

## Tracing the *Essentials of Faith* in the Bible Stories

Scripture reveals to us who God is, what He requires of us, and how He shows His love to us in mighty saving acts of grace. Our finite human capacities can never begin to know all there is to know of God, but our gracious God is able to make known to us what we need to know of Him in order to have life, health, and peace.

Through the Word of God written, the Holy Spirit teaches us all we need to know of God. We learn what He desires to make known to us.

The Bible, though, does not teach us in neat theological categories. Rather, God makes Himself known through accounts of His work in the lives of real people, through prophecies and prayers, doctrinal teaching, and wise sayings.

When we follow all these threads of truth, we see a pattern emerging—a royal robe woven from the gathered truths of Scripture adorns our King and displays His love.

To see God more clearly, we express what we learn from Scripture in a coherent way known as the essentials of faith. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are two ancient ways the essentials (known then as “the rule of truth”) were spoken.

The great Reformation confessions of faith further laid out the teaching of Scripture in a systematic way. They wove together the Golden Threads of Scripture, bringing forth the royal robe that glorifies Jesus our King. By studying them, we grow in our understanding of God. Such knowledge leads us to put on the robe of Christ by faith. This means that we take our place in union with Him, growing in love and obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The list of essentials of faith is not all Scripture has to say about God, but represents the Golden Threads around which the whole royal robe is woven. Under the heading of Teacher Devotionals, every Bible lesson in this curriculum is keyed to the Golden Threads it expresses. The Stray Threads section picks up additional ideas or notes the ways in which the Golden Threads may get distorted.

Believers in the Reformed tradition are a people who celebrate that God can be known because He graciously has made Himself known. A crucial part of our faithfulness is learning and studying the essentials that have been revealed. So, we offer these in hopes of enriching every Bible lesson, enabling you as a teacher to trace the threads of Christ's Royal Robe in the teachings of Scripture.

- 1** The one true God is the triune God of grace—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—whom alone we must worship and serve.
- 2** The eternal Son of God came to us as a human being in Jesus Christ.
- 3** Holy Scripture is the Word of God written, through which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we truly meet the triune God.
- 4** The triune God is sovereign over all.
- 5** Humanity has fallen into sin.
- 6** We are made right with God by grace alone through faith alone.
- 7** Election: God chose us to be His children and servants.
- 8** The Holy Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus.
- 9** A life of obedience.

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*For a more in-depth look at these threads, visit*  
**[www.cookministries.com](http://www.cookministries.com)**

# From These Roots



Elementary Edition

September, October, November 2008

## developing *a Spiritual Life*

by Tom Tyndall

To develop a spiritual life raises many images. Some think fleetingly of a life removed from everyone and dismiss such wanderings as impractical. Others seek trinkets, quick schemes in the manner of spiritual diet plans to trim themselves, and fear a cultish and mindless faith. I prefer to think of developing a spiritual life as permission and encouragement to ask questions. How am I invited to know the love and will of God? What do I discern to be the will of God? How will I follow God's will?

Our world is caught up in and pushed to identify our wants, so that often we forget true, suppressed, or ignored needs. In this nation, our needs dissolve quickly to wants over the next new electronic gadget, or upgrading our current possessions. Advertisers lure us with fear of rejection by others if we do not acquire the next fad or honor the current media icon

continued

### *In This Issue:*

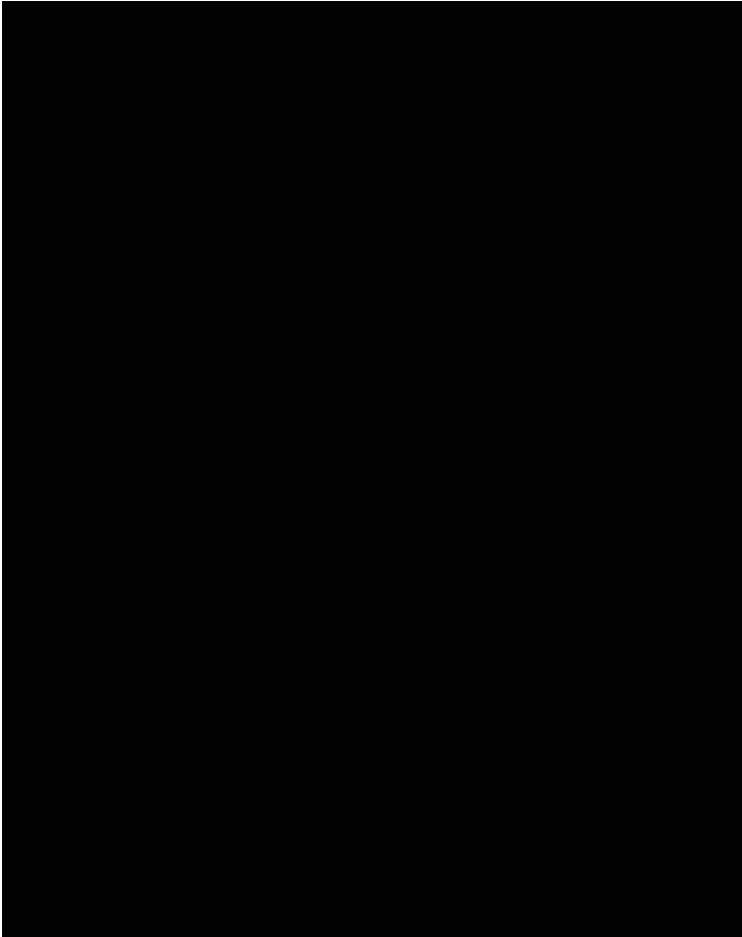
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### *Important Dates*

