

Shepherd's Storybook

For Training New Shepherds of New Congregations

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Translators

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Page numbering will change in translation. Instead of page numbers, you find sections and chapters by section numbers I, II and III, and chapter numbers 1, 2, and 3, *etc.* For example: II-5 means Section II, Chapter 5. The chapters in Section I are called “Discoveries,” in Section II, “Commands,” in Section III, “Ministries.”

While you translate, do not confuse the names of the persons in the story:

Mr. Wise is older than the rest. He is a woodworker. He visits Learner's area to start congregations.

Learner is an apprentice to Mr. Wise first as a woodworker and again, later, as a new shepherd.

Sara is Learner's wife.

Deborah lives next door to Learner.

Samuel is Deborah's brother and appears only in Section III.

Helper is Learner's brother and lives in another, nearby community.

Rachel is Helper's wife.

Mr. Foolish lives in the area and fakes conversion during the story.

Caregiver is Mr. Foolish's brother-in-law and is wiser. He lives near Helper.

Carmen is Mr. Caregiver's wife.

Jacob is an elder in Learner's church and owns a store.

Sapphire is an employee in Jacob's store

Joseph is an elder in a new church, in Section III.

Lisa is Joseph's wife.

Ruth, a newlywed, appears in Section III.

Tobias is Ruth's drug-crazed husband.

CONTENTS

Use this list of contents as you would options in a menu.

If the current need is to evangelize, select items in Section I, Discoveries.

If the current need is to establish a new church, use Section II, Commands.

If the most urgent need is to train leaders of a church, use Section III, Ministries.

INTRODUCTION

For Whom Is This Book?

Why Use Stories?

How to Use this Book

Shepherd's Storybook Free by Internet

Section I: HELP PEOPLE DISCOVER CHRIST

Chapters in Section I are *Discoveries*:

I-1 Discovery 1: Find the True Meaning of Life (*God loves us and wants us to enjoy Him forever*)

I-2 Discovery 2: Turn Back to the One God (*leave idols or whatever replaces the One Triune God.*)

I-3 Discovery 3: Find Pardon and Life in Jesus (*trust in His work, His death and resurrection*)

I-4 Discovery 4: Escape the Powers of Evil and Death (*Jesus conquers death and demons*)

I-5 Discovery 5: Discern Important Things in Life (*Turn from sin, seek things of eternal value*)

I-6 Discovery 6: Find True Goodness (*Men who say they are good also need God's pardon*)

I-7 Discovery 7: Find Abundant Life in Jesus (*Show faith by obeying, beginning with baptism*)

I-8. Discovery 8: Become a Follower of Jesus (*Meet, know and follow the risen Christ*) [*Colons*]

Section II: ESTABLISH CONGREGATIONS THAT OBEY CHRIST

Chapters in Section II are Christ's Seven basic *Commands*.

II-1. Command of Christ #1: Repent, Believe, and Receive the Holy Spirit (*salvation*)

II-2. Command of Christ #2: Baptize new Believers (*then live the holy life in Jesus that it initiates*)

II-3. Command of Christ #3: Make Disciples of Jesus (*teach obedience to Jesus and God's Word*)

II-4. Command of Christ #4: Love (*Love God and men, serve the needy, forgive enemies*)

II-5. Command of Christ #5: Pray (*Praise God, confess sin, pray for others, heal, do spiritual warfare*)

II-6. Command of Christ #6: Break Bread, *celebrate communion, worship God in spirit*)

II-7. Command of Christ #7: Give (*be good stewards of all that God gives us*)

Section III: DEVELOP THE BASIC MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Chapters in Section III are *ministries* required by the New Testament:

III-1 Ministry 1: Take the Good News to Others and Baptize New Believers

III-2 Ministry 2: Build Up the Body by Using our Spiritual Gifts to Serve One Another

III-3 Ministry 3: Worship God and Celebrate the Lord's Supper

III-4 Ministry 4: Study, Teach and Apply the Word of God

III-5 Ministry 5: Start New Congregations

III-6 Ministry 6: Train Shepherds (Shepherding Elders) and Other Leaders

III-7 Ministry 7: Develop Fellowship Within and Among Congregations

III-8 Ministry 8: Visit and Counsel People with Personal or Family Problems

III-9 Ministry 9: Strengthen Marriages, and the Faith of Entire Families

III-10 Ministry 10: Care for the Sick, Needy, and Mistreated

III-11 Ministry 11: Become Like Christ and Maintain Discipline in the Church

III-12 Ministry 12: Talk with God

III-13 Ministry 13: Be Good Stewards of God's Resources

III-14 Ministry 14: Send Missionaries

SECTION IV: BIBLE STORIES FROM THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

This fairly complete list of Bible stories in historical order deals with all major doctrines and church activities, and shows how the Old Testament events prophetically illustrate New Testament truths.

SECTION V: TOPICAL INDEX

Introduction

For Whom Is This Book?

Shepherd's Storybook is written in simple language for people who...

- do not have the Bible in their language
- need training urgently
- cannot afford to pay for training
- prefer simple stories to long, abstract sermons.

Shepherd's Storybook is free and can be translated into any language.

Why Use Stories?

Shepherd's Storybook explains great doctrines and important church activities from the Bible that Christians throughout the ages have believed and practiced. The story approach to biblical truth—instead of traditional systematic analysis—helps new believers and leaders to explain and apply God's Word for others in the way our Lord Jesus Christ often did.

All basic Bible truths grow out of historical events. The inspired comments of the prophets and apostles about these events give us basic Christian theology. The Holy Spirit uses these historical narratives to bring people to repentance, transform them, and provide models for church ministries.

The Bible lays the historical foundation for our beliefs and church practices. The books of Romans and Hebrews, for example, were written to people who already knew the Bible stories upon which their instruction is based. In the Old Testament those historical events included Adam and his fall, God's promise to *Abraham* to bless all nations, Abraham's offering of Isaac, Moses and the law, Aaron as the original high priest, and David's victories over pagan enemies. New Testament events include Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—plus many more.

List of Bible Stories

For a fairly complete list of stories in the Bible, see the Section IV "Bible Stories from the Old and New Testaments". It lists Bible stories in historical order, deals with all major doctrines and shows how Old Testament events prophetically illustrate New Testament truths.

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How to Use This Book

If You Train New Shepherds

Read and discuss the stories from the Bible with the new shepherds that you train. If the Bible is not translated into their language, tell the stories to them. Ask them to tell the stories to their people. Ask them also to follow the instructions spoken in this *Shepherd's Storybook* by "Mr. Wise," and to avoid the errors voiced by "Mr. Foolish." These characters, along with "Learner," "Helper" and others, are not real people. They represent types of people mentioned in the Bible. The biblical characters mentioned in this *Shepherd's Storybook*, however, were real people.

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All students must shepherd a flock while they study. This flock can be:

- a church,
- a task group that is training leaders or starting a church,
- a cell group that is a tiny church within a larger one. In the beginning the cell might consist only of one's own family, but with the intention that it will grow into a small church.

If You Are a New Shepherd

Read and learn the stories. Tell them to new believers and their families and friends. Encourage them to do what Mr. Wise says, but warn them not to do what Mr. Foolish says.

Select Chapters in this Book that Deal with Immediate Needs and Opportunities

Shepherd's Storybook has three sections. Start with the Section that fits your present need.

To present Jesus Christ, use Section I, Help People to Discover Christ.

To start or renew congregations, use Section II, Establish Congregations that Obey Jesus.

To train shepherds, use Section III, Develop the Basic Ministries of the Church.

If you Teach in a School

Shepherds' Storybook was not written to serve as a textbook in a school. It was written to help you train new shepherds who serve new congregations. If you use it as a textbook, then you must do more than have students read it and write examinations. Rather, they must also start or shepherd a flock, as part of the course.

Instead of only giving examinations, ask students to give reports on what they have taught and done with their flocks, and what their people have done (Mark 6:30).

There are 85 exercises in this *Shepherd's Storybook*. Each exercise can become the basis of a practical work assignment. You must not simply give lectures about material in this book. You must spend time with every student to help the student plan ministry activities for the next two weeks or so, and listen to the student's reports and questions.

Section I

Help People to Discover Christ

Chapters in Section I are *Discoveries*. Put a check mark ✓ by those that are being practiced by your people to your satisfaction:

- I-1 Discovery 1 Find the True Meaning of Life (*God loves us and wants us to enjoy Him forever*)
- I-2 Discovery 2 Turn Back to the One God (*leave idols or whatever replaces the one Triune God.*)
- I-3 Discovery 3 Find Pardon and Life in Jesus (*trust in His work, His death and resurrection*)
- I-4 Discovery 4 Escape the Powers of Evil and Death (*Jesus conquers death and demons*)
- I-5 Discovery 5 Discern Important Things in Life (*Turn from sin, seek things of eternal value*)
- I-6 Discovery 6 Find True Goodness (*Men who say they are good also need God's pardon*)
- I-7 Discovery 7 Find Abundant Life in Jesus (*Show faith by obeying, beginning with baptism*)
- I-8. Discovery 8: Become a Follower of Jesus (*Meet, know and follow the risen Christ*)

Jesus told a story about two builders. One was wise and built his house on rock. The other was foolish and built on sand. Let me introduce you to a man who is like the wise man in Jesus' story. He likes to hear God's word and put it into practice. We call him Mr. Wise. He arrives by bus in Learner's community, where he stays with a cousin and does evangelism.

Mr. Wise comes to see Learner's new woodworking shop. "You have done well, Learner. This is a fine new shop. I'm proud of you!"

"You taught me well when I worked for you last year," Learner replies, "Now I have a good trade and I owe it to you. But I'm afraid I was not always a very good learner."

"You refused to listen when I told you the wonderful news about another carpenter, Jesus."

Learner frowns. "That religious talk was always difficult for me, Mr. Wise. You used big words."

"Here, let me help you sand that table," Mr. Wise offers. "You are right. I tried to argue with you and force my doctrine into your mind. But I've learned a better way to share the good news. Let me tell you the truth about God with a story, like Jesus did. Stories are easy to understand and remember. You can repeat them to your family and friends. Bible stories are not like the stories that men make up to entertain their friends and children. They are real things that happened in history."

Another friend of Learner arrives. Mr. Foolish is a salesman for a company that sells everything except what you want. He is like the foolish builder in Jesus' story. He likes to do things his own way. Mr. Foolish interrupts. "Learner, this man is teaching something strange. We do not need any new religion here. We do not need to change the way we have always lived. Now listen to me. I have a new soap you should buy, with an odor like cinnamon. Here, smell it."

Learner pays no attention to Mr. Foolish. He knows in his heart that there is something missing in his life. He wants to know more about God. He listens carefully to Mr. Wise.

I-1 — Discovery 1
Find the True Meaning of Life
(God loves us and wants us to enjoy Him forever)

Mr. Wise tells Learner the story of **The Wasteful Son** who finds forgiveness, in **Luke 15:11-32**.

Exercises

Please read this story in **Luke 15:11-32**, or ask someone to read it to you. If you do not have the Bible in your language, ask someone tell it to you from a Bible in another language. It is necessary that you read or have someone tell you all of the Bible texts that we ask you to in this book. Otherwise, these studies will be useless.

As you read or listen to this story in **Luke 15:11-32** find what Learner discovered:

- How did the son cause pain for his father by the way he lived?
- How did the son later show that he felt bad about his foolishness?
- How did his father treat him when he arrived home again with a repentant heart?

“Learner” Mr. Wise explains, “We are all like the rebellious son. We have forgotten our father in heaven. We have done foolish things with our lives. God is waiting for us with His arms open, ready to forgive us and welcome us with a happy party, to welcome His lost children as we return to our true and eternal home.”

Learner stops sanding the table to consider what Mr. Wise said. Mr. Foolish, however, picks up his box of soap and starts out the door. He scoffs, “Do you really think God has parties? I think He has better ways to spend His time!”

Mr. Wise assures him. “Oh yes, Jesus talked about parties and enjoyed them. If we ask him in Jesus’ name, God will gladly forgive us and send the Holy Spirit to help us turn from our old life, to join the greatest party of all. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, God forgives us and receives us with joy, as lost children that have come back home. He said that being in heaven with Him is like a great wedding party.”

Mr. Wise tells Learner about **Creation and Adam’s Fall**.

Exercise

Please find now in this story in **Genesis chapters 1 through 3 (Gen. 1 – 3)** the answers to the questions that Mr. Wise asks Learner:

- Why did Adam and Eve suddenly become very afraid of God?
- What was God doing when He found Adam and Eve in the garden?
- What did God promise to do to the enemy of the human race?
- Where did God send the couple because of their disobedience?

Mr. Wise explains while he helps Learner finish the new table. “God at first walked and talked with Adam and Eve. He created people to walk and talk with Him like friends. He did not create them to suffer, nor to feel lost or confused. People were designed to live with God, enjoying His creation. God wanted people to love Him freely, because love cannot be forced. God allowed Adam and Eve to choose their own path. They chose to go their own way, which was the way of God’s enemy Satan, instead of obeying God. He had to send them out of His paradise.”

“Oh, how sad!”

“Human history also shows us that men live far away from God now. We lost our friendship with Him. The world is full of death and violence. Without God, we live in great spiritual danger. God promised to conquer our enemy Satan and sent a champion to rescue us from death and evil. Jesus paid for our rebellion with His death and made it possible for us to return to God with His resurrection. Through Jesus, we can go back to our true home with God.”

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After discussing the story, Mr. Wise asks Learner, "Do you see now the meaning for our lives? God wants us to live in friendship with Him. Would you like to know more stories about God, and tell them to your family?" Learner agrees and Mr. Wise suggests, "Here is a verse for us to memorize together in John 1:9. We shall meet again next week!"

Exercise

Please memorize **John 1:9**.

Find in **Romans 5:12** what passed on from Adam to all his sinful descendants.

Find in **Romans 5:13-21** how the first Adam contrasts with the 'final Adam'.

I-2 — Discovery 2

Turn Back to the One God

(Leave idols or whatever replaces the one true, triune God)

The following week Mr. Wise returns to Learner's woodworking shop. He helps Learner finish a new set of chairs. Mr. Foolish arrives with an armload of small statues and tells Learner, "These have power to keep evil away from your house," he explains. "Buy one."

Mr. Wise says, "They look like idols to me."

Mr. Foolish replies, "Oh, no! They are simply to beautify your house and keep evil away."

"Idols only bring misery to a house," Mr. Wise tells him, "Surely you can sell something else to make a living."

"I have to sell these! I make more money selling them than from any other merchandise."

Learner asks, "Why are they so bad, Mr. Wise?"

Mr. Wise answers, "I shall tell you about **Elijah and the Prophets of Baal**, to answer your question about idols and explain why we must turn back to the one true God and worship Him alone."

Exercise

Please find in this story in **1 Kings 18:16-39** what Learner and Mr. Wise find:

- Why did trouble come to the country of Israel?
- What was the contest that the prophet Elijah arranged between the idolatrous prophets of Baal and the one true God?
- What answer did the prophets of Baal receive, and what answer did Elijah receive?
- Who is the one true God?

Mr. Wise explains the story: "Many people in ancient Israel set up images so that they could have visible gods that belonged to them. They turned away from the one true God, and trouble came upon their country. We also set up gods for ourselves and trouble comes to us, because we turn away from our one true God. Only the true God rules over the earth, the heavens, and all the nations of the world. He can not be owned or bound by any country's borders. He is always calling to us to come back to Him."

"Wait a moment!" Mr. Foolish protests, "That may be the right way for you, but not for me. My ancestors always worshiped the spirits that correspond to these images! I will follow their way."

Mr. Wise says, "Let me tell you about **The Woman at the Well** who followed the way of her ancestors, but found a better way."

Exercise

Please find now in this story in **John 4:4-42** what Mr. Wise explained:

- What did Jesus offer to give to the Samaritan woman at the well?
- What convinced the woman that Jesus was a prophet of God?
- Who did Jesus say He was?
- What happened when the woman told her people about Jesus?

Mr. Wise explains the story to Learner and Mr. Foolish, while he works on the chairs. "Jesus once talked to a woman by a well in a foreign country. He offered to give her water that would satisfy her so much she would never thirst again. The woman did not understand that he meant water that brings a new kind of life that we have never seen before. We look for it, but we cannot find it.

"The woman asked Jesus if He was greater than her ancestors were who had dug the well and taught her people to worship God. Jesus told her that He was the one sent by God to show everyone how to truly

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worship God. This kind of worship satisfies us in a way that nothing else can. It gives us a new life that we never knew was possible.”

Learner says, “I’d like to know more about Jesus.” Mr. Wise tells Learner, “I will help you to take some simple steps of obedience toward God. Will you talk to the one true God with me and ask Him to forgive you for turning away from Him?”

“You mean pray? I’m not ready yet.”

“Would you like to hear more stories like these and tell them to your family? Let us both memorize a command from the Bible that reminds us to worship the one true God. It is in Mark 12:29-30.”

Exercise

Please read and memorize **Mark 12:29-30** now.

As the three men continue to talk about God in Learner's shop, Mr. Foolish asks, “Why do you say 'the one true God'? The Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus worship other gods, do they not? Are there not many gods?”

“There is only one true God. The other spirits that some people call gods are beings that God created. Scripture sometimes calls them ‘angels.’ The evil spirits were once angels. They followed the devil, Satan, and rebelled against the most high and holy God. He drove them out of His holy presence, out of heaven. They do not love God. To love God is more important than anything else is. We cannot love Him if we have other gods. Our salvation depends on our being united with Jesus, just as He is one with God the Father.”

“How can Jesus be one with God the Father?” Mr. Foolish asks. “I do not understand.”

“The Almighty God does not require us to understand Him. It is enough to know that He is revealed in Scripture as three Persons. These three are Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one God. There is only one true God.”

“But you must add the three persons. You add one, two, three and get three gods.”

“No! We do not add them. It would be more accurate to multiply them, if you must try to explain the mystery mathematically. One multiplied by one is one. And multiplied again by one is still one. This is because the Son eternally proceeds from the Father. Jesus explained in John 15:26 about the Holy Spirit, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

Mr. Foolish picks up his statues and leaves.

Exercise

Please memorize **John 15:26** now.

I-3 — Discovery 3
**Find Pardon and Life
in Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

(Trust in His work, His death and resurrection, not in our human efforts)

The next week, Mr. Wise again visits Learner at his shop and helps him polish a new desk. Learner says, "I told my family those stories. They liked them, but my father says we have other good teachers besides Jesus." Mr. Wise answers, "We have other good teachers but they are not like Jesus. Let me tell you about **Jesus' Arrest and Trial**, from Matthew 26:31-56.

Exercise

Please read **Matthew 26:31-56** and find what Mr. Wise describes:

- What were Jesus' words of submission when He prayed about His approaching death?
- How did Judas betray Jesus?
- When did the other disciples abandon him?
- What reason did the priests use to condemn Jesus?

Mr. Wise explains as they work on the desk, "We are separated from God by our sin. Nevertheless, God loved the world so much that He sent His son to bring us back to Him. He made the world, but the world did not recognize Him. John 3:16; and John 1:10 explain this. His own disciples betrayed and abandoned Him. The priests of God's temple condemned Him to die, although He was a holy and innocent man. Like Jesus' own people, we have all rejected Him because we have all sinned against God. Jesus loves us so much, however, that He chose to die for us. He was not only our teacher but saved us from God's punishment for our sins."

Mr. Foolish arrives at the door of the shop and shouts, "Look what I have today. Buy one of these bone-handled nutcrackers."

They pay no attention. Mr. Wise relates **The Death and Resurrection of Jesus**.

Exercise

Please find in **Luke chapters 23 and 24** what Mr. Wise narrates:

- What happened at the moment that Jesus died, to show how important His death was?
- What did the angels say to the women who looked for Jesus on the third day after He died?
- When did the men walking to Emmaus finally recognize Jesus?
- What were Jesus' last instructions to His disciples?

Mr. Wise tells Learner and Mr. Foolish, "The day Jesus died the sun went dark at about the sixth hour until about the ninth hours, and the Temple curtain was torn open. Jesus was buried and stayed dead until the third day. The most holy God would not allow this truly good and innocent man to remain dead."

"Jesus was weak!" Mr. Foolish exclaims, "He could not stop people from killing Him!"

"He could have stopped them but Jesus died willingly. He took our place on the cross. On the third day God raised Him from the dead. He came back to His disciples and they touched Him and ate with Him. They worshiped Him, calling Him 'Lord' and 'God' in John 20:28. His resurrection broke the power of death. No other man has ever defeated death like that."

Mr. Wise asks Learner, "Will you simply obey God? Do you see now that Jesus is greater than anyone else is who ever lived? Will you ask God to save you from death and give you a new life in the power of Jesus' name? Here is a verse about Jesus to memorize with your family: John 3:16."

Learner quickly memorizes it. When Mr. Wise starts to leave, Learner remarks, "I can tell these stories to my family now. Can we meet again soon to talk about Jesus again?"

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Exercise

Please memorize **John 3:16**, and help your family and friends to memorize it also.

I-4 — Discovery 4 Escape the Powers of Evil and Death

(Jesus conquers death and demons)

A week later Mr. Wise is again helping Learner in the woodworking shop. Mr. Foolish arrives out of breath. “Bad news, Learner! Your brother who lives down the river was killed in a bus wreck!”

Learner drops the polish and sits in silence. Mr. Wise sits beside him, praying for him during a long moment of silence. Learner sobs, “Oh no! Why does God let such evil happen? What comfort can I give his family?” Mr. Wise tells his friend about **Jesus' Power over Death**.

Exercise

Please find in **John 11:17-44** what Mr. Wise explains:

- How did Jesus feel about the death of His friend Lazarus?
- What did Jesus tell Martha would happen to those who believed in Him?
- What happened to dead Lazarus when Jesus called him?

Mr. Wise explains, as the three men sit in Learner's shop. “Jesus also had a very good friend who died. Jesus was very sad. God does not like to see people suffer. Jesus came to put all things right. He told Martha that Lazarus would come back to life again, because Lazarus believed in Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. He prayed to God and then called Lazarus in the tomb. Lazarus came out of the tomb alive.

Mr. Foolish asks, “But what power does Jesus have to give life now?”

“Jesus showed everyone that He has power over death. When He died and came back to life on the third day, He gave a new life to all that believe in Him. This life never ends because we have God's spirit in us.”

Mr. Wise tells about **The Man Tormented by Demons**, who met Jesus.

Exercise

Please find in **Mark 5:1-20** the answers to these questions that Mr. Wise asks Learner:

- What did the bad spirits make the man do to himself?
- What did the bad spirits say to Jesus?
- What did Jesus do for the man?
- What did Jesus tell the man to do after he was healed?

Mr. Wise explains, “Jesus is the Son of God. His very nature is that of God. Philippians 2:6 explains this. The spirits made the man cry out and cut himself. He was so strong that no one could control him. When Jesus came, they recognized Him as the Son of God. The man knelt before Jesus and the spirits begged to be sent into the pigs. Jesus sent the spirits out of the man, and they went. Jesus healed the man completely. Then He sent the man home to tell his family what God had done for him.”

Mr. Foolish leaves without a word and Mr. Wise continues, “When Jesus went up into heaven, He sent His Spirit to live in the people that trust Him. The Spirit of God is powerful and protects us from evil. He gives us a new life that is eternal and holy. He helps us tell other people the good news about Jesus.”

Mr. Wise asks Learner, “Now, do you want to pray to God in Jesus' name and ask Him to change your life? He will. Here is a verse to help you explain the story to your family: John 11:25. This is the hope you can give your family.” Learner still does not want to pray, but he memorizes the verse.

Exercise

Please memorize John 11:25.

I-5 — Discovery 5

Discern the Important Things in Life

(Turn from sin and seek things of eternal value rather than perishable things)

Mr. Wise returns the following week to visit Learner but does not find him at home or in his shop. Finally, he meets him on the street. Learner apologizes, “Mr. Wise, since my brother’s funeral I have been too busy to think about God. Maybe in a month or two...”

“I know you are busy, but you must not let the things of this life make you forget what is most important. Let me tell you about **Noah and the Flood.**”

Exercise

Please find in **Genesis 6:5-14** what Mr. Wise explains:

- How did God feel about what the people were doing in the time of Noah?
- Why did God save Noah and his family?
- What did Noah do, to obey God?

They walk to Learner’s shop and begin to work on a door. Mr. Wise explains the flood: “Jesus says that the people in Noah’s day were living their normal lives, in Luke 17:27. They forgot God and became wicked and violent. God waited patiently for them to repent, but they ignored God. God is holy. He does not tolerate sin. The sin and violence He saw in Noah’s time made him sad and angry. He decided to destroy the people of the world.”

“All of them?”

“Almost. Noah was the only man who listened to God. Noah trusted God although he could not see Him. He spent many years building the big boat although he could not see any water to float it. God saved Noah, because he believed God and obeyed Him. God destroyed the earth with a flood, but saved Noah and his family inside the boat.

Mr. Foolish stops at the door, listening. Mr. Wise explains, “Today we are like the people of Noah’s time. We ignore God and become full of sin and violence. Our sin makes God sad and angry. We will all be destroyed by death if we do not enter the safe place God has given us. That safe place is like the big boat. It is Jesus. We are safe in Jesus’ hands if we believe.”

Mr. Foolish protests, “But Learner is not doing anything evil! Why does he need a safe place to hide? He needs more money! Here, look what I brought. It’s a candy machine. Put a coin in here, turn this knob and out comes the candy. Buy it, Learner, for your woodworking shop. People will come for candy and you will get lots of money. Money is the most important thing.”

Mr. Wise tells Mr. Foolish, “I’d like to tell you Jesus’ story of **The Foolish Rich Man.**”

Exercise

- Please find Jesus’ warning in **Luke 12:13-21** for people who seek only more wealth.

Mr. Wise asks Mr. Foolish, who is still holding his candy machine. “Do you see that the rich man was just doing his ordinary business? But he was placing more importance on his crops and barns than on God. Death came when he was not expecting it. He was not prepared for death. Jesus says that He will return to the earth again. Some people will be doing their ordinary business like the people of Noah’s day. They will not be ready for Jesus. They will be destroyed like the people caught by the flood. But those who belong to Jesus will be safe.”

Mr. Foolish walks away laughing, but Learner responds: “Mr. Wise, I have been forgetting God. Pray with me so that I can ask for forgiveness in Jesus’ name.” After they pray he says, “I should have prayed with you long ago. I feel relieved. I will tell these stories to my family to help them remember God. Do you have another Bible verse for me to memorize?”

“Learn Romans 6:23. Can we meet again soon?”

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“Yes. Tonight. Please eat dinner at my house. My wife Sara wants to know you, too.”

Exercise

- Memorize Romans 6:23, about the most valuable gift in the world.

I-6 — Discovery 6 Find True Goodness

(Men who say they are good also need God's pardon)

After a good meal at Learner house, he tells Mr. Wise, "Sara wanted me to ask you a question. Something bothers her."

"With your permission, Learner, I'd like to hear Sara explain her concern herself."

Sara blushes. "You said that Learner needs forgiveness for some things. But Learner is not a bad person. He does his duties as a father and husband. He's good to his friends. Is not that enough for a person to be right with God?"

"Let me tell you about **The Corrupt Tax Collector.**" After telling the story, Mr. Wise asks questions to see if Learner and his wife Sara understood.

Exercise

Please find in **Luke 19:1-10** what Learner found:

- How did Jesus notice that Zacheus wanted to meet Him?
- How did Jesus treat this corrupt tax collector?
- How did Zacheus treat Jesus?
- Jesus did not condemn the man like others did. What did Zacheus say he would do, in gratitude?

After that, Mr. Wise explains about Zacheus: "Jesus always comes to those who are looking for him. He changes their hearts. We can never be very good people by our own efforts. Some people think they are good but are too proud to see their own sin. When Jesus comes into our lives, He gives us His goodness. Like Zacheus, we show him our gratitude with our actions."

"I still feel puzzled," Sara says. "What about my religious uncle? The priest gives him prayers that he repeats prayers many times a day! Does he also need to be saved by Jesus?"

"Yes. We do not please God by following a set of rules or simply doing religious duties. Let me tell you about **The Priest and the Tax Collector.**"

Exercise

Please find what Learner and Sara find in **Luke 18:9-14**:

- To what kind of people did Jesus tell this story about the bad tax collector?
- What attitude did the religious man in the story have towards God?
- What attitude did the tax collector have?
- Which man pleased God and became truly good?

Mr. Wise thanks Sara for the good meal. She replies, "Thank you, Mr. Wise, for the Bible story. I understand a lot better now. God forgives even bad people."

Learner says to Mr. Wise, "Please explain how such a short prayer could make that man good."

"Only God makes us truly good. When we are honest with Him about our sin and trust Him to forgive us in Jesus' name, His spirit comes to us to make us truly good. We can be very religious like the man in the story, but that alone does not please God. Our repentance and trust are what please Him."

As Mr. Wise leaves, he tells Learner, "I think Sara is responding to the good news about Christ. I hope you will talk to her about it. If you think she is ready, you can pray with her for forgiveness in Jesus' name, just as I have prayed with you."

"I will talk to her tonight. Please come back in the morning if you can."

I-7 — Discovery 7

Find Abundant Life in Jesus

(Show new faith by obeying, beginning with baptism)

The next morning Mr. Wise returns to Learner's house. Soon after, Mr. Foolish appears at the door holding several bright colored, floppy things with feathers. "Learner, buy a hat for your wife Sara!"

Learner laughs. "We have something more important to talk about than feathers. My family and I are obeying Jesus. I hope you will also, Mr. Foolish."

"I have thought about it. I follow Him in my own way. Do not get too fanatical about it, Learner. Some people say that all you have to do to go to heaven is believe in Jesus. Nothing more. I shall do that."

"I said we will also obey Him."

"You cannot. He said to love even your enemies. That is crazy!"

Mr. Wise disagrees. "No. Belief is only the start. God wants you to confirm your trust with simple obedience. The story of **The Ethiopian Government Worker** will help you all to understand."

Exercise

Please find in **Acts 8:26-38**:

- Who did the Ethiopian read about in the Old Testament scriptures, which were written hundreds of years before Christ was born?
- What things did those scriptures from the Old Testament predict about Jesus?
- What did the Ethiopian do to show that he believed in Jesus?

Mr. Wise explains to Learner, Sara and Mr. Foolish, as they sit in Learner's house: "The Scripture that the Ethiopian read was Isaiah 53. It was written centuries before Jesus was born, but it told what Jesus would do. It said that we are like sheep that have wandered off from God in our sin. We deserve death, but Jesus took all our sin, our illness, our suffering, and our death on His own shoulders. Because He suffered and died, we are freed from sin and death."

Sara brings coffee and Mr. Wise continues to explain: "The Ethiopian believed in what Jesus had done for him. To show his faith, he immediately asked Philip to baptize him there near the road, where he had seen water. Baptism shows that the Holy Spirit has united us with Christ in His death, as Colossians 2:12 reveals, and also Romans 6. Our life of sin dies with Jesus. By faith, we also join in His resurrection and begin a new life that is eternal and holy. His Spirit comes to live in us."

Mr. Foolish frowns. "That is ridiculous! We do not need water to make us holy! For that we do lengthy meditation. I will sell you a book by a Hindu holy man on how to meditate. Here, look at it."

Mr. Wise tells about **Naaman the Leper**. He asks questions to help them understand.

Exercise

Please find in **2 Kings 5:1-14**:

- What did Naaman do to show his faith?
- The river water itself did not wash away Naaman's leprosy. God did that. But how did God use the water to bring Naaman to trust Him?

Mr. Foolish fails to sell his book and leaves the house. Mr. Wise explains to Learner and Sara: "God tells us to be baptized in water. Like Naaman's washing and the Ethiopian's baptism, our baptism in water shows our faith. It is the first thing we do to obey God. Baptism shows that God has washed all our sins away with the blood of Jesus, as Acts 22:16 reveals. 1 John 1:7 also assures us of God's washing."

Learner and Mr. Wise walk to the shop, talking about baptism. "Learner, God wants you to take this step of obedience, along with your family. You should explain to Sara and your children **How Baptism Unites us with Jesus Christ**."

Shepherd's Storybook

"I shall talk to Sara. I do not know if we are ready yet."

Exercise

- Please memorize **Acts 2:38**.
- Find in **Romans 6:1-14** in what way baptism unites us with Christ.
- Also in **Romans 6:1-14**, what should be the result of baptism in the way we live?

I-8 — Discovery 8 Become Followers of Jesus

(Meet, know and follow the risen Christ)

A few days later Mr. Wise arrives at the woodworking shop and tells Learner, "I'm soon going to move to another area of the country. I hope to leave a congregation of believers here first. You have heard the good news of Jesus. You know our need for the one true God and how He sent Jesus to rescue us from sin and death. Did you talk to Sara about showing your faith with baptism?"

