Father (John 14:9).

The Pharisees were saying they honored the Father, but they rejected Jesus. Jesus tells the Pharisees of the authority given to him by the Father (John 5:27). He tells them that He can do nothing of himself, and he only does the will of the Father who sent him (John 5:30). If you honor Jesus, you honor the Father. If you do not honor Jesus the Son, then you do not honor God the Father (John 5:23).

There are a lot of people who say they know God, and many religions say they have the way to God. But you cannot have a relationship with the Father without acknowledging that God sent Jesus into the world to save us (John 5:38,43).

Jesus IS the Word of God. The scriptures are all about Jesus (John 5:39) from the beginning to the very end. And if you do not receive Jesus, then the love of God is not in you (John 5:42).

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So You May Know

Matthew 9:1-8
Mark 2:1-12
Luke 5:18-26

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Jesus has come into the town of Capernaum. Matthew's gospel says that this was his "own city," which seems to imply that this was Jesus' hometown. After several days, people heard that Jesus was in town, and many people came to see him.

Discuss:

Jesus was a celebrity.

What does that mean? It means he was famous.

What do people do to celebrities? They follow them, find out where they are, and see what they are doing.

Jesus had no privacy; people followed him everywhere he went.

What would this be like? Would you like to be famous like this?

Would you want people following you everywhere?

It could be difficult; people were always around asking questions, or wanting to be healed.

Jesus often had to get away to rest or pray because there were always crowds of people around him.

After a few days, people found out Jesus was in town.

Discuss:

They may have told their friends, "I heard Jesus is here! I heard he's staying…," or, "

My friend's friend thinks they saw him over at somebody's house."

He may have come into town, and then somebody saw him, and told other people.

Maybe they would walk by, hoping to get a glimpse of him or find out where he was.

As soon as people found out where Jesus was, so many people came to see him that there was no room in the building, not even around the door, and Jesus was preaching the word to them.

Luke's account says that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by. These men were studied in the laws of Moses, and they knew all the laws of the Bible. When they heard that Jesus was in town, they came from surrounding towns to come see Jesus.

Notice Luke 5:17: " The power of the Lord was present to heal them." The power of God was in the room!

Just because power was there, it doesn't mean that everyone could receive. When we harden our hearts to the things of the Lord like the Pharisees did, the power of God can be right in front of us and we don't even see it. The Word says when our hearts are hardened, then our ears become hard of hearing. When we are unable to see and hear, we cannot understand, and the Lord is not able to heal us because we are not open to receive from Him (Isaiah 44:18; Matthew 13:15; John 12:37-40; Acts 28:27).

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So You May Know

Some historians believe this may have been Jesus' own house, as it seems his home was in Capernaum. Others believe it may have been Peter's house, because some scriptures seem to indicate that Peter may have made his home in Capernaum; we do not know for sure.

Discuss:

Have you ever been anywhere this crowded?

All the seats would have been taken, and people were standing all around.

The doorways were blocked.

There were so many people that no-one could squeeze into the place where he was.

Five men came to see Jesus. Four of them were carrying a bed with a paralyzed man lying on it. What does it mean to be paralyzed? He couldn't move part of his body; we don't know if it was just his legs or his whole body. These four men brought him because he could not get there on his own. Maybe they were his relatives, maybe they were his friends; but they believed if they could get him to Jesus, he would be healed. They tried to figure out a way to bring the bed and the man in to see Jesus, but there were so many people they could not get inside. Luke says that they tried to get into the house: they probably asked people to let them in, but it was just too crowded.

These men came up with a different plan. They decided to go up on top of the roof. The roof was made of pieces of tile; they took the tiles off the roof and lowered the man down on his bed right in front of Jesus.

Discuss:

This was quite an event. Rather than be discouraged, they climbed up on the roof, and they had to carry the man on the bed up on top of the roof. Then they took the roof apart. They did not seem concerned that anyone might be upset that they tore up the roof; they were determined to get this man to Jesus.

This was their friend; they would do whatever it took to get him to Jesus. This shows that they were confident - they had faith - that if they could just get the man to see Jesus, he would be healed.

What would it be like if you were in the room listening to Jesus?

All the sudden, the roof is lifted and some pieces of the roof probably fell into the room on the people below. Then a man on a bed comes down through the hole right in front of Jesus. The friends are probably still on the roof; they are lowering the man down, probably with some kind of rope.

All three gospels say that Jesus could see something. What do you think Jesus could see? Jesus saw their faith.

Can you see faith? Their faith was seen because of what they *did*. (James 2:18, 22) Faith without works is dead. What does this mean? If you say you believe something, but you don't act like you believe it, do you really believe it? Did they believe that if they could get this man to Jesus he would be healed? Yes, they did. They did whatever they could to get this man to Jesus because they believed he was going to be healed.

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So You May Know

Now, notice what Jesus says. He doesn't tell him he is healed. **Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven."**

It seems like the forgiveness of sins that Jesus mentioned did not anger the crowd. Is the man healed? Nothing has happened yet.

But there was one group of people that were very upset by this. All three gospels tell the reader what the scribes and Pharisees were *thinking*. The gospels say they reasoned in their hearts, but Jesus knew their thoughts. The scribes and the Pharisees were thinking, "How can he say their sins are forgiven? Only God can forgive sins. He is speaking blasphemies (evil)." But they did not say these things out loud. Jesus knew their thoughts.

Can Jesus forgive sins? Yes, he is fully God and fully man.

He asked them, it is easier to say "Get up and walk," or is it easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven?" In the flesh it looks like it would be easier to say, your sins are forgiven. There would be no outward sign of if it had actually taken place. To tell someone to get up and walk, you would see whether it actually happened. But Jesus was trying to show them that the two are connected.

Then Jesus says, "So that you know the Son of Man (Jesus) has the power on earth to forgive sins;" he's basically saying, I'll prove it to you: I can forgive sins. Then he looks at the man and says, "Get up, take up your bed, and go to your house." The man immediately gets up, rolls up his bed, and walks out in front of everyone. The people said, "We've never seen anything like this!" And other people said, "We have seen strange things today."

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Jesus in the Story



Why was he able to walk after his sins were forgiven? Sin was the problem.

Who was the first man to sin? Adam. That made every person born in the world a sinner. When you have sin in your life, one of the things it can do is make you sick. Sin is like opening a door for Satan to come into your life.

When you sin, you are a slave to sin (Romans 5:14-21; Romans 6:11-16, 23).

Under the law of Moses, God listed all the things that are blessings for you if you obey all the laws. Then he listed the curses and bad things that would happen if you did not obey all the laws. Can we obey all of God's commands? No. But Jesus can, and he did. He came down here as a man and he did not do anything wrong. He was the perfect person and never sinned.

Under grace, our sins are forgiven.

We are made righteous, and sin no longer has power over us. We are freed from the effects of sin, and this includes sickness. This is why Jesus was saying, let me show you, let me prove it to you. Once the man was forgiven, he was free from the power of sin on his life, and he was healed.

This is also why many times Jesus told people, "Go and sin no more." We do not see that in this story, but we do see that throughout Jesus' ministry. After you receive grace and forgiveness, and even healing, if you continue to sin, you will open the door for the devil to come back into your life and become sick again (Romans 6:16).

When we receive the gift of Jesus' righteousness, we inherit all the blessings that come through Christ, which includes healing. Jesus took away the curses of the law of Moses and only left us with the blessings (Galatians 3:13-14). Because of Jesus, we have been redeemed (excluded) from the curses listed in the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 28) and they have no power over us anymore.

People glorified God because he had given such power to men. Through Jesus' name, we can pray for people and see them healed. God sent us the Holy Spirit to give us power. Jesus gave us the same authority he used on earth and we can use his name to command the devil to leave, and see people healed.

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A Withered Hand

Matthew 12:1-14
Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6
Luke 6:1-11

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Begin with discussion about the Sabbath day. What day of the week is the Sabbath? It is the seventh day, Saturday. Why was the Sabbath day the seventh day?

It was because God rested on the seventh day when he created the world.

What were they not supposed to do on the Sabbath day? Work. How did the Jewish people view the Sabbath? Some answers may include: they thought it was holy, they were very respectful of the Sabbath day and did not do any work.

Who were the Pharisees?

They were not priests, but they were a group of religious Jewish leaders who were very strict in the way that they interpreted the laws of Moses. They knew ALL the rules of the law, all 613 laws, and then they created extra rules for all of the people to follow so that they wouldn't break the law of Moses. Sometimes when people follow all the rules they think they are better than everyone else, and it can make them *proud*. The Pharisees would pride themselves on doing everything right, and look down on everyone else.

The Pharisees were always trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. They did not like Him because he did not operate by their rules.

Begin telling the story that Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath day. They were hungry, and so they picked some grain to eat. Some Bible translations say corn, and some say grain. It is believed that grain is the more accurate interpretation here. Talk to the kids about this process. First you would pick the grain, then you would have to rub off the kernels to eat it.

Can you guess who saw Jesus and his disciples pick the grain? The Pharisees. They accused Jesus, and told him he did something that was against the law to do on the Sabbath day. They said that what they were doing was harvesting - that picking the grain and removing it was work.

Jesus responds to the Pharisees by telling them that there was a time that David and his men ate the bread of the priests when they were hungry. David was not supposed to eat this bread, but God did not condemn him for it; they were not guilty. Jesus told the Pharisees that the priests in the temple broke the Sabbath laws because they had to work on the Sabbath, just like preachers do their work on Sunday. But they were not guilty, because someone had to do these duties.

The Sabbath was meant to help and bless people, not to oppress them.

The Pharisees were taking the things that God meant for good and twisting them; they used the law to oppress and condemn the people. Jesus was trying to show them that God's whole purpose of the law was to help people and bless people. Man made it all about following the rules to the extreme, and missed the whole point of what God intended for the law in the first place.

Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!" Mark 2:27.

Jesus tells them that the Son of Man is greater than the Sabbath and his disciples were not guilty.

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A Withered Hand

It isn't completely clear whether the healing of the withered hand was on the same Sabbath that Jesus and his disciples picked the grain from the field. Regardless, all three of the gospels tell these as connecting stories. These stories show the attitude of the Pharisees towards the Sabbath as opposed to how Jesus views the Sabbath.

Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he taught there. **When he gets to the synagogue, he sees a man who has a withered hand.**

Discuss:

What is a withered hand?

What does it look like?

Have you ever seen someone with a withered hand? A person's hand would be crooked and almost shriveled, and they would not be able to use it very effectively, if at all.

Luke tells us that it was his right hand.

The Pharisees are all watching Jesus very closely. Everyone seems to know about this man, and that he has a withered hand.

Ask the students why the Pharisees would be watching Jesus. What were they trying to see? They were watching to see if Jesus was going to heal him. What would be wrong with healing someone? It was the Sabbath day. Is it work to heal someone? Well, the Pharisees thought it was work and it was wrong. They are watching Jesus to see if he would heal the man, so they can accuse Jesus. They are trying to catch Jesus in the middle of doing something they believe is wrong so they can arrest him. At this time, the religious leaders had political power, and they could decide who was arrested and punished.

Jesus did not care about the rules of the Pharisees. He actually healed people on the Sabbath many times. He was trying to show the people that the Pharisees thought they had all the answers, they were doing everything right, and they were actually doing everything *wrong*.

After Jesus sees the man with the withered hand, the Pharisees asked him,

"Is it lawful (legal), to heal on the Sabbath day?"

Jesus does this a lot. He answers a question with a question. He doesn't always give answers, but he asks questions to try to get the people to think. Jesus says, if you had a sheep, and it wandered off and fell into a pit (a big hole in the ground) on the Sabbath day, would you go find your sheep, and lift it out of the pit? He did not get an answer; this was a rhetorical question and he wasn't really expecting an answer. Then he asks them, Isn't a man better than a sheep? Aren't people more important than sheep?

So, therefore, it is legal, it is okay *to do well* on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees did not like this answer. They would obey the law the way they wanted to.

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A Withered Hand

Discuss:

Talk to the students - have they ever obeyed what their parents told them to do, but not exactly what their parents wanted?

They knew they weren't doing what they were supposed to, but could say to their mom or dad, well, you didn't say not to do ....this or that?

Pretty much everyone has done this and that's what the Pharisees did. They made their own rules and then let everyone know how good they were that they obeyed God's laws, but they weren't obeying what God really wanted them to do.

Now, Jesus looks at the man with the withered hand and says, "Get up, and stand in the middle." Now the man has a decision to make. Is he going to stand up and come to Jesus? Picture this - Jesus is there, calling on him. The Pharisees are there, disapproving of this whole situation. Do the people in the room know the Pharisees aren't happy about this? I'm sure they do. The Pharisees are not making it a secret that they disapprove of Jesus and his methods. Is the man going to stand up and get healed and risk being the source of a huge disagreement, or is he going to choose not to stand up? What does he want most?

The man stood up. He must have desperately wanted to be healed. Then Jesus looked around the room, and asked,

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? To save life or destroy it?"

No one answered. The gospel of Mark tells us, **Jesus looked around the room in anger because of the hardness of their hearts**. Then Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand. Is this something the man could do before? Could he stretch out his hand? Well, he tried to stretch it out, and when he did, it became whole just like his other hand.

What should the response of the crowd have been? Do you think the man was excited that his hand was healed? Of course he was! Shouldn't the crowd have been happy for him? Shouldn't they have been praising God for the miracle?

Instead, the Pharisees were so angry that they were filled with madness. They left the synagogue and went to have a meeting to make plans on how they could stop Jesus; they wanted to kill Him.

What is wrong with this situation? The Pharisees were angry that Jesus did something *good*. What did people think about the Pharisees? They most likely respected them or feared them; they thought these were important men who did everything right and knew all the answers. Jesus tells them how wrong they are in their heart, and that they think they are so holy, but they missed the whole point of the law. They think they are obeying "the law of Moses" but the whole point of the law was to help people. The law was meant to help people do the right things until Jesus could come into the world and give them the Holy Spirit who helps them do the right things.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus' ministry was continuously exposing the motives of people's hearts.

From the very beginning, God's plan was always for people to walk with him by faith. He wanted a relationship of trust with man, but this was dependent on the condition of their hearts. Until Jesus came, we were all under sin, and man's heart was only evil. People turned it into a religion of rules, and that was never what the Lord intended. God gave the law by Moses to protect the people until Jesus could come into the earth. Now through faith in Jesus, believers have received a new heart and the Holy Spirit.

Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ. Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. Galatians 3:21-25

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).

It could be explained to the students that when you are little, you are told not to touch a stove, or an electrical outlet. You are not allowed to use these things because a very small child does not understand how fire works, or how electricity works. But as you get older, you have an understanding and you are allowed to use the stove for its purpose to cook, and you are allowed to plug things into outlets as you understand how they work. The law was like this. It protected us until Jesus came so we could understand how to be right with God through faith.

Now we are not under the law, but under grace. Now we have a counselor in the Holy Spirit to guide us in our relationship with Jesus instead of a set of rules to follow.

The Pharisees were doing all the "right things," and Jesus tried repeatedly to tell them that they were missing the point. Jesus was harsh with the Pharisees; he called them snakes and hypocrites, and these were supposedly the most important leaders of the day. A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something they are not. Their acts may have been good, but the hearts of the Pharisees were proud and hardened.

Did the Pharisees care about the man with the withered hand? Not at all. They were just looking for a way to catch Jesus breaking the law. We must understand that what Jesus was trying to show people is that obeying the rules is not what makes your heart right. What makes your heart right is having a relationship with the Lord. and giving him all the praise and glory in everything.

When you give glory to the Lord, it keeps you in a humble position knowing that the Lord is the one who keeps you, loves you and provides for you, and you cannot do these things without Him. The Pharisees did not praise God for this amazing miracle, or give any glory to God, they just got angry. When we praise and look for ways to glorify God in everything we do, that changes the condition of our hearts.

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Jesus in the Story



To be clear: children should obey their parents and obey God's commands. However, believers are not under the law of Moses, but under grace.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

Jesus fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). Pride gets in your heart when you let obeying the laws determine your identity and value. Our attempts to be "good" or righteous are like dirty rags to God. (Isaiah 64:6) The only righteousness we have is a gift from Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

Later in that same chapter in Matthew some teachers of the law asked Jesus which was the most important commandment. This is how Jesus responded:

Mark 12:30-31 (NIV)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

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Finding Great Faith

Matthew 8:5-13
Luke 7:1-10

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Jesus has returned to Capernaum, where the nobleman lived. It is believed that this event with the centurion took place about six months after the nobleman's son was healed. It is very possible that the centurion heard about that miracle. Capernaum is also referred to in Matthew as Jesus' own city. Jesus was rejected in Nazareth in Luke 4:16-32, and afterwards he made his home in Capernaum.

Discuss:

The Jews were living in Israel, but at this time Israel was under the authority of the Roman government. Discuss what this would have looked like.

The Jewish people were able to lead themselves to some degree with local matters, but they were under the rule of the Romans, and the Romans had ultimate authority over them.

Discuss what centurion means. What is a century? (100 years)

What would it mean if you were an army officer called a centurion?

A centurion would have been the leader of 100 soldiers.

This man would have been wealthy, respected, important, and an authority in the Roman army. Talk about what type of life he would have had. Discuss his lifestyle.

The centurion was a man in authority. He could have used his authority over Jesus and sent orders to get Jesus and make him come to his house. He had a high position in the government and could have sent messengers demanding Jesus to come.

Matthew and Luke give slight differences, but we can reconcile these two accounts. Matthew tells us that the centurion came to him, and Luke tells us that the centurion sent messengers. It is common that when someone sends a representative - especially in an authority or military sense - that you would say that the leader himself "came." When someone comes representing them, it would be as if the authority was present.

Looking at Luke's account, the centurion had a servant who was very sick, and about to die. He heard about Jesus, and he sent messengers to the leaders of the Jews begging them to have Jesus come to heal his servant. The Jewish leaders respected this centurion and came to Jesus on his behalf. Notice what they say. The Jewish people thought very highly of the centurion; they said he loved the nation of Israel, and he had built them a synagogue.

To the Jews, the things he had done made the centurion very worthy and deserving that Jesus should come and heal his servant.

The centurion's message to Jesus was this: LORD, my servant is sick.

The servant had palsy, which was some sort of paralysis. It likely caused weakness and often uncontrolled seizures. We also know that he was near the point of death, and in a lot of pain. The centurion loved this servant; he was very dear to him.

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Finding Great Faith

Discuss:

Notice what the centurion called Jesus. He called him Lord.

This is very important. When you call someone Lord, you are giving them the highest honor.

This man is not Jewish; he is a gentile and does not have a covenant with God.

Jesus responded, I will come heal him.

What did the centurion do that made Jesus so willingly agree to go?

He called him Lord. This is a title of honor and respect; it is the highest place.

Lord is a title for someone who is in authority over others: a ruler or a master. This centurion, this great man of authority, is willingly putting himself under Jesus' authority.

When Jesus got near his house, the centurion sent friends to Jesus with his message,

"LORD, don't trouble yourself to come here, I am not worthy (deserving, important, sufficient, enough) for you to come under my roof. Neither did I think myself worthy to come to you, but *just say the word*, and my servant will be healed." The centurion says he is not worthy.

What did the Jews come to Jesus and say about this man? Why did they say Jesus should come and heal his servant? They spent time telling Jesus how important the centurion was. They told Jesus how honorable, worthy and deserving this man was, and that Jesus should come because of the great things this man had done. This centurion was humble; he did not "expect" Jesus to come because of his "great" accomplishments. He said he was not worthy for Jesus to come *under his roof*. **He is acknowledging that Jesus is higher than he is; I am not worthy that you should come under me.**

Discuss:

What does "under his roof" mean?

When you invite someone to your home, who is in authority? Who tells the guests where to sit, where to put their shoes, when to eat? You do. You are in control of your home, and you make the rules.

The centurion knew Jesus' authority, and he knew if Jesus came to his home, that would put Jesus under the centurion's authority. The centurion was so humble that he was not going to allow this to happen.

He knew that Jesus was above him. Jesus' authority superseded or was over the centurion.

He respected Jesus and his rule, and he knew Jesus had authority to heal simply by His word.

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Finding Great Faith

The centurion begins to explain how authority works. He tells Jesus, I understand this. I have soldiers under me. I tell one man to go, and he goes. I tell another man to come, and he comes. I tell them what to do, and they do it.

He understood that Jesus was under the authority of God the Father, and that Jesus had authority over sickness and disease and every evil work. He understood that Jesus had the power to heal. He knew that all Jesus had to do was say it, command it, and **it would happen.**

Jesus marveled; this means he was amazed. He said, "I have not found faith like this in all Israel."

In Matthew, Jesus says that the Gentiles will be part of the kingdom of heaven, but that many of the Jews (the children of the kingdom) will be cast out and will not be a part of the kingdom of heaven *(because they did not believe).*

Then Jesus says, go on your way, and *as you have believed*, so let it be done for you. His servant was healed in the same hour, and when the messengers went back to the house, they found the servant completely well.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus has the ultimate power and authority, but the Jewish leaders did not recognize this or treat him with respect. The Jews exalted the centurion over Jesus, begging Jesus to heal him because of the honor they gave the centurion.

The centurion recognized the power of Jesus, and he gave him glory and honor by calling him Lord. The centurion refused to exercise his worldly authority over Jesus. He knew that Jesus' power was greater than his, and he put himself under Jesus' authority. This man, who was not a Jew, understood the authority of God's kingdom much more than the Israelites. He knew that Jesus had power over sickness and death, and all he had to do was speak the Word and give the command.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18).

And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority (Luke 4:32).

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Who is This?

Matthew 8:23-27
Mark 4:35-41
Luke 8:22-25
Psalm 107

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Mark's account seems to indicate that Jesus had been teaching to a crowd from a ship. Other stories in the Gospels mention that Jesus taught from a boat.

Discuss:

Sound experiments have been done in recent years in the areas where Jesus taught; the land was shaped around a cove.

If Jesus was speaking from a boat pushed slightly offshore, he would have been heard for quite a distance because of the way the sound carried over the water and land.

There were other little ships with him, and possibly people were listening from these ships.

Evening has come, and the crowd has been sent home. The disciples get into the ship with Jesus. He says, "Let us go to the other side," and they launch off the boats. This is clear, Jesus said, "*Let us go to the other side*," He is expecting to get to the other side.

As they sail, Jesus falls asleep in the back part of the boat on a pillow.

A great storm comes up on the sea; it was a really big storm. The wind was very strong, and it made huge waves. The waves hit the ship and filled the boat with water.

Discuss:

Talk about storms.

Have you been caught in a storm?

This was a really big storm. The wind came in on the lake and made huge waves.

What happens when a boat is full of water? It is eventually going to sink.

What do you do when a boat fills with water?

You try as quickly as you can to get all the water out of the boat.

The disciples were in a panic. They woke Jesus up and told him they were going to drown. The disciples actually accused Jesus of not caring that they were going to die. This was not a large boat, and it is amazing that Jesus was able to sleep through the storm. This shows that Jesus had total peace; so much so that he was able to rest calmly while the windstorm violently rocked the boat and water washed over him. When the disciples asked him, "Don't you care that we are going to die?", it shows how much they did not know about Jesus. Just because Jesus was not panicking, that doesn't mean he did not care; he was simply confident that they were going to make it safely to the other side.

Do we do this? Do we sometimes try to bring other people into our fear and doubt? When we are worried about a situation, and other people are trusting the Lord and not completely panicked, can we sometimes think they don't care? Maybe they have more trust and have placed more value in what the Lord said, "Let's go to the other side." God has this; he will bring us through to the other side.

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Who is This?

Jesus got up and rebuked the winds and the sea.

The words he used in Mark, **"Peace, be still,"** are interesting. The Greek word used for **peace** means to hush, inability to speak, involuntary stillness, muteness, be silent. This is essentially saying, "Be QUIET!" The Greek word for "**be still:** is also a verb and means to close the mouth with a muzzle, stop the mouth, make speechless. Jesus is in control here and is harnessing the powers of the storm.

As soon as Jesus spoke, the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. This was not a gradual process; it seems to have happened instantly. If it were gradual, the people could have attributed it to natural forces. But it happened suddenly.

Jesus then speaks to the disciples, **"Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"**

Matthew says, "little faith" and Luke simply says, "Where is your faith?" Just before this, Jesus had healed a leper, the centurion's servant, and healed 'many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word and healed all that were sick.'

The disciples are absolutely amazed. It says they were actually very afraid. They still do not have a full understanding of *who* Jesus really is. They said to each other, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" In other words, who is this guy? No one can control the weather - but the wind and the sea obey him.

Then they arrive at their destination, which is the country of the Gadarenes in the Gentile region.

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Jesus in the Story



This story has parallel references throughout the Bible.

This event involving the Messiah is prophesied in Psalm 107:23-31. Psalm 107 speaks of fishermen, men who do business in great waters, who see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. Verse 25 says that the Lord raises the stormy wind, and lifts up the waves. Their souls melted, or they lost their courage. Then they cry to the Lord, he saves them and makes the storm calm and stills the waves. They are glad and praise him for his goodness.

Does the story of Jesus calming the storm remind you of an Old Testament story? There are many parallels between this story and the book of Jonah. Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees several times that

"This evil generation seeks after a sign, and there would be no sign given, but the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matthew 12:38-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32).

Both stories involve going to the Gentiles. Jonah was told by the Lord to go to the Gentile city of Nineveh, but Jonah ran from the Lord and was on a boat going the opposite direction to Tarshish. Jonah did not want to see God's mercy on the Gentiles. Jesus was on his way to the Gadarenes, to willingly bring freedom to the people in the Gentile region. In both accounts, the Lord caused the storm. In Jonah we are told that the Lord sent a great wind, and we read in Psalm 107 that the Lord raised a stormy wind.

In both boats, the sailors and the disciples are terrified. The sailors in Jonah's boat are crying out to their gods, and the disciples are fearful and ask Jesus to do something.

Jonah slept through a storm on the side of the ship; Jesus was asleep at the back part of the ship near the rudder. The reader is uncertain as to why Jonah sleeps through the storm. The reader may assume that Jesus sleeps because he has perfect peace and confidence that they will safely make it to the other side.

The sailors wake Jonah up and tell him to call on his God. But notice, Jonah does not pray to God about the storm. After lots are cast, Jonah admits that the storm came because of him and suggests they throw him overboard. The sailors row very hard to get to land but are not able. They cry to the Lord, Jonah's God, begging not to die for Jonah's sake, and that they are not blamed for throwing Jonah overboard. Reluctantly they throw Jonah into the raging sea, and it is immediately calm.

In a similar fashion, the disciples wake Jesus up, telling him they are about to die. But in contrast to Jonah, Jesus takes authority over the storm and commands the wind to stop and the waves to be still.

Men in both boats are very afraid. The sailors offer sacrifices and make vows to the Lord. What began as an a life threatening situation because of Jonah results in their being saved and serving the Lord.

The disciples are also very afraid. They asked Jesus to "Save us," but when he does they seem surprised and amazed. Jesus does not make it easy on the disciples; he is frustrated. He asks them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith, "and "Where is your faith?"

The disciples ask, "Who is this man that the wind and sea obey him?"

They are his disciples, but do not seem to understand exactly *who* he is, and the authority that he holds.

Jesus told the Jews that the sign of Jonah is the only sign they would receive. This is one of several instances in the Bible where we see that Jesus and Jonah intersect.

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Jesus in the Story



When we face fear and storms in our lives, it reveals what is in our hearts. The condition of your heart is a recurring theme that runs throughout the whole Bible, and one which Jesus continually emphasizes. When we are faced with adversity, do we become fearful, or do we stand confident in our faith knowing WHO our Savior is, and what He is capable of?

Look again at Psalm 107. Look at verses 6, 14, 19 and 28.

What are the people doing? Crying to the Lord. What is his response? He delivered them and saved them from their distress. Verses 7, 14, 20, and 29 tell in what way he delivered them. Now look at verses 8, 15, 21, and 31. What does the Lord want us to do in response to him delivering us out of trouble and distress? He wants us to "Praise him for his goodness, and for his wonderful works…!"

When we praise Him for how good He is, and we tell everyone about the wonderful things He has done, we learn to know Him. When we know Him, we aren't afraid of storms because we know that He always saves us.

Do the students have fears or storms that they are facing? Do they know that Jesus's love casts out all fear?

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

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Set Free!

Matthew 8:28-34
Mark 5:1-20
Luke 8:26-39

Life of Jesus: Miracles

Jesus was on the way to a Gentile region when he calmed the storm. After the storm, they came to the shore in the Gadarenes, or Gerasenes, which were part of a group of primarily Greek Gentile towns. Decapolis was the name given to these ten Greek cities located in what is now modern-day Jordan, Israel and Syria.

When Jesus and his disciples got off the boat, a demon possessed man with an unclean spirit met him. The book of Matthew says there were two men, but the stories in Mark and Luke focus on one man. We have been given details about one particular man.

The man lived in the graveyard. **He was naked; he wore no clothes, and he was very fierce.** He had been possessed with devils for a long time, and he did not live in a house, but in the tombs.

Discuss:

This man was probably well known as the crazy guy who lived in the cemetery or graveyard (tombs). He was scary and people avoided this area completely. He wouldn't let anyone go this way; you could not travel in this area or you would be stopped by this fierce man.

People had tried to tie him up and put chains on him, but he broke the chains off. They had put shackles on him (metal ankle bindings with heavy metal ball and chains) and he smashed them. He was very fierce and very strong, and no one could tame him. He broke free of these chains and then the devil drove him into the wilderness.

This man was always in the tombs or mountains and he cried all night and day. He was tormented and miserable, and he cut himself with stones, so he would have had bleeding cuts and scars. This man was a prisoner in his own body. He was controlled by demons and was crying out for help.

When he saw Jesus, the man came and fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped him. Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man, then the devils spoke through the man. He cried out with a loud voice and said, **"What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I beg you not to torment me."** It was the man's voice; but the demons spoke through him.

Matthew's account says the demons asked Jesus if he came to torment them before the time. The devils know that time here is limited. The Bible has already said that the devil and his angels (demons) will spend eternity in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10, 14).

And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" and he answered "Legion," because he was filled with many demons. A legion was a Roman military term that meant between 3000-6000 men in a regiment. There were a lot of demons in this man.

The demons begged Jesus not to send them out of the region: into the abyss, or bottomless pit.

In the distance there was a large herd of about 2000 pigs feeding on the mountain.

Discuss:

The Jews viewed pigs as dirty and vile animals. According to the law of Moses, Jews were not allowed to eat pigs because they were unclean animals. The fact that there were so many pigs here shows that it was a gentile region. Historical sources say that this was a very pagan area and the pigs were likely used for sacrifices to Greek gods and used for food.

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Set Free!

The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the herd of pigs (swine). Jesus told them to "Go." The demons came out of the man, and went into the herd of pigs, and the whole herd ran violently - stampeded- down a steep hill into the sea.

Since this event, researchers have gone to this area and found where they believe is the exact place that this happened. Videos have been made showing the area where this is believed to have taken place. It is interesting to see that the pigs did not just plunge off the edge of a cliff. They deliberately ran down a steep hill, and then across a flat plains area directly into the water. Because of the landscape of the area, it would not have been mistaken as an accidental fall from a cliff, it was evident they were deliberately driven into the sea where they drowned.

The men who were keeping the pigs saw what happened and ran away. They went and told everyone in the city and in the country about what happened to the pigs, and what happened to the crazy man (men).

Discuss:

What if these were your pigs? Did you buy these pigs? What did you do with these pigs?

You might have been a man who sold them in the market for pagan sacrifices. You might have sold them for meat in the market. That is a LOT of pigs.

Would you be upset if all your pigs died? How would this affect you financially? You wouldn't be able to sell them because they are all dead. This would have cost the owners a lot of money.

The people in the city were afraid. They came and found Jesus and found the man who used to be possessed now sitting at Jesus' feet.

The famous crazy man is now sitting with clothes on, normal and in his right mind, sitting and talking to Jesus.

News spread quickly, and everyone in the city and surrounding area heard about this. They knew the crazy man is now normal, and all the pigs ran to their death. The whole city came and asked Jesus to leave; not only did they ask, but they also *begged* Jesus to leave.

Except the man who had been possessed by the devils.

He begged Jesus to let him come with him. But Jesus told the man to go home and go back to his friends. This man must have had a family and friends before he went crazy. Jesus told him to go tell all about the great things the Lord did for him.

Jesus and his disciples got back in the boat and left. The man went on his way and went all over Decapolis telling everyone the great things that Jesus had done for him. People were surprised and amazed; the man probably had a reputation of being the crazy guy, and everyone could now see that his life was **totally** changed (2 Corinthians 5:17; Isaiah 61:1).

Things were different when Jesus returned to this area over a year later. He came to the city of Gennesaret, which was one of the cities in the Decapolis region. The man who was no longer crazy must have been a great witness for Jesus, because on his second visit the people met him as soon as he got off the ship. But this time they welcomed him, bringing him all the sick and diseased people to be healed. Jesus traveled through the villages, cities and throughout the country and when people heard where he was, they brought sick people in their beds to meet Jesus.

When he came through the cities, they laid sick people in the streets and begged just to touch the edges of his clothes, and everyone who touched him was healed (Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56).

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Jesus in the Story



When Jesus was on his way to this area, he calmed the storm on the sea. In that lesson, similarities were shown between the story of the calming of the sea with Jonah. Jonah was headed to Nineveh, and Jesus was headed to this gentile region. Jesus said the only sign that would be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

This is the first time that anyone had seen authority taken over the devil. Before Jesus came into the world in the flesh, there were no accounts of anyone ever taking authority over the devil. Until the Son of God was present in the world, the authority was not present to command the demons (devils, spirits) to leave.

All the people were overcome with amazement and asked one another, "What is this message? With authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" Luke 4:36

Notice in every account of this story with the demon possessed man, the demons say to Jesus, "What have we to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God?" The demons recognized Jesus and knew the authority that he had over them (Luke 4:41).

Jesus also gave this power in His name to the disciples:

And having summoned His twelve disciples. He gave to them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal every disease and every sickness. Matthew 10:1

Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons. Mark 3:14-15

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1-2

All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18).

As Christians and followers of Jesus, we have the same power and authority that Jesus gave to his disciples. This authority is available to us through the power that is *in Jesus' name.*

"...And these signs shall follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover," Mark 16:17-18.

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Only Believe

Matthew 9:18-26
Mark 5:21-43
Luke 8:41-56

Life of Jesus: Miracles

*(*The lady was probably not elderly, due to the nature of her illness. It is likely that she touched the sleeve or tassel of Jesus' clothing, and doubtful that she was on the ground, as she would have been trampled by the crowd.)*

It is suggested that you read this to the children from the book of Mark, as it gives the most detail. Use the information from the other gospels to insert into the story the extra details.

Discuss:

Jesus has a LOT of people following him everywhere he goes.

Have you ever been in a large crowd where there were so many people it was hard to move and they had to squeeze through? This is what it was like much of the time for Jesus.

He had just come off a boat, and a whole lot of people were waiting for him. Why would they be waiting for him? What do you think they might be thinking would happen? What were they hoping to see?

Lead to answers such as: the people had heard about something Jesus did; they might be hoping to see a miracle; they may have been interested in listening to Jesus preach; they may have just been curious because they'd heard about him.

A man comes up to Jesus. His name is Jairus, and he is the ruler of the synagogue. A ruler of the synagogue would have been the man who oversaw the synagogue, took care of the building, set the times for services, chose the teachers, and chose the people who did scripture readings.

Discuss:

How do you think Jairus got through the crowd?

Answers could include: he had an urgent need, he was a somewhat important man, people knew him; maybe they let him through.

Jairus would have had close relationships with the Pharisees who did not like Jesus. He had to make a decision of whether he was going to honor them, or give honor to Jesus. Should he give more honor to his friends who don't like Jesus and his daughter dies, or give honor to the only man who can help him. Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet. This is placing honor on Jesus, and putting himself under Jesus. What does this look like? Why would he do this? He was *begging* Jesus to come to his house. Why? He was desperate; his only daughter, who was twelve years old, was very sick and about to die. He told Jesus, please come and lay hands on her, and she will live. Did he have faith? Yes. He had faith to believe that if Jesus came to his house, she would be well.

Discuss:

Jesus and his disciples went with Jairus. A crowd of people followed him and pressed on him. Talk about what this would look like. They're all walking along, a huge crowd of people, and everyone is very close together, touching other people, and everyone is bumping into Jesus.

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In the crowd is a sick lady who has a problem with her blood, and she has been bleeding for twelve years. No one knows this lady is there, or what she is doing; it seems she has come alone. She had spent ALL her money on many different doctors. She suffered many things from many doctors. In those times, they did not know very much about medical things, and they sometimes did strange treatments to try to help people. But they doctors could not help her; she did not get better, but instead she got worse.

This lady heard that Jesus was coming. She came into the crowd from behind and touched his clothes. She had said,

"If I can just touch his clothes, I will be healed." She also was desperate and had been trying to get healed for many years; the same length of time as Jairus' daughter had been alive. Jesus was most likely wearing a prayer shawl that the rabbis (teachers) wore. This shawl would have had fringe on the corners, and the corners were called "wings." This lady must have known this verse:

But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings, Malachi 4:2.

Notice this verse says, "those who fear my name." This word fear here means: honor, revere, respect, worship - it means that this lady honored the Lord. The Sun of Righteousness means the Messiah; this was a prophecy about Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. By reaching out to touch the wings on Jesus' clothes, she was acknowledging that Jesus was the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness, and she knew he had healing even in his clothing. Most likely what she touched were these tassels, or fringe, that probably would have been on the four corners of a prayer shawl he wore over his shirt.

When the lady touched his clothes, she immediately stopped bleeding and she could feel in her body that she was healed.

Jesus felt power leave his body. He turned around, and said,

"Who touched me?" Everybody around him denied touching him, and his disciples said, there's all these people here thronging and pressing on you, and you are asking, who touched you? They were basically saying, Are you kidding? What do you mean, who touched you? There are so many people here that could have touched you.

But, Jesus responded, SOMEBODY touched me, because I felt POWER go out of me. And he looked around to see who it was.

Discuss:

Power left his body not because someone bumped him, but because someone touched him with FAITH. Were there other people who touched Jesus? Did they get healed? Why did this lady get healed? Because she touched him in faith.

After he asked the question and looked around, the lady came forward, fell down before him and trembled, and told him what she did and why. This lady may have been afraid of His response. According to the Jewish law, she was not supposed to touch anyone because of her illness, because anyone she touched would be unclean. If she had been wrong about this, and she was not healed, she could have been put to death. Discuss this with the students. But the kingdom works the opposite way. Instead of her contaminating Jesus and making him unclean, he made *her* **clean**.

Jesus is not upset, he tells her,

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Only Believe

"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

What made her well? Her faith.

While Jesus was still speaking to the lady, a messenger from Jairus' house came and said,

"Do not trouble the Master, your daughter is dead." In other words, don't bother Jesus, he doesn't need to come anymore, she's already dead.

We can speculate on what Jairus was thinking, but we do not know. He may have been wanting to rush Jesus, he might have been frustrated at this interruption; we really do not know. But we are human and we can imagine how he might have felt.

Jesus knew the power of words. Our words have creative power (Proverbs 18:21) and he immediately shut down the conversation. He didn't let anyone say anything else. ***As soon as he heard the word*** that was spoken to Jairus, Jesus said to Jairus,

"Do not be afraid, only believe."

Jairus had to decide if he was going to put faith in man's words, or Jesus' words. He has just heard a word, and he has to decide which word he is going to allow in his heart. Jairus heard, "She's dead." If he allows that word in his heart, it will produce fear.

Whether Jairus fears or believes is significant in whether or not his daughter receives her healing. If Jairus expects Jesus to heal his daughter, he cannot allow fear to get in his heart. His faith is crucial to his daughter's healing. Notice what Jesus had just told the woman a few moments before, "Your faith has made you well…"

When they got to Jairus' house, it was quite a scene. A lot of people were there crying, and not just crying but weeping and wailing. It was common to hire people to come play music, and they had musicians there playing sad music.

Jesus came into this group and said, Why are you making such a big deal out of this and are weeping? She is not dead, but sleeping. Everyone made fun of Jesus and laughed at him and ridiculed him. But Jesus made everyone leave except the father and mother, Peter, James and John, and they went into the room where the girl was.

Jesus put unbelief outside. He did not allow the voices of unbelief and doubt to be in the room with them.

Fear works against faith.

He took the girl by the hand, and said, "Child, get up!" She got up, and walked, and he told them to give her something to eat. Everyone was very surprised and astonished, even the parents. But Jesus told them not to tell anyone what happened.

Do you think this was a secret they could keep? What about all the people outside crying? They all thought she was dead, and they must have been astonished too, and probably told EVERYONE what Jesus had done.

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Jesus in the Story



This story is full of so many amazing truths.

The rabbis wore this fringe to remind them to think about the Lord all the time and keep his commandments. The fringe would have had five knots in it, and the four gaps between the knots represent Y H W H. The Hebrews did not add letters to it to make it Yahweh like we do today. They did not utter the name of God because it was holy. The combination of the five knots and the eight strands of thread, put together with the Hebrew word, (which in Hebrew has a numeric value of 600) represents the 613 laws of Moses.

The lady was giving honor to the Lord, and she knew in her heart that Jesus was the Messiah. She must have read the verse in Malachi where she knew healing was available if she just touched his clothes. This was an acknowledgment of WHO Jesus was. When we give Jesus first place in our lives, and give him honor, he gives us a new identity. We do not lose who we are in making Jesus Lord of our lives, instead we find out who we really are. This lady found out she was a child of God, and part of his kingdom. Notice what Jesus calls her in Matthew 9:22, Mark 5:34 and Luke 8:48. He calls her "daughter." **This lady got a new identity when she acknowledged Jesus as her Lord.**

Both of these people were desperate. This lady was willing to break the Mosaic law to have a chance at healing. It turned out that Jesus did not condemn her for breaking the law, but comforted her telling her that her faith had made her well.

There is so much power in our words. Jesus knew the creative power of our words, and that speaking death brings death. Speaking life is giving glory to God. He shut down the conversation and did not allow the negative words to be spoken, but immediately countered them with a promise of life.

Jesus also put unbelief and doubt outside. He did not allow them into the room where the girl would be healed. This evil heart of unbelief can hinder faith, and he would not allow it in (Hebrews 3:12).

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What Do You Have?

Matthew 14:13-21
Mark 6:30-44
Luke 9:10-17
John 6:1-14

Life of Jesus: Miracles

You may choose to teach from any of the gospels, but you may prefer to teach from the gospel of John and combine the information from the other gospels as you tell the story to get the complete story.

**It is to the discretion of the teacher to to discuss details of the death of John the Baptist or ask the students if they know the story and guide them through it.*

Jesus has just received the news of the death of John the Baptist. Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins, and John had been an important part of Jesus' ministry. He was the one who spoke about Christ's coming and prepared the way for Jesus.

This news obviously had an impact on Jesus, and he took a boat across the sea of Galilee to a private place in the desert near Bethsaida to be alone.

Discuss:

Have you ever just wanted to be by yourself?

Jesus tried to get to a quiet place to be alone, but thousands of people followed him.

You probably did not have thousands of people following you, but maybe your family or friends would not give you privacy.

Jesus was not able to be alone. People recognized him (Mark 6:33) and news probably spread quickly that he was near. People followed him everywhere he went hoping to be healed; they walked from all the cities around to see him. But instead of getting irritated or frustrated, Jesus was moved with compassion for the people; he felt sorry for them.

He saw them as "sheep without a shepherd." (Mark 6:34) He taught them about the kingdom of God and healed them.

We read in Mark 6:31 that they had been so busy that Jesus and his disciples did not have time to eat. So they were also hungry.

The gospel of John tells us that Jesus looked up and saw all the people coming, and he asked Philip,

"Where can we buy bread so that all of these people can eat? " He was testing Philip by asking him this; Jesus knew what he was going to do, but he wanted to see what Philip would say.

Philip's answer is very specific. He says, "Two hundred pennyworth (some versions say 200 Denarii) is not enough for each of them to have a little." Two hundred denarii was actually quite a bit of money; it was equal to about eight months of wages. But it would not have been enough to feed that many people. Because he answered with a particular amount, it seems very possible that this is the amount of money they had. Philip is thinking in terms of lack; this is not enough. If this is what they had available, he is looking at it and saying it is not enough to give them even "just a little."

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What Do You Have?

Matthew, Mark and Luke all say that the disciples suggested that Jesus send the people home; to let them get food on the way home in the different villages. But Jesus responded to them by telling them,

"They don't need to leave; you give them something to eat." The disciples also respond the same as Philip, and mention the same amount of money, and ask about buying bread. They are not considering that there are any other options. They looked at what they needed, and then at what they had, and they saw a lack. They all ask Jesus, "Do you want us to go buy bread?"

Jesus doesn't even respond to this question. He says, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see."

Discuss:

They probably walked around asking if anyone brought any food.

Does anyone have anything to eat? Everybody's looking around, trying to see if anyone has anything.

Finally, they find someone: a little boy has brought five barley loaves and two small fish.

Discuss:

Barley was looked down upon; it was a poor man's food.

This little boy was probably poor but he was willing to share what he had.

Do you think the little boy was the only person who brought food to this event?

Were there other people there who had food but did not want to share?

The disciples said to Jesus, "We *only have* five loaves and two fish," Matthew 14:17.

"We *only have* five loaves of bread and two fish," Luke 9:13.

"There is a boy here, who has five barley loaves, and two small fish: but *what are they among so many*," John 6:9?

What do all of these comments have in common? What are they saying?

It isn't enough. We can't do this; there's not enough. They were not giving value to what they had. We ONLY have.

Did Jesus look at it and say, oh, yes, you are right…too bad; this just is not enough?

Absolutely not! The kingdom of heaven is opposite of the "normal" way of thinking. Jesus placed value on what they had. He did not consider it insignificant or small. What they considered small and useless, he considered priceless. They had SOMETHING. He could do a miracle with this.

Jesus was not saying, tell me what you do not have. He was saying, tell me what you DO have. He cannot work with what you lack, but he *can* work with what you *have*. Size and amount do not determine value.

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What Do You Have?

Value is determined by the person who has it, and how it is viewed.

Jesus said, "Bring them to me."

When we give whatever we have to Him, even if it does not seem like much, it is our offering to Him. In our own power we are not capable of doing anything, but He can do the impossible. We have to release it, to give it to him, and that gives him permission to do something with it. The disciples could have passed this food out on their own and it would not have gone very far. But when they gave it to Jesus, he was able to transform it into more than they ever imagined (Jeremiah 33:3 Ephesians 3:20).

Discuss:

What if you were the boy? The disciples are taking your lunch to Jesus….this is exciting.

The man that everyone came to see is taking YOUR lunch!

Maybe this boy got to meet Jesus personally!

After Jesus told them to bring him the bread and fish, he *commanded* (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:39) all the people to sit down on the green grass (Mark 6:39). The other gospels say that he told the disciples to *make* them sit down (John 6:10) in groups of fifty," (Luke 9:14) .

If you look up the Greek word for "sit" in this verse it actually means, "to lean upon, lay down, or recline." In this culture the accepted way to eat was to lean back and eat almost lying down.

Does this sound familiar? Can you think of another place in the Bible where it says that the Lord makes people lay down in the green grass?

Look at Psalm 23:

"The Lord is my shepherd,"

Jesus was on his way to a private place, but he saw all the people coming to him and he gave them the rest that he needed. He taught them and healed them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34). Jesus says "I am the good shepherd," (John 10:11; 10:14).

"I shall not want." Some versions say, "I have all that I need, or "I will not lack."

Did the people need food? Did the Lord hesitate to provide it for them? Did they even ask? We have no evidence that they asked. John said it was Jesus' suggestion when he saw them coming.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures."

What did Jesus do? He *commanded* them; he told the disciples to *make* them sit (or lay) down.

Jesus came to fulfill prophecy. He is fulfilling the prophecy of the Messiah from Psalm 23 in this story.

But there's more.

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What Do You Have?

He told them to sit down in groups of fifty, and this is a parallel between Jesus and Moses. When Moses was presiding as a judge and leader over the people *in the desert*, he was overwhelmed by the needs of the people. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, told him to distribute the work by dividing the people into groups and putting leaders over them (Exodus 18:13-23).

Jesus is not judging the people, but in contrast he is feeding them and meeting their needs. He is also making the disciples participate and spread out the task that needs to be done. There are a LOT of people that need to be fed - at least 5,000. Jesus brings the disciples into the process and instructs them to pass out food.

On further comparison, this parallels with the manna that God provided for the Israelites in the desert. They were hungry, and God rained down manna from heaven; Jesus himself is that manna, that "food" for the people. (John 6:48-58)

Everyone is sitting down, anticipating, eagerly waiting. Do you think that everyone there knows that there are five loaves and two fish? What do you think the crowd knew?

Jesus took the five loaves, and the two fish and he *looked up* to heaven.

If you do a word study on "looked up" or "lifted eyes and looked," often when this word combination is seen in Scripture in the Old Testament, there is a connection with someone or something in heaven and either a provision, a message, or a vision for the people (Joshua 5:13; Daniel 10:5; Zechariah 2:1, 5:1).

Then Jesus *blessed* it.

Discuss:

What is a blessing? What happens when you bless something?

Will it produce? Will it be fruitful? Will it do even more than what it is intended to do?

Then Jesus broke the bread.

This is parallel to the future where Jesus' body is broken for his people. He breaks the bread and begins handing off pieces of it, and they're all breaking the bread. He then gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples gave it to the people. Then he also divided the fish, and they gave fish to everyone.

Do you think the disciples walked around and each of them handed it to hundreds of people? If they did that, would everyone have been aware of what had happened? Maybe, maybe not. Maybe they would just think the disciples were pulling out of their reserves. But what if the disciples walked around and handed it one person in each group of fifty, and that person broke it, and the next and the next? Would people all see the glory of God that way? We do not know exactly how it was done. But we do know that the people saw the miracle and believed that Jesus was a prophet (John 6:14).

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What Do You Have?

We also know that there were many people there that day.

There were 5,000 men, but that does not include women and children. If many of these men had wives, and children there also, there could have easily been 10,000-15,000 people.

Who ate? They ALL ate (Matthew 14:20; Mark 6:42). Not just the men, but the women and children too. And did they each just get a bite? That's all Philip thought they would be able to provide. If we use what have in the physical, what we have in our own resources (in this case 200 denarii), then everyone *might* get a little. But when it is out of our control, and we give it to God, He is now the provider.

It is no longer our responsibility. When we let it go and give it the Lord, it is His responsibility. He is now the source, not you.

And He is not going to just give to some people, or make sure everyone just gets a little. When Jesus put his plan into action, they ALL ate, and were all FILLED. (Luke 9:17; John 6:12) No one went away hungry.

He is a God of more than enough, a God of abundance. When he does it, He does it for His glory, and he is never going to make it small.

If this little boy would have feared that he would not have enough, he might not have shared it. If he would have held on to what he had, he would have only had enough for the moment, then he would run out. Instead, when he gave it to Jesus, it became more than enough for everyone there. The boy ate as much as he wanted, and there was still an abundance left over. When you give what you have to God, He will multiply it for others, as well as multiplying it for you.

After the meal, people must have gone around to clean up. After every church event you must have a clean up crew, and it was no different at Jesus' meetings. They did not have bags, but they had baskets.

They gathered up all the leftover bread crust, and fish bones, and fish meat, and there were TWELVE baskets left over.

Anyone who knew that they started with five loaves and two small fish would have been astounded that not only did it feed many more than 5,000 people, but they took up enough pieces of leftover food to fill twelve baskets. The baskets were FULL (Matthew 14:20) and that they were "over and above" to those who had eaten. (John 6:13)

Psalm 23:5 says "....my cup runs over." The baskets of leftovers show that there was more than enough. God is a God of abundance. He can do more than you can ever imagine. But you must value what you HAVE and give it to Him, rather than focusing or even talking about what you do not have. When you emphasize the lack, you limit God's ability to do something with what you do have, no matter its size.

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Jesus in the Story



This is a beautiful story of the Messiah, the promised Christ, in Psalm 23 who is the shepherd who provides for his sheep. His people will never want or be in lack of anything. We can walk in the same blessings if we are thankful. We must place value on what we **do** have, no matter how small, and offer it to him. He will make it into more than we could ever imagine if we do not limit him by focusing on what we need.

In the desert, when God provided the manna, it was always enough, but it was *just enough*. But when Jesus came, God was able to bless his people in the way he always wanted to, he could be the God of abundance, the Good Shepherd who provides over and above, and beyond with generosity.

Jesus represents a new type of Moses. Not one that governs by a set of laws, but one that rules with love and compassion. He is full of grace and truth. He is a God of justice, but his primary goal is to show the love of a good God, and a good Shepherd who wants to provide for his people. But in order to receive his provision, we have to put our trust in him. Value what you have, entrust it to him, and completely depend on him to meet our needs.

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If It Is You

Matthew 14:22-33
Mark 6:45-52
John 6:15-21

Life of Jesus: Miracles

This story happened the same day of the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

Jesus told his disciples to get into the ship and go to other side while he sent all the people away.

Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. Jesus knew that the people were going to try to take him by force and make him their king, so he went to a mountain by himself alone (John 6:15). Some scholars believe that the disciples might have also gotten caught up in this plan, which is why Jesus sent them away so quickly.

Think about this. The people have seen him do miracles, and on this day they saw him multiply the loaves and fishes. They want Jesus to be their leader, and it seems they had a plan to take him and try to make him be their king.

Jesus would have known this was not God's will, or God's plan. So he went off to be alone; he went to pray.

Meanwhile the disciples had gone down to the sea. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to meet them. They were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. This sea was not very wide where they were, so it should have taken them about two hours to get across. But the wind was so strong that they must have been rowing for a long time. By the time Jesus caught up with them, they were in the middle of the sea, and the ship was being tossed by the waves because it was so windy.

It was between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., and Jesus was alone on the land. He saw the disciples struggling in rowing, and the wind blowing hard against them. They were very tired.

Jesus came to them walking on the sea.

The disciples saw him walking on the sea and they were very afraid. We are told they "cried out." They thought Jesus was a spirit, a ghost.

Discuss:

What does this mean to "cry out?" Did they yell?

Did they scream? It must have been very obvious that they were afraid.

What if you were there? What might you think?

They had never seen anyone walking on the water before. It is dark, the wind is blowing very strong, the waves are probably high from the wind.

And then there's a person walking on the water!

Jesus was going to walk right past them (Mark 6:48). But it also says he was going to them (Matthew 14:25). So what does this mean?

It seems that Jesus was going that way not only to meet them, but to help them. He saw them struggling, and he walks on top of the very thing with which they are struggling. He was going to walk right past them; but they saw him, he heard them cry out.

He said, "It is I. Do not be afraid."

Matthew is the only gospel that records what Peter did. When Jesus says, "It is I. Do not be afraid," Peter responds, "Lord, if it is you, then command me to come to you on the water."

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If It Is You

Discuss:

Think about what Peter said. He did not really give Jesus much of an option.

He said "if it's you…" Was it Jesus? Yes.

If it's you, then "command" me to come.

Was it Jesus? Yes.

Could Jesus respond any other way? Possibly.

But this was not a temptation to do something out of character. The last time we saw these words, "if you are the Son of God," it was at the temptation in the wilderness by Satan. It seems that Jesus walked on the water in order to demonstrate his deity.

How did Jesus respond to Peter? He said, "Come."

Peter came down out of the ship, and walked on the water to Jesus.

Discuss:

Can you imagine? He got out of the boat, and took a step, knowing that he would walk on TOP of the water.

The other disciples must have been watching in wonder, amazement. What would it be like if you were there? What if you were Peter? What if you were in the boat watching?

Peter is walking on water.

It took faith for him to step out of the boat and know that he would walk on TOP of the water.

Have you ever tried to walk on water? Did you get very far? It only takes a split second to realize that it is not going to work, and you are completely submerged in the water.

Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. We do not know how far he walked, but he did it. Then Peter looked around. He looked at how strong the wind was blowing. He took his eyes off of Jesus, and began to look at his circumstances. He was not caught up in sin; he simply looked at what was natural. He looked at the things around him instead of keeping his eyes on Jesus.

He was already doing something that no one (other than Jesus) had ever done before.

But when he looked at the wind, he began to sink, and he cried, "Lord, save me!"

> This in itself is incredible. People don't begin to sink in the water. They just do. There is nothing in between, the minute you touch the water you go down. But this must have been spectacular to witness: to see someone suspended between the top and bottom of the water but not completely succumbed to it must have been astonishing.

As soon as Jesus saw that Peter began to sink, what did he do? He immediately reached out his hand and caught Peter.

Then he said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

This shows us several things.

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If It Is You

Did Jesus let Peter sink and tell him to swim back to the boat on his own? No. He immediately caught Peter.

It shows us the character of Christ. As humans we sometimes think, your faith wasn't strong enough, you need to swim back to learn your lesson. Peter was a fisherman; he was probably a strong swimmer. But that is not the character of Jesus.

Did it take great faith for Peter to walk on the water? Apparently not. It only took little faith.

But what can counteract our faith? Doubt.

It was the doubt that caused him to begin to sink. It was because he looked at his circumstances and surroundings and took his focus off of Jesus.

The wind had nothing to do with walking on the water. It was a natural impossibility whether there was wind or not.

The reader is not told what happened next, but can wonder. If Jesus reached out to catch Peter, did Jesus and Peter walk on the water together to get back to the boat? Or do you think that he dragged Peter through the water and they had to pull Peter out of the water soaking wet into the boat?

As soon as Jesus and Peter got in the ship, the wind stopped. It is interesting that the wind did not stop before they got back to the boat. But it seemed to all happen at once. The wind stopped, and the ship was immediately at the land where they were going (John 6:21) .

Discuss:

Did they have to row? Did they have to make any effort to get to shore?

Did they have to navigate their way to get to their destination? It seems that the boat was caught away and no time passed before it was at the other shore. The disciples were completely and totally astonished, amazed, overwhelmed. Then they worshiped Jesus and said, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Their hearts were hardened (Mark 6:52). They should not have been so surprised. They were not thinking of the things they had already seen. Just earlier that day they had seen Jesus take two fish and five loaves of bread and feed 5,000 men plus women and children. But they did not consider it; that means they did not focus on it. They did not meditate on it. They did not actually think about what really happened, or consider the unbelievable miracle that had taken place, *just that day.*

Would we be surprised?

God wants us to be expecting these things. It seems like a good thing to be amazed by his goodness, but could that mean that we have a hardened heart? God wants us to glorify Him, but to know who He is, and expect great things from him and not be surprised by his goodness or amazing works.

These were the disciples of Jesus. They were with him daily, and watched him perform many amazing miracles **every day**! If their hearts could be hardened, do not think that your heart couldn't be hardened also. Mark 6:52 seems to be giving us the cure for a hardened heart, and it would seem to be that we need to do the opposite of what the disciples did. If they did not consider these miracles, then we need to consider the glorious things of God. We need to think about and ponder the great things that he has done. When we focus on Jesus and his marvelous works, it helps us to be mindful of who he is and what he is capable of. Then we will see more of his miraculous works take place in our own lives.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus says, "It is I. Do not be afraid." All three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke use the same words.

The Greek words here translate to "I am."

These are the same words Jesus spoke when he was arrested and these are the words that God spoke many years before when Moses asked God his name. God responded, tell them I AM sent you (Exodus 3:14). So, by Jesus responding to the disciples in this way, he is making a statement of deity.

Many things that Jesus did have a "remez", which is a hint of something that goes back to the Old Testament. Often times it was something that was being fulfilled in relation to the New Testament.

In this story, Jesus is bringing to life what is stated in Job 9:8:

"He alone spreads the heavens, and treads upon the waves of the sea."

The disciples most likely were familiar with this passage. They would have known that only God is able to walk upon the waves of the sea.

When Jesus said, "It is I," or, "I am," this would have confirmed to the disciples that HE was walking on the water, and he is "I AM."

Which is why they were completely astonished and said, "Truly you are the Son of God."

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One Thing I Know

John 9

Life of Jesus: Miracles

The Gospel of John starts out showing that Jesus is Word of God, and that Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. The whole gospel has a theme of the deity of Jesus, of Jesus as God.

Jesus is walking and he passes a man who has been blind since he was born.

We see in John 9:8 that he has been a beggar.

Jesus's disciples are with him, and they ask him who sinned to make this man blind.

They are trying to put a reason to why this man was born blind. It was common in the culture of the day to completely attribute sickness only to sin. So they ask, who sinned? Did he sin, or his parents? If he was born blind, would this mean that he had sinned before he was born?

Jesus doesn't really answer the question completely. He just says it was neither. It wasn't the man that sinned or his parents. But then he says that the works of God will be manifest in him. Now to clarify, we know that the parents and the man were sinners. (Romans 3:23) But it was not those sins that made this man blind.

Some people have used this to say that God made this man sick just so he would be healed to bring glory to God. But this is inconsistent with scripture. If God had made this man blind, it would be going against God to bring healing to him. Deuteronomy 28:28 says that blindness is a curse. Jesus came to redeem us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). Acts 10:38 says that Jesus came to do good, and healing those who were oppressed of the devil.

Basically Jesus was saying, regardless of the cause, the works of God, or the power of God, would be seen in him.

The man was blind, not deaf. Imagine that he hears Jesus say this. He must have been expectant; hearing that something was about to happen.

Next Jesus does a strange thing. He spits on the ground, and makes clay, or mud, out of the dirt and spit. He spreads the clay on the man's eyes, then he tells the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. This word Siloam means 'sent.'

The pool of Siloam was a man-made body of water that was fed by the Gihon spring. It is believed that this water source was a result of a series of tunnels and conduits built by King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:20, approximately 700 years before Christ. Some believe that it was used for purification at the time of Christ.

This man would have to walk about half a mile, or almost 1 kilometer to reach the pool of Siloam. He had mud all over his face, so it would have been an unusual sight.

Discuss:

How would this man have got to the pool of Siloam?

He was blind; what would this have looked like? Did he have help?

Did he know how to get there? Did someone take him? Maybe one of the disciples walked with him?

All we actually know is that he DID get there, he washed the clay / mud off, and he could see.

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One Thing I Know

The people who had lived around him saw him and said, “Isn’t this the man who was blind who sat and begged? “ And some people said it was him, and others said it is like him, but he said, it is me.

This man was not only born blind, but it seems likely that he was born without eyes. This could be how they knew without a doubt that he was blind at birth, and also explain why people did not recognize him after he was healed; why they were astonished and reacted so strongly. This could help explain why Jesus made the clay.

People asked him, how were your eyes opened?

He told them that a man named Jesus made some clay, put it on his eyes, and told him to go wash. He went, he washed, and now he can see.

Then they asked where Jesus was, and the man did not know. Notice that Jesus did not stay to see what happened; he had already gone on his way.

The people took the man to the Pharisees. This man has just had the most amazing day of his entire life. But the people are acting as if he has done something wrong.

***These things happened on the Sabbath day.**

Now, the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. Again, he tells them the story. Jesus put clay on his eyes, he washed them, and now he can see.

Discuss:

Shouldn’t the Pharisees be happy for this man? Are they happy for this man?

At this point, the Pharisees get into a disagreement. Some of them said that Jesus was not of God because he did not keep the Sabbath. They thought that when he made the clay, that was considered work, and he broke the Sabbath. Discuss.

But the other Pharisees said, how can someone who is a sinner do such miracles? This seems to be an absolutely amazing event, which is why many believe that he had no eyes. The Pharisees were divided over this issue.

Then the Pharisees asked the man what he thought about Jesus. He told them he thought Jesus was a prophet. What would you say?

But the Jews did not believe that this man used to be blind. They went to talk to his parents.

They asked the parents, is this your son? You say he was born blind? How can he now see?

The man was obviously an adult. We do not know his age, but his parents were still living.

The parents said, **“Yes, this is our son. We know this is our son. He was born blind. But, we don’t know how he can see.”**

They weren’t there when it happened. They said, “He’s of age;” meaning, he’s grown, ask him.

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One Thing I Know

John gives us some insight into the situation. The parents were afraid of getting kicked out of the synagogue (basically liked getting kicked out of church.) The Jews had already said that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, they would be put out of the synagogue. The parents did not want to risk this and seemed more concerned about what the Pharisees think than the miraculous healing of their son's eyes.

Being "put out of the synagogue" did not just mean you could not come to synagogue (church).

This was a big deal. It would be saying that you were a heretic, or a pagan. You would be shunned and banned.

Discuss:

Talk about this. What would this look like? What would this mean?

You would be hated. You would be cut off from your family. You could lose your job.

If you had a business, people would stop shopping at your store, or stop doing business with you.

This would affect you financially and socially.

And in some cases there could be extreme persecution or even death.

The Jews went back to the man who had been healed. It almost appears to be like a court trial; he is being called back again and asking to give witness.

The Jews told the man he needed to give God the praise, because they said they knew that Jesus was a sinner. But the man responded,

"Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. *One thing I know* is that I was blind, and now I see."

They continued with their questioning, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" The man now seems to be exasperated with them. He says, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to be his disciples?"

This made them very angry. They began cursing the blind man and insulting him. They said, "You are his disciple! But we are disciples of Moses." They said, We **know** that God spoke to Moses, but as for this guy, we do not know where he came from.

The man begins defending Jesus. He said, "This is an amazing thing. You don't know where he is from, but he opened my eyes." He tells them if any man is a worshipper of God, then God hears him.

"Since the world began it is not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."

Discuss:

Discuss what this would have been like.

This man has just had the biggest thing in his life happen to him, and people are angry at him.

He seems to have some knowledge of the scriptures.

He knows that there has not been a documented case like this before.

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One Thing I Know

Then he says, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

This man, who was blind, can now see spiritually, as well as physically. He is no longer blind to the self-righteous doctrines of the Pharisees, and he sees how they are trying to make this about whether or not the law was obeyed by their interpretation and are failing to see the greater miracle here. The eyes of the Pharisees are blinded to the compassion of Jesus, and the heart of the law which includes doing good on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9).

Now, the Pharisees are very angry. They tell the man that he was born in sins; they believe he has sinned greatly since he was born blind. They are insulted that he is correcting them and challenging their theology; then they cast him out of the synagogue.

Discuss:

What would his life be like as a blind man?

It might have been that being cast out of the synagogue was not a significant change in his life.

According to the culture of the day, he had been living as an outcast.

As a blind man, he was a beggar, and would have been living outside of the city.

Jesus heard that they cast the man out of the synagogue and he went and found him. He asked the man if he believed on the Son of God. The man asked who he was, so that he might believe on him.

Jesus told the man he had seen Him, and he had been talking with Him. The man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped Jesus.

Then Jesus said,

"I came into this world for judgment; that those which do not see might see, and those who see might be made blind."

Some of the Pharisees were with him, and they heard him say this. They asked him, "Are we blind also?"

Jesus responds by telling the Pharisees that if they were blind, they would have no sin. They would have been oblivious and therefore not held accountable (Romans 5:13). But since they said they could see, their sin remains.

"Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17

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Jesus in the Story



Until Jesus came into the earth, there is not a record of anyone who was blind receiving their sight.

However, it was prophesied that the Messiah would restore sight and open the eyes of the blind.

Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18; 43:8.

The recurring theme of the gospel of John is to illustrate that Jesus is God. There are theories about why Jesus used spit to make clay, or mud, to put on this man's eyes. The Lord formed man out of the ground (Genesis 2:7).

Isaiah 64:8 refers to the Lord as the potter, and us as the clay.

Jesus could have been using this clay to re-create the man's eyes; also showing Jesus as God, or Creator.

Job 10:9, 33:6; 45:9; Jeremiah 18:6; Lamentations 4:2

The irony is that the man's eyes were opened to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as well. They were seemingly blind, but Jesus calls them out. He tells them that if they were truly blind, they would be without sin. But they say that they see, and their sin remains.

The Pharisees were upset because Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath. They were still making this all about what they believed to be the letter of the law; but completely missing the intent of the heart of the law. The heart of the law was always about people; doing good to others and treating them the way you would want to be treated.

Matthew 7:12; Matthew 15:3; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35; John 15:12

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If You Believe

John 11

Life of Jesus: Miracles

The story begins by telling the reader about "a certain man." This man, Lazarus, lived in Bethany, and his sisters were Mary and Martha.

Mary was a very common name. Some think that this is Mary Magdalene, others do not; the scriptures are not completely clear. Does anyone remember a story about a Mary that did something unusual for Jesus?

The next verse tells you that this is the same Mary that is mentioned in all four gospels that anointed Jesus with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair; Jesus said she prepared his body for burial.

It seems that Jesus was very good friends with this family. We are told that Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus. The sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him that "he who you love is sick." Who are they talking about?

When Jesus heard the message, he said to those around him,

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God may be glorified."

It sounds like he plans on doing a miracle.

After Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed another two days in the place where he was.

Discuss:

What would you do if you heard someone you loved was dying?

Would you rush to go see them? What did Jesus do?

After that, he told his disciples, "Let's go back to Judaea." The last time Jesus was there the Jews tried to stone him. So his disciples could not imagine why he would want to go there again. They said,

Lord, the last time we went there they tried to stone you; you want to go back? This is a short time before Jesus' death, and there is increasing hostility among the Pharisees and other leaders towards Jesus.

Jesus responded and by talking about hours in the day. He talked about walking in the day and not stumbling because you see the light of the world.

Discuss:

What did he mean? It seems that he meant that traveling during the day was like traveling with God's guidance; following the light of the world. Jesus was obeying the leading of the Father to go back to Judaea. He said if you travel at night (without God's leading) you will stumble because there is no light.

Then he told the disciples, Lazarus is asleep, I am going to wake him up.

The disciples did not understand. They said, If he's sleeping, that's good, he will get well. Jesus was saying that Lazarus was dead, but they thought he was saying that Lazarus was just asleep.

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If You Believe

Why do you think Jesus used the word sleep instead of dead? Jesus may have used "sleep" to avoid the negative emotions of death and despair that would come with saying that he was dead. Perhaps when he said "sleep" it was because he knew it was a temporary situation that would change in the same way that he referred to Jairus' daughter in Luke 8:52 & Mark 5:39. Also, the New Testament often refers to death as "sleep." Sleep is temporary because God's people do not "die" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

Then Jesus told them, "Lazarus is dead." But he continues, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there so that you may believe, but let us go to him."

Jesus is basically saying, I'm glad I wasn't there to heal him so that you would believe.

Discuss:

What is he saying? What does he want them to believe?

Maybe he knows that some of them do not really believe in him. Jesus wanted to do this miracle; he said as much when they told him Lazarus was sick and he said the sickness was so that the Son of God would be glorified.

Thomas makes a comment about going to die with him. It is not clear if this is speaking of dying with Jesus or Lazarus.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany he found out that Lazarus had been in the grave for four days already.

Discuss:

They have already have the funeral; he's been buried. But they did not bury in the ground; they buried in a cave and would cover the entrance with a big stone. They wrapped the bodies in a light linen cloth.

Bethany was near Jerusalem (about three kilometers or almost two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to visit.

Discuss:

What usually happens when someone dies? Friends and relatives come over; some people bring food, and some just come and sit with the family when they are grieving. This is a similar situation: many of the Jews had come to comfort Mary and Martha. The house was probably crowded and full of people who were all sad and crying, maybe telling stories about Lazarus.

Martha heard that Jesus was coming. Someone must have sent a message because he had not even come into town yet, because she went and met him outside of town, but Mary stayed home.

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If You Believe

Discuss:

What do you think Martha said when she got to Jesus? When Martha got to Jesus, she said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you."

She said, if you would have been here, this would not have happened. What does this tell you about Martha's faith? She believes that Jesus would have been able to heal him. She believed that If Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Does she think it's too late? Maybe. But with her phrase, "....even now...." she seems to have some hope that maybe Jesus can do something.

Jesus tells her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha responds that she knows that he will rise again in the last day at the resurrection. But that was not what Jesus meant. He tells her that He is the resurrection, and the life. He that believes on Jesus, even though he was dead, yet he will live. Resurrection is not just a thing or a future event. Resurrection is a person; Jesus IS the resurrection.

Then he says that whoever lives and believes in him will never die. This seems to refer to the eternal perspective that Jesus has about our real selves. Our bodies will die, but our born-again spirits will never die.

Then Jesus asks Martha directly, "Do you believe this?"

She responds by a profession of faith,

"Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

As soon as she said this, she went back home. It would have taken a while to get back into town. She probably went to Mary secretly and whispered to her that Jesus was asking for her. As soon as Mary heard she got up quickly and went to meet Jesus.

At this point, Jesus has not yet arrived. This means that Martha heard from someone that Jesus was on his way. As soon as she heard, she ran to meet him outside the town. Martha would have gone all the way out to meet him, come all the way back, and told Mary. Jesus must have been waiting for Mary because he was still in the place outside of town where he and Martha had been talking.

When Mary jumped up to go meet Jesus, all the people got up to follow her. They were probably talking and wondering where she was going. They thought she was going to cry at the grave.

Is that what she's going to do? No, but that's what they think, and they all followed her. Mary came to the place where Jesus was and fell down at his feet.

What is the first thing she says to Jesus? The same thing that Martha said,

"Lord, if you would have been here, my brother would not have died."

Both of these sisters knew Jesus well. They understood his love for them. They even described Lazarus as the "one you love." They both knew Jesus so well that they had faith, and they knew he would have not allowed this to happen if he were there. They knew his character. They had experienced his love. They knew how he would have responded.

Mary was weeping when she came to Jesus, and the people in the crowd that followed her were also weeping . When Jesus saw how sad everyone was, he was troubled, and he asked them where they had laid Lazarus. The people told him to come and see.

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If You Believe

Then Jesus wept.

Jesus was also human. Even though he knew the miracle he was about to perform, he empathized and had compassion on the people that were there and he mourned with them as he wept. Maybe he wept because he knew his death was coming soon and he knew his disciples and friends would be weeping and sad for him.

The people saw Jesus weeping and saw how much he loved Lazarus. Some of them said, this man healed blind eyes (which was an amazing miracle) could he have saved Lazarus from dying?

He groaned in himself as he approached the grave, which was a cave. What do you think they had over the cave? A stone. The word for this groaning is close to an anger, an indignation. Jesus seems to be upset with the situation. He said,

"Take away the stone."

Martha interrupts and says, "Lord, by this time he stinks. He's been dead for four days."

Some commentaries say that the Jews believed that a person's spirit would be near the body for three days after death looking for an opportunity to reenter the body. But this fourth day would have been too late; by then the body has begun to decompose (stink), and this would have been an amazing miracle.

Jesus asks Martha, "Didn't I say to you that *if you believe* you would see the glory of God?

Why does it matter if Martha believes? Did Martha's faith have something to do with Lazarus' resurrection? It seems so. **Faith can move mountains (Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:21) and all things are possible to those who believe (Mark 9:23).** If everyone there was doubting, Jesus may have not been able to do the miracle. He needed some faith to be present. Unbelief is a powerful force because when Jesus was in his own country where his hometown was, he could not do any miracles because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:58.) Unbelief is evil (Hebrews 3:12) and faith must be present for God to work.

Martha now is probably becoming quite hopeful. She knows he wants to take away the stone, and there must be a reason. She doesn't stop him this time, and they took away the stone. Jesus lifted up his eyes and prayed. It looks like he prayed out loud so all the people would hear. He says,

"Father, I thank you that you heard me. I know you always hear me, but because of the people which stand by, I said it so that they will believe that you sent me." Jesus wanted to do this miracle. He wanted people to **believe**.

Then he said, loudly, "Lazarus, come out."

What do you think the crowd is doing now? Probably staring at Jesus and the open grave and wondering what is about to happen. Then Lazarus came walking out, wrapped with grave clothes. His hands and feet were tied up with the cloth, and his face was wrapped up. Jesus told them to unwrap him and let him go.

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If You Believe

Discuss:

What would this have been like if you were there? This would be amazing.

The people there would have been completely astonished. They had never seen anything like this.

Is everyone happy and excited?

Some of them were.

Some of them saw what happened and believed. BUT there were always people who are upset and some of them went to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had done.

It seems unbelievable that people would make this seem like a bad thing. But there were people outraged by the fact that he raised Lazarus from the dead. This seems hard to understand because it is such an amazing thing, and clearly something that only God can do, and it is wonderful that Lazarus is no longer dead. But it is also amazing what hatred and pride can do. The Pharisees were proud, and Jesus questioned their methods and ways of doing things, and they hated him for it.

After this, the Pharisees and chief priests came together for a meeting and tried to decide what to do. They knew that Jesus had done many miracles. Is anyone else doing miracles? The Pharisees were concerned that people would believe on him, and people would no longer follow the lead of the Pharisees and the Romans would take over everything. What the Pharisees were really concerned about was losing their power, or control over the people.

Caiaphas was the high priest. He was not really serving God, but God still used him to speak prophecy about Jesus. He told them that they did not understand that one man would die for the people, so the whole nation would not die.

God used him to prophesy that Jesus would die for the nation, and not just the nation, but to bring together all the scattered children of God.

After this, the Pharisees and priests met together to decide how to put Jesus to death. And as a result, Jesus could no longer go to the places in public where the people were. The Jews had given commands that if anyone knew where Jesus was, to tell them so that they could come take him. He did an amazing miracle, but now the leaders wanted to kill him all the more. It is getting closer and closer to the time of his crucifixion.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus knew that if he went to Bethany to heal Lazarus, it would cost him his own life. He knew that once he did this miracle, the Pharisees would plan to kill him.

Jesus fulfilled what he spoke in John 15:13:

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Jesus knew his death was very near, and his time was running out. He wanted to give an opportunity to as many people as possible to see the glory of God that they might believe on Him.

Jesus wanted to do this miracle of raising Lazarus so the people would know that it was the Father who sent Jesus (John 17:21).

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Giving Thanks

Luke 17:11-19

Life of Jesus: Miracles

At the beginning of verse 11 we read that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, but he went through the middle of Samaria and Galilee where the Samaritans lived. The Samaritans and the Jews did not like each other. Samaritans were primarily half Jew and half Gentile. During the time of the Babylonian captivity of Israel, the Jews that were left in the land intermarried with the Gentiles and this resulted in the Samaritan people. To the Jews, the Samaritans were not pure. They had similar yet different religious beliefs and disagreed on the location of the temple. There had been a bitter rivalry between these two groups since the time of Nehemiah.

Discuss:

A Gentile is someone who is not Jewish. What is a Jewish person? The Israelites in the Bible were called Jews. Discuss possible rivalries between different people groups.

Does God like some ethnicities of people better than others? No.

Did Jesus tell the Gentiles or Samaritans that he would not heal them because they were not Jewish? No. Jesus did say he was sent to Israel (Matthew 15:24) but Gentiles and others received from Jesus by faith.

Jesus is now in Samaria. Ten men that were lepers met Jesus as he entered a village. However, they did not come up to him; they stood far off and spoke loudly to him, asking him to have mercy on them.

Discuss:

Leprosy was a contagious skin disease. It not only affects your skin, it also affects your nerves, and your eyes and can make it difficult to breathe. Because the nerve damage can make it where you don't feel pain, many lepers would lose parts of their limbs (arms or legs) because of infection or injuries; and eventually it can even cause blindness. Discuss what contagious means - a disease or sickness that spreads that you can catch from another person.

When Moses wrote the law, there were rules about how to leprosy. According to Leviticus 13:45-46, a leper had to live outside of the city. He would have to rip his clothes, not cover his head, but wear a covering over his upper lip and call out, "unclean, unclean!" everywhere he went. Even though it was a skin disease it was actually transmitted by coughing or discharge from the nose. The Lord knew this, which is why the Old Testament law specified the covering over the mouth.

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Giving Thanks

Discuss:

Talk about this kind of life. You wouldn't get to see your family, you couldn't touch anyone, you would be living outside in dirty conditions with other people who were sick just like you. Most people did not recover, but there was a plan in place for recovery.

If you did recover, you would go to the priest and he was the person who decided if you were actually well, and if you could return to the town or village with everyone else.

The situation could be compared to Covid except that this leprosy would be a permanent situation not temporary. The face covering was for the same purpose as a Covid type mask.

These lepers saw Jesus, and called out to him. **"Lord, have mercy on us!"**

After Jesus saw the lepers, he told them to go show themselves to the priests. According to Old Testament law, on the day of the leper's cleansing he must go to the priest. The priest determines if the plague is healed, and a sacrifice is made. The leper must go through a purification process, and after a week he must shave all his hair, wash his body, and offer another sacrifice before his purification and cleansing is complete. In a similar story, Jesus healed a leper and told the man to go show himself to the priest for his cleansing, and for a testimony in Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 5:12-15. This could also have been a testimony to the priest of the power of Jesus.

The story tells us that **as the lepers went on their way** to the priest, they were cleansed. It appears that their healing was not immediately obvious, but as they acted on their faith (James 2:17) their healing came as they were on their way to the priests.

Discuss:

The Bible says that faith without works is dead.

What does this mean?

If you believe something but you act like you don't, do you really believe it?

If you truly believe, your actions will show it.

They weren't healed at first, but as they started going, they were being healed.

Discuss:

What would this be like? Maybe they looked down and saw that their skin wasn't damaged anymore, etc.

One of the lepers, after he saw he was healed, turned around and went back to where Jesus was. He yelled with excitement and glorified God with a loud voice.

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Giving Thanks

Discuss:

Talk about this; ask what they would do if they were really excited.

Talk about the leper, his family, what if he had a wife and children.

Could he work to provide for them? If you had to live far away from everyone for a long time and all the sudden you were healed, wouldn't you be excited?

His whole life has just dramatically changed. He has a new life!

This guy yelled loudly and ran over to Jesus. He ran and fell down at Jesus' feet, thanking him. Talk about what this would look like.

This man, the one that went back to thank Jesus, was a Samaritan. Remember who the Samaritans were? Did Jesus seem to dislike the Samaritans? No. Jesus showed everyone the same love and compassion.

Many of the miracles of Jesus involved Gentiles. Many Gentiles were more willing to receive Jesus than many of the Jews.

Jesus says to the Samaritan,

Weren't there ten lepers that were healed? Where are the others? None of them came back to give glory to God, except for this stranger.

Notice what Jesus says here, "give glory to God." What was this man doing? He was *thanking* Jesus.

When we thank God, we are giving him glory. We are thanking him for something that only He can do, and acknowledging it is not something we could have done ourselves.

Jesus then says to the Samaritan,

"Get up, go your way, your faith has made you whole."

There is a different Greek word used for the other lepers that were cleansed, than the word used for the Samaritan who was made whole or healed. It seems that this Samaritan received something more than the other lepers. He was made whole, or preserved. Some theories suggest that he could have been missing fingers, an arm or something else and he was completely restored, where the other nine lepers were cleansed but not made whole.

When we give thanks and glory to the Lord, we are opening up the door for him to move in our lives. There are stories in the Old Testament where they sent out the singers and the choir before the armies.

When they began to praise **and give glory to the Lord, He would set up against their enemies** (2 Chronicles 20:22).

When you praise, you are giving the Lord the ability to do something for you.

It takes you out of the situation and gives Him the opportunity move. It's not that He does not have the power to do it, but your praise gives him place in your life. It is you, yielding to him through faith, to do a work in your life. When we give thanks, it takes the focus off of ourselves, and acknowledges God and gives glory to Him.

We should give thanks always, and in everything (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:1).

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus came as the Messiah for the Jewish people of Israel (Matthew 15:24). However, his ultimate plan was to bring salvation to the whole world through his death and resurrection. But during his life ministry, other people groups such as Samaritans, Romans, and other Gentiles reached out to him and received by faith.

The words thanks and thanksgiving are in the Bible 98 times; praise and praises 242 times; sing and singing 127 times; rejoice and rejoicing 211 times; bless and blessing 181 times; and glory 371 times.

Thanks, praise, glory, blessing, rejoicing, are all a big deal to God. We do not always understand the power in giving thanks and praising Him. Jesus equated giving thanks to be the same as giving glory. When we give thanks and glory to God, we are humbling ourselves and realizing that we are not capable of doing the things that he does.

We are acknowledging His power and work in our lives, and that without him, we are nothing. But with him, we are everything.

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Have Mercy

Matthew 20:29-34
Mark 10:46-52
Luke 18:35-43

Life of Jesus: Miracles

It is not completely clear if these accounts are all the same story, but there are many similarities, so they are often taught together. There are some differences, as Matthew's account mentions two men and Mark and Luke mention one. Matthew says that Jesus is leaving Jericho, and Mark and Luke say that he is coming to Jericho. There were two parts of the ancient city of Jericho; Jesus may have been leaving one area and coming to another. All the men in the stories ask Jesus for mercy; this lesson will address the passages in all three gospels.

Jesus has been telling his disciples about what is going to happen to him, and the things that are going to take place. He told them that in order to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, you must be a servant. Jesus did not come to be ministered to, but to give his life.

Jesus is with his disciples, and huge crowds of people follow him everywhere he goes. There is a blind man, or men, sitting on the side of the road begging.

Discuss:

Why would they be sitting by the side of the road?

Would this be a busy area of town where many people would be walking by?

Most likely, and they would be hoping for people to give them money.

When a person is blind or missing one of the senses, often the other senses become heightened, or stronger. If someone is not able to see, they might have more acute hearing because their ears have been trained to hear the things they cannot see.

The gospel of Mark is specific, it tells us the man's name: Bartimaeus. He heard the crowds passing by, and asked the people around him what was going on.

Discuss:

If you couldn't see, how would you know what was happening?

How would you know there were crowds passing by? What would it sound like?

What are some of the things you might hear?

Bartimaeus asked what was going on, and the people told him that Jesus of Nazareth was walking by.

It is very likely this man had heard about Jesus. Jesus was famous. What does that mean at this time? He was a celebrity. What does it mean to be a celebrity? They did not have television or the internet like we do today, but Jesus was popular for the things he had done. People talked about Jesus; he was very well known. Sometimes rumors circulate about celebrities or famous people and some of the information is true, and some is not.

Because of Bartimaeus' response, we can assume he had heard about Jesus and knew who he was. The Bible tells us that there are so many things that Jesus did that it would not be possible to write them all down (John 21:25).

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Have Mercy

Discuss:

What do you think he had heard about Jesus?

He may have heard about his miracles.

He may have heard about the other people he healed; he may have heard that he healed blind people.

It is likely that Bartimaeus was well known himself. Luke tells us he was a "certain" blind man. He asked the people what was going on, and they answered him. He was probably known as the blind beggar on the side of the road.

So, if you are blind and there is a famous person in town, what can you do to meet them? People do not usually respect blind beggars. A beggar is looked down upon by many people. Throughout the Bible Jesus helped those people who were desperate, those who were not able to take care of themselves, those who had no other options. They had to rely on Jesus because he was their only hope.

This man, this beggar, would not have had the influence or reputation to get someone to bring him to Jesus. So he starts yelling - loudly.

"Jesus, son of David, HAVE MERCY ON ME!"

First, notice what he called Jesus.

He called him the "son of David."

Why? What does this mean? It means that he had already formed an opinion of who he believed that Jesus was. He believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, coming to save God's people.

There were many prophecies about the Messiah being of the house of David (1 Kings 2:45; 1 Kings 9:5; 1 Kings 11:36; 2 Kings 8:19; Psalm 18:50; Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; 33:17; Ezekiel 37:24-25).

He keeps shouting, "Jesus, son of David, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" All the people around him tell him to stop. They tell him to "Be quiet!!" But the more the people rebuke him, the more he repeats it, and cries out more and more, and only gets louder.

He continues to call out, "Jesus! Son of David! HAVE MERCY ON ME!!!"

Discuss:

Imagine what this would have been like. Imagine if you were blind, and you heard that there was hope.

For the first time in your life, there is someone nearby who can possibly help you. This person might be able to change your situation, or change your circumstances.

If you were completely dependent on others who can change your life, would you yell? Would you cry out? Would you be quieted by those around you who told you to stop?

Bartimaeus was not quieted. He only yelled louder. This could be his only chance; his only hope - he knew Jesus was the ONLY one who could help him.

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Have Mercy

Then, Jesus STOOD STILL.

Wow. He got Jesus' attention. He did not give in to the fear of man. He did not concern himself with what people thought of him. He was persistent. He had faith and it showed. He kept calling out again and again until he got Jesus' attention - even though everyone around him was telling him to stop.

Then Jesus commanded the people to call him. He heard someone calling him, and commanded that the person be brought to him.

Now the attitude of the people is reversed. People who had just been telling the man to "hush!" moments ago have now completely changed. They tell Bartimaeus, "Get up! He's calling you!"

T**he book of Mark tells us that Bartimaeus threw off his coat.** Think about this: this is a dramatic move. He jumps up, and quickly pulls off his cloak, throws it on the ground, and comes to Jesus.

Why? There are different theories on why he did this. Some theories say that his coat was heavy, and kept him from being able to quickly get to Jesus. The most likely seems to be that beggars wore clothing that identified them. They often had coats or cloaks that would be recognized as the clothing of a beggar, or a handicapped person. Bartimaeus may have been making a statement by throwing off his coat, and it was basically like saying, I am no longer a beggar, I will no longer need this.

This was an act of faith that he would be healed.

When Bartimaeus reached Jesus, Jesus asked him, **"What do you want me to do for you?**" He had called out for mercy, but Jesus wanted him to be specific. What do you want me to do? Bartimaeus responded, "Lord, (Rabbi) I want to receive my sight." The gospel of Matthew says they asked "that our eyes may be opened."

The gospels of Mark and Luke say that Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight, your faith has saved you," or "your faith has made you whole." The gospel of Mark says that Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes. All three gospels say that sight was received "immediately."

The gospel of Matthew speaks of the compassion of Jesus. This is the mercy for which Bartimaeus was asking. The original New Testament word for mercy translates as: to have compassion, to help one who is afflicted, wretched, or seeking aid.

After he received his sight, he followed Jesus. The gospel of Luke tells that he not only followed Him, but he glorified God.

When all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus has many names and titles: Son of God, Son of Man, and son of David are only a few.

But what does "son of David" mean?

Matthew 1 and Luke 3 show us the lineage of Christ. The lineage of both Joseph and Mary were able to be traced back to King David (Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:31). God promised that the throne of David would be established forever (1 Kings 2:45; 1 Kings 8:25; 1 Kings 9:5; Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32-33). This kingdom established through David was fulfilled by Jesus.

Jesus is the "son of David" and His reign will have no end.

What is mercy?

The original Hebrew word for mercy is "hesed" which means goodness, kindness, and faithfulness.

King David was a "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). He lived under the law, but he understood the heart of God. He understood that at the heart of the Mosaic law was a God who communicated with his people from the mercy seat.(Exodus 30:6) David understood that God is full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering, and full of mercy and truth (Psalm 86:15; 145:8) . And that the base meaning of the law was the law of love; to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and to love your neighbor as yourself. This was the kingdom that was meant to be established throughout eternity; this kingdom of a loving God full of goodness and mercy.

Bartimaeus understood who Jesus actually was; he knew that he was the promised Messiah. He must have known the prophecies of the Messiah who would come from the lineage of David. Not only that, Bartimaeus knew that the Messiah would bring in the kingdom of God with mercy and compassion.

He rightfully asked, "Have mercy on me!"

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Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

Life of Jesus

If your audience enjoys a drama presentation, this would also be a good story to act out.

The story begins with Jesus entering and passing through Jericho.

The main character in the story is introduced and his name is Zacchaeus.

The first thing we learn is that Zacchaeus is a publican, or tax collector. Not only is he a tax collector, he is the chief tax collector; this means that all the other tax collectors reported to him.

Tax collectors were despised. The only person more hated than a tax collector would have been the chief tax collector. At the time of Christ, the Roman Empire ruled over much of the civilized world, including the land of Israel. The Romans enlisted Jews (Israelites) who were willing to collect taxes from their fellow citizens for the Roman government. The Romans would offer bonuses to the tax collectors to entice them to betray the Jewish people. Tax collectors were allowed to extort money, and most of them had become rich through their dishonest practices.

Jewish people saw tax collectors as traitors, as corrupt men who collaborated with the Roman Empire. Tax collectors were not allowed to go to the temple or synagogue, and their money was considered tainted. They were not allowed to serve on a witness stand in a court of law.

Zacchaeus must have heard about Jesus. Jesus was a well known celebrity at the time. He was passing through Jericho, and it was probably the big news of the day was Jesus was coming to town. Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. He went to the place where he knew Jesus would be, but there was a huge crowd.

The second thing we learn about Zacchaeus is that he is very short. Some scholars think it is possible he had the condition of dwarfism. The reason he could not see Jesus is because he was so short. However, he was determined to see Jesus. He *ran ahead* of the crowd and climbed up into a tree to wait because he knew Jesus was going to come that way.

Discuss:

Have you ever been somewhere that there were so many people you could not see through the crowd?

Zacchaeus had to plan this out. He had to figure out where Jesus would be walking and the path he was going to take.

He could not run through the crowd; he would never get ahead. If he ran ahead, he probably had to run around the crowd. He would not have been able to go through the crowd to get ahead, so he probably took another route to get around.

Then he climbed a tree that was in the path that Jesus was going to walk down. This meant he was there before Jesus, before the crowds. Instead of trying to see Jesus from behind, he would have seen him coming.

The tree that he climbed was a sycamore-fig tree, which was a very common tree in Israel. It was similar to a mulberry tree, and had fruit on it that looked very similar to a fig. But the fruit of this tree was very bitter; it did not taste like the figs, and it was only eaten by very poor people. The branches of this tree grow very low to the ground, making it easier to climb. The irony here is that Zacchaeus, a very wealthy man, uses a poor man's tree to see Jesus.

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Zacchaeus

Discuss:

Zacchaeus is ahead of the crowd, in the tree, waiting for Jesus to come. If Jesus is at the head of the entourage, then probably most people would be following Jesus. When he looked ahead, it would have been easier for him to see Zacchaeus in the tree.

When Jesus reached the place where Zacchaeus was, he looked up and saw him.

He said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because I *must* stay at your house today."

We do not know how Jesus knew his name. Perhaps Zacchaeus was well known in a negative way, or perhaps the Holy Spirit revealed it to Jesus, it does not say. But Zacchaeus quickly came down out of the tree and *joyfully* received him. Zacchaeus was excited! He was trying to see Jesus, he had done everything he could to get to him, and now he is coming to stay at his house!

It is interesting that Jesus said today he "must" stay at his house. Could it be that this fulfilled a prophecy? Possibly. There are some parallels here with what Jesus says and Ezekiel 34:11, 16.

It could also be that Zacchaeus was *seeking* Jesus. Throughout the Bible, there are scriptures about seeking the Lord.

If we seek Him, we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 69:32; Psalm 119:2; Jeremiah 29:13). Draw near to Him, and he will draw near to you (James 4:8). The Lord will not push himself on you; He wants us to seek after Him. But when we seek him, he quickly responds.

We are told that Zacchaeus joyfully received Jesus. Jesus was often a guest in people's homes. But we know that many of the supposedly righteous Pharisees who hosted Jesus were grumbling and criticizing Jesus, and did not receive him with joy. And then the grumbling starts. People were watching what was happening here. Jesus was being followed by very large crowds, so everyone saw his interaction with Zacchaeus. Everyone was aghast, how dare he go to be the guest of this man - this *tax collector*, this sinner! What an outrage! Jesus should not be talking to him, let alone going to his house! But this man, this "sinner," received Jesus with joy and gave him more honor than those who were seemingly righteous.

Were the people who were upset also sinners? Yes, absolutely (Romans 3:23). Everyone is born into sin. But they thought they were righteous because they obeyed the law, and this tax-collector was a terrible sinner. This was scandalous.

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Zacchaeus

Jesus is looking at the heart.

He is looking at the heart of a man who is seeking him. Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd, and climbed a tree to wait for Jesus to come by, then he welcomed Jesus into his home. Many of these people were critically judging Jesus, and the "righteous" Pharisees were not nearly as excited when Jesus came to their house, or as welcoming as Zacchaeus.

When you hear from the Lord, and have a relationship with him, it changes you. Zacchaeus tells Jesus that he gives half of his possessions to the poor. Not only that, he says he will restore four times the amount back to anyone whom he has cheated.

Jesus tells Zacchaeus, "Today, salvation has come to this house."

Jesus, or Yeshua, is the same as the name Joshua which means **"Jehovah is salvation."** (Hebrew translation for Joshua) When he says salvation has come, it could mean that Jesus has come to this house and he IS God who is salvation. It could be a result of Zacchaeus' response as he simply repented, and completely changed the direction in which he was headed. He did as Jesus has commanded before,

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might…..love your neighbor as yourself," (Mark 12:30-31). That is what the whole law essentially means. It comes down to loving God, and loving others.

Jesus continues, "He also is a son of Abraham."

This means that Zacchaeus was a descendant of Abraham, and Jesus came to save the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24). Jesus then references Ezekiel 34:11-12 and says,

"The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." Jesus was the fulfillment of every prophecy in the Old Testament. It was his mission to fulfill everything that was prophesied. Zacchaeus was the sheep that was lost, the one that had been scattered and driven away by the teachings of the Pharisees (Ezekiel 34:12,16).

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus came to bring salvation first to Israel, and then to the Gentiles. (Romans 1:16)

He was the material form of all the prophecies of the Old Testament and fulfilled everything that was spoken of the coming Messiah.

Because Zacchaeus was seeking Him, Jesus responded to him.

When we seek the Lord with all our heart, we will find Him.

Zacchaeus eagerly looked for Jesus and rejoiced when Jesus came to meet with Him. That is what the Lord wants from us; he simply wants a relationship with people who desire to know him.

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Forgiven Much

Matthew 26:6-16
Mark 14:3-11
Luke 7:36-50
John 12:1-11

Life of Jesus

This is a story that is found in all four gospels of the Bible. Different scholars have varying views on the accounts told in each gospel. Matthew and Mark are very clear that it was the same event, and the occurrence in John seems to be the same story, although some say it is a third occasion. Some scholars believe that the story told in Luke is a separate narrative because it seems to come at an earlier time in Jesus' ministry.

However, this lesson is taught here as a one-time occurrence. Looking at the similarities in the stories, it can be reconciled to the telling of one event. Also, taking into account that are separate events in Luke's gospel that are not chronological and quite out of order. This particular story is so significant and unusual that it seems more than coincidental that it would have taken place twice, let alone three times. Also, Jesus says in Matthew 26:13, and Mark 26:9 that wherever this gospel is preached, that the story of what this woman has done will be told for a memorial of her. So, it would stand to reason that the account in all four gospels would be one and the same, and speak of the same woman, Mary. Additionally, John 11:2 states that the sister of Lazarus was the same Mary that anointed Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

With this view, let us examine the story. When you teach the story to the students, teach it from John and also with a bookmark in Luke as further explanation. Take notes and bring in the other points from Matthew and Mark.

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To get an idea of the time frame of the ministry of Jesus, this story takes place shortly after Lazarus was raised from the dead, and only days before Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The following day after this event is Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus is in Bethany. This is the same town where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived, and where Lazarus was raised. Bethany was about a thirty-minute walk, or a little over 2 miles (3 kilometers) from Jerusalem.

Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus is in the home of Simon, the Leper. Reconciling this with Luke, we see that he was in the home of Simon, who was also a Pharisee.

Discuss:

Do you think that Jesus healed this man?

Is it possible that he was formerly known as Simon the Leper?

If he was still a leper, would he be entertaining people in his home?

We can assume that this man was no longer a leper. Lepers were not allowed to be near other people. Especially if the man was a Pharisee, he would have definitely been abiding by the law, and lepers were outcasts of society, and not allowed to live near other people, let alone have them in their home. We can guess that this man was either healed by Jesus, or his leprosy went away, or into remission, but that he would not have been leprous at the time of this dinner.

Jesus has been invited for dinner to Simon's home. Lazarus, Martha and Mary must have known Simon well. Martha, Mary's sister, was serving the meal, and Lazarus was one of the people who was sitting at the table with Jesus. We also know that there were a lot of people at this dinner.

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Forgiven Much

Many of the Jews came not only to see Jesus, but they were curious because they knew that Lazarus would be there, and he had been raised from the dead (John 12:9-10).

When the people in this region would eat, they would sit very low to the ground, on a cushion or directly on the ground, and almost eat in a reclining or lying down position with a low table. You can sit on the ground to illustrate this, and show the students how the table would have been fairly low to the ground.

While Jesus is sitting down eating, a woman comes up to Jesus holding an alabaster box. The gospel of Luke says this lady was a "woman of the city." She did not have a good reputation, and was known as a "sinner." She knew that Jesus would be at this Pharisee's house (which would make perfect sense if her sister were serving.)

Discuss:

Everyone is sitting at dinner, and someone walks in that everyone knows, but they don't want her there. Everyone knows who she is, and they have heard about all the bad things she has done.

But as far as we know, no one tells her to leave. There could be different explanations for this.

Maybe because it was her sister and brother that were welcome there, and that is why she wasn't asked to leave.

Or maybe because she come in with a very expensive jar in her hand. Possibly they think it is a hostess gift for Simon?

She has come in with an alabaster box. What is alabaster?

Alabaster looks similar to marble, but it is a softer stone, and you can almost see through it. It was very expensive, and what it held was even more valuable. Inside the alabaster box was a pound (almost half of a kilogram) of perfume. This perfume was highly scented, and extremely expensive. It was called nard, or spikenard, and it comes from the Himalayan mountains in Nepal, near China. This is very far from Jerusalem.

Discuss:

How would they get this all the way from the Himalayan mountains to Jerusalem?

Possible answers include walking, camels, horses, maybe boats, etc.

To get this all the way to Israel with the types of transportation they had during this time, it would have taken a very long time and that made it very costly. If you have to pay one person to take it to another person all along the way, the price is going to increase with each person that handles it or ships it. The estimated value of this perfume comes to about a year's worth of wages.

We can also guess that it is possible that this lady has some money. Maybe her lifestyle made her wealthy; or maybe she's taking the most valuable thing she owns and is giving it to Jesus; maybe both.

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Discuss:

Jesus is at Simon the leper's house. Everyone is sitting down, eating. It is possible that Jesus is sitting on his knees, with his feet behind him. We are told in Luke that she stood at his feet behind him, and she is weeping. Then she breaks her box and pours the perfume on his head (Mark 14:3). This breaking of the box could mean that she broke the seal, or she had to break it to get it open, or she might have broken it so that it could not be used again. She's crying so hard and her tears are falling all over his feet. She washes his feet with her tears, and wipes them off with her hair. His feet were probably dirty; they traveled in the desert and usually wore sandals. Then she kisses his feet and pours perfume on them too.

This is what we might consider a very awkward situation.

Discuss:

This is quite a scene. What do you think people would do?

Mary is weeping, not just crying. What is the difference between weeping and crying?

What would you do? Would this be weird? Uncomfortable? Unusual? Strange?

Embarrassing? Was she embarrassed? Seemingly not at all.

Remember that this is very expensive perfume, and the scent is very strong. The whole house is filled with the smell of this perfume.

Everyone is probably watching Jesus to see what he is going to do. Is he going to tell her to stop?

People are talking. They're probably talking quietly, maybe even whispering, probably staring.

Even the disciples are indignant; they said, this is such a waste. Why is she doing this?

This could have been sold for 300 pence and given to the poor.

John tells us specifically that Judas Iscariot (the one who denied Jesus) was the one who said this. It is also possible that this was the home of Judas' father. We are told that Judas was Simon's son (John 6:71; John 12:4; John 13:26). Could he be the son of this man, Simon the Pharisee, Simon the leper? Maybe this was his father's house, and he was more bold to speak here?

Judas doesn't really want the money to go to the poor. He is in charge of Jesus' finances, and it is his job to keep the money bag. The reader is told that he is a thief, and he just wanted to sell it so he could steal the money.

The reader is also told what happened after this dinner (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11). Judas is so upset that after this he went to the chief priests to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Money was the most important thing to him.

Jesus answers them and says, leave her alone.

You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me with you. She has done a good work on me. She has anointed my body for burial.

What does this mean?

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For thousands of years, people have been embalming bodies. When someone is dead, they put oils and perfumes on the body to keep it from stinking and to try to preserve it. She seems to understand what Jesus has been telling everyone, and they did not understand. He's been telling everyone that he is going to die. She seems to know this, and is weeping because she loves him so dearly and she knows what is going to happen.

She seems to understand who he really is and what is about to take place.

Then Jesus says,

"Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her," (Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9).

He is honoring her for what she has done for him. This would explain why all of these different accounts can be reconciled as one event. It would make sense that each of the four gospels that are preached throughout the world would have a record of this story.

The gospel of Luke gives the reader a glimpse into the thoughts of Simon the Pharisee . This is his house, and all of these things are taking place at his dinner party. He is thinking, if Jesus was really a prophet, he would know what kind of lady this is. She's touching him, and she's a sinner.

Jesus knew what Simon was thinking.

Have you ever had someone look at you and then answer you because they can tell what you're thinking?

Jesus tells Simon he has something to say. Simon agrees to listen, and Jesus begins a short parable.

Jesus tells the story of a man who had two men who owed him money. One of them owed him 500 pence (over a year and a half salary) and the other man owed him 50 pence (maybe two months salary). Neither one of them could pay, so the man who loaned the money forgave them both. Which one will love him most?

Simon answered, I suppose the one to whom he forgave the most.

Jesus says, you are right.

Then Jesus looks at the lady, but talks to Simon.

He says, do you see this woman?

I came into your house and you did not give me any water for my feet; but she washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You did not give me a kiss (it was customary in that culture for men to kiss one another on the cheek), and since the time I got here she has not stopped kissing my feet.

You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet.

Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, and she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

Jesus is basically saying, if you understand how much you've been forgiven for, then your love is greater.

Then Jesus looked at the lady and said,

"Your sins are forgiven." All the people at the table began thinking, can He forgive sins too?

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But he looked at the lady and said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

We do not know if Simon ever had a revelation of what really happened. Simon did not understand that his own sin was just as bad as hers in the eyes of God. He had just as much to be forgiven for, but he did not see his own failures so he did not value Jesus.

Simon was proud, and the reader does not know if he was aware of his own pride. But we do know how God feels about pride; he feels very strongly about it.

A proud look is listed as one of the things that God hates (Proverbs 6:17). But Simon seemed blind to his own sin, because he too needed forgiveness.

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This was anointing the body of Jesus for his burial. Oil was used in the Bible to signify anointing. Anointing was done on a person to call them into a specific purpose. It is possible that this sweet smell still stayed on the skin of Jesus when he was crucified days later.

Oil in the Bible was put on people when they were anointed.

Anointing was calling someone to a purpose.

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Jesus in the Story



Have you ever done something really bad, and then you knew you were forgiven for it?

That's what Mary did. Some people think that maybe this is also Mary Magdalene, or the lady caught in adultery and Jesus did not cast a stone. Either way, she knew Jesus. She loved him, and she understood personally his grace and mercy. She had a personal revelation of his love for her, and that changed her life.

When you have a relationship with Jesus, your life will never be the same. When it is personal, and you have a revelation of who He is, and what he did for you, it changes you.

She understood grace. The people all around were judging her, but she knew that the one that mattered the most loved her in such an amazing way that she was oblivious to the people. She was completely unashamed. She poured out her worship (literally) on Jesus in such a personal way and was completely unfazed by what the people around her thought.

There were many people at this dinner with different motives. Some came out of curiosity to see Lazarus. Some came to accuse Jesus. We do not know Simon's motive; maybe he was trying to trap Jesus, maybe he was showing off, or maybe, he too, was curious. The disciples were probably just surprised and thinking how awkward the situation was. Judas just wanted money. And other people there just thought it was wasteful.

But to Mary, she gave Jesus the most valuable thing she could think of. And it did not even come close to what she was forgiven for.

She understood his love and grace, and in return, she was willing to give everything to Jesus.

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More Than the Others

Matthew 23:1-14
Mark 12:38-44
Luke 20:45-47; 21:1-4

Life of Jesus

Most studies of this story only focus on the widow and her gift to the temple treasury. But to put the story into context, it would be good to go back a few verses as Jesus is speaking all in the same sitting. The gospel of Matthew does not mention this particular widow, but the reader can tell from the context that it is the same event where Jesus is speaking.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples, but he is speaking with a much larger audience (Matthew 23:1; Luke 20:45). He is directing his words to his disciples, but the reader gets the impression that Jesus wants others to hear what he has to say.

Jesus begins by telling his disciples to beware of the scribes.

The scribes were a group of people who were very well studied in the Old Testament and were experts in Jewish law. They were the ones who wrote the scriptures on the scrolls. These were the learned teachers and authoritative leaders. They took care of legal matters; some of the scribes were also Pharisees, and the lawyers would have been scribes also. Overall, they were highly respected and esteemed by the Jewish people, and looked to for answers concerning the law. They were the voice of tradition; they were leaders in the temple and the community. They were thought to be very righteous.

They did not like Jesus; these were the ones who always tried to find fault with him. He threatened their way of life and turned everything that they spoke highly of upside down. They were among the very same people that sent him to the cross.

Jesus tells the disciples to beware of them because everything they do is because they want to be seen (Matthew 23:5).

Jesus said they "sit in Moses' seat," (Matthew 23:2-3). This means they held the authority that belonged to Moses. The scribes told all the people what to do; they told them which laws and feasts to observe. But Jesus said not to follow after their works, because they say it, but they themselves do not do them.

The scribes put heavy burdens on the people of all the rules and laws that the people must follow. But they themselves will not even lift a finger to help.

The scribes loved to wear the long robes that were symbols of status and authority. It let everyone know who they were and how important they were. They wanted to be seen in these clothes.

The scribes loved greetings in the marketplace; they loved to hear people call them Rabbi, and give them titles of respect. If people recognize them in the marketplace, and call on them, then everyone there will see them and know how important they are.

The scribes loved having the best seats in the synagogues. These were the seats at the front, and everyone would see them. They also loved the upper rooms in the feasts.

These rooms would be large open areas, with upper levels that could be seen from the floor. The scribes loved having these seats so that everyone there could look up and see them sitting in the upper rooms, and see how influential they were.

Jesus said they "devour widow's houses." The scribes would cheat the widows out of their houses. According to the law of Moses, no one was to mistreat or take advantage of a widow (Exodus 22:22). The tithes of the temple were supposed to take care of the Levites (the priests), the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows (Deuteronomy 26:12-13). The Jewish people were supposed to make sure that the widows were taken care of and they were to leave some of the harvest from the grapes, olives, and wheat in their fields for the widows (Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

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More Than the Others

The scribes loved long prayers; they would pray loudly so everyone would hear them and see how holy they were.

These were very bold statements that Jesus made. Jesus said they were not righteous, they were proud, and they were hypocrites. **To the scribes, this was blasphemy.**

Jesus was always looking at the heart. People looked at the outward appearance and were intimidated by the scribes. But Jesus was not at all intimidated; he called them out on their motives.

Jesus was speaking in the temple when he said these things (Mark 12:35, 38). So it is almost certain that the scribes would have heard.

Jesus sat across from the treasury and was watching the people put money in the offering.

Basically, Jesus was sitting in the temple complex across from where people were giving their offerings. This would have been a part of the temple buildings but not inside the temple itself. Women were allowed in this outer court, but not inside the temple, and the content of the story lets us know that this is a place where women were allowed.

He was watching the people walk up to the treasury, and put in their money, and the rich people put in a lot of money.

They were not hiding how much they were putting in. Jesus was watching the rich men put their money in, and based on the teaching that Jesus was giving just before this, we can guess that the rich people made sure that everyone was able to see how much they gave. They wanted everyone to know and they wanted to be seen.

A certain poor widow came up to the treasury.

This lady would have been very poor. It must have been obvious how poor she was.

Discuss:

How would people have known she was poor?
Maybe they knew her? Maybe they knew she was a widow? Maybe she had lost her home?

The woman gave two small coins in the offering, worth almost nothing. These would have been coins with the least value.