September 24. . . . .	See You at the Pole Day
September 21. . . . .	International Peace Day
October 5. . . . .	World Communion Sunday
October 26. . . . .	Reformation Sunday
November 23 . . . . .	Christ the King Sunday (last Sunday in Liturgical Year)
November 27 . . . . .	Thanksgiving Day
November 30 . . . . .	First Sunday of Advent

that we wish to meet. Yet most of the world has no access to such whimsical indulgences.

Our society is desperately longing to see whatever effects longterm transformation of lives, and yes, of culture. Men and women want help and hope, but



they want an honest evidence, true stories, not sham, not quick one-liners to maturity, and they are suspicious or increasingly weary of those who advertise quick schemes. We long to finish well, to find that which is durable and carries us through the day or through our lives.

The way to develop a spiritual life to find a durable center for our lives is at once attractive and difficult. It means first that I seek to sense my truest needs and try to separate them from my

wants, whims, and the fads thrust upon me. To know what makes my heart sing, what energizes my dreams, what affirms my abilities, and what makes me know I am one who resides in the kingdom of God is to find a deeper, more durable direction that carries me through to the end of a day or the end of my life.

The ancients kept the spiritual life simple. Reading Scripture, praying for their own struggles and the needs around them, practicing some form of community, and finding some opportunity to serve others were the tools they sharpened to discern God's way.

Consider the inner refreshment of your own preoccupied life out of these common practices.

**To read Scripture** means not only zeroing in on a text and swallowing it, but also taking time to digest the text, to sense those inner attention grabbings of God. At times this means comparing two or three translations. It means giving myself permission to ask questions such as What does the text actually say? What did it say to its original audience? What does the text mean for me today? What do I learn of God and of myself from this text?

**To pray** for some means keeping a list of persons or requests. This is a wonderful encouragement, and yet throughout a day, in moments of brief awareness or reflection, we detect soul soundings for those who come to mind as we encounter them, or as pictures, voice messages, e-mails, or other communication bring them across our paths. To pray is to remain open to praying throughout our day even as we mark out specific times to lay our day before God. Beginning that time with affection expressed, even wonder, toward our Lord sets us in a relationship of service, welcome, and a holy dependence on the One who desires

intimacy, release, and healing for us. Such praying may also find us laying out honest emotions of greed, anger, lust, wandering attention, or disappointment as well. God is big enough to take it all. To pray, even briefly, with full attention may mean finding a particular place near a window, a special room, or a particular scene we go to in which quiet reflection and an invitation to approach God speak to our deepest longings.

**To be in a community** takes us off that uniquely American preoccupation with ourselves and our fulfillment. A small group, whether meeting to study, to support in crisis or because of a particular interest such as caring for those with particular handicaps, calls us to remember that God not only wishes us to be transformed, but to intercede and to work for the transformation of those around us. Where is your community? For men this seems particularly difficult to open our thoughts, our emotions, even our faults and dreams to the support and scrutiny of others. Yet it is tremendously liberating and healing to know the active, gracious care of others who are with us in community.

**To find a place of service** calls me to deeper awareness of God's world. We are called to be the person for and in Jesus but also to do His works. To serve as a teacher, mentor, encourager, spokesperson, organizer, caregiver, helper, builder, or activist is to be among some avenue of people that God's Spirit beckons us to. Where do you currently serve? Where have you served? Where are you now drawn to serve and make a difference? Our Lord calls us to times of reflection, but not to the isolated life. As we serve, we often hear the cries of our society. We see we are called to listen, to strategize, to speak or to encourage those who do not possess the resources we do. And we

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find in service a humility and teachability from others that bears the mark of One who washed feet, who spoke to those of his tribe and those to whom no one would speak or approach.