"Yes. We both believe that Jesus' death and resurrection bring us forgiveness and new life. But I want to learn more about baptism."

"Listen, then to **How Paul Met Jesus.**"

Exercise

Please find in **Acts 22:1-16**:

- What was Paul doing to Christians before he met Jesus?
- Who spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus?
- What did Paul need to do to become an obedient follower of Jesus?

Mr. Wise summarizes the story while he helps Learner finish a chair. "Paul put many Christians in jail before he met Jesus. He thought he was serving God by trying to stop the Christians. He did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He thought Christians were liars. But the risen Jesus spoke to Paul. Paul was blinded until a prophet of God came to heal him. The prophet told him to get up, be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of Jesus. The prophet told Paul he would witness to all men about what he had seen and heard."

Mr. Foolish rushes into the shop and starts to speak, but sees Mr. Wise and stops. He listens for a while, and then says, "Do not hurry into these things, Learner. Think it over. Do not get carried too far away with this Jesus religion. It will interfere with your life!"

Mr. Wise prays silently to God, and then relates **How Jesus Went up into Heaven.**

Exercise

Please find in **Luke 24:36-53** what Mr. Wise asks Learner:

- What did Jesus do to show His disciples that He was not a ghost?
- What specific historical events does Jesus instruct us to proclaim as news to all nations?
- What wonderful thing did Jesus promise to send His followers?

Mr. Wise ends the story as Learner and Mr. Foolish listen in the shop: "Jesus was taken up into heaven as a man. Angels promised that He would come back in the same way. (Acts 1:8-11) Meanwhile, Jesus gave His followers a job to do and sent them His Holy Spirit from on high to empower them to do the job. This job is for us today also. He promised to give to us power to do it from heaven, which comes through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Our job is to tell all people about Jesus, especially about His death and resurrection, and to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins."

Mr. Foolish says, "Then Jesus is a long way off now. I'm leaving. You men are becoming too fanatical about religion."

Mr. Wise pays him no attention and tells Learner, "One day Jesus will come back and raise His followers from the dead, so that we can all live forever with Him where He is (John 14:3). Learner, are you ready to take this step toward God? Listen to the voice of Jesus. Confess your sins and be baptized, washing away your sin in Jesus' name (Acts 22:16)."

"I know in my heart that this is true. My family and I will obey Christ. We will be baptized. And I have already begun telling our friends about Jesus."

Shepherd's Storybook

Exercise

Do what Mr. Wise asks Learner to do:

- Memorize **Matthew 28:18-20**.
- Tell others what you have seen and heard about Jesus.
- Praise God for the day when He will come back to take His followers home with Him.

Section II

ESTABLISH CONGREGATIONS THAT OBEY CHRIST

Chapters in Section II are Christ's basic *Commands*. Check ✓ those that are being practiced:

II-1 Command of Christ #1 Repent, Believe, and Receive the Holy Spirit (salvation)

II-2 Command of Christ #2 Baptize new Believers (then live the holy life in Jesus that it initiates)

II-3 Command of Christ #3 Make Disciples of Jesus (teach obedience to Jesus and God's Word)

II-4 Command of Christ #4 Love (Love God and men, serve the needy, forgive enemies)

II-5 Command of Christ #5 Pray (Praise God, confess sin, pray for others, heal, do spiritual warfare)

II-6 Command of Christ #6 Break Bread, celebrate communion, worship God in spirit)

II-7 Command of Christ #7 Give (be good stewards of all that God gives us)

The purpose of this section is that we make disciples that obey Jesus above all else.

In the Bible we find a shepherd named Titus. See in Titus 1:5 how the Apostle Paul left this shepherd on the island Crete to help the new Christians. Paul told Titus to complete what was lacking in the new congregations on Crete. You may have met Mr. Wise in Section 1. If not, let me introduce him. He is a shepherd. He is not a real person, but he is like Titus in the Bible.

In Section I Mr. Wise told the good news about Jesus to a woodworker named Learner. He used Bible stories. Learner told the same stories to his family. Now Learner's family and several friends have received Christ and been baptized. Mr. Wise is like the wise man in the Bible who built his house on the solid rock, which is Jesus Christ. He uses stories to help the new believers grow as obedient disciples of Jesus Christ. These stories relate events that happened in history.

Learner lives where people persecute followers of Jesus. His friend Mr. Foolish is a salesman who tries to sell different things that nobody wants. He is also like the foolish man in the Bible who built his house on sand.

Mr. Foolish arrives at Learner's woodworking shop to tell him, "I heard you became a Christian. I did, too. Tourists will buy more souvenirs from me if I'm a Christian. Here, look. You might want to buy one, too." He takes a small bamboo whistle from a sack. "It is a bird whistle. Blow it and the birds sing to you. I will show you." He blows the whistle and three dogs start howling.

Learner replies, "I follow Jesus to serve God, not to make money. I am telling all my friends about Him."

Mr. Foolish laughs. "You? You need to learn the entire Bible before you can go out and teach others! Goodbye!"

Later that day Mr. Wise arrives. He taught Learner the woodworking trade and enjoys coming to Learner's shop to work with him and talk. Learner complains, "Mr. Foolish says I have to know the whole Bible before I can teach others."

Mr. Wise warns, "No, my brother in Christ! We do not simply listen and listen, and listen more, to God's words. We put them into practice a little at a time as we learn them. Otherwise they do us little good. Let me remind you of **The Two Builders**. Jesus told His followers about them so we would know how important it is to obey His words, from the beginning of our new lives as Christians."

Shepherd's Storybook

Exercise

Please read this story in **Matthew 7:24-29**. If you do not have the Bible in your language ask someone who does to tell it to you. While you go through this story, answer the questions below that Mr. Wise has prepared for Learner:

- What is the difference between the two men who both heard the words of Jesus?
- Who is the Rock, the foundation for everything good?
- What must we do, to build our life and ministry on this Rock?

Learner exclaims, "Then it is not enough simply to listen to Jesus' words! We must know what Jesus commands us to do, but knowing is not enough. We must put the commands of Christ into practice"

Mr. Wise smiles as he helps Learner finish a table. "Yes! He says in John 14:15, 'If you love me, obey my commands.' We HEAR and DO, HEAR and DO, HEAR and DO. We do not HEAR, HEAR, HEAR, and maybe do later."

"I see."

"The way to build on the Rock Jesus Christ is to *obey* Him in childlike faith and love. God blesses our loving obedience to Jesus. He does not promise to bless us simply because we have much knowledge of His Word. Shortly before Jesus returned to Heaven, He gave us our orders for the rest of our lives on earth. We find these orders, called the Great Commission, in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus tells us to make disciples. He tells us to start by *baptizing* them and then to *teach them to obey all the things that He commanded*.

"We become disciples by obeying all of Jesus' commands. We make disciples by teaching others to obey all His commands. Making disciple starts with loving obedience. That's the foundation. A true church is a group of people gathered together to obey Jesus in love. The first church on earth began immediately to obey all the commands of Jesus Christ."

They hear someone singing. Learner's younger brother, Helper, enters the shop carrying a guitar. "Can you fix this, Learner? It came unglued. Oh, hello, Mr. Wise. I'm glad I found you! I overheard a policeman saying that you hold unauthorized meetings. You are in danger. You must leave this area at once."

Mr. Wise groans. "I cannot leave yet. I must help your family and friends to become a strong congregation first, of obedient disciples of Jesus. Then I can leave and take the gospel to another place."

Helper says, "I'm not a follower of Jesus Christ, but Learner told me about Him and I want to know more. What does Jesus command men to do?"

Mr. Wise explains, "It starts with faith. Jesus commanded many other things. We can summarize them under seven general commands. We do not obey these commands to earn salvation. When we belong to Jesus, obedience is natural. We obey Him because we love and respect Him. To obey His commands shows that His life is in us."

Learner asks, "What are His commands?"

"These are the Seven Basic Commands of Christ in their simplest form:

- Repent, believe and be transformed by the Holy Spirit
- Baptize new believers
- Love
- Break bread
- Pray
- Give
- Make disciples."

Mr. Wise continues, "Let us look in the Bible to see what a church really is." He relates to Learner and his brother, Helper, **How the First Christians Obeyed Jesus**.

Shepherd's Storybook

Exercise

Please find in **Acts 2:36-47** what Mr. Wise asks the two men:

- How soon were new believers baptized and added to the church?
- Where did they break bread to celebrate the Lord's Supper?
- How did they show in a very practical way their love for each other?
- What did the Lord do for the new, obedient church, to make it grow?

Learner listens carefully. "Now I understand what a church is! It is people who gather and obey Jesus. The first Christians honored Christ. They remembered what He taught and obeyed His words with fervor and joy. My family is going to honor Jesus like those first Christians did."

"Good," Mr. Wise answers. "With the power of the Holy Spirit, they obeyed the seven basic commands of Christ from the beginning. God's blessing and joy come to congregations that obey Christ in love."

Practical Work

- Help your congregation memorize John 14:15.
- Help your congregation to memorize the seven basic commands of Christ, listed above.
- Write a short song that lists Jesus' seven basic commands, if someone has not yet done it. This makes it easy for others to learn them. Ask others to help you.
- Help your congregation obey God out of love, not fear.
- Ask everyone in your congregation to obey Jesus' basic commands before any man-made rules.

II-1— Command of Christ #1

The next week, several new believers and others who are seeking God gather in Learner's small house. They are seated in a circle so they can see each other and have better conversation. Mr. Wise teaches them Jesus' command to repent, believe and receive the Holy Spirit. He reads about the different aspects of this command in Mark 1:15, John 3:16, and John 20:22.

Mr. Foolish arrives at the meeting and announces, "I am a Christian now. I think it is the better way to live."

"I will talk with you later about that," Mr. Wise says. "Now, let us all make plans to reach more people for Christ. I did not come to preach. We are all going to talk to each other about what God wants us to do. I want all of you to talk about it. Please."

Learner says, "I have friends along the road north of here. I want to tell them about Jesus."

Mr. Foolish says, "I hope we can avoid offending those people, because they sometimes buy my little statues. We must not always be telling them they are sinners. They will get angry."

"I disagree," Mr. Wise says. "Sometimes the most loving thing we can do for people is to warn them that they must repent of their sins. We must not fear that we will offend them. Let me tell you about **John the Baptist's Fearless Preaching**.

Exercise

Please find in **Matthew 3:4-10** the answer to what Mr. Wise asks:

- What kind of people did John the Baptist baptize—people who were good enough to deserve it, or bad enough to need it?

Sara says, "Since you asked all of us to talk, I will say what I have discovered. We who know that we have had many sins in our lives appreciate Jesus' forgiveness more than people who think they are really good.

Mr. Foolish starts to reply but Learner asks, "What do we tell the people first about God?"

Mr. Wise says, "Let me tell you **The Most Important Things in the Gospel Message**."

Exercise

Please find in **Luke 24:36-53** these important things:

- What two great events in Jesus' life history do we tell to others?
- What must a sinner do, according to this passage, to receive forgiveness of sins?
- Where does our power come from, to tell others about Jesus?

Mr. Wise explains to the group in Learner's house. "When we speak to others about Jesus, we explain that He is the 'Sent One' of God, the Christ, God's anointed one. What else do we tell them?"

One of the new believers answers shyly, "Learner told me to tell them about His death and resurrection."

"Yes! And we call them to repentance. We ask them not just to make a mental decision, but to act. They are to repent and confirm it by baptism."

Learner adds to the discussion, "Then we help the new believers to use God's power that the Holy Spirit gives us to tell others about Jesus."

Mr. Foolish interrupts, "We do not need to make people feel bad about their sins. That offends them. That is why the authorities do not want Mr. Wise to live here. He offends them. People only need to accept the fact that God loves them! That is enough."

Several start to argue about this. Mr. Wise says, "Listen, please. People need to do more than accept a message. Let me tell you **How Peter Presented Jesus to the Jewish People**."

Shepherd's Storybook

Exercise

Please find in **Acts 2:22-38**:

- What did Peter say about Jesus?
- What did Peter tell people to do to be saved?

The group, sitting in a circle in Learner's house, discuss this for several minutes, then ask Mr. Wise if they are correct in what they have said. He replies, "Yes. You have learned well. Let us summarize it. The Apostle Peter preached the important truths of the Good News. Three thousand people responded with repentance, with the help of the Holy Spirit speaking to their hearts. They were baptized the same day into the church. We must not count new believers until they are added to the church by baptism, or we cause confusion. Now, what were the truths that the apostles taught those who sought God?"

A man answers, "Jesus is the Savior that God approved through miracles as the Lord and Messiah."

Sara says, "His death brings us forgiveness."

Another adds, "His resurrection brings us victory over death and a new life through God's Holy Spirit."

Still another replies, "Our response is repentance, faith in Jesus, baptism and entry into the church."

Learner affirms, "I'm going to follow the example of the Apostle Peter and tell my relatives the same powerful story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. I will use the stories that Mr. Wise told me when I first became a follower of Christ. He gave me a list of stories from the Bible to help people understand the gospel." *[This list of stories appears in Section IV.]*

Learner's brother Helper says, "I want to follow Jesus. I can repent of my sins because God's Holy Spirit helps me do it." He takes his guitar and starts to compose a new song about Christ's wonderful forgiveness."

"Wonderful!" Learner exclaims, "I rejoice that my friends and relatives are coming to Jesus!"

A few days later the group meets in Learner's house and Mr. Wise announces, "I will not be able to come and teach you much longer. I am leaving Learner in charge. He has grown in Christ and now meets the biblical requirements for a shepherding elder. I am laying hands on him to commission him to shepherd this flock in my absence."

"You cannot leave us!" Sara cries.

"I must. Learner, we will call you a 'provisional elder' until you can do these things without my constant supervision. You will baptize Helper and the others."

Mr. Foolish objects, "It is too soon! My cousin read in the Bible where it says not to lay hands on a new leader suddenly!"

Learner explains, "What did the apostle Paul mean by the word 'suddenly?' We look at his example to know. I am doing it no faster than the apostle Paul did under the same circumstances, for new congregations without experienced leaders of any kind, and under persecution, in Galatia, in Acts 14. I follow his example. Learner, you are to baptize the people to whom you took Christ."

Practical Work

- Help your congregation to know the things we are to tell others about, in **Luke 24:46-47**.
- Plan what you will do to help your relatives, friends and neighbors to repent and believe in Christ.
- Help the new believers to understand that when they turn to God, they receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

II-2 — Command of Christ #2 Be Baptized

(then live the holy life in Jesus that it initiates)

The group meeting in Learner's house talks about baptism. Mr. Wise says, "It is a basic command of Jesus, in Matthew 28:18-20. Please ask any questions."

Mr. Foolish argues, "It is too soon to baptize these people! My cousin says that his church waits until the converts are perfect in every way. So be careful. What if you baptize them and some of them fall away from the church? Wait and see how well they behave. Then you can reward those who are very good by baptizing them."

Mr. Wise groans. "You misunderstand the meaning of baptism. We do not postpone obedience to Christ. That always comes first. Baptism starts the shepherding of new, repentant believers."

Helper says, "I want to be baptized. What else does the Bible say about it?"

Mr. Wise replies, "Learner, you know the story of The Jailer Who Repented. Please tell them."

Exercise

Find in **Acts 16:22-34** what Learner explains:

- Why did the jailer want to kill himself?
- What did the jailer do immediately after Paul assured him that he could be saved, so that others would also know Christ?
- How soon were the jailer and his family baptized?

Mr. Foolish says to the group that was studying baptism in Learner's house, "We cannot do as the Bible says. It's not the same today."

Learner corrects him, "Yes it is. Sin has not changed. God has not changed. Baptism has not changed. The Philippian jailer feared because he was doomed—he thought he had failed to guard the prisoners and would be put to death. He was afraid and without hope of salvation. He knew he was lost. My relatives are like that, too. They have been really bad, but Jesus came to save those who admit that they are lost and hopeless. Baptism is a gift to people who need strong assurance of forgiveness."

Mr. Wise adds, "Yes, the apostle Paul explains in Romans 6:3-8 that baptism is not just the washing with water. In baptism, our sin nature is crucified with Christ. We are lifted up with the risen Christ to new life. When people repent, their baptism helps them be sure of their new life in Christ. We explain to them that the Holy Spirit comes to them as a gift from God to make this life possible. How did Paul know the jailer was sincere?"

Learner answers, "By his actions the jailer showed that he trusted in Jesus. He immediately called his family together. They became disciples of Jesus together. And he obeyed Jesus by being baptized. Let us encourage new believers to begin making disciples for Christ immediately, starting with their own families, relatives and friends.

Helper remarks, "The jailer immediately showed his repentance and faith by being baptized."

"Yes," Mr. Wise replies, "Baptism is the only rite that Jesus gave His church to affirm our conversion, which is the transformation that God begins in our hearts. The apostles immediately baptized everyone that turned to Christ. They received them into the congregation this way. God added them to the church, the Body of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Mr. Foolish protests, "But some of Learner's friends and relatives who want to be baptized are drunks and thieves! People will criticize the church if you let them in before they prove they are worthy."

One of the men says, "I have lived a very sinful life. I want to repent and follow Jesus Christ. But maybe Mr. Foolish is right. I would bring a bad reputation to the church if I am baptized."

Shepherd's Storybook

Mr. Wise encourages him, "Baptism is for bad people. Listen to the story of **The Forgiven Tax Collector**.

Exercise

- Please find in **Luke 18:9-14** what Mr. Wise explained to the discouraged man.
- Two men were praying. Which man prayed the longest prayer?
- Which one did God hear?
- Which one was made right before God?"

The discouraged man sighs with relief. And begins to smile again. Mr. Wise explains to the group, "The apostles did not use baptism as a graduation ceremony after a long course of study. They did not use it to reward those who had proved themselves worthy. These human traditions came later into some churches. In the New Testament, people entered the church through repentance and baptism. *Then* they grew spiritually with the help of the Body of Christ, the other believers, who loved them and served them."

Mr. Foolish tells Learner, "You do not have authority from God to baptize these people."

"Yes, he does," Mr. Wise says. "We find **Our Authority for Baptizing New Believers** in Matthew 28:18-20. That is Jesus' Great Commission. And Learner meets all of God's requirements to do it."

Exercise

Please read **Matthew 28:18-20** now to find:

- With what authority does Jesus order us to make disciples?
- What two things do we do for people, so that they become disciples of Christ?
- What does Jesus promise to do that makes it easier for us to obey this great commission?

The people leave the meeting but Mr. Wise stays a while longer to explain to Learner The Three Levels of Authority for what we do as a church. "Learner, here is an easy way to remember from where our authority comes:

- First and above all, the commands of Jesus and His apostles
- Second, the practices of the Apostles, that were not commanded
- Third, our human traditions—things that we agree as a church body to do, that are not mentioned in the New Testament."

Learner says, "I see. We obey the commands of Jesus above all else. These commands and the commands of His apostles are the first level of authority. Nothing keeps us from obeying Jesus in love.

"Yes. The second level refers to the practices of the apostles that were not commanded. They are examples to us. We cannot prohibit things they practiced. We cannot command them either, because Jesus never did. These apostolic practices include: meeting on the first day of the week, meeting in homes, immediate baptism, and laying on hands to pray to commission new leaders."

Learner says, "Human traditions are the third level of authority. Are all traditions bad?"

"No. Most traditions are good. They help us to work together in harmony. However, if a human tradition interferes with the commands of Christ, we must make a choice. Will we follow our church tradition or will we obey the Lord Jesus?"

Practical Work

- Memorize **Matthew 20:18-20** with your congregation.
- Baptize new believers without delaying it with man-made requirements.
- Let the newly baptized believers participate actively as members of the church body by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Help new believers to take Christ immediately to their own family and friends.
- Examine the traditions of your congregation to make sure that nothing delays obedience to the commands of Christ and His apostles.

II-3 — Command of Christ #3 Make Disciples

A few days later Mr. Wise returns on the bus and walks to Learner's house. Sara tells him, "Learner is at the shop. I am glad you came. He is discouraged."

"Why? What happened?"

"Mr. Foolish and his friends are complaining to everyone. They criticize Learner for teaching about religion without studying first in some kind of academic theological institution. They say he sounds like a common person when he speaks, and not like a proper clergyman or well educated church official."

Mr. Wise hurries to the woodworking shop. They talk about what Mr. Foolish and his friends are saying. Learner laments, "I'm not a good speaker. I'm not eloquent."

"Your group is too small for you to preach in the traditional pulpit style. You should rather tell Bible stories or read something, and ask questions to encourage the small group to discuss it freely."

"That is what I do. I do it the same way that you did for me. I read or tell a story, then ask questions for the people to answer and discuss. I encourage everyone to participate. But that's not what Mr. Foolish wants. He wants to listen passively, as a 'hearer only'."

"That is very wrong, according to James 1:22 and 1 Corinthians 14:26. Many Bible verses tell us to teach, correct and admonish one another. This means that we must talk to one another during our meetings. We are not simply to listen. Large congregations, to meet God's requirement for a church, must form small groups that can discuss God's Word and plan together to apply it to their lives and ministries. Jesus does not tell us to be eloquent. He wants us to make disciples. You focus on the wrong objective if you worry about being a good public speaker. It is far better to be a good shepherd. Let us consider **Jesus' Command to Make Disciples.**

Exercise

Please find in **Matthew 28:18-20** the main thing that our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to do:

- Exactly what do we do to make disciples?
- What, specifically, are the disciples to do?

Helper, Learner's brother, arrives at the shop with his guitar. "Listen to my new song, Mr. Wise. I composed it to teach the commands of Christ." He sings a simple list of Jesus' seven basic commands.

"Very good!" Mr. Wise congratulates him. "Please teach it to the new congregations."

"Come join us," Learner says to Helper, "We are talking about making disciples."

Mr. Wise points at the woodworking tools lying on the worktable and says, "Christ called ordinary working men to be His disciples, not famous speakers. He does not want His followers simply to sit in church meetings and listen to good speakers. He commands his disciples to do things that are vital for healthy church life. Let me tell you About **Jesus' Promises to Those Who Follow Him:**

Exercise

- Please find in **Luke 5:1-11** what Jesus said we would become if we follow Him.
- Also find in **Luke 5:27-32** two things that Levi (also called Matthew) did immediately after starting to follow Jesus.
- Jesus did not come to be a friend only of very good people. What kind of people did He say He came to save?

Helper says, "I am trying to tell my friends about Christ, but I'm shy. I find it hard to talk to people that I do not know well."

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"God will help you," Mr. Wise explains. "Here, let us help Learner stain this new cabinet that he's making. We can talk while we work. Jesus promised His disciples that they would be fishers of men. Like Peter, we can do nothing to reach men for Christ without God's help. Only by His power can we call people to repentance and faith. He gives us power through His gift, the Holy Spirit. We receive and use this power far more effectively when we work together, in teams of two or more."

"That is why it was hard for me to talk to people about our Lord," Helper reasons, "I tried to do it alone."

Mr. Wise suggests to Learner, "Take your brother Helper with you when you tell others about Jesus. Let us pray for both of you right now, that the Holy Spirit will anoint you and give you more coworkers, as Jesus promised in Matthew 9:38."

After praying, Mr. Wise explains, "When Jesus called Levi, he left everything and immediately followed Jesus, just as Peter and the other disciples did. True disciples let Jesus rule over every part of their lives and obey Him immediately."

They hear someone at the door. Mr. Foolish has come to the shop with a small cage holding green lizards. "They eat flies," he explains. "They will keep your house free of flies and fleas. Buy one. Here, I will show you." He releases one on the floor and it runs out the door. A cat pounces on it and runs away with it.

They talk about Learner's responsibility as an elder, to make disciples. Mr. Foolish hits his fist against the worktable, upsetting a can of stain. He says loudly, "You cannot make disciples until you learn more theology. My cousin says his pastor studied for many years before he tried to teach anyone about God. You are a hypocrite if you try to tell others about God when you do not know anything yourself!"

"No!" Mr. Wise interrupts forcefully, "What exactly do you want Learner to do to prove that he is capable of shepherding the flock that God has given him? Walk on water? He cannot stop caring for other people just because he is not perfect in every way! When we come to Christ we love others more than ever."

"Let us get back to the subject we were talking about," Learner begs. "We want to make disciples. The first thing Matthew did as a disciple of Jesus was to call his friends together for a meal so that he could present Jesus to them. We help new disciples to present Jesus to their own friends and family. We tell them about Jesus, His teaching, His miracles, His death and His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:2-5 clarifies that the good news is that Jesus died and rose from the dead, and by doing so brought men forgiveness and eternal life."

Helper says, "I read that last night to my family. The teachers of the law called Levi and his friends 'sinners.' Peter also called himself a sinner. These sinners were the people Jesus came to call to repentance and make fishers of men. Jesus called groups of sinners, like the tax collectors at Matthew's party, into His church. He changes them!"

Mr. Foolish picks up his cage of lizards and leaves the shop, one of his hands covered with stain. Helper continues to discuss making disciples. "In Acts chapter 2, the apostles could not stop talking about Jesus, His death and His resurrection. By the power of the Spirit, many people repented. The apostle Peter told them to have a change of heart and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Three thousand repented and were baptized, and were added to the church that same day!"

Mr. Wise adds, "And after baptism the apostles taught them immediately to obey all the other basic commands of Christ. It says in Acts 2 that the people heard and practiced the apostles' teaching, had loving fellowship, broke bread together, prayed, and gave to those in need. That is how the first church started!"

Learner exclaims, "Our church also is starting by obeying Jesus just like those first Christians did. They loved each other. We also help each other to obey all that Jesus commanded. We will make obedient disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

"Good," Mr. Wise responds happily. "Some of Christ's commands we practice when we meet together, such as the Lord's Supper and loving fellowship. Obedience to Jesus is the essence of true

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worship. But we also obey Christ when we are not at the meetings. We obey Him joyfully throughout the day, praying, telling others about Him and serving the needy.”

Learner asks, “What things should we do when we meet together as a body to worship God?”

“I will list for you **The Important Parts of Worship:**

- Pray,
- Praise God,
- Confess our sins and receive assurance of forgiveness,
- Celebrate the Lord's Supper,
- Have fellowship with one another,
- Give,
- Study the Word of God.”

“Do we do them in that order?”

“Do them in the order that works best for you.”

Helper says, “I think a new church or a very small group of one or two families can do these things when they meet together.”

“When you meet in a home with a small group,” Mr. Wise cautions, “You should also have a definite beginning and a definite end for the worship time. Otherwise the worship is confused with other activities and fails to bring us into God's awesome presence with serious reverence.”

“I already discovered that,” Learner says. “To start the service we ask everyone to stand and repeat a Psalm of praise. To end it we stand for a special prayer of dismissal and blessing. This way the children know when to stop playing and making noise, and when they can start again when the worship time is over.”

Mr. Wise says, “I showed you and your family how to do a simple form of family worship. You do it well and others like Helper and his wife Rachel have joined you. But I will not always be here. At any time I may have to leave. You will have to lead without my help. Learner, give each person something to do. Remember what each person enjoys doing. It will correspond to their different spiritual gifts. Then all can participate.”

Practical Work

- Pray with your congregation for people that need Jesus, those near you and those in far away, neglected places.
- Show your people how to tell others in a friendly way about Jesus, especially their family and friends.
- Limit the number of meetings during the week, to give your people time to go evangelize their friends.
- Practice all the important elements of worship during your main weekly meeting.
- Help every believer to do something that edifies the others, during your meetings.

II-4 — Command of Christ #4 Love

Learner and his brother Helper visit their neighbors and friends, telling the good news about Jesus. Helper sings for them. They live in different neighborhoods, a few kilometers of distance, so one day they visit in Learner's area, the next day in Helper's. Helper's neighbor, Mr. Caregiver, tells Helper, "I am a schoolteacher, but I have been ill and unable to work."

Helper tells him about Jesus, but Learner remains quiet. When they leave his house, Helper asks Learner, "Why were you so silent? We ought to help him some way. His family is suffering."

"I do not like Mr. Caregiver," Learner admits. "He is Mr. Foolish's brother-in-law. Last year I made a set of chairs for him and he never paid me. I later asked for payment and we argued. He got angry and threw a book at me. He is my enemy. I will not visit him again."

They return to Learner's house and find Mr. Wise waiting. Helper tells him, "Learner does not want to help Caregiver in his time of need, because they have had a disagreement since last year."

Mr. Wise advises, "Learner, you must obey Jesus' command to love, in Matthew 22:36-40. It is the greatest of God's commands. Let me tell you what Jesus said about **The Good Samaritan**."

Exercise

Please find in **Luke 10:25-37** what Learner discovers that practical love does:

- To whom are we to show love, besides God?
- What did the Samaritan do to show love for his neighbor?
- Who is our neighbor, from God's viewpoint?

They continue talking about this in Learner's house. Mr. Wise advises, "Learner, the religious leaders that passed by the injured traveler *knew* they were commanded to love their neighbor, but they did not stop to help him. The Samaritans and Jews were historical enemies. But the Samaritan *did* stop to help the injured Jewish traveler. A person in need, even an enemy, is our neighbor as God sees it. He requires us to love them all."

"Do I have to love Mr. Caregiver?"

"What do you think?"

"I guess so."

"God is love, and we were created to be like Him. He made us to love Him and to love each other just as He loves us. Love must be useful. Merely talking about Jesus is not enough. People know that we belong to Christ when we look for ways to show useful love for each other. We are no longer interested only in what God can do for us."

"What do you mean by 'useful love'?"

"Love is useful when we do the things that Jesus commands. Our worship and all our church activities come from this first great command. We prove our love for our neighbors by serving them in useful ways, especially when they need help."

Mr. Foolish arrives at Learner's door with bottles of a dark green liquid. "It is Voice Tonic," he announces. "Take a spoonful daily for a month and you can sing better, Helper. Mr. Wise, people will hear you preach from a long distance. Here, I will demonstrate it with the cat." He fills a spoon and lowers it. The cat sniffs it, snarls and bites his finger. Mr. Foolish scolds the others, "You do not have to laugh so much! You lack good manners."

Sara bandages his finger and says, "Jesus commands us to love even those who mistreat us. Did you know that, Mr. Foolish? I read it this morning in Matthew 5:44."

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"But you cannot let an enemy offend you and do nothing! Even cats know that you have to bite those who they think might mistreat you! Make people suffer for doing wrong so it will not happen again!"

"Please!" Mr. Wise interrupts, "Let me tell you about **The Unforgiving Servant.**"

Exercise

Please find now in **Matthew 18:21-35**:

- How much of the debt did the master cancel?
- How did the first servant treat the second, poorer servant?
- What did the master do to the unforgiving servant?

They continue talking about love and forgiveness in Learner's house. Mr. Wise explains, "We show our enemies love when we forgive them. That is how Jesus forgave us. We also show love to new believers by welcoming them into our church family. We show love to our disciples by listening to them and helping them have fruitful ministries. Ephesians 4:11-12 says that teachers must help all the believers to have some kind of effective ministry."

After praying, Learner sighs. "I will forgive Caregiver. But it is hard to stop hating him. Sara, please prepare some food for his family. I will help them."

He takes a large basket of bread, eggs and other supplies to Caregiver, who is very grateful. Learner tells him, "You need employment but cannot work a full day yet. Come work in my shop part time until you gain back your strength. You can do light work like painting small designs on some wooden cases that I'm making. You can stop working any time during the day if you feel tired. You will earn enough to care for your family."

Caregiver looks at Learner for a long moment. "Thank you. I will be there in the morning."

A few weeks later he tells Learner, "I am able to teach full time again. Listen. About the dispute we had last year. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I will pay you what I owe." Caregiver begins to attend the church services. Before long he receives Christ and is baptized.

At a worship service, Mr. Wise tells the group, "God has given you a good leader. Learner now leads the worship services well without needing my help. And he does it the biblical way. All of you participate. You give testimonies, speak words of exhortation, repeat verses by memory and tell Bible stories. Some sing, others dramatize Bible stories. You answer the questions that Learner asks after someone reads a Bible passage or tells a story. This is what Paul tells us to do in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 14. It is all very biblical and spiritually healthy. You should all thank God for giving you a leader that is able to lead in the way the Bible says he should."

While others leave after the meeting in Learner's house, Mr. Foolish tells Mr. Wise, "You certainly made Learner proud! But I do not like the way he leads. Those new people in our group stammer and give silly answers to his questions. He lets them participate too much. They have not earned that right yet. He gives them too much freedom! The group needs a leader that will be strict. I could lead better!"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Wise groans. "You are too stingy with God's grace! Listen to the story of **The Jealous Workers.**"

Exercise

Please find in **Matthew 20:1-16**:

- What should our attitude be toward new believers, even though we have worked hard for Christ and suffered much for Him, and they have not?

Mr. Foolish remarks to Mr. Wise, "I do not understand your teaching! New believers would have the same right to God's grace as we older ones have!"

