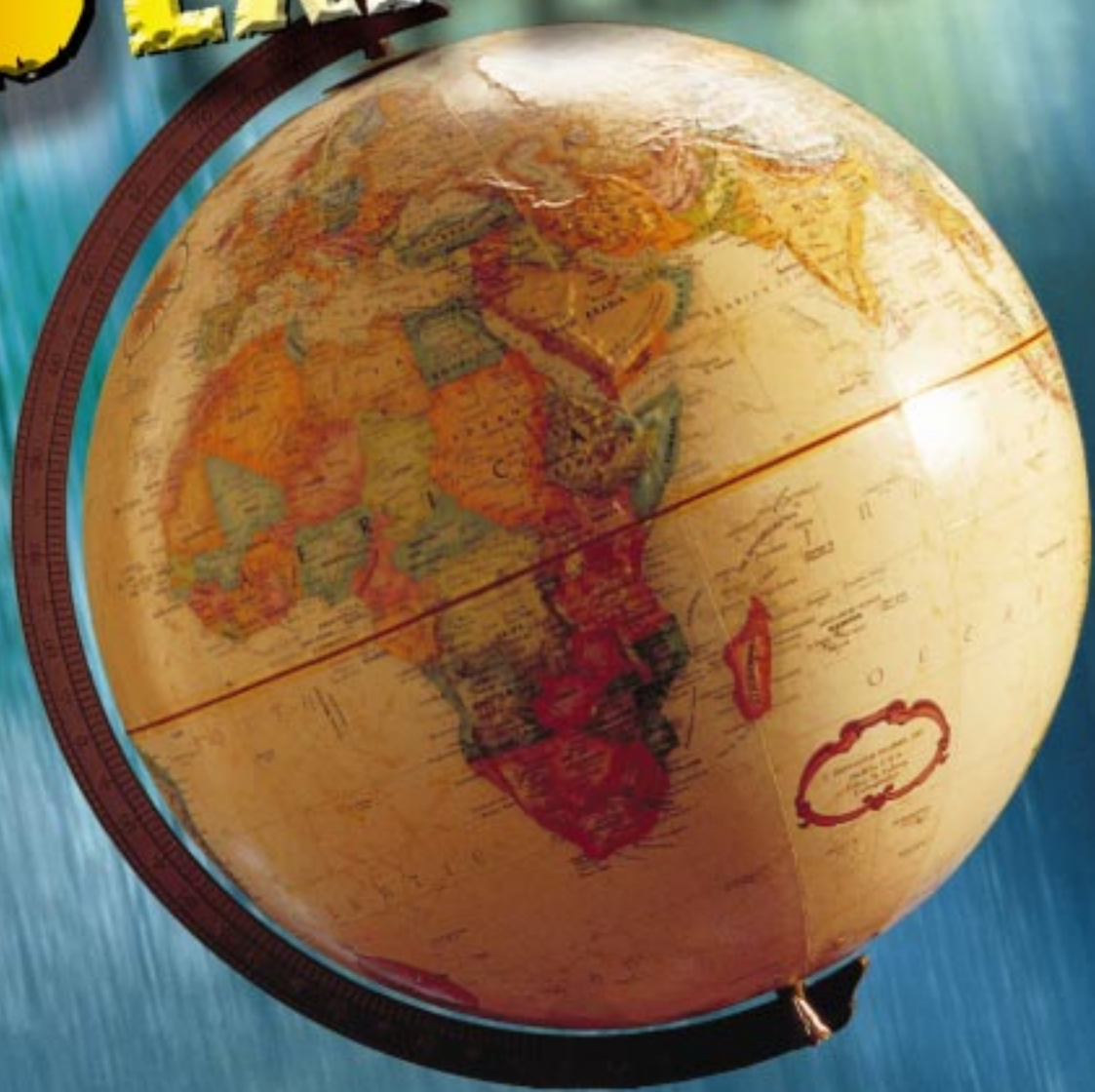


THE **JESUS** EXPEDITION™



Adult Guide for VeBS® 2003

The Jesus Expedition™

“The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”
—Psalm 118:14

A Bible Study for Adults
to be used in conjunction with *The Jesus Expedition™* VeBS.®

Written by Diana Stucky

Excerpts taken from Cook’s curriculum for adults.

The Jesus Expedition™: Exploring the Miracles of Jesus

Very exciting Bible School® Curriculum

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The Jesus Expedition™ Adult Guide

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Writer: Diana Stucky

Editor: Karen Pickering

Designer: Randy Maid

Published by Cook Communications Ministries

4050 Lee Vance View, Colorado Springs, CO 80918-7100

www.cookministries.com

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching *The Jesus Expedition*

Designed to correlate and run concurrently with *The Jesus Expedition*[™] VeBS[®], this Bible study will give your adults an opportunity to learn along with the children of your church or community, studying the example of Christ from the Gospels.

The sessions follow three simple steps: Getting Started, Digging In, and Taking It Home.

- **Getting Started** will create interest and focus your group's attention on the session topic.
- **Digging In** dynamically involves your group so that they can discover God's truth and its implications for their lives.
- **Taking It Home** helps group members apply God's truth to their lives.

In addition, remember you will also find important notes concerning Bible commentary, the lesson focus, a list of supplies needed, the preparation you will need to do, and an assignment for the next session. You'll also find tips on how you can connect with the children in *The Jesus Expedition*[™] VeBS[®]. In addition, some of the Bible commentary information given in each lesson is taken from Cook's Adult Bible-in-Life Curriculum.

As you lead this study, begin each session with prayer, depending on the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to give understanding so that the truth will be applied. Try to involve everyone in your group; group involvement is a key to learning. Arrange your chairs in a circle or semicircle. This promotes eye contact among members and encourages more dynamic discussion. As the leader, address people by name to help others get acquainted. And remember—have a good time!

SESSION ONE

Site

Antarctica

Bible Story

A paralytic is healed—Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse

Isaiah 1:18

Focus

Jesus is the Savior

Supplies

- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Response Sheet #1

Preparation

- Read story in Mark 2:1-12, and the Key Verse—Isaiah 1:18.
- Make copies of Response Sheet #1.