What is the smallest, least valuable coin in your currency? This would have been like two of those. It was worth very little.

Jesus always looks at things differently than everyone else. His kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. It is usually the opposite of what everyone expects.

Jesus saw her put this money in, and he called his disciples. It's like he said, come here, I want to show you something.

He said, 'Truly I tell you, that this poor widow put more in than everyone who put money in the treasury.'

Everyone else put money in out of their abundance. She gave out of her poverty all that she had, all of her money for living.

Jesus saw their motives. The rich men had plenty of money, and possibly even got it by questionable tactics; Jesus had mentioned that they took advantage of the widows. They had plenty, and put a lot of money into the treasury. They did it with a show, making sure that everyone knew how much they gave.

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More Than the Others

This story also ties in with the teachings of Jesus at the sermon on the mount:

We can summarize Matthew 6:1-4:

Do you do good works in public so that people will see you? If you do, your Father in heaven will not reward you.

When you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues (houses of worship) and on the streets. They do it so that people will praise them; they have received their reward. Some translations say to not make a big show of it.

When you give to the poor (or help a needy person) do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Some translations say, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it.

Let your giving be done in secret, in private. And your Father who sees what is done in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Jesus is making an illustration; he is showing you what the leaders of the day would do. It is not clear if the Pharisees actually sounded a trumpet when they gave to the poor, or if a trumpet was sounded when they put a large amount in the offering. Some scholars have thought that a trumpet may have been blown to call the needy to a place where the synagogue leaders would be giving alms, or money, to the poor. Other scholars think that Jesus was illustrating how they made a big show of how much they were giving.

Whether Jesus' words were literal or for illustration, if a big show is made of giving to others, it puts the attention on the person giving.

Jesus said that they received their reward, and that reward was that everyone would see what they had done and give them honor. The glory should go to God; not to the giver. When we do what Jesus says, if we give to the poor, but we do it secretly, and do not bring attention to ourselves or tell everyone what we did then God will see this, and HE will reward us. And the rewards that come from God are much greater than anything we could ever receive from other people.

Discuss:

We can look at this as something that the people in the Bible did. But people are people, and human nature does not change. There may be things in our society, life, or culture that are similar, but they just look different and show up a little differently.

The message is still the same.

We need to always give glory to God and not bring attention to ourselves. If we put God first, giving thanks to Him, and praising Him, it makes the temptation less to make it about us.

There was no fanfare when this widow put her money in the box. No one made a big deal about it. She might have been embarrassed as she put her two cents in and the others put in so much more. The people probably even looked at it as if it were nothing, and may have even scoffed at it. But there is a big difference between what people value, and what God values.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus fulfilled the law of Moses. This means he obeyed every one of the 613 commandments in the Mosaic law.

The Pharisees and scribes were studied in the law. They were experts in the rules of the law. But they did not really understand the law. They thought they understood the law better than everyone, they even made many extra rules to help them keep the law. Jesus did not obey their extra laws, nor did he observe the law the same way they did. They followed it exactly, but obeyed it "legally" but not from their hearts.

Jesus was not about just obeying the rules; he wanted them to see the purpose behind the law.

God's purpose came down to two things: love the Lord with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

All the Old Testament laws are based on these two commandments. If the reader truly understands the commandment, one can see that by following the commandment it only testifies to show love to God, or others, or both.

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How Will You Understand?

Matthew 13:3-23
Mark 4:3-20
Luke 8:4-15

Parables of Jesus

This lesson is easy to illustrate. You can go outside and visually show the different types of ground where the seed would have fallen.

Jesus taught many parables. Ask if they know what a parable is.

A parable is a simple story, used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

Jesus begins his story talking about someone who is sowing seed. This is different from someone digging up the dirt and placing the seed in the ground. This is an illustration of someone scattering seed; walking along, tossing it out by the handfuls.

When the sower, or farmer, sowed, some of the seeds fell on the side of the road. Then the birds came and ate them, or devoured them, meaning they ate them all up and did not leave any.

Discuss:

The man was probably walking through the field, and some of it spilled over into the well-traveled roadway. What kind of soil would it be on the side of the road? This dirt would be very hard; it would be packed down from people and animals walking on it. Luke says that the seed was trampled on. If something is walked on, and trampled on, would it seem what people were walking on had any value? Would you pay attention to what you're walking on? No. You would be walking along, probably not even looking down, and not even thinking about what you are walking on because it seems so insignificant and worthless.

Notice that what is being trampled on as completely useless by the feet of people and animals is something that the birds see as life sustaining. To the birds it is of primary importance; this is their daily food. What people are completely disregarding, the birds are swooping down to consume, as this is their meal of the day. To the bird, it is a life source.

Some of the seed fell on stony ground. This would be dirt with a lot of rocks on the surface and just underneath the surface. The seed on this soil grew up quickly. But, the soil was not very deep, so it withered away and became scorched when the sun came up because it did not have any roots.

Some of the seed fell on ground with thorns. It almost looks like the thorns were in the soil, but they weren't growing yet. Maybe you couldn't even tell they were there. But the thorns grew up with the seed, and as they grew together, the good seed was choked and did not yield any fruit. It may have grown for a while, but it did not produce any fruit.

The other seed fell on good ground. It grew and increased, and yielded fruit. Some a hundred times, some sixty times, and some thirty times as much as was planted.

Then Jesus said, "Who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus is not talking about the ears on your head. He is talking about your heart, your spiritual hearing. If you have a good heart, you can listen and understand what this means (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

After the disciples were alone with Jesus, they asked him why he spoke to the people in parables, and what this parable meant.

Jesus told them it was given to the disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but they are not for everyone. The truths of the kingdom are hidden for those who put their faith in Jesus.

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How Will You Understand?

In Jesus is where all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. But those who rejected Jesus can not understand these hidden truths and mysteries and do not have "ears to hear, " (1 Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 2:2-3; 1 Peter 3:4; Isaiah 45:3).

Jesus then told the disciples that whoever has (understanding) more shall be given, and it will be given in abundance. Whoever does not have, it will be taken away even what he has. If we do not use what we are given, then it will be taken away.

Jesus said he spoke to the people in parables because they would look, but not really see. They would hear, but not really listen.

Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-10 and Isaiah 44:18 where it speaks of the people saying they will hear, but not understand; they will see but not really perceive. Their heart is hardened, their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes so that they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears; because if they did, they would understand with their heart, be converted, and Jesus would heal them.

The disciples believe; they place value on Jesus. He tells them that blessed are their eyes, for they see; and their ears, for they hear. There have been many prophets and righteous men who have wanted to see the things the disciples see and have not seen them, and wanted to hear the things that the disciples hear and did not hear them. The disciples were blessed to be living in that time, and we are blessed to be living in this time where we that believe are able to see and understand the teachings of Jesus.

Then, in Mark 4:13, Jesus says something very interesting. He says,

"Do you not understand this parable? How can you understand any parable?" This parable of the sower is foundational. Understanding this parable is the key to understanding all of the parables and the meanings of the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus begins his explanation:

The sower sows the word. The seed IS the word of God. The seed is NOT the problem. The ground represents the hearts of the people; the word is sown, or planted in their hearts. Every person falls into one of these types of ground.

The seed that is sown on the side of the road are those who hear the word of the kingdom, and do not understand it. These people did not value the word of God. The birds represent Satan, who comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts, otherwise they could have believed and been saved. Notice it says that the birds *devoured* it. What does this mean? It means they quickly ate it all up. This means that Satan doesn't leave any part of the word behind. If he did, perhaps it could settle in a crack in this hard soil and produce at a later time, but there is none left. This ground, or heart, is so hard that the seed just sits on the surface, and Satan comes and takes it ALL away.

The second type of ground is the stony ground. These people hear the word, and receive it with joy. They are excited, at first. Satan could not steal the word from them because they received it. But Satan can bring temptation, or affliction (pressure), and persecution and drive them to offense. These people have no roots, because their soil is shallow, not deep. This is the seed that grew, but it was scorched because it had no roots or water.

These people had no roots, and they lacked moisture. When the sun came up, the heat, the pressure, the persecution, it scorched the plant. The plant is not getting water, and it doesn't have any root, so when the heat came, it withered away. Talk about withered: this means it shrinks and dries up. What do dried up plants look like? They're shriveled and brittle; they break easily.

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How Will You Understand?

We need the word of God to be our source; seeds cannot grow without water. Shallow people look to other people to "water" them. They look to people to encourage them and give them the affirmation and love they should be receiving from the Lord. They have no roots, so all the moisture comes from the surface seeking constant compliments and affirmations from others. When this doesn't happen, or runs out, they dry up because of the "heat" from persecution, troubles, or temptations because they do not have a deep well to draw from; they have the wrong source. The prophet Jeremiah said that if we put our trust in man, we will be cursed. The person who puts his trust in man is like a shrub in the desert where no one lives. Seeking affirmation from people rather than the Lord is putting trust in man.

But blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord. That person is like a tree planted by the water, and spreads out roots by the river and is not affected when heat and drought comes. This tree is in the same environment; it is experiencing the same heat and pressure that the shrub is; but the tree has roots and is getting moisture somewhere else (Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 1:1-3).

What are the roots? We are to be rooted and grounded in God's love. We are not rooted in our love for others, that would be the fruit that we bear from being rooted in His love for US. When we know and understand how much he loves us, we can be filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19; Ephesians 2:4).

These people got offended. The Greek word used here for offended in Mark 4 means to cause a person to distrust someone they should trust and obey; to see in another something to disapprove of that hinders them from acknowledging authority. Offense is dangerous; it works directly against the Lord. Offense against the word takes the word of God out of a position of authority in your life (Psalm 119:165).

The third type of ground is the soil with thorns. These people heard the word, and it grew. They received the word, they were rooted and they did not get offended. But, anxiety and care of things in the world (the actual Greek word here means 'distraction'), the deceitfulness of riches, and lusts of other things entered in, choked the word, and made it unfruitful.

The word got in, but other things got in too. We have to guard our hearts. These other things entered in from a lack of understanding of God's love. These people did not *know* that he is our source of provision and protection. These people had some roots, but they were not grounded, meaning they had not established a firm foundation. Luke says this seed did not bring any fruit to perfection. The seed may have begun to produce fruit, but these other things choked out the word of God, and the fruit did not mature (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Discuss:

Does unripe fruit taste good? What happens to fruit to make it die before it becomes mature?

The last type of ground is good ground. These are people who hear the word, and understand it. They have an honest and good heart, they hear the word, receive it, and keep it. Then they bring forth fruit. Some thirty times, some sixty times, and some one hundred times as much as was planted.

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Jesus in the Story



Most people are like the seed on the roadside.

A smaller group is those that fell on stony ground.

An even smaller group is those whose seed grew up with thorns.

The smallest group are those who bear fruit.

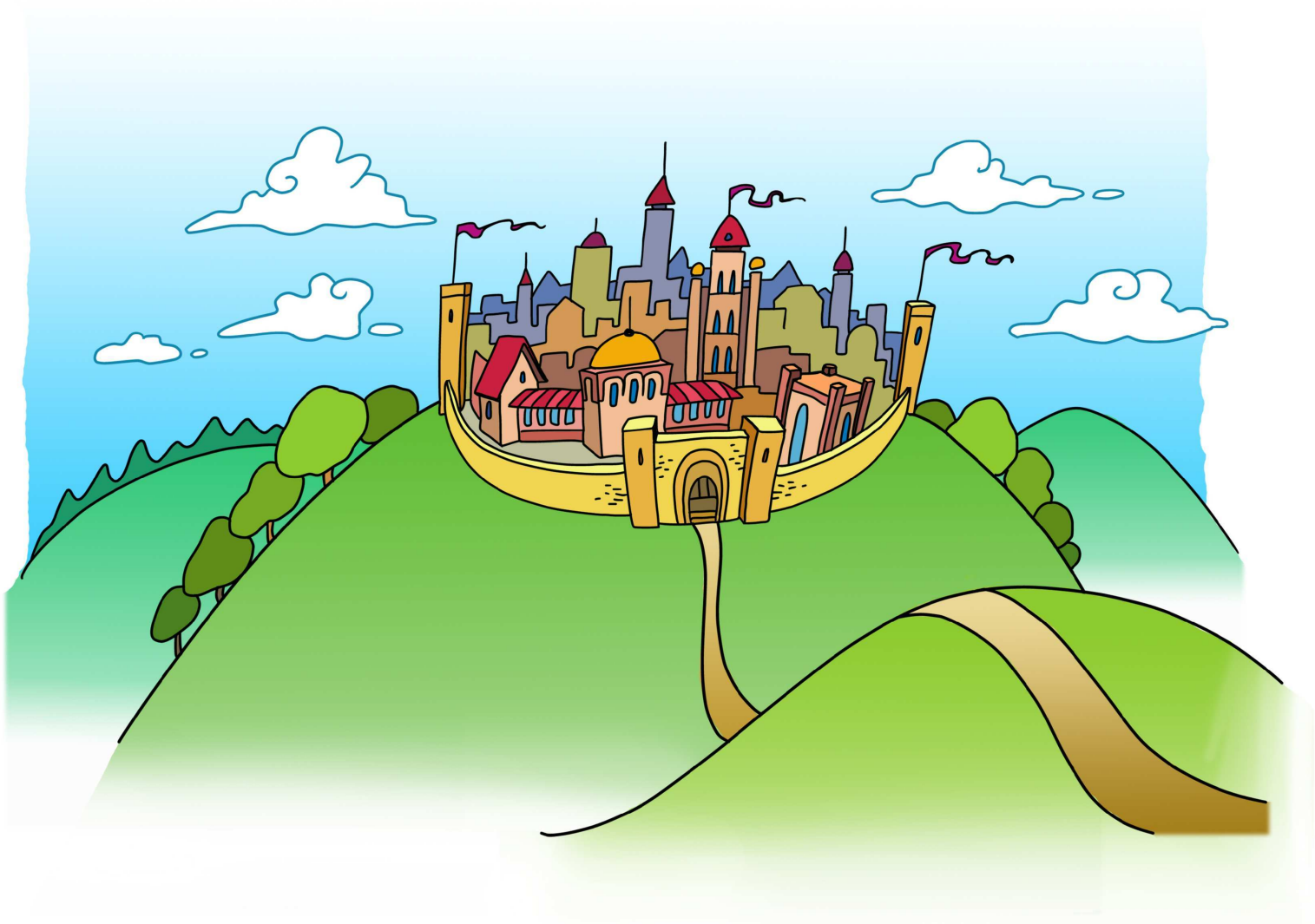
Jesus IS the Word of God. Our hearts are the ground, or the soil. When God created the world, he made the animals from the ground; he made every tree from the ground; he made man out of the ground. When a seed is planted, it pulls what is needed from the ground to grow a plant. Everything needed for that plant is in the soil; the seed determines what type of plant will grow.

In the same way, our hearts are the ground for the seed of the word of God. If we harden our heart so that we do not understand, if we do not have depth, or let the things of the world into our heart, the seed will not produce fruit in our lives. But if we value God's word, have good ground for it to grow, and do not get distracted or offended, we can take the seed of God's word and speak it, believe it, and expect to see it, KNOWING that God's word will always produce fruit (John 1:1; Genesis 2:9, 19; Isaiah 55:11).

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City On a Hill

Matthew 5:13-16
Mark 9:49-50
Philippians 2:14-15

Parables of Jesus

This teaching is part of what we call the **Sermon on the Mount.** Jesus is teaching a different way of life than what is expected. He is introducing his kingdom, and the opposite way of living.

He says that the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5); in direct contradiction to those who strive to gain power. He says to obtain mercy you must be merciful, and you are blessed when people speak badly of you for Jesus' sake. The things he was teaching were paradoxes; they were seemingly contradictory and absurd to some, but strangely true. This was not what people were expecting from the Messiah. He is showing that we are called to be different; we are representatives of heaven.

Jesus says that we are the salt of the earth.

Discuss:

What is salt? What is it used for?
One use of salt is for preservation.
Food that is preserved in salt can be kept indefinitely without any refrigeration and it will not spoil.
Salt makes things last; it makes them endure for a long time.
Salt purifies; it is used for purity. If you have a wound, you can soak it in salt to get the impurities out.

Salt was used with the sacrifices; it was commanded to be used for every offering. It was called the salt of the covenant (Leviticus 2:13; Mark 9:49).
Salt was necessary; without salt the offering was unacceptable.
Salt is an enhancer; it brings out flavor that is already present and makes it stronger.

Through medical science, we know that salt is necessary for life. It helps prevent dehydration; it is essential for transmitting nerve impulses. It is needed for muscles to contract and relax. Salt maintains a stable blood pressure which is necessary for proper circulation. And it also helps the body absorb other nutrients.

Salt is essential to life. Then Jesus mentions salt that has lost its flavor is useless, and is not good for anything except to be cast out.

Jesus then says that we are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Discuss:

What does that mean?
A city on a hill is visible to everyone around. A city on the top of the hill shows everyone that there is some sort of civilization in that area. It shows that there is an established governing body, it shows that the area is inhabited, and there is life happening in that region.
What about at night? The city would provide light that would be visible from a great distance. If someone needed assistance, they would have a light to follow, they would know where to go where there would be an established place where they should be able to find someone to help them.

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City On a Hill

A study of these words in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament show that Jesus is making reference back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 2:1-5 is a description of the Lord's house that is established on the top of the mountain.

Mountains were places where it was believed that heaven touched earth. This house of the Lord is taller than all the hills, and all the nations flow to it. This refers to the garden of Eden where four rivers flowed away from the garden, but now nations are flowing back to the city to receive teaching from the Lord (Torah).

Things have changed; their swords and spears have been turned into tools where they do not learn war anymore.

The Lord shines on this house on the top of the hill. But Jesus tells us that WE are the city on the hill. We are the ones that the Lord is shining on, and we are called to represent Christ as his body. We are to be the light that draws people to the instruction of the Lord.

This is a whole new way of life. We walk in peace, not war. It is a connection back to the garden of Eden, where man walked with God in the garden (Genesis 3:8). This is a reflection of the New Covenant. Believers in Christ are not under the Old Testament covenant given to Moses. Israel was under that covenant; they were meant to be a light to the nations, bringing God to the people of the world; but they failed.

Now we have a New Covenant; a fresh start that is only possible through Christ and his Spirit living in us (Romans 8:9). Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant to bring about the New Covenant. When we believe in Christ we are changed, we are completely new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). We are now members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 20) and we are to be the light that brings Christ to the world (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13).

So what does all this mean?

It means we are representatives of Jesus, and we are called to be different. We should not look like the rest of the world; we should not act like the rest of the world. We are called out, separate, royal, a priesthood, holy, called out of darkness into light to represent Christ (1 Peter 2:9). We should be the wise man who listens to these teachings of Jesus and *does* them (Matthew 7:24). Jesus describes a new way of living, the upside down kingdom of doing things the opposite way of what is expected.

Jesus is also referring back to Isaiah 42:1-7. Jesus is THE servant, but as followers of Jesus and part of the body of Christ, this also means us. The Spirit of God is on us and we are to bring judgment to the nations (Isaiah 42:1).

We are given as a covenant to the people, and a light for the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6).

In this kingdom, what does justice look like? It isn't what you might think. This justice is in righteousness; it opens blind eyes and releases prisoners (Isaiah 42:7). We are to represent Christ and bring freedom and light to the nations and give glory to the Lord. We walk in the light, as he is in the light. We are the city of the Lord, set on the hill (Matthew 5:14; Isaiah 60:14).

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City On a Hill

The apostle Paul also references this light that we represent in Philippians 2:14-15. He tells us to do everything without complaining, disputing, arguing.

By doing this we are different. Everyone naturally complains, argues, and disputes. This is what caused many problems for the Israelites in the desert, and God called this complaining - "an evil heart of unbelief," (Hebrews 3:12). Complaining and disputing takes away faith. You are no longer focused on what God can and will do for you. If you don't do this, you will be blameless. You will stand out in the middle of all the evil around you, and you will shine like a light in the world. Does this sound familiar? You will be a shining light, and you will be noticed as different.

Discuss:

Could it be possible that when God looks at the world that he sees lights?

Could it be that he sees us, followers of Christ, shining out as different when we do things cheerfully, happily, shining as lights in the world for Jesus?

Jesus stated that we should:

'Let our light shine'. We do this by letting people see our good works, and then they will glorify God. None of this is intended to bring glory to ourselves. We do good works like bringing freedom, opening blind eyes and bringing the kingdom to the world. We are living examples of this kingdom lifestyle that looks so different from everything else around us. And when we live this type of life, others see us, and it brings glory to God.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus IS the servant in Isaiah 42.

Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5).

But now that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22) we are his body here on the earth. He is no longer here in the flesh, but can do greater things through his body as believers are spread throughout the world doing works in His name.

We are that body of Christ, shining the light of Jesus into the world.

We are to walk in the light, as He is in the light (1 John 1:7).

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When You Pray

Matthew 6:5-13
Luke 18:9-14

Teachings of Jesus

Begin the lesson by looking at the passage in Luke. Jesus is telling this parable specifically to certain people who "trusted in themselves." They believed they were righteous, but they despised others.

Discuss:

How does God feel about those who "trust in themselves?

Proverbs 28:26 says that he who trusts in his own heart is a fool.

Jeremiah 17:5 says that the man who trusts in man is cursed…and his heart departs from the Lord.

But…Psalm 40:4 says that blessed is the one who makes the Lord his trust.

Jesus is speaking to people that think that they are righteous; they think they are holy but they are only trusting in themselves. It tells us that these people despise other people. They are proud.

What does "despise" mean? It means to feel contempt. It is to look down on someone as beneath you so that you believe they are completely worthless and have no value.

Jesus begins his story. **Two men went to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.**

The tax collectors were hated by the Jewish people. The Roman Empire ruled Israel at that time, and they hired Jews to collect taxes for Rome. These Jewish tax collectors were seen as traitors by the other Jews. The tax collectors would take money above the amount of the taxes and keep the difference. Most tax collectors had become rich from being corrupt.

The Pharisee stood in the temple and prayed with himself. Notice: he prayed with himself. Is he speaking to God?

He may have very well prayed out loud so that the tax collector and others could hear him. He prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men are. I thank you that I'm not a cheater, sinner, or adulterer - or like this tax collector."

The Pharisee continued, "I fast twice a week and give tithes of everything I have."

This is a very proud prayer. His whole prayer is a conversation telling God all the good things that he has done. Do you think he needs to tell God what he did? Does God know he fasts and tithes?

Of course God knows about his fasting and tithing. But God also knows his heart. The Pharisee is proud, and wants to make sure that everyone knows how good he is and that he follows all the rules. But just because someone follows all the rules doesn't mean they did it for the right reasons.

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When You Pray

Then the tax-collector prays. He prays standing far away; he is not trying to be heard by everyone. He realizes he is a sinner, and is ashamed to even lift his eyes toward heaven.

He prays asking God to be merciful to him because he is a sinner.

Which of these prayers do you think God will give attention to?

God hates pride. He distances himself from proud people and opposes them.

(Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 6:16-17; 8:13; 16:5; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)

Jesus gives his commentary on these men and their different approaches to God. He tells us that the tax-collector, not the Pharisee, went home justified before God. Everyone that exalts himself will be humbled, or put down. But the person who humbles himself will be exalted, or honored.

The tax-collector knew he was a sinner and humbled himself asking for God's mercy. The irony is that the Pharisee believed he was fully justified by his own actions. We are not able to be justified by our own actions.

We are justified by our faith in Christ, in the blood of Jesus, and by his grace. No one can ever be made right with God by obeying the law (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:24, 28; 5:1, 9; Galatians 2:16).

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Transition over to Matthew 6.

Jesus speaks of the Pharisees who pray just as this Pharisee in the parable.

They love to pray. They stand in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets where everyone can see them praying. They want people to see them and think that they are righteous and holy. Jesus tells us that this IS their reward: the honor that men give them.

Jesus contradicts this by telling you where you should pray. Instead of praying to be seen, go into your closet and close the door. **Pray where God is the only one who can see; He will see what you do in secret and reward you openly.**

Jesus also says not to pray using a lot of meaningless words. Some people think that God will hear them if they use more words and pray longer; Jesus says this what the unbelievers do. He says not to be like them because our Father knows what we need before we even ask.

Then Jesus tells them how to pray.

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When You Pray

We call this "The Lord's Prayer." It is often recited from memory. Stop to think about what it is actually saying.

Our Father in heaven…

What is this saying?

Who is God? He is our Father. A good Father loves his children and cares for them.

Where is God? He is in the heavens. He is above us; we are beneath Him.

May Your name be kept holy.

What does this mean?

It means that He is to be honored. He is worthy of our praise and honor.

All of these things in this phrase bring us to the acknowledgement that God is above us in every sense. We are his children, we appeal to him as a Father. He is holy and we are to honor Him and His name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

We want your kingdom to come to this earth: we want you to reign here.

We want your will to be done on the earth, *just as it is* in heaven.

Would God's will always be accomplished in the heavenly realm?

Yes, and that is what we are saying we want to happen here on earth.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Give us today the food we need. God the Father wants us to come to Him on a daily basis. He wants to walk with us each day and provide everything we need for that day. He wants to be our source.

This doesn't necessarily just mean food. This means, give us what we need to get through this day.

Meet our needs TODAY.

We want you to be present in our lives, walking with us, and providing us everything we need for life.

Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

We are asking for forgiveness, but this prayer is setting a condition. Forgive us AS we have forgiven others.

Wow. We don't always realize how important it is to forgive others. But we are asking him to forgive us in the same way we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Do not let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

This is a plea for help. We know we have an enemy who is always trying to tempt us to fail; to tempt us to sin. We are pleading for mercy for our Father to rescue us from this evil enemy.

For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. (This is only in some translations.)

This simply acknowledges who God is. Everything is His. This is His kingdom. He is the ultimate power, and glory only belongs to Him. This puts everything in its proper perspective and us in our proper place.

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Jesus in the Story



Prayer is not about you. It is not about what other people think about you, or what you've done, or how good you look when you pray.

Jesus is telling the people that all God wants is a relationship with his people. Prayer is simply a relationship between you and God. It is acknowledging that you are completely at His mercy. You accept what He has done for you, and are thankful for it. You know this is not about you, it is about his goodness and all that He has done. When you exalt and honor yourself, the only direction to go is down. But if you humble yourself and put yourself in your proper place, He now has the opportunity to exalt and honor you.

Luke began by telling the reader who Jesus is speaking to: certain people who "trusted in themselves." They believed they were righteous, but they despised others. But anyone who is truly righteous would understand that to be in right relationship with God would never result in looking at another person in contempt.

They would understand that the righteousness they received was a gift, and there is no room for condemnation in it.

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Into The Ditch

Matthew 7:1-7
Matthew 15:14
Luke 6:39-42

Teachings of Jesus

This is part of the teaching Jesus taught that we call the "Sermon on the Mount."

Matthew and Luke construct the passages slightly differently, but they both reference the same sermon. We can see from the passage in Luke that the "blind leading the blind" passage is clearly connected to the passage on judging others and looking at your own eyes first. Matthew separates these in chapter 7 and chapter 15, but there is more information in Matthew 7 and it will be easier to teach from this passage, and reference the verse in Matthew 15.

Jesus was speaking of the Pharisees, and he said, ...They are blind leaders of the blind. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

Discuss:

What does this mean?

Would you ask a blind man for directions? Would you ask a blind man to lead you somewhere you had never been? This would not be wise. You want someone to lead you and guide you who can see what is ahead. Someone who can see where you are going.

The Pharisees were the respected Jewish leaders of their day. They were the leaders in the church. They were studied and knew the scriptures, especially the Torah, which was the law of Moses, and all the Talmud, which were the writings and additional laws they put into place to explain and enforce the Torah, or Mosaic law.

Although respected and knowledgeable, the Pharisees were very proud. They had allowed their hearts to harden and puffed themselves up. They thought of themselves more highly than they should. They also obeyed the 'letter of the law,' but missed the heart of the law. This meant that technically they were keeping the laws, but they were not doing it with the right heart, or the right motive. And this is something that Jesus addressed again and again.

For example, the Pharisees would continually be angry with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, saying that healing was "work" and he violated the Sabbath. But they missed the whole heart of God. Jesus told the Pharisees that if one of their sheep fell in a ditch on the Sabbath, they would rescue it, and healing is the same way (Matthew 12:11-12). It is God's heart to save his people.

These Pharisees made up their own commandments and taught them as doctrine (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7). Jesus said the Pharisees shut off the kingdom of heaven from the people. He said they were not going into the kingdom themselves, neither were they allowing others to enter either (Matthew 23:13). He was saying that they made it seem so difficult, if not almost impossible for the common people to enter into the kingdom of heaven. They would make it seem as if they were the only ones who would make it. But Jesus corrected them, saying that they were not allowing others to enter the kingdom, but they themselves would not be able to enter.

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Into The Ditch

The risk in having knowledge is that it can "puff up" or make you arrogant (1 Corinthians 8:1).

The more knowledge that you possess the more you might feel qualified to judge others. This is why Jesus says, don't judge, so that you will not be judged.

You will be judged in the same way that you judge others, and the way that you measure, is the way that it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2).

This is not only applicable to the Pharisees, but to us as well. Many scholars believe that this is referring to the way that we will be judged by God, and others say it pertains to the way that we are judged by people in this life. Either way, it would be better to not make ourselves judges over others (Romans 2:1-3).

Jesus tells the people that when a person tries to correct, or judge, another person, it is like trying to pull a speck of dust out of someone else's eye when you have a stick or branch in your own eye (Matthew 7:3).

Discuss:

How does it feel when you get something in your eye? Have you gotten a piece of dust or dirt in your eye?

How does it feel? Does it make it hard to see? Do you have to squint?

Does it also make it difficult to focus to see out of the good eye?

It would be very difficult to try to help someone get something out of their eye when you have anything in your own eye, even if it was just a speck. Jesus uses this analogy to help us understand the principle.

We seem to often see so clearly when we are judging someone else and their actions. But in reality, we are completely blind to our own actions and what we are doing. This is the literal translation of the "blind leading the blind." Jesus tells us, You hypocrite! Pull the branch out of our own eye first, then we will be able to see clearly to pull the speck of dust out of someone else's eye (Matthew 7:5; Luke 6:41-42).

What is a hypocrite? Jesus used this word for the Pharisees many times.

A hypocrite is someone who tells other people what to do, but they themselves do something totally different.

Notice he doesn't say, pull the branch out so you can pull a branch out of someone else's eye. It seems that if we pull the branch out of our eye first, we usually realize that it is just a speck in the other person's eye. Realizing our own mistakes and shortcomings often puts everything into perspective with regard to others.

So what if you really do have a good perspective and insight, you have checked your own motives and "cleared your eye" and want to help someone. Is it right to offer advice?

Not always. This is what Jesus addresses in the next verse. Not everyone is ready to receive correction or wise counsel. He tells us not to 'give that which is holy to dogs, or give pearls to pigs, or they will trample them with their feet and turn again and tear you to pieces,' (Matthew 7:6).

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Into The Ditch

Discuss:

What does that mean?

Would you make a really nice meal, an expensive dinner that you cooked all day, and give it to a dog? Probably not. The dog would not appreciate it at all and it would be wasted.

Would you take your nicest clothes and jewelry and put it on a pig? Of course not. The pig has no understanding of what is nice or not. It would trample your nice things and bury them in the mud.

In the same way, you can discern whether someone is open to your insight. You can waste good advice on people. If you give it when they are not ready to receive, it can also ruin a future opportunity when they might be more willing to listen. This is the paradox explained in Proverbs 26:4-5. You have to determine how to respond to someone who seems foolish.

How do you know when and how to respond? That is when the next verse comes into practice. Pray about it.

"Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened unto you," (Matthew 7:7).

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Jesus sums all this up in Matthew 7:12.

The heart of the law comes down to this, which we often call "The Golden Rule."

The NKJV says:

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

A more simplified translation simply says:

Treat people the way you want them to treat you.

Jesus said this sums up the law, and all the prophets. Basically, the Old Testament law can be condensed to this: If we treated other people the way we want to be treated, it would equate to loving them as much as we love ourselves. This would completely change almost all of the interactions in our lives.

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How Much More?

Matthew 7:7-11
Luke 11:5-13

Parables of Jesus

Today we will be talking about a parable. What is a parable? A parable is a story with another meaning; or a story told to illustrate a lesson.

Discuss:

Have you ever received a gift? What was it? Was it for a special occasion?

Have you ever asked for something special from your parents and opened the present to find a rock?

Have you ever told your mom you were hungry for some bread, and she went outside and gave you rocks on your plate? Have you said you were hungry and she gave you a snake? If you asked for fish or chicken for dinner, would she give you a scorpion?

Jesus is telling a story about praying, and what we ask for.

He tells a story about someone who has visitors come to his house late at night. What if this were you? You had a friend who has been traveling all day, and shows up very late one night at your house. He's hungry, and you have nothing to feed him. It's late, the stores are closed, and you have no food. But you know that your friend who lives nearby probably has some food.

You go knock on your friend's door (illustrate knocking) and ask him for some bread. You tell him you need three loaves of bread to feed your visitors. You ask him nicely, saying: please, help me, my guests are hungry.

What is your friend going to say?

What would your friends say? What would you say?

In this story, the friend said, " No. Leave me alone. "

Do you have friends like this?

This friend said: It's late. My kids are asleep. I don't want to get up, I don't want to wake them up, Don't bother me.

But, what are you going to do? Are you going to keep knocking?

What do you think this person did?

This person kept knocking. And Jesus said, because he was persistent, he kept knocking, he kept asking, and the friend finally got out of bed and gave it to him because he bothered him so much.

He reluctantly got up and gave him everything he asked for.

Do you have friends like this? Sometimes people are like this. They don't want to do something, but they will do it just because they want you to stop bothering them and leave them alone.

Discuss:

Is God like this? What do you think?

Do we have to keep asking and bothering God so that he will give us what we ask for?

No, this is not how God is.

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How Much More?

If you knock on Jesus' door, what will happen? Will he say, "Go away!"? Will he say, "This is not a good time, leave me alone!"? What happens if we knock on the door seeking Jesus? Will he say come in? Will he open the door?

Jesus said, if you knock it will be opened to you.

Everyone that asks receives. Everyone that seeks will find. To him that knocks it will be opened.

Does God say no? What if we ask for something and we don't get it?

There is a verse that says if we ask for something and we do not receive it, it's because we are asking for the wrong things (James 4:3).

If you are angry at someone and you ask for God to punish them, will God answer that? No, because it is not in his will. When you pray, it needs to be something that God wants for you.

There is another verse about how we ask. It says when we ask, to ask in faith without doubting.

If you ask and doubt, do not expect to receive from God (James 1:6-8).

God will give us things because he cares about us, and he blesses us and gives us things we don't need. There was a time when God reminded King David of all the things he had given him. He even told him, if that wasn't enough, I would have given you more. So, God does not just give us only things we have to have, but he wants us to pray for things that are in God's will. He wants to bless us, but not when it would bring harm to someone else (2 Samuel 12:8).

Jesus talks about gifts. He says, if you ask bread from your dad, will he give you a rock?

If you ask your dad for a fish, would he give you a snake? Would you want a snake?

If you ask your dad for an egg, would he give you a scorpion? Would a good dad do that? Would you want a scorpion?

Then Jesus talks about God. He is comparing God to people.

Without Jesus, are we good? Compared to God, are we good? Can we ever be good enough without Jesus?

No. Everyone has sinned, and the only way to get to God is through Jesus (John 14:6; Romans 3:23). Jesus died for our sins, and compared to Jesus, we are evil. Without Jesus, we are sinners.

Jesus says, if you, who are evil compared to God, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will God give things to those who ask of him?

This story is not saying that he have to be persistent and if we annoy God so much, and keep bothering him, that he will answer us and give us what we ask for. The story is contrasting God to a person. It is saying, you can bother your friends so much that they will finally give you what you ask for just to get you to go away. But God is not like that. You ask God, and he wants to answer you. He wants to bless you. He wants to give things to you because he gives good gifts.

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How Much More?

The Bible tells us what kind of gifts that God gives. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above (James 1:17).

If something bad happens to you, is it from God? (No)

Does God put bad things on you to teach you things? (No).

The bad things that happen in this world is because we have an enemy (John 10:10: 1 Peter 5:8).

The thief is the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy you, and Jesus came to give you abundant life.

Every good and perfect gift comes from God, and it says that God does not change (James 1:17). He does not change his mind, he does not act one way one day, and act different another day.

Do you know people who get in a bad mood? Sometimes they're mean, and sometimes they are nice? God is never in a bad mood. He does not change his mind; he is not going to decide whether or not to answer your prayer because of his mood, or because of whether or not you were good enough. He answers your prayers and responds to you because of Jesus (Romans 3:22-24, 28; Romans 5:1,17-18).

How much better is God? How much more will he give you good gifts than the friend who finally gets out of bed and gives you what you ask for just to get you to go away?

God says yes. You asked me, let me give it to you. You're looking for me, here I am. If you start seeking God and looking for him in your life, he will come.

In all your ways acknowledge him. If you start looking for all the ways you can recognize God in your life and you start giving him glory, he will tell you where to go (Proverbs 3:5-6) and he will direct your path.

Discuss:

What are some ways that we can look for something that God did for us today?

What are some things that God has done for you this week or recently?

What are some things that God has done in your life?

When we start looking, we can find all kinds of things to praise God for.

Jesus finishes this by saying,

Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.

This is also known as the golden rule. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Do not respond and say, they did this to me, I'm just doing what they did. That is what sets us apart as followers of Jesus. We don't retaliate, but we respond differently than everyone else.

We respond the way that we WANT to be be treated, not the way that we were treated.

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Jesus in the Story



Righteousness is the state of being in a condition that is acceptable to God. It is being in "right standing" with God.

It is because of Jesus that this whole story is true. It is because of Jesus that we can relate to God in a completely different way.

Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, we are able to have new life and a new Spirit in us by faith in Him.

When we place our faith in Jesus, we receive his righteousness (Romans 4:3,5). It is not by the things that we do that God sees us. He knows that in ourselves we are nothing, but with Jesus we are complete. It is by our faith only, not by our works.

Our faith brings us into right-standing with God, and he gives us the righteousness of Jesus.

Jesus became sin for us, and through faith in him we receive his righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God is no longer judging us according to our actions, but giving us grace because of Jesus.

This grace gives us all the privileges, all the rights, and all the benefits of living in the kingdom of heaven (Colossians 1:13). The kingdom of heaven is not far off in the future, Jesus told his followers frequently that the kingdom of heaven is "at hand," (Matthew 10:7). Jesus brought the kingdom of heaven to this earth and those who believe in him are citizens of this kingdom.

We live on the earth, but we live by a different set of rules than the unbelievers who are outside of the kingdom.

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On the Rock

Matthew 7:24-28
Luke 6:46-49

Parables of Jesus

Start the discussion by discussing what a "lord" is. Historically, a lord is a person who is in charge, a ruler, or a master. This could be a landlord, someone who owns property, or someone you rent from.

Discuss:

If someone is your Lord, what type of relationship would you have with them?

Would you do what they said? If they gave you directions, would you follow them?

Jesus is speaking to the people, and he begins by asking them, "Why do you call me Lord and not do the things that I say?"

If we claim to be followers of Jesus, should we listen and follow his commands? If we hear what he says, shouldn't we DO what he says? If we claim that he is our Lord, should we give him absolute authority in our lives? If we really see him as our LORD, then would Jesus be in charge of our lives? Would he be our master? Would he be our ruler? If we give him this position in our lives, can we trust him with everything?

The answer to all of these questions should be yes. But Jesus begins telling a parable. Both of the people in the parable listen to Jesus. They both hear him, but they respond differently.

You may have heard this story before. Jesus says that someone who hears his sayings and does them is like what kind of person? Do you know what type of person it would be who listens to Jesus and obeys him?

Jesus tells us that the person who hears what he says and does them is like a wise man. So, if this is true, then what type of person would someone be if they heard his teachings and did NOT do them? He says that someone who hears his teachings and does not do them is like a foolish man.

Someone who is foolish is actually someone who has the ability to think, but does not make good judgments. A fool differs from someone who is stupid; that person may be lacking intelligence or not have the ability to think clearly. A fool has the capacity to think clearly, but makes decisions without thinking or considering the result.

Jesus begins to get specific. **He says that a man who hears his sayings and does them is like a man who builds his house on a rock.**

Discuss:

Why would you want to build your house on a rock?

Hear and discuss possible answers.

Jesus said that this man "dug deep." Why would you want to dig deep when building a house?

Possible answers may include a better foundation, more stable, it would stand up better.

Use an illustration about trying to pull a pole or fence post out of the ground. You could even illustrate this with a stick in a hole in the ground. If the post only goes down a short distance into the ground, is it easy to remove? But what if the post is much deeper in the ground? Is it more stable? And what if the post was much deeper, and secured in the ground in concrete? Would that be easy to remove? If you put the post in the ground with concrete, is that a firm foundation?

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On the Rock

If you build your house, and you have dug deep, and put your foundation down deep to the rock, when the storm comes, will it blow your house over? Would this be a firm foundation?

Jesus is saying that the person who hears his sayings and does them is like a wise person who builds a deep strong foundation for his house. Obeying what Jesus tells us creates deep roots in our lives. We can take this back to the parable of the sower, and know that our heart is the soil, or dirt. When we listen to what Jesus says and do it, the roots grow deep into our lives and they are not easily uprooted. They are strong, and become a foundation for which we can build the rest of our lives.

Now we have the contrast. The next person is the man who hears the teachings of Jesus but does not do them.

This is like a man who built his house on the sand; or "without a foundation," (Luke 6:49).

Discuss:

What if you tried to build a house or a structure but you did not put anything flat on the ground first?

What if you just started building walls on top of the ground, what is going to happen? It's going to lean. It's going to fall over. When the wind blows, it will fall over and crash quicker.

What if you built your house on the sand? Have you been to the beach? Have you seen sand?

Have you ever made a sandcastle? What happens when the water washes over the beach?

What happens to the sand? What happens if you try to build a house on the sand?

Is sand stable? Does it move?

Sand is not stable. It blows with the wind and moves with the water.

The person who built their house on the sand was foolish. It wasn't that they did not understand - surely they were familiar with the properties of sand. They must have known that sand is not stable, this can be seen just by walking on it. It wasn't that they did not know, it was that they did not consider it. They did not think about this when they were making decisions. They flippantly decided to build their house on the sand. They did not think about it or plan properly; they did not factor in the long-term effects.

Did the person who built on the sand do what was easier? Did it seem like it didn't take as long, there wasn't as much preparation, and it was faster? It usually doesn't work out to take the easy way out. If we don't take time to do it right the first time, we often end up having to do it all over again and often suffer loss in the process.

The storm came: the floods came, the wind blew and beat on the house.

The house on the rock with the firm foundation could not even be shaken. But the house on the sand fell immediately. It completely fell apart; it crashed and broke into pieces and was completely ruined. Both people experienced the storm, but they had different results.

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On the Rock

Discuss:

Is Jesus talking about a rainstorm? What does Jesus really mean?

What are storms that come into our lives? There are all types of possible answers.

God does not bring storms, but storms come because we have an enemy in this world (John 10:10; 16:33).

In this story, what is the house? The house is our life. When problems come, will you be shaken? Will your life be destroyed? Or will you stand firm because you have put your trust in Jesus?

Storms reveal what is in our heart.

The foolish person hears the words of Jesus, but does not place value on them. They hear, but disregard his teachings, quickly move on, and do not make a definitive decision to do something with what they have heard. They do not consider it, and even when the storm comes the foolish person does not always see that there could have been different results if they had done things differently.

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Jesus in the Story



Throughout scripture, Jesus is referred to as the "rock."

In the Old Testament, Moses brought water in the wilderness from a rock.	Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8-11
For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.	1 Corinthians 10:4
He is the Rock, His work is perfect: For all His ways are justice…	Deuteronomy 32:4
There is none holy like the Lord, there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.	1 Samuel 2:2

When we not only hear the sayings of Jesus, but also do them, we make him our foundation. When we do what he says, we are digging deep and putting our foundation on him, the Rock.

He is never shaken, so if our foundation is laid on him, it makes us unshakeable. This means we make him our Lord in every sense of the word. We look to him for everything and he is our ultimate authority.

To make him our Lord is to give him all power and authority in our lives. When we try to do things our own way, we are building our homes on sand.

You have a decision to make. Only you can decide what you're going to do with the teachings of Jesus.

It comes down to the attitude of your heart. It's not about what anyone makes you do, or what it looks like on the outside.

In your heart, what are you doing with the teachings of Jesus? Are you valuing them and making them the most important thing in your life? Scriptures speak about preparing your heart to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 12:14; 19:3; Ezra 7:10). You are the only one who can decide what your house will look like after the storm.

Will your house still be standing because it wasn't able to be moved?

Or will your house be completely destroyed?

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Weeds in the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Parables of Jesus

The parable is given in Matthew 13:24-30; and Jesus gives the interpretation in Matthew 13:36-43.

Jesus is teaching on this day from a ship. There are a great many people listening on the seashore, and Jesus is sitting in the boat just off the shore. People have found the place where it was believed that Jesus spoke. There was a cove here, and the land was u-shaped around where Jesus sat in the boat. This created a natural amphitheater, making it easy to be heard from off the water for quite a distance.

He tells several parables. He begins with the parable of the sower, and follows with this parable of the weeds in the wheat.

Jesus begins his parable by saying that "the kingdom of heaven is like…" a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Discuss:

If you are going to plant a garden or a crop, what kind of seeds would you plant?

Would you make sure they were seeds of the foods that you wanted to grow?

Would you make sure that the seeds were not damaged, and they were healthy seeds of good foods?

This man knew exactly what he was planting, and he planted good seeds, expecting certain plants to grow.

But while the men slept, this man's enemy came and sowed tares, or weeds, in the wheat field.

If you look up the original Greek word that was used here in the book of Matthew, that word is "zizanion." It actually is very specific. It is a plant called darnel, which looks almost exactly like wheat. It is almost impossible to tell the difference between this plant and a wheat plant until the fruit grows, and the grains of this plant are black.

Discuss:

Do you think the man knew about the tares (weeds) that were in his field?

Probably not. It took them a while to figure out what happened.

When the plant grew, and the fruit was produced, you could see that it was not wheat. The servants of the man came and asked him, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did the tares come from? And the man realized what had happened. He told them, an enemy has done this. But the servants asked, Do you want us to go and gather them up?

But the man said, "No, or when you pull the tares you will also rip up the wheat with them."

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Weeds in the Wheat

Discuss:

Have you ever weeded a garden?

Have you ever planted a garden and had weeds come up near your fruit or vegetables?

What did you do?

What happens if the weed is growing very closely to the good plant?

Sometimes if you pull a weed, it can damage the good plant. Sometimes it can rip up the good plant too because the roots are growing so closely together that they have grown around each other.

The landowner said, Let both of them grow together until it is time to harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to gather the tares first, and tie them up in bundles to be burned. But the wheat will be gathered into the barn.

After the crowds had gone, the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to explain the parable of the tares in the field.

Jesus said, the man that sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. Every time scripture speaks of the Son of Man, it is speaking of Jesus.

The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the weeds are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the angels are the reapers.

Just like the weeds were gathered and burned in this story, it will be the same at the end of the world. Jesus will send his angels to gather everything that that causes sin and them that do evil and cast them into the fiery furnace where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Be gentle telling this story to young children; do not try to scare them to believe in Jesus.)

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. If you have ears to hear, let him hear.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus sowed this seed. The "kingdom of heaven" was not on this earth until Jesus brought it here. That is why he was always saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He was trying to tell people that things are different now that he had come into the world.

Jesus is very clear in the interpretation of this parable. The devil has positioned some of his own people in the kingdom. They are living among the Christians, going to church and acting completely like believers. They infiltrate from the inside and like a spy in a nation, it can be more effective to appear to be in agreement with the ones you are trying to deceive than to simply openly oppose them. When the evil one is out in the open, he is easier to identify than one that hides among us.

Jesus presented this concept in Matthew 7:15 with false prophets as an analogy of "wolves in sheep's clothing."

It can be difficult to identify these people. They look just like the "wheat," or believers, until they produce fruit, then it might be possible to know who they really are. But even if you are able to discern their true identity, it can be more damaging to try to remove them from the circle of believers, or kick them out the church. This could be harmful to some Christians who are not as discerning and could cause their faith to waver. There could be others that are even harder to identify that remain in the church until the end of the world and then God will expose their true identity.

The devil planted these people in the church intentionally. Weeds in a garden take the nutrients out of the soil that the good plants need for growth. In the same way, these people that have been "planted" in the church can divert others away and distract them from the true ministry of the church body. These people can wrap their "roots" around true believers, and if the people who are tares are forcibly removed, they would take the true believers with them who are deceived.

Some of the people themselves may be surprised when this happens (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus says there will be people who will come to him calling him Lord, Lord, and tell him they did things in his name, but he will tell them "I never knew you."

We need to examine our own hearts and pray for God to search our hearts (Psalm 139:23). Sometimes we don't even fully understand our own hearts because they are hard discern (Jeremiah 17:9). Keeping a heart for God requires humility, and we can ask God to prepare our heart (Psalm 10:17).

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Two Kinds of Yeast

Matthew 13:33; 16:5-12
Mark 8:15
Luke 12:1; 13:20-21

Parables of Jesus

Teach the lesson from Matthew 13, or Luke 13; the verses are almost identical. This is a very short parable of Jesus, and we can contrast it with the comments Jesus makes about the leaven, or yeast, of the Pharisees.

The Jewish people had expectations of a Messiah, but Jesus did not meet those expectations.

The scriptures had prophesied that a Messiah was coming to rescue the Jews who would rule his people as king. The Jews were waiting for a savior, but one that looked very different from Jesus. They expected a strong, military leader, who would rise up against the current Roman government, and elevate Israel as a world superpower. Even the comments the disciples make let us know that they were waiting for a day when Jesus would tell them it was time to rise up and come into power.

Jesus arrives as a prophet, one who is not searching for power but humbles himself and serves the sick, the poor, and the outcasts. He reaches out to those who everyone rejects and heals those who are in need; he eats with sinners.

He does the opposite of what the people expected of a leader.

Jesus is constantly trying to tell the people that his kingdom is different. Jesus tells them that the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, is arriving on earth as it is in heaven. He tells them parables to show them that the things he is doing is the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. God's kingdom involves elevating others above yourself and putting the needs of others above your own. The kingdom of heaven **is** treating others with kindness and loving the unlovable. The people that the world shuns as the least are actually the most important in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of heaven is backwards to everything that the world expects.

This story is no different, he is telling several comparisons to show them what the kingdom of heaven is like.

In Matthew 13, Jesus has been sitting by the seaside giving many different parables to illustrate the kingdom of heaven. He gives a short illustration about a woman making bread. He tells them that the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, or flour, until the whole thing was leavened, or until it worked through all of the dough.

What is leaven? It is yeast. Yeast is a living organism; it is a living cell. It is what makes our bread rise. Without yeast we have different types of flat breads, but yeast is what makes the bread grow larger. When yeast is added to a dough it changes the whole composition of the dough, not just a part of it (Galatians 5:9).

Discuss:

Have you ever made bread? Have you kneaded yeast into the dough?

Can you have a half of a loaf of bread that rises? Once the yeast is added to a mixture, the whole loaf will be leavened. All of the bread will rise.

It is also not possible to take the yeast out of the bread once it has been added. You would have to start all over again if you do not want the bread to rise, or a leavened dough.

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Two Kinds of Yeast

So what is Jesus talking about?

The yeast of the kingdom of heaven changes people's hearts and changes the world. It is hidden in a lump of dough. You cannot see it, but it changes ***everything.***

Once the kingdom of heaven came into the world, it is unstoppable (Acts 5:38-39.) It is completely different, it is something new.

Many times that leaven is mentioned in the Bible it represents evil; several times leaven is used to represent sin. Many of the Old Testament feasts and holidays called upon the children of Israel, the Jewish people, to remove the yeast from their homes and not offer any sacrifices with yeast or leaven.

But as we read this kingdom parable told by Jesus, it seems that there are two different ways of looking at leaven, or yeast in the Bible.

Jesus tells the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Saducees (another religious group: Matthew 16:11), and the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15). Their leaven is their doctrine (Matthew 16:12), which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).

The Pharisees did everything "right." Their actions looked good on the outside to others, but on the inside their hearts were not pure (Matthew 23:25,27).

They had other motives; they wanted to be seen and praised by all the people. Their heart was not right with God and their actions did not match their intentions.

Jesus called the Pharisees out - even on their thoughts. On many occasions we are told that he knew their thoughts, and his comments addressed what they were thinking in their hearts (Matthew 9:4; Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22). Jesus called the Pharisees "hypocrites", which meant they were just acting. They acted one way to look good to the people around them, and they said the right things, but their hearts were "far" from Jesus (Matthew 15:18; Mark 7:6; Isaiah 29:13). Jesus told the people not to be like the Pharisees, who prayed loudly out in public just so that people would see them (Matthew 6:5-6).

The Pharisees made a lot of extra rules and followed them so that everyone would think they were extra holy. They would tell everyone they should obey these rules, but they would find ways around the rules to not obey them the way that God intended. An example of this is the way they treated Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were very self-righteous and proud. Jesus was telling his disciples that this way that "seems right to a man" (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25) were ways of death and they should beware of them.

This sin of pride, or self-righteousness is also a leaven that grows in the heart and changes a person, and this is the leaven he warned against.

Again, he turns everything around to the opposite of what people are thinking. What was previously used to symbolize something evil can also be used to symbolize a method that shows the way the kingdom spreads into the world. And once it is in the world, it cannot be removed.

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Jesus in the Story



Parables allowed Jesus to make very bold statements to those who were open minded, to those who "had ears to hear."

Jesus tells stories in parables to make people think, not to clearly illustrate his point. Those who searched for the kingdom would study and ponder, and go deeper. But these parables also allowed Jesus to conceal his true message from those who were against him.

He spoke in mysteries to give him the time he needed to completely bring the kingdom into the world.

The parables are still packed with truths that we can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us through our understanding.

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The Heart of Man

Matthew 15:1-3; 15-20
Mark 7:1-9; 14-23

Teachings of Jesus

NOTE: The teacher may prefer to teach from Mark as it is more concise, and Jesus refers to several things in Matthew that will not be covered in this lesson.

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day; they led the Jewish people teaching them from the Old Testament. It would be similar to our church leaders today. But the Pharisees were very proud people, and always wanted everyone to know how good they were, and how they obeyed all the commandments given by Moses. They even made extra rules and "traditions" that they followed, and expected everyone else to follow, to make them more holy.

Explain this first, so they have an understanding of the way things were in the time of Christ. Then talk about rules, and different types of rules that people follow. Even though these Pharisees obeyed all the rules, *obeying the rules did not make their hearts right*.

No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. Romans 3:20

The Pharisees had many disputes with Jesus, and ultimately they were the ones who sentenced him to death. They were always trying to catch people doing wrong, and show them how wrong they were. Jesus did the opposite. He did not point out sins and shortcomings, he showed grace and truth with love, and that led people to repent.

However, Jesus did find fault with the Pharisees. He spent much of his time telling them how their ways of being holy were never what God intended. Because they obeyed all the commandments, they looked like they were doing the right things, and other people thought they were super holy. Doing all the commandments made them proud, and their hearts were wrong. Jesus said they made rules and traditions more important than the Word of God, and God's Word had no power in their lives.

Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites; explain what a hypocrite is.

A hypocrite is someone who plays a part to get favor, and puts on a show. On the outside they seem to be much better than they really are; they are basically a pretender or fraud, all the time holding other people to the rules and values that they are pretending to have. They bragged about how they obeyed all of Moses' laws.

The story starts with the Pharisees seeing some of Jesus eat some bread without washing their hands first. The Pharisees would NEVER eat without washing their hands. They even had other rules about washing cups, pots and tables.

Then the Pharisees came to Jesus and said, Why don't your disciples follow after our traditions (their own rules) and eat without washing their hands? Jesus responded by calling them hypocrites and going back to a prophecy in Isaiah 29:13. It says the people act like they honor God, but their heart is far from it. Their worship is useless because they made up their own rules that they teach as God's rules.