"We receive them into the church with as much grace as God showed us."

Learner approaches and Mr. Wise urges them to strengthen the unity of the church body. He tells about **Jesus' prayer For Us to Be One and to Love One Another.**

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Exercise

Please read **John 17:20-23** to find:

- What did Jesus ask God to do for us?
- In what way is our unity with each other like the unity between God the Father and God the Son?
- How did Jesus say the world would know that God sent Jesus?

Mr. Wise tells Mr. Foolish and Learner, "You two men need to get along better with each other. God's people are united in His church. We are all one in Jesus Christ. A local church is a group of people united to obey Jesus in love, wherever they are. God wants us to help one another and build each other up. Jesus does not tell us to follow Him each one in his own way, alone. We do it together."

"What do you mean, we are all one in Christ?" Learner asks.

"The Holy Spirit unites us in the Body of Christ in a way that men cannot explain with human reason. Jesus said in John 17 that we are one in Him just as He is one with God the Father."

"I do not understand that," Mr. Foolish grumbles. "I do not believe anything that I cannot understand."

"No man fully understands the mystery of God's being and our new holy life that is hidden in Christ, as Colossians 3:1-7 reveals. Our understanding is not the most important thing to God. He prefers our obedience. We can learn much doctrine and that is good. But it is better to learn to obey Christ. The best thing of course is to do both. Learn and obey. That strengthens the congregation, the Body of Christ!"

"Why do you call the group the Body of Christ?" Learner asks.

"The New Testament church is the Body of Christ--not a denomination or a building. We mean God's people, those who gather to worship and serve Him. We learn as members of the body to show practical love to the one true God and to each other."

"Why is love so important?" Mr. Foolish asks Mr. Wise.

"It is the most holy motive for all we do. Learner, do you remember what Jesus said about it?"

"Yes. He affirmed the ancient command from **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'"

"Loving God is impossible unless we believe that He is One," Mr. Wise states.

"Believers in the New Testament gathered together to obey Jesus in love. Acts 2 shows that after they repented and were baptized, they applied the apostles' teaching to their lives. They practiced loving fellowship, gave generously, celebrated the Lord's Supper and prayed powerfully. The first church started from this united, loving obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. True love born of God results in joyful obedience; it is the essence of our faith."

Practical Work

- Pray that your congregation will be rooted and established in love.
- Help your congregation to memorize Jesus' command to love, in Luke 10:27.
- Arrange for your congregation to serve people who have physical or spiritual needs.
- Plan activities as a body that will build loving unity with each other and with other congregations.

II-5 — Command of Christ #5

Pray

A few days later, Mr. Wise is talking to a truck driver at the market place about Christ when Caregiver rushes up and whispers, "The police plan to arrest you! I overheard two of them say so. The authorities do not like the way you speak so publicly about Jesus Christ! Come!"

They walk quickly to Learner's shop. After they pray with Learner, Mr. Wise states, "I do not know how much longer I will be able to visit you. Before I quit, I want to make sure that prayer is a regular part of your life, and not just for when danger threatens. Jesus tells us to pray in John 16:24, so that our joy may be full. Let me tell you about **Jesus' Most Crucial Prayer** when He was facing death."

Exercise

Please read **Matthew 26:36-46** now to find:

- Where did Jesus pray?
- To whom did Jesus pray?
- What posture did Jesus take in this instance, which showed the great agony of his prayer?
- What was Jesus' greatest desire in His prayer, which led him to yield and give up his first request?

Mr. Wise comments to Learner and Caregiver in the woodworking shop, "Jesus persisted in pleading with His Father until He was ready to face death. He did not want to die on the cross, but He desired even more to obey God His Father. He trusted that the Father's answer, even if it was "no," was the best answer. We, too, should learn to keep praying fervently, trusting God instead of demanding our own desire."

"I prayed that you would not have to leave us," Caregiver says.

"God may want me to. Like Jesus, let us pray to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, to show us His will, whatever it is. Do you remember what I taught you about prayer last week?"

"Yes," Learner replies. "We pray in the name of Jesus who is our only way to God. His death on the cross makes it possible for us to go directly into the presence of the Father to ask boldly for what we need, as Hebrews 4:16 reveals. Our sinfulness no longer blocks our prayers to God. Jesus is our only mediator."

Caregiver adds, "Scripture also tells us not to pray to the dead, in Deuteronomy 18:11. I did that before I knew Christ. I thought that the spirit of one of my ancestors put into my mind that I should not pay Learner for the chairs he made last year. Jesus has freed me and my family from our fear of those spirits! We know now that He has more power than any demon spirit."

Mr. Wise replies, "We must speak all our prayers only to God. And we pray in the name of Jesus, to whom God the Father has given all power in heaven and earth, as Matthew 28:18 reveals."

Caregiver asks Mr. Wise, "Is there one way to pray that is more powerful than other ways? If I repeat the same prayer many times or say it in a loud chant, will God be more willing answer me? Mr. Foolish told me that God hears our prayers only if we pray the way his cousin's church does."

"We are free to pray in different ways that we see in the Scriptures. God does not care whether we stand, sit, kneel or lie down, shout, pray silently, alone or with others. God wants us to pray from the heart without confusion. He cautioned against praying with fancy words or long repetitions to impress people, in Matthew 6. Before He yielded Himself to be arrested, Jesus prostrated himself on the ground to show His great need and His submission to the Father. Others in the Bible sat, stood, knelt, or raised their hands. People prayed in different ways. They talked, sang, chanted, prayed together as a group, and prayed silently. Our prayer is effective, not because of the position of our bodies, but because we are honest before God and pour out our hearts to Him, believing firmly that He hears."

Learner adds, "Sometimes Jesus went away to be alone to pray to His Father. We also pray alone every day to strengthen our relationship with our Father in heaven. Jesus also prayed publicly, so we, too, can pray out loud with our brothers and sisters in Christ."

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Mr. Wise says, "Let me tell you the story in which **Jesus Teaches us How to Pray**. He gives us several reasons to pray, that are more important than our posture."

Exercise

Please read this prayer, that some call '*The Lord's Prayer*,' in **Matthew 6:1-13**. Find the words that express these reasons for praying daily:

- To praise God
- To extend the kingdom of God
- To ask for what we need
- To ask for forgiveness
- To ask for protection from the evil one

Mr. Foolish has been listening at the door of the woodworking shop and enters. "I have been asking God for a larger house and I have not gotten it. God answers prayers only when He has a whim to do so. He does what He does because He is God, and we have nothing to do with it."

"God does answer us," Mr. Wise explains. "But answers to our prayers depend on our obedience, as 1 John 3:21, 22 explains. Four sins hinder our prayers: failure to forgive, selfishness, lack of faith, and lack of love for other people. We must confess these sins. If we do, God is faithful and just to forgive us and change our hearts, as 1 John 1:8-10 promises."

That evening Learner gathers the believers at his house to ask God to protect Mr. Wise from the police. Like the New Testament church in Acts 4:29-31, they pray fervently. They ask God to let them take the good news about Jesus to the people.

Practical Work

- Help your flock to memorize the *Lord's Prayer* in Matthew 6:9-13.
- Help fathers to instruct each member of their families to pray daily, privately and as a family. The best time normally to pray privately is early in the morning.
- Ask each family to set apart a definite time for daily family prayers.
- Inform the congregation when God answers prayers, to encourage others.
- Show your people how to pray sincerely from the heart without trying to impress people with big words or mindless repetitions.

II-6 — Command of Christ #6 Break Bread

One morning Learner goes to Mr. Wise' cousin's house early, fearing that the police may have arrested Mr. Wise. He is still there. "Please come to my house," Learner begs. "If they come for you, your cousin can warn us and we will hide you. Come now. The believers are waiting for you to lead us as we celebrate the Lord's Supper."

Mr. Wise replies, "I will come, but you must lead the services from now on. I showed you how."

Learner leads a discussion at his house, for which Mr. Wise helped him prepare. The group talks about our Lord's command to break bread and participate mystically in His body. Learner points to the table with the cup and the bread. "Mr. Wise showed us how to celebrate the Lord's Supper just as he learned it in Scripture. Let us talk about **Why We Celebrate the Lord's Supper.**"

Exercise

- Please find in **Matthew 26:26-27** what Jesus said that the bread and the cup are.
- Find in **Luke 22:1-22** the reason Jesus gave for us to celebrate the Lord's Supper.
- Find in **1 Corinthians 11:23-34**:
- Why we should not always combine the Lord's Supper with a full meal.
- Who should participate in the Lord's Supper.

Learner continues to explain to his flock, in his house, "Jesus tells us that the bread is His body and the cup is the new agreement God made in Jesus' blood. In this celebration we know the Lord is very close to us. The new agreement between God and us lets us come near to Him through Jesus. Through Jesus, we have new, holy and eternal life by the power of His Holy Spirit. You see this in Acts 2:38 and Hebrews 9:15. By taking the Lord's Supper, we strengthen our faith in God's grace."

Caregiver asks, "Why do you call it the new agreement?"

Learner hesitates so Mr. Wise answers. "Before Jesus died and rose from the dead, God accepted the blood of animal sacrifices to cover men's sins. That was the old agreement, or covenant, made with the ancient nation of Israel, when Moses led them. The new agreement or covenant is based on Jesus' blood. Instead of laws that brought death if you broke them, God now gives us His Holy Spirit to regenerate our hearts and guide us. We are no longer under the Old Testament law. Romans chapters 1 – 8 explain this."

Learner says, "We celebrate the Lord's Supper to remember Jesus and to show our faith in His sacrificial death until He comes back. We do not have to understand the mystery that is happening."

"That is right," Mr. Wise affirms. "We celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly to receive blessing from the Lord for our obedience. A congregation that forgets the Lord's Supper does not glorify Christ. The Lord's Supper shows our unity with each other as a body and with Christ as our Head. Now, Learner will serve it to us."

Mr. Wise asks Learner, "Do you recall in what the Lord's Supper enables us to participate?"

Learner thinks a moment, then recalls, "1 Corinthians 10:16-17 tells us that partaking of the bread and cup is a participation in the body and blood of our Lord. We do not understand this very well. So we quote the words of Scripture when we observe the Lord's Supper, and trust Him to work in our hearts. His supernatural work is in us, not in lifeless pieces of bread. We say just what Jesus says, "Take and eat; this is my body. Drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, as in Matthew 26:26-28."

After the Communion service, Mr. Foolish says loudly, "The Lord's Supper is a holy ceremony. My cousin told me that you need a pastor with official papers and an academic theological education to serve it. And if you do it too often, no one takes it seriously."

Mr. Wise disagrees. "The New Testament church broke bread together the first day of the week in their homes, as Acts 20:7 reveals. Although God does not command us to break bread weekly, the

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apostles gave us the example. It strengthens discipline and worship in new congregations. Any group of believers, no matter how small or how new, should be encouraged to observe the Lord's Supper. The Lord did not say to wait to obey Him until you have a well-educated pastor! Man-made requirements that hinder obedience to Jesus' commands do much damage."

Mr. Foolish complains, "Helper's wife Rachel got in a fight with my wife three weeks ago. So none of us should take the Lord's Supper until that is forgotten. Rachel should not take it for at least six months. My cousin told me this."

"Mr. Foolish, you have forgotten that the Lord's Supper is to celebrate our love for Christ and for each other. We do it because we obey Christ. We cannot deny it to everyone just because one person in the body sinned. Nobody could ever participate! And we do not use it as a whip to punish people who have erred, by excluding them for a long time. Galatians 6:1 teaches that when an erring believer repents, we restore him at once. That is what we did. Yes, our sin weakens our fellowship with God, and, in time, with other believers. But when we confess it and turn from it, God renews our fellowship. As 1 John 1:9 promises, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Helper's wife Rachel apologized to your wife and asked forgiveness. So we welcomed her back to the Lord's table."

Mr. Foolish grumbles, "You may want to forgive her, but I will not!"

Mr. Wise asserts firmly, "A church body does not practice gossip and criticism but helps people find their way back to God. If Rachel has confessed her sin to God, He has forgiven her. The congregation must forgive her also. Let us look at **The Steps We Take With Erring Believers** to restore them, and what to do with those who do not repent."

Exercise

- Find in Matthew 18:15-17 the steps we take to correct believers who need this discipline.

After celebrating Communion in Learner's house, Mr. Wise tells the group, "I must say goodbye now. I must leave you. Maybe God will bring me back some day." Tears fill his eyes. Several weep.

Learner says, "Mr. Wise has loved this congregation and taught us to obey Jesus' commands so we can be a strong congregation when he is gone. He made sure that we have everything we need to grow and start other new congregations. We all thank you, brother."

"Wait," Mr. Wise says, "I forgot something. There is another thing to be done." He reads **The Requirements for an Elder**.

Exercise

Please find now in **Titus 1:1-9** the requirements for becoming a shepherding elder.

Mr. Wise tells the group, "A congregation is not complete without godly leadership. I have observed Learner's life as a Christian for a few months now. He fulfills the Biblical requirements for an elder. His brother Helper also fulfills these requirements. I will lay hands on both of you now, to impart God's anointing for you to take full responsibility for this flock."

Mr. Foolish complains, "It is not correct for you, Mr. Wise, to authorize our leaders this way. You are an outsider. You are not of this community and are not a member of this congregation. My cousin says that bishops from the outside should not name leaders in a church. The church should name its own leaders, like the church in Antioch did."

"Your cousin overlooked something," Mr. Wise answers. "The church in Antioch could name leaders, as it did in Acts 13:1-3, because it was a mature church with many mature workers. But in Crete the congregations were all new and there were no experienced workers. So Paul told Titus, an experienced worker from the outside, to name and prepare the new leaders, in Titus 1:5. So Titus acted as an overseer for the new congregations, just as I have been doing for yours."

To Learner and Helper Mr. Wise says, "You two are shepherding elders for this new congregation. You are young in your faith, but you have the Bible to lead you and the Holy Spirit to give you power.

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Learner, you will continue to train Helper, just as I trained you. Helper, you must train others and start new congregations. I will write you both letters and try to visit you when possible.”

“We hope so,” Learner says.

“Are you both willing to lead your congregation faithfully? Will you teach them to obey the commands of Jesus above all else? Will you humbly serve these people and all the believers to find their jobs to serve the congregation, as 1 Peter 5:1-4 requires?”

Learner and his brother promise solemnly before the group, “We will care for God’s people with His help.”

Mr. Wise asks the group, “Do you promise with God’s help to pray for these leaders and obey them as they teach the Word of God, and cooperate in the ministries that they equip you to do?”

They all answer “Amen!” except Mr. Foolish.

Mr. Wise lays hands on Learner and Helper and prays for their anointing as shepherds by the Holy Spirit, just as Titus did for the new shepherding elders of Crete

The group kneels to pray. Some weep. Learner knows that he now has the power of the Holy Spirit so that he and his brother can shepherd God’s flock.

Practical Work

- Memorize Matthew 26:26-28 so you can speak the very words of Christ when you celebrate the Lord’s Supper.
- Serve the Lord’s Supper regularly to all who come with repentant hearts.
- Pass on the instructions and authority to serve the Lord’s Supper to new congregations.

II-7 — Command of Christ #7 Give

The believers leave Learner's house after saying goodbye to Mr. Wise. He stays to pray with Learner. Someone knocks at the door. A policeman says, "Mr. Wise, I have come to tell you that you must leave our area of jurisdiction at once. I do you a favor to let you leave without arresting you, because you are a good man. Leave now or I will put you in jail."

Sara quickly fills a bag with food, to help Mr. Wise on his way. He says, "You are generous. I am grateful. Learner, you must teach the rest also to obey Jesus' command to give, as Luke 6:38 says. Explain that they have received everything from God that they need to follow Christ and inherit eternal life. Just as God has given to them, they must give generously to others."

"Some of them are very poor and have almost no money."

"They can give other material goods to help those in need and to serve the congregation. Learner, serve others as I have served you. Do not be like the world's leaders who like to lord it over those they control. Do not be greedy with your authority. Share it with new shepherding elders in the new congregations. Look for opportunities to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ."

"I will," Learner assures him.

"I give this to you as a gift." Mr. Wise hands him his Bible. "When you study it, remember what I taught you."

"Please tell us another Bible story before you go. The bus is not due for another hour."

"Let us read about **The Generous Widow**."

Exercise

Please find now in **Luke 21:1-4**:

- How much did the widow give, of all she had?
- How did God measure the size of her gift, as compared with the gifts of the rich?

Mr. Wise explains, "See how the widow gave all that she had to live on, 100%? Although the people of the Old Testament were commanded to give to God 10% of what they received, under the New Testament that law is not what should motivate us. Our love for God motivates us to give what we can, like the widow. Paul taught the Corinthian Christians to set aside something each week for the Lord's work, in 1 Corinthians 16:2. Ten percent of our net earnings is a good start."

Learner agrees.

"God promises to bless those who give out of a cheerful and grateful heart, in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Everything we have comes from God. We give cheerfully because we are grateful to Him. Our generosity shows that we believe that He is the Lord over all that we have. It shows our faith in His promise to take care of us and bless us."

Learner reads the brief story of the widow again. "God saw into the hearts of the widow and the rich people. He saw *why* they were giving. The rich gave out of what they had left over, to fulfill an obligation or to impress people. The widow only gave two small coins, but God knew it was a joyful sacrifice of love. He considered it to be more than the gifts of the rich."

Mr. Wise tells Learner some ways people in the Bible used their offerings:

- to support shepherding elders and missionaries,
- to help widows and orphans, and others in need,
- to help those who are hungry,
- to build or repair the Old Testament temple.

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Mr. Wise says goodbye. Mr. Foolish is waiting outside the door and tells him, "It would be better for you to promise the authorities that you will obey them, so they will let you stay. Why do you ruin your life? Your faith does you little good in this life. Forget about teaching about Jesus and get a good job here!"

Mr. Wise sighs. "Mr. Foolish, you do not understand our blessed hope. What we give now is invested for our reward in heaven. We are waiting for Jesus to return, just like He left, as Acts 1:9-11 says. When He comes, everything will be changed. We will receive a heavenly reward. We will have riches that will last for all eternity. Now I must go. Mr. Foolish, please find in Revelation 21 **What Our Future Is Like in Jesus.**" Mr. Foolish merely says, "Goodbye" and walks away, but Learner reads the Scripture promise with joy shining in his eyes.

Exercise

Please read **Revelation 21:1-9** now to find:

- With whom does God live in the new kingdom?
- What happens to tears and death in heaven?
- What happens to the people who refuse to trust God and leave their lives of sin?

Learner rejoices, "It says we will live with God and be His people. We will be perfect, and He will welcome us like a husband welcomes a beautiful bride! There will be no more crying, suffering, or dying. Everything will be new and beautiful! Mr. Wise, if I do not see you again, I will see you when God makes a new heaven and earth."

Mr. Wise says, "Learner, we are waiting for a wonderful kingdom. So, do not worry about building up riches and influence in this life. These are not the important things, because this life is passing quickly. If God blesses you with money, use it to help the weak and serve God. You saw my example. I was never a burden to you. Remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive, as God says in Acts 20:34, 35."

Learner and his brother Helper watch Mr. Wise leave on the bus, with tears in their eyes. "We might never see him again," Learner mourns.

Practical Work

- Memorize 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, about giving what we can give cheerfully. Then teach it to your people.
- Plan with your flock to keep account of the money that people give as offerings and how it is spent.
- Name a treasurer and another person to count the money.
- Instruct the treasurer never to loan any money or pay for things that are not authorized by the leaders of the congregation.
- A shepherd should never make decisions alone as to how the money is spent, or take it all for himself.
- Plan with the church body for what the offerings will be used. Give help first to people who have very serious and urgent needs.

Section III

DEVELOP THE BASIC MINISTRIES

Chapters in Section III are *ministries* the New Testament requires. Check ✓ those that you and your people are doing to your satisfaction.

- III-1 Ministry 1 Take the Good News to Others and Baptize New Believers
- III-2 Ministry 2 Build Up the Body by Using our Spiritual Gifts to Serve One Another
- III-3 Ministry 3 Worship God and Celebrate the Lord's Supper
- III-4 Ministry 4 Study, Teach and Apply the Word of God
- III-5 Ministry 5 Start New Congregations
- III-6 Ministry 6 Train Shepherds (Shepherding Elders) and Other Leaders
- III-7 Ministry 7 Develop Fellowship Within and Among Congregations
- III-8 Ministry 8 Visit and Counsel People with Personal or Family Problems
- III-9 Ministry 9 Strengthen Marriages, and the Faith of Entire Families
- III-10 Ministry 10 Care for the Sick, Needy, and Mistreated
- III-11 Ministry 11 Become Like Christ and Maintain Discipline in the Church Body
- III-12 Ministry 12 Talk with God
- III-13 Ministry 13 Be Good Stewards of God's Resources
- III-14 Ministry 14 Send Missionaries

How to use Section III

Section III deals with fourteen basic ministries. These are ministries that God requires a congregation to do, in the New Testament. Like Learner in this *Shepherd's Storybook*, decide what problem or opportunity your own congregation faces. Then use the list of ministries above like a menu in a restaurant. Find the ministry that will strengthen your congregation at this time. Develop that ministry in your congregation by teaching the stories suggested under that ministry, and their application. Then help your congregation put the truth of God into action.

In the first section of this book we introduced you to a teacher named Mr. Wise. He is not a real person, but he is like the apostle Paul in the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ gave Paul the job of establishing congregations of believers among the nations. Paul evangelized, started congregations and appointed elders in them. He trained workers like Titus and Timothy to carry on the work after him. Paul never forgot the congregations that he started, and sent them letters to encourage and instruct them. We have some of these letters in the Bible. We also have the letters he wrote to train Titus and Timothy in the Bible.

Following Paul's example, Mr. Wise evangelized a man named Learner along with his friends and family. Mr. Wise helped Learner, a carpenter, to organize the new believers into a congregation. They began to follow the basic commands of Christ and practice the things that God tells us to do as we worship. The police were hostile to Christian leaders and forced Mr. Wise to leave the area. Learner did not see him for a long time.

Learner offered to train his brother, Helper, to be a leader in the congregation. Helper replied, "I cannot read well. But I can play the guitar and sing."

"You will soon learn to read better with these studies. I will pass on to you what I learned from Mr. Wise. He is like the apostle Paul. He continues to train new leaders here, even when he is far away. He

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sends us studies by mail. We will use both the Bible and the studies we receive from Mr. Wise. They contain Bible stories that apply God's truth to the people."

This *Shepherd's Storybook* contains the stories that Mr. Wise uses. This Section III tells how Learner passes on what he learns to his disciples and his congregation. In this way, Learner helps his congregation develop ministries that flow from the seven basic commands of Jesus. He trains Helper and other leaders. Helper is starting a new congregation. Learner's acquaintance, Mr. Foolish, is a salesman who tries to sell things that nobody wants. He joins the congregation to see if he can gain some advantage from it. He is not there for love for Jesus, and he discourages Learner from making disciples who obey Christ.

III-1 — Ministry 1

Take the Good News to Others and Baptize New Believers

Helper sings praises as usual, while he helps Learner build a ladder in the woodworking shop. Mr. Foolish arrives and requests, "Learner, can you build me a light, two-wheel cart to display the things I sell, like you made for the vegetable grower? I cannot pay you now, but I will sell more things and be able to pay easily next month." Learner thinks a moment and replies, "Go bring me two old bicycle wheels and the lumber, and I shall make it. But for free. Mr. Wise cautioned us against borrowing and lending money."

Mr. Foolish stays to listen as Helper talks about his plans. "I want to start another congregation—a daughter church of the one meeting in your home, Learner. Few people where I live will come all the way here to worship."

Learner replies, "I've been praying for this to happen. I shall ask those in our congregation here who live over that way to go with you. I think several will."

"No!" Mr. Foolish complains, "That would weaken our church here!"

Learner corrects him, "Mr. Wise said that the only way to reach our entire area for Christ is to start many congregations, one in every community. The congregation in our area is not to be only our small group. Many groups will work closely together. That way we can reach thousands for Jesus. The Gospel will keep spreading like a great vine over the entire area."

Mr. Foolish leaves and Helper says, "I asked the believers who live near me to help me do evangelism. They said that they do not know how. They are afraid. How can I help them overcome their fear?"

Learner recalls a study that Mr. Wise left him, about dealing with fear. He says, "Mr. Wise left studies for you and the others that we train to be leaders. One of these studies is about how many people in the Bible told others about God with faith and courage. It will help you explain to your helpers how to put their faith into practice the same way. They will face difficulties when they talk about Jesus. The story of **David and the Giant** gives an example of courage."

Exercise

Find in **1 Samuel 17:1-51** how to fight the 'giant' of fear:

- How did David's good work as a shepherd prepare him to fight a very dangerous man?
- Why was David sure he could defeat the giant, even without a soldier's weapons?

Learner explains while he works on the ladder, "While David was taking care of his sheep, he learned to trust God in dangerous situations. He spent time worshiping God and studying His Word. This prepared him to face Goliath without fear. Many people in the Bible were witnesses for God. Now, hear a similar story about **Three Men in a Fire**."

Exercise

Find in Daniel 3:

- Why were they able to face danger without fear?
- Why was the king convinced of God's greatness?

To encourage evangelism, Helper writes a song about being courageous like David. The song touches their hearts and fear is no longer a barrier. The next day Helper visits Learner in his workshop to ask, "Does the Bible give us examples of how to evangelize effectively? We need help."

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Learner stops sawing and suggests, "Study **Cornelius and the First Non-Jewish Congregation**. You will find three guidelines for evangelism."

Learner explains the **First Guideline for Evangelism: Prepare**. "We must prepare. God prepared Peter for effective evangelism."

Exercise

Find in **Acts 10:1-33** what Helper discovers:

- What was Peter doing while the men were traveling to Joppa to find him?
- How did God show Peter that he had to go to others and accept their different ways, instead of waiting for them to become like him?
- Who went with Peter and the soldiers to Cesarea?
- Who, besides Cornelius, did Peter find waiting for him in Cesarea?
- How did Peter show respect for Cornelius before he began his message of evangelism?

Helper gets some sandpaper and helps Learner finish a table. They talk over how Peter prepared for evangelism. Learner explains, "He did it by doing the following things:

- 1) Praying.
- 2) Listening to God's guidance.
 - During Peter's prayer, God showed him that He accepts everyone. Instead of waiting for people to become like us, we take the good news to them first.
- 3) Forming a task group.
 - Peter took others with him instead of going alone. We, too, should go to people's homes in teams of two or more.
- 4) Seeking those who want to hear God's Word rather than going to the public.
 - When he got to Cesarean, Peter found Cornelius' friends and relatives in his home, waiting to hear the gospel.
- 5) Showing respect for a seeker and his family and friends.
 - Peter showed them respect by asking them why they had called him and listening to them before he began to speak. When people respond like Cornelius, we should help them pass on the good news to their friends and family."

Learner explains to Helper the **Second Guideline for Evangelism: Witness for Christ the Way the Apostles Did**, as they work together in the woodworking shop. "We witness for Christ, of what we have experienced, and what He did for all of us. You have learned to read better now. Please look through Acts 10, verses 34-43 to find this."

Exercise

Find in **Peter's Message in Acts 10:34-43**:

- What testimony did Peter give about himself?
- What three important things did Peter say about Jesus?
- What did Jesus command His followers to do in response to His resurrection?

Learner explains, "Like Peter, our message should tell, in simple words, how God has changed us and sent us to tell others about Him. We should describe Jesus' goodness and power, His death, and His resurrection. We should promise forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name.

Learner explains to Helper the **Third Guideline for Evangelism: Assure New Believers by Confirming their Acceptance by God and His People**. "Now find what we do for those who respond, to assure them."

Exercise

Find what happened in **Acts 10:44-48**:

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- Of what great event following Jesus' death did Peter witness, when the Holy Spirit came into the people's hearts?
- What did Peter do immediately to confirm the work of the Holy Spirit?

As they work together in the shop, Learner explains to his brother Helper, "Peter ordered the group to be baptized as soon as he saw that they believed God's message. He knew that they had repented of their sins and been forgiven, because the Holy Spirit had come to them. He did not wait for anything else but confirmed the Spirit's work with baptism. Peter followed Jesus' command to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. He told Cornelius and his friends how to find forgiveness in Jesus. When they responded, he baptized them at once. We should follow Peter's example of simple, immediate obedience to Jesus."

Helper responds, "No wonder we have not been effective! At first we only invited people to come to our meetings, rather than going to the people. We should help everyone, especially new believers, to talk to their family and friends."

Learner recalls, "Mr. Foolish invited one of those preachers to come from his cousin's church to hold evangelistic meetings. He used big words and complicated messages that the people did not understand. He begged the people to give big offerings for him!"

"Let us do evangelism like Peter did," Helper suggests, "I shall ask Caregiver tonight if we can visit his friends with him to talk to them about Jesus. I read in the study booklet that Mr. Wise left that some people will reject us. Jesus says in Matthew 10:14 that if anyone does not listen, we are to go to someone else. I want to take the good news to several other places also, where our relatives live. Will you help me?"

Learner replies. "Yes. Mr. Wise told me to train you and others to be leaders of many congregations and to take Christ to this entire area. I need to visit the people that you are evangelizing, so I can see your work and train you just as Mr. Wise visited me and trained me. Mr. Wise said to be strong with God's power, not our own. Let me **tell you the story of Stephen's Fearless Testimony.**"

Exercise

Find from **Acts 6:54 through 7:60** how Stephen brought glory to God even though his message was rejected.

Learner's wife Sara hears a bell ringing outside the house. Mr. Foolish is pushing his cart, to which he has attached a bell to call people to buy his wares. He tells her, "Look at these beautiful candles. Is Learner here?"

She replies, "He is working."

Mr. Foolish picks up a candle and says, "Look, it has chemicals in the wax that make the flame burn with different colors. It's beautiful. Here, I will light one." He pushes his way into the house and lights the candle. It burns yellow, then red, and then blue, then sputters loudly and fills the room with pungent smoke. Sara waves a towel to fan the foul air out the door.

A neighbor girl, Deborah, shouts, "Fire!" and comes running to help.

When they stop coughing, Deborah says happily, "I feel so peaceful and secure since Learner baptized me. Jesus is with me all the time!"

"What?" Mr. Foolish cries. "How could you be baptized so soon?" To Sara he complains, "She has an illegitimate child and does not even know who the father is! Learner will ruin our church letting such people join it!"

Deborah sobs, "I have left that sinful life!" She starts to leave but Sara takes her hand and leads her to a chair.

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Mr. Foolish yells over his shoulder as he stomps out the door, "You do not know her like I do. You will see. Learner will be sorry that he baptized her." Deborah sticks out her tongue at him and makes an ugly face toward his back as he leaves.

Obeying Christ's Command to Baptize

Sara is prepared to comfort Deborah. She recalls the story of **The Woman Who Almost Got Stoned to Death** that Learner told during family prayer time.

Exercise

Find in **John 8:1-11**:

- Why did the Pharisees bring the woman to Jesus?
- What did the Old Testament law of Moses command people to do to such women?
- How did the Pharisees treat this sinner who deserved death?
- How did Jesus treat her?
- Who has the right, since Jesus came, to condemn sinners?

Sara assures Deborah, "My young friend, how can men condemn you when God has forgiven you? He loves you! Mr. Foolish acted like the Pharisees in this story. They did not care about the woman. They only brought her to Jesus to trap Him. They shamed the woman by making her stand in front of everyone. Jesus never condemned her, although He was perfect and could have thrown stones at her. He saved her from death. He has saved you from death, too.

"You see, before Jesus came, God gave Moses His law which told people how to live. The law said not to worship idols, not to kill, steal, lie or commit adultery. We find the law in the Old Testament. This law showed people that God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. People who broke the law had to die. Jesus was the only person that ever kept the law perfectly. When He died, He ended the law's power to condemn us to death.

"We baptized you because you asked God for forgiveness in Jesus' name, He saved you from death and gave you new life. He gave you the gift of the Holy Spirit. We confirmed your faith and God's promise with baptism. You died with Jesus to the law and to your sin. Then you rose to new life in Jesus. Remember Jesus' complete forgiveness, and do not sin any more."

Learner returns home. Sara explains what Mr. Foolish told Deborah. Learner assures her, "Like many uninformed people, Mr. Foolish, thinks you have to be perfect to be baptized. That is not the meaning of baptism. Nobody would ever be baptized except liars who merely say they are perfect. New believers who receive Jesus as adults are newborn babies in God's sight. They commit many errors during their spiritual infancy. They need our immediate love, care and acceptance by baptism."

Jesus' Baptism

Deborah stops crying. She says, "I fear that I will fall back into sin! I am too weak to serve God." Sara tells her the story of **Jesus' Baptism** in Matthew 3.