Getting Started

Start off your class with everyone getting a chance to know each other better. Ask a few simple questions to get everyone sharing. Some good starting questions might be:

1. What was your first car?
2. How many bathrooms did you have in your home as a kid, and how many people shared them?
3. Where would your ideal vacation spot be?

Discuss with your class that you are beginning a study of Jesus' miracles, focusing on five of them. Remind them that their children will be studying the same story each day, and encourage them to ask their children about what

The Power of Forgiveness

The crowd that watched Jesus heal the paralyzed man responded enthusiastically to His dramatic display of power (*Mark 2:12*). Sadly, though, they overlooked His more significant ability to forgive sins—a power that deeply troubled the religious leaders (*vss. 6-7*).

Scripture teaches that God alone has the authority to forgive sins (*Isa. 43:25; 44:22*). After all, it is against Him ultimately that people commit sin (*Ps. 51:4*). Because the religious leaders rejected Jesus' claim to be God, they charged Him with blasphemy.

The Jewish leaders, then, did not deny that God had the power to forgive people and save them. What bothered them so much in Jesus' message is the radical idea that God loves and saves "sinners" as they are, without their first having to follow the law, "clean up their act," and thus be deserving of His love and mercy.

they have learned.

The focus of this first lesson is "Jesus is the Savior." Someone has said that the only people who can be saved are those who know that they are lost. Many people in our world today have no idea that they are lost and in need of salvation, so they do not know they need a Savior. You

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may even have adults in your class who are not saved, but who are attending out of curiosity or because their children have come to the children's sessions. This lesson may help them understand more of who Jesus is and why they need to put their trust in Him.

To help your class start to think about this idea, ask them to try to remember the last time they were lost. Perhaps they were trying to find a house they had never been to before and they turned down the wrong street, or they turned the *wrong* direction on the *right* street. Ask them to especially think of how they *knew* they were lost. Also ask if they or the people they were with were too proud to admit being lost and would not stop to ask for directions. Sometimes we stubbornly go ahead with something, saying, "I know what I'm doing" when in reality we don't. That mirrors what we do in life when we insist we know where we're headed spiritually, but actually we desperately need the Savior to turn our lives in the right direction.

As a related activity, you might ask the people in your class to each find someone in the class who has never been to their house before and give that person the directions to their house. Sometime before the next session they should then try to follow those directions to that person's house. That would make a good follow-up discussion to this lesson—how successful were they? Did they ever have a feeling of "lostness" as they were searching for the house? Was that a good or bad feeling, and why?

Digging In

This session we will look at a familiar Bible story from a different perspective.

Hand out Resource Sheet #1 and ask someone to read the story in Mark 2:1-12. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the story is read. Also encourage everyone to listen carefully to the story all the way through before they start to answer any of the questions on the Response Sheet.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. The questions and some pos-

Who Is the Son of Man?

Jesus' favorite designation for Himself was the "Son of Man" (*Mark 2:10*). He wanted to teach that, as the Messiah, He combined two Old Testament roles: Son of Man (*Dan. 7:13-14*) and Servant of the Lord (*Isa. 52:13-53:12*). Daniel described a Son of Man to whom God gives an everlasting kingdom. And Isaiah described a Servant of the Lord who suffers on behalf of others.

Jesus knew that He must perform the role of the suffering Servant. But He also knew that eventually He would receive glory as the Son of Man. In relation to Jesus, therefore, the expression "Son of Man" indicates both His humanity and divine authority.

From the Bible-in-Life curriculum, Adult Teacher's Guide, March 2003.

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sible answers are given below.

After reading the story, quickly summarize in one short sentence what the story says.

Your students may write something like, “Some friends of a paralyzed man cut a hole in the roof of a house to bring the man to Jesus to be healed.” Point out that we remember the hole in the roof and the healing, but we frequently forget what Jesus said about the man’s sin.

Why did the friends bring the paralyzed man to Jesus?

The friends brought the man to be healed by Jesus.

What is the importance of Jesus forgiving the man’s sin before anything else?

Through the healing, Jesus showed He is God. That is what upset the Pharisees, who knew what authority Jesus was claiming when He said the man’s sins were forgiven.

Was the paralyzed man spiritually lost? What group believed they were not spiritually lost, but really were? Why?

The paralyzed man was a sinner in need of forgiveness like everyone else. However, just to look at him, you might think his biggest problem was his paralysis, not the state of his soul. That is the same way many of us are—we see and worry about outward circumstances rather than about our spiritual condition, which is often at the root of our other

problems. The Pharisees believed they had the “inside” track to God because they knew the Law and kept the commandments. Their hearts, however, were far from God.

In what ways can sin be like paralysis in our lives?

While we may not be physically paralyzed, sin may be in control of our lives (if we have not trusted in Jesus as our Savior) or it may have “paralyzed” our walk with Jesus because we have become stuck in its grip.

Which do you need more from Jesus in your life—a physical healing or a spiritual healing?

This is a personal question that everyone should consider carefully. Jesus is the Savior, the only one who can spiritually heal our lives. We may need His first touch on us or we may need to ask Him for forgiveness for our sins so we can “rise up” and follow Him more closely again.

Do you believe Jesus can save you today? Why or why not?

Once again, this is a personal question. Those who have never trusted in Jesus as Savior may not change their minds about Him from reading just one story, but encourage them to keep an open mind as you read more about Him in the next few sessions. Anyone who did what Jesus did must be God, as Jesus was claiming in this story we just read.

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Taking It Home

Hopefully your students have seen from the Response Sheet and their answers that this is more than just a “Sunday school” story about a man who was healed. While the details about removing the roof and lowering the man through the crowd are significant, what Jesus said to the man shows what He intended for us to remember from this story—Jesus is the Savior who speaks with God’s authority.

Before your students leave, encourage them to pray about areas of their lives where sin may have them “paralyzed.” Note that the truth of the Bible is that Jesus saves us from sin and wants us to confess our sin so that we can live lives pleasing to Him (see *1 John 1:9*). We still struggle with sin even after we trust in Him for our salvation; a good example of that is the apostle Paul (see *Romans 7-8*). The key to escaping “paralysis” is the

Holy Spirit and realizing that we do not have to live in condemnation for our sin (*Rom. 8:1-2*).