Jesus then calls everyone around to come listen so they will understand:

There is nothing outside of a person that will defile the person, but the things that come out of a person are what defiles him.

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The Heart of Man

Discuss:

What does the word “defile” mean?

To defile means to pollute, or spoil (like spoiled food) or make unclean.

What are some things that would be defiled? Dirty water would be defiled, etc.

Water can be defiled or polluted by something that is put in it; but Jesus was saying it is different with people.

Then Jesus says, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. That means that not everyone that hears this is going to understand, a person has to open their heart to the Lord and see with their hearts.

After Jesus left the others, the disciples came up and asked him about the parable, because they did not understand. Jesus says, “do you not understand either?”

They were with him all the time and they still did not understand. Today we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us that gives us understanding.

Jesus explained again. He said whatever enters into your body cannot defile you, because it doesn’t go into your heart. It goes into your stomach, and comes out when you go to the toilet. What defiles is what comes OUT of the person. In your heart are evil thoughts, improper thoughts, thefts, murders, greed, malice, deceit, envy, pride, foolishness. As the teacher you can expound on this and give examples they would understand.

He concludes with, these evil things come from within, and that is what defiles a person.

Matthew puts it in greater detail, and says what comes out of someone’s mouth comes from the heart, and that is what defiles a person.

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Jesus in the Story



The Jews thought pleasing God was about obeying the law, and keeping all the commandments, but in God's eyes it was always about the heart. The Pharisees kept all the laws, but it only made them proud. They judged everyone, and boasted in their ability to do everything right. Over and over, Jesus told them of their hypocrisy. He saw through their facade and it angered them because their hearts were not pure.

We now have a completely different way of interacting with God.

When we believe on Jesus, we are given a new heart, we now have His spirit on the inside of us and it changes us into a new person.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. Ezekiel 36:26

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. 2 Corinthians 5:17

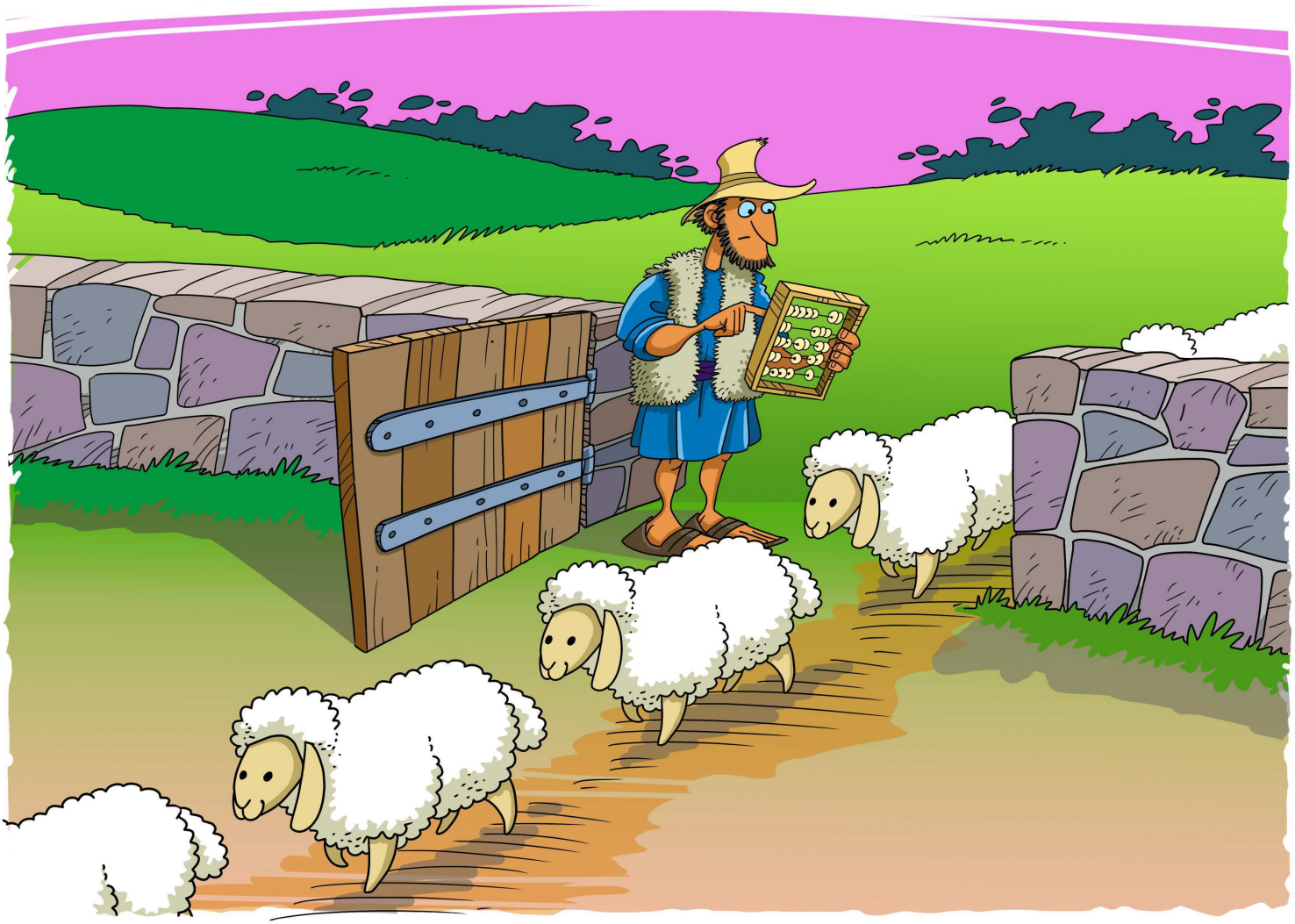
Proverbs tells us to guard our hearts.

We have to be careful what we think about and meditate on, the things we watch, the things we talk about, and the attitudes that we allow to grow in our hearts.

One way we can guard our hearts by always giving glory and praise to God. It takes the focus off of us, and puts the focus on the Lord. Our hearts are defiled when we focus on ourselves and our goodness. When we focus on the Lord and his goodness, it helps us to guard our hearts.

What is in your heart will come out; the things that are in your heart are the things that you talk about. You do not want to allow evil things to grow in your heart so fill it with the things of Jesus; let him show you his love and how to love others.

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The Door

John 10:1-18

Parables of Jesus

A parable is a story used to illustrate a moral or a lesson. Jesus often spoke in parables, and many times we are told that the people did not understand the parables.

Jesus opens the parable by saying that anyone who tries to get into the sheepfold without going through the door is a thief or a robber; the shepherds come in by the door.

A sheepfold was sometimes called a "sheep cote", and was a place where sheep would come to spend the night. It was usually a permanent structure with walls made of stone, and would often be topped with branches or thorn bushes to keep out intruders. Several flocks of sheep would spend the night here, and a doorkeeper, or porter, would guard the door.

In the morning, the gatekeeper would open the door for the shepherds when they came to get their flock. The sheep would recognize the voice of their shepherd and they would follow him.

Often shepherds will meet together in a field during the day, bringing more than one flock together. The sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd, and each will follow their own shepherd when they lead their flock out.

The sheep will not follow a stranger, but will run away, because they do not know the voice of strangers.

Jesus was speaking this parable to the Pharisees, but they did not understand. Jesus begins to explain.

He tells them that He is the door of the sheep.

Everyone who came before him claiming to be the Messiah, or anyone claiming there is another way to God, is a thief and a robber. The ones who were the sheep - the believers - did not follow the thieves and robbers.

He says again, that He IS the door. If you come in through Jesus, you will be saved, you will go in and out, and you will find pasture.

This is interesting. This can be linked with the provision that is promised by our shepherd in Psalm 23. Because we came through Jesus, we will find pasture - He leads us into green pastures beside the waters, He leads us in paths of righteousness, and protects us as we go through danger.

He then talks about the thief. Who is the thief? The thief would be Satan, the devil. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus came to give us life, and not just life, but a full, satisfying life.

Jesus explains that He is the shepherd, and speaks of his crucifixion here in veiled terms as He tells them that a good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. A hired hand does not own the sheep. If he sees a wolf coming, he will leave the sheep and run away, and then the wolf will attack the sheep. The hired hand runs away because he is hired, and does not really care about the sheep.

Jesus is the good shepherd. He knows his sheep - He knows YOU! And His sheep know him.

Jesus tells us that he knows the Father, and the Father knows Him; and that He gave His life to save us. He also has other sheep that are in a different fold; he was speaking about the Gentiles. Up until this point, Jesus was ministering to the Jews, but after His resurrection, all believers would be Christians, without a difference between Jews and Gentiles.

The Father loves Jesus because he sacrificially gave His life so that He may take it again. Jesus goes on to say that no one forced Him to make this sacrifice.

He decided to lay down His life, and the power to take it back again; it was a voluntary decision that Jesus made.

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Jesus in the Story



There are a lot of truths in this parable.

In John 10:2, it could also mean that pastors and leaders could also be shepherds of the sheep. Leaders who entered through Jesus, would be shepherds of the sheep. If a leader does not lead you to Jesus, Jesus called them thieves and robbers, and they do not lead to the truth. We must check every one who teaches, and make sure they always lead to Jesus - **He is the ONLY way.**

John 10:3-4 says He calls His own sheep by name.

He knows YOU personally! He LEADS you. He goes before you, and you follow Him because you know His voice.

Jesus' sheep DO HEAR his voice. Sometimes people do not think they are hearing Jesus. He is always speaking to us, but we have to be quiet and listen. We have to turn our ear and listen to Him. Imagine you are somewhere where there is a lot of loud noise, and your friend is talking to you. You lean towards them, you try to listen very hard to hear what they are saying. This is how we should listen to Jesus; His voice is the most important thing you can hear.

John 10:10 tells us that the thief is the one that steals, kills, and destroys. Sometimes people blame God for doing bad things and causing hardships in our life. But Jesus is clear; those things are from the devil. Satan wants to take from us and wants to destroy us. Jesus came to save us and to give us life to the fullest! The word here for life in the original Greek is "ZOE" life, and it means the absolute fulness of life, real, genuine, active, vigorous, and blessed!

There are many religions who claim that they have the way to God, but only those who teach that Jesus is the only way have the truth. **There is only one way to God, and that is through his son, Jesus Christ. He is the door, and the ONLY WAY to the Father.**

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Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

Parables of Jesus

If your audience enjoys a drama presentation, this would also be a good story to act out.

The story begins with a lawyer who comes to Jesus and tries to tempt him. People were always trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. The Pharisees and scribes were scholars of the law, and they judged Jesus by their interpretation of the law. When his views did not line up with theirs, they became outraged and eventually their accusations resulted in his death.

The lawyer asked Jesus, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded by answering a question with a question, causing the person to reflect back on their own thoughts and motives. Jesus asked him what is written in the law, and asked the lawyer how he interpreted it.

Discuss:

What do you think is the answer to this question?

The lawyer knows the law of Moses, and quickly responds with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength and and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. "

Is this lawyer right? Did he correctly answer the question?

Yes. Another time in the gospel a Pharisee that was a lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment. Jesus responded exactly the same (Matthew 22:36-40).

A person can have all the answers right, but it does not matter if the motive in their heart is not pure. God knows our thoughts and He looks at the intents of our hearts, not only our outward actions.

Discuss:

What does it mean to be righteous?

A person can be self-righteous. This would be someone who prides themselves on how good they are, whether genuine, or simply an act that they put on for others to see.

True righteousness means to be in right-standing with God. It means that you are innocent, faultless, guiltless and blameless before God. Righteousness is not something that can be earned through our deeds or something that can be achieved. The only way that we can be righteous is by faith. We must accept our righteousness as a gift from God that we can only receive by our faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22; 4:5; 4:13; 5:17; 9:30; Ephesians 2:9).

Our gift of righteousness comes with the responsibility of being a representative of Christ and his kingdom. In Christ's kingdom, loving the Lord your God and loving others comes as first priority, and the leaders of His kingdom are those who serve others.

Jesus was content with the man's answer and responded, "You have answered right; do this and you will live." But the lawyer was trying to justify himself. He was trying to prove himself, and show that he was righteous in his own right. So he pressed for more information and asked Jesus,

"Who is my neighbor? "

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Who Is My Neighbor?

Jesus responds with a story:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho…"

Historically, Jesus was speaking of an actual road, and the story speaks of a very real possibility. There was one main road to get from Jerusalem to Jericho. This road was somewhat remote, and had many caves and hiding places along the path. There was not often a lot of traffic on this road, and thieves and robbers would hide in the caves and behind the rocks and then steal from travelers.

This certain man was attacked by thieves. They stole his clothing, probably everything else he had, beat him up, and left him half-dead on the side of the road.

Discuss:

What would this be like? This would be scary.

Thieves jump out from behind the cliff, take everything from you including your clothes, and not only that, they beat you up and you are not able to go get help.

Without your clothes you are embarrassed and humiliated.

You are so badly hurt, that the thieves have left you for dead. You have no money, and have no way of asking for help, or even offering to pay someone to help you.

You are completely helpless and at the mercy of strangers.

A priest comes walking down the road. In the religious society of the day, this would be like a pastor or a bishop today. People would have thought this man to be a good and holy man. Of course he would do the right thing and help this man.

But, what did the priest do? Did he see the injured man? Yes, he did, but the priest did not stop to help. Not only did he not stop, he pretended like he didn't even see him and he walked by on the *other* side of the road.

Discuss:

What do you think this priest was thinking in his heart?

It seems hopeless, but, there's someone else coming!

Next, a Levite comes walking by. This would be like a church leader today; someone who works or teaches in the church. This is someone who should know what is right, and someone who is thought of as a "good person."

The Levite walked by, *looked* at the man, and then passed by on the other side. We do not know if the injured man saw him, or if he was unconscious, or moaned in pain and asked for help. All we know is the Levite offered no assistance and walked by on the other side.

Discuss:

What would you do? What do you think about someone who behaves as the priest and the Levite did?

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Who Is My Neighbor?

Now it seems really hopeless.

But, finally another person comes along. This person is a Samaritan. The Samaritans were not liked by the Jews. The Jews were the people of Israel, but most Samaritans were half-Jew and half-Gentile. The Jews had been told not to marry the Gentiles, so these people were looked down upon because they were a mixture; they were not pure. They had similar, but different religious beliefs, and there had been bitter relationships between the Samaritans and the Jews for hundreds of years. This was the last person you would expect to be "a neighbor."

This Samaritan man was on a journey, and he came across the half-dead man and had compassion on him. Compassion is described as an inner voice, to be moved from within with sympathy or pity. This type of compassion compels you to act, to do something to help. When Jesus healed people, it often says he was "moved with compassion."

The Samaritan did not just help the man. He went above and beyond. He bandaged up the man's wounds and used his own supplies.

Discuss:

He had oil and wine with him for his journey, and he poured these on the man. Why would he do this?

Wine is alcohol, and serves as a natural disinfectant. It kills germs and cleanses. The oil would have been a salve, and would have been an agent for healing.

Next, the Samaritan put the man on his own animal, very likely a donkey; meaning the Samaritan had to walk the rest of the way leading the man and making sure he did not fall off of the animal. He then took the man to an inn, or type of hotel, and took care of him there. The Samaritan had to leave the next day, so he gave money to the people at the inn and asked them to take care of the injured man. He told them if it cost more than the money he gave them, that he would pay them back when he came back again. It seems that this Samaritan may have had a relationship with the people at this inn; maybe he traveled here frequently. They seemed to know him and trust him since he was able to leave someone in their care promising to pay extra the next time he came through.

Jesus always told the unexpected. His teachings were often the opposite from what everyone else was thinking. The people who were listening to this story most likely thought that a Pharisee would be the one named as the "good neighbor." Pharisees were respected as the "most righteous" people. But to turn this around and say that an undesirable person such as the Samaritan was the true neighbor? **This was a scandalous interpretation of the definition of a neighbor.**

Then Jesus ends his story with yet another question. He puts it back on the man for him to decide. He asks him,

"Which of these three do you think was the neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?" And the man answered, "The one that showed mercy on him."

Jesus simply responds, "Go and do likewise."

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus was always doing and saying the unexpected, which is why so many people had a hard time believing that he was the Messiah. He did not interpret the law they way they did. He healed on the Sabbath, he had relationships with the outcasts, he ate with sinners.

The people did not understand that all of the laws are summed up in two commandments: loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind; and loving your neighbor as yourself.

The law in its perfect form would completely accomplish this. But people had turned the laws into paths of self-righteousness, and ways to show how good they were bringing glory to themselves rather than to God. They respected others based on their outward actions but Jesus saw their hearts and called them out on the motives behind their actions.

The lawyer questioning Jesus is trying to do right by the letter of the law. He asks, "Who is my neighbor?" He wants the legalistic answer, so that he can rightfully and lawfully measure what he is supposed to.

But he misses the whole heart of the commandment. It is not about helping someone because they meet the right criteria, but about having genuine love and compassion for others. In this story Jesus told, he turned the whole thing around and gave a surprise element to the story, presenting them with the least likely individual who was actually the true loving neighbor.

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The Wicked Servant

Matthew 6:14-15
Matthew 18:21-35
Mark 11:26

Parables of Jesus

Teach the lesson from Matthew 18. The other scriptures are given for reference as Jesus briefly stated in those passages. This lesson starts off with a question from Peter to Jesus. In the previous verses, Jesus has been teaching about offenses, and how to make reconciliation. After this sermon, Peter comes to Jesus and asks him how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him. Seven times? Some translations even say, How many times do I *have to* forgive him.

Jesus' response was not what they expected.

He said, "Not seven times: but until seventy times seven." If you look at the word that Jesus actually used here, it not only meant this, but it actually meant "countless times." Jesus was not telling Peter to count up to 490 times and then he no longer needed to forgive. What he was saying was basically, do not keep count.

Forgive so many times that you are not keeping records anymore.

Then Jesus tells a story, a parable. He begins the parable as he begins so many others,

"The kingdom of heaven is like..." He is showing a contrast between what we expect as normal and the way that God sees things. A study of the gospels quickly shows that the kingdom of heaven is upside down to the normal human way of thinking. It is a completely different way of thinking than human philosophy. Jesus taught this again and again, showing people that they were not thinking as God thinks.

He begins with "a certain king." This king wanted to settle his accounts with his servants. The interesting thing about the word that Jesus uses here for "account" is that it can also be translated as "word, what someone has said, a person's doctrine or reasoning." We often view this story in the context of money for illustrative purposes, but the word choice Jesus used is unique because it clearly can be used for so many different situations.

Discuss:

The king had loaned money to his servants. Different servants had borrowed various amounts.

Discuss what they possibly did with the money.

Discuss the ability to pay it back living on a servant salary.

This king brought in a man who had borrowed "ten thousand talents." Some Bibles translate this as ten thousand bags of gold. A look at the words in the original Greek that the New Testament was written in reveal that a talent of gold weighed approximately 200 pounds, or 100 kilograms. This would be approximately 2 million pounds, or just less than 1 million kilograms of gold. This is an extremely large amount of money, an outrageous amount of debt that this man owed to the king.

The man could not pay. There was probably no way that he could pay back a debt of this incredibly large sum.

Because he could not pay, the king commanded this man to be sold, along with his wife, and his children. He made the order to sell everything the man owned to repay his debt.

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The Wicked Servant

Discuss:

This was a very serious situation.

Imagine what it would have been like if you were there. This man is in shock, the king is speaking to the guards, the officials, telling them to take this man away, gather his whole family and bring them to the place where people are purchased as slaves.

The king is telling the guards to confiscate his home and all his belongings and sell them, to liquidate them to pay this man's debt.

The servant is desperate. He pleads for his life.

He falls down at the king's feet, begging for mercy. He worships the king, in complete humility he recognizes the king's power over his own life and the lives of everyone dear to him. He begs the king for patience, telling him he will pay everything back.

Discuss:

It is very doubtful that the servant has the ability to pay back this debt. The king is very wealthy, and he is a servant.

The king is "moved with compassion." The king is incredibly kind. He is powerful, but full of compassion for this servant, and the king can obviously see that this servant cannot possibly ever repay the debt. Not only does he withdraw the command for judgment on the servant and his family, he takes away all obligations, and **completely *forgave him of the* debt. It was erased. The servant owed nothing.**

But, did the servant appreciate the grace and mercy that had been given to him?

That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him money. That means that this would have been one of his equals, someone who he worked with. This servant owed the man "one hundred pence," which is equal to about three or four months worth of wages. This was minuscule in comparison to ten thousand talents that this servant had owed the king. When the man who had his debt forgiven found the servant who owed him money, it says,

"He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, and said, pay me everything."

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The Wicked Servant

Discuss:

This is harsh! This man has just been forgiven a HUGE debt for an enormous amount of money.

But then he finds someone who owes him money and laid hands on him? What does that look like? He must have grabbed the man and put him in a throat chokehold and threatened him.

This is nothing like the compassion and the kindness that the king showed to this man. And all for a small amount of money compared to what he originally owed.

His own offense was much greater than the amount for which he was holding this man accountable.

Then the second servant fell down at the first servant's feet and begged him for forgiveness. He said the same thing, begging him to have patience and promising to pay back all of it.

But the first servant *would not*. He put the man in prison until he could pay the debt.

Discuss:

How can he pay back the debt if he is in prison?

Is he able to work and earn money in prison?

Will he ever get out?

The other servants that worked with these two men saw what went on, and they were very upset. They went and told their lord the king everything that had happened.

Then the lord, the king, called the first servant to come meet with him. The king said,

"**You wicked servant! I forgave you all of the debt because you begged me.**" Shouldn't you have had compassion on your fellow servant just like I had pity on you?

The king was very angry, and he delivered him to the tormentors, until he paid everything that he owed.

Discuss:

The word used here means "torturer." These were the jailers who were assigned to torture prisoners. How can he repay when he is being tormented?

How can he pay such a large amount?

This seems like unending torture; this is unimaginable punishment.

Then Jesus simply ends the parable with a statement. This is what our heavenly Father will do to us if we do not forgive ***from our hearts*** those who trespass against us.

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Jesus in the Story



This is a hard story; we have all been tempted with unforgiveness, feeling as if we are "owed" something by someone.

But as followers of Christ, we know that God's love abounds, and his love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). 1 Corinthians 13 outlines what love looks like, and the way that we should love; it shows us perfect love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). **This perfect love illustrates perfectly the love of Christ toward us.**

There is one sin that is unforgivable to God, and that is the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31). But this story and the statements of Jesus in Matthew 6:14-15 and Mark 11:26 seem to clearly say that if we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven.

Unforgiveness is dangerous.

As Christians, it is our responsibility to bear the image of Christ. Christ is seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20), and in order to further the kingdom on the earth he has to work through the members of his body, us as Christians. We are the representatives of Christ on this earth to others. It is our responsibility to show forgiveness to others in the same way that the Father has shown forgiveness to us.

God the Father gave us his most prized possession, his Son, as an offering for our sin. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins and forgave us of an amount so large that we could never repay. It is not possible by our own actions to ever pay back the debt that we owed to the Father. But he had compassion on us and graciously forgave us.

Who are we to behave as the wicked servant?

Who are we to judge others and hold them accountable for their debts when we have been forgiven so much? And we should not think of ourselves more highly than we should (Romans 12:3) to think that we are an exception, and our sin was any less than anyone else. All have sinned (Romans 3:23) and regardless of our individual sins, we all fall short of God's standard of perfection. There are not some sinners that are worse than others; we are all sinners and unless we repent we will all perish (Luke 13:1-5).

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The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:4-7

Parables of Jesus

Jesus is teaching the people, and all the publicans and sinners came to hear Jesus. The publicans were tax collectors, and they were not liked by the people. Many of them became rich because they were dishonest in their business dealings. The sinners were people who were doing things that were looked down on by the community. But these people all wanted to hear Jesus; they were drawn to him and may have known they needed his mercy.

The Pharisees were around Jesus all the time, but not because they wanted to hear his teachings. They heard them but they did not understand them (Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:13). They were around Jesus because they felt threatened by him. They knew the people liked him, and they thought the people would believe on Jesus and then the Romans would take away the authority of the Pharisees (John 11:48). They followed Jesus and listened to him because they were always hoping to find something that would give them a reason to arrest him. The Pharisees were building a case against Jesus.

The Pharisees and scribes were complaining that Jesus let the sinners come hear him, and he even went to eat with them. He would go to their homes and eat and the Pharisees thought this was wrong. They looked down on these people and did not care about people coming into the kingdom.

Jesus responds to them by telling them three parables about lost things. A lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.

Jesus asks,

If a man has one hundred sheep, and loses one of them, will he leave the ninety-nine out in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost? Will he look for it until he finds it?

Discuss:

Would you do this?

How would you know if one was missing? That is a lot of sheep.

This shepherd must have been a very good shepherd. He would have to count his sheep every day and know them individually.

He would have to be intimately involved in the day-to-day activities of his sheep to notice that one was missing.

When he finds the sheep, he carries it on his shoulders and rejoices.

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The Lost Sheep

Discuss:

This shepherd really loves his sheep. He is a strong shepherd; he picks up the sheep and carries it on his shoulders.

Why did he not let it walk?

Was he afraid it would get lost, or stumble?

Or is he just so glad to find it that he lovingly carries it?

He comes home, calls all of his friends and neighbors, and says rejoice with me! I found my sheep that was lost.

Discuss:

This shepherd really cares about his sheep.
He is throwing a party with his friends and neighbors because he found his sheep.
We might think, he has one hundred. He only lost one, it's not a big deal.
It's okay, he still has ninety-nine left.
Or, what about the ninety-nine he left behind? Are they okay?

Then Jesus said, just like this, there is joy in heaven over *one* sinner that repents, more than over the ninety-nine just persons who do not need to repent.

It is commonly believed that the ninety-nine are already saved; they are in the kingdom, and they are fine left in the wilderness, and this is one possible interpretation of this story.

But wait. Look closer at the story.

Look at where the shepherd left the ninety-nine. He left them in the wilderness. This word in the original Greek means solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited. Would the sheep be safe out there? What about wild animals? It doesn't say he left them with someone else. All it says is he left them in the wilderness.

Throughout scripture, the wilderness does not represent the promised land. It represents a time of trial, and it is not a place of security. It is not a destination, it is merely a place of transit to get to a better place.

It also says that these ninety-nine just, or righteous, persons had no need of repentance.

Who has no need of repentance? Doesn't everyone need repentance?

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Could it be that the ninety-nine were the Pharisees? Is Jesus using a twist here; based on the Pharisees' view of themselves? Could Jesus be using sarcasm? They thought they were the most righteous (Mark 7:6-8). The Pharisees thought they were better than these sinners when actually the Pharisees were in pride and they were the ones that were in the most need of repentance.

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The Lost Sheep

Who is the lost sheep?

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way…"

We are the lost sheep. You are the lost sheep. Each one of us, individually.

Where did the shepherd go after he found the sheep?

Notice that the shepherd did not go back to the other sheep in the wilderness. He did not take this sheep and add it to the fold.

He took this lost sheep and brought it *home.*

Could it be that the ninety-nine were still in the wilderness? Could it be that the ninety-nine who were "just and righteous" were actually quite lost? Maybe they were not truly just or righteous.

One of the meanings of the original Greek word for ***just*** or ***righteous*** is:

"of those who seem to themselves to be righteous, pride themselves to be righteous, who pride themselves in their virtues, whether real or imagined."

Could it be that these ninety-nine represent the Pharisees, who were still in the wilderness and not entering the kingdom of heaven?

But the one who was lost, and now found - he was brought home. He has entered the kingdom of God.

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Jesus in the Story



Some people think that Jesus came only to save humanity. That he would not have died if it were just one, or "just me." Some would say, of course he died for our sins, but it was a group effort; he knew by his crucifixion that he was saving mankind.

But, that theory does not seem to line up with this parable.

This parable shows the importance of the ONE. Our shepherd, Jesus, was so focused on *the one* that he was willing to go to great lengths to find the ***one*** and bring it ***home***.

This is YOU. YOU are the one. He searches for you, and rejoices over you. He carries you, and all of heaven holds a party when ONE sinner repents and comes into the kingdom.

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The Lost Coin

Luke 15:8-10

Parables of Jesus

Talk about losing things.

Discuss:

Have you ever lost something? What did you lose?

Have you ever lost any money?

Have you lost a lot of money?

This lady lost some money. This story was a long time ago, and at this time a lot of people would get coins for their wedding. This could have been this lady's wedding present, or a present because she was going to get married. Either way, it was important to her.

Discuss:

If you lose something, what do you do? You look for it!

How would you look for something you lost?

Talk about how to look for something: look under things, under the rug, turn on the light, use a flashlight.

This lady lit a candle so that she could see. She swept her house, probably looking under everything, and she did not stop until she found it.

She found it!

What do you do when you find something that you lost? You get excited! This lady went and told all her friends that she found what she had lost. She had a party! She invited all her friends and neighbors over to rejoice with her; she was so happy she had found her coin.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus has lost something; He has lost people.

When people do not know Jesus, we say that they are lost. When someone comes to Jesus and repents of their sins, He gets excited! It says that there is rejoicing in heaven with the angels when someone comes to the Lord. Just like this lady, there is a party in heaven when one sinner comes to know the Lord!

For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost. Luke 19:10

We do not always understand HOW MUCH God loves us!

You are SO IMPORTANT to Him, and He loves you so much that he sent Jesus to the earth to die for us and our sins so that we could know Him. Jesus loved you so much that He died for your sins so you could be a part of His kingdom!

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us. Ephesians 2:4

Have you ever been so happy that you just started singing?

The Bible tells us that God loves us so much that He sings over us.

He wants you to trust Him and follow Him because He loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your life.

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The Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

Parables of Jesus

Today we will be talking about a parable. A parable is a story with another meaning, a story used to illustrate a lesson.

This is a fairly well known parable, a story that many people may have heard.

This story opens in the book of Luke, and the first thing we see is that all the tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus. What do we know about Jesus? Who does he always have around him? A lot of people! No one liked the tax collectors; they were usually dishonest people; and the sinners were looked down upon.

The Pharisees and scribes were complaining that Jesus was talking to the sinners and eating with them.

The tax collectors and sinners wanted to hear Jesus. Did he send them away? Did he tell them that he wasn't talking to them? No, that's not what Jesus said at all. But that's what the Pharisees thought that Jesus should have said. They were complaining and grumbling about Jesus and saying, Why is Jesus letting these people come hear him? Why is he eating with them?

Jesus responds to the Pharisees by telling three similar parables about lost things. The first story he tells is about a man who who lost one sheep. Have you heard this story? We are not going to go into detail about this story, but he told about the one lost sheep, and how the owner left all the sheep to go find the one that was lost.

The next story he tells is about a lady who has ten pieces of silver but she loses one. What does she do? She searches, she finds the one, then she has a big party.

Then Jesus tells a story about something else that is lost, and that is what this story is about.

There are three characters in this story; a certain man who had two sons.

The younger son came to his dad and said, I want you to give me the things that belong to me. When do you get things that belong to people? It is usually after they've passed away. If you have two sons, and the father passes away, then usually at that time the property and things would be divided between the sons.

I want what belongs to me. Does it belong to him yet? No. The Father is very much alive.

This story took place in Israel. If you do some research about the culture at the time, we know that what this younger son was asking was scandalous. It was an outrageous request and very insulting to the father. This was basically like saying to his father, 'I wish you were dead, just give me my stuff.'

This is not the same as just asking for something early.

This was a huge insult to the father, and basically like slapping his father in the face. It was basically like telling your father to "drop dead." This would have given the son a very bad reputation if people heard what he had done to his father.

This was simply not done. But, he asked the dad for his portion of the inheritance. Did the dad say, 'NO!" and slap his son?

No, the father gave the son exactly what he asked. This was unusual, and most men at this time would not do that. If a son asked for this, most fathers would say, no, I'm not dead. This is rude, you have insulted me and shamed me, and this is wrong. But this man gave his son exactly what he asked for.

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The Lost Son

This father did not have to give it to him, but it seems like the father did it willingly. Also, there seems like it was the possibility that the other son may have received his inheritance at the same time.

After his dad gave him the portion of his estate, the younger son gathered all of his things and went to a far away country.

Do you think he invested his money, made a lot more money, was very wise, and did well?

No, he did not. He spent all his money on really stupid things. He wasted all his money with crazy living. Maybe he gambled, maybe he drank a lot, maybe he had a lot of parties. Either way, this man was not wise and he wasted all of his money. But really, whose money was it? It was really his father's because his father was still alive.

He spent every last bit of the money. Not only is he broke, but a famine came to the land. What does this mean?

Discuss:

What is a famine? This is a time when it does not rain, and there is not enough food. The crops die, then the animals cannot eat, and many of the animals die because they don't have enough food or water. Any food that is available is very expensive because there is not enough and everyone is hungry.

Does the son have any money to buy food?

The son is a foreigner. He is a Jew, and he has gone to a far country, probably a Gentile country,, and he needs a job. In verse 15 it tells us that he "joined himself" to a person who lived in this country. This is an interesting word; if you read it in the original Greek it means "to glue, or fasten."

It seems like he found someone, maybe someone he knew, went to their house and they couldn't get him to leave. Have you ever had someone visit, and you wanted them to go home, but they just would not leave? It sounds like that is what the younger son did; stayed and was no longer welcome. He wouldn't go away, so maybe they gave him the worst job they could find. They might have even thought, he won't want to do this job so he will leave.

This person sent him out in the fields to feed the pigs. It says "sent him", so we might be able to guess that he was feeding the pigs in exchange for a place to stay.

This is probably the worst job you could get. If you took this job, it was because you had no other options. You would never pick this job over any other job. It was gross, it was smelly, but that is not all.

Discuss:

Do you know how the Jews felt about pigs? Pigs were unclean. Jews did not eat them, and they did not keep pigs. We can probably guess that this was a Gentile country. To the Jews, a pig was the lowest, most vile animal. It did not get any worse than a pig. Pigs roll in the mud, and in their food, they are filthy.

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The Lost Son

What do pigs eat? What do people give pigs to eat?

Pig food is leftovers and scraps, but not good leftovers like a bone of meat. Pigs eat the gross leftovers on the plate that no one wants to save. Pigs are fed the leftovers that you put in the trash. Pigs also eat corn husks and corncobs, things that people do not want to eat.

This man was hungry. Have you ever been really hungry? This man was so hungry that he wanted to eat the corn husks that the pigs were eating. You might think that the people he was with would offer him the scraps first. Maybe they would let him pick through the scraps before they gave them to the pigs and give him the best parts. But no one gave him even the pig's food.

Then the man "came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

Discuss:

What does it mean to "come to yourself?" It means to come to your senses.

Have you ever thought, "What was I thinking?"

Or, "that was dumb, I shouldn't have done that."

So the younger son thought, "My dad has hired servants. He feeds his servants and they have plenty of bread and they have food left over, and I'm out here starving."

Discuss:

Think about this. What does this little bit of information tell you about his father?

His father probably has money; he has hired servants. We also know that this son took much of the money, but his father still has plenty of money to live on and manage his estate.

His dad sounds like a generous person. It says that his father's servants have plenty of bread. Does his father give his servants just enough? No, he makes sure that they have plenty, and they have extra left over. His dad sounds like a better employer than the man with the pigs that the son is working for.

The son comes up with a plan. He says, I'm going to go to my dad. I'm going to tell him I've sinned against heaven and against him, and I am no longer worthy to be called his son.

I'll ask him to make me like one of his hired servants.

We do not know for sure if the man is truly sorry. Has he really recognized that he has done wrong? Does he realize this was all his fault? Or is he just looking for a way to live a little bit better life? The reader doesn't really know.

The son makes the journey back home. It might have taken him a while; we know he was in a far country, When he gets closer to his father's house, but he's still very far away, his father sees him coming.

Is it hard to recognize people when they are far away?

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The Lost Son

Discuss:

How did his dad see him if he was so far away? Do you think his dad was looking for him? Was he waiting for him? Was his dad hoping that he would come home? If you see someone that you know very well coming from far away, would you recognize them because you know them?

Do you think the father has been concerned about his son? Did they have phones back then? (No) Did they have a mail system like they have now? (No) Would he have known if his son was safe? Would he have known if his son was alive? Do you think maybe he was wondering if his son survived in the famine?

Do you think the father was looking every day for the son, thinking maybe today is the day that the son will come home?

The father saw the son when he was very far away, and what did the father do?

He RAN. The father is running towards the son. Is he excited to see him?

Discuss:

Did the father know the reason that the son was coming home?

Did he know that the son was coming to tell his father that he was sorry?

The son could have been coming to ask the father for more money.

Does the father know WHY the son is coming back?

Does the father care why the son is coming back?

Does the father say, I want to make sure that you are sorry or first, then I will hug you?

Did he try to find these things out before he started running? Not at all.

What about us? Do we sometimes want people to apologize before we forgive them? Isn't that our attitude sometimes? Do we want someone to say they're sorry before we restore the relationship?

Did this father care if the son said he was sorry? The father has no idea why the son is coming back, no idea what he is going to say, but yet he runs to meet him.

Not only does he run, he falls on the son. He hugs him, throws his arms around his neck, and kisses him. He had no idea if the son is sorry, or why he's here, but he doesn't care.

The son starts in on the speech he prepared. He says, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. What does that mean?

What was the father's response? What did he say? Did the father give an answer to what the son said? No. He did not answer; He did not say whether he agreed or disagreed; he simply did not respond at all to what the son said. This does not seem to matter to the father. He just seems so happy to have his son back.

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The Lost Son

Instead the father begins speaking to the servants. He tells the servants to go get the best robe, and put it on the son. He tells them to get a ring and put it on his hand and put shoes on his feet.

Do you think this man stank? It might have been a while since he had a bath or a shower? Did he have nice clothes? Did he smell like stinky pigs? There's been a famine; there's a good chance he did not have water to take a shower. He was probably really dirty. But the father did not care.

Bring the best robe, and put it on him.

The robe symbolized honor and status. This made the son part of the family again, and took away the shame that he had from what he had done. Doing this in front of the servants made it clear to everyone that his past was forgotten and his original place in the family is now completely restored.

Put the ring on him.

What does the ring symbolize? He's mine. It symbolizes that he belongs. He's part of the family.

If you wear a wedding ring, it means you belong to someone. This younger son belongs. This ring most likely would have had a seal on it, and the father was giving the son the authority to conduct business for the family by giving him this ring.

Put shoes on his feet.

Servants usually went barefoot. It is likely that this man was barefoot because he had been a servant, he was feeding pigs. Shoes symbolized that he was a member of the family and NOT a servant as he had come home prepared to be.

Then the father said, Bring the fatted calf.

Where did this man get a fat cow? Everyone else has starving animals because of the famine, but he has a fat cow. Apparently he did not run out of food during the famine; he planned ahead. His cows had plenty to eat, and he had them fattened and ready to eat.

Let's have a party! My son was dead, and he is alive again. He was lost and now he is found.

How many people will a fatted calf feed? You can feed a lot of people with a calf.

The father told them to get ready and have a party.

Normally this son would not have been accepted back. He would have been shamed, everyone would have known what he had done. But the father wanted everyone to know that the son returned, and he is now accepted back into the family.

It could have made the father look bad because he took the son back after the son had shamed him. But did the father hesitate to let the son come back? No. The father welcomed him back with a huge feast and a big party.

Maybe the father has been anticipating the moment his son would return, and he already had planned for a party if and when the son returned. It did not take them very long to throw together a big party. It must have been quite a party; there was music and dancing, and you could hear the music all the way out in the field.

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The Lost Son

Who is in the field? The other son is out in the field. He has been out there working, and when he gets close to the house he hears all the music. So he calls one of the servants, and says, What's going on? What do I hear? And the servant says, Your brother came back, and your father killed the fatted calf because your brother is here safe, and we are having a party for your brother.

Did the older brother say, oh good! I'm so glad my brother is back safely! Did he run to the party to see his brother?

No. He's jealous, and he is angry.

He's so upset that he refused to go to the party. The father came out to talk to the brother. He said, come join us! We have food, we have music, we are dancing, come join the party!

The brother said, I've been working for you for years, and I've always done what you asked. You never even gave me a goat to have a party with my friends. He's saying this isn't fair.

Then he puts it back on the father. He says, as soon as "your son" came home, the son who wasted all YOUR money on bad things, you killed the fatted calf and celebrated. The older brother seemed to know what his younger brother spent money on but we don't know if he's guessing, or if there were rumors about what the younger son had done.

Then the father said to the older brother, you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. You can have it all. You are here all the time. It was good that we should have a party and rejoice. Then the father makes it personal for the older brother. He says, "your brother" was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and now he is found.

The story ends, and the reader does not know if the older brother changed his mind and went to the party or not.

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Jesus in the Story



The sinners and tax collectors represent the younger son, and the Pharisees represent the older brother. They are the ones who obeyed all the commandments, but they never understood the heart of the father. The story is left open ended as the Pharisees are left with the decision of whether or not they will join in the forgiveness of the father. Will they decide to come into the "party," which represents the kingdom of heaven.

The father had no regrets; he gave everything for his son. He could have asked the son to pay him back, but he did not.

Who does this father represent? He represents God. He represents our Father, who always loves us, who comes looking for us, and is waiting for us to come to him. His love is not conditional. He does not put conditions on his forgiveness; he has already forgiven us. He is waiting for us to accept his forgiveness. He wants us to come to him, open our hearts, and accept what he's already given.

Jesus died for our sins so that we can have his robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

The robe that the father put on the son is the robe of righteousness that we get from Jesus when we believe on him. Jesus was perfect; he never sinned. We sin, but when we believe on Jesus, we receive this robe of righteousness which makes us pure in God's sight. God gives us this robe when we come to him and come into the kingdom. Just like the father in the story covered the sins of his lost son with the glory of his own robe,, it is the same for us when we put our faith in Jesus.

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What Fills Your Heart?

Matthew 12:34-37

Luke 6:45

Parables of Jesus

The passages are short, but slightly different. You may choose to teach from Matthew as it contains slightly more information.

Jesus so often taught about the condition of the heart, and continuously went back to this theme.

He was speaking to people, primarily the Pharisees and religious leaders and rulers of the day. They knew the laws given Moses in the Old Testament, and their primary focus was to obey these laws. But what Jesus pointed out over and over was that their hearts were not pure, and they were doing things with the wrong motives. They were doing it all for selfish gain.

The gospel of Matthew shows us that in this particular instance Jesus was responding to the Pharisees. This sermon started after the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a prince of the devils because he had cast out devils. They did not say these things to him directly, but he knew their thoughts and he began addressing examples of things that seemingly contradict. Jesus gives examples of how a kingdom that fights itself cannot stand, it will self-destruct or fall apart.

He speaks of trees, and how good trees have good fruit. Bad fruit does not come from a good tree, and good fruit does not come of a bad tree. Jesus is speaking with double meaning; he is not merely speaking about trees. He sums it up by speaking directly about your words, and how they reveal your heart.

Discuss:

If an apple tree has bad fruit, and all of the apples are rotten and taste poorly, what would you think?

Would you try to treat the apples themselves, or would you try to find out what was wrong with the tree?

If you studied plants, you would realize the problem was with the tree, not the fruit.

Does it need better soil? Is it attacked by insects? What would be some solutions?

Jesus says, How can you speak good things if you are evil? ***Out of the abundance of heart the mouth speaks.***

Another translation says, *For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.*

What is in your heart comes out when you speak. The things that come out of you are your fruit, just like a tree has fruit. What is in your heart naturally comes out, it spills out.

Discuss:

If you have a cup completely full of milk, and you spill it, what comes out?

If you have a cup full of tea, what comes out? Whatever is in the cup is what is going to come out.

It is the same with your words. Whatever is in your heart is what is going to "spill"out when you speak.

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What Fills Your Heart?

How do you know what is in a person's heart? How do you know what they are really thinking? A person can try to hide their true feelings for a time, but eventually what they are thinking in their heart will come out in their words. A person's words will give them away. If their heart is full of evil, they will not speak good things. A person's true emotions come out in their words. Your words are what come out of you, and they are what defile you - what corrupts a person, or pollutes them (Matthew 15:11, 16-20).

Jesus said,

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things, (Matthew 12:35; Luke 6:45).

Discuss:

What is your heart? It is the part of your mind with your thoughts, your passions, and your character.

The original word in the Greek in Matthew 12:34 for heart is where we get medical terms relating to the heart such as cardiac and cardiovascular. It means the organ in the body which circulates blood, but it also means the center of all physical and spiritual life. It is the soul or mind, the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, and purposes. It is the understanding, will and character, the seat of all affections, emotions, whether bad or good. It is the central or innermost part of anything. This is the inner YOU.

The heart is the source of the words you speak.

Then Jesus says that we will give account for every idle word we speak on the day of judgment.

Discuss:

What does this mean? What is an idle word? Some translations say "careless."
The meaning of the original word that Jesus used was inactive, lazy, unprofitable.
It would be a word that does not accomplish what it was supposed to do.

Words are very important to God.

He used words to create the world, and they have creative power. Our words are meant to create, not to destroy. They are meant to accomplish something. What Jesus is speaking of here is just "talk."

Discuss:

What could be some examples of idle conversations?
Discuss useless talk, destructive talk, gossip, speaking negatively, or speaking of anything that goes against what God has said.

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What Fills Your Heart?

Then Jesus closes by saying, *By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*

One day we will have to explain to God all the useless words we have spoken (Matthew 12:36). That is a sobering thought! It is so important to watch our words and watch what we say. We think it's just a conversation, but God takes it much more seriously! We have to guard our thoughts, to guard what goes in our hearts, to control our tongue and our words.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else because it determines the course of your life."

Wow. This is incredibly important! Many people will say that the things that happened to them determined the outcome of their life; other people caused them to be like they are, and do the things they've done. But God says YOU determine what your life looks like by what you allow in your heart. No matter what your life looks like, you can determine how you respond and how you react. Will you give it to God and let him take care of it, or will you allow bitterness to grow in your heart. What is in our hearts comes out when we speak and reveals a lot about what is on the inside. Our words will either create life or death for us (Proverbs 18:21). Your words are like creative seeds that grow when you speak them.

Discuss:

Do you want to have a good heart? How do we have a good heart?
We should listen to God's words, and keep them in the center of our hearts; they are life and health to our flesh. Proverbs 4:20-22
A righteous man will study his answer before he speaks. Proverbs 15:28
The heart of a wise person will teach his mouth…Proverbs 16:23

Understand the importance of your words: You are snared with the words of your mouth, you are taken with the words of your mouth (Proverbs 6:2).

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus always addressed the issues of the heart. The Jews were focused on *doing* the right thing and obeying all of the laws, but they did not consider the motives.

Jesus said it was about the attitude, not about obeying the letter of the law. They were doing the right things and missing the whole point. Jesus said whole law could be summed up in these two commandments:

…You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:37-40

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Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

Parables of Jesus

Jesus opens the parable with "for the kingdom of heaven is like…". He's showing a contrast here between the way that we see things here on earth and the way that God's kingdom works. It usually operates in a completely opposite way of what we are accustomed to.

Where is the kingdom of heaven? Who lives there?

The kingdom of heaven does not just refer to the heavens and God's home; there *is* a coming kingdom which will be established in the future upon Christ's return. **But right now, the kingdom of heaven is here, but you cannot see it.** It wasn't ushered in the way the disciples thought it would be; they were expecting a physical kingdom where Christ would redeem Israel, overthrow Rome, and sit on the throne. They did not understand that it was not yet time, and that instead faith in his death and resurrection brought the kingdom to earth within us. The kingdom exists, and those who put their faith and trust in Jesus are living in it here on this earth. It operates differently than the world, and Jesus is constantly telling people how the kingdom works, and how we should see things with a kingdom mentality.

In the kingdom, the last will be first, and those who wish to be first must be a servant to all (Mark 10:44).

… the kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. No one will say, "look, here it is!", or "There it is!"; **because the kingdom of God is within you.** Luke 17:20-21

The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17

Jesus begins his story.

A man who was the master, a householder, or a landowner, went out early in the morning (about 6:00 a.m.) to hire workers for his vineyard. I think we can probably assume this was the first hour of the day. They agreed on a price and he sent them into the vineyard to work. Some translations say a denarius, and some translations say a penny. It was the standard Roman coin at the time, and was equal to a one day's wage. It was actually a fair wage, and some sources say it was the price of ten donkeys.

In the third hour (9:00 a.m.) the man went out and saw other people standing in the marketplace, not having any work. **He told them to also go into the vineyard, and he would pay them "whatever is right."**

This happened again at the sixth hour (noon), and the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.)

Then at the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.), he went out and found some others standing and not working, and he asked them why they were standing there all day not working. They replied that it was because no one had hired them.

He told them also to go into the vineyard, and whatever wage is right is what they would receive.

When the evening was come, the master told his steward to call all the workers and give them their wages beginning with the last workers and ending with the first. It was customary at that time to be paid wages daily.

When the workers that started at the 11th hour came, they received the wage agreed on, the denarius. When the first workers came, they assumed that they would receive more, after seeing how much the last workers received. But everyone was paid the same exact wage.

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Workers in the Vineyard

Discuss:

How would you feel? Does this sound fair?

It's very natural of us to think this seems unfair.

But did Jesus think it was unfair?

If we think one thing, and Jesus thinks another, who is wrong? We are the ones that are wrong!

The workers who had been there longer started complaining against the master. They said, these last workers have only been here one hour, but you *made them equal* to us who have worked out in the heat all day.

Notice that they wanted more based on what they had done.

Then the master said, I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for me for this amount? Take what is yours, go on your way, and I will give to everyone just as I gave to you. Isn't it lawful for me to do what I want with my own? Are you jealous because I am kind to others?

Jesus ends with, the last will be first, the first will be last. Many are called, but few are chosen. This doesn't mean that God hasn't chosen them. They were called by God, but they weren't chosen because of their own jealousy and their own grumbling.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus gave no explanation for this parable, but it speaks of those who try to earn salvation. If you take this back to Matthew 19:27-30, He is answering Peter's question about what the disciples will have. Jesus answers him, but it is still what we may consider to be backwards from what we normally think. It's not for all the good deeds that people will be rewarded, it is for following Christ, and leaving everything for Him.

Then Jesus goes into the story of the wages.

These workers did not think it was fair that everyone was paid the same, even though they received what they agreed to when they were hired. They thought it wasn't fair that the people who got hired at the end of the day got just as much as those who worked all day.

As humans we often think this way.

We want to try to earn our way into the kingdom by doing good deeds and obeying all the commandments. We compare ourselves with people who aren't as "good" as we think we are. We build ourselves up by all the good things we have done, and it makes us proud. Salvation has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with Jesus and what he did FOR us.

Salvation is a gift from God, and no one can brag about what they have done, or that they were so good that God chose them.

Discuss:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

What does this mean? By grace we have been saved. Talk this through with the students.

It was by faith, and only faith, that we received this grace.

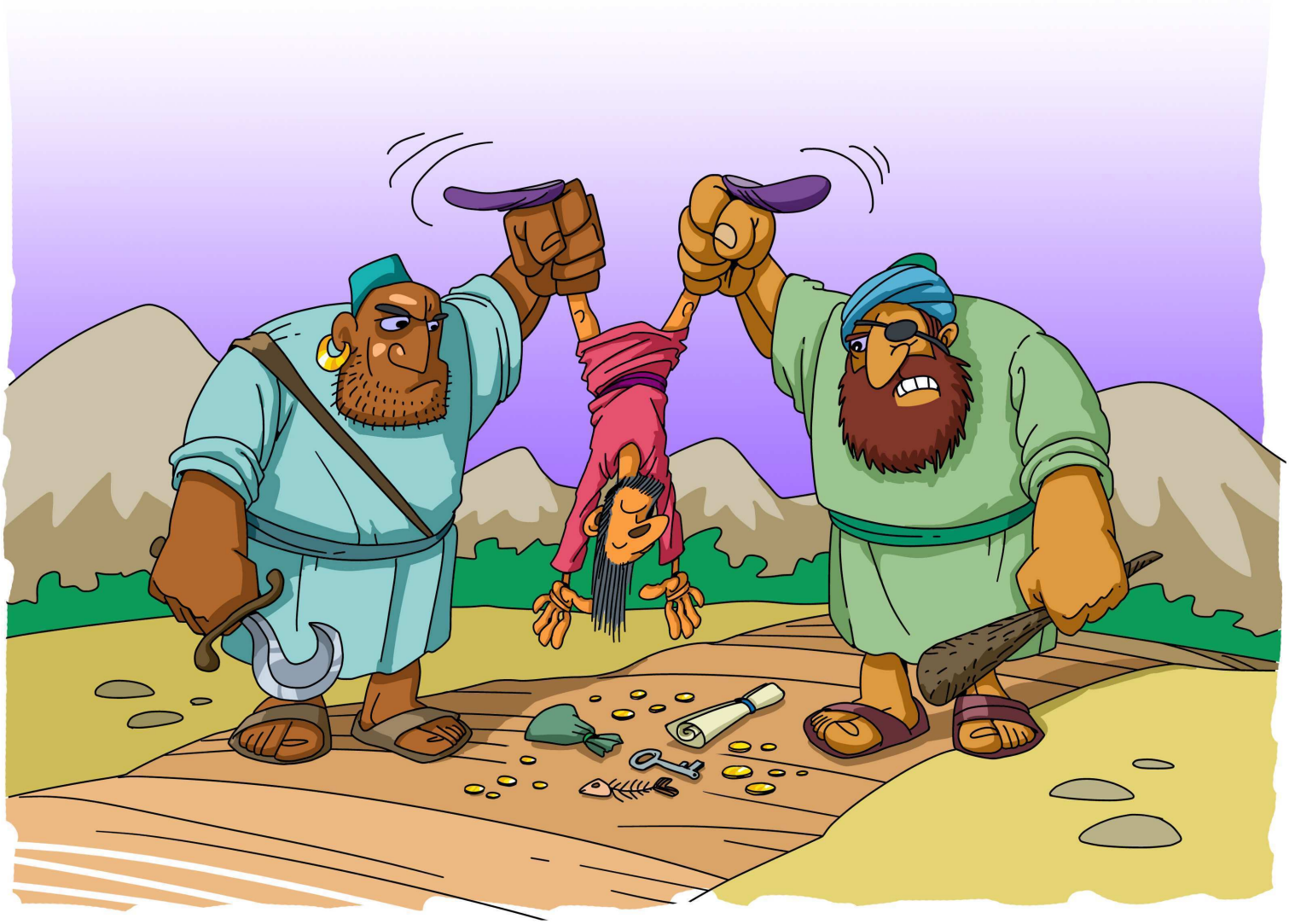
It was a gift. Talk about a gift. Did you pay for it? Did you earn it? - no, not if it was truly a gift.

You cannot earn your salvation. If you could do enough good works to earn it, then you could brag to others about what you have done. If it's a gift, it gives honor to the one who gave you the gift - God - and brings glory (attention, honor, praise) only to Jesus.

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law (Romans 10:3).

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The Wicked Farmers

Matthew 21:33-46
Mark 12:1-12
Luke 20:9-19

Parables of Jesus

Jesus had been speaking in the temple, and then he told this parable.

There was a landowner, or master, who planted a vineyard. He set a hedge around it, and dug a winepress, and built a tower. Then he rented it out to some farmers, and then the master moved to a far country.

Discuss:

The man clearly invested in this property. He planted a vineyard, and then he put a hedge around it.
What does that mean? This could have been a hedge of bushes or trees, or it may have been a fence.
Why would he build a fence?
This would keep out people that he did not want to come in and take from the vineyard.
Then he put a winepress in it; and this is a place where they would smash the grapes to make wine.
The last thing he built was a tower. Why would he build a tower?
This would allow watchmen to see who was coming and prepare for an attack.

The landowner put everything in place to protect the property while he was gone. He made many preparations for the safety and preservation of the land. Then he rented it, or leased it, to some farmers, or "husbandmen" to take care of it while he was gone. It was their job to grow the grapes and make the wine and take care of the land.