Exercise

Find in **Matthew chapter 3**:

- Was Jesus baptized because He was a sinner or because He was on the side of all sinners?

Find in **Matthew chapter 4**:

- What three things did the devil tempt Jesus to do?
- What did the devil promise Jesus if He worshipped him?

Recall **both chapters** (Matthew 3 - 4):

- Was Jesus baptized before or after He called His disciples and began His public ministry?

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Deborah exclaims, "Jesus was not a sinner! He showed everyone that He did not come to accuse sinners like the adulterous woman and like me. I understand now. He was not like Mr. Foolish. Jesus came to be on our side. That is what Jesus' baptism meant. He was baptized and then started His work as God's messenger. Maybe I can also start serving God now that I'm baptized, just like Jesus did!"

"Yes, absolutely!" Sara agrees, "Listen to the story of **The Workers Who Arrived Late**. You will see how God gives us jobs to do as soon as possible."

Exercise

Find in **Matthew 20:1-16**:

- What did the landowner tell each workman to do, regardless of the time of day?
- Why were the first workers jealous of the last workers?

Practical Work

- Use the stories mentioned in this section to encourage your people to take the good news to their family and friends.
- Help your people prepare simple testimonies about what Jesus has done for them, and to tell in a simple way about Jesus' life, death and resurrection.
- Baptize all that come to Jesus for forgiveness of sins as soon as possible, to confirm their repentance. Welcome them into the life of the congregation.
- Require only what the New Testament requires for baptism. It is for bad people who confess their sins and trust in Jesus to forgive them and change them.
- Organize the congregation so that mature Christians help the new Christians tell their friends and family about Jesus.

III-2 — Ministry 2

Build Up the Body Using Spiritual Gifts to Serve One Another

Deborah is talking with Learner and his wife Sara in their house. She laughs with joy and says, "I see what grace means! I receive the same forgiveness and kindness from God, as every other member of God's flock! The Lord Jesus will let me serve Him right away. I want to show Him my gratitude by serving Him with all my heart." She takes Sara's hand, "I can start now! Can I help you with the housework so you will have more time to prepare your Bible stories for the children?"

Learner exclaims, "This is amazing! I did not realize how soon new Christians could serve God. Mr. Wise told me that there are many ways for new believers to serve others in the congregation and the community. The Holy Spirit gives jobs to everyone in the congregation."

Deborah says, "Please explain this. How does the Spirit of God give each person a task?"

Learner hands her a Bible study that Mr. Wise left. She reads, "The Holy Spirit does at least five things in our lives:

First, the Holy Spirit regenerates us, as John 3:1-8 reveals. We are born again of the Spirit. Even though our body is dead in sin, our spirits are alive in Christ.

Second, the Holy Spirit seals us. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:12-13 that the Holy Spirit is like a seal placed on us, guaranteeing God's promise to save us.

Third, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, as 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 reveals. He makes us want to live for God.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit gives each of us spiritual gifts, as Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 reveal. He empowers each of us to do some job for Christ. These gifts are not to serve ourselves, but are to build up the whole congregation. Good leaders help everyone in the congregation to use their gifts to serve the whole congregation.

Fifth, He produces fruit in us, Galatians 5:22-23. Even though God forgives us completely when we come to Him and we want to do what pleases Him, Romans chapter 7 says we still fight a battle inside ourselves. The new person inside of us wants to do what is right, but sometimes, the old person that resides in our earthly flesh pushes us into sin. Until we die, we struggle to follow God. The Holy Spirit gives us power and strengthens His qualities in us. Some people grow very quickly into spiritual maturity but others take many years. As we respond to God in faith, we learn how to be more and more like Jesus. We look forward to the time when we will be raised to glory to a life without sin."

Deborah writes down the Bible passages to study later. Sara adds, "God has given you spiritual gifts to serve others. For example, Learner has the gift to be an administrator like Nehemiah. I am a teacher like Ezra. Helper is a shepherd like the Ephesian elders. He helps shepherd the people in our congregation. Others in the congregation are workers who serve closely together like Aquila and Priscilla. Let me read to you the examples of spiritual gifts in the Bible and of how people used them. We use these examples to encourage everyone to find their job in the congregation." Sara reads the list that Mr. Wise left them, to teach to others.

Exercise

Using the Spiritual Gifts Listed in Romans 12:3-8

Following is the list of spiritual gifts that Sara shows Deborah. If you can, mark the activities for which God has given you the spiritual gifts to make them easy for you to do:

- Serve** like Samuel in 1 Samuel 1:20-28.
- Prophecy** like John the Baptist in John 1:26-34.
- Give** like Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37

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- Teach** like Ezra in Nehemiah 8
- Encourage** (exhort) like Paul did for the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38
- Lead** like Moses in Exodus 18:13-26, or Nehemiah in Nehemiah chapters 2-3
- Show mercy** like David did in 1 Samuel: 24

Additional Gifts from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

- Speak with words of **wisdom** like Solomon in 1 Kings 3:5-28
- Speak with **knowledge** like James who warned of the danger of uncontrolled tongues, in James 3.
- Exercise **faith** like Abraham did when he saw the stars and believed God's promise, in Genesis 15:1-6, or the leper and the centurion in Matthew 8:1-13
- Heal** like Jesus in Mark 2:1-12, or Peter in Acts 3:1-16
- Do **miracles** like Elijah in 1 Kings 18:16-46
- Discern spirits** like Paul did in Acts 13:6-12
- Speak in **tongues** like Cornelius' household did in Acts 10:44-48
- Interpret** tongues like the Corinthians were instructed in 1 Corinthians 14:26-28

More Gifts from Ephesians 4:11-16

- Go to neglected fields as an **apostle** like Paul and Barnabas in Acts chapters 13-14
- Announce the Good News as an **evangelist** like Philip in Acts 8:26-40
- Pastor** (shepherd) like the Ephesian elders were instructed in Acts 20:28-34

After going over this list, Deborah helps Sara with her housework. The next morning Sara visits Deborah and hears her explaining to her brother everything that she had learned the night before, recalling the spiritual gifts and persons who modeled their use in the Bible.

Deborah tells Sara, "I read the entire study that you gave me."

They talk about the spiritual gifts that God has given to people in their church. Sara says, "I think my husband Learner has the same spiritual gift as Nehemiah the Builder. This leader organized his people to finish a job that others said was impossible. The Jewish people had abandoned God. He had let them be conquered by their enemies. Their capital city, Jerusalem, was destroyed and they were taken to a foreign country. They later returned home as God had promised, but they did not rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The walls had lain in ruins for a hundred years. Nehemiah heard about this and went to help. He was a true leader."

Deborah asks, "What spiritual gifts do I have?"

Sara replies, "It's a bit soon to tell for sure, but it looks like you might have Samuel's gift of serving others. Samuel willingly took care of God's Temple. Like him, you were eager to help me. And it sounds like you may also have the gift of teaching like Ezra. You taught your brother very well. It will be a joy to see how God develops your abilities to serve."

Later that day Learner returns home with his brother Helper. His wife Sara tells them about the discussion she had with Deborah about spiritual gifts. "I told her you have the gift of leadership like Nehemiah."

Learner replies, "I hope so. Helper, let us review the study that Mr. Wise left us about **Nehemiah** to discover the qualities of a good leader."

Exercise

Study the book of **Nehemiah** to find the following things (This is a long exercise, but worth the effort):

Look in **Nehemiah 1:1-11** to find:

- How did Nehemiah feel about the trouble his people were in?
- What did Nehemiah pray, about his sin and the sin of his people?

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Find in **Nehemiah chapter 2:**

- What did God do in answer to Nehemiah's prayer while Nehemiah was still serving the king?
- What did Nehemiah do in Jerusalem before he talked to anyone about his plan?
- What did Nehemiah do to get the people to start working on the wall?

Find in **Nehemiah chapter 3:**

- How did Nehemiah organize the workers?

Find in **Nehemiah chapter 4:**

- What opposition did the workers face?
- How did Nehemiah organize the people to overcome the opposition?
- What kind of example did Nehemiah show for the people to follow?

Find in **Nehemiah 6:15-17:**

- In how many days did the people build the wall?
- What did the surrounding nations feel when they saw how God blessed His people?

Find in **Nehemiah 8:1-6 and 9:3:**

- What did the leaders read to the people, that brought a great revival and God's blessing?

Sara brings the men coffee and Helper tells his teacher Learner, "I am impressed that the people built the huge wall in only fifty-two days after it had lain in ruins for so very many years. I hope I can be a firm and steadfast leader like Nehemiah. He cared very much about the problems in his congregation and in his community."

"Yes," Learner replies. "When Nehemiah prayed for his congregation and the leaders of his country, he asked for forgiveness for himself and for them. He asked God for wise plans to serve people with love. He spoke honestly to his congregation about the problems he saw and they carefully made plans to deal with them." He asks his wife Sara to join them as he prays, "Lord, I need your help. I want to follow Nehemiah's example and inspire our people to keep on working when they face opposition. We want everyone to use their spiritual gifts to serve others."

Helper says, "I will write a song about Nehemiah, to encourage other leaders to follow his example."

Practical Work

- Use the list of spiritual gifts and Biblical models above to help everyone in your congregation, including new Christians and children, to use their gifts to build up the church.
- Lead humbly, like Nehemiah, confessing your own sins to God first and asking Him to give you wise plans as you inspire and organize the congregation to do great things for Him.

III-3 — Ministry 3

Worship God and Celebrate the Lord's Supper

Learner is teaching in his home when Mr. Foolish and others in the congregation fall asleep. He sees two young people eating something during the Lord's Supper. The children look around restlessly. His wife Sara tells him afterwards, "I heard some of them talking when they did not know I was there. They argued about whom they should follow, Mr. Wise, Helper or you. One said to follow Mr. Foolish. An adolescent told another, 'It is boring. Learner always does everything, and it is always the same. It is a ritual that we do without thinking. That is why I brought something to eat!'"

Learner writes to Mr. Wise to explain what is happening. Mr. Wise sends this message back for Learner to read to the congregation, "My dear brothers and sisters. I must say the same thing to you that the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. It sounds like some of you are doing more harm than good when you meet together. There are divisions among you. It is not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together. Some of you eat during the Communion service, in front of others who are hungry. Do you not have homes for eating and drinking? We sin when we celebrate **The Lord's Supper** without taking it seriously. Have you have forgotten that God is present when you worship as a congregation?"

Exercise

Find in **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**:

- What were the words of Jesus when He broke bread on the night He was betrayed?
- Against whom do we sin when we fail to honor the Body of Christ during the Lord's Supper?
- What do we examine before taking Communion so that we do not bring God's judgment on us?

Mr. Wise' letter continues, "Before I left, I taught you how to worship. I taught that God is present when we meet together. We worship God with everything we do."

Learner says, "I recall Mr. Wise' teaching. We worship in our prayer and praise, in teaching God's Word, in the Lord's Supper with confession to God of our sins, in giving, and in our fellowship. We do not do these things for entertainment. God gives us freedom to do these things in different ways. Paul told the Ephesians to make music to the Lord in our hearts with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Songs can be psalms, our own words or songs written by others. They are for giving testimony of God's great works and thanking Him. They are also for praising God's greatness and adoring Him."

Helper adds, "Mr. Wise also taught us how in the Old Testament God's people worshiped Him in special ways during their festivals. The Passover Festival lasted seven days with a special offering on each day and special assemblies on the first and last day. When Solomon built God's Temple, crowds came to Jerusalem to celebrate. They ate together and lived in booths. They stood to listen to the musicians singing and playing trumpets and other musical instruments. King Solomon prayed a special prayer for them, standing and then kneeling. Our prayers are like sweet smelling incense in the presence of God."

Learner again reads from the letter, "Here are some things your leaders can do to make your worship of God beautiful, like incense in His presence:

- Pray in preparation.
- Ask people ahead of time to help you with different parts of the worship.
- Help everyone plan their part carefully beforehand.
- Arrange for everyone, including children, to participate in different ways.
- Hold festivals to celebrate special events, such as the Birth of Christ, His Death and Resurrection."

They discuss these things for a few minutes, then Learner continues to read the letter: "As the writer of Hebrews says, 'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, He has spoken through His Son, Jesus, reflects God's own glory, and everything about Him represents God exactly. After He died to clean us from sin, He sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven. When we worship God, we honor Jesus by praying in His name, teaching His words and

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proclaiming His death in the Lord's Supper. We take care of the needs of His body, the congregation, through giving and fellowship."

Several say, "Amen!" and Learner finishes the letter:

"When you gather to worship God together and take the Lord's Supper, you partake of the body and blood of Christ. You proclaim His death. You enter into the very presence of God. If you do not realize this, you dishonor the body and blood of Christ. The Old Testament shows us how important the shed blood of Christ is."

Learner says, "Helper, please tell the story of **The Passover** that we studied together, about how to enter the presence of God."

Exercise

Find in **Exodus 12:21-42** how God freed His people from slavery in Egypt:

- Who died in the middle of the night?
- What saved the Israelites from losing their firstborn sons?
- What happened after the firstborn Egyptians died, to enable the Israelite slaves to go free?
- How were the Israelites to remember for all generations this liberation from slavery?

After the meeting, Learner and his brother Helper study Bible passages that Mr. Wise listed for them, about the Old Testament sanctuary and worship. Learner asks Helper, "Please teach about it next week."

When Helper begins teaching everyone pays close attention. He sings a song that he wrote for the occasion about the blood of the Passover lamb painted on each side of the doors. He explains, "In the Old Testament, the Jews who loved God celebrated Passover every year. They remembered how God used blood and the death of firstborn sons to free them. It was an example to show us how God's Son would liberate us from slavery to sin with His blood. This is explained in **The Earthly Copy of the Heavenly Tabernacle** in the book of Hebrews."

Exercise

Read **Hebrews 9:1-26** to find what Helper teaches:

- What things were in the first, outer room of the sanctuary?
- What things were in the inner, most holy place?
- What did the High Priest do once a year to cover his own sins and the sins of the people?
- How did God's Son secure our salvation forever?

Helper asks the people, "Do you have questions?"

One asks, "What was it like to worship in the Old Testament?"

"Mr. Wise explained this. In ancient times, people took a lamb or a bull when they went to worship. They laid hands on it to confess their sins; the priests slit its throat. It was messy. The blood sacrifice foretold the death of Jesus, whose blood atoned once forever, for all the sins of the world. Learner, can you help me explain this?"

Learner adds, "The Holy Place of the Temple had a lamp stand, a table and holy bread. Behind a curtain in the Most Holy Place there was incense and the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest entered there once a year with blood to cover his sins. When Jesus died, the curtain was ripped open, and Jesus entered God's presence as our High Priest. His blood takes away our sin and saves us once for all time. Now we enter freely into God's presence, into the Most Holy Place, and we offer our prayers like incense to Him. We are in the presence of Christ when we break the holy bread at the Lord's Table. He is present when we drink the cup of the new covenant in His blood. He promised that when two or three are gathered in His name, He is present."

Caregiver says, "I understand now that I have not recognized Christ's body when we served the Lord's Supper. I had forgotten that we enter right into God's presence when we worship together. I think we all need to improve our attitude in worship."

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Learner comments, "Paul also makes it clear in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 – 14 that one leader is not to do everything. As many as want to do so are to take an active part in the worship in some way. From now on, I will share my leadership responsibilities with others. I will help all of you who want to participate more to do so. We will all grow more and the congregation will have many more new leaders who can start new congregations."

Learner turns toward Helper. "I need your help. Please help me in the future to prepare our people better for the Lord's Supper. And I need the help of all the rest of you, to improve different parts of our worship and of our other ministries. We will honor Christ by developing these ministries. Helper, I want you to help us with the music." Learner assigns jobs to other people also, so that from then on he would not be the only one who leads worship.

After the service Learner tells Helper, "I am going to follow these instructions for our congregation. I realize now that I became careless. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, God severely punished the Corinthians who failed to respect the Body of Christ as they celebrated the Lord's Supper. They failed to remember the terrible sacrifice that Jesus made. They failed to see that when we meet together we are the Body of Christ. God takes this mystery very seriously. So must everyone in your congregation. That is why Paul warned us not to make a full meal out of the celebration, because people become more interested in the food than in participating in the body and blood of Christ, as 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 says."

Practical Work

- Ask those with musical ability and spiritual gifts for teaching or giving words of wisdom to participate by leading different parts of the worship.
- Encourage people to express their love for God in new and creative ways. Encourage those with musical talent to write songs of praise to God, using the local music style.
- Use the stories in this section to teach that God is present when we gather to worship Him.
- Plan for everyone to participate in worship in some way, besides singing, including the children.
- Help people who lead the different parts of worship to prepare beforehand.

III-4 — Ministry 4

Study, Teach and Apply the Word of God

Learner visits his brother Helper, who lives a few kilometers from Learner's home, to mentor him and see how his work is going. Caregiver, the schoolteacher, lives near helper and attends the mentoring session. At first he attended Learner's congregation but now meets with Helper's new group, closer to where he lives.

After prayer, Helper explains his plans. "Learner, you have encouraged me to start a new congregation here with those that follow Christ. I need your help. I am confused about the different rules that people tell me the new congregation must follow."

Caregiver adds, "I am also confused. My brother-in-law Mr. Foolish wants to come and lead this new congregation. He insists that Helper is too young and must spend several years at a Bible school before he can be a pastor. He says the apostle Paul studied the Bible in a school in Jerusalem. He has said this to almost everyone in our group. Others are also saying that we must do things in another way. Some want to use candles and other things in our worship. Everyone wants to tell our new congregation what to do!"

Learner assures them, "Simply obey Jesus above all else. That is the foundation for your new congregation. If you do not establish its authority on the commands of Christ, Satan will rush in and fill the vacuum, and you will always have the same confusion. Remember the three levels of authority:

- First do what Christ and His apostles commanded, before all else.
- Second, you have the freedom to do the other things that the apostles practiced but did not command, but you do not demand that all congregations do them because only God can make rules for the whole church on earth.
- Third, examine any human traditions to make sure that they edify your new congregation and do not hinder obedience."

Caregiver asks, "Which of the three levels of authority applies to attending a Bible school?"

Learner bounces the question back, "What do you think?"

Caregiver pauses for a moment, then reasons, "Christ never commanded us to graduate from an academic institution. The apostles did not send the shepherds they named away for training to a school separate from the church bodies. So it belongs to the third level of authority, human tradition, the lowest level."

"Correct. This does not mean that institutional training is wrong, but simply that we must not demand it in place of the methods that the Bible reveals for us to use. You are free to choose the method that works best for you here. An academic institution apart from the churches is beneficial under certain conditions, where churches are strong and there are enough well educated pastors. But it does not sustain a new movement like ours."

Caregiver asks, "To which of the three levels of authority do we assign apprenticing new leaders like Paul did?"

Learner answers, "Our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles mentored their apprentices, but did not command it. So mentoring new leaders is level two, an optional apostolic practice. I prefer to train Helper the same way that Mr. Wise has been training me. We try to do it the same way that Jesus and Paul trained new leaders. Mr. Wise said that he imitates the apostle Paul, who trained many new shepherds. One of these new shepherds that Paul took with him to apprentice was young but a spiritually mature man named Timothy. Later, while Paul was traveling to start congregations in other lands—or sitting in a jail in Rome—he wrote letters to Timothy to encourage him and explain how to be a good shepherd. He told him to train others who would train still others, for a reproductive chain effect."

"I see what you mean by the reproductive chain," Caregiver says. "Mr. Wise trained Learner and others. Learner trains you, Helper. You train other leaders as we work in the new congregations. I want

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you to show me how to use the Bible like Mr. Wise does. Then we will all follow the Apostle Paul's example."

"Good," Learner says, "Helper, can you help Caregiver to find **What Paul Wrote to Timothy About Using the Bible?**"

Exercise

Find in **2 Timothy 3:10** through **4:5** what Helper helps Caregiver to discover:

- What tasks did Paul give the young shepherd, Timothy?
- How do we know we can trust the Bible as God's Word?
- In what ways should we use the Bible to help others?
- In what ways did Paul teach Timothy by his actions as well as by his words?
- What did God give us, so we can teach others with certainty about salvation by faith in Jesus?

While Learner listens, Helper explains to Caregiver, "Paul told Timothy to use the Scriptures for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in right living. Learner taught me that the Scriptures are breathed by God. They carry God's authority and teach His truth. When we obey the Scriptures in everything they teach us, we are obeying God. The Holy Spirit guides us when we study and obey the Bible. He helps us to be obedient disciples of Christ."

Helper glances at Learner, who says, "You are teaching it correctly, just like Mr. Wise taught me and I taught you. Continue please."

"Paul taught Timothy not just with God's Word, but also by his example. The two men had a strong relationship. Timothy saw Paul's way of life, his faith and his suffering. Paul told Timothy to imitate his words and his actions. Jesus also taught us with His words and His actions. He never failed to fulfill every detail of God's Word in His life. Both Jesus and Paul were persecuted for their obedience to God's Word. Satan opposed Jesus in every way possible."

Caregiver asks, "How did Satan oppose Christ?"

Learner asks Helper to explain it. Helper says, "Let us review **Jesus' First Major Temptation by Satan.**"

Exercise

Find in **Matthew 4:1-11**:

- In what three ways did Satan tempt Jesus?
- What did Jesus quote, to answer Satan after each temptation?
- Who came to take care of Jesus after His temptation?

Helper explains, "Satan wanted Jesus to stop trusting in God and in God's Word. Jesus answered the temptations of Satan with Scripture each time. Jesus obeyed God's Word rather than follow Satan's words. Facing temptation is hard. Jesus overcame His difficult temptation by faithfully following God's Word. Then angels came and took care of Him."

How to Study the Scriptures

Caregiver says to Helper, "You call the Bible the Word of God. What do you mean by that? I thought it was written by men."

Helper explains what Learner has taught him. "The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These books include ancient laws, history, poetry, prophecy, the life of Jesus, and letters to new congregations. The theme of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ. John 3:16 summarizes its message: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'"

"I thought the Bible was two books, the Old and the New Testaments."

"The Bible is divided into two parts," Helper explains what he learned the week before from Learner. "The Old Testament deals with God's agreement with ancient Israel to bless them if they obeyed His law

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and punish them if they disobeyed. When Jesus died, He completely fulfilled the old law and freed us from its law of death. Now we do not follow the rules of the Old Testament law, such as stoning you to death if you work on the seventh day, Saturday. The New Testament deals with God's new agreement with men, to save us through faith in Jesus Christ. It teaches us to serve Jesus in love. We read the Old Testament carefully because it gives powerful examples of the character of God and the work of Christ, in a way that is easy to understand.

"The New Testament tells us how to be disciples of Jesus Christ. It includes:

The Gospels describe the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They correspond to the books of the law, the first five books in the Old Testament,

The Acts of the Apostles tells us how the apostles started congregations in the power of the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascended into heaven. It corresponds to the historical books of the Old Testament that relate the adventures of the judges and kings of Israel,

The Letters that the apostles and their coworkers wrote to help new congregations and believers correspond to the poetic writings of the Old Testament such as the books of Proverbs and of Psalms.

The book of Revelation by the apostle John foretells the future and corresponds to the books of the later prophets in the Old Testament such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jonah."

Caregiver asks, "What is the best way to study the Bible?" Helper looks at Learner but Learner again asks him to reply, "He is your student, Helper. You have learned these things. You should teach them."

Helper explains to Caregiver, "When you study the Bible, begin with prayer. Then read through a book of the Bible, or study a topic such as prayer or faith. You may take as many days as you need to finish. Do not focus only on one verse, because you may misunderstand it. Instead, read it along with the entire paragraphs. Read what comes before and what comes after a verse you are studying so you can understand its context. If you do not understand the paragraph, read the chapter. If you do not understand the chapter, read the book."

"What do you mean by context?"

"The context is the historical setting, what has been going on," Helper says, "What has just been spoken or written, and what follows. We search the context to know who spoke or wrote, to whom and why. Is it in a chapter describing figurative visions, or is it in a historical setting that we interpret literally? Is Satan speaking, or some bad person? If so, we do not believe or do what they say."

"What if we study the context as you say but we still do not understand something?"

"Do not teach to others anything that you do not understand," Helper replies. "Begin teaching from the New Testament. Later, read the entire Bible. Studying the Bible does no good if we do not obey what it teaches. Ask God to help you practice what you learn."

"When you study a Bible passage, you will understand it better if you look for:

Who wrote the book, and for whom was it written?

Where and when did the events in the passage happen?

Who is speaking in the passage?

What does the passage prepare us to do?"

How to Teach the Scriptures and Make Disciples of Christ

Helper exclaims, "I'm going to write a song about how wonderfully enriching it is to study the Word of God. What should the song emphasize?"

Caregiver suggests, "You might mention that when we use the Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit, He changes our lives."

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Learner adds, "We could sing about **Good King Josiah and the Renewal**. He read and obeyed God's Word and brought spiritual renewal to his people."

Exercise

Find in **2 Chronicles 34:1-13**:

- What attitude King Josiah had toward God.
- What things Josiah did to seek God.

Find in **2 Chronicles 14-21**:

- Why was King Josiah alarmed, and why he repented in his heart for what he and his people had done.

Find in **2 Chronicles 34:22-33**:

- What resulted from King Josiah's repentance and obedient response to the Word of God.

Caregiver says to Learner, as they talk in Helper's house, "I want to preach the word of God like you do. Can you explain how to prepare a good message?"

Learner explains to Caregiver and Helper what Mr. Wise has taught him, "When you prepare to preach, do these basic steps: Plan, Study, Explain and Apply.

- **Plan your message:** Pray for God's guidance. Think about what specific truth your congregation needs to hear. Is there a ministry that needs strengthening? What part of the Bible will strengthen your congregation's love and service to Christ?
- **Study the Scripture:** Find where the Bible teaches what your people need. Find a Bible book or shorter passage, or a theme. A theme is a subject, a topic that deals with the truth you plan to teach. Study the Bible the way we discussed. You might study one topic or book for several weeks before you teach it. Write the important points that you find. Find a practical way to apply the teaching to your lives.
- **Explain the Word of God:** Introduce your message with a question or an example that presents the purpose clearly. Explain the important points that you wrote down when you studied the passage. Give illustrations or stories from Scripture or your own life to help people apply the teaching to their lives.
- **Apply God's Word:** Tell people how this passage applies directly to their lives. To conclude, encourage them to practice immediately what they have just heard."

Helper asks Learner, "Will you preach to our new group tonight? They need to learn about the authority of Scripture, just as you taught it today to Caregiver and me."

Learner says, "No, thank you. But I will help you to prepare a message for your congregation about the authority of Scripture. Let us look at 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 again. You can include the stories about Jesus' temptation and King Josiah's reform as illustrations."

That evening Helper is nervous when he teaches the message to his people. He reminds them of the three levels of authority for what we do. "The first level is the New Testament commands. The second level is New Testament practices that were not commanded. The Third level is human customs." He explains the three levels well.

After finishing, Helper remarks, "Some of you wanted me to go away to a Bible school for a few years. I see now that this is neither a command of Christ #nor an apostolic practice. It is a common tradition for training pastors. I plan to continue learning the Word of God from Learner because he is helping me apply the Word of God effectively to you, my people. Each two weeks Learner meets with me and shows me how to apply more and more of the Scriptures to the life of this new congregation."

Caregiver responds, "Learner, we are grateful that you are helping us to follow God's Word, by mentoring Helper."

Practical Work

- Use the stories in this section to teach your congregation the authority of Scripture.

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- Help your congregation memorize the books of the Bible and the kind of writing each book contains, such as poetry, history, letters or prophecy.
- Help your congregation distinguish between the three levels of authority for its activities.
- Prepare your messages by following the four basic steps: Plan, Study, Explain and Apply.
- Help others in your congregation also to prepare messages that strengthen the love and service for Jesus Christ.

III-5 — Ministry 5

Start New Congregations

After a worship service at Learner's house, Mr. Foolish, with two women standing with him, tells Learner, "We must talk with you. We have decided that your student, Helper, should not start another church. Several people have left our church to attend it. It weakens our church. You must tell the people in Helper's group to come back here. They are making a division. Helper should be working with you here, to serve us."

"I understand your concern," Learner replies, "but my brother, Helper, is doing what Mr. Wise and I asked him to do. He is visiting the many relatives of his wife Rachel, who live in that area. They are responding to the gospel. I do not want them to come here. That would limit the growth of the kingdom of God. Let Christ's kingdom expand by multiplying congregations throughout our entire nation."

"I do not agree," one of the women says, "but if you do start a new congregation you must take over its leadership. Helper is too new as a believer to lead it."

Learner says patiently, "Helper's new group will soon be a strong congregation. It does not belong to me, but to Christ. I do not have time to lead every new congregation that we start. I am training Helper so that he can lead that congregation and train other shepherds. The Holy Spirit will guide Helper just as he has guided us." He asks, "Do you want to hear **How Paul Started Congregations?**" One of the women says yes and a few men gather to listen and Learner invites them to sit down again.

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapters 13 and 14:**

- How the Antioch believers chose Paul and Barnabas and set them apart to start new congregations.
- How the task group presented the gospel in Pisidia, in Antioch and in Lystra?
- What they did when the Jews expelled them from some towns.
- What Paul and Barnabas did on their way back through the regions where people had come to faith through their message?
- What they did when they returned to their own congregation in Antioch?

Learner explains to the little group that gathered to hear what he was saying to Mr. Foolish. "While the congregation worshiped and fasted, they realized that God had set apart Paul and Barnabas for a special job. The leaders laid hands on them, prayed for them and sent them off as a team. Wherever they went, they found the receptive people and told them about Jesus. They told how Jesus, the anointed one that God had promised, was killed but rose again and many saw Him. They prayed for the sick and some were healed. In Lystra, they kept the people from worshiping them as gods and told them to leave their idols and turn to the one true God.

"The Gentiles responded and many believed, but many Jews rejected the message. When they were expelled, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet and went to another place. On their way back through these same towns, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to lead each congregation and committed them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. Then they returned home to report to the congregation that had sent them out. This is what our congregation is doing, also, starting with Helper and his new flock." Mr. Foolish snorts like an angry horse and leads the two women away.

Starting New Congregations

Learner goes again to visit Helper to mentor and encourage him. He tells him, "Helper, Rachel's relatives responded to the good news quickly, like many gentiles in the book of Acts. Have you asked them all to repent, believe in Jesus and be baptized in His name?"

"Yes. What do I do next?"

"Show them how to worship God with the basic elements of worship that you learned from us in the mother congregation. Have Caregiver help you shepherd them. Do not forget the basic things. Teach them

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to pray, learn the Word of God, confess their sins and receive assurance of forgiveness, celebrate the Lord's Supper, give and have fellowship. Let everyone participate in some way. Teach them to obey the seven basic commands of Jesus above all else. Do you remember them?"

"I sing them," Helper answers. "I shall never forget." He sings the song, which lists them, repent and believe, be baptized, love, serve the Lord's Supper, pray, give, and make disciples. "God's Holy Spirit helps us do all of these."

"Good," Learner says. "When the group is meeting regularly, choose other good leaders and lay hands on them with prayer. You might fast, too, as the apostles did, although they did not command it. It is good to have more than one leader, just as Paul did in the new congregations he started. These leaders can be provisional. That is, you name them temporarily, to see how well they do. It takes time to see whom God has gifted for this responsibility. Help the leaders put the seven basic commands of Christ into practice right away. Pass on to them what you learn from me. I will help you when you need it."

Learner visits Helper two weeks later. Helper reports, "I put into practice what you taught me. I visited more of Rachel's relatives. Then I took them to visit their friends. Many received Christ. Everyone in my new congregation is putting into practice what you taught me to teach to them."

A few weeks later Learner visits Helper again. Helper reports, "We started another new congregation. It meets in my father-in-law's house. I laid hands on Rachel's two uncles to commission them as provisional shepherding elders."

"I rejoice to see the Holy Spirit at work here! We now have a granddaughter congregation. I have been studying the book of Acts. Let me tell you about **How the First Church Started**, so that you can teach the same things to Rachel's two uncles as you continue to train them.

Exercise

Find in **Acts 1**:

- Where did Jesus tell His disciples to take the good news, before He ascended into heaven?
- Where did their power come from?

Find in **Acts 2**:

- What happened when the Holy Spirit came on the disciples?
- What did Peter tell the crowd about Jesus?
- What things did the repentant people do that resulted in the birth of the first congregation?

Learner explains to Helper, in Helper's house, "Jesus commanded His disciples to take the good news to everyone, starting with those closest to us. He promised power from heaven, the Holy Spirit. He came on the Day of Pentecost and filled the disciples. Some call this the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit filled them with power. He does not do this simply to give us a feeling or personal experience. He does it to enable us to serve God and tell about Christ with power. The apostles told the good news to crowds of people in their own languages, which the Apostles had never learned. Peter proclaimed that Jesus proved with many miracles that He was the chosen one of God. After Jesus died to save us from our sins and was buried, He rose back to life."