Assignment

Before the next session, ask your students to read Luke 8:41-56. Ask them to think about what they would want people to say about their life after their death. What would they want their eulogy to say about what kind of life they have led?

Kids’ Connection

At Site 1, the kids visited Antarctica and studied the same Bible story that you did. Discuss with them what they learned about being “lost” and if they understand that Jesus can forgive their sins and can wash them “white as snow.” This may be the time to talk seriously with them about accepting Christ as their Savior.

Escaping Paralysis

RESPONSE SHEET 1

Read Mark 2:1-12 and answer these questions:

1. After reading the story, quickly summarize in one short sentence what the story says.

2. Why did the friends bring the paralyzed man to Jesus?

3. What is the importance of Jesus forgiving the man's sin before anything else?

4. Was the paralyzed man spiritually lost? What group believed they were not spiritually lost, but really were? Why?

5. In what ways can sin be like paralysis in our lives?

6. Which do you need more from Jesus in your life—a physical healing or a spiritual healing?

7. Do you believe Jesus can save you today? Why or why not?

Escaping Paralysis

SESSION TWO

Site

An Egyptian desert

Bible Story

Jairus's daughter—Luke 8:41-42, 49-56

Key Verses

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

Focus

Jesus has power over death

Supplies

- Items that need a power source to operate (for example, a flashlight, a portable radio or CD player, a small fan or clock with a cord)
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Response Sheet #2

Preparation

- Read the story in Luke 8:41-42, 49-56, and the Key Verses—1 Corinthians 15:21-22.
- Make copies of Response Sheet #2.

Ruler of the Synagogue

Mark identifies Jairus as “one of the synagogue rulers” (*Mark 5:22*), indicating that he was a man of importance in the Jewish community. The ruler of the synagogue was a layman who was chosen to care for the building and supervised the worship services. In many instances, he was supported by a board of elders, over which he ruled.

Most synagogues only had one ruler chosen to look after such things as the physical arrangements for the services and to lead the board of elders. At times, this designation was honorary and did not include the administrative duties.

Getting Started

Before you begin this session, assemble a group of items that need a power source to operate. Preferably have some objects that take batteries to run (*such as a flashlight*) and others that need an electric outlet (*such as a small alarm clock or hand mixer*). Put all of the items on a table for everyone to see as they arrive. As you are about to start, ask your students what all of these objects have in common (*they all need a power source to operate*). Talk about some sources of power: electricity, fossil fuels, sunlight, geothermal sources (*hot water, like a geyser*), wind, and “people power” (*as in pedaling a bicycle*).

Now ask them how much “power” God has—they will probably say a limitless amount—and then ask them if He has complete power over their lives. Since they will likely say “Yes,” ask them how they know this. Perhaps they will say the Bible tells them that, or that they have seen this through their personal experiences. Direct them to the idea that God decided when we would be born, and He also has decided when

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we will leave this life (see *Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; Heb. 9:27*).

The Bible tells us that Jesus showed people that He was God by His power over life and death. The Scripture you will read today is one example of Jesus bringing life back to someone who was dead—the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of a local synagogue (*possibly the one in Capernaum*).

Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet #2. Ask one of your students to read aloud Luke 8:41-42, 49-56. As that person prepares to read, ask the rest of the group to notice what things Jairus does when he comes to see Jesus that indicate the seriousness of the situation. Also, tell them to notice what Jesus says to Jairus when the man from Jairus's house comes to tell him that his daughter has died. These details tell us much about what kind of man Jairus was, and how Jesus responded to him.

Now read the story and then answer the questions on Response Sheet #2. Some suggested answers are below:

What kind of authority did Jairus have in the community?

Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue, a very important position (see *the Bible Commentary on this subject*). Note that while some of the religious leaders quarreled with Jesus and His supposed disregard for the law, others were more receptive to Him and to His message (see, for example, *Luke 23:50-51*).

What actions of Jairus show that the situation with his daughter was serious? How did Jesus respond?

Luke says that Jairus fell at Jesus' feet and "pleaded" with Him to come and heal his only daughter. How Jairus knew about Jesus and His healing power we do not know.

Old at 12

The death of a 12-year-old daughter would have been especially sad in Jewish culture and a cause for great wailing and sorrow. While her father and Jesus called her "little" (Mark 5: 23, 41, NIV), that is a term showing she was young, but not an infant.

In fact, today we may think of the daughter as merely a child, but in Jesus' day the girl would likely have been about at the age to be married and start a family. She did not have the options of going on to further education or starting a career. Jewish girls particularly looked forward to their wedding day as the most joyous event in their life, and for this daughter to die so close to that important event would have been very distressing to her family and friends.

From the Bible-in-Life curriculum, Adult Teacher's Guide, March 2003.

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However, Jairus had faith enough in Jesus to go to Him, even though it might mean ridicule from some other religious leaders. Notice that Jesus did not ask Jairus questions, but simply got up and went with him, perhaps an indication that He saw Jairus's faith.

How was Jairus's faith greatly tested on the way back to his house?

Certainly Jairus had heard about Jesus being able to heal people, but not that He had power over both life and death. That Jesus could still "heal" Jairus's daughter after she died took Jairus's faith to a whole new level of understanding. How could he believe that his daughter would be brought back to life? That would seem impossible.

How do we know that Jesus actually raised Jairus's daughter from the dead?

We have two "independent" confirmations in the story that Jairus's daughter died. One is the man who came to Jesus and Jairus as they were walking to the house to tell them they need not "bother" to come further; the child was dead. The other confirmation is the group of mourners who were gathered at Jairus's house. They laughed when Jesus told them that the girl was not "dead." Of course, they knew she was dead, and they had begun the mourning process, which by Jewish custom could go on for days.

Who were the witnesses to Jesus raising Jairus's daughter? What were they not supposed to say?

Jesus allowed His three closest disciples—Peter, James, and John—to witness this miracle, as well as Jairus and his wife. Jesus did not do His miracles as a "show" for people. While His miracles caused people to come to see Him, more important to Him was that the message of the Gospel would be spread (see *Luke 4:42-43*). That is likely one reason He told Jairus and his wife not to tell others what they had seen, wonderful as it was. He also knew that the more the news of His miracles spread, the more people were ready to make Him an earthly king, when His kingdom is not of this world.