I may find an atmosphere to serve . . . *out of a perceived need*. I may work near an inner city church. I might begin to wonder what activities that church has for neighborhood youth.

Perhaps I recognize that our church or group meeting is near a college or university campus, and yet we have no active ministry to those students. I might organize parents to adopt a student for a semester. Or I might start a Sunday morning class on "Questions from Everyday Life" or host a Bible study at 9 PM one night a week at a campus facility to encourage students to wrestle with questions and investigate Christian responses to such questions.

I may serve as I have struggled to have financial peace due to wild spending habits or a gambling addiction of one parent. That may convince me to work with others in helping in financial planning. Or to give some personal word of witness on how moving toward tithing has made a difference in my life.

As a couple of good friends observe

continued

me, each tells me separately that they see in me a special ability to organize people for tasks, that could lead me to investigate organizing my church's next short-term mission trip. Or if I love to teach people some particular value such as trust, it might mean that I work with a small class of young guys to build trust in them.

I may be someone who has not grown up in the church. Out of my recent commitment to Christ, I join a church. From that commitment a passion arises in me to reach people who are pre-churched. Incidentally, I like the term *pre-churched* better than *un-churched*. *Unchurched* sounds derogatory, like *unhinged* or *undone*, a negative term. *Pre-churched* says people are candidates for the fellowship of Jesus Christ. *Pre-churched* says they might even be interested if someone illustrates the compassion of Jesus to them.

I may just want to go for it and risk. I decide to volunteer for a short-term mission trip across the Tex-Mex border, knowing no Spanish, not really knowing exactly what I will do, but I am excited to do something that is different or places me in a different culture. When I arrive, I find an older woman in our team has brought plans to draw and then paint a picture of the world on the side of a building. I remember latent artistic skills I have not used in years. Together the two of us design and then enlist others to paint a map of the world the week we are at this school. Being tall and loving detail, I do the outlines of the continents and most of the northern hemisphere. Over a dozen people, many of them from the Hispanic neighborhood, show up to help us along and to enjoy painting with us. In the meantime I actually learn a bit of Spanish and the older woman who speaks fluent Spanish gets to share her faith with several students and a teacher who shows up two after-

noons to help us paint.

I am occasionally put in places that are different from my own familiar surroundings. I have to ask, how does Jesus Christ affect this culture? How does He affect me in the short time I am in this culture? What new questions will this raise for me about my own familiar society?

From the disciplines of soaking in Scripture, engaging in reflective prayer, affixing myself to some community, and finding a place to serve, I find I am developing a spiritual life or rather God is developing that life in me. I find God's usefulness. Ministry does not depend primarily on degrees or certification. A spiritual life is not some other-worldly, isolated existence though it does mean drawing away for periods of renewal and reflection.

Out of a directed inner life that moves me into my culture, I see God give a light to someone or a direction to someone's future beyond my own life. I also connect with others who have similar interests and I find a common affirmation of both God's grace and the encouragement of others. I find myself traveling as a person in the kingdom of God, but also finding real hope and offering that to others in a real world.

To know that life and to continue to seek it amidst all the other distractions and callings that bombard me and you is to find ourselves strangely on the adventure of life guided by the presence and power of Jesus Christ Himself.

Wherever God places you, that is God's joy for you!



A graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary (MDiv) and Fuller Theological Seminary (DMin), Tom Tyndall has served in churches from seven members to 7500 members in Charlotte, North Carolina; Oxford,

Mississippi; Dallas; Lakeland, Florida; and Nashville. He and his wife, Betty, have three grown daughters and one granddaughter.

## Great ideas for your church computer lab . . .

### **How to Stick CDs to the Wall (so they won't fall down!)**

There is a type of product called a “CD Hub” that adheres to surfaces. Originally designed to mount CDs in notebooks and presentation kits, these hubs can be purchased in bulk and used to hang your CDs in any design on a wall. You can find them in clear plastic or less expensive white foam hubs. [www.uline.com](http://www.uline.com) supply has the best price I've seen on “foam hubs”—\$49 for 1000. One nice thing about using CD Hubs is you can CHANGE YOUR DESIGN. Many churches mix and match their CD sides/colors to spell out words, such as “Jesus,” using CDs. Double-sided foam tape or removable tape/gels have proven less durable or desirable.

**Another option:** CDs can also be overlapped, then glued together and hung in a line as a wall unit or from the ceiling. Popular shapes include fish, and spelling out words.