When it was time for the harvest, the master sent his servants back to the farmers, so they could get the fruit of what had been grown and produced.

Discuss:

What do you think they were expecting to get? Grapes, maybe? Maybe wine? Maybe both.

But the farmers would not give the servants anything. Mark and Luke say one servant, Matthew seems to say three. It is clearly the same story, just told slightly differently in the gospels; if you read it closely you can see they are just listing the servants and what happened to them in a different order.

The farmers took the servants and beat one of them, and sent him away with nothing. Then they threw stones at the next servant, wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. The man kept sending servants and some of them they beat up, some of them they killed, and this seems to have gone on for a while.

Discuss:

Would you want that job? Would you want to be one of the servants sent to check on the land?

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The Wicked Farmers

The landlord said, "What should I do? " **Finally, he thought, I will send my son; they will respect him.**

He had one son, who was dear and beloved to him. He thought if he sent him, they would respect him and listen to him.

But when the farmers saw the son, they talked among themselves. They said, Let's kill him, and then we will take his inheritance.

Discuss:

Is that how that works? Would they be the rightful heirs? Probably not!

The farmers took the son, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

This is serious.

What do you think the landlord will do now? Do you think the farmers will get the inheritance they thought they would?

Absolutely not.

The landlord will come himself and destroy the farmers, and give the land to someone else. He will rent it out to others who will give him the fruit from the land.

This ended the parable.

Then Jesus said, Have you read the scripture that says,

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone: This is the Lord's doing. The kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a nation who will produce the fruit. "

Whoever will fall on this stone will be broken, but whoever it falls on, it will grind him to powder.

When the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees heard his parables, they thought Jesus was talking about them.

Discuss:

Did they understand the parable?

No, but they knew he was talking about them, and they knew he spoke the parable against them.

The Pharisees wanted to seize him and arrest him right there, but they were afraid of the people. The people thought he was a prophet and the Pharisees were concerned about the response of the people. So they left him at that time. But the telling of this parable was just days prior to the arrest of Christ, and he was crucified days later they arrested him and he was crucified within a week.

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Jesus in the Story



What does this parable mean?

The landowner is God.

The husbandmen, or farmers, are the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, and specifically the Pharisees, scribes, and priests.

The servants are the prophets, and the son of the master is Jesus.

As a last resort, God sent Jesus to earth, and he was killed by his own. Israel killed its own Messiah.

The Lord had a plan. He sent his prophets to the earth for centuries prior to Jesus. Some were persecuted, and some were killed by the Jews. The people rejected their teachings and pleas to lead the people back to the Lord. Finally, the Lord sent Jesus, and they killed him.

The wicked farmers hoped to receive the inheritance of the heir. In the same way, the leaders of Israel were trying to receive the blessings and inherit the kingdom by their own merit. They felt they had earned it, and their goodness would obtain these things for them. They did not realize that our goodness or righteousness is nothing to God (Isaiah 64:6). The only way to receive the inheritance - which is the blessings of kingdom life here on earth and life eternal - is through a relationship with Jesus Christ and acceptance of his righteousness.

Just like the parable, the kingdom of God was taken from the Israelites after the death of Christ, and it was given to another nation.

It opened up the kingdom of God to all the nations of the world; and now the kingdom was available to anyone who would believe, whether Jew or Gentile.

When they took the heir outside of the garden and killed him, this is symbolic of Jesus being taken to Golgotha to be crucified. The place of his crucifixion is believed by some scholars to possibly be the place where Cain was exiled, the point where the land of Eden.

This stone that Jesus is referring to is mentioned in Psalm 118:22-23.

The stone is Jesus.

The builders are the Jewish nation.

This stone, Jesus, was rejected by Israel.

What they did not realize is that Jesus was the cornerstone by which God would build everything.

What is a cornerstone?

It is the first, and the most important stone laid in a building's foundation. It is the stone on which all the other stones of the foundation are aligned and built.

Israel rejected Jesus, and he IS the foundation for the kingdom of God.

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Kingdom Business

Luke 19:11-27

Parables of Jesus

This parable is similar to another parable that Jesus taught in Matthew 25:14-30. But they were told by Jesus at different times and places in his ministry. This lesson will focus on the parable in Luke as it has a slightly different focal point.

This parable is told after Jesus met with Zacchaeus, and Jesus spoke this parable specifically to the people because he was near Jerusalem.

The followers of Jesus were expecting a Messiah to reinstate a physical kingdom here on the earth. They thought he would rise militarily and politically and at this particular point in time his followers thought that this was imminent.

Jesus told this parable specifically to convey to the people that he would leave for a long period before his return and and before the fulfillment of a physical kingdom on earth.

The parable begins with a "certain" nobleman who goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and then to return.

He called ten of his servants together, and gave them ten pounds, or minas. One mina, or one pound was equal to approximately three to four months of wages. He divided this among the servants and each servant received one (Luke 19:16).

Then the nobleman said,

Occupy until I come.

This translates, do business until I come, or invest this for me. Use it to conduct business until I come back.

He is basically giving them a stipend to spend while he is gone. It is not their money, it is his. He is asking them to make wise investments with this while he is away.

But his citizens hated him, and said, we will not have this man to reign over us. Note, these are different people than his servants. This would be the citizens of his country; his future subjects.

When the nobleman returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded his servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him so he would know how much they had gained by trading, by their investments.

The first servant came and said, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds.

Discuss:

This servant seems to be a wise investor. What do you think he might have done with his money?
Maybe he bought a building and rented it out. Maybe he opened a store and sold goods.
Maybe he started a bank and loaned money to others. Maybe he started a new business.
We do not know, except that his investment had a very good profit.

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Kingdom Business

Then the nobleman said to that servant,

You have done well. Because you have been faithful in a very little I will give you authority over ten cities.

Notice that the master calls this **very little**. This must have been a very wealthy man. He gave each several months worth of salary to invest, and he calls it "very little."

But this man has multiplied this, and received a reward for his work; he is the ruler over ten cities.

Then the second servant came in and said, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds.

And the man said the same thing to that servant that he did to the first, and gave him authority over five cities.

Then another servant came. He said, Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a napkin, or handkerchief.

He did not lose it, he did not make a bad investment that did not yield a return. He basically did not do anything with it except set it aside and keep it safe.

Then that servant said, I was afraid of you because you are a harsh (strict, stern) man. You take what is not yours and harvest what you did not plant.

This servant seems to have a different view of the nobleman than the others. From what we saw of this nobleman, he seems to be very generous; giving a significant sum to the men to invest as they saw fit. Then he rewarded them for using money that was not even theirs in the first place.

The man is upset; he seems to be strict and harsh now.

He says, *Out of your own mouth I will judge you*, you wicked servant. You knew I was harsh, taking what is not mine and harvesting what I did not plant, so why didn't you put the money in the bank? Then when I came back I could have at least had the interest?

Discuss:

"Out of your own mouth I will judge you." What does that mean?

Could it mean that because he saw the man as harsh and strict, that he will judge him the way that he assumed?

The man is basically saying, you said it, so you will get exactly what you expected.

Then he said to the others that were standing nearby, take the money from him, and give it to the man who has ten.

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Kingdom Business

Discuss:

It seems that everyone there is waiting their turn and they can all see what everyone else has accomplished.

But the ones standing nearby said, Lord, he has ten pounds.

The other servants were basically saying, that man already has ten pounds. Why are we taking it from this guy who has hardly anything and giving it to the one who already has plenty?

But this man did not see it that way. He said,

To everyone who has, he will be given more. From him that has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away from him.

Then the man said, Bring the enemies here, the ones who did not want me to rule over them, and kill them.

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Jesus in the Story



The nobleman represents Jesus.

Jesus constantly preached that the kingdom of heaven is "at hand." That means it is approaching, coming near; joining one thing to another. His crucifixion was basically his coronation, as he received the crown of thorns and the robe. He has gone away to receive his kingdom, and through the Holy Ghost, believers reign in the kingdom with him (Romans 5:17; Ephesians 2:6). But there will come a time when he will return to earth and establish a physical kingdom.

The servants represent us.

We have been given assignments and resources to carry out God's kingdom here on earth.. Just as the servants received money to invest in business, we are to be building the kingdom until Jesus returns. We are not meant to sit idly and just wait for Jesus to return. He never intended for us to only have hope in the life to come. We are living in the kingdom now; we have things to do. We cannot afford to waste what he has given us, or disregard his assignments for each of us. We will be held accountable.

Discuss:

What are these things that God has given us? This looks different for every person.

We are all part of the body of Christ, but we all have a different part in the kingdom. The Bible talks about the different gifts that we have been given (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

This can be about any gift that you have. You may be good with people, you may be really good at making things, or math, or with computers, or maybe you can sing beautifully. You might be a wonderful cook, or maybe you love to grow plants. Maybe you're good with animals, or maybe you love teaching children.

Discuss all types of talents and gifts with the students. You might even help them find their personal gifts and talents and talk about possible ways to use those for the kingdom of God.

Everything points to Jesus, and we do it for him.

But, whatever you do, do it for the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:31).

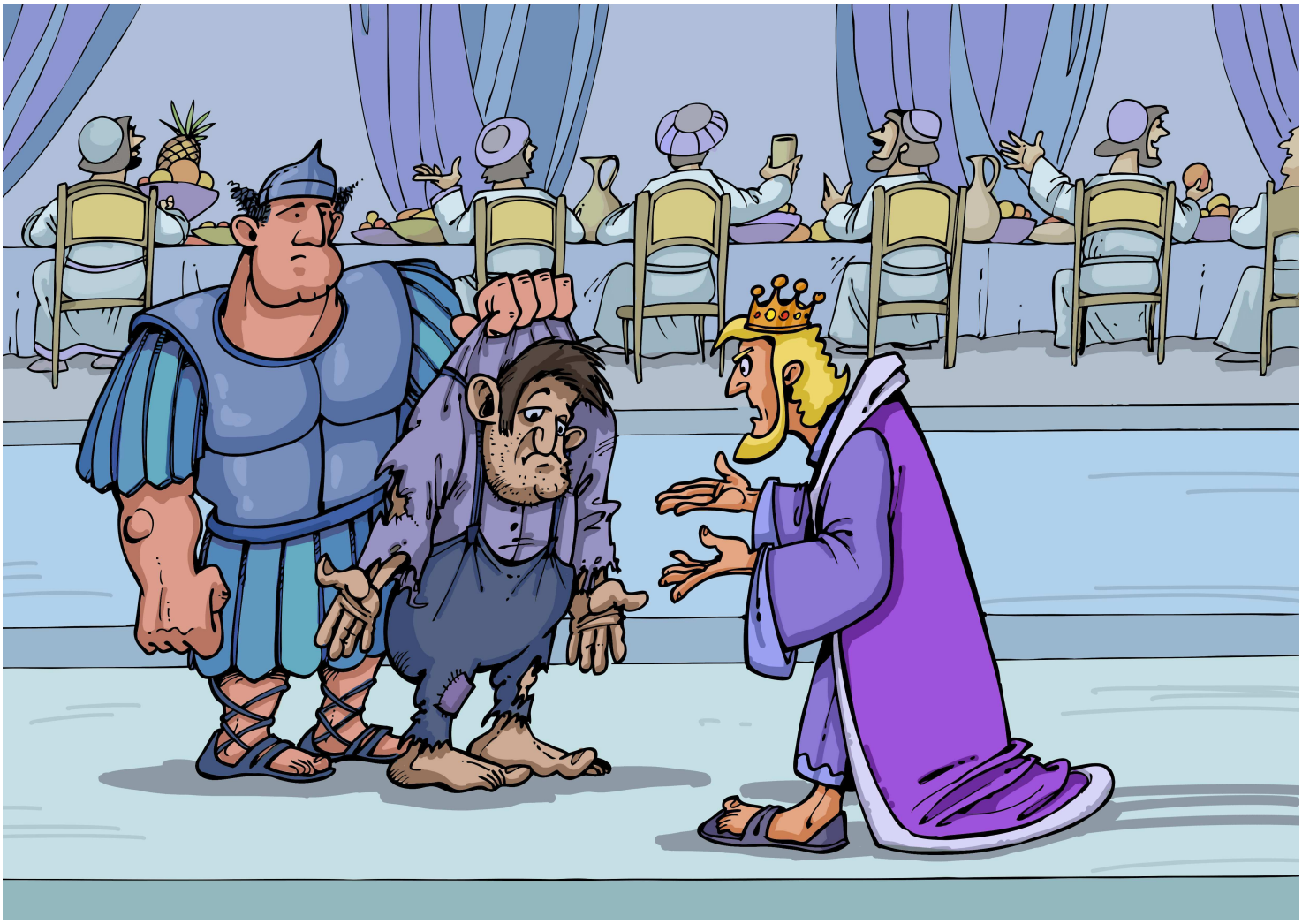
The citizens represent the people who do not accept Jesus as Lord and King.

These people were not allowed to enter the kingdom and suffered death.

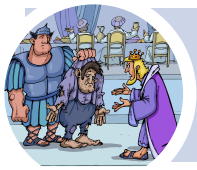
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Improperly Dressed

Matthew 22:1-14

Parables of Jesus

Talk about hosting a wedding. A king was planning a wedding for his son, so he sent out invitations.

Discuss:

Have you had a party?

How did you decide who to invite?

Did you have some people that couldn't come?

Did you have anyone that didn't want to come?

What would you do if none of your friends came?

This king is making a big feast; talk about a feast for a wedding party.

Discuss:

What would you need for a big feast?

You probably need food, somewhere for people to sit. Maybe some flowers, plates, and drinking glasses?

You would want to dress up and wear something special.

What would you wear?

If the king was planning this party, it would be very busy with many people getting ready for a huge party for the marriage of the king's son.

The king sent his servants to get the people who were invited to come. They told them, everything is ready! We made a huge feast, we've killed the animals and cooked all the meat. Come to the wedding! But the people made excuses of why they could not come. Some of the people were very mean to the servants, and some people killed those servants!

When the king heard this, he was very angry. He sent the armies to destroy the people who killed the servants, and he burned up their city.

Then the king told his servants that the wedding was ready, but people who were invited did not deserve to come.

So, the king told the servants to go out into the highways and invite everybody they could find to the wedding, both people who were good and bad. Finally they had the wedding full of guests.

The king came in and saw a man who came to the wedding, but he was not wearing wedding clothes. He called the man,"Friend," and asked him why he came in without wearing the wedding clothes, but the man had no answer and did not respond.

The king was not upset that the man did not bring a gift. It wasn't about what he brought; it was about his wedding clothes.

The man was not allowed to stay at the wedding. They tied him up and took him out.

Everyone was invited; but it was up to the guests to make sure they had the wedding clothes.

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Jesus in the Story



The king in the story is God, who is preparing for the marriage of Jesus. The Israelites were invited first, but they didn't value their invitations, so God invited everyone, both Jews and Gentiles.

Everyone is invited, but you cannot come into the wedding without the right clothes. The right clothes means you have to have Jesus.

No one can come in without Jesus. He gives us a "robe of righteousness".

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile (Romans 3:22).

Because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness , they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law, to bring righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans 10:3-4).

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The only way into the Kingdom of God is through Jesus. We can never be "good enough" to get into the kingdom. We can only get in by accepting what Jesus has done for us. His blood paid the price for our sin; his blood made us righteous, or right, with God. It is impossible to come to God on what we've done, without the saving grace and blood of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. If we try to come to God without Jesus, we are trying to "earn" our way into heaven. If we were able to earn our way, then we would be able to brag about what we have done. It has nothing to do with our actions, but is only about what Jesus did FOR us. Our own acts of "righteousness" are nothing to God. He sees our efforts as filthy, dirty rags.

We might look at this story and think the problem was that the man did not bring a gift to the wedding. This man's fault here was not that he did not bring something to God, or do something for God; this man was not missing a gift.

He was not properly dressed with the robe of righteousness that is Jesus' free gift to us. That was what was of utmost importance to the king.

It is not about what we can bring to God, but accepting His gift to us.

Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone (Romans 5:18).

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it (Ephesians 2:9).

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Arrested!

Matthew 26:36-57
Mark 14:32-52
Luke 22:39-54
John 18:1-14

Trial & Crucifixion

**The story of the arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are so expansive that this lesson only covers a small portion of the story of the redemption that Jesus provided for us on the cross.*

This lesson picks up after the Lord's supper. Jesus has spent time telling his disciples many things, and that one of his disciples would betray him.

Jesus and his disciples crossed over the brook of Cedron (Kidron) and entered into the Garden of Gethsemane which is on the mount of Olives. The word Gethsemane means "olive press." John tells the reader that Judas knew this place, because Jesus and his disciples went there often. Jesus told his disciples to sit there while he went to pray, and told them to pray that they do not enter into temptation (Luke 22:40; Matthew 6:13).

This is a very difficult evening for Jesus. He knows what he is about to face and he is very sorrowful, or grieved, and very heavy (distressed, troubled.) He told the disciples to wait there and watch. He went on a little further and fell down on the ground. He prayed to the Father that "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Jesus was fully man and fully God. His humanity was like us, he knew what was coming and wanted to avoid it if at all possible. But his resolve was amazing. He was so dedicated to the Father and doing His will that he completely submitted to whatever was going to be necessary. After he prayed, an angel was sent to him from heaven to strengthen him (Luke 22:43). After this strengthening, he prayed more earnestly in agony, and his sweat fell as great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The word Gethsemane means "olive press." In this garden, the weight of what was coming pressed on Jesus and his sweat flowed from him like olive oil flows as it is squeezed out from a press.

When he rose up from prayer, he went back to his disciples and found them asleep. Luke's account says they were sleeping from sorrow; a study of the words here show that they were sleeping because they were exhausted from grief and sorrow, as if trying to escape. Jesus asks them why they were sleeping, and says, "Could you not watch with me for one hour?" And then again, three gospel accounts tell us that he told them watch and pray, or else they would enter into temptation.

He tells them that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. "

He left his disciples again and prayed the same words. Then he came back and found the disciples sleeping again. Their eyes were heavy and they did not know how to answer him.

Then he left and went and prayed a third time, saying the same words. When he returned to the disciples he told them to take their rest because the hour had come for his betrayal.

He knew Judas was coming; he knew what was about to happen. He told the disciples to get up, it was time to go because the one that would betray him was near.

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Arrested!

While he was still talking, Judas came to where they were, but he was not alone. He came with a large number of people; the chief priests, scribes and elders were all with him. They came with lanterns and torches and were armed with weapons of swords and staves.

These clubs, or staves, were the beams or wooden poles that were used to carry the ark of the covenant. They were also used as a beam from which to suspend someone, or also used as a staff. They were always made of wood.

The people that were with Judas did not all recognize Jesus. Judas had told the officials beforehand that they would be able to identify him because the person he kissed would be Jesus, and he was the one they should take.

Judas approached Jesus and addressed him as "Master," and then kissed him. Matthew's account says that Jesus said, "Friend, why have you come?"

Luke's account says he asked Judas why he betrayed him with a kiss.

John tells the reader that Jesus asked them who they were looking for. They responded, "Jesus of Nazareth." To this, Jesus responded, "I am (he)."

What Jesus actually said was, "I am."

Does this sound familiar? When Moses asked God his name as he was preparing to lead the people out of Egypt, God responded, tell them I AM has sent you (Exodus 3:14).

When Jesus responded this way, the people backed away and fell to the ground.

They did not understand what had happened, but there was so much power in the declaration that Jesus used; he is "I AM THAT I AM." Jesus IS Jehovah. He IS Lord. He IS ultimate power and authority.

Then Jesus asked them again, "Who do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, I told you I am; if you're looking for me then let these go their way (speaking of the disciples.). This was to fulfill the prophecy "of which you gave me I have lost none except the son of perdition" (or, destruction; John 17:12). Jesus seems to be referring back to an older prophecy which is possibly apocryphal but scholars are not clear on this reference.

The disciples are ready to defend Jesus. One of them asks, "Lord, shall we fight with our swords?" Peter, who is always quick to respond, did not wait for an answer.

He pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. This would definitely take precision to cut off someone's ear without serious injury to their head.

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Arrested!

Discuss:

This would have been quite chaotic.

Jesus and his disciples are in the garden, a large crowd of people show up ready to arrest Jesus, but are not sure which one he is.

Judas comes to betray Jesus with a kiss, and Jesus asks the crowd who they are looking for.

As if things are not bad enough, Peter cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant, named Malchus.

These are the priests and synagogue leaders that are arresting Jesus - this would be like our church leaders taking weapons and arresting people.

Is Jesus glad that his disciples are trying to defend him? No. He tells them to put away their swords, and if they want to live by the sword they will die by the sword.

He tells all of them that he could ask God to send him more than twelve legions of angels to defend him. But, he said, "*How would the scriptures be fulfilled?*"

A legion was over 6,000 angels. Jesus is saying that God could have sent him over 72,000 angels to defend him if he only asked. But, Jesus knew the importance of what was at stake. He is basically saying, if I did that, how would the scriptures be fulfilled. He knew that all of these things had been prophesied about him, and they had to come to pass.

So what happened to the man who lost his ear? Jesus responded, "Enough of this." Then he touched the man's ear and healed him. The disciples were trying to fight the battle as if this was an earthly kingdom, with an earthly battle to fight. Jesus understood that this was not the answer; physical violence was not the solution to what is actually a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Even in the midst of his being arrested, he had compassion on those around him and healed them.

There is an unusual note in Mark 14:51-52 that does not seem to be relevant to any other part of the story. It comes after Peter has cut off the ear of the servant.

Jesus remarks that he was with them daily in the temple, and that they could have arrested him when he was there with them. Then all of his disciples run away out of fear that they too may be arrested.

Then Mark tells about a young man who followed Jesus after the disciples left. This young man was naked, having a linen cloth around his body. But when they arrested Jesus, they laid hands on this young man. When they tried to grab him, he left the linen cloth, and ran away naked.

No explanation is given as to who this young man is or what is happening, but there are a few theories. One theory is that when Jesus said "I AM," that there was so much power that some people were resurrected from nearby graves. This young man appears to be wearing cloths that were wrapped around dead corpses, and this could possibly explain this odd bit of information placed into the story. And perhaps a reference back to the nakedness of man in the garden to fulfill a spiritual parallel.

Then Jesus is taken away, to be put on trial and crucified.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus came to fulfill the scriptures. This means that there were prophecies spoken by prophets many years before Jesus that told who he would be, and the things that he would do. They were spoken in mysteries like a puzzle because if they would have been easy to understand then the devil would have never crucified Jesus.

The crucifixion of Jesus was essential to the redemption of mankind (Mark 4:11; Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; Colossians 1:26).

We have to look closely to see what was prophesied, and what was fulfilled.

In the garden, the crowd says they are looking for "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus responds, "I AM." There is so much power in this response that the crowd goes backwards and falls down. This is paralleled with Moses when he asks God what his name is. God's response is, "I AM THAT I AM," and tells Moses, tell the children of Israel that "I AM" has sent you. Jesus is the I AM. He is God. He tells the people that He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

This prophecy is given in Psalm 27:2, where it says, "when the wicked came against me……my enemies and foes stumbled and fell." This is a prophecy of Jesus as the Messiah and tells of the crowd stumbling and falling when they came against Jesus.

In Matthew 26:50, Jesus says to Judas, "Friend, why have you come?" This parallels the prophecy in Psalm 41:9 where it speaks of "my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (betrayed).

Jesus, who is the last Adam, (1 Corinthians 15:45), corrected what man ruined in the garden. Jesus obediently submitted to the will of the Father over his own will in direct contrast to the disobedience of man in a garden that brought sin into the world.

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Falsely Accused

Matthew 26:57-68
Mark 14:53-65
Luke 22:54
John 18:13-14,19-24

Trial & Crucifixion

**The story of the arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are so expansive that this lesson only covers a small portion of the story of the redemption that Jesus provided for us on the cross. The focus of this lesson covers the trial of Jesus by the high priest and chief leaders of the synagogue. It does not cover Peter's denial or the trial by Pontius Pilate. Peter's denial, the trial of Pilate, and the crucifixion will be covered in later lessons. However, please see the note near the end of this lesson to cover an overview of the events of the trial and crucifixion of Christ. The children need to be reminded of this during the Easter season, and different details will be covered in later lessons.*

This lesson begins after the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. They laid hold of Jesus and took him to the palace of the high priest. This is interesting; he did not commit a crime that was identifiable by a true wrong. He was being judged by the laws of the Jews, and it was the leaders of the temple that were accusing him; this would be like church leaders putting a person on trial today.

They brought Jesus to the home of the high priest and all the chief priests and elders and scribes were there. Peter followed, but at a distance. He went into the palace and sat with the servants to watch what would happen. He sat with them and warmed himself by the fire.

Discuss:

What would you do? Would you follow like Peter did and hope that no-one noticed you?

Would you go home and hide?

The high priest asked Jesus about his disciples, and about his doctrine. Jesus told them that he spoke openly. He taught in the synagogue and in the temple and he did not do anything secretly, meaning he was not conspiring to do anything; he was very open about everything he said. Then he told the priest not to ask him, but to ask those who heard him because they know what he said.

Then one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, and said, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" And Jesus said, "If I said something wrong, then testify to what is wrong.

But if what I said is true, why did you strike me? "

Remember that in all the lessons that were studied about Jesus and his miracles, that the Pharisees and Jews were always trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. They were constantly looking for a way to condemn him, for him to do something that they could use as evidence to put him on trial - and kill him. They have been searching for evidence against him for quite a long time.

Discuss:

They hated him.

If someone is hated, it is common that people will misconstrue or misunderstand what they are trying to say - on purpose.

They will try to twist everything that person says to make it sound like that person has bad intentions.

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Falsely Accused

So the chief priests and elders, and all the council tried to find false witnesses against Jesus - people who would lie about him - so they could sentence him to death. They found people who would testify against him, but their stories did not agree with one another so they were not credible witnesses.

Discuss:

If you have two people telling stories, they would at least need to agree to make it believable. If their stories were too far off, then you would not be able to use their witnesses. In a fair trial, you would realize that their stories were not completely true and the testimony would be considered unreliable. But this was not a fair trial.

Finally, they got two false witnesses. And one said, we heard this man say that he would destroy the temple of God, the temple that was made with hands, and build it again in three days (a temple that is made without hands.)

What Jesus actually said was in John 2:19-22. The Jews had been asking Jesus for a sign - they were always asking him for a sign. And he said, destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But he was talking about his body as the temple and his death and resurrection. And after he resurrected from the dead, the disciples remembered what he had said.

But even the stories of these witnesses did not agree. But the high priest stood up and said, Don't you have an answer to what these men are testifying against you? But Jesus stayed silent. Then the high priest said, "By the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Then Jesus answered, "You have said…..you will see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Luke's gospel says,

"After this you will see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God."

This outraged the priest. But to know why, the reader needs to go back to the Old Testament book of Daniel. Daniel 7:13 prophesies of the "son of man" coming on the clouds and being presented to the Ancient of Days. This has been interpreted to mean that the human-like figure (Jesus) would come on the clouds of heaven and be presented to God the Father.

The priests, elders, and scribes knew these prophecies. That is why in Luke 22:70 they *all* said,

"Are you then the Son of God?" To which Jesus responded, "You say that I am."

And they are OUTRAGED. The high priest ripped his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy, do we need further witnesses? We heard it out of his own mouth."

That was it. That sealed his fate, and they decided at that moment they had what they needed to condemn him to death. To them, this was complete blasphemy.

Then they began discussing it, asking one another what they thought. They decided he was guilty and they condemned him to be guilty of death. They mocked him, and hit him. They blindfolded him, and hit him on the face and said, "Prophesy, who hit you? " They made fun of him, told many lies, and blasphemed him.

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Falsely Accused

Discuss:

Have you had someone lie about you? Did you defend yourself? Jesus is sentenced to death for things he did not do.

At this time there was a unique system of government in Israel. The Romans ruled over Israel, but allowed the Jews to govern themselves on their own matters. The leaders of the synagogue ruled over matters relating to the Mosaic law and other temple laws. The Romans allowed an Israelite leader to rule over the Jews, but he also was subject to the Roman Empire. So although the Jews were allowed to govern over their own issues, they did not have the authority to condemn people to death. If they wanted to give the death sentence, the command had to be executed by the authority of the Roman government.

Discuss:

Explain the governmental system of Israel at the time of Jesus using relevant examples to help the audience understand how this would have been structured.

After the high priest decided that he was guilty of death, they did not have the authority to actually sentence Jesus to death. The chief priests had to send Jesus to the Roman leader of this area to determine the validity of the claims and execute the sentence.

They tied Jesus up and took him to Pilate, who was the Roman leader in Jerusalem.

Pilate was reluctant to judge Jesus, and encouraged the Jews to judge him according to their laws. But the Jews told Pilate that they did not have the authority to put anyone to death, and they were determined to see Jesus put to death. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, the leader of the Jews, and Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

Ultimately he was condemned to die and he died and suffered on the cross.

The details of the trial of Pilate, the interactions between Pilate and Herod, as well as the details of the crucifixion will be covered in later lessons on the topic of Easter.

Review the following points briefly with the students so that they will have an overview of the Easter story and the trial and crucifixion. Follow this lesson with a lesson on the resurrection.

Briefly discuss:

1. **The Last Supper: Jesus washed the disciples' feet, told them of his death and betrayal.**
2. **The prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and arrest.**
3. **Denial by Peter**
4. **The trial by the high priest.**
5. **The trial by Pilate and scourging.**
6. **The carrying of the cross and crucifixion of Christ.**

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus did not sin. He never did anything wrong. The people said he was guilty of things he did not do, and they crucified him as if he did terrible things. He did not try to defend himself, but remained silent (1 Peter 2:22-23; Hebrews 4:15).

God put the sins of the whole world on Jesus, and turned his back on Jesus at the cross. After Jesus died and rose again, God gave righteousness to all those who believe in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus never defended himself. He remained silent. He could have argued that he had done nothing wrong.

He knew that if he did not die, he would not be able to save all the people from their sins (Galatians 1:4).

Jesus had to become a man in order to save mankind. In the very beginning, God gave the rule, or dominion, of the earth to men. But then everything was changed through sin.

Jesus came to fulfill prophecy. When he told the priests and elders that he would come on the clouds, he was referring to Daniel 7:13. He was making the claim that he was "the son of man". He would come on the clouds and be presented to the Father.

Jesus was completely man, but also completely God; he was both. This was the only way this could work; he had to come as both man and God to die for the sins of everyone. When people believe in him, God sees those people as righteous, as though they had not done anything wrong. When we believe in our hearts that Jesus died for us and accept what he did, we are saved (John 1:1,14; Romans 10:9).

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When the Rooster Crows

Matthew 26:33-35; 69-75
Mark 14:29-31;66-72
Luke 22:31-34; 55-62
John 13:36-38; 18:15-27; 21:1-19

Trial & Crucifixion

This story is found in all four gospels of the Bible. Each gospel tells where Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny him, and each tells the story of Peter's denials. But only John gives the story of redemption after Jesus' resurrection.

The entire story of the trial and crucifixion of Christ is too long for one lesson. This lesson will focus only on Peter's denial and Christ's response. Be sure to frame the story to your class and explain the context in which the events took place.

Discuss and give a brief overview to summarize recent events:

Triumphal entry: Jesus entered Jerusalem with a triumphal entry, and was greeted by cheering crowds who laid branches and clothes over the path.

What did Jesus ride on? A colt; a young donkey that no one had ever ridden on.

The people welcomed him into Jerusalem, singing, Hosanna!
(Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19).

They called him the King, who was coming in the name of the Lord (Luke 19:38).

Last Supper: He shared his last supper with his disciples in an upper room (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12).

The gospel of John tells many things that Jesus spoke to his disciples.

He tells them about his death and resurrection, and to not be troubled, but they do not understand.

He even tells them to buy a sword (John 14:1; Luke 22:36-38).

He shares a meal with them that we now call Communion.

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

He tells them that one of them will betray him.

Mount of Olives: They left the upper room and went to the mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

At the mount of Olives, Jesus tells his disciples that they will be offended. He references the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7 that the shepherd will be killed and the sheep will be scattered (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27), but he tells them he will rise again.

Jesus told Peter that Satan asked for him, and he wanted to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31).

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When the Rooster Crows

Discuss:

What do you think that means? If Satan asked for him, do you think Satan saw something in Peter?

Did he think that Peter was going to do something powerful?

Jesus told Peter that he prayed for him so that his faith would not fail, and when he returns to Jesus that he would bring strength to his brothers.

What do you think Peter said?

Peter tells Jesus, "I will never be offended," saying he was ready to go with Jesus both to prison and death (Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38). He told Jesus he would lay down his life for him; but Jesus said, "Will you?" And tells Peter that before the rooster crows twice that day, that Peter will deny him three times (John 13:37-38; Mark 14:30). Peter then becomes even more insistent, saying he would never deny him, and all the disciples agree (Mark 14:31).

Jesus and the disciples keep walking until they come to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prays, and the disciples fall asleep. Jesus asked them the first time if they could stay awake and pray; and the next time he told them it was okay; they needed rest.

Then Jesus is arrested by the priests and scribes (yes, the church leaders!) It was not the Romans; they actually did not want to crucify him.

Peter has his sword with him, and he cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest (Mark 14:47; John 18:10). Peter was probably trying to kill the man. He was passionate, but does not understand. Jesus had told them to have a sword, and Peter was ready to fight to the death. What he failed to grasp was that Jesus was saying that two swords were enough; everyone did not need to have their own sword. Jesus was trying to prepare them for conflict; but they did not understand that this would be a spiritual battle.

How did Jesus respond to the servant's ear? He said, "No more of this," (Luke 22:51).

He healed the man's ear. This is not the response that Peter was expecting; he thought he was defending Jesus.

Look at this from the perspective of the disciples; they have been with Jesus for three years.

They knew him to be the Messiah; they believed he was the one that was prophesied about throughout the scriptures. But the Jews believed that when the Messiah came, he was going to take over. He was going to get an army, overthrow the government, and bring Israel back to their place in the world as a supreme power. This is why Peter most likely thought it was time to rise and fight, to bring Jesus into power and be the king over Israel.

Jesus has been telling them what was going to happen. He told them he was going to die, he told them he would rise again, but they simply did not understand. They had no concept of what he was saying, and they did not understand until after he rose again.

They're probably wondering what is happening. They were convinced this was the Messiah. He was going to rule over the nation, with them at his side. They had even asked who would sit at his right hand in his kingdom. Now, they're probably thinking, is this how this ends? Jesus dies; there is no Messiah, no kingdom?

Jesus is arrested, and all the disciples run away (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50). Jesus is taken to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest.

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When the Rooster Crows

Discuss:

What did the disciples do?
What did the disciples say they would do before this happened?
What would you do?
Do you think Peter is confused?
Why?

The gospel of John says that Peter followed Jesus, and so did "another disciple." In the gospel of John, the writer, John, frequently refers to himself in the third person. He calls himself the "other disciple," or "the disciple who Jesus loved." Scholars have determined that when John refers to another disciple who followed Jesus, he is referring to himself.

Discuss:

All the other disciples who also said they would never abandon Christ, have run away. Only two of the disciples, Peter and John, have followed Jesus to the palace of the high priest.

John knew the high priest (John 18:15,) and he went in with Jesus into the palace. But Peter is reluctant; he stands outside the door trying to get warm, probably trying to figure out what is going on. John talks to the girl who is keeping the door, and he must have told her to get Peter, because she brings Peter into the palace. Reading all four gospels helps the reader get a better understanding of the events (Matthew 26:69; Mark 14:66-67; Luke 22:55). It appears that as the girl brought Peter in, she said to him,

"You were with Jesus of Nazareth, aren't you one of this man's disciples?" (John 18:16-17).

The girl looked earnestly at him (Luke 22:56). Have you ever stared at someone? Have you ever thought you recognized someone but you weren't sure? You're looking at them closely trying to figure out how you know them. It seems like that is what she is doing. She's thinking, I've seen this guy, I think I recognize him.

How does Peter respond? It says, he denied before them all, saying,

I don't know what you're saying. I do not know him! (Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:67-68; Luke 22:55-57).

And then the rooster crowed.

What about John? Did he even have an opportunity to deny Jesus? We don't know. It seems that John wasn't afraid to associate himself with Jesus. John knew the high priest, and the priest probably knew that John was one of his disciples. We don't know for sure, but it seems that John was not afraid to be known.

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When the Rooster Crows

It appears that after Peter was admitted into the palace, and he went out into the porch area. It was cold, and he was warming himself by the fire (John 18:18).

When Peter went out to the porch, another girl saw him and spoke to the other people that were there. She said,

"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth," she said "He is one of them."

This second time Peter said, "I do not know the man; I do not understand what you're saying,

(Matthew 26:71-72; Mark 14:69; Luke 22:58). It says he denied it with an oath, which means he said, "I swear, I don't know him."

Everyone who was there that night probably knew what was going on. Jesus was very well known, the people in the city would have seen his grand entrance just days before. This was the big news of the day; people were waiting around the high priest's house to see what would happen. It would be very unlikely to have never heard of him.

Then a relative of the servant of the high priest - the one whose ear was cut off - said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him? "

If he was a relative of the man with the ear, he probably heard what happened. The man's ear was cut off, and the man he came to arrest healed his ear? The people standing around joined the conversation, and said,

'Surely you are with them, your accent (speech) sounds like you are from Galilee, you must have been with him.'

Then the third time Peter responded. This time he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know this man."

Then the rooster crowed again (Mark 14:72).

Remember, at this time Peter was inside the door. He was in the interior porch and he could see what was happening. Jesus was nearby, being questioned by the priest. As soon as the rooster crowed the second time,

Jesus turned around and looked at Peter.

Can you imagine? A few hours before you told this person that you would never leave them, and you would die for them.

As soon as Jesus looked at Peter, he remembered what Jesus had said. He remembered that Jesus said before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

Peter was devastated. He went out and began weeping bitterly. What does it mean to weep bitterly?

Briefly summarize the rest of the events of the crucifixion and death of Christ. After the trial with the high priest, Jesus was taken to Pontius Pilate, and crucified later that day. The only disciple mentioned throughout the rest of the crucifixion is John, who is at the foot of the cross (John 19:26). Three days later, Jesus rose, and the disciples saw Jesus and began to understand the resurrection.

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When the Rooster Crows

John is the only gospel that gives the story of the redemption of Peter.

How long was Jesus on the earth after his resurrection before he ascended to heaven? Forty days. During that time he proved himself alive, visited with his disciples and shared with them truths about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-3).

This is the third time that Jesus revealed himself to his disciples. Peter and several of the other disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing (John 21). In the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize him. Jesus asked them if they had any meat, and they told him they had caught nothing. Then he told them to put the net on the right side of the boat, and they would find fish. They do this, and the net was so heavy they cannot even lift it because there are so many fish.

Then, the disciple who Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

Who is this disciple that Jesus loved? John. Jesus loved all the disciples; but John had an understanding of Christ's love for him and always referred to himself this way.

John probably remembered another time that this happened; the first time they followed Jesus. John was with Simon, whose name was changed to Peter, on a day when they had fished all night and caught nothing (Luke 5:1-11). Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his nets. Peter let down a net, and he caught so many fish that his net broke. **On this day when John saw the nets full of fish, he must have remembered this and knew it was Jesus.**

When Peter heard this, he jumped in the sea and swam to the shore. Peter is passionate, he is excited, he cannot wait to see Jesus. The other disciples followed in the small ship, dragging the net of fish.

Jesus already had some fish and was cooking breakfast for the disciples.

No one dared to ask Jesus who he was because by this time they knew it was the Lord.

After they ate, Jesus said to Peter,

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?"

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When the Rooster Crows

The word Jesus used here for love was “agape”. This is usually the highest form of love: selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial.

Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” But the word for love that Peter used was “phileo.” This meant brotherly love, a close friend.

Then Jesus responded, “Feed my lambs.”

Then again, Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?

Again, Jesus used the word for love, “agape”.

Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” But again, Peter used the word for love, “phileo.”

Then Jesus responded, “Feed my sheep.”

The third time, Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?”

But this time Jesus used a different word for love, “phileo.”

This time Peter is grieved; he is sad, uneasy. **Peter said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.**

But again, Peter used the word for love, “phileo.”

Then Jesus responded, “Feed my sheep.”

Why did Jesus ask Peter this three times? Probably because Peter denied him three times. But he also did this to show Peter his love. Peter responded differently than he had weeks before. He was not so bold; he hesitated to say he had selfless, unconditional love. But Peter changed dramatically and became bold later through the Holy Spirit, when he received strength from the Lord, not his own strength.

Jesus did this in front of all the disciples. Peter’s denial may have brought doubt to his relationship with Jesus, and the way others saw Peter. Jesus was intentional in showing his forgiveness in front of all the disciples. Jesus confirmed to Peter that he still has authority in the kingdom of God.

Peter has a purpose and a commission from Jesus to “feed my sheep.”

Jesus then went on to tell Peter how he would die. Jesus said he would stretch out his hands and be taken where he did not want to go. History tells us that Peter was also crucified; but he did not consider himself worthy to die the same death that Jesus did and asked to be crucified upside down. But by then, Peter had developed the agape, unconditional love for Christ, and by understanding the selfless, unconditional, sacrificial love of Christ for him, he was willing to give everything to Jesus.

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Jesus in the Story



Look at the power of what love can do. Understanding the love of God changed Peter's life.

Jesus loved us so much that he had the agape; the unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love for us.

John called himself "the disciple who Jesus loved."

Did Jesus love John more than all the other disciples?

No. Jesus did not love John any differently.

But John knew he was loved; he had an understanding of the love of Christ that perhaps not all the disciples understood.

John knew he was loved; his whole gospel speaks of the love of Christ, and John's writing is evident of his understanding of God's love. The Bible is a book of balance, and it has counterparts. Jesus fulfilled the scriptures in the Old Testament, and gave it a New Testament counterpart.

The three denials of Peter are balanced by the three questions that Jesus poses to Simon Peter.

Jesus told Peter that Satan "asked for you, that he may sift you like wheat." But Jesus said he prayed for Peter and when he returns to Jesus, he would strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32). That is exactly what happened. When Peter returned to Jesus, he understood his own mistakes and experienced the grace of Christ.

Jesus is "the Word made flesh….full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

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Crucify Him!

Matthew 27:1-2, 11-31
Mark 15:1-20
Luke 23:1-25
John 18:28-40; 19:1-16

Trial & Crucifixion

Study this story in all four gospels, combining information from all the gospels to tell the story. It is up to the teacher to choose a gospel from which to teach the story, and and you may choose to teach from either Matthew or John. Be sure to include the details of Pilate's wife only told in the book of Matthew.

The entire story of the trial and crucifixion of Christ is told in multiple lessons. This lesson will focus only on the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate and his sentencing. Tell the story to your class and explain the context in which the events took place. This lesson will attempt to combine all four gospels into a sequential timeline, but the timing of exactly what came first is not entirely clear.

Give a brief overview of recent events.

Triumphal entry: Just days before, Jesus entered Jerusalem with a triumphal entry, greeted by cheering crowds (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19).

Last Supper: He shared his last supper with his disciples in an upper room (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12).

He shared a meal with them that we now call communion.

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and tells of his betrayal (John 13:1-10).

Mount of Olives: They left the upper room and went into the mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) , then into the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is arrested.

Trial: Jesus is taken to the palace of the high priest where they put him on trial and find him guilty of death. He is then sent to the Roman governor to be sentenced.

This is where our lesson begins. Jesus has been accused by the priests and scribes, and tried by the high priest. He has been found guilty of death after a trial has gone on all through the night. In the morning the chief priests hold a consultation with the elders and scribes, and

Jesus is taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

In order to fully understand the situation, it is necessary to have an understanding of the government at the time of Christ. The Romans ruled over much of the civilized world at the time, and they were the ultimate authority in the land of Israel. However, they did not care to involve themselves in the particular matters of Jewish customs and laws. The Jews made their own rules regarding the religious laws and the law which Moses, the Mosaic law given to the people thousands of years before.

Even though the Jews ruled their own people through these laws, they did not have the authority to put Jesus to death. Their laws were ultimately subject to the Roman laws. Crucifixion was the punishment for Roman crimes. However, the Jews must submit to the Roman government, and therefore had to send Jesus to the Roman governor to request the death sentence for Jesus' "crimes."

All of this is taking place just before Passover. There is some debate among scholars about the exact timing of the death of Christ, and some events which changed the dates of Passover in this particular year in which Christ was crucified. It has been widely accepted that Christ was crucified on a Friday. It is clear from scripture that he rose on the first day of the week, which for the Jewish calendar would have been Sunday, as the Jews observe the sabbath on the seventh day of the week, Saturday.

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Crucify Him!

However, this is disputed at times because of the claim that,

Jesus would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). A death on Friday would only be two nights in the grave, and discussion has been made for a crucifixion on a Thursday.

This information is for the teacher, to be shared with the students at your discretion. However, it is important to convey to the students that Jesus was crucified on Passover, as he is the scriptural fulfillment of the sacrificial lamb.

Jesus was led away from the high priest to the hall of judgment. It was early in the day, and the Jews did not go into the judgment hall on this day or they would be considered "defiled" and not be allowed to eat the Passover supper.

Since they would not come in, Pilate had to go out to them.

This was an example of the way that the Pharisees observed the Mosaic laws. Technically, they were obeying the law by not going **into** the judgment hall with Jesus. But they missed the whole point. The point of that law would be that it was defiling to bring judgment on the day of Passover. They were still placing judgment on Jesus by taking him to the judgment hall and asking Pilate to sentence him. But *legally* the Pharisees were obeying the law by not going *into* the judgment hall. Their actions defeated the whole purpose of the law in the first place, which was the heart of the commandment. It all goes back to loving your neighbor as yourself. If you loved someone and understood the meaning of loving others, you would not be placing judgment.

Pilate came out of the judgment hall and asked them what accusation they were bringing against Jesus. Passover was not observed by the Romans, so this made no difference to Pilate.

The Jews told Pilate that they would not have brought Jesus if he were not guilty. Pilate said, You take him and judge him according to your law. But the Jews responded that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death (John 18:30-31). There is some debate as to exactly what this meant. Some scholars believe that they wanted to judge him by the Roman system because the Romans did not allow the Jews to sentence people to death. However, this is contradictory as there is evidence of stoning under Roman rule (Acts 7:59). Other scholars believe that they were speaking of the rules of sentencing on or near Passover.

Regardless, the result was that he would fulfill the prophecies that Christ would be "lifted up" on the cross and be crucified (John 12:32).

The Jews came to Pilate and said,

We found this man refusing to give taxes to Caesar, and saying he is Christ a King. They were lying about Jesus, and twisting his words. He told the disciples to pay taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25).

The chief priests and elders made many other accusations against Jesus and he answered nothing. Pilate asked him if he was going to answer. He said, They are saying many things against you. But Jesus still answered nothing, and Pilate was amazed.

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Crucify Him!

Pilate went back into the judgment hall and asked Jesus,

"Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." Jesus asked him, "Did you say this of yourself, or did others tell you this about me? "

Pilate said, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation delivered you to me; what have you done?"

Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world, or he would fight. **But His kingdom is not from here.**

Pilate asked him again, "Are you a king?"

Jesus said, "You say I am a king. I was born to come into the world to testify of the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice."

Pilate does not seem to understand.

He asks Jesus, "What is truth?"

Pilate goes back out to the Jews and says,

"I find no fault in this man," (Luke 23:4; John 18:38).

The people became furious. They told Pilate that Jesus stirred up all the people from Galilee to Jerusalem.

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he knew that Jesus would come under the jurisdiction of Herod. Herod would be the ruler of that region, and would have legal authority to make decisions regarding Jesus. So Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

Pilate was very hesitant to make a ruling and did not want to make the final decision, as a man's life was at stake. He gladly referred Jesus to Herod, hoping that Herod would handle the situation.

Herod was very excited to see Jesus. He had heard about Jesus, and was hoping to see him do some miracles.

Discuss:

How had Herod heard about Jesus?

Jesus was famous; news of Jesus had spread throughout the entire country.

Herod interrogated Jesus. He questioned him with many questions, and Jesus did not answer him one word. The chief priests and scribes stood and angrily accused Jesus. Herod and his military men mocked Jesus, and treated him with contempt.

Then they put a gorgeous robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate.

Discuss:

Why do you think they put this beautiful robe on him?

Was it to mock him and act as if he were a king?

After he was taken to Herod, Jesus was brought back to Pilate. Up until this time, Pilate and Herod had been enemies; but this event brought them together and they became friends.

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Crucify Him!

Pilate called all the chief priests and rulers together. He told the people, "you brought this man to me,

I have examined him, and found no fault concerning the things for which you accused him."

Pilate said, Neither Herod nor I found anything that he has done to be worthy of death. Pilate told them he would punish Jesus, and then release him.

It was the custom for the Roman governor to release a prisoner to the Jewish people at the feast of the Passover. The Jewish people got to choose which prisoner they wanted released. There was another man in prison at this time. His name was Barabbas, and he was in prison for starting an uprising and murdering someone during the revolt.

Pilate asked the people, Who do you want me to release to you? Barabbas? Or Jesus who is called Christ?

Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews? He said this because he knew that the chief priests had delivered him because they were envious of Jesus. But the chief priests persuaded the people to ask for the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus.

Pilate had Jesus scourged, or whipped. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head, and put a purple robe on him and mocked him. They said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they hit him with their hands.

He was crowned with a crown of thorns, and adorned with a regal robe. What was intended as mockery by the people essentially became the coronation ceremony for Jesus. His death and resurrection sealed his position as Lord and King.

Jesus came out wearing the robe and the crown of thorns, Pilate said, "Behold the man!"

The people all cried out, Away with this man (Jesus) ; release Barabbas! Then Pilate was still willing to release Jesus.

Again, the people cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

Then Pilate said, You take him and crucify him, I find no fault in him. But the Jews answered him,

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was ***more*** afraid. Was he already afraid before this? He went back in the judgment hall.

Pilate asked Jesus, *Who are you?*

But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then Pilate said, Will you not speak to me? Don't you know I have the power to crucify you, and the power to release you?

Then Jesus answered,,

"You would have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

After this, Pilate tried to release him.

The Jews told Pilate that if he released Jesus, he was not Caesar's friend. Pilate may have been concerned about his government position. They told Pilate that since Jesus made himself a king, he was speaking against Caesar.

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Crucify Him!

When Pilate heard this, he sat down in the judgment seat in a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha.

When Pilate sat down in this judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him.

She told him to "have nothing to do with that just man." She told Pilate she had suffered many things in a dream because of him.

Discuss:

How did Pilate's wife hear about Jesus?

He was famous, and everyone in Jerusalem had probably heard about this.

This would have been the headline news of the day. They did not have television or radio like we do now, but news would have spread and people would have heard about this.

It was a big deal. Everyone knew who Jesus was.

Pilate's wife was saying that she knew Jesus was innocent, and was warning Pilate not to have anything to do with him.

She is the only person to speak for, and not against, Jesus during this trial.

Pilate brought Jesus out, and said,

"Behold your King!"

But the people cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him!

Pilate asked the people a **third** time, Why? What evil has he done? I found no reason to sentence him to death; I will punish him and let him go.

But the people were angry. The crowd was loud, and demanding that he be crucified (Luke 23:22-23).

Pilate said, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests said, we have no king but Caesar.

Pilate saw that he could not convince the people, he took water and washed his hands in front of all the people. He said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it."

And the people answered, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

Wow. They do not realize what they are saying.

And Pilate, willing to please the people, sentenced him as they demanded, and released Barabbas to them (Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25).

The soldiers mocked him. They bowed down to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spit on him. They took a reed, or stick, and hit him on the head, pushing the thorns into his head.

Then they took the purple robe off of him, and put his own clothes back on him, and led him away to crucify him.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus was the lamb of the Passover. He was the lamb sacrificed for our sins, the symbol of all sacrifices in the law. He was the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies; he fulfilled every commandment of the law perfectly, and was sacrificed despite his innocence.

The exchange of the guilty man, Barabbas, for the innocent Jesus, was symbolic of what Jesus was going to do on the cross. **He sacrificed his life for everyone, for all have sinned - becoming sin for us (Romans 3:23).**

It was our weaknesses he carried and our sorrows that weighed him down. We receive forgiveness and grace as Jesus was wounded for transgressions (rebellions), and crushed for our sins. **He was beaten so we could be whole and have peace, and he was whipped so that we would receive healing** (Isaiah 53:4-7).

He was oppressed and afflicted - they beat him and tortured him. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and did not defend himself, or say a word when the accusations were brought against him (Isaiah 53:7, Isaiah 50:6).

This is the culmination of the whole Old Testament.

This was prophesied in the garden, when God told Adam that the seed of the woman would strike the head of the serpent, and the serpent would strike his heel. This is Jesus. Satan thinks he has won, but Satan did not understand that this death was only the beginning. Through his death and resurrection Jesus was able to share his Spirit with all of his believers so that they could accomplish all that he did and more (John 14:12).

The thorns that the ground brought forth as the result of the fall of man (Genesis 3:18) are now placed on Jesus as a crown of thorns to redeem those who put their trust in him.

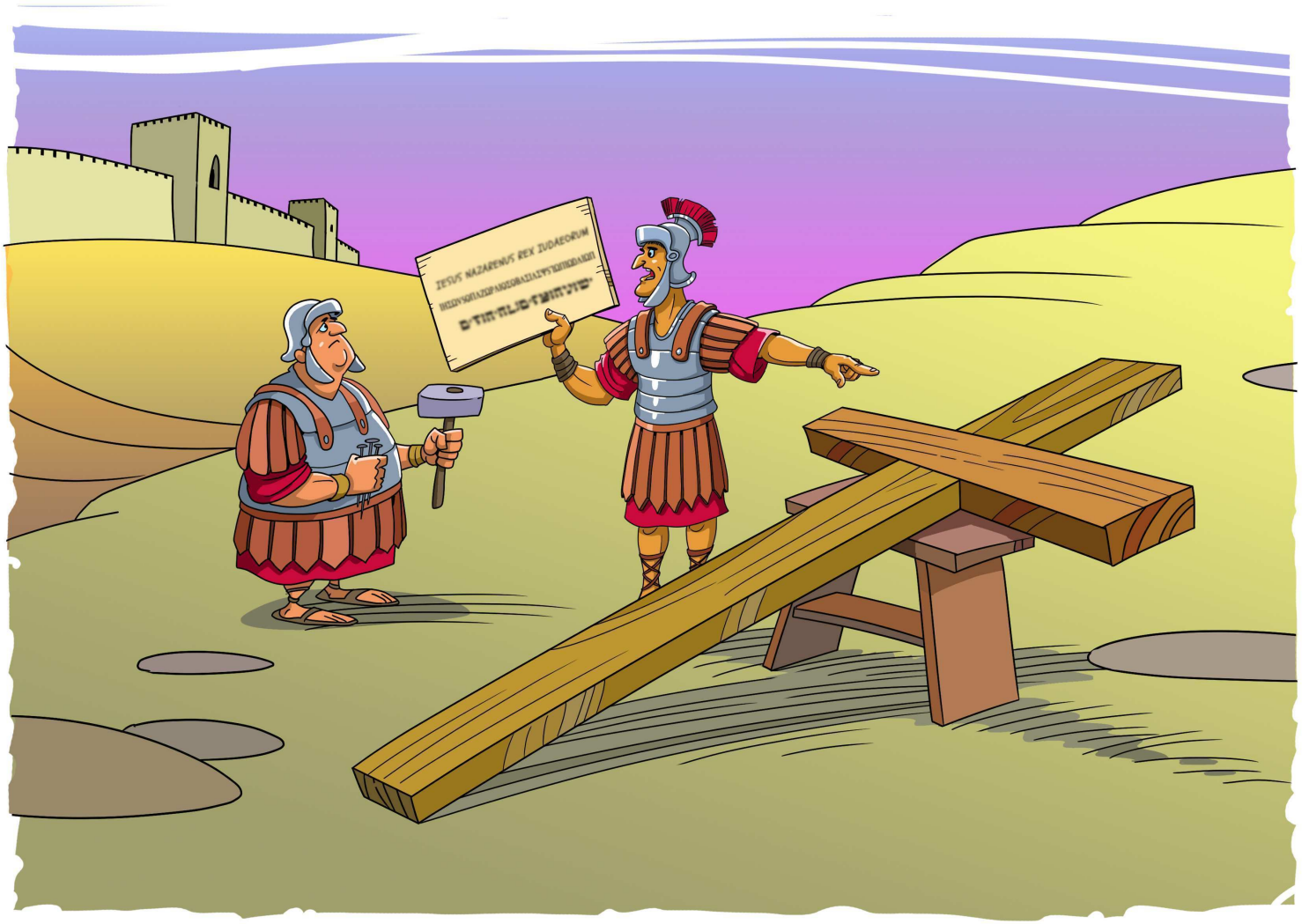
This crown of thorns becomes his coronation crown.