What are the implications for us today that Jesus could raise people from the dead?

Jesus had authority over not just life and its illnesses, but over death itself. That is authority that only God has. Anyone who has that kind of power must be worthy of our worship and commitment. Also, when Jesus said to His disciples before His crucifixion and resurrection that He would go to prepare a place for them in heaven and bring them to that place (*John 14:1-4*), there is a ring of authority in His words. No one else has come back from the dead after three days as He did.

Taking It Home

Once you have discussed the questions on the sheet about the story, encourage your students to take some time to answer the personal questions on the sheet. They might want to complete

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these statements individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

As they approach situations when close friends or loved ones pass away, or as they think about their own death, they can find comfort and peace in knowing that Jesus will bring all believers to Himself. You may want to read them the Key Verses for this session: 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Since the time of Adam, all people have died in their sin, but Christ changed that with His death and resurrection so that through forgiveness of sin and faith there is hope of eternal life with Him. However, we can still admit to each other that sometimes we have fears of death and what comes after it, and that we may wonder if we will truly see our loved ones who have died believing in Christ. Like Jairus, we may need to hear Jesus tell us, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (*Luke 8:50*).

Assignment

Ask your students to read the story of the 10 lepers in Luke 17:11-19 and to think of the most recent time they were very

grateful for something (*for example, a person helping them when they had car trouble*).

Kids' Connection

The children also studied the story of Jairus and his daughter today. This could be a tough story for younger children to understand, about someone who is dead coming to life again, but it is a good opportunity for you to talk with them about the subject of death, something we often avoid. They may have questions such as where people are who have died, and if we will see them again. Do the best you can to answer these questions for them at their age level as you explain about the eternal life that Jesus brings to believers. Encourage them to accept Jesus as their Savior if they have not done so, but not out of fear of death—they should be responding to Jesus' love for them, the kind of love He showed to Jairus and his family.

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RESPONSE SHEET 2

Read Luke 8:41-42, 49-56 and answer these Bible study questions:

1. What kind of authority did Jairus have in the community?

2. What actions of Jairus show that the situation with his daughter was serious? How did Jesus respond?

3. How was Jairus's faith greatly tested on the way back to his house?

4. How do we know that Jesus actually raised Jairus's daughter from the dead?

5. Who were the witnesses to Jesus raising Jairus's daughter? What were they not supposed to say?

6. What are the implications for us today that Jesus could raise people from the dead?

Your Response to Jesus

Complete these statements:

1. I needed to remember that Jesus has power over life and death when

_____.

2. I know that death is not the end for believers, but I am still sometimes afraid of _____.

3. In some ways I am like Jairus because I _____.

4. Jesus' awesome power over life and death overwhelmed me when I saw

_____.

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SESSION THREE

Site

A South American jungle

Bible Story

The Ten Lepers—Luke
17:11-19

Key Verse

Psalm 118:28

Focus

Jesus deserves our thanks

Supplies

- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Sheets of paper
- Colored markers
- Response Sheet #3

Preparation

- Read story in Luke 17:11-19, and the Key Verse—Psalm 118:28.
- Make copies of Response Sheet #3.

Getting Started

Ask your students to think of the last time they said “Thank you” to someone. Perhaps they said it recently to their spouse, or maybe to a clerk as they were checking out of a store. Perhaps they thanked a neighbor who helped them by watching their house while they were gone on vacation.

Leprosy and Skin Diseases

While the Bible calls the 10 men that Jesus healed “lepers,” what is described as “leprosy” actually probably covered a wide range of skin diseases in Bible times. Leviticus 13 and 14 give details about what is called “leprosy,” but the descriptions there do not match well with the characteristics of Hansen’s disease, which is the disease we call leprosy today. It seems that a variety of skin problems could make a person “unclean” in Old Testament times.

Once a priest declared a person “unclean,” he or she was banished from the community, and only through a priest’s reexamination could he declare that person clean and allow the leper to rejoin the community. The leper was required to let his or her hair be loose, wear torn clothes, and cry “Unclean! Unclean!” (*Lev. 13:45-46*). That the band of 10 lepers in this story was keeping its distance from Jesus and the disciples is shown by their having to shout to be heard (*Luke 17:12-13*). Leprosy was sometimes considered to be a mark of God’s special displeasure with a person, a visible mark of that person’s serious sin before God (see *Num. 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:27; 15:5*). However, the story of Naaman in the Old Testament shows that even though he was a leper, he stayed with his family and traveled with servants; this means everyone did not consider the condition to be contagious (*2 Kings 5:2, 13*).

Jesus’ attitude toward those declared unclean was vastly different from other rabbis of His time. One rabbi is said to have not eaten an egg purchased in a street where there was someone with leprosy. Another rabbi is said to have thrown stones at lepers to keep them away. Jesus, however, touched those with leprosy, making Himself ceremonially unclean, but also demonstrating His power to overcome “uncleanness.”

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Be sure to ask if saying “Thank you” is a regular practice for them, or if they have trouble thinking of the last time they said “Thank you” for anything. Christians often talk about having “an attitude of gratitude,” but is that more talk than action? It is important to say “Thank you” to people, both verbally and in writing. Ask, “What does it mean to you personally when someone thanks you, especially unexpectedly?” In this “me first” world, thank you’s seem to be a rarer and rarer thing, when instead we all really need more and more encouragement and thanks. And how much thanks do we owe God for our very lives and all of the blessings He has given us? This week’s story from Jesus’ life illustrates that principle, as we see people who do thank Jesus and those who do not. Let’s take a look at one incident in Jesus’ life that will provide a concrete example of the attitude of thankfulness that we should exhibit.

The Samaritans

The Jews despised the Samaritans, even though the two shared a common heritage. The Jews said the Samaritans were descendants of the foreign peoples resettled in Israel after Assyria defeated and exiled the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. (see *2 Kings 17*). Therefore, they saw the Samaritans as unclean and not true descendants of Abraham. The Samaritans themselves, however, claimed they were actually descendants of two tribes not completely deported from Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh. The Samaritans claimed that while the rest of the Israelites set up centers for idol worship throughout the land, they continued to worship God at their holy place on Mount Gerizim, north of Jerusalem, in the area known as Samaria. In later years the Samaritans set up their own temple there, further angering the Jews. Eventually, in about 128 B.C., the Jewish ruler John Hyrcanus destroyed that temple, though the Samaritans continued to worship on that mountain (see *John 4:20*).