"I remember," Helper says, "Three thousand people heard Peter and repented of their sins. The apostles baptized them and brought them into the church that same day. The new believers gathered daily to worship in homes and in the Jewish temple court. Immediately they began to practice all seven of Jesus' basic commands, and the first church started in Jerusalem. They loved each other very much."

Obeying Christ's Command to Love and Give to One Another in Practical Ways

God blesses Helper's congregation and it grows in the normal way as people tell their friends and relatives about Jesus. Helper comes to Learner's woodworking shop to tell him, "My congregation has grown too large for people to enjoy the fellowship and serve one another like they did at first. They just come and listen passively. They no longer all know each other, and they do not fit in my house. Our love for each other is growing cold because the group has grown big. People do not know each other. They do not all talk with each other. It's no longer a big, loving family. They no longer evangelize as they did when the group was small. How can we keep our witness for Jesus and our fellowship strong?"

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Learner replies, "This is a common problem. The congregation has two main jobs, to bring people to Christ and to build them up as obedient disciples of Christ. You need to organize your congregation into smaller groups to do these jobs well. Here is a list of suggestions for **How to Form Small Groups** for the new small group leaders, who will meet with a few families in their homes." He writes:

Each small group or 'cell' is a New Testament congregation; it does everything a congregation should do, even though it is part of a larger congregational body. This is the way the apostles organized the congregations in the book of Acts. City churches had large numbers of people but they were made up of many congregations that met in small groups in homes, to pray, study the Word and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Avoid meeting in the leader's home if possible. People may think the group belongs to him, and we win more people to Christ by going to others' homes.

The leader should not take care of the offering money from the group. Name someone else. Let the leader be free to shepherd the group.

Do not simply preach to the small group but instead, study the Bible together with them. Ask questions about the passage you study. Let everyone talk about it. Encourage everyone to participate in worship and the teaching, according to their gifts.

Include entire families in the activities.

Do not eat a complete meal each time you meet. This will be a burden for the hostess, and can distract from the Lord's Supper, as Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 11.

Do not allow strangers to teach the group. You and the other leaders must examine their lives and teaching first.

Look for people to train as new leaders to help you with the group. Pass on everything you have learned to them. Encourage them to start their own groups as soon as possible. This keeps the movement for Christ growing.

Two months later in Learner's woodworking shop, Helper reports what they have been doing. "The other new elders and I are following your counsel. We arranged for smaller groups to meet in homes all around the area. Some groups visit homes of unbelievers. Others focus on prayer or on sending workers to new places farther away. Most of them care for the needy in the community. They all look for ways to use their spiritual gifts to build up the congregation and the new cell groups. They all reach out to their own circle of friends with the gospel. I meet regularly with all the new small group shepherding elders, to pray, listen to their reports, deal with the problems and encourage them."

"Wonderful!"

"One group is visiting relatives that live quite far away. The elders and I plan to organize these groups as new congregations. They all come together once a month for united worship and celebration. Next time please come."

Learner cautions, "You must be careful if they all meet together in a large group. That is why the authorities forced Mr. Wise to leave here. Persecution often follows the growth of Christ's church."

Helper replies, "God will send some of them as witnesses for Christ to distant places, just as He did for Mr. Wise. This will take more time, money and effort, but I want our congregation to participate in every essential part of God's work that you have taught me."

"Very good!" Learner agrees. "God wants every people group and culture on earth to hear the good news about Jesus Christ. He rejoices in God's grace that reaches to the ends of the earth."

Practical Work

- Ask God to help your congregation recognize those who can start new congregations and set them apart with prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands.
- Recognize any group of new baptized believers that is gathering to worship and obey Jesus as a new congregation and appoint local leaders for it.

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- If the new leaders are quite new in the faith, appoint them only as provisional shepherding elders, until they are proven.
- Mentor these new leaders behind the scenes. They may be provisional leaders for a few months or a year or so, until it is clear whom God has gifted for such responsibility.
- Teach the new leaders to obey all the commands of Christ first and above all else. Show them how to baptize, celebrate the Lord's Supper and practice the basic elements of worship.
- Have the new leaders serve this way only if they are meeting with a more experienced leader who oversees their work and mentors them.
- If your congregation is too large to listen to everyone when they meet, and to be a loving family in which everyone serves the others, form small groups. Keep the groups small enough so that everyone can participate and serve one another in practical ways.

III-6 — Ministry 6

Train Shepherding Elders and Other Leaders

Helper comes to talk to Learner one day at his house but Learner says, "I am too busy to meet with you today. I'm sorry." Helper is surprised and asks what has happened, but Learner simply says he cannot talk now.

Helper asks Sara what the trouble is. She says, "I do not know. He is discouraged about something. He would not talk about it."

Helper leaves, feeling sad. He writes a message to Mr. Wise, "I am worried about Learner. He seems to have lost his zeal for the work. Something is wrong."

A few days later Mr. Wise arrives, for his first visit in a long time. He finds Helper and they go to talk with Learner. They find Learner at his house but he does not want to talk. They start to leave but Sara begs them to stay. "Mr. Wise," she says, "Oh, I'm so glad you came! I think I know what is wrong. The congregation has grown so large now that Learner is too busy and has worn himself out. He gives no time to his family. Some of the congregations he serves now help him economically, so that he does not need to work in his shop, but he is still overwhelmed by too many responsibilities. He gets angry with everyone for no reason, even the new believers."

Mr. Wise and Helper ask Learner to pray. He does not want to pray with them. They sit in silence for a long time. Finally Learner speaks softly. "I am so tired! I have too much to do. You must take over the leadership here again, Mr. Wise. The police have not been pestering us. It will be safe."

Mr. Wise disagrees. "You have the same problem that Moses had. He did too much himself. He failed to delegate pastoral responsibilities to others. You have done a good job delegating to Helper and the new congregations, but you have failed with your own congregation. I cannot return here to help you shepherd your people. If I try to shepherd every congregation I help start, I will hinder the work of the Holy Spirit! I will wear myself out and not help the people that need it."

Learner sits listening in silence. Mr. Wise continues, "Jesus commanded us to make disciples and teach them to obey everything He commanded. He passed on to His disciples everything they needed to do the ministry and start new congregations. Sometimes He sent them out by twos, to preach while He was still with them. He said they would do greater works than He did after He was gone. They obeyed Him and passed on to new leaders everything they had received from Him. God blessed their loving obedience."

"But I am not as strong as they were."

"God gives you the strength you need. Now you must do what Jesus did. Pass on to others in your own congregation everything they need to do the ministry. I laid hands on you and passed on leadership responsibilities to you. The Spirit of power lives in you as He lives in me. Now you find yourself too busy. Let us read together **the Advice of Jehthro to Leaders that Are Too Busy.**"

Exercise

Find in **Exodus chapter 18** what Moses' father-in-law Jethro told him to do:

- What did Jethro notice that Moses was doing wrong before he mentored Moses?
- What were the people around Moses doing from morning to night?
- What was Jethro's wise counsel to Moses?
- What kind of men did Jethro tell Moses to appoint as leaders?
- Why could Moses serve the people much better when he shared the leadership?

Sara brings tea and Mr. Wise explains the story to Learner and Helper. "Moses was a great leader. He brought God's people out of slavery in Egypt. The Bible also says he was a very humble man. He served his people with his whole heart, but he could not serve them well alone. Jethro saw people waiting for him to judge their complaints from morning until evening. He was wearing himself out along with the people.

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Bad leaders do not share their leadership with others. Now, Learner, please tell me what you remember about this story.”

Learner thinks a moment. “Jethro told Moses to appoint mature leaders who would share the burden of responsibility. These men were to be honest, spiritually mature and capable. Jethro told Moses to judge only the difficult cases that the other leaders brought him. He was to deal with the leaders of a large number, who dealt with leaders of a smaller number until finally it was in small groups of ten where they effectively applied the shepherding to the people.”

“Yes. When Moses shared the leadership this way, he had time to pray and teach. He served the people much better. Learner, like Moses, you have too much work to do. Since you have a strong relationship with several new elders, let them share much more of the burden of responsibility, shepherding them in more small groups.”

“But the new leaders make mistakes,” Learner complains. “I cannot let them make mistakes.”

“Yes, you can, my brother,” Mr. Wise says, “I let you make many mistakes at first. Jesus let His apostles make mistakes. Your new shepherding elders will make mistakes—perhaps as many as I made when I started! Perhaps as many as Jesus’ apostles made at first.”

Learner laughs. “I gave this advice to Helper but forgot to apply it to myself!”

Mr. Wise replies, “Then let us look together at **What Paul Taught Timothy About Training Leaders to Train Others.**”

Exercise

Find in **2 Timothy 2:1-2**:

- How deep was the relationship between Paul and Timothy?
- What did Paul tell Timothy to do with what he heard in the presence of many witnesses?
- How many links can you find in this training chain? Start with Paul and count the others.

Helper leaves Mr. Wise with Learner, “Do you see the chain of discipleship in 2 Timothy 2:2? Paul loved Timothy like a son. Paul taught him, Titus and others. He made sure every new congregation had its own elders who were able to teach others. Timothy passed on what he heard from Paul to reliable men. These men taught yet others.”

“I see. There are four links in the chain in 2 Timothy 2:2.”

“Discipleship is like a triangle with three sides. One side is love, another is the Word, the third side is the work, or practicing the Word. All three sides of the triangle must be in place or it will collapse. Paul practiced all three of these aspects of discipleship. He loved his disciples, and called Timothy his son. He taught them the Word of God faithfully, passing on everything he had received. He helped them apply the Word of God immediately to their lives and the life of the flock. Now, what do you plan to do, Learner?”

“My relationship with the new elders has grown weak. I must strengthen my relationship with them by listening to them more. Before I teach them, I will ask them what their groups need. I will help them apply their teaching to their own flocks. I will show them how to pass on their teaching to others who can teach others also, as Paul said. I will be more careful always to pray, to listen and to plan together when I meet with the elders, like you did for me.” Learner writes a list of things to do when he meets with the new elders to mentor them:

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us all during mentoring sessions.

Listen to the apprentices as they report on their ministry activities.

Listen to them as they summarize what they are learning from the Bible.

Plan new activities according to the needs and opportunities that they see in their small groups.

Assign new Bible studies according to the needs and opportunities.

Commit our plans to the Lord in prayer.

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Mr. Wise says, "When a leader fails to share his leadership responsibilities with others, he lacks humility. He needs to become a servant leader. Jesus showed us what servant leaders are like. He told us to serve people humbly without trying to be important and powerful. Read with me about **The Servant Leader Who Washed His Students' Feet**.

Exercise

Find in **John 13:1-17**:

- How did the Son of God humbly serve His disciples, as a slave would have done?
- If our Lord and Teacher served His disciples this way, with what attitude should we serve others?
- Jesus did not use only words to train His disciples to be servant leaders. What else did He do?

"I see," Learner tells Mr. Wise, "Jesus was God's Son and deserves all honor and worship, but He served His disciples humbly. He took a towel and washed their dusty feet, as a slave would have done in those days. The Great Teacher taught us by His own example. In love, we lead others with the same humility. When we train leaders, we not only teach them the truth of God, but also show them how to obey God by our example of humility."

The next day Learner calls the leaders of the congregation to meet and explains, "I am going to give you much more responsibility. You will be co-pastors with me."

Learner did not invite Mr. Foolish but he has come anyway and interrupts, "Learner, no one else is qualified to serve as co-pastors. These men cannot lead ours or the new churches you are helping others to start. You must send them away to Bible school for three or four years before they will be qualified."

Mr. Wise has not left yet. He disagrees, "That has been tried and seldom works for situations like we have here. Let us look at what the apostle Paul says about the qualifications of leaders. Learner, do you remember **The Qualifications for a Leader** that we find in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus?"

Exercise

Look through **1 Timothy chapter 3** and **Titus 1:5-9** to find:

- Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete, according to Titus 1:5?
- What did Titus need to do for the new congregations in Crete?
- What should a shepherding elder be like? Describe his character.
- A shepherding elder must be "able to teach." Why does God require this?

Mr. Wise continues to encourage the leaders who are meeting in Learner's house. "Paul made sure that every congregation he started had its own elders. They shepherded the people. They worked together as co-pastors. Paul did not consider his job done with a new congregation until it had its own leaders. Outsiders who do not live in a community should not shepherd the congregation. Sometimes Paul went back later to the congregation to appoint them. He left Titus behind in Crete to appoint elders there. Paul and Titus chose men from the congregation itself. They chose men respected by believers, unbelievers, and their own family. A leader's character was just as important as his ability to teach."

Mr. Foolish complains, "No one here meets the qualifications to be a church leader in my cousin's church."

Mr. Wise replies, "Some churches add qualifications for leaders that are not in the Scriptures, requirements that neither Christ nor His apostles commanded or practiced. These human traditions prevent leaders from appointing elders in new congregations. This hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. Whenever human traditions hinder our obedience to Christ, we must abandon them."

Learner says to the group, "Mr. Wise is giving us the same counsel that Jethro gave to Moses. He listened and observed first to find out what the needs were. He did not give advice until he clearly saw the needs and opportunities for ministry. Mr. Wise always does the same. He listens, then helps us to plan new activities together and gives us Bible passages to study that correspond to the needs. We will do the same. Let us pray to commit these plans to God."

Mr. Wise leaves the next morning. A month later Learner writes to him, "I began at once to train four other men in my flock seriously, to take more responsibility. I share the burden of leadership more fully

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with these new shepherding elders. We do what Jethro told Moses to do. I now feel relaxed and have ample time for my family. The new elders are now training newer leaders and delegate much leadership responsibility as the small groups multiply. They all find that they have more time for their families, and to pray and prepare to teach. Thank you for helping us to delegate and name more leaders. The Holy Spirit is using more people to do greater work.”

Practical Work

- Appoint elders in every new congregation, following the requirements in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9.
- Train reliable men as shepherding elders, and help them soon to train other newer leaders.
- Teach new leaders with your words and your example to be servant leaders and not proud controllers.
- Strengthen the relationship between you and the leaders you train.
- Meet regularly with the leaders that you train. Pray and listen to their reports. Plan new studies and activities together. Go with them as they visit their people and let them do the talking.
- Let those you train do the preaching when you visit them, to show their people that you respect their leadership and have confidence in them. It is your job to prepare them well to do that preaching. You need to listen to them to know how you can help them improve.

III-7 — Ministry 7

Develop Fellowship Within and Among Congregations

The next day, a group of men from Learner's congregation arrive at his house with Mr. Foolish, who announces, "Learner, we went to hear that famous preacher in my cousin's church. I have gone several times now. We are inviting you to go with us to learn how to run a real campaign for God. We are doing everything wrong. We have to do evangelism like he does. He really knows how to preach! I'm going to start a new group here that follows this great man's teaching! Others in the church agree with me. This is God's will for our church."

Obey Christ's Command to Love One Another

Learner feels angry as he looks at the faces of the men. He tells Sara after they leave, "It looks like the idea that Mr. Foolish brought back from his cousin's church is spreading through our congregation. It has already caused painful division."

The next time the congregation meets the people argue with each other. The confusion is spreading. He sends a message to Mr. Wise, who answers with a letter for the people of Learner's congregation. Learner reads it to them:

Brothers and sisters, I ask you to follow Paul's example in the book of 1 Corinthians. I ask you in the name of Jesus to stop arguing with each other. Live in true harmony so there will not be any divisions in the congregation. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. You learned to obey Jesus' commands in childlike faith and love. Do not stop now. Some of you say, 'I follow Mr. Wise.' Others say, 'I follow Learner.' Others want to follow the preacher from the church that Mr. Foolish visits with his cousin. Is Christ divided into pieces? Was I, Mr. Wise, crucified for you? This attitude comes from pride.

When I first came to you, I did not use big words or fancy ideas. I concentrated on Jesus and His death on the cross. My message and preaching was plain, but the Holy Spirit used it. We do not use the wisdom of the world. Remember that not many of you were wise or powerful in the eyes of the world, but God did wonderful things in your lives with His power. Learner is following my example, and you must obey him and your other shepherding elders, because they are teaching you the Word of God.

Mr. Foolish starts to interrupt but Learner continues to read.

Did you forget that all of you together are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives in you? Do not be proud about following a human leader. We are all servants of Christ, and he gives to each person a job to do in His church. One person plants the seeds and another person waters them, but God makes the seeds grow. You are God's field and God's building, not ours. This division among you comes from pride.

Mr. Wise' letter reviews how **Man's Pride and Foolishness Divided All Men.**

Exercise

Find in **Genesis 11:1-9**:

- In whose greatness did the people trust?
- What did God do to stop this proud rebellion against Him?

Learner discusses Mr. Wise' letter with his congregation, in his house, "People have been divided into different countries, languages and cultures for thousands of years. Now, in God's wisdom, He is bringing us together in the spirit in Christ, as was His original purpose."

One of the newly appointed elders adds, "We recently studied this in our small group. Jesus prayed for all of us in John 17. He prayed, 'Father, make them one, as you and I are one.' Jesus' prayer is answered in the universal church body, because we are one body in Christ. He is our head. We may not

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act like it, but that does not change the truth that the Holy Spirit unites us." They conclude the meeting with prayer for spiritual unity in Christ."

The next day Learner visits his student Helper and tells him, "A group led by Mr. Foolish has divided our congregation. Please come help me." They discuss how people who crave power and control often cause painful divisions. Helper tells his teacher, "I just read in 1 Corinthians that they had divisions also. I think we can find help in chapter 13, **The Love Chapter.**"

Exercise

Find in **1 Corinthians chapter 13**:

- Of what value are our gifts if we do not practice them in love?
- What are the things that love is?
- What are the things that love is *not*?
- What things does love *do*?
- What things does love *not* do?

As they travel back to Learner's house, Helper comments on what they studied, "If we practice our spiritual gifts in pride instead of love, the gifts are useless. God puts love in our hearts, making us care about the interests of other people. He gives us power to forgive them. Love is not what we feel, but what we do. We can treat people with love by faith, even if we do not feel like it. Sometimes it takes time for our feelings to match up with our resolve to love."

Learner prays, "Dear God, forgive me for me resentment against those who are divisive, and give me courage to deal with them with firmness and love."

The next day Learner and Helper visit Mr. Foolish to plead with him to stop causing division. Mr. Foolish quickly changes the subject. He blurts, "Learner, some of your people are not serving the needy like you told them to. You are letting them undermine your authority! Call a meeting and tell them to obey or leave! They are the ones who cause division in the church!"

How to Handle Differences of Opinion in the Congregation

Learner tells Mr. Foolish, "We do not avoid division by using such drastic measures. Let me tell you the story of the divided kingdom. King David loved God with his whole heart, and God promised him that his descendents would rule as kings forever. His son Solomon asked God for wisdom to rule Israel well, and he built God's Temple in Jerusalem. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, however, did not care about God or God's people like his father and grandfather had. He listened to the wrong advice and made a decision in **A Meeting that Divided the Kingdom of Israel.**

Exercise

Find in **1 Kings 12:1-19**:

- What did the people ask king Rehoboam to do?
- Rehoboam had two groups of advisors. Which did he heed?
- What did the people do when Rehoboam refused to lessen their burdens?

Mr. Foolish listens to Learner and Helper without interrupting, then says, "Thank you for visiting me and explaining this. I will think about what you said."

Helper returns to his home and Learner goes to his woodworking shop to think things over. He finds that sometimes it helps to work with his hands while he meditates on God's Word. He prays, "Father, help me deal with the division wisely." He recalls what Mr. Wise taught him about how **Two Congregations Settle a Dispute.** He thinks about how Paul and the other apostles handled a problem that had divided the church in Antioch.

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapter 15** how the leaders of two congregations dealt with their different opinions:

- Did the leaders let everyone speak to tell their side of the dispute?
- How did Peter show respect towards the Pharisees who disagreed with him?

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- Where did James find an answer to the disagreement?
- Did God help them all agree on their decision? If so, how?
- Did the Jewish Christians force the Gentiles to follow all their customs?
- When Paul and Barnabas started their next missionary trip, what caused them to work separately, with two task groups instead of one?

Helper returns to help Learner deal with the division at the next meeting in his house. Learner says, "Acts 15 reveals that people serve God in different ways. Unity in the church of Christ does not mean that every believer or every congregation has the same spiritual gifts, the same opinions or the same practices. We do not force them into conformity. Conformity is not unity. We command people to do only the commands of Christ and His apostles. There was a serious division in the church at Antioch. The Pharisees insisted on many other commands as if they had the same authority as God. The church needed help from another church."

Learner reads parts of Acts 15 and asks Helper to comment. He explains, "Paul and Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem and worked together during this meeting to explain how God had accepted the Gentiles into the church without making them follow Jewish customs. The main leaders in Jerusalem were Peter and James. They listened carefully as the people expressed their opinions, without interrupting. Then, without criticism, they showed the people in Scripture and with the Holy Spirit's power that God had freed the Gentiles from Jewish customs. The leaders listened first, then spoke the truth in love. The Pharisees finally agreed and submitted to the others and they all accepted the decision. God healed that division."

Several people say, "Amen!"

Helper continues. "Later, however, Paul and Barnabas disagreed on how to do ministry. They dealt with their disagreement privately, without gossiping or criticizing each other. They respected each other's opinions and agreed to practice their spiritual gifts separately. God blessed the work of both, as they went separate ways with two teams instead of one, to encourage **congregations** and start many more new ones."

The Difference Between Commands and Methods

Learner's people want to do the right thing and listen carefully as he explains, "Let us consider the two disagreements in Acts 15. The first one was about the authority of Christ's commands for His church. The second disagreement was about methods of applying these commands. Paul and Barnabas disagreed on an organizational issue. The church is united under the authority of Christ's commands. But Christians are free to adapt different methods of applying them in different ministries, according to their spiritual gifts. Divisions come when we confuse the levels of authority for Christ's church. His commands are the top level; we always obey them. But the methods we practice to obey these commands can vary widely."

The discussion continues for a long time. Mr. Foolish and his followers do not listen to the others. They keep criticizing Learner. Mr. Foolish is their main voice and he keeps saying, "Learner is a good man. But he lacks education and he has no diploma from an accredited theological institution. So we cannot be sure that he is teaching us the whole truth." A few others sit by him and repeat the same thing."

Learner says, "We have not come to a full agreement by everyone here and I see that many of you are growing tired. Those who want to leave may do so."

The women and young people leave. Only one man, Jacob, continues to agree with Mr. Foolish. He used to attend the church of the cousin of Mr. Foolish and recently moved into Learner's community. Jacob says for the third time, "I think we should do everything the same way as the church I used to attend."

Learner tells the men, "I do not feel right about serving the Lord's Supper when we are in such disharmony. We have heard everyone's opinion. I am asking the shepherding elders to fast and pray and meet again to end the division."

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A few days later the shepherding elders meet with Mr. Foolish and his followers. They pray and sing. Learner begs Mr. Foolish, "Please tell us exactly what changes you want to introduce in the congregation, besides replacing me as the main leader."

Mr. Foolish starts to speak, but Jacob interrupts him to say, "Let me be honest. Most of us do not want what Mr. Foolish wants. He wants us to name him as pastor of this church as soon as Learner is removed, even though he also lacks credentials from an academic theological seminary. What we really want is for us to follow the system of my former church. We like their style of worship. They have great sound equipment they often rent the stadium to hold big evangelism meetings, with famous singers and professional musicians."

Mr. Foolish adds, "We lack that kind of excitement here. I believe that all of the churches in this entire area should conform to the same policies and methods, for the sake of unity. We should do everything exactly like Jacob's former church."

All of the shepherding elders protest at once. Learner explains what he has learned from the two disagreements in Acts 15. He says gently, "I am glad to see that this is not a disagreement about Jesus' commands. This is a disagreement about different ways of doing ministry. The preacher you like uses different methods to evangelize. I do not have his gifts. Our congregation is not wealthy enough to adopt their methods. Our method of evangelism works well in our community. Our elders and most of the people prefer to continue using the methods here that God has been blessing. They are easier for our people to follow. We do not criticize the people of Jacob's former church who follow their preacher and do things his way. We do not ask them to change. Almost all of us agree on this now. Let us ask each other for forgiveness for criticizing one another simply for desiring different methods."

The elders say, "Amen!"

Learner explains, "The first church in Jerusalem met every day both in the Jewish temple court and in their homes. They often ate together, shared their possessions and took care of the needy. They were like a loving family. The **congregations** in apostolic times often sent visitors to the other **congregations** to encourage them. They worked out their differences in love instead of criticizing each other. When the Gentile **congregations** followed different traditions, they still had fellowship with the Jewish **congregations**. They let each culture follow its own customs as long as they respected each other and obeyed Jesus' commands. We can do the same." They open the Scriptures and compare the differences between the Jewish church in Jerusalem and the gentile congregation in Cesarea, in Acts chapters 2 and 10. They also consider how the gentile **congregations** in Galatia differed from the Jewish **congregations**.

Mr. Foolish leaves, but Jacob confesses, "I did not know that the Bible allows for such differences to exist among the **congregations**. And I never discerned between methods that can vary and the universal, underlying commands that do not. So I am willing to follow the suggestion of the shepherding elders and accept Learner as my leader. His style is different from my former pastor, but I see now that this is not the important thing."

Practical Work

- Plan ways to strengthen the fellowship for your congregation, and between congregations.
- You might schedule regular times for simply enjoying fellowship as a small group or the entire congregation, with games or other forms of diversion.
- Arrange for times of fellowship with other congregations, and serve them when they need help.
- When disagreement threatens the unity of the church body, plan a meeting to listen to those who want to speak. Then let the shepherding elders think about it, pray and recommend what to do.
- Do not recognize people as shepherding elders unless they are in fact shepherding others. This may be as leaders of a small group (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Teach the elders the importance of listening to everyone and reaching an agreement prayerfully.
- Be sure that the course you recommend assures immediate obedience to any command of Jesus that relates to it, and that it is not simply to give more power and control to a few.

III-8 — Ministry 8 Visit and Counsel

Learner follows Mr. Wise' example of regularly visiting the new leaders that he trains. In Helper's house, he asks, "How is your congregation progressing?"

Helper answers, "I am worried. Caregiver's family has malaria again. He is discouraged. His son also broke his leg. His wife is depressed and sits weeping and staring into space. Can you talk to them?"

They visit Caregiver's family and are surprised to find Mr. Foolish there. He tells Learner, "Caregiver's wife, Carmen, is my sister. I came to ask my-brother-in-law for a loan because my sales have been low lately. But he lost his teaching job because of his illness. Perhaps you can help me."

Learner tells him firmly, "I have told you several times that I do not make loans. Caregiver and Carmen are the ones that need help."

Mr. Foolish says to Caregiver in front of his wife Carmen, "You have this trouble because you and your family have sinned too much. You are not really saved by Jesus because if you were true Christians you would not suffer so much." Carmen runs from the room weeping loudly.

"I refuse to listen to this!" Caregiver shouts. He walks out of his house. Learner and Helper go after him. He tells them, "Mr. Foolish has disturbed my family too much. We are leaving the church."

Helper tries to persuade him to continue participating but he will not listen. Learner returns home and prays with Sara. He hurries to the house of Mr. Foolish and rebukes him, "Your sister Carmen's family has left Helper's congregation because you discouraged them."

"I'm glad!" Mr. Foolish replies, "The church is better without that stingy man. Carmen never should have married him."

Learner feels angry but says nothing. The next day he returns to visit Helper and encourage him. He takes a study that Mr. Wise had provided, to deal with discouraged Christians. He finds Helper in his house playing a sad tune on his guitar. Learner reads to him, "A basic ministry is to visit our people and counsel them. Here are practical ways to help each other trust in God and rejoice, even when life is painful. God's Spirit is called our Counselor. Learn about The Discouraged Prophet, to discover how God helped him."

Exercise

Find in **1 Kings 19:1-18**:

- Why was Elijah very discouraged? Read chapter 18 also if you want to learn the whole story.
- What help did God send first, in chapter 19, to help Elijah?
- What were God's first words to Elijah in the cave?
- How did Elijah know when God was speaking to him?
- What did God tell Elijah to do, to encourage him?

Rachel brings tea for Learner as Helper reads from the study, "Even brave prophets of God got discouraged. God gave Elijah power to do great miracles, but when queen Jezebel threatened to kill him, he fled, afraid. He ran far and became physically exhausted. He left his servant behind and went on alone, which was a mistake. He needed company. He wanted to die. Part of his discouragement came because his body was tired. God sent an angel with food and water and let him sleep until his body recovered. Then God spoke to him. God's first words were a question, 'Why are you here?' God listened to Elijah first. God used a gentle, calming whisper to speak to Elijah, not an angry storm. Finally, God gave Elijah a reason to live. He gave Elijah a job to do and new hope in His power."

They read 1 Kings 19 again. Learner says, "We will follow the example of the Great Counselor. When we know that people are discouraged, we visit them. First, find out if there is a physical reason for their trouble. Are they tired, hungry, or sick? Pray for healing and tend to their physical needs. Then ask

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questions to find what is wrong. Listen with patience for the real reason why people are discouraged or upset. Be gentle. God speaks to hurting people through our compassion, but not through our anger.”

Helper says, “I need to do this for Caregiver and his family. I should talk privately with him, like God did with Elijah, in a soft voice.”

Helper reads from the study, “Never repeat to others bad reports that you have heard, unless you are absolutely sure they are truthful and not exaggerated. Avoid gossip. Give discouraged believers hope by reminding them of who they are in Christ. Ask them to say the encouraging words in Ephesians 1:3-14 aloud and claim each precious promise. Let them read the verses or repeat them after you. Often they have sin in their lives that they have not confessed to God. Help them confess their sins. Help them to forgive anyone that has done them wrong, especially people in their own family. Assure them of God’s forgiveness. Finally, help them find practical ways to serve God, even in difficult situations.”

Helper lays down the study and exclaims, “Yes, I will do this! I will organize the ministry of visiting and counseling in our congregation. I am meeting with our workers tonight. Please stay and help me, Learner!”

Exercise

Find in **Ephesians 1:3-14** several precious promises to encourage believers in Christ.

That night Helper explains to the other workers of his new congregation, “Our people face problems that we can deal with only by visiting them in their homes. Some are in conflict with another person, usually in their own family. Others are sick, old and feeble, or unemployed. Some struggle with drunkenness, bad drugs or sexual problems. Some new believers are unsure of their salvation and their place in Christ’s church. Many have friends and relatives that do not yet know Jesus. Let us organize so that every new believer receives regular visits by someone else. Learner, please tell us what to do.”

Learner wisely advises, “You are the leader here. You know what to do. You tell them.”

Helper says to the group, “Go in pairs. Men visit men and women visit women. Avoid gossip. Husbands and wives can visit families together. Pray with the people that you visit. Use the stories that I have taught you, to tell people about Jesus and solve their problems. You more mature believers, go with the new ones to visit their unsaved friends, and help the new believers to learn quickly what to say. Remember, we are all shepherds like Jesus, our Great Shepherd. We all take care of His sheep with love and compassion. Be considerate! Do not interrupt people when they are eating or working. Be clean, respectful and gentle. Demonstrate for them what Jesus is like.”

Helper and Learner visit Caregiver’s family that left the congregation. Again Helper asks Learner to talk with Caregiver’s family but Learner refuses, saying, “You are their shepherd.”

Helper tells Caregiver and his family about how Job suffered. “Job’s friends tried to comfort him when he was sick, bereaved and in pain, but they only made him more miserable. They kept saying that he suffered because he was bad. Job wanted to ask God why he was suffering so, because he saw wicked people living in ease. Let me explain **How Those who Are in Pain Receive Comfort.**”

Exercise

Find in **Job chapters 1 and 2:**

- How did God test Job’s faith?
- Did Job understand why God was testing him?

Now find in **Job chapters 38 and 42:**

- How did God answer Job?
- What happened to him in the end?

In Caregiver’s house, Helper comforts him and Carmen. “Suffering comes to us for many reasons. We bring suffering on ourselves because we do foolish things. God also uses sickness to correct us, to help us remember Him, or to take us home to heaven. He allows suffering to test and strengthen our faith. Sometimes He heals us with His power. Sometimes He shows His strength in our weakness, as Paul told the Corinthian church.”

Shepherd's Storybook

Carmen and the children go to bed, but Caregiver wants to learn more. Helper explains **Paul's Attitude Toward Suffering**.

Exercise

- Find in **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** the main source of our comfort.
- Find in **2 Corinthians 4:7-12** what a believer's suffering in his body portrays.
- Find in **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** a reason why God allowed Paul to suffer.