Jesus came to give us abundant life and his sufferings provided freedom for his followers (John 10:10).

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King of the Jews

Matthew 27:32-66
Mark 15:22-47
Luke 23:26-56
John19:17-42

Trial & Crucifixion

Before the lesson, study the story in all four gospels and combine information to tell the story, choosing one gospel from which to teach.

The entire story of the trial and crucifixion of Christ is told in multiple lessons. This lesson will focus only on the crucifixion of Jesus after his trial and sentencing before Pontius Pilate.

Give a brief overview of recent events.

Triumphal entry:	Just days before, Jesus entered Jerusalem with a triumphal entry, greeted by cheering crowds (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19).
Last Supper:	He shared his last supper with his disciples in an upper room (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). He shared a meal with them that we now call communion. Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and tells of his betrayal (John 13:1-10).
Mount of Olives:	They left the upper room and went into the mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) , then into the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested.
Trial:	Jesus is taken to the palace of the high priest where they put him on trial and find him guilty of death. He is then sent to the Roman governor to be sentenced.
Sentencing:	Jesus is sent to Pontius Pilate to be sentenced to death. Pilate sends him to Herod, Herod sends him back to Pilate, and ultimately Pilate gives in to the demands of the people and delivers Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus has been whipped, beaten, and sentenced to death. He is sent away to be crucified.

This crucifixion takes place during the day before Passover begins at sundown. There is some debate among scholars about which day of the week that Christ was crucified. Historically the church has widely accepted that Christ was crucified on a Friday. It is undisputed from scripture that he rose on the first day of the week, which would have been Sunday. The Jews observe the Sabbath on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, making Sunday the first day of the week.

The Friday death has been questioned because of the claim Jesus made that he would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). A death on Friday would only be two nights in the grave, and discussion has been made for the most likely date of crucifixion as Thursday.

A reading of John 19:31 says that this particular Sabbath was a high day.

In the Jewish culture, there were two types of Sabbaths. The weekly Sabbath began Friday at sundown, and continued until Saturday at sundown. But there is a second type of Sabbath: the holiday Sabbath. The Passover Sabbath falls on a particular day of the year (Nisan 15 of the Jewish calendar) rather than a particular day of the week. Whatever day of the week it falls on is treated like the Sabbath, and it is called a high Sabbath. It is believed that this particular year that the high Sabbath fell on Friday, and would make the most sense with the rest of the information we are given (Luke 23:54). The high Sabbath would have been Thursday night/Friday, and the weekly Sabbath would have followed immediately after on Friday night/ Saturday. This would mean Jesus died Thursday afternoon, leaving him in the grave Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night, and rising early in the morning on Sunday before sunrise.

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King of the Jews

This information is for the teacher, to be shared with the students at your discretion. However, it is important to convey to the students that Jesus was crucified on Passover, as he is the scriptural fulfillment of the sacrificial lamb.

Discuss:

Passover was a feast celebrated every year by the Jews as a reminder of God's deliverance of the Jews from Egypt.
The last of the ten plagues was the death of the first born. The Jews were told to kill a lamb and wipe the blood on the doorposts of their home. When the angel of death saw the homes with the "blood of the lamb" he would "pass over" those homes.

After Jesus left the court of Pilate, he had already suffered greatly. He had been whipped, and beaten and completely humiliated. A huge crowd is following Jesus, and many women who are following are crying and wailing. Jesus tells them not to weep for him, and prophesies the fall of Jerusalem (which followed in 70AD).

The Romans commanded a man who was passing by, Simon of Cyrene, and forced him to carry Jesus' cross. It is presumed that Simon was in Jerusalem for the Passover. He is the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21).

Cyrene was in modern day Libya, in northern Africa. Scholars believe that perhaps Simon was dark skinned, and this would have made him an obvious foreigner which could be why he was singled out to carry the cross of Christ. It is often thought that Jesus was struggling to carry the cross, and it would have been the Roman soldiers who forced Simon to carry the cross.

Another interesting thing to note is that the specifics of Rufus and Alexander. It is thought that Mark mentions these names specifically because the people who he was writing to when he wrote the gospel of Mark would have known Rufus and Alexander personally. The name Rufus is mentioned only one other place in the Bible when the apostle Paul mentions Rufus in Romans 16:13. It is assumed by scholars that this is the same Rufus that was the son of Simon the Cyrene. It would stand to reason that perhaps carrying this cross had such an impact on Simon that his family became Christians after the resurrection of Christ.

They brought Jesus to Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Everything in the Word of God has meaning, it is not always clear exactly what that meaning is and many people have tried to interpret with different theories.

This lesson presents some possible options as to the meaning of this name, but none of these have been proven.

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King of the Jews

Over the centuries, it has been debated as to why this area was called the place of the skull. It is said that to view this area from a distance, one can see tombs in the area in the shape of a skull. There are also theories that this is the place where Adam was buried. This would mean that the original Adam was buried here, and the new Adam, or second Adam, also called the "last Adam," Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:45) was crucified over his grave. The skull of Adam would lie at the foot of the cross, which could be representative of the new "tree of life." It could also be symbolic that the blood of Christ went into the ground to redeem it from the curse and also to redeem the original sin of Adam. However, some scholars suggest that the cataclysmic nature of the Genesis flood may have made it impossible to identify the location of Adam's grave.

Another possible option is that people believe that this is where David displayed the head of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:54). David cut off Goliath's head after he killed him, and carried his head to Jerusalem. It would have been likely displayed on the highest hill outside of Jerusalem, which would be Golgatha. Goliath's armor - the bronze coat of mail - has been said to be snake-like, thus comparing him to the serpent in the garden of Eden. If his head was displayed here, it is also thought that his skull would have been buried here as well.

This would symbolize the feet of Jesus - his heel - crushing the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).

They offered Jesus vinegar to drink with gall, and he tasted it, he would not drink it (Matthew 27:34). The gospel of Mark says they offered him wine mixed with myrrh and he refused (Mark 15:23). Some scholars believe that possibly this concoction was some sort of medication offered to him to help allude the pain, others believe it was offered for a mockery. Jesus said at the last supper that he would not drink any wine until the day that he drinks it new in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). They brought him to a place called Calvary, and this is where they crucified Jesus.

Discuss:

The Bible does not tell the exact process but we know from history.

His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and he was placed upright on the cross at the top of the highest hill in the center for all to see.

There were two other criminals on each side of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as the worst of the three as he is put front and center for his "crimes." The other criminals were called thieves; the same word is used for Barabbas, who was released, and called a robber. It is thought to be very possible that these other men on the crosses next to Jesus were also rebels, or revolutionaries just as Barabbas.

His clothing was removed, he was naked, and the soldiers cast lots over his clothes.

Discuss:

What does casting lots look like? They must have had some sort of dice or way to gamble over his clothing.

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Many people saw the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus was very well known in that day, and people were curious and came to see him on the cross. Many walked by and said, you were going to destroy the temple and build it back in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. The chief priests, elders, and scribes said,

"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down off the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let God deliver him; he said he was the Son of God."

Then one of the thieves on the cross said, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." But the other thief said, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are suffering the same condemnation? We are receiving the reward of our actions, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he turned to Jesus and said, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And Jesus responded, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus looked down on all of this from the cross and said,

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

There was a sign written above Jesus' head that read,

"Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews," (Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26: Luke 23:38; John 19:19). The sign was written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and many of the Jews read it.

The chief priests went to Pilate to tell him to change it. They told him not to write "The King of the Jews," but write that he said he was the King of the Jews.

But Pilate said, What I have written, I have written (John 19:20-22).

What Pilate wrote was the truth, and this was another way God confirmed to the Jews that this was their Messiah.

The land grew dark. It was the sixth hour, which was noon. It was dark from noon until 3:00 in the afternoon. What would this be like?

The disciple John (the disciple who Jesus loved) was standing by the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary, the aunt of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and John, he said, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John he said, "Behold your mother!" After this, John took Mary into his home as his mother.

At the ninth hour (3:00 in the afternoon), Jesus called out loudly. He said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabath'tha-ni? The people around did not understand what he was saying. They thought he was calling for Elijah. But what he actually said was,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). But sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). So when Jesus became our sin, God had to turn his back on Jesus; he had to forsake his own Son. This was probably the most difficult thing that Jesus went through. Because he went through this for us, God abandoned Jesus so that we would never be separated from God (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). And we know that Jesus is always with us (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus knew now that everything was accomplished. To fulfill scripture, he said, "I'm thirsty," and they dipped a sponge in vinegar, put it on a long stick and held it up to Jesus for him to drink.

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Discuss:

Talk about what this would have been like.

After Jesus received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished."

What was finished? This is the culmination of the entire scriptures up to this point. Jesus is God in the flesh as a human coming to redeem all of mankind. The relationship between God and man is now restored.

In this, the law has been fulfilled. Everything that had been held against man for centuries has now been finished. We are no longer under the law, and we no longer have a set of rules we have to fulfill to please God. The law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). Now we do not have to adhere to all the 613 laws of the Mosaic covenant, we only have to believe in Jesus and receive his righteousness (Romans 3:22; 5:17).

And then Jesus said, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."

Sin results in death (Romans 6:23). Jesus had no sin in him, but he took on our sin. He himself had no sin, and there was nothing that could make him die. He had to willingly die and voluntarily give up his life. If he had not done this willingly, our sins would not have been atoned. He accepted our sins by choice, and once he gave up the ghost, our sins died with him, and in the sight of God, we were crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20).

He gave up the ghost; he chose to die. Several things happened when Jesus did this.

1. **The veil of the temple was torn in two but was torn from the top to the bottom**. The main part of the temple represented the earth, and the interior holy of holies represented the heavens. This veil was a symbolic divide between heaven and earth (Hebrews 9:1-9).

Discuss:

The veil of the temple was huge. It was a large curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the holy place in the temple. It was torn from the top to the bottom; this would have been impossible to be done by a man.

This veil reached from the wall to wall and ceiling to the floor, and was 60-90 feet (18-27meters) tall. It would not have been humanly possible to tear this veil, especially in the way that it was torn. Men could have *possibly* torn it from bottom to top, but never from top to bottom. This would have only been an act of God, and the exact timing was the moment that Jesus gave up the ghost. The priests and temple leaders would have had to have seen the symbolism and impossibility of this task, yet it appears that their hardened hearts did not allow them to see the truth.

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Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond this veil once a year (Exodus 30:10; Hebrews 9:7). They went through a purification process before being allowed to enter, and history tells us that they were tied with a rope in case they died in the holy of holies. The other people would then be able to drag their bodies out if they died from impurity. The purification process of the priest signified that Christ as a sinless sacrifice would enter into God's presence and make atonement for us. This veil signified that man was separated from God by sin (Isaiah 59:2). This veil was torn the very moment that Christ died, indicating that now there is no longer any separation between God and man. The veil signifies Jesus' body, or flesh (Hebrews 10:20), and his death made a new way for us to reach God through our belief in Jesus Christ.

Others have thought that perhaps this not only gives believers access to the Father, but this also freed the Father to fill the earth (Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 6:3). God inhabited the ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies. Before Christ came, the Spirit of God could not inhabit the earth, only certain believers (Psalm 51:11). Once Christ died and the veil was torn, this allowed God to freely inhabit the earth and man to boldly approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

2. **There was an earthquake.** The earth shook, and the rocks broke!

   The centurion at the foot of the cross saw the earthquake and the things that were done, and he said, certainly this was a righteous man. (Luke 23:47). "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

3. **The graves were opened** and bodies of the saints (or godly people) arose, and after the resurrection of Jesus, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people (Matthew 27:52).

The Jews did not want the bodies to stay on the cross as the Sabbath was coming. So they asked Pilate to have their legs broken (to make them die quicker) and the bodies could be taken away.

The soldiers came and broke the body of the first thief, and the other. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. One of the soldiers pierced his side with the sword, and blood and water came out. **This was to fulfill another scripture that not one bone would be broken** (Psalm 34:20; Numbers 9:12). And it also fulfilled another scripture, that they will look on him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

When it was evening, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea who was also a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. When the centurion confirmed this, they gave the body to Joseph. Joseph had a new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. Joseph bought fine linen, and Nicodemus came with myrrh and spices and they wrapped the body in the linen with the spices.

Then they placed the body of Jesus in the new tomb where no one had ever been laid, and a great stone was rolled over the door of the tomb. Some of the women, including Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw where he was laid.

The next day, the chief priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. They told him that Jesus had said he would rise again on the third day. They were concerned that the disciples might come and steal his body and tell people he rose from the dead. They said this would be worse than before, and they requested that guards be set at the tomb.

Pilate gave his approval; the Jews sealed the stone, and guards were set to watch over the tomb.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus was the Lamb of the Passover. He was the lamb that was sacrificed for our sins, symbolizing all the sacrifices in the law. He was the fulfillment of the law.

So many of the things that are taking place in this story are a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Jesus was crucified between two thieves, or revolutionaries. This fulfilled Isaiah 53:12 that says that Jesus was numbered among the transgressors; some translations say wicked ones or evil doers. (Mark 15:28)

Soldiers gambled over Jesus' clothes, fulfilling a prophecy in Psalm 22:17-18. "I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." They could see his bones because he was naked, and there was a large crowd staring at Jesus.

Jesus was offered the vinegar mixed with gall, this fulfilled prophecy in Psalm 69:21; "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Gall is also translated bitter herb, or poison. There has been speculation as to a connection to Numbers 5:11-31; but the parallels are not completely understood.

There was the prophecy of no broken bones, and a pierced side.

His burial by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea, was also prophesied in Isaiah 53:9.

His crucifixion with the thieves, or criminals was prophesied in Isaiah 53:12: "....he was numbered with the transgressors."

He asked the Lord to forgive them (Luke 23:34); "...he made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

The people shook their heads (Matthew 27:39-40) saying if he was the Son of God, come down; fulfills Psalm 109:25.

When Jesus asked why God had forsaken him (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), it fulfilled Psalm 22:1.

Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," is a fulfillment of Psalm 31:5.

You may end the lesson on a somber note. And you may choose to follow up the lesson with the resurrection.

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An Empty Tomb

Matthew 28
Mark 16
Luke 24
John 20:1-23

Resurrection

Tell the story from the book of John, but bring in information from the other gospels.

The story of the resurrection can be challenging to reconcile all of the gospel accounts. The Word of God is inerrant, and the gospels are not inconsistent. After research and review of multiple commentaries, this is a possible conclusion.

In the gospel of John, it appears that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb alone. But Matthew and Mark mention that Mary Magdalene was with the other women at the tomb. One possible explanation could be that the women planned to meet at the tomb, and Mary Magdalene got there first. She could have run to tell the apostles what happened, and while she was gone the other women arrived. They would have entered into the empty tomb while Mary Magdalene was on the way to tell the disciples. Then it could have been the other women who saw the two angels that seem to be outside the tomb that Luke recorded in Luke 24:4-7. When these other women leave the tomb to go back to the others, Mary Magdalene arrives back at the tomb, now with Peter and John (John 20:3-10). After Peter and John leave, Mary Magdalene stays and sees the two angels inside the tomb, and she is the first one to whom the resurrected Jesus appears (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18). Later, as the other women go back to tell the apostles, Jesus appears to them also (Matthew 28:9-10). With these events being so closely onnected and happening so quickly, it would make sense that Matthew, Mark, and Luke may have listed Mary Magdalene among the group of women at the tomb. John's account simply adds more detail and does not contradict.

This story follows the death and crucifixion of Jesus. It is now Sunday, the first day of the week. The Sabbath is now over, and people can move freely. Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb *when it is still dark* (John 20:1) and sees that the stone has been removed from the tomb. If we go with the conclusion in the commentary, it seems that Mary saw that the stone was gone, and ran back to tell Peter and John that the tomb was empty, and that she did not know where they put Jesus' body.

Women were coming to the tomb bringing sweet spices to put on Jesus' body, and they got there as the sun was rising (Mark 16:2). Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary" are mentioned by name, but Luke 24:10 also mentions Joanna and "other women" so we do not know for sure how many. Luke tells us that on the way there, they were discussing how they were going to remove the stone.

But when they got there, they saw that the huge stone had been rolled away.

Matthew tells us that there had been a great earthquake, and it seems that this had happened before anyone arrived.

Discuss:

Do you think people felt this? Surely they must have.

Do you think people wondered what was happening?

The angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away, and was sitting on the stone. His face was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. Luke's account says there were two angels, and their clothes were shining.

Discuss:

The chief priests had asked the Romans to set guards around the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). They told Pilate, the Roman leader, that Jesus had said that he was going to rise again after three days. They were concerned that the disciples were going to steal the body and tell everyone that Jesus had risen. To them this would be worse than when he was alive.

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An Empty Tomb

Discuss:

There was an earthquake, and an angel with a face like lightning (that might be scary!) and very shiny WHITE clothes comes and sits on the huge stone after rolling it away.

Matthew 28:4 says the guards were so scared that they shook and fell like dead men. (They went later to give messages to the priest so we can assume they fainted.)

The angel told the women (Matthew 28:5-7) that Jesus was risen, and told them to come see. They went inside the tomb (Mark 16:5-6) and were afraid when they saw a young man dressed in long white clothes.

He told them not to be afraid, to look where Jesus had been laid, and to go tell the disciples *and Peter* that they would see him in Galilee.

It is interesting that Peter is the only name that the angel specifically mentions. Peter impulsively cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest in Jesus' defense, yet a short time later he denied him three times just as Jesus had predicted. Peter was very ashamed, and possibly the angel specifically mentioned Peter to reassure him after this denial.

Luke mentions two angels; it seems as if they appeared suddenly while the women were there. The women saw the angels, were afraid, and bowed down to the earth.

The angels asked, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" The angels told them women that Jesus was not there, but reminded them how he had told them that he would be crucified and rise again on the third day. The women went back to tell the disciples. They were afraid, and they did not tell anyone but ran straight to tell the disciples.

Discuss:

Why were they afraid?

This was incredulous. They were amazed and in shock; they saw an angel that told them Jesus was alive. But they were also afraid because of the authorities. If they would have had television, the crucifixion of Jesus would have been headline news. The disciples and followers of Jesus were afraid because they thought they might also be arrested, which is why Peter denied Jesus. After the crucifixion, the disciples did not know if the authorities would be coming after them too. If people found out that the body was gone, they were afraid of what the consequences might be for the followers of Jesus.

When the women told the disciples, they did not believe them. But two disciples wanted to see if it was true. Peter and John got up and ran to the tomb. John refers to himself in his gospel as "the other disciple," or "the disciple who Jesus loved." John tells the reader that John ran faster than Peter, and he was the first one to arrive at the tomb. Mary Magdalene must have followed them back to the tomb.

John bent down and looked into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. When Peter got there, he went into the tomb.

He saw the linen clothes, and the cloth that was wrapped around his head was wrapped separately by itself. Then John went into the tomb and when he saw, he believed.

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An Empty Tomb

There is something to this.

For some reason, seeing these linen cloths lying there made John believe.

Different commentaries have been written on this. On the day of the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus brought Jesus to the tomb. Nicodemus brought a 100 pound mixture of spices and ointments, and they wrapped Jesus' body in the linen cloths. These would have been strips of cloth used to wrap the corpse, in the same way that Lazarus was wrapped when Jesus told the people to unwrap him. Joseph and Nicodemus would have put the spices and ointments on the linen. Some commentaries believe that the spices and ointment would have hardened when they dried, leaving a hard shell. When they looked in and saw the cloths, lying there, they would have been hardened and untouched in the shape of a body. If someone would have stolen the body and removed the cloths, they would have had to have been unwrapped or cut. But if the linen was still *in the shape of a body* that could explain why John saw, and believed. He would have seen what appeared to be an empty mummy. The head wrap would have been separate from the body, and it is not clear whether it was a hardened shell, or simply wrapped separately.

After they saw the linen and believed, Peter and John left, but Mary Magdalene stayed behind (John 20:11). Mary was weeping, and she looked inside the tomb.

When she looked in, there were two angels in white sitting there: one at the head, and the other at the feet of where Jesus had been. They asked her why she was crying, and she told them it was because someone took Jesus, and she did not know where they laid his body.

After Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. He asked her why she was weeping, and who she was looking for. She thought Jesus was the gardener, and told him that if they had taken him somewhere, to tell her where he was, and she would get him and take him away.

Then Jesus said, "Mary."

When he called her by name, she recognized him. She turned around and said, "Rabboni," which means, Master.

Then Jesus tells her not to touch him, because he has not yet ascended to the Father. This is interesting; he appeared to Mary before he went to the Father. He told her to go to the disciples, and tell him that he would ascend to the Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.

Mark 16:9 tells us that Mary Magdalene was the first person that Jesus appeared to after he was risen. After this, Mary Magdalene went back and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus and what he said to her. But Mark 16:11 tells us that they did not believe her.

Soon after, Jesus appeared to some of the other women as they were going back to tell the disciples. It isn't completely clear if he had ascended to the Father before this, but the other women held him by the feet and worshiped him (Matthew 28:9).

Meanwhile, the guards who had seen the angel and the earthquake went back to tell the chief priests what happened.

Discuss:

What would you do if you were a guard?

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An Empty Tomb

The priests and elders held a meeting, and then gave large amounts of money to pay off the soldiers. They told the soldiers to tell everyone that Jesus' disciples had come and stolen the body while the guards were asleep. And then they told the guards that if the Roman governor heard about it, they would calm him down and keep the guards out of trouble. The guards took the money and did what they were told and the Jews believed the story (Matthew 28:11-15).

Discuss:

The chief priests knew what had really happened and still did not believe on Jesus.

Jesus appeared a few other times to his disciples, and it seems it was that day. He appeared to see people who were walking and talking about the events of the week. They did not recognize him until they had been with him most of the day and they ate bread with him.

After that he appeared to the eleven disciples while they were eating (Mark 16:14). But Jesus reprimanded them for their unbelief and hardness of heart that they did not believe the people who told them he was alive.

Discuss:

According to Jesus, his own disciples had hardened hearts. They had been with him all the time, and yet they still had hardened hearts that manifested in unbelief.

He appeared to the disciples the same night he was risen, and this could have possibly been the same instance recorded in Mark 16:14, but is recorded in John 20:19. This time John specifies that the doors were shut. The disciples were all together and they were hiding because they were afraid of the Jews.

Discuss:

What were they afraid of?

Jesus came and stood in the room with them. They did not open the door, he just appeared. Jesus is able to do things in his resurrected body that he was not able to do before. He appears and says, "

Peace be to you." Then he showed the disciples his (nail-pierced) hands and his (pierced) side.

He sent his disciples as the Father has sent him. He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Ghost.

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Jesus in the Story



Jesus had to die to save us from our sins. Because of Adam's sin, every man is born into sin.

But in Christ, all who believe are made alive. Jesus had to be raised from the dead.

If he died and was not resurrected, we would still be in our sins, and, "most miserable." If Jesus would have stayed in the grave, then our faith would be in vain, and we would still be responsible for our sins. But through his grace and resurrection, those who believe on Him are saved by faith.

There were many things in the Old Testament that have New Testament counterparts.

Sin began in a garden, and Jesus had to be arrested in a garden after submitting to the will of the Father. After the resurrection Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for the gardener.

Because Jesus triumphed over death, it brought us victory and allowed believers to walk in a new life.

Our old sinful man is crucified with Christ, and we are no longer slaves to sin but free from sin (Romans 6:3-7).

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Unable to Speak

Luke 1:5-25; 39-80

Birth of Jesus

The story begins as we are introduced to Zacharias the priest. He and his wife, Elisabeth, both came from a lineage of priests. We are told that they were both righteous before God, they obeyed the commandments and laws.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were older. Elisabeth had not been able to have any children, and now she was too old to have a baby.

Zacharias was in the temple performing his priest duties; he had been chosen by lot to burn incense when it was his turn.

Discuss:

Do you know what it means to be chosen by lot?

One way of choosing lots is when pieces of paper or small objects are placed into a container. Each person takes one piece of paper or an object. One of the objects or papers is different from the others, and the person who chooses the one that is different is chosen for a specific purpose.

While Zacharias was in the temple, a large number of people were outside of the temple praying.

Inside the temple, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias; the angel was standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Zacharias was in the Holy Place. This was a special place inside the temple, but not the inner part. The most inner part of the temple was called the Holy of Holies, and only the high priest was able to enter once a year. Zacharias was standing in an area that was not very large, so where the angel appeared was very close to Zacharias.

As soon as Zacharias saw the angel, he was scared and very afraid.

How would you react if an angel appeared suddenly?

The angel said to Zacharias, “Fear not.” All throughout the Bible when angels appear, they almost always said, Fear not, or don’t be afraid.

The angel tells Zacharias,

“Fear not: your prayer is heard, and your wife Elisabeth is going to have a son, and you will name him John.”

The angel continues: He tells Zacharias that he will have joy and gladness, and many people will rejoice when he is born. John will be great in God’s sight, and he will not drink wine or strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Ghost even in his mother’s womb. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord. He will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to wisdom of the just, and make the people ready for the Lord.

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Unable to Speak

Discuss:

Wow! This is going to be a really special baby! He is going to grow up to be a great man of God with a special call on his life. He will be joyful, and make others joyful. He will be filled with the Holy Ghost - before he's even born! He will turn people's hearts back to the Lord, and make people ready for the Lord. Discuss this.

What would you think if an angel came and told you this great news? It's very specific. He appeared and told the exact things that John would do.

Zacharias has obviously been praying about this; the angel says,

"Your prayer has been heard." But, Elizabeth is an old lady; she is too old to have children. This is probably what Zacharias was thinking about, and he seems to put more value on this than the words of the angel. Not only has his prayer been heard, his child is going to be the man that was prophesied about in Isaiah that will prepare the way for Jesus! This is amazing news.

Zacharias does not readily accept the words of the angel. He is skeptical.

He asks, "How will I know this? I am an old man, and my wife is very old.

This angel is a special messenger sent from God. Zacharias must have known that this was an unusual happening. He knew that this was not a human, and that this whole situation was supernatural. Yet, he still questioned God. Zacharias was a righteous man, but he was looking more at the circumstances than considering the words of the Lord. Even people who are following the Lord do not always have the right priorities, and do not always place value on the things of the Lord above all else.

It does not specifically say, but the reader can almost feel that the angel appears to be somewhat indignant. He answers Zacharias and says,

"I am Gabriel, that stands in the presence of God; and am sent to speak to you and you these glad tidings" (good news!)

He's basically saying, I am an angel who stands in God's presence. That means he is an important messenger. He is saying that GOD sent him to speak to Zacharias and give him this exciting news.

And what does Zacharias do? Does he value the words of a messenger who has been in the presence of God? Someone with a special message sent to him from God?

Gabriel continues,

"You (Zacharias) will be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these words are performed, *because you did not believe my words*, which will be fulfilled in their season."

This is quite a statement. Zacharias will not be able to speak until the baby is born, because he doubted and did not believe the words of Gabriel. This makes the offense of unbelief much more serious than we often think it is.

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Discuss:

Why do you think that Gabriel said that Zacharias would not be able to talk? Why would this matter?

Our words are SO important. We have creative power in our words, and are able to speak death and life with our tongues (Proverbs 18:21). It is possible that Zacharias could have messed all of this up. If he had spoken his doubt and unbelief, and convinced Elisabeth of the same, this whole situation could have been different. Gabriel was going to ensure that God's promises would be fulfilled. As humans, we actually have the ability to negate the promises and power of God in our lives through our words.

Did Zacharias doubt the fulfillment of his prayers? It seems that he was no longer expecting them to be answered (verse 18).

Meanwhile, there is a large crowd waiting outside for Zacharias. This was a special ritual, and they were wondering why he was taking so long in the temple. When he came outside, he could not speak to them. They all thought he must have seen a vision in the temple because he made signs to them, but couldn't talk.

Zacharias fulfilled his days at the temple, and then he went back to his house. As Zacharias could not speak, we are not sure if Elisabeth knew about the visit from the angel or what he said. But after a time, Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth knew that she was going to have a baby. She hid herself for five months, and said that the Lord answered her prayers and took away her disgrace from people.

Six months later, the angel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her that she would have a baby who would be the Son of God, and his name would be Jesus. Her response was different; she was not doubtful. (This lesson will not cover the details of verses 26-38, as those will be covered in a different lesson.)

Gabriel had told Mary that Elisabeth, her cousin, was expecting a baby and that she was already in her sixth month. After Gabriel visited Mary, she quickly went into the city of Judaea to stay with Elisabeth. As soon as Mary came in the door and Elisabeth heard her, the baby inside Elisabeth jumped, and the baby was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps Elisabeth knew the prophecies about John, and the message from Gabriel. She knew something was happening when Mary came in. Elisabeth said, you are blessed among women, and blessed is the child of your womb. And Elisabeth knew that the mother of her Lord had come to her.

She told Mary that her baby had leaped for joy in her womb, and that Mary was blessed *because she believed*. Just as Zacharias had been made dumb because he did not believe, Mary was blessed because she did believe.

Mary spends some time praising God and speaking to Elisabeth about the prophecies. Then she stayed with Elisabeth for three months before going home.

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Unable to Speak

It came time for Elisabeth's baby to be born, and she had a son. Her neighbors and cousins heard how the Lord had shown mercy on her, and they rejoiced with her.

At this point, several of the prophecies have already been fulfilled. **Elisabeth conceived a child, he was filled with the Holy Ghost in the womb when Mary visited, and everyone rejoiced when the baby boy was born.**

On the eighth day, the baby boy was circumcised. This is the day when a name would be given to a boy. The people called him Zacharias, after his father.

But Elisabeth said, "No. He will be called John." All the people were surprised and questioned Elisabeth because she did not have any relatives named John. They then made signs to Zacharias to ask him what to call the baby.

It seems that perhaps Zacharias was not just dumb, but it was very possible that he was also deaf. If he were able to hear, it seems like they would have just spoken to him, and asked him about the baby's name. But they had to use signs to speak to him. Zacharias then asked for something to write on.

They brought him a tablet and he wrote "His name is John." All the people were very surprised, and ***immediately*** Zacharias' tongue loosened and he was able to speak, and he praised God.

This scared and amazed everyone. This news of what had happened spread quickly and everyone in Judaea heard what had happened. They all wondered what kind of man John would grow up to be. They knew something special was happening, and the hand of the Lord was upon John.

Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost also. He began to prophesy, and connected the Old Testament prophecies concerning John and Jesus. He referred to the prophecies (Isaiah 9:2; 40:3, 42:16; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4) that John would be the one to prepare the way of Jesus, and that Jesus would bring light to those who sit in darkness, and guide into the way of peace.

This John grew up to be John the Baptist.

He became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until it came time for him to appear publicly to Israel. He brought the people to repentance and ushered in the ministry of Jesus.

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Jesus in the Story



The Old Testament parallels the New Testament.

Just as Elijah came before Elisha, John the Baptist came before Jesus. Elijah is often referred to as the fiery prophet because of the judgment he showed; he represented the Old Testament law. Elisha came afterwards and had a different type of ministry; he was representative of the New Testament - the New Covenant.

There are many prophecies of John the Baptist in the Old Testament.

Some of the prophecies include: Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 3:1-3, 4:5-6.

Malachi refers to Elijah coming to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers before the coming of the day of the Lord.

This reference to John the Baptist goes directly with what was spoken to Zacharias by Gabriel. Zacharias would have known these prophecies but he became distracted when he looked at the circumstances rather than what had been spoken in the Word of God.

In the New Testament, there were also many references made to show that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies:

Matthew 3:1-12; 11:7-4

Mark 1:1-8; Mark 9:11-13

Luke 1:8-9, 13-17, 76-79; Luke 3:1-16; Luke 7:24-29

John 1:6, 29-34; John 3:27-36; John 5:31-35

John the Baptist was a very important fulfillment of prophecy, and had to come first to usher in the ministry of Christ.

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A Child Is Born

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20

Birth of Jesus

Begin in Luke 1:26.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. At this time, Nazareth was a small town with a population of around 200-400.

He came to a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Her fiancee was of the house of David; this means he was a descendant of King David.

The angel came to Mary and said,

"Greetings, you are highly favored! The Lord is with you: you are blessed among women!" She was troubled at this saying, and wondered what kind of a greeting this was and what it meant.

This is quite a statement. An angel comes to you - that is shocking in itself - and then tells you that you are blessed and highly favored. It sounds like she has been selected for a special purpose and she was probably wondering what that meant.

Then the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God!"

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and name him JESUS. He will be great, and called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Discuss:

"Of his kingdom there will be no end." What does this mean?

All earthly kingdoms come to an end. Throughout history we see the rise and fall of kingdoms.

This baby is going to be a different type of man. This baby is "The Son of the Most High," and will be king forever.

Mary asks a question. If you remember our story about Zacharias, he asked a doubting question. Mary is not asking a doubting question, but more of a "how" question. She is not married, and asks how she will be able to have a baby.

Then the angel explains. He says,

"The Holy Ghost will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; the holy thing that is born of you will be called the Son of God."

This is amazing; think about this. The power of the ***Highest.*** The highest power in the universe will conceive in her the Son of God.

Then the angel tells her about her cousin, Elisabeth, who had been barren for many years. He tells her that Elisabeth is already six months along.

"With God, nothing shall be impossible."

Look at Mary's response. She doesn't doubt, she doesn't question. She just says,

"Be it unto me according to your word." This is quite a response. She is saying, I will accept whatever you have said.

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A Child Is Born

But there is ***so much more.*** We read in John 1:1 that:

Jesus is the *Word*. He is the Word of God. He is the summation of every prophecy in the Old Testament that was ever written. There are so many prophecies and reflections of the Old Testament to the New Testament. There are so many of these treasures in the Old Testament that the average reader does not even recognize. Jesus is all over the Bible, and he is hidden in the stories, psalms, and prophecies (1 Corinthians 2:7).

When Mary says, "*Be it unto me according to your word,*" all the words about Jesus that have been prophesied and spoken into the world for thousands of years, have now become a seed (Genesis 22:18, 26:4; Psalm 89:4, 29, 36; Isaiah 65:9). This seed, made up of all the words spoken of the coming Messiah, has now become the **very** seed that will conceive in Mary the Son of God - ***because she believed and accepted it***. This is so powerful.

The angel leaves Mary, and she hurriedly leaves to see Elisabeth.

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Go to Matthew 1:18.

Mary is engaged to a man named Joseph. They are not yet married, but Mary is now expecting a child through the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph finds out that Mary is expecting a baby that he knows is not his child. He clearly cares about her, and does not want to embarrass her and make an example out of her, so he has decided to just quietly leave.

For a woman in this time who was not married but expecting a baby, it was a very disgraceful thing. According to the Mosaic law, she could have been stoned to death.

While Joseph was thinking about these things and trying to decide what to do, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel told Joseph not to be afraid to marry her, because she was expecting a baby that was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Then the angel told Joseph that Mary would have a son, and call his name JESUS: and he would save his people from their sins.

These things were done to fulfill prophecy that was spoken by Isaiah that a virgin will conceive and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Joseph woke up, and did as the angel had told him to, and took Mary as his wife. They were not truly married in the fullest sense until she brought forth her first born son, and called him Jesus.

****

Luke 2:1

In those days, there was a decree from Caesar Augustus that "all the world" had to be taxed. This "all the world" means the entire Roman Empire, which ruled over a huge portion of the modern world at that time.

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A Child Is Born

Discuss:

Even though they were living in Israel, they had been conquered by Rome, and they were part of the Roman Empire. Talk about what this would mean.

They had their own government, which was King Herod. But their kings and rulers were ultimately subject to the Roman rulers as final authority.

Everyone had to go back to their hometown to pay taxes. Joseph was of the house of David, so he and Mary left the city of Nazareth and went into Judaea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. She was very much expecting, and while they were there it came time for the baby to be born.

They tried to go to an inn, or a hotel, but they were all full. Everyone had come to pay their taxes; it was a decree, which meant it was a mandate, and not optional. So the city was very busy, and there was no room in the inn.

Discuss:

Mary is having the most important baby that has ever been born; she is having the Son of God.

There's no room at the hotel for them, so she had to go into the barn.

She probably did not have a doctor, or a nurse, it was probably just she and Joseph. And they did not have any baby blankets, so they wrapped him tightly in some cloth and laid him in the manger.

It was probably dirty; there probably was not a place to give the baby a bath.

She did not have a bed for him, so she laid him in the feeding trough.

It was probably full of hay, and that is where the animals ate.

Nearby, out in a field, there were some shepherds sleeping in the field, watching over their sheep flocks at night.

Discuss:

Why would they be outside at night watching their sheep?

What would they be doing?

They might be doing this in case a wolf or another wild animal came to get the sheep.

The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and the glory of the Lord was shining all around them.

Imagine this! You are outside at night - it is very dark and all of the sudden an angel appears and lights up everything around you! The shepherds were very afraid.

BUT - what do the angels always say? "Fear not!" Don't be afraid! This time the angel was excited! He said,

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A Child Is Born

"I'm bringing you good news of great joy which is for *all* people."

Who did Jesus come for? Just some people? No, he came for ALL people.

Then the angel said, "In the city of David is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. This is how you will know you found him, you will find the baby, wrapped tightly in clothes, lying in a manger."

Then, all of the sudden the whole sky lit up! There was a large number of angels - a multitude of the heavenly host - all praising God, and saying, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."**

Then the angels left.

Discuss:

What would you do? Would you wonder what was going on? Would you go see what they were talking about? The shepherds said to each other, let's go to Bethlehem and see what the angels were talking about.

So, they hurried! They found Joseph, Mary, and the baby lying in a manger.

Then they went and told everyone what had happened.

Would you? Would you go tell everyone if the sky lit up and angels were singing and telling you that there was great news that a baby had been born? And then it was true, and you went and saw the baby?

Everyone that heard the shepherd's news wondered about those things. Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Then the shepherds went back and glorified and praised the Lord for all the things they saw.

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Jesus in the Story



This IS Jesus!

Since before the world was created, it was always God's plan to bring about salvation for his people through Jesus (Revelation 13:8).

When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord already had a plan to save mankind. His plan at the very beginning was for Jesus to come in the flesh as a man and be crucified to save us all.

At the fall of man, Satan took man's authority from him. God could not just immediately bring Jesus into the world at that time to save mankind. Man had been given authority, or dominion, over the earth, but he gave his authority to Satan through sin. God created the world through words, and he had to bring Jesus into the earth through words. For thousands of years words were spoken about Jesus; how he would come, what he would do, what he would be like, what his purpose would be. The words had to be spoken by humans because they were given authority over the earth.

These words had to be hidden in mysteries, otherwise Satan and the rulers of this world would have never crucified Jesus if they would have been able to understand God's plan (1 Corinthians 2:8).

When the angels lit up the sky, they were saying, this is great news! The Son of God is finally here!

God is sending peace, and goodwill to men! Mary accepted the angel's words along with all the words and prophecies spoken over the years and they manifested in human form. Jesus is now here on the earth to free man from sin, and restore everything that was lost through the fall to those who believe.

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From the East

Matthew 2

Birth of Jesus

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judaea in the days when Herod was the king. After Jesus was born, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. They saw **his** star in the east, and came to worship him. They must have been studying the stars to notice a difference in the night sky, and somehow they knew that this star was the star of the newborn king.

Discuss:

These men were believed to be kings, or dignitaries.

They were definitely of great importance as they came with very expensive gifts.

It would have been known that they were in town; they likely came with a great caravan.

They had traveled a great distance and had to have carried many supplies for the journey.

Men of this great status most likely would have servants that accompanied them on this long journey. There were probably multiple camels, animals, and people with them.

People would have seen them come into town and were probably talking about these men.

We do not know the number of wise men. Tradition holds that there were three, possibly because of the number of gifts. Scripture says the wise men came from the east; many believe that they are a New Testament parallel of the Queen of Sheba. Just as she came to Solomon bringing gifts and seeking his wisdom, these wise men came bringing gifts to the newborn king. It is believed that Sheba may have been located in what is now modern-day Yemen, or possibly Ethiopia. Isaiah seems to indicate that the wise men came from this same area (Isaiah 60:6). The Bible does not speak specifically to these details, nor does it mention how many wise men there were.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they began asking questions. Where is the new king?

There was a birth, and they were looking for a new baby that will grow up to be the King of the Jews. They would have to be of some importance to get the attention and get an audience with the king.

Herod is the presiding king. Usually, kings are chosen from family lineage. Herod would have expected that his son would be the next king. If people are coming looking for a new king, this would be very disturbing news to an existing king. It seems that someone has been born that will grow up to lay claim to his crown. Herod, and everyone in Jerusalem, was troubled with this news.

Herod got all the scribes and chief priests together. They would know the prophecies of the coming Messiah.

Herod demanded them to tell him where Christ would be born.

It says “demanded.” Herod is upset. He is the king, and he is very angry, as well as scared, and feels very threatened. He is demanding to know where to find this **“King of the Jews.”**

The priests and scribes told him that the prophet wrote that he would come out of Bethlehem of Judaea (Micah 5:2).

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From the East

Once Herod heard this information, he called the wise men privately and asked them ***when*** the star appeared. Then he told them to go to Bethlehem and look for the baby. He told them to come back and tell him after they found him, so he could go and worship him too.

Does Herod really want to worship this new king? No, he wants to kill him.

After speaking with the king, the wise men left.

This star they saw in the east went before them and came and stood over where Jesus was. That is an amazing thing! They rejoiced when they saw the star, and they went into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother. They fell down and worshipped him.

Then they opened their treasures and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were very expensive presents, ones that would be gifts for a king.

It is believed that Mary and Joseph were not wealthy. What we know is that Joseph was a carpenter, so they seemingly lived a very humble lifestyle. It is speculated that these gifts helped them in their travels to Egypt and setting up a life in Nazareth, but the Bible does not say.

God appeared to the wise men in a dream and told them not to go back to Herod. Bethlehem is located approximately nine kilometers (5.6 miles) from Jerusalem. But the wise men went back home a different way.

After the wise men left, the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to get up and flee, or run away, into Egypt. The Lord told Joseph that Herod was going to try to kill Jesus, so to stay in Egypt until God gave him word to leave. They left in the middle of the night and fled to Egypt and stayed there until they heard that Herod had died. This fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy where it says the Lord called his son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

After Herod figured out that the wise men were not going to come back, he knew he had been deceived and he was ***very*** angry. He had all the babies in Bethlehem and surrounding areas killed that were two years old and younger. He wasn't sure exactly when the Messiah had been born, but the wise men had told him when the star appeared.

This was a horrific tragedy, and a sad time to be living in this region. It is not necessary to elaborate on this with the students. Some translations say Herod only killed the boy babies, other translations are vague.

This fulfilled the prophecy spoken of in Jeremiah 31:15 where it speaks of a great weeping and deep sadness for the loss of children.

After Herod was dead, the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream. **He told Joseph to go back to Israel, because everyone who was trying to kill Jesus was dead.**

Joseph took Mary and Jesus and went back to Israel. But he heard that Herod's son, Archelaus, was the king instead of Herod, and he was afraid to go near. He was warned of God in a dream and went into the region of Galilee and came to live in a city called Nazareth. This was actually the city where Mary was living when Gabriel appeared to her, and the city that Joseph and Mary left when they went to Bethlehem to be taxed. Apparently this was their hometown.

This fulfilled another prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

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Jesus in the Story



There are many prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament, and many things in the Old Testament are also foretold and patterned in the New Testament.

Numbers 24:17 says that a Star will come out of Jacob.

Micah 5:2 says that a ruler will come out of Bethlehem.

The star is representative of God's glory. This glory guided the Israelites through the wilderness as a pillar of fire by night. The star is the New Testament counterpart that guided the gentiles to Christ by night.

Psalm 72:15 speaks of the Messiah to be given the gold of Sheba.

Isaiah 60:6 says that a multitude of camels will cover (the Messiah), and they will come from Sheba bringing gold and incense and showing the praises (worshiping) the Lord.

One Old Testament counterpart for the wise men could be the Queen of Sheba. She was a gentile woman who came from what could be modern day Yemen or Ethiopia to see King Solomon. She came from the east bringing gifts to a king, and seeking his wisdom.

Another Old Testament reflection could also be the connection between Daniel's three wise friends being taken captive by a gentile (non-Jewish) king and carried east. Now you have wise gentile kings return to the King of the Jews.

Matthew 2:23 says that this was a fulfillment of the prophecy that Jesus will be called a Nazarene. This comes from Isaiah 11:1,10. The Hebrew word for Branch is Netzer, which is where Nazareth gets its name.

Up to this point, the Gentiles had not had any hope of a Messiah. Jesus came to fulfill God's promises to Israel, but he came as a light to the Gentiles also (Luke 2:30-32).

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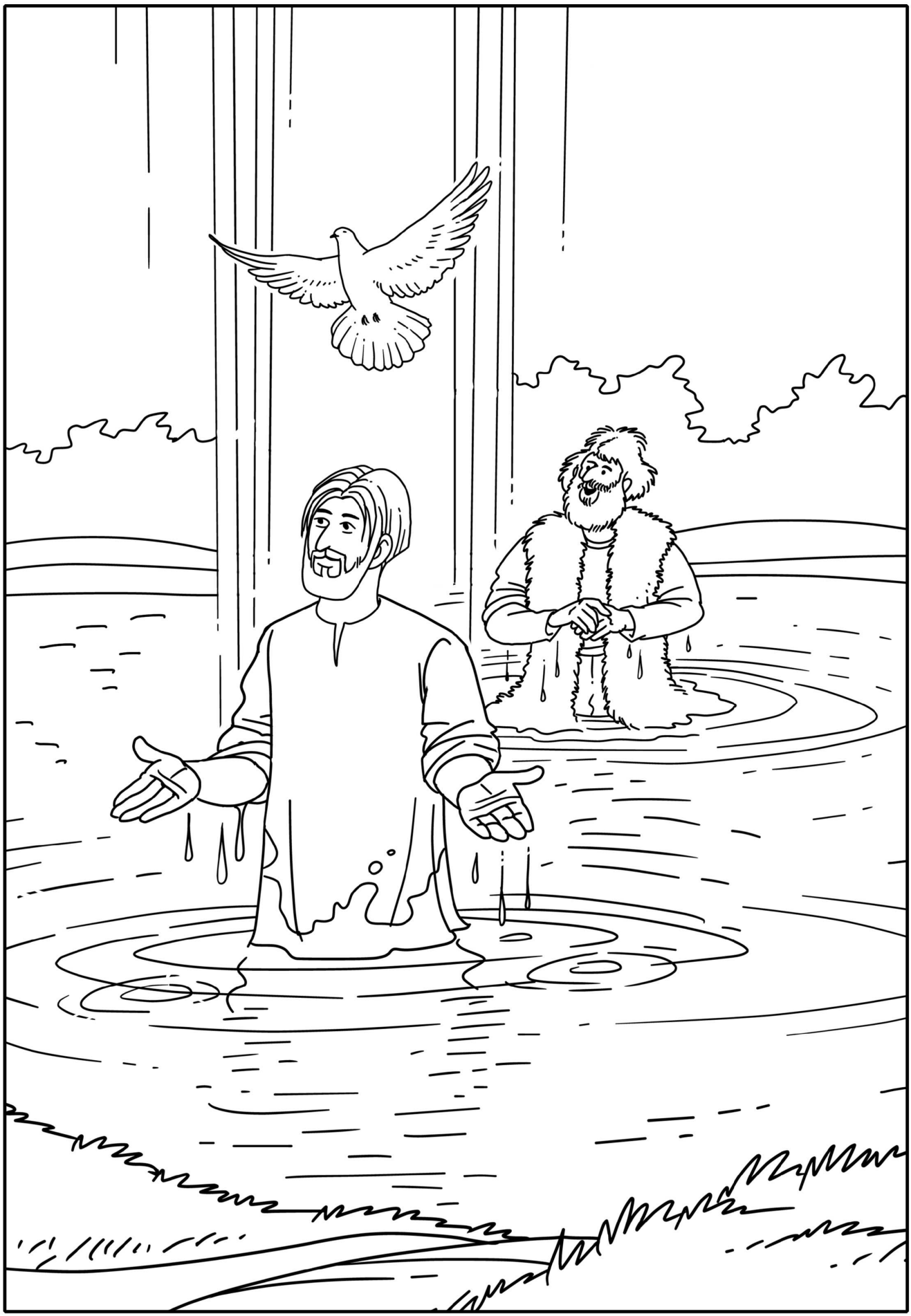
Appendix

Coloring Pages

Lesson Questions

Memory Verses

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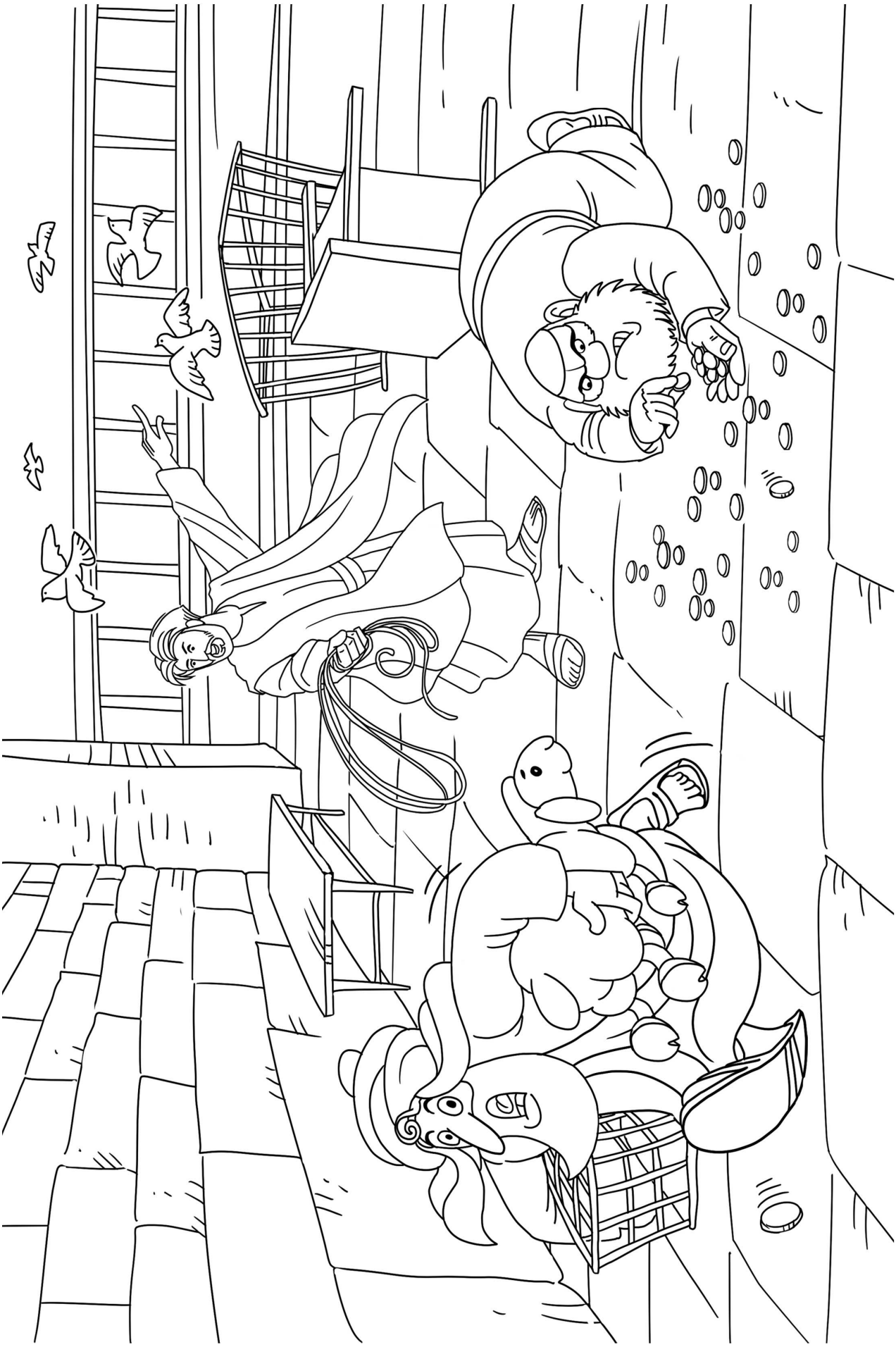


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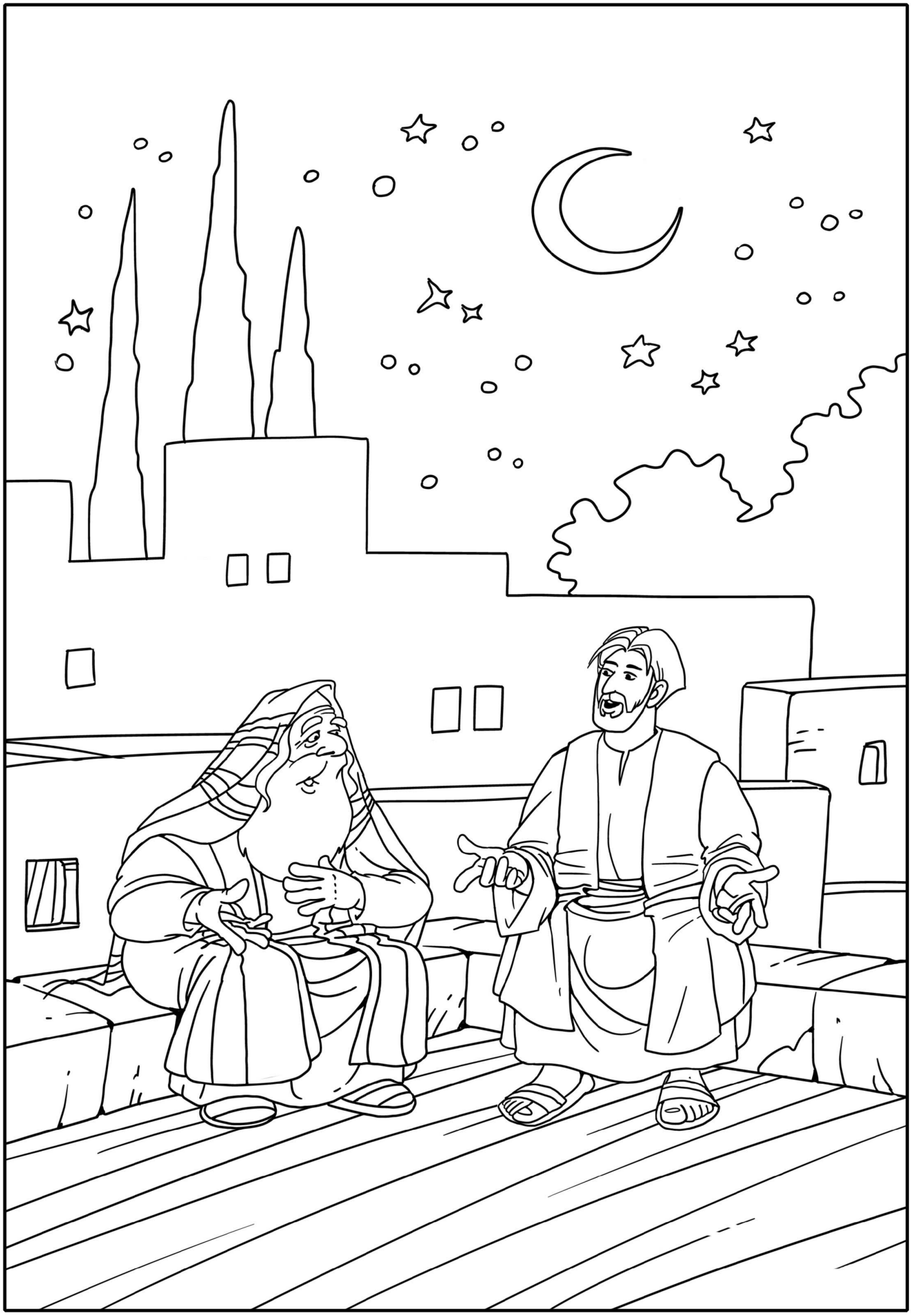