### **Used CDs Make Great Lesson Reminders—Here's How . . .**

Students or teachers write on CDs to send home as lesson or verse reminders. Lay a bunch of dead CDs (think: AOL) shiny side down on a dropcloth. Spray with gold, white, or colorful paint. Or buy a set of blank CD LABELS at an office supply store. Spray painted CDs require permanent markers to write on them. CD labels may be preferable if you don't have or want kids to use permanents.

**Technical Note:** Put a quarter inch scratch near the CD's hold across the program area so

younger ones don't put the CD in their home computer and accidentally install it! To quickly and safely make this “scratch,” place the flat edge of a screwdriver perpendicular to the CD's hole and hit with a hammer.

### **How to Make Inexpensive but Indispensable Dividers That Go Between Computers**

Glue a colorful piece of cloth around a 3' x 4' section of rigid foam insulation, or drywall. Make sure you fold the cloth all the way around the edges and glue those edges so they don't come apart. Rigid foam insulation is an interesting choice you may not be familiar with. At about 3 inches thick, it's very lightweight but surprisingly strong. It can be purchased at most building supply stores in sheets.

In my lab, we place the dividers between the tables (each table has one computer). Most lessons I will pull them out a foot or two so that the kids sitting at one computer can't see the other computer next to them. As the teacher, I sit at the divider working with both computers. Dividers are great at corralling SOUND. They deflect a nearby computer's sound just enough that students aren't distracted by the sound and sight of computers around them.

Drywall is a second choice. Score the paper with a knife and “snap” the drywall to break it into the dimensions you prefer. You may want to glue two pieces together to keep the drywall from bending. Store the dividers completely vertical or they will take on a bend.

# bulletin board

Tips for teachers  
who want to use  
*From These  
Roots* in the  
Sunday school  
classroom

*Fascinating website:  
Hollywood Jesus*

[hollywoodjesus.com](http://hollywoodjesus.com)

Reviews of current feature films from a moderate Christian perspective. Provocative quotes from the movie. Discussion ideas. Plot summaries. Pictures. Author David Bruce has an eye toward each movie's spiritual and

theological message, and discussion potential.

If you do children's sermons, [hollywoodjesus.com](http://hollywoodjesus.com) is a source of contemporary movie references and discussion ideas for your sermons.

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Cook Communications can provide you with a resource catalogue of all their publications.

Go to [www.davidccook.com](http://www.davidccook.com) to request a copy.

You can read George Barna Research's latest study on children and spiritual formation, including statistics and research that bolster the vital importance of children's ministry. Go to <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=278> Make sure you read Barna's Challenges Faced by Young People.

*Check out these  
Christian humor  
web sites!*

- [www.fairding.com/list\\_bible.shtml](http://www.fairding.com/list_bible.shtml)  
Collection of funny Bible verses
- [www.skywriting.net](http://www.skywriting.net) More funny verses and resources.

## Fruit of the Spirit

The Sunday before Thanksgiving is a good time to have a short lesson on the fruit of the Spirit, especially if your church participates in a food drive at this time of year.

Collect labels from food cans or boxes a week or two in advance to prepare for the lesson, or use food in containers that will go to a food drive when you are finished.

Divide the class into three groups, assigning each group a sentence from Galatians 5:22-23 (NIRV).

**Group A:** “But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy, and peace.”

**Group B:** “It is being patient, kind, and good.”

**Group C:** “It is being faithful and gentle and having control of oneself.”

After the students have read their passage, they should pick labels from food items for each of the strengths and tell why they made that choice.

### For example:

#### **Chicken noodle soup—Love**

I know my mother loves me when she makes this soup for me when I don't feel well.

#### **Spaghetti O's—Patience**

My little brother demonstrates patience as he eats the rings one by one with his fingers because he doesn't know how to use a spoon yet.

#### **Jello—Having control of oneself**

Even though jello shimmers and shakes in the bowl, it doesn't fall apart.

**Alternative:** Using a concordance, each group finds passages of Scripture demonstrating the virtue.

**Alternative:** Using patterns (pp. 8–9), make a fruit cornucopia, labeling each fruit with one virtue and printing Galatians 5:22–23 on the horn of plenty.