Both groups worshiped the God of Israel, and both considered the first five books of the Old Testament as holy Scripture, but the Jews considered the Samaritans the same as Gentiles, not letting them into the inner courts of the temple in Jerusalem and limiting contact with them (*vs. 9*). The Samaritans responded by harassing Jews from Galilee traveling through Samaria to Jerusalem for the Passover (*Luke 9:51-53*), and in about A.D. 6 a group of Samaritans defiled the temple in Jerusalem by spreading human bones in the temple porches.

That Jesus would even speak to a Samaritan was shocking, for some rabbis used the very name “Samaritan” as a curse word (*John 8:48*). Jesus even stayed with Samaritans (*4:40*), showing His love and compassion to those His society considered unclean and outcasts.

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Digging In

Begin by handing out Response Sheet #3 and asking a volunteer to be ready to read the story in Luke 17:11-19. Ask your students to answer the Response Sheet questions after you read the story. Here are some suggested answers:

Where did Jesus and the disciples meet the 10 lepers?

Jesus and His disciples were heading for Jerusalem from Galilee. The shortest route between the two places would take them through Samaria, but most Jews took a much longer route to avoid contact with the hated Samaritans, who sometimes harassed Jews going to Jerusalem. It was as if Jesus and His disciples met the lepers in “the bad part of town,” on the border between the two areas, where many Jews did not go.

Why did the 10 stay at a distance from Jesus?

Since lepers were unclean and shunned by the community, they usually kept their distance from other people. Notice, however, that the disease had brought together Jews and Samaritans, who normally would have nothing to do with each other.

Did Jesus immediately heal the lepers?

Jesus did not touch the lepers or heal them immediately, but instead told them to show themselves to the priest, who could declare them clean. By faith they

turned and went to see the priest and were cured on the way. They must have known something about who Jesus was and believed that He would heal them.

Why would only one leper stop to thank Jesus?

Too often we are not thankful for the things we receive. Now that the lepers were cured, they could return to normal society, and perhaps that realization overwhelmed any thoughts of thanking Jesus.

What is the importance of this leper being a Samaritan?

The Jews hated the Samaritans, considering them like Gentiles (even Jesus calls the man a “foreigner”—vs. 18). Of all the 10, the Samaritan man should have avoided Jesus. However, he is a kind of symbolic figure of all the other “foreigners” (Gentiles) who later accepted the Gospel after the Resurrection, while many of the Jews rejected Jesus.

What made the leper well?

Jesus said the leper’s “faith” made him well. The other nine, who went to the priest believing they would be healed received only physical healing. However, the Samaritan who returned may have received salvation in addition to the physical healing he experienced. We do not “deserve” to be healed either physically or spiritually any more than the 10 lepers did. However, the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ is open to us if we will only accept it.

An Attitude of Gratitude

SESSION THREE

Taking It Home

First, have your students fill in the second half of the Response Sheet, which asks them to list some people they may need to say “Thank you” to (*a spouse, friends, a family member, neighbors, someone at work, etc.*).

Then give your students the sheets of paper to fold in half. Tell them you are making thank-you cards for one or more of the people they have listed. On the front side, ask them to write with colored markers such words as “A Big Thank-You” or “I Can’t Thank You Enough.” Inside the folded paper, like a card, ask them to write a short note to the person they need to thank. To a friend, they may need to write a thank-you for allowing them to borrow something, or for spending a wonderful evening together not too long ago. To a spouse they could write that they do not thank them enough for all of the little things they do every day. They may want to write thank-you’s to all of their children, to tell them that they appreciate each one of them and are glad to have them in their lives.

After they have finished making their cards, tell them it is up to them if they want to deliver the cards or not.

As they work on the rest of the Response Sheet, note that they can thank God for

their life, their health, their family, their eternal salvation, the many blessings they have, and so on. If an “attitude of gratitude” permeates our lives, we are less likely to forget that our blessings all come from God and that we owe Him thanks for everything that we are and have in this world and in the next. Thankfulness is an antidote for the sins of pride and self-satisfaction.

Assignment

Before the next session, encourage your students to read Mark 10:46-52, about blind Bartimaeus. Ask them to think about the last time they had to “keep after” something in order to get it done or to get it right (*for instance, they had to call an insurance company three or four times to get a bill corrected*).

Kids’ Connection

Since the children also studied this story, talk with them about what they have to be grateful for. Share how grateful you are to have them as part of your family, and give them the card you made (*if you made any for them*). None of us, children included, receives enough appreciation in our lives. And we could all be more thankful for the blessings that God has given us individually and as families.

An Attitude of Gratitude

RESPONSE SHEET 3

Bible study questions:

Read Luke 17:11-19 and answer these questions:

- 1. Where did Jesus and the disciples meet the 10 lepers?***

- 2. Why did the 10 stay at a distance from Jesus?***

- 3. Did Jesus immediately heal the lepers?***

- 4. Why would only one leper stop to thank Jesus?***

- 5. What is the importance of this leper being a Samaritan?***

- 6. What made the leper well?***

I Need to Thank . . .

List here one or more people you need to say "Thank you" to (*a spouse, friends, a family member, neighbors, someone at work, etc.*). Beside each one write why you need to thank that person.

- 1. What do you need to thank God for? List some things here:***

- 2. How can thanking God for these things "make you well" in a way similar to what happened to the Samaritan leper?***

- 3. What things do you need to do in order to have a more thankful attitude toward God in your everyday life?***

An Attitude of Gratitude

SESSION FOUR

Site

Mount Everest

Bible Story

Bartimaeus—Mark 10:46-52

Key Verse

Hebrews 12:1

Focus

Jesus rewards persistence

Supplies

- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Response Sheet #4

Preparation

- Read the story in Mark 10:46-52, and the Key Verse—Hebrews 12:1.
- Make copies of Response Sheet #4.

Bartimaeus

Only Mark recorded the blind man's name for us. Some believe that this may mean that he was a known member of the church in Jerusalem and that Mark, writing with the help of Peter, named him because he would be familiar to some of the readers. Matthew states that there were two blind men healed on this occasion (*Matt. 20:30*). Mark may have chosen just to focus on Bartimaeus because he was known or perhaps he was the leader of the two who were healed.