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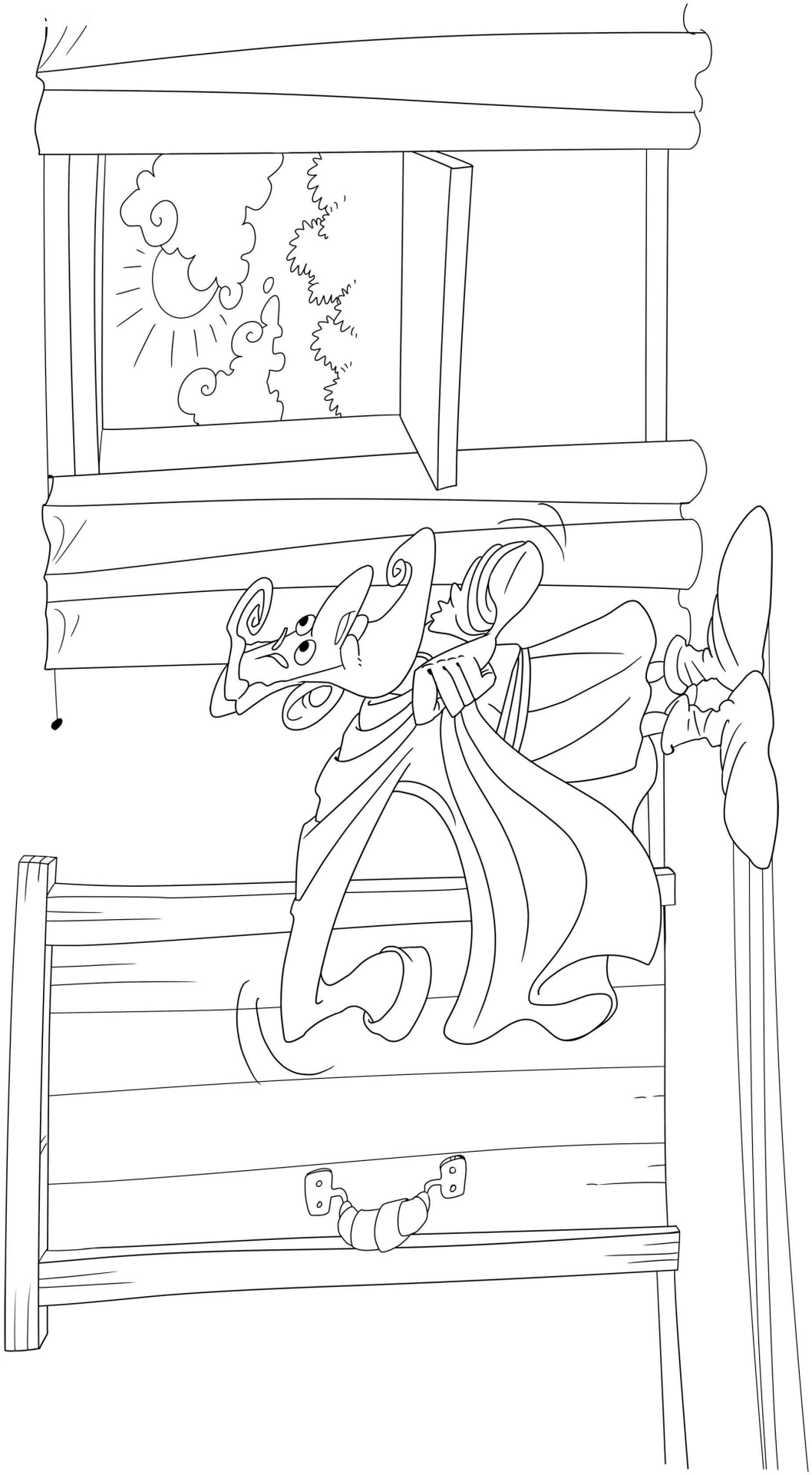
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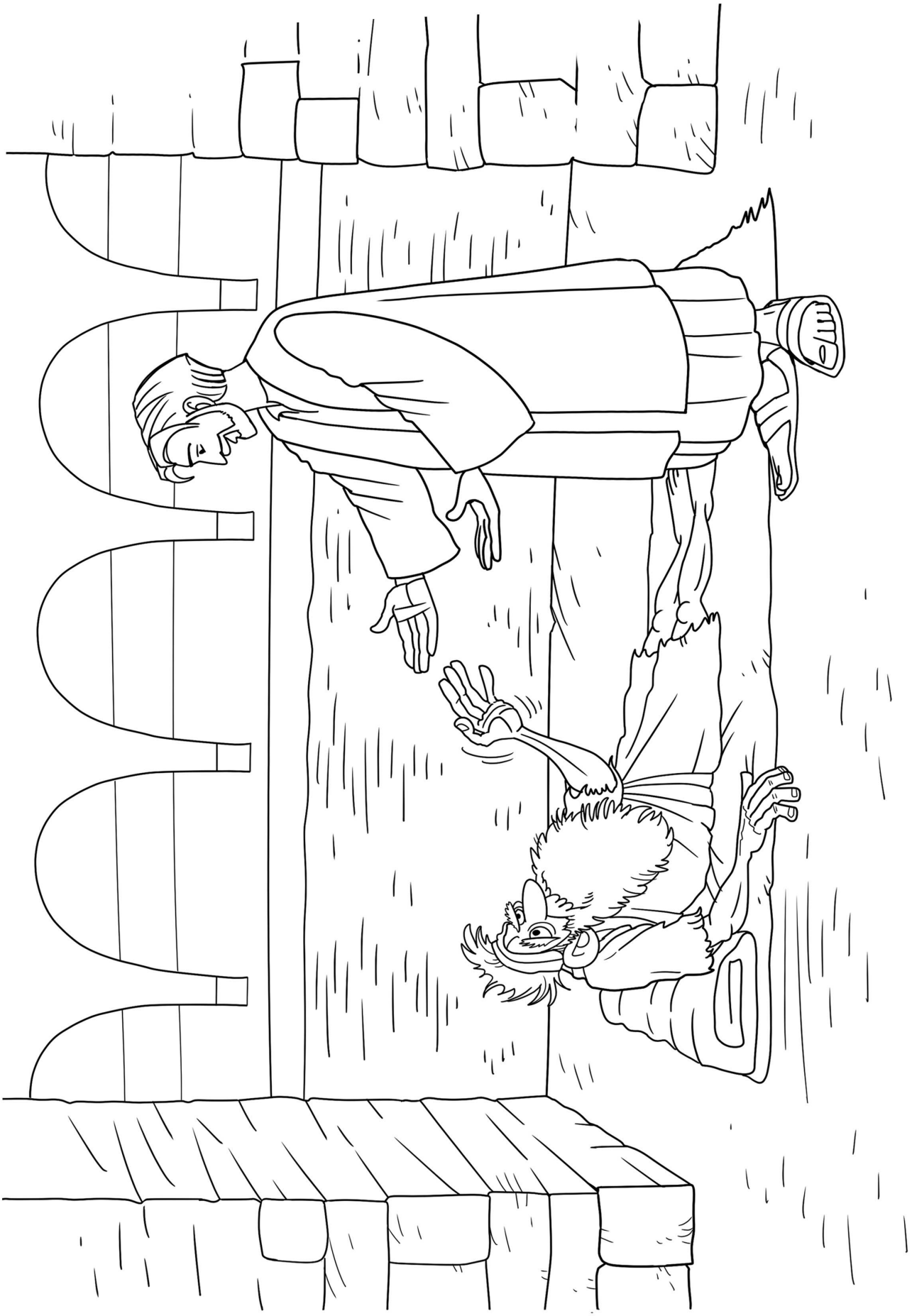
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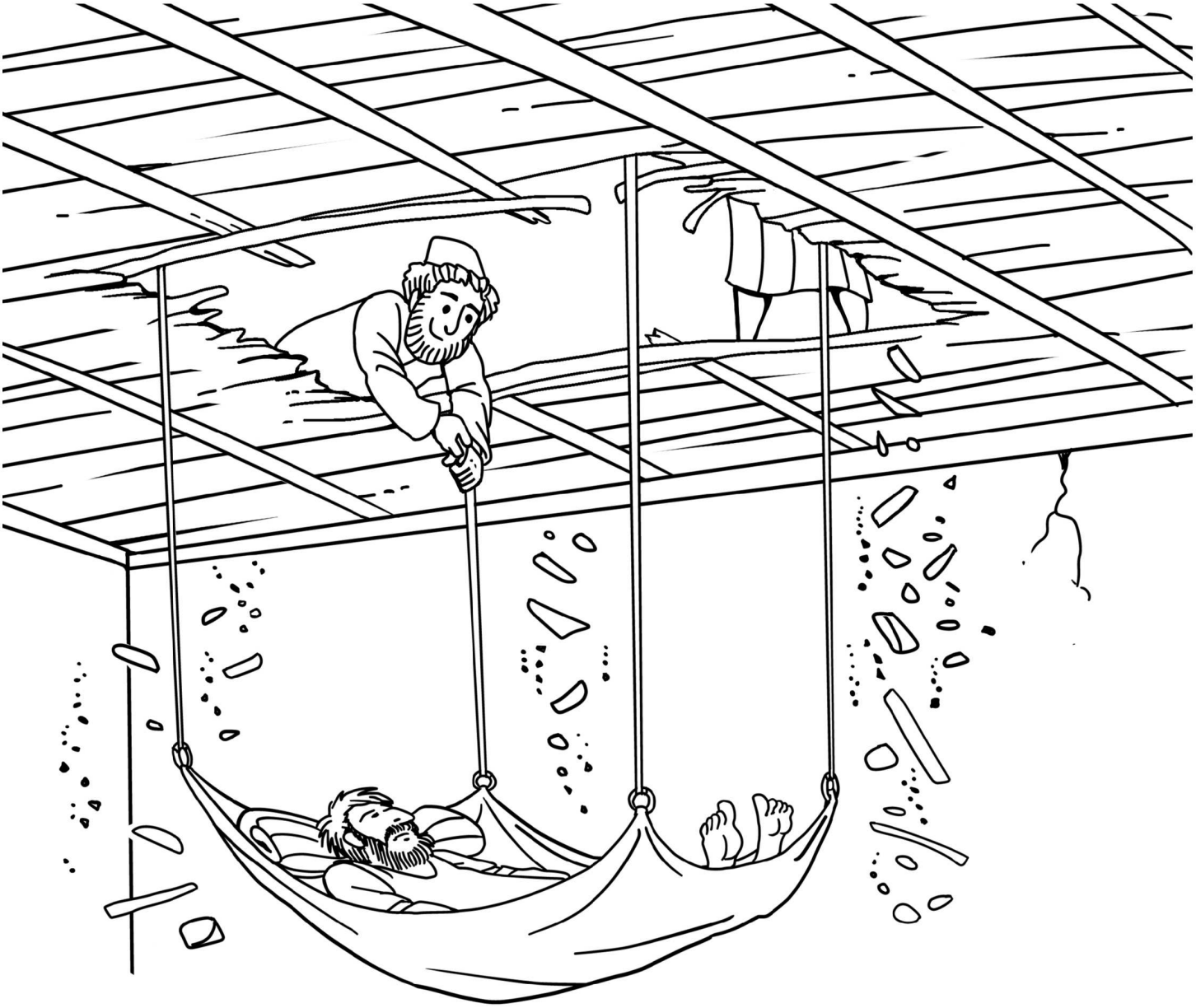
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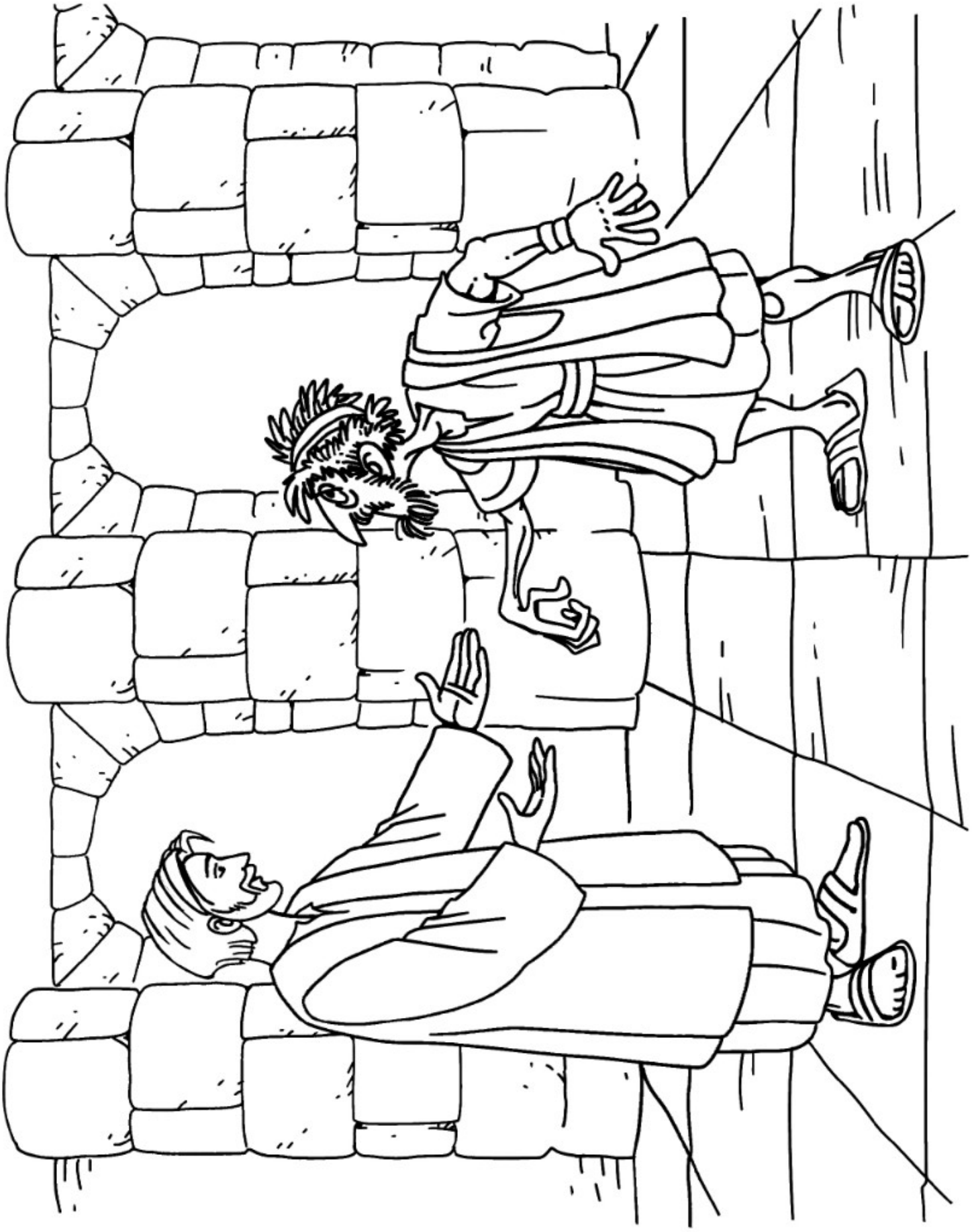
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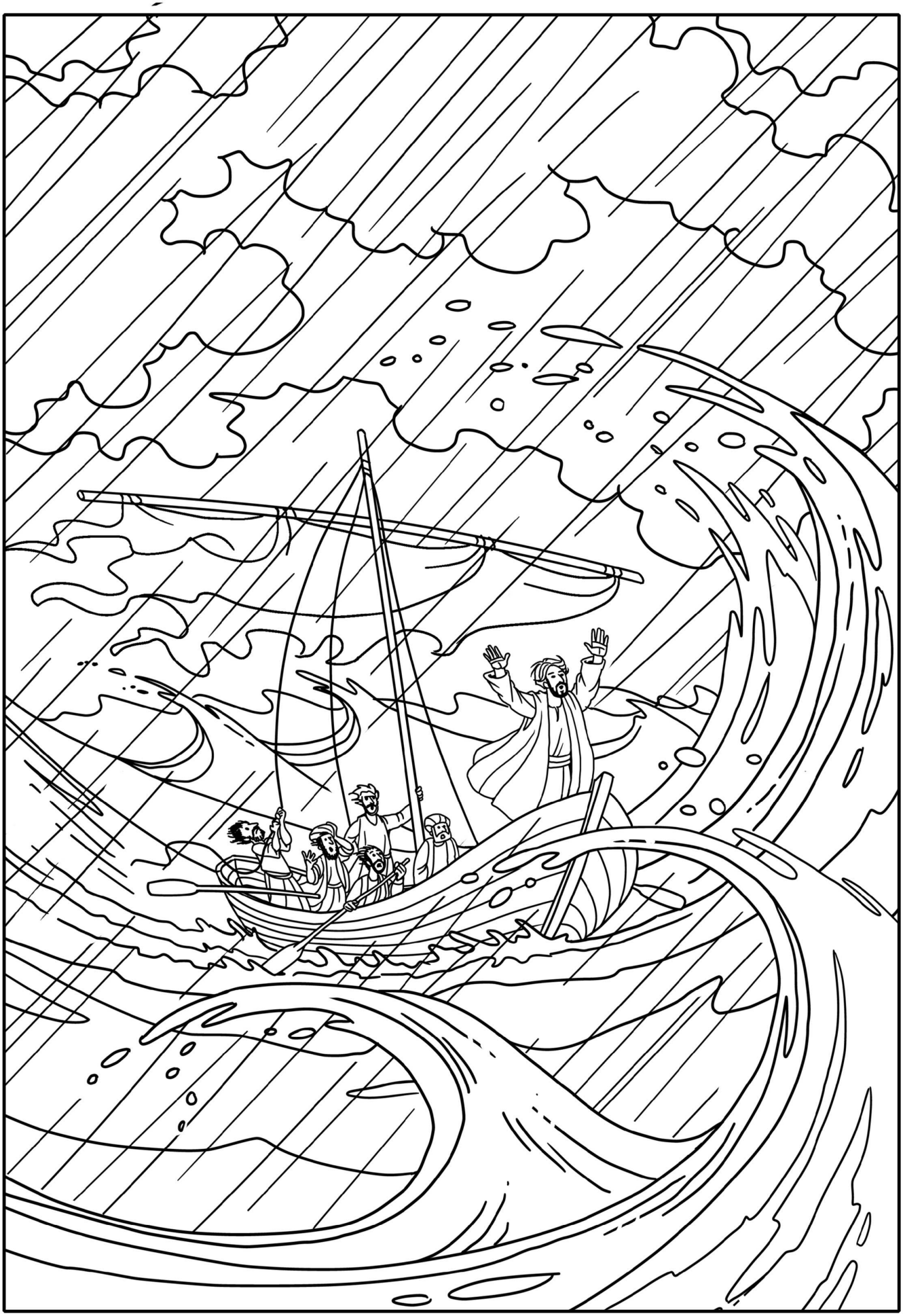
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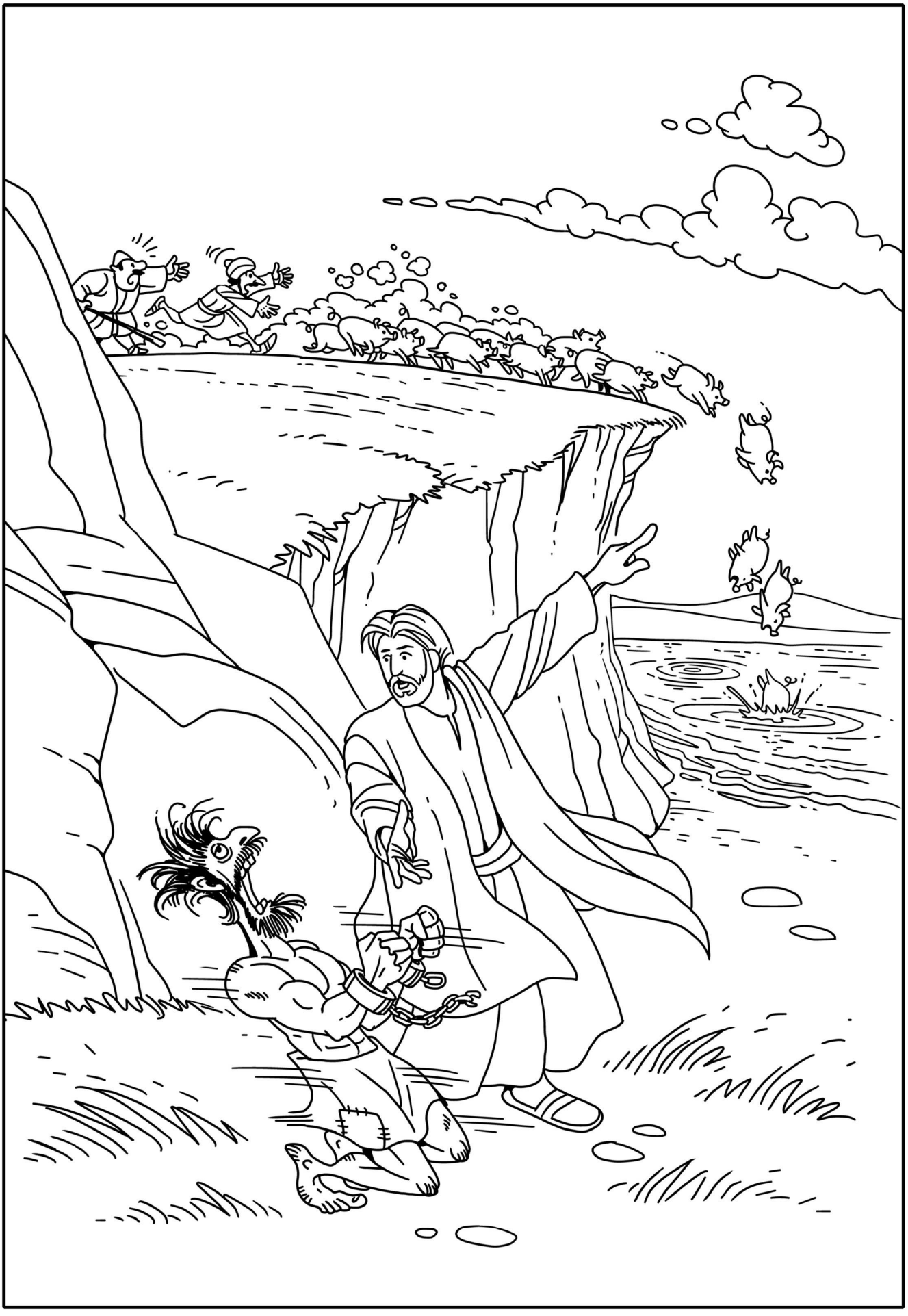
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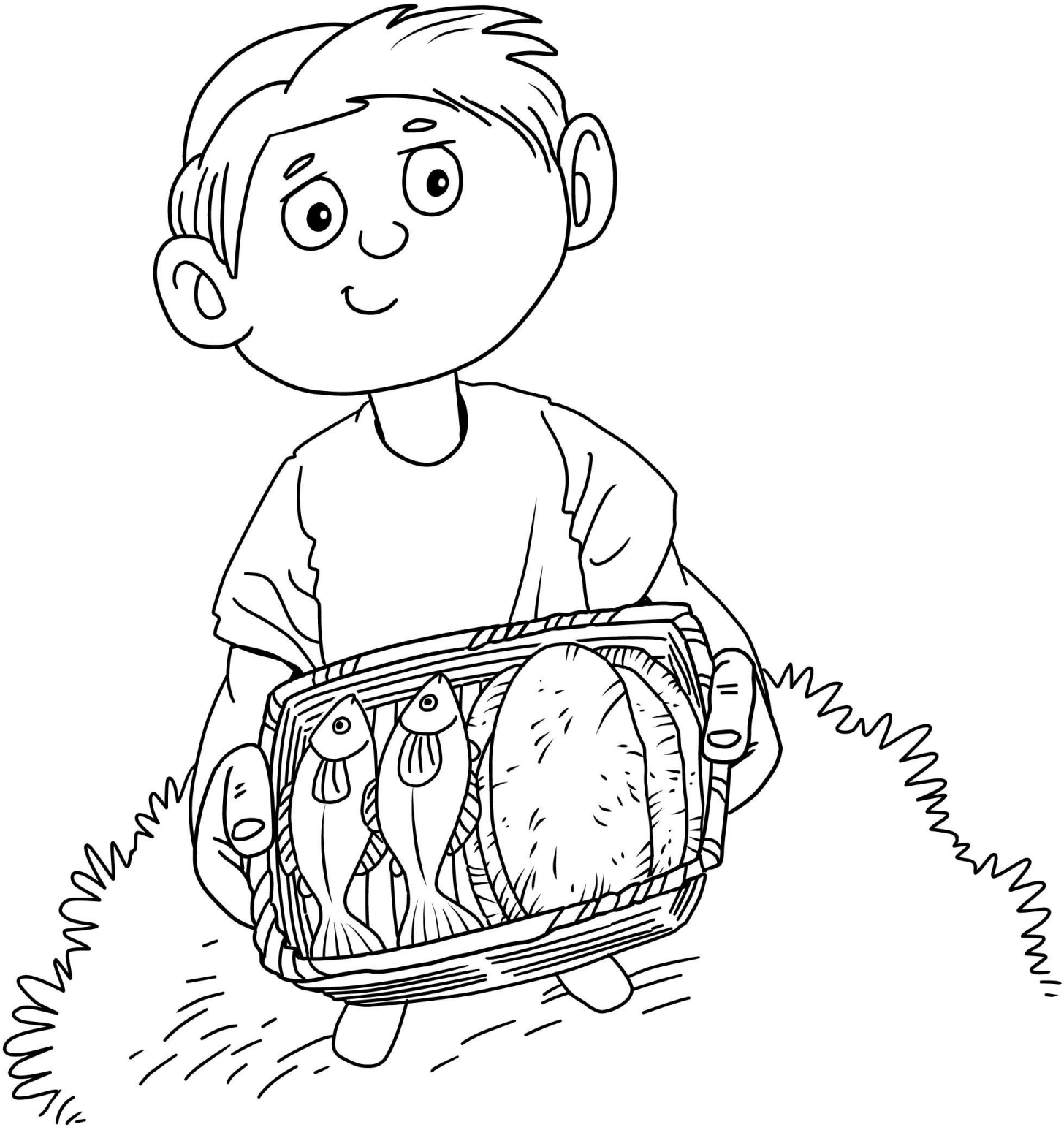


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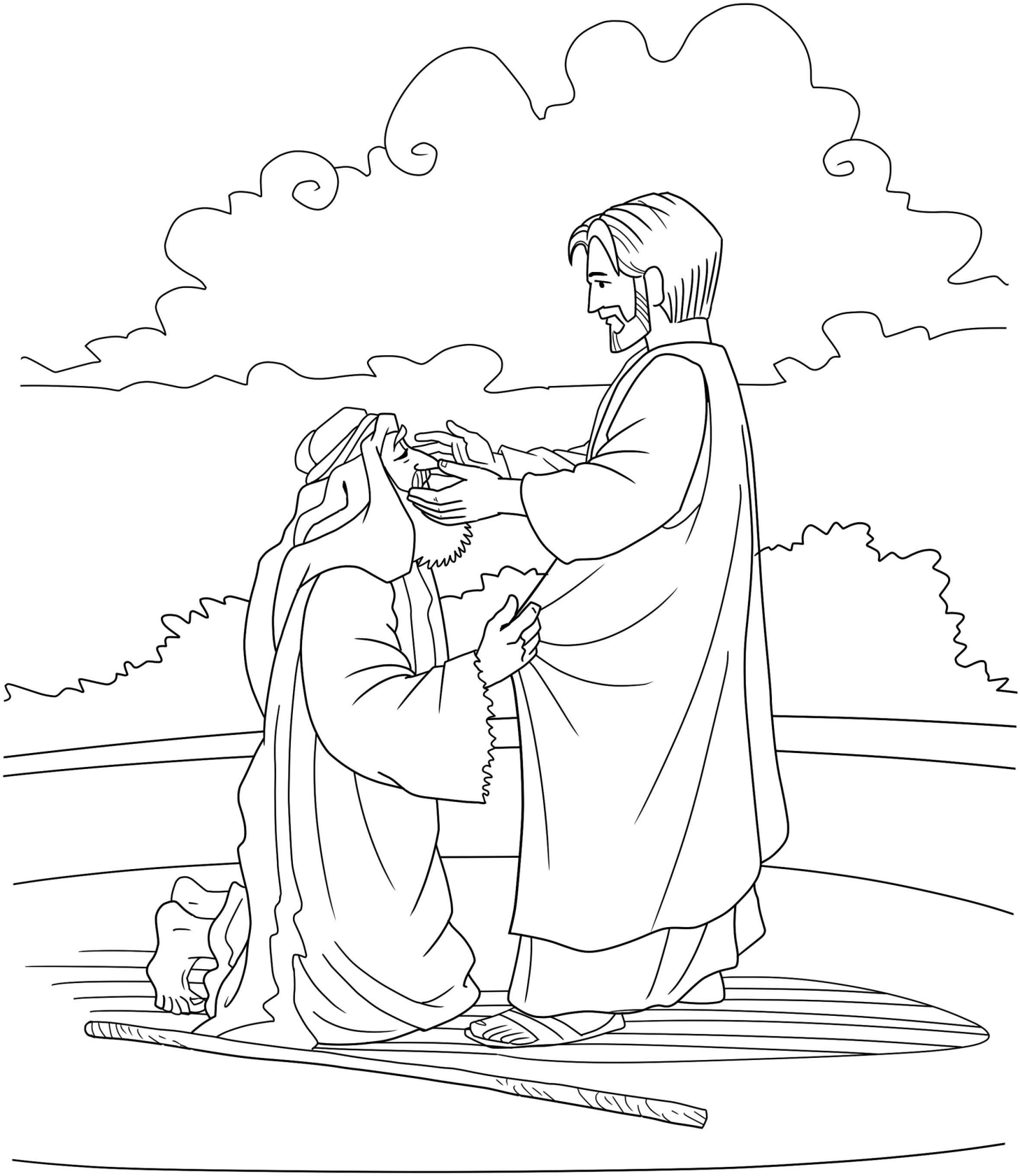
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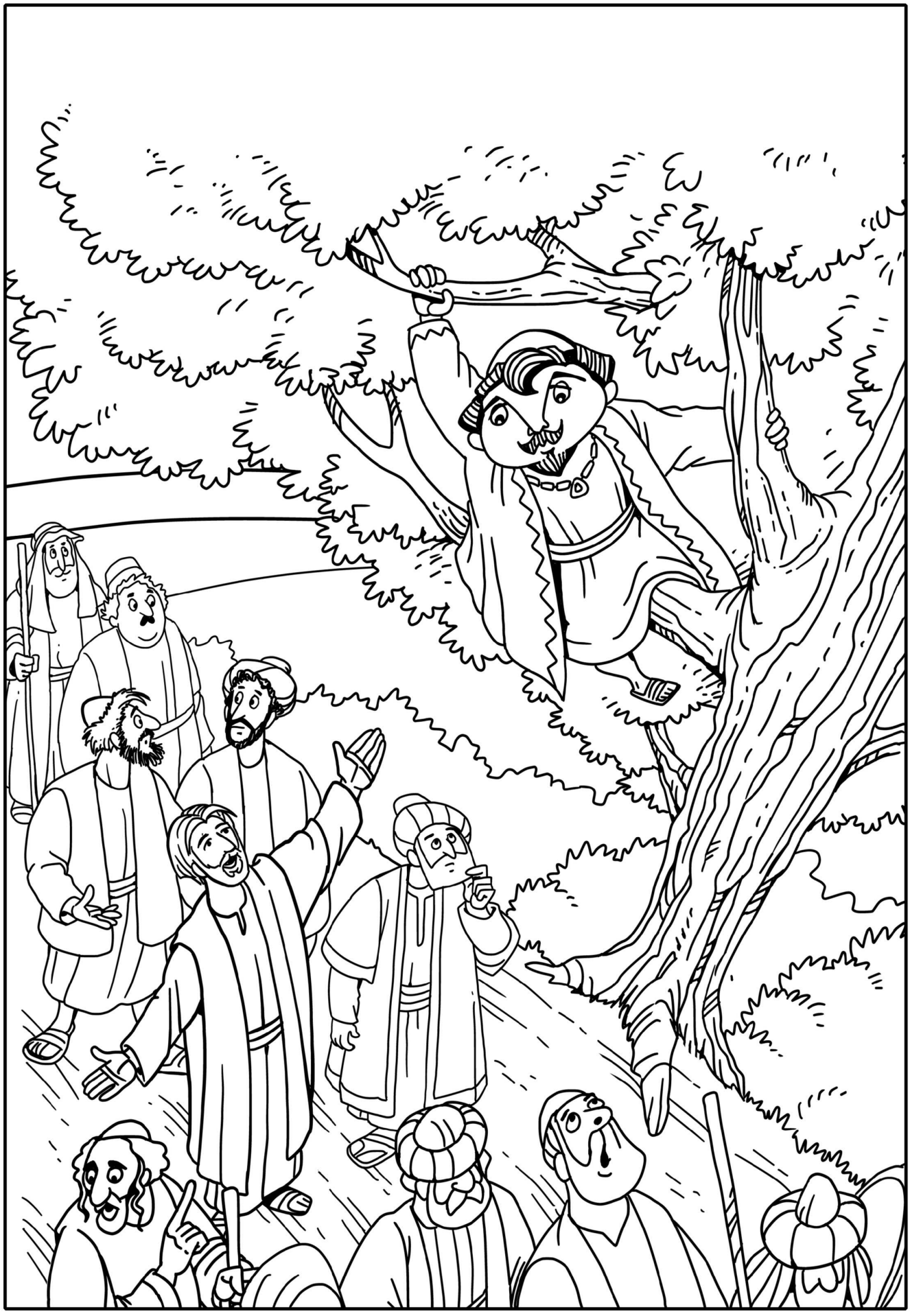
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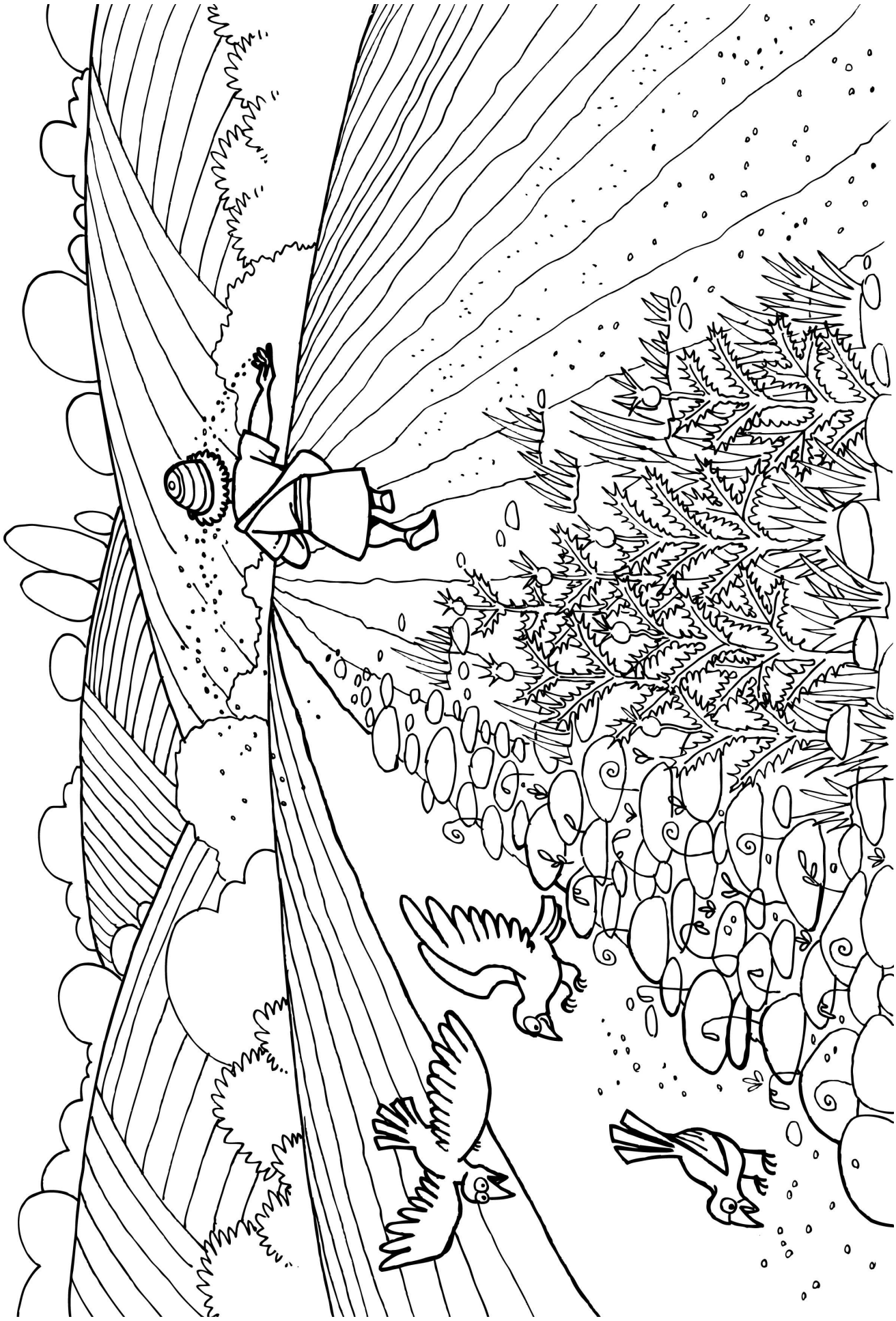


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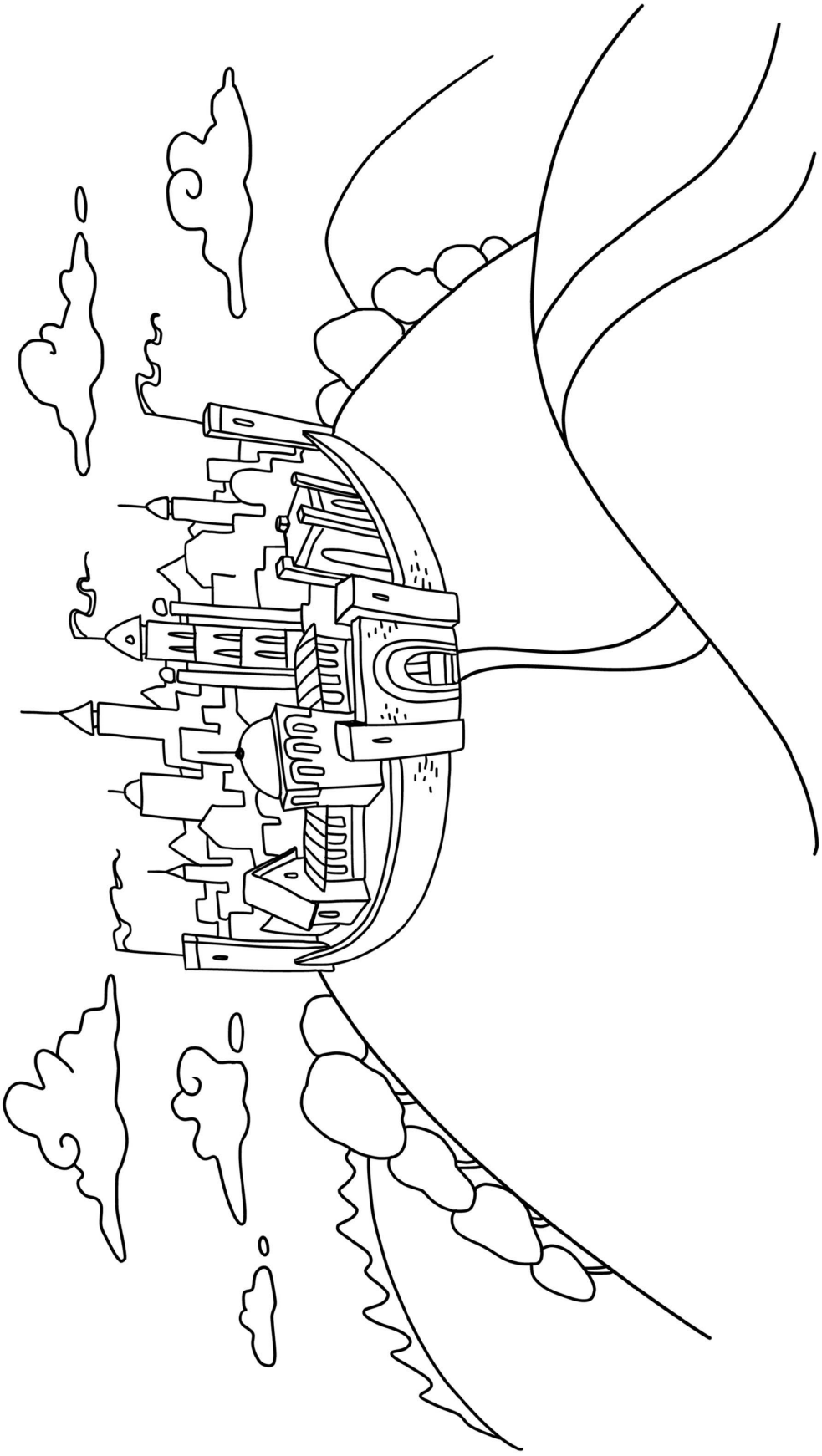


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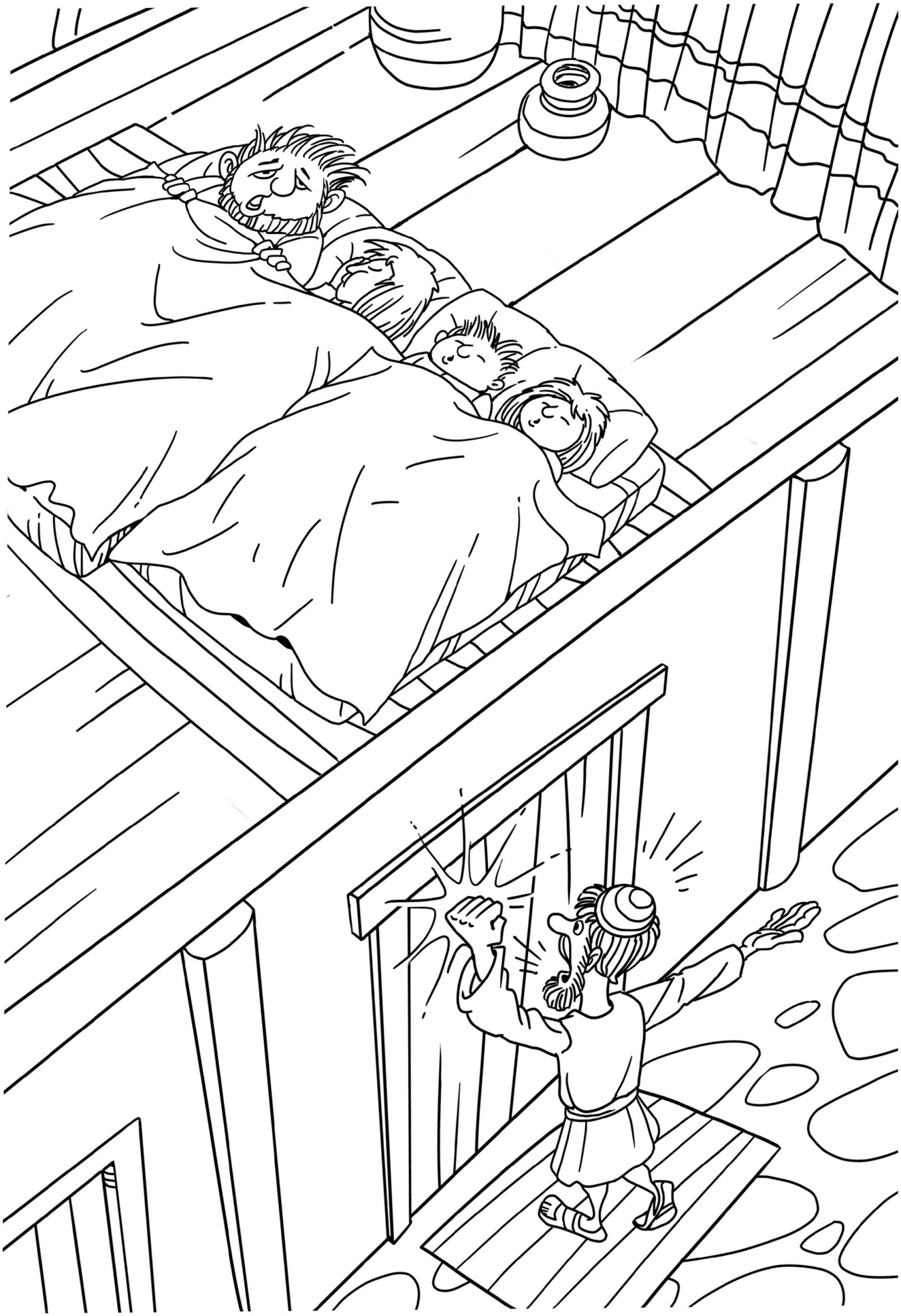