**Alternative:** Use the worksheets on Scripture passages (p. 10) to identify the virtue.

## *Fruit of the Spirit Scripture Worksheet (p. 10) Answer Key*

Matthew 5:39—self-control

Hebrews 11:11b—faithful

Psalms 145:7—goodness

2 Peter 1:7—kindness, love

1 Timothy 6:11—love, gentleness

Deuteronomy 11:1—love

Proverbs 12:16—self-control

Jude 24—joy

Titus 3:4—kindness, love

Revelation 14:12—patience, faithful

2 Corinthians 10:1—gentleness

Ephesians 2:14—peace

Romans 15:14—goodness

Ephesians 4:2—gentleness, patience, love

Romans 5:3—joy

1 Corinthians 10:13—faithful

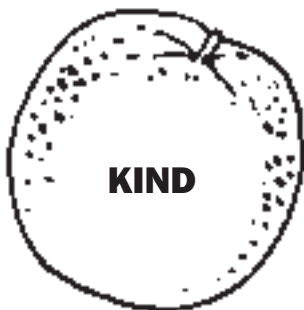
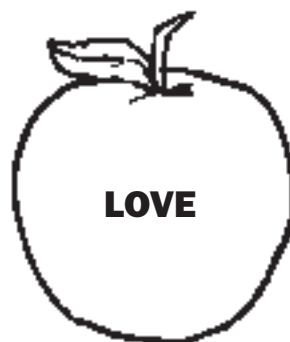
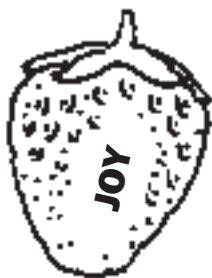
Isaiah 30:15—peace