From the Bible-in-Life curriculum, Adult Teacher's Guide, March 2003.

Getting Started

Ask your students to share about the last time they had to “keep after” something in order to get it done or to get it right. For example, they may have had to call an insurance company three or four times to get a bill corrected, or they had to keep working on a project that was difficult to finish, such as remodeling parts of their home.

Another good example is someone who persists with physical therapy after an accident or surgery so that he or she can regain strength and health.

After discussing such examples, point out that we often hear the expression, “Persistence pays off,” so ask the question, “What are the rewards of persistence?” Students will probably tell you that persistence is the only way to get some things done (*such as a remodeling project*) or that the results are worth the effort (*such as recovery from an accident and a return to normal activities*). Another reward of persistence is a sense of accomplishment, that you have done something important and worthwhile for yourself or for others.

Now ask them to think about how the idea of persistence applies to our spiritual lives. Ask them, “Would you more likely compare living their Christian lives to a short sprint or a long marathon?” Most people would choose the marathon comparison. We have so many things we must “keep after” to live the life God wants us to. Ask, “What are some of those things?” (*continual prayer, Bible reading, etc.*). Also ask them to be

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thinking about that idea as you read the story of Bartimaeus, who wanted Jesus to do something life-changing for him.

Digging In

Begin by handing out Response Sheet #4 and asking a volunteer to be ready to read the story in Mark 10:46-52. You may want to stop and answer the Response Sheet questions as you go along, or read the entire story first and then answer the questions. Here are some suggested answers:

What are the similarities between blind Bartimaeus and the 10 lepers?

Because of their diseases, both Bartimaeus and the lepers were outcasts in Jesus' society. Notice that both Bartimaeus and the lepers were outside the cities that Jesus was passing through, and they both called out to Jesus for help and mercy on them. Obviously Jesus had compassion on those that society did not, and He also reached out to those who had the faith to reach out to Him.

What did the people around Bartimaeus tell him not to do? Why?

When the blind man called out to Jesus, those people in the crowd told him to be quiet, just as the disciples before had tried to silence the children who came to Jesus (*Mark 10:13-16*). Possibly the people here did so because they didn't want an "outcast" person bothering the famous rabbi, or perhaps they believed Jesus should have nothing to do with this man. Blindness was often seen as a curse from God for that person's sins or the sins of his or her ancestors (*John 9:1-3*).

Sight to the Blind

The Jews of Jesus' time would have been well aware of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and what He would do when He came. Many of those prophecies are in the Book of Isaiah, and Jesus reads one of them in His home synagogue in Nazareth early in His ministry (*Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21*). Mentioned in that particular prophecy is that the Messiah would restore sight to the blind (*vs. 18*), something that is mentioned in other Isaiah passages as well (*for example, Isa. 35:5*).

Blindness and sight, however, are also symbols of who believes in Jesus and who doesn't. Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 to His disciples to explain to them that some people, especially some of the religious leaders, would be "blind" to Him and not accept him as the Messiah (*Mark 4:12*). In fact, He directly confronted some of the Pharisees when they did not believe in Him after He healed the man born blind. He told them that He came into this world so that those born blind would see, while those who only claimed to "see" God would actually be spiritually blind (*John 9:39-41*).

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How did Bartimaeus respond when Jesus called him?

The blind man threw off his outer garment and jumped up to go to Jesus in believing anticipation of what Jesus would do for him. In response, Jesus healed him, saying it was Bartimaeus's faith that healed him.

What did Jesus tell Bartimaeus to do? What did the formerly blind man actually do?

After Jesus healed Bartimaeus, He told the blind man to go on his own way, but Bartimaeus instead followed after Jesus. That does not necessarily mean the former blind man became a "follower" of Jesus, but it is entirely possible that he followed Jesus and His disciples into Jerusalem for the Passover and saw with his new eyes Jesus' rejection, death, and resurrection.

Taking It Home

After you have answered the first four questions on Response Sheet #4, read and discuss the case studies. Hopefully these stories will bring the subject of persistence closer to the everyday lives of your students. Here are some possible answers to the questions after the story. If you do not have enough time to answer all of them, encourage your students to take the sheet home and answer the questions later.

Why does God honor persistence?

We know that God likes us to ask Him things, even though He knows our needs. Our persistence can mirror a deep faith we have that God will honor what we are doing or what we are asking for if we are doing so in accordance with His will.

The Son of David

Bartimaeus called Jesus "Son of David" (*Mark 10:47*), a title associated with the Messiah. Several of the Old Testament prophets—such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Amos—linked the future Messiah with the lineage of David. All of the Gospel writers consciously linked Jesus with David as His descendant, including Matthew, who started his Gospel with a listing of Jesus' ancestors back to David (*Matt. 1:1-17*). Also, John noted that the religious leaders expected the Messiah to come from David's line (*John 7:41-42*).

Unlike earlier in His ministry, when He told His disciples not to tell anyone He was the Messiah (*8:29-30*), Jesus did not chastise Bartimaeus, but called the blind man to come to Him. This open identification of Himself as the Messiah anticipates the welcome Jesus would receive shortly thereafter during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (*11:9-10*).

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Explain or describe your own personal examples of persistence that God honored.

Most people will have at least one or two examples to offer, perhaps similar to Anna's. For instance, they may have prayed for years that a certain person would trust in Christ for salvation, and then that person did, in God's own time and way.

Why are there times when persistence can be negative?

This may come up after reading Will's story. There is a difference between persistence and nagging—or what may be perceived as nagging. Nagging is self-centered, an attempt to try to manipulate someone else for your own purposes, as in a child nagging his or her parents about buying a certain toy. While a parent may give in and buy the toy to end the nagging, God will not be manipulated. He gives us what we need, not necessarily what we want.

In what areas of your Christian walk do you need to be more persistent?

Most Christians could talk about things they wish were good "habits" for them,

such as daily Bible study and longer times of prayer. They may also talk about habits they wish they did not have, such as giving in to certain temptations, and how they must be persistent at "rooting out" those problems.