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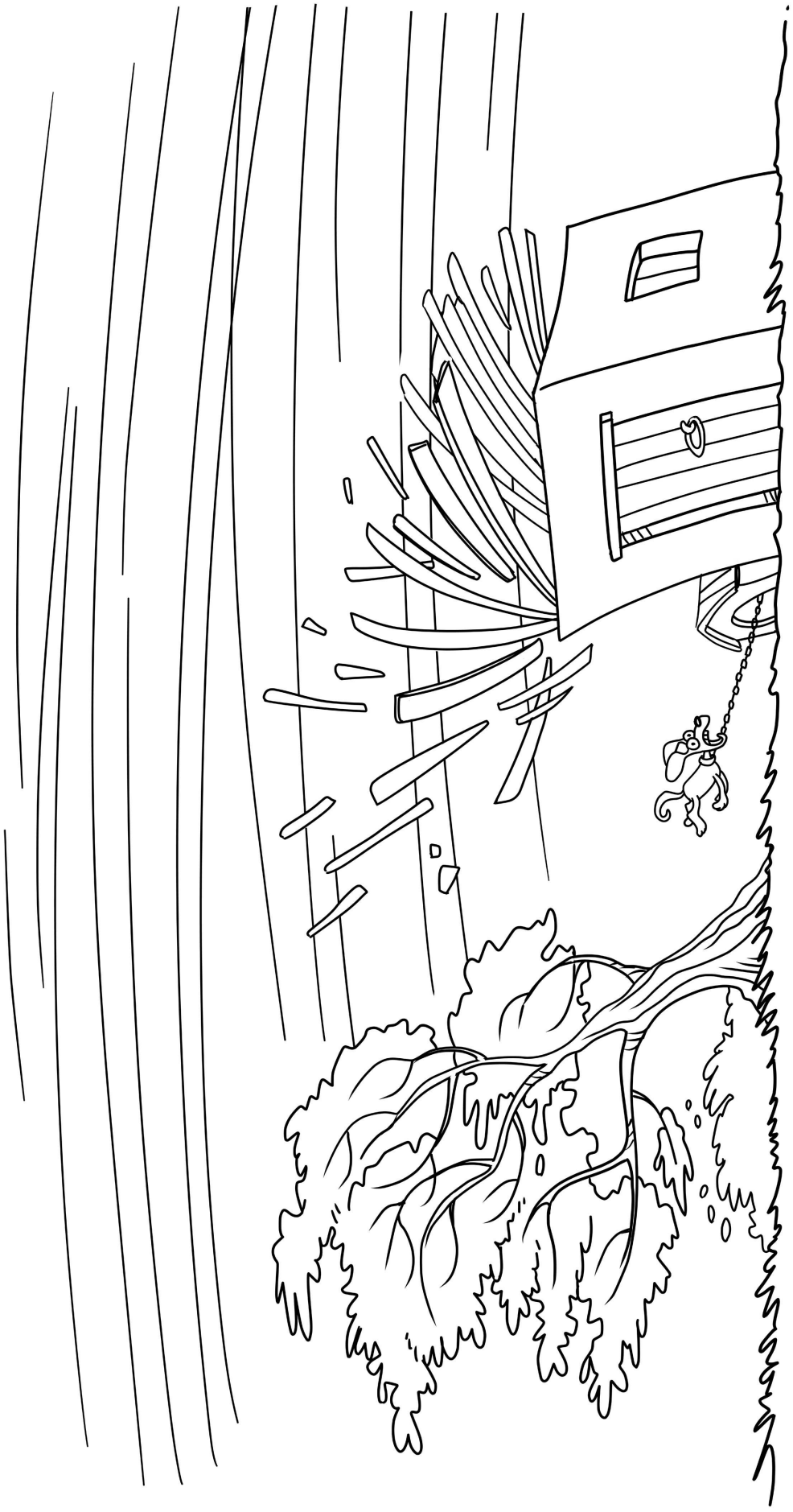
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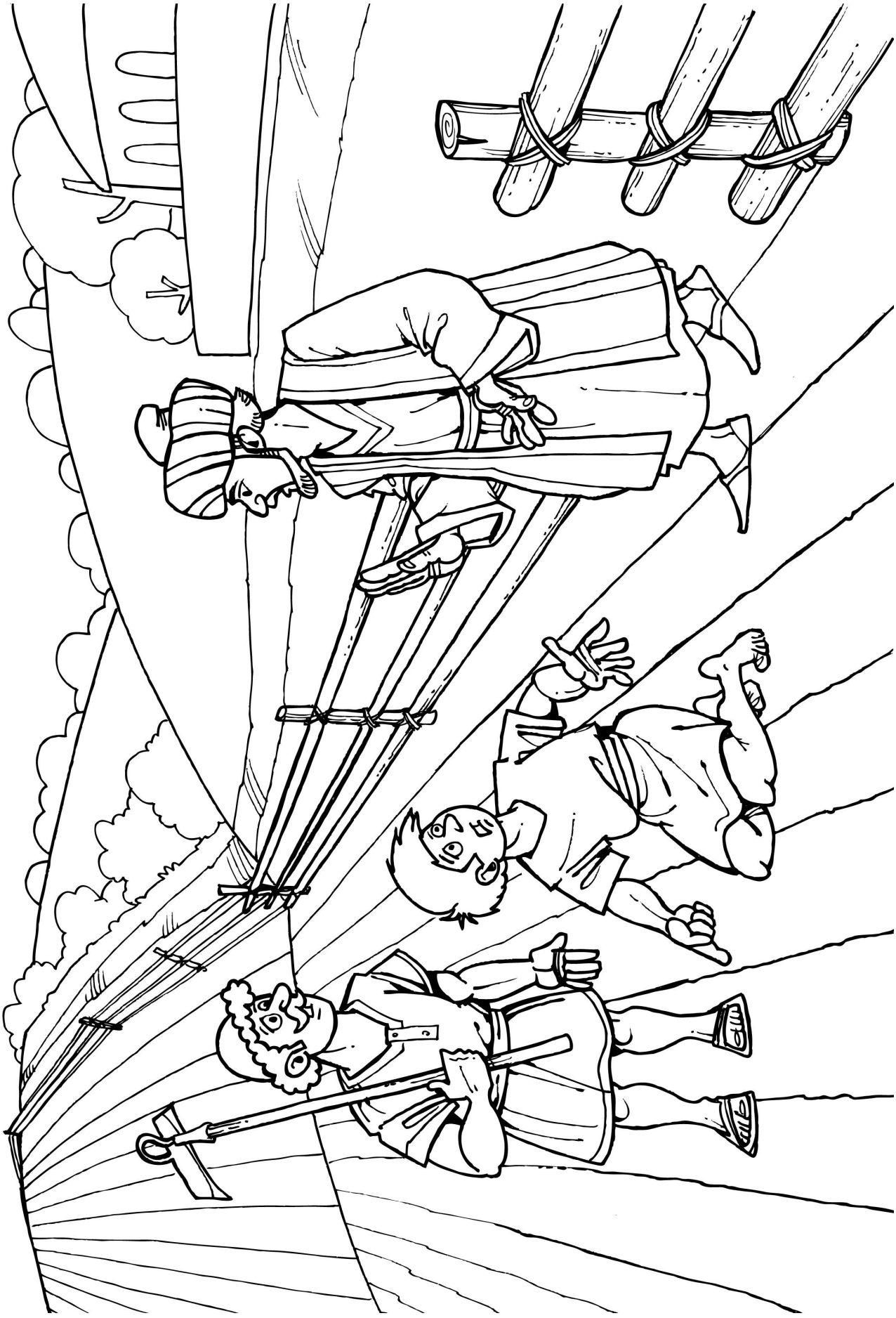
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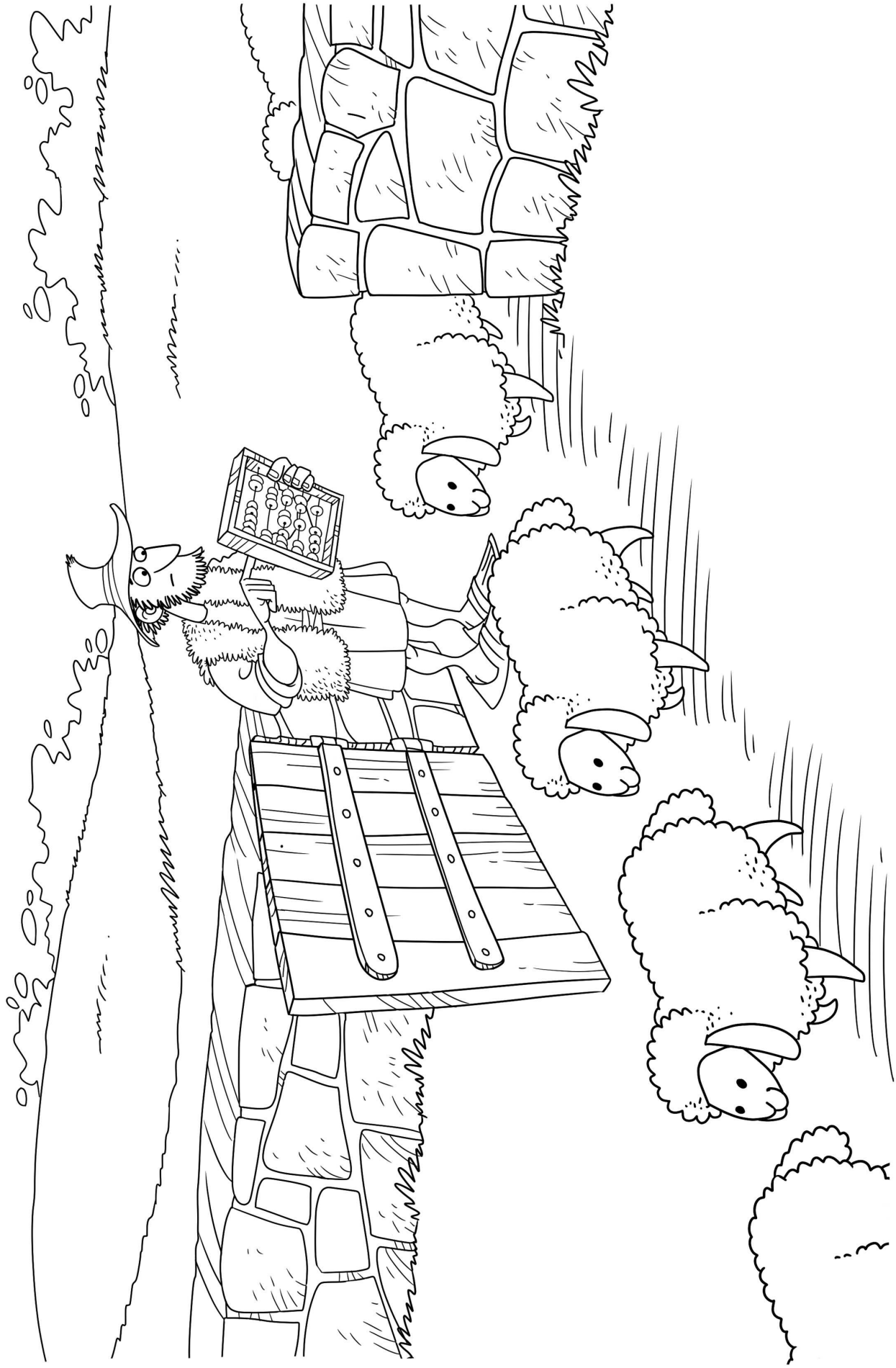
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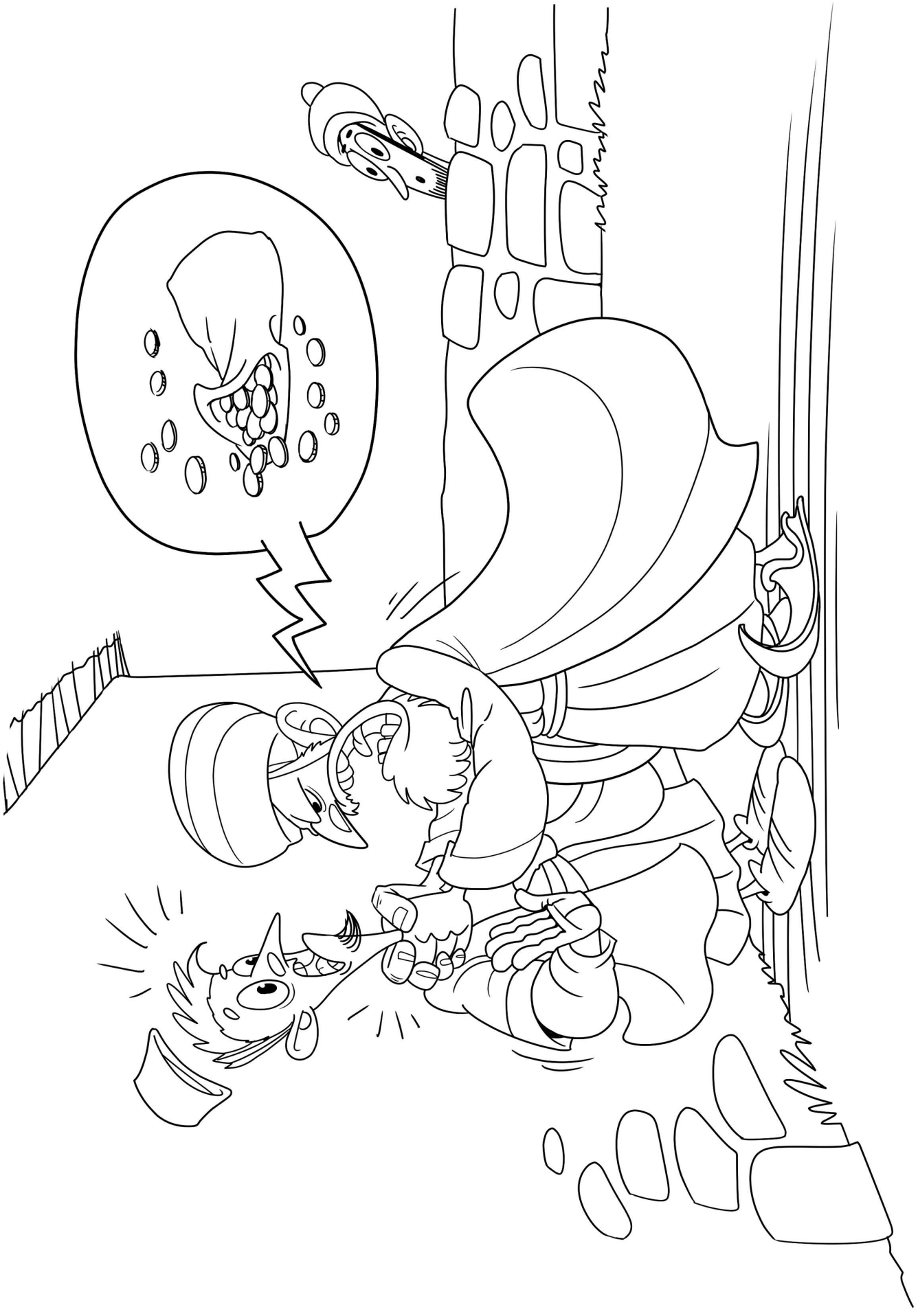
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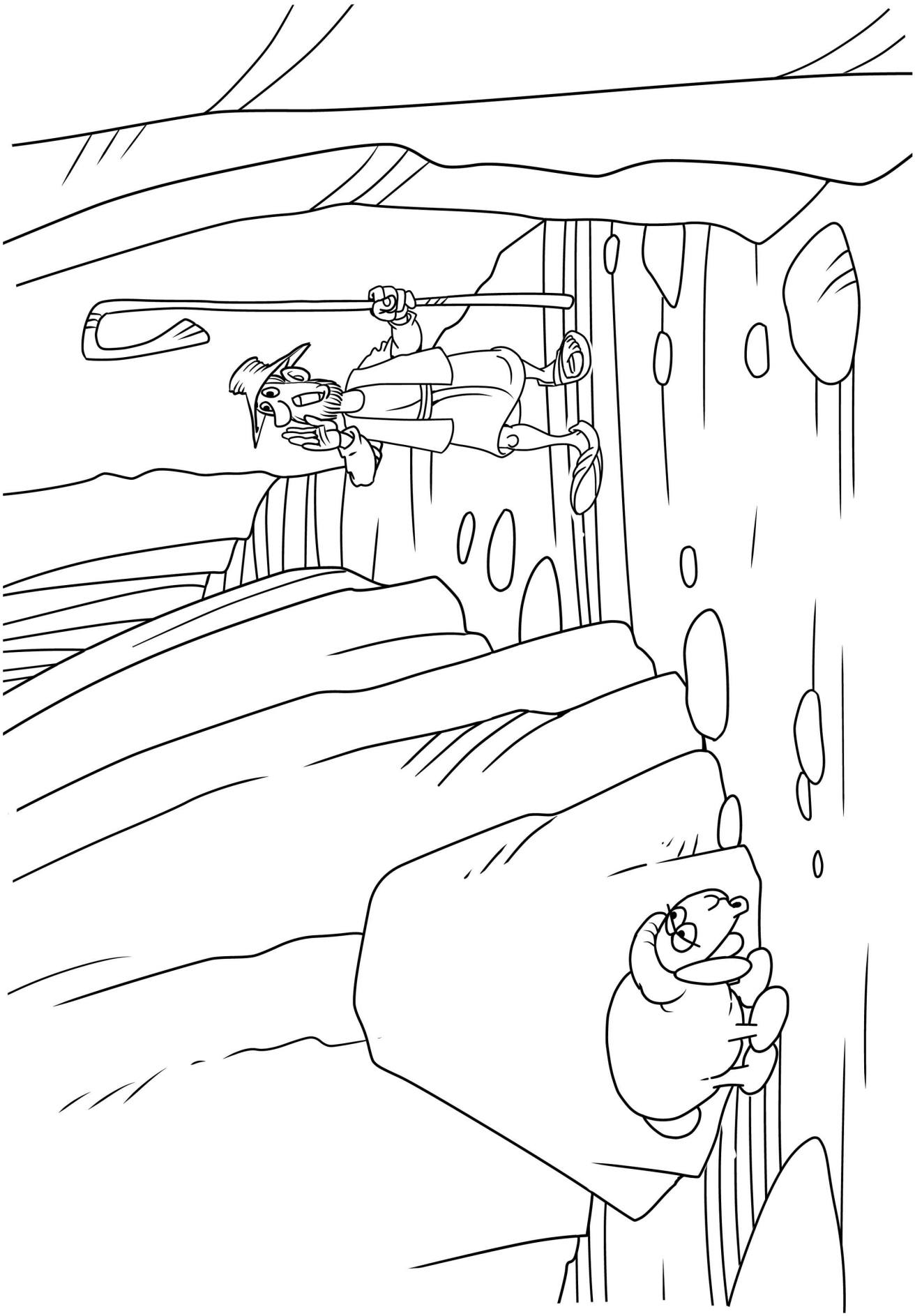
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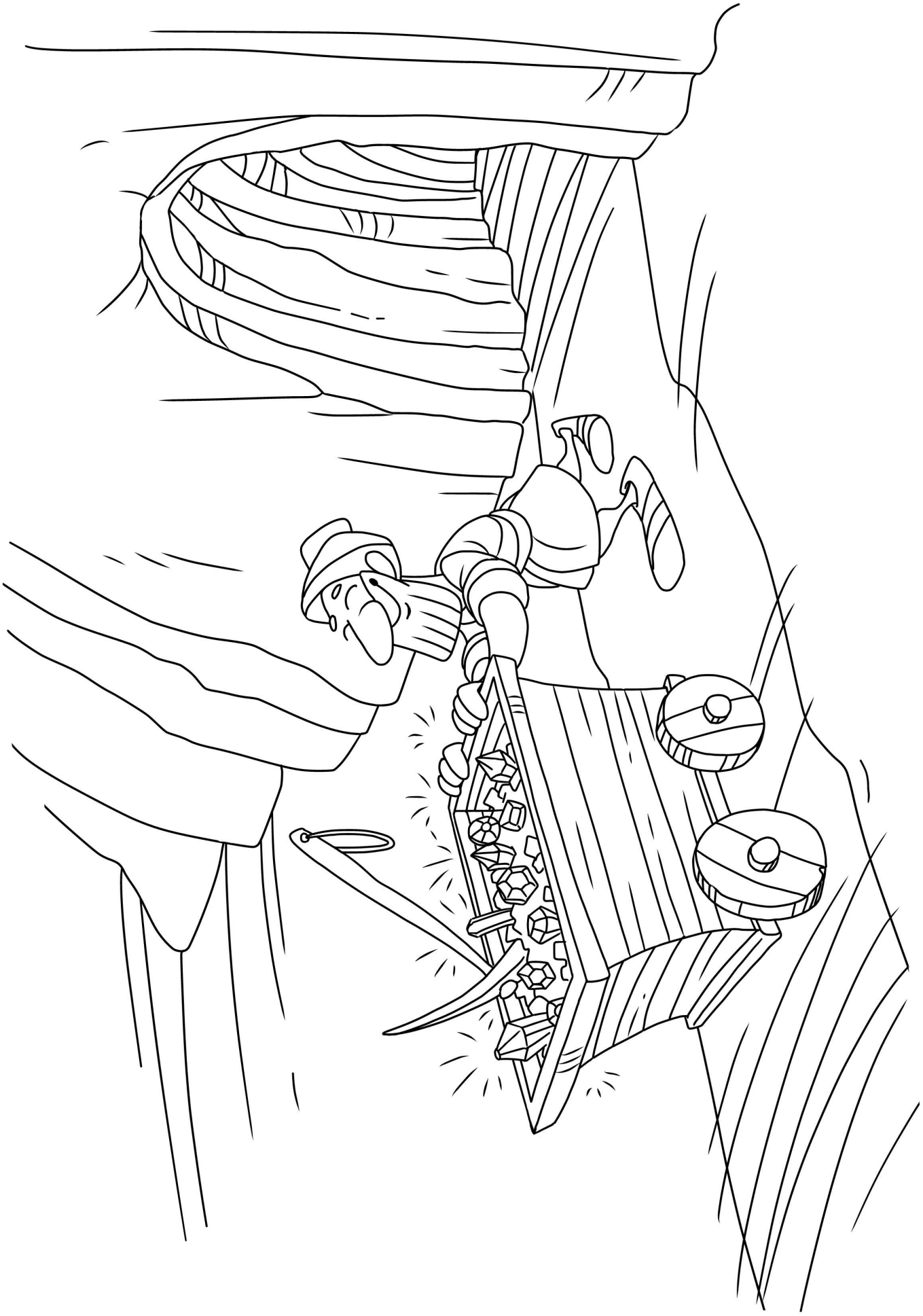
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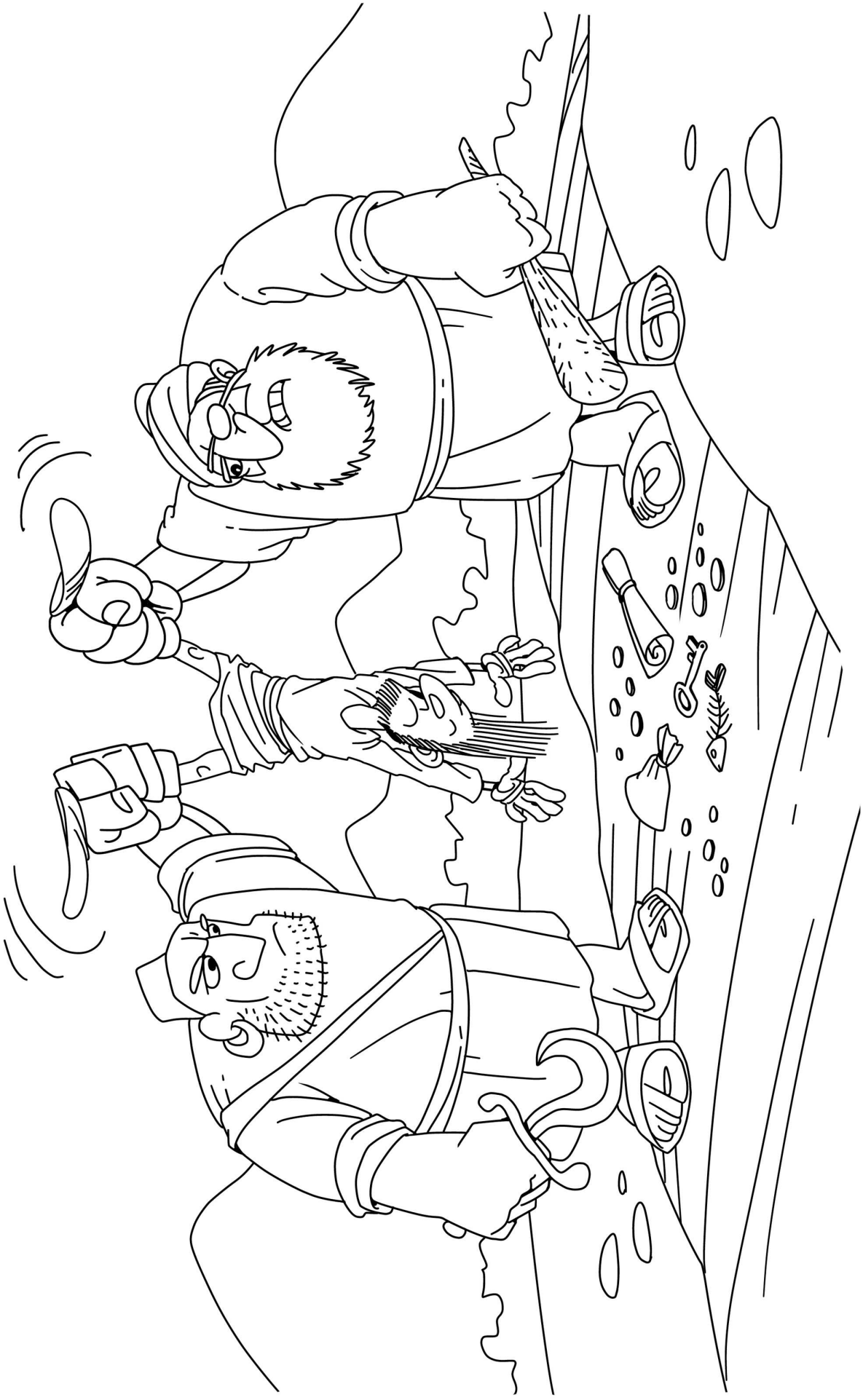
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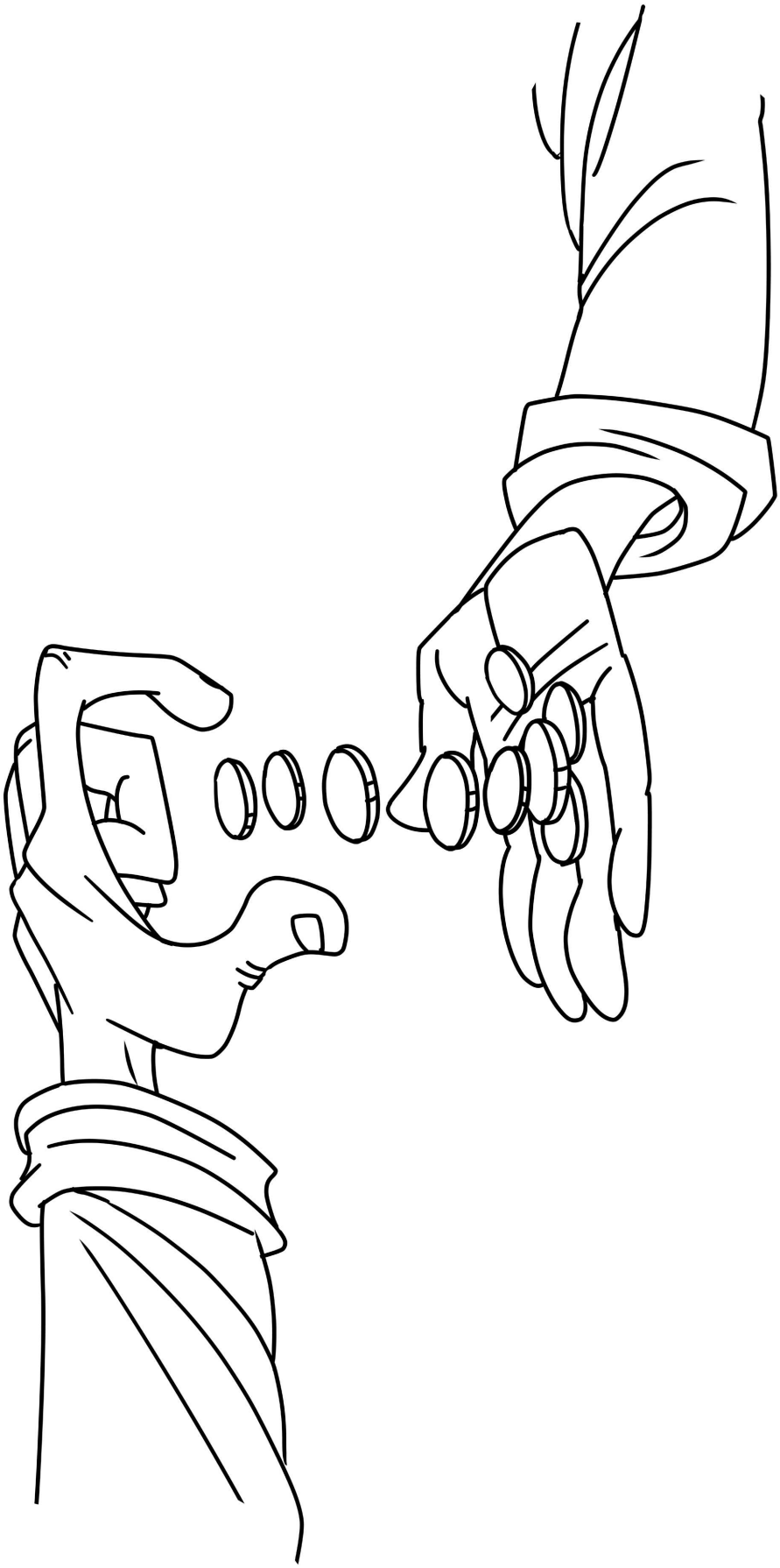
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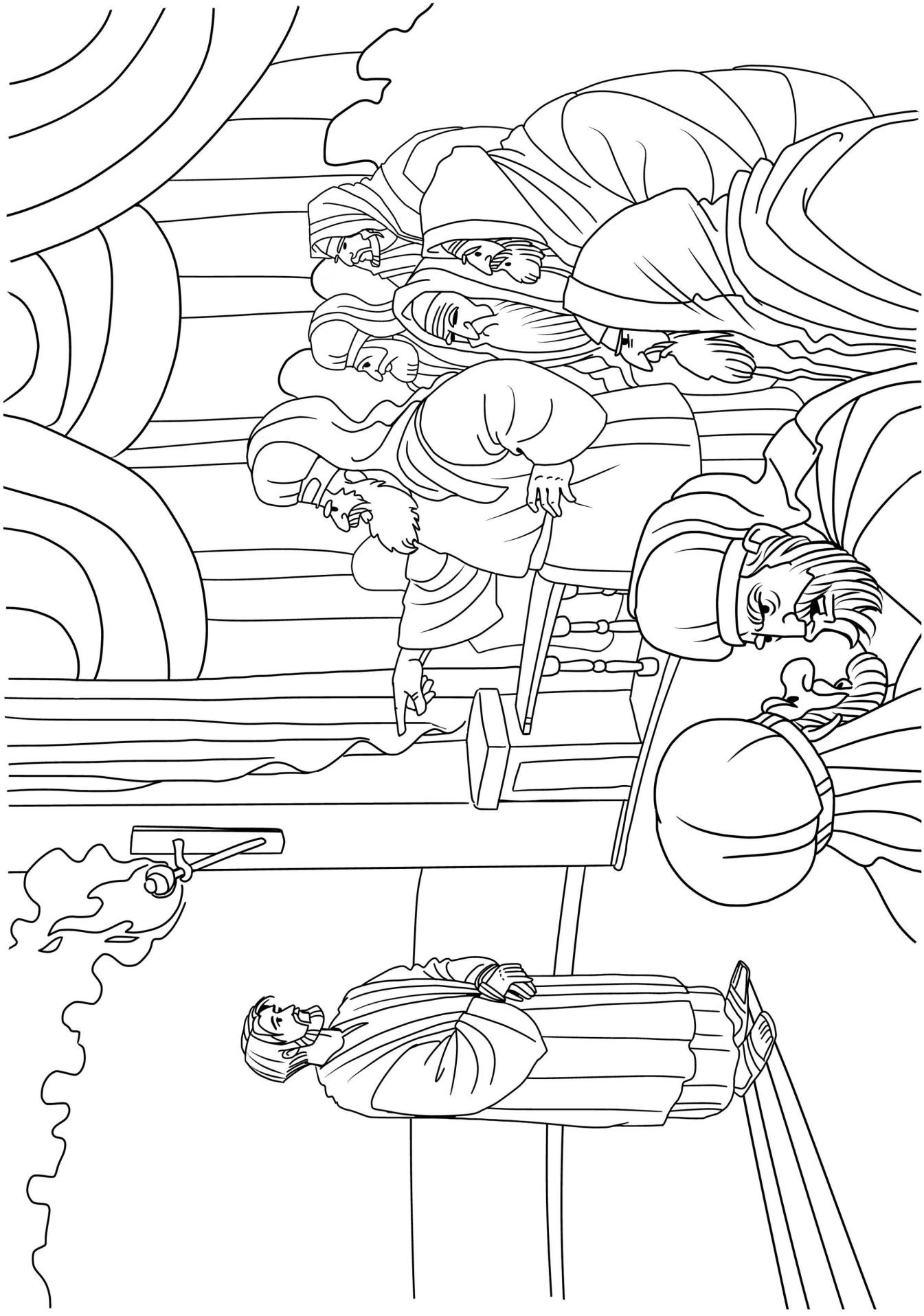


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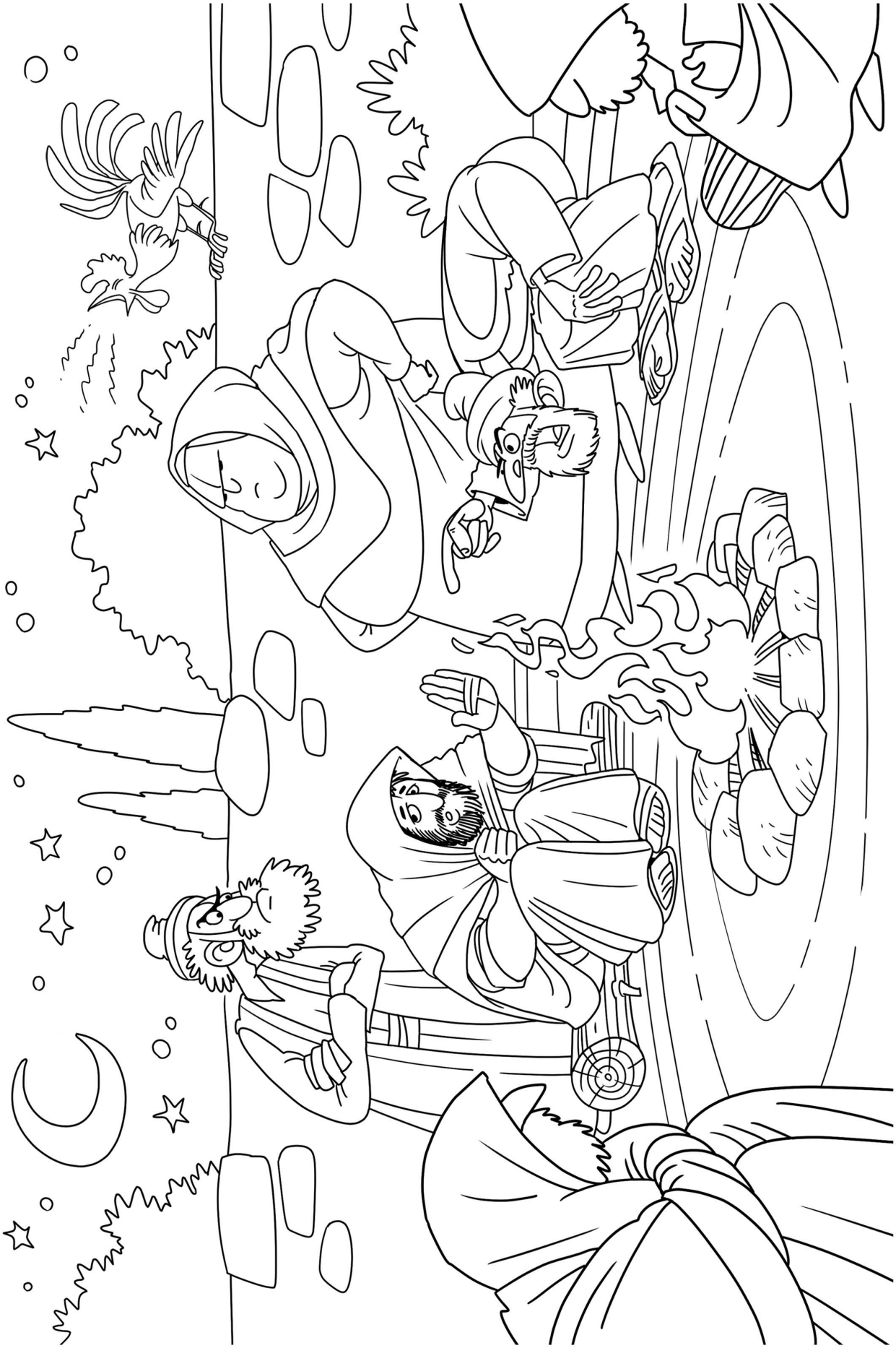
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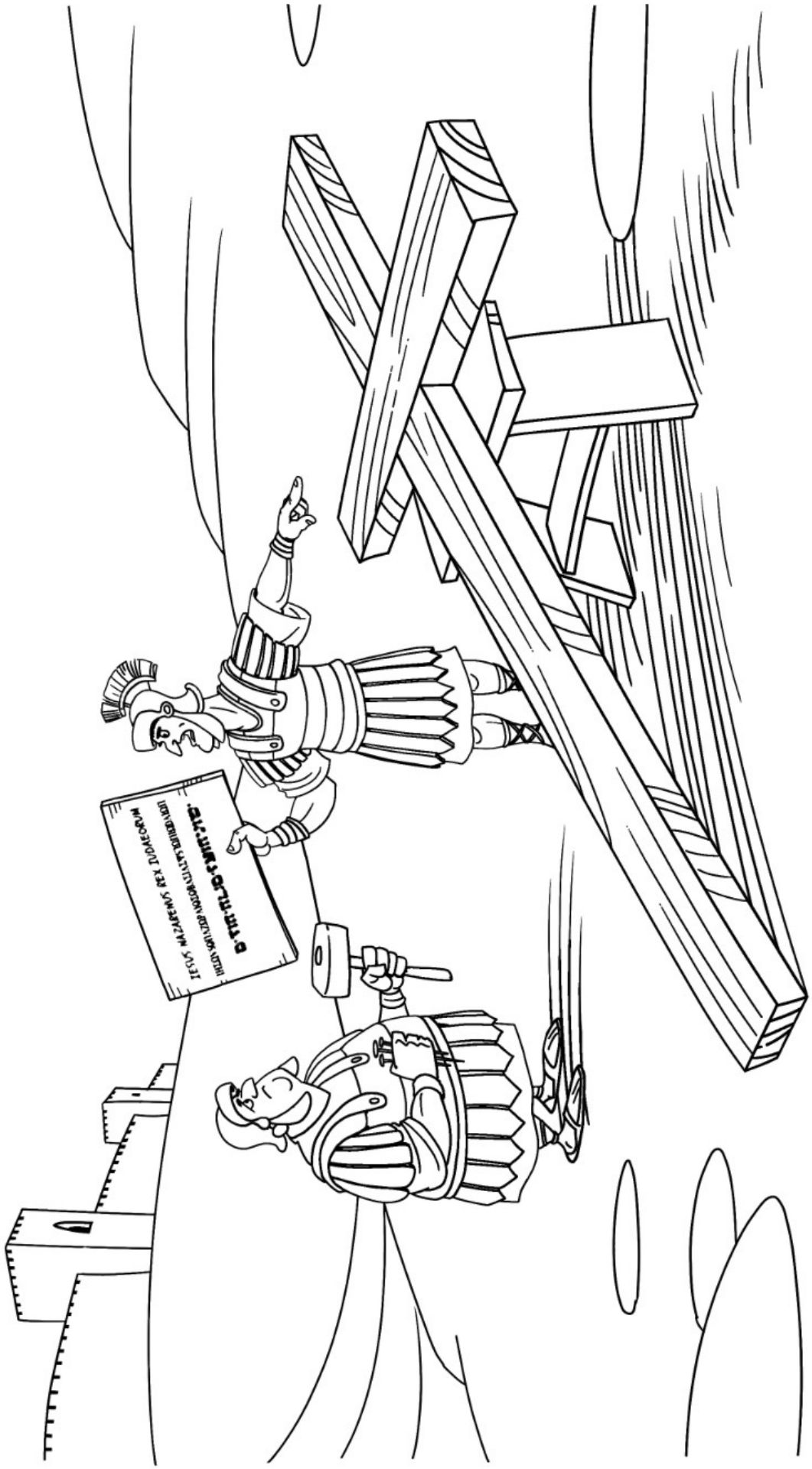
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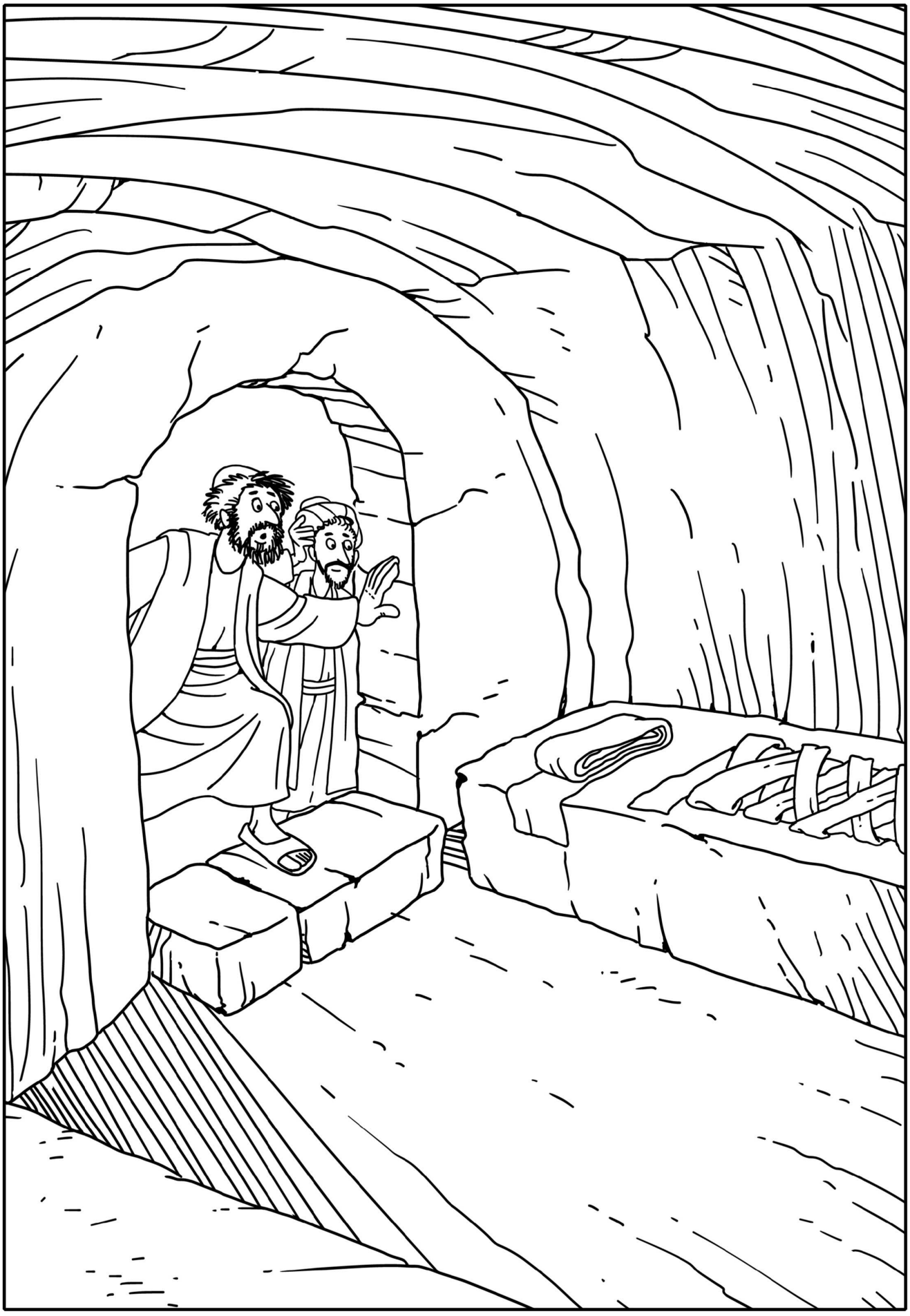
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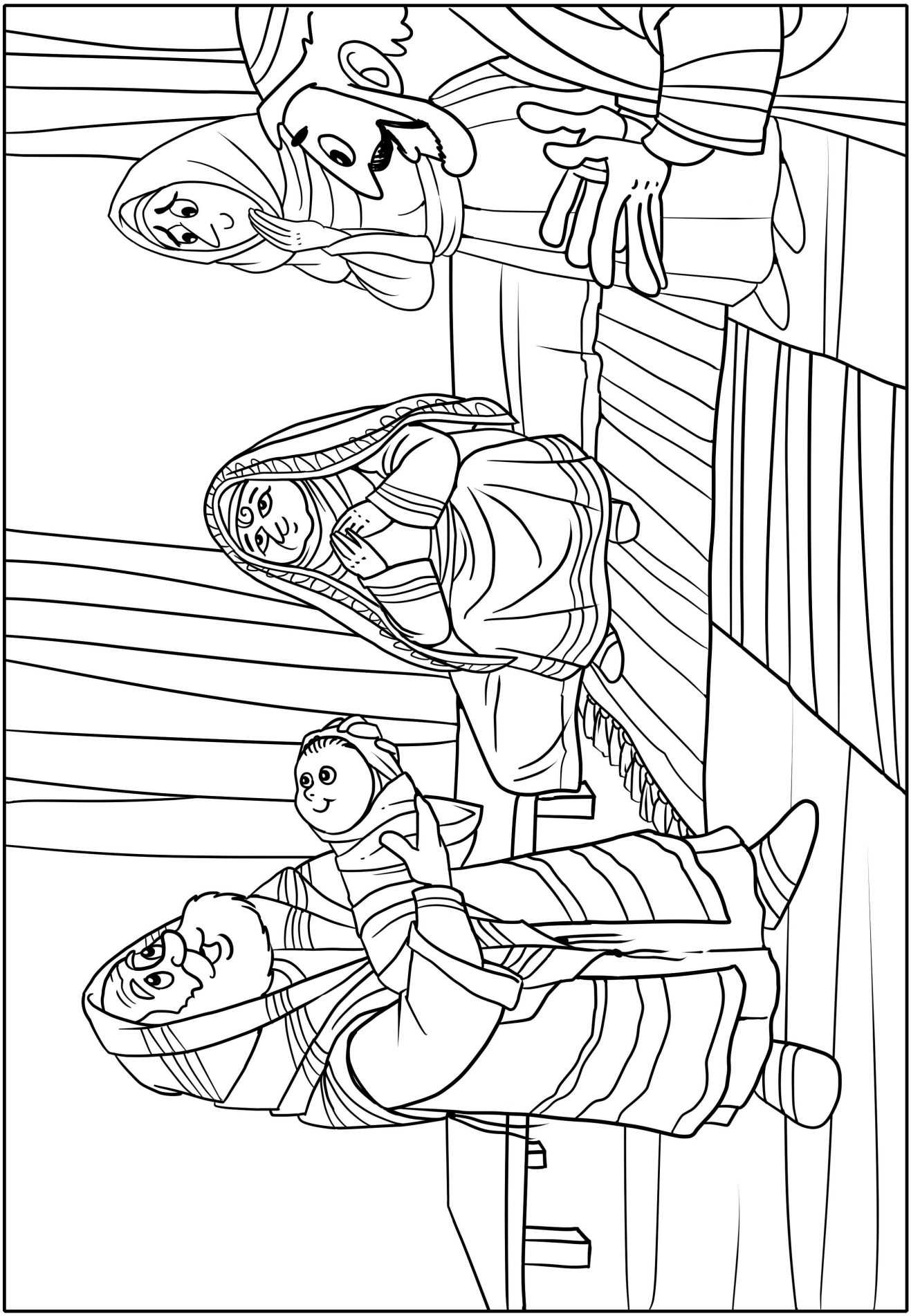
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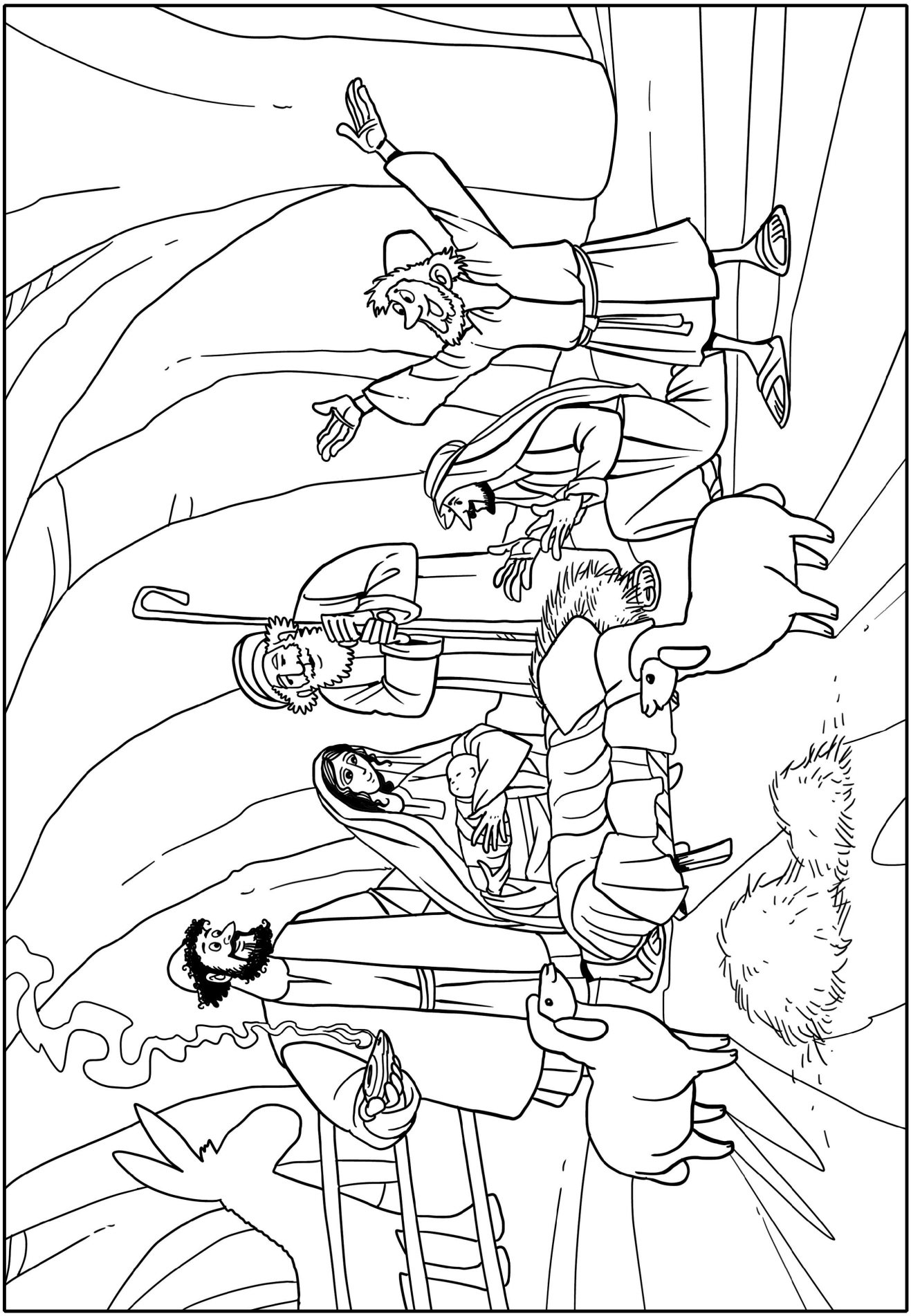
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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

1. My Beloved Son

1. What opened when Jesus was baptized?
2. What did God send to Jesus, and how did it appear?
3. Where did the voice come from?
4. What did the voice say?

Matthew 3:16-17

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying,
"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. Into the Wilderness

1. What three things did Satan use to tempt Jesus?
2. 1 John 2:16 lists different types of sin and temptations in the world. What three basic things are the beginning of all sin and temptation?

1 Samuel 12:24

Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

3. A Wedding Invitation

Read John 4:45-46

1. Where did Jesus go?
2. What happened the last time Jesus was here?
3. Why were these people looking for Jesus?
4. How did they know about him?

Isaiah 43:19

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

4. A Den of Thieves

Read Matthew 21:12-17

1. How many times did Jesus cleanse the temple?
2. What were the people doing in the temple?
3. What did Jesus say the temple is supposed to be?
4. What did Jesus do in the temple instead?

1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

5. An Evening Visit

1. Who was Nicodemus?
2. What did Jesus say a person has to do to see the kingdom of God?
3. Why did God send his son into the world? (John 3:17)
4. Who are those that are condemned and why? (John 3:18)

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

6. Everything I've Ever Done

1. Why was the lady surprised that Jesus talked to her?
2. What water did Jesus tell the lady he had?
3. Who did the lady go tell about Jesus and what did she say?

John 4:23

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

7. The Nobleman's Son

Read Hebrews 11:6

1. According to this verse, what do we have to do to please God?
2. What do we have to do to come to God?
3. Who does God reward?

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

8. Waiting for the Water

Read Romans 6

1. We are _____ to sin (v.2)
2. What should we not let rule in our bodies? (v.12)
3. We are not under what? (v.14-15)
4. What are we under instead? (v.14-15)
5. If you obey something, what do you become to the thing you obey? (v.16)

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

9. So You May Know

Compare Matthew, Mark & Luke

1. Which writer tells how many people carried the man?
2. Which writers tell how the men got in the house?
3. What do all three writers say that Jesus was able to see?

Romans 5:17

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

10. A Withered Hand

Matthew 12:11-12

1. If your sheep fell into a well on the Sabbath, what would you do?
2. What does Jesus say about people compared to sheep?
3. What does Jesus say the law allows us to do on the Sabbath?

Mark 2: 27-28

…the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

11. Finding Great Faith

1. Why did the Jews tell Jesus he should go to the centurion?
2. What did the centurion say about Jesus coming to his house?
3. What did the centurion say he understood because of the soldiers that served under him?

Psalm 10:17

Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble; you will prepare their heart; you will cause your ear to hear.

12. Who Is This?

Read Psalm 107

1. What does it say would happen in verse 25?
2. What does it say the people will do in verse 28?
3. What will the Lord do in verse 28?
4. How should the people respond (verses 8, 15, 21, 31)?

Psalm 107:31-32

Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the company of the elders.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

13. Set Free!

Read Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56

Jesus returned to this area later and the people had a different response:

1. Where did the people meet Jesus?
2. What did they bring to Jesus?
3. Who was healed?

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound…

14. Only Believe

Read Mark 5:27-34; Luke 8:44-48

1. Does this lady ask Jesus to heal her?
2. What happened to her when she touched Jesus?
3. What happened to Jesus when the lady touched him?
4. What did Jesus say made her well?

Malachi 4:2

But to you who fear my name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall fed calves.

15. What Do You Have?

1. Who doubted there would be enough?
2. What did the disciples want to tell the people?
3. What did Jesus do with the food after blessing it and giving thanks?
4. How much was left over?

Psalm 23:1-3

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

16. If It Is You

1. What did Peter say to Jesus?
2. What happened as soon as they stepped into the ship?
3. After seeing this, why were the disciples now convinced that Jesus was the Son of God?

Job 9:8, 10

He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea. He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

17. One Thing I Know

Read Isaiah 64:8

1. What is a potter?
2. Who is the potter?
3. What are we compared to in this verse?
4. What does it say about God's work?

Isaiah 42:16

And I will bring the blind by the way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them.

18. If You Believe

1. What does Mark 9:23 say is possible to those who believe?
2. John 12:44 says if you believe on Jesus you actually believe on who?
3. Luke 8:12 says if they believe they would be?

John 20:30-31

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His discipes which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in His name.

19. Giving Thanks

1. When does Ephesians 5:20 say that we should give thanks?
2. Who should we give thanks to?
3. Colossians 3:17 says that we should do everything in the name of Jesus and then give what to God?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

20. Have Mercy

1. Where did God meet with people? (Exodus 25:22; 30:6)
2. When you walk with Jesus, what will follow you? (Psalm 23:6)
3. What surrounds you when you trust in the Lord? (Psalm 32:10)

Psalm 147:11

The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy.

21.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

22. Zacchaeus

1. If you seek the Lord your God, will you find him? (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13)
2. You will find him if you do what?
3. You will find him when you do what?
4. What does Psalm 105:3 say about the hearts of those who seek the Lord?

Jeremiah 29:13

And you will seek me and fine me when you search for me with all your heart.

23. Forgiven Much

Read John 12:1-11

1. Why did the Jews come to this dinner?
2. What did Judas want to do with the perfume? Why?
3. Why did Jesus say the woman was doing this?
4. What did the priests want to do to Lazarus?
5. Why were they upset with Lazarus?

Luke 7:47

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

23. More Than the Others

1. Who was putting money in the treasury, or offering that day?
2. What did the rich people do?
3. How much did this lady put in the offering?
4. Jesus said the other people gave out of what?
5. Why was what she gave more valuable?

Luke 16:15

…You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

24. How Will You Understand?

1. What happened to the seed that fell on the side of the road?
2. What happened to the seed that fell on the rocks?
3. What happened to the seed that fell on thorns?
4. What did Jesus say the birds were like?

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

25. City On A Hill

1. In Matthew 5:13, to what did Jesus compare his followers?
2. What did he compare them to in verse 14?
3. In Matthew 5:15, what does he say that people do with a candle and why?
4. What will people do when they see our good works?

Philippians 2:14-15

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

26. When You Pray

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. We are supposed to ask God for what to be done on earth and in heaven?
2. What does God want us to ask him for every day?
3. We are supposed to ask for forgiveness in the same way that we do what?

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

27. Into the Ditch

1. What do people try to pull out of other's eyes?
2. What does the scripture say is in our eye?
3. How can we see to take something out of someone else's eye?
4. Explain what you think this means.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

28. How Much More?

1. If we ask, what will happen?
2. What happens for everyone that asks?
3. What happens for everyone that seeks?
4. What happens when we knock?

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

29. On the Rock

1. How many types of people are in the story?
2. What kind of person does what Jesus says?
3. Which person does not do what Jesus says?
4. What did the foolish man build his house on?
5. Whose house did not have a foundation?

Psalm 62:6-7

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of strength and my refuge, is in God.

30. Weeds in the Wheat

1. When could the servants tell that there was something else planted in the field?
2. Why could they not tell sooner?
3. What was the only thing that was different?
4. Why did they not pull the weeds when they could first tell what they were?
5. What do the weeds represent?

Matthew 7:15-16

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

31. Two Kinds of Yeast

1. How many measures of meal did the lady in the story use?
2. Is it possible to remove the yeast from the dough?
3. What do you have to do instead?
4. In your own words, what is "leaven of the Pharisees?" (Luke 12:1)

Acts 5:38-39

"…For if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

32. The Heart of Man

Read Proverbs 4:20-23

1. To what should we give attention?
2. To what should we listen?
3. Where should we keep the Word of God?
4. What is the Word of God to our bodies?

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

33. The Door

1. Who comes in the door?
2. Who do the sheep follow?
3. Will the sheep follow a stranger? Why or why not?
4. What does it say we will recognize if we know Jesus?

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

34. Who Is My Neighbor?

Read Matthew 25:35-40

1. Jesus said, I was hungry and you gave me?
2. I was thirsty and you gave me?
3. I was a stranger and?
4. I was sick and you?
5. I was in prison and you?
6. When we help others, who are doing it for?

Matthew 22:37-39

…You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

35. The Wicked Servant

1. How many times did Jesus say we need to forgive? Explain.
2. What did the master give to the man who owed a very large amount of money?
3. What did that man do when his worker owed him a little bit of money?
4. What does God say he will do if we do not forgive others?

Mark 11:26

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

36. The Lost Sheep

1. How many sheep did the shepherd leave behind?
2. Where did he leave the other sheep?
3. Where did he take the one lost sheep after he found it?
4. What did Jesus say happens in heaven when someone repents?

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

37. The Lost Coin

1. What did this lady do when she lost her coin?
2. What did she do when she found it?
3. Who did she tell?
4. What do the angels of God do when someone repents?

Zephaniah 3:17

For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, He will calm all your fears.

38. The Lost Son

Read Romans 8:35-39

1. What can separate us from God's love?
2. We cannot be separated from God's love by death or?
3. We cannot be separated by angels, heavenly rulers, or?
4. We cannot be separated now or?

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

39. What Fills Your Heart?

1. Where do our words come from?
2. What comes out of the heart of a good man?
3. What comes out of the heart of an evil man?
4. What will we give account for to God?

Luke 6:45

A good man out of the treasure of his heart brings forth good; an evil man out of the treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

40. Workers in the Vineyard

Read Ephesians 2:8-9

1. What have we been saved by?
2. What have we been saved through?
3. Were we saved by anything we did?
4. What was our salvation from God?
5. If it were by our works then we could do what?

Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit….

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

41. The Wicked Farmers

1. What did the farmers do to the first servant that the man sent?
2. What did they do to the other servants?
3. Who did the man finally decide to send?
4. Where did the servants they take the son?
5. What did the servants do to the son?

Isaiah 28:16

…Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.

42. Kingdom Business

1. What did the first servant do with the money?
2. Where did the last servant put the money?
3. What did the king do with the last servant's money?

Luke 19:26

For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

43. Improperly Dressed

Read John 14:6

1. Jesus is always full of?
2. Jesus is not death, he is always?
3. What is the ONLY way to get to God the Father?

Isaiah 61:10

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

44. Arrested!

1. In Ezekiel 1:28, what happened when he saw the glory of the Lord?
2. In Psalm 41:9, who betrayed (lifted up his heel)?
3. In Matthew 26:50, what did Jesus call Judas?

Psalm 103:2-4

Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies…

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

45. Falsely Accused

1. Have you ever been accused of something you did not do?
2. Did you think it was unfair?
3. What does Matthew 5:44 say to do to people who hate you and despise you?

1 John 3:4-5

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

46. When the Rooster Crows

1. In Mark 14:30, how many times did Jesus say the rooster would crow?
2. In Mark 14:70, why did they think Peter was with Jesus?
3. In Matthew 26:75 and Luke 22:62 what did Peter do after the rooster crowed?
4. In John 21, how many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him?

Romans 5:20

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

47. Crucify Him!

Read Matthew 27:11-26; Mark 15:6-11

1. What was the first question that Pilate asked Jesus?
2. What would the governor do for the Jewish people at this feast?
3. Who was Barabbas?
4. What did Pilate's wife say?
5. What did Pilate do in front of all the people? (Matthew 27:24)

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth.

48. King of the Jews

Read John 19:17-42

1. What did Pilate write on the sign they placed over the head of Jesus on the cross?
2. Why were the priests upset about what he wrote?
3. When they pierced the side of Jesus, what came out?
4. Who came to take the body of Jesus, and who else came with spices to anoint the body?

John 3:14-15

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

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Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

49. An Empty Tomb

Read John 20

1. Who did Mary Magdalene think Jesus was?
2. What did Mary think happened to Jesus?
3. What was in the tomb?
4. Do you think a thief would have left the grave clothes?

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

50. Unable to Speak

Read Luke 1:7, 18, 20, 63-64

1. What do we know about Zacharias and Elizabeth?
2. How did Zacharias respond when Gabriel told him the news?
3. Why did Gabriel say Zacharias would not be able to speak?
4. When was Zacharias able to speak again?

Psalm 139:4-5

For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.

51. A Child Is Born

Read Isaiah 9:7

1. When will the government of Jesus stop increasing?
2. What else is always increasing?
3. Whose throne will Jesus sit on?
4. What is his throne established with?

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

52. From the East

1. What gifts did the wise men bring?
2. Why did the wise men not go back to talk to Herod after they found Jesus?
3. Where did Joseph and Mary take Jesus?

Is**aiah 60:3, 6**

The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.

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is a curriculum designed to help children find Jesus in every story of the Bible. Because the Bible is one continuous story that leads to Jesus, He can be found from Genesis to Revelation. Finding Jesus is a Bible study designed for the teacher. This one-year Gospels volume includes 52 lessons which can be adapted to teach any age from 3-99. The instructor customizes the lesson for their audience, using only the Bible as a text. The teacher decides how to relay the information to their students, with regard to their background and level of education.

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About the Author:



Laura Baca is a lifelong student of the Bible with a heart for reaching the next generation with the truth and love of God's Word. Over ten years ago, while teaching in children's church, she began to recognize a gap in the way that biblical truths were being communicated to young hearts. This sparked the idea to write a curriculum designed to help children connect deeply with Scripture and find Jesus in every story of the Bible. Once her children were grown, she prayerfully developed this curriculum to speak to children across different cultures and backgrounds.
In September 2024, a divine meeting with a Kenyan woman on a layover in Istanbul led to the formation of Victorious Light, a non-profit organization established in 2025 with a desire to make this resource available to all. Laura is committed to offer materials freely to anyone, anywhere in the world. Through Victorious Light, children around the globe can encounter the transformative love of Jesus Christ through the stories of the Bible.

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