Psalms 66:6—joy

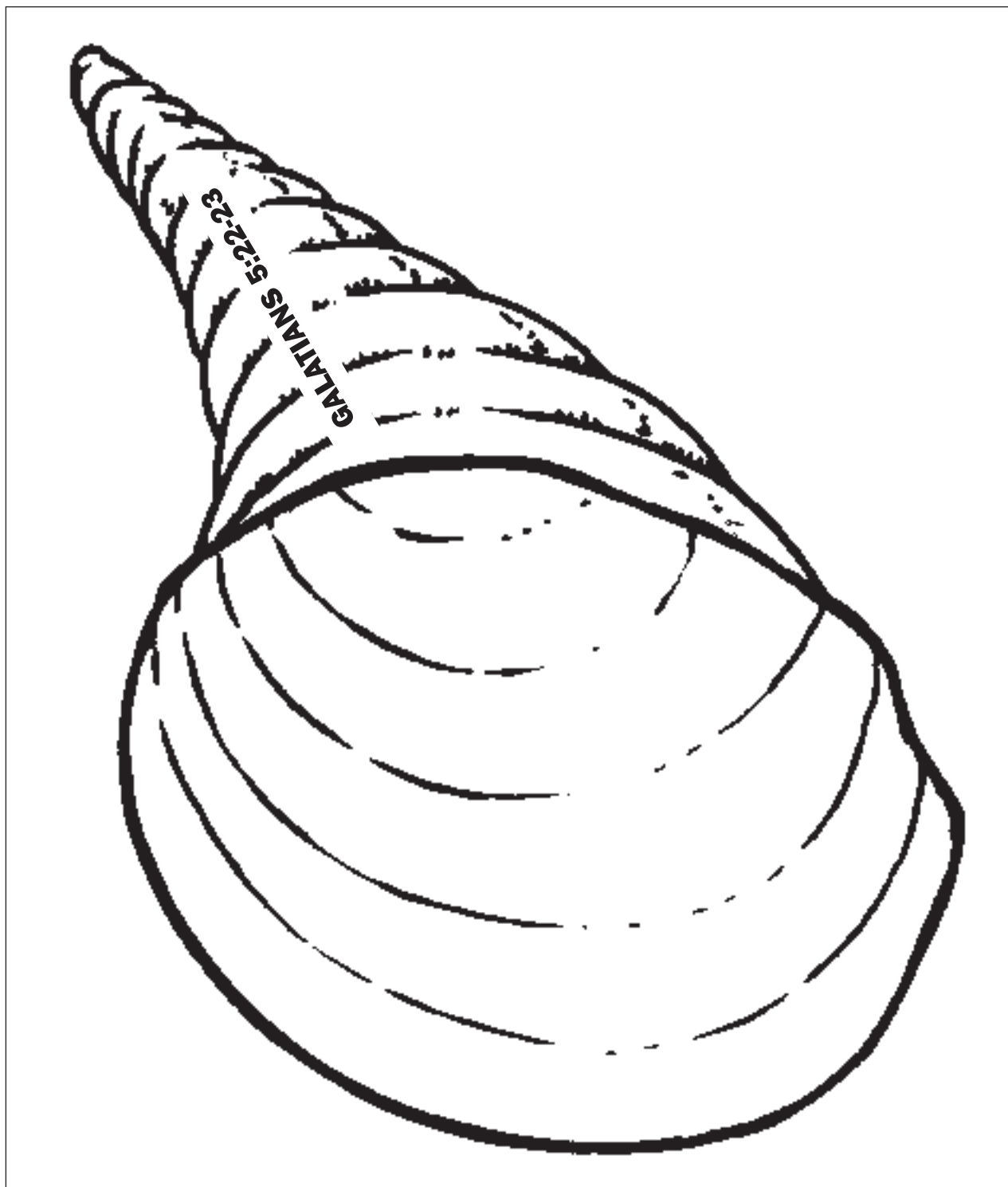
Romans 8:25—patience

Matthew 11:29—gentleness

## Fruit Patterns



# Cornucopia Pattern



## Fruit of the Spirit—Scripture Worksheet

Look up each of the following Scripture passages and indicate if it refers to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithful, gentleness, or self-control. Some passages may refer to two or more of the fruits of the spirit. Write the word (or words) in the blanks (Scripture NIV).

Matthew 5:39

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 11:11b

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 145:7

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Peter 1:7

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Timothy 6:11

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Deuteronomy 11:1

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Proverbs 12:16

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Jude 24

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Titus 3:4

\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 14:12

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2 Corinthians 10:1

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Ephesians 2:14

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 15:14

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:2

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 5:3

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 10:13

\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 30:15

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 66:6

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:25

\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 11:29

\_\_\_\_\_

# Have you hugged your pastor today?

## October Is Pastor Appreciation Month!

Pastors and their families live under incredible pressures. Their lives are played out in a fishbowl, with the entire congregation and community watching their every move. They are expected to have ideal families, to be perfect people, to always be available, to never be down, and to have all the answers we need to keep our own lives stable and moving forward. Those are unrealistic expectations to place on anyone, yet most of us are disappointed when a pastor becomes overwhelmed, seems depressed, lets us down, or completely burns out.

That's why God has instructed us to recognize His servants.

*"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."*

1 Timothy 5:17

The good news is that we can make a difference! Pastor Appreciation Month is one way we can counter the negative erosion in the lives of our spiritual leaders with the positive affirmation they need.

All Pastors need encouragement. Ask your class to write letters to their pastor with a word of encouragement, praise, or appreciation. Present the letters during your church announcements, and have the kids encourage members of the church to do something special for the pastor that week.

### Here are some ideas:

- Shower your pastor with notes or cards.
- Ask class members to sign up for a day to pray for your pastor so he's being prayed for throughout the year.
- Provide a testimony time during class when you and your friends share what you appreciate most about your pastor.
- Order pizza and sodas and deliver them to your pastor's house. You might want to call first!
- Plan a special banquet or picnic to honor your pastor and his family.
- Have everyone pitch in a dollar or two to buy a gift and card. Don't know what to get? Try a magazine subscription, gift certificate, a shirt, hat, CD—or a weekend getaway!
- Plant a tree in honor of your pastor.
- Set up a "leafless" tree that's decorated with small gifts (cookies, hobby items, gift certificates, money).
- Plan a church picnic, volleyball tournament, softball game, etc., to celebrate.
- Make and hang banners of appreciation all over the church.
- Schedule a special time to pray specifically for your pastor and his/her family.
- Help your pastor feel special all month! Have everyone sign up for a day during October when they will give the pastor an expression of appreciation such as meals, homemade bread, cards, notes, or balloons.

*continued on page 15*

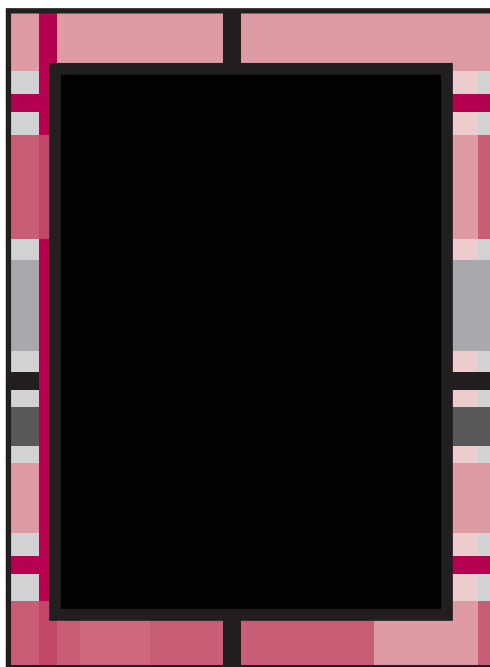
# KIRKIN' OF THE TARTAN

The late Dr. Peter Marshall was born in Scotland and served as Chaplain of the Senate and pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC. While serving in the church, Dr. Marshall instituted a celebration of our Scots heritage in 1941 known as the Kirkin' of the Tartan (Churching of the Family). The service is an American invention, but incorporates many elements of our Scots heritage.