Assignment

Before the next session, ask your students to read Matthew 17:24-27. Also ask them to think about what things they need every day to live their lives (*for example, food, clothing, water, a car, electricity, maybe a computer, etc.*).

Kids' Connection

Since the children also talked about Bartimaeus, discuss with them about how persistence can be good (*such as studying hard for a test that they know will be difficult*) or sometimes bad (*such as when they nag you for something they want you to do or buy for them that you have decided they do not need*). God honors our persistence when it shows our faithfulness to Him and brings glory to Him more than to ourselves.

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RESPONSE SHEET 4

Read Mark 10:46-52 and answer these questions about the Bible story.

- 1. What are the similarities between blind Bartimaeus and the 10 lepers?**
- 2. What did the people around Bartimaeus tell him not to do? Why?**
- 3. How did Bartimaeus respond when Jesus called him?**
- 4. What did Jesus tell Bartimaeus to do? What did the formerly blind man actually do?**

Case Studies

A. Anna, the new third grade teacher in a small town, was asked weekly by one of her students to come to church for Sunday worship or some other special program. She had not wanted to become involved in a church again because she had been so disillusioned by her last church experience. However, she decided to go once just to have the student not ask her any more. Within six months Anna not only had joined the church, but had grown in her faith and in her walk with the Lord enough that she was willingly serving in several areas of the

church's life. She was very thankful for that persistent student! Today, 20 years later, that teacher who was reluctant to go to church is no longer teaching, but is in full-time Christian ministry—and is friends with that faithful student.

B. Will grew up as a preacher's kid. He had always been made to go to church by his parents, and he hated it! He didn't like the politics of the church and the way the people talked about his parents and each other. Even though his parents tried to help Will understand that people make mistakes and need to be forgiven, they went past encouraging their son to go to church, and it just felt like nagging to him. Now, as a man in his 70s, Will still does not go to church on a regular basis, and really has no desire to go, either.

- 1. Why does God honor persistence?**
- 2. Explain or describe your own personal examples of persistence that God honored.**
- 3. Why are there times when persistence can be negative?**
- 4. In what areas of your Christian walk do you need to be more persistent?**

Positively Persistent

SESSION FIVE

Site

The Pacific Ocean

Bible Story

Coin in the fish's mouth—Matthew 17:24-27

Key Verse

Philippians 4:6

Focus

Jesus is our provider.

Supplies

- Some coins or paper money
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Response Sheet #5

Preparation

- Read story in Matthew 17:24-27, and the Key Verse—Philippians 4:6.
- Have copies of Response Sheet #5.

Getting Started

Before your students arrive, arrange some money (*coins or paper money or both*) someplace where they can see it as they come to class. As they arrive, be sure to tell them that you are not giving money away, or joke that you wish you could. Tell them that you are thinking about the things we usually need every day to live our lives. (*While they may say there are some days when they don't need money, remind them that even if they don't spend any on a particular day, they probably "pre-paid" for that day by paying the rent or mortgage at the beginning*

New Testament Taxes

The tribute or temple tax that is referred to in this story is just one of many that the Jews had to pay. Most of their taxes went to their Roman conquerors; to the Jews, that made paying the taxes feel even worse. Additionally, some of their fellow Jews collected those taxes, so tax collectors were seen as traitors to their country. Not only that, but tax collectors often overcharged their countrymen and kept the profits for themselves (*Luke 19:8*).

In New Testament times there was a head tax (*kenson*), or poll tax, imposed on registered individuals (*2:1-2*), basically all males over 14 and all females over 12. It was this tax that the religious leaders asked Jesus about when they asked Him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (*Matt. 22:15-22*). Other taxes included those on owning land, on goods transported from one area to another, on imports and exports at seaports, on incomes, on vehicles, and on animals.

Also, every Jewish male from 20 years old and upward (*Exod. 30:11-16*) was required to pay yearly a tax of a third of a shekel (see *Neh. 10:32*) for the upkeep of the temple. The tax was equal to two drachmas, about two days' wages. This story shows that Jesus paid this tax, though it hardly seemed appropriate for the Son of God to pay taxes for the upkeep of a building dedicated to Him! However, Jesus paid the tax anyway, and in the same vein later told the religious leaders about the head tax that they should "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (*Matt. 22:21, NIV*).

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of the month or buying food ahead of time.) Some examples of everyday needs they could mention include food, clothing, water, a car, a house (*shelter*), electricity, maybe a computer, etc. List what they say on a whiteboard or chalkboard, or ask one of the students to do that for you. Sometimes it helps to make a list like this so that we can see just how many ongoing “needs” we have.

Next, ask them how they meet those needs—for example, they have a job that pays them money, which they in turn use to pay various people for the goods and services they need. With a list this long, sometimes the needs can seem overwhelming. They may regularly be in the situation of having (*as the saying goes*) “too much month for their money.” The more that happens, the more we may become discouraged and frustrated as we try to “make ends meet” ourselves. That is not what God has planned for us. God knows what we need for our existence—what we need, not necessarily what we want. You may want to refer back to the list and discuss how many of the things you listed are really needs or if some of them are wants. For example, water is a necessity to sustain life, but a computer probably is not (*though it may be a vital part of a particular job, for example*).

God has promised to take care of us, to provide for our needs. The story today highlights that important fact and shows Jesus supplying needs from a very unusual source.

Fishing in Jesus’ Time

While we may often think of fishermen in Jesus’ time casting out nets to fish, Jesus told Peter to fish with a hook (*Matt. 17:27*). Peter would have used a rod and line to catch the fish, much as a stream or lake fisherman would today. On the Sea of Galilee, fishermen also caught fish with two kinds of nets. One was a cast net, a circular net with weights around the edges that helped the net sink into the water and over the fish below. The fisherman then pulled a line attached to the center of the net until it was tightly closed, trapping the fish. Another kind of net was the draw net, a long rectangular net that had weights along its bottom. It was pulled between two boats, with the bottom of the net below the water and the top floating on the water. The fishermen would draw the two ends of the net together, trapping the fish in the circle of the net as it closed.

However the fish were caught, they were then cleaned and sorted, for net fishing always brought in both wanted and unwanted fish. Jesus used that idea for a parable about how the righteous will be separated from the wicked at the end of the age (*Matt. 13:47-50*).