Helper continues to pray with Caregiver and comforts him, "God does not want to make us suffer. Jesus came to take our suffering on His own shoulders. If we trust God, He will bring something good from our suffering, like He brought good from the suffering of Jesus, Paul and Job. Now let me explain about **The Blind Man Whom No One Believed.**"

Exercise

- Find in **John chapter 9** some good things that happened because of the man's blindness.
- Find in **James 5:13-20** words of advice for people facing both good and hard times.
- Find in **Hebrews 12:5-12** an important reason why God punishes believers that keep committing a sin.

When they leave Caregiver's house, Learner tells Helper, "You counseled well. I knew you would. That's why I kept silent."

The next day Helper takes his wife Rachel to visit Caregiver's wife Carmen. Rachel has also read the studies about visiting and counseling. She explains to Carmen, "Your suffering does not mean that God has abandoned you."

Later they meet together to try to find the root cause of their discouragement. Caregiver says, "I know what the root is. I let my family forget God's faithfulness. We have not been praying as a family. Let us pray together now and ask God to bring good from our suffering, like He did for Job."

Some members of Helper's congregation bring food to the family and continue to help them for several days. The family's faith grows strong and they return to the congregation. Soon God heals their physical ailments also. Caregiver begins visiting others to tell about Jesus and comfort them. He likes to explain to those helps, "God used bad things to bring good things to us."

During a worship service Helper announces, "The congregation recognizes the compassionate care that Caregiver and Carmen are giving to many others. We will now lay hands on them to commission them as deacons, as in Acts 6." The group cheers.

Practical Work

- Develop the ministry of visiting and counseling those who have problems. Find the people in your congregation who enjoy counseling others. Teach them to encourage and exhort them, using the stories in this section.
- Arrange so that everyone receives an occasional visit, whether they have a problem or not.
- Teach new believers to obey the basic commands of Jesus, listed in Section I.
- Go with new believers to help them visit and witness to their unsaved friends.
- Give special care to the elderly who are feeble, the sick, and those with other needs.

III-9 — Ministry 9

Strengthen Marriages, and the Faith of Entire Families

Mr. Foolish arrives at Learner's house with his sales cart, displaying several items for sale. "Look at this," he says, "A new kind of flashlight battery that will never run down. Buy a whole box of twelve for your flashlight."

Learner asks, "If they never run down, why should I buy so many? What do you have covered under that cloth?"

"Personal belongings." Learner removes the cloth and finds statues, the kind that some people worship as idols.

"They are only adornments to beautify a house!" Mr. Foolish asserts.

"Then why did you hide them?"

"I knew you would disapprove! You are narrow-minded! If you had strong faith you would know that an idol is really nothing and you would not make a fuss about it. I have strong faith, so I can sell these statues without any problem."

"I do not understand your logic," Learner replies, "The pagans who buy them use them to worship."

"You do not have real faith. No one in the church has real faith except me. Your people should be living good lives but almost all the families have problems. Husbands fight with their wives and neglect their children. They have no faith! I keep my family in order. When my wife does not do what I say, I beat her."

Learner answers, "It is true that our families have problems, and it sounds like yours does, too. I told Mr. Wise that we needed to strengthen the faith of entire families. He left me this study about Abraham the man of faith. Let us read it. But first, promise that you will not sell those idols."

Mr. Foolish grumbles, "As you say. I will not sell any more after these. I do not want trouble with my church."

Learner continues, "Good. Now let us study about **Abraham the Man of Faith** to discover what real faith is. God promised Abraham that He would bless all nations through one of his descendants. That is Jesus. Abraham believed this promise."

Exercise

Find in **Genesis 21:1-7** who made it possible for Abraham's aged and sterile wife Sarah to give birth.

Find in **Genesis 22:1-18**:

- How did God test Abraham's faith?
- How did God save Abraham's son?
- What promise did God make to Abraham because he trusted God?

Mr. Foolish leans against his cart in front of Learner's house in silence for a few moments. Then he remarks, "Abraham had more faith than any man could have today. He and his wife did those things long ago. We face very different problems today."

Learner answers, "Abraham's example applies to us today. God gave him a son, through whom the promise to bless all nations would be fulfilled. That includes us. He tested Abraham's faith by telling him to sacrifice his son, to kill him on an altar. Abraham trusted God enough to obey, and God saved Isaac by sending a ram to die in his place. This was an example, a prophecy, of how Jesus would die in our place 2,000 years later. Through Jesus, who is Abraham's descendant, God kept His promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth."

"He could bless me with a few more sales."

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“About beating your wife, that is not correct. God created marriage and made it good. He sends us our children and blesses them. If we follow His Guidelines for the Family, we live in harmony.”

Exercise

Read **Ephesians 5:21-33** to find:

- To whom are Christian wives to submit?
- What must a Christian husband do to deserve this submission by his wife?
- To what degree should a man love his wife?
- What is Christian marriage an example of?

Read **Ephesians 6:1-3** to find:

- What is the duty of children in a Christian home?
- What is the duty of parents?

Learner explains to Mr. Foolish, as they stand beside his cart outside of Learner's house, “Scripture tells us that a man and a woman should leave their parents to unite in marriage. They must be faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. The husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself. The wife should respect her husband and submit to him. The husband is not to rule her with angry words and threats. Instead, Paul tells them to submit to each other. If a husband loves his wife and takes good care of the family, the wife will follow him gladly.”

Mr. Foolish interrupts, “That only works when both husband and wife are Christians. My wife is not. She is ignorant. I plan to divorce her and marry a younger Christian girl! Then my children will behave better!”

Learner explains, “No! Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 to stay with an unbelieving partner if the partner is willing. He tells unmarried believers to marry only other followers of Christ. Paul also tells us how to train our children.” Learner starts to read the passage but Mr. Foolish leaves.

How to Teach Children to Have Faith in Christ

At their next meeting Learner tells his congregation, “We must strengthen our family life. Paul tells children in Ephesians 6:1-4 to obey their parents in the Lord so that they can live long and well. He tells parents to train their children well, not frustrating them with commands that the children cannot obey easily. Good parents teach their children to obey them. You can use stories from the Bible to teach them to pray and to obey the commands of Jesus. Each family should plan regular times of family worship in the home. Let us learn about The Good and Bad Sons of Eli the Priest.”

Exercise

Find in **1 Samuel chapter 3**:

- How quickly did Samuel obey when he thought Eli was calling him?
- What did Eli fail to do with his rebellious sons?

Learner continues to explain to his congregation meeting in his house, “God warned Eli to correct his sons. As the High Priest of Israel, Eli was giving a bad example to the whole nation. His sons were misusing their positions of authority to steal from the people and mistreat them, but Eli did nothing to stop them. Because Eli did not correct his sons, they all died. Samuel’s parents, on the other hand, taught Samuel to obey immediately and cheerfully. God blessed him all his life for his obedience.”

Learner asks his people to talk about what they plan to do to strengthen their families. Jacob, who has become loyal to Learner and is now growing rapidly in Christ, responds, “As parents, we protect our children from spiritual danger by training them when they are young. We explain to them what we want them to do. We expect them to obey as quickly as Samuel did. If they do not obey quickly and cheerfully, then we correct them. Do you mothers agree?”

After a moment of silence Sara replies, “I agree, Jacob. Very young children learn quickly when we correct them immediately and physically, as Proverbs 13:24 says. When older children disobey, and we take something away from them for a while, they learn to obey us. We must respect our children and not

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yell at them or call them names. We must not correct them in anger or we might injure them. And we make sure that both parents teach the same rules.”

Deborah speaks for the first time in such a meeting. “We should teach our children by our example. We teach them to avoid drunkenness and other addictions. We show them how to choose friends that will not tempt them with evil. We show them how to work hard, doing a good job at everything, the same way you would do it for the Lord. We show them how to apply God’s Word to their own lives.”

“Excellent!” Learner exclaims. “Here are stories about families in the Bible. They are easy to teach to children. You parents can teach your children valuable truths from them. Tell them to your children and to the other children whose parents are not Christians.”

Exercise

Find in **Genesis chapter 24** how God provided a wife for Isaac.

Find in **Genesis 29:1-30** what Jacob did to prove his love for Rachel.

Find in **Acts 7:9-14**:

- What did Joseph do to show that he forgave his brothers that sold him as a slave?
- How did God use Joseph’s suffering to save his family from starving?

Find in **Luke chapters 1 & 2** into what kind of family Jesus was born.

At the end of the meeting in Learner's house, Sara asks the mothers to wait a moment. She tells them, “Learner has helped me to become a teacher for the children. He wants us to make a list of stories for children and help them present one to the congregation each week in a short drama.”

Learner adds, “Let us ask their fathers also to take part. The stories are more powerful when adults participate as well as children.”

Sara begs, “Those of you who would like to teach children, please help. We will prepare together each week. We want the children to be happy and respectful as they learn. If the men take part also, that will be much better. We need your help for that, Learner.”

Jacob's wife says to her children, “Starting tomorrow we will pray together as a family every morning before you go to school.”

Practical Work

- Help the families in your church follow God’s design for authority in the family.
- Help your families plan times when they study God’s Word, sing, and pray together.
- Teach parents to correct their children in love.
- Arrange for the children to hear Bible stories, then act them out and participate in worship.
- Ask adults also to act out the Bible stories, by themselves or together with the children.

III-10 — Ministry 10

Care for the Sick, Needy and Mistreated

Deborah, Learner's neighbor, arrives at his house early in the morning to tell him, "My cousin Joseph is in jail! You helped him start a new congregation there in his town. They meet in his house. The authorities in his town are hostile against Christianity. He has nine children and they are starving."

Learner and his wife Sara take a bag of rice and other supplies to Joseph's wife Lisa.

"Joseph is in jail," Lisa tells them, "They are going to hold a trial to convict him for holding unauthorized meetings. Learner, can you go help me find a lawyer? I have no idea how to go about it. Excuse me while I prepare you some tea."

Lisa goes into the small kitchen and Sara whispers to him, "These matters are the kind of things that you said you would delegate to other workers. Most of the people in our congregation are very poor. Some are not educated. You and I alone cannot take care of all of them."

Learner sighs, "You are right. We need to ask people in our congregation to take care of these things. One of the widows needs repairs on her house and this lady needs help to get a lawyer to defend Joseph."

When they return, both Helper and Mr. Foolish are waiting in Learner's house. Mr. Foolish whines, "Learner, please loan me enough money to buy a loudspeaker to announce what I am selling. It will increase my sales and I will pay you back next month."

"I have told you to stop begging for loans!"

"Your job as our pastor is to take care of the poor and needy. You neglect us!"

"I care about the needy very much," Learner replies. "But the worst thing a person can do for idle persons is to simply hand them money. I will be happy to help you find employment. Then you can help care for the needy, instead of being one of them."

Helper remarks, "I'm teaching my congregation to serve the needy. I began with the parable of **The Sheep and the Goats**."

Exercise

Find in **Matthew 25:31-46**:

- Whom are we also serving when we help those in need?
- What happens to non-believers after they die if they do not help those in need?

While Sara serves tea to him and Mr. Foolish in Learner's house, Helper explains, "Jesus said that the poor, the hungry, those who mourn, and innocent people who suffer receive a special blessing from God. When we serve these people, we are serving God. When we neglect these people, we are rejecting God."

How God Supplies the Needs of His People

Learner adds, "Poor people, like everyone else, should pray for their daily bread and not simply beg. But begging is more honorable than asking for a loan when you do not intend to pay it back. That is the most deceptive form of robbery. We all must trust God to supply our needs."

Mr. Foolish grumbles, "That is easy for you to say when you have food on your table."

Learner says, "Let me tell you how God took care of His people, the Israelites, in the book of Exodus. They had been slaves in Egypt for many years. God sent them a prophet named Moses. Moses told the pharaoh (king) of Egypt that God wanted His people to be free. When the pharaoh refused, God sent ten terrible plagues on Egypt. Finally, God sent the angel of death to kill all the firstborn sons. Moses warned the Israelites to kill a lamb and paint its blood over their doors so that the angel would not harm them. The pharaoh's own son died. He finally let the people go. The first few chapters of Exodus relate this. Helper, can you finish the story?"

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"I shall try," Helper says. "The people walked from Egypt to the Red Sea, and stopped. They had nowhere to go. The pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. God opened a dry path through the Red Sea for the Israelites, and when the Egyptian army tried to follow, the sea crashed over them. Then the Israelites spent forty years in the desert before they returned to their homeland. They found nothing to eat in the desert, and sometimes no water, but God provided everything they needed. Then God gave them **The Miraculous Manna.**"

Exercise

Find in **Exodus 16:11-35**:

- How did God feed His people?
- Did the gift of manna stop the people from complaining and disobeying God?

Helper tells another story, as they drink tea in Learner's house. "In the same way, Jesus cares for those in need. Let me tell you **How Jesus Offers His Flesh to Eat.**"

Exercise

Find in **John chapter 6**:

- In verses 2-13, what did Jesus do for the sick and the hungry?
- In verses 14-27, what two things did the people want Jesus to do?
- In verses 17-21, how did Jesus show He was King over nature?
- In verses 28-40, who is the bread from heaven and how do we receive it?
- In verses 41-69, what do we do, to find the bread that gives us life forever?

Helper continues, "Jesus healed many sick people. When His listeners had no food, He fed them. The people wanted him to become king and always give them free food. Jesus could easily have done that. He is the true King over all. He rules even nature. He calmed storms and walked on the top of the water. Jesus knew that physical food would not change their hearts. They would still be far from God. Jesus wanted them to have food that satisfies forever. This food is Jesus, himself. In John 6 He told them that they had to eat His flesh, to have eternal life. This offended many that did not want to hear spiritual truth. God wants everyone to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life from Him. When we become a part of the church, the Body of Christ, He gives us this life."

Mr. Foolish replies, "That's a nice story but it does not add food to my family's table. Goodbye!"

Deacons Show the Love of Christ

After Mr. Foolish leaves, Helper asks Learner, "How do I take care of the needy in our congregation and the newer congregations, without neglecting my work of leading and teaching the congregation?"

"You must fan into flame your spiritual gift of teaching, without neglecting those in need. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem faced this same problem. Many widows needed care but they were busy teaching the good news of Jesus. Let me tell you about **The First Deacons.**"

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapter 6 & 7:54-60**:

- How did the apostles make sure that the foreign widows were not neglected?
- How did the apostles know who to appoint to serve the needy?
- What kind of person was Stephen, one of the seven chosen to serve the widows?

Learner explains to Helper, "The apostles could not abandon their responsibilities of teaching and leading the church in Jerusalem, to care for the needy. So they asked the people to choose seven men of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. The apostles prayed for these men and laid hands on them. Men and women who took care of the needy in this way were called deacons. Deacons are servants to God's people. Stephen, one of the deacons, also preached to the unbelieving Jews in the power of the Holy Spirit. His face glowed and he saw Jesus seated by the Father in heaven. They stoned him to death."

Helper replies, "I remember what you taught me about Deacons. Paul told his apprentice, Timothy, that deacons must be good parents and faithful spouses. They must be mature Christians with good

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reputations, not ambitious for money or addicted to alcohol. Two women who served the needy were Dorcas, who sewed clothes for the poor, and Lydia, who gave Paul's missionary team a place to live."

Helper sighs in relief. "I understand now how I can continue leading my church while I still making sure that the needy people get help. I will call a meeting to appoint deacons to serve them, just as the first believers did."

A week later Helper reports to Learner, "My congregation chose Caregiver and his wife Carmen to serve as deacons. We laid hands on them and prayed that God will make them wise like Stephen was as they serve the needy."

"Yes. And please read in James to find **How Elders Deal with the Sick.**"

Exercise

Find now in **James 5:13-17** what elders do for the sick.

Practical Work

- Make a list of the people in your congregation and community that need your help.
- Pray with your congregation about serving these needy people.
- Determine which people in your congregation meet the requirements for deacons, to serve the needy on behalf of the flock.
- Appoint deacons who follow Paul's requirements with prayer and the laying on of hands.

Learner tells Helper, "We can help people who are suffering by reminding them that Jesus also suffered. He was human just like the rest of us."

"I thought he was God."

"He is. But when He was born of the Virgin Mary he took on our human nature. He emptied Himself of His divine glory as the Son of God and became a true human, with all of our weaknesses. The only difference is that He never sinned. Philippians 2:1-11 explains this. Hebrews 2:17-18 explains that he had to be made human in order to serve as our High Priest and suffer so He could help those who also suffer."

III-11 — Ministry 11

Become Like Christ and Maintain Discipline in the Flock

Jacob comes to Learner's house to tell him, "Brother Learner, I just discovered that one of my employees, Sapphire, is stealing from me. Sapphire is a sister in Christ. I talked to her about it but she got angry. Should I ignore this sin to avoid tension in the flock?"

Learner answers, "No, we cannot ignore sin in the flock. The Bible tells us to deal with it quickly. Let me get my wife Sara, and we will follow Christ's instructions to go to her directly. Perhaps together we help Sapphire to repent. We will go in love and gentleness, as Galatians 6:1 says."

They arrive at the Sapphire's house and ask to speak to her alone. Jacob tells her, "I hired you to help my wife cook and clean the house. I paid you well. But you stole towels and other things from us."

Sapphire trembles with fear. Sara takes her aside and assures her, "We are not here to shame you. We want you to receive God's forgiveness and fullest blessing. There is something you need to understand before we talk about what you did. Jesus taught us that God's blessing comes to those who live like Jesus. Let us read **The Sources of Happiness** together."

Exercise

Find in **Matthew 5:1-16** God's promises concerning blessings:

- In what ways did Jesus describe the people that receive happiness from God?
- How should we respond when people persecute us for following Christ?
- How do we bring glory to God through our actions?

Sara explains to Sapphire about discipline. "Now that we belong to Christ, His Spirit gives us the desire and power to be like Christ. We no longer want to do what is wrong, but our old sinful nature still pushes us to do evil. We struggle between what our old nature wants and what our new nature wants. When we fall into sin, the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin and brings us to repentance. He also uses other brothers and sisters to encourage us to do right, to call us to repentance and to assure us of God's forgiveness."

"But I'm a bad person. I'm not good like you are."

"You are God's child and He is transforming you," Sara assures Sapphire. "God corrects us as a good mother corrects her children in love. Correction keeps us out of danger. Without loving correction, a child may play with fire or poison, or run out in front of a car. God keeps us from danger by correcting us. In the Old Testament, prophets wrote seventeen books to warn Israel to stop sinning. Israel did not listen to God's correction and fell into terrible physical and spiritual danger. Now we have the Holy Spirit. He helps us live the new life we have in Christ. When Christ commanded us to repent and be baptized, He was commanding us to continue in this new life. Let me tell you about **The Way the Holy Spirit Makes Us Holy**."

Exercise

Find in **Galatians 5:16 through 6:3**:

- What wrong things do we do by habit when we do not know Christ?
- What nine virtues, or fruit, does God develop in us through the power of His Spirit?
- What do we do to our old sinful nature to avoid the sins of this world?
- How do we help restore those who fall into sin?

The men leave Sara to continue talking with Sapphire. She explains, "As disciples of Jesus, we make it our habit daily to obey Him in love. This gives us joy and brings God's blessing. It also protects us from spiritual danger. Every day we pray and apply God's Word to our life. We follow Christ's example in our actions and practice the fruit of the Spirit. We obey those in authority over us. These are ways we develop discipline to avoid spiritual danger. As we develop these habits, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to overcome sin."

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"In my case that would be a very big miracle."

"You are not alone. We all have had to crucify our old desires in some way and God always helps us. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul tells us to warn people of spiritual and physical danger when they commit these errors:

**Causing conflict or division,
Laziness or gossip,
Immoral actions or drunkenness,
Greed or stealing,
Idolatry or doctrinal error."**

Sara gently assures Sapphire, "God will free you from your bad habits. Please ask Him to do so now."

Sapphire weeps for a while, then asks God to forgive her. She goes to Learner's house with Sara and tells her employer Jacob, "Please forgive me. I will return what I stole from you. I am very sorry."

During the next meeting Sapphire confesses to the congregation, "I have had sins in my life. I tried to hide them. Even stealing. But I confessed all this and received God's forgiveness. I hope all of you can forgive me."

The people reply that they will forgive her, but Mr. Foolish comes to Learner afterwards and grumbles, "That is too easy. Stealing is a big sin. She must suffer punishment before we let her back into the congregation. She must wait and prove her repentance."

Learner disagrees, "No, Mr. Foolish. We do not judge her heart. She needs our help now to follow Christ. She needs God's strength to avoid sin. Sara offered to go pray with her every morning before she goes to work, until she is strong and confident. Jesus taught us not to count how many times we forgive. Instead, we offer to help each other escape temptation. God has forgiven us so much that we should be eager to forgive each other in gratitude. If we cannot forgive, we shut our hearts off from God's great forgiveness. God saves us only by grace, not by anything we do to prove our goodness."

Mr. Foolish scoffs, "We might as well sin all we want, because God will forgive us!"

"No!" Learner exclaims, "Such a thought would only show that we are not truly repentant."

Correcting Leaders in the Congregation

Mr. Foolish visits Jacob and criticizes Learner, "He was too soft hearted with Sapphire because the little thief is a nice looking woman." Jacob laughs. Mr. Foolish tells several others the same thing. Soon the criticism is spreading like measles among the believers.

At the next week's meeting, Sapphire is seated, joyfully waiting to celebrate the Lord's Supper with the rest of the congregation. Mr. Foolish stands and says, "We must stop these proceedings. This woman is not ready to take communion. She..."

Learner interrupts. "I studied with Mr. Wise what the Bible says about how to deal with believers who err. If we are fighting with one another, we must forgive one another and be reconciled before we take the Lord's Supper."

Mr. Foolish asks, "But what if it is the church leader who commits the error?"

Jacob answers, "All of our leaders have great responsibility. If they fall into sin, they can hurt many people. God's Word teaches that if there is a criticism against one of them, we must consider it carefully. If this criticism comes from gossip, jealousy or pride, the Bible says to ignore it. If you have proof of a serious error, deal with it. If a leader sins publicly, you must correct him before the whole congregation as a warning to the rest. One time the apostle Peter fell into error and Paul corrected him publicly. Leaders need public correction when they lead others into sin. Otherwise, their errors can cause great division. It is not an easy job to be a leader for Christ."

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Exercise

Find in the story of **Peter's Hypocrisy** in **Galatians 2:11-21**:

- When Peter was leading the believers into sin, how did Paul correct him?
- How did Peter's actions go against the good news of the grace of Jesus Christ?
- Why was Peter acting like a hypocrite?
- How are we saved, by following strict laws or by faith in Jesus Christ?
- Peter accepted the correction. Let us all do the same.

Find in **2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:25**, the story of **David's Secret Sin**:

- In what way did David's desire to hide his sin make him sin more?
- How did the prophet correct the leader's secret sin?
- How did God show David that he was forgiven?

Jacob explains, "In these stories, two leaders were corrected. The Apostle Paul corrected the apostle Peter for rejecting other Gentile believers out of false pride. Peter denied the good news of Jesus with his actions and led other people into the same sin. Although Peter taught that we are saved by faith in Christ, yet he was acting as if he were saved by obeying Jewish laws. Paul had to correct him at once publicly so that the entire congregation would understand the error. The prophet Nathan also corrected King David publicly so that all Israel would take God's holiness seriously."

Jacob turns to Mr. Foolish and asks, "Do you have evidence that one of our leaders has committed a sin serious enough for such correction by the congregation?"

Mr. Foolish says, "Oh, forget the whole thing!"

Jacob rebukes him, "You are the one that caused the gossip."

Deborah confesses, "I am ashamed now that I listened to the gossip, and repeated it. I criticized our shepherd Learner, for only a silly rumor."

Jacob replies, "I think a savage wolf, a hyena, has tried to divide our flock by spreading criticism against our leader. Learner, please forgive those of us who listened to the rumor and fell into this trap."

They praise God for the restored unity, and continue joyfully with the Lord's Supper. Sapphire tells Sara afterwards, "I am surprised at the congregation's love and acceptance. I have never seen such forgiveness in my family. How great God's grace is!"

A month later Sapphire reports to the congregation, "Learner's dear wife has been helping me to form the habit of daily prayer and overcome my old habit of stealing. God has taken that evil desire from my heart. The thought of it is repulsive to me now. It's a great joy to know that God has cleansed me and given me a pure heart."

Practical Work

- Help the people develop habits of daily spiritual discipline, of prayer and forgiving others.
- Use the stories in this section to teach how to correct people with love.
- Explain to your people how such correction protects us from spiritual and physical danger.
- Explain why, with God's grace, we forgive, correct and restore—but not punish—those who have sinned.
- Correct with love those who sin. Follow the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20.
- Receive those who repent back into fellowship and assure them of God's grace, cleansing and forgiveness.

III-12 — Ministry 12

Talk with God

The next morning police arrive at Learner's house and take him to jail. The judge tells him, "I will hold a trial to determine if you have led meetings unauthorized by our municipal government. The penalties for subversive activity are severe. Nobody is allowed to visit you except your wife."

That afternoon Sara comes to visit and tells Learner, "This has happened because so many people have been coming to the Lord. We have all been praying daily for the salvation of lost persons, and for **opportunities** to tell them about Christ. The Lord answered our prayers. But it drew the attention of those who hate Christians."

Learner prays, "Lord, give me opportunities to share your good news with the other prisoners in this jail."

God answers the prayer. After a week six prisoners have come to Christ.

Three weeks later the judge holds the trial. Joseph, the elder who had been arrested earlier, is tried at the same time. They employed the same lawyer, but he makes very little effort to defend them. The prosecutor calls witnesses who accuse the believers of neglecting the good customs and traditions of the community. Mr. Foolish also gives testimony against Learner. Apparently someone paid him to spy on the congregation. The judge announces, "You both will be held in prison until I can arrange for your execution. That is the penalty for holding subversive meetings."

Helper meets secretly with the elders of Learner's congregation in Jacob's house and tells them, " My brothers and sisters, you are angry and afraid. Do not be discouraged. Mr. Wise taught us from God's Word that we are not to be angry with the people who are persecuting you. As Jesus said when they crucified Him, 'they do not understand what they are doing.' God will use it for good. Keep praying for Learner and Joseph. Remember, our battle is not against people but against evil spirit powers. Follow the examples of those who prayed in the Bible, such as Abraham, Esther and the persistent widow. Let me tell you about **Abraham's Bold Prayer of Intercession**"

Exercise

Find in **Genesis 18:16-33**:

- In what way did Abraham persist when he interceded for the wicked people of Sodom?
- Was Abraham proud or humble when he prayed?
- How did God respond to Abraham's compassion and persistence?

Helper explains to the elders gathered in Jacob's house, "Abraham pleaded for the wicked people of Sodom. They were foreigners to Abraham, but he felt compassion for them. God answered part of his request for mercy. Abraham never demanded anything from God but asked humbly. We also intercede for cities, countries and governments, our own and those far away from us. Please help the congregation pray this way while Learner is gone."

"Remember to pray not only for yourselves and your families, but also for the whole congregation. Pray for your leaders. Ask God to unite you and fill you with the Holy Spirit and His power so you can serve Him. Pray for those in need and in jail. Pray for God to give us all more opportunities and more workers to go far away to neglected people to tell the good news. Now, let me tell you how **God Uses an Orphan Girl to Save a Nation.**"

Exercise

Find in **Esther 3:13 – 5:3 & 7:1-8**:

- Because of what great danger was Mordecai mourning?
- What did the Jews do to prepare for Queen Esther's meeting with the king?
- What did Queen Esther do to show her love for her people and her courageous faith?

Shepherd's Storybook

- Review briefly the whole book of Esther, to see how, by her people's prayers, she saved a nation.

Helper continues explaining to the elders in Jacob's house, "God raised up Esther as queen so that she could save her people from destruction. She and her people prayed and fasted for three days before she met with the king. She risked her life to go to him, and through her faith, her people were saved. In the Old Testament, God punished the enemies of His people to show His holiness. God punished Mordecai's enemies with death. In the New Testament, God shows grace to those who reject Him. Jesus tells us to pray for them. God works through our prayers to save people from destruction. We should be praying in our hearts all the time. We should never get tired of praying. Prayer is our main weapon in spiritual warfare. Now let me tell you about **The Persistent Widow.**"

Exercise

Find in **Luke 18:1-8**:

- How did the widow persuade the corrupt judge to help her?
- Since God is our good judge, should we also persist in our prayers to Him? Why?
- What does Christ want to find in us when He returns?

Helper finishes teaching with these words about prayer, "The corrupt judge helped the widow because she kept asking him. She did not let anything stop her. God is a good judge. He will answer your prayers for justice. Do not let anything hinder you from faithful prayer. Consider those around you when you pray in a group. Do not bore them with long, repetitious prayers like those that pray to false gods. Stay away from criticism and gossip. Mistreating others hinders our prayers. Remember the Enemy wants to interrupt and distract us. Jesus often went away to pray alone all night. Like Jesus, take time to pray away from the distractions of the world."

When Helper steps out the door he finds three policemen waiting for him. They arrest him and take him to jail. He requests to be put in the same cell as Learner but they refuse.

The believers fast and pray in their homes. Some meet in tiny groups and pray all night for Learner and Helper. Mr. Foolish arrives at a meeting in Jacob's store and says, "If we really want God to answer our prayers, we must pray on our knees. Not standing. Not sitting. Not lying down. Only on our knees. The Bible says King Solomon prayed kneeling with his hands spread toward heaven. That is the only way!"

Jacob responds, "You distract everyone from the real purpose of prayer. Two men are in jail and you want us to focus on the posture of our bodies! God is more concerned about the posture of our hearts. In the Bible they talk to God in different ways. Sometimes they pray in silence. Other times they pray aloud. Sometimes they pray standing or lying face down. Some of them use psalms from the Bible or sing their prayers. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'"

Mr. Foolish leaves. They talk about ways to help the congregation pray more effectively. All agree to pray every day, alone and with their families. Two older women promise to gather every morning very early to pray together. Jacob asks the believers to form a prayer chain. "When someone learns of a need, he tells another person. That person tells another, until everyone who participates in the chain is praying. Everyone can pray in different ways and at different times."

The Power of praying in Jesus' Name

The next day Jacob and the elders go and pray for Ruth, a newly married young woman who is seriously ill. She explains, "My husband Tobias beat me and I fell. He has been taking illegal drugs. I have much pain now. Mr. Foolish comes also and starts to preach, using big words. He tells the elders, "Now that Learner is in jail, I should lead the church."

"No, you will not!" Jacob asserts. "And stop using big words to impress these people with your spiritual power! Now, let the elders follow the instructions in James 5." They pour a bit of oil on the woman's head and pray in Jesus' name. They pray in faith and humility, using simple words.

"Is it my fault?" Deborah asks in her fever, "Have I have sinned so much?"

Shepherd's Storybook

Mr. Foolish starts to say yes but Jacob tells her, "If some sins are troubling you, confess them and trust God to forgive you."

While they are praying, her husband Tobias pushes open the door. He hears them pray in the name of Jesus and curses. He hits Jacob, but falls in the process and sprains his wrist. He curses again incoherently. Jacob tells the elders, "Tobias let drugs weaken his mind and open it for evil spirits to control his thoughts."

Mr. Foolish yells, "Run! We are no match for this power!" Ruth, however, cries, "Do not go! I beg you to stay. Learner taught us about Jesus' power over evil spirits. He said to resist the devil and he will flee from us."

"Yes," Jacob replies. "That is James 4:7. We will not flee from the devil but will stay here and resist him. We will force him in the name of Jesus to flee from us." He tells the story of **The Boy who Was Tormented by Demons**.

Exercise

Find in **Mark 9:14-29**:

- What were the disciples doing when Jesus found them?
- Why could the disciples not cast out the evil spirit?
- What did Jesus ask the father to do?
- What did Jesus do to cast out the spirit?

Jacob explains, "Instead of praying, Jesus' disciples were arguing when He arrived! They could not cast out the spirit because they were not relying on the power of God. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith. He told the father to believe. Then He commanded the spirit to leave the boy and never return. He cured the boy completely. Now, let us do what Jesus did, for Tobias. Come, pray with me for him!"

Mr. Foolish complains to Jacob, "Do not tell us what to do so much! You are a very new believer. In the absence of Learner, I am in charge. Mr. Caregiver has been leading people in this church too much also."

Another one of the elders rebukes Mr. Foolish, "What you say is not right. Jacob has every right to work with us. And we need Caregiver's help also, even though he is from another congregation, In the New Testament leaders continually served different congregations. They would travel often to help congregations in need. The Scriptures require this interaction between congregations. They are not meant to be isolated groups. Any congregation is part of the larger Body of Christ in its area." To the rest he says, "Come, let us lay hands on this demonized man and pray."

Mr. Foolish cries, "No! Do not oppose those demons! They will attack us!" The elders pay him no attention and he rushes from the room and stands peeking around the edge of the door. The elders rebuke the evil spirit in the name of Jesus. For the next hour they help Tobias to confess his sins to God in Jesus' name and receive the power of the Holy Spirit to protect him against the evil one. Finally Tobias relaxes and yields to God. He confesses his sin and asks Jesus to save him. After a few moments of silence he exclaims, "The evil spirits have left!"