After Dr. Marshall's death in the early 1950s, the service moved from place to place and in 1954 was held at the Washington National Cathedral. The service continues to be a part of this church's tradition and is sponsored by the St. Andrew's Society.

The custom has spread to many Presbyterian churches and the service can be adapted for use in Sunday school.

Traditionally, the service begins with a procession of bagpipes and drummer, Christian and St. Andrew's flags, the "britches" Bible (from which some Scripture will be read) and families who bring their tartan forward to be blessed. The



## for Reformation Sunday

**Kirk**—church



**Tartan**—clan plaid



**Clan**—family and identity



**Britches Bible**—Scots translation which refers to Adam as being clothed in "britches"

prayers of the people should include reference to families.

To adapt for a Sunday school class, use a tape or CD of bagpipes, including *Amazing Grace* as one of the tunes. Include a reading from the "britches" Bible (your local St. Andrew's Society can lend you one or send you a copy of the Scriptures you wish to use), talk about St. Andrew and his choice to be crucified upside down, and invite members of your congregation of Scots descent to visit your class.

Most of your children will not have a clan plaid or tartan. Instead of a tartan, have children bring a picture of their family forward for the blessing of the family prayer.

St. Colomba is credited with bringing the Christian faith to Scotland in 563.

However, it was John Knox who brought the Christian Reformation to Scotland in 1547 and, in his evangelical zeal, exclaimed,

**"GIVE ME SCOTLAND, OR I DIE!"**

## St. Andrew (for use with Reformation)

Churches around the world are filled with symbols representing persons or ideology of our faith. Each symbol describes something about the person or idea, giving instant identity.

The apostle Andrew is known as the patron saint of Scotland (Russian and Greek). His symbol is an "X" shaped cross. According to tradition, Andrew did not feel worthy to be crucified in the same way as Jesus. Like his brother Peter, he asked for an "X" shaped cross.

Andrew was in Greece when he was crucified. His enemies wanted him to suffer a long time, so they bound him to the cross, rather than nailing him to it.

The flag of Scotland is a white St. Andrew's cross on a blue background. Legend has it that the bones of Andrew were taken to Scotland by a missionary monk. The story continues that when King Hungres of Scotland was in battle with the English, Andrew appeared to Hungres

in a dream, assuring him of a Scots victory. The next day, a shining "X" cross appeared in the sky, frightening the English army, and St. Andrew was declared the patron saint of Scotland.

### Make a St. Andrew Shield

Cut a shield from blue construction paper. Cut two strips of white construction paper and glue the strips to the shield in an "X" pattern.