Focus on God’s Promises

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Digging In

Pass out copies of Response Sheet #5, then read together the story in Matthew 17:24-27. After you have read the story, answer the first questions on Response Sheet #5. Here are some suggested answers to those questions:

What tax were Jesus and Peter supposed to pay?

Every Jewish male over the age of 20 was supposed to pay the tribute or temple tax annually for the upkeep of the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, both Jesus and Peter were supposed to pay the tax, a fact that had not escaped the tax collectors in Capernaum, the town by the Sea of Galilee where Jesus spent much of His time. Peter impulsively told the tax collectors that Jesus paid the tax, perhaps reasoning that he would later clear up this matter with Jesus.

When Peter asked Jesus about paying the tax, what did Jesus say about kings and sons?

Jesus knew what Peter would ask Him, so He asked Peter first if the sons of kings were required to pay the taxes their fathers assessed on their subjects. The answer was no, because members of the royal family made the taxes—they did not pay them.

Why should Jesus really be exempt from paying the temple tax? Why, then, did Jesus say He would pay the tax?

Jesus is the Son of God, so in truth He was the King who should be collecting

taxes Himself rather than paying them. After all, the temple was the house built in His honor. However, Jesus agreed to pay the tax so as not to “offend” (*Matt. 17:27, NIV*) others who had to pay the tax. Most likely this was Jesus teaching Peter and the other disciples that His followers should look out for others before they look out for themselves. Following Jesus means sometimes surrendering personal rights when doing what furthers the good of others.

Where did Peter find the tax?

Jesus told Peter to go fishing in the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum, take the first fish that he caught, and look in its mouth for a four-drachma coin. Since the tax was only two drachmas, this coin would pay the tribute for both Jesus and Peter.

What did Jesus prove with this miracle?

Jesus proved that He is the Son of God, who could miraculously pay His taxes. But more than that, He showed that in spite of His freedom and right not to pay this tax, Jesus gave that right up as an example to others. Love for others was the limitation on His freedom.

What role can Christians play in meeting the needs of the world?

There is no doubt that literally millions of people in the world do not have all of their needs met on a daily basis. As Christians we are given the opportunity to share with others in Jesus’ name to help open hearts to the Gospel. However, sin often keeps us thinking, I need this

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for myself. We may not trust in God as our provider as much as we should, so we may hoard what we have for fear of being in need ourselves.

Taking It Home

After your students have read the story and answered the first set of questions on the Response Sheet, ask them to read the case study and answer the questions after the story. Hopefully this will reemphasize the point that God provides for all who trust in Him, and He knows what our needs are. Sometimes He wants to “stretch” us—He tests us by making us depend even more on Him, to “cure” us of the idea that we can somehow make it on our own.

Why would we not trust in God to provide for all of our needs?

Some possible answers: we are afraid He will not answer our prayers like we think He should, or we get the idea that He somehow doesn’t “understand” the situation we are in. Or we see people who we believe are not having their needs met, and we are afraid that will happen to us as well.

What examples do you have of God providing for you in times of need?

Most people should have some specific examples when God provided for them, especially those times when they found they had to rely only on Him because the needs were bigger than they could

handle themselves. If you have a relationship with Him, you can “prove” that He provides for you

Would you say that you think of the needs of others before you think of your own needs? Explain your answer.

Answers to this question will vary with the person. We may like to say that we think of others first, but in practice that may not be true.

What do you need to do to trust more in God to be your provider?

Again, answers will vary, but often this is a control issue. We may not want to let God be our provider because that takes more faith than we think we can have. Sometimes we need to get our focus off of what we can do ourselves and instead trust Him to provide even more than we could possibly imagine—which is what He promises to do (*see Eph. 3:20-21*).

Assignment

This is the last time you will be meeting together, so you may want to tell your students that you will call each of them in a few weeks so you can keep in touch and share insights and difficulties that come from living the Christian life. You might suggest also that each person find a prayer partner from someone else in the class, especially if they do not have such a person already in their life. While these sessions have hopefully been a growing and learning time for everyone, there is more growing and learning to do

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every day, and we all need help doing that.

Kids' Connection

In the lesson today, the children also studied the story of Peter, Jesus, and the money in the fish's mouth. You may want to discuss how Jesus takes care of them every day, not with money from a fish, but with other things that they need. You can make a list of these things together (*a home, food and clothing, a family, etc.*).

Focus on God's Promises

RESPONSE SHEETS

Read Matthew 17:24-27 and answer these questions.

- 1. What tax were Jesus and Peter supposed to pay?**
- 2. When Peter asked Jesus about paying the tax, what did Jesus say about kings and sons?**
- 3. Why should Jesus really be exempt from paying the temple tax? Why, then, did Jesus say He would pay the tax?**
- 4. Where did Peter find the tax?**
- 5. What did Jesus prove with this miracle?**
- 6. What role can Christians play in meeting the needs of the world?**

A Case Study

Susan knew she was supposed to leave her teaching position and volunteer at the church. Because of a chronic illness, Susan knew she needed to slow down, and she would enjoy the opportunity to help others through the church. However, could they live on one income? What about the benefits two incomes offered her and her husband? And could she face the principal with this request just weeks before school started again for the fall?

Susan and her husband prayed about what God would have her do. Finally they knew that she had to trust Him with this decision. He was leading her to change her life.

It was with a sense of peace (*but still a little trepidation*) that Susan approached the principal to ask him if it was possible to leave her position this close to the starting of school. To her surprise, he was not upset but very understanding. He even suggested that she take a year's sabbatical to think about if she really wanted to make this decision permanent. Later that week another person who had been praying for a teaching position to become available was thrilled to realize that one now existed.

Susan and her husband received many blessings from this step of faith, including Susan's improved health and a sense of fulfillment from Susan's working at the church. Even though they did go through some trying times, and had to budget more closely, the Lord never failed to provide for the necessities in their lives.

Focus on God's Promises

RESPONSE SHEETS

- 1. Why would we not trust in God to provide for all of our needs?*
- 2. What examples do you have of God providing for you in times of need?*
- 3. Would you say that you think of the needs of others before you think of your own needs? Explain your answer.*
- 4. What do you need to do to trust more in God to be your provider?*

Focus on God's Promises