They praise the Lord. Tobias tells Jacob, "I have something to confess to you. I work with the authorities and accused your leaders of subversive activities against the government. Mr. Foolish informed me of where your secret meetings were held. I would buy his junk and he would tell me anything."

The next day Tobias, freed from the demonic oppression, tells the truth to the authorities. They free Learner and Helper, who return to Learner's house and find a small group praying for their release. They praise God with great joy.

Discerning Between Shame that Is Merely Felt and Guilt Before God that Is Real

Later that day Deborah arrives at Learner's house out of breath. "Help me!" she cries, "My brother Samuel is going to kill himself! Come talk to him! I told him about Jesus but he would not listen."

Shepherd's Storybook

Learner and Sara rush to Deborah's house. She explains,

Samuel is holding a razor blade, weeping. Deborah rushes and takes the blade from him. Samuel sobs, "I have too much shame to live. Please go away!"

Sara asks him why he is so sad. After a long moment of silence he tells her, "An idiot university professor gave me failing grades and I can no longer continue. I cannot live with the shame. I studied as hard as I could, but I could not remember the material. I worked harder than the students who got high grades did! I brought shame on myself and on my family."

Sara whispers to Learner, "What would Mr. Wise do with Samuel?"

Learner prays silently for wisdom, then gently assures Samuel, "You have been shamed but you did nothing wrong. God does not hold you guilty because you failed in the university. You did what you could. You do not need to kill yourself. Jesus Christ will come into your heart and remove the shame."

"If I do not die, I have to get even with the professor. He owns expensive equipment to detect chemicals. I will steal it from him. He will not be able to prove it was me who did it!"

"No, no!" Learner emphasizes. "That would be wrong! You must understand the difference between two kinds of shame. One is only a matter of feeling. The other comes from real guilt that deserves God's punishment! To fail a course brings only the first kind of shame, which is not evil. But to steal is real sin. It brings real guilt and deserves God's punishment!"

"I do not understand the difference."

"Let me explain a Bible story about **King Saul and Two Kinds of Shame.**"

Exercise

Find in **1 Sam. 20:27-34** what Learner helps Samuel to discover:

- Find in verse 30 why King Saul said that Jonathan shamed his family.
- Find in verse 34 in what way Saul treated David shamefully.
- Which man's shame was based on real guilt before God, Saul's or Jonathan's?

Learner explains to Samuel, "Jonathan felt shame but he had no guilt before God. He had done no wrong. His jealous and vengeful father king Saul felt no guilt even though he wanted to commit an evil crime. He wanted to kill an innocent man. He had a proud and sinful heart before God. Do you see the difference?"

"Yes! This helps! Failing the University course was shameful but not really evil. But wanting to steal from the professor is evil before God. I felt shame for what was not really evil, but I felt no shame for a sin for which I'm really guilty. I prayed last night that God would help me hurt the professor some way. I was wrong. But how can I face my parents? They spent much money to send me to the university."

"God will help you. First, confess your sins to God and ask His forgiveness. You know about Christ's sacrifice for sin. Now you know why you need it. Confessing sin is a vital part of prayer. To want to steal from the professor is real sin and brings real shame before God. You must confess it."

"I do not know how to confess sins to God. I've never done it."

"To acknowledge real shame, it helps to understand the difference between real guilt before God and our feelings of shame. We feel shame when a parent, a teacher or some person of authority rebukes us in public. We feel shame when we do something that causes people to think that we are bad or that our family is inferior. Such feelings of shame sometimes are not deserved. Circumstances make us look bad when we have done nothing wrong in God's sight. Now, let us pray together to confess your real sins. If you want, I will say a prayer of confession in Jesus' name, and you can repeat the words after me."

Samuel repeats the plea for forgiveness in Jesus' name after Learner. Once he starts talking to God he finds it easy and continues to pray and confess his sins in his own words. A few days later his faith and repentance are confirmed with baptism.

Shepherd's Storybook

Practical Work

- Use the stories in this section to teach your congregation to pray faithfully, alone and with their families.
- Help your congregation to pray for each other and for those in need. You may need to visit them in their homes, and pray with them to help them start.
- Prepare the congregation to pray for the sick and those who are oppressed by evil spirits.
- During worship lead the congregation in prayer for cities, countries and governments of the world.
- Help people who feel shame to confess their real guilt and trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, to bring them forgiveness and eternal life.

III-13 — Ministry 13

Be Good Stewards of God's Resources

Caregiver and his wife Carmen come to Learner's house to tell him, "Families are moving in from other parts of the country. Many live in rustic huts, not far, down the river. We should help them."

"Let us go see them." Learner replies.

They are looking at the pitiful huts that the people live in when they hear a bell tinkling. Mr. Foolish is pushing his cart rapidly toward them. He says, out of breath, "The police are soon going to drive these people away! They are on public property."

Caregiver exclaims, "What a shame! I will plead with the authorities for them."

"No!" Mr. Foolish disagrees, "Let these people leave! They take jobs away from workers who have always lived here. They have strange customs. They dress differently. You will cause trouble with the authorities again if you defend them. They are not your problem. If you want to help poor people, you can help me. I need a bicycle. Then I will be able to get around and invite more people to our church!"

Carmen groans.

"Here, look, Learner." Mr. Foolish holds up a small bottle of white powder. "Buy this elephant extract. Swallow a pinch a day and you will grow larger."

Caregiver says, "My uncle tried it and said that it did not even make his nose grow! Learner, we must help these who are desperately poor. I read in the Bible how God tells us to help those in need. It does no good just to hand them money. We must help them in other ways." He Tells the story of **Dorcas**.

Exercise

Find in **Acts 9:36-43**:

- What did the people say about Dorcas?
- Whom did Dorcas help?
- With what attitude did Dorcas and Peter serve others?

Caregiver explains to Learner and Mr. Foolish as they stand looking at the poor huts of the newly arrived families, "Dorcas helped the poor and the widows who had no one else to help them. Both she and Peter served others with humility. When Peter arrived, he sent everyone from the room, knelt, and prayed. God raised Dorcas from the dead."

Carmen adds, "We have an opportunity here to do much good for the Lord Jesus Christ. He commands us to give and to care for the needy."

"Yes!" Learner replies. "He tells us in Matthew 25:31-46 that what we do for these poor families in love, we do for Him. God promises rewards in heaven for those who help the needy out of love for Jesus. 1 John 3:17 says that if we neglect them, we do not have the love of God in our hearts. Our love shows that we are children of God."

Robbers of Time and Money

Learner continues, "God gives us opportunities to give to others and serve them. We should give generously of our money, our time and abilities. Sometimes we overlook opportunities to give to God. We spend our money foolishly. We waste our time on foolish conversations, arguments, worry or worthless activities. These things are robbers. They steal our time and money. We must plan how to use our time, our spiritual gifts and our money for God. We must give with prayer and faith so that we can fulfill our plans."

"Correct!" Learner affirms. "We must not be like the foolish builder in Luke 14:28-30. He could not finish his building because he failed to plan first."

Shepherd's Storybook

“These poor newcomers need our help.” Caregiver says, “The Bible reveals how God blessed those who aided people escaping from war, famine or oppression. Let us plan now to help these needy people. One example is the story of **Ruth the Faithful Young Widow.**”

Exercise

Find in the book of **Ruth**:

- In chapter 1, how did Ruth show courage and faith in God?
- In chapter 2, how did Boaz show kindness to a foreign widow?
- In chapter 3, how did the two widows take initiative in resolving their problem?
- In chapter 4, how did Boaz risk his own estate to help someone else?
- In chapter 4, what good things did God cause to happen to Ruth as a result of Boaz' kindness?

Carmen exclaims, “I see! The book of Ruth teaches both the needy and the rich how to act. Ruth had no income and no one to defend her against oppression. She was very poor. Nevertheless, she stayed faithful to God and to her mother-in-law. She was not lazy. She worked hard to gather grain in the fields of Boaz. She was brave. She followed Naomi's counsel and took the initiative to ask Boaz to defend her rights as an Israelite widow.”

Learner adds, “Boaz, on the other hand, was wealthy. He could have ignored Ruth. Instead, he was kind to her. He let her gather grain freely and kept his workers from harming her. He fulfilled his duty as a kinsman-redeemer even for a poor, foreign widow. At risk to his own property, Boaz took Ruth as his wife. God blessed this kindness. David and Jesus were descendents of Ruth and Boaz. The story of Ruth is an illustration of how Jesus redeemed all believers to be His bride. He is our Redeemer. He saves us in our need. Whenever we defend those in need, as Boaz defended Ruth and Naomi, we imitate Christ.”

Two Main Jobs for the Congregation

Learner continues, “I have read how Christ's people change the world. It has two main tasks. They are like the two legs that carry us. One job is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The other is to serve people in love. All the horrible things in our world, like poverty, suffering and war, came because of sin. They continue because sin rules our lives. When we repent and come to God, He breaks the hold of sin and begins to heal us of sin's effects.”

They watch two men fight. One accuses the other, “You stole my beer!”

“We also have to tell these needy people about Jesus,” Carmen reasons.

“We will do both,” Learner says, “We shall work together as a church body. Jesus will break the hold of violence, poverty and corruption. When people turn to God, they give Him everything: their time, their jobs, and their families. We no longer live for ourselves. We stop stealing from each other and hurting each other. We begin to serve each other in love. If we are poor, we remain faithful and work hard like Ruth. Those who are wealthy or powerful must not serve themselves. Like Boaz, they must serve others, so that everyone will be treated fairly and live in peace. Let us talk with those men before they kill each other and find how we can help them to solve their real problems.”

Mr. Foolish says, “I refuse to go near them. They have diseases.” He pushes his cart back up the street, ringing the bell.

The next day Learner and Caregiver meet with the other elders and plan to help the new families. They pray for God's help and for the needy people. They visit them several times to find out what they need most. They work together with them to build a well because the river water contains amoebas. Helper arranges for employment for some of the men and schooling for their children. Carmen understands their dialect, which is somewhat different, and teaches the women to speak the local dialect. She translates for them when they talk to doctors or government officials.

The new families respond in gratitude. They embrace the good news about Jesus. Helper and Caregiver start a congregation and train several of the men as leaders. Helper helps them write songs about their faith and to sing in their own unique music style. In a few months more come to Christ than in all the other congregations.

Shepherd's Storybook

Practical Work

- Use the stories in this section to help your people serve the needy in the name of Jesus.
- Help those with the spiritual gift of compassion to organize ministries to help the people that no one else wants to help in your community. These might include immigrants, refugees, widows, orphans, alcoholics or drug addicts, those in jail and people in great economic stress.
- Find ways to help those in need take the initiative to resolve their problems.
- Work for justice for mistreated people, even at risk to you.
- Let only honest people be responsible for the offerings of the congregation and help them keep good accounting records.
- Instruct the treasurer never to loan money or give it to anyone without the elders' approval.

III-14 — Ministry 14

Send Missionaries

Mr. Wise visits Learner again, after several months. Learner tells Mr. Wise, “You have taught us how to teach! I thank you! You showed how to listen before we start teaching, in order to teach what the new congregations really need. You showed us how to use stories, so our apprentices remember God's truth and pass it on to others. You showed us how to ask questions about what you taught, to help us think it through and apply it to our congregations.”

“I only taught you the way that Jesus did.”

Mr. Wise and Learner visit his brother Helper, and find Mr. Foolish at his house. He tells Mr. Wise, “Learner has treated me badly so now I attend Helper's congregation.”

Mr. Wise tells them, “I am moving to a part of the country where there are no churches, to begin the Lord's work. I am forming a task group, and came to ask you, Helper, to join me. You have started a congregation with people from another culture and raised up leaders in it. God has given you the gift and the desire to start congregations. You are a 'sent one.' That is what the word 'apostle' means. We will learn a new language and a new culture.”

“You can not take Helper!” Mr. Foolish protests, “He has responsibilities here, and much work to do! Besides, the congregation is too poor to support him as a missionary. After we are more firmly established as a church we can think about sending missionaries. We have enough pagans here to worry about.”

Learner disagrees. “This is a great opportunity for Helper to take the gospel to people who have never heard it. God promised Abraham that through his descendents all nations would be blessed. This promise comes true in Jesus Christ, the descendant of Abraham. Jesus said in Matthew 24:10 that the end of the world and His final coming will happen after the gospel is preached to every nation. He did not mean political nations, but ethnic groups—people of the same culture.”

“Yes!” Mr. Wise concurs. “Jesus said in Acts 1:8 that we are to be His witnesses in places both near and far, in our own and other cultures. His last command to us in Matthew 28:18-20, is to make disciples of all the nations of the world. God blesses the congregations that obey His commands. He loves all the people of the world and wants them to know Him through Jesus Christ, His Son. Let me tell you about **Jonah, the Reluctant Missionary**, who at first thought like Mr. Foolish about reaching other cultures.”

God Will Save People from All Nations of the World

Exercise

Find in the book of **Jonah**:

- What did the Israelite prophet do when God gave him a message for an enemy city?
- How did God make His will prevail, even when the missionary refused to go where he was sent?
- In what way does this story show God's love for even the most sinful nations of the world?

“This is dangerous talk!” Mr. Foolish cries, as he listens to Mr. Wise, Learner and Helper, in Helper's house. “We do not need to go to distant lands to find people who need to repent from their sins!”

Mr. Wise continues to explain, “Jonah refused to preach to an enemy nation. He took a ship in the opposite direction. God sent a storm and then a fish to bring him back. Jonah learned the hard way that he must do God's will. God cared about the bad people of Nineveh just as He cares about all the people of the world. When they repented, God forgave them just as He forgives all who repent and turn to Him. God gives us love for people even when they are different from us. He sends us to take them the good news and blesses us when we go willingly. If we do not go as He commands, He will reach those people in another way, but we will not receive this special blessing.”

Shepherd's Storybook

Mr. Wise says to Helper's wife Rachel, "God has given you both the spiritual gift of being able to love and communicate with people of other cultures. Please go with me. Helper, you are poor, and I do not expect your congregation, which is also poor, to pay you a salary. It should help some, as should the other congregations that God has raised up in this area. My plan is for you and me to go and work as agents for a business that has offered us employment there. We will earn our living just as the apostle Paul did in Acts 18. Paul's friends, Priscilla and Aquila, gave him employment making tents. We have Christian friends who are like Priscilla and Aquila. They will provide employment for us where we start congregations."

How to Take the Good News to People of Another Culture

Rachel says, "I do not know how to work with people of a very different culture."

Mr. Wise explains, "We do it in the same way God that came into our culture. Think of Jesus' incarnation. God sent Jesus as a missionary to tell us the good news. He did not come as a king even though He deserved the worship of everyone. He left His glorious place in heaven and came as a helpless baby. He learned the Jewish culture as a young boy. When He taught, people listened, not because He was powerful or famous. They listened because they knew that His words came from God. Those that did not like what He said killed Him. Because of His love for us, He endured all these things. He could not have saved us any other way."

"But how do they do that?" Mr. Foolish asks. "They cannot become children again and grow up in a new culture!"

"Mr. Wise responds, "We cannot become children but we can enter the other culture in a childlike way. We humble ourselves as Jesus did, and learn the language and culture from the people. We let them teach us. We build trust and loving relationships, like Ruth did, when she moved into another culture, that of Israel. She bonded with the Israelites because she loved them, starting with her mother-in-law Naomi.

Helper adds, "When we know the people well, we will know how to relate the good news in words that they understand. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that for the Jews he became like a Jew, and for the other nations he became like them. He became like others as much as possible, to win them to Christ. I think it will be fun!"

Mr. Wise says, "I brought a study for you. It lists how missionaries can imitate the incarnation of Christ like Paul did:

- a Go live among people; live as they live, except for the sin.
- b Get a helper, to help you learn the language.
- c Choose a few sentences in their language to learn each day.
- d Go walking and practice these sentences with fifty people that you can find that day.
- e When you know their language well enough, begin telling Bible stories about God and His Son, Jesus.
- f Focus on the receptive people and leave the resistant ones for another time.
- g Speak to the heads of households. This makes it easier for entire families to come to Christ."

Mr. Wise continues to explain to Helper and Rachel, "When people from another culture come to Christ, we must be careful to teach them the commands of Christ and the apostles and not our own traditions. Let them develop their own traditions as they grow. If we introduce anything besides the Bible to them, we will confuse them. They will follow our traditions instead of Christ. Most traditions are good, but when we take traditions from one culture to another, they almost always cause harm. We will simply tell them about Christ and baptize those who repent and ask God for forgiveness in the name of Jesus. Then we will gather them as a church body to worship God and serve Him in love."

"Let us start as soon as possible!" Helper says happily, "As soon as there is a group of baptized believers, we will teach them the basic elements of worship—praise, prayer, confession of sin and the Lord's Supper, the Word, giving and fellowship. I will teach them to sing praises with their own cultural musical style. We will help them to obey all the commands of Christ. We will give them the tools to study and apply the Scriptures, just as you did for us, Mr. Wise. Those that shepherd their own families we will appoint as elders for the new congregations."

Shepherd's Storybook

Rachel agrees enthusiastically and Mr. Wise concludes, "When we train the new elders we will leave. We will continue to visit them occasionally to mentor their leaders, but we will not lead their congregations. God will raise up leaders among them quickly, as He did in Acts, and we will train them."

Missionaries Face New Customs

Mr. Foolish scoffs, "You cannot form churches until you have money to pay their pastors and build a chapel."

"We discussed this many times." Mr. Wise answers. "When money is lacking, we do not let that stop the Lord's work. We keep meeting in homes. There must be over a million tiny but healthy house churches in the world today, like the one that met in the home of Philemon. Paul greeted them in Philemon 2.

"You cannot form new churches so fast!" Mr. Foolish continues to argue. Those people are very different from us. They would introduce their strange customs into the new churches, just like all those outsiders down the river. They sing music in a different way that hurts my ears and eat foods that I would not touch. They do not use our ceremonies and celebrations. People of other cultures must learn all of our customs before they can be Christians!"

Mr. Wise sighs sadly, "I am very sorry that you do not understand God's grace, Mr. Foolish. We do not worship a list of rituals and traditions. We worship Christ and serve Him in love as He commanded. Let us review the story again of **The First Church Council**."

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapter 15**:

- What did some Jewish believers teach that denied God's grace in the Antioch culture?
- What does God require us to do to be saved?
- How did God show that all people can be saved without leaving their culture?
- Even though they were not under the law, what were the Gentile Christians to do to avoid offending their believing Jewish brothers who still followed the Old Testament law?
- How did the council encourage the believers?

Mr. Foolish walks away. He never again attends any of the congregations.

Mr. Wise continues to instruct Helper and Rachel concerning missionary work. "The book of Acts records three missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. When his own people, the Jews, rejected Paul's message about Christ, he went to the Gentiles who receive it. Some Jewish believers said that the Gentiles should follow all the Jewish traditions to be saved. Paul and Barnabas disagreed sharply with that. They said that God does not require us to follow any laws or traditions to be saved. God saves us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ just as we are. We do not have to change our culture."

Sara says, "Mr. Wise, we will gladly respect other cultures where we serve as missionaries."

"I knew you would. The apostle Peter reminded the Council in Jerusalem of his visit to Cornelius and his people. They were Gentiles, but when they turned to God, He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. That proved to the apostles that God had accepted them as they were, without having to adopt Jewish customs. Peter and his Jewish helpers rejoiced and baptized them that same day. The Council decided not to impose the law of Moses of the Old Testament on the Gentiles. Instead, they asked the Gentiles to avoid offending their Jewish neighbors. All the believers were encouraged, because this kept Christ's church united. It was united, not because everyone followed the same traditions, but because they were all saved by faith in Christ and could freely follow different traditions. Do you remember **Peter's Vision**?"

Exercise

Find in **Acts chapter 10**:

- How many times did God tell Peter to rise, kill and eat animals that were forbidden by his culture?
- This vision helped Peter to deal with another culture. How did God want Peter to treat the visitors?
- What does Peter's vision and actions tell us about accepting people with different traditions?

Shepherd's Storybook

"I see," Helper says. "We give the same freedom to people of other cultures that the apostle Paul gave them on his missionary journeys. We will not require them to learn our language or follow our customs or use our style of music. We will teach them to turn to God who forgives and accepts them as they are. He will give them the gift of the Holy Spirit just as He gave us when we turned to Him. The Holy Spirit will guide them into all truth. He will convict them of sin. He will show them what customs are helpful and what customs deny the Lordship of Christ."

"We will send you and Rachel," Learner tells Helper. "We will lay hands on you and send you with our blessing. We will pray for you faithfully during worship and in our small groups. We will help support you with gifts of love and visit you if we can. You will be God's ambassadors to those people, and we will be your partners in God's work. Please send reports to us often so that we can rejoice in everything the Lord does and pray for help when there are problems. Although the new congregations you start may not look like this congregation in external things, we will all be one body in Christ. He unites us, not by language, culture or traditions, but by His Holy Spirit within us."

All the new congregations of the area meet in secret one night in a secluded place out of sight of the authorities. They pray and lay hands on Helper and Rachel, to commission them to go with Mr. Wise and make disciples of Christ in a distant land.

The three sent ones travel to the new area and live with families that help them learn the language. They work hard to earn their living. They do the things that they learned from the stories about the apostles. The people trust them, because they work hard and reflect Jesus in their lives. Helper sends back a report to his congregation. "Many people are receiving Christ. We baptized a good number today. Their customs are very different but God blesses our work when we respect their culture and customs."

The report brings joy and great encouragement to the congregations that sent Helper and Rachel. The Spirit of God works through them to reproduce many new congregations where there were none, just as He did with Mr. Wise when he began training Learner to be a leader of God's people.

Practical Work

- Find out which groups of people in the world still lack healthy congregations and arrange for your congregation to pray for these people regularly.
- Ask God to show the congregation whom He has given the spiritual gift for working with people of other cultures.
- Make plans to support missionaries with prayer and giving.
- Train your missionaries to imitate the incarnation of Christ when they enter another culture, by learning it like little children, and identifying with the people. If possible, let them practice this first with people of another culture who live nearby.
- Train them to accept the customs of other cultures that do not deny the Lordship of Christ.
- Train your missionaries to plant healthy congregations and prepare the leaders.
- Set apart these people as missionaries as the Antioch church set apart Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1-3, to repeat the cycle of church reproduction over again.

End of Section III

Section IV

Bible Stories from the Old and New Testaments and Corresponding Doctrines

Bible references to stories are in **bold face type**.

Historical Events in the Time of the Ancient Patriarchs, with Similar Later Events and Related Doctrines

IV-1 **Creation** (Related: *new creation, regeneration, rebirth*)

[Old Testament] **God created the physical, temporary universe**, Gen. 1-2.

[New Testament] **God begins His new creation, which is spiritual, eternal, and without sin:**

- Jesus' resurrection, in which believers participate, begins the New Creation. **Matt. 28.**
- It will be complete with the new heavens and earth that await us, **Rev. 21 -22.**
- We are reborn spiritually into it (Jesus with Nicodemus), **John 3:1-7.**

[Our response] **Give thanks to God for the good things He created for us in the old creation.**

- Proclaim with joy that we enter God's new, spiritual and eternal creation by participating in Jesus' resurrection, who was the first fruits of the new creation, (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:17). There is no other way (John 14:6).

IV-2 **Temptation** (Related: *original sin, death, Adam, Satan, Jesus defeats Satan and death*)

[OT] **The first Adam yields to Satan's temptation and disobeys God, bringing death upon man and separation from the holy God (original sin):** Gen. 3.

[NT] **The final Adam Jesus spurns Satan's temptation, bringing life and reconciling mankind with God:**

- Jesus the "final Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) resists Satan's temptations, **Matt. 4.**
- Jesus, living in us, enables us to resist Satan and overcome the world, **John 16 - 17.**
- Jesus obeys the Father's will in Gethsemane, even to death (the supreme test), **Matt. 26:36-42.**

[Our response] **Confess our sins to God and repent (1 John 1:8-10).**

- Resist Satan, using the armor of God in the power of the Holy Spirit (James 4:7; Eph. 6).

IV-3 **Cain and Abel** (Related: *blood sacrifice, blood of Christ*)

[OT] **Old Testament worship required the shed blood of an innocent victim:**

- The first murderer Cain slew Abel when God rejected his bloodless offering but accepted Abel's, **Gen. 4.**
- God slew the High Priest's sons who entered His presence without the blood, **Lev. 10.**

[NT] **New Testament worship includes the blood of Christ the eternal 'Lamb of God':**

- Jesus shocks the Jews saying we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, **John 6:26-59.**
- Jesus tells a Samaritan woman that we must worship God in Spirit and in truth, **John 4.**

Shepherd's Storybook

[Our response] **Worship God with sincere hearts, remembering Jesus' blood sacrifice for our sins (Matt. 26:26-28).**

- Celebrate Communion the way He requires (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:27-32).
- We can praise God with our lips until we are hoarse, but if we do not obey Him our praise is vain (Matt. 15:6-9).

IV-4 Noah (Related: *flood, repentance, punishment, judgment, second death*)

[OT] **God sent a flood to punish the wicked human race with physical death (Noah), Gen. 6 - 9.**

[NT] **God warns of a “second death” if we fail to repent--eternal separation from God in hell:**

- John the Baptist calls men to repent, in preparation for Christ the promised Messiah, **Matt. 3.**
- God punishes unrepentant sinners in the lake of fire (final judgment and 'second death'), **Rev. 20:11-15.**

[Our response] **Let our Heavenly Father's compassion and kindness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).**

- Repent from our sins and believe in Christ (Mark 1:15).

IV-5 Babel (Related: *races, cultures, languages*)

[OT] **God created races and different cultures at the tower of Babel:**

- Men tried to remain united in one proud society but God separated them into many languages, **Gen. 10.**

[NT] **All races and cultures praise God before His eternal throne in glory, Rev. 7:9-17.**

[Our response] **Trust in God, not in man's political power (Zechariah 4:6).**

- Appreciate the different races and cultures, which are recognizable in heaven throughout eternity. Their God-given variety beautifies the Bride of Christ--people of all nations, tribes and languages (Rev. 7:9-12).
- Make disciples of all nations (cultural people groups, Matt. 28:18-20).

IV-6 God's Promise to Abraham (Related: *promise, faith, covenant*)

[OT] **God promised to bless all nations in a descendant of the believer Abraham:**

- Abraham believed God, who counted his faith as righteousness, and God promised the blessings through the believer Abraham's seed--a descendant, and seals it with a serious covenant, **Gen. 12:1-7; Gen. 15.**
- God promised Abraham a son through a miraculous birth, and Abraham believes Him, **Gen. 15:1-6.**

[NT] **God fulfills His promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed Christ, who saves from sin and heals:**

- Mary accepts to give birth in a miraculous way to a Son and her Savior, **Luke 1:26-56.**
- Jesus heals a demonized man and many others because they have faith, **Mark 1: 21-34.**
- Jesus heals, and forgives the sins of, a paralytic because of the faith of his caring friends, **Mark 2:1-12.**
- God pours out His Holy Spirit on Jews from many nations, who receive Christ (Pentecost), **Act 2.**
- God pours out His Holy Spirit on gentiles, opening the way for all races to be saved, **Acts 10:44-48.**

[Our response] **We receive God's forgiveness through faith, not by our own merits (Eph. 2:8-10).**

- We are Abraham's heirs. We receive the blessing promised to him, by believing as he did (Gal. 3:6-12; 4:21-31).

Shepherd's Storybook

- We witness for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to people of all nations (Acts 1:8).
- We pray for physical healing in Jesus' name (James 5:14-16).
- Allow God to heal or give us another form of grace instead, as He did for Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-10--God does not heal everybody, or no one would die and be with Him in heaven!)

IV-7 Abraham's Faith (Related: *faith, Islam, Isaac*)

[OT] Abraham's faith led to good works and God's promises that gave the basis for both the Old and New Testaments:

- Abraham let his selfish nephew Lot choose the richest grazing lands, **Gen. 13**.
- Abraham by faith took his workers to battle against five kings to rescue Lot, **Gen. 14**.
- Abraham's faith resulted in the birth of Isaac, through whom God established His covenant of grace, **Gen. 21**.
- God tested Abraham's faith, telling him to offer his only son Isaac--the heir of the promise--as a sacrifice, **Gen. 22**.
- In a temporary lapse of faith Abraham tried to fulfill God's covenant of grace by his own efforts **Gen. 16 - 17**. The result is that Arab Muslim descendants of Hagar's illegitimate son Ishmael still fight against Abraham's descendants through Sara.

[NT] Jesus requires faith for us to be born again, receive healing, and find God's blessings:

- Jesus explains to Nicodemus that by faith we must be born again of the Spirit, **John 3**.
- Jesus heals the servant of a believing army captain, **Matt. 8:5-17**.
- Jesus heals two blind men because of their faith, **Matt. 9:27-38**.

[Our response] Our salvation by faith results in good works, or our faith is not genuine (Eph. 2:8-10; James 1:22-24).

- Resist the doubts such as caused Abraham to try to fulfill God's covenant of grace by his own works, which led to Ishmael's birth and, through his Arab descendants, gave rise to Islam, the world's most legalistic religion (Gal. 3:6-12; Gal. 4:21-31)
- Seek daily renewal--pray and read God's Word daily--let God's Holy Spirit renew us day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

IV-8 Abraham's Stewardship (Related: *giving*)

[OT] God rewarded good stewards of what He had given them in the Old Testament:

- Abraham gave tithes of property recaptured from raiders to the Christ-like priest Melchizedek, and refused to take any of the property of the captors, **Gen. 14:11-24**.
- Boaz instructed his reapers to leave grain on purpose for the poor gatherer, Ruth, **Ruth 2**.

[NT] God promises treasure in heaven for those who give generously for His work and for those in need:

- The poor widow gave even though she needed the coins for her own living, **Luke 21:1-4**.
- Barnabas sold his property and gave it to those in need, **Acts 4:33-37**.
- The Good Samaritan cares for his enemy, **Luke 10:25-37**.
- Jesus illustrates good stewardship with His parable of the faithful stewards, **Luke 19:11-27**.
- Jesus illustrates bad stewardship with His parable of the unfaithful steward, **Luke 16:1-8**.

[Our response] Be good stewards and manage well what God has given us, whether money or goods (1 Cor. 4:2).

- Give cheerfully. God does not want what we give grudgingly (2 Cor. 9:6-15).

IV-9 Abraham's Prayer of Intercession (Related: *faith, intercession, healing*)

[OT] God answered prayers of faith in the Old Testament:

- Abraham's magnificent prayer of intercession for Lot and his family (Sodom and Gomorrah), **Gen. 18 - 19.**
- Solomon's magnificent prayer of dedication of God's temple and His people, **2 Chron. 6; 7:1-4.**
- Ezra's magnificent prayer of confession of sin on behalf of his people, and the results (renewal), **Ezra 9; Ezra 10:1-19.**

[NT] God answers our prayers of faith:

- Peter and John heal a lame man by praying in Jesus' name--and are jailed for it, **Acts 3 - 4.**
- A Father's simple prayer for faith and healing of his demon-oppressed son, **Mark 9:14-29.**
- The sinful tax collector's brief prayer, **Luke 18:9-14.**
- Jesus tells us how to pray (including the Lord's Prayer--'Our Father'), **Matt. 6:1-15.**
- Jesus prays for His apostles and for us, **John 17.**
- Jesus yields in prayer to the will of His Father, to give His life for us, **Matt. 26:36-46.**

[Our response] **Jesus tells us to pray in His name, so that our joy may be full (John 16:24).**

- The apostle Paul tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Theses. 5:17).
- The apostle John tells us to confess our sins to God (1 John 1:8-10).

IV-10 Isaac's Bride Rebecca (Related: *Isaac, Pentecost, Holy Spirit*)

[OT] Abraham sent his servant afar to seek a believing bride--Rebecca--for his son Isaac, Gen. 24.