### Alternative Class Project

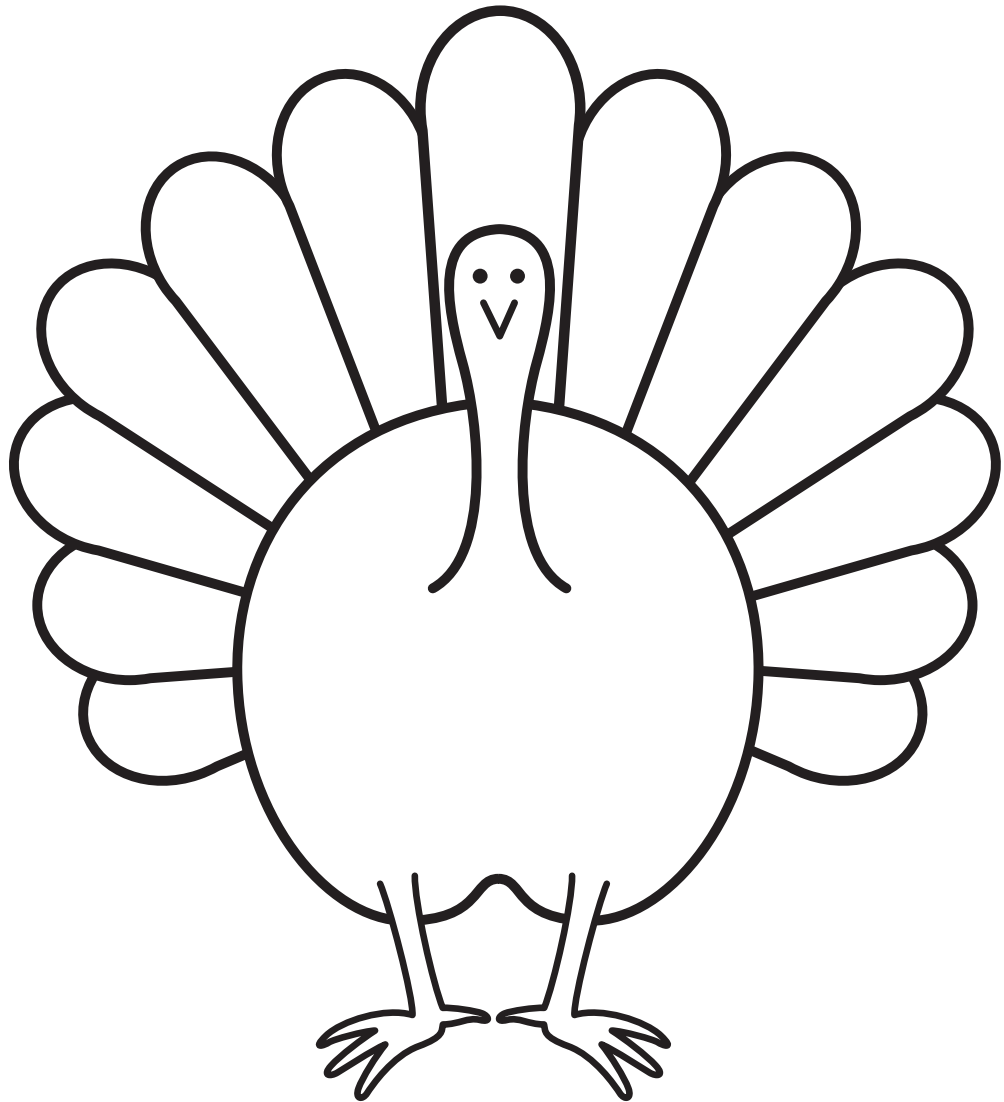
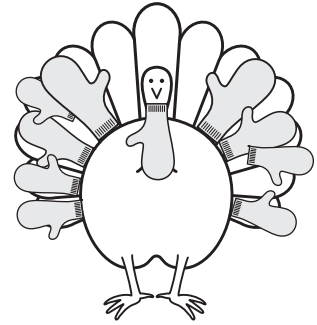
Draw a shield with a cross on poster board or tag board. Using one inch squares of blue and white tissue, crumple the pieces of tissue and glue them in the pattern, using blue as a background and white for the cross.



## Mitten Turkey

Instead of having a food drive in your class for Thanksgiving, why not collect mittens or gloves for children and adults that come to soup kitchens, homeless shelters, or inner city ministries.

Draw a large turkey on a piece of posterboard. Have children bring in mittens or gloves and staple to the turkey for tail feathers using a red pair of mittens or gloves as the waddle from the turkey's neck. Display your poster turkey in a prominent place in the church or classroom to serve as a reminder to bring in the mittens and gloves.



## Missions Journey

**I**n order to raise mission awareness in your congregation, have each of your local mission recipients supply you with a simple wish list (e.g., paper towels, books, crayons, diapers, toothbrushes).

Ask for donations of old suitcases.

Assign a local mission to each Sunday school class, and provide the class with a suitcase, a wish list, and a profile of their agency. Ask the classes to fill the suitcases with items on the wish list.

Set a time to collect the filled suitcases and then present them to the agency.

*(If you wish further details on how to expand this into a full-scale, church-wide mission celebration, contact the Local Missions Committee of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville.)*



*continued from page 11*

- Make a scrapbook with photos and notes reminding your pastor of all that you've shared in the past year.
  - Create the world's largest greeting card (use poster board). Ask everyone in your class to sign the card.
  - Present your pastor with a packet of personal service coupons redeemable for babysitting, lawn mowing, leaf raking, or car washing.
  - Print stickers that say, "We love our pastor!"
  - Treat him to his favorite sporting event. Arrange to have his name announced on the scoreboard. Gather for a sports-themed picnic after the event.
  - Buy a long-distance calling card so your pastor can talk with out-of-state friends and family.
  - Create a pastor's hall of fame where you post your favorite photos of your pastor.
  - Film a video scrapbook and tribute that highlight your pastor's ministry.
  - Buy a journal and pass it to all class members so they can write in it what they've learned since being a part of the church. Present the journal to your pastor.
  - Designate a "Hug Your Pastor Day."
- Come up with your own creative idea!***