[NT] God sends the Holy Spirit to seek a believing bride--the church--for His Son Jesus:

- Jesus promises the Comforter, who will convince us of sin and reveal Christ to us, **John 14:15-26; John 16:7-16.**
- The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost and the first church is started among the Jews, **Acts 2.**
- The Holy Spirit comes to the gentiles and the first gentile church is born in Cornelius' house, **Acts 10.**

[Our response] **Seek those that God has chosen to be His bride, the faithful, even in distant lands (Matt. 28:19-20).**

IV-11 Jacob Receives God's Grace (Related: *Jacob, Esau, faith, salvation by faith*)

[OT] The sovereign God granted grace to those He chose, not because of their good works:

- Jacob deceived his brother Esau but still receives God's blessing, **Gen. 27 - 33.**
- This long story provides insight into ancient Hebrew culture, before they receive God's law:
- Jacob deceitfully robbed Esau of his birthright, **Gen. 27.**
- Jacob worshipped God and saw a ladder to heaven; God repeated to Jacob promises made to Abraham. **Gen. 28.**
- God punished Jacob's deceit--Laban deceived him, **Gen. 29.**

Because of Jacob's faith God blessed him with wealth and children, even though he did bad things, **Gen. 30.**

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- God protected Jacob from the wrath of both Laban and Esau; Jacob wrestles with an angel, **Gen. 31 33.**

[NT] Jesus forgives and blesses bad people because of their faith, not their works:

- Jesus forgives a sinful woman, **Luke 7:36-50.**
- Jesus explains with a parable that God calls both good and bad to feast with Him, **Matt. 22:1-10.**
- Jesus eats and drink with sinners, whom He came to save, and is criticized, **Luke 5:27-32.**

Shepherd's Storybook

[Our response] **Thank God for forgiving us because of our faith, not our deeds (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:10-18).**

- Take the good news of salvation to bad people as well as good, because Jesus came to seek the lost (Luke 5:32).

IV-12 Joseph Forgives (Related: *forgiveness, intercession, Jesus our advocate*)

[OT] **Joseph served as the advocate for the sons of Israel who had wronged him:**

- Joseph gained power and pleads with Pharaoh for his brothers who sold into slavery, **Gen. 37** and **Gen. 39 - 45**.
- This is a long story and you may deal with it in small parts. It contains lessons on forgiveness, purity, family ties, intercession and God's provision. Joseph's was a prophetic figure of Christ:
- He was a shepherd,
beloved by His father,
sold by His brothers the sons of Israel,
resisted temptation,
imprisoned unjustly
raised up again to a place of honor at the right hand of the king
interceded for his brothers,
reunited with them at a glorious banquet.

[NT] **Jesus serves as our advocate before the Father, even though we have sinned against Him:**

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, **Luke 15:1-10**.
- Jesus prays to His Father to forgive those who crucify Him, **Luke 23**.
- Jesus tells His disciples why we must forgive others, **Matthew 18:15-35**.

[Our response] **Pray in Jesus' name--He is our advocate with the Father, pleading for us (John 16:24; Rom. 8:33-39).**

- Forgive those who sin against us (Matt. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:32).

Events in the Time of Moses the Lawgiver with Similar Later Events

IV-13 God Prepares Moses the Liberator (Related: *liberation, sin, redemption, Communion, Lord's Supper, Eucharist*)

[OT] **God prepared a deliverer to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt and bring forth a new, holy nation:**

- Miraculous events surrounded the birth of Moses, and the attempt to kill him, Exodus 1 - 2.
- God prepared Moses in Midian to be a leader of his people, called him from a burning bush to return to Egypt and free His people, and gave Him miraculous powers to do so, Exodus 2 - 4.
- Moses' first miracle was to convert water into blood--a curse upon Egypt's false gods, Exodus 7:13-25.

[NT] **God provides a savior to lead His people from the slavery of sin.**

- Miraculous events surround the birth of Jesus, and the attempt to kill Him, Matt. 1:18-25; Matt. 2.
- Jesus' preparation and baptism, and recognition by the Father that He is God's beloved Son, Matt. 3:13-17.
- Jesus' first miracle was to convert water into wine--a blessing, John 2.

[Our response] **trust in our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ to forgive and bring God's blessing (John 3:16).**

IV-14 Passover Lamb (Related: *Eucharist, Communion, lamb's blood, blood, sacrifice, resurrection*)

Shepherd's Storybook

[OT] **God instituted the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) for Israel**, Exodus 12.

Notice:

- It was to help His people remember throughout the ages how He delivered them from slavery in Egypt.
- The death angel saw the blood on the doorposts and passed over the houses of those who believed in God.

[NT] **Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper to affirm His New Covenant in His blood**, Luke 22.

- We do this to help us remember throughout the ages how He delivered us from sin by shedding His blood.

[Our response] **We take part in Jesus' body and blood when we celebrate this new Passover feast (1 Cor. 10:16-17).**

IV-15 Deliverance from Slavery (Related: *slavery, resurrection, immortality, Red Sea*)

[OT] **God led Israel out of slavery through the Red Sea--the basis for the Old Covenant**, Exodus 12 - 13.

[NT] **Jesus leads us out of the slavery of sin and death by His resurrection from the dead**, Luke 24:

- Christ gives us eternal life because believers join Him in His resurrection, **John 11**.

[Our response] **We trust Christ alone--the only life-giver--to give us immortality (1 Cor. 15).**

IV-16 God Provides Manna and Water (Related: *water of life, eternal life, manna, immortality, bread of life, eternal life*)

[OT] **Moses provided food and water in the desert through God's miracles:**

- God provided manna to eat, from heaven, **Exodus 17:1-7**.
- God provided water, from a rock, **Num. 20:1-12**.

[NT] **Jesus provides the bread of life (His own body) and the water of life (the Holy Spirit) to believers:**

- Jesus feeds 5,000 miraculously, and then offers His flesh as bread from heaven for eternal life, offending many, **John 6**.
- Jesus promises God's Holy Spirit, to live in us, **John 7:37-39**, and counsel us, **John 14:15-26**.

[Our response] **Seek the true bread from heaven, not material, and receive God's Spirit (Matt. 6:31-34; John 20:21-23).**

IV-17 God Provides Shepherds for His people (Related: *elders, Jethro*)

[OT] **God provided elders to shepherd His people in the Old Testament**, Exodus 18:12-27.

[NT] **God provides elders to shepherd His churches**, Acts 14 (notice verse 23).

[Our response] **Church planters name elders in new fields that lack experienced leaders (Titus 1:5-9).**

- We obey the leaders that watch over us in God's congregations (Heb. 13:17)

IV-18 Ten Commandments (Related: *Old Covenant, New Covenant, Jesus' Commands, law*)

[OT] **God engraved Ten Commandments in stone--the basis for Israel's conduct**, Exodus 19 - 20; Exodus 31:18.

- God promises a New Covenant--His laws will be written in men's heart instead of on stone, **Jeremiah 31:31-34**.
- Those who disobeyed the Old Testament law were put to death, **Num. 25:1-11**.

Shepherd's Storybook

[NT] Jesus tells us to obey His commands--the basis for our conduct in the New Covenant, Matt. 28:18-20. we do:

- Jesus is the rock foundation; obedience to His words is the only way we build on it **Matt. 7: 24-29**.
- The first church obeyed all of Jesus' commands in their most basic form, **Acts 2:37-47**:
- They repented, believed, and received the Holy Spirit, Mark 1:15; John 3:16; 20:22.
 - They were baptized and began the new transformed life that it initiates, Matthew 28:18-20.
 - They loved one another, as seen in their fellowship and care for the needy. Love includes God, our neighbor, fellow disciples, the needy--in a practical way--and enemies (forgive), Matt. 22:36-40; John 13:34-35, Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 5:43-48.
 - They broke bread (Communion, related to our worship), Matthew 26:26-28; John 4:24.
 - They prayed (this includes private and family devotions, intercession and spiritual warfare), John 16:24.
 - They gave (this includes stewardship of our time, treasure and talents), Luke 6:38.
 - They made disciples (this includes witnessing for Christ, shepherding, teaching the Word, training leaders and sending missionaries), Matthew 28:18-20.
- Jesus' main commands for us are to love God and man, which sum up all the Old Testament laws, **Matt. 22:33-40**.
- Jesus rebukes Pharisees enforcing commands of men and neglecting commands of God, **Mark 7:1-23; Matt. 23**.

[Our response] We are now led by the Holy Spirit, who produces the fruit of holiness in us (Rom. 8:3-16; Gal. 5:14-26).

- We avoid the legalism of the old law of death, and embrace the New Covenant of life and freedom (2 Cor. 3:3-18).
- Let the Holy Spirit convince us of our sin (John 16:5-15).

IV-19 Sabbath Rest (Related: *legalism, law*)

[OT] God's old covenant had a special day of rest and worship:

- God set apart the seventh day, looking back at His rest after the old physical creation, **Exodus 20:8-11**.
- God commanded His people to slay a man who gathered firewood on the Sabbath day: **Num. 15:30-36**.

[NT] God's new covenant has a special day of worship:

- Believers worshipped on the first day, when Jesus rose again, looking forward to the new, eternal creation, **Acts 20:7**.
- Jesus announces the new covenant, **Luke 22:13-20**.

[Our response] We follow the New Covenant. It liberates us from the law of death, which we could not fulfill (2 Cor 3:6-9).

- We avoid the legalism of old law, which required circumcision and keeping special days (Gal. 4:8-10; Gal. 5:5-14).
- We are free to worship on any day: (Rom. 14:1-18).

IV-20 Idolatry Punished (Related: *golden calf, greed*)

[OT] God punished those who worshipped the golden calf, Exodus 32.

[NT] God will punish with terrible plagues those who worship idols, at the end of the age, Rev. 9.

[Our response] Flee from idolatry of any form, which includes greed (1 Cor. 10:14; Col. 3:5).

IV-21 Unbelief Leaves Israel Wandering (Related: *disobedience, Promised Land, Agrippa*)

Shepherd's Storybook

[OT] **God offered the Israelites the blessings of the Promised Land but for lack of faith they failed to possess it:**

- Twelve spies probed the land, but the people feared to do so and wandered in the desert for 40 years, **Num. 13 - 14.**

[NT] **The apostle Paul offers the message of salvation to King Agrippa, who refuses to believe, Acts 26.**

[Our response] **We seek the Lord while He may be found, Isaiah 55:6-7.**

IV-22 The Tabernacle (Related: *Tabernacle, sanctuary, priesthood,, High Priest, Jesus our high priest*)

[OT] **God ordered Moses to erect a sanctuary where He would meet with His people, in the Most Holy Place:**

- God gave strict instructions for making this tabernacle and the clothing of the priests, **Exodus 25 - 31, Exodus 35 - 40.**
- The entire book of Leviticus explains the sacrifices and priests service in the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary had three parts, each with its furnishings, listed below, **Exodus 40.**
 - 1) The outer court for worshippers. It had an altar for burnt offerings, and a water tank for priests to wash (Exodus 38). The altar symbolized the cross of Christ and His sacrifice that gained eternal salvation and ended the need for animal sacrifices (Heb. 9 -10). The tank may be compared to baptism, by which all believers wash and become priests of the New Covenant.
 - 2) The Holy Place for priests only. It had a table with the 'bread of the Presence' (a figure of the Lord's Supper), a gold lamp that kept burning always with oil (a figure of the Holy Spirit) and an altar of incense (a figure of prayer).
 - 3) The Most Holy place--only the high priest could enter, once a year. A huge red veil, symbolizing Christ's flesh, separated it. It held the most sacred Ark of the Covenant, a box overlaid with gold, with cherubim (holy angels) on top. God's visible glory glowed above it--indicating the presence of God among His people, symbolizing Jesus.
- The people offered blood sacrifices as a temporary atonement for their sins, in the tabernacle court, **Exodus 29:36-41.**
- The High Priest's sons offered strange fire, without the blood, in the Most Holy Place and God slew them, **Lev. 10.**
- Only the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year to offer a blood atonement for God's people, **Lev. 16.**
- King Solomon centuries later replaced the tabernacle, a huge portable tent, with a magnificent temple, **1 Kings 5 - 6.**

[NT] **Jesus, by His death, resurrection and ascension, entered the heavenly tabernacle as our High Priest:**

- Jesus, by becoming a man, being tempted and suffering, became our perfect High Priest, **Heb. 2:14-18.**
- Jesus, who lives forever, replaces the old High Priest and all the related sacrifices and services, **Heb. 7 - 9.**

[Our response] **Draw near to God with confidence, persevere and encourage other believers (Heb. 10).**

IV-23 The Greatest Command—Love the One True God (Related: *children, marriage*)

[OT] **God is One—we are to love Him with our whole hearts and instruct our children to obey His laws, Deut. 6:1-9.**

[NT] **Jesus gives instructions for marriage and blesses little children, Matthew 5:31-32; Matt. 19:13-15.**

[Our response] **Husbands are to love their wives, who are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:21-33).**

- Paul instructs children to obey their parents, and fathers to instruct their children in the faith (Eph. 6:1-4).

IV-24 Witchcraft Forbidden (Related: *spirits, occult, Jesus overcomes evil spirits, demons, Satan's destruction*)

[OT] **God told Moses to forbid witchcraft, contact with the dead or talking with spirits,** Deut. 18:9-12.

- King Saul consulted with the Witch of Endor about a battle and God ended his reign, **1 Sam. 28:6-25; 1 Sam. 31.**

[NT] **Christ overcomes all evil spirits, including Satan:**

- Jesus casts many demons out of the Gadarene men, and into pigs, among many others, **Matt. 8:28-34; Matt. 12:22-32.**
- Christ in the last days will destroy Satan and his reign forever, **Rev. 12; Rev. 20:1-10.**

[Our response] **Avoid all witchcraft and pray in Jesus' name for demonized persons (Gal. 5:19-21; Luke 10:9).**

IV-25 Trial by Fire (Related: *treasure in heaven, heaven*)

[OT] **God forbade unholy war booty in His holy camp; jewels and precious metals passed a trial by fire:** Num. 31.

[NT] **God warns that we cannot take contraband into heaven--our works will be tried by fire:** 1 Cor. 3:10-15.

- Jesus warns against greed and clinging to riches, in His parable of the rich fool, **Luke 12:14-31.**

[Our response] **Lay up treasures in heaven instead of riches on earth (Matt. 6:19-21).**

IV-26 Balaam's Begrudged Blessing (Related: *Balaam, greed, avarice, materialism, riches*)

[OT] **Some used their wealth to serve God; others coveted it wrongly or used it selfishly:**

- Balak paid Balaam to curse Israel. God forced used a donkey and other ways, to make him bless them, **Num. 22 - 24.**
- Wealthy Nabal selfishly denies food to David's hungry soldiers, but God changes the situation, **1 Samuel 25.**
- King Hezekiah showed off the royal riches to messengers from Babylon--and lost them! **2 Kings 20:12-19.**
- King Solomon had great riches, many wives, and indulged in every pleasure, but found it all empty, **Ecc. 2:1-11.**

[NT] **Jesus warns of hoarding wealth with a parable of a selfish rich man who woke up in hell,** Luke 16:19-31.

[Our response] **Believers with wealth, or who desire it, heed God's warning that it will cause us pain (James 5:1-6).**

Events in the Time of the Judges of Israel with Similar Later Events

IV-27 Joshua Conquers the Promised Land (Related: *battle, church planting, missionaries*)

[OT] Joshua conquered for God, defeating in battle the pagan nations that occupied the Promised Land:

- God commanded Joshua to be courageous and drive out the idolatrous nations from the Promised Land, **Joshua 1:1-11**.
- The pagan city Jericho falls, **Joshua 6**.
- God lets Joshua's army be defeated temporarily because of a traitor's idolatry, **Joshua 7 - 8**.
- Joshua defeats several strong kings in military campaigns, to occupy the land, **Joshua 9 - 11**.

[NT] The apostles conquer for God, defeating Satan as they take the gospel to the pagan nations of the world:

- The congregation in Antioch commissions and sends the first long-term missionaries, **Acts 13:1-3**.
- Paul and Barnabas take long missionary journeys, into distant lands and other cultures, **Acts 13 - 14; Acts 16 -21**.
- Paul proclaims Jesus to Jewish leaders and skeptic rulers Festus and Agrippa, even though it means prison, **Acts 20 -26**.

[Our response] Send to neglected fields the apostles that God gives your flock (Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 1:8).

- Today's apostles continue to drive Satan back as God's kingdom spreads throughout the earth (Rev. 15:4).
- Face God's enemies with courage, and bear the suffering that it brings (Matt. 10:16-42).

IV-28 Gentiles Blessed by the God of Israel (Related: *Rahab, aliens brought into God's nation, Christ's church comprises all nations*)

[OT] God brought faithful aliens to be included among His people Israel in the Old Testament:

- Canaanite harlot Rahab hid God's spies by faith, and was spared when the city of Jericho fell, **Joshua 2; Joshua 6:17**.
- Moabitess widow Ruth out of love for her mother-in-law Naomi came to Israel and trusted in God. Both Ruth and Rahab are in Christ's lineage; Ruth was the great-Grandmother of king David), **Ruth--a beautiful love story**.
- Syrian army general Naaman, after battling his pride, bathed in Jordan River and God healed his leprosy, **2 Kings 5**.

[NT] Christ's church embraces all nations:

- Jesus tested, and then rewarded, a Sidonian woman's faith, **Matt. 15:21-28**.
- Jesus heals the servant of a Roman Centurion because of the army captain's faith, **Luke 7:1-10**.
- The apostle Paul makes missionary journeys to many nations, **Acts 13 - 14; Acts 17 - 20**.

[Our response]

- Jesus commands us to evangelize and to make disciples of all nations, **Luke 24:46-48; Matthew 28:18-20**.

IV-29 Gideon Finds Strength in Weakness (Related: *Gideon, David slays Goliath, Peter's denial, spiritual warfare*)

[OT] God used weak persons in the Old Testament to defeat the strong:

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- Gideon with 300 soldiers followed God's surprising instructions and defeated a huge army, **Judges 6 - 7**.
- The shepherd boy David defeats the Philistine giant, **1 Sam. 17**.

[NT] God uses weak and flawed persons in the New Testament to do great things:

- Peter denied Jesus, but God used him mightily after he received the Holy Spirit, **Matt. 26: 31-35, 69-75**.

[Our response] Confess our sins and weaknesses to God.

- Trust in God's power, not in man's wisdom and wealth (1 Cor. 1 - 2).
- Pray for strength, like Paul who said "I can do anything through Christ's strength" (Philip. 4:13).
- Wage spiritual warfare by using the spiritual armor and weapons that God provides, (Eph 6: 10-18)

IV-30 Ruth (Related: *women leaders, women respected*)

[OT] God enabled faithful women like Ruth, Deborah and Esther and in the Old Testament to do His work:

- Deborah led a courageous military campaign to free Israel, **Judges 4 - 5**. See also the books of **Ruth** and **Esther**.

[NT] God enables faithful women in the New Testament to do His work:

- Mary agreed to be the handmaid of the Lord and sang a magnificent prayer of praise, **Luke 1:22-56**.
- Priscilla made tents with her husband and thus helped to start several congregations, and mentored Apollos, **Acts 18**.
- Dorcas made clothes for the poor, **Acts 9:36-43**.

[Our response]

- Respect and honor women, and praise virtuous women of faith (Prov. 31:10-31; Eph. 5:21-33).
- Encourage Christian women to do ministries for which God has gifted them (example, Philip's daughters, Acts 21:8-9).

IV-31 Philistines, Capture the Most Sacred Ark (Related: *punishment, suffering, Ark of the Covenant, Stephen, persecution, martyrs*)

[OT] God lets evil people punish His erring children, and also lets righteous people suffer in this world:

- The book of **Judges** gives examples of how God's people fell into idolatry and other sins, then God let pagans oppress them. When they repented, God sent a deliverer and they lived in peace--until they sinned again, repeating the cycle.
- Samson, in spite of his moral weakness, let God use him to free Israel from the idolatrous Philistines, **Judges 14 - 16**.
- The Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and put it in the temple of Dagon, the fish-god. On the third day Dagon's head broke off, just as Jesus entered the old serpent Satan's former realm of death, but crushed his head to free the prisoners as He rose the third day. Cows, with no man to lead them, returned the Ark to Israel, just as the victorious Christ appeared to His disciples after He rose, and ascended to glory, **1 Sam. 4 - 6**.
- Job was a righteous man but suffered greatly. He questioned God but never turned against Him, **Job 1 - 42**. (This is a very long story and needs to be summarized or taught in parts. The key chapters are Job 1- 4 and 40 - 42).

[NT] God allows us to suffer now, so we can share His glory later, and punishes those who oppress His children:

- King Herod beheaded John the Baptist and slew James and others, but later was eaten by worms, **Acts 12**.

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- Non-believing Jews stoned Stephen to death in Jerusalem and persecuted the Christians. As a result they scattered to many places, spreading the gospel--a blessing for many, **Acts 7 - 8**.
- Paul the Apostle suffered beatings and stoning from Jews, was robbed and shipwrecked, **2 Cor. 11:22-33; Acts 27 - 28**.

[Our response] **Rejoice when we suffer for Christ, because our reward in glory will be great (1 Peter 4:12-19).**

- We suffer in the world because it hated Christ and hates us, but we will be rewarded (John 15:18-27; Rom. 8:17-39)
- Bear the cross that Jesus gives us (Luke 9:22-26).

Events in the Time of the Kings of Israel with Similar Later Events

IV-32 God Prepares Israel's Leaders' (Related: *Samuel, Hannah, Eli, king Saul, Isaiah, apostles' preparation*)

[OT] **God prepared His prophets and leaders, such as Joseph, Moses and Daniel in different ways:**

- Hannah gave her child Samuel to the High Priest Eli, to serve God; Samuel received a startling message for Eli, **1 Sam. 1 - 3**.
- The Israelites begged Samuel to anoint a king to lead them and he warned them of what would happen, but they persisted, so he anointed Saul, a strong warrior, to the great pleasure of the people: **1 Sam. 8 - 10**.
- Saul reigned well, defeating many of Israel's enemies, then committed some serious blunders, **1 Sam. 11 - 15**.
- David, like Moses, learned to be a good shepherd herding his father Jesse's sheep as a lad, **1 Sam. 16; 1 Sam 17:33-37**.
- David became a strong warrior but King Saul became jealous forced him to keep running and hiding. God used this to teach David to trust in Him (as many of his Psalms reflect), **1 Sam. 18 - 31**. These chapters contain many war stories.
- Isaiah saw a frightening vision of the Lord in His temple and felt so sinful that he fell, **Isaiah 6**.
- Jeremiah suffered many things, including being put in a pit when he prophesied that Jerusalem would fall, **Jer. 38**.

[NT] **God prepares His leaders in the New Testament:**

- Peter and the other eleven original apostles spent three years accompanying Jesus the Master, **Mark 3:13-19**.
- Paul the apostle suffered many things, and spent time in Arabia before beginning his apostolic work, **Gal. 1:11-24**.

[Our response] **We prepare well to serve the Lord, including making sacrifices:**

- Moses left the riches of Egypt's palace and suffered shame, to serve his people (Heb. 11:24-28).
- This preparation includes studying the Word of God, like you are doing now, and teaching it to your family, your people, and newer leaders (2 Tim. 2:2).

IV-33 Good Kings of Israel (Related: *David's good reign, Solomon, obedience, rulers, good, Queen of Sheba, kings of Israel, elders*)

[OT] **God let good leaders like David and his son Solomon rule His people when they turned from idols and obeyed Him, but let bad kings reign cruelly when they worshipped idols.**

Most of the kings were bad.

- Solomon begins his reign by asking God for wisdom. His wise decisions attract people from afar, **1 Kings 3; 4:21-34**.

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- Solomon built God's temple and brought the Ark of the Covenant to it with great pomp and ceremony, **1 Kings 8**.
- The Queen of Sheba comes far to see Solomon's glory and is astonished by his wisdom and wealth, **1 Kings 10:1-13**.
- Israel enjoyed immense prosperity under Solomon's reign. **1 Kings 10:22-29**.
- Jehosaphat removed idols and taught God's laws to all Israel with non-institutional education, **2 Chron. 17 - 18**.
- Josiah the boy King listened to his advisors and brought spiritual renewal to Israel, **2 Kings 22 - 23**.
- Hezekiah, like the kings Uzziah and Asa, brought Judah **2 Chron. 29 - 32**.

[NT] God gives good leaders to serve His congregations when they follow His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit::

- Paul tells his apprentice Titus to name the right kind of elders to shepherd the new congregations of Crete, **Titus 1:5-9**.

IV-34 Prophets of Israel (Related: *warning, Elijah, Ahab, Baal, repentance, false leaders*)

[OT] God sent His prophets to warn bad kings and the people to repent:

- Solomon's foolish son Rehoboam refused to ease the people's harsh taxes, which provoked Jeroboam and the northern tribes to separate, dividing the kingdom--Israel in the North and Judah in the south, **1 Kings 12**.
- Jeroboam, first king of Israel in the north, defies the prophet's warning and institutes serious idolatry, **1 Kings 13**.
- Many kings follow Jeroboam's bad example. Ahab allows almost all Israel to worship idols, but the prophet Elijah works miracles to show that God lived and was more powerful than the lifeless idols. Elijah heals a widow's son, **1 Kings 17**.
 - Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to meet with him and Ahab on Mount Carmel for a contest, **1 Kings 18**.
 - Elijah falls into despair at feeling alone but is nourished by God's angel, **1 Kings 19**.
 - Elijah convinces the most evil king Ahab to repent, **1 Kings 21**.
 - Ahab spurns the prophecy of Micaiah and causes his own violent death, **1 Kings 22**.
 - Elijah brings fire from heaven down upon the messengers of evil King Ahaziah, **2 Kings 1**.
 - Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire but the Lord passes his powers to his apprentice Elisha, **2 Kings 2**.
 - Elisha enables Israel's king Joram to miraculously defeat Moab's army, **2 Kings 3**.
 - Elisha by God's power enables a poor widow to pay her debts, **2 Kings 4**.
 - Elisha by God's power enables the Syrian army captain Naaman to be cleansed of leprosy, **2 Kings 5**.
 - Elijah by God's power causes the defeat of the invading army from Aram, **2 Kings 7:24-33; 2 Kings 8**.
- Jeremiah predicts God's punishment and the fall of Jerusalem, but the king refuses to hear, **2 Chron. 36:11-23; Jer. 36**
- The kings and people grow more evil and Jerusalem finally falls. Many are carried off as slaves to Babylon, **2 Chron. 36**.
- Jonah, the first missionary, is sent to another nation and, until God teaches him to obey, resists God's command, **Jonah**.

[NT] Jesus calls all men to repent and warns of bad leaders--wolves that lead God's people astray:

- Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep to reveal the joy in heaven when a sinner repents, **Luke 15:1-10**.
- illustrates God's grace, which leads men to repent, with His parable of the Wasteful Son, **Luke 15:11-32**.
- Peter proclaims the gospel and calls the large group of listeners at Pentecost to repent, **Acts 2:1-41**.
- Jesus heals a blind man on the Sabbath and hypocritical religious leaders resent that He did it on the Sabbath day, **John 9**.

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- Saul of Tarsus imprisoned Christians and caused their death, but converted and became Paul the apostle, **Acts 9:1-31**.
- Jesus warns of wolves who pretend they are devout Christian leaders but are false, **Matt. 7:15-20**.
- John the Baptist warns Herod about his adultery. Herod imprisons and later beheads John, **Matt. 14**.
- Jesus warns of the leavening of the Pharisees--self-righteousness and rules of men, **Luke 12:1; Matt. 15:1-20**.
- Paul warns the elders of Ephesus that wolves (false leaders) will try to divide and corrupt their congregations, **Acts 20: 28-32**.
- God, through the prophecy of John, warns of an Anti-Christ's ruthless persecution of believers, **Rev. 13**.
- John's visions also warn of terrible judgments coming upon men who do not repent, **Rev. 16 - 18**.
- John's visions also promise a glorious 'wedding feast' in heaven for those who repent, **Rev. 19**.
- John's visions reveal the final judgment of the unrepentant, before God's great white throne, **Rev. 20**.
- John's visions also reveal the new heavens and earth in which we will live and reign forever with Christ, where there are no tears, no curse and no pain, **Rev. 21 -22**.

[Our response].

- Watch over the flock that God has given us to shepherd, starting with our own families (Acts 20:28-32).
- Name as leaders responsible, mature persons who have proven their ability, (1 Timothy 3).
- Shun those who cause divisions (Titus 3:10-11).
- Our congregation must avoid the common errors that weaken congregations, that Christ warns us of in Rev. 2 - 3.
- Seek the Holy Spirit's daily renewal (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
- Assure suffering believers of their eternal reward (1 Peter 1:6-9; 1 John 3:1-3).

IV-35 Lucifer (Related: *Satan's fall from heaven, spiritual warfare, Satan tempts Jesus, devil*)

[OT] **Lucifer “king of Babylon,” a beautiful angel, became proud and fell from heaven, becoming Satan our enemy, Isaiah 14:3-17. This event occurred in the beginning of creation, but was not revealed until the time of the divided kingdom.**

[NT] **Satan wars ceaselessly against God's people:**

- Following a war in heaven, Satan was cast out of heaven with the other fallen angels that had joined him, **Rev. 12:7-9**.
- The devil tempts Jesus, **Matt. 4**.
- Jesus warns that Satan sends his evil spirits like birds to snatch the seed of the Word of God from our hearts, **Matt. 13**.
- Satan moves Judas to betray Jesus, **John 13:21-30; John 18:1-12**.
- Satan causes even believing Christians Ananias and Sapphira to sin, **Acts 5:1-11**.

[Our response]

- Resist Satan and he will flee from us (James 4:7).
- Beware of Satan as he stalks us like a roaring lion, to see whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Events in the Time of the Captivity of the Remnant of Israel and their Return to their Land, with Similar Later Events

IV-36 Babylonian Captivity of Israel (Related: *Mordecai, Daniel, Security of believers, Jesus-Good Shepherd*)

[OT] **God protected the remnant that worshipped Him alone, while they were in captivity:**

- Mordecai helps his niece, the brave Queen Esther, to plan the destruction of God's enemies, **Esther** (the entire book).
- God protects Daniel's three friends in the blazing furnace, **Dan. 3**, and Daniel in the lions Den, **Dan. 6**.

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[NT] **Jesus the Good Shepherd promises to keep His followers secure in His hands forever,**
John 10 :7-39.

[Our response] **Trust in God's infinite grace to keep His children in His hands forever,**
Rom 8:28-39.

IV-37 Ezra, Reformer (Related: *restoration, return from Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah, spiritual gifts*)

[OT] **God provided faithful leaders to restore His people and organize them to serve Him:**

- Cyrus King of Persia lets the exiles in Babylon to return and restore the temple and land of Israel, **Ezra 1**.
- The people return and begin rebuilding the temple with great shouts of joy and tears, **Ezra 3**.
- Nehemiah asks King Artaxerxes permission to rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah returns and surveys the ruins, **Neh. 1 - 2**.
- Nehemiah leads armed workers in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, amidst much opposition, **Neh. 3 - 4**.
- The people hear and heed God's Word, confess their sins and repent in the greatest national renewal, **Ezra 8 - 9**.

[NT] **God gives gifts and power through His Holy Spirit for us to lead, serve one another and help the needy:**

- Jesus eats with repentant sinners and brings God's grace to them, **Mark 2:13-17**.
- We use spiritual gifts in harmony with others' gifts to serve one another in the church body, in love, **1 Cor. 12:14-31**.
- Paul tells his apprentices to name and train other leaders, to keep the process multiplying, **Titus 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:2**,

[Our response] **Plan by faith to mobilize our people for God's work (Eph 4:11-16).**

- Commission and send new workers to where they are most needed (Acts 13:1-3; Titus 1:5).

Events in the Time of Jesus' Earthly Life

IV-38 Jesus' Life (Related: *apostles chosen, triumphant entry, cross, Jesus rises, Jesus ascends*)

- Jesus' birth: **Matt. 1-2; Luke 2**.
- Jesus' baptism: **Matt. 3**.
- Jesus' temptation by the devil: **Matt. 4**.
- Jesus calls twelve disciples who later become the apostles: **Matt. 4:18-21; 9:9-13; John 1:35-51; Mark 3:13-19**.
- Jesus' transfiguration: **Matt. 17**.
- Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday): **Matt. 21**.
- Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper: **Matt. 26:17-29**.
- Jesus' agony in Gethsemane and His arrest: **Matt. 26:36-56**.
- Jesus' trials before several authorities: **Mark 14:55-64; John 18:28-40; 19:1-16**.
- Jesus' crucifixion: **Matt. 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19:17-37**.
- Jesus' burial: **John 19:38-42**.
- Jesus' resurrection and appearances: **Matt. 28; John 20-21**.
- Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all peoples, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness in the power of the Holy Spirit: **Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8**.
- Jesus' ascension: **Luke 24:50-53**.

Events Following Jesus' Ascension to Glory

IV-39 The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost (Related: *Stephen, Pentecost, church council, missionary team, judgment*)

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- The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost: **Acts 2**.
- Enemies of Christ stoned Stephen to death when he showed from Old Testament history that their forefathers had resisted God throughout the ages: **Acts 7**.
- The first gentile church; Gentile converts also receive the Holy Spirit: **Acts 10**.
- The first missionary team: **Acts 13 - 14**.
- The first inter-church council: **Acts 15**.
- The final judgment: **Rev. 20:11-15**.

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